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SCRIPTABLE

A Bispectral Review of Recent Books



Robert Tenor, editor
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EDITORIAL

[Scriptable](#) is an irregular review of what was once called the belles-lettres, where we essay upon a wide assortment of current books and articles with an eye open for “the beautiful jumble of discordant congruencies” derived from the authors and titles under discussion. We cast a wide academic net through the social sciences and humanities, with a strong orientation toward current events, social theory, religious and cultural studies.

With this number we move away from simple reportage of current scholarship to something more ambitious. The body of each issue includes editorial essays examining themes inspired by the works under consideration. Our [Annotated Bibliography](#) will review, list and link the titles under discussion, providing a faithful summary of its content and audience.

Our purpose is to inform and entertain. Through the review essays we hope to visit new and timeworn places through unsettled ideas in currency newly minted. Perhaps to see the outlandish as intimate and to show up the familiar as stranger than before thought. Each issue should surprise.



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THE DEEP HISTORY OF OURSELVES: THE FOUR-BILLION-YEAR STORY OF HOW WE GOT CONSCIOUS BRAINS by Joseph Ledoux, Illustrations by Caio Da Silva Sorrentino [Viking, 9780735223837]

A leading neuroscientist offers a history of the evolution of the brain from unicellular organisms to the complexity of animals and human beings today

Renowned neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux digs into the natural history of life on earth to provide a new perspective on the similarities between us and our ancestors in deep time. This page-turning survey of the whole of terrestrial evolution sheds new light on how nervous systems evolved in animals, how the brain developed, and what it means to be human.

In **THE DEEP HISTORY OF OURSELVES**, LeDoux argues that the key to understanding human behavior lies in viewing evolution through the prism of the first living organisms. By tracking the chain of the evolutionary timeline he shows how even the earliest single-cell organisms had to solve the same problems we and our cells have to solve each day. Along the way, LeDoux explores our place in nature, how the evolution of nervous systems enhanced the ability of organisms to survive and thrive, and how the emergence of what we humans understand as consciousness made our greatest and most horrendous achievements as a species possible.

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THE DEEP HISTORY OF OURSELVES presents a radical new theory: rather than asking whether human-like mental states are present in other organisms, it flips today's conventional scientific thinking on its head by looking at what aspects of other organisms are present in us. LeDoux takes us on a step-by-step journey from the beginning of life and reveals how, with the incremental addition of new features over the long course of evolutionary history, nervous systems and then brains evolved, and how behavior changed as a result. While we differ enormously from our single cell microbial ancestors, deep down traces of them and every one of our other ancestors survive in us and contribute to our behavior, to a far greater degree than we generally acknowledge.

This page-turning investigation of complete terrestrial evolution from one of the most respected neurobiologists in the field, sheds new light on how nervous systems evolved in animals, how the brain developed, and what it means to be human.

The first nervous systems arrived in animals related to jellyfish. These had a diffuse web of connectivity with no centralized control. With the emergence of animals with bilaterally symmetric bodies, which accounts for most animals today, centralized control, in the form of a brain in the head region, appeared.

With most sensory organs and the neural control center both in the head, information about one's surroundings in the direction of forward locomotion could be used to rapidly control behaviors in the quest to defend, obtain nutrients and fluids, and reproduce.

Humans are vertebrates, and our brain reflects a series of modifications originating in the primordial brains of the first vertebrates, early fish. With the emergence of mammals from reptiles, more complex brains and new forms of behavioral control emerged as a result of an expansion of the forebrain.

According to the standard view, changes in the forebrain of early mammals enabled emotions, and with later mammals, further changes enabled complex cognition. LeDoux argues that this traditional view is wrong. The older forebrain regions, instead of being responsible for our emotions (our conscious feelings) themselves, simply control behavioral and physiological responses in survival situations. They are, what LeDoux calls survival circuits, rather than emotion circuits.

For example, contrary to popular opinion, the amygdala, a brain region LeDoux has worked on for decades, is not a fear center. It instead contains defensive survival circuits that help animals stay alive when in danger.

Although survival circuits do not themselves alone determine the quality of an emotional experience, their activities can indirectly affect the experience, biasing the emotion that will be experienced, and making it more intense or persistent.

Conscious emotional feelings, in LeDoux's model, are products of our unique cognitive capacities, and are related to culture, language, hierarchical reasoning and self-awareness—no self, no fear or other emotions. Emotions, like all conscious experiences, depend on the newest regions of forebrain's prefrontal cortex. Some of these regions are unique to humans.

Unique aspects of human consciousness account for our greatest achievements as a species (art, literature, music, architecture, science, medicine), but also our most troubling and base dispositions—selfishness, narcissism, greed, envy, tribal jingoism, hatred, and evil. These proclivities challenge our ability to coexist within and between social groups, and also threaten the planet and its habitability for our descendants and other species. Yet, at the same time, just as our conscious minds made these problems possible, it is also the only hope for their solution. However, LeDoux believes consciousness can only help if we, as a species, collectively will it to do so.

Can We Survive Our Self-Conscious Selves?

Like all living things, humans are organisms, biological entities that function as physiological aggregates whose constituent parts operate with a high degree of cooperation and a low degree of conflict. But unlike other organisms, humans possess a rogue component—a brain network that can, at will, choose to defect and undermine the survival mission and purpose of the rest of the body. This is the network that underlies human consciousness, and especially our capacity for auto-noetic, reflective self-awareness.

Auto-noetic consciousness (the ability to mentally model one's self in relation to time) is the essence of who each of us is, or at least of what we consciously know about ourselves. It is the basis of the conceptions that underlie our greatest achievements as a species—art, music, architecture, literature, science—and our ability to appreciate them. For good reason, then, consciousness researcher Hakwan Lau calls his blog *In Consciousness We Trust*.

But should we? Consciousness, especially auto-noetic consciousness, has a dark side—it is the enabler of distrust, hate, avarice, greed, and selfishness, mental features that could be our undoing.

Wait a minute. Isn't survival, life itself, an exercise in selfishness? Isn't selfishness the way organismic unity is maintained? Isn't it at the heart of Richard Dawkins's "selfish gene" theory of survival? Aren't bacteria and bees and worms, fish, snakes, cats, and apes selfish? The answer to all of the above is yes—how else could they survive? But something unique happened when selfishness came to be an isolated capacity in humans—that is, when selfishness became the basis for conscious decisions that could harm, rather than simply enable or enhance, the well-being of the organism as a whole.

Unicellular organisms had the Earth to themselves for more than three billion years. Multicellular organisms evolved by transferring responsibility for fitness and survival from the

single cell to a more complex entity with many cells that all shared a common genome. This biological model worked fairly well for nearly another billion years, until organismic unity was suddenly challenged by the arrival of the capacity for autonoetically conscious brains in humans.

The autonoetically conscious human brain is the only entity in the history of life that has ever been able to choose, at will, to terminate its own existence, or even put the organism's physical existence at risk for the thrill of simply doing so—the other cells and systems be damned. Some argue, on the basis of anecdotal evidence, that other animals also commit suicide. But whether such behaviors are truly intentional, in the sense of being based on a thought about causing one's self to cease to exist, is controversial. The famed late-nineteenth-century sociologist Emile Durkheim proposed that suicide applies only to cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, an act which he knows or believes will produce the intended result—death. Because this kind of conception depends on a reflective social consciousness, animals, with their purely internal, physiological constraints, are incapable of it. True suicide, in its various forms, according to Durkheim, is a social condition of humans.

Early humans are believed to have been unremarkable compared to coexisting fauna. Then, at some point (estimates range between fifty thousand and two hundred thousand years ago), something happened to distinguish our ancestors from the rest of the animal kingdom. They developed new capacities and ways of existing and interacting with one another—language; hierarchical relational reasoning; representation of self versus other; mental time travel. Autonoesis was the result.

That autonoetic consciousness might be unique to humans does not mean that it appeared out of the blue. For one thing, our primate ancestors had sophisticated working memory capacities, including executive functions, which allowed the integration of perceptual and mnemonic information and nonconscious deliberation about alternative courses of action. These were made possible by their lateral prefrontal areas (including dorsal and ventral lateral areas), which present-day monkeys and apes also possess, but their nonprimate mammalian ancestors lacked. More speculative is the possibility that these circuits may have also made it possible for ancestral primates to have noetic conscious experiences of perceptual events, and perhaps could experience a kind of noetic awareness of the value of such events based on a crude semantic appraisal of gradations of distinctions between what is generally useful and harmful. Perhaps they could even experience a relatively simple noetic version of self-awareness based on semantic autobiographical information about what belonged to their body and what did not.

But they would not have been able to experience their selves as entities with a personal past, and imagine their selves in possible future manifestations, including the existential realization of eventual non-existence. Autonoetic awareness, I propose, depended on unique features that we know typify the human prefrontal cortex: a region, the frontal pole, that has novel components and that interacts with lateral prefrontal areas to form the higher-order network; enriched connections between the higher-order prefrontal network and lower-order processors (including other prefrontal areas and perceptual, mnemonic, and conceptual processors in the occipital, temporal, and parietal lobes); and novel cell types and molecular/genetic mechanisms that fostered enhanced processing within the higher-order network and between it and lower-order processors.

Given that auto-noesis can pose a threat to organismic unity by undermining the overall survival goals and needs of the organism, it must have added significant survival value that protected it from being eliminated as a passing evolutionary fad. One obvious possibility is that with auto-noetic consciousness, rather than simply detecting risk and avoiding it, the organism can personalize the risk by, for example, asking, "How dangerous is it to me?" This, I believe, is how auto-noesis made emotions possible. An emotion is the experience that something of value is happening to you. No self, no fear—nor other emotions.

While many animals make decisions based on value about what is useful and harmful, only humans dynamically evaluate the implications of a situation in real time using complex hierarchical decision trees to draw conclusions and take actions relevant to personal well-being in the moment. Only humans plan for an imagined future, or even a set of alternative possible futures.

And only the auto-noetically conscious human mind can generate a narrative in which the danger of a certain option, after having been calculated, can be counterfactually minimized so that a selfish desire can be satisfied, free of guilt or anxiety during the act—consuming a rich, high-caloric meal, swimming in rough seas, scaling the walls of a cliff, having an adulterous fling, or taking an addictive drug.

Auto-noesis is a double-edged sword. Our future depends on how we, as a species, choose to use it.

Earlier I quoted Aldous Huxley as saying we rose above the brutes because of language. He also maintained that people can easily become victims of their words. Language gives us personal pronouns that separate "me" from "you" and "us" from "them." We build social groups, clans, tribes, religions, kingdoms, and nations on this basis, and shun, isolate, harm, and even kill one another to protect beliefs that define the groups with which we choose to affiliate. The selfishness of our genes pales next to the selfishness of our self-conscious mind and its convictions.

Beliefs are not just products of language or culture. They also depend on other special capacities that are intricately entwined with language—hierarchical cognition, self-awareness, and emotions. When these blend seamlessly, social systems that work for the greater good of our kind are possible. But when emotions are at odds with our reasoned thoughts, or when either is corrupted by beliefs, or when personal interests are pitted against the values of the culture at large, or against the needs of our species as a whole, humans suffer.

The personal, selfish nature of the auto-noetic mind leads it to assume that it is always in charge. Indeed, so-called free will is one of our most cherished narratives, which, according to the Bible, began when Adam chose the apple. And since ancient Greece, humans have believed that we are our conscious minds; we have treated the rest of the mind/brain and the body as servants, mere support staff. Descartes's dualistic philosophy was an attempt to reconcile religious conceptions of the soul in light of the scientific revolution begun by Copernicus and Galileo. The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard later proposed that anxiety is the price humans pay for the freedom to consciously choose how to lead our lives. While the behaviorist movements attempted to eliminate consciousness as a scientific construct, consciousness itself did not let that rejection stand.

Our unique brains have enabled us to conquer frontiers. We have the power to change the environment to meet our needs; satisfy our whims, desires, and fantasies; and protect ourselves from our fears and anxieties. Imagining the unknown inspires us to find new ways of existing.

Our thirst for knowledge has led to scientific and technological discoveries that have made life, at least for the lucky among us, easier in many ways. We don't have to forage for food in dangerous settings—bloodthirsty predators are simply not part of daily life for most humans. We easily combat seasonal changes in temperature with convenient appliances. We have access to medications to treat, and even prevent, common illnesses, and surgical procedures can fix and, in some cases, replace damaged body parts.

And we can electronically communicate with people anywhere in the world instantaneously. The Internet has transformed life in ways worth celebrating, but like most good things, it comes at a cost. It has made it easier to be self-centered by facilitating realignments of interests that oppose the common good, challenging commonly accepted beliefs through hearsay and rumor, and even outright lies. False assertions can gain credence simply through repetition. Such tactics have been used to undermine the value of science and its contributions to life and well-being, and to attack the foundations of our social structures, including our government, and its safety nets for those in need, and its checks and balances against tyranny.

In the past the pace of change was slow and incremental, but over the last century it has become fast and furious. Global temperature is rising, along with unusual weather patterns. Forests are burning. Deserts are expanding. The seas are rising. The rate of species extinction is accelerating.

Many alarmed observers have called for efforts to "save the planet" by reversing, or at least slowing, the changes we have wrought. Others, though, have been swayed by the belief system of climate change deniers who insist that the relevant research is a hoax.

The astrophysicist Adam Frank believes that those concerned with our current situation are right to worry. Human actions, he says, are indeed having adverse consequences, and, he argues, are on target to drastically modify the physical and biological constitution of the Earth. But we won't destroy it. Quoting Lynn Margulis, originator of the endosymbiotic theory of multicellular life, Frank says: "Gaia is a tough bitch." Our planet, Frank reminds us, has survived significant geophysical disasters and mass extinctions in the past and will persist. But if we don't make corrections soon, it may not persist in a way that will support the current configuration of organisms, including us.

Bacteria and archaea, the ultimate survivors, will surely make it. Large multicellular organisms with voracious energy appetites may have a harder time. We know from past mass extinctions that opportunities arise for those who survive. The biological experiments that result will likely create a very different profile of life on Earth. And without us mucking around the way we do, the natural order of things might reach a more stable equilibrium. The philosopher Todd May, pondering such issues, recently asked, "Would human extinction be a tragedy?" He concluded that the world might well be better off without us. But his key question was, Would a world without our kind be a tragedy, given that we have achieved such remarkable things as a species?

Autonoetic consciousness is ultimately personal and selfish, and at its worst moments, narcissistic. Self-consciousness, according to Christophe Menant, is also the root of evil. At the same time it may be our sole hope for a future.

With our autonoetically conscious minds, we have constructed conceptual guidelines, such as morality and ethics, to help make difficult decisions, for example, about our way of life. Only self-conscious minds can come to the realization, as Todd May's mind did, that we have an obligation to confront our selfish nature for the good of humankind as a whole. But in the end, this is a value judgment, one based on the assumption that our achievements are special.

Autonoesis allows us to care about our differences, and bemoan their possible demise. There's nothing wrong with that. But perhaps we can sustain some version of our way of life without asking too much from other organisms. Doing so might well avert drastic changes in the configuration of life—the balance of biological power—that climactic change can bring. Remember, small mammals with low energy needs rose to the top of the food chain when conditions became less favorable for larger, energy-demanding, reptilian predators that had dominated with abandon.

We persist as individuals only if we persist as a species. We don't have time for biological evolution to come to the rescue—it's too slow a process. We have to depend on the more rapid avenues of change—cognitive and cultural evolution, which, in turn, depend on our autonoetic brains and their choices. In the end, it is indeed consciousness in which we must place our trust. <>

HUMANIMAL: HOW HOMO SAPIENS BECAME NATURE'S MOST PARADOXICAL CREATURE: A NEW EVOLUTIONARY HISTORY by Adam Rutherford, Illustrations by Alice Roberts [The Experiment, 9781615195312]

"Rutherford describes **HUMANIMAL** as being about the paradox of how our evolutionary journey turned 'an otherwise average ape' into one capable of creating complex tools, art, music, science, and engineering. It's an intriguing question, one his book sets against descriptions of the infinitely amusing strategies and antics of a dizzying array of animals."—The New York Times Book Review

Publisher's note: **HUMANIMAL** was published in the UK under the title The Book of Humans.

Evolutionary theory has long established that humans are animals: Modern Homo sapiens are primates who share an ancestor with monkeys and other great apes. Our genome is 98 percent identical to a chimpanzee's. And yet we think of ourselves as exceptional. Are we?

In this original and entertaining tour of life on Earth, Adam Rutherford explores the profound paradox of the "human animal." Looking for answers across the animal kingdom, he finds that many things once considered exclusively human are not: In Australia, raptors have been observed starting fires to scatter prey; in Zambia, a chimp named Julie even started a "fashion" of wearing grass in one ear. We aren't the only species that communicates, makes tools, or has sex for reasons other than procreation. But we have developed a culture far more complex than any other we've observed. Why has that happened, and what does it say about us?

HUMANIMAL is a new evolutionary history—a synthesis of the latest research on genetics, sex, migration, and much more. It reveals what unequivocally makes us animals—and also why we are truly extraordinary.

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Human Paradoxical Evolution

This is a book about the paradox of how we became us. It is an exploration of an evolution that bestowed enormous powers of intellect on an otherwise average ape, to create tools, art, music, science, and engineering. Through old bones and, nowadays, genetics, we know about the mechanics of our evolutionary journey through the eons (though there is so much still to discover), but we know far less about the development of our behavior, of our minds, and of the way that we uniquely evolved into the cultural and social beings that we are today.

At the same time, though, it is a book about animals, of which we are one. We're a self-centered species, and we find it hard not to see ourselves and our behaviors in other animals. Sometimes those characteristics do have a shared origin with our own. Often they do not. Regardless of their genesis, I am attempting to demystify our own behavior by pointing to where else on Earth we see those traits, and trying to sort the things that are uniquely us, shared with close evolutionary cousins, or just things that look similar, but are in fact unrelated. I'll be examining the evolution of technology in humans—having mastered the crafting of stones, and sticks, and fire hundreds of thousands of years ago—and in the many other animals that also use tools. Evolutionary biologists love thinking about sex, and I'll be delving in, not only to try to understand how we decoupled sex in all its myriad forms from reproduction, but how the sex lives of animals are also a carnival of delights that are not always simply the direct manifestation of the biological imperative to create offspring. While this is a celebration of both us and the wondrous variation in nature, we are indubitably a creature capable of less than angelic behavior, of creating horrible nightmares—violence, warfare, genocide, murder, rape. Are these different from the often horrifying behaviors that are part of the brutal natural world, the violence and sexual practices that don't get showcased on television documentaries? In the final part, I will be scrutinizing the reasons behind the evolution of behavioral modernity—meaning the emergence of people who are like us today. Our bodies became modern long before our minds did, which is a puzzle worth examining.

Biologists appraise the wonders of evolution, sometimes to understand ourselves, often to understand the grand scheme of life on Earth. This book is a glimpse of the epic meandering journey that every organism has made. After all, we are the only ones who can appreciate it.

What a piece of work we are!

The pillars of biology are firmly in place, installed over the last two centuries and tested over and over again. We have bound the principles of natural selection to genetics, in cells powered by chemistry. We have aligned these principles in history, to draw a picture of how life spread from such a simple beginning in the basement of the oceans to every inch of this planet. You might think that this means the study of life on Earth is pretty much done, and now we're just filling in the details. But science never sleeps, because there are always leviathan gaps in our knowledge. Most of nature remains unobserved, and it continues to utterly astound us with new discoveries every day, new species, and new traits in animals and other organisms that we simply have neither seen before nor perhaps even conceived of.

Some of the things described in the pages that follow were only discovered in 2018, the year I finished writing this book. That may mean details are scant, or have been seen only once or on a few occasions. It may mean these newly observed behaviors are outliers, truly unusual characteristics. Others might be generalizable to many species, or even all. Some may turn out to be not what we originally thought. For all the glorious documentaries that we see on television, most animals spend almost all of their lives unseen by human eyes, and live in environments that are inhospitable or alien to us. That is the nature of science: Seek and ye shall find. Studying these animals is important on its own terms, and may yet provide insight into our own condition.

Sometimes these behaviors appear to have a shared evolutionary origin with us. Others exist in non-human animals because they are clearly of great use in the struggle for existence, and have evolved many times over, just as insects, bats, and birds all have wings but with little in common in their histories of acquiring flight. The philosopher Daniel Dennett calls these "good tricks," meaning that they are characteristics of such benefit that they arise many times in history. Flight is a good trick, and has evolved repeatedly in distantly related creatures, but it has also evolved many times over within the same groups of creatures. Evolution can be efficient in that way; once there is a plan to make a particular trait, that plan can be deployed whenever desirable. Insect wings have come and gone dozens, maybe hundreds, of times in the last few hundred million years to suit survival in the local environment, though the genetic mechanism that underlies wings remains largely unchanged during this time. Flying is only useful when it's useful, and it's a costly activity, so can be discarded, and the genes filed away, when not needed, like a winter wardrobe.

There are plenty of potential pitfalls in studying our own evolution. Just as we must be careful about ascribing similarity of function with common origins, we must also be cautious about confusing our behavior today with a presumption that that is why the behavior emerged in the first place. There are many tempting myths about the origin of our bodies and behaviors that teeter near the edge of pseudoscience. Let me be clear on this: all life is evolved. But that doesn't necessarily mean that all behaviors are explained with the central idea of evolution, which is adaptation. Many behaviors, especially in us, are there as by-products of our evolved existence, and not because they have specific functions that aid our survival. This fallacy is particularly prevalent in our sexual behaviors, which we will inspect in detail. We see familiar sexual behaviors in animals, some of which are associated with pleasure in us, and some with criminal violence. No matter how neat or appealing an explanation might be, science looks to facts and evidence, and an ability to test an idea to destruction.

Every evolutionary pathway is unique, and while all living beings are related, how each one came to be is a different story, with different pressures driving selection, and random changes in DNA providing the template from which variation, selection and evolutionary change can occur. Evolution is blind, mutation is random, selection is not.

Error and trial is a conservative process; radical biological change normally results in death. Some evolutionary developments are clearly so useful that they never truly go away. Vision is one example. Being able to see in the oceans clearly conferred a significant advantage for whatever life-form first acquired vision, more than 540 million years ago—you can see things you wish to eat and move toward them, you can see things that wish to eat you and swim away. Once it had evolved, vision spread rapidly. Since then, the genetic program for phototransduction, that is, converting light into sight—has remained virtually identical in all organisms that can see. In contrast, a crow with a bent stick wheedling out a fat grub from the bark on a tree is a skill that has evolved entirely independently of a chimpanzee doing exactly the same thing, and has little specific genetic underpinning in common. All abilities are evolved, which doesn't mean that they all have common roots. Unpicking and filtering the similarities and difference in behaviors that appear familiar to us is crucial in understanding our own evolution.

We have to separate out all of the attributes discussed in this book, even though each is dependent on others. We cannot recreate the order or circumstances in which they

appeared. Our brains expanded, our bodies changed, our skills sharpened and we socialized differently. We ignited sparks and lit fires, tilled the earth, crafted myths, created gods and commanded animals. The beginning of culture relied upon all of these things, powered by the flow of information and expertise. It was not an apple that gave us this knowledge—apples are a product of our own agricultural ingenuity. It was how we lived our lives. We began living in populations that grew to sizes where kin became communities, and tasks within communities fell to specialists—musicians, artists, craftspeople, hunters, cooks. In the transfer of the wisdom of these experts—in the interconnectedness of minds—modernity arose. Uniquely, we accumulate culture and teach it to others. We transmit information, not just via DNA down the generations, but in every direction, to people with whom we have no immediate bio-logical ties. We log our knowledge and experiences, and share them. It is in the teaching of others, the shaping of culture, and the telling of stories, that we created ourselves.

Darwin, with typical prescience, suspected that this might be the case:

Man alone is capable of progressive improvement. That he is capable of incomparably greater and more rapid improvement than is any other animal, admits of no dispute; and this is mainly due to his power of speaking and handing down his acquired knowledge.

Crucially, we are the only species to have held ourselves up to the light, to have asked, "Am I special?" Paradoxically, the answer turned out to be both no and yes.

Over the eons, we have moved from being not particularly special animals, to thinking ourselves uniquely created and distinct from the rest of the living world, to a sort of quantum state where we can occupy both positions at the same time. Here is a compendium of what unequivocally fixes us within the animal kingdom, and simultaneously reveals how we—humanimals—are extraordinary.

In Christian cultures, we talk of the Fall, where humankind became sullied by shaking off the shackles of our creation. I don't care for that story much. If anything, we fell upwards, slowly and incrementally, and away from the thoughtless brutality of nature. The Lord knows there's plenty of wickedness in humans, and though we mostly reject the primal urges that we might have inherited from four billion years of indifferent evolution, the numbers are on the side of Hamlet's angels. We almost never murder, we almost never rape, we create and teach all the time, and learn almost at the same rate.

The picture of how we came to be is only going to get more complicated as we continue to discover. I suspect that soon we will find more contemporary species of human who lived alongside us within the last 300,000 years, and that we will find more humans who bred with us in that time too. We should revel in this complexity and celebrate the fact that we alone are capable of understanding it.

Evolution is blind and evolutionary progress is a misnomer; natural selection carves and winnows according to the ever-changing status quo. Just like all living things, we struggle for existence, but we also try to ease the struggles of others. We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system.

Charles Robert Darwin wrote those words in 1871. He is my hero, for better or worse, and though he was so very right about some of the most important ideas that anyone ever had, like all scientists, he was wrong about others. He was right about the evolutionary pathway of humans, and simultaneously he was woefully wrong about the evolution of women, whom he thought were intellectually inferior to men. At least, part of his incomparable legacy is that we now know this to be incorrect.

Nevertheless, with the use of the word "man" to mean "human," Darwin draws *The Descent of Man* to a conclusion, writing, "with all these exalted powers—Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin."

Our genes and our bodies are not fundamentally different from those of our nearest cousins, ancestors or even our deep relatives. As for lowly origins, that is a matter of judgment. We are evolution's creatures, forged, carved and etched out of forces beyond our control, just like every living thing is. With those forces behind us, we took evolution's work, and by teaching, we created ourselves, an animal that together became more than the sum of its parts.

Remember the alien naturalist come to Earth to study us. In Carl Sagan's novel *Contact*, a real fictional alien intelligence does scrutinize humankind—they've been watching us for thousands of years. In that story, we send a scientist according to their instructions, and upon meeting her, the alien speaks:

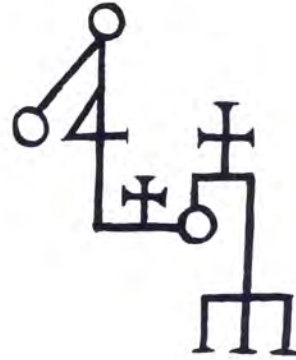
You're an interesting species. An interesting mix. You're capable of such beautiful dreams, and such horrible nightmares. You feel so lost, so cut off, so alone, only you are not. See, in all our searching, the only thing we've found that makes the emptiness bearable, is each other.

Life is continuous on Earth, endless forms most beautiful. We force discrete classifications upon that continuum to help us make sense of a planet bursting with life through eons. You sit somewhere on that trajectory, unique in trying to figure out your place in all of this. There is no dedication at the front of this book. Instead, it is for you.

Sign your name below, and work backward:

You are
 You are *Homo sapiens*
 You are a great ape
 You are simian
 You are a primate
 You are a mammal
 You have a backbone
 You are an animal
 We are the paragon of animals. <>

*Fear these spirits hurled down by the thunderbolt
of the curse, our fiercest enemies, and be constantly
on your guard.*



TOUCH ME NOT: A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM OF THE WHOLE MAGICAL ART edited and translated by Hereward Tilton and Merlin Cox [Fulgur Press, 9781527228832]

A full-color facsimile of an 18th-century black-magic compendium

TOUCH ME NOT is an Austrian manuscript compendium of the black magical arts, completed c. 1795. Unique and otherworldly, it evokes a realm of visceral dark magic. As the co-editor of this volume Hereward Tilton notes, the manuscript “appears at first sight to be a ‘grimoire’ or magician’s manual intended for novitiates of black magic. Psychedelic drug use, animal sacrifice, sigillary body art, masturbation fantasy and the necromantic manipulation of gallows-corpses count among the transgressive procedures it depicts. With their aid hidden treasures are wrested from guardian spirits, and the black magician’s highest ambition—an infernal transfiguration and union with the Devil—can be fulfilled.”

Hidden for decades within the Wellcome Library collection, **TOUCH ME NOT** is published



here as a full-color facsimile. The German and Latin texts have been translated by Hereward Tilton and Merlin Cox, scholars who have explored the sources for the various elements and provided copious references. Tilton provides an introduction that lays out the context for the survival of this extraordinary manuscript.

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Excerpt: 'Touch me not': a divine hand might have scrawled this prohibition upon the fruit of the tree of knowledge, a challenge no curious soul could resist. The work before you claims descent from that Edenic tree, which bore the fruit of both white and black magic (f. 36r); misleadingly entitled 'a most rare compendium of the whole magical art', the aggressively carnal spirits thronging its pages proclaim a debt to the black arts alone. As creators and manipulators of such phantasms, magicians preside over various archaic techniques for unlocking the imaginative portal to the demonic realms. Among them, psychedelic drugs hold pride of place in *A Most Rare Compendium*: amid the opium and nightshades of the witches' ointments, here we also find a little-known yet ubiquitous European analogue of the famed potion of the Amazonian shamans, ayahuasca. Erotic fantasy, too, grants access to the darker recesses of the magician's soul. Our compendium slyly tempts us to emulate Adam, who — succumbing to the vice of masturbation — spawned a horde of demons in his visionary raptures with Lilith, the mother of all succubi. Yet the chief means offered herein for transcending mundane consciousness and attaining the black magician's ultimate goal — an infernal transfiguration and union with Satan — is the voluntary cultivation of fear and repulsion. With vivid necrophilic images of horror, *A Most Rare Compendium* lures us to lonely sepulchres at the dead of night, or to gallows where the mandrake root sprouts from the semen of hanged men, there to transgress the bounds of the socially sanctioned self with animal sacrifice, the desecration of corpses and sordid communion with the spirits of the dead.

Clearly, then, the purpose of titling this work *Touch Me Not* was to elicit just the opposite response from potential readers. Although rational analysis of composition and historical context might divest its transgressive content of power, it behoves us to delve into the duplicity of **A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM** in order to better understand the work, its creators and their intent.

An exceedingly curious manuscript

We do not know who owned the manuscript before 1928, when *A Most Rare Compendium* was sold to the Wellcome Library by the Viennese antiquarian bookseller V. A. Heck for 1,200 Swiss francs (48 pounds sterling). Heck's sales announcement describes it as an 'exceedingly curious' and 'artfully illustrated Höllenzwang manuscript' that 'undoubtedly' originated in Austria circa 1760, and that concerns 'the conjuring of spirits, chiefly for the purpose of treasure-hunting.'

While the orthography of **A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM** suggests that it is indeed Austrian, Heck's description is problematic for a variety of reasons.

- First, the Compendium was created at a somewhat later date than that proposed by Heck, or indeed by Samuel Moorat, who suggested 'circa 1775' in his catalogue of Wellcome Library manuscripts. The psychedelic ruminations that open the main text of the work are derived from the Catholic theosopher Karl von Eckartshausen, who in his *Aufschlüsse zur Magie* (Disclosures on the Subject of Magic, 1788-92) bemoans the flashbacks caused by his careless experimentation with the art of psychedelic fumigation.' Likewise, the closing passage of our manuscript allegorizing the popular topos of the veiled statue of Isis is derived from the final volume of *Aufschlüsse zur Magie*, and the date of this volume's first publication — 1792 — provides a terminus post quem for the composition of *A Most Rare Compendium*.

- Second, **A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM** is not only 'most rare' - it is unique, as its creators knew full well. Our manuscript did not evolve from an earlier relative, a fact that is highly unusual for the magician's manuals now popularly known as grimoires'. While Heck interpreted the Compendium as a 'difficult-to-access' grimoire akin to the medieval *Clavicula Salomonis* (Key of Solomon), such manuals are typically compilations of textual fragments drawn from related (and similarly fragmentary) compilations. By contrast, our manuscript is a one-off work of artifice derived principally from printed sources that its creators had to hand; for instance, its extracts from the *Arbatel*, *Ars notoria*, Trithemius's *Liber octo quaestionum* and Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* are all drawn from the first volume of Zetzner's 1630 edition of Agrippa's *Opera*.¹ Indeed, the very title of *A Most Rare Compendium* suggests its creators were trading on its (absolute) rarity, which constitutes something of the work's *raison d'être*.
- Third, as an early modern German expression of the Solomonic demon-binding tradition, the Höllenzwang (coercion of hell') family of grimoires is principally associated with the name of Johann Georg Faust (c.1480-1540/1), Renaissance Germany's self-styled 'fount of necromancy', and with the coercion of diabolical powers for the purpose of obtaining the treasures they guard. Yet our manuscript claims to be a compendium — an epitome or abstract — of writings on nigromancy, meaning black magic in general; the theme of magical treasure-hunting is referred to explicitly in only three of the compendium's thirty-five illustrations and three times in the text. Besides generic methods for summoning demons — invocations, sigillary body painting, circle-casting, etc. — the text and illustrations of **A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM** allude specifically to necromancy — described here as the art of summoning the dead, or of using corpses for various magical ends — and catoptromancy — described as the art of scrying with magic mirrors to communicate with the absent or dead, or to obtain sought-after objects. While these arts and methods are certainly of use in magical treasure quests, none of the print or manuscript sources of **A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM** bears any clear first-hand relation to the Höllenzwang literature; for instance, the names and hierarchies of its demons are drawn chiefly from *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin*. Furthermore, when it comes to discussion of the diabolical pact, rather than reproducing the famed pact of Faust — such as we find it in certain Höllenzwang manuscripts — the opinions of the notorious witch-hunter Martin del Rio are given alongside those of the *Arbatel*.

Nevertheless, that V. A. Heck saw the Compendium as a Höllenzwang grimoire is telling, as the Höllenzwang textual family constitutes not only an important part of our manuscript's cultural context, but also its core conceptual inspiration. This conclusion is confirmed, first and foremost, by the compendium's juxtaposition of psychedelic drug use with the perils of magical treasure-hunting and the diabolical pact; as we shall see, this confluence of themes points not only to the Höllenzwang grimoires but also to the occasionally tragic history of their employment in the magical quest for treasure. Furthermore, magical treasure-hunting was a 'fashionable crime' running at epidemic levels in eighteenth-century Austria. The expectation that one would use the various necromantic techniques detailed in **A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM** for treasure-hunting purposes is clearly reflected in its remarks on the diabolical pact: those who have been rescued from the clutches of Satan by white magicians or priests are admonished to donate their ill-gotten hoard to the Church and the poor.





The Perils of Magical Treasure-Hunting

The folk beliefs that lend this particular strain of demonic magic its regional colour have pre-Christian origins. The pagan Germanic notion of vast subterranean treasures guarded by dragons persisted in medieval and early modern Christendom, as did the belief that such hoards could be gained by magically subduing their guardians. Appearing not only as dragons but also as snakes, black dogs and spectral maidens, in the Christian popular imagination these treasure guardians were interpreted as guises of the Devil, who might be

invoked and bound in the manner of an exorcism. Taking place at lonely, liminal locations — gallows, graveyards, ruined castles and churches — the binding operation was believed to be exceedingly dangerous, as the Devil would do his utmost to divert the treasure-hunter from the correct procedure.

The apparitions sent to distract magicians and lure them from their protective circles are gleefully depicted in **A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM**, as are the dire consequences of failing to follow the prescribed procedure: a cock-headed, dolichophallic demon, extinguishing a lantern with its urine, drags an ill-fated treasure-hunter to his doom. Apparently dissatisfied with the illustrator's original dating of this ghastly event to 1768, a second hand has altered that year to 1668 — perhaps feeling that the original date betrayed the manuscript's relatively late composition, although neither year sits well with the title page's. While a number of errors — failing to maintain silence, for example, or turning around at a noise — might have caused the disaster shown here, the lack of a protective circle is conspicuous. The illustration is set in contrast with the preceding portrayal of a correctly performed treasure-hunting operation, here involving ritual nudity and the necromantic manipulation of a reeking corpse at the gallows. In both images the most sought-after (but by no means essential) component of the magical operation is depicted: a literate magician, who has brought a grimoire with the requisite demonic sigils and invocations to the conjuring site.

A Word of Supernatural Horror

The most bewitching ingredients of **A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM** are, of course, its watercolour illustrations. Given the prominence of the manuscript's passage onentheogens, the suspicion naturally arises that the artist was psychedelically inspired. While this possibility cannot be ruled out, it should be noted that these illustrations all incorporate standard motifs from the medieval and Reformation representation of the diabolical realms: consider, for example, the similarities of the guardian of purgatory with Matthias Gerung's well-known satire on the Catholic priesthood, or those of our manuscript's centrepiece — the demon Dagol — with depictions of the Devil in the Florentine tradition. The undeniably arresting images of the Compendium have been executed by a trained and modestly talented artist, who has drawn upon *Großschedel's Calendarium naturale magicum perpetuum* — as well as his or her own imagination — in the design of the demonic sigils. Accompanying the image of Astaroth we also find a faux-cipher inscription suggestive of the illustrator's acquaintance with the cipher alphabets of Trithemius, presumably via Agrippa. Although the evidence is by no means conclusive, these purely imaginative elements feed a suspicion that the artist is a second party contracted to illustrate passages compiled by an individual moderately more conversant with the dark arts.

