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"Vor Gott sind alle gleich": Soziale Gleichheit, soziale Ungleichheit und die Religionen. Günter Kehler

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): "Vor Gott sind alle gleich": Soziale Gleichheit, soziale Ungleichheit und die Religionen by Günter Kehr

Review by: Ioan Petru Culianu

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expressed in the paradigm of the life of Saint Francis, is based on the endurance of pain. To a very recent date, the church has opposed any medical killing of pain on the grounds that pain, as a part of human fate, is given by God. Indonesian mysticism is the subject of a paper by Wolfgang Marschall. A last contribution on a particular case is by Hans Mayer and represents an analysis of the "magic theatre" in Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*. Mayer comes to the conclusion that Hesse had probably not made, as several interpreters claim, a personal acquaintance with drugs. Two articles, by Wolfgang Kretschmer and Hubertus Halbfas, are concerned, respectively, with the psychological base of ecstasy and with communication of paradoxical states, especially in the Christian tradition.

I recommend the volume edited by Cancik to all students of religion wanting a balanced view of such a decisive religious experience as ecstasy. Both quantitatively—as far as the bibliography is concerned—and qualitatively, *Rausch—Extase—Mystik* represents first-class material born from those fecund *Ringvorlesungen* at Tübingen. [IOAN PETRU CULIANU, *University of Groningen*]

"Vor Gott sind alle gleich": Soziale Gleichheit, soziale Ungleichheit und die Religionen. Edited by GÜNTER KEHRER. Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1983. Pp. 248.

The volume edited by Günter Kehrler represents, if not the latest, then one of the latest products of the *Tübinger religionswissenschaftliche Ringvorlesungen*, which have now a solid reputation. The book's thirteen contributions debate in what ways religion has interfered with the social order in different parts of the world and at different times.

Günter Kehrler is concerned with the problem of inequality in general and thus especially with its sociobiological aspects. Is "behavioral dominance" in animal societies the equivalent, and the forerunner, of inequality in human societies? The author is very prudent and gives no decisive answer. Neither does he take a particular stand on the sociological theories of human inequality. He only points to the complexities of the problem, which are only increased by adding a further factor to the whole game of inequality: religion itself. As a matter of fact, religion can be, as the author observes, "a legitimation and a source of social inequality" (pp. 18–25), but it does not represent a mere additional element of social competition.

The other contributions to the volume cover different fields of investigation. Wolfgang Schenkel is concerned with Egyptian religion, Wolfgang Röllig with the ancient Near East, Bernhard Lang and Hans G. Kippenberg with ancient Israel, Fritz Opitz with modern Japan, Peter Schreiner and Suresh A. Upadhyaya with India present and past, Stephen Gero with Islam, Heinz Gaube with Iran before and after the Islamic revolution, and Günter Vogler with the religious implications of the Peasant War in Germany. Two other contributions, by Johannes Neumann and Hubert Cancik, are more general in that they concern the origins of a Western institution: modern law. Hubert Cancik, in

one of the wittiest contributions to the volume, shows that the idea of modern human rights as formulated in the Virginia Bill of Rights of 1776 and in the Declaration of the Human and Civil Rights of the French Revolution (1789) actually has nothing to do with the Christian concept of "freedom," as several theologians and scholars have claimed through the ages. Cancik shows that human natural equality was already a principle of Roman order, under the influence of the ideas of the Stoics.

Belonging to the learned lectures (*Ringvorlesungen*) of the Tübingen university, the volume edited by Kehrer needs no further introduction to the students of religion who wish to have a *status quaestionis* to date on the relationship between religion and social order. [IOAN PETRU CULIANU, *University of Groningen*]

Cultes "héroïques" romains: Les Fondateurs. By BERNADETTE LIOU-GILLE. Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1980. Pp. vi + 288.

Did the Romans, like the Greeks, know heroic cults? After studying the cases of Hercules at Rome, Aeneas, Romulus, and Servius Tullius, Liou-Gille answers that they did. But that, perhaps, is not the most conspicuous aspect of the book. The definition the author proposes for the hero—a human who, after his death, receives a cult similar to the cult of a god—remains very generic. It is possible that not even all the examples that the author studies are congruent with her proposed definition. For example, a veiled statue to which she refers may be a statue not of Servius but of Fortuna. But Liou-Gille does furnish all the data one could desire on ancient sources and modern discussions, even on questions so difficult as that of the *dei Indigetes*. She ventures some new and suggestive hypotheses; for example, she compares Garanus/Recanarus with the Celtic Trigaranos. Above all, because of her clear and objective presentation of facts and theories, Liou-Gille's little book can provide a good basis for anyone interested in these matters. [DOMINIQUE BRIQUEL, *Ecole Normale Supérieure*]

The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhism. Edited and introduced by LESLIE S. KAWAMURA. Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1981. Pp. xxi + 272.

This volume consists of contributions by speakers at the Calgary Buddhism Conference, September 1978. It both benefits from and is limited by the participants in the conference. The essays deal with aspects of the bodhisattva theory not found in the classic work by Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., 1931). One wonders whether the word "doctrine" in Dayal's title and in the title of the present volume indicates reluctance to accept this theory as a practice. In any case, A. L. Basham's contribution, "The Evolution of the Concept of the Bodhisattva," and Gadjin M. Nagao's "The Bodhisattva Returns to the World"