

Lewis was a closeted Catholic afraid to renounce his Anglicanism. It is rather to suggest something about Lewis' thinking. An example is taken from *The Magician's Nephew*. The fruit gives immortality, but since the witch took the fruit in the wrong way, Polly considers that the witch could not be immortal. Yet exactly the opposite is the case, while the witch suffers another kind of punishment. Aslan explains to Digory and Polly: "When we take something good in the wrong way, the fruit is good, but those who take it loathe it ever after." So it is for the witch, Aslan continues. She has won her heart's desire, unwearying strength and length of days like a goddess, "but length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery, and already she begins to know it. All get what they want: they do not always like it."

Schall highlights the Catholic truth contained in this literature: "When what we choose is not according to what we are, not according to the order of things, we eventually find that we do not like what we choose. We do not really want it. What we are is not best explained to us by what we think we are or what we choose to make ourselves to be presupposing only ourselves." For Schall it is clear that no matter what we wish to make of ourselves or how we conduct our lives we have been created as free in our wills. The punishment for sin, for the wrong use of that will, is not external pain inflicted upon us by God or some other external being, but is the internal awareness that we get what we choose. Throughout this delightful book, many examples are offered to call us to a profound thesis: "that all of our lives, when we come to recount them, are themselves a retelling of this same story, the story of what we choose." It is what we choose that defines our eternal existence, whether we consider our own thoughts and wishes to be most real, or whether we ultimately choose what is.

Above all, Schall seeks to show that the Catholic mind is one grounded in a solid realism about real being. The Catholic mind can only seek truth, it can only hold to truth where is its destiny, from whatever source that comes. Schall has sought that truth in common sense, in reasoned argument, and in divine revelation. This work is a celebration of that journey in thought, a journey not yet completed. It is packed with profundity, humour and sober realism. It is the product of one whose mind is sharp, perceptive, challenging, alive, and above all, Catholic.

DAVID EDWARD ROCKS OP

**NEOPRAGMATISM AND THEOLOGICAL REASON by G. W. Kimura (*Ashgate Publications, Aldershot, 2007*). Pp. 176 and £50.00**

The intellectual swagger of pragmatism comes from its claim to be able to get at truth from considering what works, without having to lug around all the heavy baggage typical of correspondence theories. Why insist on all the metaphysical machinery typical of other forms of realism when a focus on "what works" is sufficient? The appeal of the principle of parsimony is undeniable.

But there is a risk of question-begging latent in pragmatism in general, let alone on theological questions. To say that some explanation counts as "true" because "it works" risks foreclosing our intellectual labours too soon. Just as deterrence theories of punishment could indeed "work" as effective measures for crime-reduction even if the one being punished were not truly "guilty" but merely someone thought to be guilty, so too accounts that "work" without getting to the real forms and causes of things risk justifying the theological equivalent of a Ptolemaic astronomy. That astronomy, after all, "works." But its success as a model for calculation disguises rather than discloses the real structure of things.

The root of the problem may be a failure to appreciate that the principle of parsimony is a double-edged sword – shaving away unnecessary hypotheses but requiring the postulation of those entities without which the phenomenon in question goes unexplained. Unless there is something in reality sufficient to explain why what works does in fact work, we risk being superficial or being arbitrary – in either case, counting an analysis as sufficient that hasn't really given an explanation. Even in the highly sympathetic account of neopragmatism in this book, one sees the problem that always nags philosophical pragmatism, and one that does so in particularly egregious ways when applied to theological questions.

The first half of this slender volume does valuable service in the history of philosophy by recounting the emergence of neopragmatism out of classical pragmatism, with special emphasis on a certain theological vision that Emerson's Transcendentalism and British Romanticism provided for Peirce, James, and Dewey. The second half analyzes the somewhat unexpected return of these same religious themes in the thought of Hilary Putnam, Stanley Cavell, and Richard Rorty while criticizing the neopragmatic theologies of Cornel West, Sallie McFague, and Gordon Kaufman.

Dissatisfied by the standard accounts of the history of pragmatism for paying insufficient attention to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Kimura devotes two chapters to the exposition of Emerson's Transcendentalism and his influence on the founders of pragmatism, William James, and Charles Sanders Peirce. By exhibiting the various components of Emerson's religion of nature as an American form of British Romanticism, Kimura sets the stage for separate chapters on the similar forms of religiosity in James, Peirce, and later John Dewey.

