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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.

Contents

Light of the Lord (Or Hashem) by Hasdai Crescas, translated with Introduction and Notes by Roslyn Weiss [Oxford University Press, 9780198724896]

This book is the first complete English translation of Hasdai Crescas's **Light of the Lord (Or Hashem)**, widely acknowledged as a seminal work of medieval Jewish philosophy and second in importance only to Maimonides' **Guide of the Perplexed, Volume 1; Volume 2**. In it Crescas takes on not only Maimonides but, through him, Aristotle, and challenges views of physics and metaphysics that had become entrenched in medieval thought. Once the Aristotelian underpinnings of medieval thought are dislodged, Crescas introduces alternative physical views and reinstates the classical Jewish God as a God of love and benefaction rather than a self-intellecting intellect. The end for humankind then is to become attached in love to the God of love through devoted service.

Review

"...this translation will hopefully inspire further serious work in Jewish philosophy, and draw others in the English-speaking world into Jewish philosophy. The translation comes not a moment too soon. That there has not been a complete translation until now is scandalous. The future of Jewish philosophy will be deeply indebted to Roslyn Weiss." -- Tyron Goldschmidt , *Religious Studies*

The beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord (Ps 111: 10)

Hasdai Crescas (c.1340-c.1410) was a man of simple piety—but by no means a simple man. Suffused with an ardent and unwavering love for God and for the Jewish people, Crescas produced, out of the depths of his love, the philosophic masterpiece, Light of the Lord (Or Hashem), a work of undisputed sophistication, monumental in scope and ambitious in conception and execution. Those acquainted with this work agree that it rivals the crown jewel of medieval Jewish thought, Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed—"rivals" it, indeed, in two senses: not only does it measure up to the Guide in range, brilliance, profundity, thoroughness, erudition, and certainly in originality and economy of expression, but it also combats the Guide's pervasive Aristotelianism. Because in his view Aristotelian physics and metaphysics deform and distort Judaism, Crescas dares to question the adequacy of the Guide's arguments and to challenge its unflinching determination to place God beyond human conception and understanding and to remove from Him all anthropomorphism and anthropopathism. If there is a single driving aim of Light of the Lord, it is to restore to Jewish thought its Jewish soul. Without sacrificing intellectual honesty or rigor, it champions and defends traditional religious belief and worship. Crescas approaches the thorniest issues in the philosophy of religion—the origin of the universe, the nature of God, the relationship between God and the world, the proper approach to Scripture and its commandments, human choice, divine providence, prophecy, the soul, and immortality—not only with a keen and crisp intellect but with a unique religious sensibility, duly recognizing the indispensability of the passional virtues of piety, reverence, and love to the perfected human life.

Crescas is one of the great systematic philosophers: all lines of thought in Light of the Lord are interconnected, converging on the single unifying theme of love. Love is at the heart of every issue: creation, infinity of space and time, providence, free will, prophecy, the end of the Torah and of human existence, and the soul's immortality Anything that cannot be subsumed under love, anything that lies outside or obstructs this central theme, is rejected. Of the three components of Torah—deeds, beliefs, and love and fear of God—it is the last, Crescas asserts, which, though smallest in quantity, is greatest in importance (Light of the Lord, II. vi. 1).

It is perhaps because of the centrality of love to Light of the Lord that the biblical figure most prominent in it is not Moses, the man of intellect who at first resists God's call, but Abraham, the man of absolute devotion who faithfully follows God wherever He leads, the only man who is called in the Bible "the one who loves Me" (Isa. 41: 18). Abraham is superior even to Adam, for Adam, despite his disposition to perfection, nevertheless succumbed to sin, whereas Abraham, despite having been raised among idol worshipers, was steadfast in his righteousness. It was therefore Abraham—and not Adam—who was deemed worthy to be the "father of a multitude of nations" (Gen. 17: 4), the "rock from which we were hewn" (Isa. 51: 1). The biblical incident recalled most frequently in Light of the Lord is the Binding of Isaac: its effect on Abraham was not a diminishment but rather a deepening of his love for God (II. i. 1).

The love that is central to Crescas's understanding of God, man, and their relationship displaces intellect as the essential link between the human and the divine. Not only, Crescas believes, is intellect unable to sustain a religious connection between human being and God; it cannot even adequately support the triad of root principles (shorashim) critical to monotheistic faith—God's existence, unity, and incorporeality. Philosophical speculation relies necessarily on uncertain and undemonstrated premises, so that philosophical arguments, in Crescas's view, inevitably frequently beg the question. Only the Torah, the supreme gift of God's love and the premier expression of His will to benefaction, can establish the foundations of faith. The Torah is not to be explained away—as a foil for deeper philosophical understanding (as it may well be in Maimonides' Guide); it is, on the contrary, the very font of understanding.

From Crescas's perspective, perhaps the most egregious sin committed by Greek philosophy is its positing of a God who has no care for human beings, who is at best an object for human intellectual apprehension. Crescas replaces the self-intellecting intellect which is Aristotle's God with a God who is engaged in infinite creation out of boundless goodness and love. Only the divine essence, according to Crescas, is beyond all-natural human apprehension; God's attributes, however, may be to some degree accessible. They accompany the divine essence as rays of light do their source: neither essence nor attributes are conceivable apart from the other. What binds essence and attributes together is the unifying principle of God's goodness.

Moreover, since the divine attributes share with the corresponding human attributes a common definition—albeit differing from them in their infinitude—one may speak of a two-way relationship between God and His human creation. Indeed, Light of the Lord affirms God's bond with the world He created and with all the creatures in it as an expression of His nature as a being of infinite passionate love (hesheq) and benefaction. Moreover, in Crescas's view, although there is no individual human being to whom God is blind or indifferent, God has a special connection with the Jewish people to whom He gave His Torah.

For Crescas, unlike for Maimonides, intellect is neither necessary nor sufficient for attachment to God: not necessary, since one becomes attached to God through observance of the commandments rather than through contemplation; and not sufficient, since philosophers need not—and generally do not—love God at all. For Crescas, the providence, prophecy, and immortality that for Maimonides are consequent upon the intellect do not require intellectual perfection; it suffices that one love and revere God. In Crescas's view the commandments make it possible for anyone—both those who are more perfect and those who are less so—to love God (III B. i. 1);

for Maimonides, since love of God and closeness to Him require a cultivated intellect, few people qualify.

In building his system, Crescas has many fascinating—indeed, groundbreaking—things to say about physics and metaphysics, the matters that occupied, and preoccupied, his predecessors. It is certainly legitimate, then, to mine Light of the Lord for the positions Crescas takes regarding nature and beyond. Yet, arguably, in offering an alternative to Aristotelian philosophy, Crescas's concern is not in the first instance to revolutionize these fields—even if his thought is nothing short of revolutionary—but rather to weaken Aristotle's iron hold on the thinking person...

[Harvey takes issue with Wolfson concerning the extent to which Crescas took himself to be advancing new views in physics as opposed to merely dismantling the Aristotelian edifice to which Maimonides was, in Crescas's view, unduly attracted. Wolfson contends that Crescas "did not mean to be anything but negative and destructive in his treatment of the physical problems of Aristotle. All he wished to accomplish was to undermine the principles upon which were based the Aristotelian proofs for the existence of God. Still, within this destructive criticism and within these arguments which are only ad hominem, we may discern certain positive tendencies in the direction of the early Greek philosophers the revival of whose views is the common characteristic of all those who long after Crescas struggled to emancipate themselves from the thralldom of Aristotle." What is in dispute is clearly not whether in fact Crescas made any constructive contribution to physics—Wolfson no doubt agrees with Harvey that "Crecas' discussions of physics and metaphysics are more than only destructive" and that "he proposes new and original concepts in place of those he rejects." Rather, the disagreement concerns Crescas's conception of his project. Harvey's defense of the claim that Crescas "saw himself" as venturing beyond the destructive into the constructive relies in part on Crescas's remark at the start of his critique in I.ii.1 of Aristotle's arguments for the nonexistence of empty space: "we have deemed it fit to reply and to exposit the falsity of those arguments, for there is in this no small benefit for this science." Note, however, that what Crescas touts here as a valuable contribution to physics is precisely his discrediting of Aristotelian views.]

...Recognizing Maimonides as a tragic victim of the seductiveness of Aristotelian thought, Crescas was alarmed by the already devastating influence Maimonides had on Jewish intellectuals who abandoned their Judaism with the Guide as their warrant. Even if Maimonides himself was able to remain steadfast in his faith, refusing (at least openly) to side with Aristotle against the Torah when the two were in conflict, what assurance was there that others, including his closest disciples, would do so? Although Crescas accused Maimonides' students of distorting their teacher's claims, it is at least possible that they reached their heterodox views not by perverting but by following to their logical conclusion the "astonishing things" (devarim matmihin) (as Crescas calls them in the Introduction to Light of the Lord) their master had said.

For Crescas, one thing is certain: God is the author of nature; all existence and all existents owe their being to Him, and everything that exists is thus utterly dependent on Him. The precise way in which God creates or emanates is ultimately of only secondary importance to Crescas. Even an anteriorly eternal world can be accommodated, so long as it is understood that God spent all of anteriorly eternal time bringing existents into being out of nothingness. Indeed, an anteriorly eternal world is compatible for Crescas, unlike for Maimonides, with Torah and miracles. For Crescas, since even an eternal universe would necessarily be a product of divine goodness, such wondrous manifestations of God's creative love as these are surely to be expected to occur in it.

The enterprise of ascertaining Crescas's position on a whole host of issues—notoriously, the free will question, but others as well, including what can be known of God—is extremely fraught, as there are many twists and turns along the way. Perhaps the virtue most needed for studying Crescas is patience: it can often seem that he has pronounced definitively on a question, when, in fact, the

second shoe has yet to drop. Sometimes that shoe never drops. Yet even when we cannot be sure where Crescas stands, we need never be at a loss as to what he stands for. <>

NAHMANIDES: LAW AND MYSTICISM by Moshe Halbertal, translated from the Hebrew by Daniel Tabak [Yale University Press, 9780300140910]

A broad, systematic account of one of the most original and creative kabbalists, biblical interpreters, and Talmudic scholars the Jewish tradition has ever produced

Nahmanides, the greatest halakhist of the thirteenth century, was one of the most original and creative expositors of the Bible that the Jewish tradition has ever produced, and one of the most influential kabbalists and mystics. In this broad, ambitious account, Moshe Halbertal provides a systematic analysis of Nahmanides's thought.

Rabbi Moses b. Nahman (1194–1270), known in English as Nahmanides, was the greatest Talmudic scholar of the thirteenth century and one of the deepest and most original biblical interpreters. Beyond his monumental scholastic achievements, Nahmanides was a distinguished kabbalist and mystic, and in his commentary on the Torah he dispensed esoteric kabbalistic teachings that he termed "By Way of Truth."

This broad, systematic account of Nahmanides's thought explores his conception of halakhah and his approach to the central concerns of medieval Jewish thought, including notions of God, history, revelation, and the reasons for the commandments. The relationship between Nahmanides's kabbalah and mysticism and the existential religious drive that nourishes them, as well as the legal and exoteric aspects of his thinking, are at the center of Moshe Halbertal's portrayal of Nahmanides as a complex and transformative thinker.

Review

"Beautifully written, Moshe Halbertal's groundbreaking book is exceptional in its capability to penetrate to the heart of Nahmanides's thinking and worldview. An admirable achievement."—Adam Afterman, Tel Aviv University

"Moshe Halbertal masterfully analyzes and synthesizes the thought of a major Jewish intellectual icon. This book is without peer."—Jonathan Dauber, Yeshiva University

"Moshe Halbertal is the lucid expositor of complex ideas *par excellence*. In this magisterial volume he meets his ideal subject, positioning Nahmanides at the apex of a creative revolution in Jewish thought."—Elisheva Carlebach, Columbia University

"Moshe Halbertal's splendid book deeply engages Nahmanides's oeuvre. Its comprehensive analysis explores the variegated intellectual activity of one of the pillars of the Jewish Middle Ages, profoundly illuminating Nahmanides's worldview."—Moshe Idel, author of *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*

Moshe Halbertal has a gift for making complex ideas readily understandable in his lucid and logically compelling Hebrew prose. It has been a pleasure to translate his work and thereby introduce more of his ideas to an English readership.

This translation, however, has required that I translate the words of IL Moses Nahman almost as much as those of Moshe Halbertal. This great responsibility was not easily discharged. Nahmanides's style could not be more different from that of the other famous medieval R. Moses—Maimonides—who wrote in a highly organized, systematic manner. Nahmanides was not nearly as systematic. His arguments do not advance with the same kind of ineluctability. He often preferred to intimate rather than expressly state, making the reader work harder. Moreover, he typically qualified and revised by keeping pen to parchment and writing on, leaving the old and the new in tension. This signature style cuts across all genres of Nahmanides's writing and probably contributed to the unfortunate state of his works at the beginning of the age of print, by which time they already were riddled with errors. Scribal or other errors more often than not have corrupted not only his words but his ideas and arguments, too. The translator's duty is to translate a text as precisely as possible, but with the printed texts as they are...

Despite my reliance on manuscripts for many of Nahmanides's works, I have not noted those instances in which I translated based on manuscript readings rather than the standard printed editions, because doing so would have needlessly encumbered, visually and otherwise, the present book. A corollary of this is that I was unable to use existing translations of Nahmanides's works, especially those produced by It Charles Ber Chavel. While Chavel mostly did a fine job in his translation given the state of the printed texts, he was not always precise in translating even those texts. Moreover, his Hebrew editions, on which his translations were based, have additional serious drawbacks that others have pointed out elsewhere.

As such, all translations here are original, unless otherwise noted. I have tended toward a more literal translation of Nahmanides's words, especially in kabbalistic contexts, where rigor is of cosmic significance. Wherever Nahmanides, or other medieval authors, launched into rhymed prose, I have tried to convey this shift in register in the translation. In order to declutter the text, however, I have omitted all instances of "may his memory be a blessing" and the like. For similar reasons, I have nor given full references to the rabbinic sources on which Nahmanides drew unless they are relevant to Nahmanides's argument or Halbertal's analysis. The interested reader will refer to Chavel's editions, where all these sources are provided.

A word about translating kabbalistic sources is in order here. Often the meaning of Nahmanides's kabbalistic allusions remains obscure (as he would have wanted), and I had to strike a tricky balance

between what his words can evidently bear, and the full exposition given by the supercommentaries, which I mostly combed through in manuscript. The same holds true for translating biblical verses: Nahmanides often does not say how he reads a given verse kabbalistically, so I had to reconstruct the most likely reading while trying to achieve the same balance.

Translating kabbalah is a thorny, complicated, messy business. In order to signal to the reader that certain words are cognomens of sefirotic entities, or are associated with particular sefirot, I have employed capitalization. The supercommentaries occasionally also understood certain other words in this way, but I have chosen not to capitalize them if they are not crucial to Halbertal's argument and may represent a later imposition on Nahmanides's original intent. In order to minimize potential confusion, I did not capitalize non-kabbalistic phrases that are often capitalized in English; therefore, I render it "the land of Israel" rather than "the Land of Israel."

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R. Moses b. Nahman (1194-1170), known in English as Nahmanides, was the greatest halakhist of the thirteenth century and remains one of the most original and creative expositors of the Bible that the Jewish tradition has ever produced. In his Talmudic novellae, Nahmanides consummated the interpretive and analytical achievements of his twelfth-century predecessors; the conceptual distinctions he minted have become tools of the trade in halakhic analysis, faithfully serving generation after generation of Torah scholars. He left his mark on each and every Talmudic sugya that he engaged with his analytical brilliance, linguistic aptitude, and meticulous reading of the sugya's progression in all its thick detail. His novellae provided the nourishment for the subsequent flowering of Talmudic creativity in Catalonia, inspiring as they did the novellae of R. Solomon Ibn Adret (Rashba, 1135-1310), IL Yom Tov Assevilli (Rim, 1260-1310), and R. Nissim Gerondi (Ran, 1315-1376). Nahmanides's prodigious creativity and exegetical prowess are readily apparent on every page of his Commentary on the Torah. The commentary's novelty lies in the combination of his psychological insight into the biblical personae and their struggles, his astute grasp of the sociopolitical conditions in which they lived, and his literary sensitivity, which is partly expressed in his treatment of broad textual units as the building blocks of the exegete.

In addition to his stature as a biblical commentator and as the greatest Talmudic scholar of his century, Nahmanides was one of the most important mystics and kabbalists of medieval Jewish tradition. Between the lines of his rich Torah commentary, he interspersed kabbalistic allusions that he crowned "the way of truth." In so doing, he crafted an exceptional work that addresses two different audiences. The vast Majority of those studying his commentary are incapable of penetrating the veil of secrecy created by Nahmanides's allusions and so view the formulaic expression "by way of truth" as a green light to pass over what follows until the commentary returns to its exoteric stratum. Moreover, some scholars from Nahmanides's own school apparently held his exoteric commentary in the highest esteem while expressing misgivings about the esoteric allusions. According to R. Isaac b. Sheshet Perfet (Rivash), his teacher Ran, who was one of Nahmanides's greatest grand-disciples, had this to say: "I likewise have informed you that my teacher, our master R. Nissim, told me privately that Nahmanides dung excessively to the belief in kabbalistic doctrine."' At the same time, the minority of kabbalistically informed readers have viewed the esoteric stratum as the center of their interest, as evidenced by the various works written solely to explain Nahmanides's allusive comments. The kabbalistic allusions in his Commentary on the Torah and his fragmentary commentary on Sefer Yetzirah constitute a relatively small, and mostly inaccessible, body of material when compared with the rest of his oeuvre. Nahmanides was very sparing in his disclosure of kabbalistic traditions, dropping mere morsels here and there, so the reader can hope

to grasp them only by putting them all together and interpreting them through oral traditions that were recorded by his grand-disciples long after his passing. Such students of his disciples Rashba and R. Isaac b. Todros included, among others, R. Shem Tov Ibn Gaon and R. Meir b. Solomon Abusahulah, who respectively wrote Keter Shem Tov and Peirush Sodot ha-Ramban. One would be mistaken, however, to infer from the limited written material that kabbalah was a peripheral interest of Nahmanides that had negligible influence on his thought. For Nahmanides, kabbalah was the deepest bedrock of truth on which his whole worldview rested. He considered it to be an oral tradition transmitted from one generation to the next ever since Moses received it at Sinai, imparting to a restricted elite the deepest meaning of the Godhead, the Torah, and all existence. Aside from Nahmanides's formative influence on a very important school of kabbalistic thought, his authority as a master halal& ist and exegete was of serious weight in getting kabbalah recognized as the authentic esoteric truth of Judaism.

Besides his monumental achievements in the fields of halakhah, kabbalah, and biblical interpretation, each of which alone would have provided him with a fulfilling and full life, Nahmanides was also deeply involved as a communal leader in the realms of social, political, and religious matters. He effected a change in the Jewish leadership of Barcelona and the character of its community, played a decisive role in the Maimonidean controversy of the 1230s, and stood tall as the stalwart defender of Judaism during the public disputation with the Dominicans in the court of the Aragonese count-king.'

The present book attempts to provide a broad, systematic account of Nahmanides's thought: his conception of halakhah and his approach to the central concerns of medieval Jewish thought, including his conception of God, history, revelation, and the reasons for the commandments.' My discussion of Nahmanides's ideas and positions on a range of matters emerges our of conversation with the work of other scholars on particular aspects of his thought, including Chayim Henoch's book Nachmanides: Philosopher and Mystic, which focuses on his reasons for the commandments, and Haviva Pedaya's book Nahmanides: Cyclical Time and Holy Text, which explores Nahmanides's conception of time and the Torah. The first two chapters of the present book take as their topic Nahmanides's approach to halakhah: Chapter I examines his philosophy of halakhah, and Chapter 2, his conception of halakhic history and his theory of custom. Subsequent chapters are devoted to Nahmanides's thought, deciphering his kabbalah, and the relationship between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of his writings.

Aside from its own inherent qualities, Nahmanides's thought was particularly weighty and influential because of his stature as a halakhist. If one were to compile a comprehensive list of the various halakhists and Talmudists of the thirteenth century, one would be hard put to point to someone whose output is more critical, systematic, and consistently insightful than that of Nahmanides. In his Talmudic novellae and glosses, one can readily see his dissatisfaction with local, forced solutions to the intricate problems that arise in the explication of the Talmudic sugya, and his inexhaustible drive to develop fundamental and systematic distinctions as a way of neatly resolving contradictions and untangling knotty problems of interpretation. This feature of his thought process forces the scholar to presume that under all of his thought—even his kabbalistic thought—there lies a well-developed, systematic worldview, even if only the tip of the iceberg is visible in any one place. The attempt to complete this picture and position it on a theosophical, metaphysical foundation guides the chapters on Nahmanides's understanding of sin, death, and redemption; his conception of the chain of being and hidden miracles; his theory of prophecy; his conception of history; and his reasons for the commandments. These threads of his thought are all intertwined and wrapped around a central religious posture rooted in his theology.

Nahmanides was a systematic thinker in the extreme. Unfortunately, he did not leave us a systematic opus akin to R. Judah Halevi's Kuzari or Moses Maimonides's *The Guide of the Perplexed*. To systematically reconstruct his thought requires painstaking attention to the snippets dispersed throughout his Commentary on the Torah, Commentary on Job, fragmentary commentary on Sefer Yerzirah, Sefer ha-Ge'ulah, Torat ha-Adam, Torat Ha-Shem Temimah, and his discourses on Ecclesiastes and the New Year.' The exploration of Nahmanides's Torah commentary focuses, therefore, on the aspects that express his thinking on the issues central to his conception of Judaism. The commentary is treated here as the key to Nahmanides's thought because aside from his main exegetical undertaking in it, he used it as a framework in which to present his ideas on the great questions of Jewish tradition. This characteristic of the commentary is evident from his inclusion of relatively lengthy disquisitions on core topics of his thought, digressions from the straightforward objective of a Torah commentary. These sections cover miracles, prophecy, the uniqueness of the land of Israel, the problem of anthropomorphism in the Targum Onkelos, the magical-demonological worldview, the chain of being, and the reasons for the commandments. Taking all these together, one can generate a quite coherent picture of his thought; in fact, Nahmanides himself must have thought so, for in his discourses, which contain the most systematic presentation of his thought, we can find almost verbatim and at considerable length parallels to these excursive passages.

As we excavate the esoteric layer of Nahmanides's thought on each issue, we repeatedly encounter a fascinating phenomenon. The components that together make up the idea of a personal God fade away and are replaced by patently causal and structural ones. The Judaism of the Bible and midrash is founded upon a deity in a living, complicated, interpersonal relationship with humans, which can be portrayed by way of analogy or contrast with the relationships between father and son, king and subject, master and slave, judge and accused, husband and wife. Within the framework of the anthropomorphic imagination, religious creativity is expressed by coining new analogies for understanding the religious posture, analogies that go on to reverberate in the construction of religious ritual and in the historical self-understanding of the community. A paradigmatic example of such religious creativity can be seen in Talmudic literature, which produced the teacher-pupil and landowner—hired hand analogies, as well as the very influential image of God reflected through the prism of the midrashic king parables, which both compare to and contrast with the Roman emperor. Furthermore, the complexity and density of religious life derive from the simultaneous application of all these analogies to a single divine personality—to take but one example, God is simultaneously both judge and father. Creation, history, revelation, the commandments, and other elements of Judaism were shaped within the biblical and midrashic literature that contains this anthropomorphic perspective on human-divine relations. As I try to demonstrate in the various chapters of this book, the anthropomorphic conception of God increasingly gives way to a kabbalistic one in which a multidimensional entity replaces this manyhatted personality. As with every other major change to tradition that occurs through processes of interpretation, here too emphasis is placed on those earlier voices within the tradition that were drowned out by the mainstream, on those ideas abandoned by the wayside of the royal road that connects and runs through biblical and midrashic literature.

This sea change, which forms one of the central axes of this book, to a certain extent situates Nahmanides's kabbalah and medieval Jewish philosophy within the same broader context. The Jewish intellectual elite of the Middle Ages experienced a crisis as they felt ill at ease with the traditional, anthropomorphic depiction of God. The esoteric stratum of R. Abraham Ibn Ezra's commentaries on the Torah and the secrets of Maimonides's Guide attest to a sidelining of the idea of God as a personality; as with Nahmanides's writings, the more their esoteric ideas are exposed, the more one

can see how the foundation of a personal God has been replaced by something else. There are, to be sure, stark differences between these esotericists, but they stem primarily from the different causal and cosmological schema each one chose as the foundation for his reinterpretation of tradition.

Unlike the Zohar, Nahmanidcan kabbalah contains no mythical personae, intricate midrashic tapestries, or exciting frame stories. The distilled form of the kabbalah Nahmanides transmits, and the role of his towering stature in solidifying kabbalah's position as the authentic secret corpus of Jewish teachings, allows us to examine his thought in the wider context of medieval Jewish culture. If it is indeed correct that the esoteric stratum of medieval Jewish thought replaces the anthropomorphic conception of God with a causal-systemic one, then the question of the relationship between kabbalah and philosophy, and the place of kabbalah in Jewish tradition, is ripe for reassessment. The divide between kabbalah and philosophy is typically understood through the categories of myth versus reason, or as the result of a gap between the kabbalist's internal, authentic voice that bursts forth from the depths of his primordial religious consciousness and the philosopher's carefully reasoned, discursive voice he adopts from non-Jewish sources. But these contrasts prove unsuitable for explaining kabbalah and philosophy because their hostility and disparity notwithstanding, on a profound level the two both reflect the triumph of the Greek category of nature. It catalyzed Jewish philosophers and kabbalists alike to provide causal explanations of major concepts of the Jewish tradition, and under the esoteric veil they reinterpreted tradition until it no longer looked quite the same. The conclusion of this book situates the picture that emerges from the preceding chapters within the wider panorama of medieval Jewish thought.

Nahmanides's Talmudic novellae and Bible commentary share one remarkable feature, which is a direct result of his extraordinary cultural positioning. In these two immense undertakings, Nahmanides developed his unique views and groundbreaking ideas in dialogue with the diverse array of halakhic and cultural approaches of the Jewish world he inherited. In his Commentary on the Torah, he consolidated his thought in conversation with the central Jewish thinkers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries: R. Solomon b. Isaac (Rashi), Ibn Ezra, and Maimonides, each of whom represented a distinct strand of medieval Jewish thought. Nahmanides characteristically invited all of them to participate in a discourse of his hosting, as he was, conveniently, in the right place at the right time: thirteenth-century Catalonia was a unique cultural basin toward which all of these opposing and divergent streams of the Jewish world made their way." The same is true of Nahmanides's Talmudic novellae, in which we find the systematic breakdown of geocultural barriers, an unparalleled phenomenon in medieval Jewish works. His frame of reference in Talmudic and halakhic study was not limited to the discourse of his own native cultural region; he formulated his positions from a synoptic vantage point that extended beyond the range of Talmudic literature to the various halakhic traditions of the twelfth century—northern French, Provençal, Andalusian, and North African. His broad horizons also owed much to the diverse backgrounds of his own halakhic teachers R. Judah b. Yakar and R. Meir b. Nathan of Trinquetaille, who introduced Nahmanides to the traditions of the northern French scholars the Tosafists and the halakhists of southern France and Catalonia." Nahmanides's predecessors did not have access to such an all-encompassing view, and even in his own writings the discourse only widened over time, until in his novellae he consistently established his position over against those of Rashi, R. Jacob b. Meir (Rabbeinu Tam), R. Abraham b. David (Ra'avad), R. Zerahiah ha-Levi (Razah), R. Isaac Alfasi (Rif), Rabbeinu Ephraim, R. Joseph Ibn Migash, Maimonides, and others.

The twelfth-century halakhists who preceded Nahmanides had had very limited discussion of nonlocal halakhic traditions. It is astounding but true, for example, that Maimonides did not relate to any of Rashi's commentaries. His halakhic discourse was limited mainly to the traditions of Andalusia and North Africa upon which he was reared, beyond which it was as if nothing else existed. The state of affairs in Germany and northern France was similar, although perhaps less so. The number of times Rabbeinu Tam related to Rif is quite meager, his halakhic discourse focused upon establishing his own creative interpretations in the face of Rashi's positions and Rhenish traditions and included extensive discussions with his northern French contemporaries. In Provence, circumstances were different, owing to its nature as a crossroads between Christian Spain and Ashkenaz (Franco-Germany), and so the discursive scope of Ra'avad, R. Isaac b. Abba Mari (author of 'Ittur Soferim), and especially Razah was broader. Each of the twelfth-century halakhists, who so comprehensively transformed the nature and character of halakhah, worked in his own world, a world in which geocultural borders oftentimes defined the boundaries of discourse and debate. Nahmanides's Talmudic novellae are the supraregional halakhic texts par excellence in terms of range—all the distinct creative streams of the long twelfth century drain into them. This development, which began in Provence and culminated in Nahmanides's Catalonian novellae, parallels a similar, albeit slightly earlier, revolution that made medieval law supraregional, too.

Nahmanides's uniqueness as the first halakhist and thinker to draw upon the totality of Jewish culture is apparent in his stance and standing in the Maimonidean controversy of the 2230$. He was the only participant amid the harsh strife to address both sides: on one hand, the sages of northern France, who banned Maimonides's writings, and on the other, Maimonides's supporters, the so-called Maimunists, of southern France and Christian Spain. Like his magnificent compositions on the Torah and Talmud, Nahmanides's letters to rabbinic personalities in northern France and communal leaden in Catalonia, Aragon, and Provence reflect his intimate familiarity with and absolute command over the internal codes of the vastly differing cultural languages of medieval Jewry. Again, his unique cultural position afforded him the ability to adopt an original position that would put out fires in the greatest culture war of the thirteenth century.

The complicated interrelationship between Franco-German and Andalusian sources of influence has preoccupied various scholars who have tried to situate Nahmanides along the axis between Ashkenaz and Sepharad. The condusion of the book returns to this question, and that of Nahmanides's position in the controversy over Maimonides's writings. What is important to stress at this introductory stage is that in contrast to the many voices in the exoteric layer of Nahmanides's commentaries and novellae, the esoteric layer of his kabbalah has a lone, authoritative voice that cannot be described by geocultural terms like "Ashkenaz" or "Sepharad." Kabbalah is just as Nahmanides makes it sound—"the way of truth," which he considered a received tradition that must be preserved from additions or subtractions. Unlike his novellae and commentaries, in his kabbalah he does not mention anyone else, be they kabbalist predecessors or contemporaries. He does not mention R. Isaac the Blind, usually referred to in the writings of the Gerona kabbalists as "the pious one" (he-hasid), and he cites R. Ezra of Gerona's writings only twice—anonymously and indirectly. Nahmanides viewed himself as a tradent of kabbalistic traditions that were not open to speculation or reasoning and should not be examined in light of the parallel kabbalistic positions maintained by the Geronese and Provençal kabbalists. The source of his kabbalistic traditions, however, remains mysterious and obscure, as evidenced by the enigmatic, and possibly ironic, name of his kabbalistic teacher, whom Nahmanides grand-disciples referred to as Ben Belimah." In any case, the absence of the Geronese kabbalists and R. Isaac the Blind from Nahmanides's writings teaches us that his

kabbalistic traditions were independent of them and that despite his presence in Gerona he should not be associated with the circle of kabbalists there.

The nature of the kabbalistic stratum within Nahmanides's thought and its relationship to the exoteric reveals a deep tension within his personality and approach, between the innovation and creativity that mark his Talmudic novellae and Bible commentary, on one hand, and the conservatism and strict adherence to tradition that characterize his kabbalistic doctrines, on the other. In addition to this tension, there is an observable gap between the contents of the esoteric stratum, which forms the innermost core of Nahmanides's thought, and his exoteric positions. Through the medium of secrecy and esotericism, Nahmanides introduced a radical dimension into his thought that he anchored in kabbalah and tradition. Chapter 8, "Esotericism and Tradition," does not analyze specific esoteric doctrines of Nahmanides but his approach to esotericism itself. The chapter focuses on how he understood the need for esotericism and its limits, and what motivated the particular path he adopted in transmitting the esoteric tradition. Beyond the multifaceted creativity evidenced in Nahmanides's exoteric writings lies this uniform esoteric layer that further complicates his personality and thought.

Of all the extraordinary figures to come out of medieval Jewry, the only one worthy of comparison to Nahmanides in terms of breadth, complexity, stature, and influence is Maimonides. These two halakhic giants, who were also both physicians and had close ties to the royal court, played decisive roles in shaping the sweeping change wrought by medieval Jewish thought: Maimonides by bringing philosophical motifs into the heart of Judaism, and Nahmanides by claiming that kabbalah constitutes the innermost, profoundest teachings of Jewish tradition. Each believed he alone was privy to the deepest and secret meaning of the Torah, and both anchored this tremendous revolution within medieval Jewry in the esoteric stratum of Judaism. Their imposing halakhic authority to a large extent lent legitimacy and protection to these opposing worldviews that changed the face of Judaism. Nahmanides, who was born almost certainly in 1194, was approximately ten years old at Maimonides's passing, and from the day he became a Torah scholar, exegete, and kabbalist, he maintained a complicated relationship with Maimonides's views, by turns adopting them, dismissing them, praising them, polemicizing against them, and defending them. Despite the vast daylight between their worldviews, the two men share the same deep tension between halakhah and thought, between the exoteric and the esoteric.

Nahmanides's achievements as the supreme halakhist of the thirteenth century and as one of the most creative commentators of the Torah make him a medieval luminary of the revealed aspects of the Jewish tradition. By comparison, his kabbalistic colleagues in Gerona, namely Rabbis Ezra, Azriel, and Jacob b. Sheshet, are known only for their kabbalah. Were we to take their esoteric teachings away from them, there would be no trace of their contribution to medieval Jewish creativity. Nahmanides could not be more different. The fecundity reflected in his Talmudic novenae and Torah commentary is plain for all to see, and those works are more than enough to entitle him entry into the pantheon of the greatest medieval halakhists and thinkers. Yet studying carefully the esoteric layer of his thought exposes the deep gap between the revealed dimensions of the Jewish tradition and the dynamic processes that were hiding beneath its surface level. Understanding Nahmanides's conception of halakhah and clarifying the nature of his esoteric thought, along with the basic religious drive to maintain it alongside his halakhic, manifest work, serve as the axis of discussion in this book.
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Mystifying Kabbalah: Academic Scholarship, National Theology, and New Age Spirituality

by Boaz Huss [Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism Series, Oxford University Press, 9780190086961]

Most scholars of Judaism take the term "Jewish mysticism" for granted, and do not engage in a critical discussion of the essentialist perceptions that underlie it. Mystifying Kabbalah studies the evolution of the concept of Jewish mysticism. It examines the major developments in the academic study of Jewish mysticism and its impact on modern Kabbalistic movements in the contexts of Jewish nationalism and New Age spirituality.

Boaz Huss argues that Jewish mysticism is a modern discursive construct and that the identification of Kabbalah and Hasidism as forms of mysticism, which appeared for the first time in the nineteenth century and has become prevalent since the early twentieth, shaped the way in which Kabbalah and Hasidism are perceived and studied today. The notion of Jewish mysticism was established when western scholars accepted the modern idea that mysticism is a universal religious phenomenon of a direct experience of a divine or transcendent reality and applied it to Kabbalah and Hasidism. "Jewish mysticism" gradually became the defining category in the modern academic research of these topics. This book clarifies the historical, cultural, and political contexts that led to the identification of Kabbalah and Hasidism as Jewish mysticism, exposing the underlying ideological and theological presuppositions and revealing the impact of this "mystification" on contemporary forms of Kabbalah and Hasidism.

The book offers a study of the genealogy of the concept of “Jewish mysticism.” It examines the major developments in the academic study of Jewish mysticism and its impact on modern Kabbalistic movements in the contexts of Jewish nationalism and New Age spirituality. Its central argument is that Jewish mysticism is a modern discursive construct and that the identification of Kabbalah and Hasidism as forms of mysticism, which appeared for the first time in the nineteenth century and became prevalent since the early twentieth, shaped the way in which Kabbalah and Hasidism are perceived and studied today. The notion of Jewish mysticism was established when Western scholars accepted the modern idea that mysticism is a universal religious phenomenon of a direct experience of a divine or transcendent reality and applied it to Kabbalah and Hasidism. The term Jewish mysticism gradually became the defining category in the modern academic research of these topics. Mystifying Kabbalah examines the emergence of the category of Jewish mysticism and of the ensuing perception that Kabbalah and Hasidism are Jewish manifestations of a universal mystical phenomenon. It investigates the establishment of the academic field devoted to the research of Jewish mysticism, and it delineates the major developments in this field. The book clarifies the historical, cultural, and political contexts that led to the identification of Kabbalah and Hasidism as Jewish mysticism, exposing the underlying ideological and theological presuppositions and revealing the impact of this “mystification” on contemporary forms of Kabbalah and Hasidism.

Excerpt: The introduction presents Martin Buber's early 20th century attempt to expose the existence of "Jewish mysticism," and the later establishment of the academic study of Jewish mysticism by Geshom Scholem, and the revolution that occurred in the study of Jewish mysticsm in the 1980's. The introduction outlines the genealogical study and critical examination of the concept and research field of Jewish mysticism that will be presented in the book, and explains that it seeks to expose the deep-rooted factors that have guided (and continue to guide) the identification of Kabbalah and Hasidism as mysticism, and how these influence the ways in which these movements are interpreted and studied. It discussed that two central claims that guide the discussion in this book. The first is that mysticism, in general, and Jewish mysticism, in particular, are not natural and universal phenomena that were discovered by researchers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rather, these are discursive constructs which served to catalogue, compare, and explain a broad range of cultural products and social structures not necessarily related to one another. The second claim that guides the discussion of the study of Jewish mysticism involves the theological assumptions that underpin the category of mysticism.

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In 1906, the young Jewish philosopher and Zionist activist Martin Buber (1878–1965) sent a copy of his newly published book *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman* to his friend, the renowned German publisher Eugen Diederichs (1867–1930), with these words:

> I am sending you a book, *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman*, which you may find interesting. Do you perhaps recall that once—a few years ago—we discussed the question of the existence of Jewish mysticism? You didn't want to believe it. With this book on Nachman I have opened up a series of documents that will expose its existence.

"Mysticism" had become a popular concept by the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. At that time (and still today), mysticism was defined as a direct and unmediated experience of a divine or transcendent reality, which constitutes the essence or apex of religion. Similar to many other thinkers of his generation, Diederichs, a central figure in the neo-Romantic movement, denied the existence of mysticism in Judaism. He believed that Judaism was a rational and legalistic religion, essentially alien to mysticism. Buber sought to prove not only that mysticism exists in Judaism, but also that it is Judaism's vital and central foundation.

Buber viewed the publication of *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman* as the first step in the exposure of the existence of Jewish forms of mysticism. But what was the significance of such an exposure? In his preface, entitled "Jewish Mysticism," Buber did not discuss unfamiliar texts or new and unknown trends in Judaism. Rather, he wished to demonstrate to the German-speaking public (Jews and non-Jews alike) that well-known Jewish texts are Jewish expressions of mysticism. Buber argued that classical Jewish sources, such as *Sefer Yetzira* and *Sefer ha-Zohar*, were written under the inspiration of ecstatic experiences and that central Jewish movements, Kabbalah and Hasidism, in particular, were created under the universal aspiration for achieving mystical rapport with the supreme, transcendent reality.

Other Jewish thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shared Buber's contention that Kabbalah and Hasidism are Jewish expressions of mysticism. Outstanding among them was

Gershom Scholem (1882–1897). As a young boy in Germany, Scholem became an enthusiastic Zionist. The writings of Martin Buber greatly impressed him, and later, he acknowledged that "Buber was the first Jewish thinker who saw in mysticism a basic feature and continuously operating tendency of Judaism" (Scholem 1976b, 145). At a young age, Scholem decided to abandon the study of mathematics and pursue research on Kabbalah. After submitting his dissertation on the early Kabbalist text *Sefer ha-Bahir* to Munich University in 1922, he immigrated to Paletstine and joined the staff of the Hebrew University, then in its early stages of establishment. He began as a librarian and later became a lecturer.

Scholem espoused the category "Jewish mysticism," basing an entire field of academic scholarship on it. Scholem accepted the modern neo-Romantic definition of mysticism and adopted Buber's assumptions about the continuous presence of mysticism in Judaism. Scholem and his students devoted enormous efforts to the historical and philological investigation of the movements through texts and doctrines they deemed to constitute Jewish mysticism. They described the development of Jewish mysticism and the influence it had on Jewish history from the late Middle Ages to the beginning of the modern age. The main purpose of Scholem's research was to reveal the centrality of the mystical element in Jewish history, which he believed enabled the national existence of the Jewish people during their exile from their homeland. According to Scholem, the study of Kabbalah had an important role in Jewish national revival. Furthermore, Scholem believed that academic research was the only means by which modern people could have contact with the transcendent reality that inspired Jewish mystical texts. Hence, in Scholem's view, academic research on Kabbalah was the continuation of Jewish mysticism in the modern period.

In the 1980s, following Scholem's death, a revolution occurred in the academic field that he founded. Young researchers led by Moshe Idel, Yehuda Liebes, Elliot Wolfson, and others proposed new perspectives and directions for research. They disagreed with many of Scholem's basic theoretical and methodological assumptions. The new scholars rejected Scholem's assumptions regarding the source of Jewish mysticism and its historical development. They questioned the exclusivity of the historical-philological methodology and suggested the inclusion of other research methods, primarily the phenomenological comparative study prevalent in religious studies.

Nevertheless, the new research did not abandon the fundamental category of the field—identifying Kabbalah and Hasidism as Jewish mysticism. Not only did researchers, led by Idel, not object to this identification, but they criticized Scholem and his followers for not sufficiently studying the mystical aspects of the Kabbalah. Following Idel, many contemporary scholars emphasized experiential and ecstatic aspects of Kabbalah and Hasidism. Through phenomenological and comparative research, they strove to understand the deep structures and basic models of the universal mystical experience, which, in their opinion, lay beneath Kabbalistic and Hasidic literature. Thus, the fundamental assumption of the research field, that is, the identification of Kabbalah and Hasidism as mysticism, continues to govern the academic study of Kabbalah and to determine its research practices.

This book offers a genealogical study and critical examination of the concept and research field of Jewish mysticism. It seeks to expose the deep-rooted factors that have guided (and continue to guide) the identification of Kabbalah and Hasidism as mysticism, and how these influence the ways in which these movements are interpreted and studied. The book examines the identification of Kabbalah and Hasidism (and some other movements) as Jewish manifestations of a universal, mystical phenomenon, and the establishment of the academic field devoted to the study of Jewish mysticism. It reveals the historical processes that led to the structuring of the category of Jewish mysticism and turned it into the key concept that governs the perception of Kabbalah and Hasidism not only in

academia but also among the broader public, including contemporary Kabbalistic and Hasidic movements. The book exposes the theological assumptions embedded in the concept of Jewish mysticism and how the revolutions that transpired in the field of study were, in fact, shaped according to the logic of these theological presuppositions.

Two central claims that guide my discussion deserve clarification at the outset. The first is that mysticism is not a natural and transhistorical, universal phenomena that exists in all human cultures. Rather, it is a modern category that originated in Western Europe and the United States in the modern period, in specific theological and political contexts, and which served to organize and interpret a broad range of doctrines, practices, and social groups. The cultural practices and artifacts defined as mystical do not share common traits or characteristics that set them aside from other things not labeled as such. Scholars of comparative mysticism assert that mystical phenomena across cultures share some common traits. Yet I am not aware of any factor, or factors, that are common only to these phenomena, and I do not think that they resemble one another more than other phenomena that are not perceived as mystical. Notwithstanding the attempts of scholars to capture the shared elements common to different mystical traditions, the only common denominator that most scholars agree on is that mystical cultural phenomena have been inspired by mystical experiences; that is, they were the result of a direct encounter with God or the transcendent reality.

I would like to emphasize that I do not deny the historical significance of texts and practices included in the category "mysticism," nor do I oppose their research. I do not deny the fact that people put their heads between their knees, whispered songs and praises, memorized the names of angels, secluded themselves, and prostrated on the graves of the righteous. I do not doubt that people who employed these practices claimed to have had visions, to hear voices, or reported extraordinary events that they described as "descending to the chariot," ascension into the garden of Eden, prophecy, or cleaving (*dvekut*) to nothingness. Nor do I deny the importance of the studies that examine these reports in their social and historic contexts.

My claim is directed against the prevalent assumption, according to which one must catalogue and explain these reports as expressions of a universal mystical experience. I doubt that for all the phenomena labeled "mystical" in various cultures there is a factor or factors—common only to them—that justify their being labeled as such, and I do not think that they resemble one another more than other phenomena that are not perceived as "mystical." In short, I do not accept the assumption that they belong to one category and require unique academic disciplines, theories, and methodologies for researching and teaching them.[1] The various historical phenomena defined today as "mystical" can be studied according to research methods and theories of the humanities and social sciences, similar to other cultural practices and products that were formed in specific historical, political, economic, and social frameworks. The use of the category "mysticism" tends to disconnect phenomena from these social contexts. Despite the fact that most researchers of mysticism will agree that phenomena labeled "mystical" transpire in specific social and historical frameworks, the use of the category "mysticism" and the attempt to study it through phenomenological and comparative methods contribute to a severing of phenomena from their historical contexts and blur their social and political nature.

This brings me to the second claim that guides my discussion of the study of Jewish mysticism. The modern concept of mysticism, as well as its use as an analytic category, entails theological assumptions that govern the way scholars study and interpret the social and cultural phenomena labeled as mysticism. Although modern definitions of mysticism do not assume an active and personal God who intervenes in history, they do assume that mystics across cultures experience an

encounter with a divine or transcendent reality. Scholars of mysticism assume that the encounter with this metaphysical reality has an influence on the mystic and his or her creativity and, therefore, on human culture, society, and history. Hence, inherent within the use of the term *mysticism* as an analytical category is an implicit assumption that the divine or transcendent reality can be a causal factor that explains cultural products and social practices.

The theological logic implied by the use of the category of mysticism, I will claim, dictates and shapes the research practices of the academic field devoted to Jewish mysticism. As I will demonstrate in the various chapters of the book, the formation of the academic field, the theories and research methods used in it, and the historiographies offered by scholars of Jewish mysticism are largely determined by the field's inherent theological logic.

Guided by these two central claims, the following chapters seek to reveal the processes that led to the establishment of the category of Jewish mysticism. They aim to clarify the factors that led to the building of a research field defined by this category and show how theological assumptions and national ideology shaped the theory and practice of the study of Jewish mysticism.

The first chapter deals with the genealogy of the modern category of mysticism as it was shaped in the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The chapter examines the theological context of the modern definitions of mysticism. It shows that theological assumptions underlie the perennialist perception of mysticism, which claims that cross-cultural mystical experiences are basically identical. It further argues that theological assumptions also have a bearing on the contextual approach to mysticism, according to which mystical experiences are shaped according to their cultural context. The chapter demonstrates that mysticism is a modern discursive construct and points out difficulties in applying it as an analytical category.

The following two chapters of the book deal with the processes of formation and reproduction of the category of Jewish mysticism and its associated academic field. Chapter 2 examines the "exposure" of Jewish mysticism by Martin Buber and the establishment of the research field of Jewish mysticism by Gershom Scholem and his pupils. It examines the relevant nineteenth-century ideological and theological contexts, especially the modern Jewish national-theological discourses associated with the Zionist nation-building undertaking, that shaped Scholem's historiography of Jewish mysticism.

Chapter 3 examines the new directions and perspectives that emerged in the research of Jewish mysticism in the late twentieth century. It discusses the theoretical and methodological changes that challenged many of Scholem's basic assumptions but also the perseverance—and even intensification—of the use of the term *mysticism* as a fundamental category in the study of Kabbalah and Hasidism. The chapter demonstrates that the changes that occurred within the field were delineated by the theological logic of the research field. The chapter identifies the modern theological suppositions of contemporary scholars of Jewish mysticism and their affinity to contemporary New Age spirituality.

The next two chapters examine the ways in which the category of mysticism, and its theological underpinnings, directed and governed the production of scientific knowledge about Kabbalah and Hasidism. Chapter 4 examines how the concept of Jewish mysticism excluded from the academic discourse Kabbalistic movements that were not considered to be part of authentic Jewish mysticism. The chapter examines the claim of Buber, Scholem, and many of their followers that the Hasidism of the eighteenth century was the final stage of Jewish mysticism. It reveals why later forms of Kabbalah and Hasidism were not regarded as authentic expressions of Jewish mysticism and why they did not,

therefore, receive any scholarly attention but were the object of contempt. In this chapter, I show that the disregard of Scholem and his pupils toward the Kabbalistic formations of their times derived from a national-theological position that viewed Jewish mysticism as a vital force of the Jewish nation during the exile, but which concluded its role with the return of the Jewish people to its homeland. The national-mystical vitality of the Jewish people was, in their opinion, expressed in the modern era in the Zionist project and not in modern Kabbalistic and Hasidic movements, which were perceived as deteriorated and irrelevant. This stance expressed a typically Orientalist ambivalence that emphasized a supposed Eastern origin of Jewish mysticism and which glorified its glorious past but viewed its modern expressions (in the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe) as faltering and degenerated. Scholars of Jewish mysticism—who viewed themselves as the authorized guardians of the Kabbalah—believed that the continuation of the Jewish mystical tradition is to be found in academic research that exposes the historical significance of Kabbalah and Hasidism, and reveals their mystical, transhistorical source.

The fifth and final chapter of the book examines the ways that the application of the category of mysticism directed the research interests of scholars of Kabbalah and Hasidism and shaped the image and practice of Kabbalah among the broader public. Subjugation of the Kabbalah to the category of mysticism led to an emphasis on Kabbalistic doctrines and practices that were compatible with the modern image of mysticism, such as reports of visions, ascension to other worlds, and union with God. Furthermore, scholars assumed that ecstatic visions and extraordinary experiences underlay Kabbalistic texts, even when the Kabbalists did not report such events. The chapter focuses on analyzing how the perception of Kabbalah as "Jewish mysticism" led to a growing interest in the writings of thirteenth-century Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia and to his description as the Jewish "mystic" par excellence. In the chapter, I discuss also the impact of the scholarship of Jewish mysticism on the image and practice of contemporary Kabbalah and on the reception of Abulafia's, who was rejected from the traditional Kabbalistic canon, as a current cultural hero of Kabbalah.

My analysis is indebted to studies written in recent decades that discuss the genealogy of the concept of religion and which offer critical examination of the field of religious studies. Talal Asad's *Genealogies of Religion* was especially influential, particularly his claim "that there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes". I was also inspired by the studies of Russell McCutcheon, Timothy Fitzgerald, and others who, following Asad, explored the formation of the modern category "religion" and the theological assumptions underlying it. The comparative and phenomenological research of Mircea Eliade and his pupils was singled out in particular, which is significant because Eliade's school greatly influenced research into Jewish mysticism. Fitzgerald claimed the phenomenology of religions is a kind of contemporary ecumenical theologization, whose main belief is that there are many religions in the world that are all equal (more or less) in that they constitute responses to one transcendent God. In Fitzgerald's words:

> Ecumenical liberal theology has been disguised (though not very well) in the so-called scientific study of religion, which denies that it is a form of theology and at the same time claims that it is irreducible to sociology either. In this context, an essentially theological enterprise has been repackaged as an academic analysis of things that can be found in the world, objects called variously religions, religious systems, faith communities and so on.

As I will explain in the chapters of this book, similar theological paradigms lie behind the category of mysticism and guide academic research of Kabbalah and Hasidism.

I was also inspired by various studies that show how the Western labeling of Oriental cultural phenomena as spiritual and mystical was accepted by political leaders and philosophers of those cultures (mainly in India and Japan) and was developed by them as part of an aspiration to construct non-Western national collective identities. As Partha Chatterjee argued, Indian nationalism launched its most creative and significant projects of structuring a modern national Indian culture in a so-called spiritual domain. Within the various contexts in which Jewish national identity developed, similar processes shaped the formation of Jewish mysticism as a category and a research field.

