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David G. Schultenover, S.J., ed., *The Reception of Pragmatism in France & The Rise of Roman Catholic Modernism, 1890-1924*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009. 247 pp. ISBN 978-0-8132-1572-3.

Review by Gary E. Aylesworth, Eastern Illinois University.

This volume is an anthology of essays whose topic was proposed at meeting of the Nineteenth Century Group of the American Academy of Religion in 2004. According to the editor's Preface, members of the AAR who were concerned with Roman Catholic Modernism had long noticed the strong connection between Catholic Modernism and American Pragmatism in France, especially in the case of William James (1842-1910). James had spent considerable time in France, was fluent in the language, cited French sources (e.g. Bergson and Renouvier) in his own writings, and engaged in regular correspondence with French academics, philosophers, and theologians. Furthermore, starting around 1905, articles on James and "Anglo-American pragmatism" began to appear in French philosophical journals, and in 1908 Marcel Hébert published *Le pragmatisme*, whose second edition featured a response by James and Hébert's reply. As the authors of the volume make clear, all of this took place against the backdrop of the "modernism crisis" in Roman Catholicism, which was especially pronounced in France.

Historically, the ground for the crisis had been prepared by Kantian philosophy and Darwinian evolution. The Church's position against modernism is spelled out in two important documents: Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* of 1879 and Pius X's *Pascendi dominici gregis* of 1907. The former, whose English title is "On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy," asserts the philosophy and theology of Thomas Aquinas to be the standard against which all other philosophies are to be measured, while the latter condemns modernism in various forms, but especially in Kantian "immanentism" and "subjectivism." In accordance with these documents, American pragmatism would represent everything the Church condemns as modernist heresy, so it is significant that certain Catholic philosophers and theologians would find affinities with pragmatism in their attempts to reform Catholicism and bring it into alignment with the modern world. Perhaps the most pressing need for this alignment arises from the revolution in science brought about by Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859).

John Dewey describes the impact of Darwin's theory on the development of pragmatism in a manner that directly opposes pragmatism to scholasticism. He notes that the term "species" is the scholastic translation of Aristotle's notion of *eidos*, which was taken to be the unchanging, universal type to which living (and dying) individuals belonged. That the sensible individuals came to be and passed away, while the universal type, accessible only to the intellect, remained unchanged, indicated the superiority of intellectual knowing over empirical experience. By hypothesizing the empirical origin of species (including the human species), therefore, Darwin destroys an entire metaphysical schema, in which ultimate truth is a correspondence between intellectual knowledge and an eternal, unchanging reality.

As Dewey suggests, the deeper crisis for Catholic orthodoxy would not be that humans are empirically descended from apes, but that knowledge and truth are themselves subject to change and evolutionary development. This is precisely the position taken, each in his own way, by Peirce, Dewey, and James.

Kant had earlier disqualified theology as a science by restricting knowledge just to those things that appear in space and time. For Kant, concepts such as “God” and an “immortal soul” can play a role in guiding our conduct (as matters of belief) but do not provide objective proof that such things actually exist. Moreover, the rational content of all religion reduces to the golden rule (do unto others, etc.), which reason legislates for itself without need for divine revelation. Pragmatism extends this “practical” application of theological concepts by testing all concepts according to their results (including the sentimental or emotional ones) when they are applied in action. This goes for moral rules themselves, which are to be treated as hypotheses that must prove themselves by their experimental results. Even religious faith, as in James, is to be tested according to its practical benefits and advantages, and these may differ from person to person.

The first two essays in the volume provide a general account of the reception of pragmatism in France and the connection between pragmatism, especially James, and Catholic modernism. The third essay discusses the relationship between James and the non-Catholic Bergson on the issue of time and consciousness. The two were very familiar with one another and both acknowledged certain affinities between them. Nevertheless, Bergson’s theory of duration is derived from a metaphysical analysis of time, whereas James’s notion of the stream of consciousness is based upon introspectionist psychology. The metaphysical emphasis of Bergson, as opposed to James’s empiricism, is consistent with the approach of Catholic modernists such as Maurice Blondel, Marcel Hébert, and Edouard Le Roy, all of whom are taken up in essays that follow. Prior to the examination of these figures, however, there is a chapter on James and Charles Renouvier, from whom James adopted the notion of free will (attributed by Renouvier to Jules Lequyer) as “the sustaining of a thought because I choose to when I might have other thoughts” as the basis for his own theory of volition.

As to the Catholic modernists, all emphasize the importance of action and practice as the key to realizing metaphysical and religious truth in human experience, while resisting the radical empiricism of James and other “Anglo-American” pragmatists. Blondel, for example, affirms Christian revelation as a supra-natural truth, implicit in human action, that draws us beyond all utilitarian ends. Nevertheless, his focus upon action (instead of pure intellection) as the realization of divine truth, rendered him suspect in the eyes of the Church. The same could be said for Le Roy and Hébert. The former advocated a pragmatic theory of dogma, in which the dogmas of the Church are rules of conduct, to be judged according to the services they render to life and knowledge. Furthermore, he held that dogmas can change as long as they remain faithful to the religious “fact” upon which they are based, and that philosophers should be free to construct theories using them as guidelines rather than as literal truth. Hébert, likewise, declared that religious images and representations are not to satisfy intellectual curiosity, but should orient believers in their actions. He was, furthermore, strongly committed to science and the idea that the world itself is evolving such that human action can direct its development toward the ideal, thus bringing God’s work to completion. This would take Christian faith beyond its developmental shape in Catholic orthodoxy.

The last essay in the volume discusses the British theologian George Tyrrell (expelled from the Jesuit order in 1906), who was also very influential in France. Like other modernists, he advanced the idea that action was more important in theology than the theory of religion, and that all faculties of the person must be taken into account in religious experience, not just reason. But contrary to American

pragmatists, Tyrrell aimed to re-introduce a notion of Christian mystery into the affairs of everyday life, thus retaining a metaphysical orientation against pragmatism's potentially destructive empiricism. In this respect, he distances himself from certain empiricist and utilitarian tendencies in pragmatism in much the same way as his French counterparts.

Overall, the scope and quality of the essays included in the volume are of a high standard. All contributions are written by established professionals who cover their subjects with clarity and precision. The book will be of interest to students and scholars working in the areas of philosophy, theology, and 19th Century intellectual history, and should certainly be considered for libraries that support graduate and undergraduate programs in philosophy and religion.

Contents: Preface, David G. Schultenover, S.J.; Introduction, John R. Shook and David G. Schultenover, S.J.; "*Vivo ergo cogito*: Modernism as Temporalization and Its Discontents: A Propaedeutic to This Collection," Stephen Schloesser, S.J.; "Early Responses to American Pragmatism in France: Selective Attention and Critical Reaction," John R. Shook; "James and Bergson: Reciprocal Readings," Frederic Worms; "William James on Free Will: The French Connection with Charles Renouvier," Donald Wayne Viney; "Blondel and Pragmatism: Truth as the Real Adequation of Mind and Life," Michael J. Kerlin; "Pragmatism in France: The Case of Edouard Le Roy," Harvey Hill; "*Le critique malgré lui*: Marcel Hebert's *Le pragmatism*," C.J.T. Talar; "Notre attitude en face du Pragmatisme': George Tyrrell's Relation to Pragmatism," Clara Ginther; Appendix: "Extract from a Letter of Henri Bergson to Horace M. Kallen," trans. Tony Nuspl; Selected Bibliography of Pragmatism in France, 1894-1914, John R. Shook.

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