

H-France Review Vol. 16 (June 2016), No. 82

Étienne Fouilloux and Frédéric Gugelot, eds., *Jésuites français et sciences humaines (Années 1960). Actes de la journée d'étude organisée par le Conseil scientifique de la Collection jésuite des Fontaines et l'équipe Religions, Sociétés et Acculturation du Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône-Alpes, Lyon, 6 juin 2012*. Lyon: RESEA & LARBRA, UMR 5190, 2014. 213 pp. 20.00€. (pb). ISBN : 979-10-91592-07-9.

Review by Michael Kelly, University of Southampton.

The detailed and closely documented essays in this volume provide a remarkable insight into the role of the Society of Jesus in providing intellectual leadership for French Catholics in the years following the Second World War. The Jesuits played a crucial role in establishing progressive Christian humanism as the pastoral philosophy of the Church during the Second Vatican Council, articulated in the major papal encyclical *Gaudium et spes* (1965). As a result, they were on the front line in responding to the new developments in the human sciences that provoked disarray in French Catholic thought during the later 1960s. The work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida led transformations in ethnography, sociology, psychology, linguistics, economics and political science. Difference, systems and structures came to replace identity, the human person and engagement. Where the existentialists and Marxists had thrown down challenges to religion and belief, the new social theorists simply ignored both, or at best regarded them as objects of study.

The Jesuits took this intellectual disengagement from issues of faith very seriously and assembled their leading intellectuals in high-level seminars to address the challenge. They deployed some heavyweight thinkers, of whom Michel de Certeau is probably the best known to the lay public. But figures such as Jean-Yves Calvez, Jean Daniélou, Louis Bernaert, François Roustang and Henri de Lubac were highly influential in Church circles. They did not formulate a single response, but took positions on a spectrum between those who wanted to embrace the new thinking and those who wished to oppose it. In any event, they recognised the need for a Jesuit presence to be more prominent in the intellectual debates of the day. The successive chapters of this volume examine different episodes in this battle of ideas.

Michel Fourcade traces in fine detail the tensions caused by the emergence of German philosophers as the dominant force in French philosophy from the 1930s onwards. Jesuit philosophers like Gaston Fessard and Henri Niel played a leading role in promoting Hegel in France after the Second World War, though they were largely kept apart from young seminarians. Jesuit educators like Marcel Régnier and Joseph Gauvin taught Hegel, along with Kant, Heidegger, Jaspers and others in the seminaries at Vals, Fourvière and Chantilly. Their enthusiasm was at least in part an attempt to mitigate the sharp decline in vocations and to reduce the number of students abandoning their studies for the priesthood. However, they came under constant pressure to give priority to the traditional teachings of St Thomas Aquinas that were promoted by the Vatican. The tradition was reinforced by Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950), which attacked "new theology," in terms inspired by the Dominican Thomist, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange. The encyclical was widely regarded as counter-productive since the weighty tomes of St Thomas were generally discouraging to young seminarians who were already beginning to chafe under the strict discipline of their training. These programmes came under pressure from the combination of falling vocations, the seismic shifts of the new papacy of John XXIII, Vatican II

and the broader intellectual and moral upheavals of the sixties. The Jesuit training programmes were dramatically reduced and reshaped. Perhaps the lesson that emerged most clearly from the crisis was that traditional conceptions of theology were overwhelmed by the dynamism and sophistication of philosophical innovation.

The changing attitude to the Jesuit palaeontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, was a similar index of the changes that shook the Jesuits during the 1960s. Loïc Figoureux teases out the struggles over the publication of Teilhard's works after his death in 1955. The initial hostility in Rome included threats to put his work on the Index of Prohibited Books, though this was withdrawn in the light of Teilhard's huge following among the most prominent international scientists. His literary executor, Mlle Jeanne-Marie Mortier, courageously insisted on publishing his major works, including *Le phénomène humain* (1955) and *Le milieu divin* (1957), and the Jesuit order had to negotiate its response. Some of Teilhard's friends in the Order made individual attempts to honour his memory, balancing his achievement with recognition of doctrinal ambiguities and even errors in his work. Henri de Lubac eventually received approval to publish the first major study.^[1] At the same time, opinion at Rome was shifting under the impetus of John XXIII. By the end of Vatican II, Teilhard was seen as a role model for Catholic scientists and thinkers and became one of the inspirations for *Gaudium et spes*.