Although it has undoubtedly inspired readers down through the years to experiment with the archaic techniques it describes," **A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM** is not a practical Höllenzwang manuscript of the sort one might pore over with farmers in the local tavern or furtively transport to a lonely vineyard hut, flowerpot and entheogens in hand. If it can indeed be considered a grimoire in the Höllenzwang tradition, then it is also a work of supernatural horror composed in the form of a Höllenzwang grimoire, and its decidedly Gothic aesthetic confirms a date of composition in the dying years of the eighteenth century. While this demystifying reading might bleed some of the transgressive thrill from the words 'Touch me not', it in no way detracts from our manuscript's value as a highly entertaining conveyor — and unique reinterpretation — of Germanic magical tradition.



INTRODUCTION TO MAGIC: RITUALS AND PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES FOR THE MAGUS VOLUME I by Julius Evola and the UR Group translated by Renato Del Ponte [Inner Traditions, 9780892816248]

The rites, practices, and texts collected by the mysterious UR group for the use of aspiring mages.

- Rare Hermetic texts published in English for the first time.
- Includes instructions for developing psychic and magical powers.

In 1927 Julius Evola and other leading Italian intellectuals formed the mysterious UR group. Their goal: to bring their individual egos into a state of superhuman power and awareness in which they could act "magically" on the world. Their methods: the practice of ancient Tantric and Buddhist rituals and the study of rare Hermetic texts. So successful were they that rumors spread throughout Italy of the group's power, and Mussolini himself became quite fearful of them. Now for the first time in English Introduction to Magic collects the rites, practices, and knowledge of the UR group for the use of aspiring mages.

Included in Introduction to Magic are instructions for creating an etheric double, speaking words of power, using fragrances, interacting with entities, and creating a "magical chain." Among the arcane texts translated are the Tibetan teachings of the Thunderbolt Diamond Path, the Mithraic mystery cult's "Grand Papyrus of Paris," and the Greco-Egyptian magical text De Mysteriis. Anyone who has exhausted the possibilities of the mundane world and is ready to take the steps necessary to purify the soul in the light of knowledge and the fire of dedication will find a number of expert mentors here.

INTRODUCTION OF MAGIC, VOLUME II: THE PATH OF INITIATIC WISDOM by Julius Evola and The UR Group, Translated by Joscelyn Godwin [Inner Traditions, 9781620557174]

Authentic initiatic practices, rituals, and wisdom collected by the UR Group

- Shares a rigorous selection of initiatory exercises, including instructions for creating the diaphanous body of the Opus magicum, establishing initiatic consciousness after death, and the construction of magical chains (the enchained awareness of initiates)
- Offers studies of mystery traditions throughout history, presenting not only the principles themselves but also witnesses to them and their continual validity today

The "Gruppo di UR" was a group of Italian esotericists who collaborated from 1927 to 1929. The purpose of this group was to study and practice ancient rituals gleaned from the mystery traditions of the world, both East and West, in order to attain a state of superhuman consciousness and power to allow them to act magically on the world. They produced a monthly journal containing techniques for spiritual realization, accounts of personal experiences, translations of ancient texts, and original essays on esoteric topics. The group included a distinguished line-up of occultists, neo-pagans, freemasons, Anthroposophists, orientalists, poets, and members of high society. The prime movers of the group were Arturo Reghini (1878-1946), a Pythagorean mathematician and reviver of a spiritual Freemasonry, and Julius Evola (1898-1974), then a young philosopher with a

precocious mastery of the esoteric doctrines of East and West. Many years later, in 1971, Evola gathered these essays into three volumes. Inner Traditions published Volume I in 2001, under the title *Introduction to Magic: Rituals and Practical Techniques for the Magus*.

This volume, the second in the series, complements the first one, yet they are not strictly sequential, and their contents can be read in any order. Volume II shares authentic initiatic wisdom and a rigorous selection of initiatory exercises, including instructions for creating the diaphanous body of the *Opus magicum*, establishing initiatic consciousness after death, and the construction of magical chains (the enchained awareness of initiates). It offers studies of mystery traditions throughout history, presenting not only the principles themselves but also witnesses to them and their continual validity today.

This series shows that the "Magic" of the UR Group meant an active and affirmative attitude toward individual development, handed down from a "primordial tradition" and discernable in alchemy, Hermetism, esoteric religious doctrines, indigenous practices, Tantra, Taoism, Buddhism, Vedanta, and the pagan mysteries of the West. Although some of the practical experiments demanded extraordinary efforts, both individual and collective, there is incalculable value here even for the less heroic, for merely reading these essays leaves a permanent mark on the reader.

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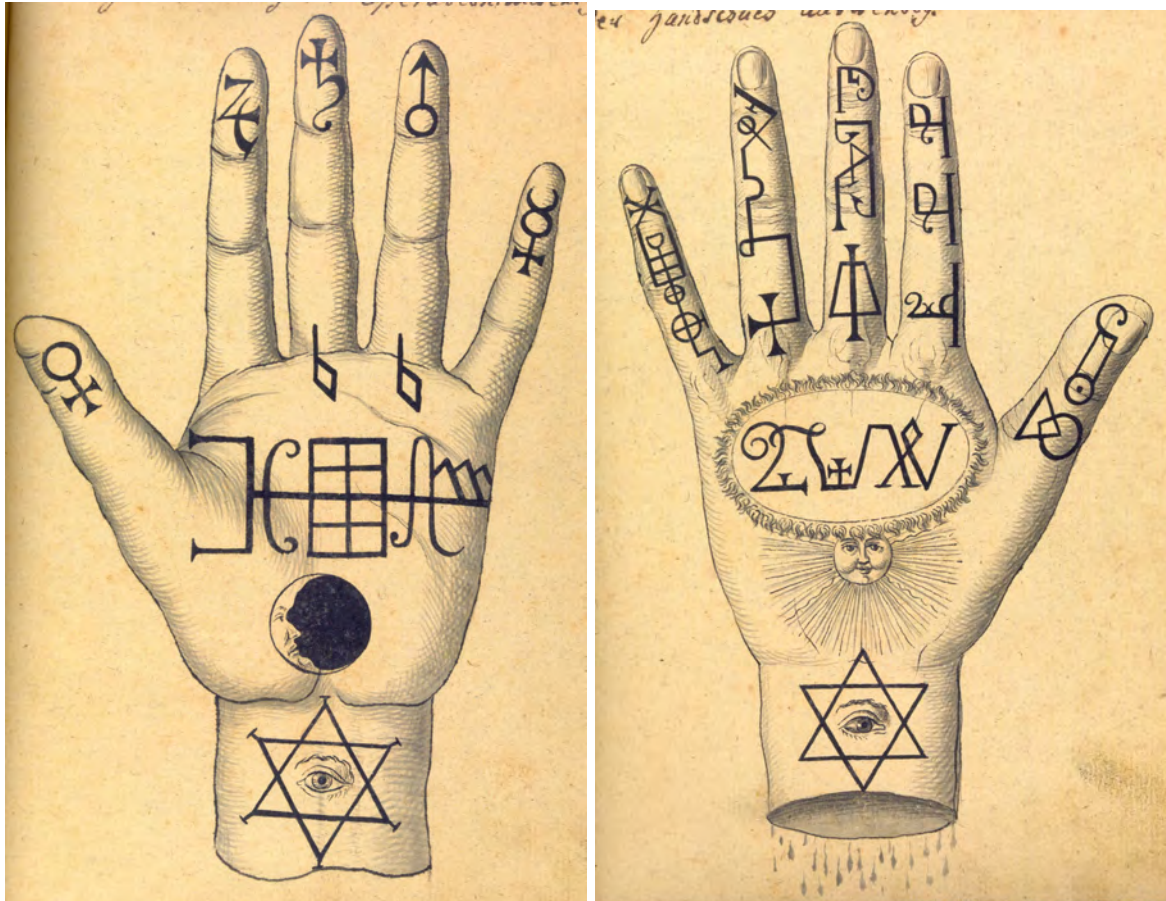
The "Magical" Gruppo di UR in Its Historical and Esoteric Context by Hans Thomas Hakl

At last the second volume of writings by the Gruppo di UR—or UR Group, as we shall henceforth refer to it—has been completely translated. The first volume immediately met with great interest, because of the high quality of its contents, but at the same time it raised a whole series of questions: From what tradition did the UR Group derive its extraordinary knowledge? What was its goal? Who were the leading figures, and what is known about them? Why did the group only last for three years? Are (or were) there organizations that descended from it, perhaps still working to this day?

Professor Renato del Ponte, in his preface to the first volume, has already described the essentials of the group, and provided many answers that we will take for granted here. His work was the very first to shed a brighter light on the background of the UR Group. Even in Italy there had been only a few writings, aside from Julius Evola's own memoir, that discussed the subject up to a point, and they did so much less thoroughly. Del Ponte's

expanded essay appeared in Italian in 1989, and assumed its final form in a book published in 1994.

His investigation, however, focused only on the UR Group itself, not on the traditional strands preceding it or on the post-1929 groups that claimed a connection to it. Therefore, we will specifically address such matters here. Since these strands and groups span several centuries, we can only provide an overview of them, like a series of snapshots. But there is quite a comprehensive literature for readers of Italian, if not always easily accessible, which treats the various aspects of this history in detail. The only exception concerns the post-1929 groups, about which little has been published up to now.



Prehistory

Here we will concentrate on the "Italian" component, leaving aside the thread that goes back to Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy. Much has been written on the history of Anthroposophy and Theosophy, which has nothing directly to do with UR. Nor will we treat the era before the eighteenth century, since specific derivations from Pythagoras, for example via Neoplatonism and the Renaissance, are practically impossible to pin down historically. This does not mean, however, that we deny the esoteric and/or intellectual connections that reach back to these earlier times—quite the contrary.

Instead we will begin with a central figure, who, together with the dubiously renowned Cagliostro (Giuseppe Balsamo, 1743/49-1795), was presumably the modern starting point of magical-chemical efforts in Italy. This is Raimondo di Sangro, Prince of San Severo and Duke of Torremaggiore (1710-1771), a multifaceted personality around whom countless

legends swirled, and continue to do so. He was the first regular Grand Master of Neapolitan Freemasonry, and united all the local lodges under his leadership. He was intensively occupied with magical and alchemical experiments, which finally led to his excommunication by the pope.

The enigmatic nature of Raimondo di Sangro's life continued right up to his death, because he died under mysterious circumstances, probably from poisoning, reputedly caused by his own alchemical experiments.' Massimo Introvigne assumes that Cagliostro, who was living in Naples at the time and certainly associated with the prince, bestowed on him not only the more or less public "Egyptian" degrees of initiation, but also secret ones, the so-called Arcana Arcanorum (Secret of Secrets). These presumably contained a sort of "inner alchemy" for the construction of a "glorious body" or "resurrection body," hence for the achievement of immortality.

The so-called Egyptian Rites later enjoyed wide distribution, right up to the most well-known modern magical order, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn; this leads one to suspect a common descent from the Gold and Rose Cross. There are even visible influences in the "Egyptian" lodge of Anthroposophical leanings in Hamburg, called Zu den drei Rosen an der Elbe (At the three roses on the river Elbe). Theosophy, too, had an "Egyptian Rite" founded by Charles Leadbeater; see Introvigne, *La sfida magica*, 110-15, and also Carlo Gentile, *Il mistero di Cagliostro e il sistema "egiziano"* (Foggia: Bastogi, 1980), and Serge Caillet, *Arcanes & Rituels de la Maçonnerie Egyptienne* (Paris: Trédaniel, 1994).

In 1983, after a long search, Professor Clara Miccinelli discovered in a house in Naples a locked chest containing Raimondo di Sangro's "Testament," along with a medallion of him; it also contained several writings, including prophecies, and objects that he had owned." A magnificent temple with rich symbolism is located near the di Sangros' house: it had once been the site of Raimondo di Sangro's devotions, and also of his laboratory. It can still be visited and is today one of the most important museums of Naples, containing many artistic treasures.

From Naples, a line of tradition leads to France, settling in the purely Masonic "Egyptian Rite of Misraim and Memphis." A second line, more interesting to us, leads to Baron Nicola Giuseppe Spedalieri, who had a copious correspondence with the famous French occultist Éliphas Levi:" also to the advocate Giustiniano Lebano and to Pasquale de Servis. Giustiniano Lebano (1832-1909) was an officer in regular Masonry (the "Grand Orient"), a member of the Egyptian Rites united under the Italian revolutionary hero Garibaldi, and was also active in the Theosophical Society. He received occultists from all over Europe, and collected a comprehensive library.

A cholera epidemic tragically took the lives of Lebano's four sons, which sent his wife into a state of mental instability. During a depressive crisis, and presumably to atone for her husband's magical activity, she set fire to herself and died, deliberately destroying a large quantity of magical manuscripts and documents in the process.

In any event, Lebano must have been an important figure in the occult milieu, otherwise the extremely elitist "Ottaviano" would not have referred to him as such in a famous letter to the Kremmerzian periodical *Commentarium*, even taking issue with the famous magus Giuliano Kremmerz in this context. This Ottaviano was a personality who had a decisive influence over the magical orders of his time. The pseudonym most likely concealed Leone

Caetani, Prince of Teano and later Duke of Sermoneta (1869-1935), whose forbears included Pope Boniface VIII. Important Italian esotericists think that he was the famous "Ekatlos," who authored a widely discussed article titled "The `Great Track'—the Stage and the Wings" in volume III of the UR papers.¹ Other equally important esotericists identify Ekatlos with a female follower of Giuliano Kremmerz.

Renato del Ponte has already explained the importance of this "Ekatlos" in his historical-critical preface to the first volume of the UR papers: the intention was nothing less than to bring about a resurrection of the ancient Roman Empire, with all its sacrality, in the twentieth century. Rites were performed day after day in the attempt to influence incipient Fascism in this direction, and especially Mussolini, who was far from averse to such ideas. But it soon became clear that this attempt must fail in the face of Fascist *realpolitik*. Instead of putting himself under the protection of the ancient Roman gods, Mussolini signed the Lateran Accords with the mighty Catholic Church.

A woman who had participated in these magical rites had already prophesied to Mussolini in 1919, when the first Fascist combat groups had just been formed, that he would become (Roman) "Consul." In 1923, when Mussolini was in fact head of the government, the same person approached him again and handed him a lictor's bundle of rods with an antique bronze Etruscan ax, which had been obtained in a mysterious way. In ancient Rome, the lictors' bundles were the symbol of the high magistracy. Mussolini was thoroughly familiar with this symbolism, and had "passionately" supported the performance of a mystery play on the sacred origins of Rome. This is even known from a surviving letter of his.

Leone Caetani was a famous orientalist and Islamicist, whose writings included the ten-volume *Annals of Islam*. In 1894 he had visited the notorious Yezidis, which would later cause him to be suspected of Satanism.² At the same time he was a representative of the Socialist Party in Rome, and thus had easy access to Mussolini, who had originally also been member of this party. With the aforementioned Giustiniano Lebano and Pasquale de Servis, Caetani was a member of the "Egyptian Order," which represented the innermost circle of the traditional line supposedly going back to the Prince of San Severo and Cagliostro. Caetani's central position is clear from this. He had a decisive influence on the Egyptian Order, and also on Giuliano Kremmerz, to whom we will return, and likewise on the latter's initiatic group of Myriam (or Miriam).

Giuliano Kremmerz, Arturo Reghini, and their Groups

Around the turn of the century, Pasquale de Servis lived in Portici, near Naples, in the house of Giuliano Kremmerz's mother. The birth name of Kremmerz (also written Kremm-Erz) was Ciro Formisano (1861-1930). From his earliest childhood he had thus been acquainted with a man who possessed ancient secret knowledge. Kremmerz also came into contact with Lebano and Caetani. After a few years spent abroad—having become rich through stock-market speculations, as Daffi confirms—he rapidly published a series of important esoteric periodicals, including the abovementioned *Commentarium*.

In 1896 or slightly earlier, he founded the *Fr+ Tm+ di Miriam* (or *Myriam*), the Therapeutic Magical Fraternity of Miriam, referring to the Egyptian Isis priestesses of antiquity. Its exclusive purpose was the healing or alleviation of illnesses. This was attempted through magnetic processes, accompanied by ritual prayers and calls to angels, ancient gods, and various daimons (in the positive sense). It is hardly surprising that *Myriam* arose under the

explicit protection of the "Great Egyptian Orient," which in turn traced back to the Egyptian Order, mentioned above in connection with Caetani, Lebano, and de Servis.

It is not entirely clear why Kremmerz moved to the Côte d'Azur, while most of his students were in Bari and Rome. Perhaps it was because of his son's sickness, or possibly due to legal difficulties caused by his irregular paramedical activity. He died in 1930 in Beausoleil, France. Before his death, his secretary had several forebodings and monitory dreams.

There immediately ensued the first split of the fraternity, through the director of the Myriam academy in Naples. Despite difficulties during the Fascist period—for Mussolini had prohibited all Masonic and quasi-Masonic associations—several academies continued. The Roman one, after a series of quarrels and "astral" instructions from the "Superiors," came under the direction of Vinci Verginelli (died 1987). Verginelli was also an important collector of alchemical treatises. His collection has been assimilated with that of the famous composer Nino Rota, who also belonged to this esoteric circle: among other things, Rota wrote the music for all the familiar Fellini films, and also for the Mafia film *The Godfather* and for Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. Nino Rota owned about 450 of the most beautiful and the rarest alchemical manuscripts, and with this acquisition his collection became one of the most important in the world of such material. In 1985 he donated it to the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in Rome. The group in Rome formerly led by Verginelli seems to have had a close relationship with the late Florentine publisher Bruno Nardini. Meetings following certain principles of the Myriam fraternity were also held in Florence.

Marco Daffi (pseudonym of Count Libero Ricciardelli) led another somewhat heterodox Kremmerz group and published several texts based on the Myriam material. Before his death he handed on the most important ritual to Giammaria Gonella, a lawyer from Genoa. The latter published supplementary material with Kemi-Hathor, based in Lainate, near Milan, where an alchemical periodical appeared, likewise named Kemi Hathor.

Giammaria Gonella, for his part, founded the Corpo dei Pari (Body of Peers), another rather heterodox group based on Myriam's principles but, as the name indicates, one without a hierarchical structure. At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, it posted its proclamations on the house walls of Genoa, in the style of the Rosicrucian manifestos over three centuries earlier. In 1978 the internal teachings and more detailed documentation about this group, which never numbered more than twelve, were published by the members themselves. It is interesting that some of the principles thus published concerned "operations with two vessels," that is, instructions for sexual magic.

The Order of Mantos, which had an even more secret and aristocratic structure, should certainly be listed as a later Kremmerzian association, though it was not a direct descendant of the original lineage. In addition to the Order of Mantos, there is a host of larger or smaller groups, especially in southern Italy, of which some continue ritual and magical work to this day. One of them, the Schola Philosophica Hermetica Classica Italica, Fratellanza Terapeutico-Magica di Miriam (S.P.H.C.I. Fr+ Tm+ di Miriam), under its president Anna Maria Piscitelli, claims to be the only true successor of the Kremmerzian heritage. This claim is rejected by other Kremmerzian associations.

There is also a Christian variation of these initiations, founded by Count Alberti di Catenaia (pseudonym Erim) whose student was Paolo Virio. Virio's teachings are easily accessible, since many of his books are still available and are continually being reissued.

A branch in France is also worth mentioning: the Souverain et Hermétique Ordre d'Atoum (Sovereign and Hermetic order of Atoum), whose teachings are mostly represented in the work of Jean-Pierre Giudicelli, Count of Cressac-Bachelerie. Their center of gravity lies in "inner" alchemy, which Giudicelli connects closely with Chinese alchemy. He repeatedly refers to the Arcana Arcanorum. It is remarkable that in all these Kremmerzian lodges, orders, and so forth there are multiple personal intersections and connections with the Masonry of Misraim and Memphis. Some of their high degrees are even supposed to possess the Arcana Arcanorum. There are similar intersections with certain Martinist currents.

In 1987 there suddenly appeared a tiny numbered edition of internal writings of Myriam and the Osiridian Egyptian Order, which brought to light mostly sexual magical rituals and practices of these groups that had hitherto been entirely unknown. These were published by the Milan group Prometeo-Agape, led by Paolo Fogagnolo, who was a member of the communist Red Brigade. An explosion followed: there were rumors of betrayal, theft, and so forth, and it must have led to the dissolution of some Kremmerzian groups. Why were there such dramatic consequences? It was because these writings disclosed that, besides the "Isis" teachings, which were purely concerned with healing the sick, there was an "Osiris" magic that consisted of certain sexual magical practices, although these were only conducted in a few, very restricted gatherings. They also told of techniques for separating the "solar" part from the physical body, the construction of a "glorious body," and even the appropriation of another person's body by the "soul" of an initiate or by a purely spiritual being. In other words, here was everything that allowed the group's opponents to accuse it of the blackest magic. The documents published by Prometeo-Agape are mostly concerned with the organization associated with the C.E.U.R. (Casa Editrice Universale di Roma),³⁴ which, for its part, developed out of the A.N.K.H. Lodge (Accademia Neo-Kremmerziana Hermetica); they do not seem to apply to all Kremmerzian associations.

It is not known how far back such practices go. Introvigne writes, however, that they must be closely connected with the Arcana Arcanorum already mentioned by Cagliostro. The persons responsible for publishing the strictly internal documents (Prometeo-Agape and "Alexandre de Dánaan"), give as their reason for doing so a desire to warn against the anti-Christian aims contained in them. It is impossible to know whether this was, in fact, the real motivation, or whether it had more to do with internal quarrels between competing groups of the order.

Nor can one tell how far "Abraxa" (Ercole Quadrelli), a member of both the UR Group and the Kremmerzian movement, was initiated into these practices. In any case, Quadrelli's approach to sexual magic seems different, as his essay in this volume shows. He was apparently not concerned with a "physical" immortality, which is the aim of the practices mentioned, but rather with access to transcendence. On the other hand, access to transcendence is also the basis for immortality.

A further traditionalist current in the UR Group was centered around Dr. Arturo Reghini (1878-1946), though his collaboration ended after only two years. Along with Kremmerz, Reghini was one of the most outstanding figures of Italian esotericism in the twentieth century. It was he who introduced Julius Evola, the leader of the UR Group, to the founder of the "integral tradition," René Guénon, and he also helped to shape Evola's early political views.

Reghini saw himself in the line of Pythagoras, Dante, and Machiavelli, as well as Napoleon (who, as a Corsican, Reghini considered to be Italian), and the Masonic founders of Italian unification, Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi.³⁷ Reghini belongs, with Decio Calvari, to the founders of the Italian Theosophical Society; he was a high-degree Mason, and apparently admitted Aleister Crowley in 1913 as an honorary member of the Rito Filosofico Italiano, with which Reghini was affiliated. His most important master and friend was Amedeo Armentano (1886-1966), who among other things was the owner of the famous stone tower in Scalea, where Reghini performed so many magical rituals, and which he also mentions in this volume.

Reghini's periodicals *Atanór* (1924) and *Ignis* (1925) could qualify as actual precursors to the UR publications translated here, with the difference, however, that in the framework of UR so-called "chains" were established that worked with ritual magic, even if not all the members did participate. Reghini wrote very important essays for UR under the pseudonym of Pietro Negri. Furthermore, he was active in the revival of Pythagorean number mysticism, and in continuing Gabriele Rossetti's researches on the esoteric teachings of the Cathars and the Fedeli d'Amore, as one of his essays in this volume demonstrates.

Like Evola and Caetani, Reghini wanted to influence Fascism toward a reconstruction of the sacral imperial tradition of Rome, and he also expressed this in his publications. However, he was extremely vehement, even offensive, in his choice of words, which once even prompted Mussolini to respond (under a pseudonym). The very fact that Mussolini, as head of state, felt moved to answer an attack in a journal that carried no political weight whatsoever and was only aimed at a tiny, specialized readership, is evidence enough of his basically positive attitude toward ancient Rome. On the other hand, as we now know, Mussolini obstructed such pagan sacral-imperial plans not only by allying himself with the Catholic Church through a concordat, but also through a law targeting secret societies of one sort or another, and Freemasonry especially. Yet it was with the latter's help that Reghini thought he could further his plans, which shows the ambiguity of the relationship between Fascism and Freemasonry.

These Masonic views, together with a certain incompatibility between two extremely self-willed characters, were the cause of the schism between Evola and Reghini in the UR Group. Evola accused Reghini of misusing UR for his own Masonic ends, and Reghini countered with the charge that Evola wanted to censor all his contributions in an intolerable fashion. This came to a head with Reghini's claim that Evola's book *Imperialismo Pagano*, published in 1928, had stolen both title and contents from him, which Evola naturally denied with equal vehemence. The quarrel escalated and even led to legal proceedings, although these did not amount to anything.

Finally, in 1929, Reghini failed in his attempt to revive his former journal *Ignis* as a polemical vehicle against UR, following the first issue (nearly the entire contents of which was aimed at attacking Evola). His most important student, the magically very gifted Giulio Parise (pseudonym "Luce"), quit UR together with Reghini. In his autobiography, Evola himself writes that people connected with Masonry tried to wrest the leadership of UR from him. The historian Giovanni Vannoni, in his work on Masonry, Fascism and the Catholic Church, seems to confirm Evola's position. Reghini, however, was badly hurt after all these blows, and finally retreated to the province of Emilia as a mathematics teacher. His work first found successors in Giulio Parise, already mentioned, and later in the periodical *Il Ghibellino*

(Messina, 1979-1982). Reghini's influence is also evident in the periodical *Hygieia* in Reggio di Calabria, connected with the Associazione Pitagorica, which in 1984 arose under the leadership of Gennaro d'Uva, assisted by Sebastiano Recupero, who sadly died of cancer at a young age. In 1990, after a sixty-year "interval," there came an astonishing revival and continuation of *Ignis* under the direction of Roberto Sestito (who had previously been the editor responsible for the contents of *Hygieia*) and the granddaughter of Amedeo Armentano, Emirene. Unfortunately, this initiative ended in 1992 after only six issues. Unpleasant rumors ensued. The last attempt in this direction was the Roman periodical *Politica Romana*, which published ten issues from 1998-2018.

The salient characteristic of this Pythagorean "Italic school" is its polemical stance toward the purely "Roman" line, to which we will return. This is especially evident in its emphasis on the Greek and Etruscan elements, as well as its rejection of the excessive Germanic influence, blamed chiefly on Evola. This polemic already began in *Il Ghibellino* (nos. 4, 5, and 6) and reached an intellectual high point in Piero Fenili's article about "Evola's Errors." There, with rich documentation and some justification, Evola is accused of having viewed the Germanic and German element in too exclusively positive a fashion.

Recent Research on the UR Group

Since Renato del Ponte's 1985 introduction to the first volume of the UR writings, research into the individual members has naturally progressed, and some of it is worth mentioning here.

I would start with the writing of Guido de Giorgio (pseudonym "Havismat," 1890-1957).⁴⁷ Not only did Evola admit to the great influence that de Giorgio had on him, but Guénon also writes in a letter (see footnote) that no one but de Giorgio could treat Evola as he did, and expect him to take the criticism seriously.

After his philosophy studies, de Giorgio went to Tunisia as a teacher, and there became acquainted with Sufism. He encountered Guénon right after the First World War, and the two men developed a close friendship. He returned to Italy, married a second time, and worked as professor at a liceo in Piedmont. Later he retired to the Piedmontese Alps and lived in an abandoned presbytery as a hermit and, in Evola's words, a "wild initiate." De Giorgio tried to combine the Roman tradition with Christianity and Vedanta, and included some Islamic influences as well. His teachings, only published after his death, address not the intellect but much deeper spiritual centers. There are examples of this in the present volume.

Since the publication of the first volume, it has been discovered that the anonymous article "Le message de l'étoile polaire" (The Message of the Pole Star), originally published in French, was, astonishingly enough, written by the Russian-Polish-French author and occultist Maria de Naglowska, who led an occult group in Paris during the 1930s and became known for her teachings on sexual magic. However, much of her occult "fame" rests on her translation of the notorious *Magia Sexualis* of P. B. Randolph (though whether at least part of it is written by her is unstated). Naglowska had to move from country to country; in the 1920s she lived in Rome, where she got to know Evola and very likely had an affair with him.

An even greater surprise was that the "father" of Italian psychoanalysis, Professor Emilio Servadio, who was a cousin of the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Emilio Segré, also worked

with both UR and KRUR. He used the pseudonyms "ES" and probably "APRO." By his own account, he helped Evola with translations from English, among other things, but did not take part in the magical rituals. He was able, however, to report that the inner working circle of the UR Group did not number more than twelve to fifteen persons.

In June 1994, at a commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Evola's death, Servadio spoke movingly of his long friendship with Evola, and this was even reported in the Italian national newspapers. Servadio had suffered badly in the later Fascist period from the racial laws (his sister had died in Auschwitz). Unfortunately, he himself died shortly after this appearance in Rome. A very interesting testimony was published by Emilio Servadio in the newspaper *Il popolo di Lombardia* (28 April 1928), describing his first encounter with Evola and how the latter's magical reputation had literally terrified him beforehand.

Domenico Rudatis (pseudonym "RUD"; born 1898) died in New York in 1994; he was a friend of the mountaineer Reinhold Messner and coauthor of accounts of the formidable "Sixth Grade" of Alpine climbing.

Corallo Reginelli (pseudonym "Taurulus"; born 1905) was another member of the original UR Group. We know a little more about him, for example, that he wrote several articles (under the pseudonyms of "C. R. Alone" and "C. E. Zero"), especially in *Vie della Tradizione* and *Cittadella*, which bear witness to his continued esoteric involvement. During the 2017 Naples conference a hitherto unknown recorded interview with Reginelli was played to the public, showing his dissent with Evola. There is also an article about Reginelli on the Internet, published by the Zen practitioner Leonardo Alfolsi.

"Otokar Brezina," who contributed one essay to this volume without actually being a member of UR, is the pseudonym of the Czech poet Václav Jebavý, born in 1868 in southern Bohemia. He lived as a teacher in a small Moravian town. In addition to a collection of philosophical essays, he mainly published small volumes of his lyric poetry. In his poems he unites the style of Symbolism with a deeply mystical inclination.

A detail that seems to have been overlooked until now is that Gustav Meyrink, whom Evola greatly valued and whose work he cited extensively in vol. I, mentions UR in his 1921 novel *The White Dominican*: "He who has become the treetop and consciously carries the root 'Ur' in himself, enters consciously into this society (of those—as he says—who have crossed the boundary) through experience of the Mystery known as `liberation with corpse and sword.— This is a clear allusion to the Taoist practice of fully conscious transition from life to immortality, in which the physical body disappears and a sword remains in its place. It represents the culminating sign of the Taoist initiate and is also the aim of the UR initiations. It is especially interesting that Evola himself translated this novel by Meyrink into Italian in 1944, and wrote an expert introduction to it. Curiously enough, the Italian version leaves out the word "Ur."

We cannot pass judgment on the report by Jean Parvulesco, the Rumanian-French author well known in occult circles, that he had in his hands an extraordinary unsigned manuscript from the innermost circles of UR. Parvulesco hints in enigmatic words that the UR Group and Evola worked under higher "approval," by which he seems to mean a spiritual leader. He even speaks of Evola's "occult mission."

Ur-Inspired Groups After 1930

After the UR Group had ceased its activity in 1929, and Evola was turning more and more to the political field, there was no direct continuation of magical-initiatic activity. Evola himself has confirmed this. However, in a very informative article in *La loggia*, the official bulletin of the Italian Federation of Freemasons, a person writing as "Tergestum" affirms that a friend of his, "F. C.," joined UR in 1935 in Rome.⁵⁷ The group was led by Arturo Reghini. "F. C." had obtained the address from a man to whom Evola had personally referred him.

After the dissolution of the UR Group, Evola did receive repeated requests, especially from younger persons, to found a new order that would work traditionally and ritually. While he declined to do so, he did prepare guidelines for it. Interestingly, he suggested it be called the "Order of the Iron Crown," thus connecting it to the order of the same name which had been first founded by Napoleon in 1805, and later reestablished by the Habsburg Emperor Franz I on January 1, 1816. The iron crown is supposed to go back to Constantine the Great, and is preserved in the cathedral of Monza.

The goal of the Order of the Iron Crown is initiatic in nature and therefore possesses both an outer and an inner aspect. The inner circle is divided into three degrees. The order as a whole is led by a seven-person council of Masters, with a Grand Master. It is unknown whether there was ever an attempt to put these principles into practice, though rumors have circulated to that effect.

Within the predominantly political association *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order), which also looked to Evola for inspiration, at the end of the 1960s a small subgroup formed that again intended to undertake ceremonial magical work in "chains," based on the prescriptions of UR. It called itself the *Gruppo dei Dioscuri* (Group of the Dioscuri, "Zeus's sons"), devoted itself to magical practices and rituals, and soon spread from Rome to independent filiations in Naples and Messina. Among others, Evola's personal physician, Dr. Placido Procesi, is said to have been behind the Roman foundation. Four brochures were published, but these are fairly uninformative. In the periodical *Europae Imperium*, which was closely associated with other Evolian circles, there were soon polemics both for and against the value of this initiative, in which Renato del Ponte expressed a negative judgment. It is noteworthy in this context that the cover of *Europae Imperium* features the Ur-rune.

In any case, not all the members of the Dioscuri Group seem to have withstood the energies aroused by the rituals. This led to severe internal quarrels, and even to members committing suicide by jumping out of windows and inhaling automobile exhaust. The Roman group, at least, was finished by 1975. In Messina, however, where the late director of the Roman traditionalist monthly *Cittadella*, Professor Salvatore Ruta, is said to have been a member, they apparently continued working ritually until the mid-1980s. In 1984 there grew out of this the *Centro Studi Tradizionali Arx*, whose outward activity was the aforementioned periodical *Cittadella*. A very small group within Arx must have been again active in magical ritual practices, which basically stemmed from the UR writings and from Kremmerzian instructions. In 1975, also in Messina, there appeared the purely internal text *La Via Romana degli Dei* (The Roman Way to the Gods), which contains magical exercises and meditation techniques, and is connected to the Dioscuri. It was published by a so-called Institute for Higher Operative Psychology.

In the traditionalist periodical *Convivium*, a former member of the Dioscuri Group, L. Moretti, reports about the breathing practices that he followed there, and warns individuals and

groups against emulating them. In the third volume of the UR writings, not yet translated, "Taurulus" also writes about some negative effects and even an accident in the context of his magical experiments. It is here that natural growth is necessary and excessive zeal harmful. We cannot tell how long the Delta Lodge, connected with the publishing house Arkto in Carmagnola, was magically active. In any case, it too belonged to circles influenced by UR and Evola.

The groups that have been mentioned here also show a repeated intersection with the Masonry of Misraim and Memphis, as also with the Martinists, whose best-known leaders were Gastone Ventura and Francesco Brunelli. Gaspare Canizzo, who in 1971 was already publishing the extremely interesting magical-traditionalist periodical *Vie della Tradizione* in Palermo, also belonged to this group of ritually working Martinists, which possesses an impressive temple in that city.

The axis of UR—Dioscuri—Arx has already provided a path to follow for many traditionalists today who feel allegiance to the ideals of UR: it is the so-called "Roman" way, in contrast to the "Pythagorean" or "Italic" school described above. Those who feel called to it have mostly oriented themselves around three periodicals: *Arthos*, directed by Renato del Ponte; the *Roman Mos Maiorum* (unfortunately now defunct); and *Cittadella*, originally headed by Salvatore Ruta and later continued by Sandro Consolato (but also now defunct); as well as in three study groups dispersed around Italy. However, these groups are less concerned with "magical" teachings and are mainly focused on the ceremonial and ritual restoration of a sacred unity with the Roman tradition.

Most prominent among the groups active today is the *Movimento Tradizionale Romano* (formerly *Movimento Tradizionalista Romano*), the Roman Traditional Movement, which is divided into separate "families" (*gentes*, presently five in all of Italy) and led by a *princeps* and a *promagister*. Members try to live according to the ancient Roman *calen-dar* and the sacred prescriptions that it contains for days and festivals. Contrary to what one might assume, the orientation of the MTR is principally monotheistic: Janus is regarded as the *deus deorum* (God of Gods) and the other gods are simply further expressions of the highest unity. The MTR celebrates the great milestones of life such as birth, marriage, and death, following the ancient rites. For instance, it even performs the ancient Roman marriage through the rite of *confarreatio*, which implies absolute indissolubility. This movement regards as its forerunners the poet Ugo Foscolo, the archaeologist Giacomo Boni, and the eminent historian of religion Angelo Brelich. It even acknowledges non-Italians, such as the German classical historian Franz Altheim.

The *Associazione Romània Quirites*, led by Loris Viola in Forlì, which issues an internal newsletter *Saturnia Regna*, goes a step further. The members have banded together and live in a common household that strictly observes ancient Roman regulations regarding eating, clothing, and relations between the sexes, so that they stand in complete opposition to the modern world.

