



Johnston, Lee (2017) *A divided theologian: Karl Rahner's existential ontology and the problem of ecclesiology*. MTh(R) thesis.

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/8139/>

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten:Theses
<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/>
theses@gla.ac.uk

**A divided theologian:
Karl Rahner's existential ontology and the problem of ecclesiology**

Lee Johnston B.D. (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MTh (Research) Theology and
Religious Studies

School of Critical Studies
College of Arts
University of Glasgow

April, 2017

© Lee Johnston, 2017

Abstract

This dissertation explores the connection, or rather, disconnection between Rahner's ecclesiology and his existential ontology, showing that his thought has the potential to be useful in the pluralistic conversation which Christianity finds itself in today if pushed in more radical directions. The dissertation is structured by first exploring the basics of Rahner's terminology and thought, particularly in contrast with Heidegger – a major influence on his writing – showing that transcendence and immanence are interdependent for him. Next, we will explore the wider issue of Rahner's place in post-modern conversations, establishing a hermeneutic which focuses on the 'Hearer' – one constituted by the speech of God and the Other in the everyday of life, rather than a stable modernist subject, as is often attributed to him. Next, taking this hermeneutic, I will show how it is worked out in existential terms, to the extent that Rahner's thought validates any and all philosophies and theologies which engender love for one's neighbour, hope for the future and authenticity in the face of death – our prime example being the philosophy of Hegel. Unfortunately, Rahner's ecclesiology fails to direct the impulse of his existential ontology towards universalism, instead favouring the privileged status of the visible Church in general and the Roman Catholic Church in particular. Therefore, I will conclude by reconstructing Rahner's ecclesiology in conversation with Hans Küng and Jean-Luc Marion, moving towards a universal idea of the Church which recognises that the gift of God is received freely by all Hearers in their diverse contexts, groups and possibilities of knowledge, without the need for a visible Church.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to my supervisor Professor George Pattison for his helpful oversight and diligent proofreading.

Table of Contents

General Introduction	4
1: Transcendence in Rahner	7
<i>Introduction</i>	7
<i>Human Being as Transcendent</i>	7
<i>Transcendence and Historicity</i>	11
<i>Post-modern critiques of Rahner</i>	13
<i>Rahner and Catholicism</i>	25
2: Existence and Revelation	30
<i>Introduction</i>	30
<i>Existential categories of Revelation</i>	31
<i>Hegel and Immanence</i>	44
<i>Hegel's Christianity</i>	46
<i>Hegel as Prophet</i>	55
3: Rahner's Ecclesiology	60
<i>Introduction</i>	60
<i>Rahner's problematic Ecclesiology</i>	60
<i>Alternatives: Küng and Tillich</i>	67
<i>Universal Ecclesiology</i>	73
Conclusion	83
Bibliography	84

General Introduction

In Karl Rahner we find the most interesting of the Vatican II thinkers, one who sought to both challenge the stifling traditions of the Roman Church and the certainty offered by modernity, instead offering a third way: focusing on mystery and human transcendence. Rahner may have accomplished more indirectly than directly – often providing the theological justification for other, explicitly contextual, styles of theology – such as liberation theology. Indeed, his thought on its own basis is granted less attention now that debates have moved on in both Roman Catholicism and philosophy; this may in part be due to the moderation of his tone through which he seeks to be faithful to his ecclesiastical tradition whilst at the same time introducing novel concepts.

The main problems that my thesis will address are on the one hand, the view that Rahner's theology leads to the primacy of the visible Church when it comes to revelation and salvation, and on the other hand, that it leads to a foundationalist understanding of the individual – both readings which would rightly lead us to conclude that Rahner's thought has little or no continued value when it comes to interfaith dialogue or questions of ecclesiology amidst the decline of western institutional Christianity. In offering a re-reading of Rahner, we will challenge how his thought has been received both by his contemporaries and today: as a foundationalist mainly concerned with the individual by post-modern thought or as a potentially dangerous figure for more traditional catholic thinkers. Instead we will argue that Rahner's thought grasped the complex interplay of communal and individual formation in light of the mystery of God. However, given that Rahner retains a clear commitment to the visible structures of the Church especially in his work entitled *Foundations of Christian Faith*¹, we will deal with Rahner on his own terms, asking if indeed there are possibilities of re-reading his thought in a more radical manner. As such, one of the key questions that arise in this paper is the connection – or rather the disconnection – between Rahner's existential ontology, in that it has the potential to affirm an ecclesiology beyond the visible structures of the Church, and his proposed ecclesiology which retains the Church as the prime witness to Christ. Bringing Rahner's theology into conversation with more radical thinkers such as Küng will allow us to re-read him the midst of the decline of visible Christianity in the west, reconnecting his existential

¹ One of the key limitations of this paper is that I focus mainly on Rahner's theology as found in *Foundations of Christian Faith* because it is his most systematic and mature work, as opposed to the *Theological Investigations* which are earlier and more fragmentary in nature. I do, however, use other works such as articles in *Sacramentum Mundi* and Rahner's *Theology of Death* in order to better present some of his key concepts.

ontology to a more open ecclesiology which affirms all Hearers of the word rather than privileging those within the visible Church.

In chapter one I will explain the basics of Rahner's thought and terminology. Specifically, I will address how he uses ideas of Heidegger's, such as 'Being-in-the-world,' and takes them in a Christian direction, building a system of thought in which human beings recognise the infinite mystery – God – who upholds and conditions their finitude. Next, our discussion of transcendence in Rahner will widen into an analysis of foundationalism in Rahner through the work of Shannon Craigo-Snell, John Milbank, Hans Urs von Balthasar and others in order to establish a way of reading Rahner in light of the conversation between modernity and post-modernity, showing that he offers a uniquely Christian third way in his concept of the Hearer who is constituted by the experience of God in mystery and the encounter with the Other in the world – instead of the stable individual Self favoured by modernity. Rahner emphasises the existential ontological nature of the Hearer and the call of God which the Hearer responds to – being first constituted by that call and then deciding for or against it through existential modes of Being. The complex dialogue between the individual and the community serves to show that Rahner's subject can neither be an island to themselves nor be wholly grasped and represented in and through an institution such as the visible Church.

The second chapter will then apply the hermeneutical focus on the Hearer to a real example: can someone like Hegel be understood as a prophet by Rahner; in other words, can God be heard in philosophy and other discourses, in Rahnerian terms. I explore Rahner's existential ontological idea of revelation which can be applied beyond explicit forms of Christianity to thinkers who are neither existentialists nor part of the visible ecclesia – such as Hegel. Ultimately, I will argue that any system of thought, either individual or communal, gives access to Christ as long as it encourages the development of love, hope for the future and authenticity in the face of death – all of which themselves represent our foundational relationship to mystery and, therefore, God. In summary, the Hearer we argue for in chapter one and the revelation that the Hearer is exposed to cannot possibly be contained within Rahner's later assertion of the primacy of the visible Church.

After providing a Rahnerian reading of Hegel in the second chapter, in the third chapter I will show how Rahner's ecclesiology disagrees with his existential ontology, which has the potential to be open and inclusive of philosophy and other theologies. This conclusion will lead to a more detailed

discussion of Rahner's ecclesiology through commentators such as Richard Lennan and Patrick Burke, arguing that, contrary to their interpretations, Rahner's ecclesiology is a departure from his wider thought and is in need of being reconstructed. Lastly, I will reconstruct a reading of Rahner in dialogue with Jean-Luc Marion's idea of the saturated phenomenon and Hans Küng's reading of Hegel, arguing for the idea of the Church as universal humanity instead of one in which the visible Church has a privileged position in its epistemological – rather than existential – knowledge of God. To conclude, the Hearer and revelation that we have argued for up until this point will be shown as incompatible with Rahner's idea of the primacy of the visible Church as the place of revelation, instead offering a more complex alternative which resists being finalised in one or even several institutions. I will show that an ecclesiology which is more universal in nature is both more compatible with Rahner's existential ontology and more useful than Rahner's original ecclesiology for interacting with the complex questions that the declining western Church faces.

1: Transcendence in Rahner

Introduction

Before understanding the ecclesiology of Karl Rahner, it is necessary to understand how he regards human beings in general. If we could describe his view of humanity in one word, it would be transcendent, and, if we could describe his view of God in one word it would be mystery. I will explore both themes in detail in this chapter. In order to do so I will compare and contrast the thought of Rahner with that of Heidegger due to Rahner's extensive borrowing of key concepts of Heidegger. Rahner often takes a concept of Heidegger's, such as Being-in-the-world, and pushes it further in a distinctively Christian direction. Related to this is Rahner's turn towards phenomenology, which was a clear break with Thomism – dominant during his time of writing.

Specifically, I will show how Rahner develops Heidegger's concepts of Dasein and Being-in-the-world to create an implicit Christianity which focuses on meaning rather than Being; this approach results in a methodology that is descriptive rather than argumentative. Next, I will look at how this ontology simultaneously both reveals God as he is and yet maintains limits on reason, drawing us ever more into a relationship with God as mystery; in doing so, Rahner is establishing an a priori limitation on knowledge prior to that of Kant's transcendental categories. Thirdly, I will address how this a priori conception of man as transcendent is always conditioned by immanence in history and leads to historicity – the self-interpretation that arises as we reflect upon our foundational experience of mystery. Rahner's views on history and historicity are ultimately conflicted: leading to a tenuous balance between a circular existential view which centres on individuals, who may or may not need the insight of a community, and an overarching view of the particular revelation and salvation which occurs in and through the 'official' Christian witness.

Human Being as Transcendent

Rahner uses the term transcendent to describe human beings. In *Foundations*, he asserts that humankind is inherently transcendent due to its faculty of self-consciousness and ability to question (1986, p. 20); this is evident from man's constant experience of limitation, which he surpasses upon recognising and comparing it to the limitless and ineffable mystery that constitutes his being and the world at large; the orientation towards mystery is not only true of the subject but the structure of the

world, which also exists as finitude in contrast to the infinite (1986, p. 19). It is only compared to the “darkness of God” as mystery that we can know or do anything since we only know what is known and finite by comparing it to that which is unknown and infinite (1986, p. 22). Rahner describes this as the a priori subject that is open to infinite potentiality, evidenced even in its denial of such potentiality (1986, p. 20).

Heidegger describes human beings as Dasein in order to differentiate them from all other beings; ultimately, the human being is the focal point of Being in general because it is the only being for whom their own existence is a problem and which can ascribe meaning to beings and objects in a conscious manner. Heidegger writes: “Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities...it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it” (1962, p. 32). This ontic quality or characteristic leads to an infinite search for meaning to resolve the question of Being. Rahner adds to Heidegger's view that we are constantly dealing with Being in a familiar yet unconscious way by arguing that God constitutes human beings through an event of self-communication.

Both Rahner and Heidegger are descriptive in their methodology since human existence is the focal point of all meaning and Being for both thinkers. As Richard Polt writes, “what we can say about phenomenology is that it is fundamentally descriptive, not explanatory: Heidegger will be describing how Dasein and the world show themselves, rather than proving...or explaining” (1999, p. 39). This observation is equally true of Rahner's method in the majority of *Foundations* where he is describing man's experience of mystery, guilt and an existential christology, until – revealingly – he tries to prove and defend a traditional Catholic ecclesiology in the later chapters using scriptural quotations. Rahner attempts to balance his commitment to the structures of the Roman Catholic Church whilst trying to present an existentially focused and intellectually credible alternative to Neo-Scholasticism.

The anthropological approach, centred on man's original experience of mystery, is a unique break with Thomism, which sought to understand God through the analogy of objects or the being of things in a realist sense. Sheehan outlines Rahner's transcendent project as a four-fold process: beginning with the study of human behaviour, understanding from that what it is to be human, defining the limits of knowledge and, finally, defining the range of objects available to knowledge (2005, p. 30). All knowledge is therefore in the context of human behaviour in relation to the world,

God, and the knowledge of oneself which always lingers in the background (2005, p. 31), in contrast with understanding the world of objects as an in-itself. We are always aware of ourselves as knower when perceiving any object – there is never a pure conception of self or a pure conception of objects. Rahner argues that knowledge is not as straightforward and clear as objects appearing on a mirror but rather “the knowing subject possesses in knowledge both itself and its knowledge” (1986, p. 18); knowledge is therefore both relation to self and the world, or as Heidegger would say: Being-in-the-world.

Sheehan relates this limitation of reason to the phenomenological turn to the subject that occurs in Rahner's thought through Heidegger. Polt describes Heidegger's concept of Dasein's Being-in-the-world through the example of a glove, which only has meaning when one understands that it has utility; however, no meaning can be inferred and the object remains simple matter in a physical form without the presence of Dasein, “Real things are independent of us, but what it means to be real depends on us” (Polt, 1999, p. 82). For Heidegger, Being-in-the-world does not simply mean being spatially in the same universe or locale as other objects ('present-at-hand'), but, rather, dwelling and being absorbed in the world of objects to such an extent that we are shaped by it a priori (Heidegger, 1962, p. 80). Furthermore, we misunderstand ourselves and the world if we view it simply as an interaction between subject and the world as a thing that we can know apart from ourselves. Rather, we only make true progress when we understand this orientation towards the world as the background of our every-day living and familiarity with the world. Heidegger can therefore describe Being-in-the-world as an existential modality (1962, p. 86).

Rahner brings this change to a theology which was consumed with the being of things: the world, human nature, and God; Sheehan argues that Rahner, although using the same language of being, is, in fact, showing how objects are meaningful in relation to us and, specifically, our relationship with God (2005, p. 33). The search for meaning and the infinite number of meanings that we construct in lived experience is the core of Rahner's transcendental project, the infinite potential which conditions our finitude. Subjects never fully relate to themselves in themselves as God can but always must relate to themselves through that which they are not, as Sheehan says, humans are: “perfectly imperfect self-related otherness” (2005, p. 35). Therefore, the limitations of reason and the failure to overcome them is not a defect in human nature but is rather a part of what it means to be human. Reason and mystery condition rather than resolve one another.

The transcendental project, then, is about discovering the limits of reason and revelation in relation to salvation precisely because man is limited in knowledge and only has his experience through which he can know God. In the entry entitled 'Transcendental Theology' in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Rahner argues that the difference between transcendental philosophy and transcendental theology is that the latter seeks to define the limits and possibility of salvation and revelation in relation to knowledge rather than knowledge in general (1975, p. 1749). Reason, therefore, is not about discovering all truth; it is first about understanding the limits of knowledge through philosophy and subsequently discovering and putting into words the salvific existential relationship inherent and implicit in our universal experience of mystery.

Philip Endean argues that Rahner resists the project of seeking absolute certainty – present both in modernity and the Roman Catholic rejection of it. Rahner is not using reason or theology to know everything, rather he is seeking to use reason to come to a higher form of knowledge in which mystery is embraced without being resolved; this is not a deficiency in reason but its fulfilment, as shown even in the beatific vision when God remains mystery (2005, p. 289). Rahner's personal reflections support this interpretation of his theological project. In his *Confessions of a Catholic Theologian* he argues that all theological statements are analogical dialectics in which we affirm and then negate any statement about God: the true object of theology is, therefore, the incomprehensibility of God (2005, p. 301). He recognised the problematic nature of theological statements that function as if we know God's will and attributes. However, if we rightly affirm then negate theological statements we can “descend into the silent incomprehensibility of God's very self... Our theoretical statements then share the same existential destiny as we do, namely, that of a loving trusting self-surrender to the unfathomable reign of God” (2005, p. 299).

Philosophy and theology have limits: neither are used to resolve mystery or arrive at full disclosure of knowledge but, rather, are methods of understanding and furthering an existential relationship to God as mystery. Rahner is following Heidegger's idea that existential analysis of Dasein truly allows Being in general to be seen, or rather, God to be seen in and through human experience. Being is truly disclosed through this process of existential examination: it is not a purely mysterious or subjective process, yet Being is never fully disclosed. Likewise, Heidegger states of phenomenology that it is the discovering of “that which shows itself in itself” (1962, p. 51) yet for both Rahner and Heidegger this process is never-ending. Both depart from Kant's transcendent epistemology in which a priori categories are able to provide the co-ordinates for our empirical

experience, or indeed our concept of human beings or Being in general. Kant attempts to prove that “the categories universally and necessarily apply to our experience, to whatever might be presented to us in space and / or time” (Guyer, 2006, p. 95). However, Guyer points out that this idea becomes problematic when one seeks to establish the priority of the category over the sensory data (2006, p. 96) and gives the example of a dog, which we recognise as having several properties such as four legs.

Kant's approach would lead to three key issues when it comes to understanding human beings for both Heidegger and Rahner. Firstly, using a priori categories to understand human beings would lead to a conception of human beings that they are like other present-at-hand objects in the world, which have properties and an essence which constructs their existence. Secondly, it would be open to Heidegger's critique of the Cartesian approach of assuming and ignoring what it means to be, whilst pursuing categories of what makes the human being present-at-hand: i.e. cognition (Polt, 1999, p. 26). Lastly, it would lead to the dualism which Heidegger and Rahner overcome by viewing Being as a foundation that exists prior to categories and systems of understanding.

To conclude, Heidegger's and Rahner's transcendent projects limit human reason in a more fundamental way than Kant's – a way which rejects dualism and pursues the question of Being. For Rahner in particular, man is ever orientated towards mystery – denying or affirming that which is beyond himself and knowing what is in comparison to what is not; therefore, he is transcendent in his experience of every-day life. All subsequent intellectual reflection has this original experience of mystery as its material and source (1986, p. 16). Rahner answers Heidegger's call for a theology in which dogma is not the foundation, but, rather, human experience of Being (Heidegger, 1962, p. 30). The goal of theology then is to move from this original implicit experience of the mystery of Being towards a personal, explicit, and partially institutional relationship to the mystery as God.

Transcendence and Historicity

Given the imperfect nature of man, the limits of reason and the goal of moving towards an experience of mystery, history by necessity becomes the point at which man's transcendent search for meaning interprets and drives his immanent experience of the implicit and subsequently explicit mystery of God. Firstly, transcendence is a necessary condition of historicity for it is the experience of going beyond the now and relating oneself to the past and future (1986, p. 140). Rahner employs

a circular argument: we are transcendent, therefore, we have history; we have history, therefore, we are transcendent. Rahner's distinction between history, historicity and their co-conditioning clearly draws from Heidegger's idea of temporality. Heidegger writes, "But temporality is also the condition which makes historicity possible as a temporal kind of Being which Dasein itself possess, regardless of whether or how Dasein is an entity 'in time'. "Historicity, as a determinate character, is prior to what is called history" (1962, p. 41).

Rahner takes Heidegger's idea further in arguing that our transcendence is the a priori condition that enables us both to be historical creatures and to understand our a posteriori experience of God with regards to salvation historically. Indeed, history is not only caused by the transcendence of man but history is primarily the "history of transcendental itself" (1986, p. 140). History cannot be interpreted as salvific without the apriori subject as understood by his transcendental theology. Without the human recognition of finitude and the potentiality of the future, history would simply 'be' – with no search for meaning based on human questioning.

This relationship was further elucidated by one of Rahner's pupils, Karl Lehmann, in the theological encyclopedia *Sacramentum Mundi*, which Rahner edited. Lehmann concludes that "Immanence and transcendence belong to each other and mediate each other, which shows both the necessity and the limitations of these concepts and their application" (1975, p. 1736). He repeats Rahner's argument that we need to define ourselves by what we are not and the need for the Other to understand our temporarily against (1975, p. 1735). Furthermore, he argues that the transcendence of the human being pervades all immanence but it never resolves it because this would result in the end of freedom – the ability to will something other than what is.

Therefore, immanence and transcendence condition each other: immanence – or finitude – is the only way to understand and express our transcendence and transcendence is always necessary in order that we remain truly free, not becoming limited to immanent conditions or instances in history. This mutual conditioning provides the basis for both Rahner and his student to speak of God as both close and distant at once, rather than simply distant or reducible to nature. All that is finite is an expression of God's transcendence but this self-communication never brings about an absolute immanence; our understanding of God only occurs by analogy through our experience of the world. Rahner's transcendence leads us to conclude with Lehmann that God is both "inward and over against" (1975, p. 1739). Human beings are orientated towards God who simultaneously stands

inside and outside of creation. As Rahner states, “What we are calling transcendental knowledge or experience of God is an a posteriori knowledge insofar as man's transcendental experience of his free subjectivity takes place only in his encounter with the world” (1986, p. 52).

In this relationship between transcendence and immanence, we can see that Rahner was inspired by Heidegger's idea of Being-in-the world; a category that describes the way in which we relate to ourselves and, therefore, Being, through our experience of the world. However, Rahner takes this concept further by identifying this every-day Being-in-the-world as the very mediation of God to us (1986, p. 151). Given the graceful self-communication of God that constitutes us in the world and universality of that communication, Rahner rightly asks: what place does Christian revelation have in his system? (1986, p. 139) His problematic response is that history is “taking place in an irreversible direction towards the highest and comprehensive self-interpretation of man” which will become “ever more intensely an explicitly religious self-interpretation of this supernatural, transcendental and revelatory experience of God” (1986, p. 154). This position is problematic because it does not justify his ideas of particular revelation and an official ecclesial witness, and it is even structured to allow thinkers such as Hegel – who have no such overt obligations – to be regarded as a development of revelatory history.

Having outlined Rahner's concepts of transcendence and immanence, we will now specifically look at how such concepts have made him a problematic thinker in conversation with modernity and post-modernity. Rahner escapes being easily identified with either of these movements, instead holding a distinctly Christian position – yet even this claim is widely criticised by his Catholic contemporaries.

