

HUSSERL, RAHNER, AND THEIR TRANSCENDENTAL(S): TRANSCENDENTALITY, INTERSUBJECTIVITY, AND ORIGINAL SIN

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I. INTRODUCTION

Karl Rahner's philosophical and theological project is often read either in light of Immanuel Kant's transcendental philosophy, via Joseph Maréchal, or Martin Heidegger's phenomenology. These approaches are useful, but do not tell the whole story. It is true that Rahner draws on these two authors. He even declares that 'Martin Heidegger was the only teacher for whom [he] developed the respect that a disciple has for a great master'.¹ However, despite the unmistakable influences of these two philosophers, Rahner always insisted that he was his own man. He was an independent thinker. In fact, when later in life he was asked what his philosophy was, he replied: 'I do not have a philosophy'.² This does not mean that he was not influenced by the philosophies of his time. What Rahner is saying, however, is that he took in this philosophical *Zeitgeist* without subscribing to one particular philosophy.

In light of Rahner's own comments, it would be reductive to read his philosophical thinking exclusively in light of Kant and Heidegger. Connections can be made between Rahner and other important philosophers of his time. One philosopher often neglected in evaluations of Rahner's thinking is Edmund Husserl. When Rahner went to Freiburg to study philosophy in 1934, phenomenology was still very much influenced by the thought of its founder, and when he was there, Rahner took a seminar on Husserl. Moreover, the respective projects of Rahner and Husserl share much in common. Both try to develop a transcendental project—understood, in the Kantian sense, as the study of the conditions of possibility of knowledge and experience—and both build their project on the centrality of the ego or the subject.³ Because of an exclusive

¹Karl Rahner et al., *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965-1982* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 257. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of Husserl's and Rahner's texts from German are mine. When the reference to the German work is not provided, it is implied that the English translation is being used.

²Karl Rahner quoted in William V. Dych, *Karl Rahner, Outstanding Christian Thinkers* (London: Continuum, 2000), 18.

³According to Kant, the transcendental is all knowledge 'which is occupied not so much with objects as *with the mode of our knowledge of objects* insofar as this *mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori*' (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B25, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, Reissued edition [Basingstoke, Hampshire New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007], 59). My emphases. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B122, 123-124; B197/A158, 194; Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004).

emphasis on Kant and Heidegger, these possible connections between Rahner and Husserl have remained unstudied.

Having similar approaches, the projects of Rahner and Husserl also face similar difficulties. Both thinkers are aware that it is difficult for a transcendental project that starts and ends with the question of the subject to avoid being solipsistic. Transcendental projects—whether philosophical or theological—are doomed to fall into some form of solipsism. This is the reason why intersubjectivity becomes an important question for both Husserl and Rahner. Both try to address this question: Husserl in his fifth *Cartesian Meditation* and Rahner in his *Foundations of Christian Faith*. Both seek a way to reconcile transcendental with intersubjectivity. However, as we shall see, although their questions are similar, their answers are completely different. While Husserl remains stuck in a transcendental solipsism, Rahner overturns the meaning of the transcendental. He develops it in a new direction. This comes out with particular clarity in his theology of sin and original sin, expressed in the section of *Foundations of Christian Faith* which we will be considering in this article.

Rahner's understanding of sin and original sin is important for our discussion about the transcendental, and this is for two reasons. First, Rahner uses his understanding of the transcendental to make a direct contribution to the theology of sin and original sin. He situates both at the level of the transcendental—rather than the contingent—decision, without, however, neglecting the role of historical circumstances and interpersonal relationships. Through this, he also solves a possible philosophical conundrum, and this is his second contribution. Rahner indicates that there is a way in which the transcendental and the intersubjective can be reconciled. It does not have to be an either-or decision between the two. This is something that Husserl tried but failed to achieve. But Rahner, precisely because he was primarily trying to solve a theological question rather than a strictly philosophical one, comes up with answers that are beneficial not only for theology, but also for philosophy. Indeed, this is a case not only of philosophy as *ancilla theologiae*, but also of theology as *ancilla philosophiae*.

This article will better explain what we have just sketched out. In the following we will first consider Husserl's transcendental project and his unsatisfactory answers, then we will move to Rahner and consider what he seeks to achieve through his transcendental project. We will then consider the particular case of sin and original sin, and explore the way in which Rahner applies his transcendental model to this theological question. Finally, we will consider the contribution that Rahner's transcendental approach to sin and original sin makes, not only to theology but also to philosophy in general. This is Rahner's own Copernican revolution, both within theology, and beyond it in philosophy.⁴

II. HUSSERL'S SOLIPSISM

Husserl's phenomenology is a transcendental philosophy. It is the 'inquiring back to the ultimate source of all the formations of knowledge', and for him, it is the ego that constitutes this ultimate source and ground.⁵ Such an ego-centric approach does not come without its

⁴Cf. Thomas Sheehan, 'Rahner's Transcendental Project', in Declan Marmion and Mary Hines (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxvi, 22.

⁵Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie: eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, §26, Philosophische Bibliothek, Band 641 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2012), 106.

problems. One critique that has been levelled regularly at Husserl's phenomenology, particularly after the publication of *Ideas* (1913), is that of its being solipsistic and lacking an intersubjective aspect.⁶ As Paul Ricoeur puts it, the problem of intersubjectivity 'is the touchstone of transcendental phenomenology. It is a question of knowing how a philosophy whose principle and foundation is the ego of the *ego cogito cogitatum* accounts for what is other than me and all that depends on this fundamental otherness'.⁷ Husserl was aware of this critique, and this is what he tries to address in the fifth meditation of his *Cartesian Meditations*, given at the Sorbonne in 1929.