The international reader may be surprised at the nature of these multiple magical and ceremonial "scenes" active in Italy today, since practically nothing of the kind is known outside Italy. Perhaps even more surprising is the fact that these groups chiefly involve the intellectual and social upper class. One of the reasons for this must lie in the strong position of the Catholic Church in Italy, which with its time-honored rituals replete with mysteries (at

least until the recent liturgical reform) has created the foundation for a deep appreciation of ceremony and symbolism.

Hans Thomas Hakl received a Doctor of Law degree in 1970 and, together with partners, created a large international trading company as well as the publishing house Ansata in Switzerland, which specializes in the esoteric. After having sold his shares in both companies in 1996, he founded and is still editor of Gnostika, the most widely acknowledged German publication dealing with esotericism in an academic way. Hakl has collaborated in several international journals and dictionaries on the occult and religion and is the author of Unknown Sources: National Socialism and the Occult and Eranos: An Alternative Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century. His writings have been translated into English, French, Italian, Czech, and Russian. <>

ESOTERIC FREEMASONRY: RITUALS & PRACTICES FOR A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING by Jean-Louis de Biasi [Llewellyn Publications, 9780738748481]

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Esoteric Freemasonry takes you deep into the mystical side of this fascinating secret society and shows you how to carry out the most powerful practices. Learn how to enter your inner temple and accomplish the ancient mysteries. Discover the compelling links to Egyptian Freemasonry as you progress through the degrees of initiation. Using this guide's profound rituals and its exploration of Masonic tradition, you'll take the next step in your spiritual practice and improve all realms of life.

As a leading Mason in Europe, Jean-Louis de Biasi was appointed Grand Officer after successfully restoring the esoteric and Egyptian degrees in one of the most important French Masonic groups, the Grand Orient of France. With access to highly restricted teachings, Jean-Louis is a foremost authority on little-known rituals and practices that can be used by lodges and individually.

Freemasonry is an ancient and powerful initiatic organization, with both public and esoteric doctrines. The inner teachings and practices of the esoteric tradition are indispensable for any serious student of this often misunderstood fellowship.

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The roots of Freemasonry by Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabatha Cicero

The roots of Freemasonry are swathed in mystery and speculation. Over the last three centuries, Masonic authors have advanced numerous conjectures into Masonry's beginnings, suggesting that the answer lies in ancient Egypt, Rome, the Knights Templar, and Solomon's Temple. Contemporary literature overflows with Masonic intrigue, conspiracy theories, and whodunits. Current research indicates that the origins of Freemasonry are likely to be found among the medieval stonemason's guilds of Scotland and England. Nevertheless, Freemasonry has substantial historical ties with esotericism, providing the basic structure for most of the occult groups that followed it. The entire lodge framework, officers, degree system, ceremonial patterning and floor work, symbolism, secret passwords and handshakes, signs and knocks, grade initiations, ritual drama reenactment, and sometimes even the exact wording of certain speeches in Freemasonry have all been adopted by esoteric and occult groups of the modern era.

Due to increased interest in all things Masonic, many new lodges formed during the latter part of the 1800s. According to Masonic historian S. Brent Morris, more than 150 new fraternal organizations were formed in the USA from 1885 to 1900, and by 1920 half of America's adult population—thirty million people—were members of a least one of the 800 or so "secret" fraternities that were embedded in the fabric of the country's social life.

Outside of a brief resurgence here and there, membership in most American Masonic groups began a slow drop after 1930, a decline that continues to this day. The "graying" of the lodge membership is an inescapable fact not lost on those who love Freemasonry. Masonic newsletters are full of essays decrying the wane in membership and giving ideas on how to get young people, particularly young men, interested in Masonry again. Many of these articles bemoan the current times we live in, wherein young men have far too many modern distractions and time-intensive responsibilities that keep them from joining the lodge. The usual remedies proposed in these essays stress that Masonic meetings should be made more interesting, more family events and dinners should be planned, networking and communications between the brothers should be encouraged, and more attempts at community outreach should be proffered. While such efforts may bring in a few more members, they do not begin to address what we feel is the primary problem: many young men (and women!) who seek out Freemasonry today do so because they are interested in the esoteric side of Masonry.

We've heard the same story so many times we've lost count: an eager young man asks about joining the Freemasons because he wants to learn about esotericism, only to be discouraged by an older Mason to such an extent that the light of enthusiasm slowly but clearly drains out of his eyes and he never returns to the lodge. Once even we were told by a high-ranking Mason to "stay away from that Qabalah stuff." While philanthropy and social improvement are unquestionably worthy goals for many Masons, others yearn for something more; they seek further Light in the form of the ancient mysteries, theurgy, hermetic knowledge, and an increase in psychic awareness. Luckily, a few Masonic lodges here and there are returning to their arcane roots and making the lodge a welcoming place for esoteric thought and practice. As a result, some of those eager young men are staying in lodges that are more accommodating to the mystical Mason.

Jean-Louis de Biasi's book *Esoteric Freemasonry: Rituals & Practices for a Deeper Understanding* could not have come at a better time. The focus of this text is on an individual approach to the practice of Freemasonry. There is nothing inherently gender-specific about ancient wisdom teachings; their knowledge is open to all with eyes to see and ears to hear. As the author explains, "The purpose of esoteric Freemasonry is to unveil to the initiate the mysteries of life and death through initiations and efficient individual practices." This more mystical type of Masonry seeks to move beyond the mere theatrical form and ritualized reenactment that often characterizes its exoteric cousin. Additionally, esoteric Masons are more inclined to have a personal lodge space in their home for their own private use. This book offers men and women the opportunity to study and experience esoteric Masonic Light in a solo fashion, outside of the lodge setting where members of different groups and jurisdictions may not have the ability to work together.

One of the primary forms of esoteric Masonry covered is Egyptian Freemasonry. De Biasi provides readers with all the tools necessary to begin their own regimen of Egyptian Masonic practice, including regalia and other items for the lodge space. Simple yet effective rites for self-initiation are paired with equally efficient meditations, rituals, and exercises designed to facilitate the practitioner's work.

Masonic author Carl H. Claudy once wrote, "It is not only with the brain and with the mind that the initiate must take Freemasonry but also with the heart." This is certainly true of esoteric Masonry and especially true for any solo Masonic practice. Jean-Louis de Biasi has done a great service to the reader by providing the practical keys to unlock these timeless truths for the individual enthusiast. —Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabatha Cicero

Esoteric Freemasonry is Egyptian Freemasonry

This book is about esoteric Freemasonry and, more precisely, Egyptian Freemasonry. I am sure that you have already heard this expression. Maybe you have even heard or read about what is presented here as an aspect of Freemasonry. As a matter of fact, Freemasonry today often talks about esotericism being a part of this tradition, or even a marginal section of it. It is true that esoteric Freemasonry is not all Freemasonry. Although your heart is not your whole body, it is the essential organ that keeps you alive. Esotericism is the heart and the essence of Freemasonry. Without it, life will disappear and this organization will become a body without a soul.

To keep this essence alive and in good health, we have to be aware of its existence and its function. The consequences of not taking care of it, or denying its importance, could be huge for the tradition itself and its initiates. I am always surprised to see how often Grand

Officers or officers know so little about esotericism and its role in an initiatic tradition. We may be surprised to realize that this aspect of Freemasonry has been minimized or hidden by the main Masonic organizations.

I am not saying that Masonic organizations do not mention the esoteric aspect of their tradition or the other branches of Freemasonry. I am saying that most of the time they do not really know what they are talking about. It is easy to understand the main misconception. Esotericism in Freemasonry is usually taken literally. This word is understood as a synonym for the term symbol. The latter is seen as something hidden, veiled by the visible aspect of a representation. For example, a Masonic tool such as a square will be associated with the meaning of rectitude. Consequently, the square becomes the symbol of this virtue. From this simple understanding, it could be easy to deduce that esoteric Freemasonry is the learning of the symbols allowing the initiate to find the hidden secret. Obviously, this is what most of the Grand Officers are teaching very seriously. If such assumption is correct, a simple dictionary should suffice. Masonic books, rituals, and initiations would be useless.

As a matter of fact, this is not the case, because esotericism cannot be marginalized in such a way. Esoteric Freemasonry has been a very powerful part of Freemasonry from the beginning of its history. As you may have noticed, I used the expression esoteric Freemasonry instead of just esotericism. The reason is simple but should be highlighted. When esoteric and Freemasonry are associated, that means we are talking about a specific branch that is still part of mainstream Freemasonry. That has been the case from the beginning of this tradition. Several lineages can be found in esoteric Freemasonry. They all have specific rituals that have been developed to maintain occult traditions from a time before the official birth of Freemasonry. Some of them are more focused on Qabalah, whereas the main and more original part is known as Egyptian Freemasonry. If, as I wrote before, esotericism in its full meaning is the heart of this tradition, then this branch should be the place where the secret keys can be found. It should be the Holy of Holies, the secret Naos that every Mason is looking for. But before approaching this sacred sanctuary, rituals and practices should be used to purify and train the initiate. This is the real essence of what can be called an initiatic tradition. This is what the founders of esoteric and Egyptian Freemasonry intended to do. However, this is not what you can find in most of the Masonic lodges around the world.

Over the years, Freemasonry has become something else. At best, this organization has developed into a philanthropic organization using a ritual inspired by the Bible. At worst, it has become an organized power aiming to eradicate or at least control the esoteric branches of Freemasonry. In some countries, such as the United States of America, the main opponent to defeat at all costs is Egyptian Freemasonry. It will be very important to explain in detail the reasons behind this obsession and to highlight the good and bad of this specific branch of Freemasonry. But at this point you may think that I am introducing here another conspiracy theory, this time one inside Freemasonry itself. This is why I want to give you only one example among many. I will come back to all that with more detail later in this book.

The rites called Memphis and Misraim have been an important part of Egyptian Freemasonry. They are present almost everywhere on the planet in various forms. In the

United States the rite of Memphis was introduced in 1856. Then associated with Misraim as Memphis-Misraim, it became active in 1861 and continued to work until the First World War.

Then in 1932 one of the Grand Officers of the Egyptian Masonic Rite of Memphis (96°) invested some of his friends to the high degree (95°) and reactivated a Sovereign Sanctuary of the Egyptian Masonic Rite of Memphis.

Then the Sovereign Sanctuary held a meeting to surrender the Sovereignty of its Rites for the purpose of being absorbed by an organization called the Grand College of Rites for the United States of America about to be formed. Officially, this new structure was presented as "a regular Masonic body, dedicated to preserving the history and rituals of defunct and inactive Masonic orders." But the second article of three is "the elimination of sporadic efforts to resuscitate or perpetuate Rites, Systems and Orders of Freemasonry in the United States, except to bring them under control of the Grand College of Rites." Of course, one of the main targets was every esoteric Masonic organization and, more precisely, Egyptian Freemasonry. This is one of the main reasons that this essential part of Freemasonry is so unknown by most people and even Masons. When you have such a monopoly and what seems to be a conspiracy, it is difficult to compete and tell the truth.

As I said previously, this is only one example among others. When I discovered such major objects of this important and well-established Masonic organization, I was stunned! As a Freemason myself, initiated in several rites, having received the highest degree of Egyptian Freemasonry when I lived in France, I knew that Masonic principles are different from that. Freemasonry should be an institution of tolerance, working to improve our virtues and helping all men to become better men. Everyone is free and freedom of speech is a right in most democratic countries. We can expect Masons to have the same rights. If Egyptian Freemasonry and other esoteric rites are the subject of such strong opposition, it is important to know why! Nobody implements and maintains such power without a clear motive. Esoteric Masonic rituals and organizations seem to have something that make them very dangerous for mainstream Freemasonry. They seem to appear to the latter as a threat against which every effort must be maintained.

Like me, you can sincerely ask yourself the important question, what it is? What could be so controversial and threatening in the esoteric part of Freemasonry? Are there particular teachings, practices, or rituals that we cannot find in classic Freemasonry?

The answer is yes to all that!

Yes, Egyptian Freemasonry represents an original part of this tradition as old as the mainstream organizations that are wealthy and well established.

Yes, Egyptian Freemasonry contains authentic teachings coming from the Ancient Schools of Mysteries.

Yes, Egyptian Freemasonry teaches inner practices that should be used individually and in groups.

Yes, Egyptian Freemasonry and esotericism are capable of providing a curriculum that allows you to know yourself and ascend to spiritual planes.

Yes, Egyptian Freemasonry is a branch of what we can call esoteric Freemasonry.

Yes, Egyptian Freemasonry is still alive and has a lot to give to anyone who is interested in a real inner experience.

And this is why Egyptian Freemasonry and esotericism are very often seen as a threat by the Masonic establishment.

From my previous experience in this field and the books I have written in other languages, I can go even further with you today. This book will be an opportunity for you to practice and experiment firsthand with this hidden part of the Masonic tradition. You will be able to realize in detail what is at stake here. You will unveil some of these secrets, not as a historian but as someone who is eager to experiment.

This is the reason why, even though I will give you clear historical references and access to rare details, my goal in this book is to go even further. I want to give you a real opportunity to individually experiment with this school of Freemasonry. You have in your hands a real guide for the solitary practitioner of Egyptian Freemasonry, Mason or not. <>

HEIDEGGER AND KABBALAH: HIDDEN GNOSIS AND THE PATH OF POIËSIS by Elliot R. Wolfson [New Jewish Philosophy and Thought, Indiana University Press, 9780253042569]

While many scholars have noted Martin Heidegger's indebtedness to Christian mystical sources, as well as his affinity with Taoism and Buddhism, Elliot R. Wolfson expands connections between Heidegger's thought and kabbalistic material. By arguing that the Jewish esoteric tradition impacted Heidegger, Wolfson presents an alternative way of understanding the history of Western philosophy. Wolfson's comparison between Heidegger and kabbalah sheds light on key concepts such as hermeneutics, temporality, language, and being and nothingness, while yielding surprising reflections on their common philosophical ground. Given Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism and his use of antisemitic language, these innovative readings are all the more remarkable for their juxtaposition of incongruent fields of discourse. Wolfson's entanglement with Heidegger and kabbalah not only enhances understandings of both but, more profoundly, serves as an ethical corrective to their respective ethnocentrism and essentialism. Wolfson masterfully illustrates the redemptive capacity of thought to illuminate common ground in seemingly disparate philosophical traditions.

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Belonging Together of the Foreign

The un-rest of questioning is not empty uncertainty; instead, it is the opening-up and guarding of that rest which, as the gathering together into what is most question-worthy (the event), awaits the simple intimacy of the call and endures the extreme wrath of the abandonment by being. — Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*

To flee into the identical is not dangerous. To venture into discordance in order to say the Same is the danger. — Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'"

Martin Heidegger is incontestably considered by intellectual foe and friend alike as one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century and perhaps one of the greatest thinkers of all time, and this in spite of the controversy surrounding his allegiance to National Socialism and despite, even more damaging, his inability to acknowledge his mistakes publicly and to show remorse or compassion for the victims of the extermination camps.' I have explored the topic of Heidegger's flirtation with the right-wing politics of Nazism in a separate monograph.' I will not repeat my arguments here, but what is crucial to note is that regardless of how one decides on the relationship between the political and the philosophical, the gift of Heideggerian thought has been enormous, and so, too, the debt of those seized by the reverberations—at times haunting—of his voice, and this includes the impressive aggregate of Jewish students who flocked to the feet of the master or the "philosopher-king," as he was known. And so it is with my own philosophical reflections on Jewish mysticism. For several decades, I have availed myself of certain themes in Heidegger's oeuvre to elucidate the phenomenological aspects of kabbalistic esotericism and hermeneutics. In this book, I will expand my earlier insights and think more deeply about the juxtaposition of Heidegger and kabbalah.

Heidegger and Judaism: Review of Previous Scholarship

To contextualize my approach, it would be beneficial to mention some previous analyses that impinge upon this subject. In her provocative study, *La Dette impensée: Heidegger et l'héritage hébraïque*, Marlène Zarader explored the manner in which the Hebraic heritage influenced Heidegger's thought, principally in his appropriation of biblical faith through the medium of Christianity, which, together with Greek thought, comprise the foundations of occidental culture. The very experience of being and language that Heidegger sought to retrieve from the pre-Socratic thinkers as an alternative to what was forgotten in the history of Western metaphysics can be traced to what has been more overtly expressed—"in letters black on white"—in Jewish sources.' And yet, as Zarader also contends, following Ricœur, Heidegger occludes the Hebraic component of his thought "to the point of leaving something like a blank space in his text.'" Zarader thus concludes that Heidegger both "restored to Western thought the determinations central to the Hebraic universe" and "effaced it from thought and, more broadly, from the West itself.'" Zarader's own effort was to fill the blank space by making explicit the Hebraic dimension of Christianity that was obfuscated or perhaps consciously repressed by Heidegger with his alternate narrative of a *Heilsgeschichte* that revolves linguistically and historically about the poles of ancient Greece and modern Germany.' Just as Heidegger spoke of the oblivion of being (*Seinsvergessenheit*) as the obliviousness to the difference between being and beings, so Zarader identifies Judaism as what is left unthought at the heart of his thinking. In line with Heidegger's hermeneutic, the more pronounced the concealment, the more profound the disclosure, the more resonant

the silence, the more poignant the bearing witness. Particularly relevant to this study is the author's comparison of Heidegger's conception of nothingness and the domain of being's withdrawal to kabbalistic speculation on *simsum*, the contraction of infinity to create the vacuum within the plenum, the space wherein, paradoxically, what is ostensibly other than that which has no other can come to be.

When asked in an interview with Dominique Janicaud to respond to Zarader's thesis, Derrida concurred but argued even more forcefully that it was an act of violence on Heidegger's part to disregard Jewish thought so thoroughly and deliberately, a display of disdain that can be explained only as part of an ideological-political agenda," a position that curiously accords with Buber's critique of Heidegger's misrepresentation of the mission of the prophets of ancient Israel, or more expansively the Judeo-Christian tradition, which he contrasts with the prophetic essence of the poet as typified by Hölderlin. Others, such as François Vézin, have drawn an explicit connection between Heidegger's systematic, and apparently conscious, inattentiveness to Jewish philosophers and his apathy toward the millions of Jews brutally and senselessly murdered. It is interesting that, in a similar vein, reading against Heidegger's own explicit assertions, Jean-Luc Nancy surmised that his signature idea of *Ereignis* may have "nothing to do with a destinality engaged solely by the Greeks but everything to do with a different history, one that includes Roman, Judeo-Christian, and 'modern' events in a sense that Heidegger was perhaps never truly capable of apprehending." My own inquiry will lend support to Nancy's conjecture, albeit as it relates more specifically to the affinities between the Heideggerian event of *beyng* and the kabbalistic emanation of the infinite, a comparison that brings to light the metaontological critique of the ontotheology typically associated with the Jewish esoteric teaching. The validity of juxtaposing Heidegger's *Seinsdenken* and the kabbalistic contemplation of infinity will be strengthened by attending to several other topics worthy of comparative analysis, to wit, the hermeneutical nature of the human experience of history and the contours of tradition, the conception of authentic time as a linear circle that instantiates the replication of difference, the simultaneous disclosure and concealment of the mystery, and the intricate triangulation of language, peoplehood, and land.

Another work that should be mentioned is Johanna Junk's **Metapher und Sprachmagie, Heidegger und die Kabbala: Eine philosophische Untersuchung**. Even though this book is marred by the fact that the author does not seem to possess the philological skills requisite to read kabbalistic material in its primary languages, and thus her analyses are based on the evaluations culled from other scholars, Junk's study yields some important insights and interpretive strategies that substantively enrich the discussion and illumine the fundamental question of the compatibility of Heidegger's path and the esoteric tradition of the kabbalah. Noteworthy as well are Richard Wolin's **HEIDEGGER'S CHILDREN: HANNAH ARENDT, KARL LÖWITH, HANS JONAS, AND HERBERT MARCUSE**, and Samuel Fleischackers edited collection **HEIDEGGER'S JEWISH FOLLOWERS: ESSAYS ON HANNAH ARENDT, LEO STRAUSS, HANS JONAS, AND EMMANUEL LEVINAS**. These works are serious engagements with the complicated relationship that several leading twentieth-century Jewish thinkers had to Heidegger, but the latter's relationship to kabbalah or Jewish mysticism is not discussed at all in either book. Mention should also be made of Allen Scult's **BEING JEWISH/READING HEIDEGGER: AN ONTOLOGICAL ENCOUNTER**. The author presents an innovative study that underscores the phenomenological resemblance of Judaism as a way of life, grounded in the interpretative relation to a sacred text, and

Heidegger's view of philosophical practice as a reading of the founding texts of Western philosophy. In like fashion, Michael Fagenblat has written that "Heidegger maintained, as does traditional Jewish thought, that thinking is saturated with interpretation and therefore conceived philosophy as an endless series of commentaries that forget, restore, and unfold an original truth, as does the Jewish tradition of commentary." This comparison of Jewish commentarial practice with Heideggerian hermeneutics does not make any explicit reference to the kabbalistic material, but the inclusion of the latter would substantiate the thesis considerably. The same can be said for more recent attempts to draw positive analogies between Heidegger's thinking and rabbinic thought by Elad Lapidot and Sergey Dolgopolski.

It is appropriate to recall as well a passing remark of Emil Fackenheim in **ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JUDAISM AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY: A PREFACE TO FUTURE JEWISH THOUGHT**. Fackenheim, an escapee from Nazi Germany, suggested that the power of the later Heidegger "to captivate the Jewish thinker" far exceeded the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit*. The rationale for this assertion is that Heidegger's insistence on a shift from an original hearing to a derivative seeing demonstrated that he was "engaged in no less startling an enterprise than the Judaization of the entire history of Western philosophy.... At least from Plato to Nietzsche there has been a fateful yet inevitable falling away from an original Denken-of-Being—fateful because it manifests a *Seinsvergessenheit* and inevitable because it manifests a *Seinsverlassenheit*." Summarizing Heidegger's later thought, Fackenheim remarks that the notion of truth as the unconcealedness of being "is accessible to an original 'thinking,' which is a 'hearing' rather than a 'seeing.'" Drawing on the conventional portrayal of Judaism as privileging the auditory over the visual, Fackenheim concludes that "the later Heidegger Judaizes philosophy, and hence also the view that the Jewish thinker is justified in being attracted to his later thought."

One can challenge the accuracy of this stereotypical characterization of Judaism, but even more important, Fackenheim's observation is based on the faulty conception that the ocular and auditory dimensions of the Heideggerian appropriative event can be separated definitively. The spuriousness of this claim is attested, for instance, in Heidegger's statement about the nature of *Ereignis* as the saying that is the showing (*die Sage ist Zeigen*), or its corollary, the showing of the saying (*das Zeigen der Sage*). Inasmuch as the hearing is at the same time a coming to light, the listening itself must be construed as an act of seeing. Elsewhere Heidegger points out that the transfer from the aural to the visible—as we see in the case of the term for brightness, *Helle*, which derives from *hallen*, to reverberate or to echo, a character of sound and not originally of sight—is indicative of an early power and wisdom of language. Bracketing this criticism, it is remarkable that Fackenheim, a German Jew arrested by the Nazis during *Kristallnacht* (November 9-10, 1938), and briefly interned in the *Sachsenhausen* concentration camp, would have no compunction characterizing Heidegger's alleged denunciation of ocularcentrism after the so-called turn (*Kehre*) in the 1930s as the Judaization of the entire history of Western philosophy. The astounding nature of this claim is augmented when we recall that in **TO MEND THE WORLD: FOUNDATIONS OF POST-HOLOCAUST THOUGHT**, Fackenheim, in a manner that is consonant with Buber, is brutally critical of Heidegger's endorsement of the Nazi regime impelled not by personal considerations but by the force of the philosophical path laid out in *Sein und Zeit*.

Heidegger and Kabbalah: Being, Language, Time

In this section, I will review three Heideggerian themes that have been central to my previous efforts to offer a cogent philosophical exposition of the Jewish mystical material:

the depiction of truth as the unconcealedness of the concealment of concealment; the construal of language as the house of being within which all beings are disclosed in the nothingness of their being; and the understanding of the origin of time-space arising from an inceptual act that is, concomitantly, a constriction and an expansion, a withholding of the boundless ground that results in the self-extending delineation of boundary.

Turning to the first topic, I have been struck by the way Heidegger's conception of truth as the clearing (Lichtung) for the self-concealing (Sichverbergen) of being, the bringing to light, the lighting-up, of what remains enshrouded, well captures the paradox of secrecy and the meontological understanding of the infinite nonbeing at play in a plethora of kabbalistic sources. The clearing within which beings are unconcealed is the concealment of those very beings; kabbalists would surely assent to the Heideggerian assessment that the nature of nature is such that every being we encounter "keeps to this curious opposition of presence [Anwesens] in that it always withholds itself at the same time in a concealedness [Verborgenheit]." The concealment that occurs within the clearing is thus a form of dissembling (Verstellen) whereby the being that appears "presents itself as other than it is" (es gibt sich anders, als es ist). This insight into the concealment that conceals and dissembles itself leads Heidegger to the disquieting conclusion that the unconcealedness (Unverborgenheit) is dominated by a denial that takes the form of a double concealment (zwiefache Verbergen), the concealment of the concealment, such that truth, in its very essence, is un-truth (die Wahrheit ist in ihrem Wesen Un-wahrheit), a proposition that is not intended to state that truth is necessarily falsehood (Falschheit), but only that, in defiance of the principle of noncontradiction, it is always itself and its opposite; that is, truth is the disclosure regarding which it is essential that it remain concealed.

Much as Heidegger understood that untruth belongs inextricably to the comportment of truth, insofar as the latter is the unconcealment (aletheia) of that which is hidden or forgotten (léthe), the mystery that is "the concealing of what is concealed" (die Verbergung des Verborgenen), the nonessence (Unwesen) that is essential to the essence of truth, the self-withdrawing (Sichentziehende) that initiates the nonshowing of being in the showing of every nonbeing, so for the kabbalist, divulging the secret is a double negative that yields a positive, the concealment that conceals itself to be revealed. Heidegger accurately, even if unsuspectingly, expressed the guiding principle of kabbalistic esotericism, "A mystery is a mystery only when it does not even come out that mystery is at work." Extrapolating the cosmological implications of this hermeneutic of the dissimulation of the dissimulation, Gershom Scholem wrote that the "secret signatures (rishumim) that God had placed upon things are as much concealments of His revelation as revelation of His concealment" 36. Prima facie, Scholem's approach is close to my own, but there is a decisive difference: when Scholem writes that the concealment of the divine revelation is a revelation of the divine concealment, he has in mind something akin to Hegel's dialectic, which posits the sublation of antinomies such that there is a synthesis in which one thing becomes its opposite; my hypothesis, by contrast, is more consistent with Heidegger's idea of the belonging together of opposites that remain opposite in their juxtaposition as opposed to the coincidentia oppositorum from which one may infer the identity of the identity of nonidentity and the nonidentity of identity. The kabbalistic intonation of the paradox strikes me as far more germane to understanding the Heideggerian notion of the unveiling (Entbergung) of being than simply viewing the latter as a philosophical appropriation of the theological emphasis on the epiphany of the invisible God common to a presumed Judeo-Christian vocabulary.

Offering a generalization based on the painstaking immersion in particular texts through many years, I am prepared to say that kabbalists extended the hermeneutic of secrecy to their understanding of the nonbeing of being. Thus, like Nicholas of Cusa and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, both of whom may have incorporated elements of kabbalistic theosophy, which, in turn, influenced Heidegger in an ancillary way, kabbalists have staunchly maintained that all that exists is a manifestation of the light of the infinite, but every manifestation of that light perforce must be a concealment, since what is innately hidden can be revealed only insofar as it endures as being hidden. Perhaps most conspicuously, the conceptual footing of the myth of *simsum*, the primordial act of divine kenosis, an idea whose roots go back to the thirteenth century but which is expressed more explicitly in the sixteenth century, is the paradox that concealment is the cause of disclosure and disclosure the cause of concealment. Translated phenomenologically, every appearance of the infinite is a nonappearance—the nonapparent cannot appear except as inapparent—whence it follows that the infinite is present in the world to the degree that it is absent from the world; indeed, the infinite light is present precisely as that which is absent, not as a presence presently absent nor as an absence absently present, but as the absent presence that continuously withdraws in the spectacle of its present absence.

Kabbalists and Heidegger share the hermeneutical conviction, which is based on the aforementioned cosmological paradox, that there is no naked truth but only truth rendered visible via the cloak of invisibility. This is the import of Heidegger's insistence, mentioned above, on the identification of saying and showing; that is, with respect to the appearing of *beyng* implied in the *es gibt*, all that we are capable of speaking is seen through the mantle of the name by which the being is denuded. This, I submit, is also the phenomenological basis of Heidegger's contention that *beyng* is expressed through but is irreducible to the discrete beings of the world, or to be even more precise, the former is disclosed in the latter to the extent that it is occluded by the latter. Thus, like a mantra, Heidegger proclaims in his essay "Der Spruch des Anaximander" (1946), "By revealing itself in the being, being withdraws [Das Sein entzieht sich, indem es sich in das Seiende entbirgt].... By bringing the being's unconcealment, it founds, for the first time, the concealment of being." The same dynamic can be attributed to the kabbalistic understanding of the infinite, and thus we can say of both *Seyn* and *Ein Sof* that they illumine—each from its distinctive vantagepoint—all that can be seen but are themselves never seen, the luminescence that facilitates the appearance of all phenomena but itself does not appear phenomenologically. As Heidegger put it in "Der Rückgang in dem Grund der Metaphysik," the introduction he added to the fifth printing of the essay "Was ist Metaphysik?" in 1949, metaphysical thinking always represents beings only as beings and hence being as being (*das Sein als Sein*), which in its essence is the truth as the unconcealing that is the source of the light in which beings appear, remains veiled and unthought. The identification of being as the light that brings all beings into appearance but that does not itself appear calls to mind Heidegger's two translations of the Heraclitean fragment (preserved by Hippolytus), "The thunderbolt pilots all things," as *Das Alles jedoch (des Anwesenden) steuert (ins Anwesen) der Blitz*, "But lighting steers (in presencing) the totality (of what is present)," or as *Das Seiende im Ganzen aber' steuert der Blitz*, "But the lightning steers beings as a whole." Heidegger retrieves from Heraclitus the idea of being as the flash of lightning that summons the presencing of all things present while itself remaining concealed from being present, an idea connected as well to Heraclitus's maxim that nature loves to hide, which conveys the interplay of unhiddenness and hiddenness, that "the essence of being is such that, as a self-

revealing, being reveals itself in a way such that a self-concealing—that means, a withdrawal--belongs to this revealing.... As a proffering that clears and lights, being is simultaneously withdrawal.

The new thinking about beyng, as opposed to beings, requires one to push beyond the metaphysical binary of presence and absence. Jean Beaufret succinctly expressed the point: "For if presence and absence are qualities which constantly alternate in beings, this can happen only under the immutable horizon of being. Being itself is never a being, but rather the measure according to which all beings can enter into presence or can pull back from presence and disappear in absence. Far more original than the presence-absence of beings is the omnipresence of being, which, losing nothing in its participation in such a vicissitude, encompasses beings without losing itself in that vicissitude." The same can be said about the infinite for the kabbalists, the light of being that manifests all beings but is itself unmanifest. The unconcealment of beings is what secures the concealment of being. Even the eschatological promise that one may elicit from kabbalistic sources, to gaze upon the light without the encumbrance of any garment, amounts to realizing that it is not possible to behold the light but through the garment that is light. The goal on the mystical path may be described as the removal of all barriers to vision—to polish the heart like a translucent mirror, as Sufis are wont to say—but the greatest of barriers is to think that all barriers may be removed. In the end, nothing is revealed to be the truth of which nothing is revealed but the possibility of something to be revealed.

With respect to this matter, the state of contemplation cultivated by the kabbalists maybe profitably compared to Heidegger's description of *Besinnung* as musing (*Er-denken*) or heartfelt thinking (*herzhaften Denken*), that is, the contemplative reflection (*besinnliche Nachdenken*) or meditative thinking (*besinnliche Denken*) that occasions the release (*Gelassenheit*) into what is worthy of interrogation with respect to beyng rather than a computational thinking (*rechnende Denken*) that thinks beyng from the perspective of beings and thereby reinforces the metaphysical fallacy of obliterating the ontological difference 56 Heidegger felicitously called this mode of contemplation "thoughtful configuration" (*denkerische Gestaltung*), an expression that can be applied propitiously to the poetic thinking traversed by kabbalists, which similarly presumes that "the essence of thinking is something other than thinking" (*das Wesen des Denkens sei etwas anderes als Denken*). Embarking on this path of thinking that is other than thinking leads one to the discernment that the Heideggerian *Seyn* and the kabbalistic *Ein Sof* each denote a presence that is always a nonpresence, a presence that can be present only by not being present, the mystery manifest in the nonmanifestation of the mystery, the nothing about which one cannot speak in contrast to there being nothing about which to speak. In Derridean terms, the ultimate secret is the open secret, the secret that there is no secret, and hence the watchword of the secret of secrecy (*secret du secret*) is that "no more secrecy means more secrecy" (*plus de secret, plus de secret*). By continuing in the footprints of Heidegger, 61 Derrida, perhaps unwittingly, came upon a central tenet of kabbalistic esotericism: the truth of the nonbeing of being cannot be unveiled but through the veil of truth, which is to say, the veil of untruth.

The second theme I have explored in previous work centers on the resonances of Heidegger's complex view on the relation between language and being with an analogous pattern of thought that may be elicited from the kabbalah. For Heidegger, especially after the *Kehre*, language and being stand in the proximity of their remoteness and in the

concordance of their discord. As he famously expressed it, "in thinking being comes to language. Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell." Rather than positing a direct correspondence between words and things à la classical representationalist epistemology undergirding the Aristotelian definition of the human as the animal rationale, Heidegger insists that "language is the house of being in which the human being ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of being, guarding it." In the manner that the house provides the framework within which beings are both exposed and sheltered, language is understood as an opening through which being appears to the human in the occlusion of its appearance. In every word spoken, therefore, we must heed the unspoken.

On this score, we find confirmation of the previous point: the showing-saying of language discloses the mystery of being it continues to safeguard, concealing the concealment at the heart of the unconcealment, projecting and withholding, not successively but synchronously. Kabbalists would acquiesce to Heidegger's allegation, "That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery [Was auf solche Weise sich zeigt und zugleich sich entzieht, ist der Grundzug dessen, was wir das Geheimnis nennen]." In similar fashion, Heidegger describes the unheimlich—the uncanny, which is the counterpoint to Geheimnis, the mystery—as "what looms forth in the essence of human beings and is that which stirs in all stirring and arousal: that which presences and at the same time absences [das Anwesende und zugleich Abwesende]." Just as the presence of being at home is experienced most acutely in the absence of not being at home, so the secret necessitates the letting be—that is, the letting appear—of the "hidden essence of being" (das verborgene Wesen des Seins), which is concurrently present and absent, present as that which is absent and absent as that which is present. The mystery, therefore, is not a thing, not even a no-thing, but the "open in-between" (offene Zwischen) that "is the being-there [Da-sein] ... of the ecstatic region of the disclosure and concealment of being." The open enclosure—the refusal that is the conferral—is the absolute appearance wherein nothing appears, the privation of the privation of privation, the lack of image that surpasses in its ontic deficiency even the image of lack. Metaontologically, presence is not the absence of absence nor is absence the absence of presence; presencing rather is the absencing of the absencing of presencing. Following this line of thinking, we might say that the mystery of language is the self-withdrawing bestowal of the self-bestowing withdrawal of the nothing—the kabbalistic Ein Sof and the Heideggerian Sein—which denotes not a nonbeing, the negation of something positive, but the nullity or emptiness that is the origin of all that comes to be in the intricate interweave of beings that make up the fabric of the world.

Heidegger insists that Dasein is uniquely endowed with the language that unveils the veil of being. However, the way that language and being belong together in this unveiling of the veiling is veiled, not because the matter is presently concealed and eventually will be revealed, but, in a more enduring sense, because not-showing is intrinsic to the showing that is the saying of the unsaying. With this we arrive at an aspect of Heidegger's thinking that resonates deeply with the paradox of esotericism at play in kabbalistic theosophy: every act of revealing is a concealing, for the truth that is inherently a secret cannot be revealed unless it is concealed. Simply put, uncovering is always a cover-up. In Heidegger's own words, "Retaining belongs to concealment [Das Behalten gehört in die Verborgenheit]. The mystery [of being] is concealment, which is [at the same time] unconcealing itself as such [Das Geheimnis ist die sich entbergende Verborgenheit als solche]." The kabbalists similarly view the performativity of language as revealing and concealing, not sequentially but

concurrently; that is, language has the capacity to reveal the nature of being to the extent that the nature of being it reveals is concealed. For the kabbalists, like Heidegger, the unconcealment is not a disrobing of truth but the unveiling of the veil. "All revealing," writes Heidegger in a decidedly kabbalistic tone, "belongs within a harboring and a concealing. But that which frees—the mystery—is concealed and always concealing itself.... Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose clearing shimmers the veil that hides the essential occurrence of all truth and lets the veil appear as what veils." To let the veil appear as what veils—this corroborates the point made above concerning the eschatological goal of the mystical way: lifting the veil, ostensibly to see the face laid bare, amounts to discerning that there is no way to see the face but through the veil of the face. Hence, the final veil to lift is the veil that one can see without a veil.