Post-modern critiques of Rahner

Rahner is accused of giving up Christian tradition and the ecclesial community in favour of philosophical foundationalism by his critics such as Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Milbank (Craig-Snell, 2008, p. 167). As Shannon Craig-Snell points out, his claim that there is a universal experience of mystery in humanity leads to the claim that he is an essentialist – seeing humanity as a list of qualities rather than the product of communal and historical development (2008, p. 168). Furthermore, his focus on the individual Self leads to the suspicion that he gives too much weight to the Cartesian subject which modernity emphasises (or idolizes). It is claimed that the transcendent

Self is simply expressed rather than formed by history; instead, history is simply the expression of transcendent subjects (2008, p. 169). Such readings make him problematic for post-modern thinkers and other Christian thinkers alike – but for different reasons which we shall explore. Also, such critiques are not limited to harsh critics of Rahner; it is generally agreed, even by moderate commentators such as Kerr and Sheehan, and those seeking to take Rahner's thought towards liberation theology, that he does not give enough weight to historical, interpersonal and cultural sources of meaning (2008, pp. 167-168, p. 173).

Firstly, we shall examine Rahner's thought in conversation with John Milbank who claims that Rahner is part of a tendency in theology to capitulate to modernity and in doing so that he betrays his Christian tradition by removing the need for the Christian community as a source of revelation in history. Milbank regards the intellectual landscape as broadly split into two categories in his book *Theology and Social Theory*; he writes:

An extraordinary contrast therefore emerges between political theology on the one hand, and postmodern and post-Nietzschean social theory on the other. Theology accepts secularization and the autonomy of secular reason; social theory increasingly finds secularization paradoxical, and implies that the mythic-religious can never be left behind. Political theology is intellectually atheistic; post-Nietzschean social theory suggests the practical inescapability of worship (1990, p. 3).

Milbank reads Rahner as embarking on a project that implicitly dispenses with the need for worship and theism – and the communities which sustain this – in favour of self-sustaining secular reason (Craig-Snell, 2008, p. 173). Underlying this reading is Milbank's idea that secular reason embodies forms of violent discourse and action which provides a false universalism: one in which consensus and universalism and an essential view of human nature have been artificially forced upon differing communities, contexts, and narratives in order to promote a false peace, sustained by the violence of reason reducing or eradicating difference. This false peace is in contrast to true Christian peace that holds together a 'sociality of harmonious difference' (Milbank, 1990, p. 5). Furthermore, God's peace comes from within the Christianity community which is enabled to critique society due to the positioning of theology as a new 'master-discourse', which does not resort to intellectual, political or physical violence but uniquely allows difference. The lack of totalising reason along with peace-promoting ecclesiastical practices sustains a unique interpersonal community – the Church – which

is an image of the unity of the Trinity in its different persons (1990, p. 6). It is hoped that this master-discourse and the Church's practices will positively influence society from this unique position of peace, thus Milbank can claim that 'Truth is social' (1990, p. 6).

Therefore, Milbank regards Rahner's transcendent subject as a manifestation of secular reason being the totalising master-discourse – eradicating difference between communities and persons in them, largely ignoring context and social ecclesial practices which form the human subject. Milbank writes:

The social is an autonomous sphere which does not need to turn to theology for its self-understanding, and yet it is already a grace-imbued sphere, and therefore it is upon pre-theological sociology...that theology must be founded. In consequence, a theological critique of society becomes impossible. Theological beliefs themselves, however much a formal orthodoxy may be espoused...tend to become but a faint gloss (1990, p. 208).

Milbank, in contrast to Rahner – who locates the “encounter with grace situated at the margins of every individual's knowing” (1990, p. 208) offers a more supportive reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar and the *Nouvelle Theologie* which emphasise the need for “confrontation with certain historical texts and images which have no permanent 'place' whatsoever, save that of their original occurrence as events and their protracted repetition through the force of ecclesial allegiance” (1990, p. 208). Milbank, therefore, is suggesting that, the Church is systematically arbitrary in Rahner's thought – it is of secondary value as an expression of the individual's foundational experience of mystery. On the other hand, the Church bears the burden of epistemology and ontology in Milbank's theology because the supernatural is not a permanent area of human life (1990, p. 209); therefore, the Church's images and symbols are the only source of supernatural revelation, which must constantly be repeated – only within this context of ecclesial aesthetics and participation can any sense of the individual Christian be formed.

Another common accusation made against Rahner is that he creates a foundation of individual Christian experience similar to that of Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher believed that Christian theology was dependent upon the Church – a collection of individuals with similar pious feelings; in other words, the foundation of the Church and, therefore, theology is personal feelings of the individual (Schleiermacher, 1928, p. 5). More specifically, he viewed this feeling as an 'immediate

self-consciousness' in which one feels absolutely dependent upon that which cannot be changed and yet which changes you from without, namely, God (1928, p. 6). To feel absolutely dependent in the world and to be in relation to God are "one and the same", and, therefore, the more conscious of this dependence you are, the more pious you are (1928, p. 17). Furthermore, "The religious self-consciousness, like every essential element in human nature, leads necessarily in its development to fellowship or communion...most people become self-conscious of dependence via utterance of others" (1928, p. 26). Christian dogma is therefore all about taking those fundamental pious feelings and transforming them into action and knowledge; yet it is only the feelings that are truly 'abiding-in-self': knowledge, action and community all stem from this individual source (1928, p. 11). Behind Schleiermacher's claims is a suspicion of theology done with the head but not with the heart – simply knowing, understanding and expounding theology without a feeling of dependence upon its source: God.

It is not difficult to see the apparent similarities between the thought of Schleiermacher, at a face-value reading – an essentialist, expressionist and foundationalist – and the thought of Rahner. Rahner's ideas of a universal experience of mystery; the existential commitment that all potentially share; and the essence of man who continually and endlessly seeks meaning in the face of infinitude. These claims seem to support the conclusion that Rahner had a foundation other than Christian theology, as perhaps Schleiermacher had before him. However, this simplistic comparison can be easily dismissed. Rahner's subject is not primarily focused on their own feelings of piety, but, rather, engaged in an existential ontological relationship with God and the Other by default, as finitude towards that which is infinite, leading to a disposition towards mystery and a need to continually make meaning; Rahner is therefore not so concerned about individual feelings of piety and instead would view this process as much more interpersonal. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how feelings, thinking and action can be separated in Rahner as they are in Schleiermacher into: abiding-in-self (feeling) and passing-beyond-self (thinking and doing); there is a sense in which everything is happening internally and externally at once in Rahner and any attempts to neatly emphasise and differentiate between that which is feeling or knowing, individual or interpersonal, becomes extremely difficult. Therefore, the claim that Rahner is an expressivist similarly to Schleiermacher is untrue. We must also emphasise the existential category of love for the Other, which is precisely one of the things that identifies revelation as Christian. Christian revelation apart from the existential disposition in which one risks temporal well-being in love for the Other is not possible for Rahner; this is less clear for Schleiermacher – who separates the internal feeling and

external knowing and action.

As Craigo-Snell argues, Rahner is universalising in his claims about mystery and the transcendence of man but he is not a straightforward essentialist. All general traits in Rahner's subject can be read as being constructed in socialisation instead of prior to this: our transcendence is always and only worked out in history – towards God and others – it is not an essence which is “innate and inborn” (2008, p. 181, p. 184). Furthermore, she argues against the claim that both Hans Urs von Balthasar and Milbank put to Rahner: you have everything you need by default of being human without need for the explicitly divine. Instead, she understands Rahner's unique contribution to be precisely the opposite; God freely gives himself in self-communication – it is not automatic nor simply another aspect of humanity that is essential (2008, p. 182). It is a gift in the sense that it is offered by God freely and universally, but the fact it is a gift means it is not essential – we could be human and wholly in history without the transcendent search for meaning and orientation to mystery. The supernatural existential is a universal gift but not an automatic part of human essence; perhaps, one could say that that clue is in the name: it is not natural but something given from the transcendence of God without. Craigo-Snell points to the fact that, for Rahner, the supernatural existential is correspondent to the coming of Christ in history, not the creation of Adam (2008, p. 183).

Milbank's accusation, “Rahner fails to hold together the otherness of God and the claim that this otherness is present in the a priori structure of every created human spirit” (Milbank, 1990, p. 222) is therefore invalid because Rahner does emphasise that it is a gift – it is not something naturally innate, and, furthermore, God remains mystery and otherness regardless of being encountered in the every-day precisely because he is encountered as mystery and not as being wholly contained by words, concepts or theologies.

As has been discussed previously through the work of Philip Endean, Rahner cannot be accused of capitulating to modernity's search for absolute certainty, instead, he is resisting this tendency of totalising reason both in philosophy and in the Church of his day. The goal is not certainty but relationship with God who always remains transcendent mystery. We never arrive at absolute disclosure – to be human is to be finite – and it is potentially dangerous and idolatrous to claim otherwise, as in Milbank's project of theology which emphasises absolute historicity and, therefore, absolute theological authority has a privileged place of being the master-discourse in society – yet without the limits imposed by the transcendence of God. Ecclesiology bears the whole weight of Milbank's theology to the extent that he is in danger of making the historical Church and its images

the absolute in his theology rather than God who is the source. Rahner's theology is far more balanced in that both God and the Other interact with all historical instances of human existence, yet whilst remaining mystery and thus stopping humanity from claiming absolute authority. In making history and its expression in the ecclesia the most important thing, one may accuse Milbank of subordinating Christian theology to the standards set by the post-modern landscape of current academic discourse – making Christianity respond to it with an ecclesiastical certainty and divinisation of images which is antithetical to Rahner's idea of transcendent mystery.

Craig-Snell agrees with Milbank's critique of Rahner in that Rahner does not trust human history in absolute terms because the divine cannot, according to Rahner, be contained or understood wholly in history (2008, p. 199), however, this is not a problem for Rahnerian theology in particular or Catholic theology in general – it can be applied to most major Christian theologians. Instead of reading Rahner as a modernist, we better understand him, along with contemporaries such as Hans Urs von Balthasar, as providing differing interpretations of the relationship between reason and faith². Rahner is arguing that the natural presupposes the existential ontological grace which constitutes the very structure of human knowing, meaning that we cannot have an unbiased approach to arguments from reason nor a pure conception of nature as an object such as in the classical cosmological argument (DiNoia, 1989, p. 191).

Thus far we have largely defended Rahner by disentangling some misconceptions that might arise from his transcendent terminology. However, we have not offered an alternative – positive – reading of Rahner. In a chapter entitled 'Rahner amid modernity and post-modernity' Michael Purcell does offer such a re-reading, showing that the terminology he employs – that of Hearer – contradicts the claims that Rahner is occupied with a Cartesian subject. Purcell writes, "The post-modern concern is for fragmented subjectivity or interiority and the return of the objectivity or exteriority and the challenge which these present to enlightened transcendentalism" (2005, p. 195). The question therefore becomes how we can read Rahner differently – showing the vulnerability and instability of Rahner's subject. Purcell argues that we do this by recognising that Rahner's idea of the subject in the face of infinite mystery operates similarly to Jean-Luc Marion's concept of the excess or saturated phenomenon for obvious reasons – neither can be wholly known, contained or systematised without fragmentation. (2005, p. 195); faith, for Rahner is a "method of understanding" and "access which encounters excess" (2005, p. 198). Purcell goes on to argue that

² Building on the tradition of Thomas Aquinas in the first part of the *Summa Theologica*.

the term Hearer is the most descriptive of the transcendental subject in Rahner's later thought, particularly in *Hearer of the Word* and *Foundations*, to the extent that it describes what Rahner means by 'Transcendent Subject' without giving the impression of a Cartesian-Kantian subject. The term Hearer presupposes one who is addressed from without by God and neighbour, prior to having any initiative or reflection; it is not an 'I' or 'Ego Cogito' that Rahner is concerned with but a subject who, initially is passive as Hearer, then enters constant dialogue – being formed by the speech of God and all that is in the world (2005, p. 201).

Therefore, Purcell is arguing that Rahner is not creating an “overarching transcendental method and structure which unites and synthesizes his work” (2005, p. 199) but rather is engaging in pastoral, theological and philosophical fragments, responding to the needs of his community – both intellectual and ecclesial (2005, p. 200). In defence of this, Purcell cites Rahner's recognition in the introduction of *Foundations* that theology is plural and interdisciplinary (2005, p. 201). The conditions of revelation are therefore historical and deal with the whole of human existence – theological reflection is united with the circumstances in which it is done. Lastly, the supernatural existential, constituted by the self-communication of God, is shown to be brought about by being spoken to by the infinite – encountering excess, it is not an essence of the subject; the post-modern concern is therefore satisfied in that the Hearer is not stable but always subject to excess, dealing with their fragmented self and world (2005, pp. 203-204). I would therefore argue that Rahner can be defended from the often cited critique of Jennifer Beste³, who claims that victims of abuse – unable to be free subjects – are not accounted for in Rahner's transcendent project. Instead, one could imagine a Hearer so badly co-conditioned by the sin of others to the extent that they cannot be free in Rahnerian terms. Furthermore, Purcell notes, as with many other commentators – including Milbank who argues negatively⁴ – that Rahner's theology acts as a resource for those in the margins, validating their theological experiences of God and engaging with their cultural and socio-economic reality (2005, p. 206). Rahner's project is fragmentary and interdisciplinary and the Hearer is open to discontinuity and fragmentation. As Purcell summarises, “the subject is constituted as a moment and movement of grace, which is always prevenient and which cannot be comprehended. The mystery of the Other ensures the subject as a constant dynamic movement beyond itself” (2005, p. 208).

³ As summarised by Regan (2010, p. 130).

⁴ In that he assumes Rahner allows such contexts and 'scientific' responses to become absolute in relation to theology.

But, can we claim that Rahner's phenomenological approach to mystery is like that of Jean-Luc Marion? Marion in his book *Givenness and Revelation* argues that revelation comes from without – unexpectedly as otherness – to the extent that the more revelation given, the more resistance there is likely to be from Hearers; if there is no such otherness of revelation, there would be no resistance – indeed, if there is no resistance to revelation, it is likely not revelation. He writes,

Indeed, revealed religions do not presuppose devotees who are already convinced, as the result of their sole efforts and desire to adhere; rather, revealed religions assert themselves upon witnesses who...find themselves neither prepared for nor most often convinced of this communication—indeed, they are often hostile to it. The revealed character of a religion: to the exact extent that the revelation comes from elsewhere, it exceeds the religion and thus confers on it only a very ambiguous privilege (2016, pp. 1-2).

Another closely related paradox in Marion's thought is that revelation reveals itself to the point of being non-revealed; Jesus so perfectly reveals God that we cannot bear with the revelation: God remains hidden yet visible in Christ. Furthermore, the revelation is not endlessly deferred as in Derrida's idea of the future or Hegel's idea of the perfect idea constantly becoming but which in reality never becomes concrete – functioning formally rather than actually. Instead, Marion's idea of revelation is that it is present in our experience of the saturated phenomenon – excess – which comes from without as a gift – presently giving itself to us yet not being understood within our conditions of knowledge – such as the conditions of knowledge that we have for knowing objects, but, rather, it creates its own conditions of knowledge; he writes,

Revelation would indeed come from elsewhere, but it would only end up saying without a concept what reason itself will end up saying once again with a concept... revelation is thus limited to making something accessible by other means that reason already knows or will soon know, but through shortcuts that are pedagogically more effective, and which leave the reason for the effects unknown (2016, p. 3).

Thus, whenever Christianity has gone astray in its understanding of revelation it has tried to “maintain a rationality compatible with rationality without revelation” (2016, p. 3). Instead, the structure of revelation in the bible is much better described as that of “phenomenality” rather than “than from the question of beings and their being (existence), and certainly infinitely more than

from the question of a knowledge of objects (demonstration)” (2016, p. 5). One of his prime examples is of transfiguration, in which the disciples simply cannot bear the presence of God, they cannot grasp it but they experience it and bow down before it – both witnessing and yet having to cover their eyes from the excess. This leads to a concrete distinction between an unconcealment of the truth by which we know objects and concepts through reason analysing evidence, 'aletheia', and the uncovering of the truth, 'apokalypsis', in which God uncovers himself to us as a gift (2016, p. 34). Finally, this results in the claim that we do not approach truth through reason, experience in general, or propositions, but through the logic of charity or love. We love that which we do not know because revelation will always be 'unthinkable' and impossible in the eyes of reason, yet in love it is accessible: love for God is a condition of knowing God.

The structure of revelation is trinitarian for Marion. We love and divert the will for God because the Spirit enables us to do so – not because of any natural conditions; the ability to love God is also the gift of the Spirit – we experience the love of God and in turn love him back, the Spirit attracts us toward God; then, having met the condition of loving God, we see the Father through Christ, and this revelation is always more than we can thematise. Revelation is therefore the excessive giving of the Trinity of itself to us freely. According to Marion,

Christ appears as the visible icon of the Father, who remains invisible, because the believer, in looking at his face as it should be looked at, not only sees Jesus, the son of the carpenter of Nazareth, as the Christ, but also the Christ as the Son, and thus, finally, the Son as the Father. Because the Father and the Son share the same face, or precisely, the same icon with double visibility...In this way we find accomplished, iconically and in a trinitarian manner, what is to be conceived in the foundational paradox of Revelation understood as an uncovering: “Whoever sees me, sees the Father, ho heōrakōs eme heōraken ton patera” (Jn. 14:9) (2016, p. 103).

Marion sees this view of revelation in contrast to Rahner his predecessor. He directly argues against Rahner when he writes that his view of love giving access to God should not be viewed as an idea of anonymous Christianity,

This maxim, above all, must not be understood as a medieval anticipation of the implicit faith of the “anonymous Christian”, as if every will were unconsciously oriented toward

Christ; rather, precisely the opposite: as the recognition of the fact that no will comes to will except in proportion to what attracts it, and thus to what it loves; we understand, then, that it wills more the more it loves Christ, who is God revealing himself as loving... Love knows and makes itself known, but on one condition: that its freedom to set the conditions of its knowledge be recognized; that is, that it be free to begin with the will, insofar as it can first be converted and convert the mind (2016, pp. 44-45).

Therefore, Purcell's suggestion that the idea of the excess can be transferred from the thought of Marion⁵ to Rahner without much difficulty is mistaken. Excess is not situated in the every-day-ness of Being-in-the-world as mystery or the Infinite is for Rahner. For Rahner, hearing is default – automatic – it does not occur through an extra intervention from without by the Spirit, rather, the gift has already been given in the very creation of man, the self-communication of God⁶. The Hearer is not an epistemological 'witness' to the excess of Christ, there is not the consideration for Rahner, as for Marion, that “The comprehension, then, does not depend only on what one hears, but first of all on the way in which one listens to it. Not every Hearer has the posture of the witness.” (2016, p. 79). Instead, we see in Rahner that what the subject hears and encounters in every-day living is simultaneously normal and excessive from within the structure of knowing one's finitude in the face of all that is possible epistemologically, in terms of how we make sense of the world and how we choose to invest ourselves amidst the super abundance of options – all of which ultimately get reduced to a yes or no for God. God is present for both Rahner and Marion but, for the latter, is revealed in a specific way, breaking in from without as Other – creating its own conditions of knowing and leading to specific epistemological knowledge of God in the Christ event. In other words, Rahner requires and gives primacy to existential ontological commitment to that which we do not know – and are never required to know⁷, Marion gives priority to the otherness of Christ which we are enabled and led to commit to by the Spirit before we 'witness' it; this leads us to be in awe of the revelation – saturated in meaning by the encounter. God is not epistemologically uncovered for Rahner apart from in the beatific vision; for Marion, however, we have a far more present experience of this in our encounter with Christ, yet this gift always leaves unanswered questions⁸.

5 Important in that he is a Catholic philosopher renowned for engaging with post-modernity and the natural inheritor of Rahner's Catholic appropriations of phenomenology.

6 I agree here with Hans Urs von Balthasar's suggestion that Rahner's idea of nature is a purely formal one – a thought experiment to show what might have been but never was nor will be.

7 The specific name and event of Christ Jesus, that is.

8 Rahner, by the very structure of knowing via finitude and infinitude also leaves unanswered questions, thus avoiding

Westphal points out that Marion is doing phenomenology instead of theology – describing phenomena as saturated as they are apprehended better by intuition, rather than being contained in concepts or language (2013, p. 539). Neither is Marion explicitly making truth claims in the same way that classical theology might, rather, he is describing “modes of existence without committing himself to their actuality...phenomenology only describes the form of givenness such events would have to have, whether illusory or veridical. It neither affirms nor denies what faith and theology affirm” (2013, p. 538). The key, post-modern, point is that the subject is taken off the pedestal, replaced by focus on the phenomena of faith itself, as an event we are grasped by rather than an object grasped by us – phenomenological truth is therefore truth of a different, more descriptive nature. On this basis, we could say that the thought of Marion critiques Rahner in two ways: first, Rahner does not state the impossibility of revelation well enough – instead seeing it as happening in every-day life for every person regardless of if they have an explicit intuition and intentionality towards Jesus; or as he would say, being a 'witness'⁹. Following on from that, because the existential – or, as Rahner would say, the 'event of God's self-communication' in the creation and existence of man – takes epistemological precedence over the historical event and drama of Christ's death and resurrection, Marion would view it with suspicion that, indeed, the ego – as the supernatural existential – is back on the pedestal and, therefore, Christ is devalued¹⁰. In other words, love ontologically refers us to God as mystery and, therefore, explicit knowledge of God is of secondary concern for Rahner. On the other hand, the epistemological and ontological significance of Christ is equal for Marion: the witness is only affected to the extent that they have an intuitive experience of Christ – who is more than they can grasp with a concept.

