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Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 17 | Issue 2 Article 11

4-1-2000

Smart, REFLECTIONS IN THE MIRROR OF RELIGION

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Recommended Citation

Chapple, Christopher Key (2000) "Smart, REFLECTIONS IN THE MIRROR OF RELIGION," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 17 : Iss. 2 , Article 11.
Available at: https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol17/iss2/11

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process. Ethical theory in particular cannot lightly take it that the notion of process can replace the notions of event and act.

Reflections in the Mirror of Religion, by **Ninian Smart**. Edited by John P. Burris. Macmillan/St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. xiii and 237. Cloth $45.00.

CHRISTOPHER KEY CHAPPLE, Loyola Marymount University

This work gathers several essays written and published by Ninian Smart during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Ninian Smart, the 1998 President of the American Academy of Religion, helped establish two premier departments of Religious Studies, at the University of Lancaster in England and at the University of California, Santa Barbara. These essays contain reflections on four decades of Smart's study and teaching of world religious traditions.

The editor, John Burris, has grouped these essays into three categories. The first several essays probe the great metaphysical questions that undergird the study of world religions. What is the nature of religious experience? Can an experience of pure consciousness be achieved? Does the mystic enter into a realm held in common with members of other faith traditions? The second group of essays explores the sociology of religion in India and China for the past two hundred years. Smart discusses the differences between the South Asian and East Asian responses to colonialism and seeks to explain the unqiue pespective of Theravada Buddhism, particularly in Sri Lanka. In the third and final section of the book, Smart examines practical issues pertaining to the study of religion at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and ends on the optimistic note that interreligious understanding will help promote world peace.

Smart's philosophical approach to the study of religion might be characterized as liberal, open-minded, optimistic, pragmatic, and somewhat perennialist. Though Smart has for decades worked at a full articulation of the geographic and historical distinctions that set religious traditions apart from one another, his analysis discerns two primary modalities of religious thought. The first, and more common, asserts a transcendent presence that determines and shapes the course of human life, at least in matters of ultimate concern. The Abrahamic Monotheisms (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) fit this typology, as do Hinduism and certain strands of East Asian thought, particularly as found in the moral absolutism of the Confucian tradition and the cosmic Buddhahood of the Mahayana. However, according to Smart, Theravada Buddhism, with its negation of an abiding soul, puts forth a model of religiosity that requires its own category. While not exactly nihilistic, the Theravada nonetheless shows no interest in the pervasive theological concerns of the other traditions. By focussing on the heroic control of the mind through ethical observances and meditation, Theravada remains a reluctant partner for dialogue with other faiths because of its reluctance to name as deity its concept of transcendence.

In discussing religion and modernity, Smart compares and contrasts Maoist Marxism (which he considers to be religious) with the Neo-

Hinduism of the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. Both Maoism and Neo-Hinduism sought to cast off the shackles of western imperialism. Whereas the Indian movements stem from longstanding indigenous ideologies, Smart considers Maoism to be somewhat unrelated to core Chinese values, resulting in a cultural disconnection for China in the last half of this century. He regards the Taiping rebellion to be a precursor to Maoism's success and notes that Marxism has essentially become the national religion of China. In the instances of both China and India, Smart observes that "secular and religious ideologies need to be treated together" (p. 172), that in the modern period distinctions between the two are fraught with ambiguity.

In his reflections on the academic study of world religions, Smart notes that virtually all world faiths can be found in significant numbers in such major cities as Los Angeles and New York. He champions a phenomenological rather than theoretical approach to the study of religions and advocates "fairness and empathy in dealing with other folks' values" (p. 187). He acknowledges the importance of the study of primary texts such as the Vedas, Torah, and Quran, but urges that this approach be tempered with "liturgical, inspirational, intellectual, and other uses" (p. 191), indicating the need for a holistic approach to the study of religion. He also notes overlaps among traditions, particularly the mystical aspects of Sufism, Yoga, and Christianity. He carefully points out that comparative studies of religion were impossible before the modern era, yet advocates respect for religionists who protect the pure transmission of traditions.

