Karl Rahner was a Jesuit. This is a well-known fact. Therefore, I do not say anything new to you in Korea where Rahner is read as well. Quite a number of Jesuits of Sogang University had had studies in Innsbruck or Munich and so continued to pass on the theology of Karl Rahner. Just a few months ago, a Korean translation of his lecture *Das Konzil – ein neuer Beginn* (1965) was published. Albert Raffelt and I wrote a comment that we may now admire in a language completely alien to us.

Once more: It is a well-known fact that Karl Rahner was a member of the Society of Jesus. Yet, what does it mean? Is it only a piece of biographical
information? Just a religious post-nominal? Does being a Jesuit influence his way of doing theology? His choice of topics? His approach, the modus procedendi? Those are the questions I would like to think about in my lecture. And I’d like to take a look behind the scenes, from the stage of the known, obvious and public to the more basic backgrounds and settings of Rahner’s thinking and consequently of his oeuvre.

1. A Theologian of the Century

Thirty years after his death, Karl Rahner—both within the Society and beyond—is still (and again) read, studied, consulted, quoted and ‘mined’ in every respect; a wide variety of texts—not only the ‘classics’—is still being re-printed; books by him are money-spinners in second-hand bookshops. For all of that, at least some credit is due to the edition of the Sämtliche Werke (SW, complete works) in a projected 32 volumes, which began in 1995. With volume 1 being published in some weeks and only volumes 5 and 32 missing, the edition is almost finished.

Masterminds do not come out of the blue, even with the Jesuits. We do not ‘manufacture’ masterminds on an industrial basis. Having said that not everyone who considers themselves a mastermind may be right. This is true among Jesuits as well as for others. Karl Rahner certainly never contemplated whether he belonged to the first rank of the theologians of his order, or not. Such considerations were alien to him. He left speculation and stereotyping to others—sometimes surprised of what was attributed to him, both positively and negatively. But to give truth its dues, the Society of Jesus in Germany and Austria did not form five ‘issues’ of Karl Rahner in the 20th century, i.e., not five of his kind and quality. Doubtless, he is a theologian of the century, and those are rare; more seldom found than many believe who consider themselves amongst the Olympians of Thinking.
There is no reason to underestimate or diminish the impact of Karl Rahner. He is among the Jesuits with the most publications on them in the world, along with Hans Urs von Balthasar († 1988), Michel de Certeau († 1986), Gerald Manley Hopkins († 1889), Bernard Lonergan († 1984), Henri de Lubac († 1991) and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin († 1955). This is a company to be seen with. These thinkers transcended their lifetimes, and Karl Rahner was on top of that list until 2009, followed by Hans Urs von Balthasar who left the Society in 1950 for reasons of conscience but remained in touch and would have liked to re-join formally at the end of his life.

Along with Rahner, Alois Grillmeier († 1998) may be counted among the German Jesuits in the 20th century who enjoyed international reputation, not because he was created a cardinal at the age of 84 (by John Paul II), but because of his pioneer work in the field of christological research.

Maybe one should mention Alfred Delp. He died on February 2nd 1945, a few months before the end of the War—murdered by the Nazis because he belonged to the ‘Kreisauer Kreis’, a group of resistance who projected a Germany after and without Hitler. He did not live to see his 38th birthday when his life ended at the gallows. *Im Angesicht des Todes* (*Prison Writings*, New York 2004), his letters and meditations from his time in detention in Berlin are known not only in German-speaking countries. In 1962, Thomas Merton (1914-1968), American Trappist and author of worldwide bestsellers, called a selection from Delp’s writings ‘the possibly most clear-sighted … Christian meditations of our time’. Those are strong words. In addition, he did not hesitate to call Delp ‘a prophet and a mystic’.1)

Karl Rahner and the Society of Jesus: To discuss whether he ‘felt comfortable with it’ or whether there were ‘conflicts’ is not a common topic—and discussing conflicts is different in an Asian context compared to the German-speaking area. Of

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course, there were conflicts. In general, they are notorious; less known is the fact that the ‘Römische Erlebnisse’\(^2\) (Roman experiences), as Rahner called the difficulties with Vatican officials or the Curia of the Society in his last speech in February 1984, originated from denunciations from within the Society. Not every member was a friend of Rahner’s.

Two hundred years ago, on August 7\(^{th}\) 1814, Pope Pius VII restored the Society of Jesus. He was better advised than Clement XIV was. The suppression traumatized the order. After the restoration, the Jesuits had to cling closely to the pope and the Holy See—and to prove reliant. Soon they were regarded as an elite troop, a task force for special missions of any kind.

It is an irony of church history that the Jesuits became the foremost and vassal-like defenders of the pope and the papacy. Johann Philipp Rothaan (1875-1853), 21\(^{st}\) Superior-General elected in 1829, had wanted a spiritual renewal of the Society of Jesus. However, as most historians of the order agree, he failed. Formalism and juridification more and more replaced Ignatius’ spirit of openness and pluralism that marked the first century of the Society after its foundation in 1540.

Jesuits became precursors of the First Vatican Council (1869/70) which would define papal infallibility and the primate of jurisdiction. In some cases, this led to a mentality of defending the pope ‘come what may’, even at the cost of truth and intellectual honesty.