The genealogical and critical discussions proposed in this book progress in the opposite direction that research of Jewish mysticism has taken from the beginning of the century and up to the present. While research of Jewish mysticism assumes the existence of common essential and universal traits for doctrines and social practices defined as Jewish mysticism and strives to reveal and clarify these traits and show how they shaped Jewish history and culture, the present volume claims that the assumption that these phenomena have common traits originated in the late nineteenth century. The book seeks to reveal and clarify how this assumption was formed and how it shaped the ways in which the variety of social movements, literary texts, and cultural practices catalogued and subordinated under the category of Jewish mysticism were researched and understood. <>

A History of Kabbalah: From the Early Modern Period to the Present Day by Jonathan Garb [Cambridge University Press, 9781107153134]

This volume offers a narrative history of modern Kabbalah, from the sixteenth century to the present. Covering all subperiods, schools and figures, Jonathan Garb demonstrates how Kabbalah expanded over the last few centuries, and how it became an important player, first in the European then subsequently in global cultural and intellectual domains. Indeed, study of Kabbalah can be found on virtually every continent and in many languages, despite the destruction of many centers in the mid-twentieth century. Garb explores the sociological, psychological, scholastic and ritual dimensions of kabbalistic ways of life in their geographical and cultural contexts. Focusing on several important mystical and literary figures, he shows how modern Kabbalah is deeply embedded in modern Jewish life, yet has become an independent, professionalized subworld. He also traces how Kabbalah was influenced by and contributed to the process of modernization.

Jonathan Garb is the Gershom Scholem Professor of Kabbalah at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 2014, he received the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities' Gershom Scholem Prize for Kabbalah Research. His latest books include **Shamanic Trance in Modern Kabbalah** (2011) and **Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah** (2015).

Review

'While the study of Kabbalah in both scholarly and popular circles remains vibrant, until now there has not been a history of Modern Kabbalah stretching from the sixteenth century. With his usual deep learning, conceptual rigor, and lucidity, Jonathan Garb offers a broad and creative rendering of how Jewish Kabbalah developed from the Lurianic circle to New Age Religion and the late modern commodification of mysticism. Garb deftly navigates through the early period to draw out the threads that will become emblematic in modernity. A major contribution to the study of Kabbalah and the History of Religions more generally. — Shaul Magid, Professor of Jewish Studies, Dartmouth College

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This volume represents the first attempt to provide modern Kabbalah with a comprehensive and autonomous history. It is a good idea to stress at the outset that while Gershom Scholem, a founder of academic research in Jewish mysticism, began his own account of modern Kabbalah with the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain, here we commence (for reasons to be explained in Chapter 1) with the spiritual revolution that took place in the Galilean town of Safed around the mid-sixteenth century. Since this time and even somewhat earlier, Kabbalah has been an important player not only Jewish history, but also in the cultural and intellectual life of Europe.

It was only in the modern age of print and other forms of rapid communication that Kabbalah became a major factor in Jewish textual, liturgical and ritual life, engendered mass social movements (Sabbateanism, Hasidism and the Zionist school of R. Avraham Itzhak Kook) and also significantly impacted European intellectual life (mostly notably in the case of Baruch Spinoza). Fueled by print and lately digital technology, modern Kabbalah is quantitatively vast (and constantly expanding): the literature composed in various kabbalistic worlds in this period is staggeringly voluminous (rendering any attempt to summarize it in one volume a true challenge). For example, the Otzar Ha-Hokhma database (created in recent years in traditional Yeshiva circles in Jerusalem), one of several, contains approximately 10,000 Hasidic books (all modern) and printed works of Kabbalah (almost all modern). On the qualitative level, we are dealing with a highly diverse array of complex theosophical systems, intricate techniques, radical ecstatic and revelatory experiences and intense conflicts (also in scholarship...). All these spread not only throughout Kabbalah's continents of origin, Europe and the Middle East (especially impacting the sociopolitical development of the state of Israel) but also, later, to the Americas (as well as other global locations such as South Africa and India). All of the above processes greatly accelerated in the late modern period and hence my stress on the last two centuries.

Yet surprisingly, there is no scholarly (or even popular or traditional) book on the history of modern Kabbalah. Actually, there is no English language work on the history of Kabbalah as such. Scholem's canonical Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism is explicitly confined to what he himself regarded as the central schools of kabbalistic and pre-kabbalistic Jewish mysticism, mostly premodern (thus, there is virtually no discussion of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in this 1941 book). Scholem's focus on the late antique, medieval (and at most early modern) periods is in tension with his above-noted emphasis on the very early modern event of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, as well as his obvious fascination with the seventeenth-century Sabbatean movement and its offshoots. Furthermore, the next generation of phenomenological overviews of prominent kabbalistic themes was also focused mainly on premodern periods (as in the works of Moshe Idel, Elliot Wolfson and Charles Mopsik). This is obviously true of what is perhaps the most successful publishing project in the field, Stanford University Press' multivolume translation of the thirteenth-century classic, the Zohar. It is only in recent years that the autonomy of modern Kabbalah and its discontinuities with premodern forms have been increasingly recognized, due mainly to the work of Shaul Magid, Boaz Huss, myself and the new generation of scholars. As a result, we have seen a marked increase in specific studies devoted to modern figures and developments, yet without any attempt at organizing these in an unbroken and comprehensive narrative, which would also include the numerous unresearched (or entirely unstudied, even in traditional circles) centers, figures, texts and trends.

Actually, there are two schools that have captured the popular imagination from the early twentieth century, due to the writing of Scholem and his archrival Martin Buber: the radical Sabbatean movement and the highly colorful Hasidic worlds. More recently, these have been joined by the twentieth-century schools of Kook (due to his remarkable influence on the history of Israel) and R. Yehuda Leib Ashlag (due to his universalistic reading of Kabbalah, facilitating massive popular reception and reworking). However, all of these have been sequestered in discrete conversations, rather than being integrated within the panorama of modern Kabbalah or, more ambitiously, within that of modern intellectual history. In this sense, the present project is complemented by broad studies of modern Judaism, such as those penned by David Ruderman and Leora Batnitsky.

This volume will provide a detailed century-by-century description of the major developments, schools, figures, works and challenges of modern Kabbalah. This narrative format, utilizing the convenient centennial convention (which does not always work neatly in actual practice), facilitates contextualizat ion and dialogue with other fields of research. Yet again, the focus here shall he on the role played by Kabbalah in the development of modern Judaism (with the history of Christian Kabbalah/kabbalistic Christianity and its tributaries assigned a supportive role). The five historical chapters (whose respective length will favor later periods, as indicated above), will be preceded by a chapter explaining the uniqueness of modern Kabbalah and detailing the limes that it carried over from premodern periods. The concluding chapter will trace recurrent topics over the entire modern period, summarizing the differences between subperiods, and briefly pointing at domains for further research. The purpose of this structure is to combine a focus on recent and contemporary developments with long-term historical perspective.

Major scholarly positions and disputes, both early and current, will be extensively addressed, yet interwoven into the discussion of the kabbalistic materials, in order to prioritize the texts themselves. This choice reflects the heavily exegetical nature of kabbalistic discourse (referring both to canonical Jewish sources and, increasingly, to the kabbalistic canons and subcanons), In which the text itself is seen as an embodiment of the divine, with its study being regarded as the quintessential form of world-maintenance and world enhancement. It can be well argued that this dominance of the text sets Kabbalah apart from most other forms of mysticism (alongside other differences). Of course, this is not to negate non textual dimensions of kabbalistic life, whether we are dealing with oral transmission, mystical or magical forms of life and practice or ineffable inner experiences. Nonetheless, unless we are speaking of contemporary or very recent phenomena, we only have access to the para-textual through its recording and preservation in texts.

This text- centered approach is also expressed in numerous, yet concise quotes from striking passages, found in existing translations or first translated here (thus increasing the scope of key texts available to readers in English). While the emphasis shall be on studies available in English, one of the aims of this work is to acquaint readers with the best of scholarly writing in other languages (naturally mostly Hebrew), in all three generations of modern Kabbalah research (the history of which shall be described in its context in Chapter 6, while its present state shall be addressed in Chapter 7). Thus, readers shall be exposed to the current burgeoning of graduate and postgraduate work in the field, alongside a taste of the vast material yet to be researched. Social scientific approaches, particularly sociology and psychology, shall also be engaged in dialogue, in order to explore the nexus of intellectual, cultural and social history (as in the case of formation of elite circles and later of mass movements).

The overall implications of the book include the need to place modern Kabbalah in its own context, thus capturing its autonomy from (yet also continuity with) earlier periods, its dialogue with mystical

traditions in other religions, its basic coherence over five centuries and its unique impact on modern culture. It shall be argued that the reflexive nature of modernity carried over into the self-awareness of modern kabbalists (calling for a different toolkit from that employed in the study of medieval Kabbalah). Recurrent themes to be encompassed, century by century and also in tandem, will include: forms of social organization; new genres of writing (especially autobiography and hagiography) and literary style; the impact of print culture; systems of psychological thought; emergent forms of self-cultivation and regimes of ritual and daily life; increased sophistication in the cultivation of meditative or trance states; transformations of discourse on gender and sexuality; the increase of nationalistic discourse; and new ways of interpreting canonical, non-kabbalistic works (such as the Bible and the Talmud), joined by modern Kabbalah's self-interpretation. In sum, the main contributions of the book will be the first-time (in English) comprehensive historical-chronological presentation of kabbalistic literature, combined with a manageable and justifiable focus on the modern period; pioneering exposure to central schools, figures and works; especial treatment of recent and contemporary developments; a coherent account of central recurring themes; placement of the subject in a broader Jewish and extra-Jewish historical context; dialogue with the social sciences; an updated, critical and hopefully nonpartisan history of scholarship in various languages, pointing toward areas for further research.

Premodern and Modern Kabbalah: Breaks and Continuities

The premise behind a separate history of modern Kabbalah lies in its autonomy from premodern Kabbalah. This is evident first and foremost on the intrinsic level - the self-consciousness of modern kabbalists and their unique forms of social organization and new genres of writing. Yet this claim also rests on extrinsic factors - the impact of the dramatic changes heralded by Jewish and general modernity. At the same time, autonomy by no means entails independence or isolation, so that the chapter will take up the major themes continuing premodern kabbalistic approaches. These include exegesis of canonical texts (Bible and Talmud), gendered views of the divine world and perceptions of theurgical or magical impact of embodied human action on the supernal and, conversely, the demonic realms. In this context, we shall follow specific historical chains of continuity and examine the changing role of canonical premodern kabbalistic corpora, especially the thirteenth and fourteenth-century Zoharic literature (composed in Castile, Spain). However, the excessive dominance of the influence of this corpus in existing studies of modern Kabbalah shall be critiqued.

It is well beyond the scope and goals of this work to examine in detail nonkabbalistic premodern influences on modern Kabbalah. These include general (Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism) and Jewish (Heikhalot, or chambers of the supernal realm, literature and magical writings) forms of mysticism in late antiquity. These were then joined by medieval phenomena: Jewish (Hasidut Ashkenaz, or German Pietism and Judeo-Sufi Pietism and Spanish mystical poetry) and general (Islamic and Christian mysticism). Some of these shall be alluded to throughout, yet strictly when the topic at hand calls for it. It is even less appropriate to do more than mention the complex and contested question of the interrelationship between mythical mystical sources (Jewish or otherwise) dating to even earlier antiquity (e.g. the period of the Mishna, as in the second chapter of tractate Hagigah, Gnostic sources or the corpus of Philo) and the open manifestation of Kabbalah (literally reception of transmission), under that very name, in the Middle Ages! Therefore, this chapter shall focus on modern Kabbalah's dialogue with its immediate predecessor, namely the tradition surfacing or developing, mainly in Southern Europe (Provence, Spain and Italy), between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Thus, it should be stressed, it does not purport to provide any history of medieval Kabbalah (though such a volume, placing this lore in its often neglected historical-geographical context, would be greatly desirable). Rather, it shall provide the modicum of detail necessary for

appreciating the prelude to modern Kabbalah, a screenshot, as it were, of the state of affairs at its inception.

Kabbalah in Transition to Modernity

The great variety of traditions, corpora, locations (as in the unique development of the Kabbalah in Italy or the Byzantine Empire) and interactions with earlier or parallel worlds, make it difficult to assume that there was a singular, consistent and coherent body of thought and practice known as Kabbalah by the end of the medieval period. Kabbalah should be seen as autonomous, rather than independent, in relation to the wider context of medieval life, both Jewish and general, with specific corpora or schools tied to complex strands to cultural forces ranging from German Pietism to Maimonidean philosophy (as in the case of Abulafia). Nonetheless, the kabbalists themselves assumed that there was such a 'reception' (the literal meaning of the term Kabbalah), as well as a social group composed of kabbalistic exegetes and/or practitioners. Furthermore, we have followed the tendency to cluster around canonical groups of texts, even prior to the solidification of canons by the modern advent of print. As a result, the approach taken in this chapter was that of isolating common denominators that, as we shall see, carried forward into the Renaissance and modern periods. Yet all the while, one should recall that modern kabbalists inherited not a doctrine, but a series of tensions, complexities and debates. The manner in which these played out, fueled by the dynamic processes of modernity itself, account for the sheer richness and vastness that is modern Kabbalah. It is this very richness that enabled the crystallization of the professional, discrete identity of the kabbalistic practices and circles. <>

THE CHOSEN WILL BECOME HERDS: STUDIES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY KABBALAH by Jonathan Garb, translated by Yaffah Berkovits-Murciano [Yale University Press, 9780300123944]

The popularity of Kabbalah, a Jewish mystical movement at least 900 years old, has grown astonishingly within the context of the vast and ever-expanding social movement commonly referred to as the New Age. This book is the first to provide a broad overview of the major trends in contemporary Kabbalah together with in-depth discussions of major figures and schools.

A noted expert on Kabbalah, Jonathan Garb places the "kabbalistic Renaissance" within the global context of the rise of other forms of spirituality, including Sufism and Tibetan Buddhism. He shows how Kabbalah has been transformed by the events of the Holocaust and, following the establishment of Israel, by aliyah. **THE CHOSEN WILL BECOME HERDS: STUDIES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY KABBALAH** is an original piece of scholarship and, in its own right, a new chapter in the history of Kabbalah.

Review

"The first comprehensive survey of the major developments in the history of Kabbalah as well as the spiritual life in Israel in the twentieth-century…This is an original piece of scholarship, written by a first-rank scholar."—Moshe Idel

"Garb's monograph is the grounding study of twentieth-century Kabbalah. The volume offers a profound appreciation of the social and political forces in play amongst the schools that study and

produce Kabbalistic literature in our day."—Daniel Abrams, Bar Ilan University, Editor of *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*

"Jonathan Garb traces the astonishing transformation of the Kabbalah from an obscure, initially devalued scholarly domain to a bold, generative movement of twentieth-century mystical speculation. His approach is at once critical, skeptical, and empathic in the finest sense of the word, and the story he tells is illumined by a broad comparative vision and by his immense erudition in the classical Jewish sources. This essay is an exemplary instance of modern, historically informed comparative religion."—David Shulman**,** Hebrew University (David Shulman)

"The best book I've read on modern Jewish mysticism. Jonathan Garb gives us an insightful overview of contemporary Kabbalah and Hasidism, including the impact of Zionism, postmodernism, New Age, and the internet."—David R. Loy, author of *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*

"Jonathan Garb presents a fascinating picture of the latest phase of development in Jewish Mysticism, in particular its complete break with esoteric restrictions and traditions."—Moshe Halbertal, New York University School of Law

"Garb shows how 20th-century Kabbalah impacted multiple political, religious, and cultural arenas in Israel and beyond. Simply put, this is the best available map of modern Kabbalah."—William Parsons, Rice University

This book is based partly on a series of articles that I published on twentieth-century Kabbalah, and partly on original and as yet unpublished research. The articles have not been copied verbatim but have rather been woven into the text alongside new findings. Readers interested in further research may consult former articles of mine on this topic. My interest in twentieth-century Kabbalah was triggered by my early exposure to the writings of R. Avraham Yizhaq Ha-Kohen Kook. My in-depth study of his works led me, while a student at the Hebrew University, to participate in a research project conducted by Professor Tamar Rappaport into sociocultural processes in the Religious-Zionist world. Since then, my research has expanded to include other kabbalistic movements, and it is that research that forms the underpinnings of this book. This study of twentieth-century Kabbalah

has allowed me to combine my interest in Kabbalah and comparative mysticism with my interest in postmodern culture.

It is incumbent on researchers studying the present or the recent past to try to narrow the distance between themselves and the phenomena they are studying, as well as the distance between themselves and their readers. I will, therefore, share with my readers some of the dilemmas and conflicts I encountered in researching twentieth-century Kabbalah. Clearly, my interest in the transformations that the world of Kabbalah has undergone in recent generations is related to the fact that I myself was exposed to these shifts, first as a Yeshiva student and later as a university researcher. My geocultural status also explains my focus on processes that took place in Israel.

As I predicted in the postscript to the Hebrew edition of this book, a great deal has happened in the world of contemporary Kabbalah even in the short time since that edition was published. At that time, I argued that the main obstacle facing researchers of twentieth-century Kabbalah was the fact that many important works remained in manuscript or circulated within closed circles. Fortunately, this state ofaffairs has greatly improved, for in the past couple ofyears works by almost all of the important late kabbalists mentioned in the book have been published.

In addition to these texts, we have seen over the past few years the publication of new and interesting works by many of the living figures discussed here (such as R. Ginsburgh, Ohad Ezrahi, Michael Laitman, R. Moshe Shapira, and R. Tau), the extraordinary appearance of extremely esoteric works (such as the Scroll of Secrets by R. Nahman of Bratzlav, published by Zvi Mark), and the emergence of intriguing new figures (such as R. Itamar Schwartz, author of the multivolume Bi-Lvavi Mishkan Evne). Naturally, recent events in Israel, such as the disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the Second Lebanon War, have also prompted fresh kabbalistic discourses, by R. Ginsburgh and R. Yitzbaq Maier Morgenstern, respectively. Finally, the emergent field of twentieth-century Kabbalah research has produced a spate of new and important studies, such as those by Yoram Bilu, Smadar Cherlow, Shlomo Fischer, Boaz Huss, Jonatan Meir, Haviva Pedaya, Avinoam Rosenak, Philip Wexler, and others.

Toward a Twenty-First-Century Kabbalah

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that I do not share the view that spiritual choices can be reduced to social or sociological factors. I believe that the upsurge of interest in mysticism stems also from the internal force of the ideas it represents. Although the demise of the modernist rationalist metanarrative (both secular and religious) may have helped disseminate mysticism, by the same token the force of mystical thought may have triggered the challenge to the modernist metanarrative. It is also possible that mystical forces that were formerly repressed or diverted now enjoy free expression. According to this line of reasoning, Kook's literary and contemplative treasures, which are becoming increasingly evident with the publication of his hidden works, have a force of their own that contributes to the dissemination and popularity of his works. The same process is occurring within contemporary Hasidic literature, where early works such as Esh Qodesh or Mei Ha-Shiloah are fertilizing the neo-Hasidic renaissance. As for magic, it is older than all the religious and ideological phenomena mentioned in this book and shall probably outlive them.

Gershom Scholem anticipated that Jewish mysticism would resurface, and he therefore wrote at the end of his monumental work Major Trends, "The story has not yet ended, it has not yet become history, and the secret life it enfolds may surface tomorrow in you or me." Today we are witnessing the realization of this prophecy. Indeed, Scholem himself proposed on a few occasions the possibility of a secular mysticism. The New Age movement, which operates mainly outside the religious establishment and frequently without any religious belief in the accepted sense, is the effective

realization of this option.' We may, therefore, anticipate the development of a secular Kabbalah devoid of religious affiliations, along the lines of the Kabbalah offered by the Kabbalah Center. Michael Laitman, the leader of Bnei Barukh, claims that "it is almost impossible to approach Kabbalah from religion," and that it is easier for the secular public to embrace Kabbalah, since, according to him, "Kabbalah relates solely to the internal dimension of divine worship within man." From a sociological perspective, the secularization of mysticism may take many forms, from religious organizations masquerading as secular ones to spiritual activities by the formerly religious.

Alongside the secularization of Kabbalah, we see a growing schism between Kabbalah and Jewish identity—a trend even more marked than the schism between Kabbalah and halakhic Judaism (see Chapter 6). The overtures of the Ashlag circle to the non-Jewish world and the burgeoning of Christian Kabbalah are manifestations of the globalization of Kabbalah within an eclectic culture that is unaffiliated with any specific religion. Even contemporary Christian Kabbalah has a more psychological flavor than a Christian one. The growing rift between neoKabbalah and Jewish traditions should permit a merger of Jewish and Christian forms of Kabbalah.

These qualitative changes may trigger quantitative changes, some of which we are already witnessing, such as the establishment of Kabbalah centers in countries that formerly had little kabbalistic activity, such as England, Australia, and South Africa." This trend, which should bring about new kinds of kabbalistic writing, reflects the globalization of Kabbalah and the return to Judaism that is taking place within these communities.

Although I am not sure that Forman is right in categorizing the new mysticism a "civilizational" change, it certainly represents an extremely profound social and spiritual transformation, which is no longer in its infancy. In writing this book, therefore, I have attempted not only to write "a history of the present," in the spirit of Foucault's appeal, but also to pave the way for the writing of a history of the future. In this context, it is worth quoting Joseph Dan's statement that the New Age movement was not only "the most sweeping phenomenon of the late twentieth century but also one "that shows us very clearly what to expect in the next century. <>

Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah by Jonathan Garb [The University of Chicago Press, 9780226295800]

In **Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah** Jonathan Garb uncovers a crucial thread in the story of modern Kabbalah and modern mysticism more generally: psychology. Returning psychology to its roots as an attempt to understand the soul, he traces the manifold interactions between psychology and spirituality that have arisen over five centuries of Kabbalistic writing, from sixteenth-century Galilee to twenty-first-century New York. In doing so, he shows just how rich Kabbalah's psychological tradition is and how much it can offer to the corpus of modern psychological knowledge.

Garb follows the gradual disappearance of the soul from modern philosophy while drawing attention to its continued persistence as a topic in literature and popular culture. He pays close attention to James Hillman's "archetypal psychology," using it to engage critically with the psychoanalytic tradition and reflect anew on the cultural and political implications of the return of the soul to contemporary psychology. Comparing Kabbalistic thought to adjacent developments in Catholic, Protestant, and

other popular expressions of mysticism, Garb ultimately offers a thought-provoking argument for the continued relevance of religion to the study of psychology.

Review

"For anyone who studies Kabbalah, it is clear that that subject's most relevant cognate discipline is psychology. In Jungian terms, the lists and diagrams of collective archetypes made by Jung and, particularly, his student Erich Neumann, overlap as much as eighty percent on the subject listings of kabbalistic lexicons from the sixteenth century to the present. Gershom Scholem, the organizer of the field, often averred that Hasidism, the leading expression of Jewish mysticism in modernity, was distinguished by its imbuing of metaphysical ideas with internalized, psychological resonance. Now Jonathan Garb has come to move the calendar back and show that the psychological content of kabbalistic writing asserts itself far earlier than once thought." — *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

"In **YEARNINGS OF THE SOUL: PSYCHOLOGICAL THOUGHT IN MODERN KABBALAH**, Jonathan Garb, the Gershom Scholem Professor in the Department of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, explores the rich psychological tradition in modern Kabbalah and modern mysticism. Tracing Kabbalistic writing from sixteenth-century Safed to contemporary New York, he shows how both psychoanalysis and modern Kabbalah have been expressions of the process of modernization." — *New Books Network*

"This is a very sophisticated study that makes a thought-provoking body of literature, modern Kabbalah, accessible to intelligent readers with no previous knowledge of the field and shows these readers the depth, significance, and relevance of this literature and its authors. It is a remarkable achievement that belongs in any collection dealing with contemporary religion—Jewish or otherwise." — *Religious Studies Review*

"*Yearnings of the Soul* is a valuable contribution to multiple worlds of scholarship. For academics working in the field of Jewish mysticism, Garb's work offers new directions for scholarship and helps to define the field of modern Kabbalah. It is also an important reminder that we scholars of Jewish studies inhabit a world of broader disciplines. The scholarship of Jewish thought need not be restricted to diachronic history of ideas within the unadulterated universe of purely Jewish orbits. And for scholars of religion, **YEARNINGS OF THE SOUL: PSYCHOLOGICAL THOUGHT IN MODERN KABBALAH** is a fascinating case study in the development of a tradition in a wide variety of cultural contexts; it is a rich tale of particulars with wide-reaching implications." — *The Soul of Scholarship*

"An original, pathbreaking study of the renderings of the 'heart and soul' in the works of major, minor, and even obscure (but important) figures that dot the landscape of modern Kabbalah. In his panoramic sweep, Garb has unearthed a treasure trove of neglected figures and texts, bringing into dialogue their views on heart and soul with those found in other religious and secular authorities. The result is nothing short of astonishing." — William Parsons, author of Freud and Augustine in Dialogue: Psychoanalysis, Mysticism, and the Culture of Modern Spirituality

Contents

Psychology and the Emerging History of Modern Kabbalah

> The Struggle with history ... is a way of soul-making. The occupation with history ... reflects *anima.* —James Hillman

As I have claimed in the past, there is a glaring discrepancy between the fact that the greater part of Kabbalistic literature was penned in the modern period and the focus on the premodern periods in academic training. This is certainly true in the case of psychology, as almost the entirety of research on the soul in Kabbalah is devoted to the medieval period.[44] Since my last book on modern Kabbalah, and perhaps at least partly in response to it, the study of modern Kabbalah has indeed been burgeoning, creating a much-needed setting for the investigation of specific themes. David Ruderman's wide cultural history of Jewish early modernity and Maoz Kahana's groundbreaking work on Central Europe in the eighteenth century have greatly improved our understanding of the cultural and intellectual context in which modern Kabbalists operated. The updated publication of David Sorotzkin's work on Orthodoxy and modern disciplination has joined the publication of Roni Weinstein's above-noted *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity.* Yaacob Dweck's work on R. Yehuda Modena used Modena's seventeenth-century critique of Kabbalah as a case study for examining the interrelationship of Kabbalah and modernity. Pawel Maciejko's work on the Frankist movement, joined by Ada Rapoport-Albert's work on Sabbateanism, take up Scholem's main inquiry (at least in the modern period) and deal with a world whose psychological thought deserves further investigation, yet not in the present study, for reasons that will be discussed in chapter 7.

As we shall see in that chapter, I continue to focus my exploration of modern Kabbalah on the more nomian and mainstream streams of Jewish modernity, all the while seeking to illuminate schools and texts, especially between the late sixteenth and early twentieth centuries, which have enjoyed less scholarly attention. Among these, I would include the Middle Eastern reception of Safedian Kabbalah (which has now received an important historical study by Jonatan Meir), the above-mentioned Luzzatto circle, and works that have barely been mentioned in English, such as the seventeenth-century *Nishmat Adam* by R. Aharon of Kremnitz (devoted entirely to the topic of the soul), the nineteenth-century works of R. Isaac Haver of Lithuania, and the voluminous works of R. Ya'aqov Abuhatzeira of Morocco in the same century. In addition, I propose to move through psychology towards a new reading of better-known schools, such as the Lithuanian Mussar movement and the Hasidic schools unfolding from the circle of the Seer of Lublin. In this analysis, to be offered in chapter 3, I hope to be able to show that specific developments in European modernity impacted on these strongly psychological views of the soul.

Generally speaking, I follow Daniel Abrams in seeking to correct the ever-increasing academic tendency, in both research and teaching, to repeatedly focus on a limited corpus, especially when we

are speaking of the modern period. Although the recent developments surveyed above have somewhat improved this sad state of affairs, one cannot but note the gap between the sheer volume of material available now through vast Haredi databases such as Otzar HaHokhma, not to mention the manuscript material that Abrams focuses on (gradually being published in Haredi editions), and the generally repetitive selection in the universities. This slow migration of cultural capital (and of the emotional energy associated with it, paraphrasing Randall Collins) away from the university reflects the crisis of both the Zionist and the liberal American Jewish enterprises, both of which include a strong drive towards canonization.

In any case, we are still very far from a general theory of Kabbalistic modernity. I feel that one vital step towards this goal is a much fuller and consciously comparative treatment of one of the key characteristics of European modernization—the psychological realm. I believe that the recent debates surrounding the modern selfhood that emerged over the course of the eighteenth century (the notion of interiority and uniqueness as articulated in the philosophical tradition versus cultural configurations of gender, race, and class) will be cast in a different light once one places this discussion in a more panoramic context. Namely, if we allow Raymond Martin and John Baressi (as well as their duly acknowledged predecessors) to remind us that the modern self could emerge only once it was reimagined, in this period, as mind rather than as soul, especially in the case of John Locke and his respondents, or alternatively, that the modern self has often replaced the soul. As we shall soon see, this period of what is increasingly termed "the long eighteenth century" will be cardinal in our narrative of the modernization of Kabbalah.

However, in order to avoid universalizing the Western psychological mind-set, even when more broadly construed, it must be remembered at all times that this is but one of "multiple modernities," to use the late lamented S. N. Eisenstadt's felicitous phrase. While including Ottoman Kabbalah obviously requires addressing modern Sufism to some extent (in chapter 2), other mystical traditions on the soul can be addressed mainly in order to illustrate both the uniqueness of the European case and the profoundly Euroean nature of much of modern Kabbalah.

In view of these cautions, the comparative discussion in chapter 6 will mostly juxtaposition Kabbalah's psychology with Christian contexts such as the seventeenth-eighteenth century "religion of the heart" (also comparing the recent Kabbalistic writing on the soul covered in chapter 5 to similar discourse in mystical Christianity and Western Sufism, no less than "unchurched" mysticism). In doing so, one cannot but extend Wolfson's formidable study of attitudes to non Jews in Kabbalah and address the role of nationalization on the evolution of what I have elsewhere termed "national psychology" within Kabbalah, to be addressed in detail in chapter 4. One of the key shifts from premodern Kabbalistic thought to the psychology of modern Kabbalah was the victory of the doctrine of the divinity of the soul, which was almost always interpreted as the Jewish soul."

At the same time, that chapter will show that even in the depths of national psychology, as in the writings of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaq Kook, one may find insights conducive for psychological thought and imagination. Furthermore, my comparative chapter will disclose the paradoxical similarity between Jewish national mystical psychology and parallels in modern Europe. All of these moves require relinquishing the insistence on "panoramic" continuity between modern Kabbalah and premodern modes of thought. Specifically, the decline of Greek-influenced philosophy in increasingly nationalized Jewish culture from the sixteenth century precludes reading later developments as "neo-Platonic." The retreat of Jerusalem (literally in the case of sixteenth-century Jerusalemite Kabbalah) from dialogue with Athens also creates a certain distance from psychoanalysis, including archetypal psychology, as an heir not only of Greco-Latin terminology, but also of Greek mythology.

In other words, I part ways with Hillman, with his conscious return to the Renaissance and through Florence to Greece, in attempting to present a thoroughly modern imagination of the soul as an inspiration for its return.

Our tale of the soul in modern mysticism will weave together numerous images and motifs arising from both Jewish and Christian sources discussed throughout the book, following rich accounts of the wandering and return, renewal, recovery, rebirth, growing, proliferation, migration, transformation, and personalization of the soul. All these are gerunds, for just as process theology claims that "God is a verb," a process-oriented study of mystical psychology reveals that the soul is seen as a verb more often than as a noun (although, as we shall see, this view is also not absent among the numerous manifestations of the modern mystical imagination).

Neighboring Areas

> Everybody seems to be publishing a psychology these days. —William James

The sheer quantity of unstudied Kabbalistic material and the need for comparative contextualization necessitate leaving numerous themes outside the scope of the present work (especially as some of these have been admirably covered by others). As Brad Gregory put it very well:

> Any attempt to "cover everything" would succeed only in producing a completely unmanageable mountain of data. Indeed, in proportion to its increase, **which** has been enormous ... the sheer volume of historical scholarship—what Daniel Lord Smail has recently called "the inflationary spiral of research overproduction' "—paradoxically militates against comprehension of the past in relationship to the present. A different approach is needed if we are to avoid being overwhelmed by specialized scholarship, the proliferation of which tends to reinforce ingrained assumptions about historical periodization.

First and foremost, although I shall often touch on the body/soul relationship, I remain focused on the soul itself. Thus, although one does not need to be a Freudian to realize the intimate connection between Amor and Psyche, this book is not part of the Foucauldian project of the history of sexuality nor the wider project of the history of the body (including the physical heart). From my earlier comments on the "heart of Foucault" it should be clear that I regard even the modern soul as far more than "the prison of the body" (as "the effect and instrument of a political anatomy"). Rather, like Kristeva, I regard the "iron cage" (Weber) of modernity primarily as a "prison of the soul."

While reincarnation of souls *(gilgul neshamot)* plays a key role in Kabbalistic discussions of the soul, I regard it as a separate topic, interlaced with other questions of eschatology and soteriology (such as the interrelationship of the resurrection at the end of days and the "world of the souls" in the afterlife) as well as time and sacral history. This concern peaked in Safed and continued to receive much attention in the Middle Eastern reception of Luria (as in R. Yehuda Petaya's twentieth-century practice of soul retrieval), but is far less present in the writings of the circle of Luzzatto, Lithuanian Kabbalah (including Kook), and most streams of Hasidism.

As Kerr has shown, psychoanalysis as a modern movement originated in the mental hospital at Burgholzli in Zurich, and of course it is difficult to address the soul without what Hillman has termed "pathologizing." However, my concern is with the illumination and transformation of the soul rather than with madness, which has received some scholarly attention in the pioneering psychological-anthropological work of Bilu and later in Jewish studies that joins a recent interest in trauma in Israeli Kabbalah scholarship, probably reflecting the posttraumatic and traumatic character of Israeli society. Although I share Barbara Ehrenreich's eloquent social critique of the current avoidance of the suffering of the soul in positive psychology, I am following here the mainstream and authoritative, rather than the marginal (as we shall see further in chapter 7).

Finally, we must bear in mind that the psychological thought of modern Kabbalah must be differentiated from related but separate areas of investigation, such as the psychology of God, as discussed in an important study by Abrams. The modern victory of the doctrine of the divine soul much deepened the already intimate relationship between theosophy and Kabbalah's psychology, as well put by Wolfson: "If we are to accept the language of the secrets of the divine being presented in the guise of the secrets of the soul, then we must equally posit that the secrets of the soul are presented in the guise of the secrets of the divine." However, my concern is with the secrets of the soul rather than the secrets of the divine. Thus, while dissolving Rudolph Otto's geocultural distribution of the "Eastern" soul-mysticism and the "Western" god-mysticism, I support his essential phenomenological intuition, while opting to address the former. Others, especially Idel, have already dealt with the modern psychological reinterpretation of the supernal realm, in doing so reinforcing my argument as to the uniqueness of modern Kabbalistic discourse on such areas.

On the broad cultural level, my attempt to regard Kabbalah as a form of indigenous knowledge that may contribute to psychology rather than just being interpreted through it joins the extensive dialogue between Buddhism and psychology as well as rapidly developing directions such as spiritual psychotherapy and pastoral psychology. Here I join Philip Wexler, who has pioneered the extraction of models of social psychology—rooted in classical social theory—from Hasidic texts. As Wexler has more recently and generally put it: "in the new mystical scholarship, one can find . . . models of social interaction, of mystical interaction, that may again become analytically resonant, especially with the declining intuitive validity of modern sociological theory." As we shall see in chapter 2, the Safedian conceptualization of social interaction in the fellowship as reflecting the internal interaction within a plural psyche (closely linked to what Wexler's hero William James termed "a pluralistic universe") clearly bears out Wexler's own intuition.

More generally, it is my hope that this study, like previous works of mine, will contribute somewhat towards a fuller integration of religious studies and the social sciences, an interrelationship presently confined mostly to current phenomena... I believe that this synthesis is crucial for the joint struggle of the humanities and the "softer" social sciences in face of the managerial trends mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, epitomized by the physical and conceptual relocation of psychology at my university away from both the humanities and social sciences to the natural sciences... Again quoting Wexler (following Weber, who I shall return to at the very end of the book): "in the contemporary social world of incessant rationalization and commodification .... 'imparting training,' the hallmark of the 'specialist type of man' remains the prevailing type of pedagogy." <>

Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture by Eliezer Diamond [Oxford University Press, 9780195137507]

The existence of ascetic elements within rabbinic Judaism has generally been either overlooked or actually denied. This is in part because asceticism is commonly identified with celibacy, whereas the rabbis emphasized sexuality as a positive good. In addition, argues Eliezer Diamond, it serves the theological agendas of both Jewish and Christian scholars to characterize Judaism as non- or anti-ascetic.

In fact, however, Diamond shows that rabbinic asceticism does indeed exist. This asceticism is mainly secondary, rather than primary, in that the rabbis place no value on self-denial in and of itself, but rather require of themselves the virtual abandonment of familial, social, and economic life in favor of

an absolute commitment to the study of the Torah. It is an asceticism of neglect, rather than negation. He also notes that this asceticism of neglect dovetails with the rabbinic theology of sin and punishment, which encourages delaying gratification in this world in the hopes of a greater reward in the next. The rabbis believed, moreover, that every pleasure taken in this world detracts from what awaits one in the future.
The rabbis valued and occasionally engaged in primary asceticism as well. In fact, as Diamond shows, the vocabulary of holiness was often used by the rabbis in connection with voluntary self-denial. One form of primary asceticism--fasting--became increasingly popular in the wake of the destruction of the second temple. He traces this development to the need to mourn the temple's devastation but also to the cessation of three forms of temple-related rituals: the sacrificial cult,
the *Ma'amadot* (groups that would fast, pray, and read from the Torah while daily sacrifices were offered), and naziritism. Fasting is linked by the rabbis to each of these practices and Diamond shows that fasting was seen as a substitute for them after the temple was destroyed. In a final chapter, Diamond shows that there is a greater tendency toward asceticism among the Palestinian rabbis than among the Babylonian. He contends that the divergent political histories of these communities as well as differing external cultural influences account for this disparity.

Review

"With the scope and depth of its research, masterly panoramic presentations, invaluable insights, splendid notes, and judiciously selected bibliography, his book sets a standard that transcends the label of an excellent introduction. It is a comprehensive education in a specific dimension of rabbinic Judaism and more than that, in rabbinic Judaism as a totality."--*American Historical Review*

"...a rewarding and enlightening study. Its fresh approaches to the understanding of familiar rabbinic texts penetrate beneath the technical surfaces of talmudic law and rhetoric to confront important issues of Jewish spirituality and lifestyles."--*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

HOLY MEN AND HUNGER ARTISTS: FASTING AND ASCETICISM IN RABBINIC CULTURE is part of a lifelong effort to make sense of two of the strangest and most difficult, and yet most formative and inspirational aspects of life: fasting and asceticism in rabbinic culture. Chapter 1 outlines that rabbinic Judaism does in fact contain ascetic elements, but that the asceticism of

rabbinic Judaism is significantly different from that of Christianity in that it is largely incidental and instrumental rather than essential and that the two could co-exist. Chapter 2 examines the beliefs in theological principle and their implications for the rabbinic pursuit or avoidance of pleasure. Chapter 3 surveys the use of terms in the rabbinic corpus and evaluates what this usage implies about rabbinic asceticism. It is suggested in chapter 4 that fasting is the post-destruction substitute for its biblical predecessor, the Nazirite. Lastly, Chapter 5 explores the differences in attitude toward fasting, and perhaps toward active ascetic behavior in general, between the rabbis of the Land of Israel and those of Babylonia.

> [I fasted] because I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else. —The eponymous protagonist of Kafka's The Hunger Artist

> The person who lives as a worldly ascetic is a rationalist, not only in the sense that he rationally systematizes his own personal patterning of life, but also in his rejection of everything that is ethically irrational, esthetic, or dependent upon his own reactions to the world and its institutions. The distinctive goal always remains the alert, methodical control of one's own pattern of life and behavior. —Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion

HOLY MEN AND HUNGER ARTISTS: FASTING AND ASCETICISM IN RABBINIC CULTURE is part of a lifelong effort to make sense of two of the strangest and most difficult, and yet most formative and inspirational, years of my life. At the end of ninth grade my parents, primarily my father, decided that for high school I would attend a relatively new local institution that he had helped found, a mesivta or yeshiva high school. I knew that this yeshiva's ideology was different from that of my previous school, but nothing could have prepared me for the experience that lay ahead.

I spent the next two years of my life in what was in effect a Jewish monastery. The mesivta was a males-only boarding school; it required a totally controlled—one might say hermetic—environment in order to achieve its goals. Outside culture was kept out; we were forbidden to have radios. (One of the Talmud instructors or rebbeim who wanted to keep up with the news would go out to his car each day to listen to the broadcasts there; this practice made him "modern" in the eyes of some, not necessarily a compliment in the world of the mesivta.) All reading matter, including books, newspapers, and magazines, was strictly supervised and censored by the administration. The English teacher who wanted us to read Catcher in the Rye was told that the book was unacceptable; some of us read it on our own anyway. Every other weekend and many Jewish holidays had to be spent on the school grounds. Our activities during our rather limited free time were heavily restricted. A primary concern was that we not engage in any activity that might in any way result in our meeting and fraternizing with members of the opposite sex. Going bowling was forbidden for this reason.

The institution's commitment to keeping out American culture was so thorough that when one of the rebbeim heard me playing a Beatles tune on a piano left behind by the building's previous owners, he rushed in, horrified. "Eliezer," he said, "what are you doing?!"—to which I answered, reasonably enough, "I'm playing the piano." Two days later the piano was gone.

There were also restrictions in connection with clothing and grooming. Haircuts or hairstyles that were considered too modern had to be "corrected"; certain styles of suits (double-breasted, for example, a style coming back into vogue at that time) and eyeglass frames (such as metal frames, which were then a relative novelty) were forbidden. We were required to wear brimmed hats during prayers and were encouraged to do so at other times as well; the preferred mode of dress,

from the administration's perspective, was a not particularly stylish dark suit, white shirt (tie optional), and black, not overly shiny, shoes. In short, it was hoped that we would dress like our rebbeim.

In any case, the rigorous schedule of study and classes left little time for bowling, clothes shopping, or anything else. Morning prayers began the day; those who did not arrive on time were assessed a nominal fine. The prayers were followed by a twenty-minute period of independent study of Mishnah Berurah, a compendium of the laws governing a Jew's daily religious responsibilities. Breakfast followed, after which we paired off in groups to prepare for that day's Talmud class. Our Jewish studies curriculum consisted entirely of Talmud. Hebrew language and literature were not taught at all, nor were the Nevi'im and Ketubim (the prophetic works and the hagiographa); we were expected to review the weekly Torah portion with Rashi's commentary on our own. After preparing for two hours we would attend the daily Talmud lesson, which involved review of the material we had prepared and presentation of new material from Talmudic commentaries we had not previously seen.

At about 12:30 we had lunch, followed by afternoon services and another twenty-minute study period, during which we studied an ethical tract of our choice, usually with a study partner. This was followed by the only break of the day: for an hour and a quarter we played basketball, did homework, or, in a few cases, voluntarily studied another tractate of the Talmud. The next three and a half hours were devoted to general studies; this was followed by a two-hour period in which we were expected to study a chapter of the Talmud other than the one we were studying in the morning. At about 9:30 P.M. we were free to return to the dormitory to do homework and then to engage in any form of relaxation that was not forbidden.

One might think, given this description, that I detested the institution and that I abhor it still today. However, the truth is much more complicated. I did dislike the mesivta, but I was also enthralled by it. In the day school I had previously attended my teachers had often spoken about mesiras nefesh, dedicating one's life to the service of God. I had the sense, though, that they weren't too fond of practicing it in their own lives. At the mesivta, we lived mesiras nefesh. Everything about the mesivta declared in no uncertain terms that there was only one thing that made life worth living: lernen (Yiddish for the study of Torah). No apology for the bad food and the endless restrictions was given or needed; if you wanted to become a Torah scholar, you had to lead a life of rigorous self-discipline and relative hardship. To my rebbeim, the rabbinic dictum "This is the way of Torah: you shall eat bread with salt, drink water by measure, sleep on the ground, and live a life of discomfort while you toil in the Torah" was not poetic hyperbole but an actual blueprint for the life of Torah.

I was also intrigued by my rebbeim. Their lives were every bit as demanding as ours. Before coming to the mesivta, each of them had spent at least ten years studying in the Lakewood, New Jersey, kollel, an institution that gives each of its students, all of them married, a rather minimal stipend in exchange for their devoting all day and part of the evening to Talmud study. This pattern of life continued for them at the mesivta. While we were preparing the Talmud, they studied. We studied late into the night; at least one of the rebbeim studied with us each evening and the others were no doubt studying at home. Every event in their lives was connected somehow to Torah. I remember a conversation in which one of my rebbeim was having trouble recalling what year he had gotten married; he finally shrugged his shoulders and said, "Well, I do remember that we were studying [the Talmudic tractate] Kesubes that year."

The asceticism and self-denial in the pursuit of lernen advocated by my rebbeim was absolute; it even applied to denying oneself the spiritual delights of the next world, if necessary. One of the songs we

used to sing began, "Oylom haboh iz a gute zach, ober lernen Toyre iz di beste zach"—"The world to come is a good thing; but learning Torah is the best thing."

And so for all that I hated the mesivta for its Orwellian environment, its indifference to aesthetics and hygiene, and its contemptuously superior attitude to the world outside, I was irresistibly drawn to its single-minded clarity of purpose. Some part of me has always felt that a life lived with anything less than absolute devotion to a sole objective is a life squandered on the small-mindedness of daily survival or the pointless pursuit of evanescent pleasure. The legacy I received from the mesivta and its rebbeim has blessed and cursed my life ever since. To this day I can hear in my head the cadences of my rebbeim and fellow students chanting the Talmud and debating its meaning, praying as only those who are both abjectly humble before God and supremely confident of their importance in his world can do, and discussing every aspect of life as though it were a difficult passage in the Talmud. And to this day, if I am doing anything other than studying the Talmud, there is a voice in my head that says, "Nu, what about lernen?"

It is the desire to understand that voice and its power that has inspired my study of rabbinic asceticism. Though I have heard repeatedly that Judaism is not an ascetic faith, experience teaches me otherwise. Thus, the question is: How could the stark self-denial of the mesivta be an expression of a faith viewed by so many as the antithesis of asceticism? This question cannot be addressed without one's revisiting an old and much-debated question, namely whether, and to what extent, rabbinic Judaism, the Judaism that came into being in Palestine and Persia between the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. and the Islamic invasion of Persia in 640 C.E.,1 is ascetic. It is to this latter question that the following study is devoted.

I am aware that in acknowledging a personal motivation for this inquiry I open myself to the accusation of having an axe to grind and the charge that this will inevitably influence my work and its conclusions. These claims are, of course, true. No one can claim honestly to be a totally objective scholar (whatever that means). The best that one can hope for is to be aware of one's biases and to strive not to let them play an inordinate role in one's research. Note that I do not discount my presumptions out of hand; discounting one's suppositions without examination is no better scholarship than affirming them unreflectively. It is not impossible, after all, for one to be predisposed to a point of view that one later concludes is logically and historically sound. Obviously, though, one must be especially skeptical of the arguments that seem to persuade one of the correctness of a position toward which one is instinctively hospitable.2 In any case, I suppose that it is particularly appropriate to preface a study of asceticism by acknowledging my frailties and shortcomings while dedicating myself to wrestling with them.

Almost from the moment of Christianity's inception, there was, as Daniel Boyarin puts it, "a difference between Christians and Jews that had to do with the body." Paul distinguished between Israel according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα) and Israel according to the spirit (κατὰ πνεῦμα),4 and between law (νόμος) and faith (πίστις), thus repudiating the traditional Jewish link between identity on the one hand and physical and social separation through circumcision and the laws of kašrût on the other. Moreover, by discarding the tribal, biological definition of Israel and by reading the Torah allegorically5—two moves that were intimately connected, as Boyarin has argued so convincingly6—Paul laid the groundwork for subsequent Christian glorification of virginity and sexual continence and the rejection of the Jewish view of biological propagation as a divine commandment.7 From the perspective of celibate Christians and their communities, the ongoing Jewish commitment to the observance of miṣwôt (commandments) including marriage and propagation were seen as symptomatic of their rejection of Christ's kerygma. The "commandments in the flesh"—the Torah's

obligations and prohibitions in their literal sense—were meant only to be symbolic precursors to Jesus's (read Paul's) gospel of the spirit; the Jews, however, had tragically mistaken symbol for substance.

Jews, on the other hand, saw Christian celibacy as a betrayal of the biblical blessing and command to be fruitful and multiply. The third- and fourth-century bishop and church historian Eusebius of Caesarea cited the following objection of a Jewish contemporary: "If we [Christians] claim that the Gospel teaching of our Savior Christ bids us worship God as did the men of old and the pre-Mosaic men of God [i.e., those before the advent of the Law], and that our religion is the same as theirs, and our knowledge of God the same, why were they keenly concerned with marriage and reproduction while we to some extent disregard it?"8 The fourth-century Syrian churchman Aphrahat recounts the following Jewish anti-Christian polemic: "But you [Christians] do something not commanded by God for you have received a curse and have received barrenness. You hinder generation, the blessing of righteous men. You do not take wives, and you are not wives for husbands. You hate procreation, a blessing given by God."9 This critique was especially appropriate in the context of Syrian Christianity, where celibacy played a more dominant role than it did elsewhere in the Christian world.

Christian asceticism took other forms besides celibacy, including fasting and renouncing one's possessions; these latter forms of asceticism, particularly fasting, are present in rabbinic Judaism as well. Nonetheless, when the study of asceticism began in earnest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, little notice was taken of rabbinic asceticism. This inattention was due largely to the almost exclusive interest of most scholars in Christianity. Even those who considered the possibility of Jewish asceticism generally had little or no access to rabbinic sources and therefore limited their discussion to Philo and the Essenes. With the notable exception of James Montgomery,11 most scholars of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, both Jewish and Christian, characterized Christianity as ascetic and Judaism as non-or anti-ascetic. More recent scholarship, while sometimes acknowledging the existence of Jewish asceticism, often does so only with significant qualifications. David Halivni is willing to consider the possibility that early Judaism contained some ascetic strains but says that if "the claim that normative Judaism is anti-ascetic is confined to the talmudic period there [is] little to quarrel with." Salo Baron acknowledges that "ascetics were not lacking in ancient Judaism, even among the rabbis. But," he continues, "the majority believed in the legitimacy of pursuit of this-worldly happiness, including the enjoyment of material goods bestowed upon one by grace divine." However, there have been some important exceptions to the general consensus that asceticism is a marginal Jewish phenomenon. Studies by Allan Lazaroff, Steven Fraade, and Moshe Sokol17 have examined the nature of Jewish asceticism. As will be made clear later, Fraade's thinking has been particularly helpful in my own analysis of the problem.

The assumption that Judaism is non- or anti-ascetic has often served as the handmaiden of a theological agenda; the terms "ascetic" and "nonascetic" serve roughly the same function in the nineteenth and twentieth century that "spirit" and "flesh" do in late antiquity. For Jews viewing asceticism as a physically and spiritually injurious practice contrary to human nature, its purported absence in Judaism has been evidence of spiritual health—and of the superiority of Judaism's worldliness to the "pathological" ascetic withdrawal of Christianity. For Christians, on the other hand, Christianity's rejection of the flesh in favor of the spirit has been a sign of the transcendent superiority of the new Israel. Even those Christian scholars who acknowledge the presence of asceticism within Judaism often see it as an imperfect precursor of Chrisitanity's more fully developed spirituality.