Husserl starts this meditation with the question of whether, when employing the phenomenological reduction, one ends up with a *solus ipse*, stuck in a transcendental solipsism.⁸ For him, the answer is 'no', for transcendental self-consciousness also includes intersubjective consciousness. This negative assertion presupposes the transcendental reduction, which is the *sine qua non* of the phenomenological method. The 'phenomenological philosophy only begins with the "reduction"'—according to Eugen Fink, one of Husserl's closest disciples—and to understand Husserl's understanding of intersubjectivity, one has to start from the way in which he understands this reduction.⁹

What is important for the purposes of our argument is the *residuum* of the phenomenological reduction. What is left after the reduction is the *ego cogito cogitatum*: the thinking ego, directed, or intentioned, towards his object of thinking. This is essentially a monad, purely *in* himself and *for* himself. The world has been bracketed out and no external transcendence is contemplated.¹⁰ Only one form of transcendence or movement is present: the 'internal transcendence' of the ego towards the object of thinking, the *cogitatum*, situated within the ego himself.¹¹

One struggles to understand how such an understanding of the subject can escape the accusation of solipsism.¹² But, it is in the reduced features of this monad that Husserl finds the elements to argue for a transcendental intersubjectivity. He does this by turning his attention to one particular property of the *ego cogitans*: the body (*Leib*). Through the reduction, whatever has nothing to do with the ego and his thinking has been bracketed out. The *ego cogitans* that remains after the reduction is an ego that has been stripped of everything that does not necessarily belong to him. Yet, even after the most radical reduction, the *ego cogitans* still knows himself as having a body. He is not simply a thinking ego, but also an enfolded ego. There is no *ego cogitans* without a body, or flesh.

⁶Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, vol. I (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1913).

⁷Paul Ricoeur, *À l'École de la Phénoménologie* (Paris: Vrin, 2004), 233.

⁸Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen: Eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologie*, §42, Philosophische Bibliothek, Band 644 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2012), 89.

⁹Eugen Fink, *Studien zur Phänomenologie, 1930-1939* (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1966), 108.

¹⁰Cf. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §44, 93.

¹¹Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §48, 105. Cf. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, §54, 199.

¹²In his *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl notes that 'should it even be possible to show that everything constituted as proper [that is, my own], thus also the reduced "world", belongs to the concrete essence of the constituting subject as an inseparable inner determination, then in the self-explication of the ego, his own proper "world" would be found as being "within"' (Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §44, 98). Cf. Ricoeur, *À l'École de la Phénoménologie*, 266.

This is a fundamental building block in Husserl's argument for intersubjectivity, for through this bodily dimension—which no one can deny, and which cannot be bracketed out—Husserl is giving spatial extension to the ego. Because he has flesh, the ego inhabits a world as *Leib*. 'The world is my own, but I have worldified myself by means of this body', to use Ricoeur's words.¹³ More importantly, the particular enfleshed ego does not exhaust the possibilities of the world, including the *possibility* of there being other bodies, and, *a fortiori*, other egos. The possibility exists that there might be other egos existing alongside the enfleshed *ego cogitans*.

The argument that Husserl is making here is not an *a posteriori* argument drawn from empirical and individual experience—and this cannot be emphasised enough. It is an *a priori* argument which unravels 'exclusively within my proper sphere'.¹⁴ Hence, it should not be mistaken for an argument about the *real* existence of the alter-egos: 'at no point has the transcendental attitude, that of the transcendental *epoché*, been abandoned'.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the transcendental argument *for the possibility* of other egos in the world is corroborated when we move from the transcendental attitude to the empirical attitude. In our quotidian life in the world, we indeed experience other bodies, and this is something that Husserl calls apperception: 'I see a body that, through its similarity to mine, demands apperception as a foreign ego, that is, as an ego like me [...] Thus the foreign ego is set as an analogue of [my] ego.'¹⁶ However, even this apperception—contemplated as a possibility in the transcendental attitude and confirmed in the empirical attitude—implies only a limited knowledge. The other ego is ultimately impenetrable, and if there are other egos in the world, they can never be known directly, but only indirectly. Indeed, even if Husserl often speaks of empathy (*Einfühlung*), a true and veritable empathy does not exist.¹⁷ As he writes in an early text: 'I cannot actually put myself in the other person's shoes, I can only *imagine* how I would feel

¹³Ricoeur, *À l'École de la Phénoménologie*, 243. The world to which Husserl refers is not the quotidian world of life, the prescientific *Lebenswelt*. Husserl's philosophy is a transcendental philosophy which deals with the conditions of possibility of the *Lebenswelt*, rather than with the *Lebenswelt* itself. Cf. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §58, 135; Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, §34A, 135.

¹⁴Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §55, 123. Husserl adds, 'that the others constitute themselves in me as others is the only conceivable way in which they can have meaning and validity for me as existing entities and essences' (§56, 128). And later he adds, 'everything that exists for me can draw its sense of being exclusively from me, from my sphere of consciousness' (§62, 149-50).

¹⁵Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §62, 148.

¹⁶Edmund Husserl, 'Einfühlung. Die Möglichkeit des Anderen vor der wirklichen Erfahrung von ihm. Das fremde Ich als Analogon des "Ich im Dort"', in Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, ed. Iso Kern, vol. 1 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 269. As Husserl writes elsewhere, foreign bodies (*Leiber*) are 'indirectly, indicatively experienceable for me, but in principle not directly experienceable [...] they are] in indirect relations to my sphere of experience, in which my body, as the originally experienced one, bears the whole chain of indications by analogy' (Husserl, 'Der Widersinn des transzendentalen Realismus. Gegen den Einwand des Solipsismus', in Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, ed. Iso Kern, vol. 2 [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973], 345).

