

KARL RAHNER SOCIETY

- Topic: Rahner, Catholicism, and Public Life
Convener: Melvin E. Michalski, Saint Francis Seminary
Moderator: Thomas M. Kelly, Saint Anselm College
Presenter: Carmichael Peters, Santa Clara University
Respondent: Bryan N. Massingale, Saint Francis Seminary

The presenter and the respondent were each given ten minutes to summarize their papers which had been distributed in advance on the Society's web page (www.theo.mu.edu/krs/). The complete texts of their presentations: "A Rahnerian Reading of Black Rage," and "Anger and Human Transcendence: A Response to 'A Rahnerian Reading of Black Rage'" will be published in volume 13 of *Philosophy and Theology*.

Carmichael Peters's presentation brought Karl Rahner's understanding of human "ex-sistence" (L. *ex* "out, forth" and *sistere* "to stand") that is, "standing forth," to bear on the phenomenon of black rage in the United States. Peters emphasized that Rahner's theological anthropology understands human life as "spirit-in-the-world." For Rahner the human person is both rooted "in the world" and is dynamically oriented to the "more." Rahner understands the human person as "a capacity for the nameless and boundless mystery of the excessive fullness of being." Peters argues that this anthropology can be helpful in analyzing the existential structure of black rage. With the help of Rahner's anthropology Peters first establishes the existential legitimacy of black rage and then seeks to unleash the energy of this rage for active engagement in the process of liberation. While some have criticized Rahner's theology as "unworldly," Peters alleges that the application of Rahner's thought to the social reality of black rage actually shows the potential for liberation revealed in the tension between transcendental and "worldly" that characterizes Rahner's thought.

Bryan Massingale responded by raising four questions: (1) What is "black rage"? (2) What is Rahner's contribution to an understanding of black rage? (3) What does black rage offer to our understanding of Rahner? And (4) What does black rage reveal about the adequacy of Rahner's thought? Massingale asserts that Rahner's theological anthropology grounds both the possibility and legitimacy of black rage. Here black rage "becomes a concrete instance of 'cursing' the false determinations imposed upon human subjectivity, and a categorical expression of the transcendental freedom to define and dispose of oneself." While agreeing with Peters that black rage is ethically ambiguous, he cautions that "the emancipatory potential of black rage is precisely a *potential* possibility." Massingale added that "given the usefulness of Rahner's fundamental insights for social life, as demonstrated in this encounter with the reality of black rage, one hopes that those more devoted to Rahner's legacy will take up the task of developing the socioethical dimensions of his project." Sixteen participants at the session entered into a lively

discussion of the topic asking for clarification of the reasonableness of Peters' conclusions.

The Karl Rahner Society held its tenth annual breakfast meeting on Saturday, June 10, with forty-one persons participating. Richard Miller, Boston College, addressed KRS members on the topic: "Karl Rahner on Naming God." Miller argued that in the whole of Rahner's corpus he never devoted a full article to the question of naming God. Rahner's theological account of the foundation of naming God, unlike Thomas Aquinas's approach, which proceeds in a purely formal way from the existence of God and the attributes that follow upon existence, proceeds from God's self-communication in the mode of quasiformal causality. Miller concludes that for Rahner *incomprehensibility* is the ultimate name for God. In the discussion period that followed, questions were raised regarding the distinction made between "mystery" and "incomprehensibility." By way of conclusion, Miller offered his own ultimate name for GOD as "pure act of being *as self-communication*."

In the following business meeting, Howard Ebert, St. Norbert College, was nominated and elected to the steering committee of the KRS, replacing Denise Lardner Carmody, the new Provost of Santa Clara University. Topics under consideration for the Rahner session at the CTSA Convention, June 7-10, 2001, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, are "Rahner and Barth," and "Rahner and Lonergan on the concept of divine love: a precondition for mission." Robert Masson will issue a call for papers and the steering committee will review the proposals.

The breakfast ended, as is our habit, with a Rahner anecdote.

MELVIN E. MICHALSKI

*Saint Francis Seminary
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*