Dominique Arvon traces the impact of semiology on biblical studies, first identifying the relationship between the signifier and the signified (words and things, the symbolic and the real), and then opening a growing rift between them. This affected the traditional teachings about the Eucharist and shifted attention from the 'substance' of the bread towards the meanings of the act of sacrament. It also affected the traditions of biblical exegesis. The historical criticism that tried to locate the people and events of scripture was challenged by a textual criticism that focused on the messages that were conveyed to the reader. The Jesuit François Roustang argued that the Church needed to address the '*troisième homme*': the Christian who had no time for Catholic traditions or for a Church seeking to adapt to the modern world, but wanted to be spoken to in clear terms about issues of faith. Working with Michel de Certeau on the influential journal *Christus*, he sought to show the link between intelligence and spiritual life in ways that would speak to this Third Man. They met considerable resistance from superiors and Roustang ultimately left the Order in 1968. The following year, Certeau and Xavier Léon-Dufour organised a conference on biblical exegesis and hermeneutics with the participation of leading lay intellectuals, Paul Ricoeur, Antoine Vergote and Roland Barthes. This semiotic turn appeared as a renewal of theology, though it was vigorously attacked by traditionalists. But neither side in the argument was able to stem the decline in Catholic practice that accelerated during the decade.

The position of Jesuit schools in France evolved considerably during this period. Philippe Rocher paints a vivid picture of the individuals and institutions that were involved, focusing particularly on the Centre d'Études Pédagogiques and its two publications, *Pédagogie*, aimed at teachers, and *Parents et maîtres*, aimed at families. Rocher sketches in the history of Jesuit education in France since the Society of Jesus was founded in 1540, centred on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola. He provides thumbnail sketches of some of the leading figures in the twentieth century, from André Ravier to Michel de Certeau and Denis Vasse, each in their way sensitive to contemporary debates in the human sciences. He mentions significant moments of the mid-twentieth century, including the agreement that Jesuit schools would receive state funding, under conditions laid down by the *loi Debré* of 1959. This provoked far-reaching re-examinations, fuelled also by the debates of Vatican II and by the influential study of *les héritiers* by Bourdieu and Passeron in 1964, which challenged the traditional focus of Jesuit education on forming social elites. Jesuit schools were deeply affected by the crisis of May 1968 and their educators looked to new sources of inspiration in education, such as Celestin Freinet, A.S. Neill and Ivan Illich. The Jesuits took a critical view of the Haby reforms (1975) on lower secondary schools (*collèges*), which they feared replaced a rounded concept of education with a narrow view of vocational training. The leading Jesuit educators also looked to psychoanalysis, especially the work of Françoise Dolto, to humanise education and open students to a bolder sense of risk-taking. However, this included a more

open approach to sexual education in school, which provoked a storm of protest from parents and eventually led to the closure of the two CEP journals. Nonetheless, the spirit of freedom remained a key element of Jesuit spirituality, even if it proved unable to slow the decline in Jesuit-trained teachers.

The encounter with psychoanalysis was a key element in the response of Catholic intellectuals to changes in the world. While many looked to Carl Jung, especially among the Dominicans, French Jesuits increasingly looked to the Freudian tradition, represented in France by Jacques Lacan. Louis Bernaert was one of the first and most constant supporters of Lacan, in whom he saw the ideas necessary to build a dialogue between faith and psychoanalysis. Agnès Desmazières traces Bernaert's itinerary through books and articles over more than thirty years. He followed Lacan into the Société française de psychanalyse in 1953 and again in 1964 followed Lacan's break-away *École freudienne*. A key reason for this was Bernaert's determination to understand the development of the Society's founder, St Ignatius of Loyola, whose autobiographical writings were published for the first time in French in the 1920s and 1930s. He used Lacanian concepts of the self, the unconscious, desire and renunciation to explore the mystical experience of St Ignatius. Through different stages of analysis, he took these autobiographical writings to offer a model for the Jesuit life of discipline and obedience, and an alternative to the more popular mysticism of St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila, whose works were promoted by the Dominicans and Carmelites. Bernaert's efforts could not stem the continuing decline in the numbers of Jesuits but he chose to remain in the Society at a time when many others left it.