The section on James in particular is revealing. Sympathetic as James is to religious experience, his constant focus is on the satisfaction that being religious brings and on the varieties of religious fulfilment that are possible. He manifests in these books his characteristically pragmatic attention to "what works" as if that constituted "truth" rather than with worry about inconvenient "truths" that are typical of exclusivist religious claims. Likewise, Kimura emphasizes Dewey's stress on what faith-communities and religious narratives can do for their larger communities and his disinterest in resolving questions about the mutually irreconcilable truth-claims of the various religions. In somewhat more popular terms, the theological views of these pragmatist philosophers anticipate the phenomenon prevalent in contemporary culture of respecting spiritualities so long as they are not too tightly bound to historical religions.

In the second half of the book Kimura traces the rise of neopragmatism and exposes the internal incoherence of the positions called by that name today. By comparing the epistemological vacuity of such leading neopragmatists as Cornel West and Richard Rorty with the more epistemologically responsible thought of such other neopragmatists as Nicholas Rescher and Hilary Putnam, Kimura lays out what he calls the "crisis of neopragmatism." To this reviewer, the author would do well to extend his thesis even a bit further, so as to appreciate that the current crisis is really a crisis endemic to philosophies that are insufficiently attentive to form, structure, and other indispensable aspects of metaphysics.

The criticism that Kimura offers to the theological constructions of West, McFague, and Gordon as constructions out of whole cloth is telling. What is arbitrarily asserted may be arbitrarily denied. The only justifications that they offer (and can offer, given their form of neopragmatist commitments) are the hopes of their proponents for some form of social reconstruction. The result, however, is that the emptiness of their claims to be "true" (whatever their utility for the social purposes they are designed to serve) stands out clearly.

Where this otherwise interesting volume most stands in need of improvement is in the development of a metaphysical critique of even the more conservative

neopragmatists. The grounds for such a critique have already been prepared in the forceful exposure of the emptiness of the radical positions. The problem is not simply, as Kimura proposes, that there is epistemological inconsistency within the neopragmatic camp and that the more unrestrained social activists have devised theological novelties that they hope will be useful for their political agendas. The problem is in not considering that the deepest reason that “what works” about explanations that do really work is that they are true, that they express thoughts that really disclose the causal structures of reality.

Seen in this way, even the restrained neopragmatists like Rescher and Putnam are all the more praiseworthy because they are fundamentally alert to the need for epistemology to privilege the mind’s receptivity to reality in its knowledge, both the reality of the mundane world and the reality of the divine. Putnam is, after all, a practicing Jew and Rescher a practicing Catholic. Their philosophical adoption of some of the categories and practices of pragmatism strikes me as part of a larger philosophical realism that understands that explanations that “work” do so because of the causal structures of reality that these explanations describe.

Just as the metaphysically-friendly pragmatism of Peirce is so different from the metaphysically-hostile pragmatism of Dewey, so too the self-described neopragmatism of Putnam or Rescher is worlds apart from the self-described neopragmatism of West or Gordon. Likewise, their humble admission of religious reverence is not the cosmic pantheism of Emerson nor the utilitarian fictions of social radicals but an admirable wonder over the irreducibly divine for which they need to find a place in their philosophies if those philosophies are really to “work” as explanations for what transcends human control.

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**FINDING FAITH: THE SPIRITUAL QUEST OF THE POST-BOOMER GENERATION** by Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller (*Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick N.J., 2008*). Pp. xi +228, £60.95 hbk and £18.95 pbk

This is an unusual study of Californian post-boomers (those aged between 20 and 40) seeking communally based forms of spiritual embodiment to express their faith by means of deeply felt experiential styles of worship. Usually religious belief in the sociology of religion is consigned to understandings of holistic forms of spirituality or cults and sects. By contrast, this study focuses on Christianity and the vigorous responses of its followers to a culture of postmodernity. The title and the cover suggest something topical; often in such cases, one is deeply disappointed. This is not so in regard to this study.

Anybody with the slightest interest in what is going in the religious marketplace should read this study carefully. It is very clearly written; the sociology sits lightly but highly significantly; the ethnography is vivid and credibly authentic; and the insights yielded are rich and unexpected. The title indicates why the study is so interesting. It is about finding faith, not losing it. The testimonies of the children of light, who in the mass media are often cast into outer darkness, are given sociological recognition in ways that reverse the usual expectations that postmodernity destroys religious vitality and paralyses its believers, most especially if they are young. Far from being cowed, the post-boomers find in postmodernity distinctive opportunities for forming their own strategies for seeking salvation. Apart from one group in the study, most of the others seem beneficiaries of the opportunities for the expression of belief postmodernity so distinctively generates.

Reflecting the cynical traits of postmodernity, usually, the majority of sociologists, gravely afflicted with secularity, deal in nefarious demolition jobs on religious belief. As deconstruction workers on religion, they do not handle testimonies