

KARL RAHNER SOCIETY – CONSULTATION

- Topic: “All You Who Labor...”: Theology, Work, and Economy
 Convener: Kevin McCabe, Seton Hall University
 Moderator: Mary Beth Yount, Neumann University
 Presenters: Erin Kidd, St. John’s University (New York)
 Mark Fischer, St. John’s Seminary
 Respondent: Terrence Tilley, Fordham University

Erin Kidd’s paper, “Seeking Epistemic Justice in the Work of Theology,” employs Karl Rahner’s concept of “witness” and recent philosophical work in epistemic injustice to provide a theology of testimony. In the first section of her paper, Kidd discusses the origins of sexual harassment discrimination in dialogue with philosopher Miranda Fricker’s concepts of “epistemic injustice” and “testimonial injustice.” She goes on to develop the concept of “theological harm” to speak precisely about both the epistemic and spiritual harm that is done when a person’s testimony is not received by her community and to name the loss for the community, which misses out on her theological wisdom. Kidd finds theological resources to support these ideas in Rahner’s theology of “bearing witness.” Witness, according to Rahner, involves a self-disposal to the other and an act of self-transcendence. His understanding of witness shows that epistemic injustice threatens a person as a lover of God and a follower of Christ. To frustrate an individual’s ability to bear witness frustrates their ability to say “yes” to God. In the final portion of her paper, Kidd elaborates on the implications of her ideas for the work of theology. Motivated by the conviction that “citation is political,” she calls upon theologians to listen to, cite, and amplify the voices that have historically been overlooked or silenced due to processes of epistemic injustice. She concludes that our theology will be impoverished if marginalized voices are neglected.

Mark Fischer’s paper, “Rahner’s Seemingly Fruitless Labor Regarding the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary,” examines the context of Karl Rahner’s failure to get the permission of the Jesuit censors to publish his opus on the assumption into heaven of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1951. The censors said that it was too speculative, and the work remained unpublished until 2004. Fischer’s paper addresses the broader theological context of Rahner’s Mariology and why it was so controversial at the time. Rahner had asked whether Mary’s assumption precluded the possibility of natural death, understood as the consequence of sin. His exploration of the meaning of death as the “validation” of human life and its “transposition” beyond time and space had consequences for Rahner’s later theology. In closing, Fischer argues that history shows that Rahner’s failure to publish the book during his lifetime was not “labor lost.” His Mariology found an audience later in life and anticipated the publication of *Lumen Gentium* and an eschatological understanding of Mary as the first of the redeemed. Rahner’s book is valuable because it helps us imagine the resurrection of our own bodies at the end of time.

In Terrence Tilley’s response he first addressed Kidd and inquired about the relationship between epistemic injustice and epistemic incapacity—the inability of some persons to recognize injustices. In his response to Fischer, Tilley examined the ways in which Rahner’s Mariology challenged some popular styles of Marian

devotion. Rahner saw Mary not as the Mediatrix of all graces but as the first of the redeemed.

Both papers were enthusiastically received by the attendees. In the question-and-answer period, Kidd responded to Tilley's questions about the relationship between epistemic injustice and epistemic incapacity, and several persons expressed their gratitude for Fischer's historical investigation and theological elaboration of Rahner's theology of the Assumption.

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