Pius IX reigned for an impressive 32 years. His pontificate will be remembered for the *Syllabus*, a collection of 80 ‘errors of modern times’ and the encyclical *Quanta cura* of the same year 1964 as well as the First Vatican Council. Pope John Paul II fancied beatifying him together with John XXIII, which caused protests among church historians at that time. Under Pope Leo XIII, the Church developed a consciousness of social issues, as shows in the 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum*.


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Pius X started as a pope of reforms, leading to loads of renewals. However, his pontificate as well was ruled by the fear of modern times. The Oath against Modernism at the beginning of the 20th century, the vindication of Alfred Loisy and other theologians lead to a mental petrification that lasted until the death of Pius XII in 1958 and caused a massive blockade. The encyclical *Humani generis* of August 1950 lead to an ice age of theology. Many theologians were silenced. Henri de Lubac S.J. or Yves Congar OP were created cardinals-in their eighties.

It is not without irony that outstanding theologians like Karl Rahner or Henri de Lubac had major conflicts with Rome before the Second Vatican Council. They suffered from the tense atmosphere, the constant suspicions and mistrust that originated mainly from the Jesuits who were devout followers and guardians of an ever more sterile doctrinal theology that confused the reality of human life with a composition of pontifical, episcopal and other doctrinal documents. Karl Rahner notoriously called it the ‘Denzinger theology’.

Karl Rahner was a Jesuit-for 62 years. Since his death on March 30th 1984, hopefully he belongs to that greater society of Jesus that transcends the Society founded in 1540. This greater society of Jesus encompasses every baptized who in their way continue the life of Jesus. 3) That the dogmatist and historian of dogma Karl Rahner was a Jesuit (1922) and a priest (1932) as well, may be a well-known fact. The possible relevance, however, was marginalized and thus underestimated. It became a mere ‘leisure’ for Rahner experts by the mid-70s. 4)

It has only been a few years that Rahner’s choice of life is made a subject and analysed for its meaning. However, ten years after Rahner’s death, the then director

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of the Karl Rahner archive reckoned Rahner’s ‘being a religious’ to ‘those bare matters of implicitness of his life that do need not much concerning with’ and are ‘understood as the “forgotten facts”’.5) The post-nominal ‘S.J.’, however, signifies a sense of belonging that is not only for private information but is relevant both spiritually and theologically.

2. The Jesuit: ‘One was at disposal’

Karl Rahner was admitted to the Society of Jesus as soon as November 14th 1921 by Augustin Bea S.J. (1881-1968), then provincial of the Province of Upper Germany; he was created a cardinal later on. Less than four weeks after finishing school, on April 20th 1922, Rahner entered the noviciate6) in Tisis near Feldkirch (Vorarlberg/Austria); the Society did not own major facilities in Southern Germany then.7) 60 years after that, on April 27th 1982, Karl Rahner gave a sermon in the Jesuit College of Innsbruck to commemorate his religious jubilee: ‘How much did we live to see in these years, wars and revolutions, prosecution of the Church and our Society, new paradigms, changes in the religious lifestyles and personal history with its changes and dangers, successes and failures, joys and disappointments. And through it all, we remained Jesuits. Thanks to God!’8)

7) In the course of the Kulturkampf in which Bismarck tried to diminish the Catholic Church in Germany, Jesuits were exiled according to the Jesuit Acts. Formation centres were established near the German borders: the noviciate in Vorarlberg, the Faculty for Philosophy and Theology in Valkenburg (Netherlands) near Aachen. After the abolition of the Jesuit Acts in 1917, the Society re-established its presence in Germany-from the mid-20s, even larger facilities like the Berchmanskolleg in Pullach where Rahner completed the second and third course of his basic philosophical formation.
Karl Rahner was shy about autobiographical information during his lifetime. This was due to his mentality, a certain shyness, but also to the time he was born into and grew up in to become a religious. As an ‘old school’ Jesuit, he did not take himself too seriously.

The first autobiographical notes, which were made only after the Second Vatican Council, were scarce and reserved. In his later days, Rahner gave in to the curiosity he faced. When asked in the context of his 80th birthday why he had become a Jesuit, he replied, ‘Fundamentally, I don’t know. If one asks a husband after sixty years of married life, why did you marry Berta and not Andrea, it may be difficult for him to tell. It’s similar in my case. [...] I vaguely remember that I projected a students’ chaplaincy as a more concrete task within the Society. After their philosophical studies, some of my course-mates were send to Brazil—which could have been my lot. Anyways, I don’t believe I contemplated a professorship as a theologian, but one was at the Society’s disposal, basta.9)

‘To be at disposal’: This was elementary to religious life in Rahner’s view. Because, as Herbert Vorgrimler states in the very first Rahner-biography, ‘being a Jesuit primarily means to diminish all private aspects and to regard them as secondary things. The very fundament of the Society is service, countenance, obedience, selflessness, not because of the institution and its smooth operation, but because this is the only way man can bear witness of the ever greater, mysterious God. The unconditional service a man wants to oblige himself to when he becomes a Jesuit does not only prohibit any kind of personal cult and pomp about his person [...]. After one has made the experience of that vocation and has become obedient, there is no more further description possible. This general note may explain fundamentals of Karl Rahner as a person. Without any reservation, he is a Jesuit.’10)

Rahner always denied that the example of his brother Hugo Rahner (1900-1968), his senior by four years who had had to serve in the First World War and became a Jesuit in January 1919, played a role in that. However, Karl announced to him ‘shaking and shyly’\textsuperscript{11}) in a hand-written letter dated January 27\textsuperscript{th} 1917 that he also wanted to become ‘one of the Society’s.’\textsuperscript{12}) His parents only indirectly learned about that.