The contrast between the thought of Marion and Rahner should, therefore, lead us to conclude that the idea of the excess or saturated phenomenon as revelation cannot be easily transferred to Rahner's thought by way of redeeming him in post-modern discourse. However, Purcell does make other valid points concerning Rahner without making this claim, in that Rahner does emphasise the Hearer – one constituted by the speaking of God and recipient to God in the Other. This conclusion is enough to discredit the idea that Rahner is a modernist – overtly concerned with a free and stable

Marion's category of idolatry. Marion writes, “How then could the question of God avoid sinking into idolatry? Precisely by remaining a question” (Marion, 2016, p. 117).

⁹ Experience of Jesus likened unto the disciples at the transfiguration or resurrection.

¹⁰ Rahner understands Christ's significance primarily in the incarnation and existential happening. However, one must also note that Christ does take ontological primacy in the thought of Rahner, even if not epistemological in that Christ is the forerunner, ground and condition of all true supernatural existential orientation towards God and must have been uniquely God to do so.

subject – and provides a useful hermeneutical focus for analysing Rahner's work. We should always be asking what the dialectic is between the Hearer and the revelation – without claiming that this occurs in a transfiguration-like epistemological awakening as in Marion.

On the other side of post-modernity – that of Derrida's deferred Other – Michael J. Scanlon argues for possible lines of agreement between Rahner and Derrida. Examples include Rahner's attempt to find space for atheists in his supernatural existential (1999, p. 224); the secondary nature of messianisms vs the messianic 'groundless' ground of Being, in that they both seek ways to be more faithful to a ground prior to thematisation (1999, p. 228) and both hope in the apokalypsis (uncovering) in the future which we cannot wholly grasp but which we strive for, the gift we never "get". From the conversation between Rahner and Marion, however, we must note – with Marion – that for Derrida the uncovering is always suspended, never arriving; however, for Marion, the gift is present-tense, as it is for Rahner, yet in a way that does not emphasise the qualitative difference of knowledge in our experience of the infinite; instead, he emphasises the endless possibilities of existential directions and meanings in our every-day experience, orientating us towards God – the source and structure of all that surrounds us. However, both agree that it is in the loving encounter with the Other that we encounter and know God, although important epistemological differences remain, as does Rahner's status as an ambiguous figure in conversation with modernity and post-modernity.

The broad themes that we have covered so far in Rahner's theology: the unity of subject and object in God's self-communication and his idea of the absolute unity between body and spirit in Christian theological terms leads us to conclude that we cannot escape the co-conditioning of guilt both in and ourselves and from others (2008, p. 188, p. 190). Freedom is constantly in dialogue with and vulnerable to the history in which it is formed – it is not just expressed. In other words, we cannot make a choice for or against God out-with our social context in Rahner (2008, p. 182), and, therefore, he does not turn the subject wholly inward – he also directs the subject always towards God and the Other outside of oneself. As Craigo-Snell concludes "it is most helpful to see Rahner's theology as occupying a different space, between the purely essentialist and the purely constructivist" (2008, p. 193). Rahner is not wholly focused on the individual's existentialism and reasoning as a means to God, instead, the interpersonal always plays a vital role in forming the individual in a way that the community nor the individual subvert or subordinate one another but rather exist in interdependence since both experience and community stem from God, who remains

the mystery outside and inside of both (Endean, 2005, p. 289). Lastly, for Rahner, the existential category of love for others must also be an identifying characteristic of revelation, whether explicitly Christian or not, showing that it is impossible for Rahner's subject to be independent of community in its understanding of revelation and relationship to God.

Rahner and Catholicism

In many ways, the current debates surrounding Rahner and modernity were already fought within Catholicism itself and are worth exploring in order to understand Rahner in the context of his own theological tradition and conversations. The greatest critic of Rahner remains his contemporary and fellow Churchman Hans Urs von Balthasar due to their shared Catholic inheritance and involvement in Vatican II debates. It is particularly useful to contrast both thinkers due to the clarity of the alternative system that Balthasar offers and his lack of post-modern assumptions, which colours Milbank's critique of Rahner. Both are doing theology in and for the Catholic Church during the same debate but with very different conclusions; this divergence serves to support our critique of Rahner's ecclesiology¹¹.

Firstly, as previously argued, Rahner's thought is not that of the Cartesian thinker but rather of the spirit-body unity of Dasein which exposes us to God and the Other in the world; Craigo-Snell took us to the point of defending the interpersonal element of Rahner's thought but not as far as claiming that the ecclesial is vital to Rahner's thought – with good reason. John O'Donnell brilliantly summarises von Balthasar's critique of Rahner when he writes,

He (Balthasar) rejects the transcendental method as reducing Christ to the level of human expectations. For Balthasar, the Christ-event is so new that no human categories can capture it. It is completely unpredictable. Secondly, Balthasar believes that the dramatic dimension is completely lacking in Rahner's anthropology. The incarnation and the cross seem to add nothing to the grace already given to humanity with the creation. For Balthasar, on the contrary, the cross is the event which turns around the whole course of human history... moreover, he does not believe that Rahner takes into account the fact that Christ bore the sin of the world on the cross. For Balthasar, the death of Christ was different from

¹¹ Indeed, some reasons that Hans Urs von Balthasar gives for rejecting Rahner's system are our reasons for accepting it as a valid basis for ecclesiology in the current context of theology.

every other human death in that Christ bore the full weight of sin in our place...Rahner's Theology of the death of Jesus reduces Christ's death to a mere example to be imitated. In his view, Rahner has undermined the unique efficacy of the cross as an event which reverses the whole tide of the drama between God and humankind (John O' Donnell SJ, 1992, pp. 105-106).

Regardless of whether we can agree with this critique, we can see a clear contrast with the thought of Rahner. Balthasar rightly identifies the heart – or foundation – of Rahner's theology as being that of the human horizon and inner structure of knowing. J.A. DiNoia OP writes of Rahner, "revelation does not invade the human reality as something utterly alien but as something to which human beings are already attuned" (1989, p.192). O'Donnell rightly recognises that Rahner starts from the human before trying to understand the divine – Christ's incarnation and death are made to correspond to our human structure of knowing and Being-in-the-world, fulfilling it perfectly. Fergus Kerr rightly notes the centrality of the incarnation in his thought when he writes, "Rahner's version of what Christianity is could not be more radically embedded in the historical existence of Jesus Christ – in the doctrine of the incarnation" (2007, p. 91). We must first understand ourselves before we understand Christ. We cannot understand ourselves, in Rahner's view, by starting with the events of the passion or resurrection.

Therefore, Balthasar's critique of the lack of divine drama – the drama of the death and resurrection of Christ – is in some sense justified – he recognises that the death and resurrection of Christ correspond to human existence for Rahner, which – paradoxically – is what makes Rahner so radical. Christ's death is not wholly unique in potentiality for Rahner; rather, it is the fulfilment of the incarnation. As Christ's life is fulfilled in his death, our existential way of Being-in-the-world is fulfilled in our death – though never perfectly as for Christ. DiNoia OP defends Rahner's orthodoxy by saying that, for Rahner, "the place of Christianity is unique because in Jesus Christ both the divine revelation and the human response to it are perfect and definitive" (1989, p. 200) but nonetheless it is not a drama that we witness as we witness an object or event, but rather it is an existential fulfilment towards God that we strive to embody. The term 'mere example' used by O'Donnell does not give full justice to the world-changing implication that this has in the thought of Rahner, but it does rightly express the contempt felt by Balthasar towards existential christology. One key aspect missed in this critique is Rahner's claim that Christ fulfils human life perfectly. This is important because it raises an implicit question: how can Christ fulfil this perfectly if he simply is

the same as we are? The answer inherent in both Rahner and Hegel is that Christ is perfect because he is ontologically divine in a way that every other human is not. It is therefore difficult to share Balthasar's contempt of Rahner's christology on the grounds that it diminishes Christ's unique divinity. The incarnation – the human existence of Christ – is the starting point of Rahner's theology of the passion.

In contrast, von Balthasar starts with an understanding of the cross as drama – an event and object which breaks into history unexpectedly; therefore, the cross is what adds meaning and purpose to Christ's incarnation and its relevance to our faith – but not vice-versa. John Riches writes, “It is as Balthasar comes to consider the event of revelation as an actual drama between God and his creatures that the role of the believer assumes greater importance...through all this Balthasar presses on to the contemplation of the central mystery of the faith: the drama of the passion and resurrection of the eternal Son” (1989, pp. 244-245). We contemplate but we do not participate or mimic Christ's death as in Rahner. Underlying this disagreement between both theologians is the dialectic between object and subject; Balthasar claims we perceive God clearly only by faith¹² – losing ourselves as we view God apart from us as object, whereas Rahner argues that we move within ourselves and have the experience of being grasped there by mystery (1992, p. 24) – subject and object are interdependent and ever-present realities. Riches describes Balthasar's accusation against the transcendental method as “conceptual reduction” by which “statements about the manner of God's action in the world, in certain events in human history, are really statements about the manner in which I may experience a change in my existence” (1989, p. 247). On the other hand, Rahner would view Balthasar's theology as failing to recognise the implication of the incarnation in that it reveals God's self-communication being extended to all humanity – all human subjectivity in the world – instead of being limited to Christ alone. However, it would be wrong to say that Rahner proposes endless relativism because of the unity between subject and object. DiNoia OP writes, “Although he exploits modern conceptualities in his articulation of the Christian faith, he resists any tendency to mute the realism of theological affirmation under the pressure of modern philosophical critiques of religion” (1989, p. 188). Christ actualises this and remains the ultimate and irreducible revelation of God as he is in himself.

It is wrong to accuse Balthasar of forgetting the subject as, similarly to Rahner, he was vehemently opposed to Neo-Scholasticism and held a view of subject-object unity which depended upon the

¹² Reason out-with the context of faith is blind for von Balthasar (1992, p. 23).

interpersonal and historical; the key point that separates them is how this subject-object unity is mediated in history: is it through the self-understanding of the subject in the World – as for Rahner – or is the subject-in-the-world always in need of specifically Christian aesthetics in order to form a relationship to God, as Balthasar understands it. The true difference is revealed in Balthasar’s book on *The Theology of Karl Barth* in which he outlines a role for philosophy – even existentialism – as valid in so far as it provides the question but not the answer; the potentiality but not the actuality of hearing God, which theology alone can do (1951, p. 151). On the other hand, Rahner allows room for both theology and philosophy to both constitute the Hearer and allow that Hearer access to God in as much as their disposition is one of love, hope and authenticity. Therefore, Balthasar rightly accuses Rahner of entertaining the idea of nature as being a purely formal category – a thought experiment in which we imagine how things might have been if humans were not the self-communication of God; of course, for Rahner, this is never actualised. As a result, Rahner is accused of naturalising grace – making it normal and not supernatural at all, “In Rahner’s opinion God cannot place an unconditional dynamism in nature and then leave it unfulfilled”(1951, p. 298).

Again, we are drawn to the conclusion – in agreement with Balthasar – that the transcendental takes precedence over the ecclesial for Rahner because even if it is mediated in the world through interpersonal relations, those relationships are not required to occur within the confines of the Church. I will argue in the last chapter that we must move Rahner’s theology towards a more complete definition of the Church than the one he offers of the official ecclesial and, ultimately, Roman Catholic witness. Kerr places Rahner’s views in the context of the Vatican II consensus that someone may be understood as part of the Church before baptism on the condition that they want to be baptised – or, more relevant to what we are arguing – on the condition of existential longing for the divine-human unity which baptism makes explicit or public (2007, p. 97). Nonetheless, Rahner still holds that the ideal situation is one in which the person fully adopts Christianity.

The lack of a definitive ecclesiology in Rahner is evidenced in that most commentators sympathetic to him, such as Craigo-Snell or Ethna Regan, defend the interpersonal aspect of Rahner’s subject and stop at the point of asserting that Rahner’s interpersonal relations always occurs within the ecclesial context without expanding on why this is necessary to Rahner’s thought. Regan argues against Kerr’s moderate critique that Rahner is “pre-occupied” with the Kantian-Cartesian subject by saying that he fails to recognise that included in Rahner’s turn to the subject is the turn to the world, the vulnerability of the spirit-body unity, and the claim of love from out-with the individual –

all elements which we have already discussed. Furthermore, Regan then cites the influence that Rahner indirectly had upon liberation and feminist theologians, in as much as he validated the experience of those usually excluded from theology – women and the poor – as a source of revelation, an argument also employed by Craig-Snell. However, both fail to argue that this interpersonal element of Rahner's theology only validates women and the poor within the Church; in other words, it is also perfectly reasonable to conclude that Rahner's theology would validate the experiences of any community or individual thinker – such as Hegel – which were open to mystery in both God and the Other. One could equally conclude that Rahner's theology also validates the experience of atheist feminists or non-ecclesial systems of thought (2010, p. 138). Furthermore, the fact that Rahner was only an indirect source of inspiration for such theologies and did not develop a coherent and detailed ecclesiology himself – such as that of Gutierrez – suggests that the ecclesiological element of his thought is lacking. To summarise, Rahner claims the visible witness of the Church is necessary due to his own loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church but it is not vital to systematic thought in the same way that interpersonal relationships are in general.

To summarise our reading of Rahner thus far: the interpersonal is vital for Rahner but the ecclesial is only one possibility of that in the context of his systematic thinking on revelation – regardless of his claims to the contrary. We best understand Rahner when we agree with Purcell's hermeneutical point that Rahner is constantly concerned with the Hearer of the message – one constituted and in constant conversation with God and the Other. He is not a straightforward expressivist, essentialist or philosophical foundationalist, nor does he seek certainty in response to modernity but is rather uniquely expressing a theology which holds together transcendent mystery of our encounter with God and the Other – which are interdependent in his concept of love – and historicity. Revelation takes place in the every-day existential ontological encounter with Christ in love, hope and Being-towards-death; revelation is not straightforward epistemology in which we are witnesses to excess phenomenon nor do we view God as a sort of object. As such, what Marion and Rahner most agree upon is that the commitment and dialogue of love is the condition of knowing God. Having established this reading of Rahner, we shall now turn our attention to how the Hearer is affected by the call and responds to it, showing that the proper content of Christian revelation is always existential for Rahner. The Hearer must hear and existentially give themselves to mystery in love, hope and death.

2: Existence and Revelation

Introduction

Rahner in his discussion of revelation in *Foundations* ultimately claims that the person of Jesus Christ is the criterion (1986, p. 176) which determines what is and is not Christian revelation, but in what way? As we will see, he emphasises not epistemological truth claims about the nature and work of Christ but, rather, the existential categories of faith, hope and love which such truth constitute in the Hearer. In other words, it is not so much that we speak of Jesus but model his existential categories of Being-in-the-world.

Ultimately, we will show that this view of revelation leads him to understand individual thinkers and communicators as 'prophets' – both inside and outside of explicit Christianity. I will argue that the prophet can take many forms for Rahner in as much as they direct the Hearer towards an existential ontological relationship with Christ, even when not providing an explicitly epistemological Christian revelation; in short: the existential ontological takes precedence over and directs the epistemological for Rahner, in contrast to the Christian theologians and philosophers such as Marion and Balthasar that we have covered.

I will use Hegel as an example of a prophet due to the importance he places on God and God's immanence in history; the development and progress of human history; the limitations of reason¹³; the overcoming of the subject-object distinction; and the importance of Jesus Christ for the progress of reason in history. These are all subjects that directly overlap with Rahner's theological project, yet they are from the perspective of a non-ecclesial philosopher who does not emphasise the existential implications of their thought. It is precisely because of these differences that a thinker like Hegel can serve to highlight the logical implications of Rahner's existential ontology – its broadness – which he then contradicts in his presentation of a narrow ecclesiology in the latter chapters of *Foundations*.

13 Or the lack thereof.

Existential categories of Revelation

As we have previously seen, Rahner borrows heavily from Heidegger's thought in general; however, he is also strongly influenced by his views on death when discussing Christ's death and the Christian life. Heidegger viewed death as the ever present condition which society – or 'They' – seek to make palatable or obscure to the extent that it does not affect every-day events, conversations and decisions substantially. In other words, although we may know we will certainly die, we do not live each day in light of this impending existential threat. Indeed, it is death which we truly care about, the anxiety or 'care' that structures Dasein is ultimately orientated towards death because it reveals temporality as the horizon of our existence. As he writes, “Dasein cannot outstrip the possibility of death...its existential possibility is based on the fact that Dasein is essentially disclosed to itself, and disclosed, indeed, as ahead-of-itself. This item in the structure of care has its most primordial concretion in Being-towards-death” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 308). For Heidegger, death and our orientation towards it is the basis of all true self-knowledge and authentic disclosure in the world – it shows us our limits as well as our potentiality and enables us to live accordingly.

However, this authentic way of being takes effort. Instead of being alienated from death – “falling” – we must make an existentiell commitment to a way of being in light of this horizon, in doing so we will also be liberated from a view of ourselves that is false and based on pressure from without – the 'They-self'(1962, p. 351). Stephen Mulhall writes: “Dasein has a life to lead, it exists – it must make decisions about which existentiell possibilities will be actualized and which will not...death is a way to be; it is not an event” (1996, p. 116). Although this will look different for each individual, Heidegger claims that there are some characteristics or structures of Dasein which properly orientate it towards death, namely: anticipation and resoluteness. He writes of this disposition, “This distinctive and authentic disclosedness, which is attested in Dasein itself by its conscience – this reticent self-projection upon one's ownmost Being-guilty, in which one is ready for anxiety – we call “resoluteness” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 343). In other words, this authenticity is characterised by an embracing of the care which death causes us and calls for silence rather than noise which obfuscates and distracts from such care. Furthermore, the resoluteness does not remain simply a disposition but in line with Being-in-the-world it is made concrete in resolution – actions in the world which come from this authentic space (1962, p. 345).

One could read this direction of history as Rahner's point of departure with the every-day focus of Heidegger's project in which there is no overarching direction of history; for Heidegger, the focus is always on Dasein's relationship to future potentialities for the individual. He writes that care is a disposition that reaches 'ahead-of-itself' towards potentialities that will never fully be realised – totality is never achieved (Heidegger, 1962, p. 279). Additionally, the past is always reaching into the future: conditioning and influencing Dasein's every-day-ness and existential possibilities (Polt, 1999, p. 5). As John MacQuarrie points out, care as understood by the existentialists – including Heidegger – is best understood as anguish, malaise, or uneasiness and is the “basic way in which one finds oneself” (1972, pp. 127-128). This anxiety confronts us with our being and Being in general and potentially leads us to “falling” – a state in which we flee from our existence and its uncomfortable ambiguities and truths (1972, p. 130). In going ahead of itself this anxiety looks towards perhaps the greatest fear, that of our own temporal nature which ultimately leads to death.

Temporality – the limitation of possibilities and striving towards a totality which will never be realised – is what colours our experience of time, our care or anxiety over temporarily (Heidegger, 1962, p. 278); Heidegger can even claim that if you gain wholeness you lose Dasein (1962, p. 280). Indeed, he equates wholeness with death – the horizon against which we must choose authentic ways of Being within our limited situation instead of giving in to the temptation to flee from our own experience – through business or being determined by others (MacQuarrie, 1972, p. 130). In light of this we must choose authentic ways of Being, whilst all the time being conditioned, in part, by our past and our every-day experience. This primary focus on the existential implications of death has little in common with Rahner's overarching story of God's concurrent revelation and salvation in which history has a common end and experience of God's inherent revelation becoming explicit in some way. Furthermore, even Rahner's focus on the individual in terms of eschatology does not lead to the same conclusions about death and totality as Heidegger.

If Heidegger's horizon for time is death then what is Rahner's alternative? Firstly, Rahner views eschatology as a continuation of the rest of his thought, in which we move from the implicit towards an explicit understanding of God – it is not an event in the sense of an intervention by God from outside of the world¹⁴ (1982, pp. 431-432). Secondly, this is only historical in the sense that it will generally occur within community as well as individual experience (1982, p. 432). Thirdly, he holds the view that the corporate end of humanity will be a positive fulfilment of what God has done in

14 In contrast to Marion.

Christ for our salvation, again showing the idea of the direction of history, yet, problematically, this may not be applied to all individuals. Lastly – and most importantly – death is an existential horizon in terms of 'wholeness' but this wholeness is “time conquering” in the sense that time matures into an eternity which is realised in all of creation, as well as our individual movement towards God (1982, p. 437). Moving towards death as fulfilment is therefore an existential category but one which directs us to love or give freely in a way that acknowledges that temporality is not permanent but coming to fruition in an eternity where our actions will count (1982, p. 439). Rahner’s concept is a radical reworking of Heidegger's idea of death as 'wholeness' and it shapes what he thereafter understands as valid salvation or revelatory history.

Rahner takes the ideas of resoluteness and anticipation, reworking them according to his christology. In the article “Death” found in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Rahner argues that we encounter ourselves in anxiety towards death and that God provides the answers to our existential cares (1975, p. 329). Our orientation towards death ideally brings greater union with God, as we live our lives; then, in dying, there is continuation – rather than escape – from our former existentiell orientation for God (1975, p. 331) to the extent that the life of faith or the life of sin is completed at death but not by death (1975, p. 332). Death is therefore “always already present” showing our “necessity of activity, uniqueness of opportunity, irrevocability of decisions” (1975, p. 332) and is anticipated by acts of faith and participation in the sacraments. Christ provides both the example and the potentiality to live this life of faith – through his life and death. Most clearly in him do we see death as a fulfilment of his life in the sense that his death was a result of a life committed completely to God's call, even if that meant an unjust death and making a sacrifice for sin. This unconditional openness to God in death – anticipation and resoluteness – was present in every act of Christ’s life until his death and was vindicated by his resurrection. (1975, p. 332). Rahner writes in *Fundamentals*, “The resurrection does not mean the beginning of a new period in the life of Jesus, a further extension of time filled with new and different things. It means rather and precisely the permanent, redeemed, final and definitive validity of the single and unique life of Jesus who achieved the permanent and final validity of his life precisely through his death in freedom and obedience”. It is a “single event” (1986, p. 266).

