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Paul Crowley, ed. *Rahner beyond Rahner: A Great Theologian Encounters the Pacific Rim.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. xx + 171 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7425-4963-0.

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Rahner in a Global Context

The essays in this book were papers presented at a conference ("Karl Rahner at the Pacific Rim") held at Santa Clara University (California) in October 2004, honoring the centennial of Rahner's birth. As one of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians in the twentieth century, Rahner was a major contributor to the theological ideas that influenced the work of Vatican II. Although initially not a *peritus*, or official theological consultant at the Council, his input was met with nearly universal respect and admiration. Censored and silenced by Church authorities before the Council (as were John Courtney Murray and Yves Congar, among others), Rahner had no illusions about the lived experience of Christianity in its institutional manifestation. Since the Council his theology has become highly influential in both ecclesiastical and academic circles who stress the need for ongoing "aggiornamento" in the Church.

While Rahner was helping to bring the Roman Catholic Church into the modern world, the world itself was becoming post-modern; for both Rahner's early critics and his more recent ones, Rahner is "too modern"–too German in his use of transcendental philosophy and subjectivity, too Eurocentric (although Rahner himself wrote of the coming of a "world Church"), too prone to universalizing in an intellectual milieu that had come to emphasize historical particularity and to prize social constructions and intersubjectivity over abstract determinations of consciousness.

Is Rahner a relic of a vestigial Enlightenment mentality? Are his theological insights relegated to what appears in retrospect to be a period of naïve ecclesiastical optimism? Or are there resources for ongoing theological work in a more global context? These are the questions that the contributors to *Rahner beyond Rahner* seek to address. These same questions are issues among Rahner scholars in general, and the essays reflect this.

There are twelve essays, plus an introduction and an afterward by the editor. The essays vary in length (from 3 to 19 pages), breadth (from the ecclesiastical concerns of Catholics in the United States to an interest in transcendence among Chinese philosophers), and depth (from a brief introduction to possible questions, to more searching explorations of Rahnerian themes). These variations in length, topics, and scholarly style render the book as a whole somewhat uneven in thematic unity and overall quality.

They are arranged in three groups of four each; however, there is not much shared discourse among them, although there are notable exceptions. In the opening essay ("Rahner Beyond Rahner: A Comparative Theologian's Reflections on *Theological Investigations* XVIII"), Francis Clooney mines some of Rahner's texts to find particular references to other religions. Pace criticisms of Rahner's overly ambitious transcendental universality, Clooney argues that it is Rahner's well-known explicitly christocentric commitments that offer the most important–and most fruitful–starting points for interreligious exploration. Rahner himself would want to hand off such questions to "philosophers of religion," but in Clooney's model, comparative theology requires scholars well versed in their own traditions, and willing to also acquire expertise in another. Thomas Sheehan's essay, "The Body as Blessing," wants to use Rahner's philosophical theological anthropology as a basis for a global dialogue on meaning and value, whereas Catherine Bell's response in "Constraints on the Theological Absorption of Plurality" argues that philosophical approaches can be just as limiting and triumphalistic as theological ones.

These three positions are each microcosms of the varied receptions of Rahner currently regnant in the academy: (1) Rahner's particularity as a Christian theologian offers possibilities he himself did not always recognize; (2) Rahner's anthrolopology offers the possibility for an inclusive "unity in diversity" understanding of pluralism; (3) Rahner's entire project is too aligned with

modernity and its too-easy assumption of individualism and universality to be a helpful resource in a post-modern world. Other essays offer other variations on the above themes, such as Nancy Pineda-Madrid's critique of Rahner's individualistic understanding of symbol (which coincides with the third reception of Rahner's work), and Robert Lasalle-Klein's invocation of Ignacio Ellacuria's expansive application of Rahnerian categories to corporate entities, such as cultures (which coincides with the first reception of Rahner's work).

The uneven quality of the book is especially notable in what it counts as the "Pacific rim." The array of topics and cultures examined seems altogether scattered. Pineda-Madrid's essay is about the feminist re-imaging of the Guadalupe symbol in Mexican culture; Lois Malcolm's companion piece on Rahner's theology of the Cross is a fine essay, but at least as applicable to suffering in general as to anything specific about the Mexican context. The clergy sexual abuse crisis in the United States is included, on the grounds that it is a major concern in California. While everything in the book is related to countries with a Pacific Ocean coastline, the real unifying theme of the book has little to do with geography, and much more to do with reading Rahner in a global *and* American context–one that deals with cultural pluralism and the "new economy." Somewhat surprisingly, Rahner's idea of gnoseological concupiscence–his belief that different ways of knowing in the contemporary world have become fragmented and practically incongruent with each other–receives no sustained attention. This is regrettable, in the light of Rahner's repeated admonitions that Catholic theology in the twenty-first century would need to go beyond the traditional methods of European theological inquiry, that the theology of his time and place would need to be greatly expanded for a Church that was increasingly a "world Church." To do justice to that vision, *Rahner beyond Rahner* is a necessary if somewhat halting first step; it is time to go beyond what is offered here.

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