¹⁷He writes that, 'in principle, there is no perfect knowledge of an other, he is constituted out of his individual "historicity", his genetic self-constitution, which I cannot really uncover completely, or even in segments' (Husserl, 'Unvollkommenheit der Erkenntnis des Anderen in seiner "Historizität"', in Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, ed. Iso Kern, vol. 3 [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973], 631). Edith Stein tried to address the problem of solipsism in Husserl's philosophy through her phenomenological work on empathy. Cf. Edith Stein, *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*, ed. M. Antonia Sondermann, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 5 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2008).

if I were like the other person [...] So it is an *imaginary* representation.’¹⁸ This is why, when speaking of apperception, he admits that, at best, the other ego is only an analogue of my own ego: the other can only be known through analogy.¹⁹

That in all of this Husserl identifies the other egos as *alter-egos* is very befitting. They can only be known in relation to, and starting from, my ego. The original intuitive givenness of a body (*Leib*) has to be the original givenness of my body and of no other body.

The apperception of ‘my body’ is essentially the first and it is the only completely original one. Only when I have constituted my body can I apperceive (*apperzeperieren*) any other body as such, and this apperception has in principle an indirect character [...] Everyone therefore has a retrospective relationship to my body.²⁰

The other body, and consequently the *alter-ego*, are thus merely modifications of the *self*-perception of the ego.²¹ This is why in the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl writes: ‘*alter* means *alter ego*, and the ego which is implied here is myself, constituted within my primordial particularity (*Eigenheit*)’.²²

This is Husserl’s theory of intersubjectivity. The transcendental ego is not simply an *ego cogitans*, but an *ego cogitans* who, out of the very fact that he thinks and knows himself as having flesh, contemplates the possibility of other egos. But, because Husserl’s project is transcendental and anchored exclusively in the transcendental ego, the *other* is never a veritable *other* with respect to the ego, but a mere extension of the *ego cogitans*. As Ricœur beautifully puts it, ‘the meaning of “other” is borrowed from the meaning of “I”, because first you have to make sense of the “I” and the “my own”, before you can make sense of the “other” and the “other’s world.”’²³ Building on this, one understands that because Husserl’s project is transcendental and *a priori*—and he wants it to remain so—the most that he can argue for is the *possibility* of other egos. His argument by analogy ‘only provides the supposition, the empty anticipation of a foreign life’.²⁴ Intersubjectivity is only an ‘ideal possibility of being’ (*ideale Wesensmöglichkeit*).²⁵ In other words, the farthest that Husserl can go

¹⁸Husserl, ‘Kritik der Begriffe der “Einfühlung” und der “Übertragung durch Analogie” für die Apperzeption des fremden Seelenlebens’, in Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, vol. 1, 338. My emphases.

¹⁹This is an analogy that functions as passive genesis, ‘like when we understand a new reality by analogy from an already known reality and on the basis of a first experience that provides a kind of *Urstiftung*, an original foundation’ (Ricœur, *À l’École de la Phénoménologie*, 248).

²⁰Husserl, ‘Texte aus dem Zusammenhang der Vorbereitungen eines “grossen systematischen Werkes”’, in Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, vol. 2, 7.

²¹Cf. Husserl, ‘Kritik der Begriffe der “Einfühlung” und der “Übertragung durch Analogie” für die Apperzeption des fremden Seelenlebens’, in Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, vol. 1, 341. Husserl is very clear about this point when he writes: ‘each monad, not only constitutes itself in stages [...] but also constitutes all the other monads [...] and thus, in general, it potentially—if not actually—has all possible being on its horizon’ (Husserl, ‘Der konstitutive Aufbau der Welt und die konstituierende Intersubjektivität. Die Selbstausslegung des Ego führt im Ego auf die alter Egos. Zur transzendentalen Monadenlehre’ in Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, vol. 3, 194).

²²Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §50, 109.

²³Ricœur, *À l’École de la Phénoménologie*, 238.

²⁴Ricœur, *À l’École de la Phénoménologie*, 249.

²⁵Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, §64, 156. Cf. Ricœur, *À l’École de la Phénoménologie*, 271.

in his transcendental project is to argue for these possibilities *as* possibilities, and if these possibilities were to be explored further, then this could only be done by analogical extension of the *ego cogitans*.

In light of what has been said so far, while it is true, as Dan Zahavi points out, that in Husserl there is an ‘intersubjective transformation of transcendental philosophy’—particularly when compared to Kant’s silence about intersubjectivity—it is debatable whether Husserl successfully manages to discredit the accusation of solipsism.²⁶ As he himself admits, ‘we have an *intersubjective* nature, which in itself is experienceable for everyone as *solipsistic*’.²⁷ For this reason, one has to acknowledge that Husserl’s understanding of intersubjectivity remains very limited. It is, ultimately, monodirectional, asymmetrical, and contemplates no reciprocity.²⁸ There can be no veritable intersubjectivity, if one espouses Husserl’s strict dogmatic transcendentalism. Perhaps if one wants to develop intersubjectivity fully, then it is the transcendental itself that has to be revisited, and this is what Rahner attempts to do.

III. RAHNER AND HIS TRANSCENDENTAL PROJECT

Rahner’s theological project is also transcendental.²⁹ He places himself in the Kantian tradition and from the very beginning of his philosophical and theological project, employs the transcendental method, which he takes to mean the study of the conditions of possibility of knowing and existing. These conditions are centred around the subject and are prior to any empirical experience: ‘a transcendental questioning, regardless of the subject area in which it occurs, is present when and insofar as the question about *the conditions of possibility of knowledge* of a certain object in the knowing subject himself is asked’.³⁰ Within this transcendental line of enquiry, Rahner endeavours to integrate the intersubjective aspect, and in this his approach is similar to that of Husserl. Like the latter, Rahner wants to give due consideration to the intersubjective without, however, forfeiting the fundamental transcendental orientation of his project. Like

²⁶Dan Zahavi, ‘Husserl and the Transcendental’, in *The Transcendental Turn*, First edition, ed. Sebastian Gardner and Matthew Grist (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 235.