As novices and students (‘scholastics’), the two brothers could not know that they would be working at the same Faculty of Theology in Innsbruck for decades. They supported each other on their respective maturing in the Society, and there were lifelong bonds between them, personally as well as thematically (a fact underestimated for a long time);\textsuperscript{13}) both were anxious to take seriously the founder of the Society, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), not only in a hagiographical way, but also theologically.

Could Karl Rahner—as he retrospectively mused—‘have become a secular priest or an academic with an interest for religious topics in the manner of Walter Dirks’\textsuperscript{14})? That will remain speculative, as well as the question why he became a Jesuit instead of a Benedictine, a Dominican or a Franciscan. There were contacts with the Benedictine Abbey of Beuron, a centre of liturgical and monastic renewal in the German-speaking area, where the Schott, a German missal, originated. But he did not feel prone to an religious life that mainly focused on liturgy: ‘I could not sing and so I was definitely not predestined to become a Benedictine, although I had good relations to Beuron Abbey.’\textsuperscript{15})

\textsuperscript{12}) Quoted from: ADPSJ, Abt. 47-1010, KRA III, B, 1 (“Freiburg 27. im Hartung 1921 ... dein Bruder”).
\textsuperscript{14}) K. Rahner, “Bekenntnisse”, in \textit{SW} 25, 59-84, 79.
Fundamentally, entering the Society meant to be open for everything, possibly against aptitude and affinity: ‘When I became a Jesuit, I did not want to become a scholar, I did not aspire to an academic career, but I wanted to become a religious and a priest and that remained a matter of course through the whole life, be it well done or not. One tries to serve God, one tries to pray, one tries to celebrate the Eucharist, one meditates, one prays the rosary (under circumstances), one prays the Latin Breviary as a priest, one tries to be at the Church’s disposal as a minister. When I entered the noviciate, I naturally had to and wanted to anticipate that I may be sent to India as a missionary or to South Brazil, where even today one or so of my con-novices live and teach children. One had to anticipate that one would be put into one of our schools as a teacher and give some lads lessons in Latin and Religion.’

Things went differently. It took only five years in the Society to decide that he should become a professor of philosophy. Under circumstances still not quite sorted out, he was ‘deviated’ to Tirol and worked as a lecturer and a professor of theology throughout his life: in Innsbruck (1937-1939 and 1949-1963), Pullach (1945-1948), Munich (1964-1967) and Münster (1967-1971). He was appointed to numerous commissions and committees. He accompanied Franz Cardinal König, then Archbishop of Vienna, to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) as a personal advisor, as well as being a peritus there appointed by the pope. He became a Member of the International Theological Commission (1969), advised the German ‘Synod of Würzburg’ (1971-1975) and received multiple honours worldwide, amongst them more than a dozen honorary degrees, for his epoch-making merits in theology and the organisation of science. As the Italians say, the theologian Karl Rahner

made a *bella figura*. The Society of Jesus could be proud of him, he contributed to the *bonus odor Societatis*. What he accomplished has an impact—far beyond the 20th century.

The Society was the structure for his work. A comment by his collaborator Karl-Heinz Weger SJ (1932-1998) is telling: his ‘thoughts did not pour over into his pen, as one might be prone to think, but were the result of hard and diligent efforts.’

18)

The impressive bibliography with more than 4000 entries (some 1800 remaining disregarding re-prints, new editions and translations) says it all. The structure and its ‘basic supply’ helped. In any case: ‘Rahner’s productivity is based on regularity.’

19)

Holidays meant, if anything, working holidays and resulted in ‘a bad conscience’; hobbies were almost alien to Karl Rahner: ‘I have not been living; I worked, wrote, lectured, tried to pay my dues and to earn my living. In this usual banality I tried to serve God, and that’s the rest of it.’

20)

Nowadays we may see the ambivalence in this, there is a hint of his self-perception: a professor as a confessor.

2.1. Jesuit drill

Karl Rahner’s sense of duty and responsibility was shaped by the first years in the Society, which had a lifetime impact on him. ‘The main traits of the Society of Jesus’, Herbert Vorgrimler writes, ‘have formed his main traits of character. First and foremost, he is a man of the Church, a servant of the Catholic Church. Her affairs, worries and problems have become his very own affairs, worries and problems. He wants to serve the Church in that unconditional way proper to the Society of Jesus: obedience to the superiors. To the result that one works where


19) Ibid.

20) K. Rahner, “Bekenntnisse”, in *SW* 25, 59-84, 82.

21) Ibid., 58.
one is needed, and that one is consumed there. There’s no question that such a way of life—in close view—may appear shocking and exciting in today’s society.

Even after the Second Vatican Council it was customary in the different provinces of the Society to receive one’s *destinatio* (the task and location one was sent to) on the feast day of St Ignatius (July 31st)—odd as it may seem: In large colleges with their daily schedules often reminiscent of monastic orders (contrary to the original idea which was rediscovered as late as the second half of the 20th century) it happened that a Jesuit would learn about his future from a slip of paper under his cup in the morning—without prior consultation with the superiors. Habits like these were (in all religious orders) a normal means of the so-called mortification. Today, we frown upon that. Yet it would be unfair to judge a then devout and pious exercise by today’s approach to spirituality.

