

naturelle s'avérant incapable de trouver Dieu. Cependant, là encore, la racine humaniste se laisse voir : c'est en lui, et non par une aide extérieure, que l'homme trouve la possibilité de cette foi. En lui se trouve la Parole. Cet accès n'est pas l'anéantissement du mystique, mais un savoir qui, s'il excède les forces de la seule raison naturelle et dont A.S. reconnaît que les spirituels ne donnent jamais une description claire, est le fruit d'une longue et difficile préparation dont le but principal est le détachement par rapport au monde ; ce savoir lui-même est « un savoir positif, qui permet à l'homme d'entreprendre la reconstruction du monde et de soi-même sur la base du sens retrouvé » (p. 228).

Cet accès direct à Dieu, par les seules forces de l'homme, invalide, on le comprend, toute médiation institutionnelle : l'Église extérieure et visible est proscrite, le spiritualisme, comme le dit Franck avec virulence, « veut supprimer tout ce qui est extérieur à la foi : la prédication, les cérémonies, les sacrements, les anathèmes et la vocation, car inutiles. » (p. 134) Seule est valable « l'expérience intime et directe de la Croix » (p.138), expérience qui par interiorisation active détermine la conduite éthique et vertueuse de l'homme. Cette position touche l'Écriture qui, si elle n'est pas invalidée, n'offre pourtant qu'un « témoignage de la vérité » qui n'enseigne pas la foi, témoignage matériel qui n'est en rien la Parole de Dieu, et qui se révèle même l'instrument du Diable dans l'interprétation contradictoire qu'en donnent les Églises – autre conviction qui oppose violemment le spiritualisme à l'interprétation littérale de l'Écriture par Luther. Une vision du monde et de l'histoire est évidemment liée à cette conviction, vision pessimiste pour laquelle l'histoire est histoire de la dégénérescence et de la dénaturation de la vérité, à mesure que se développent les Églises.

Reste une question, particulièrement intéressante, que A.S. ne fait qu'effleurer au profit d'une analyse minutieuse des doctrines des trois principaux spirituels : « Frank et les autres spirituels étaient-ils croyants ? » (p. 229). Se gardant de répondre, l'A. indique cependant clairement que la démarche des spirituels est d'abord philosophique : elle *part* de la philosophie pour mener au concept de Dieu. La confrontation à la transcendance, découverte *en* l'homme, par ses propres forces, est la réponse cherchée à l'angoisse existentielle première. On peut en effet alors parler d'un radicalisme de l'humanisme : « nous avons affaire à une tentative de réinventer Dieu comme hypothèse nécessaire afin de donner à l'existence humaine une dimension absolue et divine. » (p. 230) Et

l'A. de préciser que ce Dieu « n'est pas le Dieu de la religion ». Dans l'esprit d'un humanisme radical, l'entreprise est bien celle d'une divinisation de l'homme (dont le Christ, considéré uniquement comme un homme, offre l'exemple et le modèle) – à quoi l'on peut reconnaître l'une des racines essentielles de la philosophie de la religion qui va naître. C'est ainsi un aperçu particulièrement intéressant que nous offre l'A. sur une pensée qui se situe à la frontière où convergent philosophie, religion et philosophie de la religion, nous dévoilant pour ainsi dire *in vivo* la fabrication d'une « religion » humaniste radicale, d'une religion sans religion qui allait connaître une fantastique postérité.

Vincent Delecroix.

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SHAROT (Stephen).

**A Comparative Sociology of the World's Religions: Virtuosi, Priests and Popular Religion.** New York-London, New York University Press, 2001, 343 p. (bibliogr., index).

I am delighted to review this impressive and wide-ranging book. Clearly it is the product of many years' work, of encyclopaedic reading and much reflection. The Author teaches in the Department of Behavioural Sciences in Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He tells us that many of the ideas within this book were initially worked through with different classes of his undoubtedly fortunate students (the size of S.S.'s classes grew as the focus on a comparison of the world's religions developed) ; happily a much wider range of students and scholars are now able to access this important body of material.

