

**KARL RAHNER: THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY** by Karen Kilby, *Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, London, 2004, Pp. ix + 160, £15.99 pbk*

Foundationalism makes the refutation of scepticism a central concern of those disciplines influenced by its methodology. Whilst philosophical foundationalism responds to the problem of general scepticism, theological foundationalism answers a question of particular scepticism, suggesting that theological beliefs are justified by inference from non-theological foundational beliefs, themselves justified independently of theology. Since Karl Rahner's theology is often regarded as completely or at least partially dependent upon his philosophy (a non-theological foundation) for its justification, Karen Kilby's contention that Rahner's theology is best read non-foundationally is significant for the assessment of that theology.

Kilby advances her thesis through argument and exposition. Chapter one examines foundationalism and non-foundationalism in both philosophy and theology. Chapter two discusses *Spirit in the World* and offers a critique of Rahner's philosophical arguments for the *Vorgriff auf esse*. Chapter three examines the senses of 'transcendental' in Rahner's thought and criticizes the efficacy of transcendental arguments for achieving their purported aim. Chapter four considers the relationship between *Hearer of the Word* and the supernatural existential arguing that they are incompatible. Chapter five delineates a non-foundationalist account of Rahner's theology and argues for its superiority to semi-foundationalist alternatives. Chapter six defends Kilby's account from a number of objections. Chapter seven considers the anonymous Christian as an example of how a non-foundationalist account of Rahner's theology is able to offer a better interpretation of one of Rahner's most contentious doctrines than its foundationalist rivals can offer.

Kilby's argument depends on an implicit contrast between the differing capacities of foundationalist and non-foundationalist accounts of Rahner's theology to overcome a number of difficulties identified in chapters two to five. A non-foundationalist account of Rahner's theology is to be preferred because: (i) since on such an account Rahner's theology is not dependent upon his philosophy for its justification, the attacks Kilby (and others) make on Rahner's philosophical account of the *Vorgriff* become superfluous. (ii) The epistemic constraints affecting transcendental arguments undermine foundationalist accounts of Rahner's theology but not non-foundationalist accounts. (iii) A non-foundationalist account of Rahner's theology can offer a better explanation of the discrepancies Kilby identifies between *Hearer of the Word* and the supernatural existential. (iv) A non-foundationalist reading can offer a more convincing explanation of the tension existing between the status of Rahner's

transcendental method and the pluralism he identifies in philosophy and theology.

The crucial step in Kilby's argument is (ii) which deserves further comment. It is developed in chapters three and five and depends on two principles: one logical- that a valid argument is one in which it is not possible for the argument's premises to be true and its conclusion false, the other epistemic- that a transcendental argument of the kind Rahner employs cannot be known to be valid, only consistent.

Consider the argument 'all men are mortal, therefore some man is mortal.' The conclusion is consistent with the premise, however the argument is invalid because the premise 'all men are mortal' is equivalent to 'nothing is a man and not mortal' (its double negation) which is itself consistent with there being no existent men. That being the case, there is a possibility where the premise is true and the conclusion false, hence the argument must be invalid. Now the same principle will hold for a transcendental argument, entailing that proving the validity of such an argument will necessitate ruling out any possibility where the premises are true and the conclusion false. Since however one could at best rule out only those possibilities that one could imagine, it would remain conceivable that there were unimagined possibilities that could refute the conclusion of a transcendental argument. Moreover, even if one could demonstrate that all imaginable possibilities had been considered, it would remain the case that there might be unimaginable possibilities (that is unimaginable given the conceptual scheme under consideration) which could refute the conclusion of a transcendental argument. Thus regardless of whether a particular transcendental argument was valid or not, the most one could know was that its conclusion was consistent with its premises, since one could never rule out there being a possibility that the premises were true and the conclusion false.

Given that Kilby offers a theological transcendental argument for the *Vorgriff* (p. 77) the previous result is amenable to a non-foundationalist account because not having made the refutation of scepticism its central concern, it need not be alarmed by the failure of transcendental arguments to offer the level of certitude seemingly required to refute the sceptic. Furthermore, since the non-foundationalist reading only claims to be the best way to read Rahner, not the only way, the epistemic constraints affecting transcendental arguments suit its purposes well. They allow at least two competing accounts of Rahner's theology, both consistent but neither valid, with the superiority of one to be decided on the basis of the considerations Kilby adduces in (i), (iii) and (iv).

Kilby's book deserves a wide readership. By delineating a non-foundationalist account of Rahner's theology, it makes a

useful contribution to the assessment of that theology and ought to encourage those not convinced by the philosophy to reassess the theology.

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**ETHICS AND THEOLOGICAL DISCLOSURES: THE THOUGHT OF ROBERT SOKOLOWSKI** edited by **Guy Mansini OSB** and **James G. Hart**, *The Catholic University of America Press*, Washington D.C., 2003, Pp. xviii + 198, \$ 69.95

This second series of essays in honour of Robert Sokolowski is dedicated to his ethical and theological work rather than to his more technical phenomenological writings. We begin with three essays on Sokolowski's recent development of Aristotle's ideas on friendship: Drummond discusses how difficulties about judging one's own case shed light on the relationship between friendship and justice and on Aristotle's remark that when people are friends they have no need of justice; friends, note, not cronies. Cobb-Stevens and Mansini develop Sokolowski's phenomenological analysis of friendship, raising questions about why Aristotle says so little (despite Plato) about *eros* (p. 25), about what specifically makes an action a moral action and about the transformation of friendship by the theological virtue of charity. Is it possible to make sense, on revised Aristotelian (and Thomistic) lines, of the notion that we can become friends of God?

We then move more explicitly in a phenomenological direction to perhaps the central theme of this book, namely what Sokolowski calls 'the theology of disclosure'. Sokolowski has introduced this phrase to refer to a type of theological thinking – distinct from both historical and speculative (scholastic) theology – whereby one can examine the way God discloses himself to us. The last essay in the collection is by Sokolowski himself enquiring how such an approach can be applied to the way Christ (in the New Testament) reveals something of the nature of the Trinity. Sokolowski recognizes that this is a rather strange expansion of the phenomenological method, but seems to suggest that it works on some sort of analogy to the analysis by Husserl and his successors of the appearances of physical objects.

Several of the essays deal with the relationship between this theology of disclosure – disclosing a phenomenon by its 'presences' and 'absences' – and what Sokolowski has called the Christian distinction: a philosophical representation of the peculiarly Christian thesis, so important in patristic times (in contrast, that is, to various