This assumption has become a self-fulfilling prophecy; most scholars, whenever they encounter Jewish behavior that smacks of asceticism, attribute it to nonascetic motives and origins or ascribe it to influence from other religions. Naziritism is not ascetic, argues T. C. Hall, because Nazirite vows are merely "survivals of primitive Semitic religious customs"; the attendant abstinence from wine "is a survival of nomad morality protesting against the agricultural stage." Arthur Vööbus is so certain that "Judaism was not interested in asceticism" that he attributes all of the asceticism he finds in the Qumran scrolls and in rabbinic sources to foreign influences, which, he says, affected Judaism only marginally.

The entire question of the degree of asceticism within Judaism is further complicated by the profound lack of agreement about what the term "asceticism" means. Among historians of religion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century there was vast disagreement about how to define ascetic behavior and ideology. In the introduction to their recent collection of studies on asceticism, Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis enumerate three comprehensive definitions of asceticism that have been proposed in this century. The first, Hall's, posits two major forms of asceticism: "disciplinary," which has as its goal the training of the body, spirit, and will, and "dualistic," which functions as a means of escaping the inherently evil body and the functions associated with it. The second definition, that of Oscar Hardman, speaks of three types of asceticism. "The mystical ideal—fellowship," has as its goal both unio mystica and communitas with fellow mystics. "The disciplinary ideal— righteousness," seeks obedience to divine laws and order. "Sacrificial asceticism" regards certain ethical behaviors as offerings that serve to remove pollution and evil. Finally, Max Weber speaks of four types of asceticism: "innerworldly asceticism," innerworldly mysticism," otherworldly asceticism," and "otherworldly mysticism." I shall have more to say about Weber's conceptual scheme.

In the face of the plethora of definitions that have been offered for asceticism, contemporary students of asceticism are reluctant to offer definitions altogether. Moreover, one can (and scholars of rabbinic Judaism do) pick particular definitions of asceticism and thereby "prove" that rabbinic Judaism is, or is not, ascetic. The debate between Yitzhak Baer and E. E. Urbach as to whether or not rabbinic Judaism is ascetic can be explained in this way. Baer defines asceticism as התעמלות רוחנית, "moral striving," which takes the forms of self-education, character development, service to God, and boundless generosity toward others, all of which can be found in Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism. Urbach, on the other hand, associates asceticism with dualism, mortification of the flesh, and the creation of an elite class of ascetics. He finds none of these elements in rabbinic Judaism—though the first is arguably present in rabbinic Judaism and the latter two show up among the medieval German Jewish pietists and the sixteenth-century Safed mystics.

In truth, Baer and Urbach are talking past each other, and not simply because they are working with different definitions of asceticism. Baer is trying to locate rabbinic Judaism within the historical and ideological context of the Graeco-Roman world. He therefore isolates what he believes to be the essential elements of askesis for Greek thinkers and shows that they are present in rabbinic thought as well. (In fairness to Baer it should be noted that he is also careful to identify those aspects of the rabbinic religious regimen, such as gemîlût ḥasādîm, acts of lovingkindness, which distinguish it from the practices of the Greek philosophical schools.)

Urbach, on the other hand, seems intent on using asceticism as a means of distinguishing Judaism from Christianity. Thus the definition of asceticism that he adopts is taken straight from early Christian practice. Self-imposed suffering, including self-mutilation, was common among some early Christians (but not, it should be noted, among the Neoplatonists and Pythagoreans, who most would

grant were ascetics nonetheless)1 there were numerous early Christians who actively sought martyrdom and those, most notably the desert fathers, who practiced varying degrees of self-denial. Urbach clearly thinks Judaism the better for eschewing such ascetic practices. In this regard his study is part of the aforementioned long-standing tradition of scholars of Christianity and Judaism using the comparative method as a way of proving the relative superiority of one faith or the other.

The most balanced and insightful discussion of asceticism within Judaism is that of Steven Fraade. He urges that we change the terms of the conversation concerning rabbinic asceticism in at least two important respects. First, given the multiplicity of available definitions of "asceticism," he suggests that a definition be found that is broad enough to encompass the varied forms of ascetic practice but not so inclusive as to be meaningless. The two components he sees as basic to asceticism are: "(1) the exercise of disciplined effort toward the goal of spiritual perfection (however understood), which requires (2) abstention (whether total or partial, permanent or temporary, individualistic or commun-alistic) from the satisfaction of otherwise permitted earthly, creaturely desires." Second, given the complex interplay of history, external influences, and the human psyche, "ancient Jewish 'asceticism' … cannot be interpreted simply as a reflex of specific historical events or foreign influences … but as a perennial side of Judaism as it struggles with the tension between the realization of transcendent ideals and the confronting of this-worldly obstacles to that realization." Or, as Fraade puts it elsewhere, "The question is not: Is ancient Judaism ascetic or non-ascetic? but: How is asceticism … manifested and responded to in the ancient varieties of Judaism, including that of the rabbis?"

The vagueness of a phrase within the second half of his proposed definition for asceticism—an intentional vagueness, Fraade tells us—deserves elucidation. He speaks of abstention from "otherwise permitted earthly, creaturely desires." Fraade alludes here to the elitist nature of asceticism, or at least the asceticism he and I are interested in studying. If one were to omit the two words "other-wise permitted" from Fraade's definition, it would include all of rabbinic Judaism, and for that matter any religious system that places constraints upon its adherents. Is not kaŝrût, for example, a case of abstaining from "creaturely desires" as part of a "disciplined effort toward the goal of spiritual perfection"? If the answer is yes—and it is—then Fraade's definition has become useless, because we have identified asceticism with religious discipline in general. Thus, for asceticism to be something other than a synonym for religious praxis, it must involve the voluntary acceptance of a spiritual discipline that is not binding on one's larger religious community. If one thinks of almost any major group that we speak of as being ascetic—be it the desert fathers, Buddhist monks, or Hindu renouncers—we will see that they have existed against the background of, and in complex relationship to, a larger community of fellow believers that is not ascetic, at least not to the same degree. Even those, like the Essenes and the Encratites, who saw themselves as the only true believers found it necessary to engage and proselytize unbelievers; the Miqṣat Maʿasē Tôrâ of the Qumranites and the Encratite Acts of Thomas come to mind as examples. The athletic imagery used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 captures both the elitism and the sense of communal responsibility that informs Paul's ascetic practice:

> Do you not realize that, though all the runners in the stadium take part in the race, only one of them gets the prize? Run like that—to win. Every athlete concentrates completely on training, and this is to win a wreath that will wither, whereas ours will never wither. So that is how I run, not without a clear goal; and how I box, not wasting blows on air. I punish my body and bring it under control, to avoid risk that, having acted as herald [κηρύξας] for others, I myself may be disqualified.

On the one hand Paul speaks of religious praxis, and its self-denying aspects in particular, as being a form of competition (with the evil within one's self?) in which few are victorious. On the other hand, as the "herald" to the Christian community, he urges all its members to strive for the prize of spiritual achievement.

Similarly, the sages saw themselves as Israel's vanguard, but they neither separated themselves completely from the ʿamē hā-'āreṣ ("the people of the land," rabbinic parlance for the nonrabbinic Jewish populace) nor did they see any Jewish male as being barred from joining their ranks; on the contrary, they saw them all as equally obliged to do so, as the following passage suggests:

> Our rabbis taught: The poor, the rich and the evildoer are [all] brought to judgment [in the world to come]. They ask the poor man, "Why did you not engage in Torah study?" If he replies, "I was poor and burdened with sustaining myself," they say to him, "Were you any poorer than Hillel?" … They ask the rich man, "Why did you not engage in Torah study?" If he replies, "I was wealthy and burdened by [the responsibilities of] wealth," they say, "Were you any richer than R. Eliezer [b. Harsom]?" … They ask the evildoer, "Why did you not engage in Torah study?" If he replies, "I was handsome and [therefore] burdened by my sexual impulses," they say, "Were you handsomer than Joseph?" … (bYoma 35b)

Fraade has pointed us in the right direction. In order to move his approach to rabbinic asceticism forward, we must identify the manifestations of asceticism peculiar to rabbinic Judaism. To do so, we must refine still further our understanding of asceticism by making four observations, the last of which I shall dwell upon at length.

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First, I understand asceticism as being as much a dynamic—or, in Geoffrey Gait Harpham's phrasing, an imperative—as it is a particular group of behaviors. To put it differently, asceticism can be present in attitude as it is in action (or restraint). This is particularly true of what Weber calls "worldly asceticism" (about which see later); such ascetics operate within the larger world of commerce and have families as do their nonascetic neighbors, but enjoyment of wealth and excesses of affection and erotic feeling are forbidden to them. Thus even a religious culture that allows or even demands gainful employment and family life of its members may still hold an ascetic perspective on work and love. We therefore encounter sages who, while fulfilling the obligation to be fruitful and multiply, reduce physical intimacy and pleasure during intercourse to a minimum.

Second, as a religion that, more than most, requires detailed and extensive self-restriction of all its adherents in matters of sex and diet, Judaism, and particularly rabbinic Judaism, might be said to have an inherently ascetic temperament. That is, Judaism teaches again and again that the path to spiritual excellence goes through self-denial. The following rabbinic teaching embodies this notion: "The commandments were given only in order to refine humanity. Does God care whether one slaughters from the throat or the neck?! [Rather], it must be that the commandments were given only in order to refine humanity." This does not mean that the attitude of rabbinic Judaism toward physical and material is negative. However, it does open Judaism to two ascetically oriented moves: the further minimizing of pleasure in the pursuit of greater spirituality, and the instrumentalization of this-worldly behavior, which deemphasizes its pleasurable components. The Talmudic phrase "the commandments were not given as sources of pleasure,"60 though it has the specific legal meaning that fulfillment of a commandment is not considered a this-worldly benefit, serves nicely to encapsulate this latter notion as well.

Third, it is important to state that two of asceticism's faces are withdrawal from the body and withdrawal from society. In the first case one gives up eating, sex, or some other bodily pleasure in an attempt to reach a spiritual goal; in the second, one withdraws from communal meals, conversing, engaging in commerce, or other interpersonal activities because they are seen as inherently sinful or at least an obstacle to one's spiritual growth. In Christian asceticism the flight from the world usually functions as a necessary means for practicing bodily self-denial. It is not surprising, therefore, that Christian asceticism in the Egyptian and Palestinian deserts begins with the solitary eremeticism of Anthony and only later develops into Pachomius's coenobitic monasticism.

On the other hand, among the sages, as among the Essenes, and perhaps the Pharisees, of the Second Temple period, asceticism seems to begin with and sometimes focuses on the formation of a fellowship within or apart from society at large. Thus at least some of the Essenes go out to the desert to form a community of strict purity, celibacy, and communal property. Possibly the Pharisees, and certainly the early sages, established ḥabûrôt or table fellowships that abided by meticulous norms of tithing and purity and thereby excluded most Israelites from breaking bread with them. At least some sages imagined a world in which they would engage solely in Torah study, having little or no contact with women, children, and nonrabbinic Jews, while being supported by the work of others.

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Finally we must recognize the existence of what I shall call an "instrumental" asceticism alongside the "essential" asceticism which is usually discussed. Essential asceticism entails explicit renunciation of some aspect of conventional existence because the self-denial itself is seen as inherently spiritually salutary. Instrumental asceticism involves the passionate commitment to a spiritual quest so consuming that one feels it necessary to minimize or eliminate worldly pursuits and pleasures because they detract from or distract one from one's godly objectives. The widespread characterization of rabbinic Judaism as nonascetic or even anti-ascetic is usually based on the absence of essential asceticism in the form of celibacy or other forms of stipulated self-denial. Thus, for example, Urbach says concerning the sages of the Mishnah and Talmud: "We find sages possessing great spiritual powers[בעלי הנפש] who imposed various restraints upon themselves; however, the denial of physical needs was merely a means and not an end unto itself etc."65 However, extreme devotion to the study and practice of Torah on the part of some of the rabbis results in self-denial indistinguishable behaviorally, if not motivationally, from that of the classic ascetic.66 Thus, rabbis marry and father children, but some delay marriage for many years in order to study without the "millstone" of family responsibility around their necks while others marry and then spend years away from home engaged in scholarship. Furthermore, an examination of rabbinic sources makes clear that for many of the rabbis dedication to Torah study meant that it took precedence over fulfilling other commandments, engaging in a profession or occupation, conjugal and familial obligations, general physical comfort, and even, in times of persecution, life itself. We therefore have an interesting situation in which economic, social, and familial life, while acknowledged as an integral part of the life of a rabbinic Jew, are subject to significant neglect without being renounced outright. Moreover, we shall see that this hierarchy is affirmed by, and enshrined in, rabbinic halakhah which, with some important exceptions, codifies the primacy of Torah study over all other obligations.

The idea of instrumental asceticism is not a new one, nor is it limited to the sages. Eusebius of Caesarea, in a previously cited passage, offers a number of responses to the Jewish claim that Christian celibacy is not in accordance with behavior of the biblical patriarchs. His second reply is as

follows: "The men of old days lived a easier and freer life, and their care of home and family did not compete with their leisure for religion …, but in our days there are many external interests that draw us away, and involve us in incongenial thoughts, and seduce us from our zeal for the things which please God." In this view the major good of celibacy is that it frees one from the distractions and responsibilities of family life, and from the threats to one's spiritual vocation that accompany them, and allows for the single-minded pursuit of godliness.

A conception of instrumental asceticism also informs some of Friedrich Nietzsche's reflections on the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche distinguishes between the Christian ascetic ideal, which he denounces as being directed against life and the self, and that of the philosophers:

> What does the ascetic ideal mean to the philosopher? My answer is … on seeing an ascetic ideal, the philosopher smiles because he sees an optimum condition of the highest and boldest intellectuality [Geistigkeit],—he does not deny existence by doing so, but rather affirms his existence and only his existence, and possibly does so to the point where he is not far from making the outrageous wish: pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, fiam! ["Let the world perish, (but) let philosophy exist, let the philosopher exist, let me exist."]

Change the word "philosopher" to "rabbinic sage" and you have a succinct summation of the rabbinic ascetic ideal, at least in its most extreme form. The philosopher, says Nietzsche, wishes to avoid marriage and children not because he is opposed to sexuality and procreation in principle, but because they are a hindrance to his philosophical vocation. As we shall see, although the rabbis could not forgo creating families, because they saw themselves as being religiously obligated to do so, a good number of them minimized their involvement—physical, financial, and emotional—with these families. For them the perpetuation of Torah scholarship was paramount. There are numerous rabbinic statements that make the world's existence depend upon the Torah and those who study it, as in the following rabbinic chreia:

Rabbi Judah the Patriarch sent R. Hiyya, R. Assi, and R. Ammi to pass through the towns of Israel and establish scribes [i.e., Bible teachers] and reciters [of oral law] in each. They went to a place in which they found neither a scribe nor a reciter. They said to [the townspeople], "bring us the guardians of the town." They brought them the town's senatores. [The rabbis] said to them, "These are the town's guardians!? These are nothing but the town's destroyers!" [The townspeople] asked, "And who are the town's guardians?" They replied, "The scribes and the reciters. This is what scripture states: 'Unless the Lord builds the house [its builders labor in vain on it] (Psalms 127:1)."' (yHagiga 1.7, 76c)

Because rabbinic ascetics do not forswear family life but rather allow the demands of Torah to take precedence over their involvement in worldly matters, their objectives are often represented as being in conflict with those of their families. Rabbinic sources reflect a range of reactions to this tension, from condemnation of the absent husband and father to an affirmation of the commitment (p.14) to study even at the cost of one's family's privation. Plainly, rabbinic asceticism is not as clear-cut as the self-denial of the Christian anchorite or the Hindu renouncer; this difference accounts, in part, for its rarely having been recognized as asceticism.

A useful comparison can be made between rabbinic asceticism and the worldly asceticism of seventeenth-century Protestantism described by Max Weber. One of Weber's great contributions to our understanding of asceticism is the insight that askesis need not involve a rejection of the mundane but instead may consist of its transformation. The Protestants identified by Weber as ascetics do not forswear a life of commerce, family, and society; rather, they refashion its

significance. In their industrious pursuit of wealth they seek not to gain the material pleasures that wealth can yield but rather to magnify God's glory and to obtain certainty of their salvation:

> [Puritan] ascetic conduct meant a rational planning of the whole of one's life in accordance with God's will. … The religious life of the saints, as distinguished from the natural life, was … no longer lived outside the world in monastic communities, but within the world and its institutions. This rationalization of conduct within this world, but for the sake of the world beyond, was the consequence of the concept of calling of ascetic Protestantism.

Every aspect of life had to be evaluated in terms of God's will and dedicated to God's greater glory. Believers were expected to make an ongoing accounting of their actions, using the same scrupulous accounting methods for their spiritual life as they used in their businesses. "The process of sanctifying life," concludes Weber, "could thus take on the character of a business enterprise."

As was noted earlier, one aspect of this emphasis on constant self-discipline was "the continually repeated, almost passionate preaching of hard, continuous bodily or mental labour" among the Puritans. Weber attributes this to two causes, the first being that constant labor was seen as a means of avoiding the various temptations that beset the believer. The second is "that labour came to be considered in itself the end of life, ordained as such by God."

This near-sanctification of labor had far-reaching consequences for the Puritan community. It meant, first of all, that any form of idleness, including any activity that was not seen as adding to God's glory, was not tolerated. This included overeating, oversleeping, ostentatious dress, "frivolous" engagement in the fine arts—in short, anything other than work, worship, and the carrying out of one's familial and social duties. Second, because work was seen as one's calling, people were seen as the stewards of the profits that accrued from their work, and every penny had to be used in accordance with God's will. This meant both refraining from spending money on "useless" pleasures and investing funds with an eye to receiving the greatest possible return. Consequently, many Puritans were placed in the paradoxical position of having a great deal of wealth and being forbidden to spend it.

If one stops to compare the picture painted by Weber with the one that emerges, as will be seen, from rabbinic sources, one is struck by the similarity between these two communities. The rabbis, like the Puritans, insist on constant labor and they abhor idleness; sex is permitted but significantly regulated. For the rabbis, as for the Puritans, these requirements and limitations are formulated in great part in deference to a vocation that is supposed to occupy the vast majority of their time and energy. The major difference between these two communities is that while for Protestants one's calling is one's work, and the result is a self-denying but financially and therefore familially and socially secure community, for the rabbis one's "work" is Torah study, and so a tension is created between one's religious calling and one's familial obligations.

Weber is aware of this distinction. Thus he notes that while the Puritan demonstrated his piety through the scrupulousness of his business practices, "the pious Jew never gauged his inner ethical standards by what he regarded as permissible in the economic context." Rather, "the Jew set up as his ethical ideal the scholar learned in law and casuistry, the intellectual who continuously immersed himself in the sacred writings and commentaries at the expense of his business [emphasis mine], which he very frequently left to the management of his wife." In fact, as a consequence, Weber concludes, the rational organization of the rabbinic Jew's life in order to allow immersion in the study of the law and the fulfillment of its dictates "is not 'asceticism' in our sense."

On the one hand one cannot take issue with Weber; for him true asceticism must be an organizing principle for all of life. Because he does not find such a principle in Judaism, particularly with regard

to economic life, he classifies Judaism as a nonascetic religion. Nonetheless, one can wonder whether Weber's definitions of asceticism are overdetermined by his intense concern with the economic aspects of religious life and, perhaps, by the stereotypical assumptions about Christianity, Judaism, and asceticism that prevailed in his time.

Moreover, Weber's conclusion is based on faulty evidence. Weber seems unaware of the strain of Talmudic thought that connects piety with scrupulousness in money matters, and he does not mention the medieval Jewish conception of one's possessions as a piqqādôn, an object temporarily vouchsafed by the owner—in this case, God—to the holder for safekeeping. Neither is there mention of the thoroughgoing critiques of wealth and the wealthy by the ascetic German-Jewish pietists in thirteenth-century Germany and sixteenth-century Poland. These caveats notwithstanding, one can avail oneself of Weber's analysis without sharing his conclusions about Judaism and asceticism.

One might object that if instrumental self-restraint is included in the definition of asceticism then the category of asceticism becomes so broad as to be meaningless. A boxer who refrains from sex during his training period because he believes that "women weaken legs" would then be an ascetic as well—a perhaps not inapt conclusion given the athletic origins of the term "asceticism." Some contemporary thinkers, especially those drawn to what they see as the aesthetic dimension of asceticism, happily accept this notion; I do not. The term ἄσκησις as used by Christian writers, although borrowed from the gladiatorial arena, refers specifically to self-discipline in pursuit of spiritual redemption. As Susanna Elm puts it in her discussion of Christian askesis, "Asceticism is in essence a statement about the relationship between the body, the soul, and the human potential for salvation." The rabbis, in turn, sought through their acceptance of ascetic self-restraint the blessing of the world to come. The asceticism that is the focus of the present work is self-denial in the pursuit of a spiritual ideal that transcends all forms of earthly self-gratification.

In chapter 1, I will make in detail the case that I have outlined: that rabbinic Judaism does in fact contain ascetic elements, but that the asceticism of rabbinic Judaism is significantly different from that of Christianity in that it is largely incidental and instrumental rather than essential and that this asceticism could co-exist—though uneasily at times—with involvement in the social, economic, and familial spheres. The key to this asceticism is a single-minded focus on the study of Torah, a commitment—dare I say obsession?—that leaves little time, energy, or desire for life's other pursuits. The rabbis themselves acknowledge this point with regard to sex and commerce in particular, but we shall see that it applies as well to other aspects of life—and even death.

Furthermore, two elements of rabbinic theology encourage an ambivalent attitude, at best, toward the pleasures of this world. The first is the rabbinic reaction to the problem of theodicy. One of their responses is that God front-loads, as it were, the reward due the wicked, paying them off in this-worldly coin so that they will have no claim to the pleasures of the next world. Underlying this rejoinder is the belief that the pleasures and rewards of the next world far surpass those of this one. The original intent of this theology presumably was to comfort the suffering righteous, who had to suffer the added indignity of seeing the wicked prosper, and to argue the justice of God's ways in the face of evidence to the contrary. However, its implication is that one who is enjoying this world overly much ought to be concerned that he is being bought off with the base coin of this world and will thereby be barred from the pleasures of the next. One way to ensure that this is not the case, of course, is to minimize one's this-worldly pleasures. A second, closely related notion, is the belief in the finitude of one's reward. This means that whatever is consumed now will not be available later. Even aside from the theological principle just mentioned, therefore, rabbis are wary about

depleting their spiritual capital by withdrawing from their account in this world and thereby having little left in the world to come. Chapter 2 examines these beliefs and their implications for the rabbinic pursuit or avoidance of pleasure.

Until now I have inferred an ascetic stance from the behaviors and attitudes described in rabbinic texts and limited the discussion almost entirely to instrumental asceticism. In fact, there are two terms, פרישות (abstinence) and קדושה (holiness) and their variants, with which the rabbis describe explicitly an ascetic ethos which encompasses essential asceticism as well. In chapter 3 I survey the use of these terms in the rabbinic corpus and evaluate what this usage tells us about rabbinic asceticism. It emerges that these terms are often used with regard to the types of voluntary self-denial characteristic of essential asceticism.

Essential asceticism figures most prominently in rabbinic Judaism in the form of fasting. Once again, however, arises the problem of defining asceticism in rabbinic Judaism. Numerous scholars are aware of the centrality of fasting to (abbinic Judaism but do not consider it asceticism because they do not consider the motives for rabbinic fasting to be ascetic. I reject this view both because of my behavioral approach to asceticism and because I understand at least some of the rabbinic motives for fasting to be consistent with an ascetic mind-set. This becomes clear from a survey of prerabbinic sources that mention fasting.

One can ask how fasting became an accepted and, for some, an encouraged form of asceticism within rabbinic Judaism. In chapter 4 I suggest that fasting is the post-destruction substitute for its biblical predecessor, the Nazirite. Although the Nazirite did not fast, food and drink restrictions were a primary part of the Nazirite's regimen, and the rabbis' discussions of whether naziriteship is positive or negative seem a means of approving or criticizing asceticism in general and fasting in particular. However, the original significance of the Nazir's practices is far from certain. After explaining what I believe to have been the original significance of biblical naziriteship, I will suggest how and why the Nazir came to be understood somewhat differently by the rabbis. Finally, a link will be suggested between the virtual cessation of naziriteship and the institutions of sacrifice and the maʿamadot (groups of non-officiant Priests and Levites as well as Israelites who would fast, pray, and read from the Torah while the daily sacrifices were being offered) as a result of the destruction of the Temple, as well as mourning for the destruction itself, and the rise of fasting.

Chapter 5 explores the differences in attitude toward fasting, and perhaps toward active ascetic behavior in general, between the rabbis of the Land of Israel and those of Babylonia. The Babylonian rabbis seem negatively disposed toward fasting, while their counterparts in the Land of Israel favor it. I suggest that these differences are due both to the different historical experiences of each community and to the differences in the cultural and religious values in the surrounding societies. Jews in the Land of Israel were heirs to a legacy of destruction and oppression; the rabbinic movement itself was born and began to flourish in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple and the brutal suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt. Babylonian Jewry, on the other hand, was under the relatively benign rule of the Parthian and Sassanian dynasties and was subject only to sporadic persecution. Furthermore, the Graeco-Roman culture surrounding the Jews of Palestine recognized and valued fasting, and asceticism generally, as useful instruments for attaining visions of the gods and, in the view of the Stoics in particular, as a key to a life of apatheia. On the other hand, Babylonian Jewry's Zoroastrian neighbors abhorred fasting as a sin against the divinely created human body. While it is not certain to what degrees Palestinian and Babylonian Jews were affected in their attitudes towards fasting by their surrounding culture, it is clear that the parallels between rabbinic and general cultural attitudes deserve further consideration.

There are a number of important questions related to rabbinic asceticism that are not addressed by this study. Numerous individuals are given the appellation hasid, "pious one," in rabbinic literature. The nature of their piety, and whether or not they constituted a definable group, have long been the subject (p.18) of scholarly debate. To what extent do the Hasidim represent an ascetic stream with the rabbinic community? This question still awaits a full study.

Medieval Judaism includes groups of Jews, such as the Haside Ashkenaz, the German-Jewish pietists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who engaged in self-flagellation as a form of penance. Are these practices solely the result of Christian influence, or are they also the consequence of a turn to the ascetic voices within rabbinic tradition? The answer to this question also lies beyond the parameters of my investigation.

Whatever errors of omission and commission I may have made, I feel grateful to have the opportunity to draw the interest of the scholarly and general community to an important but heretofore neglected aspect of rabbinic culture. It is my hope that scholars of rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity, as well as students of religion both amateur and professional, will find much in my work that is both interesting and useful.

Before presenting the fruits of my labor, it is important that I address three methodological issues that are central to my work. First, I have been speaking of rabbinic Judaism here in an undifferentiated fashion. Rabbinic Judaism of late antiquity was not, however, monolithic. One of its outstanding characteristics, in fact, in contradistinction to its predecessors, was its legitimation and institutionalization of intramural dissent. Further, rabbinic Judaism developed in two different geographical locations, Palestine and Babylonia, with different traditions and cultural influences.85 It would seem impossible, then, to represent any particular viewpoint as that of rabbinic Judaism as a whole.

In fact, I am not claiming that all rabbis of late antiquity were in perfect agreement on matters of asceticism. On the contrary, my contention is that Palestinian and Babylonian sages differed in their attitudes toward fasting and other forms of ascesis. My assertion is only that the types of asceticism outlined earlier and to be presented in detail were widespread among the sages. With regard to each ascetic behavior and attitude I will indicate whether the sage citing or exhibiting it is tannaitic or amoraic, Babylonian or Palestinian. In a number of cases I will also discuss whether a tradition quoted in the name of a Palestinian sage in the Babylonian Talmud, or in the name of a Babylonian in the Palestinian Talmud, should be regarded as Palestinian or Babylonian in origin.

A second issue is the problem of attributions in rabbinic literature and their reliability. It is by now a truism among most contemporary scholars of rabbinic history and literature that the attributions found in rabbinic sources are to treated with great caution. It has been shown that they are often inaccurate or even knowingly fictitious and that the rabbis themselves are aware of this fact. This problem has raised questions about whether or not rabbinic biography is possible and, more germane to the work at hand, whether it is possible to write a history of rabbinic thought. Richard Kalmin and Christine Hayes89 have delineated three schools of thought on the question of the reliability of rabbinic attributions. The so-called traditional school, which includes many Israeli scholars such as Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, assumes that attributions are essentially reliable as they stand. A second group, which includes Jacob Neusner and his disciples in America and Arnold Goldberg in Europe, sees rabbinic attributions as essentially useless for historical purposes. Neusner does concede, however, that one can speak of ideologies of rabbinic documents, which can be dated, however, no earlier than their date of publication, despite the fact that they contain material attributed to an earlier period. This view assumes that each of the major rabbinic documents—the

Mishnah, Tosefta, halakhic (legal) midrashim, Yerushalmi, Bavli, and aggadic (exegetical and homiletical) midrashim—is the product of a thoroughgoing final redaction the date of which can be determined; in fact, however, with the exception of the Mishnah, there is considerable debate as to when each of these texts was edited.

My own approach is closest to that characterized by Christine Hayes as the source-critical approach. This approach notes that in its presentation of traditions of particular sages, rabbinic documents appear to follow a consistent chronological order. That is, later rabbis know of the views attributed to earlier ones and elucidate or question them. Rarely if ever do we find an entirely new set of views attributed to earlier sages by later ones. Furthermore, the use of specialized citation terminology and temporal markers indicates that rabbinic texts consist of teachings from different sources and periods. Consequently, I endorse Hayes's statement that "with proper attention to the distinctive features of [rabbinic] texts and the use of literary and source criticism, some relatively reliable diachronic and cultural-historical analyses of rabbinic texts beyond the level of redaction become possible." In other words, although one cannot attest to the specific historicity of the vast majority of rabbinic traditions—we do not know if a particular sage actually said or did what rabbinic sources attribute to him—we can reasonably assume that in most cases the dicta and actions attributed to sages of a particular time and place accurately reflect the views during that period and at that locale.

Let us now consider the relevance of this position for the study that follows. On the one hand, I treat each rabbinic source as a unit apart from the document in which it is found and I assume, absent evidence to the contrary, that it dates from the locale and period indicated in the citation. On the other hand, I do not claim that each tanna (sage from the period circa 70 C.E. to circa 220 C.E.) and amora (sage from the period 220 C.E. to circa 500 C.E.) to whom a statement is attributed actually made that statement. When I say, therefore, that Rabbi X said thus and such, I actually mean that such a statement is attributed to Rabbi X in the rabbinic corpus. However, because I am not writing rabbinic biography but merely establishing whether, where, when, and to what extent certain ideas and practices were current in rabbinic circles, the issue of the historical reliability of the attributions of the sources cited is mainly moot. When I attribute a view to the rabbis or sages without further qualification, I mean that this view is cited in several sources and that to my knowledge no dissenting view appears in rabbinic literature. This does not mean that every sage agreed with this view, only that such opposition has not been recorded. In those cases in which issues of history or attribution are important, they will be addressed in the body of the study.

Finally, an important component of my methodology in this study is to suggest conceptual and behavioral parallels between rabbinic and Christian asceticism. In particular, I will point out parallels between rabbinic materials and the apophthegma of the desert fathers, a phenomenon already examined at some length by Catherine Hezser. This approach invites a third methodological concern. At the 1997 conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, during the question and answer period following my paper on rabbinic asceticism, my friend and colleague Ya'akov Elman suggested that the asceticism I was describing was so different from that of the Christian variety that perhaps they ought not be compared or studied together. My response, then and now, is that given the Jewish predilection to see itself as nonascetic, it is necessary and important to establish a continuum between Christian behaviors commonly labeled as ascetic and rabbinic ascetic praxis, which, as I will demonstrate, share the same sensibility of self-denial in the pursuit of spiritual excellence. Thus my debate with Elman and those who share his point of view is not whether or not asceticism is present in rabbinic Judaism. Given the innumerable definitions of asceticism, as we shall see, this would be a pointless discussion. Rather, the question is whether one can find enough points of contact between rabbinic and Christian asceticism to conclude that they are conceptually similar

and therefore capable of illuminating each other. My answer to this question is affirmative, based in part on the similarities between the asceticism of the rabbis and that of the desert fathers. With these caveats in mind, let us turn to the texts themselves. <>

ASCETICISM OF THE MIND: FORMS OF ATTENTION AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION IN LATE ANTIQUE MONASTICISM by Inbar Graiver [PIMS, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts 213, 97808884421 30]

Asceticism is founded on the possibility that human beings can profoundly transform themselves through training and discipline. In particular, asceticism in the Eastern monastic tradition is based on the assumption that individuals are not slaves to the habitual and automatic but can be improved by ascetic practice and, with the cooperation of divine grace, transform their entire character and cultivate special powers and skills. **ASCETICISM OF THE MIND: FORMS OF ATTENTION AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION IN LATE ANTIQUE MONASTICISM** explores the strategies that enabled Christian ascetics in the Egyptian, Gazan, and Sinaitic monastic traditions of late antiquity to cultivate a new form of existence. At the book's center is a particular model of ascetic discipline that involves a systematic effort to train the mind and purify attention. Drawing on contemporary cognitive and neuroscientific research, this study underscores the beneficial potential and self-formative role of the monastic system of mental training, thereby confuting older views that emphasized the negative and repressive aspects of asceticism. At the same time, it sheds new light on the challenges that Christian ascetics encountered in their attempts to transform themselves, thereby lending insight into aspects of their daily lives that would otherwise remain inaccessible. **ASCETICISM OF THE MIND** brings rigorously historical and cognitive perspectives into conjunction across a range of themes, and in so doing opens up new ways of exploring asceticism and Christian monasticism. By working across the traditional divide between the humanities and the cognitive sciences, it offers new possibilities for a constructive dialogue across these fields.

Review

"In **ASCETICISM OF THE MIND** Inbar Graiver makes extensive use of the insights of social cognition and related disciplines such as cognitive psychology to offer new perspectives on the practices of early Christian ascetics and monastics, focusing especially on what she calls attentiveness, that is, the methods ascetics used to focus their minds on the divine. This is an original and timely book that has much to offer to scholars of Christianity, early and late, and to all others interested in ascetic discipline." —Susanna Elm, University of California, Berkeley

"This is a highly original study of the strategies employed in the Eastern monastic tradition to influence character and mental disposition by cognitive means. The book explores the methods utilized by monks for self-transformation and self-stabilization that are described in detail in their writings and situates these writings within late ancient religious history, as well as examining them in the perspective of recent experiments on attention, introspection, and related problems in the field of cognitive psychology. In her patient and well-informed analysis of these texts, Inbar Graiver makes an important contribution to the growing literature linking the humanities and the brain sciences." —Brian Stock, University of Toronto

About the Author

Inbar Graiver, a postdoctoral scholar at the Faculty of Theology at Humboldt University, studied philosophy, comparative literature, grammar, and general history before she completed her doctorate in medieval and late antique history at Tel Aviv University. Her current research is devoted to the ancient, late antique, and early Byzantine history of psychological knowledge and the processes related to its production, dissemination, and application. Her articles have appeared in *The Journal of Early Christian Studies, The Journal of Religion,* and *The Journal of Cognitive Historiography*.

Christian asceticism assumes that it is possible for a human being to acquire special powers by a process of inner development, with the cooperation of divine aid. While realizing this potential to its full may have been reserved for a precious few, asceticism in the Eastern monastic tradition is based on the assumption that a profound self-transformation can take place in any individual who applies himself or herself with enough determination and faith. Invested with extraordinary psychological capacities and spiritual power as well as an imposing presence, acquired through years of withdrawal and ascetic training, Christian monks and holy men could then be called upon to offer advice and efficacious prayers, to treat physical and mental ailments, to ease social tensions, to mediate, or to provide protection.

In recent decades there have been great advances in the understanding of the social, spiritual, and supernatural power that monks and holy men wielded in late antique society. But one question still awaits an answer: how were they able to cultivate such exceptional capacities? *Asceticism of the Mind* seeks to address this question by exploring the strategies that enabled ascetic practitioners in the Eastern monastic tradition to transform their entire character and mental disposition, as well as the persistent problems that they encountered in the attempt to do so.

The transformation brought about by ascetic practice belongs to a general pattern of self-transformation in which the self is an active agent of its own transformation; however, the goal of this transformation and the conditions under which it can occur are different in each cultural and religious framework. This study focuses on the unique form that self-transformation took within the Egyptian, Gazan, and Sinaitic monastic traditions in late antiquity. While this transformative process eventually enabled Egyptian and Palestinian monks to fill important functions in Near Eastern society, for them asceticism was not a cultural phenomenon or a social institution, but part of their concrete daily life. It is this facet of asceticism — as a practical phenomenon and a method for promoting inner transformation — that I seek to reconstruct in this study. In particular, this study argues for the need to broaden the scholarly emphasis on the ascetic body and to consider the role of mental training in ascetic processes of self-formation. While asceticism is ultimately expressed in the body, the problem that Egyptian and Palestinian monks sought to address was ultimately rooted not in the body but in the mind's failure to exercise control over the body. Thus, the form of asceticism at the

centre of this study involves a disciplined and systematic effort to train and purify the mind and attention. This form of training, I argue, assisted Christian ascetics in the process of creating new psychological capacities and exceptional cognitive skills, in the service of contemplation. However, the monastic discipline of attention was not without risks. As will be shown, it was powerful enough not only to heal but also to harm, unless performed with sufficient experience and skill.

To fully appreciate the complexity and innovation of the early monastic discipline of attention, I propose to examine it from a joint historical and cognitive viewpoint. For Christian ascetics, attention was a way of restoring their relations with God, rather than a method for cultivating special cognitive skills; yet inasmuch as their attempt to do so relied on regular mental training, attention provides a useful bridge between the radically different explanatory models presumed by modern and late antique theories of mind. Accordingly, throughout this study the discussion shifts back and forth between these perspectives and their accompanying terminologies: "attentiveness" is employed when discussing the spiritual and religious goal of the monastic discipline of attention, whereas "attention management" and related terms are employed when discussing the cognitive underpinning of the monastic strategies.

Despite the shift in the study of asceticism in recent years towards embracing a wide range of approaches and methodologies in analyzing this multifaceted phenomenon, many historians still shy away from using cognitive research. This book seeks to demonstrate the benefits of working across the traditional divide between history and cognitive science. In particular, collaborative research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience is one of the most exciting domains of interdisciplinary research in this century. This study explores some of the ways in which historians can profit from these developments.

As will be shown, the converging evidence provided by neuropsychological and cognitive data underscores the beneficial potential and self-formative role of the monastic system of mental training, thereby confuting older views that emphasized the negative and repressive aspects of asceticism. At the same time, research on attention regulation and meditative practices in Asian religious and meditative traditions also reveals the risks inherent in systematic mental training. In this way it sheds new light on the nature of the challenges that late antique monks encountered in their attempt to train attention, as well as on the expression of these problems in early monastic sources.

Monastic authors ascribe the challenges involved in ascetic self-formation to the sinister influence of demons. Accordingly, an additional goal of this book is to advance a better understanding of the demonology of the Egyptian desert. Drawing on cognitive research on attention, I argue that demonology provided late antique monks with tools that were subtle enough to map the complex cognitive mechanisms involved in attention regulation as well as the ways in which this effortful process can go wrong. While we have no direct access to the monk's experience of the demonic, which was clearly richer than modern scientific explanations allow, research on attention lends valuable insight into the representation of these experiences in monastic demonology, thereby underscoring its sophistication. My reliance on cognitive theories therefore should not imply doubt about the truth claims of the monastic sources. It is precisely because I take them seriously that I rely on these theories, rather than dismissing monastic demonology as literary elaboration, an expression of superstition, or something completely incomprehensible to modern readers.

More generally, this study seeks to explore the potential for constructive dialogue and theoretical refinement across history and cognitive science. By situating key monastic insights into the operations of the human mind in the context of contemporary cognitive science, it aims to advance a better understanding of Christian monasticism and asceticism as well as the religious practices of late

antiquity. At the same time, by presenting culturally specific ways in which pan-human cognitive phenomena were understood, articulated, and manipulated in late antiquity, this book seeks to contribute to current discussions in the cognitive and social sciences on the relationship between cognition and culture. Finally, analyses conducted in this study uncover processes related to the production of psychological knowledge in late antiquity and reveal the extent to which such knowledge is socially constructed. The fact that psychological knowledge bears the mark of the cultural context in which it is produced does not necessarily mean that it is merely a reflection of this context, yet it is only by comparing different types of psychologies that we can recognize what is perhaps cross-cultural in psychology and what is culturally constructed. I thus offer this book for the benefit of psychologists interested in the history of their discipline, as well as those interested in gaining reflective distance from its explanatory models.

With this varied audience in mind, this introductory chapter has a double purpose: first, to situate Egyptian and Gazan monasticism within its historical and intellectual context, and second, to contextualize the research approach to be employed in this book in view of recent research on Christian asceticism and monasticism. Chapters 1 and **2** then provide a theoretical introduction to the central themes to be addressed in this study: the ascetic self, self-control, and attention. Chapter 1 describes the opposing modes of self-constitution between which the ascetic process of self-formation unfolded: an ideal self model that gave direction and motivation to this process, as well as the actual constitution of embodied monastic selves. The tension between these opposing modes of self-constitution will run throughout the present study. Monastic asceticism sought to resolve this tension, and one of the ways in which it did so was by defining specific areas where self-control should be exercised. Chapter **2** therefore elucidates the meaning and significance of self-control, particularly control of attention, in Christian asceticism.

Ascetic practitioners were expected to achieve ambitious goals of self-control, especially attentional control. Chapters 3 and 4 investigate the problems and setbacks that they encountered in their attempt to do so. Drawing on research on attention and on the complications that can arise from systematic mental training, chapter 3 shows that various forms of misuse of the monastic discipline of attention could unwittingly serve as the source of these problems, and that demonology enabled monastic writers to cope with questions concerning this seemingly paradoxical phenomenon. In other words, what was ascribed to demonic machinations were the very risks inherent in the effort to train attention, and hence in monastic asceticism.

To further investigate how problems related to attentional control were interpreted within the explanatory framework of monastic demonology, chapter 4 focuses on monastic accounts of a demonically induced psychological state characterized by uncontrollable preoccupation with some sinful or otherwise unwanted thought. This state was described using Greek verbs meaning "to besiege," which were rendered into Latin as *obsidere* — the etymological root of the English word "obsession." I argue that the interpretation of siege as a phenomenon of the mind enabled monastic authors to develop their own representation of what is known today as obsession, or obsession-like symptoms, which thwarted the ascetic process of self-formation.

In chapter 5 I draw on cognitive research on attention and brain neuroplasticity in order to explore the beneficial potential of the challenges involved in the monastic discipline of attention. While demonically induced siege or obsession may have been a "risk of the trade" in the monastic system of mental training, I argue that when skilfully handled it could serve as the positive condition of its own negation and eventual supersession: those who were able to withstand the siege would eventually gain control over automatic patterns of thinking and reacting that lie beyond ordinary

control, in order to renounce them. The chapter ends with an attempt to reconstruct some aspects of the new subjectivity that accompanied these cognitive changes.

Asceticism and Self-Transformation

Many religious practices are aimed at transformations of the self and often operate to support these transformations. Comparative studies in the history of religion suggest that the need for such change is a universal theme at the heart of all the major religious cultures. Moreover, a typological distinction can be drawn between two general modes of self-transformation in these cultures: models of sudden change in the composition of the self, when the self is a passive recipient of the process (for instance, in certain types of religious conversion), and models of gradual transformation based upon an active effort over years of intentional and systematic practice. Asceticism belongs to this gradual mode of self-transformation.

Asceticism assumes that humans can be transformed. Although scholars have not been able to arrive at a generally accepted definition of asceticism, there seems to be a consensus in recent scholarship on its self-formative dimension. Recent works have argued that asceticism should not be understood merely as a process of rejection — of sex, food, or the norms of the dominant society — but also as one involving a transformation of the self. Richard Valantasis, who has proposed what is perhaps the most quoted definition of asceticism, defines ascetic practices as "performances within a dominant social environment intended to inaugurate a new subjectivity, different social relations, and an alternative symbolic universe." Asceticism, on this view, is not an end in itself. Rather, ascetic practice is organized around change — in subjectivity, in social relations, and in the understanding of the world.

The emphasis on the self-formative dimension of asceticism owes much to Michel Foucault, who treated Christian asceticism as a "technology of the self" — a discipline that permitted individuals to influence their own bodies and souls so as to transform themselves in order to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. The interpretive framework and conceptual basis for Foucault's study of ancient technologies of the self derives from Pierre Hadot's work on ancient spiritual exercises. In his influential book *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* Hadot argued that ancient philosophy, unlike modern philosophy, was not a theoretical and abstract activity but a way of life, whose goal was to promote a profound transformation of the philosopher's way of being and vision of the world. Philosophy thus required special practices or "spiritual exercises" aimed at realizing this transformation. In the fourth century these exercises were integrated into Christian monasticism.

Hadot identified the components of the spiritual exercises employed by the Egyptian desert fathers as those prevailing in the Greco-Roman world. His work provided an important key for deciphering monastic texts and contextualizing them in the philosophical tradition. Historians of Christianity who applied his theoretical formulation of "spiritual exercises" to early monastic texts have typically addressed the cultural setting or the spiritual and theological aspects of various monastic spiritual exercises, more than their practical facet and concrete experience. The present investigation benefits from the results provided by these prior works in order to investigate the latter facet of ascetic training. How were the lives of Christian monks shaped by religious ideals of spiritual perfection? How, and to what extent, were they able to implement these ideals in their own bodies and minds? What were the problems and setbacks that they encountered in their attempt to transform themselves?

To address these questions, I will adopt a praxis-oriented approach which starts with the actual circumstances that ascetic practitioners encountered in their daily lives, rather than a "top-down"

approach which starts with general aspects, such as theology or society, as the most crucial issues for understanding asceticism. More specifically, I will examine asceticism from the perspective of self-control, which is the basic faculty that allows individuals to alter their thinking and behaviour. In particular, in Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism special importance was accorded to the capacity to control the mind's content and activity. Hence, among the areas where self-control can be exercised, this book focuses on mental control, or control of attention, and on the system of mental training of which it was a part. In view of the central role accorded to this kind of self-control in early monastic thought and practice, this perspective can help us reconstruct from the ascetic literature of Egypt and Palestine the actual ups and downs of ascetic self-formation.

An additional way in which this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of monastic spiritual exercises or self-technologies is by drawing attention to the important role of language in ascetic self-formation. As will be shown in chapter 5, along with cognitive strategies of attention management, late antique monks also employed linguistic strategies — new ways of formulating, understanding, and speaking about their inner experiences — in order to purify their mind and retrain their attention. Whereas the role of traditional ascetic practices and spiritual exercises in facilitating self-transformation has received much scholarly attention, the present study reveals the important role of linguistic strategies in this transformative process.

Asceticism of the Mind

Asceticism usually combines two systems of training, a physical and a mental or "**psychic**" one, each of which involves a different set of exercises. Max Weber defined the latter form of training in his sociological study of religion as a methodical regulation of the content and scope of all thought and action, thus producing in the individual the most completely conscious, willful, and anti-instinctual control over one's own physical and psychological processes [...] in subordination to the religious end." The training of thinking and other psychic processes, therefore, is directed to a systematic concentration of the mind upon whatever alone is essential in religion. In monastic asceticism, systematic mental training helped ascetic practitioners cultivate the mental and emotional stability and inner unity necessary for contemplation.

Although asceticism is as much a process of mental as of physical discipline, historians of Christianity and theorists of asceticism have tended to focus on the latter. As part of a shift away from a view of asceticism as a devaluing of the body, in the past decades the ascetic body has received much scholarly attention of increasing methodological and theoretical sophistication. The catalyst for this new approach was the 1971 publication of Peter Brown's "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity."[66] In this and in subsequent publications Brown has shown that ascetic practice was the source of the holy man's holiness, and that his body functioned as a locus of sanctity. In the wake of Brown's groundbreaking work, the body has become a major topic in the study of Christian monasticism and asceticism.° Over the last few decades, historians have demonstrated that mortification of the body was linked in the minds of Christian ascetics to the hope for its renewal, and that the goal of ascetic practitioners was not deliverance from the body but rather to ensure that the body conforms to the rational faculty.[68] Nevertheless, the system of purely mental *askesis* that enabled them to attain this goal has not received its due attention.

The present study joins recent scholarship in situating the seemingly repressive aspect of asceticism within a creative programme intended to produce a new subjectivity; however, it argues that it was not solely or primarily through bodily training that monastic asceticism carried out this programme. Rather, in Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism it was primarily the mind that needed to be transformed and renewed in the image of Christ. Thus, the form of asceticism at the focus of this

book involves a disciplined and systematic attempt to train and purify the mind — to "take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ," as Paul enjoins the Corinthians (2 Cor. io:s), so as to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23-24; cf. Col. 3:9-11). In subsequent chapters I draw on contemporary cognitive research on attention in order to reconstruct the ways in which systematic mental training enabled Christian monks to translate this ideal into practice.

The study of attention is a major part of contemporary cognitive neuroscience and psychology. Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, significant advances have been made towards mapping the cognitive underpinnings of attention and developing detailed models of attention. In addition, a major aim of research since the 1990s has been to gather neuropsychological evidence pertaining to the brain mechanisms that underlie attention and to develop models that describe the neural systems involved in attention. The converging evidence provided by neuropsychological and cognitive data suggests that repeated acts of attentional control can affect the activity of the mind in an enduring way, and that in so doing they can also rewire the circuits of the brain. One type of attention-training method that has been shown to be particularly effective in producing such changes is meditative practice. The present study draws on research in these fields in order to elucidate certain aspects of the daily life of late antique monks that would otherwise remain inaccessible to us.

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Demonic Machinations and Cognitive Mechanisms

Demons are a recurring figure in the religious practices of various traditions of late antiquity. Whereas earlier generations of historians tended to treat the increasing fascination with demons in this period as an expression of credulity or superstition," more recent studies on late antique and medieval demonologies st ress the positive role that beliefs in demons played, for example, in helping to consolidate the identity of Christian groups, in supplying a ready explanation for various misfortunes that beset these groups, and in facilitating collective reflection on social tensions and unfortunate or incomprehensible occurrences.

While demons filled a variety of functions in early Christian monastic life, the demonology of the Egyptian desert is mostly concerned with the role that demons play in the monk's psychological and ethical life. Few studies have been devoted to this aspect of monastic demonologies. David Brakke, in his excellent hook *Demons and the Making of the Monk,* draws on the psychoanalytic concept of abjection in order to explain how demons facilitated the formation of monastic identity in the fourth and early fifth centuries. As a projection of the monk's own passions, he argues, the demon facilitated the "othering" of a dimension of the self that the monk had to renounce, thereby allowing him to establish a new identity. In another important study of early monastic demonology, Richard Valantasis interprets it as a metaphorical system that expresses the transformation and perfection of the monk's body. Although both authors acknowledge that demons operated not only through bodily attacks but also through mental attacks, they focus on the former.

In this book, I follow recent scholarship in stressing the constructive role that beliefs in demons played in late antiquity, but I argue for the need to situate the relationship between monks and demons within the context of the monastic discipline of attention in order to give a more accurate account of this relationship. Drawing on research on the cognitive mechanisms of attention, I argue that modern psychology and the demonological psychology of the Egyptian desert propose different but compatible symbolic formulations of the cognitive mechanisms involved in attention regulation as well as the risks inherent in this process. Nevertheless, in the ancient and late antique world psychology did not exist as an independent science with its own objects and goals, nor was a distinction drawn between scientific and moral or religious elements of psychological knowledge.

Accordingly, my use of the labels "monastic psychology" and "demonological psychology" is premised on a broad view of what constitutes psychological knowledge and how it is acquired and articulated. I n subsequent chapters I explore the new lines of psychological investigation and he new therapeutic procedures to which monastic demonology gave rise.