Heidegger's poeticized thinking, as it is enunciated in relation to Greek and to German—a belonging together that connects but also keeps separate thought and poetry—finds a close parallel in the kabbalistic allocation of ontological significance to Hebrew. From the vantage point of the kabbalists, unfailingly and uniformly upheld through the generations, Hebrew is the matrix language and hence it is accorded the status of being most conducive to unmasking the masking of the unmasking, to disclose the secret of the concealing of what is concealed in ascribing a name to the nameless. In addition, the kabbalistic focus on the connection between the holiness of Hebrew, the godliness of the Jewish people, and the sanctity of the land of Israel presents another intriguing analogy to Heidegger's commitment to the nexus between homeland, peoplehood, and language in the case of the Germans. Far from avoiding the difficult political questions that surround this indissoluble link between place, nationality, and speech, in the final chapter, I will show that kabbalistic sources are susceptible to the reproach that has been leveled against Heidegger for what he himself called the folkish thinking (*völkische Denken*), which mandates the ethnolinguistic enrootedness and invocation of historical destiny for a particular people to the exclusion of others. The similarity is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that Heidegger's privileging of Greek and German as the axes about which the history of being turns—the first beginning inaugurated by the Greeks and the other beginning entrusted to the Germans—not only marginalizes but demonizes the Jews as the metaphysical enemy excluded from that history.' But more than exclusion, the connection forged by Heidegger between the Jewish question (*Judenfrage*) and the question of being (*Seinsfrage*) confers on the Jew—or, more specifically, on *Weltjudentum*—a central part in the philosophical transgression par excellence, the forgetfulness of being: "The question of the role of world-Judaism is not a racial question, but a metaphysical one, a question that concerns the kind of human existence which in an utterly unrestrained way can undertake as a world-historical 'task' the uprooting of all beings from being." Apparently, Heidegger did not think the Jew was capable of realizing the "innermost structure" of the metaphysics of *Dasein*, which enables the expansion into the metapolitics "of" the historical people, that is, the task of belonging to the *Volk* determined not racially or biologically but by an essentially collective and historical destiny that is metapolitical. As Donatella di Cesare has aptly put it, "Heidegger's apocalyptic vision sees the Jew as the figure of an end that obsessively repeats itself, preventing the German people from reaching the 'other beginning,' that is, a new dawn of the West.... The metaphysics of the Jew gives rise to the metaphysical Jew, an abstract figure to which the qualities that supposedly pertain to the 'idea' of the Jew, the fantastic model of the figural Jew, are obscurely transferred. ... The metaphysics of the Jew thus produces a metaphysical Jew, the idea of the Jew defined metaphysically on the basis

of the secular oppositions that relegate the Jew to inauthentic appearance, that reduce him to a soulless abstraction, to a spectral invisibility, and eventually to nothingness."

The third theme in Heidegger that I have invoked as a prism through which to examine kabbalistic texts is the idea of time.¹ In modes of discourse beholden explicitly to Schelling, and by implication to the theosophical gnosis espoused by kabbalists, Heidegger depicts the Abgrund as the "primary clearing," or the nameless abyss, the groundlessness that grounds its ground in the holding sway of its grounding, that is, the ungrounding of the nonground, the spot or interval prior to the partition of time and space into the differentiated representations that mark the signposts of humankind's historical destination. Heidegger's understanding of the origin of time-space within the revealing-concealing of the Abgrund, which constitutes the essence of truth, is indebted to Schelling's rendering of time as the space of the Ungrund, the infinite within which oppositions are preserved in the indifference of their identity. The terminology of Schelling is appropriated from the mystical theosophy of Jacob Böhme, which is ideationally, if not textually, related, in turn, to the Abgrund of Eckhart—an intellectual trajectory that Heidegger noted with regard to the paradoxical notion of God becoming the ground of the emergence from himself to himself of that which is not himself—but also may reflect kabbalistic speculation on Ein Sof, as is made explicit in the thought of Friedrich Christoph Oetinger. Previous scholarship has documented the possible influence of kabbalistic motifs on Schelling and the probable channels of influence, to wit, Latin translations of zoharic and Lurianic texts published in Christian Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata*; original treatises of Christian kabbalah by Pico della Mirandola, Johannes Reuchlin, Guillaume Postel, Egidio da Viterbo, Francesco Giorgi, and Paulus Ricius, to name a few of the better-known examples; the writings of European philosophers, particularly in their interpretation of Spinoza spearheaded by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Johann Georg Wachter, as well as the Cambridge Platonist school of Henry More and his disciple Ann Conway, the thought of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and Johann Georg Hamann; and the works of hermetists, alchemists, and theosophists influenced by Jewish esotericism and the occult, such as Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, Paracelsus, Athanasius Kircher, Böhme, Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, Oetinger, and Franz von Baader. As Habermas succinctly expressed the matter, "It remains astonishing how productively central motifs of the philosophy of German Idealism shaped so essentially by Protestantism can be developed in terms of the experience of the Jewish tradition. Because the legacy of the Kabbalah already flowed into and was absorbed by Idealism, its light seems to refract all the more richly in the spectrum of a spirit in which something of the spirit of Jewish mysticism lives on, in however hidden a way." It is feasible to extend this argument to Heidegger and to assume an incidental influence of Jewish theosophical speculation on his path of ineptual thinking/enowning, an inspiration that remained unspoken and unthought. At the very least, the similarities are striking and call for interpretation.

Belonging Together and the Correlation of Sameness through Difference

This monograph, to the best of my knowledge, presents the first serious attempt to lay out the comparison of the Heideggerian and kabbalistic corpora on the basis of textual-philological criteria. As I already noted, it may very well be that Heidegger became aware indirectly of kabbalistic motifs and symbols through the work of Schelling. With regard to the more general influence of mystical theosophy on Heidegger, which may independently exhibit a symbolic kinship with the kabbalah, the likely vehicles of transmission would have

been the Latin and German writings of Eckhart and the theosophical compositions of Böhme. The impact of these thinkers on Heidegger has been duly noted, but no one has paid attention to how the kabbalistic resonances in their works may have inadvertently imprinted Heidegger's thought. An investigation of this sort would certainly contribute to unearthing new facets and dimensions of European intellectual history from the Middle Ages to modernity and into contemporary postmodernism. At various pivotal junctures in the ensuing chapters, I will argue that certain kabbalistic ideas made their way into Heidegger's thought through secondary conduits. The argument in this book primarily, however, assumes a different form. It is not influence that is the focal point of my concern—I am sympathetic to Heidegger's denigration of this kind of analysis—but rather the constellation of themes underlying the respective viewpoints of Heidegger and the kabbalists, a constellation that demonstrates the disarming correlation—as opposed to dialectical coincidence—of sameness through difference, that is, the identity of the nonidentical in the preservation of the nonidentity of the identical.

Without denying the cultural and existential disparities too obvious to warrant specification, it is justifiable nonetheless to bridge the two, to ponder the kabbalah in light of Heideggerian poetic thinking, and the later in light of the former, on three accounts. First, as I noted above, historical connections between Heidegger and kabbalah—through intermediaries like Böhme and Schelling—cannot be ruled out unequivocally. Second, Heidegger's relation to gnostic, mystical, and esoteric currents in Western Christian thought, including principally Meister Eckhart and Angelus Silesius, suggest the possibility that he may have been enamored with ideas from these sources that have strong parallels in the Jewish material. Third, and most important, leaving aside the historiographical question of influence, the comparative analysis is justified methodologically by conceptual affinities. The path of Heidegger's later thought turns in a paradoxical manner—predicated, as it is, on the poetological heeding of the unspoken in what is spoken—that is particularly appropriate for the study of the apophatic dimension of the kabbalah.

The predictable anachronistic charge of anachronism against this approach is readily dismissible as the philological insistence that a text be studied in a diachronically modulated historical context, though valid up to a point, need not be accorded hegemony in the hermeneutical task of constructing meaning. Availing ourselves of the Heideggerian distinction, the analysis in this book may be considered historical as opposed to historiological. To avoid potential misunderstanding, let me be clear that I am not advocating an interpretative method that discards philological competence on the specious grounds that all readings are equally tenable, an erroneous and self-contradictory view that lamentably has gained great currency in the marketplace of ideas. It is fitting to recall the acerbic observation of Nietzsche, "He who wants to mediate between two resolute thinkers shows that he is mediocre: he has no eye for what is unique; seeing things as similar and making things the same is the sign of weak eyes." Lest I be accused of mediocrity and feeble vision, I will state clearly and unambiguously that I have no intention of equating Heidegger and kabbalists on the basis of superficial comparisons that ignore the specificity of the respective historical, social, and cultural environments that informed each body of thinking. On the contrary, I embrace the discipline of philology as the means that is necessary for both the historicist situating of a text in its literary milieu and the deconstructionist deciphering of the textual sense, a venture that doubtlessly would demarcate the substantial differences even as it points to considerable correspondences.

Beyond that criterion, however, the meaning one imparts to or elicits from a text should not be corroborated solely on the basis of genealogy or chronology. As Heidegger himself in one place expressed the matter, "It is possible, for example, to ascertain historically down to the last detail what Leibniz said about the Being of beings, and yet not to understand in the least what Leibniz thought when he defined the Being of beings from the perspective of the monad, and defined the monad as the unity of perceptio and appetitus, as the oneness of perception and appetite."

What Heidegger wished to convey here, and in countless other passages in his voluminous corpus, is that the philosophical understanding may be enhanced by—but it is certainly not confined to—the historical setting, at least if that setting is determined exclusively and predominantly by historiological assumptions. Granted that one's hermeneutical orientation cannot be disentangled from presumptions about experience more generally and especially the elaborate role that memory plays in the psychosocial formation of identity and the eidetic confabulation of time. Criteria that respect these realities foster a broader and more diversified conception of historical enframing that epistemologically problematizes the commonplace belief that we can be certain that the future does not flow into the past through the present or that the past is not as much occasioned by the future as the future is by the past. In contrast to this more conventional standpoint, the temporal presupposition buttressing my hermeneutic embraces the prospect of a reversible timeline—what I have called the timeswerve of linear circularity—such that the present is as much the cause of the past as the past is the cause of the present; the past persists in the present as the trace that is reconfigured anew each moment through the agency of anamnesis. In sync with Benjamin and Heidegger, I view scholarly reconstruction as a type of futural remembering, or a remembering expectation, an act of recollecting that has the capacity to redeem the past, not by describing how the past really was but by imputing to it meaning that it never had except as the potential to become what it is not. The radical possibility of time as future—a perspective shared by kabbalists and Heidegger—implies that the past itself is only past insofar as it is the reiteration of what is always yet to come. The gesture of mindfulness most apposite to this temporal possibility is the leap (*Sprung*), which "takes us abruptly to where everything is different, so different that it strikes us as strange," as opposed to a "steady progress, where we move unawares from one thing to the next and everything remains alike." The deeper attunement leads to the recognition that appropriation of one's own requires the disappropriation of confronting the stranger. The encounter with the alien is what propels the journey home, the struggle with the unordinary instigates the return to the ordinary.

Accepting this hermeneutic plausibility, it is reasonable to propose that Heidegger can provide a metadiscourse to excavate structures of thought latent in kabbalistic literature. His own words on the nature of "genuine comparing" in *Einleitung in die Philosophie: Denken und Dichten*—a lecture course announced for the 1944-45 winter semester at the University of Freiburg but canceled after the second session as a result of the intrusion of the Nationalist Socialist Party in November 1944—are especially germane: "After all, comparing [*Vergleichen*] is not supposed to result only in the determination of what is the same and different [*die Feststellung von Gleichem und Verschiedenem*]; rather, with real comparison, we aspire to see what is different through the same and through the difference of the same [*durch das Gleiche das Verschiedene und durch das Verschiedene des Gleichen*] to always see into the very essence of that which stands in comparison." In this book, I will

seek to achieve the vision of that which stands in comparison so that difference is disclosed through the discernment of the same and the same through the discernment of difference. There is no appeal to a transcendental ideal for the nature of being or to a concept of experience that can be extricated from specific historical contexts, no postulating a metadiscourse or a monolingualism universally applicable to the multiple networks of sociolinguistic meaning. To paraphrase Derrida, even the speaking of one voice requires that there be several voices. As Steven Burik has argued, the circumspect reader may elicit from Heidegger's own work a model of comparative thinking that is not expressive of syncretism or monotonization that would level out all difference, but rather the forging of a bricolage of thought based on convergences marked by deep-seated divergence, or what has been called more recently by Eric Nelson intercultural hermeneutics. In Heidegger's own formulation in the 1929-30 lecture course *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit*, the comparative examination is the most approachable and adaptable method "because in the process of making and grasping distinctions we can first really glimpse whatever is coincident [Übereinstimmende] and the same [Selbige]."

Here it is pertinent to recall that Heidegger was fond of distinguishing between "the identical" (das Gleiche) and "the same" (das Selbe). Thus, for example, in "Die Onto-Theo-Logische Verfassung der Metaphysik," a lecture delivered on February 24, 1957, in Todtnauberg as part of a seminar on Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*, he put it this way: "But the same is not the merely identical [Allein das Selbe ist nicht das Gleiche]. In the merely identical, the difference disappears [verschwindet die Verschiedenheit]. In the same the difference appears [erscheint die Verschiedenheit], and appears all the more pressingly, the more resolutely thinking is concerned with the same matter in the same way [von derselben Sache auf dieselbe Weise]."

In the dialogue between the guide, the scientist, and the scholar on the nature of thinking, written in 1944-45 but published posthumously in 1995 with the title *Feldweg-Gespräche*, Heidegger expressed the difference between selfsameness (Selbigkeit) and identicalness (Gleichheit) by noting that the quality of belonging togetherness (Zusammengehörigkeit) applies to the former and not to the latter. We can say of things that are identical that they "associate well with one another" (gleich und gleich gestellt sich gern), but it is the identicalness that precludes the justification of thinking of them as belonging together (zusammenzugehören). Things belong together, in other words, only because of the unbridgeable chasm that keeps them separate; sameness is discernible through difference, but not in a dialectical way that sublates the disjuncture of their conjunction.

The centrality of this notion in Heidegger's thought can be gauged from a passing comment in the address he gave in Messkirch on October 30, 1955, commemorating Conradin Kreutzer's 175th birthday: "Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all [nicht zusammengeht]." Unlike computational thinking, which forces us to cling one-sidedly to ideas and to stitch them together homogeneously, the thinking that is meditational compels us to compound that which is heterogeneous. From a comment in *Der Satz vom Grund*, the 1955-56 lecture course on the principle of reason delivered at the University of Freiburg, it can be further deduced that Heidegger considered the matter of sameness as the belonging together of difference an archaic truth of Western thought that perseveres as the unthought yet to be thought, which is to say, the essential thought that is prevented from ever becoming an object that is no longer underway to being thought:

When we think the same—more precisely, sameness [Selbigkeit]—as a belonging together in essence [Zusammengehörigkeit im Wesen], then we keep in mind one of the earliest thoughts of Western thinking. Accordingly, "the same" does not mean the empty oneness of the one and the other, nor does it mean the oneness of something with itself. "The same" in the sense of oneness is the indifference [Gleichgültige] of an empty, endlessly repeatable identity [Identität]: A as A, B as B. Thought in the sense of what in essence belongs together, the same indeed bursts the indifference [Gleichgültigkeit] of what belongs together, even more it holds them apart in the most radical dissimilarity [Ungleichheit]; it holds them apart and yet does not allow them to fall away from each other and hence disintegrate. This holding-together [Zusammenhalten] in keeping-apart [Auseinanderhalten] is a trait of what we call the same and its sameness. This holding [Halten] pertains to a "relation" [Verhältnis] that still stands before thinking as what is to be thought.

Utilizing the Schellingian locution, Heidegger thus delineates the same as the relational quality that bursts the indifference of what is conjoined, holding apart what is held together in radical dissimilarity as opposed to the oneness of the indifference of an endlessly repeatable identity. That radical dissimilarity is the underpinning of Heidegger's repeated emphasis on strife, the contentious encounter of combatants bonded in their disunion. The discriminating ear will hear echoes of this Heideggerian theme in Schelling's comment that the "outcome of opposing infinite activities" is a "static conflict," which is equivalent to rest. The synthesis has "to be thought of, not as an annihilation of the two activities by each other, but rather as an equilibrium to which they reduce one another, and whose continuance is conditioned by the persistent rivalry between the two." For Schelling, as for Heidegger, the shared task of philosophy and art is to resolve the infinite dichotomy of opposed activities, but the aesthetic production unveils the mechanism of resolution more completely, and especially the primordial intuition of the poetic gift. The oscillation between opposites is resolved by the third activity of juxtaposition, the bringing of the two opposites into a "relative equilibrium," but the latter is predicated on the constant recurrence of the contradiction between the opposites.

The following passage from "Der Satz der Identität," a lecture delivered at the University of Freiburg on June 27, 1957, sheds further light on this critical Heideggerian hermeneutic of sameness as the bringing-together by keeping apart:

If we think of belonging together [Zusammengehören] in the customary way, the meaning of belonging is determined by the word together, that is, by its unity. In that case, "to belong" means as much as: to be assigned and placed into the order of a "together," established in the unity of a manifold, combined into the unity of a system, mediated by the unifying center of an authoritative synthesis.... However, belonging together can also be thought of as belonging together [Zusammengehören]. This means: the "together" is now determined by the belonging.

The belonging is no longer understood solely "in terms of the unity of the together," but rather connotes "experiencing this together in terms of belonging." Heidegger concludes, therefore, that "belonging together" represents "belonging in terms of the unity of the together," whereas "belonging together" entails "experiencing this together in terms of belonging." Heidegger makes this distinction to explicate the coupling of thinking and being in the celebrated fragment of Parmenides, which he translates as Das Selbe nämlich ist Vernehmen (Denken) sowohl als auch Sein, "For the same perceiving (thinking) as well as being." The choice of the term das Selbe to render the Greek to auto is quite deliberate on the part of Heidegger. According to his interpretation, "before thinking arrived at the principle of identity," Parmenides expressed the "enigma" (Rätsel) of identity in his

pronouncement, which is to be decoded as follows: "thinking and Being belong together in the Same and by virtue of this Same" (Denken und Sein gehören in das Selbe und aus diesem Selben zusammen).

To understand the mystery of the identity of thinking and being—the originary mystery that embodies the "essence of thinking" sanctioned by the ancient Greek thinkers and eventually abandoned by the "technical interpretation of thinking" advanced by philosophy beginning with the Sophists and Plato—one must probe the nature of the belonging together. Thinking and being belong together in such a way that the togetherness is delimited by the belonging rather than the belonging by the togetherness, and thus the difference of the sameness of that which belongs together is affirmed—they are the same by virtue of being different. In the "Brief über den 'Humanismus,'" Heidegger put it simply, "thinking is the thinking of being. The genitive says something twofold. Thinking is of being inasmuch as thinking, appropriated [ereignet] by being, belongs to being. At the same time thinking is of being insofar as thinking, belonging to being, listens to being. As the belonging to being that listens, thinking is what it is according to its essential origin." Thinking belongs to being, but it does so as that which listens to being, which is to say, thinking and being belong together as what remain distinct, since the notion of listening—even listening to oneself—presupposes some degree of distance, a breach that can be bridged only by conjoining what remains apart.

Following this insight, the comparison of kabbalah and Heidegger undertaken in this monograph will yield reflections on the same within which the differences shall become more blatant in light of common ground. Given Heidegger's personal involvement with National Socialism, his disparaging use of some standard anti-Semitic tropes, his steadfast silence about the victims of Nazi brutality, and his concerted effort to avoid engaging any Jewish thinker or text, thereby banishing Jews from the history of philosophy, it is all the more remarkable that the path of his thinking can be illumined by and can illumine the theosophical ruminations of the Jewish esoteric tradition. Even more surprising is the fact that in both Heidegger and the kabbalists one can find a coupling of semantic essentialism and ethnocentric chauvinism, that is, the privileging of a particular language as disclosive of the truth of being and the consequent affirmation of a unique cultural destiny of a particular ethnos to be the custodian of that language in the land of its origin, a position that harbors the potential for the disvaluing of others in racial terms.

In a published review of the first three volumes of Heidegger's *Schwarzen Heften*, spanning the years 1931-41, David Krell noted the obvious: the "repeated juxtaposition of Jews and National Socialism in Heidegger's texts" is "repugnant and perverse." Focusing on one passage in particular in which Heidegger writes that his "attack" on Descartes "has been exploited by both Jews and National Socialists with equal vigor," Krell speculates that these words could have been written at the very moment when Kristallnacht occurred. I certainly understand Krell's point and he is to be given credit for pointing out the magnitude of Heidegger's arrogance and insensitivity to pair the victims and the executor in this aberrant and tactless way. However, it is my hope that the juxtaposition of the ostensibly incongruent fields of discourse, the belonging together of what is foreign, Heidegger and kabbalah, will not only enhance our understanding of both, but, in an even more profound sense, will serve as an ethical corrective of their respective ethnocentrisms, thereby illustrating the redemptive capacity of thought to yield new configurations of the unthought colluding on disparate paths of contemplative thinking. <>

GIVING BEYOND THE GIFT: APOPHASIS AND OVERCOMING THEOMANIA by Elliot R. Wolfson [Fordham University Press, 9780823255719]

This book explores the co-dependency of monotheism and idolatry by examining the thought of several prominent twentieth-century Jewish philosophers—Cohen, Buber, Rosenzweig, and Levinas. While all of these thinkers were keenly aware of the pitfalls of scriptural theism, to differing degrees they each succumbed to the temptation to personify transcendence, even as they tried either to circumvent or to restrain it by apophatically purging kataphatic descriptions of the deity. Derrida and Wyschogrod, by contrast, carried the project of denegation one step further, embarking on a path that culminated in the aporetic suspension of belief and the consequent removal of all images from God, a move that seriously compromises the viability of devotional piety.

The inquiry into apophasis, transcendence, and immanence in these Jewish thinkers is symptomatic of a larger question. Recent attempts to harness the apophatic tradition to construct a viable postmodern negative theology, a religion without religion, are not radical enough. Not only are these philosophies of transcendence guilty of a turn to theology that defies the phenomenological presupposition of an immanent phenomenality, but they fall short on their own terms, inasmuch as they persist in employing metaphorical language that personalizes transcendence and thereby runs the risk of undermining the irreducible alterity and invisibility attributed to the transcendent other.

The logic of apophasis, if permitted to run its course fully, would exceed the need to posit some form of transcendence that is not ultimately a facet of immanence. Apophatic theologies, accordingly, must be supplanted by a more far-reaching apophasis that surpasses the theolatrous impulse lying coiled at the crux of theism, an apophasis of apophasis, based on accepting an absolute nothingness—to be distinguished from the nothingness of an absolute—that does not signify the unknowable One but rather the manifold that is the pleromatic abyss at being's core. Hence, the much-celebrated metaphor of the gift must give way to the more neutral and less theologically charged notion of an unconditional givenness in which the distinction between giver and given collapses. To think givenness in its most elemental, phenomenological sense is to allow the apparent to appear as given without presuming a causal agency that would turn that given into a gift.

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Even as the egomaniac does not live anything directly, whether it be a perception or an affection, but reflects on his perceiving or affectionate I and thus misses the truth of the process, thus the theomaniac ... will not let the gift take full effect but reflects instead on that which gives, and misses both. —Martin Buber, **I AND THOU**

But where does the opening come from and how is it given? What speaks in the "It gives"?
—Martin Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking"

Apophasis, Transcendence, and Immanence

Truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions. —Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*

In this book, I offer a philosophical examination of the themes of apophasis, transcendence, and immanence in a number of twentieth-century Jewish thinkers. The implications, however, go well beyond the specificity of this cultural formation. Consistent with all my work, in this study I delve deeply into one tradition out of the conviction that the particular is indexical of what we are still compelled to call the universal. Mindful of, and in some measure beholden to, the postmodern critique of foundationalism, let me be clear that there is no crypto-transcendentalism at work here, no appeal to what Lyotard called *les grand récits*, the "great stories" or "metanarratives," no recourse to an essentializing or totalizing truth, no positing an infinite transcendence or metaphysical absolute. Although inviolably committed to the truth that there is no inviolable truth, I nonetheless acknowledge the inherently contradictory and subversive repercussions of the relativist position: if meaning is always to be determined from context, in line with the historicizing hermeneutic that prevails in academic discourse, then the veracity of this assertion and the methodological presumption that ensues therefrom cannot be sufficiently generalized to justify the argument for contextualization. Simply put, without the ability to step out of context, we could not cultivate the cognitive apparatus necessary to detect the parameters of any context. Every statement avowing the relativity of truth can be true only if it is false.

My upholding of the universal is certainly not meant to efface the particular; indeed, the universal I envision is one continuously shaped by the particular, the universal singularity, to borrow the language of Alain Badiou,¹ and in that sense, the concrete is what is most abstract, the contingent the most unconditional, the exception the most inclusive. Operating with a tetralemmic logic informed by the middle way (*madhyamaka*) of the Mahayana tradition—A is A; A is not-A; A is both A and not-A; A is neither A nor not-A—the path of my thinking leads to the dialectical overcoming of the dialectical resolution of these binary oppositions, and thus I resist (*à la* Hegel) both the universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal. Closer to the cadence of our experience, in my opinion, is the recognition that the determinacy of the universal is always in the process of being determined by the indeterminacy that is the particular and that the indeterminacy of the particular is always in the process of being determined by the determinacy that is the universal. Following this line of reasoning, and in consonance with a relational rather than a substantialist notion of self, I assume that in the domain of intersubjectivity, too, we must say that one is veritably the singularity of oneself insofar as one is otherwise than oneself, that the exteriority of the interior—the homelessness that alights the way back home in the foreboding night of our solitude—is gauged by the interiority of the exterior, that individuality consists of embracing an alterity that is, at least *qua* potential, universalizable: the difference between us is what invariably makes us the same and therefore categorically not subject to the categorical.

The investigation that informs the inquiry to unfold in this book is impelled by the belief that a theolatrous impulse lingers in the very heart of monotheism, even when the latter is explicated in the apophatic idiom of philosophical theology, a trend that has become quite fashionable in the academy these last few decades. The extent to which the scriptural foundation of the monotheistic faiths may itself be considered idolatrous is a line of inquiry that has been explored by other scholars. To cite one relatively recent example: in his *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry*, Mark Johnston suggests that the "anthropocentric accretions" of the first verses of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:3-6) "may have already obscured the real nature of the Highest One, so that the original ban on idolatry is itself refracted through an idolatrous prism." Striking a similar note in another passage, Johnston observes that the representations of Yahweh as vengeful and punitive appear to be "an idolatrous projection onto the Highest One of the insecurities associated with the patriarchal psychological structure of ancient Near Eastern tribal life." This backsliding is not limited to Judaism. In Christianity and Islam, too, we can discern the "historical sediments of our collective resistance to True Divinity. The sacred scriptures often exhibit a self-incriminating character, in that they serve also to expose the idolatrous potential of even the ostensible true believers."

Idolatry, in the most rudimentary sense, is the worship of graven images, but more expansively, the term connotes the spiritual materialism that turns one's attention away from the supreme being, who is demarcated as the "wholly other," the "numinous One" that transcends all images, "toward supposed deities whose embodiment is under the influence or control of human beings." Johnston's own desire to purge monotheism of this erroneous supernaturalism is predicated on theological assumptions that are not only imposed on the scriptural portraits of God but also entangle him in the very web whence he wishes to escape. Thus, in the beginning of the book he states the belief that colors the whole of his exposition: "God is transcendent; that is, God can come into view, if he comes into view at all, only as a result of his self-presentation." For Johnston, there appears to be no contradiction in linking transcendence and self-presentation. But what is the nature of this "self" that presents itself as an essential feature of divine transcendence? Addressing the possibility of a clash between religion and science, or the appropriate worship of the divine and nature, Johnston asserts, "But that seems impossible, since the Highest One cannot require that we believe or act on falsehoods." It is reasonable to hope that this is correct, but to assume that it is so either textually or philosophically implicates one in attributing a moral sense to God that reflects what we presume to be the standard of goodness. As laudable as this might be, to say that "the Highest One is not indifferent to justice, and is not a perpetrator of evil" is itself a form of anthropomorphizing that, strictly speaking, compromises the impenetrability of the supreme being.

Johnston argues that the legitimacy of the call of the "Most High" on us "does not derive from an awesome power to punish or reward us," but rather "only from the fact that the Most High is the true object of our own-most wills, the very thing we obscurely desire in everything that we desire ... In demanding that we be guided by his will, the Most High has to be calling us to express our own most enlightened and authentic willing.... The idolaters are slaves to their gods, while the worship of the Most High is the embrace of our own truest natures." But are we any less enslaved to God if we believe that the worship of that God is the worship of our truest nature? To be sure, from Johnston's perspective, the ban on idolatry and the representational imaging of the divine occasion the "idea of the Most

High as the one whose transcendence is just the other side of his immanence in this world. This world, properly seen, is the outpouring and self-disclosure that is the Highest One."

I note, parenthetically, that I am not convinced of the accuracy of Johnston's presentation of the biblical views on divine transcendence and immanence. The tenor of the Hebrew Bible regarding these technical theological taxonomies is better captured by Yochanan Muffs:

The use of the terms immanent and transcendent often serve to obfuscate the problem: God is not as much of this world as the term immanent would suggest, nor is He as out of the world as the term transcendent might indicate. God is both close and far. Even though He is not close in the sense that He is identified with the world, derived from it, or subject to it, He is intensely concerned with the people who live in the world, specifically with Israel. There is no doubt that God appears in the Bible as a person possessed with a wide range of emotions: concern, joy, sadness, regret, and chagrin, among many others.

The problematic feature about idolatry is not the personification of the divine with multiple facets—the pagan belief in a plurality of deities is converted over time in ancient Israel to the point that YHWH becomes, as it were, "a whole pantheon in Himself"—but rather the assumption that there is a sphere of reality above the divine and to which it is subject against its own volition.

Notwithstanding my reservations regarding Johnson's manner of construing the distinction between transcendence and immanence, I will accept it for the sake of the discussion. The shortcoming of his argument is that to think or to speak of a transcendence that exceeds natural phenomena augments the imaginative representation of that transcendence as an aspect of immanence. To view the world as the kenosis of a transempirical absolute Being—all that we experience in the cosmos allegedly is what God is not, inasmuch as the divine being is other than worldly being and thus can only be present as absent, appearing as what cannot appear except by not appearing—confirms the ascription of an unassimilable alterity to the transcendence. However, the plausibility of this claim is severely challenged by the conjecture that divine transcendence is imagined as the other side of divine immanence in the world. At best, therefore, the transcendent can assume the status of a relative other, that is, an other in relation to the same, indeed, the mirror opposite or shadow phantom of the same, the exteriorization of the interior that can be ascertained phenomenally only as the interiorization of the exterior; immanence, we might say, assumes the status of convexity vis-à-vis the concavity of transcendence. Even agnostic claims that all we can know is that we cannot know and apophatic utterances that all we can speak is that we cannot speak are, in the last analysis, self-refuting human fabrications—they are true only if untrue and untrue only if true.

Here it is apposite to recall the observation of Jean-Luc Nancy that the enduring legacy of monotheism is "the fact that divine unicity is the correlate of a presence that can no longer be given in this world but rather must be sought beyond it (the presence in this world being that of an 'idol,' the rejection of which is no doubt the great generation and federating motif of the threefold Abrahamic traditions). If one attends to Nancy's words carefully, one is led to the unsettling realization that "monotheism is in truth atheism," which is to say, the aniconic ramification of the monotheistic creed is the undoing and demythologization of theism. As Nancy puts it elsewhere:

the unique theos, deprived of appearance [figure] and name, really represents an invention, even the invention, of "god" in general. There is neither "the god" nor "the divine," nor even perhaps "the gods": these do not come first or, again, they do not quite exist so long as

there are the people or the species of immortal figures.... We must therefore suppose that the invention of "atheism" is contemporaneous and correlative with the invention of "theism." Both terms, in effect, have their unity in the principal paradigm or premise [paradigme principal].

In another work, Nancy went so far as to say that post-ontotheological attempts to locate the divine in the "difference" between beings, as opposed to in the "fullness of metaphysical being," fail because "far from being rediscovered, God disappears even more surely and definitively through bearing all the names of a generalized and multiplied difference. Monotheism dissolves into polyatheism, and it is no good asserting that this polyatheism is the true word and the true presence of God in his distance from the supreme being of metaphysics. For finity distended by the infinite distance of god, should no longer be termed 'God,' nor be presented in any way as 'God' or as divine."

Counterintuitively, monotheism is not correlated antithetically to polytheism as multiplicity is to unity. The unique God is not simply the "reunion," "subsumption," or "spiritualization" of multiple gods under one unifying principle. The pairing of monotheism ideationally with polyatheism stems from the fact that both terms signify the "absenting of presence," which is not to say an absence that is "the negative of a presence" but rather an absence that is "the nihil that opens and that disposes itself as the space of all presence," that is, the withdrawal that fosters the engendering of the nothing that is the substrate of being, the nihility that makes creation possible. In Nancy's own terms:

Monotheism or atheism is thus a complete metamorphosis of divinity and origin. Nothing is given any longer, except that alone which is still given It is the gift offered by the unique God, but if this gift is still given from one side ... it cannot be reduced to that state: it is more properly giving, it is the very act of gift and in this act the singular history according to which the human being—and with it all "creatures"—is a partner more than a simple recipient of divine action (for to receive the gift is part of the gift itself) is engaged.... Creation forms, then, a nodal point in a "deconstruction of monotheism," insofar as such a deconstruction proceeds from monotheism itself, and perhaps is its most active resource. The unique God, whose unicity is the correlate of the creating act, cannot precede its creation any more than it can subsist above it or apart from it in some way. It merges with it: merging with it, it withdraws in it, and withdrawing there it empties itself there, emptying itself it is nothing other than the opening of the void. Only the opening is divine, but the divine is nothing more than the opening.

The ensuing chapters will grapple with the extent to which the discernment that the final iconoclastic achievement of monotheism calls for destroying the idol of the very God personified as the deity that must be worshipped without being idolized. As Henri Atlan deftly expressed the paradox, "the ultimate idol is the personal God of theology ... the only discourse about God that is not idolatrous is necessarily an atheistic discourse. Alternatively, whatever the discourse, the only God who is not an idol is a God who is not a God." Several of the twentieth-century Jewish thinkers to be discussed, to wit, Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Emmanuel Levinas, were all keenly aware of the pitfalls of scriptural theism and the penchant of the human imagination to conjure false representations of transcendence, and yet, in differing degrees, they each gave in to the temptation of personifying that transcendence, even as they tried either to circumvent or to restrain it by apophatically purging the kataphatic descriptions of the deity. By contrast, Jacques Derrida and Edith Wyschogrod, the other two Jewish thinkers treated at length in this book, were able to carry the project of *dénégation* one step further. Despite their many differences, they both embarked on a path that culminated in the aporetic suspension of

belief. Unlike Cohen, Buber, Rosenzweig, and Levinas, Derrida and Wyschogrod were prepared to thrust aside the authority of tradition, and, as a consequence, they accepted the fate of social dislocation and political estrangement, occupying a place that is no place, nomadically adrift without any discernible lifeline to be reanchored in a specific liturgical community.

Derrida and Wyschogrod well understood that the removal of all images from God, if maintained unfailingly, seriously compromises the viability of devotional piety. To deplete God of the anthropomorphic and anthropathic embellishments decisively curtails the imagination's ability to concoct the deity in personalist terms. If we retain the use of theological terms, they should be viewed, according to the formulation of Carl Raschke, as "pure semiotic formalisms." In a manner comparable to mathematical postulates or scientific models, religious concepts form an ensemble of signs that contribute to the structuring of a virtual as opposed to an actual reality. The experience of a theistic God, therefore, can be delineated as a "particular event horizon," which is perceived as "eminently real," but it can never materialize with the sensual concreteness of observable data. Indeed, the horizon established by this eventuality—as vividly as it may present itself to human imagination—is best depicted as a territory that is peculiarly not a territory, a territory beyond all territorialization, the margin to which we are propelled by attunement to the surpassing of language through language. Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me emphasize that the metalinguistic nonphenomenon of which I speak does not imply the positing of an ineffable alterity but rather the denial thereof; words beget words in an endlessly extending chain of signifiers that is not bound by any transcendental signified at either termini, an endless succession of metonymic replacements and metaphoric substitutions.

The undercurrent of this book is the recognition of the codependency of religion and idolatry. Contrary to what is commonly held to be the theological import of monotheism and the greatest contribution of ancient Israel and later Judaism to the history of religion, the turning toward God is not a turning away from idol images. The following portrayal of Judaism from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno can be taken as exemplary of this sentiment: "It places all hope in the prohibition on invoking falsity as God, the finite as the infinite, the lie as truth. The pledge of salvation lies in the rejection of any faith which claims to depict it, knowledge in the denunciation of illusion." These critical theorists of the Frankfurt School were able to affirm such an excessive aniconism, for they were not concerned with justifying the perpetuation of Judaism as a living community of practice and belief. If, however, one were to evaluate the situation from that standpoint, then it would be transparent that the vibrancy of faith is not sustainable without the veracity of deception; that is to say, all propositional utterances about God, even apophatic statements of what God is not, are not only ambiguous and hyperbolic but, literally speaking, fictitious as they attempt to describe linguistically the indescribable and to delimit conceptually the illimitable. As Avishai Margalit and Moshe Halbertal observed:

Idolatry can thus be formulated in a kind of general rule: "any nonabsolute value that is made absolute and demands to be the center of dedicated life is idolatry." ... The internal logic of this general formulation "nothing human can be made absolute," as the core of the understanding of idolatry, threatens to include all complements of idolatry as idolatry, even the worthy God. If the knowledge of the worthy God is ultimately channeled through humans, then it cannot itself be made absolute.... What will stand in opposition to idolatry

will not be any sense of absolute but the freedom from absolutes and the denial of ultimates; extension reaches its extreme limit.