Like Bernaert, Michel de Certeau was both an energetic scholar of the Jesuit tradition and an innovative interpreter of it in the light of psychoanalysis. This drew him into a revealing conflict with the historian Robert Mandrou on their understanding of the events at Loudun in 1662-1664, involving the apparent demonic possession of a group of nuns, which caught the public imagination in the aftermath of 1968. Denis Pelletier presents Mandrou's account, which saw the events as part of a broader shift from an archaic popular order that recognised witchcraft to a modern culture of rationality, preparing the way for the Enlightenment.[2] Certeau sharply criticised Mandrou for taking sides with the doctors, lawyers and theologians of Loudun. He produced his own account, arguing that the events showed complementary light and dark sides of people and societies that remain relevant today.[3] Certeau was inspired by his detailed knowledge of the Jesuit exorcist, Jean-Joseph Surin, an experienced mystic who went to Loudun and achieved the cure or conversion of the afflicted Mother Superior, but in the process descended into madness himself. Certeau argued that the Loudun events were comparable to the events of May '68 in challenging the established intellectual order and precipitating a social reorganisation of knowledge.

The implications of challenges to traditional thinking were felt by the Jesuits in a rumbling crisis of recruitment and retention. Frédéric Gugelot argues that the wave of panic that struck the Order after 1968 was a direct consequence of the attempts to engage with contemporary thinking in the human sciences. Georges Morel was a characteristic example, since he saw a fundamental conflict between the freedom of the individual to pursue the truth and the requirement of the institution to secure obedience. He criticised the constraints of conservative thinking and outmoded religious practices. Morel was persuaded to withdraw from the priesthood, and like many of his contemporaries, he left in a deferential manner, with many regrets.

Jean-Louis Schlegel offers a personal memoir of his time in the Jesuit Order, from 1965 to 1986. His memory largely confirms the accounts of tensions and disarray, questioning and departures, including his own. He feels that this was brought on mainly by the effects of Vatican II and May 1968, rather than by the effects of an engagement with the human sciences. The Jesuits were affected by the general crisis in the wider society, where so much was being questioned and so many changes were in the air. He notes the influence of Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche, and the difficulty for theology in keeping up with

other intellectual agendas. But ultimately the main challenge to the Church, and the Jesuits, remains the wider decline in numbers of the clergy, which has been virtually constant since the Second World War.

The chapters in this book are without exception carefully referenced and offer a wealth of information that will be valuable to specialists. A good deal of background knowledge is assumed and non-specialist readers may find it difficult to navigate the variety of Catholic institutions mentioned. Gugelot's concluding remarks seek to draw the various chapters together, emphasising that the return to their intellectual origins led the Jesuit thinkers to engage with the social sciences in ways that produced a 'crisis of language': the theories developed in the 1960s simply did not provide a way of discussing people and societies that could lead meaningfully to questions of faith. This is a major strand that weaves through the collection, but needs to be understood in the context of the period. An engagement with social sciences was consistent with the thrust of the Second Vatican Council. Its programme of renewal was a response to the steady decline of Catholicism in Europe, which Pius XII's reassertion of Thomism had conspicuously failed to arrest. The Christian humanism of Vatican II was a more progressive creed, but had been developed in response to the issues of the 1940s and 1950s. The new French thinking of the 1960s challenged the humanist consensus, but did not give Catholics the intellectual tools to articulate their beliefs or their traditions.

Those Jesuits who engaged most deeply with semiotics or psychoanalysis often found themselves unable to sustain their faith or their membership of the Order. But they were far from exceptional. Many of their colleagues abandoned their vocation or their faith for other reasons, often associated with the growing gulf between the Order's expectation of disciplined obedience and the surrounding culture of freedom and imagination. Schlegel estimates that up to three-quarters of the students entering the Jesuit novitiate in the 1960s left the Order before reaching ordination, a pattern that he believes was reproduced in other religious orders and in candidates for the priesthood. The catastrophic social decline of the Catholic Church in France has continued and even accelerated in the years since the 1960s. Today, fewer than half of the French population consider themselves religious and less than 5 per cent attend weekly mass.[4] It is difficult to attribute causal effects to the role of the human sciences in this evolution, but the volume does give a clear and at times moving picture of committed Catholic intellectuals wrestling with ways of expressing their faith in a time of fundamental cultural change.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Étienne Fouilloux, "Introduction"

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Jean-Louis Schlegel, "Parcours du témoin"

Frédéric Gugelot, "Conclusion"

NOTES

[1] Henri de Lubac, *La Pensée religieuse du père Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris: Aubier, 1962).

[2] Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1968).

[3] Michel de Certeau, *La possession de Loudun* (Paris: Julliard, 1970).

[4] Leila Marchand "Plus de la moitié des Français ne se réclament d'aucune religion", *Le Monde*, May 7, 2015. http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/05/07/une-grande-majorite-de-francais-ne-se-reclament-d-aucune-religion_4629612_4355770.html#eh0HTel3KP611Drg.99 (accessed 31 December 2015).

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ISSN 1553-9172