What has come to be a ‘strange Jesuit world of its own’ was perfectly normal for the first decades of Karl Rahner’s Jesuit life. The ‘Jesuit drill’ imposed in the noviciate and during the consequent more than ten years of studies was well accepted by most Jesuits, although it could lead to psychological or physical stress with permanent damage caused. During his formation, which was not complete with his ordination (1932) but continued to his Final Vows (August 15th 1939), Karl Rahner was said to be extraordinarily ‘easy-care’.

Be ready to respond and serve: This attitude would dominate Rahner’s Jesuit life, even and especially in situations and difficulties that got to him but would never have made him contemplate to leave the Society. The idea of leaving everything behind never occurred to him, he confessed, since ‘the very substance of being human, being a priest, a religious […] is not touched’ by that, ‘and maybe there has been a change

25) Ibid., 35.
in the present mentality that may be justified to some degree. I would not get out of my cassock just because I could not teach theology officially. I would consider such a decree very unjust, very dumb, very primitive, very ridiculous, but that would not change anything as regards the Church and my order.’

2.2. ‘A true Jesuit’

When Karl Rahner passed on March 30th in Innsbruck, the question arose how to organize the funeral. It was scheduled for April 4th. Along with Josef Müllner SJ (1920-1993), rector of the Innsbruck Jesuit college, Alfons Klein SJ. (provincial of the Upper-German province 1978-1984) decided to give the sermon himself: ‘I had thorough consultations with several confreres then. Above all, Karl Rahner was a Jesuit. So we finally decided that a Jesuit should give the sermon. His home was with us. The Society was his life. As Nathanael was a true Israelite, Karl Rahner was a true Jesuit—with the workload, the virtue, the horror, the sufferings that might go along with it. We thought, there will be other opportunities to honour him academically, but not at his funeral. […] As Jesuits, we wanted to show how Father Rahner had lived as a human being, how he had felt as a human being, as a priest, as a Jesuit. His scientific merits should not be focussed on at his funeral.’

Karl Rahner: ‘a true Jesuit’. ‘The spiritual exercises had formed him. He lived by them, and I tried to point that out in my sermon.’ One might object that a provincial ought to speak so highly. But Alfons Klein had studied theology in Innsbruck in the 1950s and had encountered Karl Rahner in person time after time.

As he later told, he had experienced his teacher when Rahner was tired, depressed, even crying because of stress and anger. But Klein did not conceal the fact that living with the ‘mastermind’ Karl Rahner was not an easy thing, exactly because he was such an internationally reputed and asked-for theologian and author, a distinguished lecturer and preacher. Remark ing that Rahner was ‘apparently not accepted by some confreres’, Klein replied, ‘Of course, this stands to reason. That’s quite understandable, I figure. If you are a professor in Innsbruck like ten others, but only one is ever mentioned—well, it’s only natural people get jealous. It was not always easy to teach at the same faculty as Father Rahner.’

This may hint towards the conflicts and tensions that result from very human frailties—envy, competitive thinking, rivalries, or mere personal antipathy.

3. Conflicts

Whenever a theologian does not hide behind his desk by merely repeating the books and practicing ‘Denzinger theology’ (be it more or less accurate or inventive), he will face uncomfortable situations. Conflicts are at hand if theology does not restrain itself to (pseudo-)historical studies. Karl Rahner did not look for an ecological niche to resort to for an easy and privileged life as a professor. Neither did he push forward into the public. His way of dealing with theological question was fascinating: It was different from the customary way, more ‘existential’. That is why Karl Rahner for so many years attracted students from all over the world to Innsbruck. Deeply enrooted in the tradition of the Church, Rahner had a creative approach, he asked questions and looked for answers.

The collection *Sendung und Gnade* (1959), containing articles on pastoral theology, was translated into many languages and contributed to Rahner’s international reputation.

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30) Ibid., 202.
and popularity before the Second Vatican Council. The book proves impressively that Rahner did not duck away when he was put to test. He answered.

3.1. Incriminated writings

It is not necessary to discuss in length the debates about his articles *Kirche der Sünder* (Church of sinners, 1947), *Theologische Deutung der Position des Christen* (theological analysis of the Christian’s setting, 1954) nor his speech at the Catholics’ Assembly *Löscht den Geist nicht aus!* (Don’t extinguish the Spirit!, 1962). No details will be given about his mariological opus *Assumptio Beatae Mariae Virginis* (1950) which was written in the pretext of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary but not published until twenty years after Rahner’s death,31) nor about the disputed article *Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer* (Many masses and a single sacrifice, 1949), nor about the reflections on the parthenogenesis in *Virginitas in partu* (1960) – to mention just a few of the subjects that caused major problems. Rahner for his part had no intention to raise conflicts, which were oftentimes unfairly mounted and even more unfairly dealt with. He seemed rather surprised about the impact by the incriminated contributions. It strongly affected him when conflicts continued for fatiguing years, as was the case with his Mariology:32) ‘If one does not write or treads the old ways once more, it is easy and comfortable. If one has stood up to their duty as a theologian of the Church in that case is quite a different question, even if one does not have to fear the inquisition.’33)


32) The editorial report of *SW* 9 (XI-LVI) is a breath-taking contribution to the history of theology as it allows a look behind the curtains and does not only reveal what happened, but how Rahner felt, as well.