To define the opposition to idolatry as the denial of ultimates implies that one can entertain no thought about God that is not an idolatrous representation. The freedom of absolutes thus relativizes any and every theological pronouncement.

In this spirit, Simone Weil famously wrote, "Idolatry comes from the fact that, while thirsting for absolute good, we do not possess the power of supernatural attention and we have not the patience to allow it to develop.... Idolatry is thus a vital necessity in the cave. Even with the best of us it is inevitable that it should set narrow limits for mind and heart." The rejection of idolatry is not achieved solely by affirming the belief in one God; it demands avoiding the Satanic temptation of the imagination to falsify the deity by treating the relative as absolute, the earthly as heavenly, the visible as invisible, a tendency to which the ancient Israelites were especially susceptible. In a blatantly hostile tone, Weil writes that idolatry is "in large measure a fiction of Jewish fanaticism," for it was the cruel followers of the "cult of Yahweh" who imputed to other peoples the crime of idolatry even though they were monotheists. Weil surmises that if the "Hebrews of the good old days" were resuscitated, they would reproach Christians for being idolaters, "taking Christ to be Baal and the Virgin to be Ashteroth." Following Colossians 3:5, Weil identifies the root of idolatry as lust, which she interprets as the "thirst for carnal goodness," and in the case of the Jews, this is expressed in their ethnocentrism: "The Hebrews had for idols, not metal or wood, but a race, a nation, something just as worldly. Their religion is in essence inseparable from such idolatry, because of their notion of the `elect (chosen) people."

To rectify the idolatrous nature of faith, one must reclaim kenosis on the part of the divine, the annihilation, or in Weil's terminology, the decreation that results in the spectacle of incarnation, and the corresponding self-abasement on the part of the human, the disincarnation that results from the pietistic ideal of renunciation, detachment from desire, and purging the mind of all images. To be faithful to Christ, therefore, it is necessary to experience "faithfulness in the void," to contemplate the inscrutable mystery that the "void is the supreme plenitude"—a mystery so sublime that even "Christ himself, for an instant, was completely without knowledge of it"—for only in this way can one discern the further paradox that the world both manifests and hides the divine, not sequentially but concurrently, that is, the divine is manifest in the world by being hidden and hidden by being manifest. God is most present in the absence of God, and hence, ironically, it is feasible to speak of institutionalized religion as a "hindrance to true faith" whereas atheism heralds the purification of the notion of God and the awakening of the supernatural part of the soul to the realization that the utter dissimilarity between God and all other beings imparts theological meaning to the statement that God does not exist.³⁸ Adopting a paradoxical logic typical of mystical intuition, Weil maintains that belief in God involves the denial of God insofar as subservience to the true God is predicated on the refusal to worship images of a false God. Reminiscent of Meister Eckhart's notorious invocation, "I pray to God to make me free of God," Weil remarked that the highest form of prayer is "to pray to God ... with the thought that God does not exist."

The argument I am advancing can be profitably compared to the thesis recently proffered by Gideon Freudenthal in his *No Religion without Idolatry: Mendelssohn's Jewish Enlightenment*. Extrapolating from the specific case of Mendelssohn, Freudenthal makes a

more general claim for this codependency based on his analysis of the semiotic role of the religious symbol. Summarizing his thesis, Freudenthal writes that "religion consists in the tension between Enlightenment and myth or idolatry. In a religious community, these interdependent poles may be represented by more and less enlightened and idolatrous members of a community. This structure of a community often corresponds to the ambiguity in its practitioners' minds, who either combine idolatrous and enlightened views or consciously or unconsciously waver between them." Religion, in other words, cannot exist without idolatry insofar as it must comprise mythical symbols as a complement to the criterion of reason dictated by the principles of the enlightenment. Freudenthal thus concludes provocatively that idolatry is a "necessary component of religion. Without idolatry religion would dissolve." My own investigations of the dialogical philosophies of Judaism in the twentieth century, epitomized by Cohen, Buber, Rosenzweig, and continued in his own manner by Levinas, corroborate this basic insight into the phenomenology of religious experience.

Jean-Luc Marion has similarly argued, albeit from a different theoretical framework informed by the history of Christian-Neoplatonic negative theology, that if the deity is beyond all description, then any kataphatic statement of belief would be an apophatic gesture of unbelief, indeed the undoing of monotheism, since one would have to believe in the depictions of God that one could not believe in on the notional grounds that they are illusory appearances of the inapparent, which can appear only as that which cannot appear. Insofar as incomprehensibility belongs to the "formal definition" of God, any attempt to envisage God theologically subjects God to a finite conception that is idolatry. The biblical tenet regarding the invisibility of God (Exodus 33:23; John 1:18) implies not only that "nothing finite can bear his glory without perishing" but also that "a God that could be conceptually comprehended would no longer bear the title 'God:...' The idolatry of the concept is the same as that of the gaze: imagining oneself to have attained God and to be capable of maintaining him under our gaze, like a thing of the world." Revelation of the divine thus consists of being disabused of this blasphemous illusion and fathoming that vision entails seeing that one cannot see, apprehending that one cannot apprehend. For this very reason not only is a kataphatic theology problematic but a phenomenology of religion is an impossibility—the phenomenon to be investigated under the rubric of religious experience is simply not available to human consciousness. In the final chapter, I will discuss in more detail the philosophical tenability of Marion's insistence that a denominative or nonpredicative theology—the theology of absence, "where the name is given as having no name, as not giving the essence, and having nothing but this absence to make manifest"—would necessitate that we substitute praise for predication and the further supposition that this praise directs the worshipper to the one whose name cannot be said, even negatively, but which calls to the worshipper, the vocative name that serves as a signpost for the indecipherable giver of "the gift of the name above all names," an obvious allusion to God's bestowing the name upon Jesus according to Philippians 2:9.⁵² For the present purposes what is important to underscore is that the "apophatic anti-metaphysics" implicit in Marion's thinking renders any positive description of God fallacious, and ideally, this should include the paradoxical statement—indeed the paradox of paradoxes, which he presumes "traverses the entirety of Christian theology," including such figures as Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius the Areopagite, John Chrysostom, John of Damascus, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Thomas Aquinas—that "God is known only as unknown" (*Dieu ne se connaît que comme inconnu*).

Arguing a compatible position with regard to contemporary Christian praxis, Peter Rollins has written:

This recognition of hyper-presence leads us to consider the traditional atheism/ theism opposition, for if our beliefs necessarily fall short of that which they attempt to describe, then it would seem that a certain atheistic spirit is actually embedded within Christianity.... Yet the atheistic spirit within Christianity delves much deeper ... for we disbelieve not only in other gods but also in the God that we believe in. As we have seen, we ought to affirm our view of God while at the same realizing that that view is inadequate. Hence we act as both theist and atheist. The a/theism is not some agnostic middle hovering hesitantly between theism and atheism but, rather, actively embraces both out of a profound faith. Just as Christianity does not rest between transcendence and immanence but holds both extremes simultaneously, so too it holds atheism and theism together in the cradle of faith.

Rollins succinctly captures a trend that has dominated the philosophical theologies that have proliferated in recent times based in no small measure on reclaiming the long and venerated tradition of negative theology, a mode of thinking—or unthinking, as the case may be—that allows for the persistent negation of what is affirmed about God, since in saying the unsayable one continually unsays what is said. The gist of this book is to move beyond positing the agnostic middle, wherein theism and atheism continue to function as the handles of the cradle of faith, or as Richard Kearney analogously expresses the matter, the middle space of anatheism, "where theism dialogues freely with atheism," a "third space" in which the "wagering between belief and nonbelief" continues without resolution. The openness of the middle I seek—the middle excluded by the logic of the excluded middle—cannot be circumscribed by a "radical and recurring sense of something more—something ulterior, extra, and unexpected," the "infinite Other incarnate in finite others." The chiasm of the space between should be characterized neither by the presence of absence nor by the absence of presence. The logic of apophasis, if permitted to run its course without the intervention of preexisting beliefs, would surpass the metaphysical dyad of presence and absence in the atheological unmasking of the mask and the consequent transcending of the need to posit some form of transcendence that is not ultimately a facet of immanence, a something more that is not in fact merely another expression of the totality of what there is, provided we understand that totality as the network of indefinite and ever-evolving patterns of interconnectivity rather than a fixed system of predictable and quantifiable data. Within that network it makes no sense to speak of an infinite other extrinsic to and incarnate in finite others; alterity is the intrinsic corollary of the diffusion of the same, the otherness at the horizon of phenomenality marked always by the sense of there being more, and therefore fewer, lived experiences that manifest the interrelatedness and interdependence of the phenomena that together constitute the multiverse.

The reliance on apophaticism has emerged in recent times as the catalyst and justification for the erection of idols of that which is beyond idolization. The naming of this namelessness is, as Thomas Altizer argued, an inherently theological naming even if it is presented under the guise of what he considers the "purest illusion" of the atheological. The modern anonymous subject, who has experienced the depth of the abyss of nothingness, "can only know an anonymous God, and therefore a totally nameless God. This naming of namelessness is nevertheless a genuine naming, a naming of an ultimate and final anonymity, and thus a naming of the anonymous God." Our paths diverge, however, insofar as I do not subscribe to a dialectic by which absolute negation passes into absolute affirmation, so that Nietzsche's proclamation about the death of God can be transformed

into the hope for resurrection and the silence of God be broken by a new attempt to speak the name of God. As Altizer put it in "America and the Future of Theology" (1963), the Christian faith that accepts the death of God is "called upon to negate all religious meaning, but it is the very radical nature of this negative movement which can prepare the way for the deepest epiphany of faith. Reiterating the point in "Theology and the Death of God" (1964), Altizer wrote:

Dialectically, the opposites coincide, radical negation has become radical affirmation; but if the negative movement is a denial of God, then the positive movement must finally be an affirmation of God, of the God beyond the Christian God, beyond the God of the historic Church, beyond all which Christendom has known as God. A truly dialectical image of God (or of the Kingdom of God) will appear only after the most radical negation, just as a genuinely eschatological form of faith can now be reborn only upon the grave of the God who is the symbol of the transcendence of Being.... The transcendence of Being has been transformed into the radical immanence of Eternal Recurrence: to exist in our time is to exist in a chaos freed of every semblance of cosmological meaning or order.... Therefore the dissolution of the "being" of the world has made possible the renewal of the stance of eschatological faith; for an ultimate and final No-saying to the world can dialectically pass into the Yes-saying of eschatological faith.

The dialectical vocation to which Altizer is drawn—and I see no evidence that he has wavered from this position through the long *durée* of his career—induces the "scandal" of the coincidentia oppositorum such that the Yes can become a No and the No, a Yes, not by way of conflation but by juxtaposition, the disappearance of the very possibility of difference in the nonidentity of the identity of opposites; that is, opposites are identical in virtue of their opposition. Altizer's language pushes at the limits of reason to articulate an apocalyptic understanding of the "uniquely modern nihilism" in which the Nihil finally stands forth as the Nihil of an immanence that affords no resort to transcendence. Only through this absolute self-sacrifice and absolute self-negation "does the purely negative pole or potency of the Godhead become fully actual and real, and actual and real in ultimate disjunction from its own polar contrary. Only now do the negative and the positive poles of the Godhead become actual as true opposites, and opposites in ultimate opposition to each other. Thus, as wholly opposed to what the mystic knows as the absolute nothingness of primordial Godhead, this pure and absolute negativity is an absolutely alien negativity or an absolutely alien absolute nothingness." The transfiguring power of this absolute negativity "impels a radical movement away from that very actuality which is a necessary consequence of the absolute sacrifice of the Godhead, or that actuality which in full modernity realizes itself as an absolute immanence ... that is the necessary consequence of the pure reversal of an absolute transcendence.... The very advent of immanence is inseparable from the realization of the full and actual emptiness of absolute transcendence, an emptiness that is a truly alien emptiness, and one which is realized as the Nihil itself." Inasmuch as the dialectical form of faith can never dissociate affirmation and negation—illustrated most dramatically in Altizer's admission that his "deepest theological goal" was to discover the coincidence of Satan and Jesus, a quest, no doubt, imbued with a Blakean spirit—the demise of transcendence is as much a source of suffering as it is a source of salvation; the crucifixion is itself the resurrection. Altizer thus speaks of the "ultimate breakthrough" predicated on understanding that the "absolute nothingness" of the Godhead entails an "absolute transfiguration of itself," but the latter "is only actually possible by way of a transfiguration of absolutely opposite poles or polarities, only when these opposites are fully and actually real could this transfiguration occur. These are the full opposites which pass into each other in an absolute

transfiguration, and all deep and genuine dialectical thinking and vision incorporates such a transfiguration."

Altizer's unwavering resolve to insist that in our nihilistic epoch the mandate of radical theology must be to name God as the unnameable is surely deserving of praise for its courage and candor. From my perspective, however, the radical theology of Altizer, much as the postmodern apophatic theologies that have dominated the marketplace of ideas within the academy, is still guilty of theomania, a term that I deploy, following the sense implied in the passage from Buber that serves as one of the epi-graphs of this book, not to denote a delusional state wherein one believes oneself to be God but rather a relentless and maddening obsession for transcendence, even if the latter is construed as a negative presence, that is, a presence that is present only as the absence of presence. I thus concur with Mark C. Taylor's moving encomium:

Thomas J. J. Altizer is the last theologian. As such, he is the most God-obsessed person I have ever known. To speak—truly to speak—with Altizer is to encounter a passion the excess of which borders on madness.... This is, of course, no ordinary madness; nor is it literal. The madness that pursues Altizer while he is pursuing it is a holy madness. For those blessed with holy madness, the foolishness of the world can only be overcome by reversing it in a higher madness that negates what others affirm and affirms what others negate.

To the extent that the encounter with the darkness that emerges from the disbanding of transcendence—the nihilism that Altizer identifies with apocalypticism—dialectically yields the resurgence of light, there is the peril of its reification as a mental idol confabulated in the imagination, even if, and perhaps especially so, what is idolized is the darkness itself, personified as Satan. The following depiction of Blake offered by Altizer could easily be applied to himself: "Blake was the first Christian atheist, and his atheism was born out of a hatred of repression and a joyous response to a new and universal epiphany of Jesus. But he was no atheist in the ordinary sense; he knew that the Christian God is every bit as real as the reality of repression, that the sovereignty and transcendence of God is created by the Fall, and that this wholly other God has died to make possible the advent of the Apocalypse." Rather than fleeing from death—a characteristic that Altizer associates with Gnosticism—the task of radical theology is to confront the unspeakability of death, the abyss that does not call forth "a proclamation of the name of Christ" but "the absence of the nameability of Christ ... indeed, the absence of all nameability whatsoever, an absence that is a necessary and inevitable absence for a full and total apocalyptic enactment." Altizer's theological voyage and his unique interpretation of the incarnational trope of the kenosis of God that is the self-negation of heavenly transcendence—the naming that is concomitantly an unnamings, the silence that reverberates in the totally present absence of the totally absent presence of speech—has steered him to the place where he can brazenly assert that "the most actual name of God for us is truly the name of Satan. Each of us knows and speaks that name, and we speak it in truly or actually naming our darkness." Needless to say, by the paradoxical logic that pertains to the absolute transfiguration of the absolute apocalypse, in naming the darkness, one names the light, since the darkness is, in the final analysis, naught but a more intense illumination of the light.

Altizer's laborious and unremitting attempt to name the unnamable and thereby reveal the divine presence in absence is, as Taylor rightly noted, a rending of the veil of God's invisibility, which is not to say making the invisible visible but rather making visible the fact that God is currently occluded and therefore not visually accessible except as nonvisible. To

cite Altizer's own words again: "Yes, the primary calling of the theologian is to name God, and to name that God who can actually be named by us, and if this calling has seemingly now ended, that could be because the theologian has not yet truly named our darkness, and thus not yet truly named God. While silence is now the primary path of the theologian, and above all silence about God, this is a silence which I have ever more deeply and ever more comprehensively refused, for I am simply incapable of not naming God." It seems to me that in this effort to make the invisibility of transcendence visible, Altizer remains shackled by the metaphysics he thinks he has overthrown, since the invisible continues to be conceived as a presence that presents itself as nonpresent.

The relevance of my misgiving is brought into sharp relief when we consider Altizer's endeavor to commingle his radical Christian theology and Mahāyāna Buddhism around the theme of absolute nothingness or the self-emptying emptiness. The earnestness of this undertaking notwithstanding, there is a critical difference in the two systems of thought that cannot be ignored. According to the former, no matter how radical or postmodern, the yearning to name the nothingness as God bespeaks the fact that the theologian remains committed to a belief in presence, even if that presence is experienced as absence, whereas according to the latter, there is no such belief, for there is neither a presence that is absent nor an absence that is present. In fairness, it must be noted that Altizer frequently demonstrates that he is acutely aware of the fact that the Western concept of a theistic God cannot be readily translated into a Buddhist terminological register, and thus there is an unbridgeable difference, as we see, for example, from this observation: "Now, and for the first time in the West, an absolute Nothing is fully realized in thinking and in the imagination, and unlike every Eastern vision of an absolute nothingness, this is a Nihil which is actually and historically real, manifest and real not only in the depths of interiority but in the depths of history itself, depths calling forth a truly new Godhead, and a Godhead for the first time manifest as absolute evil." Closer to the point is the following passage where the source of absolute compassion in Christianity and Buddhism are distinguished:

But Christianity knows that reality as the depths of the Godhead, a Godhead wholly absent in Buddhism, and far more deeply absent in Buddhism than in any other religious way or tradition. Perhaps nothing is so distinctive about Buddhism than is this absence, and an absence that is not simply an absence or an eclipse of God, but far rather an absence precluding the very possibility of the presence of God, and precluding it in its own deepest power and depths. Yet Buddhism is surely not atheistic, and not atheistic because here there is no negation of God, nor even the possibility of the negation of God, for ultimately in Buddhism there is no negation whatsoever.... While the Christian might be baffled or offended at the absence of God in Buddhist thinking, an absence fully realized in the deepest and purest expressions of Buddhist thinking, such an absence of even a trace of pure transcendence is surely inseparable from the very purity of Buddhist thinking, which is wholly closed to the very possibility of apprehending an essential and intrinsic "other," and therefore closed to the possibility of being open to the essential and final transcendence of God.

In spite of being mindful of the crucial disparity, Altizer is committed to the possibility that precisely because Buddhism lacks a theistic conception, the comparative approach can open a "universal ground" that will reinvigorate Christian theology with a deeper understanding of the kenotic dimensions of the crucifixion. As he put it in his theological memoir, "a Buddhist horizon makes possible this apocalyptic understanding, and above all so a Buddhist understanding of an absolute nothingness or an absolute void, apart from which apocalypse is a meaningless surd." What is critical about the amalgamation of Buddhism and

Christianity, then, is that the identity of opposites, which is most purely realized inwardly in the former, can be actualized outwardly in the latter.

While I accept that the dialectic affirmed by Altizer implies that the absolute negation of the absolute transcendence results in the transformation of the latter into absolute immanence—and thus the theological truth he wishes to retrieve is perforce an atheistic denial of the wholly other God—I would counter that the transformation precludes the prospect of the absolute immanence dissolving the absolute transcendence absolutely, since the dictate of the *coincidentia oppositorum* is such that, in the locution cited above, opposites must be in ultimate opposition to each other and hence everything always contains its own other. In his appropriation and recasting of the Buddhist teaching, in no small measure following the lead of Japanese philosophers of the Kyoto school like Nishida Kitaro and Nishitani Keiji, Altizer surmises that the transcendence of God is apprehended as the self-negation of an absolute nothingness—rendered symbolically as the death of God—that is the absolute presence and absolute absence at once; the incarnation of the kenotic Christ is a self-negation of this original self-negation. The move to construct what Altizer called a "pure theology" based on the hybrid of Buddhism and Christianity is doubtlessly culturally significant, but it effaces the deeper contribution of the Buddhist doctrine of nothingness as a meontology that transcends the polarities of transcendence and immanence, being and nonbeing, emptiness and fullness. That Altizer himself grasped this fundamental point is evident from his depiction of Buddhist enlightenment as the awareness of "an absence which is the is-notness of isness, or the pure nothingness of pure isness, a *coincidentia oppositorum* in which no opposites are actually present, for here there is no distance or distinction between is and is not. If that is a pure emptiness which is a pure fullness, it is full precisely by being empty, and hence there can be no actualization of emptiness, and no act which enacts anything whatsoever." Or, as he put it elsewhere, "Buddhism can only know a primordial origin, an origin which is the very opposite of an actual origin, and thus an origin which voids the very possibility of an actual origin. That is a voiding which is the voiding of the very possibility of an actual nothingness." If one follows the Buddhist path of annihilation, the negation is itself negated in the negation of the negation—the void voided in the voiding that is the void—and thus there is no reason to propose a negation to negate the negation.

I find myself once more in agreement with Taylor's contention that the theology of Altizer is haunted by the impossibility of theology, the realization that the move beyond darkness implies that there is no beyond to which to move. The only way to be faithful to Altizer's Christian atheism and apocalyptic nihilism, therefore, is to betray it, for the death of God reaches fruition when we forget what it is that we have forgotten, a twofold oblivion that signals the end of theology and not the possibility of its rejuvenation. "As long as the specter of God haunts the world, the kenotic process that Altizer, following Hegel, charts remains unfinished.... For the 'No' of world negation to be negated and nihilism to be complete, we must say 'Yes' to the nothingness and emptiness hiding in the utter ordinariness and banality of contemporary culture."

Along similar lines, I would contend that the apophatic theologies, as influential as they have been in forging a new synthesis of philosophy and religion, likewise should be supplanted by a more far-reaching apophasis, an apophasis of the apophasis, based on the acceptance of an absolute nothingness—to be distinguished from the nothingness of an absolute—that does not signify the unknowable One but the manifold that is the pleromatic

abyss at being's core, the negation devoid of the negation of its negation, a triple negativity, the emptiness of the fullness that is the fullness of the emptiness emptied of the emptiness of its emptiness. On this score, the much-celebrated metaphor of the gift would give way to the more neutral and less theologically charged notion of an irreducible and unconditional givenness in which the distinction between giver and given collapses. To think givenness in its most elemental phenomenological sense is to allow the apparent to appear as given without presuming a causal agency that would turn that given into a gift. It is, as Derrida once wrote, to receive the improbable "grace" of clearing oneself of the double bind "of the gift, of the given gift, of giving itself." I offer this book as a token of this improbable grace, an act of giving beyond the gift. < >

THEOSOPHICAL APPROPRIATIONS: ESOTERICISM, KABBALAH, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONS
 edited by Julie Chajes and Boaz Huss [Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 9789655361797]

"The thirteen chapters of this volume examine intersections between theosophical thought and areas as diverse as the arts, literature, scholarship, politics, and, especially, modern interpretations of Judaism and kabbalah. Each chapter offers a case study in theosophical appropriations of a different type and in different context. The chapters join together to reveal congruencies between theosophical ideas and a wide range of contemporaneous intellectual, cultural, religious, and political currents. They demonstrate the far-reaching influence of the theosophical movement worldwide from the late-nineteenth century to the present day" Contributors: Karl Baier, Julie Chajes, John Patrick Deveney, Victoria Ferentinou, Olav Hammer, Boaz Huss, Massimo Introvigne, Andreas Kilcher, Eugene Kuzmin, Shimon Lev, Isaac Lubelsky, Tomer Persico, Helmut Zander.

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Postmodern Theosophies and The Theosophical Societies

Excerpt: Appreciation of the historical importance of the Theosophical Society (henceforth, TS) and related movements is growing, and rightly so, yet the extent of theosophical influences can still be surprising, even to scholars in the field. The chapters of this volume contribute to our increasing recognition of the global impact of the TS and its ideas and illustrate lesser-known instances of theosophical appropriation around the world.

From its very beginning, the TS was an international movement. Its founders were an American lawyer and journalist, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907), an Irish-American lawyer, William Quan Judge (1851-1896), and a Russian occultist writer and adventurer, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891). Following its founding in New York in 1875, the TS soon became a worldwide organization. In 1879, its headquarters moved to India, first to Bombay, and later to Adyar, Madras. From the 1880's, theosophical lodges were established around the world: in America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. Today, the movement has branches in about sixty countries. The first objective of the Society (as formulated in 1896) was "to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color," and it was open to members of diverse religious, national, and ethnic backgrounds. The universalistic nature of the TS was expressed in its interest in different religious and esoteric traditions: first, in Western esoteric, ancient Egyptian, and Kabbalistic doctrines, and later, in Hindu and Buddhist ones. As a movement, Theosophy encouraged the comparative study of religion and integrated into its teachings concepts and themes derived from a large variety of contexts. Unlike other esoteric movements, the TS included many non-Christian and non-Western members from the outset. These members participated in theosophical adaptations and interpretations of their traditions. Despite these interpretations being offered by adherents of the traditions themselves, they were usually predicated on a modern esoteric perspective, within a Western discursive framework. Theosophical appropriations had a considerable impact on the way different religious traditions were perceived in modern Western culture. In particular, they had a decisive and significant impact on new developments in, and transformations of, modern Kabbalistic, Hindu, and Buddhist currents.

The chapters that follow are the product of an international workshop held at Ben-Gurion University in December 2013, funded by the Israel Science Foundation (ISF) and the Goldstein-Goren Center for Jewish Thought at Ben-Gurion University. Scholars attended the conference from Israel, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Holland, the United States, Japan, and Sri Lanka. The workshop was part of a four-year research project funded by the ISF (Grant 774/10) on Kabbalah and the Theosophical Society.

As part of that project, we studied Jewish involvement in the TS, the formation of Jewish theosophical groups, and the adaptation and interpretation of Kabbalah by Jewish and non-Jewish theosophists. These topics were also central to the workshop, a centrality reflected in this volume, with its section on Kabbalistic appropriations. The workshop considered Judaism's often-ambivalent placement between the categories of "East" and "West" and the TS's role in the construction of modern Jewish and non-Jewish identities in relation to those categories, inter alia. Since we believe questions relating to Jewish theosophists and the

appropriations of Kabbalah in the TS should be understood in wider context, the workshop also examined theosophical adaptations in other cultures and traditions as well, especially within Anthroposophy, which emerged directly from the TS.

The chapters in the volume examine intersections between theosophical thought with areas as diverse as the arts, literature, and poetry, scholarship, modern interpretations of Judaism and of Kabbalah, Orientalism, and politics, especially nationalism. How may we explain the extent of these theosophical influences? Although they are very different from one another, these chapters join each other in pointing towards congruencies between theosophical ideas and the cultural logic of a wide range of contemporary currents. In other words, we suggest that Theosophy was exceptionally successful (and influential) because it was a key expression of some of the central cultural, intellectual, and political developments of the period. Yet, for all these congruencies between theosophical, artistic, literary, political and scholarly themes, there were also important differences and tensions. Max Müller's negative stance towards his theosophical admirer, Madame Blavatsky, and Gandhi's ambivalent attitude towards the TS (even though it had influenced him) are just two of the examples discussed in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Survey and Outlines

The present volume includes thirteen chapters, each of them a fascinating case study of a theosophical appropriation of a different type and in a different context. They are divided into three thematic sections: Theosophical Transformations, Kabbalistic Appropriations, and Global Adaptations. The first section, Theosophical Transformations, focuses on the appropriations that took place in the early TS, especially in the thought of Madame Blavatsky.

In the opening paper, Julie Chajes discusses two of Blavatsky's early works that refer to Kabbalah: "A Few Questions to Hiram" (1875) and *Isis Unveiled* (1877). The chapter elucidates Blavatsky's doctrines of Kabbalah in those texts, each of which have distinct emphases. In "A Few Questions," Blavatsky emphasized Rosicrucianism and Spiritualism, identifying Kabbalah with the current doctrines of the Theosophical Society: conditional immortality and metempsychosis. Blavatsky abandoned these doctrines in her later works. In "A Few Questions," she alluded to three main types of Kabbalah: An original, Oriental Cabala, its Jewish derivation, and the Rosicrucian Cabala, which drew on the Oriental and Jewish varieties. Blavatsky was influenced in her understanding of the Jewish Cabala by the work of the Polish Jewish scholar, Christian David Ginsburg (1831-1914), and many of her ideas about the Rosicrucian Cabala came from the work of the freemasonic writer Hargrave Jennings (1817-1890). Blavatsky brought these two sources—the work of a professional scholar and that of an amateur historian—together in her narrative.

Two years later, in *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky postulated a Buddhist source for Kabbalah, a position unique to that work. The universalism of her Kabbalah was now more pronounced, and her treatment of Kabbalistic doctrines much more detailed. In proposing a Buddhist source, she was influenced by C. W. King (1818-1888), an expert on gemstones who wrote a book about Gnosticism. Other sources cited in Blavatsky's discussions of Kabbalah include the early-modern Christian Hebraist and Kabbalist, Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689), and the nineteenth-century French Jewish scholar, Adolphe Franck (1809-1893). Although Blavatsky does seem to have known Franck's renowned 1843 work on the Kabbalah in the original French, at least in part, her citations of Franck and of Knorr were

derived largely second-hand through the works of the Boston lawyer, Samuel Fales Dunlap (1825-1905). One again, therefore, Blavatsky drew together an assortment of scholarly and non-scholarly influences.

In her narratives, Blavatsky drew on these diverse sources to affirm Ain Soph as the true source of the cosmos in explicit opposition to the idea that Jehovah was the creator. The true origin of the cosmos in Ain Soph was, Blavatsky claimed, attested in the Bible, and in philosophies and religions the world over from time immemorial, but only in their correct, Kabbalistic interpretations. Thus cast as the sole legitimate form of Biblical hermeneutics and as an ancient science, Kabbalah was used to attack the hegemony of the Catholic and Protestant Churches and the prepotency of "materialism," especially within the natural sciences. Kabbalah therefore empowered Blavatsky to pronounce boldly on the ongoing disputes arising from the baffling modern diversification of scientific and theological developments, attempting to lead all branches of human knowledge back to their claimed original integrity.

Blavatsky's Kabbalah, Chajes argues, was a modern form of Kabbalah. It incorporated numerous and diverse modern sources and it was related to modern discourses of religion, science, progression, and decline, and, importantly, to modernizing interpretations of Buddhism, Judaism, and Kabbalah. All of this was marshaled in the proposition of solutions to modern "problems" such as the "conflict" between religion and science and the perceived growth of nihilism. This discursive entanglement and integration of seemingly incongruous sources was of central importance to the shape modern (and post-modern) Kabbalah would come to take, both in subsequent theosophical literature and in the myriad of theosophically influenced movements within New Age and alternative spirituality.

In the following chapter, Isaac Lubelsky charts the relationship between Madame Blavatsky and the renowned German-born Oxford Orientalist, Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900). Blavatsky's references to Müller are often mentioned in passing in accounts of her sources, but this is the first detailed exploration of this topic, looking at the relationship from both sides. For Blavatsky's part, she revered Müller as a scholar and quoted his works in corroboration of her theories both in *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. Müller began with a curious and relatively friendly attitude towards the Theosophists but it cooled over time, ending in explicit dislike. In Lubelsky's account, other characters play minor but important roles in the ongoing drama of Blavatsky vs Müller: Henry Olcott, Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), Annie Besant (1847-1933), Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933) and Alfred Percy Sinnett (1840-1921).

Considering Blavatsky's two major works alongside Müller's article "Comparative Mythology" (1856) and his 1892 Gifford Lectures, later published as *Theosophy or Psychological Religion* (1893), Lubelsky highlights the common ground, as well as the antagonism between the two authors. Commonalities include their related (yet differing) images of "Aryan" India as a land of pristine and ancient wisdom as well as the concrete political influence Müller and the Theosophists enjoyed on the subcontinent. In his documentation of this unique relationship between the philologist and the matriarch of the "New Age," Lubelsky deepens our understanding of intersections between scholarship and occultism in the nineteenth century as well as the reception of Theosophy among some of Blavatsky's contemporaries.

In the third chapter, John Patrick Deveney clarifies the nature of early Theosophy vis a vis what the Society became from the 1880's onwards, arguing that the differences between

the two are so great that we are justified in speaking of two Theosophical Societies. Redressing an unfortunate under-acknowledgement of the nature of early Theosophy in the scholarly literature, Deveney analyses Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* as well as her early articles and letters. He also considers the writings of other central early theosophists, such as Damodar Mavalankar (b.1857), William Quan Judge, Albert Rawson (1829-1902), and Colonel Olcott. These demonstrate, Deveney argues, that the Society as established in 1875 was devoted to practical occult work, and specifically to the development of the ability to project the astral double. This ability was considered an indication of the fusion of the student's "individuality" with their "divine spirit" to create an "individualized" entity capable of surviving death. The early theosophists attempted to prolong life long enough to achieve this goal and to that end they instituted a number of rules, including temperance, fasting, and some form of sexual abstinence. A system of three degrees was established to indicate the student's progress. From the 1880's, these practical, magical, and occult aims were downplayed, discouraged, and even condemned by the theosophical mahatmas as "selfish." Blavatsky began to describe the individual as the "false personality." Rather than teaching that this individual could become immortal, she now taught that after death it disintegrated and that the only human principles to survive (atma, buddhi, and part of manas) do not constitute the individual who desires immortality here and now, but rather are impersonal in character. The failure of the Theosophical Society to produce the practical occult instruction they had promised and the change in the Society's teachings prompted some theosophists to look elsewhere, for example to the occult movements the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor and the Golden Dawn. The Theosophical rejection of individual immortality was also one of the principle elements that led to the anti-Blavatskyan Christian Theosophical current.

Deveney's clarification of the Society's early teachings and change of doctrinal direction is important when considering the issue of theosophical appropriations because to a significant extent, the "two Societies" must be considered separately in terms of their influences and legacies. The first Society was the heir of ideas associated with the Rosicrucians and with Cagliostro (1743-1795), the Italian mage who spread a system of practical occultism across Europe. An heir of this early type of Theosophy was American New Thought. Like Cagliostro, New Thought teachers taught some form of occult sexual practice. This may have involved the retention or ingestion of semen, and was predicated on the idea that sexual energy made psychic and spiritual development possible. This idea was an open secret, Deveney argues, known to all in the quarter century before World War I. Although Deveney does not attribute explicitly sexual practices to Blavatsky and her followers, the early theosophists were well aware of a connection between sexual energy and the achievement of conditional immortality. Whatever the details of the practical work they pursued, Deveney concludes, it is clear that there was such work, focused on lengthening life and developing an individualized monad capable of surviving death. This was later concealed and (almost) forgotten.

In Chapter Four, Tomer Persico argues that Krishnamurti's famous dissolution of the Order of the Star in 1929—including his abandonment of the role of messiah assigned to him by Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater (1854-1934)—did not represent his negation of religious tradition or the establishment of new one, but rather his embrace of an existing current: the "Tradition of No Tradition" with roots stretching back to Protestant Pietism and articulated most clearly by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). In his writings, Emerson rejected ritual and tradition and articulated a perennialist view of religious truth, positions

that are uncannily close to Krishnamurti's later statements. Persico considers the biography of Krishnamurti (1895-1986), including his native Brahmanism, his "discovery" by Leadbeater, his Theosophical training, and his brother's tragic and traumatizing death. Examining Krishnamurti's writings closely, Persico demonstrates a continuity in his thinking despite his apparent doctrinal volte face. Indeed, iconoclastic elements had always been present in Krishnamurti's thought to some extent, alongside a certain ambivalence towards Theosophical teachings. Persico highlights Krishnamurti's time in England and France, but especially in America, as formative in the development of his thought. It was after this period abroad that Krishnamurti's criticism of Theosophy intensified, his latent iconoclastic tendencies consolidated, and he fully and publicly turned away from Theosophy towards the position exemplified so eloquently by Emerson: the Tradition of No Tradition.

The second section of the volume, entitled Kabbalistic Appropriations, deals with various theosophical transformations of Kabbalah, a theme already introduced in Chajes's paper. As Boaz Huss explains in the first chapter of this section, many theosophists of Jewish origin studied Kabbalah, translated kabbalistic texts, and published articles and books about Kabbalah, in which they created theosophically inspired modern forms of Kabbalah. Huss redresses a lack of academic research on these Jewish theosophists, and offers a preliminary survey of the biographies and literary contributions of key Jewish figures in theosophical centers around the world—Europe, America, the Middle East, China, India, and South Africa—from the foundation of the Society in 1875 into the third decade of the twentieth century. He considers the formation of Jewish theosophical groups, especially the Association of Hebrew Theosophists, founded in Adyar in 1925 following the Jubilee Congress of the Theosophical Society. He also tells the story of another (controversial) Jewish theosophical group, founded in 1926 in Basra, Iraq, by Kaduri Ani and his supporters, which included around 300 families. The members of this Jewish community were excommunicated because of involvement with Theosophy and they established their own congregation until the ban was finally lifted a decade later, when they were reabsorbed into the wider community.