Although the demonology of the Egyptian desert is mostly concerned with the role that demons play in the monk's psychological and spiritual development, monastic demonologies cannot be explained exclusively in psychological terms. Demons not only influenced the inner processes of the self, but also appeared to monks in bodily form, provoked disagreements between them, caused diseases, I Harassed people in certain locations, and possessed people. Furthermore, the fact I hat they could attack humans both from within and without suggests that they were not perceived as being merely "within the mind." Rather than assuming a Cartesian break between external and internal causation, monastic demonologies are based on the assumption that external powers, both good and evil, can influence internal processes of the self. In this way monastic authors were able to fit the demons into an explanation of human cognition.

Thus, the blurred boundary between external and internal causation in monastic thinking need not preclude a psychological interpretation of monastic demonology. Rather, it was widely held that demons adapt their strategies to the monk's internal condition, and hence that knowledge concerning their activity can be acquired by introspection. Thus, the desert fathers and their followers, especially Evagrius, were able to develop new methodologies of introspection, or "looking inward" — *introspicere,* as Cassian transmitted it to the Latin West — and to chart the inner dynamics of the mind. While the history of psychology as a scholarly study of the mind and behaviour dates back to the ancient Greek philosophers, who developed elaborate theories of the soul, in antiquity there was no clear-cut discussion of the peculiarity of the individual person, nor were ancient philosophers interested in the individual's inner life. As will be shown, demonology enabled monastic writers to pursue new lines of psychological investigation of which modern Western psychology is the remote heir.

Introspection, as a means of acquiring knowledge about mental processes, was of central importance in the emergence of modern psychology. In the second half of the nineteenth century, with the appearance of quantitative introspective methods, the study of the mind first took shape as an empirical, progressive, and laboratory-based science. At this stage, the application of specific practical methods of data production became an essential characteristic of the field and distinguished it from its intellectual predecessors. Consequently, scholars investigating the history of Western psychology have tended to focus on the nineteenth-century roots of scientific psychology. The present book, however, shows that early monastic discussions of the inner processes of the self and how they are manipulated by demons offer an important source of evidence for the history of psychological knowledge and the ways in which it is produced, articulated, and applied in psychological praxis. In this way it demonstrates the need to broaden the scholarly investigation of the history of the *discipline* of psychology to include the history of psychological *knowledge.* <>

METHOD AND MYSTICISM: COSMOS, NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISLAMIC MYSTICISM by Seyyed Shahabeddin Mesbahi [Fons Vitae, 9781891785863]

In this pioneering work, Seyyed Shahabeddin Mesbahi offers a new methodology for approaching Islamic mystical concepts by examining the importance, place, and manifestation of the concepts of cosmos, nature, and environment in Islamic mysticism. The study presents a framework for understanding the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of these concepts, within selected stations (maqamat of the mystical path tariqa), and how, in a reciprocal interaction, they weave a "symbiotic whole." This work also reexamines the concept of "mystical experience" with regards to the Islamic mystics' approach toward the concepts of cosmos, nature, and environment, especially in the thoughts of great masters, such as Hallaj, Bayazid Bastami, Ghazali, Ruzbihan Baqli Shirazi, Ibn 'Arabi, Rumi, and Mulla Sadra.

Review

"Islamic mysticism, most of which is crystallized in Sufism, possesses both an active and a passive aspect, both a preparing oneself to 'wait upon God' and a journey with one's whole being to Him. Therefore, in its totality it involves a method—in both a philosophical and a practical sense—a method that is, in fact, central to Sufism and gnosis or 'irfān. It is this nexus between method and mysticism . . . that constitutes the theme of this short but important work." —Seyyed Hossein Nasr, University Professor of Islamic Studies, George Washington University

"This book presents a new paradigm and creative approach to the study of Islamic spirituality. . . . This very important book . . . is an original and welcome addition to the contemporary scholarship on Islamic mysticism." —Mohammad H. Faghfoory, department of religion, George Washington University

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Towards a Methodology in Approaching Islamic Mysticism

The issues of nature, the environment and the cosmos as a whole are of increasing concern not only to environmentalists, but to the general public, and to scholars, policy-makers, and theologians alike. In this regard, Islamic scholars have not remained aloof from discussions or debates over these issues. In fact, within the Islamic mystical tradition, these concepts are repeatedly alluded to and form part of the core of the mystical experience. Their elevation in the Islamic mystical tradition fosters an attitude that surpasses respect for the concepts in and of themselves, and views them as manifestations of the Absolute.

The work at hand intends to elaborate on the concepts of cosmos, nature and environment in Islamic mysticism. Despite the extensive studies on cosmos, nature and the environment, there is an evident gap in the literature dealing with these concepts from a mystical perspective. While the manuscript will utilize these and other existing scholarly works, it will rely primarily on original sources, namely the Qur'an and the works of Islamic mystics.

In addition to a dearth of scholarship, we also face methodological problems and limitations in that conventional and prevailing methodology prevents an in depth study of religious "experiences" in general, and mystical experiences in particular. Here, we should address shortly a general misapplication of the concept of "experience" among some contemporary scholars of religious studies.

This misapplication, in my view, is the general result of employing the Hobbesian approach to "experience," in the field of religious studies. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) wrote in *The Elements of Law:*

> The remembrance of the succession of one thing to another, that is, of what *antecedent,* and what *consequent,* and what *concomitant* is called an experi-ment...To have had many experiments, is that we call *experience,* which is nothing else but remembrance of what antecedents have been followed with what consequents...Experience concludeth nothing universally.'

Although a "Hobbesian definition of experience" (which I have termed the Hobbesian triangle) [Figure 1], could be a useful tool in its related social/political aspects, because of its mechanical nature (antecedent, consequent and concomitant), it may not be applied successfully and effectively as an approach to the religious, and especially mystical experience. An example of implementing this mechanical method of understanding can be found in Ninian Smart's approach to "religion and ideology" as world view analysis by applying the idea of *epoche*'. According to Smart,

> The *most important idea* in modern social science was that of *epoche*' or suspension of judgment. In other words, you suspend your own beliefs about others (whether that be culture, or group, or person) in order to make your description more realistic.

Smart then concludes,

> The study of *religions and ideologies* can be called world view analysis. In this way we try to depict the history and nature of the symbols and beliefs that have helped form the structure of human consciousness and society. *This is the heart of the modern study of religion.*'

The main paradox in Smart's observation springs from his dependence on *epoche*' as an essential accessory to construct a world view through observation of "religions and ideologies." Observation of "religions and ideologies" in the same container of dialectical inquiry, by itself contradicts the *epoche*'. In other words, despite all their differences such as roots, realms and doctrines, observation of these two in a homogenous position, shows that Smart did not apply the rule of *epoche',* i.e., the suspension of judgment, in order to reach a more realistic description of the subject.

Although, Smart does not point to the exact same origin for both "ideology and religion," his mechanical method in observing "religions and ideologies" both simultaneously *and* in the same category to reach a world view as if they were the product of the same origin, leads to the *desacralization* of religious traditions/experiences. As a result, a large expanse of religious experiences will be sliced into separate and disconnected *performances;* performances that are not recognized and dignified with respect to the characteristics and identity of the religious/mystical experiences. Suffice it to say that such experiences forfeit their organic religious/ mystical identity.

In contemporary scholarship on Islamic mysticism, one can recognize a lack of awareness of an organic identity *(huwiyah)* which is embedded in each mystical concept. This identity consists of numerous elements which cannot be elaborated in a one-dimensional approach. Each term, metaphor, or recorded saying of Sufi masters carries within itself affinities with different elements in the long tradition of Islamic mysticism. Underestimating the coherent connections of these affinities and simply translating a mystical term would not shed light upon the organic identity of Islamic mystical concepts.

Mysticism utilizes its own language, terminologies and tenets to examine the place of cosmos, nature and the environment and provides us with a more comprehensive understanding of these concepts. Islamic mysticism *(`ilfetn)* provides us with the opportunity to observe and discover the presence of mystical metaphors and allegories and to unveil the very essence of the intermeshed physical and spiritual characteristics of nature, environment and cosmos. The concept of "experience" in Islamic mysticism, has an "organic" rather than a mechanical "identity." This identity needs to be elaborated with respect to its organic affinities and interconnectedness with its own concepts of "tradition" and "sanctity" as the main domain of Islamic mystical experience. This elaboration will be applied by introducing a new and organic approach which I have termed a "methodological triangle." <>

PIETY AND REBELLION: ESSAYS IN HASIDISM by Shaul Magid [New Perspectives in Post-Rabbinic Judaism, Academic Studies Press, 9781618117519]

PIETY AND REBELLION examines the span of the Hasidic textual tradition from its earliest phases to the 20th century. The essays collected in this volume focus on the tension between Hasidic fidelity to tradition and its rebellious attempt to push the devotional life beyond the borders of conventional religious practice. Many of the essays exhibit a comparative perspective deployed to better articulate the innovative spirit, and traditional challenges, Hasidism presents to the traditional Jewish world. **PIETY AND REBELLION** is an attempt to present Hasidism as one case whereby maximalist religion can yield a rebellious challenge to conventional conceptions of religious thought and practice.

Review

"One distinguishing element of the essays contained in this volume, and of Magid's work more generally, is a willingness to engage in interpretive play at the intersections where Kabbalah and Hasidism converge. In addition to its eclectic quality, another feature that distinguishes **PIETY AND REBELLION** is the book's bold autobiographical introduction. Here, Magid recounts his own captivating journey. It is the story of a restless intellectual, who, fashioning himself both an insider and an outsider, has sustained his soul on everything from macrobiotics and LSD to the yeshivas of Jerusalem, from the rabbinate to the Ivy League. … I find **PIETY AND REBELLION** to be a stimulating addition to the scholarship on Hasidism by one of its most energetic, creative, and politically engaged interpreters. There is much to praise in these studies, which are as varied as the variegated corpus of Hasidism itself." —Jeremy Phillip Brown, McGill University, H-Judaic

"**PIETY AND REBELLION** is a superb collection of ten essays on Hasidism by Shaul Magid, one of the more daring and innovative interpreters of Jewish thought and cultural studies. The two parts of the book, early and later Hasidism, demonstrate the impressive range of the author's command of primary and secondary material. Magid's studies enrich our understanding of both the historical and the phenomenological contours of the pietism that emerged in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its repercussions in forms of American Jewish fundamentalism that evolved in the twentieth century. Each of the essays is well documented, providing a myriad of avenues of research for future generations. In addition to the ten chapters, the author has provided a moving introduction in which he charts his way to neo-Hasidism, framed particularly in terms of the struggle with the matter of alterity, determining one's sense of identity in relation to the other and envisioning the possibility of living otherwise. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that the struggle with alterity informs many of the essays included in this volume. The charting of Magid's personal odyssey will surely be of great interest to potential readers and only adds luster to a very fine anthology of critical essays that shed light on the pious nature of rebellion and the rebellious nature of piety." —Elliot R. Wolfson, Marsha and Jay Glazer Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Alterity

Excerpt: For me, as a young secular Jew from the flesh-pots of the New York suburbs, from Jewish Workman Circle summer camp and a mixed-race public school where popular culture was all that was sacred, that is what Ilasidism and Hasidic life represented: the promise of alterity. Of course, I had never even heard the word "Hasidism" until I was at least ten or eleven and, even then, only in books. The word was never uttered at home. Perhaps It is more accurate to say, then, that as long as I can remember, alterity more generally was something that intrigued me, the notion of living or being "otherwise, as Levinas taught me many years later. I saw myself as different, hut not different enough to feel alienated, just different enough to feel like he suburban life I was experiencing was not all there was, and also was not enough. But being alienated was part of the counterculture I was reared in, so that alienation was itself that which produced cohesiveness.

It was in my teens when I first read Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and came to realize alterity was something people actually embodied. It was a short time between that first reading of Kerouac and when I drove off in my 1972 Volkswagen minibus on New Year's Eve 1977 that took me literally "on the road" to the mountains of New Mexico with no purpose other than to experience the feeling of being unbound, what I later came to know as the notion of "*lishma*": that wonderful experience where there is no place of arrival other than where you happen to stop at the end of the day. Of course, such freedom, even the possibility of such experiential liberation, is a privilege of a middle-class life with a safety net that was not fool-proof but strong enough so that you needn't worry that you would end up homeless and destitute with no one to call—the way Neal Cassidy ends up in flop houses on the Bowery or on the streets of Denver in On *the Road.* I did not have the courage to take it to that extreme but I played around the edges. Not exactly a hitchhiker with a credit card (there were plenty of those too) but certainly one with a phone number where people who loved you would likely answer, scold you, and then wire the necessary money to get you out of a jam. I remember some of those calls with both trepidation and gratitude. For some reason when I left home all my father gave me was a gas credit card, hoping, I assume, I would not run out of gas on some abandoned road on the fruited plain.

But the road to Jewish alterity for me began even earlier in my childhood, if only in my imagination. My paternal grandmother, an immigrant from the Pale of Settlement, used to take me on annual trips to places outside the bubble of New York. One year we visited what was then called "Amish country" in Pennsylvania. What struck me a child of the gilded suburbs was the simplicity—what the Amish call "plainness"—of their lives. It was perhaps my first real experience that it was possible to live "otherwise:' The smell of hay, the rural rolling green hills, shoofly pie (an Amish delicacy made of molasses and pie crust), and the horse-drawn carts offered a world I hadn't known existed. The second memory was during trips to visit relatives in Brooklyn. We would often take the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway which runs right under the hasidic enclave of Williamsburg. As a child I recall getting glimpses of h*asidim* stroll on the overpass as we sped by underneath wondering who they were and how they lived. I knew I was a Jew and they were Jews but I could not understand what tied us together. The connection between h*asidim* and the Amish, and Christianity, remained strong throughout my childhood and even into adulthood, when I discovered Thomas Merton and became enthralled with monastic Christianity, or when I published an essay on the Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder.

The door to Jewish alterity may have first appeared to me explicitly as a child of about ten or eleven when I read Chaim Potok's *My Name is Asher* Lev at the behest of my mother, whose suggestion was based on artistic talents that I exhibited as a burgeoning adolescent. At that time, and perhps until about 16, if I seriously thought about my future it was likely as a painter. Inadvertently, *Asher Lev* also introduced me to the strange **and** compelling world of Hasidism. But also, Hasidism as rebellion, not against the world but against itself. The final scene in the book, the ultimate moment of hasidic rebellion, was when Asher Lev, having already left his Hasidic world for the art world in Greenwich Village, paints a large crucifixm. And the man hanging on the cross is none other than his Hasidic father. Many years later I would publish a book, *Hasidism Incarnate,* and use Marc Chagall's "Yellow Crucifix" as the cover, having no recollection of that final scene in *Asher Lev* that was so arresting to me as a young boy.

This sense of Hasidism as alterity occurred to me, decades later, soon after I moved to Boro Park, Brooklyn, to study in *yeshivah* and begin my life us **a h***aredi* Jew. I was walking down a side street one evening in autumn and happened upon one of the many hasidic synagogues in the neighborhood. **On** the outside wall there was a sign announcing a *shi'ur* (Torah class) by a well-known rabbi. In English and Yiddish the sign read: "Come hear this great sage, Mozei Shabbos, parshat Noah:' What struck me was not the rabbi, who I had never heard of, or even "Mozei Shabbos" which in Boro l'ark is simply Saturday night. What struck me was there was no date given except "parshat Noah:' I realized that in this world, time was marked not by t he English calendar and not even by the Jewish calendar but by the Torah reading that will be read in synagogue that week. All the Jews in Boro Park knew the date by the *parashah* of the week. A non-Jew passing by, or even a secular Jew from the outside, would not know the date of this lecture. There was an experience of alterity in that moment that was exhilarating. Time marked only by Torah—in the middle of New York City.

Macrobiotic New Mexico, the Holy Land, and the Holy

After a brief stint living in Albuquerque after dropping out of college in 1977, I moved north near Santa Fe, and I found myself living in a macrobiotic impromptu commune of sorts in the small hamlet called Galisteo, populated mostly by Native Americans, Mexicans, a few old timers, and hippies. It was in Santa Fe where I came to know Bill Rosenberg, a New York Jew who was a practicing acupuncturist and macrobiotic healer who had lived for a short time in Denver, where he came across Rahhi Shlonio Twersky, an iconoclastic hasidic rabbi who had attracted many *bablei teshuvah* to his small circle. The Twersky family rose to notoriety in Chernobyl in the late eighteenth century with a hasidic master Menahem Nahum Twersky. The dynasty then migrated to Tolne, Skvere, and other locales before settling in America and Palestine/Israel. In America one branch of the family settled in Milwaukee and then moved to cities like Pittsburgh and Boston. Rosenberg had touched Judaism lightly in those days, and being the only two Jews in our small circle we bonded and remain in touch to this day. Bill is now Ze'ev Rosenberg, an Orthodox Jew who teaches Eastern medicine at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in San Diego. Rosenberg played an important role for me because he gave me what was perhaps my first Jewish book in about 1977, a copy of the recently published *Fragments of a Future Scroll* by a rabbi named Zalman Schachter (later Schachter-Shalomi). A meandering hodgepodge of reflections, translations, and inspirational writing, *Fragments* was my first entry into the literary world of Hasidism , admittedly through a neo-hasidic lens. Studying macrobiotics and oriental medicine had primed me for what was to come, but it was *Fragments* that made me decide to take my minibus back east and make some money to visit the strange country called Israel that I knew nothing about.

I returned to Manhattan some time that spring. Working as a street messenger by day and a dishwasher in a macrobiotic restaurant by night and sleeping on a futon on the floor in my parents'

modest Manhattan apartment, I soon saved enough to buy a one-way ticket to Israel with no definite plan to return. As a child I knew nothing about Israel. My family were Workman Circle people and much of what I knew about being Jewish came from attending the Workman Circle Camp Kinder Ring on Sylvan Lake, near Hopewell Junction, NY. We rarely if ever spoke about Israel, learned Yiddish and not Hebrew, and knew more about socialism than Zionism. So when I boarded the plane to Israel I carried no ideological baggage at all, something friends later have attributed to the ease with which I was able to adopt a leftist political stand on matters of Israeli politics and policies.

Over the course of a few months travelling alone and with some people I met on the way, I came upon a small group of young *yeshivah* students very much like myself, who happened to also be macrobiotic. On their prodding I attended a few classes in a run-down yet charming building that housed the Beit Joseph Novordok *yeshivah* on Shmuel ha-Navi Street in Jerusalem. The *yeshivah* where I was attending—known as "Brovinders," led by an American rabbi, Chaim Brovinder—was renting space from the Novordok *yeshivah* which consisted of a few do/en seemingly ill adjusted pale-skinned students who seemed to conic straight out of a Roman Vishniac photograph. 'I he founder of this group was an ascetic man in Russia named R. Yosef Yuzel of Novordok (1847-1919), a by-product of the Mussar movement of R. Israel Salanter. Known for their ascetic practices and introverted piety, Novordokers were strange birds even in a fairly strange world. My most vivid memory of them was that fifteen minutes before *minkth* (the afternoon prayer recited at 1pm in many *yeshivot* before lunch) they would close their *gemaras* (talmudic tractates), gather in the front of the cavernous sanctuary, and engage in an act of collective crying. It was actually quite startling to witness a group of young men crying together, bemoaning their unworthiness and blemished selves, imperfect servants of God trying to stay away from the temptations that swarmed all around them. Many of us Americans smirked at such overt piety but I secretly admired it.

I began to attend classes in the *yeshivah* more frequently until I enrolled in time and moved in with the group of friends living in a small apartment in new H*aredi* neighborhood, Sanhedria Murkhevet, about a 20-minute walk from the *yeshivah.* Without realizing it I had become a *yeshivah* student, cut my hair, removed my earring, and delved into the bizarre and fascinating world of the Mishnah and Talmud. I came with no background in Hebrew and thus struggled massively during that period, but those around me were kind, helpful, and compassionate. In particular, Rabbi Brovinder become a mentor for me; his intellectual rigor and biting sense of humor kept us sane in a world that otherwise appeared like a parallel universe to many of us. He taught us how to "learn," how to think inside a talmudic *sugya,* and also how to not take ourselves too seriously, the last being the most challenging for many of us. In those years (the late 1970s) *the ba'al teshuvah* movement was still in its heyday, Jerusalem was an open city (walking through east Jerusalem at night was not something we worried about), Israel was cheap (it had not yet moved from the Lira to the Shekel), and private telephones were rare. We had no televisions, and radio was useless since we were not yet fluent in modern Hebrew. We felt blessedly cut off from our American roots and lived a kind of reflexive orientalist existence in a world that resembled that of our great-grandparents and not our parents. I smelled the fragrance of alterity in the multi-ethnic Jerusalem neighborhood of Bukharim where we hung around after classes ended, a neighborhood that housed both the austere Novordok *yeshivah* and the hedonistic Turkish baths. The four or five people I lived with became close friends. They were all students of some enigmatic and mysterious hasidic rabbi who lived in America named Dovid Din. They spoke with a rare combination of intimacy and reverence, telling stories about his intense pious behaviors, such as praying the morning service for three hours or his long daily immersions on the mikveh, and about his bad teeth. Tales of his brilliant Torah discourses that spanned the spectrum from the sixteenth-century kabbalistic teaching of Isaac Luria to the poetry of William

Blake or the Sufi poet Rumi. He was also a strict macrobiotic. He had sent his "boys" (as he called them) to Jerusalem to become literate in Talmud and codes. Intrigued by these stories I became a kind of vicarious student to this unknown teacher, and after some time I realized I needed to meet him.

There were a variety of reasons I first left Jerusalem that spring but meeting Dovid was certainly one of them. Returning to Manhattan I had no immediate plans and spent some time studying shiatsu massage at the Shiatsu Center in Manhattan. I was also able to get the address of a place where Dovid was teaching in Brooklyn and made my way there to meet what for me had already become a mythic figure. My first memory of him is a bit vague. He was giving a class in an unaesthetic study house in Flatbush with oil-cloth tablecloths and fluorescent lights. He was indeed an ethereal figure, almost transparent, dressed in Satmar-style hasidic garb (including stockings and knee-length pants) and wearing a scarf in the early summer. After the class I went to introduce myself. He seemed to recognize my name as my Jerusalem friends must have mentioned me, but he made no indication of any interest in who I was. Just another traveler passing through, he assumed. "Ah yes, I heard about you," he almost whispered. "*Shalom aleikhem,*" he said, and put out his white, bony, and very feminine hand.

I was resolute to make myself known to him and began attending meetings more frequently, befriending some of the misfits and vagabonds who often frequented his classes. It was a hasidic underworld of sorts, lost souls wandering the streets of lower Manhattan looking for some Jewish satori. Then there were a few middle-aged female university professors who saw something in Dovid that we didn't. A few of them became his benefactors. There were also some "normal" hasidic Jews who came as well, but they showed little interest in us and we had nothing really to say to them. In their world we were interlopers, Dovid serving as the bridge that each crossed with caution to meet the other. Even then those hasidic enclaves had an underbelly, those who occupied the margins, looking for something more than what their communities could offer…

The Hasidic Underground and Yeshivah Life

Life in Boro Park, Brooklyn, was a macabre experience of living in an alternative universe that was a subway ride away from a city that offered everything. I lived in a dilapidated house in a mixed hasidic and Hispanic neighborhood on the outskirts of Boro Park that Dovid had one lived in with his family before moving to the other side of Boro Park. They may have been evicted. One was never quite sure who was actually living in that house. Some of those I knew from Jerusalem had returned and then a variety of other stragglers, vagrants, hangers-on, or those simply travelling through inhabited that house at various times. If there was space on the floor we could accommodate one more. Both the hasidic and Hispanic neighbors were equally baffled as to who we were and what we were doing there. We were robbed many times, but the intruders eventually gave up because we had nothing worth stealing. One of the most memorable robberies happened while we were eating the third meal on Shabbat, singing hasidic *niggunim* together as the sky darkened. Little did we know that as we were singing, burglars had broken into a back room and stolen the backpack of someone who had just arrived from Jerusalem. The only thing of value, or that which we most lamented, were some tabs of LSD that were lost forever. I hope our Hispanic brothers and sisters had a nice trip.

I first began studying in a small study house in Crown Heights with a young Lubavitcheh*asid* named Baruch Wertzburger. I was contemplating moving to Crown Heights to attend Yeshivat Hadar Torah Chlabad seemed liked a logical choice as it was much more structured than the more diffuse world of Boro Park, mirroring the more disciplined and conformist world of CHabad and the more free-flowing world of Polish Hasidism. I even packed all my things in my small Mazda to move into

the dorms in Crown Heights. I arrived late at night, parked my car on Eastern Parkway and spent the night in the *yeshivah* without unpacking. In the morning I walked around and decided it wasn't for me. So instead of unpacking my car I just pulled away and drove back to Boro Park. Habad Hasidism was compelling and uplifting, but there was something about the rebbe worship in Habad that turned me off. I attended numerous Farbrengens with the Lubavitcher rebbe and the intensity was enormous as he carried the room with his charisma, but day-to-day Crown Heights just seemed too cultish for me. Boro Park was more eclectic and more dysfunctional. I liked that. I continued coming to Crown Heights daily to Wertzburger's small classes in Habad Hasidism, beginning with *Sefer ha-Tanya* and then reading through some of the present rebbe's *sibot.* My Hebrew was getting much better and I began to get the map of the terrain of Hasidic texts.

Eventually I needed a bigger *yeshivah* with more subjects of study. I stumbled upon a new *yeshivah* in Flatbush run by two *roshei yeshivah,* one a Lakewood-trained *rosh yeshivah* named R. Chaim Friedman, proficient in the Lithuanian style of learning, and the second a Satmar *basid* named R. Yizhak Ashkenazi. Here I spent a little more than two years really honing my skills in Gemara and *halakhah* and continued studying Hasidism and Kabbalah with Dovid and his circle (of which I had become by that time an inside member). Learning the Lithuanian method of Talmud by Rabbi Friedman and the broader rather than deep method popular among *hasi-dim* was illuminating. Rabbi Ashkenazi was perhaps the first person I met who really knew the entire Talmud by heart. He was from the Aleksander Hasidic dynasty—people referred to him as the Alekser Rebbe—and he set up a small Hasidic shul in the basement of his house. The Alekser dynasty was founded by R. Shraga Feivel of Gritsa, who was student of R. Yizhak Worka, a contemporary of R. Menahem Mendel of Kotzk. R. Ashkenazi's family had drifted to Satmar in America, but he retained the stature of Hasidic aristocracy and was viewed by others with reverence. *Hasidim* often wandering in the *yeshivah* to ask him questions or ask for money. He took a special liking to a few of us, especially me, perhaps because he knew Dovid and also saw I was heading in thehasidic direction, whereas most of my classmates were not. My clothing had become more and more Hasidic in style, I wore a black hat and suit and white shirt all the time, and unlike many others in the *yeshivah* I was interested in Hasidism. I was appointed his driver, mostly because I was the one who had a car and had the proper dress for the occasion. We spent many evenings traveling around Brooklyn and sometimes to New Jersey and Monsey, New York, a religious town in Rockland Country, to raise money (what is called *schnorring).* R. Ashkenazi was a master. On one occasion we sat at an ornate dining room table of a rich Jew in Monsey. Conversation ensued but the topic of money was never mentioned. Then at one point, the man took out a checkbook.... Without a break in the conversation R. Ashkenazi looked at the check and with no expression, slid it back to the gentlemen. The conversation continued. 'Ibis went on two or three times until R. Ashkenazi put the check with the "right" amount into his pocket. often we got up, shook hands, and left. That is how it is done.

One other person worth mentioning from that *yeshivah* was a rabbi named Yona Frankel, probably in his thirties, a modern Orthodox rabbi who lived in Long Beach, Long Island, but traveled every day to Boro Park lo teach *ba'alei teshuvah.* He viewed it as something wondrous, and I felt it was his kind of *pro Bono* for the cause of Torah. I studied Mishnah and 'la !mud with him for about a year, and his patience still remains with me. My most vivid memory of him was the time he asked me to drive him to deliver a *hespid* (eulogy) for an elderly woman who had died. We entered the chapel in the funeral home and I took a seat in the front and began psalms, which is the custom. R. Frankel began delivering a long and impassioned eulogy for this woman. At some point I turned my head to I lie audience behind me. There was only one woman sitting there, the dead woman's caretaker. The rest

of the chapel was empty. R. Frankel had been delivering this passionate eulogy for this one woman, or maybe not even. I had never encountered such a person growing up.

At this time, my relationship with Dovid was deepening and I become one of his close disciples. I use the term "disciple" carefully, as that is what we were. He served as a rebbe and spiritual guide and we treated him as. We did constitute a "family" of sorts and, in retrospect, we probably would have met the bar of being considered a cult, but we were so integrated into the h*aredi* community around us no one really noticed. Except one person.

In those days (the late 1970s) Aryeh Kaplan, who was already well known an Orthodox writer, lived on the outskirts of Boro Park. His books in Kabbalah had been published by Samuel Weiser, who owned a New Age press from Maine. This bothered some of the more conformist *haredim* in Boro Park, and thus I think Kaplan's decision to live on the margins of Boro Park was more than symbolic. An ultra-Orthodox Jew of Sephardic descent, who was a *ba'al teshuvah* himself, and once served as a rabbi in u Conservative synagogue (which in Boro Park is basically the same as a church), Kaplan decided to stay on the margins of that world. A deeply pious man, he would have an open house after Friday night dinner, and we sometimes walked there to listen to him. The neighborhood was not safe at night, and thus going to Kaplan's home itself required a modicum of *emunah* (faith). His dining room was adorned with a series of bizarre oil paintings. At some point, with no training as an artist, Kaplan decided to refrain from study for a year and devote himself to painting. After the year he stopped and never painted again. Those paintings were the product of his experiment.

He would gesture to someone to ask him a question about the weekly Torah portion and then he would just spin off of that for what seemed like hours (it probably wasn't). In any event, Kaplan emphatically did not like Dovid. It was a kind of fissure in the scene because there was a lot of overlap in those years between Dovid and Kaplan. Kaplan saw something in Dovid he didn't trust, but he didn't know what. We just never mentioned Dovid in Kaplan's presence. Many years later Kaplan's intuitions about Dovid turned out to be right. He was hiding something.

During this time, I began to integrate more into the *haredi* world even as we were always looked upon as different. But we were "walking the walk" so intensely, and seeing us at the mikveh at 5:30am on a freezing January morning before *davenning* made them respect us even as they probably would not allow us to marry their daughters. The quasi-monastic life we led was very conducive to me, and I began to feel like I was living like those Amish in Pennsylvania and the *hasidim* walking over the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway I had seen as a child. I felt like I had found some alterity. I was living "otherwise' I once got a phone call from a high school girlfriend. It happened to be Thanksgiving and she asked where I was eating Thanksgiving dinner. "Thanksgiving?" I responded. "Oh, I didn't know that:' I smiled at that remark. I had found a way off the grid. She later told me she thought I was living in a crack house in south Brooklyn. Who in America doesn't know it's Thanksgiving? Welcome to hasidic Boro Park

Hasidism opened itself to me as a textual tradition and a lived life simultaneously. I studied the texts and tried to live the life they professed, or expected. In the classic Augustinian sense, I took my return too far. I did not have the slight cynical edge many have who grow up in that world. Texts became an appendage: we carried them around (one always had a *sefer* with them in case they had a few minutes to open it), we read them on the subway, we spoke of them to friends in the street, at airports, on lines in supermarkets, at Shabbos tables. In those years I felt that studying Torah wasn't something we did, it was part of who we were. The line separating work from leisure did not exist. That itself was a kind of alterity. And yet we also lived it in subversive, countercultural ways. We allowed our past "hippie" lives a place at the table, as long as it played by the new rules. In that sense

we had a secret from those around us. They had a right not to trust us. We were also interlopers, perhaps the worst kind, because we were offering different rendering of their world, which seemed like a previous render straight-looking Orthodox Jews who had chosen the wrong kosher restaurant, a table of Hari Krishna folks, and next to them, black jazz musicians on a break from a gig a few blocks away talking Coltrane. The I. (under of the restaurant was Moshe Schlass, an ex-biker hippie who had Income a Lubavitcher *hasid,* who was a kind of master of ceremonies of the bizarre syncretism he loved. He eventually moved to the Old City of Jerusalem, where he lives today, and left the restaurant to his first wife, who ran it for another decade until she had a child late in life and sold it. The Caldron was the main hangout for many of us in those years. We would sit there drinking bancha tea for hours and talk, learn, just breathe in the vibe of the East Village. We felt part of the counterculture and we secretly liked that. It was there I first met Yossi Klein Halevi, who was a nrw-time member of Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League and also part or the wider circle of Dovid's "boys:' who had started a hip newspaper ailed *The New Jewish Times.* The front page of the inaugural edition in the late 1970s had a split screen photo of people at a raucous punk rock show and Friday night *davenning* at the Bobov hasidic synagogue in Boro park—a study in comparative contrast. We felt like we were making a mark.

When I think about my exposure to hasidic texts, I realize the very notion of critical study of these texts was so foreign, so utterly odd in those days, that I never thought much about it. I suppose we had the typical insider's critique that those "scholars" could not really understand these texts, because a full understanding would require living the life, being "on the path," as they say. Decades later, as I have spent a good part of my academic career doing just that, I can still sense the difference, and there is still some small voice in me that says, "If you hadn't been *there* in some fashion, something would be missed here." I don't know if I believe it, and I also think those *there* miss something precisely because of that "thereness." In any case, I can, and do, study these texts in a variety of often contradictory ways. My own academic approach does not eschew the traditional approach in principle. In fact, in my work on Hasidism I try to show that, in many cases, the texts lend themselves to the undoing of the traditional ways of reading them. This is not to suggest I have unearthed any esoteric meaning or have disclosed any essential nature of Hasidism. Rather, it is to suggest that the texts themselves contain multivalent layers and the lens one chooses to use as a reader can yield a variety of results that the texts themselves can sustain, even though in some cases those readings may stand in contradiction to one another. Here deconstruction has served me as a useful tool. My own allergy to normative readings of these texts comes in part because at a certain time in my life I was convinced that was the only way to read them. In that sense, my readings are products of my own internal battle with normativity and innovation.

Even during my years in Boro Park and *haredi* Jerusalem these texts we studied often seemed to some of us to rub against the grain of the world that used them as a template for life and practice. Perhaps that is because some of our teachers, like Dovid and Aryeh Kaplan, were teaching these texts in quite iconoclastic ways, not necessary by choice but by design. Neither had received the tradition from the inside alone, each came to it from the outside and then, gaining literacy in the tradition, began to teach themselves. Kaplan was much more adept textually and also more conservative, albeit not as pious, as Dovid. But in general, what was happening among the sub-cultural Boro Park *ba'alei teshvah hasidim* was a syncretistic exercise under the auspices of haredism. We were living the life, in many ways more fully than our hasidic neighbors, and we were spending the thousands of hours in study required to get our credentials. But we were a subculture. And although we would have denied it then, we were forming a new kind of neo-Hasidism.

This "movement" was being fed by Zalman Schachter, Shlomo Carlebach, the Diaspora Yeshiva Band, Habad, Bratslav, and the orientalist veneration of Eastern Europe. We knew about Buber, Heschel, Gershom Scholem, and even Joseph Soloveitchik—but they didn't interest us that much. We felt we were in the belly of the beast, and their writings were for outsiders: they were modern, they were not countercultural enough. We would rather just study the hasidic texts they were studying and skip the scholars as intermediaries. We had no idea that they had value as more than interpreters of wisdom. Years later, I learned how wrong I was.

The Enigma of Over-Belief

Life with Dovid was hard. Besides being obstinate and stubborn, he moved **very** slowly and deliberately, and he demanded others do so as well. Thus being with him meant slowing down your body clock. He also had a bizarre lack of fear. I recall walking or driving with him on Houston Street in Manhattan late at night after classes he gave at the Charles Street Synagogue in the West Village in the early 1980s. Dovid would often ask me to pull over and wait for him as he got out of the car to give a wino or a junkie on the street all the money he had. Or being stopped at a red light by a panhandler and Dovid rolling down the window and handing him a $20 hill he got for his class as a donation. In those downtown neighborhoods, where we would go late at night to vegetable stands in Little Italy, Dovid was known by the winos and junkies as the "The Rabbi" because he would always give them money. Dovid was always on welfare, food stamps, etc.; he was real mendicant Jew, claiming his work was serving God. He wore black stockings and a long coat in the style of some hasidic Jews, and once when waiting on line at the Welfare Office, two black women on line ahead of him saw him, and one said to the other, "Girl, let that dude ahead of you in line. Look, the dude is so poor he ain't even got no pants!"

Davenning with Dovid could be uplifting and it could be maddening. He had a monastic cadence and took hours. Literally. And we all recited every-

thing together in a kind of Tibetan or maybe closer to a Gregorian chant. Dovid had an amazing capacity for concentration and focus. Maybe more than I have ever witnessed. If you were able to tune into that wavelength it was exhilarating. If you were in a hurry, you felt like jumping out of the window.

We were once travelling together back from Israel to New York. We had an early morning flight and thus had to *daven* at Ben Gurion airport. Dovid refused to quicken his pace at all. It turned out the flight had almost comleted boarding and he was still ending his *davenning.* I urged him to take off his tefillin and finish on the plane. He refused. By the time we arrived at the gate the attendant told us the gate was closed. I pleaded, and the woman finally agreed and let us go to the tarmac. A bus came to pick us up to bring us to the plane. When we arrived, security was standing in front of the steps to the plane and directed the driver not to open the door. On our way down I heard the woman upstairs complain to security that two hasidic Jews refused to finish their prayers and thus held up the flight. The plane door closed and we were driven back to the gate. I was furious. Dovid had no emotion whatsoever. He looked incredulous when I began to complain to him. "For something like this you are losing your temper?" Either the world conformed to his dictates or he gladly suffered the consequences.

We were redirected to a flight through Paris. When we arrived in Paris we found out there was an airport strike and no planes were departing. We had little money. We spent two days and two nights in the Paris airport drinking only water and eating only the peanuts that we had with us. Dovid refused to eat anything else because of *kashrut.* I was his disciple and I went along with his requests. But I was not happy about it. In those moments I felt like I had entered into the hasidic tales we

read. Texts and life merged into one annoying mix. I learned that alterity has another side, that the extremism I romanticized often didn't take others into account, that piety too often trumped others who got in the way. It was an important lesson.

Learning with Dovid was both arduous and exhilarating. And here I think my initial understanding of Hasidism becomes apparent. The texts were not to be read, but one had to *make* Hasidism out of the Hasidism (and here I think Dovid was a master, even as he often read the texts wrong). That is, the texts were portals of ideas that one could read and explain and then do to them what they have just done to the tradition. I think Buber understood that better than Scholem. Scholem wanted to know what the texts said; Buber was interested in how they provide a template for how to think about serving God. Buber was not compelling for me at this early stage, because he was so intent on finding the essence he let external acts of piety through devotion dissipate. Buber wanted to create something really new. We were deeply enmeshed in the romanticism of the old. It was only years later that I began to see how deeply Buber understood this material. But secretly we too did not accept the old readings, and Dovid was offering something new—except his resistance to the tradition didn't go left but right. It was not that traditional norms demanded too much; it was that they did not demand enough. The kind of antinomianism of Buber became for Dovid a hypernomianism. *Halakhah* was just the beginning. He essentially became a Jewish monk (he was married and had a family but his devotional life was monastic). He answered Buber's move outward by a move inward to achieve a similar cod, in my view. Buber would have understood Dovid more than Scholem would have.

Povid didn't know Hebrew nearly as well as he thought he did. He knew it well enough; he could read Hebrew texts and explain them (often hIs pronouncing words but getting the meaning right). Many people who not from a traditional upbringing used to complain about Dovid's misprounciations but were compelled enough by the content of what he said returned again and again. In any case, what the text was, or what the text and, took on more meaning once he began to expound on them. At that time the text became superfluous. In retrospect, some of it was second-rate New Ageism, but Dovid was really a poet by nature, and his use of language rind imagery and his general education in the Humanities (he dropped out of college his senior year but had a Dylanesque ear for the poetic) enabled him to bring Nahman of Bratslav to life as if he was in conversation with Walt Whitman. Or Isaac Luria as if he were sitting with Rumi or Ibn Arabi. It was an interesting exercise. It's not that he actually quoted any of these non-Jewish sources very often. It is, rather, that his rendering of the texts we were reading were given a universal spiritualist appeal that spoke beyond the confines of their world. It was this unspoken synthesis that I think drew many of us to him; it enabled us to retain a part of the world we came from and not become swallowed up into a h*aredi* world that was often not very pious. And not very interesting, and certainly did not have the aesthetic ear many of us thought, or hoped, Judaism possessed. Most of the h*asidim we* lived amongst were just ordinary people who happen to be born into a particular community. Some of them were indeed true gems of piety and devotion but they were the exceptions. And we knew that.

We envisioned Dovid as a leader of a kind of New Age hasidic syncretistic Judaism that could be both ultra-Orthodox and spiritually open. Ray Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook coined the phrase "behaviorally constricted and thoughtfully expansive." We never studied Kook, because Kook was a Zionist and Dovid identified more with the anti-Zionist Neturei Karta or Satmar types. Had Dovid read Ray Kook, stripped of his Zionism, he would have liked him.

Dovid attended many ecumenical retreats and spoke as easily with a Buddhist monk as with a Trappist novice. His justification was always that it is "*kiruv,*" finding wayward Jews to bring them

back to Judaism. But in retrospect, I think he needed to get out of the h*aredi* world he inhabited. He was far more critical of that world than he let us believe, but because they were largely clueless of what he was up to, and they provided a perfect place to hide, he remained part of that community. Looking back, I think my interest in comparative readings of hasidic texts with Christianity probably came from Dovid's spiritual ecumenicism that he got, in part, from Zalman Schachter years before. Dovid had worked for Zalman as a personal secretary when Zalman taught at the university in Winnipeg in the mid-1960s. After many of us left him in the mid-1980s Dovid began studying Christian theology with Ewert Cousins at Fordham University. Many years after Dovid died I inherited a few boxes of books on early Christianity and Gnosticism from the Fordham University library that were decades overdue. I still have some of them.

In those years a group of about eight of us lived in either Boro Park or Jerusalem. We usually had apartments in both places, and different combinations lived in either place. We were constantly going back and forth. One of the Boro Park houses was an old decrepit house on 42nd street off 10th avenue, on the outskirts of Boro Park in a mostly Latino neighborhood. Besides those of us who were permanent residents, that is, our names were on the lease, the house was consistently inhabited by a variety of vagrants, misfits, and all manner of h*aredi* and *quasi-haredi* riffraff One guy who looked a like one of Fagan's boys from *Oliver Twist* always rode around in a wheelchair (that he did not need), wearing fingerless gloves, terrorizing hasidic locals. Another was so OCD that we found him late at night one Friday night in the middle of a side street in Boro Park. He would not move because he noticed a piece of lint of his coat and, since one is not permitted to carry on Shabbat (Boro Park has no *eruv* that would permit carrying), he thought he could not continue walking without "carrying" the piece of lint. And he could not brush it off because it was "*muksa*" (something that one cannot touch on Shabbat because it has no use). He was determined to stand there until Shabbat ended twenty hours later! It took us a full 30 minutes to convince him he was permitted to walk home with the lint on his coat. There are many other such bizarre incidents, but this suffices to give you a sense of the world I'd entered into.

Aliyah and Kabbalah

I finally moved to Jerusalem permanently in 1981. In part it was to break from Dovid and in part to settle into a more conventional *baredi* life in the Holy Land. I had no Zionist affiliations or aspirations whatsoever. I lived in a small apartment in the Old City of Jerusalem with a close friend without any electricity or hot water. We didn't pay the bill and they shut off the utiliiies, and we realized we didn't really need them. We went to sleep when it and dark and awoke around 4 am to go to the mikveh and then *daven* with a sunrise *(vatikin)* at the kotel every morning. We lived downstairs from a kabbalist named R. Mordecai Sheinberger who had a kabbalistic *yeshivah, Kul* Yehuda, in the Old City. R. Sheinberger was from the Ashlag school of ibalah. Yehuda Ashlag (1885-1954) was a Polish kabbalist who moved Jerusalem in 1922. He was somewhat of an iconoclast and is mostly well known for his commentary to the Zohar entitled *Ha-Sulam* (The Ladder). I le also published a popular book called *Talmud Eser Sefirot (On the len Sefirot)* that became popular among Phillip Berg and The Kabbalah Centre people (Berg was a student of R. Yehuda Zvi Brandwein, a student Ashlag). Dovid often used that book in some of his classes. We used to eat Shabbat dinner at the Sheinberger's every Shabbat, a beautiful but very poor family with many children. My roommate Baruch Gartner, now a well-known teacher of Hasidism in Jerusalem, and I asked R. Sheinberger to teach us. He said his schedule was very busy but if we woke him up at lam he would study with us until it was time for the morning *davenning.* So about four nights a week we would walk up one flight of stairs and lightly knock on his door at 2am and he would answer in a bathrobe and we would sit and study Zohar and Ashlag for a few hours. We did this through one entire winter.

I later studied Lurianic Kabbalah with R. Mordecai Attiah, a Syrian kabbalist from the Shalom Sharabi tradition who was very antagonistic toward Sheinberger and the Ashlag school. The original Sharabi (1720-1777) was **a** Yemenite kabbalist who immigrated to Palestine, where he founded the Beit El *yeshivah* in the Old City. The *yeshivah* building still stands, but the *yeshivah* moved to the Zikhron Moshe neighborhood at some point. He was one of the most celebrated kabbalists of the Lurianic school and composed the first comprehensive *siddur* with mystical intentions according to teaching. His tradition lives on today in Nahar Shalom *yeshivah* in the Nahla'ot neighborhood on Jerusalem that was led, when I was there in the 1980s, by R. Mordecai Sharabi (no relation to Shalom Sharabi). R Attiah's grandfather, also named Mordecai Attiah, who was a study-partner with Rav Kook, came from the Sharabi tradition, and so the younger R. Mordecai Attiah who I studied with was a part of that tradition. They did not look kindly upon the Ashlageans, thinking them a diluted and mistaken interpretation of Luria. When I began studying with R. Attiah my relationship with R. Sheinberger ended. They often sparred over publishing rights to various editions of kabbalistic texts and could barely hear the other's name mentioned.

I studied with R. Attiah for about three years. I entered the *yeshivah* wanting to study Lurianic Kabbalah. I asked him if I could enter his closed *shi'ur* every afternoon from 4pm to 6pm. He assigned me texts to prepare for the *shi'ur* with his father R. Eliyahu Attiah, a sweet and learned man who knew the entire *Tanakh* by heart. Recite the first words of any verse and he could finish it without a mistake. We sat for a few hours and prepared the material. I recall we were studying a book called *Da'at Tevunot* of the Ben Ish Hai, R. Yosef Hayyim (1835-1909), a late nineteenth-century Baghdadi kabbalist. At 3pm I dutifully entered the room, which consisted of tables set up in a big square, each person taking his appointed seat. It was a mix of people from the *yeshivah* and various students of the grandfather for years, who worked in menial jobs. One was a bank clerk, and one was an old Jew with a long white beard named Yehezkel who was an exterminator. He arrived every afternoon with this grey exterminating uniform and equipment. When there was a particularly difficult question in the text R. Attiah always deferred to Yehezkel, who had studied for many years with R. Attiah's grandfather and was a master of this material, but always very humble. I felt it was a slice of old Jerusalem that few outsiders witnessed.

R. Attiah entered the room, shut the door, sat down, opened his book, looked at me and pointed toward the door. "Please leave," he said. Confused, and disappointed, I took my book and left. I told his father, who never attended the *shi'ur,* what had happened. He said, "Don't worry, we'll try again tomorrow" I repeated the same thing for over a week. I sat in my seat; he entered the room and summarily told me to leave. I was frustrated, but I really wanted to be part of the group. After about ten days or so, same story, he came in, sat down, opened the book, and looked at me. This time he smiled, stroked his beard, and then asked someone to read. I was in.

My time with R. Attiah was quite intense. I became very close with him and he rewarded my diligence with attention. He was not particularly enamored by Hasidism in general, and over time I began to alter my dress to be less hasidic. I retained my long *payot* but began to wear short coats and a more modern hat. I had become more immersed in Lurianic Kabbalah than Hasidism. Even after I left the *yeshivah* and then the Orthodox world, I still periodically go to visit him. On one visit I gave him a copy of my book on Lurianic Kabbalah, *From Metaphysics to Midrash.* He smiled and hugged me when I gave it to him, but I am quite certain he never read it. His spoken English was fine, but I cannot imagine he would have made the effort to read it. I hope it is still sitting somewhere on a shelf in his library. My understanding of hasidic texts was greatly enhanced by the years I studied him. Since much of hasidic literature is based on the Lurianic systematic knowing it as intimately as I

did though his tutelage made me better prepared when hasidic literature became an academic profession.

During some of those years I would divide my time between Yeshivat ha-Mivtar, also known as "Brovinders," and R. Attiah's Yeshivat ha-Hayyim ye ha-Shalom. I would study Gemara in the morning at Brovinders and abbalah in the afternoon with R. Attiah. R. Brovinder had a profound impact on me. In those years I was deeply invested in the *liaredi* life. And yet there was something about me that still felt outside. R. Brovinder was born and raised in Brooklyn in the heart of postwar Modern Orthodoxy. I lc studied with Rav Soloveitchik at Yeshiva University and immigrated to Israel with many from his world in the years following the Six-Day War. A brilliant talmudist and gifted teacher, he also received his PhD in Semitic languages at the Hebrew University, studying with the philologist Moshe loshen-Gottstein. Although modern in every sense, he was a deep believer lit the *yeshivah* as an institution and the world of the *yeshivah* as a place where true innovative scholarship could take place. He knew Dovid Din from those of us who attended his *yeshivah* and, while skeptical, he enjoyed the quirkiness and also the diligence that many of us exhibited inside the walls of his institution. If you studied hard and asked good questions, you won his respect.

At a certain point, intrigued by those of us who were devotees of hasidic lexts, R. Brovinder decided to try his hand at it. Friday mornings in *yeshivah* are usually left for individual or elective study, as life turned to Shabbat by early afternoon. R. Brovinder established a Friday morning class in Nahman of Bratslav's *Likkutei MoHaRan,* one of the classic texts of early Hasidism. We thought it was a victory of sorts, getting this Litvak *rosh yeshivah* to study *Likkutei MoHaRan* with us. The *shi'ur* continued for a few years, and, looking back, it was pivotal for me as a student of Hasidism. It was the first time I had studied hasidic literature with someone who was outside the world of Hasidism. R. Brovinder read it as he would read any Jewish text, and one saw the joy he felt at realizing the interpretive genius of Nahman. While we felt we had some impact on him, it was really his approach that had a big impact on me. I learned what it was like to read a text outside its context, and not as a purely devotional act but as a critic as well. He later tried the same thing with Luria's *Ei; tlayylm,* but it was not successful. *Ei; Hayyim* requires a different set of skills and knowledge base than Hasidism. A *yeshivah-trained rosh yeshivah* with no real kabbalistic training could not easily crack the Lurianic in it. That itself was an interesting lesson for me as I moved forward.

For three years, from 1986-1989 we lived on Moshav Mebr Modi'im, a small communal town *(moshav)* near Lod founded in the late 1970s by disciples of Shlomo Carlebach. I think of it as there where I really began to understand how Carlebach's countercultural reading of hasidic texts served as the foundation for a certain kind of religiosity. And in some way I felt I had a window into seeing how hasidic communities are born years before they began to take shape. At that time, most of the members of the *moshav* were connected in some way Carlebach, who also had a house there and spent most of his summers using the *moshav* as his base of operations. There is much to write about life there and the people we lived with in close proximity, many of whom were and remain wonderful souls. But for my limited purpose here I learned to see how Hasidism in a "neo" register actually "worked" outside the normative framework of hasidic communities elsewhere.

