the distinction between the syntax of ritual action and the semantics of religious representations. The intuitions of the participants about the first enable them to use the latter in appropriate ways in actual rituals. Houseman, in his contribution on the 'secret' initiation rite for boys among the Beti in Cameroon, argues that rites are not only syntactically constrained, but to some degree also semantically by the formal properties of religious interaction.

This well-ordered and well-produced book is a credit to the growing literature on the cognitive approach to the study of symbol, ritual and religion which has emerged in the last decade. The paradigm being so young, its adherents are highly ambitious: the hypotheses formulated challenge many received points of view. Though they often seem to explain certain empirical data better than previous theories, yet, so far the enterprise has remained rather speculative. Even so, this collection of papers is, in my view, of prime importance to all scholars of symbols, rituals, and religions with an interest in theory development for the purpose of the construction of more adequate instruments of research for these three highly important fields of cultural research.

University of Leiden
Dept. for the Study of Religion
Matthias de Vrieshof 1
NL-2300 RA Leiden

J.G. PLATVOET


Despite its title, and 'readings' from Otto, Kristensen, Kitagawa, Eliade, and Hultkrantz, this edited collection of excerpts is a source book in philosophical Phenomenology in the tradition of Scheler and Ricoeur rather than a Phenomenology of Religion in the tradition of van der Leeuw. Twiss and Conser subsume the latter more historical tradition into a more speculative and more properly Husserlian phenomenology. The readings are grouped in three sections. The first is on 'numinous', mystical, and feminist
religious experience, which Twiss and Conser term ‘essential phenomenology’. It has excerpts from Otto on the experience of the numinous (77-85), Scheler on the divine being revealed in ‘natural religious’ acts as absolute and holy (86-96), Earle on a phenomenology of mysticism (97-112), the Zen teacher Sekida on samadhi in Husserlian and Heideggerian terms (112-120), Carol Christ on the spiritual quest of women from nothingness to awakening, insight, and new naming (120-128), and Dupré on his thesis that ‘autonomous reflection’, divorced from religious experience, cannot do justice to religion (129-142). In the second section, five readings are grouped on ‘the social and symbolic forms of the sacred’, as studied by what Twiss and Conser term ‘the historical-typological Phenomenology of Religion’. It has excerpts from C.J. Arthur on Phenomenology and religion in Golding’s novels about the Neanderthalers (145-166), Kristensen on prayer (167-176), Kitagawa on three types of pilgrimage in Japan (177-187), Eliade on the world, the city, and the house (188-199), and Hultkrantz on the cult of the dead among North American Indians (200-220). The third section is a collection of readings on ‘levels of meaning in the religious life-world’ as discussed in ‘existential hermeneutics’. They are by Ricoeur on guilt and ethics, J.E. Smith on the experience of the holy and the idea of God (238-248), M. Westphal on again guilt (248-264), Caroline Bynum on the polysemic nature of religious symbols (265-273), and Paul Pruyser on the dynamics of hope (273-289). The three sections are preceded by a long introduction (1-74) in which Twiss and Conser introduce these three successive types of phenomenology of religion, the essential, the historical-typological, and the existential-hermeneutical, as the three ‘separate but related voices’ (1-2) which together constitute the choir of modern phenomenology of religion.

The phenomenology advocated in this book is the existential-hermeneutical one. It is a non-factual, personal, holistic (160), imaginary re-experiencing (163) of one’s own or any other believer’s experiences of the Transcendent. It espouses a meta-testable inclusive religious ontology and is thoroughly religionist. Twiss and Conser consider their amalgam ‘one of the most important methods for the study of religions developed in the last century’, a claim which a good many scholars of religions will not endorse, however much they will respect this theology, in the manner in which religions are to be respected. This book seems to be of interest mainly for