For Rahner, Christ is not only the model for Being-towards-death for Christians but he is the inner ground of such authentic living for all. In his book *On The Theology of Death*, written earlier than *Foundations* and less systematic in nature, he outlines a Christian view on death in which all human

deaths historically contribute to the existential potential of humanity – the culmination of which is in Christ's death. All deaths after Christ's are determined, enabled or fall short in correspondence with his. Rahner begins to develop this world-encompassing view of death by advocating that the soul does not leave the material body to ascend beyond matter or worldliness when one dies according to Christian theology (1961, p. 24). Instead, the human soul continues to contribute to the development of human existential potentiality in the world, in so far as he can say the dead in fact become less isolated than they were in life instead becoming involved in the world as a whole (1961, p. 34) – yet without Eastern philosophical undertones¹⁵. World-centred death – which does not feature as explicitly in the later work *Foundations* – has its critical claim in the idea that temporality must be fulfilled in eternity; eternity is not simply continuation of earthly life but its end in fulfilment. He writes: “Time is a unique process, determined in its beginning through God's free act of creation beyond time...it moves in an unambiguous way (hidden, however, from us who dwell within time) towards a perfectly determined, final, and irrevocable end” (1961, p. 36).

Rahner, in claiming that the pre-fall Adam would have died in some way (1961, p. 42) is arguing that to be human is to both fulfil oneself and contribute to the greater fulfilment of the eschaton through living one's death and – ultimately – dying that death. The difference brought by sin is that it obfuscates death (1961, p. 50), making it a risk only able to be faced by grace through faith – in contrast to the pre-fall Adam, who would of in some way known his end was fulfilment in death and lived in correspondence to that. Christ, then, is the new Adam, who in entering the current fallen state of ignorance and sin nonetheless lives in perfect fulfilment towards God, culminating in a death which changes the existential potentiality of the world through his resurrection – which we are then enabled to enter into. God's grace in sending Christ and Christ's perfect human response to grace in a world of death and sin truly changes the situation for all who come after his resurrection (1961, p. 70). In this, Rahner differs from Heidegger in the respect that death – and, most importantly – Christ's death, changes the fabric of history (1961, p. 73), driving it onwards towards fulfilment through the life of the individual. We are not dealing with the fulfilment of individuals alone; death truly affects human experience in more than simply an emotional or material way. This correspondence between the death of Christ and our death does not mean that Christ's death is no longer unique – it remains so due to his perfect obedience to God in spite of the obscurity brought by sin, something that humanity is otherwise incapable of. As Rahner states, “his death...helped to offer to God the “flesh of sin” – which death really is – transforming it into a flesh of grace; so that

¹⁵ Rahner strongly rejects any dualism which would take our attention away from the world.

we now can...belong to God and to Christ in death, despite the fact that death, in itself, means remoteness from God” (1961, p. 79).

Rahner's history-changing view of death – particularly the death of Christ – completely agrees with what we have read of him so far, in his reworking of Being-in-the-world along Christian lines. We must define ourselves against that which we are not – God – and this only takes place in a historical context as we are with God and people; therefore, all of our experience of transcendence is mediated in history. Having established how our death and the death of Christ operate on a large scale for Rahner, we must ask how this fits with the individual – what responsibility does death place up on us? Craigo-Snell answers this question in her book *Silence, Love and Death*, in which she writes:

Rahner does not claim that the moment of death is the exact time that a person says “yes” or “no” to God. Instead he asserts that the reality of our own death is something about which we cannot remain neutral. It forces us to take up a posture that either affirms or denies the love of God. This is Rahner's “existential” approach to death as an act of the human person (2008, p. 127).

Craigo-Snell's position is completely in agreement with what we find in *On a Theology of Death* where Rahner describes death as having both a passive element – its unpredictable and unstoppable intrusion into human existence and its active element – our choice for or against God in light of our inevitable end (1961, p. 48). Therefore, she rightly concludes that this leads Rahner to a position in which eschatology is not an “external reward or punishment inflicted upon the person from without” (2008, p. 139) but is rather a continuation of our existentiell choice.

Furthermore, Craigo-Snell recognises the co-dependence between orientation towards death; hope in the future or significance of life; and love for the anonymous Christian in making a choice for or against God. All three existential categories are key for establishing a radical reading of Rahner, over and against a more ecclesial reading. This re-reading emphasising love can be accomplished without sacrificing the communal elements of Rahner's thought but may be less straightforward than Craigo-Snell's defence of Rahner, who is nervous of any readings of Rahner which may circumvent the importance of the official historically constituted witness of the Church.

Craig-Snell points out that the idea of an all-cosmic soul, which we mentioned earlier, is phased out in *Foundations*, yet the presuppositions of the world being a fundamental one-ness for Rahner and the idea of the soul being in open-ness to the world (2008, p. 148) are retained. We must ask if this historically effective element of death – both of Christ and ours – is still important for his later more systematic work, and, if so, in what way.

The most logical place to start exploring Rahner's thought on death in *Foundations* is his chapter on guilt because of its close relation with death in his thought. In this chapter he reminds us of previous themes, writing that: “Freedom is the capacity of the one subject to decide about himself in his single totality...Freedom is freedom in and through history and in time and space, and precisely there and precisely in this way is it the freedom of the subject in relation to himself” and this freedom is the “capacity to do something final and definitive” (1986, pp. 95-96). He goes on to explain that every free act that we do is a yes or no towards God (1986, p. 98) either un-thematically or thematically understood by us. Furthermore, the eschatological statements of our faith – such as those found in revelation – are understood as revealing the radical possibilities of our lives – either for or against God, thus revealing the lasting historical impact of our lives and our deaths which fulfil them (1986, p. 103, p. 115). These decisions not only matter for the individual but affect all since “by his very nature a spiritual subject is permanently related to the world” (1986, p. 104). We can, therefore, agree with Craig-Snell that the historical importance of all death, for or against God; explicitly or implicitly understood and decided when facing the mystery of God and the unknown of death is maintained in Rahner's *Foundations*.

Having outlined how Rahner's view on death agrees with earlier themes of Being-in-the-world and how it is understood as historically and existentially definitive, we may now explore the implications this has for our larger project. Aside from the complexities previously mentioned, the un-thematic experience of death for God – in terms of how he describes the disposition towards death – is that of hope or actions which presuppose hope in the face of the uncertainty posed by death post-fall. This faith is always worked out or heard in community due to his emphasis on the unity of all creation and God; and the ways in which community provide the explicit terms in which we all understand our orientation towards mystery – including the questions posed by death. It therefore follows and is clearly taught by Rahner that this disposition of saying yes to God in light of death is available to all – both those inside and outside of visible Christianity – to the extent that those who say yes by their orientation towards death are called anonymous Christians.

George Pattison argues that the departure of Christian existential positions from Heidegger is two-fold: that of hope beyond and in death and the solidarity that exists between the living and the dead – particularly for Christians (2013, p. 79). Firstly, Pattison argues that Christian theology offers hope of something beyond death, contrary to Heidegger, to the extent that hope becomes as fundamental to the existential position of the Christian as anxiety. Therefore, anxiety or care – a general uneasiness at the overall experience of existence in light of death – is co-conditioned by a hope that is without (2013, p. 88).

Secondly, Pattison argues, against Heidegger, that this hope – present in Christianity – does not obscure death in the same way that idle 'talk' might, 'tranquillizing' the subject against the nothing that they must face as an individual. Rather, this hope recognises the impact that the death of others has to our own experience of life and death – informing us perhaps more than Heidegger's approach of individual contemplation towards death and uniting the resurrection hope that we have for ourselves and the hope we have for those who have gone before us (2013, p. 110). Pattison argues that this approach is far more consistent with Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-world in the sense that it recognises the profound impact of the Other in our constitution as human beings. We are affected as a whole by others and, therefore, their dying – such experiences are not compartmentalised, separated from our individual contemplation of death (2013, p. 111).

Furthermore, Pattison's re-reading of Heidegger not only removes the privileged position of anxiety in favour of love, making it co-dependent with care and hope. Pattison accomplishes this by challenging the philosophical burden that Heidegger places on the individual – one who ultimately faces the world and death alone, instead arguing that love – not death – is the lasting horizon of our existence beyond death. Pattison writes,

In a religious perspective, we may make the point by saying that living in love will still be the business of our lives in heaven, when we have sloughed off mortality. There is an obligation that, literally, outlives mortality. A literal understanding of such eschatological hope is obviously not available either to those who do not have a religious faith or to many non-fundamentalist believers, but my point here is not to commend that faith with regard to its dogmatic content but as phenomenologically revelatory of the possible independence of conscience from being towards death. In these terms the comportment it discloses is equally

available to those who self-describe as 'religious' and to those who don't (2013, p. 103).

Pattison does not explicitly explore his contradicting of Heidegger in relation to Rahner in particular. Rather, he refers to Christian hope via Kierkegaard and attempts to maintain a phenomenological approach to the experience of death, rather than an explicitly theological one. However, Rahner faces similar issues as Pattison when he attempts to push Heidegger in a Christian direction; the existential ontological themes of love, death and hope are not hierarchical for Rahner but, rather, co-condition one another equally, leading Dasein to offer a definitive yes or no to God. Indeed, our way of embodying hope in the face of death is love, regardless of whether our hope is explicitly Christian or not. Rahner argues in *Foundations* that the true way of distinguishing whether something is of God is its orientation of love in the absence of immediate benefits or, indeed, the possibility of worldly disadvantage resulting from loving action – including death.

Rahner's position is in agreement with Pattison's contradiction of Heidegger insofar as Pattison takes Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-world to its logical end, recognising it in love, hope and solidarity with the dead. Secondly, Rahner's project emphasises the idea of mystery which underpins all three existential dispositions. As Christians, we live in solidarity with the dead in the sense that the dead have fully entered their finitude in the face of the infinite mystery of God – the limits of humanity have been fully realised for them and thus call us to recognise our own limitations in the face of God, who is infinite mystery, which will one day be revealed in our own death. The death of others leads us to hope against hope for a resurrection that remains a mystery, as we do not know the nature of the resurrection that Christ both experienced and promises us – yet we hope, trusting that in death and in resurrection life we will know God who is mystery more immediately. Lastly, the dead whom we have loved and who have gone before us, remind us to love the Other who, like us, face mystery both in life and death; the experience of God as mystery unites us and we find solidarity in that. The Other remains the point at which we meet mystery – the self-communication of God in man – to the extent that to love people is to love God for Rahner. Therefore, what unites all three existential categories is what underlies the whole thought of Rahner – finite humanity meeting the endless mystery of God and solidarity in this shared experience.

Rahner seemingly contradicts this existential reading by claiming at the end of his chapter on revelation in *Foundations*, pre-empting questions concerning clear criteria, that we can distinguish Christian revelation by its christology. He boldly states:

We can speak of “anonymous Christians.” But it still remains true: in the full historical dimension of this single self-communication of God to man in Christ and towards Christ, only someone who explicitly professes in faith and in baptism that Jesus is the Christ is a Christian in the historical and reflexive dimension of God’s transcendental self-communication (1986, p. 176).

However, Rahner's christological criteria are one and the same as the general existential criteria covered thus far. He argues that Christianity unites those with common professions of faith and that there must be some kind of continuity between the early Christian community – the apostles – and those who now claim to be Christian, in that they share the same existential commitment we have to Christ, in spite of vastly different contexts. As previously discussed, Rahner yet affirms the unique, irrevocable and world-changing redemption brought by the historical events of Christ death and resurrection – the event which provides the content of Christian proclamation and explicit belief. On the face of it, then, he could claim that a prophet is one who proclaims the traditional tenants of Christianity in continuity with the traditional and historical Christian Church, and there is no doubt based on the above quotation that there is a visible ecclesial body which is discernible in Rahner’s thought. However, the true issue which categorical revelation and its relation to the ecclesia reveals is how broad it is possible for this visible ecclesia to be and if it is truly necessary to his existential ontology. No sooner has Rahner claimed that Christ is the criteria for objective revelation does he undermine it in the rest of his chapter on christology – as well as by his previous assertions on the nature of prophets and revelation.

Rahner undermines the previously mentioned interpretation – and its supposed clarity – by admitting that faith in Christ is difficult to thematise due to its implicit nature (1986, p. 204). Therefore, the continuity that is experienced between Christians of different generations, going back to the apostles, is not one of dogma and profession in an objective sense but one of existential commitment to Christ (1986, p. 241), to the extent that one can be part of an objectively erroneous group within or without Christianity as long as one has the disposition of commitment (1986, p. 227). On this basis, it is difficult to see how one can clearly identify a visible ecclesia without resorting to a protestant notion of an invisible elect Church or some more radical solution. Indeed, he claims that theology presupposes an already committed Hearer of the message – one who has said ‘yes’ to God implicitly. The goal of theology and apologetics is therefore not to convince

people to become Christian but to affirm that Christian faith which is already present in the Hearer's existential disposition (1986, p. 294).

Furthermore, the christological criteria that he expands upon is not that of proclamation of objective statements but, instead, that of existential dispositions which implicitly call the Hearer into an existential disposition towards God, in agreement with our earlier analysis of his use of Heidegger's concepts of death and anticipation.

Firstly, he advocates the category of loving one's neighbour as an indicator of Christian revelation and community, in the sense that one does good for the Other in spite of having no immediate or guaranteed future benefit or perhaps even at the risk of harm to oneself (1986, p. 295). He argues for this based on the biblical idea that to love one's neighbour is to love God through them (1986, p. 309). He writes:

Anyone who lets go and jumps falls into the depths which are there, and not only to the extent that he himself has fathomed them. Anyone who accepts his humanity fully, and all the more so of course the humanity of others, has accepted the Son of Man because in him God has accepted man...he who is at once nearest to us and farthest from us is always accepted and loved in every neighbour (1986, p. 228).

Craig-Snell draws the connection between the love of God in Christ and our existential love, to the extent that Christ is the ground of all love of neighbour and connects it to God. When we love God we are entering a trinitarian movement of love: the Son's unconditional love for God and humanity and God's unconditional love for humanity in Christ (2008, p. 89). Christ thereby becomes the ontological ground for anonymous Christians who find God through love of neighbour, therefore anyone who truly loves their neighbour in such a way that they are "honest when dishonesty would be approved, whenever someone offers kindness that is not required, such a person is affirming a meaning and value that cannot be account for in purely human terms" (2008, p. 79) can be said to be Christians. Ultimately, this is the case because the Other as the self-communication of God is also mystery and thus our orientation towards them is simultaneously an orientation towards God as mystery (2008, p. 91).

Werner Jeanrond in his *Theology of Love* writes of Rahner, “Every genuine human love for the neighbour – in truth and action, without self-deception – is an act of faith in God and God’s love for the human being, notwithstanding whether or not this is reflexively known.” (2010, p. 148) and concludes that love is always tied to the incomprehensibility of God. Love does not, therefore, try to grasp the Other or God wholly but, rather, allows the Other to be mystery (2010, p. 150). Therefore, if mystery underlies the existential disposition to love the neighbour and God, the goal of theology for Rahner – including that of making the implicit orientation towards God explicit – is not done in order to grasp them wholly within definitions and groups. As such, I would argue that the privileged position of the visible ecclesia in his thought is at odds with his overall appreciation of mystery – both in God and people. His goal of moving all towards a highest institution of truth which cannot possibly account for the mysterious and diverse nature of human beings is the low point of his theological project.

Rahner calls his second christological category “readiness towards death”¹⁶, in connection with love and hope, in order to describe the existential disposition present in those who both commit to and proclaim Christ. Rahner also employs the idea of a universal 'memory' which directs humanity – the Hearer – to the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection; this is the new reality because the constitution or ground of humanity has been changed by the resurrection to the extent that all are now endlessly drawn towards an inevitably successful search for Christ – culminating in final validity in death.

Thirdly, hope in a future redemption of some form, contained even in a mere hope that one’s life had some significance on persons or history in an ambiguous way is a mark of a Christ-inspired revelation. These three broad concepts, which are co-dependent, confirm that which we have already learned from Rahner – that his main concern is an existential ontological faith which informs the whole of his thought, including his view of specifically Christian revelation. Regardless of the form, therefore, it is this existential dispositions of faith, hope and love in the face of death and at potential cost to oneself, which reveals the work of the Holy Spirit (1986, p. 316). This is what he means when he claims that christology is the criteria of Christian revelation, and, as such, the revelation does not overcome mystery but, rather, existentially grapples with it.

16 Previously covered in our discussion of Rahner's idea of death in contrast with Heidegger.

This reading of Rahner takes into account and agrees with Rahner's extensive use of Heidegger's concept of care and Being-towards-death, although shaping it in a communal and historical direction in Christ – rather than the lonely individual crisis that one faces in the thought of Heidegger. Lastly, it also agrees with descriptive methodology of phenomenology used by both Rahner and Heidegger and maintains the limits that Rahner places on reason. Therefore, Rahner's criteria for what counts as revelation – even Christian revelation – is more existential than dogmatic; we have also established criteria for reading Rahner as neither modern nor post-modern but instead one who focused on an existential ontological commitment of love which experiences revelation in the every-day; a Hearer who is constituted by God and humanity in their own specific contexts of existential choices.

Rahner presupposes that all of history is a development of self-understanding in relation to God, or, as he would call it, revelation (1986, p. 153); this is perfectly in line with the views of immanence and transcendence which condition one another in history and his view of the Hearer of Christian revelation being both constituted and informed by the self-communication of God as mystery. He attempts to separate revelation into two main forms: special knowledge or revelation – by which he means explicitly Christian theology as proclaimed by the Church and as understood in the Old and New Testaments (1986, p. 155); and categorical revelation – which includes all non-Christian knowledge of God. Both types of revelation have the implicit knowledge of God as mystery as their common source and are directed by the Holy Spirit; therefore, both are considered valid by Rahner as revelation (1986, p. 157). He writes,

The Christian historian of religion...can observe and describe and analyse the phenomena in the history of non-Christian religion without reservations, and interpret them with regard to their ultimate intentions. If he sees the God of the Old and New Testament revelation also at work there, however primitive they might be or however depraved, and these things of course do exist in the history of religion, he is in no way prejudicing Christianity's absolute claims" and this "raises the question about the concrete criteria for drawing distinctions (1986, p. 156).

However, Rahner claims that his view of a wider role of revelation cannot be accused of being relativism because all categorical revelation in history is driven by the self-communication of God, even though it is co-conditioned by human guilt. He can even go as far as to say that "God

interprets himself in history” (1986, p. 158) in this endless human history of spiritual reflection. Now we shall go on to consider how these categories are ambiguous and do not clearly distinguish certain systems of philosophy or non-Christian theology as being either categorical or special. This problem is, in part, caused by Rahner’s view of the prophet in his systematic thought of revelation, as well as the criteria – even christological – that he uses to distinguish special revelation from categorical revelation, which is naturally more universal and diverse in its nature.

Rahner’s concept of the prophet in *Foundations* is problematic in that he seeks to maintain a place in his theology for the official interpreters of ecclesial religion whilst at the same time promoting an existential ontological project that, by necessity, is far more broad and universal in nature. Firstly, prophets are not limited Judeo-Christian prophets but they are understood as those who have the calling and the ability to express the faith of others – putting the implicit experience of mystery into objectified proclamation, though not in the traditional sense of creedal affirmation (1986, p. 159). There is a need for prophets which are unique to each culture and community due to the interpersonal nature of humanity and, therefore, knowledge of God (1986, p. 159) – which again reflects his use of Heidegger’s category of Being-in-the world; being with God and people. However, more importantly, the key criterion for identifying a prophet is in their self-understanding of receiving revelation from God for others (1986, p. 159). He writes,

The light of faith which is offered to every person, and the light by which the “prophets” grasp and proclaim the divine message...is the same light, especially since the message can really be heard properly only in the light of faith...perhaps as distinguished from other believers, it is expressed in the prophets in such a way that it becomes for others too the correct and pure objectification of their own transcendental experience of God, and it can be recognised in this correctness (1986, p. 159).

Furthermore, he adds that this self-understanding of the prophets includes their confidence in being kept from error by God; they also do not cling to that which is merely provisional. However, the logical end of his thought results in dogma being provisional in comparison to the greater weight he affords existential commitment and, therefore, it can be argued that it is Rahner who clings to that which is provisional in the later chapters of *Foundations*, which defend a visible institutional form of the Church in spite of such assertions made earlier in the book. Having established this reading of Rahner, one can ask if Hegel can be understood as doing Christian theology in Rahnerian terms, in

order to show that Rahner's view of historicity and revelation can bear with a key philosopher of the same subjects. A philosopher who, importantly, is not situated within the official Christian Church. Ultimately, viewing Hegel's philosophical system as being compatible with Rahner's salvation history will serve as a basis for critiquing Rahner's conclusion of there yet being a "public, official, particular and ecclesially constituted revelation" (1986, p. 174), which retains its privileged and protected status in his thought in spite of the universal nature of revelation and salvation history.