²⁷Husserl, ‘Der Widersinn des transzendentalen Realismus. Gegen den Einwand des Solipsismus’, in Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, vol. 2, 345. My emphases. Elsewhere, he writes that ‘the ideal, first constituted, real is the *solipsistic* one, and this is based, in general, entirely on the rule of the solipsistic stream of consciousness’ (Husserl, ‘Texte aus dem Zusammenhang der Vorbereitungen eines “grossen systematischen Werkes”’, in Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, vol. 2, 7-8).

²⁸Cf. Robert R. Williams, ‘Life-World, Philosophy and the Other: Husserl and Fichte’, in *Fichte and the Phenomenological Tradition*, eds. Violetta L. Waibel, Daniel Breazeale, and Tom Rockmore (Berlin ; New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 145; Gerd. Brand, *Welt, Ich und Zeit; Nach unveröffentlichten Manuskripten Edmund Husserls* (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1955).

²⁹For an in-depth analysis of Rahner’s understanding of the transcendental, cf. Nikolaus Knoepffler, *Der Begriff ‘Transzendental’ bei Karl Rahner: zur Frage seiner kantischen Herkunft* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1993); Friedemann Greiner, *Die Menschlichkeit der Offenbarung: Die transzendente Grundlegung der Theologie bei Karl Rahner*, Münchener Monographien zur historischen und systematischen Theologie (München: Kaiser, 1978); Lambert Gruber, *Transzendentalphilosophie und Theologie bei Johann Gottlieb Fichte und Karl Rahner*, Disputationes theologicae (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1978).

³⁰Karl Rahner, ‘Überlegungen zur Methode der Theologie’, in Karl Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. IX (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1970), 98. My emphasis. Cf. Knoepffler, *Der Begriff ‘Transzendental’ bei Karl Rahner*, 27.

Husserl, Rahner develops a theory of *transcendental intersubjectivity*, although, as we shall see, the similarities between the two will have clear limits.

The likeness between Rahner and Husserl is not a coincidence. Rahner was familiar with Husserl's phenomenology. As already indicated, in the *Sommersemester* of 1934, while studying in Freiburg, Rahner took a seminar with Fritz Kaufmann titled 'Exercises on Husserl and the Phenomenological Movement'.³¹ A *Protokoll* of one of the seminar sessions written by Rahner still exists and has been published in the *Collected Works*. It deals with the paragraphs 57 to 62 of Husserl's *Ideas*. These notes, written by the young Rahner, are brief but telling. From them, it is clear that Rahner understood what the Husserlian project stood for: the pure ego, pure consciousness, and eidetic essences. In Rahner's words, it is a 'transcendence in immanence', concerned with the inner life of the ego and its directionality towards the eidetic object.³² Indeed, 'the same ego stands opposite to the whole stream of experience as an identical ego, as a *necessary presupposition* of the stream of experience, to which the stream of experience belongs and to which everything about it [the stream of experience] is related'.³³ Husserl's project is another ego-centred transcendental project, like other transcendental projects in modern philosophy. It is for this reason that Rahner notes that in Husserl, there appears 'the secret longing of all modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant'.³⁴

In line with this transcendental tradition, going from Descartes, through Kant, to Husserl, Rahner builds his own project on a similar understanding of the transcendental and the subject. In his article, 'Introduction to the Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger', he notes that '*based on the Kantian definition of the concept, we can say that a question is asked on the transcendental level when it concerns the a priori conditions that make knowledge of an object possible*'.³⁵ It is this understanding of the transcendental, which has its origins in Kant but which has determined most subject-centred modern philosophies, including that of Husserl, that becomes the cornerstone of Rahner's own understanding of the transcendental. And even if his use of the term 'transcendental' is not always univocal, he does exhibit consistency in the way he understands it. For Rahner, the transcendental denotes a condition of possibility of some kind. It 'belongs to the necessary and indissoluble structures of the knowing subject himself'.³⁶ This understanding of the transcendental should not be understood merely as epistemological, however. For Rahner, the epistemological is

³¹Cf. Peter Joseph Fritz, 'The Prospects of a Christian Phenomenology in Karl Rahner', in *Theological Fringes of Phenomenology*, Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies, eds. Joseph Rivera and Joseph Stephen O'Leary (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2024), 194.

³²Karl Rahner, 'Protokoll aus einem Husserl Seminar bei Fritz Kaufmann', in Karl Rahner, *Sämtliche Werke von Karl Rahner*, ed. Karl Lehmann, Vol. II (Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 428.

³³Rahner, 'Protokoll aus einem Husserl Seminar', 427. My emphasis.

³⁴Rahner, 'Protokoll aus einem Husserl Seminar', 430.

³⁵Karl Rahner, 'Introduction au Concept de Philosophie Existentielle chez Heidegger', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 30, no. 2 (1940): 152-171, 156. My emphasis. When it first came out, the article was erroneously attributed to Karl Rahner's brother, Hugo. It is important to keep in mind that transcendental and transcendent do not mean the same thing. The term 'transcendental' denotes the *a priori* conditions of possibility of knowledge and being. Cf. Knoepffler, *Der Begriff 'Transzendental' bei Karl Rahner*, 42-43.

³⁶Karl Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums*, 9. Aufl. (Freiburg im Breisgau Basel Wien: Herder, 2001), 31; T., Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 20.

connected to the ontological. Not only does the transcendental denote a condition of possibility that determines *knowing*, but equally, it is a condition of possibility that determines the *existence* of the human being. One could say that the transcendental is the *a priori* condition of possibility of concrete knowing and existing.³⁷ Such an understanding was already clear in Rahner's early work *Spirit in the World*, but it is to his later synthetic work *Foundations of Christian Faith* that we will be referring here.³⁸

Rahner's understanding of the transcendental comes out clearly when, in the second work, he discusses the freedom of the human person. For him, freedom entails the '*self-possession of the subject as such*' in relation to the totality of his existence.³⁹ This self-possession cannot be adequately derived from empirical experiences of the self and its representations.⁴⁰ Rather, this subjective self-possession is '*given in every individual experience as its a priori condition*'.⁴¹ Freedom, therefore, is to be understood transcendentially: it is an *a priori* condition of possibility.