Herbert Vorgrimler, Karl Rahner’s long-term assistant in Innsbruck and close to his teacher in later years, writes, ‘Karl Rahner was an uneasy man up to his death. He was outspoken going to crudeness, and his creative phantasy lead to new ideas he wanted to see discussed. He loved the Church above all and would never have her being second to human relations, but he wanted to help people even if that meant breaking rules and regulations. He despised of bigotries, but even more of holier-than-thou doubtlessness. He loved liberty and managed to find some even where “officials” considered everything normed and forbidden.’

In 1977, Rahner mentioned these difficulties in an interview for the first time: ‘There were certain conflicts, both within the Society and with the Roman authorities, and I was partially forbidden to write. At one time, a Roman pre-censorship was imposed on me, but did not come to effect in the end. The government of the Society once sent a mole to Innsbruck in order to check my theology for orthodoxy. Such and similar things happened several times. In 1954, the pope—without explicitly giving my name—opposed one of my writings in a solemn speech he delivered to the assembled bishops at St. Peter’s. This was unambiguous. Such and similar things happened between 1950 and the Second Vatican Council.’

The visitator not mentioned here by name was the Dutch Jesuit Felix Malmberg (1903-1979) who was to investigate complaints about Karl Rahner in Innsbruck. The latter was decided not to give up his professorship because of such proceedings but to accept if he had to. In the general atmosphere of intimidation of the 1950s, this measure was not too absurd: ‘You know, it was well possible that I might be ousted as a professor of theology in Innsbruck. It never happened, but it is no secret to say that one had to face that in the fifties, regardless of a deeper meaning. It was in general considered a fate not too comfortable but certainly

34) Herbert Vorgrimler, Karl Rahner verstehen, 109s.
bearable for a theologian of that time and more so for a religious person of that
time. If I had been ousted or were effectively hindered from writing, I would have
acknowledged that and would have done something else, like giving the exercises or
preaching or hearing confessions or becoming a missionary in India or Brazil. It
would not have been considered as devastating and tragic as nowadays a professor
of the next generation might feel. I think such an official decree by the Church was
welcomed in a spirit of obedience and acceptance without reservation.\textsuperscript{36)

3.2. Roman opponents?

Karl Rahner was on a par in intellectual disputes, but the \textit{modo romano}, the
Roman habit to avoid plain words and disguise one’s thoughts, was difficult for him.
Others mastered better: In Rome mainly the theologians Edouard Dhanis S.J.
(1902-1978) in the context of the mariology and Sebastian Tromp S.J. (1889-1975),
lead by Franz Hürth S.J. (1880-1963), professor of morals at the Pontifical University
Gregoriana since 1942. They draw the attention of the Holy Office (currently
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) to Karl Rahner.

Hürth was Karl Rahner’s teacher in Valkenburg. He always praised him
respectfully as a professor of outstanding didactics and sharp as a tack, ‘who should
be given due credit because unlike many other teachers’, even Martin Heidegger’s,
his lectures start to grow boring only after about two years.\textsuperscript{37)

Tromp for his part, Rahner tells us, ‘had developed the idea of the Corpus
Christi Mysticum the encyclical by Pius XII is based on. Compared to Bellarmino’s
concept of the Church as a \textit{societas perfecta}, this certainly had something new to it.
But Tromp naturally only wanted to concede something new he was affined to and
had had an insight.’\textsuperscript{38) It was obvious to Rahner that ‘he couldn’t stand me’ and
‘probably inserted the hints against me into the speeches of Pope Pius XII.’\textsuperscript{39)

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 37s.
\textsuperscript{38} K. Rahner, “Bekenntnisse”, in \textit{SW} 25, 59-84, 71.
Tromp’s renunciation is probably based on Rahner’s expertise on the schemata for the Second Vatican Council commissioned by Cardinal König in which he moans about the sterility of the Roman scholastic theology and its lack of pastoral sensitivity—with Tromp being its champion.

3.3. Relations to Superiors

It was disturbing and hurtful for Rahner that Superior were willing to be exploited for certain proceedings, as did Superior-General Johannes Baptist Janssens SJ: ‘The decrees of the Joly Office were directed through the Superior-General. In the atmosphere of these days, it was impossible to shield his subjects from the Holy Office, even if he did not agree. Today more moral fibre would be expected of a Superior-General. P. Janssens did not seem to have any, at least in my case. He did not mean ill, he even once told me: Well, you know, sometimes lightning strikes from the Holy Office and nobody knows why and whom it may hit. He was a decent and devout man, be he was not exactly a great man. He always passed on measures by the Holy Office as a good boy. The General also had to report to the Holy Office in what way the delinquent reacted to the verdict, whether he showed the humility and lowliness appropriate. That was the Roman mentality that we would rightfully abhor today.’