Hegel and Immanence

In outlining Rahner's ontology it was shown that Rahner both sees history as a cycle and as having a revelatory direction towards God – contrary to Heidegger. It is therefore helpful, in thinking about the radically open possibilities of Rahner's thought, to compare and contrast his ideas of history with a thinker who likewise dealt seriously with the concept of linear history, namely Hegel. First, however, I will summarise Hegel's views on immanence, reason and epistemology, which provide the necessary background to his idea of history, in order that we may establish his thought as being compatible within Rahner's concept of anonymous Christianity.

Hegel is generally interpreted as rejecting notions of transcendence in favour of purely immanent metaphysics. Joseph McCarney supports an immanent reading of Hegel based on its compatibility with his overall project in which reason becomes expressed fully in history, without any unknown realm of knowledge. Hegel's insistence that Christianity is the highest form of religion due to its union of transcendence and immanence, or rather, infinitude and finitude, further establishes the immanent reading. It is the doctrine of the incarnation that makes Christianity distinct from Judaism and other religions which keep God at transcendent distance in an absolute sense – breaking into history from without (2000, p. 46). In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel writes,

Inasmuch as this knowledge exists immediately in myself, all external authority, all foreign attestation is cast aside; what is to be of value to me must have its verification in my own spirit, and in order that I may believe I must have the witness of my spirit. It may indeed come to me from without, but any such external origin is a matter of indifference; if it is to be valid, this validity can only build itself up upon the foundation of all truth, in the witness of the Spirit (1895, p. 43).

In this passage, Hegel clearly rejects the idea of a transcendent revelation in which knowledge comes independently of man's constitution and existential situation – disconnected from his being in the world and the historical development of the world. This immanence is dependent upon his idea of self-directing Spirit which constitutes both the whole and the particulars of the world, thus leading to a fundamental unity within all that is – subject and object, absolute and individual. Thus, all truth is mediated in humankind and through humankind in history.

Reason is furthered through the process of the dialectic – different stages of intellectual affirmation, negation and synthesis. Firstly, we observe the world, progressively conceptualising how one part of experience may reveal something of the whole; next, we realise that the concept that has been arrived at cannot explain all experience and so, thirdly, a synthesis happens in which the concept is changed to bear all of that experience without faltering (Beiser, 1993, p. 18). Ultimately, this will result in God – or reason – being fully actualised and known as such in history and will provide a model for understanding universal and particular religion. How this immanent revealing or progression is worked out in human terms is through the ‘cunning of reason’ working in and through humanity. Self-determining Spirit or reason must come to pass through man’s self-consciousness, but the way in which this occurs in history is not necessarily through individuals or masses willing it or understanding it. Man’s collective desires, failures and self-interest, and his progressive achievements regarding self-consciousness and morality, lend themselves to the progression of Spirit in history; they reflect different stages of the dialectic – negation and affirmation – ultimately leading to the progression of Reason.

Frederick Beiser (like many others) reads Hegel as attempting to overcome the Kantian limits on metaphysical knowledge and the dualism in which it results. Firstly, Hegel can be read as defending the notion that one can have “rational knowledge of the absolute” based on the idea that the absolute is not in a self-contained realm beyond human experience but is the whole of the material universe working itself out in an organic and self-determining fashion. Mind is the highest organised form of matter and matter is the lowest organised form of mind. In arguing this, Hegel is overcoming Kant's limits on knowledge of the transcendent absolute because the absolute is the whole of the universe that is “given to our experience” (Beiser, 1993, p. 8). We can, therefore, confirm that the categories that make up our world are the same as the ones that structure our mind, against Kant, who believed that we could simply proceed as if the universe was structured in this

way (1993, p. 9). Knowledge is, therefore, immanent for Hegel – it does not go outside or beyond creation in any sense but will inevitably be revealed within it; however, Hegel is very specific as to how this knowledge can and will be discovered.

Hegel's Christianity

Hegel is critical of Schelling's solution of intuition that limits knowledge to the select few who feel it (Beiser, 1993, p. 16). Hegel writes, “We know that God is, but not what He is — the content, the filling up of the idea of God, is negated.” Instead, he advocates that “by philosophical knowledge or cognition, we mean not only that we know that an object is, but also what it is” (1895, p. 44). Hegel rejects the idea that intuitive unmediated experience that lacks theoretical content can lead to the realisation of reason in the world. The overall project of reason becoming revealed through philosophical thinking and his rejection of intuition is extended to religion, which Hegel views as having become corrupted in three ways. Firstly, he argues that the Lutheran Church of his day has either retreated into biblical exegesis, ignoring the developments in philosophy and the sciences – thus cutting itself off from the worldwide development of reason. Secondly, the rise of religious ideas of revelation and epistemology that rely upon feeling or intuition entail disregarding reason as a means of discovering truth about God. Hegel’s view is that this has led to a content-less Christianity in which the logically developed and substantial dogmas of the Christian faith – such as the Trinity or incarnation – have become optional in favour of a moral Christ or an indefinite mystery. Thirdly, he rejects the critical enlightenment philosophy of religion for a similar reason, as he states “For God was conceived by that rationalistic way of looking at religion, which was only the abstract metaphysic of the understanding, as an abstraction which is empty ideality, and as against which the finite stands in an external fashion” (1895, p. 30).

Lawrence Dickey describes Hegel as a philosopher of Christian consciousness based upon his position relative to thinkers contemporary with him in Berlin. On the one hand, elements of Protestantism sought to defend traditional theism from his ideas; on the other hand, Hegel rejects the radical post-Christian approach of his student Feuerbach, who departs with the usefulness of Christianity and sees religion as a projection of man's ideal attributes. The incarnation and other Christian dogmas hold no value beyond these projections (1993, p. 323). Instead, Hegel's insists that “logic had to be grounded in religion – in Christian anthropology – if proper account were to be made of the spiritual dimension of human nature.” (Dickey, 1993, p. 308) For Hegel, Christianity

remained unique and the highest point of reason revealing and working itself out in religion – it was not merely the projection of man's ideals but ideals being revealed in and through its dogmas and symbols. Therefore, Hegel's ultimate goal became to express Christianity in speculative thinking which would lead to concrete action, leading to a society with Christian values (1993, p. 317).

However, this does not lead him to traditional theistic Christianity.

Hegel's solution to the problematic relationship between philosophy and religion – or Christianity in particular – is to present a view of Christianity which emphasises freedom and the development of logic in its theological content. He writes, “In the Christian religion I am to retain my freedom or rather, in it I am to become free. In it the subject, the salvation of the soul, the redemption of the individual as an individual, and not only the species, is an essential end. This subjectivity, this selfness (not selfishness) is just the principle of rational knowledge itself” (1895, p. 17). The way the rational knowledge inherent in Christianity gets worked out is through the symbolic and intellectual content of historical dogmas. He goes on to argue against theologians who view traditional Christian dogmas with contempt or keep them at a historical distance – viewing themselves as the inheritors of such knowledge without taking the content of the dogmas seriously. Concepts such as the Trinity and the incarnation have not arisen from intuition or traditional revelation as such but through reason working in the world through Christianity. As such, Christianity remains for him a key factor in the history of reason and freedom manifesting and becoming in the world and is the supreme example which his speculative philosophical project must re-interpret and take further. For Hegel, even the artistic elements of Christianity which are not immediately given to speculative intellectual reflection are an invitation to a higher mode of thinking in terms of universals (Taylor, 1975, p. 480).

Hegel's God is an organic self-organising and self-determining whole which is becoming through a dialectic between universal truths and particular truths in history. This concept is embodied in his metaphor of the tree, of which writes, “All specifications or determinations are contained in this, the whole nature of the tree, the kind of sap it has, the way in which the branches grow; but in a spiritual manner, and not pre-formed so that a microscope could reveal its boughs, its leaves, in miniature.”(1895, p. 61) In other words, the universe is implicitly structured and has an end but this end does not come from without but exists as a potential within the world; potential becoming actual. His argument reveals his critique of Kant, who believed that we could simply act as if the world had structure and telos because we do not have the conditions to know this for certain. Hegel

interchangeably uses the terms Spirit, reason or God to describe the absolute which both forms the whole and is manifest in the distinctive instances of itself in history, and will relate and disclose itself fully in history after a series of progressive revelatory moments. As Charles Taylor puts it, “God comes to knowledge of himself through man’s knowledge of him” which is “slowly and painfully realized through history” (1975, p. 481).

The view of God in Hegel that I have just presented may be best described as monist, however, this is not the only interpretation of Hegel’s idea of God, and so it may be helpful to take a moment to contrast this with other, more conservative, readings of Hegel’s philosophy (or, theology) of God. Beiser charts the development of Hegel’s thought through his earlier years spent in Bern to his later years in Frankfurt (2005, p. 132), arguing that he started off more critical of Christianity, in a similar way to his student Feuerbach, or even later, Marx; although he would have preferred a Socrates-like figure, eventually he came to believe that Christianity was actualised in such a way that it was the religion which one must deal with – the one which most gripped the world at that time and expressed the most useful ideas that could form a positive citizen within the state, which Spirit now uses as the vehicle for progress (2005, p. 134). Beiser goes on to read Hegel as re-working, rather than rejecting, pantheism – in such a way that the individual expresses the whole rather than disappearing into it.

Daniel P. Jamros, a Jesuit theologian, agrees with this monist reading and dismissing conservative readings in which Jesus is identified as wholly unique in Hegel, by pointing out how Jesus seems to be less important than that which he accomplishes – a birth of a human community via his Spirit, which more and more moves from the particular expression of the Church to universal expression in the state (1995, p. 288). What Jesus accomplished and expressed can therefore, in principle, be shared by all human beings; this challenges the idea that Hegel had a traditional Christian view of unique Son of God in the incarnation, although this exists in tension with a yet high view of christology. Jamros writes, “For the Church a unique incarnation of God preserves divine transcendence; but for Hegel the universal incarnation eliminates transcendence.” (1995, p. 298) He also admits that, although in principle all humans can achieve this unity with the divine, on Hegel’s terms Jesus is both the first – and perhaps, in some ways, the only historical instance of this unity being actualised (1995, p. 281). Humanity needed one historical person to achieve this in order to grasp it with empirical certainty – in order that it would become universal.

Peter Hodgson, arguing for a reading of Hegel which is more friendly towards traditional Christianity, writes “Yet according to Christian faith, so Hegel affirms, it (the incarnation) does happen once in a revelatory definitive way.” (2005, p. 156). And, although the systematic logic of Hegel’s thought may not require this to be exclusive to Jesus, “at this point he is bending his argument to accommodate normative Christian doctrine” (2005, p. 162). Hodgson concludes, “Jesus is revelatory definitive more than he is ontologically definitive for Hegel. To be sure, his revelatory impact follows from the fullness of God’s presence in him, so the revelatory and the ontological are connected” (2005, p.163). We may expand on this relation of ontology to revelation in Hegel that Hodgson touches upon by asking what kind of ontological understanding of Christ is implicit for Hegel in his claim that Jesus revealed the unity of the divine and human so perfectly. In other words, if Jesus is ontologically like everyone else then why him and how could he achieve which others, thus far, have not? Clearly, although Hegel may not make it explicit, his view of Christ requires us to conclude that there is something ontologically different about him. We may conclude therefore that Jesus is both fully human and divine in the sense that others are not – both implicitly and by necessity – for Hegel’s understanding of the historic progress of Spirit through Christ and into the world.

Bernard Reardon supports this interpretation of Hegel, in which the significance of Christ goes beyond that of symbol; rather, Christ actualises reconciliation and constitutes the ground upon which self-consciousness can be achieved (1977, pp. 70-71). Burbidge claims that the unique significance of Christ for Hegel is rooted in the fact he was formed by Lutheranism and likens elements of Hegel’s writing to those of the mystics such as St. John of the Cross, who overcome the dark night of the soul (negation) in order to achieve a unitive experience with the divine, or – in Hegelian language, synthesis (1993, p. 100). Burbidge further argues that this movement present in Hegel, from separation to salvation; negation to synthesis; individual to universal; is, in fact, a re-wording of Christian doctrine of redemption or reconciliation (1993, p. 101) and he argues that Hegel’s doctrine of the Spirit of Christ moving into the community – or the unity between resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit in John’s gospel – is mostly compatible with Hegel’s thought, and vice-versa. Therefore, Burbidge claims that Hegel was not only a Christian but that Christianity is the necessary condition of his philosophy (1993, p. 101).

Ultimately, we can conclude that there is a tension in Hegel between traditional christology and monism, to the extent that we can say he both implicitly believes and philosophically requires a high christology in which Christ uniquely accomplishes unity with the divine, becoming the ground for all others to do so through his post-resurrection Spirit working in community. In other words, Christ does not disappear into the universal work of the Spirit; he retains a unique and important place both ontologically and revelatory in Hegel's thought. This position is supported by this quote, found in his *Philosophy of History*,

This implicit unity exists in the first place only for the thinking speculative consciousness; but it must also exist for the sensuous, representative consciousness – it must become an object for the world – it must appear, and that in the sensuous form appropriate to Spirit, which is the human. Christ has appeared – a man who is God – God who is man; and thereby peace and reconciliation have been accrued to the World...the appearance of the Christian God involves further its being unique in its kind; it can occur only once, for God is realized as Subject, and as manifested Subjectivity is exclusively One Individual (1956, pp. 324-325).

This view is also reflected in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the section entitled “Revealed Religion” (Hegel, 1977, p. 476), suggesting that the unique identity of Christ – the first and foundational historical and ontological instance of Spirit becoming self-conscious in the individual – is central to his thought.

Given Rahner's view of this immanent and universal history of salvation and his positive view of philosophy, we may ask if his idea of history is compatible with a non-theistic philosophical account of history, such as that of Hegel. Clearly, the two ideas are not wholly compatible, for the following reasons: Rahner's idea of reason is at odds with Hegel's self-determining and all competent reason because human reason has limitations in what it can reveal about God to the extent that it does not seek to resolve or disclose God fully but rather tries to apprehend him in ever as mystery in ever greater degrees. Hegel, on the other hand, states, “There cannot be two kinds of reason and two kinds of Spirit; there cannot be a divine reason and a human, there cannot be a Divine Spirit and a human, which are absolutely different. Human reason — the consciousness of one's being is indeed reason; it is the divine in man, and Spirit, in so far as it is the Spirit of God, is not a spirit beyond the stars, beyond the world. On the contrary, God is present, omnipresent, and

exists as Spirit in all spirits” (1895, p. 33). Hegel, would, therefore, view Rahner's limitation of human reason and his focus on mystery in the same way that he viewed the theology of his day – which he accuses of making God “an infinite phantom, which is far from us”, presenting human knowledge simply a mirror on which phenomena appear (1895, p. 36).

The very idea of God is radically different for Rahner and Hegel and this is what underpins their epistemological differences. Rahner is still trying to maintain some semblance of tradition Catholic theology, regardless of his turn towards the subject. God nonetheless remains transcendent in spite of Rahner's unique way of overcoming dualism by viewing God as the constitutive part of man's being. As he writes in *Fundamentals*, “we make the presupposition and hold to it radically that the Trinity in the history of salvation and revelation is the “immanent” Trinity because in God's self-communication to his creation through grace and incarnation God really gives himself, and really appears as he is in himself” (1986, p. 136). However, as previously discussed, God is the infinite transcendent against which our creatureliness is intelligible; therefore, Rahner is not proposing a self-communication in which creation and creator become indistinguishable.

Rahner escapes the critique that Hegel directs towards Schelling, who advocates a direct intuition of the absolute and the theologians – most notably Schleiermacher – who emphasised feeling rather than thought because of his central notion that all original experience of mystery is mediated through thought in greater or lesser degrees. Nonetheless, this key epistemological disagreement about the limits of reason remains, leading Rahner to a very different idea of salvation history, and more specifically, the history of religions, which does not lead to a universal, all-encompassing disclosure of God, as it does for Hegel. Clearly, Rahner is probably closer to Heidegger than to Hegel here.

Both thinkers also disagree on the fundamental disposition of man. Contrary to Rahner's idea of the transcendent human disposition towards that which is without and that which is not, we may say that Hegel's idea of humanity, or the subject, is that of collective humanity becoming that which is already implicit in itself and in the world at large regardless of conscious or unconscious phenomenological experience. Due to the cunning of reason, as previously discussed, reason will proceed collectively both in spite of and through individual experiences, depending on the historical moment. Thus, McCarney can predict that Hegel's interpretation of the Holocaust would not be that of the failure of the dialectic or reason since it only lasted a few years before things progressed to a

better state, rather it was necessary. The suffering of individuals thus was not the most important because the collective realisation of Spirit went on and freedom was realised again, perhaps in a more developed way (2000, pp. 211-212). The movement of reason takes priority over the individual, even if that means suffering.

Another apparent disconnect between Hegel and Rahner is how immanence and transcendence condition one another and the resulting idea of history. Lehmann argues in *Sacramentum Mundi* that the German Idealism of figures such as Hegel failed in its assertion that “spirit-that-thinks mediates itself to itself” as opposed to Rahner's view in which God is simultaneously inside and outside of human experience. Hegel's view thus led to a “surrendering of God to history” (1975, p. 1739) whereas the task of transcendental theology must be to give an account of how history can continue to be changed. It would appear, therefore, that Rahner's project of transcendental theology is at odds with Hegel's view of immanence and, indeed, the view of the freedom that Rahner advocates based on there being a transcendent questioning and search for meaning which allows human beings to go beyond their historical and finite circumstances. Lehmann believes that there is not sufficient potentiality inside of history in order to change history – history must be affected from without and within by God, most particularly in his plan for the eschaton. History, for Rahner and for Lehmann, therefore, does not have this inner and self-sustaining telos which drives it – as with Hegel – but, rather, depends upon the transcendent experience of God's self-giving communication. For transcendental theology, there is no self-sustaining ‘cunning of reason’ directing historical human progress towards its end.

In spite of these differences, Hegel is still potentially useful for drawing out a radical reading of Rahner, particularly if we can show in what ways Hegel's system could be considered valid in Rahner's terms, perhaps even as particular revelation. The first sense in which Hegel is valid for Rahner is in Rahner's understanding of philosophy as the means to understanding man in the world – it establishes the idea of the Hearer of the message upon which theology then works. As well as co-conditioning one another, philosophy and theology examine the same subject matter in Rahner and he views the state of his contemporary philosophy as too fragmented – not examining or offering a comprehensive picture of human experience or knowledge and giving deference to the natural sciences: a claim that could not be applied to Hegel.

According to Rahner, the Hearer of the word of Christianity is constituted by the Hearer's self-interpretation through true philosophy (1986, p. 25). This leads Rahner to say, “we do not have to be concerned about separating philosophy and theology methodologically in the sharpest possible way” and indeed, he claims that “a philosophy that is absolutely free of theology is not even possible in our historical situation” (1986, p. 25). Philosophy, therefore, conditions and is presupposed by theology – they are interdependent (1986, p. 25) and both make explicit what is implicit in the universal “unthematic experience of our orientation towards ineffable mystery” (1986, p. 53). Both theology and philosophy are also united in the sense that neither can completely reveal the truth about God or resolve mystery, and both are constituted by grace (1986, p. 56), as opposed to the scholastic view in which grace is needed to perfect philosophical or natural knowledge of God. Rahner can agree, therefore, with Hegel's assertion that religion and philosophy reflect upon the same subject matter – God becoming or being revealed – and that both must be synthesised. Moreover, Hegel's project is valid for Rahner in the sense that it reveals and reflects upon historical experience and in doing so contributes to the construction of the Hearer, as well as revealing some provisional truth about God based on the original experience of mystery – whether the Hearer explicitly acknowledges that mystery or not.

However, we could take this argument one step further than simply suggesting that Hegel is a philosopher of the Christian consciousness, working with the same material as the theologian. Based on Hegel's reconstruction of basic Christian dogmas such as the incarnation and Trinity, along with his view of Jesus dying in order that the absolute may dwell within the Church and ultimately wider community or state (2005, p. 18), Peter Hodgson argues that Hegel is better described as a “Christian theologian of the Spirit” who is treating theology as a branch of philosophy “that concerns itself with the knowledge of God and exhibits the rational content of religion. It does this by raising the symbolic, metaphorical, representational language of religion into a conceptual, scientific terminology” (2005, p. 15) against thinkers such as Schleiermacher – a theologian of feeling, as well as materialist readings of Christianity – as argued by philosophers such as Feuerbach (2005, p.10). Although this would meet the condition of being theology by most definitions, it is not clear that it would be understood as valid theology by Rahner, particularly as Hodgson describes Hegel's project as “ontotheological” in contrast to anthropological (and therefore existential) approaches (2005, p. 17) such as that of Rahner. However, we could ask if Hegel's project can be understood by Rahner, who is yet anxious to preserve the theological authority of the Church, to be in some way Christian theology which nonetheless reveals some truth

about God and cannot be simply described as philosophy – even if heterodox.

As previously discussed, Hegel argues that the Father in Christianity is representative of the universal – or Spirit – which structures and is becoming in the world, and who was understood as a distant deity in the Jewish religion. The innovation of Christianity – which makes it the highest theological truth and indispensable to his speculative thought – is that the idea of the Son both represents and initially brings to pass the coming together of this distant divine absolute with the particular instances of human history, or we may say, instance. Christ is both the first unique instance and the ultimate symbol of man's unity with the divine and not merely a profound teacher such as Socrates (1956, p. 325). The unity of the divine and the human as expressed in Christ results in freedom because the particular, the Son, in total identity with the will of the Father – the universal principle working itself out in the world. This unity overcomes the human struggle represented by the myth of the fall in which self-conscious humanity recognises itself lacking and subsequently experiences alienation by pursuing material and personal interests (1956, p. 321). The Trinity is so important for revealing this concept that it not only applies to the Church but it also must be applied to the State, in order that the whole of the human history can come into conformity with the outworking of the absolute (1956, p. 335). As Hegel writes:

It was then through the Christian religion that the absolute Idea of God, in its true conception, attained consciousness. Here Man, too, finds himself comprehended in his true nature, given in the specific concept of “The Son.” Man, finite when regarded for himself, is yet at the same time the image of God and a fountain of infinity in himself. He is the object of his own existence – has in himself an infinite value, an eternal destiny (1956, pp. 333-334).