Huss surveys the numerous books and articles of Jewish theosophists, demonstrating that overall, Jewish theosophists had greater access to primary texts of Kabbalah than did non-Jewish theosophists, and some even had enough knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic to prepare their own translations. Nevertheless, their knowledge of primary sources was limited and even those who did have some language skills largely based themselves on secondary literature, including Western esoteric, theosophical, and academic texts. Thus, the Jewish theosophists emphasized kabbalistic themes that were close to Theosophy (such as reincarnation and the divine origin of the human soul) but ignored Jewish kabbalistic notions that were incompatible with Theosophy (such as the theurgic import of the Jewish commandments and the unique status of Jewish souls). The Jewish theosophists believed Kabbalah reconciled Judaism and Theosophy, and saw themselves as having a double mission: to increase knowledge about Judaism, especially Kabbalah, amongst theosophists, and to help Jews to better understand Judaism, through Theosophy. Although influenced by Blavatsky, unlike her, they presented Kabbalah as unequivocally Jewish and as a force for the renewal of Judaism.

Huss situates these Jewish-theosophical interpretations of Kabbalah within a wider current of modern Jewish interest in Kabbalah, demonstrating that some of the basic assumptions of the Jewish theosophists about the nature and significance of Kabbalah resemble the

perceptions of modern scholars of Kabbalah. Their positive reevaluation of Kabbalah took place within the framework of a neo-Romantic and Orientalist fascination with the "mystic East" that often intersected with Jewish nationalism and which portrayed Kabbalah as Jewish "mysticism."

Developing the discussion of Kabbalah and Theosophy, Eugene Kuzmin's chapter is the first academic study of the place of Kabbalah in the thought of the renowned Russian poet, literary critic, and painter, Maksimilian Voloshin (1877-1932). A polymath and highly original thinker whose life and work spanned the Silver Age through the Soviet Era, Voloshin's poetry and prose contain numerous references to Kabbalistic works and principles, as well as to Voloshin's wider occult and philosophical ideas. Kuzmin analyses several key texts (including poems and letters), identifying Kabbalistic references and themes, and exploring their sources in contemporaneous literature on the Kabbalah. Although Voloshin had an interest in Hebrew and Judaism, he was primarily influenced by the occultist versions of Kabbalah that have roots in the Christian Kabbalah of the early-modern period. In particular, Kuzmin explores the influence of Eliphas Levi (1810-1875), Madame Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) and Antoine Fabre d'Olivet (1767-1825). He demonstrates how Voloshin's texts contained elements drawn from these authors, but that Voloshin was guided in his interpretations by an ideologically based sense of freedom that was the outcome of his perspectives on the unique roles of the artist and the initiate. Kuzmin's chapter provides a fascinating glimpse into some of the adaptations of Kabbalah by Russian intelligentsia, contributing to our understanding of some of the religious aspects of Silver Age, but especially Soviet culture, during which religion was officially repressed.

Andreas Kilcher's chapter also discusses the thought of a Kabbalistically inspired intellectual, the Austrian Zionist, Ernst Müller (1880-1954), who, despite his participation in circles that included many well-known figures, is himself relatively obscure. Kilcher focuses on the alliance between Kabbalah and Anthroposophy as understood by Müller. In *A History of Jewish Mysticism* (1946), Müller's conclusion was in sharp contradiction to Gershom Scholem's, as published in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* just four years previously. Scholem (1897-1982) understood Kabbalah as essentially Jewish, whereas Müller saw it as universal, especially when interpreted through Theosophy and Anthroposophy. Müller was introduced to Rudolph Steiner around 1909, in Vienna. He considered Steiner's new vision of Theosophy (which would be institutionalized as Anthroposophy just three-four years later) as much closer to the Judeo-Christian tradition than the Eastern-oriented Theosophy of Blavatsky. Müller's perspective on Anthroposophy reflected Steiner's own assessment that Anthroposophy would recover the true, mystical, "old Hebrew" understanding of the scriptures. Although Steiner referred to Kabbalah relatively infrequently, Müller took Steiner's ideas and constructed a more elaborate alliance between Anthroposophy and Kabbalah (especially the Zohar). He was helped by his friend, Hugo Bergmann (1883-1975), who, like Müller, was a Zionist with anthroposophical leanings. Kilcher's chapter analyzes Müller's anthroposophical perspectives on Kabbalah, including how they were revealed in his studies and translations of the Zohar. He concludes with an analysis of Gershom Scholem's critique of Müller's attempted alliance, which Scholem saw as fragile.

In the final chapter of this section, Olav Hammer discusses theosophical appropriations of Kabbalah in the writings of the leader of The Summit Lighthouse, Elizabeth Clare Prophet (1939-2009). He demonstrates how information taken from a spectrum of sources (ranging from older and newer Kabbalah scholarship to occultist works) was adduced by Prophet as

support for doctrines of a fundamentally theosophical nature. Beginning with an introduction to the establishment of the Summit Lighthouse Movement—one of the most controversial theosophically derived movements of the twentieth century—Hammer discusses some of Prophet's central doctrines and their Theosophical bases. Some of the Theosophical influences were direct but some were indirect, such as those mediated by another theosophically inspired religious leader: Alice Bailey (1880-1949). Summit Lighthouse teachings include such Theosophical staples as the chakras, karma, reincarnation, the Masters, and a septenary spiritual anthropology, as well as doctrines derived from Christianity and other sources. Elizabeth Clare Prophet combined all these elements in a perennialistic vision. Hammer focuses in detail on Prophet's book, *Kabbalah: Key to Your Inner Power* (1997). He considers the place of distinctive Kabbalistic terminology such as *Ain Soph*, the *sephirot*, and the *shekhinah* as well as the importance of Kabbalah in Prophet's presentations of ethics, gender polarity, spiritual progress, and human occult physiology.

The third and final section of the volume, *Global Adaptations*, opens with Shimon Lev's chapter, which brings together a range of secondary and primary sources, to explore the relationships between Mohandas Gandhi (1883-1944) and his Jewish-theosophist supporters in South Africa. Lev begins with a biography of the main founder of the Johannesburg theosophical lodge, the English Jew Louis W. Ritch (1868- 1952), before focusing in greater depth on the lives and theosophical connections of three more English Jews: Henry Polak (1882-1959), Gabriel Isaac (1874-1914), and William M. Vogl, as well as the German Jew, Hermann Kallenbach (1871-1945). Lev discusses the political activism of these Jewish theosophists, their involvement in the *satyāgraha* struggle and their friendships with Gandhi, which were often very close. Lev highlights the tension between South-African Jewish identification with the ruling white elite and Jewish critique of that establishment, speculating about a self-perception shared between Jews and Indians as "Oriental" immigrants in South Africa. He notes the appeal of a Theosophical Society that enabled the exploration of unorthodox ideas but which, at the same time, did not require the abandonment of Jewish identity.

Gandhi's own involvement with Theosophy is also considered, especially his membership of the Esoteric Christian Union established by Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846-1888) and Edward Maitland (1824-1897). Lev notes Gandhi's selective intake of theosophical notions, his adoption of the ideas of brotherhood, universalism, and spiritual development (as representative of what he saw as "practical" Theosophy)

but his rejection of what he deemed "formal" Theosophy, which he described as "humbug" involving an unfortunate search for occult powers. Although Gandhi discouraged his Jewish-theosophist friends from participating in the Society formally, it was the theosophical notion of brotherhood, Lev argues, that was a motivating factor in both his— and their— political activism in the context of South-African racial discrimination.

Moving from Africa to Europe, in her chapter on theosophical appropriations in early-twentieth-century Greek culture, Victoria Ferentinou argues for a greater appreciation of the importance of theosophical syncretism in the history of modern Greece. She focuses on five case studies of Greek intellectuals and artists who integrated theosophical themes into their work: the journalist, politician, and academic, Platon Drakoulis (1858-1934), the poets, Kostis Palamas (1859-1943) and Angelos Sikelianos (1884-1951), and the painters, Frixos Aristeus (1879-1951) and Konstantinos Parthenis (1878-1967). Ferentinou charts the

gradual institutionalization of Theosophy in Greece, with the establishment of the first lodge in 1876 and the proliferation of Theosophy in the 1920's. As she argues, the early reception of Theosophy in Greece is a complicated and sensitive matter and must be framed in the interplay of nationalist politics, identitarian discourses, Greek Orthodoxy, and secularism during the early-twentieth century. Of central importance was the negotiation of Greece's unique identity vis a vis consolidation of its position as a progressive European nation, as well as its struggle to expand its borders, all the time subject to influences perceived as conflicting: West vs. East; secularism vs. Christianity; modernization vs. tradition. Within this context, there was considerable ambivalence towards Theosophy, which drew criticism from the Orthodox Church as well as the scientific community.

A central theme in Ferentinou's analysis is the notion of "occultist Orthodoxy," first coined by Palamas, and which was part of a wider Helleno-Christian synthesis central to nationalist narratives. This was expressed in art and ideology, especially in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Occultist Orthodoxy, Ferentinou argues, was neither homogeneous nor always religious, but chiefly cultural. It involved Greek intellectuals' adaptation and fusion of ideas drawn from occultism (including Theosophy) with their visions of Hellenism, Paganism, Christianity, and other elements. An understanding of the contours of occultist Orthodoxy and its place in the history of modern Greece can help explain the unique character of individual theosophical syntheses and their ambiguous relationships with wider European culture. Greek intellectuals often desired closer ties with modern Europe, but also had an attachment to Orthodoxy and the idea of "the East." The reassessment Ferentinou proposes as a basis for analyzing these writings and artworks provides us with a more workable theoretical framework than those hitherto proposed by scholars of modern Greece. It illuminates identitarian and nationalist discourses and the interactions between heterodoxy and Christian Orthodoxy at the same time as it elucidates intersections between Theosophy and Greek modernity.

Moving now to Asia in our tour of global theosophical adaptations, Karl Baier's chapter reveals the Theosophical Society to have been a significant influence in the popularization of the cakras from the late-nineteenth century onwards. Baier considers the earliest and most intense period in the history of the appropriation of the cakras by the Society. He discusses pre-modern conceptualization of the cakras, demonstrating the differences between these complex and historically contingent Asian systems and the modern, recognizable depiction of the cakras, which derives largely from the *Satcakranirūpana* (Description of the Six Centers) by the sixteenth-century Bengali tantric, Pūrṇānanda, first published in Sanskrit and Bengali in 1858.

Baier then moves on to theoretical considerations, arguing that the history of Theosophy in South Asia is not one that documents the interactions of representatives of more-or-less well-defined traditions, but rather a history of complex reciprocal processes of transculturation involving protagonists of cultures-in-the-making. He outlines the processes involved in such transculturation, including what he terms "welcoming" and "releasing" structures. The welcoming structures involved in the theosophical appropriation of the cakras included Orientalist concepts of "selfness" and "otherness." Baier draws on Gerd Baumann's theorization of Orientalism as a grammar of identity/alterity based on "reversed mirroring," arguing that this paved the way for the theosophical reinterpretation of the cakras as part of the perennial ancient wisdom, confirmed by post-materialistic science.

A second welcoming structure was the result of previous Euro-American-Asian cultural transfers, in particular those involving Romantic-influenced images of the "mystic East" to be found in works such as Joseph Ennemoser's *Geschichte der Magie* (1819), Godfrey Higgins *Anacalypsis* (1833), Louis Jacolliot's *Le Spiritisme dans le monde, L' initiation et les sciences occultes dans l'Inde et chez tous les peuples de l'antiquité* (1875), and Hargrave Jennings's *Indian Religions, or Results of the Mysterious Buddhism* (1858). As part of their assimilation of the cakras, the theosophists had to overcome the negative image of Tantra (to which the cakras are closely related) that was pervasive in the literature of Orientalism and Hindu reform movements (such as Dayānanda Sarasvatī's *Arya Samaj*). Baier highlights the important role of the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, probably written in eighteenth-century Bengal, and which bridged the gap between tantrism and the Hindu Renaissance. Negative attitudes towards Tantra were reappraised in the Society following the publication of an article in *The Theosophist* by the anonymous "Truthseeker," initiating a series of contributions about tantrism and yoga practices written by South Asian members. "Vedantic Raj Yoga Philosophy" was written by Sabhapaty Swami, published as a booklet by the Society, and advertised in *The Theosophist*. It taught a modern hybrid form of cakra meditation different to that of Pūmānanda's influential *Satcakranirūpana*. The *Satcakranirūpana* itself was introduced to the theosophists in articles by the knowledgeable Bengali Baradā Kānta Majumdār, who later went on to assist Sir John Woodroffe (aka Arthur Avalon, 1865-1936), author of the highly influential work *The Serpent Power* (1918). Ultimately, pro-tantric theosophical figures such as Majumdār overcame the anti-tantric perspective of those such as Dayānanda Sarasvatī, convincing the leaders of the Theosophical Society of the value of Tantra. Nevertheless, Blavatsky accommodated both positive and negative views of Tantra by proposing the existence of both a "black" and a "white" Tantra, analogous to her dualism of black and white magic.

Another welcoming structure in the theosophical reception of the cakras involved perceived convergences between the cakras and preexisting cultural elements, especially those deriving from Mesmerism, for example, the notion of the "solar plexus." Mesmeric images of the body were used for the interpretation of yogic practices, which facilitated the integration of the cakras and kundalini into the evolving theosophical worldview. The final welcoming structure that Baier identifies is the enrichment that the theosophists expected from the appropriation of the cakras. This enrichment involved the hope for a more detailed understanding of the subtle body, and for a more precise conceptualization of the theory and practice of astral projection, a point that ties in with Deveney's arguments in his chapter about the importance of such practices in the early TS.

Returning to the theme of theosophical nationalism discussed in Victoria Ferentinou's paper, but now in the context of twentieth-century Canada, Massimo Introvigne discusses the celebrated Canadian artist and theosophist, Lawren Harris (1885-1970). Introvigne charts Harris's life and relationships with numerous spiritually minded collaborators, his involvement with the Theosophical Society, and his ideas about "theosophical art." Introvigne focuses on the ways in which Harris's ideas about art and Theosophy converged with his Canadian nationalism, influenced by an existing tradition that drew on a Romantic valorization of the unique Canadian topography. Despite Blavatsky's teaching that a new sub-race would emerge in the US, Harris believed that Canada would be the true location, and he differentiated between the ethos of Canada (associated with its special natural environment, as well as art, and culture) and the ethos of the United States (associated with

business and a lack of spirituality). Harris viewed his renowned depictions of the Canadian wilderness, and his work in general, as truly "theosophical art." He insisted that a work of theosophical art must not transport its audience outside of itself to the "subject" of the painting, but rather draw the audience into the art itself, to enjoy a unitive, spiritual experience. Harris described this process through reference to the theosophical concept of buddhi. Despite his explicit rejection of symbolism, Harris depicted buddhi as part of his painting representing the three theosophical principles, atma, buddhi, and manas. Nevertheless, Harris denied any attempt to depict Theosophical doctrines and refused to accept any symbolic interpretation of his work. Rather, in his elaborations of the meaning of theosophical art, he argued that his paintings were intended to provide a divine experience of beauty and of essential forms, which was an end in itself. Harris's perspective was part of his broader ascetic aestheticism, which included a sexually-abstinent marriage to his second wife, Bess, the attempt to eradicate all personality in art and an emphasis on impermanence that was influenced by Buddhism, mediated by Theosophy. Harris's views, Introvigne argues, constitute just one interpretation among many of what it means to be a theosophist and produce "theosophical art." They demonstrate that Blavatsky's ideas about aesthetics and art were sufficiently equivocal to lead theosophist-artists in quite different philosophical and aesthetic directions, and that they could easily be combined with other discourses, such as nationalist ones.

Our final stop on the tour of global theosophical adaptations is Germany. In his chapter on the transformations of Anthroposophy from the death of Rudolph Steiner to the present day, Helmut Zander considers Steiner's life and legacy, focusing on the various practical applications of Anthroposophy that are popular in Germany as well as internationally: Waldorf schools, anthroposophical medicine, anthroposophical farming methods, and many more. Zander considers the various conflicts that have arisen within and in relation to the Anthroposophical Society, such as the "discovery" of Steiner's ideas on race and the challenges posed by increasing historical-critical enquiry into Steiner's life and works. Considering the internationalization of Anthroposophy, Zander discusses Kfar Raphael ["the village of the archangel Raphael"], an anthroposophical community in Beer Sheva, Israel, which provides a home and employment for adults with special needs. Zander concludes his chapter by considering the "self-defeating success" of the proliferation of the practical applications of Anthroposophy, exploring how the Society might respond to the numerous practical and intellectual challenges it faces in a twenty-first-century world marked by individualism and pluralization. <>

1882). In his writings, Emerson rejected ritual and tradition and articulated a perennialist view of religious truth, positions that are uncannily close to Krishnamurti's later statements. Persico considers the biography of Krishnamurti (1895-1986), including his native Brahmanism, his "discovery" by Leadbeater, his Theosophical training, and his brother's tragic and traumatizing death. Examining Krishnamurti's writings closely, Persico demonstrates a continuity in his thinking despite his apparent doctrinal volta face. Indeed, iconoclastic elements had always been present in Krishnamurti's thought to some extent, alongside a certain ambivalence towards Theosophical teachings. Persico highlights Krishnamurti's time in England and France, but especially in America, as formative in the development of his thought. It was after this period abroad that Krishnamurti's criticism of Theosophy intensified, his latent iconoclastic tendencies consolidated, and he fully and

publicly turned away from Theosophy towards the position exemplified so eloquently by Emerson: the Tradition of No Tradition.

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Huss situates these Jewish-theosophical interpretations of Kabbalah within a wider current of modern Jewish interest in Kabbalah, demonstrating that some of the basic assumptions of the Jewish theosophists about the nature and significance of Kabbalah resemble the perceptions of modern scholars of Kabbalah. Their positive reevaluation of Kabbalah took place within the framework of a neo-Romantic and Orientalist fascination with the "mystic East" that often intersected with Jewish nationalism and which portrayed Kabbalah as Jewish "mysticism."

Developing the discussion of Kabbalah and Theosophy, Eugene Kuzmin's chapter is the first academic study of the place of Kabbalah in the thought of the renowned Russian poet, literary critic, and painter, Maksimilian Voloshin (1877-1932). A polymath and highly original thinker whose life and work spanned the Silver Age through the Soviet Era, Voloshin's

poetry and prose contain numerous references to Kabbalistic works and principles, as well as to Voloshin's wider occult and philosophical ideas. Kuzmin analyses several key texts (including poems and letters), identifying Kabbalistic references and themes, and exploring their sources in contemporaneous literature on the Kabbalah. Although Voloshin had an interest in Hebrew and Judaism, he was primarily influenced by the occultist versions of Kabbalah that have roots in the Christian Kabbalah of the early-modern period. In particular, Kuzmin explores the influence of Eliphas Levi (1810-1875), Madame Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) and Antoine Fabre d'Olivet (1767-1825). He demonstrates how Voloshin's texts contained elements drawn from these authors, but that Voloshin was guided in his interpretations by an ideologically based sense of freedom that was the outcome of his perspectives on the unique roles of the artist and the initiate. Kuzmin's chapter provides a fascinating glimpse into some of the adaptations of Kabbalah by Russian intelligentsia, contributing to our understanding of some of the religious aspects of Silver Age, but especially Soviet culture, during which religion was officially repressed.

Andreas Kilcher's chapter also discusses the thought of a Kabbalistically inspired intellectual, the Austrian Zionist, Ernst Müller (1880-1954), who, despite his participation in circles that included many well-known figures, is himself relatively obscure. Kilcher focuses on the alliance between Kabbalah and Anthroposophy as understood by Müller. In *A History of Jewish Mysticism* (1946), Müller's conclusion was in sharp contradiction to Gershom Scholem's, as published in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* just four years previously. Scholem (1897-1982) understood Kabbalah as essentially Jewish, whereas Müller saw it as universal, especially when interpreted through Theosophy and Anthroposophy. Müller was introduced to Rudolph Steiner around 1909, in Vienna. He considered Steiner's new vision of Theosophy (which would be institutionalized as Anthroposophy just three-four years later) as much closer to the Judeo-Christian tradition than the Eastern-oriented Theosophy of Blavatsky. Müller's perspective on Anthroposophy reflected Steiner's own assessment that Anthroposophy would recover the true, mystical, "old Hebrew" understanding of the scriptures. Although Steiner referred to Kabbalah relatively infrequently, Müller took Steiner's ideas and constructed a more elaborate alliance between Anthroposophy and Kabbalah (especially the Zohar). He was helped by his friend, Hugo Bergmann (1883-1975), who, like Müller, was a Zionist with anthroposophical leanings. Kilcher's chapter analyzes Müller's anthroposophical perspectives on Kabbalah, including how they were revealed in his studies and translations of the Zohar. He concludes with an analysis of Gershom Scholem's critique of Müller's attempted alliance, which Scholem saw as fragile.

In the final chapter of this section, Olav Hammer discusses theosophical appropriations of Kabbalah in the writings of the leader of The Summit Lighthouse, Elizabeth Clare Prophet (1939-2009). He demonstrates how information taken from a spectrum of sources (ranging from older and newer Kabbalah scholarship to occultist works) was adduced by Prophet as support for doctrines of a fundamentally theosophical nature. Beginning with an introduction to the establishment of the Summit Lighthouse Movement—one of the most controversial theosophically derived movements of the twentieth century—Hammer discusses some of Prophet's central doctrines and their Theosophical bases. Some of the Theosophical influences were direct but some were indirect, such as those mediated by another theosophically inspired religious leader: Alice Bailey (1880-1949). Summit Lighthouse teachings include such Theosophical staples as the chakras, karma, reincarnation, the Masters, and a septenary spiritual anthropology, as well as doctrines derived from

Christianity and other sources. Elizabeth Clare Prophet combined all these elements in a perennialistic vision. Hamner focuses in detail on Prophet's book, *Kabbalah: Key to Your Inner Power* (1997). He considers the place of distinctive Kabbalistic terminology such as *Ain Soph*, the *sephiroth*, and the *shekhinah* as well as the importance of Kabbalah in Prophet's presentations of ethics, gender polarity, spiritual progress, and human occult physiology.

The third and final section of the volume, *Global Adaptations*, opens with Shimon Lev's chapter, which brings together a range of secondary and primary sources, to explore the relationships between Mohandas Gandhi (1883-1944) and his Jewish-theosophist supporters in South Africa. Lev begins with a biography of the main founder of the Johannesburg theosophical lodge, the English Jew Louis W. Ritch (1868- 1952), before focusing in greater depth on the lives and theosophical connections of three more English Jews: Henry Polak (1882-1959), Gabriel Isaac (1874-1914), and William M. Vogl, as well as the German Jew, Hermann Kallenbach (1871-1945). Lev discusses the political activism of these Jewish theosophists, their involvement in the *satyāgraha* struggle and their friendships with Gandhi, which were often very close. Lev highlights the tension between South-African Jewish identification with the ruling white elite and Jewish critique of that establishment, speculating about a self-perception shared between Jews and Indians as "Oriental" immigrants in South Africa. He notes the appeal of a Theosophical Society that enabled the exploration of unorthodox ideas but which, at the same time, did not require the abandonment of Jewish identity.

Gandhi's own involvement with Theosophy is also considered, especially his membership of the Esoteric Christian Union established by Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846-1888) and Edward Maitland (1824-1897). Lev notes Gandhi's selective intake of theosophical notions, his adoption of the ideas of brotherhood, universalism, and spiritual development (as representative of what he saw as "practical" Theosophy) but his rejection of what he deemed "formal" Theosophy, which he described as "humbug" involving an unfortunate search for occult powers. Although Gandhi discouraged his Jewish-theosophist friends from participating in the Society formally, it was the theosophical notion of brotherhood, Lev argues, that was a motivating factor in both his— and their— political activism in the context of South-African racial discrimination.

Moving from Africa to Europe, in her chapter on theosophical appropriations in early-twentieth-century Greek culture, Victoria Ferentinou argues for a greater appreciation of the importance of theosophical syncretism in the history of modern Greece. She focuses on five case studies of Greek intellectuals and artists who integrated theosophical themes into their work: the journalist, politician, and academic, Platon Drakoulis (1858-1934), the poets, Kostis Palamas (1859-1943) and Angelos Sikelianos (1884-1951), and the painters, Frixos Aristeus (1879-1951) and Konstantinos Parthenis (1878-1967). Ferentinou charts the gradual institutionalization of Theosophy in Greece, with the establishment of the first lodge in 1876 and the proliferation of Theosophy in the 1920's. As she argues, the early reception of Theosophy in Greece is a complicated and sensitive matter and must be framed in the interplay of nationalist politics, identitarian discourses, Greek Orthodoxy, and secularism during the early-twentieth century. Of central importance was the negotiation of Greece's unique identity vis a vis consolidation of its position as a progressive European nation, as well as its struggle to expand its borders, all the time subject to influences perceived as conflicting: West vs. East; secularism vs. Christianity; modernization vs. tradition. Within this

context, there was considerable ambivalence towards Theosophy, which drew criticism from the Orthodox Church as well as the scientific community.

A central theme in Ferentinou's analysis is the notion of "occultist Orthodoxy," first coined by Palamas, and which was part of a wider Hellenic-Christian synthesis central to nationalist narratives. This was expressed in art and ideology, especially in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Occultist Orthodoxy, Ferentinou argues, was neither homogeneous nor always religious, but chiefly cultural. It involved Greek intellectuals' adaptation and fusion of ideas drawn from occultism (including Theosophy) with their visions of Hellenism, Paganism, Christianity, and other elements. An understanding of the contours of occultist Orthodoxy and its place in the history of modern Greece can help explain the unique character of individual theosophical syntheses and their ambiguous relationships with wider European culture. Greek intellectuals often desired closer ties with modern Europe, but also had an attachment to Orthodoxy and the idea of "the East." The reassessment Ferentinou proposes as a basis for analyzing these writings and artworks provides us with a more workable theoretical framework than those hitherto proposed by scholars of modern Greece. It illuminates identitarian and nationalist discourses and the interactions between heterodoxy and Christian Orthodoxy at the same time as it elucidates intersections between Theosophy and Greek modernity.

Moving now to Asia in our tour of global theosophical adaptations, Karl Baier's chapter reveals the Theosophical Society to have been a significant influence in the popularization of the cakras from the late-nineteenth century onwards. Baier considers the earliest and most intense period in the history of the appropriation of the cakras by the Society. He discusses pre-modern conceptualization of the cakras, demonstrating the differences between these complex and historically contingent Asian systems and the modern, recognizable depiction of the cakras, which derives largely from the *Satcakranirūpana* (Description of the Six Centers) by the sixteenth-century Bengali tantric, Pūrṇānanda, first published in Sanskrit and Bengali in 1858.

Baier then moves on to theoretical considerations, arguing that the history of Theosophy in South Asia is not one that documents the interactions of representatives of more-or-less well-defined traditions, but rather a history of complex reciprocal processes of transculturation involving protagonists of cultures-in-the-making. He outlines the processes involved in such transculturation, including what he terms "welcoming" and "releasing" structures. The welcoming structures involved in the theosophical appropriation of the cakras included Orientalist concepts of "selfness" and "otherness." Baier draws on Gerd Baumann's theorization of Orientalism as a grammar of identity/alterity based on "reversed mirroring," arguing that this paved the way for the theosophical reinterpretation of the cakras as part of the perennial ancient wisdom, confirmed by post-materialistic science.

A second welcoming structure was the result of previous Euro-American-Asian cultural transfers, in particular those involving Romantic-influenced images of the "mystic East" to be found in works such as Joseph Ennemoser's *Geschichte der Magie* (1819), Godfrey Higgins' *Anacalypsis* (1833), Louis Jacolliot's *Le Spiritisme dans le monde, L'initiation et les sciences occultes dans l'Inde et chez tous les peuples de l'antiquité* (1875), and Hargrave Jennings's *Indian Religions, or Results of the Mysterious Buddhism* (1858). As part of their assimilation of the cakras, the theosophists had to overcome the negative image of Tantra (to which the cakras are closely related) that was pervasive in the literature of Orientalism and Hindu

reform movements (such as Dayānanda Sarasvatī's Arya Samaj). Baier highlights the important role of the Mahānirvāna Tantra, probably written in eighteenth-century Bengal, and which bridged the gap between tantrism and the Hindu Renaissance. Negative attitudes towards Tantra were reappraised in the Society following the publication of an article in *The Theosophist* by the anonymous "Truthseeker," initiating a series of contributions about tantrism and yoga practices written by South Asian members. "Vedantic Raj Yoga Philosophy" was written by Sabhapaty Swami, published as a booklet by the Society, and advertised in *The Theosophist*. It taught a modern hybrid form of cakra meditation different to that of Pūmānanda's influential *Satcakranirūpana*. The *Satcakranirūpana* itself was introduced to the theosophists in articles by the knowledgeable Bengali Baradā Kānta Majumdār, who later went on to assist Sir John Woodroffe (aka Arthur Avalon, 1865-1936), author of the highly influential work *The Serpent Power* (1918). Ultimately, pro-tantric theosophical figures such as Majumdār overcame the anti-tantric perspective of those such as Dayānanda Sarasvatī, convincing the leaders of the Theosophical Society of the value of Tantra. Nevertheless, Blavatsky accommodated both positive and negative views of Tantra by proposing the existence of both a "black" and a "white" Tantra, analogous to her dualism of black and white magic.

Another welcoming structure in the theosophical reception of the cakras involved perceived convergences between the cakras and preexisting cultural elements, especially those deriving from Mesmerism, for example, the notion of the "solar plexus." Mesmeric images of the body were used for the interpretation of yogic practices, which facilitated the integration of the cakras and kundalini into the evolving theosophical worldview. The final welcoming structure that Baier identifies is the enrichment that the theosophists expected from the appropriation of the cakras. This enrichment involved the hope for a more detailed understanding of the subtle body, and for a more precise conceptualization of the theory and practice of astral projection, a point that ties in with Deveney's arguments in his chapter about the importance of such practices in the early TS.

Returning to the theme of theosophical nationalism discussed in Victoria Ferentinou's paper, but now in the context of twentieth-century Canada, Massimo Introvigne discusses the celebrated Canadian artist and theosophist, Lawren Harris (1885-1970). Introvigne charts Harris's life and relationships with numerous spiritually minded collaborators, his involvement with the Theosophical Society, and his ideas about "theosophical art." Introvigne focuses on the ways in which Harris's ideas about art and Theosophy converged with his Canadian nationalism, influenced by an existing tradition that drew on a Romantic valorization of the unique Canadian topography. Despite Blavatsky's teaching that a new sub-race would emerge in the US, Harris believed that Canada would be the true location, and he differentiated between the ethos of Canada (associated with its special natural environment, as well as art, and culture) and the ethos of the United States (associated with business and a lack of spirituality). Harris viewed his renowned depictions of the Canadian wilderness, and his work in general, as truly "theosophical art." He insisted that a work of theosophical art must not transport its audience outside of itself to the "subject" of the painting, but rather draw the audience into the art itself, to enjoy a unitive, spiritual experience. Harris described this process through reference to the theosophical concept of buddhi. Despite his explicit rejection of symbolism, Harris depicted buddhi as part of his painting representing the three theosophical principles, atma, buddhi, and manas. Nevertheless, Harris denied any attempt to depict Theosophical doctrines and refused to

accept any symbolic interpretation of his work. Rather, in his elaborations of the meaning of theosophical art, he argued that his paintings were intended to provide a divine experience of beauty and of essential forms, which was an end in itself. Harris's perspective was part of his broader ascetic aestheticism, which included a sexually-abstinent marriage to his second wife, Bess, the attempt to eradicate all personality in art and an emphasis on impermanence that was influenced by Buddhism, mediated by Theosophy. Harris's views, Introvigne argues, constitute just one interpretation among many of what it means to be a theosophist and produce "theosophical art." They demonstrate that Blavatsky's ideas about aesthetics and art were sufficiently equivocal to lead theosophist-artists in quite different philosophical and aesthetic directions, and that they could easily be combined with other discourses, such as nationalist ones.

Our final stop on the tour of global theosophical adaptations is Germany. In his chapter on the transformations of Anthroposophy from the death of Rudolph Steiner to the present day, Helmut Zander considers Steiner's life and legacy, focusing on the various practical applications of Anthroposophy that are popular in Germany as well as internationally: Waldorf schools, anthroposophical medicine, anthroposophical farming methods, and many more. Zander considers the various conflicts that have arisen within and in relation to the Anthroposophical Society, such as the "discovery" of Steiner's ideas on race and the challenges posed by increasing historical-critical enquiry into Steiner's life and works. Considering the internationalization of Anthroposophy, Zander discusses Kfar Raphael ["the village of the archangel Raphael"], an anthroposophical community in Beer Sheva, Israel, which provides a home and employment for adults with special needs. Zander concludes his chapter by considering the "self-defeating success" of the proliferation of the practical applications of Anthroposophy, exploring how the Society might respond to the numerous practical and intellectual challenges it faces in a twenty-first-century world marked by individualism and pluralization. <>

PTOLEMY'S PHILOSOPHY: MATHEMATICS AS A WAY OF LIFE by Jacqueline Feke [Princeton University Press, 9780691179582]

The Greco-Roman mathematician Claudius Ptolemy is one of the most significant figures in the history of science. He is remembered today for his astronomy, but his philosophy is almost entirely lost to history. This groundbreaking book is the first to reconstruct Ptolemy's general philosophical system—including his metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics—and to explore its relationship to astronomy, harmonics, element theory, astrology, cosmology, psychology, and theology.

In this stimulating intellectual history, Jacqueline Feke uncovers references to a complex and sophisticated philosophical agenda scattered among Ptolemy's technical studies in the physical and mathematical sciences. She shows how he developed a philosophy that was radical and even subversive, appropriating ideas and turning them against the very philosophers from whom he drew influence. Feke reveals how Ptolemy's unique system is at once a critique of prevailing philosophical trends and a conception of the world in which mathematics reigns supreme.

A compelling work of scholarship, **PTOLEMY'S PHILOSOPHY** demonstrates how Ptolemy situated mathematics at the very foundation of all philosophy—theoretical and practical—and advanced the mathematical way of life as the true path to human perfection.

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Ptolemy's Universe in his *Almagest*

Excerpt: Claudius Ptolemy is one of the most significant figures in the history of science. Living in or around Alexandria in the second century CE, he is remembered most of all for his contributions in astronomy. His *Almagest*, a thirteen-book astronomical treatise, was authoritative until natural philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries repudiated the geocentric hypothesis and appropriated Nicolaus Copernicus's heliostatic system of *De revolutionibus*. Ptolemy also composed texts on harmonics, geography, optics, and astrology that influenced the study of these sciences through the Renaissance.

Ptolemy's contributions in philosophy, on the other hand, have been all but forgotten. His philosophical claims lie scattered across his corpus and intermixed with technical studies in the exact sciences. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' development of discrete academic disciplines let the study of Ptolemy's philosophy fall through the cracks. When scholars do make reference to it, they tend to portray Ptolemy as either a practical scientist—mostly unconcerned with philosophical matters, as if he were a forerunner to the modern-day scientist—or a scholastic thinker who simply adopted the philosophical ideas of authoritative philosophers, especially Aristotle. This latter portrayal no doubt evolved in part because Ptolemy cites Aristotle in the first chapter of the *Almagest*. Liba Taub proved that the philosophical claims in *Almagest* 1.1, as well as in Ptolemy's cosmological text, the Planetary Hypotheses, are not Aristotle's, and with this debunking of the assumed view Taub opened the door for my own analysis of Ptolemy's philosophy, including how it manifests throughout his corpus and how it relates to several ancient philosophical traditions.' This monograph is the first ever reconstruction and intellectual history of Ptolemy's general philosophical system.

Concerning Ptolemy's life we know nothing beyond approximately when and where he lived. In the *Almagest*, he includes thirty-six astronomical observations that he reports he made in Alexandria from 127 to 141 CE. Another unaccredited observation from 125 CE may be his as well.' The Canobic Inscription, a list of astronomical parameters that Ptolemy erected at Canopus, Egypt, provides a slightly later date: 146/147 CE. Because the Canobic Inscription contains numerical values that Ptolemy corrects in the *Almagest*, it must predate the *Almagest*. Therefore, Ptolemy completed the *Almagest* sometime after 146/147 CE. In addition, Ptolemy makes reference to the *Almagest* in several of his later texts. The life span that this chronology requires is consistent with a scholion attached to the *Tetrabiblos*, Ptolemy's astrological text, indicating that he flourished during Hadrian's reign and lived until the reign of Marcus Aurelius, who became Roman emperor in 161 CE but ruled jointly with Lucius Verus until 169 CE. Thus, we can estimate that Ptolemy lived from approximately 100 to 170 CE.

Concerning any philosophical allegiance, Ptolemy says nothing. In his texts, he does not align himself with a philosophical school. He does not state who his teacher was. He does not indicate in what his education consisted or even what philosophical books he read. In order to discern where his philosophical ideas came from, one must mine his corpus, extract the philosophical content, and, with philological attention, relate his ideas to concepts presented in texts that are contemporary with his own or that were authoritative in the second century. Unfortunately, what survives of the ancient Greek corpus is but a fraction of what was written, and we have very little from Ptolemy's time. It is impossible to determine what exactly he read or even where he read it, as it is dubious that the great Alexandrian

library was still in existence. At best we can place Ptolemy's thought in relation to prevailing ancient philosophical traditions.