Field study has become an important part of the religious studies program that Smart has helped develop at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Smart notes that "the student who spends most of his time with the Pali canon or commentaries on the *Yoga-sutras* may not acquire a good grasp of the way religion is on the ground" and notes that "non-religious worldviews are also part of the cultural milieux of modern religions" (p. 202). He also stresses the need for scholars of religion to address ethical issues and to take leadership in articulating the importance and relevance of religion.

The book concludes with a prediction that the boundaries between religions will soften as a logical consequence of their newfound proximity to one another. He also predicts that this development will result in increasing polarization as faiths struggle to maintain their discrete identity in an increasingly shrinking world. Additionally, new religious forms will continue to arise, with a shift to mysticism and evangelical conversion. He ends the book by questioning the validity of any such prognostications, suggesting that we cannot anticipate future "philosophical or scientific revolutions" (p. 221) that might shape the religious landscape in new and unpredictable ways.

This book contains several powerful essays, and in a sense represents decades of participation in the birth of Religious Studies as an academic discipline. It includes a comprehensive bibliography of Smart's books, grouped in the categories of History of Religions, South Asian Religions, Indian Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, Methodology and Theory, Religious Dialogue, Religious Studies in Education, Politics, Religious Thought, and Christian Theology, representing a total of 36 books edited

or authored by Ninian Smart.

Though not all the essays flow smoothly from one to the next, the editor, John P. Burris, has assembled a coherent collection that represents the scholarly concerns of Ninian Smart over the past ten years, informed by several decades of experience and reflection. Smart, a pioneer in the discipline of religious studies, reminds us in this volume of the enormous complexity of the study of religion, a discipline that integrates philosophy, cultural studies, sociology, and political thought.

The Selfhood of the Human Person, by **John F. Crosby**. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996. Pp. x and 313. $19.95.

JAMES G. HANINK, Loyola Marymount University

Philosophers seldom make headlines. When they do the news is not always encouraging, as with Peter Singer's bid to rehabilitate infanticide. Karol Wojtyla, of course, is an exception. As John Paul II his recent *Fides et Ratio* won plaudits even in fora resolutely ignorant of philosophical inquiry.

Celebrity opens many a door. But Wojtyla's message merits its reception. It speaks hope—and, thus, courage. "It is the nature of the human being," he argues, "to seek the truth" and especially "the truth of the person—what the person is and what the person reveals from deep within." (#32)

John Crosby, of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, begins his study of the person with an acknowledgement. "This work was born of my encounter with the personalism of Karol Wojtyla in the early 1980s." (ix) (He cites Wojtyla's *The Acting Person* and the essays available, thanks to Theresa Sandok, under the title *Person and Community*.) Crosby explores, as does Wojtyla, classical Thomist themes in a phenomenological mode. Wojtyla's phenomenology engages the legacy of Max Scheler. Crosby's mentor—in substance *and* method—is Dietrich von Hildebrand. As a (dissenting) student of Husserl, von Hildebrand essayed a phenomenological realism premised on an intentionality that achieves a direct contact with being.

A straight-ahead approach to Crosby's book seems best. First I will sketch the central themes he so carefully examines. Then I identify a pair of problems which he must face more squarely than he so far has. His book, I think, is extraordinary. If there be any justice, others will go well beyond my brief comments.

How is it, to begin, that we can speak of a "self," a self that we discover in consciousness? We can do so, Crosby observes, by reflecting on our *moral* consciousness. Paradigm cases of depersonalization, for example, slavery and prostitution, point to a subject conscious of a self if only in its very resisting of objectification.

An objectification of the self, in effect, alienates the self to another. Yet there is an incommunicability central to the self of moral consciousness. (While every individual has an incommunicability, e.g., your copy of today's paper is not mine, incommunicability becomes stronger—and axiologically