Hegel is using explicitly Christian theological concepts which reveal the movement and development of reason in the world; he understands himself and philosophy in general as true revelation of God or Spirit both working itself out and becoming conscious of its own development simultaneously. The wide theological differences between both thinkers may be best expressed in that Rahner believes that God – a person – gives himself freely and fully constituting man but, nonetheless, the divine is never wholly united with or expressed by the particular; on the other hand, for Hegel, the universal is in potentiality and only becomes actualised through the particular, progressively, until the universal expresses itself fully to itself.

A serious challenge to this reading of Hegel is raised by William Desmond in his book *Counterfeit Double*, which is a critique of the idea that Hegel is in any way a theologian or Christian philosopher. Desmond argues that Hegel's system amounts to monism masquerading as trinitarian Christianity; he argues this based on the symbolic nature of the Trinity and its correspondence to Hegel's three-stage dialectic, or as he describes it: 'triadic logic'. As we have previously read: The Father is the Absolute; The Son is the ideal human unity with the absolute; and the Spirit comes to be understood as the relationship between them. However, Desmond points out that this is wholly symbolic and what is in fact going on is that the universal is relating to itself as Subject (Son) and Object (Father) and so the Trinity, for Hegel, is merely a useful tool to represent his monist idealism (2003, p. 79). For Desmond, this whole which is working itself out in self-relation as subject and object destroys any notion of the Christian God, who is transcendent – beyond complete understanding (2003, p. 97). Rahner would agree with this critique due to his insistence on the limitations of Reason and his transcendent project in which we always remain limited as humans in the face of the infinite horizon of God; we exist as a result of God's self-communication but we are not identifiable as God.

Furthermore, Desmond uses the analogy of eros to describe Hegel's monistic use of the Trinity and claims that the Father is simply a potentiality which 'lacks the condition of Being' until it actualises itself through a limited creation in a process that ultimately will lead to its fulfilment (2003, p. 114); he writes, "There is a fullness shown to this poverty of our knowing which it fills, but neither the knowing nor the showing are absolutely determinable as the self—knowing or self-showing of God. There is always the (reserved) otherness of God that is not God's self-othering" (2003, p. 112). Desmond's interpretation of the transcendence of God and his critique of Hegel's Monism is in agreement with Rahner's view of God: the one who lacks nothing and gives of himself freely in creative self-communication in creating self-conscious humanity.

Hegel as Prophet

In spite of key differences, Hegel may be said to fit the criteria of advancing Christian revelation – even as a prophet in Rahner's terms – in the sense of making the implicit experience of mystery explicit for others, even if on erroneous grounds, and in that he understands himself as expressing divine truth – even Christian truth. Hegel believes that he – like others who rightly understand the divine – are constituted by the first revelation of the unity of absolute and the human in Christ and,

furthermore, are being used to make this union universal and actual in history. Therefore, he clearly meets Rahner's broad definition of a prophet, in that one must understand oneself as communicating divine truth with certainty. We will go on to examine if Hegel fits the specific criteria of being able to orientate people towards Christ existentially in Rahner's terms, those terms previously described as love, hope and orientation towards death.

It is less obvious how Hegel would be able to meet the existential criteria that Rahner requires for 'Christian' revelation: faith in spite of the threat of death, expectant hope for future redemption and love for one's neighbour. At first glance, the almost organic outworking of the principle called Reason seems to inspire duty or intellectual development rather than a disposition of love towards one's neighbour – and, therefore, God. However, we should not forget that this is not wholly an impersonal principle but the developing of self-consciousness in which the divine discovers and outworks itself in individual and human consciousness. This view may be supported by our earlier assertion that Hegel's view of the holocaust might mean viewing it as a necessary stage in the dialectic – a necessary evil in order that the cunning of reason be worked out. However, McCarney notes that Hegel does not advocate a state of affairs in which one merely intellectually develops oneself or their surrounds nor does his theory lead to inactivity in the face of problems (2000, pp. 217-218). Since we are at times able to become self-conscious of the direction of reason in history, and, at other times we are unconsciously at the mercy of the 'cunning of reason', it follows that either way we implicitly or explicitly commit to the progress of history as individuals – expressing the progress of the whole. Hegel's system can therefore be said to produce existential hope for a better world and purpose in the face of death even if one is ignorant of the whole picture. What remains less obvious is how he meets Rahner's category of loving one's neighbour.

Although Hegel does not describe existential commitment on an individual level nor talk in terms of existential love, nonetheless, his system of thought – through its use of the image of the triune unity of God and man – results in human concern for the interests of the whole which may result even in personal death for the sake of progress¹⁷. Hegel meets that existential criteria if one is aware of a risk of losing immediate benefits – even life itself – for the sake of progress when making decisions for the individual other or for communal progress in general. This reading agrees with Hegel's view on metaphysics which is far from materialist, lending itself to hope in a future which is not contingent upon physical life or death. The idea of Spirit being the synthesis is the collapsing then

17 Through the 'cunning of reason'.

including of the dialectically opposed affirmation and negation into a harmony which is analogous to love for the neighbour. The state of affairs that Hegel calls freedom, in which the unity of the particular interests and the outworking of the absolute becomes actual, neighbours would be united in absolute interest for one another as a norm. We could also note that Spirit took the place of love in Hegel's later thought¹⁸, suggesting that love is in the background of Hegel's concept of the Spirit when he talks about the spirit of Christ forming the community of the Church and beyond. Therefore, we can say that Hegel meets the broad criteria of faith, hope, and love established by Rahner to identify Christian forms of revelation, as well as the fact that he uses specifically Christian theological terms to describe reality and the future. Indeed, Hegel's reading of the Trinity partially resembles Rahner's insistence that God's providence leads particular revelation to become ever more universal (1986, p. 161).

However, this reading of Hegel in Rahnerian terms apparently faces issues when it comes to Rahner's requirement of there being a community which expresses particular religious views because of Hegel's role as an academic philosopher, without any overt ecclesial commitment (Rahner, 1986, p. 174). As previously discussed, the interpersonal nature of human beings necessitates a communal expression of divine revelation; this potential problem is further highlighted by the existential ontological role of revelation for Rahner in contrast to the more direct epistemological role that revelation plays for Hegel. However, our argument thus far – that the criteria of revelation is far more loose and therefore applies to people outside of the ecclesia far more readily, gives support to our reading of Hegel. Firstly, the fact that we are by nature interpersonal also applies automatically to all – including Hegel and his contemporaries; therefore, even if unintentionally, he was yet informing the view of a community. Secondly, as an academic, he was already part of community of learning in which his ideas would have had the potential to cause existential reactions among Hearers of the message – especially given the metaphysical subject matter, which, as we have argued, lends itself to faith, hope and love. Revelation can therefore take place in settings not limited to official ecclesial institutions as this would contradict the inner logic of Rahner's claims. Furthermore, Hans Küng in his reading of Hegel offers a view of his ecclesiology, one which does not bypass the Church but views it as being part of a more universal outworking of speculative thought in the world¹⁹.

18 As argued by Hans Küng and others.

19 Küng's interpretation of Hegel shall be examined thoroughly in chapter three.

I therefore disagree with Desmond's claim that the Trinity is simply symbolic for Hegel, thereby destroying the uniqueness of Christ. As previously argued, Hegel is better read as having a high christology – even though not presented in strict dogmatic formulation – in which Christ uniquely actualises the divine and human relationship in a way that is not achieved by anyone else.

Furthermore, Christ constitutes the ontological as well as the epistemological ground for that relationship to become actualised universally. Therefore, Christ must be ontologically unique in order to achieve this height of revelation and human accomplishment, as no one else has done so before or after him. Although Hegel's system ultimately results in the divine-human unity becoming actual for everyone, it is also true that it is yet to happen and remains a potential for the future at the time of Hegel's writing; until that changes, Jesus is both the first and the last person to actualise this relationship perfectly in Hegelian terms. This high christology in Hegel also suggests that Hegel can be understood as not only a prophet but a Christian prophet in Rahnerian terms in that he directs the Hearer, with all their existential ontological potentiality and experience of mystery, towards the explicit revelation of God in Christ. The lack of a clear ecclesia and tradition does not diminish this claim.

Moreover, due to the nature of the existential focus that Rahner offers and his subordination of creedal or doctrinal truths – including the Trinity – to interpretations which can affect existential meaning and commitment, Desmond's critique of Hegel changes little even if it were accepted; for Rahner, Christian monism is a valid – though not ideal – way of affecting existential commitment to Christ assuming that it promotes the existential categories of faith, hope and love – which represent the true marks of Christian revelation. Although differing views of God do matter, they do not render Hegel as invalid for Rahner but simply as a form of Christian revelation with some misunderstandings – as can be expected for creatures with limited reason. Moreover, Hegel could be viewed in Rahnerian terms as one of many valid theologies because Rahner admits to the validity and necessity of plural theologies.

In conclusion, Hegel can be understood as a Christian prophet in Rahner's terms; prophet – in that he makes the implicit existential orientation towards mystery explicit and in the fact that he understands his philosophy as being an expression of the absolute being revealed and actualised in history, this fits Rahner's definition perfectly. He can be called Christian because his metaphysical thought lends itself to encouraging the three existential markers of revelation: hope, authentic orientation towards death and love for the neighbour; he also uses explicitly Christian concepts to

make the implicit human experience explicitly for God in Christ; lastly, his philosophical understanding of Christ reveals a high christology – in that Christ is not only able to express and become the ground of the divine-human unity but that Christ must be uniquely ontologically able to do so, in a way that no other human being can. However, even without the high christology and the explicit mentioning of Christ, we could yet understand him as a prophet in Rahnerian terms and as expressing the Christian orientation towards God in hope, authenticity and love. There is a disconnect between the Rahner who can approve of different theologies and philosophies, such as that of Hegel – due to their existential ontological potential – and the Rahner who yet wants to maintain that the highest expression of this must be found in the Catholic Church.

3: Rahner's Ecclesiology

Introduction

In this chapter we will be exploring ecclesiology at its most basic – who is in the Church and how are they in the Church, instead of a discussion of historical or concrete instances of churches. Having established a reading of Rahner which emphasises the existential ontological Hearer – one who is constituted by his relationship to God and people in the world through the existential modes of love, hope and resoluteness towards death – as the crux of his thought, we shall now be more explicit in how his ecclesiology in the last chapter of *Foundations* is at odds with this existential ontology. Although we have previously hinted at elements of Rahner's ecclesiology, we shall now explain it in more detail from the final chapter of *Foundations* before offering criticisms. Next, we will read of two solutions proposed by Rahner's contemporaries: Paul Tillich's existential ecclesiology which emphasises the “latent” and “manifest” modes of the Church and faces the same problems as Rahner's existential ontology, and Hans Küng's reading of Hegel's trinitarian and christological thought, which results in a universalism in which the whole of humanity is caught up into the inter-trinitarian relationship of love through the Spirit. Finally, we conclude that Küng's approach is far more useful for reconstructing Rahner's thought in order that the privilege of the visible Church is removed in favour of affirming all that has the potentiality to affect positive ontological disposition towards mystery, removing the boundaries between anonymous and explicit Christianity.

Rahner's problematic Ecclesiology

In the chapter ‘Christianity as Church’ Rahner argues that since humans are interpersonal and historical, the interpersonal must find concrete expression via historic institutions (1986, p. 323). Furthermore, the Church is a unique institution in the mediation of religion – privileged above all other individual and collective expressions of religious truth to the extent that the period we now live is the “period of the Church” (1986, p. 322) and it is in this institution we will find the proper context in which to practice love as political and social beings. However, based on the hierarchy of truths in Vatican II, the doctrine of the Church, he claims, is of secondary importance and is not essential to Christianity in the same way that “faith and love, entrusting oneself to the darkness of existence and into the incomprehensibility of God in trust and in the company of Jesus Christ”

(1986, p. 324). Nonetheless, the Church remains crucial to his thought as shown by his claims that the particular institution of the visible Church is a necessary outworking of the universal history of revelation, having a special categorical revelation beyond other intuitions or manifestations of God as mystery. The Church makes explicit the person and work of Jesus Christ. Indeed, he goes as far as claiming that no serious theologians can question the idea that the Church needs to be a particular historic institution – not just a collection of those who have an existential relationship to Christ (1986, p. 326).

The visible Church is a post-Easter institution created by Jesus for the interim period between his rejection by the Jewish people and the coming of the eschaton in which all will be gathered in (1986, p. 328). An institution which has its purpose in preserving a witness to the faith of Jesus post-resurrection in a way that individual or group of pious individuals could not because the Church must have continuity and identity throughout the ages, just as Jesus and the early Church had with the history of the people of Israel before them (1986, p. 330). Because of its special place, the current visible Church has authority to interpret and restructure itself after the departure of Jesus in the trust that he still directs the Church – as opposed to having to justify everything via the verifiable history and actions of the early Church. Jesus gathered and formed the Church in order that it might have a broader mission: first to the Jews, as shown by the symbolism of the twelve disciples, and then to the wider world; special authority is given to Peter to accomplish this mission. The gospels of Luke and Matthew in particular provide Rahner with ecclesial concepts, such as the three periods of time: that of Israel, Jesus and the Church in Luke (1986, p. 337). Rahner goes on to outline a biblical picture of the Church from the letters of Paul – the imagery being that of the body of Christ. However, it is not our goal to offer a historical or biblical criticism of Rahner’s ecclesiology or to offer a critique of the various biblical justifications that he has for the specific role of the Pope and teaching authority of the Church in matters of dogma – such as that of the assumption of Mary. Instead, our focus remains at a much more basic level, the philosophical theological or systematic case that he presents for the privilege of this institution and how it relates problematically to the rest of his thought.

Writing of the privilege of the Church, Rahner states,

Does not mean that anyone who does not belong to such an ecclesially constituted Christianity loses his salvation, nor that he cannot have the ultimate and decisive relationship to God which is grounded in the grace of Christ. But the fact that God's salvific work is offered in principle to all people, and that in principle it effects the salvation of every person if it is accepted in obedience to one's moral conscience, this does not exclude the fact that the full and historically actualized Christianity of God's self-communication is an Ecclesial Christianity...By its very nature, the subjectivity of man...requires that it encounter an objectivity which is the norm for this subjectivity...As something which is able to act authoritatively, this objectivity must be the religion of God and not only an explication of my own feeling about existence. Christianity is the religion of a demanding God who summons my subjectivity out of itself only if it confronts me in a Church which is authoritative...The concreteness of Jesus Christ...must confront me in what we call the Church...(it will) make the reality of salvation present for me (1986, pp. 343-344).

When a Christian understands the Church as the historical tangibility of the presence of God in his self-communication, he experiences the Church as the place for the love of both God and neighbour...although it can be grasped only in faith and hope, this ultimate success is pledged and is sacramentally present in the Church because interpersonal love can find ultimate success only if it takes place within the realm of God (1986, pp. 398-399).

Rahner's justification of the privilege of the Church is based on the every-day and interpersonal nature of man's existence – both themes that we have previously emphasised. This institution is the only place that man's interpersonal nature can find true fulfilment because in the Church one encounters loving relationships based on the specific revelation of Christ; Christ founded the visible Church and it is not merely created by man's social instincts (1986, p. 347). Therefore, it is uniquely empowered – both by its historic Christian message and its authority granted by Jesus himself – to bring objective revelation to man's universal and subjective experience of mystery. As such, Rahner rejects the “ecclesiological relativism” of evangelicals who would put all churches on the same level of authority – removing the privileged place of the Roman Catholic Church (1986, p. 353) because it would lead to the end of true ecumenical dialogue which has its goal in the institutional unification of all churches. If all churches are equally valid then moves towards

institutional unity are unnecessary. For Rahner, the unity of the Church must be visible rather than invisible. On the contrary, we are arguing for a re-reading of Rahner based on his existential ontology to the extent that the revelation is universally accessible through existential ontological commitment and is always already interpersonal – not requiring the Church specifically as the point of revelation.

Patrick Burke, a catholic theologian and commentator on Rahner, reads him as claiming that the visible Church is a reality before it is institutionally constituted – presumably due to the ontological disposition of its members (2002, p. 160). However, as we have read from Rahner, this reading is incorrect. The Church has authority not only through its correspondence to authentic human experience but also due to the biblical and historical assumption that it was constituted by Christ and continues to be led by the Spirit. Burke also claims that Rahner reverses Augustine's thought that we believe the gospel because of apostolic authority (2002, p. 173), again, this is not fully the case in Rahner because the Church provides the continual objective witness to the resurrection which is necessary to fully constitute a Hearer as Hearer of God's self-communication. Burke does recognise that, for Rahner, the only complete and ideal destination for the anonymous Christian is the Catholic Church (2002, p. 179), yet the visible Church makes the Hearer what they are by virtue of their existential disposition rather than what they are not (2002, p. 180). The Hearer already possesses faith, hope and love to the extent that evangelism is telling a person that they are always already in Christ and that their home is in the Catholic Church – the “full categorical expression” of faith (2002, p. 185), as opposed to other expressions of faith which are impure and, therefore, open to error.

For Burke, Rahner is in danger of contradicting traditional ecclesiology precisely because of the ontological element in his thought, which leads him to read Rahner as more dangerous than he actually is when it comes to the Church's authority. However, I would argue that one can aptly describe Rahner's chapter on ecclesiology as overly cautious – a break with the rest of his project explained by his personal loyalty to the Catholic Church. The reason for describing Rahner's position as cautious is that the existential ontological basis of Rahner's thought, even whilst supporting the need for interpersonal relationships, does not justify his claim that this community be the particular community described in the later chapters of *Foundations*. As we have argued, the universal experience of mystery, God's universal salvific will, and the interpersonal nature of man do not need particular expression in order to be valid, but rather can be expressed in any form

philosophically or theologically which engenders love, hope and authenticity towards death. Therefore, it is impossible to claim that one community is the only group instituted by God which can fully constitute a Hearer towards the mystery of God and offer revelation. Rahner prioritises the existential ontological above the ecclesial: he writes that his ecclesiology “Does not mean that anyone who does not belong to such an ecclesially constituted Christianity loses his salvation, nor that he cannot have the ultimate and decisive relationship to God which is grounded in the grace of Christ.” (1986, p. 343). It is conspicuous that Rahner almost wholly abandons his normal form of writing and argumentation – that of phenomenological description – in favour of biblical and 'indirect' historical argument in his chapter on ecclesiology. Rahner fails to give argument for the unique validity of the Catholic Church on the basis of his existential ontology, instead choosing to rely on claims of biblical and historic authority present in the Church through Christ and the apostles. He seems afraid to draw out the more radical potentiality of his thought – that of true universalism in which other faiths and philosophies have equal validity and authority to that of the Roman Catholic Church on the grounds of Christ's gift of universal salvation and God's self-communication to all as mystery.

As Lennan points out, Rahner believed that secularization means that most people will not attain the fullest categorical truth of Christ in the Church but rather experience it anonymously. Nonetheless, he also agrees that this did not lessen Rahner's conviction that the Church was that fullest expression and would continue to be so due its continuity with the early Church and its subsequent objectivity. Lennan incorrectly claims, like Burke, that the objective faith of the Church is in some way dependent upon the anonymous faith of the masses. However, as we have shown previously, it is rather dependent on the Church being in historical continuity with the community given authority by Jesus. In his book *The ecclesiology of Karl Rahner* Lennan writes,

While secularization had not obliterated—indeed could not obliterate—humanity's relationship to God, Rahner accepted that it probably meant the Christian message would remain ineffective for the majority of people in any future world. Consequently, it was not an articulated theism, but an 'anonymous' response to God's offer of salvation which was likely to become the norm...For Rahner, truth, especially when it related to the fundamentals of human existence, was inextricably linked with institution. Human beings, he argued, arrived at truth via a common search and dialogue: only through encountering the opinion of others could we be sure that our truth was more than self-deception. Indeed, only through

such encounter did our truth really become our truth. The alternative was the ‘hell of absolute aloneness’. The Church, therefore, like other institutions, represented the objectivity of reality; through it, ‘the Other’ had a meaning for me and was beyond my manipulation (1997, p. 178).

Based on what we have quoted from Rahner on ecclesiology thus far, the role of the Church is not theologically reliant upon nor gets its authority from anonymous Christians but rather relies upon the historical Christ, although this Church does resource and give the fullest categorical expression to the faith, hope and love that anonymous Christians experience in the light of mystery. We may conclude, therefore, that Burke and Lennan in their understanding that Rahner's Church is dependent upon the anonymous disposition of the Hearer towards God are mistaken. Rather, the anonymous Hearer depends upon the Church which Jesus founded for its fullest categorical expression; however, the reverse is not true: the Church is rather dependent upon the post-Easter arrival of the Spirit in the first community of believers and the maintenance of historical continuity with that first Church. Therefore, Burke and Lennan are overestimating the continuity of Rahner's thought in seeing his ecclesiology as congruent with this existential ontology. On the other hand, as we have argued, Rahner's ecclesiology is a fundamental departure or, rather, an unnecessary addition to the rest of this thought.