The book is divided into two parts. The first is concerned with Concepts and Theories, the second with Religious Action in the World Religions – more precisely with a set of case studies drawn from each of the world's religions, which elaborate the innovative themes set out in the theoretical chapters. The Author articulates his goal as follows : a comparative analysis of 'what are variously called the popular, common, folk, unofficial religious forms, or little traditions, and their relationships with the elite, official forms, or great traditions, of the world religions' (p. 3). In order to do this, he draws on an extensive body of interdisciplinary literature concerned with popular religion and organizes this 'within an analytic scheme of religious action that builds principally on the writings of Max Weber' (p. 4). The brilliance of this book lies in linking Weberian

thinking about religious action with popular rather than elite forms of religious life.

First, then, the theoretical frame. This pays particular attention to the concept of religious action. Employing two intersecting dimensions – one which contrasts the transformative with the thaumaturgical, and one which contrasts this worldly action with other worldly action – the Author suggests four types of religious goals (p. 36). These are the nomic (the maintenance of existing order anchored in the supramundane), the transformative (with an emphasis on change in nature, society and individual being), the thaumaturgical (where release rather than change is expected) and the extrinsic (where mundane goals are the object of actions purported to be supramundane). Goals, however, are only one aspect of religious action. We need also to look at means – which, like goals, are infinitely varied in the different world faiths and in different types (elite and popular) of believers. It is this framework that is used to organize the material on elite and popular religion in the chapters that follow.

Two further points are necessary before looking selectively at the case studies. First that this book is an immensely rewarding text, but not always an easy one. The theoretical ideas are demanding and need to be digested slowly. The second is to underline that the framework is not exclusively Weberian. Ideas from Durkheim and Marx are also incorporated. Marx and Marxists, for example, have preoccupied themselves with the religions of the masses, seeing these as compensation for suffering and alienation. It is important, therefore, that we take into account the structural features that are likely to influence the similarities and differences between elite and popular forms of religion. Patterns emerge in these relationships which depend on the 'environments' of religious action (pp. 65-66): these involve the values system incorporated in the religion in question, the nature of its organisation, and finally the wider socio-economic context.

The case studies that follow vary considerably, variations which depend partly on the material available. They cover the major world faiths and almost all parts of the globe. My own interests led me to the chapters on Christianity and their implication for a better understanding of religion in Europe and the United States. Chapter 7 is concerned with Catholicism in medieval Europe and the marked contrasts between the official Church and the religion of the masses in, for example, the pantheon. The position of the Virgin is particularly interesting from both points of view. Chapter 9 asks how the

Reformation and the emphases of Protestantism have changed these relationships; it also interrogates the very different patterns that have emerged in America, where church religion is far more popular than it is in Europe. In this context, it is harder to discern a truly differentiated popular religion. The final section of Chapter 10 introduces commodified forms of popular religion in the West, including the New Age.

I find my self reflecting on these ideas, but in a rather different direction. The key question in modern Europe is not only the increasing divorce between belief and belonging, but what happens to belief in this context. It is clear that the historic or official churches in Europe can no longer discipline beliefs, actions or moralities – almost all scholars are agreed on this point. They are less agreed about the consequences as belief 'spills over' into society's mainstream. Thinly disguised as spirituality we find it everywhere: in management (especially training) and economic life, in business (well-being sections of major food stores), in healthcare (mainstream and alternative), in green movements and ecology, in the education system (the search for values and morality as a basis for citizenship), in welfare, in family life and in relationships. Not only must we get to grips with this phenomenon, we need also to understand its relationship with more traditional forms of religion. Sharot's analysis offers important clues about how to do this, not least the value of placing this material in a comparative perspective.

With this in mind, I recommend this book very warmly. It should be read for its own sake, but also as a stimulant to further studies in this important field.

Grace Davie.

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STUART (Jan),  
RAWSKI (Evelyn S.).

**Worshipping the Ancestors. Chinese Commemorative Portraits.** Washington D.C., Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, in association with Stanford University Press, 2001, 216 p. (bibliogr., glossaire, index, liste des caract. chinois, illustr., cartes).

Ce catalogue d'une exposition organisée par la Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., 17 juin-9 septembre 2001) aborde un thème jusqu'à présent jamais étudié dans l'art chinois malgré le grand