It was there I experienced a different kind of hasidic focus on experience *(deveikut),* on camaraderie, on the shared sense of purpose that evolves from intense focus on one individual's view of the world, then the one I experienced in Boro Park or Me'ah She'arim. It was more close-knit, more countercultural, more confused in many ways, than traditional hasidic communities, and yet it contained an energy that was palpable and fructifying. Modi'im was also far less misogynist and paranoid than conventional hasidic communities. And I also experienced the way the focus on one

charismatic leader creates all kinds of destructive elements and internal dissent. Yet at that time I remember thinking that in some way, that is the price, that the intensity and focus simply could not be generated and certainly not sustained without charisma. I learned many years later from Zalman Schachter-Shalomi that such charisma could transfer among various individuals within a community, that is, that the rebbe could be a function and not a person, what he called "rebbitude."

Modi'im differed from hasidic communities in other ways I found refreshing. Established hasidic courts read hasidic literature devotionally and try to emulate its values, but they are also very entrenched in habits and traditions developed long ago, and the communal structure is very invested in keeping them intact. This is part of what one could call hasidic conservatism. Neo-hasidic life at Modi'im in the mid- to late-1980s did not have the trappings or the weight of a tradition to maintain. Its members were creating their devotional life on the fly, as it were, many coming from the American counterculture with progressive values that were then recalibrated to conform to some manlier of traditional hasidic life and contemporary Israeli society. 'this resulted in a variety of apparently contradictory values, for example, a broad and sincere openness to the world and a strident right-wing political stance on the question of Palestinians. A belief in the holiness of the land that often easily elided to the holiness of the state by some who in the U.S. protested the state, patriotism, and its warring policies. As one friend from Modi'im, who tragically died quite young, wrote on her Facebook profile regarding her political views, "Right on Israel, left on everything else." Modi'im was a study in contrasts, with Carlebach's vision of Hasidism its driving engine.

Jewish Renewal, Neo-Hasidism, and American Post-Judaism

The essay I submitted on Jewish Renewal was far too long for a publication like *Tikkun.* Jo Ellen asked if I would be willing to divide and publish it literally, to which I agreed. It was published in three installments in 2005 and 2006. Only after delving into the thought of Renewal and its founder Zalman Schachter-Shalomi did I think about writing a book-length study the topic. But I still felt the issue needed a broader frame. From this came
American Post-Judaism. But more than that, through this project I became reacquainted with Schachter-Shalomi, whom I had met in the late 1970s at t wild Renewal Shabbat at the Freedom Farm outside Philadelphia. I am quite sure he did not recall meeting me, but we crossed paths numerous limes after that when he used to visit his daughter and her family in Moshav Modi'im, where I had lived from 1986 to 1989.

During my research and writing of *American Post-Judaism,* which was not a book about Hasidism but was certainly a book that, in part, attempted to reimagine neo-Hasidism in a cultural and not only a religious register, I became quite close to Schachter-Shalomi and in some way again found the erity I was seeking. This project also brought me back to where things began for me. Dovid Din had been Schachter-Shalomi's secretary when I w was the Hillel director at the University of Winnipeg in the mid-1960s, when Dovid showed up in a converted school bus with a group of hippies looking to buy land for their commune. The others went on their way and Dovid stayed behind to work for Schachter-Shalomi. Dovid's Jewish journey thus began with Schachter-Shalomi, and even as he went deep into the *haredi* world while Schachter-Shalomi took haredism and crafted it in his own image, there was something about Dovid, and the things I learned from him, that remained quite close to Schachter-Shalomi. And there was something about Dovid, a kind of wayward son, that Schachter-Shalomi never gave up on. Years after Dovid died tragically of complications from anorexia at the age of 46 in 1987, Schachter-Shalomi would ask me about his wife and children when we spoke on the phone. It seemed to me a combination of genuine care combined with a small dose of guilt.

As close as I felt to Schachter-Shalomi, I could not enter the Renewal world he created. I always remained on the margins, both because that is where I felt most comfortable and because many in that community did not quite trust my "academic" and "critical" assessment of their rebbe. Externally I had moved further away in terms of religious practice, and yet my *haredi* past was too embedded in my psyche to allow me to take the New Age as seriously as is required in order to enter that world fully.

In any case, after *American Post-Judaism* I returned to the study of Hasidism with new energy. I now felt free to look at these texts I loved with new eyes. Having moved to the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University in 2004 I was now surrounded by other scholars of religion the way I had not been at JTS. And living in Indiana made me feel for the first time I was living in the kind of America that did not exist in New York City. *American Post-Judaism* was fully a product of that "American" experience, and my subsequent book, *Hasidism Incarnate: Hasidism, Christianity, and the Making of Modern Judaism,* was also a product of living in a multidimensional and multivalent academic community. I felt a kind of ownership of those texts in ways I had not before, a confidence that I had something to contribute to their continued relevance. Rather than viewing them solely within the orbit of Jewish life and practice, I argued that given the focus on the experience and proximity of God to the h*asid,* and given the notion of the hasidic *zaddik* as *axis mundi* (to borrow a locution form Art Green's popular and important essay) the parallels to Christianity were more than occasional, and worth tracing. The point was not to make direct connections, something that would be difficult if not impossible to do. Rather, I offered a phenomenological claim of similitude as a response to similar spiritual orientations and concerns coupled with the Zohar's polemic against Christianity by adopting Christian motifs that Hasidism absorbed without knowing of their polemical roots.

Coming Back to Hasidism Once Again

The present volume collects a series of reflections on Hasidism that spans about twenty years. Most of the essays appeared elsewhere in scholarly journals or volumes; a few are new. They illustrate my struggle with hasidic texts, my closeness to them, and my distance from them. In retrospect perhaps they reflect more about me than about them, but all scholarship is, or should be, autobiographical. Academics in the humanities have the blessed opportunity to contemplate the world through a particular lens that both reflects and teaches them about the texts they read and the worlds they come from, and about themselves and why they find these texts so compelling, even, or precisely, when they disagree with them.

In any case, I hope to convey in these essays how the texts were a product of their time and remain alive, at least for me, not as exemplars of any lifestyle or practice, although they are certainly also that for some, but as exempla of the pursuits of consciousness and meaning, often through the creative misappropriation of traditional motifs to serve a different end. In this way, I suppose I return to Buber, albeit with a different focus. Unlike others, I am not looking for a hasidic essence. that was for a different time. In these essays I am looking, perhaps, for an alterity that could open the texts to the world and shine light on the possible global implications at work in the recesses of a highly parochial tradition. In this sense I am taking Dovid Din's transnational monastic piety and Schachter-Shalomi's rendering of Renewal as the "fourth turning of Hasidism" to a new place. While Jewish collective existence remains important to me as a Jew, as a scholar of Hasiidism and as one who hopes my work extends beyond those parochial parametersI do not place Jewish "continuity" at the center of my intellectual and spiritual project. Although, as Hannah Arendt replied when asked about her being a Jew, "I can't quite think of being anything else:'

Over the course of the years when these essays were written, I explored li variety of other subjects in my academic work and in topical writing. A book on Lurianic Kabbalah, on American Judaism, on the little-known Elijah Zvi Soloveitchik's Hebrew commentary to the New Testament, and many essays on modern Jewish thought, Mussar, Judaism and Christianity, kind Zionism. A friend once noted laconically that I had "left Jewish mysticism behind:' But that is not quite true. My interests have always been eclectic as far back as my adolescence, and my training at the Hebrew University mitigated *against* the American academic doctrine of focused expertise. Eliezer Schweid wrote on everything from the Hebrew Bible to globalization; my doctoral advisor at Brandeis, Marvin Fox, wrote on everything from rabbinic literature to Kant, even though he was primarily Maimonides scholar.

But wherever my restless mind and heart may have led me, I always seem to come back to Hasidism. There is something in its mix of metaphysical speculation and its messy depiction of the human condition that never grows old for me. To me, hasidic literature feels like an old friend who knows you well and who has been with you on a long journey, and in and with whom you always find something new. Like an old friend, it is in relation, what Buber liked to call the "in-between" where real insight occurs. These essays are an example of that "in-between:' Not always loving, not always joyous, not always satisfying. I am not sure the hasidic texts I examine here are, as one scholar described Hasidism, "words of fire:' But they are certainly words that breathe life into this Jew trying to find his way in the world. Thus far I have come. *Ashreinu mah tov helkeynu* ("oh to be happy with one's lot"). <>

Time and Difference In Rabbinic Judaism by Sarit Kattan Gribetz [Princeton University Press, 978-0691192857]

How the rabbis of late antiquity used time to define the boundaries of Jewish identity.

The rabbinic corpus begins with a question— "when?"—and is brimming with discussions about time and the relationship between people, God, and the hour. **Time and Difference In Rabbinic Judaism** explores the rhythms of time that animated the rabbinic world of late antiquity, revealing how rabbis conceptualized time as a way of constructing difference between themselves and imperial Rome, Jews and Christians, men and women, and human and divine.

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Time and Difference In Rabbinic Judaism sheds new light on the central role that time played in the construction of Jewish identity, subjectivity, and theology during this transformative period in the history of Judaism.

"Winner of the National Jewish Book Award in Scholarship, Jewish Book Council"

Review

"Through a meticulously researched in-depth analysis of early rabbinic texts, Sarit Kattan Gribetz explores the critical role time plays in forging distinct social identities. **TIME AND DIFFERENCE IN RABBINIC JUDAISM** demonstrates how schedules and calendars accentuate major cultural contrasts between rabbinic and Roman, Jewish and Christian, man and woman, and human and divine. A spectacular, tour de force contribution to the sociohistorical study of time!"**—Eviatar Zerubavel, author of *Time Maps*, *Hidden Rhythms*, *The Seven Day Circle*, *Ancestors and Relatives*, and *The Clockwork Muse***

"This compelling and marvelously readable book draws scholarly attention to the importance of time as an analytic rubric for understanding rabbinic culture. The breadth of scholarship is so wide-ranging that at times it took my breath away."**—Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, author of *Gender and Timebound Commandments in Judaism***

"**TIME AND DIFFERENCE IN RABBINIC JUDAISM** undertakes to reveal as constructed something we are encouraged to experience as natural: the relationship of humans and their world to time. With wondrous learning, Sarit Kattan Gribetz shows how the rabbis of the Mishnah and in late antiquity employed the construction of time to distinguish, but also often to bind, Jews, Romans, and Christians; women and men; and God and his children. Following the Jews spatially into Iran, and historically until the modern world, *Time and Difference in Rabbinic Judaism* is an exemplary and exhilarating work of history."**—Clifford Ando, author of *Law, Language, and Empire in the Roman Tradition***

"Sarit Kattan Gribetz's beautifully written book uses rabbinic texts to uncover how cultural and communal perceptions of time were constructed in late antiquity. She reveals the multiplicity and complexity of rabbinic 'timescapes' while opening up larger questions about our modern conceptions of time and our day-to-day commitments to use it well."**—Laura Salah Nasrallah, author of *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul***

"Presenting a rich case study in late-antique rabbinic timescapes, Gribetz systematically maps the differentiating function of time across an array of social categories, from empire to the gendered body. This cutting-edge book has made me think anew about time in both the ancient world and social discourse more generally."**—James Ker, University of Pennsylvania**

"**TIME AND DIFFERENCE IN RABBINIC JUDAISM** is a thoughtful, meaningful, and beautifully written work of scholarship."**—Beth A. Berkowitz, author of *Defining Jewish Difference***

CONTENTS

Excerpt: The foundational document of rabbinic Judaism, the Mishnah, opens with a question about time: "from what time?" A person must declare devotion to God each morning and evening; the question is: *when?* Rabbinic literature is replete with concerns about time and the triangular relationship between people, God, and the hour.

These concerns about time were timely in the early centuries CE, when rabbinic Judaism emerged and flourished. In a period of Jewish theological creativity and ritual innovation, in the context of the Roman Empire and its imperial calendar, and in competition with developing Christian times, how did the rabbis of late antiquity conceive of the temporal rhythms of Jewish life? This book examines how, in this complex cultural context, rabbinic texts from the first six centuries CE constructed imperial, communal, individual, and divine rhythms of time through the practices that they mandated and the stories that they told.

Though time may appear to be natural and universal, based on elements such as the rising sun, the phases of the moon, or the seasons, time is, in fact, culturally constructed and communally specific. Temporal institutions can cultivate shared notions of time along with shared communal identities, but they can also differentiate those who mark their time in certain ways from those who mark their time differently. Time—as it is constructed, interpreted, and enacted—thus creates both shared worlds and different worlds, and through measurements and manners of conceptualizing and organizing time, different groups intertwine with each other in multiple ways. Mapping rabbinic timescapes, as this book does, demonstrates the central role that time played in how rabbis attempted to construct Jewish identity, subjectivity, and theology—indeed, how they constructed their worlds—during this formative period in the history of Judaism.

The overarching argument of this book is that the rabbis used time-keeping and discourses about time to construct crucial social, political, and theological difference. The book demonstrates, through close analysis of rabbinic texts, that as the rabbis fashioned Jewish life and theology in the Roman and Sasanian worlds, they articulated conceptions and structures of time that promoted and reinforced new configurations of difference in multiple realms. It explores four such realms: imperial, communal, gender, and theological cosmology.

Rabbinic texts constructed imperial difference by distinguishing rabbinic time from Roman time; communal difference by separating Jewish time from Christian time; gendered difference by dividing men's time from women's time; and theological difference by contrasting the time of those who dwelled on earth from the time of those in the heavenly sphere, including God and the angels. The four chapters that constitute this book analyze rabbinic texts that employ time to negotiate difference in each of these realms.

The book further contends that the processes through which various forms of difference are constructed in rabbinic sources, be they, for example, differences between men and women or between Jews and Christians, cannot fully be understood without also considering the constructions, discourses, and practices of time that undergird them. That is because time—its conception and its organization—serves as a powerful mechanism through which to enact difference and forge identity. Uncovering the specific ways in which conceptions of time and practices of time-keeping were used practically and discursively by rabbinic authorities actively to forge multiple types of inter- and intracommunal difference reveals the central role that constructions of time play in processes of differentiation within rabbinic texts. The book's primary intervention in the fields of rabbinics, ancient Judaism, and the study of religion in late antiquity is to identify the temporal dimensions that facilitated the construction of difference in the rabbinic corpus. The history of difference and the processes through which difference is forged, in rabbinic sources as in other corpora and cultures,

are more fully comprehended when the role of time is both acknowledged and investigated. That conceptions of time and practices of time-keeping are often assumed to be natural or self-evident (or indeed to be objective) because they so frequently rely on natural or bodily phenomena (whether the rotation of the sun or the aging of a body) masks the fact that conceptions of time and practices of time-keeping are just as constructed as difference itself. It is the task of this book to investigate how time was used in rabbinic sources to construct the differences—between rabbis and Romans, Jews and Christians, men and women, humans and the divine—that the texts, and often their readers, take for granted.

This introductory chapter is structured in three parts. Part I introduces the underlying theoretical framework of the book by reflecting upon the categories of "time" and "difference" and the interrelationship between the two. Both time and difference are examined conceptually, informed by previous scholarship as well as the peculiarities of rabbinic sources, with an eye toward distilling what is particularly illuminating about probing the intersection of the two. Part II seeks to transport the reader back in time to the first and early second centuries CE, in order temporally to situate the rabbinic texts analyzed in the subsequent chapters. Three interrelated cultural and political dimensions of the rabbis' late antique world are discussed. Rather than set within a conventional historical contextualization, however, the story is told as a history of time, highlighting specifically temporal aspects of the Jewish, Greco-Roman, **and** Christian contexts in which the rabbinic movement emerged and developed. Part III outlines the book's organizational structure, methodological orientation, and indebtedness to previous scholarship. The chapter concludes with a note about the terminology used in the book. Just as we cannot experience the world outside of time, so too we cannot escape the limits of language—leaving us to seek words that make adequate sense of the world and of time.

What is Time?

The question "What is time?" has preoccupied history's most sophisticated minds. More than two millennia of effort, however, has failed to yield a clear answer to this seemingly simple problem. Consider Augustine's iconic puzzlement as he groped for the proper language to articulate ideas about time: "What, then, is time? There can be no quick and easy answer, for it is no simple matter even to understand what it is, let alone find words to explain it." Maimonides expressed similar exasperation about the notion of time, explaining that "the analysis of the concept of time has presented difficulties to most thinkers, so much so that they became bewildered as to whether it had any real existence or not." Virginia Woolf, too, thematized the mysteriousness of time when she wrote, in 1928, that "time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and fade with amazing punctuality, has no such simple effect upon the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second. This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation."

Despite difficulties articulating notions of time, this vexing topic has endlessly fascinated scholars from antiquity to the present. Naturally, each scholar's approach is informed by her particular methodological and disciplinary angle of inquiry: physical, metaphysical, phenomenological, biological, sociological, historical, religious, narrative, psychoanalytic. Philosophers, theologians, and scientists have contemplated whether time actually *is* (is time real? is it an illusion?), *what* time is (is it a precondition of being? a part of experience? a sense?), and *how* time functions (does it flow? is it

relative?). Such questions have generated an extensive debate the outcome of which remains (necessarily, perhaps) inconclusive.

Sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and scholars of religion have largely set aside questions about the absolute nature of time, instead choosing to interrogate time as it is conceived and comprehended, and how it functions, within particular societies. Such scholars have sought to understand how cultures and religious traditions conceptualize time, how these conceptions manifest themselves in the ways communities' structure and narrate their times (rhythms of daily life, calendars, the recording of history and chronology, and so on), and what they reveal about the values and views of these cultures. Precisely because assumptions about time seem so natural and intuitive, it is easy to forget that these, too, are cultural products that merit contextual and historical investigation. Asking fundamental questions about how people in periods and places far removed from ours made sense of time can lead to surprising insights about their lives.

This book follows the latter approach, aiming to understand how a particular group of people (the ancient rabbis), as their ideas were preserved in a particular set of texts (rabbinic literature), conceptualized time and coped with the need to organize and signify it, and how their structuring of time constructed new identities, subjectivities, and forms of difference. Rabbinic sources devote much interpretive energy to outlining the precise timing of daily, weekly, and annual practices; many rabbinic texts can be regarded as elaborate deliberations about how a member of the rabbinic community might best organize and use their time in accordance with rabbinic values. Speculation about cosmic origins, memories of mythical pasts, constructions of chronologies and histories, and anticipation of a redemptive future also feature on the rabbis' agenda, alongside the nitty-gritty details of determining hours and setting calendars.? Such concerns animated the rabbis and provide a broader temporal and historical context for understanding rabbinic attitudes to daily time. The study that follows therefore navigates between the conceptual and the practical, the symbolic and the quotidian, weaving together the history of daily life, social history, cultural studies, religious studies, and rabbinics.

Not long ago, some scholars of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Israel held that the limited temporal range of biblical Hebrew grammar and its tenses and the absence, in biblical texts, of philosophical discourses on the nature of time similar to those found in Greek and Roman philosophy signal that biblical sources—and thus ancient Israelites and later Jews—lacked chronological and temporal sophistication. In response to this claim, the historian Arnaldo Momigliano passionately insisted on the opposite: ancient Jewish texts indicate that ancient Jews conceived of time and temporality in ways no less complex and compelling than their Greek counterparts. Biblical sources, he acknowledged, are often more concerned with structuring quotidian time than in philosophizing about time in the abstract. "Biblical writers speak about time in the concrete way which would have been understandable to the ordinary Greek man, for whom there was a time of day in which the agora was full," he quipped.[11] Meditations about the abstract category of time might not have been central features of rabbinic texts either, but their absence does not mean that rabbis did not hold sophisticated opinions about time. Indeed, they did.

This book is most interested precisely in the fashioning and conceptualization of time for Momigliano's "ordinary Greek man" on his way to the agora as **well as** the Roman woman going to the forum or the nearby church, her Jewish neighbour making his way to synagogue for evening prayers before the time for the recitation of the Shema has passed, and this neighbor's wife who, at the same time, walks in a similar direction to immerse herself in the ritual bath. How did their conceptions and experiences of time shape their respective identities and senses of self? When did

the temporal rhythms of the daily lives of Jews and non-Jews and of men and women overlap? When did they diverge? And how did time play a role in the differentiation and synchronization of these people and their communities?

Rabbinic sources, written by a limited number of elite men in intellectual and scholastic contexts, do not provide decisive answers to these questions. Scholarship has emphasized just how little is known about how authoritative the rabbis were in the early centuries of the Common Era, how many Jews actually followed rabbinic laws, and how closely those who did complied with the many details outlined in rabbinic sources. The rabbinic corpus, however, does constitute a fascinating set of texts—an elaborate discourse—that reveals how these rabbis imagined, and hoped to shape, the times and identities of these subjects in relation to one another. This book, therefore, examines how the late antique rabbis whose ideas were preserved within the rabbinic corpus conceived of and constructed the rhythms of daily time, irrespective of whether their compositions describe a social "reality." The book focuses on the timescapes that emerge in rabbinic texts and the possible social effects that this rabbinic system might have had on those who read their texts, heard their sermons, or abided by their prescriptions, either in late antiquity or in subsequent periods, when rabbinic tradition proved more authoritative and more widely studied, scrutinized, and observed.

This book draws from these earlier studies while homing in on the regular-everyday time as it is conceived and mandated in rabbinic texts. It illustrates the central role that rabbinic ritual, narrative, and conceptual configurations of time played in facilitating the development of rabbinic notion of imperial, communal, gendered, and theological difference. The focus officially on time as a mechanism for the creation of varieties of difference his to contribute both to the study of rabbinic literature and to the fields of our studies, Jewish studies, and time studies more broadly defined.

The analysis in this book assumes that the rabbinic corpus contains polyphonic ideas about time and timing rather than a unified and singular "conception of time," an idea emphatically articulated as well by Sylvie Anne Goldb[e]rg in *La Clepsydre.* It mines ancient sources for the temporal complexities and contradictions that rabbinic discussions bring forth, within each rabbinic composition as well as between sources from various periods of rabbinic histo**ry. It** also argues, though, that among this multiplicity, some general trends **about** time and difference emerge, however messily, from these rabbinic compositions.

The chapters of this book are structured around units of time, social realms, discourses of difference, and rabbinic genres. The first chapter addresses rabbinic-Roman difference through examining annual time in the context of Roman imperialism; the second chapter focuses on Jewish-Christian difference through analyzing weekly time in the context of intercommunal relations; **the** third chapter centers on gendered difference through a study of daily time within communal boundaries; and the fourth chapter dwells on divine-human difference through a consideration of hourly time within theological discourse. Thus, the chapters shift from annual to weekly, daily, and hourly cycles, and they turn to increasingly constricted social domains, proceeding from the broadest context of the Roman Empire, to intercommunal relations between Jews and Christians (members of parallel yet competing communities within a broader imperial context), to gendered time within rabbinic communities, and then, expanding outward again, to the intersection of human and divine spheres. The choice to devote each chapter to a particular temporal cycle—annual, weekly, daily, hourly—is not meant to suggest that rabbis only constructed imperial difference on an annual basis, Christian difference on a weekly basis, gendered difference on a daily basis, and theological difference on an hourly basis. Rather, this editorial choice is intended to spotlight the

variety and diversity of strategies used within rabbinic texts to order a wide range of different temporal durations, each chapter demonstrating a unique time frame.

Nevertheless, the unit of the day remains central throughout this study: the first chapter examines discourses about the significance of certain days of the year; the second chapter studies the status of certain days of the week; the third chapter investigates practices that mark the beginnings and ends of each day; and the fourth chapter analyzes the subdivision of days into hours and other units. The first two chapters deal with special or sacred types of days, those differentiated from other times; the second two chapters address quotidian time and more regular, seemingly mundane temporal rhythms of the day, on earth as well as in heaven. At its core, then, the book is about the construction of difference in daily life, through various scales of time-keeping from the annual to the hourly.

Each chapter begins with an examination of rabbinic sources from the second and third centuries (known as "tannaitic" literature) and then proceeds, in its second half, to an analysis of narrative materials from later rabbinic compositions from the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries (known as "amoraic" and "post-amoraic" literature). The chapters engage with texts from both Palestine and Babylonia, though the focus remains largely on Palestinian sources. The rabbinic material from the Babylonian Talmud is essential to the book's argument even though it was composed and redacted beyond the borders of the Roman Empire and indeed in a different historical, cultural, and political context than rabbinic texts composed in the region of Palestine. Juxtaposing the Palestinian and Babylonian sources often brings into sharper relief what is distinctive about the Palestinian materials and how they approach time in ways that are different from how Babylonian sources approach the same or similar questions about time. At times, highlighting how the Babylonian Talmud interprets earlier traditions also proves generative. Moreover, following how ideas from Palestinian sources were received and adapted in Babylonia demonstrates how Palestinian ideas changed when they were applied and appropriated in new contexts.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter explores the differentiation and synchronization of rabbinic and Roman time by examining rabbinic attitudes toward the Roman calendar and its annual festivals. Mishnah *Avodah Zarah* begins with a list of Roman festivals and prohibitions against participating even in the non-cultic commercial activities that surrounded them. Ironically, by trying so deliberately not to observe the Roman calendar and by formulating laws intended to limit interactions between Romans and Jews on certain calendar days, the rabbis of the Mishnah actually integrated the rhythms of the Roman calendar into their own daily lives, embedding Roman temporal sensibilities into the Jewish calendar. However, the Roman calendar became integrated into the Jewish cal**endar** not only through the formulation of rabbinic laws intended to limit interactions between Romans and Jews on certain calendar days but also **through** the Judaization of the Roman calendar in the rabbinic imagination. **The** rabbis explicitly ban economic interaction and deride social engagement **between** gentiles and Jews. Yet, in the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, **the** origin and history of Roman festivals are presented as Jewish or biblical at **their** core. In one story, about the festival Kratesis, the geological, mythical, **and** historical origins of the city of Rome are traced to the idolatrous sins committed by a series of Israelite kings. In another story about this same festival, **the** Romans are said to draw on the power of the Torah and their alliance with **the** Jews in order to defeat their Greek rivals. Similarly, both Talmuds attribute the festival of the Kalends of January to the biblical Adam. In the Babylonian Talmud, Adam establishes this festival "for the sake of heaven" but the passage concludes that the festival was later corrupted by the Romans and made into an idolatrous celebration. Through these later rabbinic eyes, the Roman year was punctuated with days that had

Jewish stories—and indeed a long Jewish past—attached to them, even as they maintained a cautious distance from them. As Fritz Graf has argued, the Roman calendar mapped Roman history onto an annual cycle.[153] Rabbinic prohibitions against and stories about Roman festivals had a similar function, mapping a rabbinic antiimperial narrative of Jewish history onto the Roman imperial year. These sources illuminate just how integral past and present Roman time was for the rabbis—a grave threat from which the rabbis sought to protect and distance their community, and so pervasive in the rabbis' environment that they sought to Judaize the Roman calendar.

Chapter **2** turns to rabbinic discussions of the Sabbath in light of Roman pagan critiques of and competing Christian claims to a weekly sacred day and other weekly worship practices. The first half of the chapter analyzes a section of Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael that contains an extended exegetical discussion about the Sabbath. This midrash offers passionate engagement with ideas that were popular in Second Temple and early Christian debates about Sabbath observance. The second half of the chapter analyzes a series of rabbinic stories that explore the sanctity of the Sabbath, found in fifth-century rabbinic sources compiled after Sunday became an imperially sanctioned day of rest and worship. It appears that rabbis proactively promoted the Sabbath as a day with distinct qualities that were inherent to it and persuaded Jews of this dimension of the Sabbath precisely because they worried that Jews might be drawn to other weekly temporal rhythms or that they could be susceptible to Roman Christian and non-Christian disparagement of the Sabbath and might therefore stop observing the Sabbath altogether. In each narrative, rabbinic outsiders confirm the constitutional singularity of the Sabbath day. In one story, an emperor visits a rabbi for a Sabbath meal and concludes that food on the Sabbath is more delicious than dishes prepared on any other day of the week. The narrative explains that the food is delectable thanks to the Sabbath's special qualities, which cannot be accessed by those who do not observe the day properly. In another story, a governor questions a rabbi about the qualities of the Sabbath, and the two figures engage in a long discussion that culminates in the official conjuring up his dead Roman father to verify the sanctity of the day. Although these stories are quite humorous, they are not told for purposes of entertainment. They appear in the later stratum of Palestinian rabbinic literature composed at the height of the Christianization of the Roman Empire, during the period when Sunday was added to the imperial calendar in an official legal capacity. The narratives address specific critiques of the Jewish Sabbath that are known to us from non-Christian Greek and Latin polemics as well as contemporaneous Christian polemics against Jews and Judaism, all of which were prevalent within the lands of the Roman Empire. They can be understood as rabbinic attempts to make the Jewish Sabbath more attractive to other Jews, who may have been inclined to view the Sabbath as a temporal burden and even an embarrassment. Here, again, rabbinic insistence on the Sabbath's essential sanctity and therefore the importance of its proper observance asserted Jewish difference vis-à-vis not only alternative Roman pagan time but also Christian rhythms of weekly time in a period in which these Christian times were becoming more deeply embedded into a Roman imperial framework and had become increasingly dominant.

Chapter 3 tracks the construction of a gendered temporality by examining a set of daily rituals mandated in rabbinic sources, some of which applied to men and others that were only required of women. The chapter begins with the first ritual discussed in rabbinic sources, the recitation of the Shema prayer. Timing became an essential component of the Shema's recitation (in contradistinction to the biblical passage on which this rabbinic practice is based), and thus the tractate includes numerous debates about ritual time. One's time, it is suggested, ought to be marked first and foremost by this regularized declaration of devotion to God each morning and evening. Another feature of the rabbinic Shema is that only men became obligated in its recitation. According to the

Mishnah, women are exempt from the fulfillment of this particular ritual as well as from the entire category of rituals that are labeled "positive timebound commandments." Women, in other words, are kept apart from the central devotional prayer that marks important moments of temporal transition during each rabbinic day, as well as from other rituals that similarly construct time for the individual and the community. Rabbinic texts do not regard women as completely disconnected from time-boundedness, however. While women are excluded from positive time-bound commandments, an entire set of rituals related to the laws of menstrual purity applies *only* to women and constructs a woman's time in ways that were markedly different from the time of men. The second half of this chapter follows the development of the laws of bodily purity from biblical texts, which provide extensive instructions concerning both men and women, to rabbinic texts, which focus far greater attention on laws related to the menstruant woman. By the end of the classical rabbinic period, the web of menstrual purity laws functioned in ways that are remarkably different from the laws of purity that pertain to men, especially with regard to time. One of the defining features of women's time, in contrast to men's time, is the alternation between times of purity and impurity. This feature emerges already in tannaitic sources but is especially striking in the Babylonian Talmud. These alternating times were dictated by the state of a woman's body as well as the associated daily practices of bodily examination, which women were required to perform at the same times at which men were required to recite the Shema. It is not incidental that positive time-bound commandments are based on external time-markers such as the celestial bodies and are designed to orient men's time toward God while the menstrual purity laws, in contrast, rely on the internal rhythms of a woman's body and orient women's times toward their bodies, their husbands, and other objects that could be contaminated at times of impurity. When men and women are mandated to perform different rituals that structure their days in unique ways, their conceptions of time can radically differ as well. What it meant to be a halakhically observant rabbinic man or woman, then, was defined by distinct embodied rituals and experiences of time.

Chapter 4 explores the day and its hourly subdivisions as rabbinic sources imagine God and humans to operate within the same units of time. The first three chapters detail annual, weekly, and daily rhythms of time in human realms and analyze the various ways in which people were instructed to use their time to worship God and observe God's commandments. The fourth chapter, in contrast, concentrates on rabbinic sources that wonder whether God keeps time, and if so, whether God keeps the same time as humans and how God's time is used in service of them. In texts from across the rabbinic corpus, God's divinity is contingent, in part, on time. As this chapter demonstrates, the unit of the hour became especially associated with God's time. God keeps to an hourly schedule during the day, has an active nightlife, and engages in tasks that sustain earthly life. Often, in these texts, God spends time performing activities in which humans engage as well, for example studying Torah, wearing phylacteries, and matchmaking, but God also performs tasks that are exclusively divine, such as judging the world's creatures and worshipping with the angels. These aspects of God's temporality thus simultaneously differentiate God in the heavenly sphere from those in the earthly realm and draw similarities between the time of those in heaven and on earth. The end of the chapter returns to the historical events that frame the beginning of this book. In the Babylonian Talmud, one of the most surprising aspects of God's time is how much of it God spends mourning the temple's destruction. Just as Ezra, in 4 Ezra, suffers from insomnia as he struggles to comprehend the tragedy of the destruction, God, as portrayed in the Babylonian Talmud, awakens to mark the nightly watches with pained cries of despair that the temple no longer stands. The fall of Jerusalem thus not only radically alters the human time frames that rabbinic sources attempt to reconfigure through revised rituals and laws. The destruction is also understood, in these later rabbinic sources, to cause a crisis of time for God, whose subsequent (post-destruction) times, too, needed

readjustment. These sources about God's time highlight what the rabbis regarded as unique to human and divine time as well as how they imagined these two timescapes to intersect. They reinforce how important conceptualizing and dividing time was for the rabbinic enterprise not only in distinguishing men from women, Jews from Christians, and rabbis from Romans but also in distinguishing people from God and articulating what it meant, temporally and existentially, to be human or divine.

These processes of definition and differentiation did not end with the redaction of the Talmuds or the composition of later midrashim. Even as these temporal developments in classical rabbinic sources were tentative and gradual—and some of their social effects unintentional—many of the temporal practices became normative in the medieval period, establishing rhythms of time for later Jewish communities. Rabbinic discussions might have begun as legal and exegetical debates among the intellectual elites of the tannaitic and amoraic periods. Once the Babylonian Talmud gained semicanonical status and dictated Jewish life more broadly in the subsequent centuries, however, its laws were often more widely mandated, enforced, and practiced even as they continued to evolve in new historical and cultural settings. Medieval and modern legal literature and treatises devote much hermeneutical energy to interpreting prohibitions against participating in the forbidden times of those among whom Jews lived, marking the Sabbath, determining times for prayer, explicating the category of time-bound commandments, and further detailing the rhythms and rituals of bodily impurity and of God's time. In other words, the *conceptions* of daily time in the classical rabbinic sources that are at the heart of this study did, sooner or later, directly impact many aspects of Jewish *experiences* of time and influence the rhythm of daily life—to this day. The conclusion outlines how select groups of later Jews adopted and adapted (and, at times, ignored) these rabbinic concerns about time to their present circumstances and the lasting legacy of these time frames and the differences they constructed on the history of Judaism and Jewish life in the *longue durée.* <>

Nature and Norm: Judaism, Christianity, and the Theopolitical Problem by Randi Rashkover [New Perspectives in Post-Rabbinic Judaism, Academic Studies Press, 9781644695098]

Nature and Norm: Judaism, Christianity, and the Theopolitical Problem is a book about the encounter between Jewish and Christian thought and the fact-value divide that invites the unsettling recognition of the dramatic acosmism that shadows and undermines a considerable number of modern and contemporary Jewish and Christian thought systems. By exposing the forced option presented to Jewish and Christian thinkers by the continued appropriation of the fact-value divide, **Nature and Norm** motivates Jewish and Christian thinkers to perform an immanent critique of the failure of their thought systems to advance rational theopolitical claims and exercise the authority and freedom to assert their claims as reasonable hypotheses that hold the potential for enacting effective change in our current historical moment.

Review

"**Nature and Norm** is constructive philosophical thinking at its best, probing the meaning of making theological, moral, political and scientific claims in the real social contexts in which we find ourselves implicated and enmeshed. Rashkover's argument is in part a philosophical story of how facts and values have been continually partitioned in modern and even contemporary Jewish and Christian thought. But it is also an important intervention that seeks to model a kind of inferential

thinking that tends to the plurality of ways claims are made intelligible, even seemingly irreconcilable ones, from out of the communal spaces of reasoning we occupy. Beginning with the critical juncture at which scientific thinking gained autonomy from theological justification, however, Rashkover argues that modern and post-liberal Christian and Jewish thought have failed to account for inherited epistemological antinomies that serve as blindspots in philosophical, theological, and especially what she calls theopolitical claim-making. Rashkover's argument is thus a necessary intervention. Any philosophical theologian would do well to consider Rashkover's argument, if coherence is what they seek. Then again, even those willing to resist Rashkover's conclusions will nonetheless benefit from the rigorous re-reading of some of the most important philosophical problems in modern Christian and Jewish thought presented here, as well as from her call for rigorous immanent critique and self-reflection. Indeed, readers who might not reach the same conclusions as Rashkover will yet find this work compelling for the critical reflection on knowledge claims it demands and observes. *Nature and Norm* is truly a remarkable work of thinking." —Paul E. Nahme, Dorot Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies, Brown University

Contents

Nestled deep in the middle of Gillian Rose's essay "Athens and Jerusalem: A Tale of Three Cities" is a reproduction of a painting by Poussin entitled *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion.* "Recently," Rose says, "I discovered a painting by Poussin which illustrates the unintended consequences of our substitution of the New Jerusalem for the missing analysis of the old Athens." The painting, she tells us, is inspired by Plutarch's *Life of Phocion.* Phocion was an Athenian general and statesman who, despite a lifetime of public and political service, was ultimately accused of treason, forced to take hemlock, and denied burial. His body, Rose tells us, "was taken outside the city walls and burnt by a paid alien; his ashes left untended on the pyre." The painting depicts Phocion's wife and a companion gathering Phocion's ashes in anticipation of giving them a proper resting place.

Rose first encountered Poussin's *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion* through a television show called *Sister Wendy's Odyssey* that showcased the nun Sister Wendy and her love and interpretations of painting. However, Rose and Sister Wendy disagreed on how to interpret the painting: the gesture of the women, the backdrop of Athens in its architectural dominance, and the position of the women in relation to it. Sister Wendy, Rose tells us, interpreted "the wife bending down to scoop up the ashes as an act of perfect love.." According to this argument,

> The classical orders as such stand for the tyranny of the city of Athens.... In this presentation of the rational order in itself as unjust power, and the opposition of this domination to the pathos of redeeming love, I discerned the familiar argument that all boundaries of knowledge and power, of soul and city, amount to illegitimate force and are to be surpassed by the new ethics of the unbounded community.

Phocion's women, Sister Wendy's interpretation suggests, commit the ultimate act of ethical critique by refusing to engage the city and its structures, insisting instead upon the privacy and individuality of their sentimental love and sadness in the wake of the city's indifferent cruelty.

For Rose, Sister Wendy's reading effaces the philosophical and political character of the women's act as a public appeal to the city's norms of justice. As Rose says, "to oppose the act of redeeming love to the implacable domination of architectural and political order—here, pure, individual love to the impure injustice of the world—is completely to efface the politics of the painting.'" Rose points to the women's physical proximity to the city and the architecture of Athens, which elegantly frames them. Athens is no sinister symbol of political tyranny and cruel insensitive dominion. Rather, confident in its structures and in the possibility that they may provide justice, Phocion's women perform not a private act but a very public and unsentimental rite of mourning. By taking up space and making itself visible, their rite wagers on the world as a place that can accommodate it—a place within which the women may present the claim implicit in their mourning, a place where their ethical line in the sand can be publicly acknowledged and generate a legislative response.

With this act, the women defend the rationality of their claim that Phocion's treatment was unjust and call for a legislative response. There ought to be, their action attests, a law against prohibiting a person's right to a proper burial. Phocion's women exercise self-conscious philosophical authority by justifying normative claims on the grounds of their contribution to the current worldly conditions within which they find themselves. They demonstrate the philosophical courage to boldly assert their normative claim as a justifiable hypothesis in light of the material conditions of the world in which they live.

No doubt Rose interprets Phocion's women in her own philosophical image, and no doubt Rose's philosophical self-awareness is a product of the history of modern Western intellectual reflection that she inherits. Stated otherwise, there is a backstory to Rose's deep appreciation for worldly conditions as the context within which philosophical reflection about norms occurs. More

specifically, it is the story of the slow process by which modern Western intellectual culture came to terms with the scientific revolution and its valorization of natural knowledge over and against theological, ethical, and political discourse, what is commonly referred to as the "fact-value" or "nature-norm" divide, by apprehending the logical significance of both scientific and non-scientific knowledge, or what are understood as "fact" and "value" claims.

NATURE AND NORM draws inspiration from Rose's hard-earned interpretation of Phocion's women and recognizes its back-story in the specific intellectual trajectory of modern and contemporary Western Jewish and Christian thought. If Rose's philosophical courage emerges from the gradual process by which Western European thought comes to apprehend the significance of the material conditions within which communities live as the conditions for the justification of scientific and non-scientific claims, *Nature and Norm* offers a picture of how Jewish and Christian thought finally catches up with and participates in this same philosophical apprehension.

NATURE AND NORM is a book about the encounter between Jewish and Christian thought and the fact-value divide. The fact-value divide is the belief that statements of facts concerning the objective world alone may be considered true or false, whereas claims about values are subjective or strictly relative to those who hold them and are devoid of intelligibility or validity. Entranced by the new developments arising from natural science, scientists and philosophers alike began to take for granted that scientific knowledge offered the most accurate representation of reality and that only claims concerning the natural world could be considered potentially true or false.

Not an attempt to tear down the value of scientific inquiry to prop up theological discourse, *Nature and Norm* argues for a logic of discourse that gives ample space to both religious thought and scientific inquiry by dissolving the so-called "fact-value" binary. At its core sit three observations. First, a good deal of modern and contemporary Jewish and Christian thought has adhered to the logic of the fact-value distinction. Second, adherence to this logic has had calamitous results for Jewish and Christian thought, including an inability to articulate clear and meaningful claims, an inclination towards utopian theopolitical positions, a vulnerability to skepticism, a tendency for coercion, and an overall inability to advance effective platforms for theopolitical change. Finally, contemporary Jewish and Christian thought needs a logical reorientation that would illuminate conceptual practices capable of issuing on-going and changing measures of the justifiability of claims derived from both natural and social orders of discourse.

In 1610 Galilei Galileo confirmed Copernicus's heliocentric model using a self-designed telescope. In 1620, Francis Bacon published *Novum Organum Scientiarum (New Instrument),* which introduced his observation-based method of scientific inquiry. In 1687 Isaac Newton published the *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy),* laying the foundations for classical mechanics. The rise of modern science sent shock waves through Europe and dramatically altered the contours and standards of Western thought, generating what Jonathan Israel has referred to as the "crisis of the European mind." In his classic text, *The Radical Enlightenment,* Israel states that, during the Middle Ages and the early modern age down to around 1650, western civilization was based on a largely shared core of faith, tradition, and authority. By contrast, after 1650, everything, no matter how fundamental or deeply rooted, was questioned . . . challenged or replaced by startingly different concepts generated by the New Philosophy and what may still be usefully termed the Scientific Revolution.

Undoubtedly, those of us living in the early twenty-first century are the beneficiaries of these shock waves and the fruits they have borne in medical science, chemistry, biology and technology. Nonetheless, it is the central claim of this book that this crisis of the European mind has

reverberated throughout modern western Jewish and Christian thought since the seventeenth century and continues until our current time.

According to Israel, the crisis of the European mind arises from the impact of the scientific revolution upon philosophical thinking.

It was unquestionably the rise of powerful new philosophical systems, rooted in the scientific advances of the early seventeenth century and especially the mechanistic views of Galileo, which chiefly generated that vast *Kulturkampf* between traditional, theologically sanctioned ideas about Man, God and the universe and secular, mechanistic conceptions which stood independently of any theological sanction.

Israel's book offers an exquisitely detailed documentation of the scientifically primed "philosophical radicalism" of the early European Enlightenment and the challenge this new picture of reality and its "mechanistic conceptions" posed to traditional ideas about God, authority, and morality. Most importantly for my purposes, Israel's project attests to the logical valorization of these new ideas or claims over and against non-scientific claims concerning God, morality, and politics, or what has come to be known as the fact-value divide.

Israel makes a convincing case for identifying Baruch Spinoza as the primary exemplar of the fact-value divide insofar as his "general philosophy was profoundly influenced by his conception of science [and science constituted for him] the only certain and reliable criterion of truth we possess." According to Israel, Spinoza's thought is transformative because he explicitly maintains that, "the laws science demonstrates through experiment and mathematical calculation are universally valid and the sole criterion of truth."

The import of identifying logical validity with scientific knowledge for the logical status of non-scientific claims is clear. Either one considers them thinly veiled claims about the natural world or one dismisses them as logically invalid. On the one hand, therefore, Spinoza "seeks natural causes for every phenomenon which has impressed or frightened. On the other hand, Spinoza also insists that some phenomena have no place in the natural order of things and that claims about them therefore have no logical validity. Israel offers Spinoza's treatment of miracles as an example.

The discussion of miracles in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* vividly illustrates the centrality of scientific criteria and modes of explanation in the overall structure of Spinoza's system. . . . Nothing [for Spinoza] happens or exists beyond Nature's laws and hence there can be no miracles; and those that are believed, or alleged, to have occurred, in fact had natural causes which at the time men were unable to grasp.

However, miracles are not the only phenomena that have no place in the natural order of things. In both the *Theologico-Political Treatise* and the *Ethics,* Spinoza asserts that there are no values in nature either." Normative claims derive from the subjective human experiences of nature and its laws and are therefore relative to the individuals who have these experiences. Ethics, politics, and religion are discourses that express these kinds of claims and different ways of organizing and managing them. Consequently, they cannot satisfy the logical standard of adequate knowledge or the scientifically determined criterion of truth." Certainly, as we will see, Spinoza is not the only thinker whose work exemplifies the fact-value divide, nor do all thinkers influenced by the fact-value divide agree on how knowledge of nature is achieved. However, regardless of whether scientific facts arise through empirical observation or by way of *a priori* natural laws, the fact-value divide presupposes that knowledge of nature is the logical standard of "true knowledge." In the shadow of this confidence,

theopolitical or normative claims—claims whose subject matter is theology, ethics, or politics—are excluded or reduced away.

Immanuel Kant—an unabashed Enlightenment cheerleader for the power of reason—recognized these implications of Spinoza's thought. Kant expressed a deep concern for the potential crisis of the same Enlightenment if and when reason was used to undermine traditional beliefs and social norms and associated this crisis with Spinoza's thought. Left unchecked, reason could lead to "materialism, fatalism, [and/or] atheism." It could, in other words, revert to Spinozism. Ultimately, the rise of scientific materialism led to the inscription of Spinoza's fact-value divide onto the dominant academic distinction between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften,* and neither Jewish nor Christian thought was immune to its influence. As Timothy Reiss maintains, "scientific discourse was to remain the model and exemplar of all discourses of truth—of all knowledge with few doubts until the last third of the nineteenth century and, even with increasing attacks, until the present."

Most often, the notion that value statements are excluded from "the domain of rational discourse" is associated with a philosophical school known as logical positivism. As Hilary Putnam explains, "according to the positivists, in order to be knowledge, ethical 'sentences' would have to be either analytic, which they manifestly are not, or else 'factual. And their confidence that they could not be 'factual' ... derived from their confidence that they knew exactly what a fact was." Like Spinoza, the logical positivists took for granted the identification of truth with true knowledge about the objective world." In the *Tractatus,* Ludwig Wittgenstein expresses the logical positivist's account of the world as a realm of facts without meaning.

> "The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world, everything is at it is and everything happens as it does happen... In it no value exists. But since for the early Wittgenstein, as Omri Boehm explains, "talk of what is outside the world is meaningless"" and since in this objective world, no values exist, it follows that there is no potential truth to value claims. As Robert A. Harris states, "the positivists [also] rejected all talk about values (ethics, morals, religion, philosophy) not only as 'references without foundation' but as meaningless or 'non-cognitive' babble."

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* G. W. E Hegel describes this prioritization of the logical status of natural scientific claims as the privileging of Substance over Subject. Such a position neglects subjectivity both as the subject matter of knowledge (that is, human "values") and as the activity of the knower, or the vantage point of those who take up and live with objective knowledge. In these terms, the "fact-value divide" is the assumption that the standard of truth for all knowledge derives from our knowledge of substance, the physical and so-called "objective world", or as Timothy Reiss describes it, "a way of conceptualizing the world that 'marks a total distancing of the mind from the world."

The fact-value divide has undoubtedly undergone damaging criticism by philosophers and scientists. As Robert A. Harris notes, "positivism's claim that 'only statements of [objective] facts have meaning' was a claim not subject to [objective verification] and thus, by its own definition ... had no meaning. Thus was the philosophical basis for positivism refuted. A long line of thinkers as diverse as William James, Leo Strauss, and Thomas Kuhn have demonstrated the extent to which "the practice of science involves much more than the compilation of self-evident facts. Nonetheless, despite this pushback, as Putnam says, "the idea that 'value judgments are subjective' is a piece of philosophy that has gradually come to be accepted by many people as if it were common sense"" and this is no less the case among Jewish and Christian thinkers who continue to assert arbitrarily determined ethical and theological claims.

Certainly, I am not the first to take note of the influence of scientific naturalism and the attending logical prioritization of natural scientific claims over and against theopolitical claims upon modern and contemporary Jewish and Christian thought. In *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination between the World Wars,* Benjamin Lazier tells a new story about inter-war and post-war Jewish and Christian theology as polarized between a this-worldly incarnationalism and a return to naturalism characteristic of Strauss and Schmitt on the one hand and the neo-gnostic acosmism of the *Krisis* theologians, Barth, Rosenzweig and Gogarten on the other hand. In this lively review, Lazier categorizes thinkers as critics or defenders of the thematic contents of Spinozistic philosophy. "For a variety of reasons," he asserts, "the interwar period witnessed an explosion of interest in Spinoza." During this time, the Spinoza-gnostic rivalry [manifests itself] in one of its purest forms. Barth and his minions count as the theological expression of a sentiment that insisted man drain his cup to its dregs. . . . But for many, it offered an overly bleak outlook on the world.... This very fact made Spinoza's revival important.... In its depth and breadth, Spinoza's revival ... outstripped by far the gnostic recrudescence.

In Lazier's estimation, the force of Spinoza's influence at this time even pitted theologically minded thinkers like Schmitt and Barth against each another. As Lazier explains, "it should perhaps come as no surprise that interwar Catholics . . . would invoke Spinoza in the name of banishing once and for all the bugbear that would not go away. . . . The Catholic (and Spinozist) penchant for inclusion ... stood in sharp contrast to the demand the crisis theologians laid upon man to decide—either for the world or for God."" And if Lazier concedes that, "Schmitt . . . did [not] expressly mobilize Spinoza to contest the gnostic spirit, . . ." his thought, unlike Barth's, could be associated with the Spinozistic focus on this world.

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In light of this account, we can appreciate why immanent critique affords a plausible strategy for resolving the theopolitical problem. Arising as it does from out of the ashes of the potential dissolution of key Jewish and Christian claims, immanent critique prompts a process of reflection that gives rise to a new standard of logical validity, and one that *does* apply to and *can* be used in the assessment of Jewish and Christian claims. In particular, immanent critique bridges the apparent divide between theopolitical claims and claims about the "world" by reflecting upon how theopolitical claims are related to other claims a community makes about the world at the current time. As a reflection upon the inferential practices of a given community, immanent critique does not posit a fundamental difference between the condition of the possibility of the meaningfulness of a theopolitical claim and that of a scientific claim. Theopolitical claims do not operate outside of the normal conditions of rationality used to determine the intelligibility of claims concerning the natural world, but according to the same inferential rules a community deploys with respect to any claim. This logical reorientation equips Jewish and Christian thinkers to identify the intelligibility conditions of their claims and avoid the threats of meaninglessness, acosmism, utopianism, and dogmatism characteristic of their adherence to the fact-value logic.