This transcendental freedom, as understood by Rahner, denotes the possession of oneself. It means to be oneself: 'I am myself', as tautological as it may sound. Rahner is not simply arguing for self-awareness. Otherwise, his understanding of the subject would simply be a reiteration of the Cartesian ego, which is not the case. Rahner speaks of self-possession (*Selbstbesitz*), which means something more. The subject is not only aware of himself but takes ownership of his self. I am not simply myself, but this is *my* self, and I *want* to be this self.

Rahner is also saying something more, however. When employing this transcendental understanding of freedom, he does not have in mind one's ability to make concrete decisions about, for example, the shirt that he will wear, or the movie that he will watch. Rahner understands freedom in a way that is 'much more nuanced, much more complex, much less obvious than the primitive categorical notion of freedom as the ability to do this or that as it pleases'.⁴² For him, the ability to make concrete choices—something which Rahner calls categorical choices (not to be confused with Kant's use of the categorical)—is based on a more fundamental understanding of freedom: the transcendental freedom which we have just mentioned. Indeed, to be free means to be aware of oneself and to own oneself, and this is an *a priori* decision which conditions all concrete choices. Put differently, to be a person, to act as a subject, implies an *a priori* awareness and possession of oneself. This is an unthematic fundamental attitude, or approach, to one's own self, and Rahner calls it freedom. It underlies time, is present through time, without, however, being identifiable with one point in time. Most importantly, this relationship between the transcendental freedom and the

³⁷Cf. Knoepffler, *Der Begriff 'Transzendental' bei Karl Rahner*, 96; 120.

³⁸Rahner employs the term 'transcendental' 350 times in this work. Cf. Knoepffler, *Der Begriff 'Transzendental' bei Karl Rahner*, 87.

³⁹Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 41; *Foundations*, 30.

⁴⁰Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 41; *Foundations*, 30.

⁴¹Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 42; *Foundations*, 31.

⁴²Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 101-102; *Foundations*, 94. Rahner adds that 'where freedom is really understood, it is not the capacity to be able to do this or that, but the capacity to *decide on oneself and to make oneself*' (Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 49; *Foundations*, 38). My emphasis. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 47; 49; 102; *Foundations*, 36; 39; 95.

concrete should not be read in terms of a before and after, but in terms of the simultaneous presence of the *conditioning* and the *conditioned*. Within every decision, there is the transcendental *conditioning* and the concrete decision that is affected by that *conditioning*. Without this fundamental *conditioning* freedom, concrete *conditioned* choices would be void of meaning and coherence.⁴³

Through this transcendental understanding of freedom, Rahner is clarifying the *a priori* aspect of the transcendental and, more importantly, introducing something new to the understanding of the transcendental itself. According to his argument, the transcendental is not simply an inert and unchangeable structure, but a *decision*. The transcendental, as a condition of possibility, is not just a *structure* of conditions, but a *decision*, or an orientation, about these conditions. The ego is not simply a *thinking* ego, an *ego cogitans*, but a *deciding* ego. This is the essence of freedom.

This transcendentalty of freedom should not give the impression that Rahner downplays the importance of concrete categorical choices. While categorical choices presuppose transcendental freedom, the latter needs the former to become actualised and thematised. A transcendental feature, any transcendental for that matter, is a possibility that needs actualisation, a structure that needs content. If that does not happen, the condition of possibility—that is, the transcendental—remains itself just a possibility. In other words, transcendental features need the concrete dimension. Otherwise, they would remain formal structures lacking materiality.⁴⁴ This also applies to Rahner's understanding of freedom as a transcendental quality. He distinguishes between the origin of freedom (*Ursprünglichkeit*) and its categorical objectivation, with the latter being the actualisation of the former. Because of humanity's carnality (*leibhaften*)—like Husserl, Rahner speaks of flesh—and worldliness (*welthaften*), this actualisation takes place in and 'through the concrete world which encounters us', and in and through the bodies that we inhabit and encounter.⁴⁵ What this leads to is a constant and enduring interplay between 'an originating and an originated, between a freedom in its origin and a freedom, as it were, in its concrete, worldly incarnation'.⁴⁶

This is undoubtedly interesting and innovative. Nevertheless, as interesting as Rahner's transcendental understanding of freedom might be, one could object that, from what we have covered so far, Rahner fails to give due consideration the intersubjective dimension; even though he is supposedly interested in this dimension. But one should also keep in mind that *Foundations of Christian Faith* is not a treatise on theological philosophy. It is a compendium of Catholic doctrine. Rahner does not develop his transcendental approach systematically, but progressively, by working through several doctrines of faith. It is in one of these doctrines that the intersubjective element of the transcendental comes out with particularly clarity: the section on sin and original sin. It is to this that we now turn, to understand in what sense Rahner's theory of transcendental freedom also includes transcendental intersubjectivity.

⁴³Cf. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 47; *Foundations*, 36.

⁴⁴Cf. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 49; *Foundations*, 39.

⁴⁵Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 105; *Foundations*, 98. Freedom 'is always mediated by the concrete reality of temporality and spatiality, of humanity's carnality (*Leiblichkeit*) and its history' (Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 47; *Foundations*, 37). Sometimes, Rahner also speaks of *Leibhaftigkeit*, a term that is also used by Husserl. Cf. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 114; *Foundations*, 107.

⁴⁶Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 48; *Foundations*, 37.