The most hurtful thing to Rahner was that complaints, verdicts or anonymous expertise were not explained but simply conveyed. Regardless of the fact that ‘the withdrawal of such measures was never conveyed expressively or in writing. […] Such courtousness was apparently not customary towards a small religious person in Rome at that time.’ That is why he more and more vehemently encouraged more self-confidence since the mid-70s: ‘The Superiors-General are still forced to act as

39) Ibid., 68.
40) Ibid., 66s.
mailmen for the higher Roman authorities and to pretend to act of their own accord. I think that the Superiors-General in some cases might be well entitled to say— in spite of their duty of obedience— that their conscience would not allow such a measure, and to ask the authority to act on its own and to directly contact the person whose doctrine or behaviour is objected to.” At the same time, he distinguished very much ‘between Superiors and Church officials': ‘But all in all, I did not have problems with my Superiors. They were always loyal, even to me, as far as the Roman procedures allowed at that time.’

As the Superiors-General of the Society are elected *ad vitam*, for life-time, like the popes, Karl Rahner lived to see only four Superiors-General: Wladimir Ledóchowski S.J. (1866-1942), who reigned since 1915, Johannes Baptist Janssens S.J. (1889-1964), Pedro Arrupe S.J. (1907-1991), and very briefly Peter-Hans-Kolvenbach S.J. (b. 1928), the first Superior-General to voluntarily abdicate (because of his age) with the permission of Pope Benedict XVI whose predecessor had repeatedly declined the request of abdication. Difficulties and problems were mainly faced under Janssens’ regime. Rahner regarded him as ‘something like a “correction officer” of the proper Roman authorities’.

3.4. Karl Rahner and Pedro Arrupe

The Basque Pedro Arrupe and Karl Rahner can be regarded as friends in a certain way. In any case, the relationship between them far exceeded what was usual between a Superior-General and his subordinates. Elected Superior-General on May 22nd 1965, the former novice-master and provincial of Japan participated in the final period of the Second Vatican Council, where they met for the first time. Like Rahner, Arrupe had studied theology at Valkenburg (although later) and

42) Ibid.
43) K. Rahner, "Die Antwort heißt Gott, in idem, Sämtliche Werke", 31: *Im Gespräch über Kirche und Gesellschaft, Interviews und Stellungnahmen*, (Freiburg, 2007), 341-356, 345s. [= SW 31].
44) Ibid., 345.

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therefore was acquainted with his teachers. Not only did Karl Rahner write a preface to an anthology of Arrupe’s text in German translation (Unser Zeugnis muß glaubwürdig sein, 1981) and an epilogue to the publication of a very personal interview (Mein Weg und mein Glaube, 1983). He also prepared dossiers, statements or expertise. In August 1968, at the announcement of the encyclical Humanae vitae by Paul VI, Karl Rahner interrupted his holidays in Yugoslavia to meet Arrupe in Rome—conducted by his assistants Karl Lehmann and Roman Bleistein S.J. (1928-2000).

After the 32nd General Congregation passed the resolution Our mission today: the service of faith and the promotion of justice in 1974/75 (often abbreviated to ‘decree 4’) which made the ‘option for the poor’ a Jesuit principle, strong tensions arose in some provinces of the Society, especially in Latin America and Europe. In collaboration with the social ethicists Walter Kerber S.J. (1926-2006) and Hans Zwiefelhofer S.J. (1932-2008), Rahner advocated this decree in 1976 in the expertise Glaube und Gerechtigkeit. Überlegungen zur theologischen Begründung von Dekret 4 der 32. Generalkongregation that was intended for internal circulation first. Arrupe thanked him in a letter dated March 2nd 1976.

The high esteem Pedro Arrupe held for Karl Rahner is easily made out. A very personal letter of gratitude marked his 70th birthday on March 5th 1974. When Karl Rahner received an honorary doctorate by the Pontifical University Comillas of Madrid the same year, the Superior-General—as the chancellor—congratulated by a later (datet May 25th 1974): ‘I esteem your oeuvre that makes this honour possible.’ He wrote a letter to Karl Rahner’s mother to mark her centennial (February 1st

45) SW 25, 191-193.
46) Ibid., 194-197.
49) SW 25, 616-670.
1975), thanking her in particular for her two Jesuit sons Hugo and Karl, ‘who are a great gift for us.’ At his 75th birthday, he sent a telegram.

3.5. Respect and gratitude on the part of the Society

Karl Rahner was thin-skinned when he prepared texts for the Society (anonymously in most cases) which then ‘ended up in the dustbin’ (in his view), as was customary at the Council or the International Theological Commission.

Like the daily bread is needed for nutrition, so is respect. Admittedly, Rahner could not complain about a lack of respect. On Rahner’s 75th birthday, the president of the Conference of Provincials of the German assistance of the Society, Vitus Seibel SJ, expressed ‘the deep gratitude for all the good things you did by your life and your work for the confreres. These days you will often hear or read about your extraordinary impact in the contemporary Church and theology—and beyond. And I am certain: it is all accurate. I cannot, and will not, suppress my pride in that. As we take so many things for granted among us and forget to say thanks, I want to write these few lines. Please believe me; I do not act out of courteousness. Many confreres told me, how much they owe to you as regards their piety, their faith, their imitation of Christ, their being a Jesuit.’50) On the same occasion, Pedro Arrupe sent a telegram: ‘I like to point out that in all the manifold and often difficult situations you faced and suffered, you always had the distinct composure of a religious person and made clear that you have a feeling of belonging to the Society of Jesus. Not stopping at being a ‘companion of Jesus,’ you were a companion to the other companions of the Society of Jesus. This day I would like to thank you very much on their behalf.’51)