In chapter five, I also identify Peter Ochs and Nicholas Adams as examples of contemporary Jewish and Christian thinking that show what this kind of reflection looks like and how it establishes an inextricable connection between the articulation of Jewish and Christian claims and the network of other knowledge claims held by particular Jewish and Christian communities. These examples clarify how a post-fact-value Jewish and Christian thinking exercises a continued appreciation for worldly inquiry without succumbing to the damaging consequences of the fact-value logic. Consequently, it will also become clear that the fact-value divide and its appropriation by Jewish and Christian

thinkers was itself a pragmatic response to the emergence of scientific knowledge. As such, the recalibration of the logical orientation of Jewish and Christian thought turns out to be part and parcel of the Western cultural and intellectual project of thinking through the significance of the scientific revolution.

Nature and Norm's attention to this process of cultural and intellectual self-reflection follows in the footsteps of G. W F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* which provided one of the first and certainly the most influential immanent critiques of the fact-value divide. Like *Nature and Norm,* the *Phenomenology* documents a process of reflection that arises from the problems confronting *the* modern European identification of natural scientific claims and logical validity in one that does apply images in a portrait of a new standard culminates of logical validity, and historical activity of reflection on the conditions for the integrability claims that Hegel calls, "absolute knowing?'

Chapter six of **NATURE AND NORM** illuminates this important overlap between the two projects in order to highlight the extent to which *Nature and Norm* participates in this long Western process of reflection on science and its impact upon logic and epistemology. Both *Nature and Norm* and the *Phenomenology* are motivated by the skepticism that accompanies the factvalue divide as a theory of knowledge. As has been discussed above, the fact-value divide identifies the logical validity of natural scientific claims as the criterion for the logical validity of all knowledge claims. **NATURE AND NORM** identifies the problems caused by the appropriation of the fact-value divide by Jewish and Christian thinkers. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* identifies the problems caused by taking the fact-value divide as the ground for the validity of *any* knowledge claim.

Like Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* before it, Hegel's *Phenomenology* presents a philosophical quest to identify the conditions of the possibility of knowledge claims. Unlike Kant's *Critique,* however, Hegel's *Phenomenology* provides a negative transcendental deduction of these conditions since, like *Nature and Norm,* it begins with an epistemology that Western thinkers have taken for granted and identifies the skeptical threat facing this apparently self-evident standard. However, when appraised for its utility as a viable theory of knowledge, this standard cannot account for itself and turns out to be indistinguishable from any other contestable knowledge claim. "Facts," the *Phenomenology* demonstrates, are not self-justifying ideas, but presuppose particular conditions (that is, relations to other claims as these claims are held by communities) in order to be justified. This is as much the case for "scientific" facts as it is for any other kind of knowledge claim. Described by Hegel as a "way of despair," the *Phenomenology* documents the long trail of responses to the initial failure of natural empiricism to ground itself. In the process, the *Phenomenology* reveals itself as a quest to uncover an unconditioned ground for a theory of knowledge. It uncovers this ground, however, not through a transcendental deduction of some set of facts or preestablished categorical conditions for the objective validity of knowledge. As is well documented, refusing this strategy is the core of Hegel's critique of Kant's theory of knowledge." Instead, the unconditioned ground of knowledge is Reason's ongoing *activity* of grounding, of offering accounts of the validity of claims by perpetually challenging their intelligibility, what Hegel calls the "negative". Reason grounds not as a "fact" or a "law" or a self-certifying idea. It grounds in the *act of grounding* that never rests secure in its past achievements but is effective only when it responds to the ever-changing challenges to communally agreed upon habits of propositional intelligibility.

Hegel's account of the condition of the possibility of knowledge claims in Reason's ongoing activity of grounding echoes **NATURE AND NORM**'s account of both the stages in the process of coming to terms with the fact-value divide documented in *Nature and Norm,* that is, acceptance, redescription, and external critique as well as *Nature and Norm's* appreciation for the forced option and demand for

immanent critique and the process of reflection upon the "who," "how," and "when" of the Jewish and Christian claims introduced above. Both offer philosophical analyses of the logical limits of the fact-value divide. Both document the process by which Western thought has slowly reflected upon and ultimately gained a more mature apprehension of science, such that natural science no longer bears the burden of establishing universal criteria of logical validity but rather, like other discourses, offers a body of knowledge whose rationality depends upon the continued assessment of its suitability for human social existence. **NATURE AND NORM** pays particular attention to the implications of this logical reorientation for Jewish and Christian thought since it has taken longer to recognize the negative impact of the fact-value divide upon the sustainability of Jewish and Christian claims. Still, the goal of both is the same: as Hegel put it, "Spirit's insight into what knowing is.. . ." When it is achieved, scientists and religious thinkers alike acquire the freedom and authority to assert their knowledge claims as rational when by rational we mean, useful for those communities who hold them in a changing world. Once thinkers recognize that logical criteria are not given by the sciences, they realize the authority of philosophy to address those questions by its own transcendental method.

Ultimately, *Nature and Norm* invites the shocking and unsettling recognition of the dramatic acosmism that shadows and undermines a considerable number of modern and contemporary Jewish and Christian thought systems. Exposing the forced option presented to Jewish and Christian thinkers by the continued appropriation of the fact-value divide, **NATURE AND NORM** motivates Jewish and Christian thinkers to perform an immanent critique of the failure of their thought systems to advance rational theopolitical claims. By identifying the critical juncture at which many Jewish and Christian thinkers currently find themselves, **NATURE AND NORM** uncovers a new standard of logic whereby Jewish and Christian thinkers gain the authority and freedom to advance their claims as reasonable hypotheses that hold the potential for enacting effective change in our current historical moment.

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The above comparison between **NATURE AND NORM** and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* exposes how modern Jewish and Christian responses to the factvalue divide run parallel to non-religious cultural and intellectual attempts to come to terms with the philosophical significence of developments in modern science. Like **NATURE AND NORM**, *the Phenomenology* ends by emboldening the western European intellectual community to exercise its philosophical authority for the sake of sustaining the rationality of its knowledge claims. For in recognizing the need to engage in ongoing immanent critique, the community also recognizes a responsibility and an authority to engage in this labor for the sake of the life of the community in the here and now.

Implicit in the task of immanent critique are several implications that bear upon the ongoing work of Jewish and Christian thinkers.

a) The theopolitical problem is a characteristic of our *current* historical climate, arising out of the conditions of a forced option. It thus signals the inadequacy of pre-philosophical attempts to offer an adequate account of the logical validity of theopolitical claims at the current time.
b) Consequently, immanent critique is not a critical judgment on the relevance or adequacy of prior efforts at logical explanation *for their time* but a commentary on the adequacy of these explanations for our own.

c) Immanent critique therefore presupposes an *apprehension of the historicity* of logical assumptions about the validity of knowledge claims held by modern Jewish and Christian thinkers.
d) This awareness generates a self-consciousness of our own historical moment and what we need to do in light of it. This particular historical moment *calls* for Jewish and Christian thinkers to exercise the kind of speculative or philosophical reflection outlined here and endows them with the pragmatic authority to do so. Jewish and Christian knowledge claims relate to scientific claims when the latter are no longer taken to be the self-evident standard of rationality but rather, like the former, are understood as knowledge claims whose validity depends on particular forms of life.
e) Rational determination of Jewish and Christian claims sustains the Enlightenment's concern with empirical knowledge about the world, since justifying theopolitical claims depends upon on-going assessments of the worldly conditions within which knowledge claims are held.
f) Immanent critique includes the entire process by means of which a form of life generates accounts of the rationality of its claims *as needed* and in *different moments of historical challenge.*
g) In the current climate, we can no longer afford the luxury of taking for granted the self-evidence of our knowledge claims scientific or otherwise. Knowledge is something we use and for which we are responsible. Like Phocion's women, it is incumbent upon us as scientists and religious thinkers to exercise our historically mandated philosophical authority to preserve the vitality of the knowledge claims with which we most successfully live in and with our world. <>

THE UNITY OF BODY AND SOUL IN PATRISTIC AND BYZANTINE THOUGHT edited by Anna Usacheva, Jörg Ulrich, and Siam Bhayro [Contexts of Ancient and Medieval Anthropology, Brill, 9783506703392]

This volume explores the long-standing tensions between such notions as soul and body, spirit and flesh, in the context of human immortality and bodily resurrection. The discussion revolves around late antique views on the resurrected human body and the relevant philosophical, medical and theological notions that formed the background for this topic. Soon after the issue of the divine-human body had been problematised by Christianity, it began to drift away from vast metaphysical deliberations into a sphere of more specialized bodily concepts, developed in ancient medicine and other natural sciences. To capture the main trends of this interdisciplinary dialogue, the contributions in this volume range from the 2nd to the 8th centuries CE, and discuss an array of figures and topics, including Justin, Origen, Bardaisan, and Gregory of Nyssa.

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THE UNITY OF BODY AND SOUL IN PATRISTIC AND BYZANTINE THOUGHT inaugurates a new Series from Brill, Contexts of Ancient and Medieval Anthropology, which welcomes multidisciplinary research on the history of ancient and medieval anthropology broadly understood in terms of both its European heritage and its reception of, and engagement with, various cultural and intellectual traditions (e.g. in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic etc.). This series encourages multidisciplinary studies of the various philological, textual, and archeological sources concerned with the development of anthropological theories in ancient medicine, philosophy, religion, and theology, as well as the subsequent theoretical and practical interactions between these theories. Particularly welcome are studies that emphasise the fundamental connection between different philosophical, scientific, and socio-cultural contexts where anthropological theories were produced and applied, and that analyse the implications of these theories in ethical, ascetic, ecological, gender, and political life from classical Antiquity up to the Middle Ages. Attempts to understand human beings as biological, physiological, religious, and socio-cultural entities persisted from Antiquity and are echoed in the establishing of the complex and multifarious European identity. In grasping this cross-cultural and diversified process, one is able to see the foundations of contemporary scientific, religious, and political discourses that treat the human being and how humanity relates to the world.

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From introduction: Dualist or holist, complementary or antagonistic, subordinate or equal, Christian or philosophical—various approaches to the issue of the unity of body and soul have one important implication, namely, all of them transpire through the individual embodied lived experiences of human beings. Hence, general theoretical agreements about psychological concepts can easily attenuate or vanish, yielding to the varied empirical data. Besides, the same person, playing different social roles, often slightly varies her views on the same psychosomatic subject, be it the solemn issue of individual salvation or practical plans for conceiving a new human being. The mysterious beginning and end of human life, together with the challenges of disease, ageing, emotional reactions and diverse perceptions, provide such a variety of theoretical hypotheses and empirical data that can be difficult to harmoniously systematise within some philosophical or religious theories. Nevertheless, the study of the Christian approach to the core psychological issue of the unity of body and soul is of paradigmatic significance for the history of the theories and practices of self-identity, morals, social and gender relations, epistemology, medicine, and scientific method. While covering such a gigantic terrain is an unthinkable enterprise, the specific target of this volume is to explore the diversity of individual lived experiences and theoretical approaches to the unity of body and soul as expressed by authors who flourished between the second and seventh centuries CE. Monks and

bishops, medical doctors and philosophers, exegetes and theologians of Christian East, expressed plenty of nuanced views about the unity of body and soul: from the moment of conception and birth until the resurrection and post-mortem existence. To hear individual Christian voices contextualised in their various social networks and to demonstrate the diversity and peculiar patterns of patristic psychological views is the goal of this collective scholarly work.

This volume is the result of the workshop "Bodily Resurrection vs Immortality: Philosophy, Medicine, Theology," that took place at the XVIII Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford (August 19–24, 2019). The general aim of the workshop was to bring together specialists in Patristics, ancient Philosophy, Theology and the History of Medicine in order to explore longstanding tensions between such notions as soul and body, spirit and flesh, in the context of human life, death, reproduction, and bodily resurrection. The discussion revolved around late antique views on the human body and the relevant philosophical, medical and theological contexts. Free from the dichotomy between science and religion, the authors of Late Antiquity developed their concepts in the atmosphere of vibrant interdisciplinary dialogue. To capture the main trends of this discussion, the contributors to this volume shared their expertise on the formation of such notions as body, flesh, soul, mind, emotions, reproduction and redemption in late antique philosophical and Christian contexts.

In the opening chapter of the volume, Professor Jörg Ulrich, from Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, explores how the combined reading of Gen 1:26f. and Gen 2:7 in the second century emphasised the unity of body and soul. Ulrich pinpoints an important discrepancy between the early Christian understanding of the biblical accounts of the creation of humans. Some patristic authors, whom Ulrich associates primarily with the platonic tradition, believed that when Genesis spoke about the image of God, it referred only to the human soul and not to the human body. Other exegetical traditions supposed that the account of the creation of man out of the dust of the earth, preserved in Gen 2:7, also implied creation in the image of God. Ulrich explores textual testimonies of the second exegetical tradition in the works of Clement of Rome, Justin, Pseudo-Justin, Irenaeus of Lyon, Theophilus of Antioch, and Tertullian. Although Ulrich primarily focuses on early Christian sources, he also shows that the combined interpretation of Gen 1:26f. and Gen 2:7 was not an invention of Christian authors but goes back to Old Testament exegetical tradition. In addition to a detailed analysis of second century patristic texts, Ulrich demonstrates how the idea of the unity of body and soul resonated in the early stages of Trinitarian discussions and in later Christological debates.

Professor Samuel Fernández, from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, analyses Origen's views about rational creatures and matter within the framework of eschatological theory. Fernández begins by exploring the concept of bodily resurrection in On First Principles and shows the correspondence that, according to Origen, exists between the beginning and the end of human life. Fernández proposes a helpful review of contemporary scholarly views on the concept of the "pre-existence of the soul" and suggests his own interpretation. In his analysis of the initial and final relationship between rational creatures and matter, Fernández proposes that we understand the "pre-existence of the soul" as the prenatal existence of rational creatures provided with light bodies. Hence, according to Origen, the priority of the soul over the body is identical to the priority of rational creatures over matter. Fernández emphasises that the nature of this priority is logical and not chronological. He argues that the primal transgression of rational creatures brought upon them their earthly birth in heavy bodies, which will be transformed in the eschaton, thus justifying the parallel between the prenatal and post-mortem existence.

Professor Ilaria Ramelli, from Durham University, devotes her contribution to the study of Origen's ideas about the unity of body and soul in both the earthly life and the afterlife, and also to Origen's influence on Gregory of Nyssa in this respect (as in many others). Ramelli shows that, unlike the Neoplatonists, Origen argued against metensomatosis and propounded the notion of ensomatosis, which emphasised the idea of the unity of one soul and one body. Thus, Ramelli maintains, Origen claimed that only God is entirely intelligible, while rational creatures and human souls were created together with their individual ethereal, pneumatic, spiritual bodies. Therefore, the "skin tunics" (Gen 3:21) in the eyes of Origen were not simply associated with corporeality per se, but with a particular kind of heavy and corruptible body. Ramelli explains that this blanket corporeal condition of the whole creation is necessary for its freedom. Since the capacity of change is predicated on their corporeal nature, it is only due to their bodies that rational creatures can pursue either virtue or vice, with the following consequences for their bodies. In support of the primordial union of the body and the soul, Origen professed that even the risen body will be composed of the same four elements as the earthly body. Contrary to what is commonly assumed, Ramelli demonstrates that many of Origen's ideas were endorsed and developed by Gregory of Nyssa.

Ilaria Vigorelli, from the Pontifical University of Holy Cross, devotes her chapter to a detailed analysis of various aspects of the trinitarian anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa. She starts by explaining his elaborate methodology of argumentation identified with the notion of akolouthia, understood as a relational logical sequence that takes into account common premises known to his addressees. Another indispensable component of Gregory's method accorded with the notion of piety (eusebeia), which enabled Gregory's audience to grasp his message. After establishing these epistemological requirements of Gregory's discourse on the soul and the body, Vigorelli goes through the most essential aspects of his anthropological thought and shows how he linked it to his trinitarian doctrine. Vigorelli demonstrates that Gregory had a holistic vision of human nature where the dualism of intelligible soul and corporeal body was harmonised by the condition of apatheia and isaggelia, restored by Christ. Taking as a point of departure the ontological similitude and kinship of the human soul and divinity, Gregory elaborated the Pauline idea of epektasis as the final relational condition of human divinisation.

Professor Kuo-Yu Tsui, from the National Chengchi University in Taipei, explores the issue of the body in the ascetic thought of Evagrius Ponticus. Contrary to what is commonly assumed, Tsui elucidates the positive role of the body in Evagrius' thought. She outlines the tripartite structure of Evagrius' anthropology (derived from Origen and Greek philosophy), and describes how he integrates this scheme with Christian ascetic practices. Thus, according to Evagrius, human nature is divinely endowed with the seed and potential for an eventual unification with the divine through which the body may be elevated to the rank of the soul, and the soul to that of the mind (nous). Evagrius emphasized that this unification does not occur until the mind is sufficiently purified from preoccupations with bodily distractions by means of prayer and contemplation. Tsui demonstrates that, in the teachings and examples of Evagrius, the practical ascetic life (praktikē), which consists of both bodily and spiritual disciplines, helps guide and strengthen monks as they struggle and train against intruding or obstructing passions and strive through divine grace for the blessed intermediate stage of apatheia, a prerequisite for higher levels of contemplation (theōria). Tsui observes that, although Evagrius encouraged the desert monks to embrace the ideal of a total withdrawal from the world (anachoresis), he did not regard the body as an impediment to salvation. On the contrary, Tsui demonstrates that Evagrius engaged with the body as a providential vehicle that, when cared for and used according to its proper nature, grants access to sensory experience and knowledge of the material world as divine creation, and is therefore necessary and instrumental in bringing about the

restoration of the mind. Tsui shows that, for Evagrius, the path of the spiritual journey towards higher levels of contemplation is precisely through the virtuous and disciplined body.

Professor Andrew Crislip, from Virginia Commonwealth University, reflects upon resurrection, emotion and embodiment in Egyptian monastic literature. Crislip especially focusses on the affective and emotional language of such doctrines as the resurrection of Christ himself, the real presence of his body and blood in the Eucharist, and the post-mortem fate of martyrs. Thus, Crislip showcases the variety of embodied experiences of individual resurrection, Eucharist and the resurrected body of Christ. Crislip starts with an exploration of the letters of Antony the Great and his contemporary Ammonas, and then studies the sermons of Shenoute, and homiletic literature produced and transmitted in late antique Coptic monasteries. Crislip offers an emotion-based mode of analysis of the resurrection narratives, which reflects phenomena observed in current research in cognitive and affective neuroscience. This interdisciplinary approach expands our understanding of ancient Christian theories and practices, and creates a platform for an interdisciplinary dialogue between historical and contemporary scientific disciplines.

Anna Usacheva, from the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, analyses Christian theories of reproduction in the context of Hellenistic dualist discourse and embryology. Usacheva gives an overview of the philosophical and patristic texts and compares the embryological theories of Aristotle, Galen and Porphyry with the views of Athenagoras of Athens, Justin the Martyr, Methodius of Olympus and Gregory of Nyssa. She also argues that, in the fifth century, Christian interest in the mysteries of reproduction was heated by the debates about the union of the divine and human natures of Christ, and speculation regarding the details of Jesus' generation. Some novel views of ensoulment were introduced by such representatives of the Antiochene school of theology as Theodoret of Cyrus and Nemesius of Emesa. A brief analysis of Theodoret and Nemesius' views of reproduction demonstrates that, although these authors closely engaged with Aristotelian, Galenic and Neoplatonic concepts, their ideas show a continuity with early Christian concepts. Usacheva claims that, due to the specific metaphysical principles of Christian doctrine, the church fathers were bound to balance a dualist lexicon, which they often used, with holistic anthropological and Christological statements. According to Usacheva, patristic theories of reproduction represent a vivid example of balanced Christian holistic thought, which imbibed plenty of Hellenistic concepts, yet remained true to the fundamental principles of Christian doctrine.

Samuel Kaldas, from St Cyril's Coptic Orthodox Theological College, studies the soul-body relation in the homilies of the fourth century Syrian writer known as Pseudo-Macarius or Macarius-Symeon. Kaldas explores Macarius' language and metaphors, and shows just how deep and disguised was Macarius' affinity with Platonic asceticism. Instead of focusing on the direct philosophical influences on Macarius' thought, Kaldas takes the more subtle path of unraveling the intrinsic structure and framework of Macarius' ideas about the spiritual life. It transpires from Kaldas' study that the importance of Macarius' metaphorical language rests on his belief in the twofold nature of the universe, comprising the invisible and visible worlds. Hence, the symbolic characteristics of physical objects, arranged on an imaginary scale of their "hardness" and "subtlety", demonstrate Macarius' implicit "physical theory" of the different kinds of substances. Thus, Kaldas shows that, in the eyes of Macarius, the soul is a "subtle body", clothed in the "garment" of the physical body, which although coarser in nature than the soul, is indispensable not only in the present life but also after death. Kaldas demonstrates how, in his theology of the transformation from "the garments of flesh" to "the garments of light", Macarius combined the basic outline of Platonic topoi with Syriac imagery.

Professor David Bradshaw, from the University of Kentucky, explores Patristic views on why there is no repentance after death. Bradshaw demonstrates that, despite a strong and biblically justified agreement between the church fathers about the impossibility of post-mortem repentance, their explanations of this doctrine were rather different. After outlining the main attitudes to this issue from the second to the fourth centuries, Bradshaw focusses on the more detailed expositions of the problem offered by such later authors as Nemesius of Emesa, Dorotheus of Gaza, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus and Theophylact of Bulgaria. Bradshaw demonstrates that, according to these theologians, after death and separation from the body, the soul loses its capacity for moral transformation. Bradshaw argues that, although varied in their explanations, the views of the church fathers are not incompatible, and the diversity of their approaches can most likely be explained by the contexts of and motives for their compositions. Bradshaw also analyses Patristic views on Christ's descent to Hades, and the opportunity for repentance that this offered to its inhabitants.

Professor Siam Bhayro, from the University of Exeter, explores treating the body and the soul in late-antique and early-medieval Syriac sources. Bhayro's particular focus is on the legacy of Sergius—a priest, theologian, philosopher, prolific translator, diplomat and chief physician of the city of Resh ʿAyna. Instead of the conventional comparison of the sixth-century Sergius with the ninth-century Arabic scholar Hunayn ibn Ishaq, or the usual association of Sergius' image with the Graeco-Roman model, Bhayro tries to navigate a new path. He notes that, unlike the Graeco-Roman milieu, with its humoral pathology and differentiation between the roles of physicians and priests, the Syro-Mesopotamian tradition suggested a simultaneous and complementary treatment of the body and the soul. Hence, Bhayro compares Sergius' scholarship with the legacy of the earlier Syriac scientist, scholar, astrologer, philosopher and poet, Bardaiṣan of Edessa. Similarly to Sergius, Bardaisan was also known to be both a priest and a physician, who served in the royal court in Edessa. Bhayro demonstrates that Bardaiṣan's astral scholarship and medical practice were based on the historic Syro-Mesopotamian systems, as was his overall scholarly model of the priest-physician-scholar. Bhayro argues that Sergius' model of scholarship reflected many aspects of Bardaisan's status and accorded with the traditional near eastern model of scholarship. Hence, Sergius followed the traditional Syro-Mesopotamian approach to the treatment of the body and the soul.

Andrew Summerson, from Calumet College of St. Joseph, explores how Maximus the Confessor in his Ad Thalassium presented the issue of human passions in the light of human salvation and theosis. Summerson argues that, according to Maximus, Adam fell at the very moment he was created. Hence, right from the start of human existence, passions became a part of human nature, and thus required a transformation that could only be achieved with the assistance of Christ. Summerson shows that, in tune with Neoplatonic tradition, Maximus believed that "ignorance of God" was at the root of fallen human passibility. Consequently, both human passions and the wrong interpretation of scripture are different symptoms of the same disease of original sin. Summerson explores Maximus' ideas about the medicinal healing of human emotion, which went back to the early Christian trope of Christ as divine physician. In his analysis of the Christian practice of apatheia, Summerson points out its distinctly Stoic roots, and explains that the Stoic notion was not about the complete eradication of passions but instead about the replacement or transformation of vicious passions with good ones. To describe such a transformation, Maximus again employed a medical metaphor that associated the good use of passions with an immunisation, established by God for salutary purposes.

Professor Vladimir Cvetković, from the University of Belgrade, analyses Maximus the Confessor's view on the soul and the body in the context of five divisions. To explore the nature of Maximus' anthropology, Cvetković chooses a fascinating angle: he studies Maximus' doctrine of the fivefold

division that comprises such binaries as the unities between male and female, paradise and the inhabited world, earth and sky, sensible and intelligible nature, and human and divine. In tune with other post-Chalcedonian authors, Maximus argued that this final, paradigmatic unity between the divine and human natures is analogous to the union between the human body and soul. Cvetković demonstrates how Maximus pictured the beautiful divine cosmological design, which harmonised various kinds of universal unities, and particularly focused on the comparison between the body-soul union in the human being and the unity of the divine and human natures in Christ. Cvetković also explores the continuity of Maximus' psychology with respect to the teachings of Nemesius of Emesa and Leontius of Byzantium, and analyses Maximus' polemics against Severus of Antioch. Thus, Cvetković explaines the rationale behind Maximus' doctrine of Christ's composite hypostasis and human composite nature, and also outlines a connection between his anthropological, Christological and eschatological doctrines. <>

Virtue in the Cave: Moral Inquiry in Plato's Meno by Roslyn Weiss [Oxford University Press, 9780195140767]

In this radical new interpretation of Plato's Meno, Roslyn Weiss exposes the farcical nature of the slave-boy-demonstration and challenges the widely held assumption that the Meno introduces "Platonic" metaphysical and epistemological innovations into an otherwise "Socratic" dialogue. She shows that the Meno is intended as a defense not of all inquiry but of moral inquiry alone, and that it locates the validity of Socratic method in its ability to arrive not at moral knowledge but at the far more modest moral true belief.

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Offers an interpretation of Plato's Meno that seeks to illuminate the particularly "therapeutic" philosophy that Socrates practices. It argues that the Meno, rather than constituting a bridge between "Socratic" and "Platonic" dialogues by way of the introduction of distinctively "Platonic" doctrines such as metempsychosis and learning as recollection, the dialogue employs these ideas to urge Meno to take up the life of moral inquiry. Confronting a young man eager for virtue (success), Socrates attempts to focus Meno's attention on the importance of inquiring into the nature of virtue, the nature of the truly excellent human life. Struggling against both Meno's youthful impatience and his overarching desire for power and wealth, Socrates argues for a life in which the virtues – justice, temperance, and piety, in particular – constitute the core of genuine success. To counter Meno's resistance to elenctic investigation, to disarm Meno's challenge to an inquiry conducted by someone who himself lacks knowledge, Socrates fashions the myth of recollection, followed by the demonstration with the slave boy, in order to convince Meno that even such inquiry is of value. Socrates is no believer in the idea that all knowledge is recollected: most knowledge, he thinks, is learned from those who know and from those who can prove that they know. And the demonstration with the slave boy is no demonstration of recollection: what it is, is a lesson in geometry, but one artfully disguised as an elenchus through which the slave-boy presumably "recollects" the solution. When Meno, despite Socrates' valiant efforts to coax him back to the inquiry into the all-important question of what virtue is, wishes still to consider only how one gets virtue, Socrates tries his best to benefit Meno by protecting him from harmful beliefs and influences, arguing that virtue comes neither by nature (so Meno may not arrogantly assume he already has it), nor by teaching (so Meno need not seek out further sophistic training), nor spontaneously (so Meno

has no reason to associate with such men as Anytus). If virtue comes at all, Socrates contends, it comes by divine dispensation – or at least that is how political success is acquired: whether or not one makes a name for oneself is ultimately a matter of luck. How is real virtue, as opposed to political success, attained? By the hard work of moral inquiry, by examination, and investigation that leads to true and right opinions.

Review

"Weiss defends another highly original reading...Weiss offers detailed exegeses of some of the more puzzling aspects of the dialogue-most notably, Meno's paradox of inquiry and the geometrical session involving Socrates and Meno's slave boy."--*Ancient Philosophy*

The Meno assesses the worth of moral inquiry and its limits. Moral inquiry, especially in the form of Socratic elenchus, hopes to achieve the truth about moral questions, recognizing that certainty about moral questions is not possible within the "Cave." "Platonic" themes, such as immortality of the soul and recollection, are advanced in the Meno in order to promote moral inquiry and are not intended as doctrines whose function it is to account for how any and all knowledge is acquired.

In the Cave

> For even if one should happen to say the whole truth, nevertheless, he himself does not know; but belief is fashioned over all things. Xenophanes, DK 21B34, trans. McKirahan (1994)

Is the Meno just another in a series of "Socratic" excursions into the barren land of moral definition? Or does it, perhaps, mark the first "Platonic" foray into the more fertile fields of metaphysics and epistemology? Is the target of its inquiry the nature of virtue, or is the target of its inquiry, inquiry itself?

This book takes and defends the position that the Meno is a self-conscious analysis and assessment of the worth, on the one hand, and of the limitations, on the other, not of inquiry simpliciter but of, specifically, moral inquiry, indeed dramatizing, even constituting in itself, Socrates' "fight in word and deed" (M. 86c2–3) for the value of open-ended and never-ending investigation into things moral. On this view, the Meno is an apology for the Socratic enterprise, justifying it, however, not, as one might think, on such "Platonic" grounds as immortality of the soul and recollection theory, but on its own terms: moral inquiry is vindicated in the Meno by its (p.4) progress toward true opinion. The Meno postpones moral knowledge to the indefinite future, to someday, to the time when there might appear among us the equivalent of Teiresias among the dead (M. 100a4). In the Meno, moral knowledge is not ours now, nor will it soon be ours; nor, indeed, are we but questions away from

having it. For in the Meno, moral knowledge is not human knowledge; it is, as Socrates says of it in the Apology (20e1), wisdom greater than human. From the Meno's perspective, then, until such time as human beings attain wisdom greater than human, moral matters will remain matters of opinion.

What ought human beings to do in their moral Cave, where they do not, and cannot, know what they need to know most of all, namely, how they ought best to live? Socrates' answer, in the Meno as in the Apology, is that people ought to engage in lifelong moral inquiry, that they ought to live the only life worthy of their humanity: a life of critical reflection. In the Meno, Socrates takes up his god-given task to help others live the examined life.

In carrying out his task, the method Socrates employs is elenchus, a method that can examine and "refute" opinions but that has no hope of transcending opinion and yielding knowledge. Through elenchus—that is, through subjecting opinions to the test of reason—Socrates aims at reducing moral error. In the court of reason, he trusts, false opinions will fall by dint of their absurdity, that is, of their failure to cohere with those truths most deeply embedded in the human soul. True opinions, by contrast, will stand: because they resonate in perfect harmony with those deepest human truths, they will banish the contrary false beliefs that bring discord to the soul. The doors to the court of reason, however, must forever remain open; for, in principle, any belief, even one that has been examined many times, might meet an argument that proves its undoing. Elenchus, then, never rests; its truths are never fully secure—not even when bound "by arguments of iron and adamant" (Gorg. 509a1–2).

Although the Meno acknowledges fully the limitations of elenchus, it recognizes at the same time that it is precisely these limitations that intensify the urgency of its practice: with moral knowledge beyond reach, where else but to elenchus can one turn for moral truth? Since the best human life, according to Socrates, is the life whose central concern is virtue, and since, in the Cave, knowledge of virtue is inaccessible, the best human life will be the life spent in the search for moral truth.

The best human life, thus conceived, will hold no appeal for the wicked, the stupid, the intellectually lazy, or the arrogant. The wicked actually savor their odious ideas; the stupid are unable to test their opinions; the intellectually lazy prefer to be guided by the authority of others; the arrogant are too certain of their wisdom to question it. Socrates' divine mission is to convert those susceptible of conversion to a life of moral inquiry, to turn away from their evil or complacent ways those who are capable of being turned away. Despite Socrates' dutiful efforts undertaken at the god's command, however, the interlocutors he encounters in Plato's elenctic dialogues prove to be intransigent: if they come to the exchange wicked, stupid, lazy, or arrogant, so they leave it. Socrates' great problem in the Meno is that his interlocutor is Meno. The Meno is the fictitious record of Socrates' attempts at Meno's improvement. The present book is a reconstruction of Socrates' efforts on Meno's behalf.

Meno is an interlocutor hobbled in his pursuit of a good life by several deficiencies in his character. He is both slow to learn (how many times must Socrates remind Meno that justice, temperance, and piety are vital components of any adequate account of virtue? [see M. 73a7–9, d7–8, 78d3–4]) and unwilling to exert the requisite effort; he is eager above all for power and wealth; and he holds a rather inflated opinion of himself. Socrates no doubt wants to leave Meno in a better state than that in which he found him. But how will Socrates convince Meno or, for that matter, other ambitious and impatient young men who crave fairly instant "success" that the way to make their lives worth living is to spend them engaged in a practice whose conclusions are never certain and whose completion is never near? How can Socrates possibly win the battle for the worth of murky moral inquiry when he competes with others who not only lure the young with the promise of power and

wealth but also dazzle them by answering "fearlessly and magnificently" all questions posed by anyone (M. 70b6–7)?

In truth, Socrates can hope to persuade Meno of the importance of moral inquiry only if he masks its inconclusiveness. To this end he perpetrates, as he must, a mild deception: he invents a myth of recollection. No sooner does he espouse the sham doctrine that all learning is recollection, however, than he is compelled to compound this bit of dissimulation with another, that is, with a purported "demonstration" of how recollection works. Socrates' strategy in both the recollection myth and in the ensuing demonstration with Meno's slave-boy is to obscure the unique character of virtue. In the recollection myth he speaks simply of "virtue and other things," suggesting thereby that, as in other things, so in virtue, there can be a final answer. In the slave-boy-demonstration, he fosters the illusion that virtue is like other things by dressing up instruction in geometry as elenchus. But geometry is not learned by elenchus; surely, neither Meno nor Socrates learned it that way. Geometry is a mathēma, a teachable and learnable subject whose propositions are susceptible of conclusive proof. Of what value, then, is elenchus for teaching geometry? Elenchus is not, after all, a method for teaching; elenchus takes the place of teaching when teaching is an impossibility, that is, in the matter of virtue. Since the propositions of virtue do not, within the confines of the Cave, admit of certain proof, elenchus steps in to pursue, not knowledge, but the more modest true opinion.

The Meno, let us note, is the only Platonic dialogue that celebrates the practical worth of true opinion, equating its practical effectiveness with that of knowledge. Although the dialogue recognizes the superiority of knowledge to true opinion in respect of stability, nevertheless, on the assumption that human beings are not going to (p.8) attain knowledge of virtue, it recommends, in place of the ideal guidance that knowledge would provide, the comparably good guidance that true opinion provides.

VIRTUE IN THE CAVE: MORAL INQUIRY IN PLATO'S MENO proceeds on assumptions that are best exposed at the outset. I shall, therefore, consider the most controversial of these now, however briefly and dogmatically. (Some of these matters are taken up at greater length—and with supporting argument—later on.) I shall present the book's assumptions as answers to the following questions:

1. Does Socrates believe moral knowledge to be impossible, or does he just think it difficult to come by?
2. Why is moral knowledge impossible?
3. What is the point of searching for moral knowledge if its attainment is impossible?
4. Does Socrates willfully deceive Meno in argument? Is he not, then, a sophist?
5. How does one tell when Socrates is being sincere and when he is being ironic or is dissembling?
6. Why does Socrates work so hard in the Meno to introduce and promote doctrines that he does not endorse?
7. If Socrates deliberately misleads, what makes what Socrates does philosophy?

The following is a brief synopsis of Virtue in the Cave, which follows closely the order of the text of the Meno:

Chapter 1 (M. 70a–79e) replays Socrates' struggle to divest Meno of his fascination with power and money and to encourage him to place value instead on justice, temperance, and piety.

Chapter 2 (M. 79e–81e) tracks the mounting tensions between Socrates and Meno, tensions that lead to an impasse in their joint search for the nature of virtue, an impasse that culminates, finally, in "Meno's paradox." This chapter argues that the myth of recollection with which Socrates responds to the paradox does not represent Socrates' own beliefs but is, in the main, a ploy designed to keep Meno from abandoning the inquiry.

Chapter 3 (M. 81e–86c) resists the widespread tendency to suppress the frankly farcical nature of the slave-boy-demonstration21 and permits it to be seen, instead, for what it really is: a lesson in geometry, complete with teacher, student, and new material taught. This chapter also discloses the deeper message of "recollection": since moral true opinions are always in the soul, they can be released and recovered through the Socratic method of elenctic questioning; geometry, however, and other kinds of knowledge are simply taught.

Chapter 4 (M. 86c–100c) portrays Socrates' reluctant relinquishment of the search for what virtue is, the inquiry for which he so doggedly fought in the belief that in it alone lies Meno's salvation. Taking its place is a consideration of Meno's preferred question of how virtue is acquired. Chapter 4 shows how Socrates seeks to benefit Meno even within the investigation's newly narrowed confines by persuading him that virtue comes to men neither by nature nor by teaching nor spontaneously. This chapter shows, too, how Socrates makes the case, sotto voce, for true opinion as the source of virtue.

The Conclusion explores the relationship between Plato's portrayal of Socrates in the Meno and his portrayal of Socrates in the Socratic dialogues generally and, especially, in the Apology. This chapter shows that the Socratic ideals and commitments featured in the Meno, namely, Socrates' high regard for true opinion and his determination to fight in word and deed for the worth of moral inquiry, are fully consonant with those in evidence in the Apology and in other Socratic dialogues. This chapter explains, too, how it is that even though the examined life fails to achieve moral knowledge, it is, nevertheless, for Socrates, a happy one, and the man who (p.15) leads it, a good man. It contends that whereas for Socrates knowledge is certainly a sufficient condition for virtue, it is, as the Meno and the Apology both show, not a necessary one.

Appendix I considers the relationship between the Phaedo's and the Meno's versions of the recollection thesis. In doing so, Appendix I addresses what is surely the most serious and most formidable objection to the interpretation advanced in this book of the Meno's recollection thesis: how can the Meno be, as is argued here, mainly a strategic ploy on Socrates' part to keep Meno from abandoning the inquiry into the nature of virtue when recollection is integral to Plato's conception of learning in the Phaedo as well?23 In response to this objection, Appendix I shows that the Phaedo's discussion of recollection is no mere refinement or development of the Meno's but represents, on the contrary, a radical departure from it. Thus, far from supporting the Meno's version of recollection, the Phaedo provides good reason for abandoning it.

Appendix II explores the change in the status of moral inquiry brought about by the introduction in the Republic of the Theory of Forms. This appendix shows how and why, with the emergence in the Republic of philosophers defined not by their sheer love of wisdom but by their actual attainment of it, moral inquiry is abandoned: for the philosopher-kings, moral inquiry is replaced by the vision of the Forms; for the citizens they govern, it is replaced by the rulers' exercise of persuasion or, when necessary, of compulsion. Whereas the practice of elenchus is critical for men's moral improvement in the Cave, its inability to

transcend opinion renders it obsolete once some human beings attain wisdom greater than human. <>

PHILOSOPHERS IN THE "REPUBLIC": PLATO'S TWO PARADIGMS by Roslyn Weiss [Cornell University Press, 9780801449741]

In Plato's Republic, Socrates contends that philosophers make the best rulers because only they behold with their mind's eye the eternal and purely intelligible Forms of the Just, the Noble, and the Good. When they are endowed with an array of moral, intellectual, and personal virtues and appropriately educated, surely no one could doubt the wisdom of entrusting to them the governance of cities? Although it is widely assumed that all the Republic's philosophers are the same, the Republic actually contains two distinct portrayals of the philosopher. According to the book, Plato's two paradigms of the philosopher are the "philosopher by nature" and the "philosopher by design." Philosophers by design, as the allegory of the Cave vividly shows, must be forcibly dragged from the material world of pleasure to the sublime realm of the intellect, and from there back down again to the "Cave" to rule the beautiful city envisioned by Socrates and his interlocutors. Yet philosophers by nature, are distinguished by their natural yearning to encounter the transcendent realm of pure Forms, as well as by a willingness to serve others—at least under appropriate circumstances. In contrast to both sets of philosophers stands Socrates, who represents a third paradigm, one that is only hinted at in the Republic. As a man who not only loves "what is" but is also utterly devoted to the justice of others, Socrates surpasses both the philosophers by design and the philosophers by nature. This book aims to challenge Plato scholars to revisit their assumptions about Plato's moral and political philosophy.

Review

"What we expect from Roslyn Weiss is close textual argument and unusual readings. Her book on philosophers in the Republic does not disappoint.... The audacity of this close reading of the dialogue is a welcomed challenge to settled habits. Whether you agree with the conclusion or not, you will learn a lot about the text." — Richard D. Parry — *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition*

"This important book takes Plato at his word. Delicately attuned to nuances and alterations in Plato's language, Roslyn Weiss painstakingly—but never uninterestingly—accumulates convincing textual evidence in support of three main thesis: (1) The *Republic* contains two distinct and irreconcilable portrayals of the philosopher: the philosophers by nature of books five and six and the philosophers by design of book seven (chapters one through three); (2) Socrates is superior to both of these philosophical types because he displays the virtue, deliberately suppressed in the *Republic*, of piety (chapter four); (3) Socrates intentionally blurs the difference between the other-regarding virtue of justice and the self-regarding virtue of moderation (chapter five). These theses are internally connected by Weiss's guiding intuition that the example of Socrates, who puts himself in harm's way in the course of caring for the souls of others, furnishes the proper measure of philosophy and justice in the *Republic*." — *The Review of Metaphysics*

"In *Philosophers in the 'Republic,'* Roslyn Weiss argues that Plato's *Republic* contains two 'distinct and irreconcilable' portrayals of the philosopher: what Weiss calls the 'philosopher by nature' and the 'philosopher by design.' Through close reading of the arguments and the dramatic action of

the *Republic*, Weiss convincingly shows the distinctness of these two types while also educing a third: that of Socrates himself. Weiss illuminates the multifaceted arguments of the *Republic* anew with deft intelligence, calling attention to conspicuous absences as well as important inconsistencies that ought to shift conventional readings of the dialogue from any approach." — *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*

"Weiss develops her bold and refreshing alternative to standard interperetations of the *Republic* by way of close readings of the dialogue that attend with nuance to its language and arguments and also its dramatic structure. Weiss's exceptionally rich footnotes supplement the careful arguments of her text, while also offering, over the course of the book, a sustained set of insightful gestures to undernoted proximities between Plato and Aristotle." — Jill Frank — *The Review of Politics*

"*Philosophers in the 'Republic'* offers a new and challenging interpretation of Platonic moral philosophy. Roslyn Weiss focuses attention on a careful reading of the *Republic* as a philosophical and dramatic work and also has important things to say about the history of Western moral philosophy and the structure and identity of moral philosophy generally. Weiss develops her case with extraordinary care, meticulously examining both the form of the arguments and the dramatic character of the dialogue." —Gerald M. Mara, Georgetown University, author of *Socrates' Discursive Democracy*

Two Paradigms

The book's purpose is to show that Plato's Republic contains two distinct and irreconcilable portrayals of the philosopher. Plato positions his readers to detect the deficiencies in the second philosopher by revealing—in advance—a philosopher of a different stripe. If the first philosopher can reasonably be thought to represent a Platonic ideal, then the second, a philosopher radically different from the first, cannot. If the second philosopher is thus not only second but second-rate, it is because he reflects the character and taste not of Socrates or Plato but of Socrates' interlocutors Glaucon and Adeimantus. The remainder of the chapter discusses the brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus and Socrates' engagement with them. An overview of the subsequent chapters is also presented.

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The modest aim of this book is to show that Plato's Republic contains two distinct and irreconcilable portrayals of the philosopher.1 That this is so is something of which I am deeply confident. I am less sure, however, of why this is so: it is one thing to read a text, quite another to read the mind of its author.

As I understand Plato's dialogues, particularly those in which there is animated interaction between Socrates and his interlocutors, their aim is to put the philosophic life on display. The characters in them, though fictionalized, are real enough: there were—are—such types. And within their respective types, the characters are each unique—as real people are. Socrates tailors his therapeutic method to the needs of his varied interlocutors, making the necessary concessions to their moral and intellectual limitations.

By presenting images of philosophy in action, Plato's dialogues speak to us, his readers. One might say that they contain two messages: one, Socrates'; the other, Plato's. Socrates' message is in the first instance for his interlocutors—not for us. It is driven by his interlocutors' moral character and by the quirks of their personalities, by their good intentions and bad, by their interests, by their desires, by the level of their understanding, and by their willingness or reluctance to inquire further. But Plato's message is for us; he invariably finds a way to remind us—by inserting some glaring peculiarity in the text3—that we are not Socrates' interlocutors but his. It is, after all, oddities that give pause and spur thinking: in the Phaedo (100e-101c), what is said to rattle complacency are such puzzles as how the taller man and the shorter are taller and shorter by the very same thing ("by a head"), or how the taller man is taller by something small (a head), or how both addition and division can be the cause of two; in the Republic (7.523a-525a), what is said to "summon or awaken the activity of intellect" are such questions as how a finger can be simultaneously large and small, hard and soft. Inconsistencies in a Platonic dialogue are therefore not to be papered over and domesticated, but acknowledged and confronted. Plato counts on his readers to disentangle Socrates' exchange with his interlocutors from his own address to us. Although there is surely overlap between the two, there is never complete identity. We are to draw the lesson Plato intends for us by watching the interplay between Socrates and his interlocutors.

Plato's presentation in the Republic of two incompatible portraits of the philosopher is a case in point. Plato positions his readers to detect the deficiencies in the second philosopher by revealing—in advance—a philosopher of a different stripe. If the first philosopher can reasonably be thought to represent a Platonic ideal, then the second, a philosopher radically different from the first, cannot. If the second philosopher is thus not only second but second-rate, it is because he reflects the character and taste not of Socrates or Plato but of Socrates' interlocutors Glaucon and Adeimantus…

An overview of the subsequent chapters

Two Cities and Two Kinds of Philosopher-Ruler

In Books 2–5 Socrates constructs for Glaucon (and, to a lesser extent, for Adeimantus) a city that he will later call "the beautiful city" (kallipolis—7.527c). Callipolis is not Plato's or Socrates' ideal city but is intended to be Glaucon's. Though not the city that Glaucon would have created on his own, it nevertheless reflects his preferences even as it modifies them. Callipolis is a city marked by repression, social stratification, and discipline—in accordance with Glaucon's ideals; but Socrates at 6.503b places philosophers at its helm. These philosophers, designed specifically for Callipolis, come to philosophy by coercion and are made to rule against their will. Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to them—Chapter 2 to their nature and education, Chapter 3 to their rule. They are shown to be not philosophic but appetitive by nature, intellectually gifted—and so able to scale the heights of wisdom if forced to—and "not unwilling" (519d, 520d-e) to rule when persuaded that ruling is their best option. Rather than pursue as their first concern the improvement of the moral condition of their subjects, however, they seek to secure the city's efficiency or "happiness" by exiling from it all those older than ten. These philosophers represent, on the one hand, Socrates' attempt to find for

philosophy a place in Glaucon's city and, on the other, his concession to the reality that philosophy as it truly is has no place in Callipolis.

But there is another city, a better city, which, although it appears only briefly (500d-502c), nevertheless offers a distinct alternative to Callipolis. It arises by chance rather than by coercion, and by chance, too, it is governed by philosophers—real philosophers. In Chapter 1, I identify, from among the four philosophic types found in Rep. 6 (only two of which are actually called philosophers), the genuine philosopher, the philosopher by nature. This philosopher, first introduced in Book 5's "third wave" (473c-d), is distinguished by possessing, in addition to his intellectual prowess and his passionate love of wisdom, a full complement of moral and personal qualities. Should this philosopher come by chance to rule, his principal aim would be to perfect the city's laws and the soul of each and every citizen (501a-c). It is surely this philosopher whom Plato hopes his readers will admire, one whose love for the transcendent motivates him to promote the moral excellence of other human beings. He provides a welcome contrast to the philosopher who would spend his time contemplating the intelligible realm of being, but would be so profoundly indifferent to other people that he would expend no effort on improving their character (519c-d).

A Third Paradigm?

The one philosopher the Republic is virtually silent about is Socrates. Although he is briefly associated with Book 6's philosophers by nature (496c)—for the sake of simplicity, I call the philosophers whose description begins at 5.473c and runs until 6.502c "Book 6's philosophers"—he cannot simply be one of them. Whereas these philosophers "stand aside under a little wall" (496d)—that is, withdraw from the city to keep their souls pure (496d-e)—when they are surrounded by political corruption and have no "ally" with whom to come to the aid of justice (496d), Socrates, as we know from the Apology (23b, 31a-c, 36b, 38a), under the very same conditions, makes a point of frequenting public spaces and talking to anyone he encounters. If the philosophers of Book 6 are better than those of Book 7—I call the philosophers whose description begins at 6.502c and runs through Book 7 "Book 7's philosophers"—but Socrates is better still, would he not constitute a third paradigm that is superior to both? In Chapter 4 I argue that Socrates not only surpasses the appetitive men coerced into philosophy in Callipolis but rises, too, above the natural philosophers of the city of chance. His justice reaches the very highest level, that of piety, a virtue as conspicuously absent from Rep. 4's list of four cardinal virtues as Socrates is from the four philosophic types specified in Rep. 6. The kind of justice Socrates embodies goes beyond not harming others (the level of justice Book 7's philosophers reach); it even goes beyond helping others when conditions are right (the level attained by the philosophers of Book 6). Socrates fosters justice in others even at his own peril, and so is indeed in a class by himself. He thus represents a third paradigm—but one that lies outside the confines of the Republic: none of the philosophers described in the Republic can meet his standard.

Justice

In Chapter 5 I show how Socrates skillfully reduces justice to moderation, the healthy psychic state that Glaucon finds so attractive. It is left to Plato's readers, to those who watch this subterfuge unfold, to raise the question, If the healthy and harmonious condition of the soul is moderation, what is justice? Since Socrates repeatedly insists that justice is a fourth virtue distinct from the other three, one that even "rivals" them (433d), it is up to us, Plato's readers, to recognize that it is justice's unselfishness, the fact that it is concerned for others, that makes it the primary virtue, the "power" that anchors all the others, both producing and preserving them (4.433b-c). It may be salutary for Glaucon and Adeimantus to confuse justice with moderation, but it is not good for us. We must see that there is beauty—nobility—in being concerned for others. It is indeed when one

strives to protect the interests of others, and in the best case even to further everyone's most important interest, personal virtue, that one lives well and fares well: eu prattōmen (10.621d). <>

Socrates Dissatisfied: An Analysis of Plato's Crito by Roslyn Weiss [Oxford University Press, 9780195116847]

In **Socrates Dissatisfied**, Weiss argues against the prevailing view that the Laws are Socrates' spokesmen. She reveals and explores many indications that Socrates and the Laws are, both in style and substance, adversaries: whereas the Laws are rhetoricians who defend the absolute authority of the Laws, Socrates is a dialectician who defends--in the *Crito* no less than in the *Apology*--the overriding claim of each individual's own reason when assiduously applied to questions of justice. It is only for the sake of an unphilosophical Crito, Weiss suggests, that Socrates invents the speech of the Laws; he resorts to rhetoric in a desperate attempt to save Crito's soul even as Crito sought to save his body. Indeed, as Weiss shows, Socrates' own philosophical reasons for remaining in prison rather than escaping as Crito wishes are clearly and fully articulated *before* the speech of the Laws begins. In this book, Roslyn Weiss contends that, contrary to prevailing notions, Plato's *Crito* does not show an allegiance between Socrates and the state that condemned him. Denying that the speech of the Laws represents the views of Socrates, Weiss deftly brings to light numerous indications that Socrates provides to the attentive reader that he and the Laws are not partners but antagonists in the argument and that he is singularly unimpressed by the case against escaping prison presented by the Laws. Weiss's greatest innovation is her contention that the Laws are very much like the judges who preside at Socrates' trail--interested not in justice and truth but in being shown deference and submission. If Weiss's argument is correct, then the standard conception of the history of political thought is in error--political philosophy begins not with the primacy of the state over the citizen but with the affirmation of the individual's duty to act in accordance with his own careful determination of what justice demands.