IV. RAHNER ON SIN

In *Foundations of Christian Faith*, when it comes to sin, Rahner is not interested in categorical decisions and the choice to do something wrong rather than good. He considers sin in light of his understanding of freedom as a transcendental decision which determines the existence of the human being.⁴⁷ In Rahner's view, in the human subject's transcendental decision about himself, he has to decide whether he wants to be essentially closed within himself, or open to a transcendent absolute, that is, God. Thus, transcendental freedom also includes a decision about the totally other: whether one wants to be open to the possibility of God, or, rather, prefers to be *incurvatus in se*, closed in a radical solipsism.⁴⁸ While the latter is a sinful transcendental orientation, the former would be a virtuous one, and both could become conditions of possibility for categorical virtuous or sinful acts.⁴⁹ This means that, considered within the framework of this transcendental decision, the ego is not simply an epistemological subject, but equally a moral one.

God is not the only *other* that features in Rahner's transcendental understanding of freedom and sin, however. Rahner adds an important clarification. Referring to the sinful situation of the human subject, Rahner notes that the transcendental subject is always conditioned and manipulated by the environment in which he lives. These two elements, the subject and the environment—and the environment is always an inhabited environment, so it includes other subjects—can never be separated from one another, for 'where I act freely as a subject, I always act *in an objective world*. I always move away from my freedom, as it were, into the necessities of this world. And there where I experience necessities, recognise them, analyse them, and connect them, I do this *as the subject of freedom*'.⁵⁰ Rahner goes even further. He says that the human subject finds himself 'in a situation which he finds already there, which is imposed on him, which is ultimately the precondition of his freedom [...] he accomplishes himself as a subject of freedom in a situation which is itself always historically and interpersonally determined'.⁵¹

Here, Rahner is trying to reconcile two apparently conflicting claims, and in this he is not too dissimilar to Husserl (even though the latter does not deal explicitly with the question of sin). Both try to keep together transcendentalism and the questions of historicity, worldliness, and intersubjectivity. But if one were to stick to a strict transcendentalism, the two claims become contradictory. This is why Husserl is ultimately led to privilege the solipsism of the ego over a veritable intersubjectivity. Rahner, however, adopts a different approach. He attempts a way out of this impasse by employing the prefix *mit*. Not only does the transcendental involve a moral aspect, as we have already seen, but this transcendental decision is itself partly determined by something else. While the transcendental determines the

⁴⁷This is the reason why Rahner, in his 'Original Sin' entry in *Sacramentum Mundi*, writes that 'original sin and being redeemed are two existentials of the human situation with regard to salvation, which at all times determine human existence' (Karl Rahner, 'Original Sin', in Karl Rahner (ed.), *Sacramentum Mundi : An Encyclopedia of Theology* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 330.

⁴⁸Cf. Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 66.

⁴⁹Cf. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 97-98; *Foundations*, 90-91.

⁵⁰Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 104; *Foundations*, 97. My emphasis.

⁵¹Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 113; *Foundations*, 107.

categorical, and this is what we have already demonstrated, the inverse is also true: the transcendental decision of the subject is ‘internally also *co-determined* by the imposed moments that have constituted the situation of the free subject in time, *co-determined* by the free history of all the others who constitute the subject’s own shared world (*Mitwelt*)’.⁵² This means that transcendental freedom does not simply determine and actualise itself in the categorical, but categorical choices, both mine and those of others, determine my transcendental freedom. This is why Rahner speaks of co-determination (*mitbestimmt*), a term that is employed regularly in his work.⁵³ There is a mutual ‘co-determination’ between transcendental freedom and the materiality of categorical decisions (both mine and those of others). This comes out with particular clarity in Rahner’s understanding of sin: ‘our own situation of freedom is co-determined (*mitgeprägt*) in an ineliminable way by the guilt of others’.⁵⁴

It is not just ordinary sin, however, that evinces this aspect of co-determination. Original sin brings it out even more clearly. For Rahner, in line with his general understanding of sin, original sin is not a material sin and he is uninterested in the biological transmission of Adam’s sin. He even says that this has ‘absolutely nothing to do with the Christian dogma of original sin’.⁵⁵ Just like any other sin, original sin has to do with the transcendental, and not with the biological.

To explain his point, Rahner starts his exploration of original sin from the concrete. There is the possibility of radical-evil decisions and there are, in this world, ‘real subjectively-evil decisions that have actually happened’.⁵⁶ Though concrete, these decisions have a transcendental aspect: they do not leave the transcendental dimension of the subject unchanged. Committed by various subjects, these evil concrete decisions create *situations of sin*, which, in turn, affect humanity’s—and not simply the individual, but the whole human race—transcendental freedom. The human being, as a transcendental free subject, is co-determined by these situations of guilt, and in turn, keeps perpetuating this guilt through his own sinful transcendental decision, actualised in concrete categorical choices. This is what Rahner tries to highlight through his infamous banana example:

When someone buys a banana, he does not reflect upon the fact that its price is tied to many pre-suppositions. To them belongs, under certain circumstances, the pitiful lot of banana pickers, which in turn is co-determined by social injustice, exploitation, or a centuries-old commercial policy. This person himself now participates in this situation of guilt to his own advantage. Where does this person’s personal responsibility in taking advantage of such a situation co-determined by guilt end, and where does it begin? These are difficult and obscure questions.⁵⁷

This example is often understood superficially. Rahner is not interested in the categorical decision to buy a banana. He is underlying the transcendental orientation that is actualised in the act of buying a banana and, more importantly, the fact that this transcendental orientation is influenced by the concrete situation of sin in which the person buying the banana

⁵²Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 113; *Foundations*, 107.

⁵³Cf. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 117; *Foundations*, 110.

⁵⁴Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 117; *Foundations*, 111.

⁵⁵Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 117; *Foundations*, 110.

⁵⁶Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 114; *Foundations*, 108.