50) ADPSJ, Abt. 47-1010, KRA II, C (Glückwünsche).
51) KRA II, A (Arrupe, Pedro).
3.6. Between tradition and innovation

The question ‘How can a man of today be a Jesuit and remain a Jesuit?’ was answered by Karl Rahner in the paperback Jesuiten. Wohin steuert der Orden? (Jesuits. Where is the Society heading to?, 1975) when he confesses: ‘I could never have lived my life as a Jesuit if I had not found the inner relation of an unconditional faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. It is him whom my life shall serve, his life that continues in mine, and the power of his life I shall bear witness of. […] In this community, I grew richer only to that extend that I tried to give instead of taking. That is when I experienced that the Spirit of Christ is alive in my community.’52) He could be quite critical (even of himself) and did not dissemble: ‘Under many ashes, the love to the incomprehensibility of Jesus and his fate is still burning in my order. That is why it serves the Church and can be critical of her and of itself, and take a chance on the experiment of a history not computable in advance, and accept life, success and failure, prestige and marginality as a participation in the lot of him whose name my order bears (a bit immodest, why, but full of endearing hope).’53) These words were often quoted since, which deprived them of their meaning and reduced them to a pious banality.

Until the end of his life, Karl Rahner identified with his order, even though his uncomfortable ideas caused confusion among the confreres. He wanted to tell what was important to him, what he missed, what he felt lacking, what he considered irreplaceable. He did not hesitate to lay a finger on the uncomfortable topics, but refraining from the air of an elder statesmen. He certainly did not agree with everything or welcome every development and felt entitled, nay, obliged to point to future developments. That was the attitude in which he worked as a theologian. He experienced many changes in his own order, participated, suffered, and many

52) Ibid., 285.
53) Ibid.
post-conciliar ‘progresses’ worried him. The theologian he was, however, he did not stick too much to forms.

Regarding the Council and the efforts to implement the decisions in the various orders and congregations, Rahner was obviously eager to give solid theological reasoning to encourage confreres not to let themselves be treated as minors or to be satisfied with pseudo-theological argumentation. He opposed attitudes and ideas that would result in making adults infants.

3.7. Defender of the Society

When the reputation of the Society of Jesus was at stake, Karl Rahner could be quite fierce. In the beginning of July 1973, the historian Ludwig Volk SJ (1926-1984)—who lived at the scripters’ mansion in Munich like Karl Rahner—published a very harsh article in the Hamburg newspaper Die Welt without permission of his superiors (Die Soldaten kommen aus dem Tritt – Jesuitenorden am Scheidewege), in which he aired his grievances. The article caused major irritations among the German-speaking provinces. The provincials responsible felt the Superior-General and the coming general congregation to be disavowed by the angled observations. A week later, Karl Rahner reacted with a lengthy letter to the editor that ended very emotionally: ‘I, an old Jesuit, who wants to live and die in the order, can only bemoan with utter bitterness how falsely Volk portrayed the Society in the public, can only be amazed that a “conservative” employs a style, a method and claims that would better fit those he opposes.’54) Even if Karl Rahner published thus reaction without prior consent of his local superior, he had the assent of higher superiors who were not unhappy about the prominent response and thanked Karl Rahner – as letters show.

Another example of Karl Rahners steadfast loyalty to the Society were the articles Der Papst und die Jesuiten (The Pope and the Jesuits) and Zur Situation

Regarding the situation of the Society after the difficulties with the Vatican. He wrote them in the context of the investiture of Paolo Dezza SJ (1901-1999) as pro tempore governor of the Society by John Paul II—a papal intervention that ignored the statutes of the Society of Jesus, though welcomed by some members. It was doubtless the most severe crisis of the Society since the suppression of the Society by Pope Clement XIV in 1773. ‘I will certainly try not to be disrespectful. But have to choose between honesty and respect, I choose honesty.’ Some months early, in October 1981, he and 17 other Jesuits from the Berchmanskolleg in Munich had written a remonstrative letter to the pope that became known to the press by indiscretion. Karl Rahner was no coward and no opportunist.

4. Was Rahner happy in the Society?

In the letter by which Augustin Bea SJ admitted then 17-year-old Karl Rahner to the noviciate, he wishes well: ‘May you grow happy in our Society and make happy quite a few others!’ Was Karl Rahner happy in the Society? Being well or feeling at home were no categories he was used to. ‘Happiness’ rather meant the bliss found in another world. Melancholic by nature, he was prone to be a nuisance, but he did not rate comfort first. He lived the destination given by his superiors as a ‘schoolmaster of theology’.

Karl Rahner did not escape to the banality of cheap happiness and did not confuse it for well-being or comfort, although he was in need of ‘Stimmigkeit’ (atmosphere/ coherence) throughout his life. Where this was amiss, Karl Rahner could feel depressed or angry so that he could not concentrate. He endured many

55) SW 25, 333-334, 335-350.
56) Ibid., 335.
57) ADPSJ, Abt. 47-1010, KRA III, B, 1; facsimile in Paul Imhof - Hubert Biallowons, Karl Rahner, Bilder eines Lebens, 14.
things *sub specie aeternitatis*. He could not stand a narrow mind, self-righteousness, formalisms. He knew when to hint to that. If it is necessary, that the dean of the own faculty (Franz Lakner S.J.) presses charges against him in Rome\(^{58}\) is quite another question. Jesuits are only human, after all. At least in this case, a problem of relationship is disguised as a problem of facts.