The personified Laws in the Crito who make the case for Socrates' remaining in prison and accepting his execution rather than fleeing at the urging of his friend Crito, speak not, as is generally thought, for Socrates, but represent instead the city of Athens and its laws. The Laws are, indeed, in style and substance, Socrates' adversaries: whereas Socrates defends dialectically the claim of the individual to exercise and follow his own reason, the Laws defend rhetorically the absolute authority of law. Socrates has his own reasons for remaining in prison—escape would involve him and his friends in unsavory and unworthy activities and would violate Socrates' publicly announced agreement to "abide by" his penalty (Ap. 39b)—but Crito cannot accept reasons of this kind. Caring most about helping his friend and not allowing his friends' enemies to win, Crito flouts the law in his willingness to engage in bribery and stealth. Recognizing the utterly unphilosophical nature of his friend, Socrates works to repay Crito's friendship by bringing him up to the level of law-abidingness, hardly the highest level of morality but at least not the very lowest. The speech of the Laws that Socrates fashions to this end has the same effect on Socrates as Corybantic rites do on those exposed to them; it does not, however, provide a rationally convincing argument.

Review

"The classical, philosophical, and literary reader will find here a refreshing (and relatively new) approach to a Platonic work, reading the dialogue as a dialogue, with close attention to the text in all its aspects. Pupils and students should be encouraged to study this book as an example of a careful

and sensitive reading of an ancient work. One can only wish for more of its kind." —*The Classical Outlook*

"*Socrates Dissatisfied* resolves a multitude of particular difficulties and poses important objections to competing interpretations of the *Crito* that have long ruled the roost. Weiss offers an especially original analysis of the argument Socrates makes as to why he should not attempt to escape from jail and avoid the death penalty. Her methodological approach to the dialogue is to take Socratic rhetoric and the dialogue form seriously, by acknowledging how the inequality between Socrates and Crito compels Socrates to use means other than straightforward logical argument in order to persuade his interlocutor. *Socrates Dissatisfied* is exemplary in its clarity of exposition and finely-discriminated argument. No Plato scholar can afford to ignore its challenge." —John Ferrari, *University of California, Berkeley*

"Weiss's book makes a landmark contribution to Socratic studies *qua* Platonic studies." —*Times Literary Supplement*

"Weiss displays a superb knowledge of the enormous secondary literature on the *Crito*, and she has a keen ability to pick out and exploit the weak spots in the positions staked out by her opponents. . . . the book is filled with clever and complicated arguments that send the reader time and again back to the text. It forces the reader to rethink what had been settled, and for that alone the reader will be in the author's debt." —*Ancient Philosophy*

"This is the first book-length argument of its kind and it supersedes all previous attempts in its persuasiveness and its thorough and detailed treatment: sensitive not only to the dialogue's Greek and argumentative structure, but also to its literary/characterological nuances, it establishes an important scholarly outpost on the interpretation of the *Crito* . . . written in a remarkably engaging, clean and effective style . . . provocative and impressive . . . It is sure to be a guidepost for all future investigations of the *Crito*. —*Journal of the History of Philosophy*

A Dissatisfied Socrates

Socrates' first allegiance is to the dictates of his own reason. The reason he refuses to escape his unjust conviction and punishment is that he believes that to do so would violate his tried and true long-held moral principles. Socrates is no anarchist, but he will neither obey the law nor be its victim when it conflicts with the requirements and entitlements of morality as he sees them. He will suffer injustice only when the sole alternative to suffering it is to commit it. Socrates' reasons for accepting the penalty of death are reasons of justice; they are thus distinct from those presented by the personified Laws.

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Is Socrates a man whose first allegiance is to his city and its laws? Is he citizen first and man second? Does he refuse to escape his unjust conviction and punishment because he regards himself as morally bound to obey whatever verdicts and commands the city of Athens issues?

An affirmative answer to these questions would be unthinkable were it not for the views propounded in the speech of the Laws in the latter part of the Crito. Yet the unthinkable becomes thinkable if one takes those views, as many scholars do, to reflect Socrates' own beliefs. In this book I contend that Socrates' first allegiance is to justice and philosophy; he is man first and citizen second; and he refuses to escape because he believes that escape would violate the moral principles to which he has always adhered. The views espoused by the Laws are the views of the Laws—not of Socrates; indeed, the moral perspective reflected in the Laws' arguments stands in stark opposition to the Socratic point of view.

My purpose in **SOCRATES DISSATISFIED** is to demonstrate that the Socrates who inhabits the Crito—no less than the Socrates who inhabits the Apology—is a radically independent moral agent: his moral choices are decided solely by his own reasoned calculations with respect to justice. He will not compromise his dignity; he will be no one's—not even the city's—slave; whether he obeys or disobeys authority will turn on what he, on each occasion, holds to be best—most just and noble. As Socrates says of himself: "I, not only now but always, am such as to obey nothing else of what is my own than that logos which appears best to me upon reasoning" (Cr. 46b4–6). Only in this way can a man be a man and not a slave.

If Socrates in the early part of the Crito is a man who obeys only the principles that result from his own reasoning and recommends the same course to others, then the personified Laws in the latter part of the Crito, who would have men obey absolutely the city and its laws, cannot represent Socrates. These Laws, as Socrates notes, speak as orators do on behalf of the laws of the city of Athens, defending the authoritativeness of all the city's judgments and commands. Yet, if the speech of the Laws does not reflect the Socratic point of view, why, one must wonder, does Socrates invent it?

The speech of the Laws is created for Crito's benefit. It represents Socrates' last hope, now that he is at the end of his life and at his wits' end, of benefiting his friend Crito by improving his soul. Socrates has tried through philosophical argument to convince Crito of the insignificance of the opinion of the many, to arouse in him an appreciation for goods of the soul—that is, for nobility and justice—to encourage him to discard his concerns about money, reputation, and children, concerns "of the many," and to stop him from conceiving of justice in relation to friends and enemies. But Socrates fails. He fails utterly. Crito remains fixed in his belief that what is important is to save Socrates' life and thereby preserve his own reputation; that what is just is to foil the designs of Socrates' enemies; and that what counts is the opinion of the many, those who can do one "the

greatest evils." Crito has known Socrates intimately for a very long time, for a whole lifetime. Yet he neither holds in esteem nor even comprehends Socrates' moral commitments. All he can finally say is: "I have no answer to what you ask, Socrates. For I do not understand" (Cr. 50a4–5).

The speech of the Laws, then, grows out of the increasing frustration that Socrates experiences as Crito remains unresponsive to his arguments. If Crito's moral and intellectual loyalties render philosophical investigation with him futile, how can Socrates help his friend? A despairing Socrates, no longer harboring even the faintest hope that his own preferred method of inquiry will succeed with Crito, steps aside and entrusts the discussion to someone else, to the personified Laws. It is up to them now to persuade Crito that escape would be wrong—because Socrates himself could not. But the Laws succeed where Socrates fails because the Laws offer arguments that Socrates could never offer.

Readers of the Crito are inclined to assume that the reasons the Laws offer against escape are Socrates' reasons. In this book I show, however, that the Laws' reasons for opposing Socrates' escape are antithetical to Socrates' reasons in both form and substance. They reflect a moral perspective that is at its core unsocratic. The arguments that the Laws present are arguments that Crito's moral outlook can accommodate, arguments that do not demand of Crito the kind of radical overhaul of his personal moral outlook that Socrates' arguments demand. Whereas Crito and the Laws can talk to each other, Socrates remains an enigma to them both.

The rewards of resisting the assumption that the Laws' moral point of view coincides with Socrates' are significant. If the Laws' view is not Socratic, then (1) the Socrates of the Crito can be reinstated as a man of radical independence, the man he was in the Apology, (2) there is no need to reconcile the clearly authoritarian character of the Laws' speech with the Socratic view that considerations of justice must override the law, (3) there is no longer any good reason to construe the Laws' rhetorical explosion as a model of philosophical acuity, and (4) the Laws can now function as defenders of the city, leaving Socrates to champion instead the causes of justice and philosophy.

A minority of interpreters of the Crito have resisted the impulse to assume that the Laws are—in whole or in large part—spokesmen for Socrates: Strauss, Anastaplo, Brown, Young, Hyland, Miller, and White, among others.5 But their view is summarily dismissed by most other scholars. Woozley, DeFilippo, and Stephens, for example, mention this alternative reading and reject it out of hand. Many more do not mention it at all. In this book I lend my support to the defenders of the minority view.

In a number of ways, however, this book goes beyond the existing defenses of that view. First, the book discovers in the early part of the dialogue—that is, before the Laws even make their appearance—a complete and self-contained statement of Socrates' philosophical argument against escape, an argument that turns on the old, familiar Socratic principles rather than on the newfangled notions eventually introduced by the Laws. Second, it reveals the utter vulgarity of the Laws by showing that the term "persuade" as the Laws use it in their injunction to "persuade or obey" is but a euphemism for the kind of shameless supplication that the Laws, no less than the judges at Socrates' trial, demand of those who have fallen from favor. Third, it finds previously unnoticed or at any rate uncited indications in the text of the Crito itself of Socrates' disenchantment with both the style and the content of the Laws' discourse and of the Laws' deviation from Socratic views. Fourth, the book stakes out an unusual position on Socrates' relationship to law: it argues that although Socrates is no anarchist, he recognizes no obligation on the part of the citizen either to commit or to suffer injustice at the behest of his polis,8 favoring compliance with a government's command to

suffer injustice only when the alternative to suffering it is to commit it. Finally, the book suggests fresh translations of several key passages: Cr. 50c9–d1; Cr. 51c1; Cr. 51e4–52a3; Cr. 54d5–6.

SOCRATES DISSATISFIED is structured as follows. Chapter 2 establishes Socrates as an independent and autonomous moral agent, utterly devoted to the pursuit of justice and truth. Chapter 3 reveals the moral chasm that divides Crito from Socrates: although Crito loves Socrates and means well, his moral views are those of the many and the "help" he offers is not of the sort that Socrates can welcome. Chapter 4 shows that the views of Socrates in the early part of the Crito are completely in accord with those of Socrates in the Apology and that Socrates' own philosophical argument against escape relies entirely upon these familiar views. Chapter 5 calls attention to Socrates' broad hint that the arguments about to be expressed by the Laws are a rhetorical, not a philosophical, defense of a view with which Socrates disagrees—that is, of the view that all the city's decrees right or wrong are valid and binding. Chapter 6 exposes the unabashed authoritarianism that pervades the Laws' arguments and reveals the logical lapses that those arguments contain. Chapter 7 argues that Socrates' choice of the Corybantic metaphor to characterize the effect upon him of the Laws' arguments indicates his lack of regard for them. It is not until Chapter 8 that the question of why Socrates has the Laws present arguments that are flawed, arguments with which he himself disagrees and of which he strongly disapproves, is addressed. Chapter 8 shows how the Laws, by speaking Crito's language—that is, by accommodating themselves to his conventional beliefs and responding to his conventional concerns—are able to accomplish what Socrates, despite his best elenctic efforts, could not: they boost Crito to a higher rung on the moral ladder. Chapter 9 reaffirms the radical independence of Socrates, who will never assume the slavish posture of obsequious reverence, deference, and submission that the Laws both crave and require.

It is a commonplace in political philosophy to point to the Crito as the locus of the first developed articulation of the view that citizens owe complete or near complete obedience to their state. Moreover, insofar as the Crito is taken to be the work that marks the start of political theory, it is generally assumed that political theory itself begins with the affirmation of the primacy of the state over the individual. If the thesis of this book is correct, however, this deeply entrenched assumption is undermined, as is the traditional conception of the history of political thought for which it provides the foundation. For this book argues (1) that Socrates affirms in the Crito the uncompromised independence and authority of the rule of reason—that is, of the rule of justice as determined by individual persons through the exercise of their own best thinking; (2) that it is the Laws and not Socrates who set the state above the individual; and (3) that Socrates invents and presents the Laws and their speech only as a very last resort and only for the sake of people unwilling or unable to engage in and benefit from philosophical inquiry—people like Crito. <>

STUDIES IN EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY: A COLLECTION OF PAPERS AND ONE REVIEW *by* Jaap Mansfeld [Philosophia Antigua, Brill, 9789004382053]

The collection of nineteen articles in Jaap Mansfeld's **STUDIES IN EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY: A COLLECTION OF PAPERS AND ONE REVIEW** span the period from Anaximander to Socrates. Solutions to problems of interpretation are offered through a scrutiny of the sources, and also of the traditions of presentation and reception found in antiquity. Excursions in the history of scholarship help to diagnose discussions of which the *primum movens* may have been forgotten.

General questions are treated, for instance the phenomenon of detheologization in doxographical texts, while problems relating to individual philosophers are also discussed. For example, the history of Anaximander's cosmos, the status of Parmenides' human world, and the reliability of what we know about the soul of Anaximenes, and of what Philoponus tells us about the behaviour of Democritus' atoms.

This volume of studies contains a selection of for the most part recent papers dealing with early Greek thought. They are supplemented by a recent review article. I have tried to offer solutions to some of the interpretative problems that I have encountered, by looking at the ancient sources first, and by taking ancient traditions of presentation, interpretation, and reception into account. Excursions in the history of scholarship, or the study of modern traditions of reception and presentation, which come second, are not only interesting per se, but may also help to diagnose an interpretative problem of which the *primum movens* has been forgotten. These approaches are complementary.

The following are brief summaries of the contents of the selected papers:

Chapter 1, *Detheologization. Aëtian Chapters and Their Peripatetic Background,* is concerned with the much reduced presence of the ancient *theologoi* and of doxai concerned with the divine, in the doxographical tradition best represented by the Aëtian *Placita,* even though this approach already begins in Aristotle himself. The ancient poets still listed in several of Aristotle's dialectical overviews, and the early theologies, both Greek and Oriental, listed by Eudemus have almost entirely been eliminated later. This state of affairs provides a noteworthy contrast with modern and contemporary attempts to interpret some of the early thinkers from the point of view of the history of religion, examples of which are given in Chapters 3 and 19.

The doxographical tradition is a body of doctrine with pronounced 'secular' features. I shall look at individual Aëtian chapters where the secularization is comparable with that in Aristotle (or

Theophrastus), or has gone even further. The chapters chosen for this exercise can be linked with passages in Aristotle dealing with the same themes. What happened is that the ancient poets, or theologoi, listed in several of Aristotle's dialectical overviews have almost entirely been eliminated. Apart from a few isolated passages Aëtius confines discussion of the divine to his chapters on principles and theology. I shall also look briefly at the abstracts in Damascius from Eudemus' discussion of early theologies, both Greek and Oriental, and compare them with a passage in Aristotle and a chapter of the Placita.

Chapter 2, *Insight by Hindsight. Intentional Unclarity in Presocratic Proems,* deals with a literary issue. The enigmatic surveys of the contents of a poem or treatise in its proem can only be understood fully when the work as a whole has been read and understood. To attract the hearer's or reader's attention the proems of Parmenides' Poem, Heraclitus' logos, and Empedocles' On Nature announce the purpose of these works in an obscure way. What is meant only becomes clear when one has studied the whole.

Chapter 3, *Bothering the Infinite: Anaximander in the Nineteenth Century and Beyond,* is an excursion in the history of the interpretation of Anaximander's famous 'fragment'. Interpretations are often enough based in part on notions deriving not from the source, or passage, that is studied, but from elsewhere. In order to interpret the difficult fragment of an early Greek philosopher, for instance, one has to paraphrase, or even partly to replace, its obfuscating narrative with another narrative that is easier to understand. Unavoidably such a secondary narrative, no matter how coherent, will be an aggregate. The dramatic and religiously inspired reading concerned with crimes against the Infinite and their punishment, dominant in the nineteenth century, was gradually replaced by a secular interpretation concerned with the rule of law in a stable universe. The earlier view, however, never vanished entirely.

The view, once generally accepted, that Anaximander's fragment is about existence as a crime or as the punishment for a crime, is dependent on the defective text of the Aldine edition of 1526 of Simplicius' Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, which lacks the crucial word ἀλλήλοις, 'to each other'. Perhaps surprisingly, Brandis' discovery in 1835 of the correct manuscript reading, which should have entailed a less gruesome interpretation, for a long time failed to do so. Even Diels' critical edition of 1882 of the Simplicius text did not advance matters, and Diels himself till the end of his life stuck to the earlier interpretation. A paradigm shift towards the view that the fragment deals with cosmic justice and an everlasting cosmic equilibrium evolved only gradually, finding its first clear expression as late as the beginning of the 20th century. This became the dominant interpretation, though its predecessor never vanished completely, and despite the fact that this cosmic equilibrium is not so easily squared with the testimonia concerned with the past and future of Anaximander's cosmos.

Chapter 4, *Anaximander's Fragment: Another Attempt.* Rejecting both the alternatives discussed in Chapter 3, I argue for the interpretation of Anaximander's world as an unstable, dissipative, not everlastingly balanced system. The inconsistency found by scholars in Theophrastus' /Simplicius' text disappears when it is seen that the elemental forces of nature do not change into each other. They are in the Infinite in time as well as in space. To some extent preference is given to Aristotle's evidence over the doxographical vulgate habitually derived from Theophrastus, though the Theophrastean passage containing the Verbatim quotation remains the primary witness.

Chapter 5, *Anaximenes' Soul.* The so-called fragment of Anaximenes at Aetius *Placita* 1.3 is an instantiation of the widespread technique of updating by means of interpretation. The explicit argument from analogy between the human soul and the guiding principle of the cosmos cannot be

early. It points at a Stoic background, as does the use of *pneuma* as equivalent for the early term *aër* ('air'). The refutation of Anaximenes' thesis uses an Aristotelian argument that has been made to fit a Stoicized doctrine.

Chapter 6, *Minima Parmenidea. Exegetical Notes on 28B1.22-23a, B2.1-5, B6.3, and B8.38 41 DK.* A philological discussion of Vexed and Vexing problems of interpretation, namely of the meaning of the handshake in Bi, of the subject of 'Is' in B2, of the problem of (he third way in B6, and of the reference of 'changing place and colour' in B8.

Chapter 7, *Parmenides from Right to Left.* The second part of the great Poem, whatever its relation to the first part may be thought to be, is meant as a serious account of the world and the human being from a physical point of View. Parmenides devotes considerable attention to human physiology in an entirely original way, by appealing to the behaviour and effects of his two physical elements when explaining subjects such as sex differentiation in the womb, aspects of heredity, and sleep and old age. Unlike his general cosmology and account of the origin of mankind, this *topos*, or part of philosophy, is not anticipated in his predecessors. What follows is that the second part of the Poem, whatever its relation to the first part may be believed to be, is meant as a serious account of the world and man from a physicist point of view.

Chapter 8, *Parmenides on Sense Perception in Theophrastus and Elsewhere.* Theophrastus' account at *De sensibus* 3–4 shows (1) that he did not find evidence for a detailed theory of sense perception in Parmenides and (2) that he did not include our fr. 28B7 in his overview. The tradition followed by Sextus Empiricus and Diogenes Laertius concluded from 28B7 that Parmenides rejected the evidence of the senses in favour of that of reason (*logos*). But *logos*in Parmenides means 'argument', and *glôssa* is not the organ of taste but of speech. If Theophrastus had interpreted the evidence of 28B7 in the manner of Sextus and Diogenes he would have been obliged to discuss Parmenides' triad of purported senses between Plato's two and Empedocles' five.

Chapter 9, *Heraclitus on Soul and Super-SouL With an Afterthought on the Afterlife.* A discussion of the reception in Antiquity of Heraclitus' views on the human soul in its cosmic context. These views were updated by later thinkers, and their extensive evidence on the matter is scrutinized in detail. A World-Soul and Various forms of immortality came to be attributed to his doctrine, while soul stuff was said to be inhaled from the environment. An appendix considers the quite general opinion that Heraclitus posited some sort of afterlife for human souls. It is argued that fragments held to support this interpretation are better construed in a different way.

This chapter is about the reception of Heraclitus' views on the human soul in its cosmic context. Those views were updated by later thinkers, and their extensive evidence on the matter is scrutinized in detail. A World Soul and various forms of immortality came to be attributed, while soul stuff was said to be inhaled from the environment. An appendix considers the quite general opinion that Heraclitus posited some sort of afterlife for human souls. It is argued that fragments held to support this interpretation are better otherwise construed.

Chapter 10, *Alcmaeon and Plato on Soul.* The doctrine of soul as 'self-moving' is an original position of Plato and has not been derived from Alcmaeon, as has been generally supposed. The rather common view that Alcmaeon influenced Plato's doctrine of the soul's self-motion is false. In the doxography self-motion has spread from Xenocrates and Plato to their predecessors Thales, Alcmaeon and Pythagoras.

Chapter 11, *The Body Politic: Attics on Alcmaeon on* Isonomia *and* Monarchia. The occurrence of political terms in the context of a medical doctrine, attributed in a sentence of the doxographer

Aëtius to Alcmaeon, who probably is to be dated to around 44o BCE, is an instance of the broader application of political terms. The use of these metaphors has generally been explained as the result of direct influence upon Alcmaeon's thought of the terminology connected with the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes at Athens, in 508/7 BC, and/or his reception of the notion of cosmic equilibrium attributed to Anaximander. But this analogy is false: humans are mortal and Anaximander's cosmic balance is not everlasting, see Chapter 4 above. I submit that the Aëtian metaphors are a reflection of the reception of the famous discussion regarding the best political constitution in the historian Herodotus.

Chapter 12, *Aristotle on Anaxagoras in Relation to Empedocles in* Metaphysics Comparison of Aristotle's dating of Empedocles and Anaxagoras in *Metaphysics*A ch. 3, and of his systematic order of treatment of these two philosophers in *Met.* A ch. 8, with his dating and treatment of Anaximenes, Anaxagoras and Democritus in the discussion of earthquakes at *Meteorologica* 2.7 shows that ὕστερος in *Met.* A.3 984a13 means 'more advanced'. This is because Anaxagoras, when treated *more Aristotelico*, turns out to be closer to Plato than Empedocles. Therefore he may be discussed after Empedocles in *Met.* A ch. 8, though as to chronology he is earlier.

Chapter 13, *»Das verteufelte Lastschiff« Philolaus 44B12 DK.* A philological Miszelle: for the corrupted passage. For the corrupt ὃ τᾶς σφαίρας ὁλκὰς read ⟨τ⟩ὸ τᾶς σφαίρας ὅλ{κ}ας.

Chapter 14, D*emocriins on Poetry. Fragments 68B18 and B27 DK.* Another philological *Miszelle.* Democritus *68B18.* as cited by Clement of Alexandria, is a generalized reformulation or paraphrase of B21 DK, known from its quotation by Dio Chrysostomus at the beginning of hid On Homer.

Chapter 15, *Out of Touch: Philoponus as a Source for Democritus.* Passages from Philoponus' commentaries are insufficient evidence to support the assumption that according to Democritus the atoms never touch each other. The testimonia conveniently printed in our fragment collections or otherwise available should not be put on the same level, as if they had the same quality and were equally reliable. Philoponus is an unsafe witness.

The evidence that according to Democritus atoms cannot touch each other or come into contact is found in Philoponus' Commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics* and *On Generation and Corruption*. But he did not and presumably could not access Democritus' works, and depending on his exegetical context reports that the atoms touch each other as well as that they do not touch each other. This information offers insufficient grounds for the belief that according to Democritus atoms never touched each other.

Chapter 16, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Discussion of a New Handbook.* Discussion of the Various approaches to the interpretation and presentation of Presocratic thought in the recent *Frühgriechische Philosophic* Volumes of the Ueberweg *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophic.* The information provided is excellent and the level of discussion high. But original attempts at interpretation should perhaps be toned down a little in a work that claims to present, and mostly succeeds, in presenting the *status quaestionis* of the research in its field. The work does not include the Sophists, which are dealt with in another Ueberweg volume.

Chapter 17, *Protagoras on Epistemological Obstacles and Persons.* Reading Protagoras' *homo mensura* rule in the light of his statement regarding knowledge of the gods shows that it is not restricted to the here and now, or to sense perception as is often believed, but pertains to personal experience and the development of the human person in interaction with others and with the world.

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Chapter 18, *Aristotle on Socrates' Contributions to Philosophy*. More information about the history of dialectic and logic beyond what he wrote in the logical treatises is found in Aristotle's physical and ethical treatises, and also in the *Metaphysics*. The potted *placita* at the beginning of the *Magna Moralia,* offering an overview of the development of the definition of Virtue, are unique in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* and not by Aristotle himself. They are based on what is found dispersed elsewhere in the *Corpus*.

Chapter 19, *Hermann Diels (1848-1922)*. Diels put the study of the Presocratics on a new footing, both by reconstructing the tradition of their transmission and by his editions of their remains. These works still to a large extent dominate the scene today. Though first and foremost an editor of texts, Diels also held Views concerned with the relation between religious and rational thought that influenced his interpretation. I attempt to follow (not slavishly) his career as a student of the Presocratics, though to do justice to the richness and importance of his contributions one would at least need a full-length monograph. Contents: 1, Four Reviews; 2, Physicorum historic; 3, Editing Fragments; 4, The *Parmenides* and the *Herakleitos:* Mysticism, Rationalism, Pessimism; 5, Anaximander the Mystical Rationalist; 6, Empedocles, from Reason to Religion; 7, Changing the Chapter Sequence.

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The majority of these papers have been set anew according to the Brill style sheet. For permission to reprint them I am most grateful to the publishers of the Various Volumes and journals in which they originally appeared. I have cited these original publications in the Acknowledgements. Warm thanks are due to the members of the Board of Philosophia Antigua and to Jennifer Pavelko and Meghan Connolly of Brill for encouragement and support, and in particular to David Runia for help and encouragement over the years. The Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies of Utrecht University must be thanked for logistical and other support provided during my emeritude. Last but not least, my former assistants Ivo Geradts and Johannes Rustenburg of TAT Zetwerk, Typographica Academica Traiectina, whose cutting-edge expertise has proved indispensable in typesetting the Volumes of the *Aëtiana,* are to be thanked again for scanning an early article and for reorganizing my typescripts. References have now been listed at the end of those papers which originally included them in the footnotes. Upgrading has been minimal. Small errors and infelicities have been corrected when noticed. The overlap between Chapters 3 and 19 has been reduced by abridgement of Section 5 of Chapter 19, but enough has been left to allow for independent perusal of either chapter. The textual appendix of Chapter 3, a doublet of that of Chapter 4, has been dropped in favor of the latter. <>

PLOTINUS ON LOVE: AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS METAPHYSICS THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF EROS *by* Alberto Bertozzi [Philosophia Antigua, Brill, 9789004441002]

Plotinus' metaphysics is often portrayed as comprising two movements: the derivation of all reality from a single source, the One, and the return of the individual soul to it. Alberto Bertozzi argues that love is the origin, culmination, and regulative force of this double movement. The One is both the self-loving source of the derivation and articulation of all reality in levels of unity and love and the ultimate goal of the longing of the soul, whose return to its source is a gradual transformation of the love it originally received from the One. Touching on virtually all major concepts of Plotinus' philosophy, **PLOTINUS ON LOVE: AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS METAPHYSICS THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF EROS** is at once an investigation of a lesser-studied Plotinian theme and an introduction to his metaphysics.

One of the most obvious difficulties in dealing with Virtually every aspect of Plotinus' thought is to find a point of entry in his philosophical universe which would not presuppose knowledge of the rest of that universe. Part of the problem is owing to the fact that Plotinus' writings, unlike Proclus' *Elements of Theology,* for example, do not attempt to reproduce a system, but rather discuss particular problems whose solutions are intelligible on the basis of a set of internally coherent principles which, though never made explicit *more geometrico* by Plotinus himself, constitute the indispensable background of those discussions. Thus, in trying to make this background as explicit as possible, Plotinus scholars provide us with relatively systematic accounts of his thought that one will hardly ever encounter in the *Enneads* themselves. Several of these accounts revolve around the ideas of derivation or procession of all reality from a single source—the One—and of ascent or return to it.

The contents of the work lying before you follow in the wake of this expository and systematizing method or tradition.[2] What is peculiar to the present account is that it unfolds from the standpoint of eros or love. In other words, the interpretive systematization of the Plotinian universe will have love as its guiding concept. This is not to say that love is the *only* concept by which a systematic reconstruction or a survey of Plotinus' metaphysics is possible, but simply that it is *one* such concept among what are perhaps some more familiar possibilities, such as unity, being, participation, and presumably others. In short, I will attempt to introduce and clarify some of the fundamental aspects of Plotinus' philosophy in terms of love, both with regard to the derivation or procession of all

reality from one single principle, the One, and for the return or ascent of the individual soul to the same principle.

I can think of two main reasons for a study on the notion of love in the philosophy of Plotinus, assuming for the moment that such a study is warranted by what can be found in the *Enneads* themselves. The first reason is the partial lack of a reconstruction of his metaphysics through the concept of love. The literature on love in Plotinus' thought which has come to my attention can be divided in two groups. First, we have works that focus on Plotinus' treatise *On eros (Enneads* III.5 [50]), specifically: two book-length commentaries, respectively by A. M. Wolters and by P. Hadot; one chapter in a book on Plotinus by M. de Gandillac and one in a doctoral thesis on love in Plotinus, Proclus, and Dionysius by D. A. Vasilakis; an article by A. Smith. While I will deal with *Enneads III*.5 [50] in Chapter 3, this study is not a thorough analysis of the treatise on *eros,* but an attempt to demonstrate the systematic significance of love for Plotinus' philosophy from the entirety of his corpus. The second group of works on love in Plotinus takes us beyond the treatise on love, *Enneads* III.5 [50] , and includes: one substantial chapter in a study on love and the soul in Plato, Plotinus, and Origen by J. M. Rist; two thematic monographs, respectively by J. Lacrosse *(L'amour chez Plotin. Eros henologique, ergs noétique, eros psychique)* and A. Pigler *(Plotin, une metaphysique de l'amour. L'amour comme structure du monde intelligible).* Lacrosse focuses mainly on the types of *eros* that are proper to each hypostasis, while Pigler chiefly analyzes the role of love in the process of derivation of all reality from a single source, the One. In this study I make use of their works, but I also go beyond them in at least one important respect, namely: I show not only the difference of *eros* in each hypostasis (Lacrosse) and its importance for understanding the process of derivation of all reality from the One (Pigler), but also its systematic relevance for the process of ascent of the individual soul to the One.

The second reason attesting to the need of a study on the concept of love in Plotinus is what I take to be the systematic significance of love for an understanding of his philosophy. Put differently, I think that Plotinus' metaphysics, both in its fundamental concepts and as a whole, can be explained in terms of love. My hope is that this study will contribute to our understanding of Plotinus by showing that what in his philosophy may appear as a marginal concept or a Platonic residue is actually one of its essential and pervasive features. More specifically, I will try to show that the notion of *eros* illustrates the systematic character of Plotinus' thought by employing it as a conceptual passkey that allows the reader of the *Enneads* to access Virtually all aspects of his metaphysics.

My main claim is not that Plotinus' understanding of love what we might call his *erotics—is* immediately available as a system to the cursory reader with little effort nor that it is completely free of interpretive problems. The unusual difficulty of the *Enneads* seems to preclude these possibilities. The claim is rather that if one can speak at all of a Plotinian erotics, this can emerge only as a laborious interpretive reconstruction from a plurality of arguments and statements which, despite their thematic heterogeneousness and lack of immediate transparency, can be found to form a generally coherent picture.

It is safe to assume that one cannot attempt such a feat without including some extensive background on some of the main lines of Plotinus' philosophy. For this reason, this work may also serve as an introduction to some of the major themes and structures of Plotinus' metaphysics and as an overview of his thought. As such, it should be of interest not only to those readers who, being already familiar with Plotinus and Neoplatonism, wish to investigate the relevance of love in his philosophy, but also to a broader audience which may include advanced students and researchers in such fields as ancient philosophy, metaphysics, aesthetics, psychology, religious studies, and intellectual history in general.

Before I go on to present a survey of the material of this study, I wish to Provide a quick word on my reasons for considering *eros* the privileged term of love in the *Enneads.* Plotinus' jargon of love and desire is Varied and rather loose. As a general warning to the reader of the *Enneads,* Rist points out that "Plotinus' use of terminology is not always a guide to his thought." And as Arnou remarks specifically about Plotinus' terminology of lové, "entre tous ces termes eros, it ne reste chez Plotin que des nuances, qui souvent s'effacent." If I will partly disregard Arnou's otherwise keen observation and prevalently use *eros* as the choice term for love in the *Enneads,* it is because it seems reasonable to maintain that Plotinus himself, both in his treatise on love, *Enneads III.5* [50], and in a number of selected passages (most notably, VI.7 [38] 22.7-1o, 17-19, 31.17-22, 32.24-29, 34.14-15, VI.8 [39] 15.1-2, VI.9 [9] 9.24-46), singles out *eros* from an array of terms of love and desire he had available to express a wide range of affective phenomena, from one's infatuation with a beautiful body to the self-love of the One, which none of those other terms taken singly would have sufficed to express (Section 2 of Chapter 3 will be enough, I hope, to justify this claim). One of the reasons for this, in turn, seems to be that *eros* was Plato's own term of choice for his investigation of the phenomenon of love, both in the *Symposium* and in the *Phaedrus.*

The treatment of the subject will unfold in two parts, comprising a total of six chapters. The main goal of Part 1 is to illustrate how the notion of love is operative throughout Plotinus' metaphysics in the process of derivation of all reality from one single source, the One, whereas in Part 2 I take into consideration the relevance of love in the soul's journey of ascent or return to the same source. Plotinus' philosophy is thus intended as an organic whole with love as its guiding theme and the One as both the origin and the terminus of all love.

In Part 1, Chapter 1 *(The Derivation of the Many from the One: The Problem and Its Plotinian Solution)* deals with the issue of the derivation of multiplicity from a single simple source and provides a conceptual framework for Plotinian metaphysics from the standpoint of derivation. In Chapter 2 *(The Derivation of All Reality from the One as Erotic Procession)* I use *eros* as the key concept to explain how all reality derives and unfolds from one single principle. I argue that Plotinus conceives the source of the procession of all reality as utterly simple power. This power, in turn, is understood as a love—what I will call henalogic *eros—which* the One bears to itself and only to itself and which at the same time is productive of otherness. What derives from the One also possesses *eros.* However, while in the One love is self-contained, in that it aims at nothing other than itself, in all derived reality it is directed to something other than that in which it inheres, namely, to the One understood as the Good. The derivation of reality is thus conceived as an overflowing of love productive of love—a thesis which has already been defended extensively by Pigler.[12] Moreover, the communication of all *eros* from the One is also what causes derived reality to structure itself hierarchically in the fully formed hypostases of Intellect and soul, as well as in the sensible universe. The unfolding of each derived hypostasis occurs as a three-phase non-temporal (or a-temporal) event: first, the superabundance of *eros* proceeding from the higher hypostasis; second, the reversion of this *eros* toward the generating hypostasis; third, the communication of *eros* (gradually diminished both in intensity and in proximity to its ultimate desideratum, the One) which will constitute the first stage of the next hypostasis, until with lower matter the erotic power of reversion (and thus the ability to generate something after itself) comes to a halt.

In Part 2, the focus shifts to the theme of the return of the soul to the One, with its four chapters addressing three major aspects of this theme: in Chapter 3, the nature and Variety of *eros,* with special focus on the *eros* which belongs connaturally to the soul as the Very condition of possibility of the ascent; in Chapter 4, the One as the Good, or the ultimate goal of the soul's innate love; and finally, in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the path that the soul, naturally possessed with love, is to tread

to reach its goal. The main goal of Chapter 3 *(The Nature and Variety of* Eros: *A Guided Tour through* Enneads *III.5* [50] On Eros) is to show that the possibility of the soul's ascent to the One is grounded in the primordial love for it present in the soul. For this reason, I introduce some basic classifications of *eros* as it is found in the individual soul, which, as we shall see in the last two chapters, is the protagonist of the ascent to the One. I do this while broadly commenting the treatise on love, *Enneads III.5[50],* a treatise in which Plotinus presents his Views about *eros* as an interpretation of some material from Plato's dialogues and from some traditional myths on the same topic.

It is in Chapter 4 *(The One as the Supremely Loved, or the Universal Final Cause)* that the focus of the discussion shifts explicitly to the movement inverse to the process of derivation: the traditional theme of the return of the soul to the One, here conceived as the Good, or the universal final cause. This theme is again investigated from the perspective of love, since to speak of the One as the Good means to say that it is the final terminus of the connatural love belonging to the soul introduced in Chapter 3. In particular, I argue that for Plotinus the soul's possibility of being directed toward a universal final cause (as found, for example, in Aristotle) remains unintelligible unless one Views the final cause as also the origin of the love directed toward it. Thus, the One is that which is supremely loved, or the Good, not only because it is universally desired but because it is at the same time the origin of the love by which it is so desired. Lastly, in Chapter 5 *(The Return of the Soul to the One as Erotic Ascent: Prolegomena to the Journey)* and Chapter 6 *(The Return of the Soul to the One as Erotic Ascent: The Stages of the Journey)* I investigate the process of attunement of the individual soul to the Good. This process, technically referred to as the ascent, takes place as a thorough disciplining of the soul's affective commitments, or its *eros.* The goal of the ascent, whose major presuppositions, terminology, features, and stages are the main themes investigated in these two chapters, is gradually to narrow the gap that separates the individual soul from the final aim of its desire, the Good, until this gap is reduced to a minimum and the soul, completely transformed (rather than annihilated) into pure love for the One, comes in contact with its desideratum.

Taken together, the two parts of this study are like two halves of the same metaphysical diptych—one which, echoing the title of the work by Pigler referenced earlier, may aptly he called "a metaphysics of love." Part 1 shows how love is operative from the point of view of procession, or the derivation of all reality form one single source, the One. Conversely, Part 2 shows how love is operative in the process of return, or the soul's purificatory movement toward its source taken as the highest desideratum, the One qua Good. As such, love constitutes the origin, the culmination, and the regulative force of the double movement that characterizes Plotinus' metaphysics—the process of derivation of all reality from the One and the process of return of the soul to it—as well as the fundamental link between the different levels of the Plotinian universe.

Were it not for the chronological element introduced by occasional internal references, the contents of Part 1 and Part 2 could be read in reverse order, since the realities they treat are the same, only approached from the opposite poles of Plotinus' metaphysics. As Trouillard observes, the two processes—dérivation and return—"n'apparaissent antithétiques que dans l'image spa-bale qui les représente comme des événements extraposés."

Principles of Plotinian Metaphysics Introduced in This Study

What follows is a list of the principles of Plotinus' metaphysics introduced in this study ordered alphabetically according to the titles I assigned to them. These principles are gathered here for the reader's convenience and should be considered as general guidelines rather than rigid formulas, in the sense that every time each of them is employed, it needs to be qualified further on the basis of

the hypostatic levels on which it is operative, with the likely exception of the Principle of Henologic Giving, which *taken strictly* refers exclusively to the One, as the title assigned to it clearly suggests (but see my observations at the end of Section 5 of Chapter 5). The formulations of the principles are mine and are tentatively reconstructed from the main references indicated in the right column. References are limited to the chief passages of the *Enneads* explicitly discussed when each of the principles was first introduced and examined in the body of the text.

Principle	Formulation	Main references
Affinity	*Assimilation of a lower term to a higher one is possible on the basis of a prior affinity between the two terms.*	*III.5* [50] 9.44-45,
Assimilation	*Assimilation of a lower term to a higher one is possible on the basis of a prior attunement of the former to the latter.*	I.6 [1] 9.29-30
Double Activity	*Each thing operates in accordance with a double activity:* of *the essence (internal, or primary) and* from *the essence (external, or secondary).*	*V.1 [10]* 6.25-37, V.4 [7] 2.26-37
Henologic	*The One gives what it does not have.*	*VI.7 [38]* 17.3-6
Likeness of Cause and	*A cause communicates something of itself to its effects.*	II.9 [33] 3.8,
Non-reciprocal Participation	*That in which a thing participates is other than that because of which that thing participates in it.*	I.2 [19] 140-42
Prior Actuality	*The proper actuality of any given is prior in being to that potentiality.*	VI.1 [42] 26.1-*V.9 [5]* 44-10
Prior Simplicity	*Whatever is composite ultimately derives from something simple.*	V.4 [7] 1.5-15
Reversion	*Every generated hypostasis constitutes by erotically reverting upon itself and toward its generator, thus replicating the unity of its generator at its own level of*	*III.4 [15] 1.8-*V.2 [11] 1.9—11
Superabundance	*Whatever has reached perfection in its kind overflows and produces something other than itself, until all possibilities have been realized*	V.2 [11] 1.7-9, V.3 [49] 16.1-5, V.4 [7] 1.34-39
Superiority of Cause to Effect	*A cause is superior in being, unity, and self-identity to its effects.*	V.1 [10] 6.37-V.3 [49] 15.7-VI.7 [38] 17.3-

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THE FIRST PRINCIPLE IN LATE NEOPLATONISM: A STUDY OF THE ONE'S CAUSALITY IN PROCLUS AND DAMASCIUS by Jonathan Greig [Philosophia Antigua, Brill, 9789004439054]

In **THE FIRST PRINCIPLE IN LATE NEOPLATONISM: A STUDY OF THE ONE'S CAUSALITY IN PROCLUS AND DAMASCIUS**, Jonathan Greig examines the philosophical theology of the two Neoplatonists, Proclus and Damascius (5th–6th centuries A.D.), on the One as the first cause. Both philosophers address a tension in the Neoplatonic tradition: namely that the One was seen as absolutely transcendent, yet it was also seen as intimately related to other things as the source of their unity and being. Proclus' solution is to posit intermediate causes after the One, while Damascius posits a distinct principle, the 'Ineffable', above the One. This book provides a new, thorough study of the theories of causation that lead each to their respective position and reveals crucial insights involved in a rigorous negative theology employed in metaphysics.

The Focus of This Study

In recent scholarship, Damascius' position has been construed as either concluding a typical late Neoplatonist move of positing extra intermediaries,68 or implying that he accepts epistemic skepticism about first principles in general. The first claim would imply that the Ineffable is a superfluous principle, since the One, by itself, should be sufficient to account for the transcendence and causality implied in being a first principle. The second claim would implicitly be an inversion of the first, namely that what counts as `the One' has only been a subjective concept attained by the soul, while the 'real' principle (the Ineffable) lies beyond any framework for metaphysics." Yet neither of these claims takes account of Damascius' causal framework, both in general and in the case of the One, and further they do not address how Damascius fits alongside Proclus in addressing the tension of the first approach with early Neoplatonists: namely the One as analogous to the Forms' causality,

thus as anticipating the plurality it produces. In this light the issue of causal synonymy is key to understanding why Damascius distinguishes the Ineffable and the One.

As this study will attempt to show, while Damascius appropriates Proclus' framework, he makes certain, radical revisions in the causal structure of higher principles to account for both issues of causality and transcendence that Proclus himself attempts to address with mixed results. In particular, Proclus tries to maintain the balance between the One's complete transcendence and its causality by positing the `henads'. Yet one of the main tensions in Proclus is explaining how they emerge from the One in their varying characters, where the One has no relation to all things—including the characters differentiating each henad. It is this crucial gap in causality that motivates Damascius' major revision for the One and its causality, where such a relation is permitted between the One and the characters pertaining to the henads, since, for Damascius, the One is synonymous with its effect of all things—and finally what leads Damascius to posit the Ineffable. It is ultimately this aspect in Damascius, and in turn Proclus, that has not been addressed in the scholarship, and which this study will focus on in detail.

With this in mind, we may now summarize how we will proceed in the following chapters. Chapter 7 establishes the background to which both Proclus and Damascius are responding with their frameworks. In Section II we look at Plotinus' motivation to establish pure unity as the nature of the first cause: namely, if the first is an intellect or a being of some kind, it implies the plurality of the Forms that it either contains or produces. This leads to Plotinus' radical claim that the One's status is 'beyond being' in a strict sense, thus not an intellect as the majority of his Middle Platonic predecessors would claim. Yet as we will see, Plotinus' construal of the One implies a two-sided aspect: in itself the One contains no plurality, yet since it directly produces plurality, and since it acts as a paradigm of Intellect and Being, the One internally implies attributes that are correlated with plurality and pertain to Intellect and Being. In Sections 7.2-7.3 we look at the reception of Plotinus in Porphyry and Iamblichus, where one finds the consequences of Plotinus' position made explicit in both successors—even in the case of Iamblichus who anticipates Proclus and later Neoplatonists by adding intermediate principles between the One and Intellect. We end with Proclus' master, Syrianus, in Section 7.4, where the latter establishes the foundation for Proclus' understanding of the One, and the causal framework that supports responding to the tensions implied in the previous Plotinian frameworks for the One.

The remaining chapters are then split into two groups: the first (Chapters 2-3) focuses on the general causal frameworks for Proclus and Damascius, which respectively inform how each construes the One's causality; and the second (Chapters 4-5) focuses specifically on the One's causality and the important correlation of participated principles, for Proclus, and the Ineffable, for Damascius.

In Chapter 2, we consider the distinction between unparticipated and participated entities as crucial for Proclus' response to the tensions implied in Plotinus' causal model. Proclus builds this distinction on his understanding that productive causes produce intermediate entities that convey the producer's effect while they also mirror the participant's nature. This distinction applies both between (for instance) each individual soul and its participating body, and more generally between the first, unparticipated cause of a property to individual, distinct participants. This balances both the transcendence of the cause—insofar as it is unaffected in itself by the participant(s)—while causal synonymy is still maintained—insofar as the intermediaries themselves reflect the character of their prior causes.

Chapter 3 shows how Damascius' causal framework is built as a response to difficulties raised in cases of dissimilar causation from Proclus' framework, like the derivation of Intellect from Being, which breaks the principle of causal synonymy. This leads Damascius to hold that synonymy cannot obtain only between the cause and its intermediaries, as in Proclus, but it must include the final effect: in other words, to produce Intellect the principle of Being must ultimately become like Intellect. Damascius thus introduces a fundamental modification for causation: that in producing an effect, causes 'act on themselves' in the causal process. Thus two stages are posited for productive entities: in themselves they transcend their effects—thus they are not causal in this sense—but in the causal process, the producer in itself becomes synonymous with the effect as its cause. This leads to a major revision of Proclus' distinction between unparticipated/participated causes, as well as the notion of self-constitution: while Damascius keeps these causal distinctions, they indicate a progressive separation of unity and being, from higher, 'concentrated' causes to lower, 'unfolded' effects.

Chapter 4 begins by focusing on Proclus' proof for the One, where compared to Plotinus' proof, Proclus distinguishes between two notions of prior unity: one that implies plurality `by participation', and one that is beyond the direct participation with plurality—both of which respectively correspond to the distinction between participated and unparticipated. Thus, Proclus' understanding of henads, as unities after the One that are plural `by participation', is a major factor to account for the One's causality. Alongside the henads, Proclus also poses the Limit and Unlimited as intermediaries between the One and beings, so they also fulfill the same intermediary role that the henads perform. A number of questions emerge about the relation between the two, but a fundamental issue at stake is this: what accounts for the henads' distinction? Even if the Limit and Unlimited become responsible for this, how one accounts for their emergence after the One becomes a crucial tension in Proclus' framework. This tension then suggests an opposite problem to the one implied in Plotinus and his successors: the One may be transcendent and cause unity, but in what way it brings about plurality (at least corresponding to the henads) is unclear.

Finally in Chapter 5, we first consider Damascius' aporia on the first principle's relation to all things in the beginning of the De Principiis. Damascius' notion of the One as in a 'coordination' with all things—even if it is not strictly identified with 'all things' as its cause—follows on his notion of causal synonymy, as indicated in Chapter 3: if the One truly causes 'all things, it must be synonymous with 'all things' as a cause, or as Damascius says, it is 'itself all things'. Since the notion of a 'principle' implies priority to the effects, whereas the notion of a 'cause' implies being the same in kind as the effects—and therefore with the effects—this leads Damascius to assert that the proper 'principle' cannot be the One but rather a truly non-causal principle: the Ineffable. Damascius then treats the Ineffable not as a skeptical conclusion, but instead as a grounding principle by which the One functions as the first cause. This allows Damascius to maintain the One's causality of unity and plurality, solving the causal gap between the One and the henads in Proclus by affirming the One's causal relation to plurality. This move, however, is made possible only by distinguishing the principle of absolute transcendence apart from the One—i.e. the Ineffable—which in turn implies its own tensions when assessing the Ineffable as a 'principle' within the metaphysical hierarchy.

On the whole, this work attempts to place Proclus and Damascius within the general Neoplatonic (and by proxy, overarching Platonic) tradition by asking, in a nutshell: what justifies Proclus in positing the One as unparticipated? And what justifies Damascius in positing the Ineffable, if not Proclus' One? The answer for both, we find, is an attempt to solve the tension of transcendence and causal relation for the first principle. Both Proclus and Damascius begin with the same structure, yet

they diverge in the manner in which one can or cannot ascribe causality to the first as a result of their respective understanding of causality in general. <>

ON THE NATURE OF LOVE: FICINO ON PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM *translated from the Tuscan by Arthur Farndell [Commentaries by Ficino on Plato's Writings, Shepheard-Walwyn, 9780856835094]*

ON THE NATURE OF LOVE is a translation of Marsilio Ficino's commentary to Plato's *Symposium*. This edition makes Ficino's Tuscan version available to English readers for the first time. On November 7, 1468, nine men gathered at Careggi, outside Florence, to honour Plato's birthday. After the meal, the Symposium was read, and the guests – now reduced to seven – spoke on the nature of love. Ficino, who was also present, recorded what was said, and his report constitutes the text of his commentary. His work was eagerly taken up by court circles throughout Europe and became part of their standard fare for the next two centuries. In more recent times, Ficino's commentary has exercised the minds of theologians, philosophers, and psychologists.

Review

"The distilled conciseness of these writings gives us, more vividly perhaps than any other source, a sense of what Plato's wisdom meant to [Ficino] who became his apostle to the Renaissance." — *Temenos Academy Review*

"It fills a need, since these Ficinian works have never been translated into English before. Even those Anglophone scholars who know Latin still need a translation in order to read quickly through a large body of material." —Carol V. Kaske, Cornell University in *Renaissance Quarterly*

"Ficino was anxious to show that there was no separation between religion and philosophy, and that Christianity and Platonism were compatible. Neither was there a sharp distinction between human nature and the supernatural, but a 'ladder of love' existed between human love and divine love . . . A short review cannot do justice to the wide-ranging treatment of love that is dealt with in this work . . . a valuable addition to the corpus of Ficino's works translated into English." —Rosemary Arthur, *Faith and Freedom*

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On the Nature of Love is a translation of Marsilio Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. Although Ficino wrote commentaries on all the Platonic dialogues, he exceptionally wrote two versions – Latin and Tuscan – of his commentary on the *Symposium*. The Latin version was published in 1484, but the Tuscan version did not appear for another 60 years.

The Tuscan version is called *Sopra lo Amore*, and the present volume is considered to contain the first English translation of this text, which, while running broadly parallel to the Latin, presents numerous small divergences from it. In the Tuscan work Ficino's language equals, or perhaps surpasses, his finest use of the Latin language in its beauty and eloquence.

The story-line is very simple. On November 7, 1468, nine men gathered at Careggi to honour Plato's birthday. After the meal, the *Symposium* was read out, and each of the guests – now reduced to seven, for the bishop was called away to care for souls, and the doctor was summoned to care for bodies – spoke on the nature of love. Ficino, who was also present, recorded what was said, although he himself did not speak, and his report constitutes the text of his commentary.