The first century BCE to the second century CE is distinguished by the eclectic practice of philosophy. The Greek verb *eklegein* means to pick or choose, and the philosophers of this period selected and combined concepts that traditionally were the intellectual property of distinct schools of thought. Mostly, these philosophers blended the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions, but they also appropriated ideas from the Stoics and Epicureans. The label "eclecticism" has long held a pejorative connotation in philosophy, as if eclectic philosophers were not sufficiently innovative to contribute their own ideas, and the philosophy of the periods before and after this seemingly intermediate chapter in ancient philosophy were comparatively inventive, with the development of the Hellenistic movements, including the Stoic, Epicurean, and Skeptic, and the rise of Neoplatonism, respectively. Nevertheless, John Dillon and A. A. Long revitalized the study of eclectic philosophy. So-called middle Platonism and the early Aristotelian commentary tradition have received more attention in recent years, and their study has demonstrated that the manners in which these philosophers integrated authoritative ideas are themselves noteworthy.

I aim to prove that Ptolemy was very much a man of his time in that his philosophy is most similar to middle Platonism, the period in Platonic philosophy that extended from the first century BCE—with Antiochus of Ascalon, who was born near the end of the second century BCE and moved from Ascalon, in present-day Israel, to Athens to join the Academy—to the beginning of the third century CE, with Ammonius Saccas, the Alexandrian philosopher and teacher of Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism. Both Antiochus and Ammonius Saccas are known for their syncretic tendencies. In response to Academic skepticism, Antiochus argued not only that knowledge is possible but also that the old, pre-skeptical Academy was in broad agreement with the Aristotelian and Stoic schools. Centuries later, Ammonius Saccas argued that Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies were in fundamental agreement. Middle Platonism manifested in a variety of literary forms, styles of argument, and attitudes toward authoritative figures, but a significant trend emerged in this period where philosophers asserted the harmony of previously distinct schools of thought. They drew concepts, theories, and arguments from philosophers attached to once competing schools. To be a Platonist at this time entailed not only clarifying the meaning of Plato's texts but also appropriating ideas from the Aristotelian and Stoic traditions in the course of developing Platonic philosophy. Epicurean philosophy had less of an impact, but several of its terms had by this time become common intellectual property. It is this harmonizing tendency of middle Platonism, coupled with its emphasis on certain key themes in Platonic philosophy, that fundamentally influenced Ptolemy's own contributions in philosophy.

Ptolemy's seamless blending of concepts from the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions and, to a lesser extent, the Stoic and Epicurean, is itself impressive, but its greater significance lies in its radical and even subversive character. Ptolemy adopted ideas from these many traditions but his integration of them yielded a philosophical system that upended the entire edifice of ancient philosophy. In *Almagest* 1.1, Ptolemy denounces attempts by philosophers to answer some of the most central questions of philosophy, and he argues that the fields of inquiry that philosophers study are merely conjectural. Against the vast current of ancient Greek philosophy, Ptolemy maintains that theology and physics are essentially guesswork and that mathematics alone generates sure and incontrovertible knowledge. This epistemological position—that mathematics alone, and neither physics nor theology, yields

knowledge—is unprecedented in the history of philosophy and would have been extraordinarily controversial. Moreover, Ptolemy's appropriation of ancient virtue ethics is equally subversive. He maintains that the best life is one where the human soul is in a virtuous, or excellent, condition, and in his adaptation of Platonic ethics he affirms that the highest goal of human life is to resemble the divine—to be, as much as humanly possible, like the gods—but, according to Ptolemy, the one and only path to the good life is through mathematics.

Ptolemy deems mathematics epistemologically and ethically superior to every other field of inquiry, but that is not to say that he eschewed philosophy. For Ptolemy, mathematics is philosophy or, rather, a part of philosophy. It is one of the three parts of theoretical philosophy, alongside physics and theology. In addition to these three theoretical sciences—where, in ancient Greek philosophy, a science is simply a branch of knowledge—there are the three practical parts of philosophy: ethics, domestics, and politics. Ptolemy argues in *Almagest* 1.1 that the theoretical part of philosophy is more valuable than the practical, and that, of the three theoretical sciences, mathematics is the best in its abilities to render knowledge and transform the human soul into its most perfect condition. Mathematics reveals the objective of human life, to be like the heavenly divine, and it provides the means to achieve it. Ptolemy does not claim, however, that one should study only mathematics. He argues that mathematics contributes to physics and theology, and, furthermore, that it guides practical philosophy and even the ordinary affairs of life. Positioning mathematics at the foundation of every one of life's activities, Ptolemy advances the mathematical way of life.

Consistent with Plato's account of the philosopher's education in Book VII of the *Republic*, Platonists upheld mathematics as a useful means of training the soul, where mathematics is propaedeutic, preparing the way for other, higher, more valuable studies, such as dialectic or metaphysics. Yet, for Ptolemy, mathematics is not simply useful; it is not merely a path to another science. For Ptolemy, it is the highest science. Only mathematics yields knowledge. Through its study alone human beings achieve their highest objective, to become like the divine. Human beings come to comprehend, love, and resemble divinities through the study of astronomy and harmonics, which, according to Ptolemy, are both mathematical sciences. Astronomy is the study of the movements and configurations of the stars; harmonics is the study of the ratios that characterize the relations among musical pitches. Astronomical objects serve as ethical exemplars for human souls, and both astronomy and harmonics give rise to souls' virtuous transformation.

Ptolemy's texts testify to his additional interest in mathematics' application to theology and physics, especially. In the *Almagest*, Ptolemy's astronomy informs his theology, and his natural philosophical investigations are extensive. Just as he argues in *Almagest* 1.1 that mathematics contributes significantly to physics, time and again Ptolemy studies bodies mathematically before investigating their physical properties. Mathematical study informs the analysis of bodies' physical qualities, and, though physics is conjectural, the application of mathematics affords the best guesses possible of bodies' physical natures. In the chapters that follow, I examine Ptolemy's applications of geometry to element theory, harmonics to psychology, and astronomy to astrology and cosmology.

The only one of Ptolemy's texts devoid of mathematics is *On the Kriterion and Hêgemonikon*, an epistemological study that examines the criterion of truth, the method by

which a human being generates knowledge, as well as the physical nature and structure of the human soul, including the hêgemonikon, its chief part. More than any other text of Ptolemy, *On the Kritêrion* has provoked controversy concerning its authorship, no doubt in part because it contains no mathematics. Nevertheless, thematic, stylistic, and linguistic arguments support Ptolemy's authorship, and I argue that it is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of Ptolemy's extant texts.' In *On the Kritêrion*, Ptolemy proposes a dually rational and empirical criterion of truth, where the faculties of sense perception and thought cooperate in the production of knowledge. Ptolemy adheres to this criterion in the rest of his corpus, but when he wrote *On the Kritêrion* he had not yet mandated the application of mathematics to physics. After he composed it, he devised his mathematical-scientific method, which he employed in every one of his subsequent studies. Every other of Ptolemy's texts constitutes an inquiry into or an implementation of mathematics.

In addition to *On the Kritêrion*, the texts I analyze are those of Ptolemy that contain manifestly philosophical content.' Again, the *Almagest* is Ptolemy's most famous astronomical text. It comprises thirteen books—likely in homage to the thirteen books of Euclid's *Elements*—and it consists in the deduction of geometric models that, according to Ptolemy, truly describe the mathematical objects in the heavens, the combinations of rotating spheres that give rise to the movements of celestial bodies, the fixed and wandering stars. In the first book, Ptolemy situates astronomy in relation to the other parts of philosophy, he describes the structure of the ensuing text, and he establishes the fundamental hypotheses of his astronomical system, such as the heavens' sphericity and the earth's location at the center of the cosmos. In the latter part of Book 1 through Book 2, he presents the mathematics necessary for the mathematical deduction, including the "Table of Chords," used in the trigonometric calculations that follow. The remainder of the *Almagest*, Books 3 through 13, contains the deduction itself of the astronomical models, accounting for the movements of the sun, moon, fixed stars, and five planets. These models are both demonstrative and predictive, since by using the tables an astrologer would have been able to approximate the perceptible location of any celestial body on any given date.

The Planetary Hypotheses is Ptolemy's cosmological text. In the first of the two books, he presents astronomical models, mostly consistent with the *Almagest*'s models; he specifies the order and absolute distances of the celestial systems; and he determines the diameters of the celestial bodies. In Book 2, he presents his aethereal physics, describing the heavenly bodies in physical terms, and he discusses celestial souls, which, in Ptolemy's cosmology, control the aethereal bodies' movements. Only a portion of the first book of the Planetary Hypotheses exists in the original Greek. The second of the two books and the remainder of the first book exist only in a ninth-century Arabic translation as well as a Hebrew translation from the Arabic.

The Tetrabiblos delineates Ptolemy's astrological theory. In the introductory chapters, he defines astrology and defends this physical science's possibility and utility. Thereafter, he summarizes its principles, including the powers of celestial bodies, the rays by which stars transmit their powers, and the effects these powers have on sublunary bodies and souls. Book 2 examines the celestial powers' large-scale effects on geographic regions and meteorological phenomena, and Books 3 and 4 address celestial influences on human beings and their individual lives.

In the *Harmonics*, Ptolemy elaborates on his criterion of truth and employs it in the analysis of the mathematical relations among musical pitches. The text contains three books, and, after completing his study of music theory in *Harmonics* 3.2, he examines the harmonic ratios that exist among psychological, astrological, and astronomical phenomena. Unfortunately, the last three chapters, 3.14-3.16, are no longer extant; only their titles remain. In the chapters that follow, I also make reference to Ptolemy's *Geography*, *Optics*, and two works—*On the Elements* and *On Weights*—that are entirely lost to us but which Simplicius, the sixth-century philosopher, attests to in his commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo*.

Ptolemy's texts offer few clues to their chronology. In the *Tetrabiblos* and *Planetary Hypotheses*, as well as in the *Geography*, he refers to his "syntaxis" or "mathematical composition", manifestly the *Almagest*. Consequently, Ptolemy must have completed these texts after the *Almagest*. Noel Swerdlow has argued that the *Harmonics* predates the *Almagest* because the titles of the three lost chapters indicate that they examined the relations between musical pitches and celestial bodies tabulated in the Canobic Inscription. Considering that Ptolemy must have written the Canobic Inscription before the *Almagest*, the *Harmonics* probably predates the *Almagest* as well, and I argue that Ptolemy completed *On the Kritêrion* before the *Harmonics*. Thus, one reasonably can conclude that Ptolemy composed the texts most relevant to this study in the following order: (1) *On the Kritêrion* and *Hêgemonikon*; (2) *Harmonics*; (3) *Almagest*; and (4) *Tetrabiblos* and *Planetary Hypotheses*, in an indeterminate order.

I take *Almagest* 1.1 as the starting point of this study, as it functions as an epitome of Ptolemy's general philosophical system. My chapters 2 through 4 are analyses and intellectual histories of the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical statements of *Almagest* 1.1. In chapter 2, I argue that the metaphysics Ptolemy presents when differentiating the three theoretical sciences—physics, mathematics, and theology—is Aristotelian, though not Aristotle's, and that Ptolemy underlays his ontology with epistemology. In chapter 3, I show how Ptolemy blends an Aristotelian form of empiricism with a Platonic concern for distinguishing knowledge and opinion, and he thereby produces a new and subversive epistemology where mathematics is the only science that generates knowledge rather than conjecture. Moreover, I analyze Ptolemy's argument for the contribution of mathematics to physics and theology, and I examine the case studies of how astronomy informs his theology and geometry drives his element theory. In chapter 4, I

maintains his position in *Almagest 1.1* that mathematics yields sure and incontrovertible knowledge. In chapters 7 and 8, I turn to Ptolemy's application of mathematics to the physics of composite bodies. In the former, I argue for the development of his psychology from *On the Kriterion* to the *Harmonics*, where he strives to improve his account of the human soul by mathematizing it. The development in his psychological theory, I contend, marks the maturation of his scientific method. In the latter chapter, I argue that Ptolemy maintains the epistemology and scientific method that he articulates in *Almagest 1.1* and applies in the *Harmonics* in his studies of astrology and cosmology in the *Tetrabiblos* and *Planetary Hypotheses*. Overall, Ptolemy's philosophy remains remarkably consistent across his corpus.

At the foundation of Ptolemy's complex philosophical system is his ethics. The explicit motivation for his study of the theoretical sciences is his objective to transform his soul into a condition that resembles the divine, mathematical objects of the heavens, the movements and configurations of the stars. That Ptolemy required such a motivation for his prodigious and influential scientific investigations may be surprising, but we must remember that in antiquity mathematicians were rare. In any one generation in the ancient Mediterranean, no more than a few dozen individuals studied high-level mathematics. Given the scarcity of advanced mathematical study, an individual who concentrated on it would have made a deliberate choice to disavow more dominant intellectual practices, including the conventions of philosophers, and assume an unconventional way of life. Mathematicians play a special role in the ancient philosophical landscape in that they studied philosophy to varying degrees but they were not philosophers. In Ptolemy's case, he was well versed in the philosophy of his time. He appropriated ideas from authoritative and contemporary philosophical traditions for his own philosophical system. What led him to set aside the nonmathematical study of philosophy and focus on mathematics? We know so little of Ptolemy's life that it is impossible to say for certain. It would be easiest to suppose that he simply found mathematics to be captivatingly interesting. Nevertheless, I aim to present a more complex portrait, where the clues lie in the philosophical claims scattered across his corpus, and I propose that it was Ptolemy's appropriation of Platonic ethics and the formulation of a radical philosophy—the mathematical way of life—that motivated him to devote his life to mathematics.

Almagest 1.1 functions as an epitome of Ptolemy's philosophical system. He structured it in such a way as to mimic the opening chapters of philosophical handbooks, a contemporary genre used to introduce the philosophical ideas of authoritative figures like Plato. Ptolemy employs this format to establish the authority of his own philosophy, where mathematics reigns supreme. Like so-called middle Platonists, Ptolemy appropriated concepts from the Aristotelian and Platonic traditions as well as, to a lesser extent, the Stoic and Epicurean, but the end product of this amalgamation is not a derivative philosophy or one of optimum agreement among schools of thought. Ptolemy's philosophy is subversive. He puts forward claims that would have been extraordinarily controversial at the time, and that discredit attempts by philosophers to answer the very questions of philosophy. According to Ptolemy, philosophers will never attain knowledge, they will never agree on the nature of theological and physical objects, because theology and physics are conjectural. Ptolemy argues that mathematics alone yields knowledge and that, furthermore, it is the only path to the good life.

Despite the singular status of mathematics in his philosophy, Ptolemy does not dispense with the other sciences. He improves them by means of mathematics. He argues that mathematics contributes to theology and physics and that, moreover, mathematics is foundational to practical philosophy and even the ordinary affairs of life. Mathematics reveals the ultimate goal of human life: to be like the divine, mathematical objects of the heavens, the movements and configurations of the stars. The best life is one where everything an individual does is guided by and in the service of this mathematical-ethical objective. Positioning mathematics at the foundation of all philosophy, theoretical and practical, as well as each and every one of the ordinary activities of life, Ptolemy propounds the mathematical way of life.

Ptolemy's corpus suggests that he lived in accordance with this way of life. Every one of his extant texts is a study or an application of mathematics, *except On the Kriterion and Hêgemonikon*, which I argue he composed first of all of his extant texts and before he formulated his mature scientific method, including the persistent and necessary application of mathematics to physics and theology. In his corpus, Ptolemy applies geometry to element theory; harmonics to psychology; and astronomy to astrology, cosmology, and theology. Besides *On the Kriterion*, every one of his texts is an inquiry into or an implementation of mathematics. Yet, for Ptolemy mathematics is not propaedeutic; it is not preparatory to another, higher science. Mathematics is the highest science, and Ptolemy dedicated his life to it. If we take him at his word, he did so with the aim of transforming his soul into a condition that resembles divine, astronomical objects, which are constant, well ordered, commensurable, and calm. Ptolemy's ethics justifies his study of mathematics and provides the foundation for his many philosophical and scientific contributions.

Ptolemy defines mathematics alongside the other two theoretical sciences in *Almagest 1.1*. Although he cites Aristotle, Ptolemy's definitions of physics, mathematics, and theology are not Aristotle's. They are Aristotelian. Ptolemy distinguishes the sciences according to their objects of study, and he classifies the three fundamental types of objects in the cosmos according to epistemic criteria. In other words, he incorporates epistemology at a foundational level to his metaphysics. More specifically, whether and how an object is perceptible to human beings defines what type of object it is. The Prime Mover, the object of theology, is imperceptible; physical objects are special sensibles, meaning they are perceptible by only one of the five senses; mathematical objects are common sensibles, perceptible by more than one sense.

Ptolemy fuses an Aristotelian theory of perception with the Platonic concern for distinguishing knowledge from opinion, which he associates with conjecture. According to Ptolemy, whether a human being is able to construct knowledge or mere conjecture when studying one of the sciences depends entirely on the properties of the objects the science studies. These properties are epistemic and ontological: perceptibility, clarity, and stability. A human being can have knowledge only of something perceptible. Because the Prime Mover is imperceptible, it is ungraspable and its study, theology, is conjectural. Although physical objects are perceptible, they are unstable and unclear. Their instability and lack of clarity prevent the human intellect from making clear and skillful judgments from their sense impressions, and therefore physics, too, is conjectural. Ptolemy calls physics conjectural not only in *Almagest 1.1* but also in the *Tetrabiblos* and *Planetary Hypotheses*. Nevertheless, Ptolemy mitigates the epistemic deficiency of physics and theology by systematically placing

them on a mathematical foundation. He first studies entities mathematically before investigating their physical or theological nature.

The objects of mathematics, on the other hand, are stable and clear. A human being can skillfully examine clear sense impressions of them and thereby create knowledge. Among the mathematical sciences, harmonics and astronomy are complementary. Harmonics studies the relations among musical pitches, which are perceptible only by the sense of hearing; astronomy studies the movements and configurations of celestial bodies, which are perceptible only by sight. Moreover, harmonics and astronomy each employ an indisputable method, or instrument, of mathematics: arithmetic or geometry. Ptolemy indicates that harmonics generates sure and incontrovertible knowledge—as he claims all mathematics does in *Almagest* 1.1—but astronomy does so only inasmuch as it both employs Ptolemy's criterion of truth—the interplay of reason and perception—and relies on geometry, one of the indisputable instruments of mathematics. In the *Almagest*, Ptolemy takes the existence of eccentric and epicyclic spheres to be certain, but the quantitative aspects of his astronomical models are not exact. They are approximate rather than precise. The eccentric and epicyclic hypotheses follow from his criterion of truth and derive from geometry, but the spheres' parameters and periods of revolution do not follow from geometry and they depend solely on observation for their determination. Hence, Ptolemy concludes that mathematicians cannot know and should not claim that the quantitative features of astronomical models are true. They forever remain approximate.

Why, then, does Ptolemy even attempt to quantify his astronomical models? I suggest that he does so because astronomy, like astrology, is by definition a predictive science. Ptolemy defines astronomy in juxtaposition with astrology in the first chapter of the *Tetrabiblos*. Consistent with *Almagest* 1.1, he claims that the judgments of astronomy are sure, whereas astrology, like every other study of material quality, is conjectural. Yet, the claims of astrology are still possible, as opposed to impossible, and therefore they merit study. Astrology relies on the prior, complete study of astronomy, because it examines the effects the stars' movements and configurations have on sublunary bodies and souls. The stars' powers affect sublunary events by means of rays, which travel through the heavens and into the sublunary realm. Ptolemy also discusses the stars' powers and rays in the *Planetary Hypotheses*, and just as his astrology depends on astronomy, so, too, does his cosmology. In the *Planetary Hypotheses*, Ptolemy presents his astronomical models before he propounds his aethereal physics. According to Ptolemy, the heavens are animate. Celestial souls instigate and maintain the uniform circular motion of the spheres and parts of spheres that constitute their aethereal systems. Moreover, celestial souls cause these movements, I argue, as a result of their desire for the Prime Mover, which Ptolemy calls in *Almagest* 1.1 "the first cause of the first motion of the universe?"

At the foundation of every one of Ptolemy's studies is his ethics. It is because mathematics furnishes the good life that Ptolemy pursues its study and application. I suggest that in Ptolemy's philosophical system both astronomy and harmonics produce the virtuous transformation of the human soul, just as in Plato's *Timaeus* the study of the heavens and harmony facilitate the ordering of the human soul's orbits.⁹ For Ptolemy, it is because harmonia causes the existence of harmonic ratios among the constituent parts, movements, and configurations of the most complete and rational objects in the cosmos—human souls, musical systems, and heavenly bodies—that harmonic and astronomical objects serve as exemplars for human souls. As corruptible, human souls fall out of attunement. They require

an exemplar, an instantiation of harmonic ratios in a body physically unlike themselves on which to model their formal configuration. By studying and practicing harmonics and/or astronomy, human beings attain good order in their souls. Through astronomy, they come to love the heavenly divine and transform their souls into the constant, well-ordered, commensurable, and calm condition of the stars' movements and configurations. Restoring the harmonic structure of their souls, they resemble the divine. They become godlike.

By late antiquity, Ptolemy was celebrated as an authoritative figure. He acquired the epithets "wonderful," "excellent," and even "divine." Both Simplicius and Philoponus call him "the wonderful Ptolemy" , John Lydus—the sixth-century CE bureaucrat and author of a compilation of celestial and meteorological omen literature—refers to "the most divine Ptolemy", and Synesius remarks on "the excellent Ptolemy and his divine company of successors." They use these epithets when discussing Ptolemy's contributions in astronomy, astrology, and physics, but did Ptolemy's reputation extend to his more traditionally philosophical contributions? Were his metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics influential?

I already have pointed toward some areas of possible influence. Similarly to how Ptolemy identifies mathematical objects with common sensibles, Philoponus and Sophonias, the late thirteenth- to early fourteenth-century Constantinopolitan monk, address the nature of mathematical objects in their studies of Aristotle's *De anima*. They define mathematical objects as forms, abstracted by thought from matter, that are common sensibles.¹ In addition, Syrianus, the fifth-century Neoplatonic philosopher, addresses the possibility that mathematical objects are common sensibles abstracted by thought from perceptible objects. It is possible that Ptolemy's identification of mathematical objects with common sensibles influenced Syrianus, Philoponus, and thereafter Sophonias.

The influence of Ptolemy's epistemology was evidently long lasting. In the early fourteenth century, the statesman and scholar Theodorus Metochites examines mathematics in comparison to the other species of theoretical philosophy in the opening chapters of his *Stoicheiōsis astronomikē*, and he calls mathematical objects the only type of objects that are "really knowable." Moreover, he describes mathematics as, with the exception of theology, superior to the other species of theoretical philosophy.² Similarly, in the sixteenth century the French mathematician Oronce Fine characterizes mathematics, as well as its relationship to physics and metaphysics, in a manner that recalls *Almagest* 1.1: "Mathematics is intermediate between the natural or physical investigation and the supernatural or metaphysical investigation (which deserve to be called conjecture rather than knowledge), taking part, with the natural, in matter, and joining the supernatural in the fact that it considers the same things as if they were separated from matter"³ Fine appropriates both Ptolemy's argument for the intermediate status of mathematics and his epistemological assessment of the three theoretical sciences. Albert the Great in the thirteenth century cites Ptolemy in his commentary on Euclid's *Elements*. He calls Ptolemy "great in all divisions of learning" and paraphrases the epistemological argument of *Almagest* 1.1, which judges physics and theology to be conjectural and mathematics alone as productive of knowledge.⁴ Albert's student, Thomas Aquinas repeatedly cites Ptolemy in his commentary on Boethius's *De trinitate*. When affirming the trichotomy of the theoretical sciences, he appeals to Aristotle and Ptolemy side by side, and he quotes Ptolemy not only with respect to the sciences' epistemological status, as knowledge or conjecture, but also with respect to the indisputability of mathematical demonstrations: "But as Ptolemy says in the beginning of the *Almagest*, 'Mathematics alone, if one applies himself diligently to it, will give the inquirer

after knowledge firm and unshaken certitude by demonstrations carried out with unquestionable methods: "

Ptolemy's and Hero of Alexandria's claim that geometrical demonstration is indisputable echoes through the Greek corpus in the works of at least ten historical figures from the third to the fourteenth century. Notably, Proclus, in the fifth century, claims that Euclid improved on the work of his predecessors by reforming their propositions into irrefutable demonstrations, and he appropriates the geometrical style of proof in his studies of theology and physics, the *Elements of Theology* and *Elements of Physics*, respectively. In a way, Proclus combines Ptolemy's characterization of geometrical demonstration as indisputable with his mandate to apply mathematics to theology and physics. For Ptolemy, this application means inferring the nature of the Prime Mover by way of an analogy with mathematical, specifically astronomical, objects and studying bodies mathematically before investigating their physical properties. For Proclus, mathematics' application entails composing discourses on nonmathematical objects in the style of geometry. It is the demonstration of theological propositions on the procession and characteristics of the various classes of gods as well as the demonstration from first principles of the existence of an unmoved cause of motion and change in the world. For Proclus, the irrefutability of geometrical demonstration extends to other fields of inquiry when their discourses are constructed in a geometrical style.

The appropriation of the geometrical style for nonmathematical studies flourished in the seventeenth century. Prompted by Mersenne, Descartes, for example, presents the central arguments of his *Meditations* in a geometrical form at the end of the *Second Replies*. He divides them into definitions, postulates, axioms or common notions, propositions and their demonstrations. Similarly, Spinoza employs the geometrical style in several works, most significantly in his *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*. Thomas Hobbes embraces the geometrical style in his *Leviathan*. Contributing to the *Quaestio de certitudine mathematicarum*, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century debate on the scientific status and certainty of mathematics, he calls geometry "the onely Science that it hath pleased God hitherto to bestow on mankind," and he observes, concerning philosophers, "For there is not one of them that begins his ratiocination from the Definitions, or Explications of the names they are to use; which is a method that hath been used onely in Geometry; whose Conclusions have thereby been made indisputable." Could the appropriation of the geometrical demonstration and the extension of its indisputability to nonmathematical studies have its roots in Ptolemy's epistemology?

The influence of Ptolemy's ethics likewise requires further study. Notably, in his commentary on the *Almagest* Theon of Alexandria proclaims that the overall message of *Almagest 1.1* is ethical. He paraphrases Ptolemy as claiming that the human being who lives well maintains the fine and well-ordered state. It is possible that the authors of commentaries on Ptolemy's *Almagest*, including Theon, adopted Ptolemy's ethical theory. At the very least, we know that later philosophers ascribed some ethical value to mathematics, as a type of mental or spiritual exercise. Matthew Jones has shown that Descartes, Pascal, and Leibniz considered mathematics to be avenues to the good life.' According to these philosophers, mathematics cultivates the mind. It exercises the intelligence and reveals the powers and limits of human reason. Yet, none of these philosophers took mathematics to be necessary or sufficient for the good life. For Ptolemy it is. Ptolemy's ethics is distinctly mathematical. It is only through mathematics that a human being achieves the good life.

Is Ptolemy alone in his devotion to the mathematical way of life? At the very least, we know that he was not alone in ascribing some ethical benefit to mathematics. Ptolemy's ethics is, after all, Platonic, and it resonates with mathematical practice well into the seventeenth century. What requires further study is why mathematicians throughout history chose to be mathematicians, or why individuals who concentrated their studies on mathematics did just that. In the modern world we ascribe a high value to mathematics and the mathematical sciences—particularly with respect to the economic rise of the so-called STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—but a benefit supplemental to this economic payout and the value in the liberal, economically independent, study of mathematics are not self-evident. To choose to devote one's studies and the better part of one's life to mathematics, an individual requires some reason or purpose for doing so, and, according to Ptolemy, the benefits mathematics provides are epistemological and ethical. Mathematics is the only field of inquiry through which human beings can acquire knowledge, and it is the only path to the good life. In Ptolemy's philosophy, the best way an individual can live his life is to live the mathematical way of life. <>

THE INTELLECT AND THE EXODUS: AUTHENTIC EMUNA FOR A COMPLEX AGE by Jeremy Kagan [Maggid Books, 9781592645138]

Developing emuna, or faith in God, is extraordinarily challenging in our day. Emuna may have sat comfortably with us as we dwelt among the worshiping cultures of the ancient Near East. But several thousand years of exposure to rationally based Western cultures has transformed our consciousness, personalities, and outlook to the point that God often seems like an idea pasted incongruously onto our vision of reality. How can we achieve an emuna that is integrated, consistent with our rational context, yet still retains its Near Eastern soul? In 'Intellect and the Exodus', award-winning author Rabbi Jeremy Kagan traces the history of our experience of emuna, building on the perspective it provides to gain powerful insights into the nature of emuna in the modern world. He then shows how the story of the Exodus is structured to foster a perception of reality in us, out of which an awareness of God emerges naturally. That perceptual component, however, must be complimented with an inner sense of God that has a genuine basis. That basis is to be sought in the depths of the self.

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Seeking Authenticity in Torah

I have spent much of my life seeking authenticity in Torah. I am not talking about emotional connections to the mitzvot, the commandments. I mean a sense that Torah is true. Had it been my perspective on the world from the birth of my consciousness, its vision would be the filter through which I always experienced my self and, therefore, would naturally seem real. But because I did not grow up religious, that wasn't the case for me.

Rather, I first encountered Torah on a serious level when I was in college. I was introduced to its depth by an Orthodox roommate and my interest was awakened. But, as would be true for anyone discovering Torah at that stage in life, I was acutely aware that its central text, the Humash, described a world that bore little resemblance to the one we live in today. After all, we do not see seas splitting and anyone claiming prophecy is headed for a lengthy hospital stay. Torah was intriguing, but it did not seem real.

As a child of Western culture I was trained to give priority to physical reality. Therefore, I could not just dismiss this, as might a person raised from his youth to respect the truth of Torah. So even though the understanding I gained from Torah about myself and my world was profound and compelling, I could not embrace Torah without dealing with the issue of its reality.

As it turns out, it is not just latecomers to Torah who are bothered by this. The great Torah Sages were as alive to the world as they were to Torah, so the fact that the two do not mesh smoothly was not lost on them. I explored their views on this topic in my previous books *The Jewish Self* and *The Choice to Be*.¹ Those explorations led me to appreciate that the dissonance between our present experience and Torah's description of the past is actually the key to understanding Torah's vision of history. Torah identifies the primary significance of history with the constant evolution of the nature of human awareness over time — a view we will be reexamining in this book. Torah's depiction of the past is strange to us; yet rather than undermining Torah's legitimacy, this strangeness provides us with essential perspective on the way we experience reality today.

Coming to this understanding did more than address a formidable block on my integration with Torah. It also extended certain ideas I had been working on previously in college² and thus brought a greater continuity to my intellectual journey. Moreover, it opened a new level of depth to my perception of reality. While little questions lend themselves to little answers, the big ones — the kind that call a whole system into question — can only be resolved by reaching a new level of understanding of the entire structure.

My attachment to Torah has grown in part from the times I have experienced these major shifts in understanding. At a certain point I stopped looking at contradictions as problems and, instead, saw them as opportunities. They mark thresholds of understanding which invite us to find the door. I guess that was when Torah changed for me from an idea to reality — at least a level of reality. Reality is never wrong. Our understanding of it might be

— contradictions arise signaling that we must dig deeper. But reality itself cannot be wrong. It just is, waiting to be understood.

Living in the Present

The Torah vision of history that emerged from this investigation is strikingly modern, or at least lends itself to a formulation that resonates strongly with modern views. It closely parallels, at least structurally, the academic understanding of the unfolding of human consciousness over historical time that has been building in philosophical, anthropological, and psychological circles since the time of Kant.

I do not mean by that to say, "Yeah, we always knew that anyway?" Rather, I am suggesting that when we engage the Torah in the context of honest awareness of our present experience while remaining open to the questions that it raises, the understanding we develop is relevant to who we are today.

Not coincidentally, it is also relevant to the rest of mankind. The development of humanity, at least in the context of civilization, is universal; we are all in it together. While Torah gives us our unique slant on the issues, the issues are shared across the board. So an open engagement of Torah allows us who study it to locate ourselves in and communicate with the larger intellectual world if we so choose.

Moreover, through this honest and genuine inquiry we fulfill our obligation to constantly make Torah new — that is, to revitalize our understanding of it. The idea is not that we should come to a different understanding so much as to understand what we have always known, but in a new way — a way that genuinely speaks to who we truly are in the generation in which we live. By pressing the self that we are against the Torah and asking the questions that bother us, we develop an understanding of Torah that reflects our concerns, highlighting the aspects of Torah most relevant to our place in history. It is this process that gives exile meaning, as we are forced to explore Torah from all the different vantages afforded by the halting evolution of human culture and experience.

The Challenge of Emuna (Faith)

This book will explore a different distance between Torah and our awareness of reality — at the very least, my awareness of reality. God is central to all Torah understanding, yet I am not filled with a sense for the immediacy of God — emuna (faith) did not come naturally to me. This didn't concern me, for as I grew in Torah I remained conscious that I was the product of conflicting worldviews, with my Western roots leaving little space or need for God's existence. So my expectations for intuitive conviction were low. But I certainly wanted to integrate my emuna with myself.

As I worked on the question of how to accomplish this, I found myself returning to the question of why emuna is so challenging to the Western mind — why we are so deeply committed to a secular outlook. After all, you cannot solve a problem unless you know what is causing it. This brought me back to the topic of my previous books — the development of human awareness over historical time. I eventually accepted that my project would not be complete without reviewing this material. Initially, I thought I could get away with a synopsis of my previous writing. But as I revisited the issues in the context of my present focus, they came alive for me in a new way.

I was already in the midst of a revived interest in history, but in a different manner than I had approached it previously. In my earlier books I traced the developing nature of human awareness through the successive peoples that have dominated civilization by relating to those peoples and their cultures as abstract entities — I identified the dominant trait of their cultures and little more. But I found myself wanting to extend my knowledge of these peoples to their actual history — to understand how they carried and expressed these various forms of awareness and what it was like to be them and live among them. After all, on our journey through time we have not been alone. We are part of mankind. Other peoples experienced their cultures while we were experiencing ours. Their experience affected us just as ours affected them.

Moreover, since the destruction of the First Temple we have found ourselves in exile, living among these peoples and building our national life as part of a much broader cultural entity. The focus of our development has been directed by this environment and by the challenges it raises. Trying to understand ourselves and our history without understanding that of the nations of the world would be like trying to fathom the motions of a swimmer without recognizing that he is in water.

My newfound desire for details pushed me to explore academic sources. This has altered my understanding of these cultures in important ways. And this in turn has forced a more nuanced reading of Torah sources. Though I formulate my views within a midrashic and aggadic framework, the academic perspective now informs my understanding of the particulars of these cultures. This has produced a clearer understanding of the basis of human awareness in the era in which Torah emerged and how that fostered a spiritual perception of reality. It also clarified the process by which abstract reason's growing dominance of consciousness constricted spiritual awareness, eventually leading to the secular mindset characteristic of Western civilization today.

Though the more general understanding found in my earlier books was sufficient for their core project of explaining the Sages' vision of the structure, direction, and purpose of history, this book aims for more precision. Its goal of understanding the challenges that the historical process brings to our emuna, how we meet those challenges, and how the nature of our emuna has changed as a result, requires that we engage more of the details. This material comprises chapters 2 through 8 of this book.

Emuna in the Creator

The examination of emuna that eventually grew into this book began when I was exploring the process by which Abraham came to recognize the existence of the Creator.¹ Because Abraham achieved conviction about this through his own efforts before he received prophecy, I thought he might act as a guide to how I could bring more personal conviction to my own relationship with God. Moreover, since Abraham discovered God specifically in His role as Creator, I felt that studying Abraham's journey would accentuate this aspect of God in my own faith. This spoke to my desire for increased integration of my emuna.

We tend to isolate our relationship with God in our heads, disconnecting Him from our primary experience, which is material reality. This is because God is not physical. True, He expresses Himself in physical reality. But out of concern for idolatry, we expend extreme effort to guard against associating God with anything physical — we keep our ideas about Him very abstract. This, however, gives God an almost ghostly, unreal quality, leaving us with an emuna that seems artificial. Emuna in God specifically as Creator, however,

develops from direct engagement with physical reality. I felt that reinforcing my awareness of God in this role would give my relationship with Him a concrete anchor while avoiding associating physicality directly with God Himself.

As I was working through this material, I realized that when the commentaries define our Torah obligation of emuna, they also speak of God as Creator.' In other words, though we relate to God in numerous capacities that are central to our vision of Him — such as Giver of Torah, Judge, and Savior — our mitzva of emuna is to recognize Him specifically in His capacity as Creator.

It occurred to me, then, that by studying Abraham's path I could both enhance the sense of reality in my emuna (a personal priority) and also strengthen my fulfillment of the Torah obligation of emuna (a priority for all of us). I began developing the material on Abraham's path with this larger project in mind. It forms chapter 9 of this book.

But I also realized that I could not properly help people strengthen their observance of the mitzva of emuna without a clear understanding of the mitzva. This required an additional research effort. To give a broad treatment, I focused on the approach of Rambam as representative of the philosophical school and of Ramban as representative of the more mystical school. The results of this investigation are brought in the first chapter.