There were loads of things that could have driven Karl Rahner to leave the Society. Nevertheless, in spite of all the obstacles, nuisances, difficulties, suspicions, hostilities and plots he never contemplated leaving. Having spend 53 years in the Society, he said, ‘In the Society, I found a community with a long history. Such a history may well be a burden and load, but much more than that, it is a life-tested wisdom and a richness of experience that cannot be replaced by theoretical reasoning or planning. Religious life means to me the courage that pays, to be ready to listen to others, to overcome a fancy for one’s own opinions and sentiments. If one has dared to take that courage to some degree, one may feel that giving this trust to the greater spirit of a group is a blessing.’\(^{59}\)

Karl Rahner lived his life as a Jesuit without major personal crises. In that, his example was and is encouraging. Church and theology will keep benefitting from his theology for a long time. For some, this insight might take a bit.

I dare to predict: Rahner is yet to come! There has never been a Rahner-school. Many of his postgraduates have reached important positions. Not everybody who did their duty as assistants, who applied or imposed themselves as secretaries or drivers were grateful. Karl Rahner demanded a lot, but was ready to promote. He exploited—and got exploited. He could not manage some situations. They out-grew him. There is a clueless Rahner.

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The *Rahner Lectures* organised by the Karl Rahner Archive in Munich show the unbroken interest in Karl Rahner’s lifetime achievement with outstanding contributions. Precisely marking the 30th anniversary of his death, the *Karl Rahner-Lesebuch* was reprinted. It was first published in 1979 by Karl Lehmann, assistant to Rahner from 1964 to 1969, and Albert Raffelt. The book bears witness of the spectre of styles and genera: introduction to a faithful, Christian existence. Positions are in demand. Karl Rahner’s theology proves helpful. This will remain—even in a hundred years.61)

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60) cf. www.karl-rahner-archiv.de.
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Weger, Karl-Heinz, “Ich glaube, weil ich bete”, Für Karl Rahner zum 80, 
칼 라너와 예수회

안드레아스 바틀로그 S.J.

칼 라너는 80년의 생애 중 62년을 예수회원으로 살았다. 본 연구는 종종 간과되고 있는 이 사실을 부각시키고 있다. 라너에게 있어서 예수회원이라는 것은 무엇을 의미했을까? 어떤 방식으로 그것은 라너의 사유방식에 영향을 주었을까? 그에게 있어 예수회는 분명히 자신이 인생을 보낸 틀이었지만 분명 그것을 넘는 의미가 있었다.

칼 라너는 로욜라의 이냐시오가 예수회를 창립하면서 만들었던 영신 수련의 경험으로 살았다. 주님과 교회를 섬긴다는 것, 자신을 고집하지 않고 언제든 따를 준비가 되어 있는 것, 라너는 예수회의 이 이상에 따라 살려고 항상 노력했다. 그러나 이렇게 하는 것이 그에게 항상 쉬운 일은 아니었다. 칼 라너가 국제적 명성을 얻어갈 때도, 제2차 바티칸 공의회 전까지 그에게는 폭력, 힘겨운 시간들이 있었다. 예수회에 있다는 것은 축복과 평온함만을 의미하지도 않았고 또 의미하지도 않는다. 그러나 칼 라너는 교회에 뿌이나 예수회에 깊이 연결되어 있음을 느꼈다. 그의 이 소속감이 매우 명확하게 드러나는 것은 아니지만, 칼 라너는 자신의 성속에 대해 감사했다. 그리고 예수회는 이냐시오의 이 아들을 매우 자랑스러웠다. 신학에 있어서 라너의 영향력은 이미 그의 생전에 대단했고, 그의 사상과 통찰은 교회와 신학을 위해서 계속해서 풍요로운 열매를 가져다주었으며, 그리고 앞으로도 이어질 100년 동안도 그럴 것이다.

주제어: 칼 라너, 예수회, 수도생활, 충돌, 배경
Karl Rahner and the Society of Jesus

Andreas R. Batlogg S.J.

Of the 80 years of his life, K. Rahner spent 62 as a Jesuit. This often-neglected fact is highlighted in this lecture. What did being a Jesuit mean to Rahner? In which way did it influence his way of thinking? To him, the Society of Jesus certainly was a framework in which he spent his life, but its meaning exceeded that by far.

K. Rahner lived from the experience of the spiritual exercises that Ignatius of Loyola made the fundament of the Society. To serve the Lord and his Church, to be at disposal without pushing oneself forward: K. Rahner always tried to live up to these Jesuit ideals.

This did not always give him an easy time, however. With his international reputation, K. Rahner had to face the envy of others, even his confreres. Although he never complained about direct conflicts with his superiors, there were quite trying times for him before the Second Vatican Council. Being in the Society did—and does—mean bliss and tranquillity.

However, K. Rahner felt deeply obliged to the Society of Jesus, as well as to the Church. His sense of belonging may not show very obviously, but K. Rahner was grateful about his vocation. And the Society was well proud of this son of St Ignatius. His impact on theology was enormous during his lifetime, and his thoughts and insights are still fruitful for Church and theology—and will be for another hundred years.

**Key Words:** Karl Rahner, Society of Jesus, Religious life, Conflicts, Background