⁵⁷Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 117; *Foundations*, 110-111.

finds himself. That person, who is a free transcendental subject, finds himself in a situation of sin—in this case the sins of those people linked to the banana trade—and is influenced by this situation. His transcendental freedom is co-determined by the sins of others, and in turn, this transcendental freedom is actualised in the act of buying the banana. This categorical decision, the actualisation of the transcendental orientation, then further propagates the situation of sin surrounding the purchase of that seemingly innocuous banana.

The banana example perfectly synthesises Rahner's understanding of original sin. Building on this example, one could say that, influenced as he is by the ambient situation of sin, the subject is *aprioristically* pushed away from God, rather than towards him. This may sound strange, but this is the *crux* of Rahner's understanding of original sin. Historical and concrete decisions, the sinful situations in which I am born and live, influence my *a priori*, that is, the orientation of the conditions of possibility that determine what I decide, what I think, and the way I behave. This *a priori* departure from the divine, which happens on the transcendental level, then becomes actualised in my own sinful concrete decisions. The latter, in turn, condition the other transcendental subjects present in my life. What the 'banal' banana example, a synthesis of Rahner's theology of original sin, actually reveals is the circularity of the transcendental. The transcendental—as manifested through the theology of sin and original sin—determines concrete decisions, but is itself influenced by the concrete decisions of the subject and those of other people.⁵⁸ Indeed, the banana example is much more than a banal one. By it, Rahner re-interprets the doctrine of original sin and, through this, of the transcendental itself. This is something that should be explored further.

V. WHAT IS RAHNER DOING?

Through his transcendental model, Rahner seems to overhaul the theology of original sin. He is arguing that sin and original sin—and the two always go together—are both universal and particular, in history and outside of history. In other words, he wants to avoid both a purely historical understanding of sin—à la Schoonenberg's *peccatum mundi*—which reduces sin to a merely contingent historical phenomenon, and a universal understanding of sin which, in turn, gives no consideration to the historical and personal aspect.⁵⁹ Rahner does this by situating original sin at the transcendental level, but also by specifying that the historical and the intersubjective both play a role in determining this transcendental.⁶⁰ Just as there is an originating and originated sin, there is also an originating and originated freedom, and there is a constant interplay between the two. Transcendental *originating freedom*, when it is a decision against God, leads to *originated sin*, rather than virtue. This *originated sin*, in turn, becomes the *originating sin* which determines, again, the *transcendental originating freedom*.

It is important to notice the lack of detail that Rahner gives about original sin. He is not interested in *when* this started, *how* it started, and whether there were *one* or *many* original

⁵⁸Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 117; *Foundations*, 110.

⁵⁹Cf. Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin: A Theological View* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1965).

⁶⁰As Rahner notes in *Sacramentum Mundi*, 'original sin has a history [...] though this does not mean that original sin is merely the sum total of all sin' (Rahner, 'Original Sin', 333).

sins. For Rahner, these are questions which cannot be answered: ‘how this takes place in the spatial-temporal breadth and length of a historical existence, also in the concreteness of the plurality of human lives, is a question that we cannot decide with precision.’⁶¹ The original alternative between *posse non peccare* and a *posse peccare* cannot be pinpointed in time; although it could have existed in time, even if this is beside the point. What Rahner really wants to highlight is that *one* is the condition, but *many* are the historical circumstances that lead, and could have led, to this condition. Humanity sinned and still sins, and because every sin has an effect that goes beyond the sinner and involves other subjects, the one, or many, original *peccata* affected the transcendental freedom of other human subjects. The historical situation of sin in which the human subject is born and lives affects and develops his transcendental freedom in such a way that there is now only a *non posse non peccare*. This is still propagating itself through the circularity of sin and freedom, and this vicious circularity can only be broken by grace.

In his theology of transcendental freedom and original sin, Rahner does something more, however. He is not simply making a theological argument, but through this theology, he is making an important philosophical point. He is effectively changing the meaning of the transcendental itself. As we saw earlier in Husserl, a transcendental that is entirely ego-centric, *a priori*, and atemporal cannot allow for the possibility of a veritable intersubjectivity. Out of his commitment to the transcendental project, Husserl, for example, limits the role of the other to an object of intentionality, not even known directly, but only by inference or analogy. His ambition to develop a transcendental intersubjectivity hit a brick wall and has remained unfulfilled. Rahner, however, *modifies the transcendental to accommodate the intersubjective*. The first aspect of his argument is uncontroversial: that transcendental freedom actualises itself in categorical decisions which affect the people around me. This is not something to which a transcendental philosopher would object. But then, Rahner goes a step further: categorical decisions, both mine and those of others, modify the transcendental. This means, as Thomas Sheehan puts it with reference to Rahner, that ‘the transcendental turn is not simply a “turn to the subject” but more precisely a turn to the subject-in-relation’.⁶² And this relation, at least for Rahner, goes both ways. The concrete is determined by the subject, and vice-versa: the subject is determined by the concrete, which always includes an intersubjective element. In light of this, one could say that Rahner’s project remains transcendental—he himself upholds ‘the presupposition that every philosophy, that is, every real metaphysics worthy of the name, must operate in a transcendental-philosophical way, or else it is not at all a philosophy’—but his is a different transcendental.⁶³ It is open to being modified by historical conditions and intersubjective relations.⁶⁴

In fairness, the idea of a conditioning and development of the transcendental is not alien to the project of the most important modern philosopher of transcendentality, Kant. He speaks of the epigenesis of pure reason, suggesting that nature (*Natur*) plays the active role

⁶¹Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 49; *Foundations*, 38.

⁶²Sheehan, ‘Rahner’s Transcendental Project’, 32.

⁶³Rahner, ‘Überlegungen zur Methode der Theologie’, 96.