The Importance of the Exodus

An important consequence of this research was an appreciation of the centrality of the Exodus to achieving the mitzva of emuna. This forced the addition of another layer to the book. I have been working for many years on understanding the plagues of the Exodus and how we are supposed to develop emuna from their study. The interpretation which speaks most deeply to me sees each plague directed at a specific facet of character. As each plague purifies a trait, the aspect of reality "seen" by that trait is revealed for what it is: a consequence of God's act of creation.

An act of creation is accomplished through a series of stages — ones that are internal, ones that are emotional, and actions. Each stage is realized through a specific trait of character. The Exodus structured our personality along the lines of those character traits of creation so that we experienced ourselves as creators. Creators see the world through the lens of creation. This sensitized us to the acts of creation reflected in the world around us and, therefore, to the Creator.

This approach to the Exodus brings the concept of integrated emuna to an entirely new level. Emuna becomes something that is embedded in our personality and emanates directly from our experience of reality, rather than an isolated concept that fits uncomfortably within the complex of our general understanding of the world.

The Exodus thus speaks directly to the desire for integration that launched the book in the first place, closing the circle. I come to a conclusion that was anything but intuitive at the beginning of the project, which is that the path to genuine, integrated emuna is not only through personal meditation but also through assimilation of this event from our distant past. This material forms the second half of the book.

Before we begin, a note on translations. All translations herein, unless otherwise stated, take as their starting point the Soncino Press translations. I have, however, liberally altered them both to modernize the language and, in numerous cases, to focus on a meaning of the

text different from that found in the Soncino, one that is more appropriate to the context in which I am citing the source.

The structure of the book is as follows: First we will examine the mitzva of emuna and what is required to fulfill the obligation (chapter 1). Then we will explore the development of human consciousness in the context of civilization to appreciate the difficulties we face in trying to achieve emuna. This will include a discussion of the mechanisms the Sages have instituted to overcome these difficulties (chapters 2-8). Based on this exploration I will suggest that, beyond our traditional halakhic obligations, each individual needs to independently pursue personal

conviction about the existence of the Creator. We will then turn to Abraham for guidance on how to do that, analyzing the path by which he came to his emuna (chapter 9).

For reasons that we will discuss, the emuna that can be achieved in this way is both incomplete in its conviction and limited in scope. So in the second half of the book we will turn to the Exodus. We will learn how the plagues can guide us to full emuna by structuring our personality and perception in such a way that our recognition of the Creator becomes integral to our experience of self and our vision of reality.

For all its power, however, we cannot make this vision a part of ourselves without some internal awareness to testify to its truth and anchor it in the self. We therefore conclude with an analysis of how the Jews developed exactly this in their journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai, where emuna became the eternal foundation of Jewish identity.

The Mitzva of Emuna

When the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai, they experienced a revelation of unprecedented clarity that immediately became the foundation of our national relationship with God.' That relationship had begun earlier with our salvation from Egypt, an event that already obligated us to God's service and even included several specific commandments. That Exodus experience was so critical that when God revealed Himself at Sinai He identified Himself as the One responsible for it: "I am the Lord your God that took you out of Egypt" Still, at Sinai the process of revelation that began in Egypt came to its completion and was of such depth that it formed the essential core of the Jewish people, shaping not only that generation but also their descendants.' While the Exodus is vital, it is through Sinai that we connect to the Exodus.

"I am the Lord your God..." was actually the opening line of the Sinai revelation. It commands us to have emuna (faith) in God's existence.' Since Sinai is the basis of our relationship with God and emuna was the first command we heard there, it is conceptually the beginning and the root of all our obligations. All mitzvot extend from this command and serve to actualize it.

This makes sense, since the commands of the Torah are all elements in a relationship with God. The prerequisite and foundation of any genuine relationship is the true recognition of the other — a statement that is not as trivial as it sounds. In our relationship with God we call this emuna.

Our goal in this book is to learn how to achieve this mitzva. That is not a simple task, for while emuna is the most fundamental of the mitzvot, in our age it is also among the most challenging. There are many reasons for this, which we will discuss in the coming pages as

we try to figure out how to overcome them. First, however, we need to understand the mitzva. To do that we begin by analyzing the verse from which the mitzva is derived.

The Basis of Emuna

The verse we mentioned as obligating us in emuna is, in full: "I am the Lord your God that took you out from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." At first glance this is a surprising source from which to derive our obligation of emuna as it focuses on God in His capacity as redeemer of Israel. Though obviously the Exodus is central to our discovery of and unique national relationship with God, this should not determine the identity or defining characteristic of the God we are obligated to recognize. Surely the significance of His role as redeemer pales in comparison to that of His being the basis of existence. We expect the mitzva to be directed at God as the Creator.

In fact, as we mentioned in the introduction, this is the case. The major commentaries understand that the mitzva of emuna is directed at the Creator. What, then, do they do with the part of the verse that references the Exodus?

If the verse is obligating us to believe specifically in the Creator, then the phrase "that took us out of Egypt" is not defining whom we are to believe in. Presumably, then, it is identifying the event through which the Jews came to recognize the Creator. But by including the process by which the first generation of Jews came to their emuna as an integral part of the eternal command, the verse obligates us to come to our emuna through that same process as that first generation.

According to this reading, the verse requires us to build our emuna on the Jewish people's historical experience of the miracles of the Exodus. Such a reading would exclude personal investigation from building emuna — at least in pursuit of the mitzva — severely narrowing our options as we search for ways to strengthen its fulfillment. This concern is parried by Rambam's understanding of the verse.

Emuna According To Rambam

Surprisingly, Rambam makes no mention of the Exodus at all in his description of the mitzva of emuna.

To understand this omission we first have to realize that when discussing Rambam's view of this mitzva, the term emuna, which translates as "faith," is misleading. He actually speaks of an obligation "leida that there is a First Reality Who brings into being all that exists." Leida means "to know." Rambam's position is that what most commentators understand to be a mitzva of belief is actually an obligation to come to rational certainty of the Creator's existence.

Rambam's view of this mitzva has its roots in the specific nature of our experience at Sinai. Though eight of the Ten Commandments were relayed to us by Moses, the Jews heard the first two, including "I am the Lord your God," directly from God. At the moment He spoke to us we did not believe that God existed, we knew it! We were not ordered to recognize God; rather, hearing the statement brought us to absolute clarity about His existence! For this reason there is no actual command in the verse. Rather, it is a statement of fact: "I am the Lord your God."

Yet Rambam, like most other commentators, derives a mitzva from the verse.' What, then, is our mitzva in this regard?

Having had this experience of clarity at Sinai, the collective "we," the Jewish people, know that God exists. We are forever obligated to recognize that truth, not because we are commanded to do so by God — we are not — but rather because an overarching necessity to "accept the truth because it is true" is woven into the structure of existence.' This makes clear why Rambam insists that our obligation is to "know" that God exists, rather than to "believe" it. And if we as individuals don't know this truth of God's existence, we must come to know it — because it is true. And if we know it but our knowledge is unsure, we have to strengthen it.

Though we must accept every truth, this does not mean that recognizing every truth is a mitzva. I do not have a Torah obligation to acknowledge the existence of the Swiss Alps. But the truth of God's existence was revealed to us by God. Thus without commanding it, He is the One that caused there to be the obligation to recognize His existence. The force of necessity behind the obligation is, at least for man, a priori. But God, through His revelation, is the One who caused this knowledge to enter this category of a priori necessity, elevating the acknowledgment of this truth to a mitzva. In fact, it is the mitzva.

The distinction between being obligated and being commanded in the mitzva of recognizing God is an important one, as it answers several critical difficulties. First, how can God command us to believe in His existence? He is talking to us — obviously He exists! Answer: He is not commanding. He is revealing His existence through the statement, "I exist"; the obligation is a consequence of the revelation. This also explains how we derive a mitzva from a statement. Rambam's approach circumvents another problem as well. This "command" is prior to the full establishment of the king-to-subject relationship between God and the Jewish people." Yet a command only obligates when the commander has a prior basis of authority. According to Rambam this is not an issue because the necessity to recognize the truth being revealed is not from God's command; it is a priori to us from the creation.

When Rambam obligates us to "know," he does not mean some inexplicable feeling. The ongoing mitzva is to bring ourselves to a certainty in God's existence that echoes the clarity we experienced at Sinai. Since reason is man's only vehicle to genuine certainty, and the existence of God is susceptible to logical proof, we are obligated to use our rational intellect to achieve conviction that God exists.

In line with Rambam's philosophical approach to Torah in general, the highest level of "emuna" — for Rambam, knowledge — comes through philosophical inquiry. This is because the strength of the logic employed, along with the pure submission to intellect that individuals trained in genuine philosophical thought achieve, compels the most forceful and legitimate certainty about God. But obviously this most

basic of mitzvot is not the exclusive preserve of philosophers. Every individual has a rational capacity. According to Rambam the obligation is to harness that capability to achieve personal certainty in the existence of the Creator, each person on his own level.

The Meaning of "Creator"

We have said that our obligation of emuna is directed at God in His capacity as Creator. That Rambam requires us to achieve a certainty in our emuna that can only be achieved through rational proof, forces us to be more discerning in our understanding of this. For not all aspects of our understanding of God are susceptible to proof.

Rambam agrees with the Greek philosophers that though it can be demonstrated logically that there is an Entity standing outside of physical existence that is its basis, it cannot be proven that reality has a specific beginning — that is to say, that it came into being through a distinct act of creation that began time. An alternative is possible — that while supported by God, physical reality has always existed with no beginning to time. This position, which we call kadmut, was the position of Aristotle. So Rambam, who requires us to achieve emuna through rational proof, can only have in mind emuna in God with respect to His role in underpinning existence, not in creating it.

Once we are sensitive to this distinction, we can see that this is exactly what Rambam states in describing the mitzva: "The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is that there is a first Existence that is bringing into being all that is ...";²⁰ Rambam makes no mention of a past act of creation.

Rambam's description of the mitzva captures the precise meaning of the verse commanding us in emuna. Though we translate the first of the commandments at Sinai as "I am the 'the Lord'..." the actual text is "I am yawheh,"" This four-letter name of God is a composite of the verb "to be" in past tense (yaw), present tense (yahu), and future tense . It conveys that God is being. If God is being, then nothing can exist except as a manifestation of God — and God is reality's basis and support. The command "I am min,..." then commands us to believe in God as the basis of existence without reference to God having created it in a unique act.

Torah tells us through revelation that the world was created. Based on that, Rambam accepts that God created reality. But this fact of the past is far less significant than that God is the ongoing basis of existence now, always was, and always will be. This was what was revealed at Sinai, is logically provable, is directly relevant to our present awareness, and is the focus of our mitzva of emuna according to Rambam.

It is still reasonable — and simplifies our discussion considerably — to describe our mitzva of emuna as directed at the Creator even according to Rambam. Once we recognize that God is being, even having created reality He could not give it existence independent of Him — for He is being. Attributing to God an act of creation, then, requires that He remain the basis of that creation — Creator implies Basis.

That we conflate these two aspects of God in our minds is reflected in common usage. We sometimes refer to God as the Creator in the specific sense of the One who initiated existence through a specific act of creation. But generally our primary intent is to convey the idea that God underlays existence. We use the term Creator because we take for granted that the first concept implies the second, while we intend the second because that is the far more fundamental and pressing realization.

For example, when I said earlier that we would find it surprising if our mitzva of emuna was directed at the One who redeemed us from Egypt rather than at the Creator, the surprise

was a consequence of this more fundamental characteristic that God is the basis of existence. The conflation also goes in the opposite direction. When I read Torah sources that specify God as the basis of existence, I used to unthinkingly identify that with the Creator. That is why for years I understood the Rambam to be requiring emuna in the Creator. If we are precise, however, the two concepts are distinct, and Rambam is clear that our mitzva is directed at the Being who underlies existence, not its Creator.

Summing Up Rambam

Rambam sees rational inquiry as the only road to emuna. Historical experience, even an event as powerful as the Exodus, cannot bring the certainty achievable through logical proof. The Exodus revealed the Jewish people's unique relationship with God. It can substantiate and strengthen emuna for someone who has already gained rational clarity about God's existence. It provides a basis for relationship with God for those who do not have the space for developing rational clarity about His existence or as a stop-gap until they develop it. But the Exodus does not establish rational certainty about the existence of God; therefore it cannot provide a basis for fulfilling the mitzva of emuna.

Why, then, according to Rambam, is the Exodus mentioned in the verse commanding emuna? It is in order to link the Being we recognized at Sinai with the events of the Exodus, which, as we said, establish the unique relationship of the Jewish people with God. In other words, we do not need the Exodus to establish our emuna. Rather, we need our emuna to enlighten us about what actually happened during the Exodus.

By separating the Exodus experience from our obligation of emuna, Rambam allows the option of personal investigation as a means of pursuit of the mitzva of emuna. But it is important to bear in mind that because Rambam sees the experience at Sinai as the source and paradigm for emuna, he requires a level of certainty in our faith that narrows the possible avenues of investigation to logical proofs.

Emuna according to Ramban

Not everyone follows the approach of Rambam. Ramban is representative of the mystical tradition of Torah. He differs with Rambam in two obvious respects. First, Ramban accepts the more traditional view that our mitzva of emuna is directed toward the Creator in the classic sense — the One who created existence through a unique act. And second, he accepts the simple interpretation of the verse commanding emuna — that it mentions the Exodus because the Exodus must be the basis of our emuna even today.

Ramban's approach to emuna is that we develop it through the experience of miracles — at least, through miracles that demonstrate a systemic overriding of the order of nature. Violations of natural law show that those laws do not define existence. Rather, they function in and are superseded by a larger context that is the source of their functioning. In other words, the laws of nature have a Creator.

This view is very different from that of Rambam. He does not accept miracles as proof of a higher power because there is always the possibility that what appear as breaks in the order of nature may be preprogrammed into nature — that is, they simply reveal a higher order of nature.

This is not an isolated argument; it actually cuts to a fundamental difference between Rambam's and Ramban's understanding of God's relationship with creation. According to

Ramban, the occasional openly revealed interventions by God in the workings of physical reality are indicative of the fact that there is no such thing as natural reality. Rather, every moment of reality is the consequence of a distinct decision by God to recreate the world in whatever manner we encounter it. In other words, every moment is a miracle — a direct intervention. So for Ramban recognizing God through miracles is recognizing Him through His general relationship with reality. Ramban, on the other hand, sees the natural order we encounter as a set reality — a set relationship with creation — which God at most alters occasionally. Whether or not Ramban ever allows for a change is in dispute among the commentators. He certainly attributes to the Sages the position that whatever appears to us as a miracle was preprogrammed from the days of creation. This approach is a response to the Greek view that God's perfection requires that He is unchanging and therefore cannot modify anything in His relationship with reality (we will discuss this Greek understanding later in the book). In any case, since there is certainly the possibility that miracles are preprogrammed, they cannot be the basis of our emuna according to Ramban.

But if Ramban draws his proof from the occurrence of miracles, why must we relate specifically to the miracles of the Exodus? More powerful miracles obviously catalyze a deeper recognition. During the Exodus we witnessed an extraordinary level of miracle. Perhaps this is the reason why it must remain the basis of our emuna in the Creator.

This interpretation is problematic because there was a time when we were given even deeper insight into the complete omnipotence of the Creator — when we received the Torah on Mount Sinai. Yet that was the very occasion when, according to Ramban, God tied our emuna back to the Exodus by identifying Himself as the One who redeemed us from Egypt!

In addition to the differences we have already discussed, Ramban's path to emuna also adds another dimension to the mitzva beyond that of Rambam. Since miracles are direct interventions in world affairs, they reveal not only that the Creator exists but also that He created with a purpose which He is intent upon and involved in achieving. For Ramban the obligation to recognize this aspect of the Creator's relationship with creation is inseparable from the obligation to recognize His existence. We cannot fully recognize that He is without on some level recognizing who He is to His creation — how He interacts with it. Once we accept that God created with a goal, we, as His creations, are necessarily implicated in attaining that goal — at least in a general manner. Thus according to Ramban, emuna and some degree of obligation to God are inextricably linked.

The miracles of the Exodus bring this aspect of emuna to an unprecedented level. The Exodus saved the Jewish people from the absolute bondage of Egyptian slavery, giving us existence as a distinct people. Salvation from bondage brings obligation; salvation from absolute bondage brings absolute obligation. Together with proving the Creator's existence, the Exodus obligated the Jewish people to accept the Creator's direct and full kingship — that we are defined by our service to the Creator.

Ramban thus understands the mitzva of emuna to have two facets: emuna in the existence of God and acceptance of God's kingship. This is reflected in the verse from which we derive the mitzva. It does not merely state, "I am the Lord"; it adds the words "your God" (in the sense of King or Ruler).¹ While God's existence is evident in any major miracle, His complete kingship over the Jewish people is specifically a consequence of the Exodus.

By basing emuna on the events of the Exodus, Ramban also answers the questions we raised when discussing Rambam's approach to emuna: How do we derive a command from a statement, and how could we be commanded by the Creator in the first of the Ten Commandments when the Creator's authority over us had not yet been accepted?

Ramban's answer is that our salvation from Egypt had already created the king-servant relationship, so God's authority was established before we heard any of the commandments on Sinai. And for that very reason also, the command to believe in and accept the kingship of God came as a statement of fact — it legislated an obligation we had already accepted, a reality that merely needed to be declared. The statement "I am the Lord your God that took you out of Egypt" implies the authority and obligation that stem from the event recorded in the statement. But if our emuna must be tied to the miracles of the Exodus, does an individual quest to discover God have any relevance to our own achievement of the mitzva? Do we have leeway or alternative paths to fulfill our mitzva of emuna? Ramban does not appear to acknowledge any. At first glance this sounds strange: What could be questionable about building faith through proofs, intellectual arguments, and personal investigation?

When we consider Ramban's particular understanding of emuna, it does make sense, since Ramban's emuna is inseparable from acceptance of servitude to the kingship of God. Emuna derived from Rambam's pure rationality is indifferent to this commitment. Though Rambam obviously recognizes that we have this obligation, it is a distinct mitzva from emuna. Separating it out has important ramifications. Since emuna is the essential basis of all the mitzvot, the qualities specific to it implicate the whole relationship with God. Rambam's form of emuna implies that contemplation of God is the highest ideal. Ramban's emuna leads directly to service.

Whereas Rambam does not accept Ramban's miracle-based emuna for its lack of logical certainty, Ramban does not accept Rambam's rational emuna because it is too ethereal and ultimately misses the point.

But is it really the case that Ramban considers intellectual investigation irrelevant? According to Ramban, must emuna rest solely on the historical record?

To answer this we need to further clarify why Rambam and Ramban approach emuna in the ways that they do. Are there alternatives? Or are the paths of rational reason and miraculous experience the only ways to reach emuna?

Personally, I can say that neither of these approaches played any role in at least the initial stages of my journey to emuna. To better understand what considerations are driving the positions of Rambam and Ramban, it will be helpful to contrast them to the path by which I came to emuna.

A First Approach to Faith

Because I was first exposed to Torah when I was halfway through college at a liberal university, building emuna on the miracles of the Exodus in the manner of Ramban was not an option for me. At the time I felt certain that miracles do not happen. But Rambam's rational approach did not speak to me either. I had studied the philosopher Immanuel Kant, who concludes that the existence of God cannot be rationally proven. Though this point is hotly disputed by many theologians,⁴⁵ I was not interested in pursuing it because, in any

case, logical proofs seemed a very external means to something that I felt needed to be internally grounded.

I was open to exploring Torah because before I was introduced to it I had already become skeptical of Western materialism's claim to being a complete vision. We are trained, consciously or unconsciously, to assume that science is well on its way to explaining how everything that exists in our reality came to be, starting from the beginning of time. If this were in fact true it would not contradict the Torah; but it would leave less room for someone like myself, who was not familiar with the Torah, to be interested in investigating it. I, however, was in doubt about science's ability to close the circle.

I came to Yale with a strong background in science. My father was a successful and dedicated scientist, I went to a predominantly math/ science high school, I had already completed all my college requirements in both those subjects before arriving at Yale, and I went as a declared math and physics major. But my high school study of college-level biology had left me questioning the ability of natural selection to produce the sophistication of the organic world in which we live. I graduated in the mid-'70s and even then we knew more than enough about biochemistry and the structure of the cell to make it seem far-fetched to think that a random process could explain life as we know it. Subsequent study of the math more than confirmed this intuition.

This did not bring on any "crisis of faith" in the Western tradition. I simply took note of the impression. But it did leave me open to the possibility that the system of understanding to which I was committed was not the whole picture.

It was something else, however, that actively drew me to Torah: I saw in it a possible answer to a question that bothered me deeply. It was clear to me that it is not just nice to be nice — being good is somehow essential, necessary, objective. But I didn't find a compelling way to justify or ground that intuition within the Western tradition. Torah provided an approach. According to Torah, reality is the consequence of an uncaused act of creation. This was *hesed* (giving, kindness) in the purest sense possible: since the Creator does not need anything from creation, existence is an altruistic gift. The trait of *hesed*, therefore, is foundational to existence. We cannot resonate with reality on its deepest levels unless we ourselves also embody this trait.

My only difficulty with this concept was that I had to believe in God for it to make sense.

Emuna and Subjective Experience

My path to emuna began with extrapolating from my internal experience. The only thing which I know in its being — as opposed to how it merely appears — is myself. Though I have a physical aspect as well as a non-physical one, I experience my physical aspect as the vessel of my non-physical consciousness, while I identify with my inner experience along with its history. That is me; it is who I am.

This means that all "being" to which I have access is an internal, spiritual entity which merely takes on expression through a physical vessel. Therefore, the most logical starting point for understanding reality is to assume, unless proven otherwise, that the "being" of all things — at least those which appear to be animate like me — even though I can only access them through their physical appearance, must consist of hidden, spiritual cores. We

instinctively extrapolate our inner experience of being to the world around us; we are not satisfied to interact with mere appearances.

Moreover, if I perceive existence as an organic entity or whole, it also must have this essence. That essence is a first approximation of God. Though God is much more than the essence of creation, this thought process at least brought me to the point of accepting the possibility of His existence. I found it an adequate basis from which to seriously consider emuna and explore its implications.

That emuna was strengthened by my conviction that transcendent morality exists — an extension of my sense that "it's not just nice to be nice." This conviction is central to who I am — take it away and the remaining "I" would not be a "me" that I would recognize. My commitment to the existence of morality, therefore, is inseparable from my identity.

This is relevant to my emuna because I am unable to understand the validity of moral principles without recognizing God. Attempts with which I am familiar to ground morality in something else, such as a social contract, are ultimately based on self-interest — however sophisticated the subsequent development of the argument. Self-interested morality is not the morality to which I am committed. The sense of morality that is an integral part of my identity is inextricably bound up with objectively grounded right and wrong, good and bad — not interest or utility (which is why I specified "transcendent" morality).

In other words, if I see a large adult beating a small child I run up to him and scream, "Stop!" He asks me, "Why?" Personally, I must say to him, "Because it is wrong." Part of me would die if I said, "Because it will lead to higher taxes to supply the kid with therapy in the future."

Moreover, our culture's smug rejection of God's existence is a consequence of the overwhelming character of today's experience of physical reality. This, coupled with the ability science has given us to manipulate material with increasing precision and success, leaves us with the conviction that matter is real. In comparison, all non-physical existence, be it spiritual or intellectual, seems unreal. Our rejection of God is part of a larger dismissal of these other dimensions of existence. But if reality is truly confined to material, then our entire internal life — our ideas, ideals, emotions, and values — has no objective significance, in fact no reality at all. It is, at best, fantasy. Such an amoral vision was anathema to me. This made me realize that belief in God is implicitly part of my consciousness and identity.

These arguments were enough to start me on my path to emuna. We do not, however, find these lines of thought or anything comparable in the classical commentaries on the mitzva of emuna. We find only Rambam and Ramban with minor variations on their basic themes. Why are their approaches the only options?

The answer is that my approach is based on extrapolation from subjective experience. Though I valued its personal character, this could only bring me to recognize something I must accept. That is to say, I can realize that I cannot be me if I do not believe a certain thing. But this approach cannot lead to the realization of something that must be — a certainty whose compulsion is independent of me and my personal identity, which is what the Torah requires to properly fulfill the mitzva of emuna.

This absolute emuna cannot be built from subjective experience — at least for people on our spiritual level. Rather, it must be grounded in something objective. So the very thing I

mentioned earlier that led me to disregard a rational proof of God — its objectivity — is a requirement of the Torah to achieve emuna. I will have something to say about my intuitive preference for a subjective path to emuna at the end of this book. The Torah's ultimate standard, however, is objectivity. This leaves only the position of Rambam, that the grounding is in rationality, and the position of Ramban, that the grounding is in our historical experience of miracles.

Complications with Rambam and Ramban

That said, this objective emuna, which is the ideal of Torah, is challenging for us. With regard to Rambam's approach, how many people today are capable of the purity of logic that Rambam requires? Furthermore, few of us now genuinely embrace the results of logical arguments as compelling and binding truths. We do not respect intellect or its products to the extent people did in earlier ages; rational proofs often leave us with a nagging sense of doubt unless they confirm what we already thought was true.

This skepticism is particularly strong with regard to ideals. The larger culture of which we are a part regards ideals (which would include emuna) as no more than personal convictions; if there is any truth to them we are taught to doubt our ability to access it.

There are numerous reasons for this ambivalence toward intellect. Perhaps the most important rests on a concept that we will discuss in more detail later in this book — that the time when human personality was anchored in the intellect has passed. When our personality was identified with our intellect (roughly the period of Greek hegemony), we equated reality with ideas and thought, and by extension logical proof with truth. But though Greek culture continues to exert a powerful influence on Western culture, we are no longer Greeks, in the sense that though ideas are important to us they do not constitute essential reality for us in the way they did for the Greeks.

This disconnect between our sense of self and intellect has direct consequences for our pursuit of emuna. I already mentioned my personal reticence about using logic as the basis for belief. It seems to us external and thus artificial. How can we use something that is for us a mere tool of the self to determine something definitive of the self? It is like determining that we love someone by using algebra! With this awareness it became easy to understand an observation made by Rav Yosef ben Chayim Ya'avetz, who was part of the Spanish exile. He noted that while the simple Jews during the Spanish Inquisition gave up their lives to sanctify God's name, the sophisticated Jews, those influenced by Rambam, usually converted. It seems that a commitment created by intellect does not penetrate to the essential self.

I then realized that Rambam himself does not look at intellectual thought as a tool of the self — he sees it as the essential self. Our intellect is our tzelem Elokim (image of God), with God the ultimate "Intellect" thinking Abstract Thoughts that are Him. According to Rambam, the more we purify our rational thought and become centered in it, the more we truly exist and become ourselves. In a sense Rambam wants to return us to the Greek period when our selfhood was centered in our intellect.

But we do not naturally experience ourselves in this manner. We see this, for example, after we work our way through an Aristotelian proof of the existence of God. We do not suddenly sense ourselves to be maaminim (believers). Rather, we congratulate ourselves on having

followed an abstruse argument that is about as natural to us as translating an ancient text in an unfamiliar language using a dictionary.

People who know me consider me someone who is unusually focused on ideas. I know people who are much more intellectual than I am, but I am certainly toward the extreme end of the spectrum. And I find Rambam's vision of the essential self unrecognizable! Contemplating the twenty-six propositions from which God's existence is proven — external agents causing actualization, accidental movement necessarily ending, the impossibility of an infinity of finite magnitudes, etc. — does not make me feel at home with myself.

Genuine emuna must be experienced as personally compelling. For it to come through a proof, the necessity of the demonstration must grab us to the core of our being! With purely abstract proofs, this can only happen with those who have transformed themselves into beings centered in and defined by rational thoughts. This is why Rambam talks of the long path to philosophy. It does not come naturally or easily; the capability must be painstakingly developed.

In other words, Rambam's approach to the mitzva of emuna cannot be taken in isolation. It only makes sense in the larger context of his vision of reality, humanity, God, and, crucially, the revolution of self he requires us to achieve. To return to an earlier metaphor, perhaps a true mathematician, someone who lives everything and every moment through math, might very well use algebra to determine his love. But this would probably only be possible if the object of his love was also math.

With this point in mind, we can perceive the soaring beauty of Rambam's approach and appreciate the remarkable spiritual level he achieved in his personal life. But this also forces us to confront just how far most of us are from following his approach to achieve integrated faith. Though we recognize the greatness of the Rambam's vision, to most of us it is external and forced. Therefore, many question the relevance of Rambam's approach to anyone in our generation outside the very select few. In fact, Rambam himself writes in *Moreh Nevukhim* that even in his generation he was writing only for those few who, while fully accepting Torah, were trained in and committed to the centrality of philosophy.

With Rambam's approach to emuna beyond most of us, we are left with Rambam's reliance on miracles as the preferred path to faith. But it is not as if building emuna on the Exodus is without complications in our time.

Complications With Miracles

How are we to base our emuna on miracles when we live in a time when they have disappeared from human experience and our surrounding culture views reality as relentlessly natural? How can we develop wellgrounded conviction out of our historical tradition of miraculous experience when the very possibility of miracles is under such assault? This is another instance of a question that I am awake to because I did not grow up religious — my *girsas d'yankusa* (early formative learning) was the Western tradition. Perhaps people who were raised in Torah are able to take also this for granted. In *The Choice to Be*, however, I argue that the question should bother almost all of us, because only the select few can succeed in integrating themselves with Torah to the point that they are genuinely impervious to the influences of our surrounding culture.

Our loss of confidence in miracles comes at the end of a long process of increasing alienation from all things spiritual, which is one of the central themes of the historical development of culture. The story begins with the slow decay of spiritual experience in the Near Eastern societies that carried civilization before the rise of the West. The Jews,

as one of those societies, shared this weakening of spirituality. Then our exile to the Western empires dragged us through their even more pronounced spiritual decline. This has diluted our capacity for emuna generally. But the West's focus on physical reality and natural processes has been particularly toxic to belief in miracles which, according to Ramban, is our vehicle for building emuna.

We concluded that Rambam's rational approach to emuna is out of reach for most of us because of the purity of intellect it requires, so we turned for guidance to Ramban. Are we now concluding that Ramban's miraculous approach is beyond us so that we need to reconsider our abandonment of Rambam?

Ramban's reliance on miracles for achieving emuna is certainly a challenging approach. Yet we will see that it is not unachievable. And in any case we need to deal with our difficulties with miracles, because Rambam also requires them.

In the second half of this book we will broaden our examination of emuna beyond God's existence to include our recognition that all aspects of reality emanate from God alone — what is called *yihud Hashem* (the Unity of God). Although the necessity of God's unity can also, according to Rambam, be proven rationally, for reasons we will discuss later Rambam ties *yihud Hashem* to the Jews' unique obligation to God's kingship. And Rambam agrees with Ramban that this relationship came through our miraculous salvation from Egypt.

The mitzva of accepting God's kingship, which Ramban saw as a facet of emuna, Rambam sees as synonymous with *yihud Hashem*. So Rambam also must eventually engage the miracles of the Exodus to achieve emuna, at least this more sweeping form of it. According to everyone, then, we must develop our ability to rely on them.

Where To From Here?

Our next step is to chronicle the spiritual decline we are describing. Just knowing that in the past we witnessed open miracles and viewed reality in a manner that allowed them to integrate comfortably into our experience goes a long way toward blunting the uneasiness we feel over the distance between our miraculous narrative and today's experience of reality as relentlessly natural. Understanding that cultural forces have wrought this change transforms our current spiritually barren view of existence from objectively based truth to a historically based perspective.

This will give us some ground to stand on as we push back against our current culture's full repudiation of miracles. We will combine this with an analysis of how the Sages responded to our increasingly difficult spiritual environment, shoring up our capacity to reach emuna by developing new capabilities. At that point we can evaluate how effective those measures are today and determine if there are additional responsibilities that we need to accept to strengthen our efforts to achieve emuna.

Those interested in an overview of this historical section before plunging into the more detailed treatment of the book can turn to my eulogy for Rav Moshe Shapiro in the appendix. The eulogy describes who this remarkable man was to me — his influence on my

understanding is readily apparent to anyone familiar with his thought. To explain the challenges Rav Shapiro faced communicating Torah on the level that he did, I go through a brief explanation of the history covered at more length in this book. The eulogy also makes clear why what I am attempting to do in this book is important. Alternatively, the eulogy can be used as review once you have completed the first half of the book. It is more than a mere synopsis, so reading it at some point is valuable. <>

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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THE DEEP HISTORY OF OURSELVES: THE FOUR-BILLION-YEAR STORY OF HOW WE GOT CONSCIOUS BRAINS by Joseph Ledoux, Illustrations by Caio Da Silva Sorrentino [Viking, 9780735223837]

A leading neuroscientist offers a history of the evolution of the brain from unicellular organisms to the complexity of animals and human beings today

Renowned neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux digs into the natural history of life on earth to provide a new perspective on the similarities between us and our ancestors in deep time. This page-turning survey of the whole of terrestrial evolution sheds new light on how nervous systems evolved in animals, how the brain developed, and what it means to be human.

HUMANIMAL: HOW HOMO SAPIENS BECAME NATURE'S MOST PARADOXICAL CREATURE: A NEW EVOLUTIONARY HISTORY by Adam Rutherford, Illustrations by Alice Roberts [The Experiment, 9781615195312]

“Rutherford describes **HUMANIMAL** as being about the paradox of how our evolutionary journey turned ‘an otherwise average ape’ into one capable of creating complex tools, art, music, science, and engineering. It’s an intriguing question, one his book sets against descriptions of the infinitely amusing strategies and antics of a dizzying array of animals.”—The New York Times Book Review

Evolutionary theory has long established that humans are animals: Modern Homo sapiens are primates who share an ancestor with monkeys and other great apes. Our genome is 98 percent identical to a chimpanzee’s. And yet we think of ourselves as exceptional. Are we?

In this original and entertaining tour of life on Earth, Adam Rutherford explores the profound paradox of the “human animal.” Looking for answers across the animal kingdom, he finds that many things once considered exclusively human are not: In Australia, raptors have been observed starting fires to scatter prey; in Zambia, a chimp named Julie even started a “fashion” of wearing grass in one ear. We aren’t the only species that communicates, makes tools, or has sex for reasons other than procreation. But we have developed a culture far more complex than any other we’ve observed. Why has that happened, and what does it say about us?

TOUCH ME NOT: A MOST RARE COMPENDIUM OF THE WHOLE MAGICAL ART edited and translated by Hereward Tilton and Merlin Cox [Fulgur Press, 9781527228832]

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The rites, practices, and texts collected by the mysterious UR group for the use of aspiring mages.

- Rare Hermetic texts published in English for the first time.

- Includes instructions for developing psychic and magical powers.

In 1927 Julius Evola and other leading Italian intellectuals formed the mysterious UR group. Their goal: to bring their individual egos into a state of superhuman power and awareness in which they could act "magically" on the world. Their methods: the practice of ancient Tantric and Buddhist rituals and the study of rare Hermetic texts. So successful were they that rumors spread throughout Italy of the group's power, and Mussolini himself became quite fearful of them. Now for the first time in English *Introduction to Magic* collects the rites, practices, and knowledge of the UR group for the use of aspiring mages.

INTRODUCTION OF MAGIC, VOLUME II: THE PATH OF INITIATIC WISDOM by Julius Evola and The UR Group, Translated by Joscelyn Godwin [Inner Traditions, 9781620557174]

Authentic initiatic practices, rituals, and wisdom collected by the UR Group

- Shares a rigorous selection of initiatory exercises, including instructions for creating the diaphanous body of the Opus magicum, establishing initiatic consciousness after death, and the construction of magical chains (the enchained awareness of initiates)
- Offers studies of mystery traditions throughout history, presenting not only the principles themselves but also witnesses to them and their continual validity today

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Esoteric Freemasonry takes you deep into the mystical side of this fascinating secret society and shows you how to carry out the most powerful practices. Learn how to enter your inner temple and accomplish the ancient mysteries. Discover the compelling links to Egyptian Freemasonry as you progress through the degrees of initiation. Using this guide's profound rituals and its exploration of Masonic tradition, you'll take the next step in your spiritual practice and improve all realms of life.

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THE INTELLECT AND THE EXODUS: AUTHENTIC EMUNA FOR A COMPLEX AGE by Jeremy Kagan [Maggid Books, 9781592645138]

Developing emuna, or faith in God, is extraordinarily challenging in our day. Emuna may have sat comfortably with us as we dwelt among the worshiping cultures of the ancient Near East. But several thousand years of exposure to rationally based Western cultures has transformed our consciousness, personalities, and outlook to the point that God often seems like an idea pasted incongruously onto our vision of reality. How can we achieve an emuna that is integrated, consistent

with our rational context, yet still retains its Near Eastern soul? In 'Intellect and the Exodus', award-winning author Rabbi Jeremy Kagan traces the history of our experience of emuna, building on the perspective it provides to gain powerful insights into the nature of emuna in the modern world. He then shows how the story of the Exodus is structured to foster a perception of reality in us, out of which an awareness of God emerges naturally. That perceptual component, however, must be complimented with an inner sense of God that has a genuine basis. That basis is to be sought in the depths of the self.