Rahner's ecclesiology breaks with two major principles of his theology: the universal salvific will of God and the universal experience of God as mystery, accessible through faith, hope and love. It does this by establishing a two-tier Christianity in which anonymous Christians are of secondary importance both in their knowledge and their participation in the world – they are lesser and potentially deceived if they find any other expression for their inner orientation to God other than the one prescribed by Rahner. As such, anonymous Christians will never fully be themselves outside of the one true Church, even if they are saved in the end. The Hearer is constituted by listening to the visible Church in a way that cannot wholly be achieved outside of its bounds. Given the decline of Christianity – which was acknowledged by Rahner in his lifetime – his position means that only a privileged few truly and categorically know God, compared to a mass of ignorant yet noble people; both groups will be saved by the grace of God but only those within the Church will know it and reach the fullest salvation and fulfilment available in this life. This position violates the principle of the universal salvific will of God in that the visible Church exists in particular times and contexts – it is not universal; therefore, people or communities without access

to or in disagreement with the visible Church are always already at a disadvantage towards reaching the ultimate categorical expression of their relationship to God. Underlying this idea is the assumption that there is a universal salvific will of God but not a universal fulfilment and enjoyment of that will – a contradictory position to take. Also, one cannot argue that this is simply due to free-will and human rejection of God because the Hearer is always already being constituted by their environment – Being-in-the-world; therefore, if the main speaker is the visible Church there are many who will not hear simply by virtue of their differing contexts.

To conclude, Rahner's ecclesiological position is in stark contrast to his fundamental claim that the grace of God encounters all in their every-day experience of mystery and finitude. I am therefore proposing an alternative reading of Rahner in which many contexts may speak positively to the Hearer – directing them towards faith, hope and love. Rahner does not think that mystery is resolved within the Church; rather, he is saying that it is through Church that we gain the best loving, hopeful and anticipatory orientation towards mystery, yet this position is still inadequate as it creates a two-tier Christianity – that of anonymous Christianity and actual Christianity. A question arising from this conclusion is as follows: is it not possible for Rahner to imagine an individual or group outside of Christianity who might invest existentially in God more fully than those who are within the visible Church? It seems impossible to answer this negatively given that the criteria for knowing Christ is existential – in one's love, orientation towards death and hope for the future. Rahner's system in its emphasis of existential rather than epistemological commitment to God does allow for this to occur until we get to the last chapter of *Foundations* especially through his category of the prophet, which may be applied to philosophers such as Hegel. This being the case, Rahner's ecclesiology should reflect the universalising impulse of his existential ontology in its understanding of those outside of the visible Church, who are nonetheless following their relationship to God as mystery in their every-day experience of the world.

We have argued thus far for an interpretation of Rahner which emphasises the Hearer – one who encounters God through charitable relationships with their neighbour; the interpersonal nature of man is one of Rahner's non-negotiable claims. However, in the ecclesiology that we have just presented, an extra and unnecessary leap is made by Rahner: the Hearer is an ecclesial being, not just an interpersonal being. Thus, Rahner is arguing that the Hearer must find some historic continuity with the early Christian Church which gave expression to his faith long before he ever experiences it, engaging with it in a sacramental fashion, hearing its authoritative explanations of

his orientation towards mystery and investing in it as the interpersonal existentiell expression of their whole life. However, are we really to claim with Rahner that there are no other equally valid expressions of the interpersonal for humanity that could draw out a proper existential orientation of love, anticipation and resoluteness towards death and hope in uncertainty? This position would seem to be at odds with the universal salvific will of God and also to be in disagreement with Rahner's operative theological term: mystery. One of the confusing points about Rahner's description of the prophet mentioned in the last section – which, as we have shown, does suggest that other interpersonal expressions of truth are valid – in that the prophet must have certainty that they are hearing from God and expressing God's truth. However, given that we know God primarily as mystery – even as Christians – and that Rahner's project is not taken up with a modernist search for certainty – it is a departure for Rahner to claim that the prophet or the visible Church needs that sense of certainty in order to understand themselves as doing valid theology. Instead, there needs to be a less rigid outworking of Rahner's existential ontology – one that does not validate a search for certainty in the face of mystery; only in this way can Rahner's thought be of use in future ecclesial conversations, which are inherently involved in conversations with a pluralistic culture.

Alternatives: Küng and Tillich

One alternative to the problematic ecclesiology of Rahner is that of Hans Küng, who takes the Vatican II conversation in a more radical direction, explicitly reading Hegel as doing valid Christian theology. Küng claims Hegel is inspired by and not in contradiction of traditional trinitarian thought and christology, arguing that when Hegel talks about the movement of reason in the world, which first establishes itself positively, is negated and finally achieves synthesis, it is wholly compatible with the relationship of the Trinity to itself and the world, in the following ways. Firstly, the early Church gave up too much to Hellenistic philosophy when it accepted that God couldn't be changed – he could not suffer nor develop in any way because that implied metaphysical lack in God (1987, p. 408). Küng, on the other hand, argues that it is not only Christ who suffers but that God suffers in Christ; this is not problematic because such suffering comes not from a lack in God but from the divine fullness of love. God gives of himself freely in the suffering of Christ out of an abundance of love directed towards the good of humanity (1987, p. 446). Having established that God can suffer and God is in some way dynamically involved in relationship with the Son and creation, Küng claims that there is change, development or becoming in God (1987, p. 462), in line with traditional trinitarian and christological thought. The divine drama of the Father giving the Son to the world

and then pouring out his Spirit into the world in order that it might be one with him is a dialectic: a dialectic which is in agreement with that of Hegel without contradicting normative Christian theology which highlights the unity between God and man. The fact that there is a Son separated from the Father proves antithesis in God himself which is then resolved in a movement towards synthesis.

Thus, Küng and Hegel can say that the truths of Christianity are accessible to reason alone (1987, p. 73) after the coming Christ, his death, and then his resurrection in community and world via the Spirit; the coming of Christ and explicit faith in him was a necessary but transitional phase in the dialectic, a temporary image or mystery (1987, p. 129). Christ's death being negation and the antithesis of God to himself, we have now reached synthesis where God knows himself as God in unity with man in the world: the hypostatic union is thus universalised via the Church to the whole of humanity – this is the eschaton and it is already taking place among us. However, this is not pantheism²⁰ because the infinite never wholly swallows the finite, rather, the finite is recognised as being inside the infinite – each finite part being an expression of the whole (1987, p. 132) and in conversation with each other, a constant movement and discovery of self-consciousness of God in man and vice-versa. Indeed, as in the unity and diversity of the Trinity, “Otherness does not preclude identity” (1987, p. 367); this is extended to the relationship between God and humanity at large. God is present in the Church via the Spirit and drives on towards universal self-consciousness in the world (1987, p. 212). History is therefore both circular and linear in the sense that God returns to himself anew (1987, p. 220) in human self-consciousness as the dialectic achieves synthesis. Unity had to be accomplished through a linear series of historical events – through the history of religion, ultimately culminating in the Church and its integration into the universal vehicle of philosophy (1987, p. 224) and yet it is part of the bigger picture of divine self-becoming.

Küng defends the Christian nature of this dialectic on the basis of traditional christology; he explains that Christianity has always accepted the analogical nature of language, including the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’; the concept of reconciliation between God and man, in as much as God accepts man who is sinful (which Hegel freely admits) and man moves beyond self-centredness towards the divine in such a way that universal divine-human unity is achieved. Hegel’s use of the Spirit in the Church to take the place of Christ is not contrary to the basic Christian doctrine that the Church is

²⁰ Küng also claims that Hegel is different from pagan or pantheistic claims in that he believes very clearly in sin – alienation from God in self-centeredness; in other words, everything is not inherently good. (1987, p. 352)

united to Christ to the extent that it can be called his body. Christian history is progressive, it is moving towards universalisation – God wills that all be saved (1987, p. 226). Lastly, the Logos in John’s Gospel is similar to the dialectic of Hegel in the sense that in it God comes full circle. God is before the world with Christ in a dialectic of love and self-knowing; Christ creates and is united with the world, bringing universal light or knowledge of God to all; in these relationships we see all the stages of the dialectic: affirmation, negation and synthesis – in which full unity with the world is achieved (1987, p. 260). God is dynamic and developing and the Church must do likewise through its own dialectic towards universalism. Küng writes,

But how did Hegel actually come to think up...this affirmation through negation? The whole foregoing account of Hegel’s thought has adequately explained just how decisive a role his christological understanding of God played at this very point. Such restriction, renunciation and negation are demanded of man because they are precisely what the absolute demands of itself. Consequently, man simply accompanies and re-lives what the absolute Spirit itself achieves in the common history of the world and society (1987, p. 304).

However, Küng is not wholly uncritical of Hegel’s system but rather tries to resource it from a Christian perspective of love. Küng claims that the big problem with Hegel is that he gets rid of the distinctiveness of the Other to the extent that love becomes impossible and of secondary concern to the idea of reason being the operative dynamic relationship (1987, p. 236). Consequently, we must move beyond Hegel towards a concept of the living God within a dialectic of love versus a non-relational God who operates primarily through a dialectic of knowledge; indeed, love and knowing are united in the theology of the New Testament (1987, p. 240) and Küng describes this love as “becoming fond of” God (1987, p. 239). Furthermore, as we have previously heard in the above quote, the movement of God in affirmation, negation and synthesis – or rather, self-giving – is a movement of self-consciousness and love combined. The Spirit is eternal love – the love between the Father and the Son and our participation in it. How then is Küng’s reading of Hegel worked out in ecclesiology²¹?

21 Here I am talking specifically of Küng’s reading of a potential Hegelian ecclesiology ‘from above’ because it is far more useful for a more universalist re-reading of Rahner, instead of Küng’s own ecclesiology ‘from below’ (1987, p. 469). Indeed, Küng’s own ecclesiology seems to bear little in common with the lengthy exposition of Hegel that precedes it, instead he chooses to focus on a minimum of historical knowledge of Jesus and his message that we can gain from the gospels.

Having established this reading of Hegel, Küng departs from it without fully giving attention to what an ecclesiology based on Hegel's principles might look like; yet, it is useful for us to do so because the theoretical and theological points made thus far are valid and would be able to push Rahner's ecclesiology in a more universal direction. For Hegel, the qualitatively new has already been achieved – the eschaton has happened: the second coming of Christ to his Church in the Spirit – and the Church is now in the business of quantity or universalism. The role of philosophy is now to explain religion and the Church allows itself to be brought into a wider philosophical discourse – universalising its message of divine-human unity into a (Hegel's) final speculative form. The message of reconciliation, therefore, is really telling people what has already happened – how they are always already orientated to God in unity. Küng's critique of this position is that 'it justifies and deifies status quo' (1987, p. 407), however, we can see clear uses for this approach when it comes to Rahner's idea of the supernatural existential and recognise that Rahner would be open to the same critique from his more traditional contemporaries such as Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Rahner's beliefs in the universal salvific mission of God; the unity between God and his self-communication in man; self-interpretation of God in man; the overlap between philosophy and theology and the unity of reason and revelation are all present in what we have heard so far in Küng's reading. And, Küng's point of re-introducing the concept of love, rather than a cold knowledge, into Hegel's thought is clearly in agreement with the idea of existential ontological nature of knowledge in Rahner in the sense that all true knowledge of God has its start and end in love. Furthermore, the Church would no longer be obsessed with its own objectivity and authority, as has been our critique of Rahner but would rather be involved in a larger philosophical project, explaining itself through a diversity of means – both in overtly Christian and philosophical concepts, in order to show the unity of God and man. In doing so, the Rahnerian hope is to engender loving appreciation of the mystery of God that we encounter in our every-day existence. It is enough at this point to note the connections and potential for Küng's reading of Hegel for a different kind of ecclesiology, one that might be more fitting for Rahner's thought overall. However, we shall reserve a more general, critical and thorough discussion of these topics until the next section of this chapter, in which we will outline a critical reading of Rahner which results in a more universal ecclesiology inspired in part by Küng's reading of Hegel.

Having covered one solution to the theological problem – how to deal with christology and its resulting ecclesiology in the context of the 20th century, we shall go on to see yet another proposed

solution, that of Paul Tillich and his systematic thought on the nature of the Church, affected by existentialism as Rahner is, yet from a Protestant perspective. Tillich argues that the visible Church – that which claims to have faith in Jesus as the Christ – both represents and does not represent what he calls Spiritual Community: the community of those who have experienced New Being in Jesus Christ. Immediately, then, we can see the difference between what he calls the ‘essence’ of churches or religions as organisations which have ambiguities and differences of theology and the Church itself, a group of people within these visible communities which are unified at least in their experience of New Being through Jesus Christ. However, Tillich prefers to use the terms “latent” and “manifest” to instead of “visible” and “invisible” to describe this distinction because at times the visible Church does truly reflect the Church – the invisible sometimes becomes visible. We shall see if some statements of Tillich regarding this may shed some light on this relationship; he writes,

It is the Spiritual Community that is latent before an encounter with the central revelation and manifest after such an encounter. This “before” and “after” has a double meaning. It points to the world-historical event, the “basic kairos,” which has established the center of history once for all, and it refers to the continually recurring and derivative kairoi in which a religious cultural group has an existential encounter with the central event (1978, p. 153).

Yet, this becomes more complex in a following section where he writes,

There are youth alliances, friendship groups, education, artistic and political movements, and, even more obviously, individuals without any visible relation to each other in whom the Spiritual Presence’s impact is felt, although they are indifferent or hostile to all overt expressions of religion. They do not belong to a Church, but they are not excluded from the Spiritual Community...churches are not excluded from the Spiritual Community, but neither are their secular opponents. The churches²² represent the Spiritual Community in a manifest religious self-expression, whereas the others represent the Spiritual Community in secular latency (1978, p. 153).

²² Given the context, Tillich is specifically talking about churches that are in some sense ‘good’ in their orientation to God in Christ, not churches in general since he also describes some as demonic or profane, rather than expressions of the Spiritual Community (1978, p. 153).

The difference is that the term latent means “partly actual, partially potential” and “one cannot attribute latency to that which is merely potential, for example, the reception of Jesus...by those who have not yet encountered him” (1978, p. 153). The criterion for these latent groups becoming manifest is “the faith and love of the Christ” and these groups are “unable to actualize a radical self-negation and self-transformation as it is present as reality and symbol in the Cross of Christ” (1978, p. 154) because they only have a vague orientation towards ultimate mystery and loving concern rather than epistemological knowledge and, therefore, ontological experience of the cross. However, what Tillich fails to consider is if there is not actuality and potentiality mixed both in manifest churches which profess Christ and groups or individuals outside of the Church, given the disconnect between some churches and the Spiritual Community. In light of this, his system logically leads to the idea that there is the possibility of greater actuality in some non-Christian groups than many churches, leading to a much more equal ecclesiology: removing the problem of there being two-tiers of Christian experience which are clearly identifiable. This critique of Tillich's ecclesiology mimics our critique of Rahner: both potentially give validity to expressions of God's salvation outside of the Church but nonetheless fail to fully validate the historical expressions of God's universal salvific will that are not the visible Church. Furthermore, Tillich's context relies far more upon the reality of a cultural Christianity which has been rapidly retreating in western countries since his death. We could not as easily ascribe the term latent to the un-churched majority of people in the West today, growing up with little or no Christian theological experience or literacy.

Tillich who, like Rahner, teaches an implicit existential ontological relationship to mystery – or in Tillich's case: Being – concludes similarly to Rahner that the churches are still always going to be the highest guardians of truth, both epistemological and existential. In spite of the emphasis on the existential ontological nature of Christ, salvation and human existence and the universality of God's grace and in spite of Tillich's admission that even churches – presumably with the epistemological knowledge of Christ in their tradition – may fall into demonization and profanity. As such, Tillich is open to the same critique that we have employed against Rahner's ecclesiology: he creates a two-tier system of Christianity and is therefore of limited use to our discussion going forward other than to illustrate that this problem is common to existentialist Christian theologians – compared to a more radical thinker such as Küng.

Having looked at two useful and contemporary conversation partners that engaged with the same philosophical, cultural and theological contexts of Rahner, we will now go on to consider how to proceed towards a critical re-reading of Rahner's ecclesiology – bringing it into harmony with the universalising and existential ontological concepts emphasised in the rest of his thought, inspired in part by Küng's Hegelian explanation of Christian doctrines.

Universal Ecclesiology

The first ecclesiological principle I want to propose in re-reading Rahner is to maintain his main thesis that the main way of experiencing God is as mystery – finitude relating to the infinitude which surrounds, creates and sustains it. Likewise, there must be a universal ecclesiology – one self-conscious that it interprets mystery: it will never arrive at certainty but this not exclude the possibility of communities which foster the existentiell affirmation of mystery that we can achieve through love, hope and an authentic orientation towards our death. This approach would not take the form of a content-less existentialism: a commitment to nothing, rather, it would take the form of an appreciation of the diversity of symbols, beliefs and philosophies that can and do sustain an existentiell commitment to God, without regard to whether they are overtly Christian or not. In other words, the Church would attach a disclaimer to its message: we may be wrong but if our symbols, beliefs and sacraments help you understand and commit yourself to your experience of mystery in your every-day life then our theology is nonetheless helpful. In such a way, we can affirm Rahner's recognition that there is a diversity of valid theologies and, we might add, philosophies and ways of life which may not epistemologically correspond to the Christ event but which nonetheless existential ontologically find their ground in the unique person and universal historical-ontological event of Christ. Each diverse approach to God as mystery is always already included in the Christ event.

How are we to justify this openness on a theological basis? Surely this position devalues the Christ event by reducing it to one of many options and rendering it unimportant, or, worst, suggests that Christ's death was ineffectual or meaningless? On the contrary, such an approach truly recognises the grace of God in the sending of Christ as a gift and truly affirms – as previously discussed via Küng – the fullness of God as opposed to lack. If God sends Christ, who accomplishes salvation through his existential yes to God in his life, death, and resurrection for us, and then God requires that humanity responds in order to validate and be fulfilled by this gift then it makes the Christ

event no longer a gift by exposing a lack in God. Rather, if God in a superabundance of love – concern for the Other – gives his Son to be the ontological ground of all past and future relationships to him as mystery, in the sense that Christ in an existential ontological way changes history and humanity at large – orientating all humanity towards ultimately saying yes to God as mystery, even anonymously, then we may truly describe Christ as a true gift. God gives salvation to humanity out of concern for its ultimate good, not requiring anything other than its orientation to mystery which is always already universally constituted and effective due to the Christ event. God does not therefore require any more efficacy via the making explicit of himself as mystery in the Church – there is no gift beyond the life, death and resurrection of Christ, either in Church or sacrament. Therefore, if the Christian Church and all memory of the Christ event disappeared from the face of the earth due to some historical or political event, Christ would remain the universal ground of all orientation towards God and salvation would still have full efficacy and fulfilment among human beings.

However, this should not lead one to conclude that the Church and other expressions of human interpersonal relationships are not necessary; however, they are more necessary due to man than God. Rahner correctly argues that it is in the nature of man to question and search when he encounters God as mystery; however, it is the extra step that Rahner makes in saying that the visible Church is necessary in order to reach final validity, the true objectification of the faith or true interpersonal love. Rather, we are arguing that the Church, secular groups or even individual orientations which express an inner orientation towards mystery must remain in mystery – they never reach certainty, final validity or objectivity as Rahner claims; rather, they are all equally valid ways of responding to God's gift of Christ. Here we should be critical of Rahner's distinction between implicit and explicit relationships to God because it assumes that religions and philosophies, as well as the Church in general, are able to make the mystery of God explicit to some greater degree or foster a closer relationship to God than is generally possible without the visible Church. This assumes that those who have an implicit affirmation towards God remain ignorant or lesser even though all are constituted by the same Christ event. Instead, one can argue that all experiences of God in Christ are implicitly and explicitly taken up with the mystery of God – or, in Tillich's terms – we are always existing towards God in states of latency and manifestation, potentiality and actuality – both are always present even for the Church and its members. To conclude, all humans are always tied up in the endless questioning and encounter with mystery, and, as one conclusion is reached another question emerges ad infinitum, regardless if this is done in

group or individually, within visible Christianity or outside of it.

The principles of ecclesiology I have argued for thus far (the universal salvific and effective will of God; the nature of the Christ event as gift requiring nothing; and the persistence of mystery throughout all experiences and epistemological explanations of God), can lead us to solving one of Rahner's main problems— that of a two-tier Christianity. If one accepts these principles then there can be no superiority of any subset of humanity, including the visible Church, over those who love God but do not know what they love. This interpretation would allow for the helpful idea that an anonymous Christian has the same potential to have not only experience of God as mystery but some appropriate interpretation of that mystery which would be equally valid to that of the traditional Christian because both are constituted upon the same ground of the gift of the Christ event and God's universal salvific will is effective for both of them – nothing is required of them because it has already been required of and accomplished by Christ. Furthermore, our interpretation destroys the distinction between the anonymous and explicit Christian: there are simply different people all constituted and directed by the Christ-event in different ways – some towards individual or even atheistic questionings of mystery and some towards ecclesial and theological questionings of mystery. Equality and existential freedom is re-established in both ontological and epistemological terms between anonymous and explicit Christians.