⁶⁴Rahner himself is very clear about this, when he writes that ‘what we call transcendental knowledge or experience of God is indeed an *a posteriori* knowledge’ (Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 61; Rahner, *Foundations*, 51).

of ‘bringing forth (*hervorbringen*)’ the faculties of reason.⁶⁵ Indeed, ‘under the inscrutable *principle* of a primordial *organisation*’, nature has ‘an indeterminable yet also unmistakable part’.⁶⁶ It conditions the development of the faculties of reason. But what had been, at best, hinted at in Kant, now becomes explicit and central in Rahner. In the latter’s transcendental project, the *ego cogito* has been breached.⁶⁷ His *a priori* is a historically conditioned *a priori*.⁶⁸ This does not mean that the transcendental is no longer universal, but rather that it is ‘sufficiently’ universal, while allowing for a certain degree of historical conditioning and thus of variety.⁶⁹ In other words, the conception of original sin as a transcendental decision against God is so broad and fundamental that, though transcendental, and thus universal, it manifests itself in different shapes and forms.

Interestingly, several authors have considered Rahner’s use of the transcendental to be deficient. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza highlights a certain ‘looseness’ in Rahner’s understanding of the transcendental, and argues that it would be better not to understand ‘transcendental’ in Rahner’s theology as a strict philosophical category.⁷⁰ Similarly, Rowan Williams asks whether, if the historical conditioning of the transcendental is to be taken with complete seriousness, ‘the whole transcendentalist apparatus will not need radical revision, such as Rahner has not in fact chosen to undertake’.⁷¹ These authors are correct to highlight a certain lack of systematicity and, sometimes, philosophical coherence in Rahner’s understanding of the transcendental. This is a result of the unfinished nature of Rahner’s project on transcendentalism, and its lack of systematisation. It is a work in progress. Rahner is *still* trying to take transcendentalism in a

⁶⁵Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B167, 174. Kant borrows terms from the language of organic growth to describe the historical self-development of reason. Animals grow organically by incorporating external elements, for example food, that enable the development of the original blueprint transmitted from previous generations. The germ (transmitted from both parents in sexual reproduction) does not contain the fully formed organism, but has the power to form itself when it accesses the proper resources. The same would apply to reason. Cf. J. Wubnig, ‘The Epigenesis of Pure Reason. A Note on the Critique of Pure Reason, B, Sec. 27,165–168’, *Kant-Studien*, 60, no. 2 (1969): 147–52. This is important for the purposes of our argument because it shows that even Kant does acknowledge that the ego develops, and that, even though minimal, elements external to the ego do play a role in the organic development of reason. Kant favoured the idea of epigenesis because it ‘reduced an appeal to supernatural agency to a bare minimum, since it relied on God for only the original construction of the forms that the species lines would take, and it balanced a mechanical account of nutrition and growth with a teleological explanation of the organism’s purposive development [...] Kant found epigenesis to be attractive for thinking about reason because it opened up possibilities for thinking about reason as an organic system, as something that was self-developing and operating according to an organic logic’ (Jennifer Mensch, *Kant’s Organicism: Epigenesis and the Development of Critical Philosophy* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015], 144).

⁶⁶Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 81, 253.

⁶⁷Cf. Michael Purcell, ‘Rahner amid modernity and post-modernity’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, 203.

⁶⁸Cf. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, ‘Method in Theology’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, 77.

⁶⁹I am borrowing the term ‘sufficient’ from Kathryn Tanner. She speaks of conditions that are ‘sufficient to support a problematic affirmation. If transcendental arguments in theology are understood accordingly, one has to admit that it is possible for a problematic claim of Christian practice to be buttressed in a number of different ways’ (Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology*, 23).

⁷⁰Schüssler Fiorenza, ‘Method in Theology’, 77.

⁷¹Rowan Williams, ‘Balthasar and Rahner’, in *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. John Kenneth Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 30.

different direction. But the incomplete nature of this project does not render its fundamental premise incorrect.

Moreover, the evaluation of the direction taken by Rahner really depends on what one chooses to establish as the primary criterion of transcendentality. For someone whose understanding of transcendentality closely mirrors that of Kant or Husserl, Rahner's understanding of the transcendental remains unacceptable. But then, such a person would still be stuck in a transcendental solipsism with no opening for the intersubjective. If one were, however, to consider the possibility of a different transcendental to that of Kant and Husserl, then the importance and enormity of the task that Rahner gives himself becomes immediately clear. He is trying to move beyond one of the central claims of modern philosophy—the transcendental—not by abandoning it but by revisiting its limits. From now on, the conditions of possibility—the transcendental element—are not only conditioning, but themselves conditioned.

If one wanted to criticise Rahner, it is for other reasons that one could do this. One could criticise him for the introduction of a two-tier anthropology, split between transcendental subjectivity and concrete human actions, or for considering original sin as something that we are doomed to develop, rather than something that is inherited, which is a view that does not fit well within the Catholic tradition that Rahner aims to develop. These would be fair criticisms of his project. Dismissing his use of the transcendental, however, seems to fail to appreciate the originality and radicality of what Rahner is trying to accomplish.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Rahner's theological work on sin and original sin shows that theology can be an *ancilla philosophiae*. Rahner does not simply give a new direction to the theological understanding of sin and original sin by placing it at the level of the transcendental. But, by understanding the transcendental as intersubjectively and historically conditioned, he also goes beyond the limits of theology. He tackles the problem of intersubjectivity in transcendental philosophy, offering a way out of a philosophical impasse. This is indeed a case which shows that the theologian is sometimes equipped with a conceptual framework that helps him or her see things differently, even in areas that are not, strictly speaking, their own. This is precisely what Rahner does when, through his theology of sin and original sin, he redefines the theologically independent philosophy of the transcendental. In this way, the 'Rahner revolution' complements and further develops the Copernican revolution inaugurated by Kant and followed by Husserl.