We must duly be critical of Rahner's idea that true or the highest expressions of love can only be found in the Christian ecclesia. Firstly, his use of Being-in-the-world assumes that we are thrown into interpersonal relationships both towards God and God through the Other from the moment we are born; furthermore, we can assume that Christians do not have a special ability to love or be loved that would set them apart from humanity at large, unless one wanted to argue that the Spirit as love is not common to all humanity. This would be a problematic idea in the context of Rahner's theology and theology in general as it would mean that everyone had the experience of mystery but only a few had the experience of the Spirit in order to guide their experience of mystery. Again, this situation would be at odds with the universal salvific will of God as expressed in the Christ event, in which God's love was poured out – gifted – for all. Lastly, Christ is the ground of all love and his death and resurrection being effective for all means that knowing Christ in one's love for the Other cannot be limited to a certain group of people in a certain location at a certain time. We can

therefore agree that loving interpersonal relationships²³ are a reality for all and, as such, individuals and groups outside of the Church and their orientation towards God are always already constituted within interpersonal relationships. Again, this removes the privileged place of the visible Church.

One possible way of expressing this notion better than Rahner himself does – the language of implicit and explicit being problematic in its suggestion of final conclusions and validities – is through a Rahnerian reading of Marion's saturated phenomenon, modified in the sense that the saturation must appear and occur in the every-day, constituting its own conditions for being known in our 'hearing' of the love of God in the Other. Marion in speaking of his concept of the saturated phenomenon writes,

What sort of phenomena might this be? It includes all the phenomena that exceed and overwhelm the ego and its horizons, not just momentarily but permanently. To say that they give rise to an infinite hermeneutic is to say that the Other is never reducible to the same, that no language or conceptuality can ever do full justice to what is given (Marion, 1998 cited in Westphal, 2013, p. 539).

Westphal summarises, “Marion calls such phenomena saturated because they give more to intuition than conceptuality can capture or language express” (2013, p. 539).

For Rahner, the place of this saturated phenomena is the every-day experience of love and mystery that we encounter in the Other – who we cannot define, contain or express fully. There is never a sense of lack in the approach of Rahner: man is flooded with the superabundance of God's self-communication in himself and through human community which resists all definitive conclusions. Furthermore, this does not occur as it does for Marion in a transfiguration experience in which we encounter the Word, it occurs in the every-day interpersonal relationships for Rahner: the contrast between our finitude and the infinite mystery of God. As Hearers we are not only encountered by a superabundance of options – quantitative – but we have an encounter with something altogether qualitatively different – saturating to the extent that the idea of mystery is preserved; no matter how much you interpret it in the context of the Church or interpersonal relationships you never get closer to mystery than anyone else. This re-reading of Marion's idea establishes equality between

23 This claim is still true even if, hypothetically, the only loving relationship in a person's life is that of the Trinity towards them.

categorical and anonymous Christianity and shows how phenomenologically impossible it is for the Church to be in an epistemological position of privilege because it does not have a monopoly on the every-day.

As has already been suggested by reading Hegel as a prophet in Rahner's terms and by our discussion of Küng's view of Hegel, I am also intending to re-read Rahner in conversation with Hegel. Firstly, as has been suggested: the prophet in Rahner's terms makes the implicit explicit and is certain that they are in some way communicating for the divine – an understanding that we applied to Hegel. Hegel can be said to be self-consciously certain, indeed, his system leaves little left to the idea of uncertainty and mystery which is under discussion; and, I have argued that his system is useful for the existential modes that Rahner emphasises. Beyond this, however, can we still make some use of his ideas in relation to Rahner, and if so, in what way?

Firstly, there is a divine-human unity in Rahner which works itself out as God's self-communication of himself to man – God himself being the gift – then as Rahner states: "God interpreting God" (1986, p. 158) in man's search for meaning in light of mystery. Here we find an inter-trinitarian love: a knowing-love along the lines that Küng would argue for, adding love back into Hegel's concept of Spirit. The love of the Father is extended to his antithesis in Christ (and his body, the Church) through his Spirit – which is eternal love. Therefore, the phenomenological encounter between man and God as mystery is always already christological in the sense that God's love as Father is directed towards humanity in the Son; to experience the saturated phenomenon is a divine-human moment of unity to the extent that Rahner can view it in a circular notion – similarly to Hegel – of God's endless return to himself. Here we agree with Küng's reading of Hegel and the point in general that man must be divinized to an extent: Christ must be universalised existentially ontologically to the whole of creation, and, indeed, this is what is accomplished at the resurrection. Man, then, is an expression of this love and of God's return to himself in his encounter with the saturated phenomenon in his every-day life. Each and every disposition of love, hope and authenticity towards death is therefore always already a knowing-loving response to the saturated phenomenon of God, enabled not only in that God is greater than man but that God has constituted man through the creation and the reconciliation of the Christ-event to participate in the love between the Father and the Son. As such, we agree with Küng's point of departure with Hegel: the self-consciousness of God cannot be unfolded only to produce epistemological revelation – reason becoming actual in the world; rather, if it is to be truly Christian, the encounter between God, the

God-man and those included in God-man – humanity – must necessarily be a loving encounter, just as knowing and love are united in the New Testament (1987, p. 240). I am not arguing that God has lack and must gain knowledge of itself through us nor develop through us, but rather, returns to himself in love through us. In this way he remains loving mystery from the human perspective, qualitatively different from us – remaining God.

On this point one can absolutely agree with Küng's claim that the Church lost the sense of the dynamic God: one who suffers in his Son and together with humanity; one who truly loves that which he has created; one who changes and becomes reconciled to himself through the drama of the crucifixion, resurrection and universal community of the Spirit. This is not in Hegel's sense of becoming self-consciously knowledgeable of himself but, rather, self-consciously loving towards humanity in himself. Hegel is finding other analogical language other than 'Father' and 'Son' to describe this movement but that in no sense wholly invalidates his project from our standpoint of Christian theology because the analogical language of 'Father' and 'Son' points towards God's loving movement towards himself and humanity in himself. A movement which could likewise be described in other terms, such as 'Affirmation' and 'Negation'. As Küng writes "It is said to be Hegel's intention to have such expression as "Father"...understood in a speculative sense – but is not even traditional theology obliged to understand these words analogically (indeed, as more dissimilar than similar to the object of comparison) and therefore to sublimate their meaning per viam affirmationis, negationis et supereminetiae?" (1987, p. 226)

Given this re-interpretation of Hegel through Küng as applied to Rahner, what more may one say about Rahner's category of the prophet which we earlier applied to Hegel? Simply, if the prophet's role is not to make that which is implicit explicit then its purpose must be directed towards the greater knowing: that of a knowing love between humanity and God. Through the prophet we are not called to resolve mystery but called to know mystery in love – love that which saturates us and leaves us mystified by the encounter. Only in this sense can Hegel, and other forms of philosophy, truly embrace God as mystery, responding in the Rahnerian terms of faith, hope and love. The message addressed to Rahner's Hearer becomes one of trinitarian love calling the Hearer to commit existentially to the unknown God, and, in this movement, God loves his Son through the Spirit – inclusive of his Son's mystical body, the Church – both visible and anonymous.

How then are we to define the Church, having departed from Rahner's definition of an official ecclesial witness in historic continuity with the first community established by Jesus himself? Continuing with our concept that there is equality between anonymous and explicit Christians rooted in the nature of the Christ event as gift – requiring nothing extra; their experience of the saturated phenomenon of mystery and their inclusion in the inter-trinitarian loving knowledge of God²⁴, then we must define the Church much more broadly. Keeping in mind that the goal in this whole exercise to re-construct elements of Rahner's thought that are exclusionary towards anonymous Christians, any definition of Church must produce unity and equality between those who explicitly identify as Christians and those who do not. The Church cannot be defined on the basis of doctrine or practice or even physical proximity but rather must be understood on the basis of the mystical body of Christ – those grafted in to the trinitarian love of God by the Christ event. It is existential ontological disposition towards mystery which constitutes the ecclesia and not explicit and self-conscious belief; therefore, there is no minimum standard as all standards have already been met in Christ and received as a gift.

One could point to the verse, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (Matthew 18:20)”, and by “in my name” understand not the explicit naming of Christ by those gathered but rather who are named by Christ in love as his own body through his work on the cross. Humanity as a whole – who consequently know him in the saturated phenomena of every-day living. In this sense I am using the capitalised form – Church – intentionally: a universalised and invisible Church yet one that cannot be described as latent versus manifest as in Tillich precisely because those in the Church will be manifesting their disposition towards God in loving action, the spreading of hope and authentic living in the face of death. The way that this manifestation may take place may indeed be within churches but it also may be within secular groups, atheist groups or simply in ‘individual’ lives.

Only by interpreting the body of Christ as universal can one have a true universal Christian hope that we are united with all the living and the dead – not leaving humanity or escaping humanity through the Church but rather teaching that all humans are Hearers of the hopeful message of Christ's death and resurrection for them. Without this universalism, Christian love would easily slip into a false love and hope with separation and superiority at its heart: we are separate from those outside of the Church – anonymous Christians or not – because they do not have the same fullness

²⁴ Implicit in all of this is a suggestion towards soteriological universalism.

of hope that we have nor can we love them as equals in the body of Christ. Only by embracing the fullness of the universal salvific will of God can we claim to truly believe that all who embrace love, hope and authenticity towards death are truly recipients of God's revelation.

Our project at this point runs into the same problem as all universalism; namely, the problem of evil. What of those who do not love, have no hope and live superficially – given to “idle talk” and “falling” in Heideggerian terms – or, indeed those who perpetrate acts of evil²⁵. In line with the rest of Rahner’s project, we have to simply say that man as the self-communication of God is also himself mystery and that all love, hope and authenticity are interdependent dispositions all relating to mystery for this reason. Therefore, just as we are unable to grasp the saturated phenomena of God, we are likewise unable to categorise humanity simply into those who are saved and lost, evil and good. In Christian terms, one accepts one’s limitations as Rahner would encourage, leaving such questions of individual salvation and goodness – that of being good enough for salvation – up to the judgement of God whilst at the same time knowing that God as judge has spoken in the gift of his Son and, therefore, one has cause for supreme optimism in this matter.

As Küng argued via Hegel: explicit faith in Christ – and the churches as the official witnesses to this – can be understood as a necessary but transitory phase: one which moves towards a universalism of the divine-human relationship from Christ to the Church and ultimately to the whole of humanity (1987, p. 212). However, it is possible that the visible Church remains part of the wider discourse and universalisation – not being swallowed up into a universal reconciliation, similarly to how individuals do not disappear into the collective. Likewise, for us as for Hegel, the name of Christ is likely to remain unique – the one who convinces us of the divine-human unity in history, resisting being swallowed up into an ahistorical understanding of universal revelation.

Another strong argument against my thesis is that although society at large may foster hope in the face of finitude and death, respect and solidarity with those who have died in anticipation of one's own death and love towards one's neighbour, nonetheless, only in the Church and its narrative of God dying is this truly realised in history. Therefore, only the Church truly celebrates hope, love and death in their fullness because God has made it normative for humans – it is the way things are

²⁵ Hegel too believed in evil as a self-centred estrangement of the individual from the absolute which is ultimately overcome through our reconciliation or synthesis in Christ; again, Küng relates this to the Christian background of Hegel’s system (1987, p. 216). Rahner likewise has a conception of evil, describing it as the co-conditioning of guilt which can cause some partial and seemingly temporary rejection of God, but he does not emphasise this in *Foundations* or his thought in general due to his theological optimism.

according to Christ and only the Church truly knows and preaches this. However, this argument is not without its faults. Firstly, it downplays the role of universal orientation towards mystery – which is encountered by everyone in their experience of the death of others; love of neighbour and of seeking hope in the face of evil; and the fact that for Rahner this orientation towards mystery will always be instantiated in history somehow, even if not in the Church. Revelation is always taking place and is always already in history. It would be difficult to argue based on Rahner's idea of mystery that only the Christian Church – and even the Roman Catholic Church more particularly – is truly giving the fullest expression to the every-day experience of love and death that all encounter. Love, hope and death are all normative for humanity because they represent and encounter mystery, which demands a decision for or against God universally – both inside and outside of the Church.

A universal notion of the Church will then substantially change the course of interpretation of Rahner; if a visible witness is not necessary then what is the role of the visible Church in relation to the Church of which it is a part; and what might the relationship be between the Church and other groups or individuals? Küng in talking of the ultimate destiny of the Church in Hegelian Christianity writes,

The deepest and ultimate purpose of the philosophy of religion is that it points not to, but beyond itself. Not that this discipline does not contain the ultimate and entire truth, but simply that it does not contain it in its definitive and unsurpassable form...quite apart from the fact that religion offers revelation to everyone while the philosophical penetration of revelation can only be grasped by a small elite, Hegel insists that religion continue to be regarded as an absolute state of knowledge...it is only the form in which this content is present in religion that differs from the way in which it is present in Philosophy. Philosophy, then, does not create a new truth or new revelation, but rather aims to reflect on and to deepen actual religion (1987, pp. 374-375).

Hegel is arguing for philosophy to take over as the master discourse, quite contrary to the idea that theology is the 'Queen of the Sciences'. Although we should not go this far due to the very problem that Hegel mentions – philosophy being for an elite few – might we still re-imagine the relationship between theology and philosophy as being a more appropriate discourse for the visible Church of today to be taking part in? One could argue that this is a useful way forward given the increasingly

specialised realm of theology in the academy – done outside the bounds of Churches; the decline of Christianity as a social, religious and political force in the West; and the lack of credibility of the idea of an official ecclesial witness that we have established. There is a clear need for a re-engagement between theology and philosophy which Rahner recognised as an issue in his day, confessing that theology was no longer dealing with the issues in people’s lives and that anonymous Christianity would increasingly be the majority Christianity, at least in the west (Lennan, 1997, p. 178). As we have argued, the re-engagement should be one in which all Hearers are equal, emphasising interpersonal but not necessarily ecclesial relationships, open to all theologies and philosophies which promote love, hope and authenticity – understanding that they too are constituted on the ground of Christ’s resurrection.

Ultimately, we are re-interpreting Rahner according to his own view on the ‘interlocking of philosophy and theology’, he writes “Hence theology itself implies a philosophical anthropology which enables this message of grace to be accepted in a really philosophical and reasonable way, and which gives an account of it in a humanly possible way” (1986, p. 25). Contrary to this, we are claiming that both philosophy and theology have the potential to inform humanity of what they truly are because both theology and philosophy are valid ways of arriving at a disposition of faith, hope and love, and that theology has no privilege in this regard, not in spite of but precisely because of the gift given to us in Jesus Christ. A gift which does not require itself to be known explicitly but rather offers Jesus as the ontological ground which enables one to live. Philosophical and theological explorations of this, either collectively or individually, serve the purpose of enabling humanity’s endless confrontations and interpretations with God as the saturated phenomenon. A process which never arrives at a definitive conclusion nor the corresponding privilege of theology and the Church that Rahner suggests.

Conclusion

My argument until this point lends itself as a justification for a new kind of theology – one which led us to re-reading Rahner in the perspective of Hegel’s philosophy as a means of universalising Christianity and its message. The nature of the gift that God gives us in Christ – requiring nothing in return out of an abundance of love – should also lead the visible Church to a similar discourse of gratuity: freeing itself from the fear of decline in order to promote a universal message of existential ontological relevance, which may in turn require nothing of people towards itself as an institution but rather turn people towards their own experience of mystery, even to the institution’s detriment²⁶. If the message can therefore reach the universal Church – the whole of humanity – in such a way that it promotes love, hope and authenticity in the light of death, then this should be done, even in philosophical rather than theological terms.

In doing so, I am not suggesting that the visible Church gives up the command to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20). Rather, I am arguing the opposite. The reason that the Church can go to all nations and baptise people in the name of God is because they are already named by God in Christ with their own equally valid understandings of what it is to live authentically towards God as mystery. The Church can preach the gospel to anonymous sisters and brothers in a fullness of love without requiring their assent or visible participation in return, just as God freely gives his Son out of a superabundance of love. Such a disposition of love would transform Rahner's idea of the Church from a privileged visible institution into a life-giving sacrificial witness to its Lord, able to engage with other groups – both religious and non – on the grounds that all are equally encompassed and informed by Christ's salvation instead of trying to make up a perceived lack in itself. This would result in individuals and groups being affirmed in their unique and contextual sense of the knowledge of God without being forced into a rigid visible institution which considers itself above all other expressions of truth. Through this way of love which fully recognises God in the mystery of the humanity, the visible Church has a prosperous future in a pluralistic world.

²⁶ As previously discussed, one of the key markers of love for Rahner is the willingness to suffer loss for the Other.

Bibliography

von Balthasar, H. U., 1992. *The theology of Karl Barth: exposition and interpretation*. Translated from German by E. T. Oakes. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

Beiser, F. C., 1993. "Introduction: Hegel and the problem of metaphysics" in Beiser, F. C., Ed., 1993. *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Beiser, F. C., 2005. *Hegel*. London: Routledge.

Burbidge, J., 1993. "Hegel's conception of logic" in Beiser, F. C., Ed., 1993. *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burke, P., 2002. *Reinterpreting Rahner: A critical study of his major themes*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Caputo, J. D., Scanlon, M. J., 1999. "Introduction: Apology for the Impossible: Religion and Postmodernism" in Caputo, J. D., Scanlon, M. J., Eds., 1999. *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Conway, E., 1993. *The Anonymous Christian – a relativized Christianity*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Craig-Snell, S., 2008. *Silence, Love, and Death: Saying "Yes" to God in the Theology of Karl Rahner*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.

Desmond, W., 2003. *Hegel's God: A counterfeit Double?* Aldershot: Ashgate.

DiNoia OP, J. A., 1989. "Karl Rahner" in Ford, D. F., Ed., 1989. *The Modern Theologians: An introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century, Volume I*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Endean, P., 2005. "Has Rahnerian theology a future?" in Marmion D., Hines, M. E., Eds. 2005. *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Guyer, P., 2006. *Kant*. London: Routledge.

Hegel, G. W. F. 1895. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Volume 1*. Translated from German by E. B. Speirs and J. B. Sanderson. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.

Hegel, G. W. F., 1956. *The Philosophy of History*. Translated from German by J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publications.

Hegel, G. W. F., 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Heidegger, M., 1962. *Being and Time*. Translated from German by J. MacQuarrie & E. Robinson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hodgson, P. C., 2005. *Hegel and Christian theology: a reading of the lectures on the philosophy of religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jamros SJ, D. P., 1995. "Hegel on the Incarnation: Unique or Universal". *Theological Studies*, 56, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishing.

Jeanrond, W. G., 2010. "Rahner's Theological Method and a Theology of Love" in Conway, P., Ryan, F., 2010. *Karl Rahner: Theologian for the Twenty-first Century*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Jeanrond, W. G., 2010. *A Theology of Love*. London: T & T Clark.

Kerr, F., 2007. *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Küng, H., 1987. *The Incarnation of God: An Introduction to Hegel's Theological Thought as Prolegomena to a Future christology*. Translated from German by J. R. Stephenson. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Lehmann, K. 1975. "Transcendence" in Rahner, K., Ed., 1975. *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. Translated from German by J. Griffiths, F. McDonagh, and D. Smith. London: Burns & Oates.

Lennan, R., 1995. *The ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

O' Donnell SJ, J., 1992. *Hans Urs von Balthasar*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.

Pattison, G., 2013. *Heidegger on Death: A critical theological essay*. Surrey: Ashgate.

Polt, R., 1999. *Heidegger: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Purcell, M., 2005. "Rahner amid modernity and post-modernity" in Marmion D., Hines, M. E., Eds. 2005. *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rahner, K., 1961. *On the Theology of Death*. Translated from German by C. H. Henkey. Freiburg: Herder and Herder.

Rahner, K., 1975. "Transcendental Theology" in Rahner, K., Ed., 1975. *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. Translated from German by J. Griffiths, F. McDonagh, and D. Smith. London: Burns & Oates.

Rahner, K., 1975. "Death" in Rahner, K., Ed., 1975. *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. Translated from German by J. Griffiths, F. McDonagh, and D. Smith. London: Burns & Oates.

Rahner, K., 1986. *Foundations of Christian Faith: An introduction to the idea of Christianity*. Translated from German by W. V. Dych. New York: Crossroad.

Rahner, K., 2005. "Experiences of a Catholic theologian" in Marmion D., Hines, M. E., Eds. 2005. *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reardon, B. M. G., 1977. *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*. London: Macmillan.

Regan, E. 2010. "Not Merely the Cognitive Subject: Rahner's Theological Anthropology" in Conway, P., Ryan, F., 2010. *Karl Rahner: Theologian for the Twenty-first Century*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Riches, J., 1989. "Hans Urs von Balthasar" in Ford, D. F., Ed., 1989. *The Modern Theologians: An introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century, Volume I*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

MacQuarrie, J., 1972. *Existentialism*. London: Hutchinson.

Marion, J., 2016. *Givenness and Revelation*. Translated from French by S. E. Lewis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McCarney, J. 2000. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel on History*. London: Routledge.

Milbank, J., 1990. *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Mulhall, S., 1996. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time*. London: Routledge.

Scanlon, M. J., 1999. "A Deconstruction of Religion: On Derrida and Rahner" in Caputo, J. D., Scanlon, M. J., Eds., 1999. *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Schleiermacher, F., 1928. *The Christian Faith*. Edited by H. R. Mackintosh & J. S. Stewart. Translated from German. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Sheehan, T., 1987. *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Sheehan T., 2005. "Rahner's transcendental project" in Marmion D., Hines, M. E., Eds. 2005. *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, C., 1975. *Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Bible: New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized), 1995. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tillich, P., 1978. *Systematic Theology, Volume three*. London: SCM Press.

Westphal, M., 2013. "Phenomenology" in Pattison, G., Adams, N., Ward, G., Eds., 2013. *The Oxford handbook of theology and modern European thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.