His work was eagerly taken up by court circles throughout Europe and became part of their standard fare for the next two centuries. Writers and artists were inspired by it. The topic of idealised love immediately resonated with the makers and shakers of many countries, particularly Italy, France, Spain, and England. In more recent times, Ficino's commentary has exercised the minds of theologians, philosophers, and psychologists. At a convention of more than a hundred Plato enthusiasts gathered at Delphi in the summer of 2015, this translation of the Tuscan text was warmly – in some instances, rapturously – received. There is every reason to be confident that the influence of the work will continue, for it has rightly been said that love is the secret password to every heart.

Ficino himself gives the essence in his preface: 'We all love unceasingly in one way or another, but nearly all of us love wrongly. To put us back on the right road, God inspired Diotima, who taught

Socrates, who revealed the mystery to Plato, who wrote a book for the Greeks. I have put this book into Latin and into Tuscan, together with my own commentary.

We might add that this book has now been put into English, the current world-language, in the hope that its message may play its part in nudging the world away from its propensity towards hatred and violence and reminding it that more peaceful and loving times are ever available.

Preface of Marsilio Ficino of Florence concerning the book on Love, dedicated to his very dear friends, those judicious citizens of Florence, Bernardo del Nero and Antonio di Tuccio Manetti

After long practice human beings come to be good at those things which they do routinely and frequently; and the more often they do them, the better they become. Through our foolishness, and to our distress, this general rule does not obtain in the case of Love. We all love unceasingly in one way or another, but nearly all of us love wrongly; and the more we love, the worse we become. And if one in a hundred thousand loves correctly, he is not trusted, because his ways are not the usual ones. We fall into this extra ordinary error (heaven help us!) because we boldly set out on this exhausting journey of Love before learning about the journey's end and how to traverse the dangerous tracts. As a result, the further we wretches go, the further we stray and the more we suffer. Getting lost in this dark wood has more serious consequences than getting lost on other journeys, for we make our way there in greater numbers and with greater frequency.

To put us back on the right road, from which we have gone astray, the supreme Love of divine Providence in ancient times inspired a truly pure woman in Greece known as the priestess Diotima, who, being inspired by God and meeting the philosopher Socrates, who was devoted above all others to Love, taught him what this burning desire was, how we can fall from it to the most grievous evil, and how we can rise again from this to the supreme Good.

Socrates revealed this sacred mystery to our Plato. Plato, a philosopher more reverent than all others, at once wrote a book about this for the sake of the Greeks. And for the sake of the Latins I have translated Plato's book into their tongue; and being encouraged by our Lorenzo de' Medici, the Magnificent, I made a commentary on the mysteries in that book which were more difficult to understand. And in order for this life-saving manna, sent from Heaven to Diotima, to be readily available to more people, I have translated these Platonic mysteries from Latin into tuscan, together with my own commentary. this work is addressed to you in particular, my beloved Bernardo del Nero and Antonio Manetti, because I am sure that you will receive with Love the Love which your Marsilio ficino is sending you, and you will make it clear to anyone who might presume to read this book heedlessly that he will never be able to do so, because no one can embrace the heedfulness of Love with heedlessness or take hold of Love with hatefulness.

May the Holy Spirit, divine Love, which inspired Diotima, illumine our mind and kindle our will, that we may love him in all his beautiful works, and thus love his works in him and find boundless joy in his boundless beauty.

SPEECH 1

The order of the book

Plato, Father of Philosophers, reached the end of his life, after completing eighty-one years, on November 7, the very date on which he had been born. He was sitting at table, and the dishes had been cleared away.

This banquet, which embraces both the beginning and the end of Plato's life, was celebrated annually by the early followers of Plato right down to the times of Plotinus and Porphyry; but these festive meals were subsequently suspended for twelve hundred years. Eventually, in our own times, the renowned Lorenzo de' Medici, wishing to re-establish the Platonic banquet, entrusted this matter to Francesco Bandini.

And so, because Bandini had arranged the celebration for November 7, he welcomed nine Platonic guests with a splendid reception at the villa in Careggi. They were Antonio degli Agli, Bishop of Fiesole; Ficino the doctor; Cristoforo Landino the poet; Bernardo Nuzzi the rhetorician; Tommaso Benci; our friend Giovanni Cavalcanti, who was called the Hero by the other guests on account of the nobility of his soul and his aristocratic appearance; Cristoforo and Carlo, sons of Carlo Marsuppini the poet; and, finally, Bandini wished me to be the ninth, so that, with the addition of Marsilio Ficino to those listed above, the number of the Muses would be matched.

And when the dishes had been cleared away, Bernardo Nuzzi took up the dialogue of Plato named The Banquet of Love and read all the speeches from this work. After the reading he asked the other guests to expound one speech each. To this they all agreed, and the exposition of the first speech (that of Phaedrus) fell by lot to Giovanni Cavalcanti; that of Pausanias, to Antonio the theologian; that of eryximachus the doctor, to ficino the doctor; that of Aristophanes the poet, to Cristoforo the poet; and that of young Agathon, to Carlo Marsuppini. tommaso Benci was allotted the disputation made by Socrates, and the final speech (that of Alcibiades) fell to Cristoforo Marsuppini. they all approved their lots, but the bishop and the doctor were obliged to leave, the former to care for souls and the latter to care for bodies. they both entrusted their parts to Giovanni Cavalcanti, to whom the others directed their attention to hear what he would say... <>

THE RENAISSANCE OF PLOTINUS: THE SOUL AND HUMAN NATURE IN MARSILIO FICINO'S COMMENTARY ON THE ENNEADS by Anna Corrias [Routledge, 9781138630895]

Plotinus (204/5–270 C.E.) is a central figure in the history of Western philosophy. However, during the Middle Ages he was almost unknown. None of the treatises constituting his ***Enneads*** were translated, and ancient translations were lost. Although scholars had indirect access to his philosophy through the works of Proclus, St. Augustine, and Macrobius, among others, it was not until 1492 with the publication of the first Latin translation of the ***Enneads*** by the humanist philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) that Plotinus was reborn to the Western world.

Ficino's translation was accompanied by a long commentary in which he examined the close relationship between metaphysics and anthropology that informed Plotinus's philosophy. Focusing on Ficino's interpretation of Plotinus's view of the soul and of human nature, this book excavates a fundamental chapter in the history of Platonic scholarship, one which was to inform later readings of the ***Enneads*** up until the nineteenth century. It will appeal to scholars and students interested in the history of Western philosophy, intellectual history, and book history.

Ficino's Plotinus

This book, as the title suggests, is about Plotinus. Not the Plotinus who is taught in textbooks and university classrooms today, although, in many respects, the five chapters which follow speak also of that Plotinus. He is the Plotinus to whom on many occasions I shall refer to as 'Ficino's Plotinus'. This epithet, I hope, will make the task of describing his historical and philosophical identity easier: he is the Plotinus who emerges from the commentary on the *Enneads* composed by the fifteenth-century humanist philosopher Marsilio Ficino and published in Florence in 1492. This commentary accompanied Ficino's Latin translation of the *Enneads*, published in the same year, but which, as we shall see, occupied Ficino from the 1460s.

The epithet 'Ficino's Plotinus', however, expresses a much more intimate and complex relationship than the one implied by Ficino's authorship of the Latin version and interpretation of Plotinus's text. For our Plotinus shares some fundamental philosophical traits with his translator and commentator. Two of these traits – the most prominent ones – have been identified and discussed in previous scholarship, most recently by Stephen Gersh in the two introductory essays that accompany his critical edition and English translation of Ficino's commentary on *Enneads* III and IV. They are: (1) Plotinus's interest in and commitment to the philosophy of some of his successors, i.e. Porphyry, Synesius of Cyrene, Proclus, and, especially, Iamblichus (whom I shall generally refer to as 'post-Plotinian' Platonists hoping that the reader will keep in mind that, for Ficino, they were not 'post-' to anyone, but simply 'Platonists'); (2) Plotinus's adaption of some of his positions to the principles of Christian theology. The third trait, partly discussed by Gersh, which I shall articulate further in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, is our Plotinus's desire to rescue the original Aristotle from the misinterpretations of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes who, in Ficino's view, had disgracefully made Aristotle a 'non-Platonist'. The first two traits need to be further unpacked in order to avoid hasty conclusions, such as thinking Ficino was deliberately manipulating Plotinus and forcing him into a box where he did not belong – for this is the last thing that Ficino wished to do.

In the first part of this Introduction, I shall discuss what it meant, for Ficino, to give Plotinus – what for us is – a post-Plotinian character and why on many occasions he made Plotinus agree with Christianity. I shall claim that: (1) the reason why Ficino made Plotinus make a wide use of the post-Plotinian philosophers was not to give Plotinus a spurious, borrowed identity; on the contrary, his intention was to make Plotinus's genuine thought as transparent as possible for his readers – for who could explain Plotinus more lucidly and loyally than Plotinus's closest successors?; (2) in many instances, Ficino's Plotinus's espousal of some principles of Christianity cannot be explained by Ficino's belief that Plotinus agreed – or should have agreed – with those principles. Instead, it should be understood in the light of Ficino's constant preoccupation with getting into trouble with the Inquisition. I shall also argue that on no occasion should the post-Plotinian and the Christian dimensions of Ficino's Plotinus affect or transform the theoretical sophistication of Plotinus's line of thought. In Ficino's commentary, Plotinus remains, first and foremost, a rigorous metaphysical philosopher.

Plotinus's relation to the philosophy of his successors was discussed by E. R. Dodds in several works, especially his 'Theurgy and Its Relationship with Neoplatonism', published in 1947, and *The Greeks and the Irrational*, of 1951. Dodds famously claimed that Plotinus was a highly rational thinker who, in contrast to his philosophical successors, had no interest at all in theurgic rituals aimed at recovering the magical character of nature by enabling a connection between the earthly and the divine worlds.[3] Quoting Wilhelm Kroll, he argued that Plotinus 'raised himself by a strong intellectual and moral effort above the fog-ridden atmosphere which surrounded him'.[4] According to Dodds, the fact that Plotinus agreed to participate in the ritual of evocation of his own daemon in the temple of Isis in

Rome was nothing more than school gossip. Even if this event really had taken place, it would not have proved that Plotinus had any interest in the ritual itself, for 'a visit to a séance does not make a man a spiritualist, especially if he went there on someone else's initiative'.[5] With Plotinus's death, Dodds continued, the fog from which he had tried to escape began to close in again, and the later Platonists can be seen, in different respects, as reverting to 'the spineless syncretism from which he had tried to escape'.

Dodds did not mention Ficino. Yet Ficino was the philosopher most responsible for the interpretation of Plotinus he rejected. Indeed, Ficino's Plotinus is not only the author of the *Enneads* and Plato's most sublime interpreter. He is also a passionate reader of Iamblichus and Proclus; he believes in the efficacy of magic and even devises various ways of dealing with a systematically organised hierarchy of daemons. He inhabits, describes, and philosophically justifies a universe where the soul can – and must – withdraw in solitude and obscurity, preparing its ultimate, earth-renouncing 'escape in solitude to the solitary'.

In this same universe, though, the soul can also – and must – penetrate the divine *on earth*, attuning the rhythm of embodied life to the theophanic activity which characterises the cycles of nature. 'On earth' means in stones, in plants, in animals, in the various daemons bustling about the air, in heavenly influxes, and in people. It is no surprise that such a theurgically-oriented Plotinus inspired the third book of Ficino's *De vita libri tres*, entitled *De vita caelitus comparanda* ('On How to Obtain Life from the Heavens') which, Ficino claims, grew out of his commentary on a treatise from *Enneads* IV, in all probability *Enneads* IV.3.11.

Surely, there is very little of Dodds's Plotinus in the *De vita*. Apart from Ficino's account of the operations of the Soul of the World, which plays an undeniably important role in the *Enneads*, this treatise is mostly grounded in the idea that daemonic and astral influences, as well as material objects used as talismans, could give the fully descended soul access to the divine nowhere else, but on earth. Obtaining this access (and especially obtaining it here), however, had neither speculative nor practical relevance for the Greek Plotinus, since he believed that our highest part, our intellect, never abandons the divine. Hence, Ficino's *Enneads* closely resembles Iamblichus's *De mysteriis*, which, according to Dodds, offered 'seductive comfort' to pagan minds,[8] but was 'the last resort of the personally desperate, of those whom man and God have alike failed'[9] and the 'refuge of a despairing intelligentsia which already felt *la fascination de l'abîme*'.

However, in approaching Ficino's Plotinus the main question should not be to what extent he differs from (or resembles) the Plotinus we think of today. It is not whether Ficino was right or wrong to interpret some passages of the *Enneads* through post-Plotinian lenses, or whether right or wrong are those scholars who read Plotinus following Dodds's 'hyper-rationalistic' hermeneutics. A question of this kind would miss an important point, i.e. the historical and philosophical (or, better said, historically philosophical) significance of Ficino's Plotinus *per se*. For the history of Western philosophy is not the history of authors who were at some point lost to later reappear in their pristine form – often in the nineteenth century; nor is it the history of philosophers who remained unchanged through time. It is rather the history of the different personae of those philosophers, as Denis Robichaud would have it, as they were crafted by their interpreters and received by their readers.

Plotinus is certainly the sublime rational thinker described by Dodds, one who believed that the *unio mystica* 'is attained, not by any ritual of evocation or performance of prescribed acts, but by an inward discipline of the mind which involves no compulsive element and has nothing to do with magic'. But for two centuries at least, Plotinus was also the 'exalted mind' described by Ficino, the

sublime interpreter of Plato who, just like Dodds's Plotinus, understood the *unio mystica* as an inward flight of intellect to Intellect which, however, had its driving force in the love of God; the 'exalted mind' who believed that we can rejoin the divine in Intellect, but did not rule out that the divine could be accessed on earth through theurgical rituals and daemonic partnership.

Given the undeniable impact of post-Plotinian philosophy on Ficino's reading of the *Enneads*, we might be tempted to assume that Ficino created a Plotinus devoted to magic, with little of the philosophical rigour that is so characteristic of his thought. Such an assumption would, however, be completely wrong. As I hope this book will make clear, the main activity and interest of Ficino's Plotinus remained philosophy in the strict sense of the term. His rigorous reasoning and complex metaphysics were fully preserved by Ficino; and it was precisely because of Plotinus's ability to describe the world and the soul – and their relationship to each other – in purely philosophical terms that Ficino regarded him as Plato's greatest commentator. We need to keep this in mind in order to make a correct assessment of his interest in Plotinus and also to rescue Ficino from an interpretative trend which sees him more as a magician or an astrologer than a metaphysical philosopher and humanist.

An exploration of the influence of Ficino's Plotinus before the 1580 publication of the *editio princeps* of the *Enneads* in the original Greek will certainly contribute to the study of an important chapter in the history of Western philosophy. As Gersh has rightly observed, the only Plotinus known to sixteenth-century luminaries such as Giles of Viterbo, Francesco Giorgi, and Giordano Bruno (but also John Colet, Girolamo Cardano, and Charles de Bovelles) was Ficino's Plotinus. It must also be said that Ficino's Latin version of the *Enneads* accompanied the Greek text for almost four centuries, i.e. from 1580 until in 1924 Émile Bréhier published a modern edition of the Greek text accompanied by a French translation rather than Ficino's Latin.[13] In the early nineteenth century Thomas Taylor rendered many of the *Enneads* into English. However, throughout the seventeenth century and beyond, Ficino's commentary was widely used as an interpretative tool to read Plotinus, both in Greek and in Latin. Ralph Cudworth and Henry More, for example, often refer to and quote Ficino's commentary although they read and quote Plotinus in Greek.

Even though Plotinus went hand in hand with Ficino for so many centuries, while Plotinus is a familiar presence to most scholars working on Ficino, Ficino is just a name to most Plotinian scholars. This is the result of the truncated view – dominant in the field of history of philosophy, but especially in that of classical reception – which tends to ignore centuries of interpretative labours and historical filiation and to treat the presence of classical authors in the modern world as sudden appearances lacking a history of textual and doctrinal transformation. This book, I hope, will challenge this view. By focusing on the identity crafted for him by Ficino, it will show that the Plotinus who traversed the paths of Western philosophy did not austerely abide in the eternal and unchanging nature of his doctrines. In fact, for a period of time which was long enough to leave an undeniable mark in at least two generations of readers, he was deeply conversant with the philosophy of his later interpreters and even, anachronistically as it may seem, spoke through their voices and invoked their daemons.

By exploring the post-Plotinian dimension of Ficino's Plotinus (which, I must reiterate, on no occasion overshadowed the philosophical ingenuity and rigour of the Greek Plotinus), I also hope to show that, in the Renaissance, references to the ancient world were understood as an unremitting act of interpretation and reinvention. Far from being an undisciplined exercise of creation, such acts relied on the painstaking textual analysis and sophisticated translation work of the humanists, of which Ficino's Latin *Enneads* is a superb example. Even if we decide to disregard the doctrinal transformations undergone by Plotinus in the course of his reception history and focus on his

original text instead, we cannot ignore the fact that Friedrich Creuzer and Georg Heinrich Moser, Plotinus's nineteenth-century editors, consulted Ficino's editorial and translation work and that Ficino's Latin version of and commentary on the *Enneads* accompanied their 1835 critical edition of the Greek *Enneads*.

To modern eyes Ficino's Plotinus may appear to have a biform nature: zealously loyal to both the letter and the spirit of the Greek text in the translation and intertextual, yet eclectic, and syncretistic in the commentary. Ficino, however, would have not accepted such a characterisation for his Plotinus. One thing is for sure: if by 'eclecticism' and 'syncretism' we mean a deliberate attempt to reconcile different or opposing philosophical positions, nothing can be said to be more foreign to Ficino's spirit than these two terms. For Ficino believed that the Platonism which he was bringing to light was a comprehensive system, a unified whole; as such, it did not need reconciliation. In his view, he sailed as close to land as possible in his account of what was in the *Enneads*.

Indeed, Ficino made great efforts to follow Plotinus's narrative to the very roots of his thought and when he invoked other authors – the late ancient Platonists, medieval philosophers, and even St. Paul – he did so with the intention of making Plotinus's text more accessible and familiar for his readers; he wanted no recess of the *Enneads* to remain unexplored, no meaning unexcavated. For Ficino 'the translator' and Ficino 'the interpreter' the constant overarching goal was the same: to ensure easy readability and make Plotinus's voice unambiguously clear. In the 'Commentary', the post-Plotinians could provide this clarity with accuracy, elegance, and accessibility, serving the same purpose as a right translation choice would do with Plotinus's most tortured syntax.

Let us proceed to the second trait of Ficino's Plotinus, i.e. his being a friend of Christianity. It has long been claimed that Ficino endeavoured to reconcile Platonic metaphysics and Christian theology, which is undoubtedly true. However, in order to appreciate the nature of Ficino's Plotinus, we should investigate whether these endeavours originated (1) in Ficino's authentic belief that in order for Platonism to be philosophically acceptable it should be fine-tuned with some, or all, of the principles of Christianity; or (2) in his ever-present fear of the possible reactions of the Roman Curia. The chances of success in this investigation are few to none. Indeed, in elaborating what Gersh has defined as 'the concord in discord between Plotinus and Christianity', Ficino keeps silent, never drawing attention to his doctrinal interventions. Nonetheless, my feeling is that Ficino held Platonism to have an intrinsic philosophical value regardless of whether or not it agreed with Christian doctrine.

I am not claiming that Ficino was entirely unbiased – no translator or interpreter is. But I believe that his interest in voicing Plotinus's authentic philosophy was stronger than his interest in making Plotinus accommodate positions that he recognized as foreign to Plotinus's thought. In other words, his reasons for making Plotinus sometimes speak as a Christian – which Ficino undeniably does – were more political than theoretical. I do not mean that they were entirely political, for I believe that Ficino genuinely held that the Platonists and the Christians agreed on fundamental truths. However, in those cases where they did not agree, Ficino did not believe that they necessarily should. The exception is, of course, when pagan sources advocated positions which were offensive to human nature, such as mortalism and metensomatosis into animal species. We shall see that Ficino harshly rebukes Plotinus for having endorsed the latter position.

Transmigration provides a very apt example for my claim, for while Ficino is outraged by metensomatosis into animal bodies, he widely discusses metensomatosis into human bodies, i.e. the soul's so-called 'vehicles' or spiritual envelops, as we shall see in Chapter 3. He even uses this doctrine to back up his own philosophical positions. In the same context, he also discusses the pre-

existence of the soul. These discussions are often followed by his usual disclaimers, such as, 'we have explained these things, interpreting rather than approving of them (*nos non tam approbantes, quam interpretantes exposuimus*)', which are scattered throughout the *Commentary*. These disclaimers, however, tell us very little about what Ficino really thought of the philosophical value of these doctrines. If he was to write in a religious censorship-free context he would not have let Plotinus freely express transmigration into animal bodies, but, surely, he would have made much fewer acts of disavowal. Indeed, in reading Ficino's *Commentary* one gets the impression that at times he lets Plotinus talk autonomously and even unconventionally. Returning to metensomatosis into animal bodies, for example, Ficino chastises Plotinus, but does not censure him. This is not, of course, because deeply inside himself Ficino sympathised with the pagans but because, in my view, he did not see his role as a commentator and his identity as a Christian (and clergyman) as anonymously blending into one another.

As I said, it is impossible to ascertain to what extent Ficino was sincerely convinced that Plotinus's thought should be tweaked or altered. Admittedly, the reader of this book will encounter a Plotinus who, in most cases, indisputably obeys the Christian truth. However, it is my hope that the reader will not stop at Ficino's role as a Christianizing interpreter, which would lead to a very shallow and misleading understanding of his hermeneutical approach. Such a view fails to acknowledge one dominant aspect of his intellectual identity which, in my view, should come to the fore in the scholarship on Ficino's commentaries: the fact that he was a classical scholar of supreme skills. One that had been entrusted with the onerous task of providing the first Latin translations of some Greek works ever to be read in Italy. Ficino was aware that the transmission of the wisdom contained in those works depended on his ability to make those works talk to his contemporaries in a way that was both as accessible to fifteenth-century readers and as loyal as possible to the voice of the original authors. He maintains a courteous and non-judgemental relationship with his sources, his interest being first and foremost that of excavating the original truths told by the texts – whether or not they agreed with Christianity. My claim is that Ficino felt the obligation towards his role as a classical scholar as deeply as he felt the commitment to religious orthodoxy, if not more so. The latter does not overshadow the former, even if, as Robichaud has rightly observed, Ficino made great efforts to hide his laborious textual work behind the glow of his philosophical persona.[18] I hope the reader will keep this in mind in order to fully appreciate the complex identities of both Ficino as a commentator and the Plotinus he comments on.

Finally, the third trait of Ficino's Plotinus is his hermeneutical finesse, not only in the interpretation of Plato, but also in that of Aristotle and, in particular, of Aristotle's view of intellect. Indeed, untangling Ficino's use of Plotinus in an Aristotelian context is a central task of this book. It is well known that in *De anima* III.5 Aristotle unexpectedly introduced what, apparently, is a second, 'productive' intellect – called *nous poiêtikos* by his successors. His brief and complex remarks on the nature of this intellect left generations of readers wondering what exactly the *nous poiêtikos* was and how it related to the intellect as he had described it up to that point. In Ficino's view, no second intellect was ever introduced in III.5 or elsewhere in the *De anima*. The mind described by Aristotle was one single entity, which acted on two different levels, depending on whether it used reason or intellect. In the latter case, thinking was *in act*, whether in the former case it was *potential to* thinking in act. This view emerges neatly from Ficino's commentary on Priscianus Lydus's paraphrase of Theophrastus, published in 1497, a text essential to the understanding of Ficino's engagement with Aristotle's *De anima*. It is not my intention to expand on Ficino's reception of Theophrastus in this book. However, Ficino's view of *De anima* is essential to understand why he regarded Plotinus as the one who had seized the words and meanings of that text, revealing the *nous poiêtikos*'s intrinsic

Platonic nature. For in describing man's truest self in terms of a hypostasised Intellect, eternally engaged in the contemplation of Being, yet able to be accessed by the individual human intellect, Plotinus, for Ficino, had interpreted Aristotle correctly.

In praising Plotinus for having deciphered the obscure language of *De anima* III.5, Ficino compared him, more or less explicitly, to Aristotle's two most famous interpreters – Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes. In wrestling with the enigmatic nature of the *nous poiêtikos*, Alexander identified it with God, drastically separating it from the *nous pathêtikos* and condemning the latter to sharing the same mortal fate as the body. On the other hand, Averroes – as interpreted by his Latin commentators – hypostasised the *nous pathêtikos*, placing it outside and above the individual human soul. For him, thinking occurred through episodic contacts between the forms of the imagination in the soul and the external *nous pathêtikos* – contacts which were put into effect by the *nous poiêtikos*. In doing so, Averroes placed the final actualisation of the human mind in the union with the external intellect, depriving it, in Ficino's view, of its essential ability for both discursive thinking and intellectual contemplation. In a letter to John of Hungary, Ficino expressed his concern about the powerful position which had been attained by such interpreters of Aristotle and stated clearly that he had translated and commented on Plotinus in order to bring to light a philosophy which was able to counter these perverted forms of Aristotelianism:

> *We, therefore, who have toiled until this time to translate and expound the earlier theologians, are now daily working in the same way on the books of Plotinus. We have been chosen for this work by divine Providence, just as they were for theirs, so that, when this theology emerges into the light, the poets will stop the irreligious inclusion of the rites and mysteries of religion in their stories, and the Aristotelians, I mean all philosophers, will be reminded that it is wrong to consider religion, at least religion in general, as a collection of old wives' tales. For the whole world has been seized by the Aristotelians and divided for the most part into two schools of thought, the Alexandrian and the Averroist. The Alexandrians consider our intellect to be subject to death, while the Averroists maintain that there is only one intellect. They both equally undermine the whole of religion.*

He goes on to explain that this philosophical irreligiousness was so widespread and defended by such sharp intellects that merely preaching the faith would not have been sufficient to save Christianity. 'Here much greater power is needed', he says, 'either divine miracles manifesting themselves everywhere, or at least a philosophical religion which one day will persuade the philosophers who are prepared to listen to it with an open mind'.[22] Against Alexander and Averroes, Ficino deploys his Plotinus, fully armed with a solid and unrivalled form of personal intellectualism and immortality.

These three traits of Ficino's Plotinus are tightly interlaced. It is often the case that while wearing his 'post-Plotinian' hat, Plotinus is also concerned with rescuing what, for Ficino, was Aristotle's original view on the soul *and* with showing the essential harmony of philosophy and religion. This complex identity, I hope, will become clearer by reading the five chapters in this book.

Outline of the Book

The title of this book indicates that my study of Ficino's Plotinus focuses on 'human nature' and the 'soul'. In fact, this was also the focus of Ficino's own study of Plotinus. In reading, translating, and commenting on the *Enneads*, Ficino was not drawn to the One or the Intellect. Nor was he drawn to the Soul of the World, or to daemons, or to the stars. He was drawn to the human soul. Indeed, it was the harmony of metaphysics and anthropology that Ficino admired most in Plotinus. Plotinus's description of human nature as a complex system of interactions between a discarnate and an incarnate self and his claim that, of the two, it is the discarnate self that is truly 'human', deeply informed Ficino's thought from the earliest days of his Platonic career.

Chapter 1 looks at the birth of Ficino's Plotinus, showing how Ficino became acquainted with the *Enneads* and why he regarded Plotinus as Plato's most sublime interpreter. It also provides an introductory discussion of the first two traits discussed above, i.e. Plotinus's closeness to certain central principles of the Christian religion and his acceptance of some philosophical tenets which belong to later forms of Platonism.

The second and third chapters discuss what I have indicated as the third trait of Ficino's Plotinus, that is, his concern with rescuing Aristotle's original view on the soul. As I said above, Ficino thought that his newly discovered Plotinus could perform an invaluable service for philosophy: that he could provide an alternative to the dominant but perverted interpretations of Aristotle's *De anima*. For Plotinus's position as regards both the soul and the separate intellect, he believed, had the merit of being in harmony with not only Plato but with Aristotle as well.

Chapter 2 shows that Ficino built his criticism of Alexander of Aphrodisias's mortalism on Plotinus's idea of a 'presence without participation'. In fact, for Plotinus, it is not only the intellect that is discarnate, but the soul too. The soul gives life to the body without participating in the nature of the body: it enlivens and forms the body from without. Plotinus believed that the living being (τὸ συναμφότερον) results not from the coming together of the body and the soul, but from the coming together of the body and an image (εἴδωλον) of the soul. I also show that Ficino lingers on Plotinus's use of the verb παρεῖναι, which indicates a presence 'by the side', to stress the difference between being present *to* the body and being present *in* the body. In excavating this position, Ficino praises Plotinus for having described a form of hylomorphism in which, *contra* Alexander, the soul supplied its entelechy to the body without becoming metaphysically involved with the body.

I devote Chapter 3 to Ficino's criticism of Averroes's so-called monopsychism, that is, the view that there is one single intellect for all human beings. I claim that Ficino's insistence on and even obsession with criticising monopsychism betrays an underlying attraction towards the lofty and ever-acting nature of the *nous pathêtikos* as described by the Arab commentator. In fact, Averroes is Ficino's bête noire, by whom he is, however, irresistibly charmed. For even though, in Ficino's eyes, the Commentator had 'de-humanised' the intellect by depriving it of all individuality, he had also revealed the undeniable tribute to Plato in Aristotle's *De anima* III.5. Indeed, monopsychism was attractive philosophically inasmuch as it explained the possibility of the knowledge of universals and ensured that the intellective soul, as demanded by Aristotle, was not mixed with the body.

While Ficino found the separateness of Intellect insidious, yet unsettlingly appealing, he could not admit Averroes's view that the act of understanding occurs in the human mind through occasional contact between the *formae imaginativae* or *phantasmata* in the cogitative faculty and the intelligible forms in the material intellect. Averroes, moreover, claimed that the death of an individual brought with it the destruction of the imagination – the essential condition for individual thinking – and that all traces of individuality relapsed thereupon into nothingness, whereas the *nous poiêtikos* continued to enjoy its eternal thinking of Forms, completely unconcerned with human affairs. This solution, in Ficino's eyes, robbed the individual of his or her inherent capability to understand. Thus, for Ficino, Averroes was guilty of two serious philosophical crimes, one metaphysical and one epistemological. He stood charged of denying both the ontological independence of the intellectual soul from the two intellects, and the self-determination of individual understanding. In Plotinus, by contrast, Ficino saw a rock-solid defence of the metaphysical belonging of the individual intellect to Intellect as a hypostasis. This unity could be broken, so to speak, from a psychological perspective – as we can or cannot be aware that our truest nature is to be intellects. However, the identity of intellect and

Intellect is not affected by our awareness (or unawareness) of it. For Plotinus, we are intellectual *by nature* – whether or not we, as incarnate selves, acknowledge it.

Chapter 4 analyses Ficino's reception of Plotinus's account of the soul's faculties, with a special focus on the imagination. In Ficino's commentary, the bi-dimensional psychology described in the *Enneads* becomes a multi-level psychology, so to speak. For in addition to Plotinus's distinction between a higher-rational and a lower-irrational soul, Ficino ascribes to each of the soul's powers – the intellect, reason, the imagination, and the senses – a more perfect and a less perfect level of operation. Hence, the soul, as emerges from his account, is able to use each faculty at two different heights – closer to Intellect or to the body. This view agreed with one of the primary concepts of his philosophy: that the nature of man is such that it mirrors divine things without letting go of mortal ones and is the bond which joins Being and Becoming together, as in one of the most famous images from his *Platonic Theology*. Of all the Plotinian soul's faculties, Ficino seems to be particularly attracted to the imagination, on account of the imagination's ability to mediate between the higher and the lower soul and to provide the soul with self-awareness. This faculty, Ficino believed, oscillated between conditions of heightened perception, on the one hand, and the vital dispositions which ruled the lower parts of the soul and governed the body, on the other. In this way, it kept the two extremes of human nature connected. Moreover, the imagination was responsible for the soul's perception of the temporal relations between events which characterize embodied life as opposed to the timeless existence of Intellect. Because of its intermediate nature between spirit and matter, the imagination played a key role in the relationship between mind and body and was responsible for the general well-being of the individual. Ficino is very attentive to the psychosomatic dimension of the soul's procession of images, giving detailed descriptions of the ways in which images are responsible for different physiological processes, from falling ill and recovering to being lovesick and conceiving a child.

In Chapter 5, I explore some aspects of Ficino's daemonology and of his view that stars are not causes, but 'signifiers' of what happens on earth. The focus is primarily on *Enneads* III.4.3 ('On Our Allotted Guardian Daemon') and II.3 ('On Whether the Stars Are Causes'). I concentrate on the philosophical implications of the soul's interactions with entities higher on the ontological scale, whose sophistic nature had important epistemological consequences. I also compare Ficino's fascination with external daemons as masters of illusion with Plotinus's interest in the psychological dimension of the daemon. Plotinus considered one's guardian daemon to be the trace left by the intellect within the soul – a token of divine life. In fact, external daemons were philosophically insignificant for him and the 'daemonic', he believed, was an inner, luminous region where the soul could, and should, withdraw to reconnect with its divine source. For Ficino, by contrast, the 'daemonic' was a hazy – at times even murky – territory where the influence and action of external daemons were interiorized by the soul. This interiorization often resulted in the soul becoming trapped in the web of appearances rather than becoming emancipated from them. Since Ficino believed that human souls, daemons, and planets were connected by invisible chains extending everywhere, Chapter 5 is also concerned with the role of astral influences in the life of the soul. In his work on providence, Plotinus famously attacked a certain kind of astrology which assumed a causal relation between planetary and earthly events. In his *Commentary*, Ficino begins with Plotinus's position but takes his discussion well beyond Plotinus, showing a remarkable knowledge of late ancient and medieval astrological literature. Indeed, Ficino's commentary on *Enneads* II.3 opens up a vibrant new world, one which expands from Saturn to the Moon, from the Alexandria of Ptolemy to Renaissance Florence, into which Plotinus temporarily disappears. In this world, we see the Hellenistic poet Aratus and the Persian astrologer Abû Ma'shar scan the sky, and Porphyry arguing

with Iamblichus on whether our guardian daemon is given to us according to one single star or to the general disposition of the heavens. We learn about the planets which hunt the Zodiac and even hear stories from Ficino's everyday life, such as that of two twin sisters, born simultaneously (*sine intermissione*) under the exact same constellation. However, Ficino says, the two little girls went on to face different, yet equally tragic fates: one died of illness after seven weeks, while the other was suffocated after seven months by an unskilled childminder. Ficino also tells us of two twin brothers born into a family in his neighbourhood – again *sine intermissione* – who grew up to be very different in their physical constitution, character, and fate (*corporibus*, *ingeniis*, *casibus diversissimi*). Finally, we hear how Ficino, with the help of a midwife, was able to save the life of an infant born under Saturnian influence in the eighth month of gestation.

These stories set the context for Ficino's central claim that celestial bodies have no causal power over earthly events – let alone the mind, its free action, and free will. However, they can act on the psychosomatic composite (at times even perniciously as, for example, on new-born children) and on our emotional persona. This is because stars, just like daemons, are both outside and inside the soul, in the sense that their influences, like daemonic influences, can be interiorized, that is, transformed into a psychological or psycho-physiological act that takes place within the soul or the soul–body composite. This act of interiorization is made possible by the fluid relations of harmony and attunement which govern the universe. These relations, of which Ficino's Plotinus is the exquisite narrator, bring together the crystalline spheres and the dusty earth, daemons and men, discarnate intellects and incarnate souls. They also explain why stars cannot be causes but sometimes can be signs. Indeed, dancing to the same tune as the other components of the interconnected universe, stars can predict the moves of their fellow dancers and tell their stories in a visible language. However, as Ficino never tires of repeating, stars do not write the stories they tell.

Ficino's entire career as a philosopher was devoted to proving that the ever-changing and free human soul was God's most cherished creature, to which He had given the gift of immortality. It is no surprise, therefore, that the human soul, with its capacity for the most abstract philosophical contemplation and the deepest form of religious devotion, was at the centre of Ficino's revival of the *Enneads*. His presentation of Plotinus as a supreme interpreter of Plato, a sublime philosopher, and a powerful *theurgos*, who had a god as his guardian spirit, was the crowning achievement in his lifelong praise of the human soul. For this achievement Ficino had prepared for over twenty-five years, reading, translating, and using the *Enneads* as a central text to untangle the truest nature of Platonic metaphysics and philosophical anthropology. In fact, I would dare to say that after the late 1460s there is no Ficino without Plotinus. Definitely, his *Platonic Theology* is as Plotinian as his *Commentary on the 'Enneads'*. We should henceforth consider Ficino's Plotinus as an illuminating guide to understanding the ingenious and philologically-based dialogue which Ficino had with the Greek Plotinus and the Platonists of late antiquity – however different his Plotinus might be from our current perception of who Plotinus is.

Plotinus and His Daemons

A Platonic universe is a daemonic universe. For Ficino, no one could doubt this. In fact, the idea that discarnate forms of life and intelligence – I prefer not to say 'disembodied', as daemons have their own spiritual bodies – shared the cosmos with human beings had a seminal place in ancient cosmology. This idea was already fully developed in Pythagorean works, as well as in Plato, but it turned into a sort of philosophical subfield with the Platonists of the generation before Plotinus, such as Plutarch, Apuleius, Maximus of Tyre, and Numenius of Apamea. Daemons ensured the continuity of being between different metaphysical levels; they were the intermediate nature, με,ταξύ in Greek,

between opposite ends of a universe which unfolded effortlessly from the fullness of being of the divine to the nothingness of matter. In other words, they were the link by which Nature kept herself connected. The timeless appeal of Platonic philosophy relies precisely on the conflicted nature of its metaphysics, which assumes the existence of two irreconcilable – yet connected by a continuity of life and being – levels of reality. Daemons embody this continuity. They join the absolute transcendence of the first principle to the world of generation, the loftiness of the gods' celestial habitations to human bodies, heavenly fire to air and to the earth, permanence to change. These 'intermediate, godlike powers', Apuleius writes, 'carry both our desires and our good deeds to the gods'. They go back and forth between earth and heaven, 'conveying prayers from here and gifts from there' and 'carrying requests from here and help from there, as it were ambassadors and goodwill messengers for both'.

With the philosophers of the generation after Plotinus, daemons acquired a great philosophical, cosmological, and anthropological relevance. For Iamblichus, as Gregory Shaw has it, 'they completed the circuit of divine life that descends continually into sensible expression while remaining rooted in the Forms'. Daemonic action, Shaw goes on, was both 'centrifugal', i.e. they brought the divine gifts down to men, and 'convertive', for they aided the soul to escape the body and rejoin with the divine.[5] Over a century after Iamblichus, Proclus organised the province of discarnate being into an extensively articulated hierarchical taxonomy: gods, angels, daemons (of a higher and of a lower rank), and heroes. I agree with Michael Allen that, for the most part, Ficino 'followed Proclus in his daemonological speculations', inheriting 'the most systematic version of Platonic daemonology with its host of intricate scholastic distinctions'[8] Indeed, with the theurgic turn in late ancient philosophy, daemons became important players in the grand enterprise of reuniting the soul and the divine on earth. The densest and most detailed chapters in the history of daemonology were written in this period.

Intriguingly, Plotinus's place in this history is contested. Unlike his predecessors and successors, Plotinus's main, and perhaps only, demonological interest is in daemons understood as *partes animae*, as in *Timaeus* 90a–c, *Phaedo* 107d, and *Republic* X.617e and 620d.[9] He did admit the existence of discarnate beings who interact with humans, but these remain in the background of his philosophical discussion. In the *Enneads*, it is the daemon as a psychic power which takes centre stage.[10] In fact, Plotinian daemonology is both interlaced with and subordinate to psychology, and daemons are introduced only to explain some aspects of the soul's life, especially metensomatosis. For in addition to becoming humans, animals, or plants, Plotinus believed that departed souls could also become daemons. But who becomes a daemon? In *Enneads* III.4.3, a surprisingly long-neglected treatise which is just now receiving increasing attention, Plotinus replies: 'He who was one here (ἐν,ραῦθα) too'. And who, then, becomes a god? 'Certainly he who was one here (ἐν,ραῦθα)'. This apparently obscure passage introduces the view that whether we shall become daemons or gods depends on which psychic faculty has dominated during our earthly life. This faculty, which Plotinus calls rò ἐνεργοῦν, not only establishes the degree of divinity of our afterlife identity, but also appoints the daemon which will watch over us as a tutelary spirit in our next incarnation. He writes:

> *For what worked in a man (rò ἐνεργῆσαν) leads him [after death], since it was his ruler and guide here too. Is this, then, 'the daemon to whom he was allotted while he lived'? No, but that which is before the working principle; for this presides inactive over the man, but that which comes after it acts.*

The way we conduct our embodied existence relies on the interplay of τὸ ἐνεργοῦν, which, as John Dillon has it, represents 'the centre of gravity of our consciousness and personality', and the daemon itself, which watches over τὸ ἐνεργοῦν without taking action.[16] Therefore, if we live according to the senses, 'the daemon is the rational principle; but if we live by the rational principle, the daemon is what is above this [i.e. the intellect], presiding inactive and giving its consent (συγχωρῶν) to the principle which works'. Aware of the obscurity of Plotinus's doctrine and language in this passage, Ficino carefully discusses the role played by τὸ ἐνεργοῦν (which he translates as *qui operatur*),[18] explaining that it can be regarded as: (1) a 'powerful faculty' (*potentia*) of the soul, (2) the soul's 'moral disposition' (*affectio*), and (3) 'a productive and industrious force' (*effectrix et negotiosa potentia*). He also specifies that in this present life, τὸ ἐνεργοῦν is the 'the proper agent' (*proprius effector*) of our actions.

The definition of *affectio* recalls a passage in *Enneads* III.4.5 where the use of the word αἵρεσις (choice/choosing) to describe the activity of the soul in the other world (ἐκεῖ) before it enters the world of generation, is explained by Plotinus as an enigmatic way of referring (αἰνίττεται) to the soul's universal and ubiquitous deliberative power (προαίρεσις – Ficino translates this by *propositum*) and moral disposition (διάθεσις, *affectio*). Plotinus thus makes it clear that it is τὸ ἐνεργοῦν which makes the decision regarding our daemon, for 'it is rightly said that "we shall choose"'.

It must be remarked that the daemon and τὸ ἐνεργοῦν are in a relationship of mutual dependence. For on the one hand the daemon cannot be outclassed by τὸ ἐνεργοῦν, but on the other hand, τὸ ἐνεργοῦν is responsible for choosing its daemon and appointing it to its role of guiding principle. This reciprocal control is the pivotal point of our embodied life, both in a theoretical and in a practical sense. After death, this psychological balance is temporarily altered, for the daemon leaves the separate soul, which becomes identified with τὸ ἐνεργοῦν. Those souls in which the daemon and τὸ ἐνεργοῦν had coincided become themselves daemons or, in case of divinely inspired people, such as Plotinus, even gods. Let us see how Ficino explains this:

> *If [the soul] has lived in the manner of a plant, it forms after this life the body of a plant in which the vegetal power alone is active. Sense presides over such a life in the manner of a daemon, not as an observer that acts but as one that is attendant. Similarly if the soul living as an animal finally becomes an animal, exercising only sense together with the vegetal power, an inactive rational power in the manner of a certain observing daemon hangs over it. A person who has lived according to reason together with sense has a mind standing by him in the manner of a daemon. Finally, a person who has lived according to mind seems to have a god as his overseer in place of a daemon.*

The interactions – if I may use this term, despite the fact that, as I have said, the daemon itself does not really act – between the daemon and τὸ ἐνεργοῦν are important for an understanding of the complex dynamics which inform the actual self that exists in the here and now of the ἐνταῦθα. If we agree with Lloyd Gerson that the self 'represents the "link" between incarnate and discarnate activities', we must admit that the self is also the link between τὸ ἐνεργοῦν and the daemon. In fact, the relationship between these two psychic entities forms the underlying cause of each individual's personality.

To understand the 'daemonic' nature of incarnate life in Plotinus, however, it will be useful to make a distinction between personality and individuality. Personality can be understood as the 'persona' of the incarnated self, the mask which is crafted out of discarnate activities (intellection) and incarnate activities (discursive reasoning, memories, and desires). Individuality, by contrast, is the self laid open, in the nakedness of disembodiment.[26] This important distinction, however, raises even more questions. For example: does the Plotinian daemon embody our individuality, even though it shapes

– through interactions with the incarnate self – our personality? Can the daemon be said to inform the individual psychological traits of animals as it does with humans? In the peacefulness of its contemplation, the daemon has a close resemblance to the undescended part of the soul – a bastion of individuality. However, from a Plotinian point of view, it cannot be identified with it, because its contemplation is directed downwards: it watches over the active principle of incarnate activities. Moreover, Plotinus claims that a soul which is transmigrating into an animal body can have a wicked (πονηρός) and stupid (εὐήθης) guardian daemon, in which case it is obvious that the daemon is not the intellect.[27] Admittedly, Plotinus's account of the daemon's position with regards to the hierarchy of knowledge and being is not clear. At least not immediately. Unlike other Platonic daemons, the Plotinian spirit does not seem to be halfway between the intelligible and the material worlds, for it is much closer to the former than to the latter. This brings about another important question: how is the daemon related to the idea of μεταύ, which distinctively characterised the philosophical and religious understanding of the 'daemonic' at the time? Was Plotinus an exception to this general understanding? I do not think so.

Plotinus's metaphysics do not need intermediaries to *physically* fill the gap between the soul and Intellect, to which the soul remains always connected. The 'daemonic', for him, is rather the trail of Intellect/intellect within the descending/descended soul. But he also makes clear that we cannot call by the term 'daemon' any of the beings which inhabit the intelligible world, for they are gods (θεοί). 'Even if there is an Idea of daemon (αὐτοδαίμων), he says, '[it is better] to call this a god'. Hence, the intellect itself, which belongs to Intellect, is a god, not a daemon. A daemon is rather the 'trace' (ἴχνος) left by each soul 'when it enters the universe'. In this sense, a daemon is a vestige of divine life. The famous story of Plotinus's own tutelary spirit which, summoned by an Egyptian priest in the temple of Isis in Rome, revealed itself to be a god and not an ordinary daemon, confirms this view. Plotinus lived according to his undescended part which, dwelling in Intellect together with the Forms, could only be a god. In fact, in the biography of his master, Porphyry remarks that it was this face-to-face encounter with his own tutelary spirit that prompted Plotinus to write *Enneads* III.4.3.

Since the daemon has a liminal nature, 'exteriority' and 'interiority' become rather flexible notions. I agree with Andrei Timotin that the Plotinian daemon is 'at the same time inside and outside the soul'.[33] 'Outside' as it is not physically within the soul but watches over it without acting and its tutelage often remains unperceived; 'inside', in a twofold way: (1) as the trail left by Intellect in the soul, and (2) as the soul's connatural yearning for Intellect. After all, Plotinus himself argued that the daemon 'is not entirely outside but only in the sense that he is not bound to us, and is not active in us but is ours'.

This brings us back to Shaw's understanding of the daemons' action as both 'centrifugal' and 'convertive'. Accordingly, Shaw defines daemons as the agents of πρόοδος, ('procession'), and ἐπιστροφή, ('return'). But these were Iamblichus's daemons, external to a soul which was fully embodied. What about Plotinus's daemons? Can we interpret them according to the same categories? At first sight the answer would seem no. For in Plotinus both the source of πρόοδος (Intellect) and the subject of ἐπιστροφή (the embodied self) are 'ours'. They are parts of the same nature, i.e. 'we'. Hence, 'we' do not need the 'daemonic' to perform a 'centrifugal' and a 'convertive' action. Ἐπιστροφή is the return of the self to the self, rather than to a different reality. Why would we have to rely on a medium to reconnect ourselves to ourselves? The answer is that the soul's enslavement to the body has produced a hiatus between what we are as 'we' and what we are as 'self', i.e. between what we are as personae and what we are as individuals. This hiatus is not metaphysical, for 'we' still *are* our 'self', but psychological, for we have lost awareness of being such.

The Plotinian soul does not need an ὄχημα as a physical means of its descent and alienation, for it does not *physically* descend or become alienated. However, it does need a daemon to fill the psychological gap between awareness (of being incarnated selves) and unawareness (of being discarnate selves). The 'daemonic' is necessary to keep our two different dimensions harmoniously together and, eventually, to reconnect them.

In this sense, Plotinus's daemon is not so different from Iamblichus's daemons: it is released by the soul's highest part, almost as a comet tail, when the soul enters the world of generation. It is a sort of divine gift which proceeds from Intellect/intellect and which the soul, being itself intellect, bestows upon itself when it abandons Intellect. In fact, Plotinus remarks that a daemon proceeds only from a soul 'in the universe' (ἐν κόσμῳ), for, as we mentioned, 'the pure soul produces a god'. Thus, even if the daemon is not the agent of πρόοδος, it certainly appears to be a consequence of it. On the other hand, as a trace of the divine, the daemonic can be accessed by the soul during embodied life, in this way facilitating the soul's recognition of its heavenly lineage and prompting its ἐπιστροφή. The daemonic, for Plotinus, is a sort of image of the quintessential self, whose semi-divine tutelage helps the soul to transcend the material world. Intriguingly, Ficino has a different, if not opposite, view of what accounts for the daemonic within our soul. For him, it is the imagination (reflecting the μετα4ύ on a cognitive level) the faculty which acts 'daemonically'.

Ficino's view, as we have seen, is that the soul's higher faculties are free, while the physiological dimension of the living being is influenced and governed by Nature (understood as the lowest power of the Soul of the World). Both can be *signified* by the stars, which also have a certain power on the psycho-physiological make up of the individual. But he also believed that stars make something *in* us. In fact, they are *in* us. As he says in a well-known passage from a letter to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici: 'the whole heaven is within us (*totum in nobis est caelum*)'. This claim, as Melissa Meriam Bullard has observed, shows that 'for Ficino the astral forces and humors, which according to accepted wisdom originated in the planets, resided also in man, where they can be more easily observed and managed'. However, there is something more in this claim which previous scholarship has never fully articulated. Something which can be understood only in relation to the daemons, which are bound to stars by chains that 'extend everywhere from the highest to the lowest'.[165] As with daemons, stars are, for Ficino, both outside and inside the soul; their powers are the counterpart, in the outside world, of the psycho-physiological features of the συναμφότερον. And just as the daemon is the force which 'adapts our life to fate', so stars help us carry out our chosen existence in harmony with the universe. In a way, stars, too, are the 'fulfillers of our choices', inasmuch as they contribute to our life being fully aligned to the soul's true nature – and to the universe:

> *Whoever is born possessed of a sound mind is naturally formed by the heavens for some honorable work and way of life. Whoever therefore wants to have the heavens propitious, let him undertake above all this work, this way of life; let him pursue it zealously, for the heavens favor his undertaking. Assuredly for this above all else you were made by nature – the activity which from tender years you do, speak, play-act, choose, dream, imitate; that activity which you try more frequently, which you perform more easily, in which you make the most progress, which you enjoy above all else, which you leave off unwillingly.*

Ficino's Plotinus belonged to this interconnected world, in which different levels of being were part of the same circuit of divine life continually inclining down to material expression while remaining rooted in the intelligible realm. In such a world, daemons were all around human beings. They not only watched over them from a hidden dwelling inside the soul, but their influences were woven into the fabric of nature, deeply embedded in the heavenly fire and in the air surrounding the earth. They

breathed upon the intellect, *agitated* reason, and *turned around* the imagination.[168] Their 'centrifugal' and 'convertive' action helped souls in and out of the fate of mortal existence. In this world, planets could reach down for embodied souls, but souls, in turn, could 'reach up' for planetary influences through the subtle art of 'obtaining life form the heavens'. All these levels of life were not only interconnected, but in attunement – singing and dancing to the same melody, i.e. that of the lyre which the earthly Apollo played on earth but plucked in heaven. Ficino's Plotinus not only inhabited this world, he unveiled it and read it, and he unravelled its metaphysical threads so that their connection to the divine oneness became clear.

However, according to the view of rationalism as the expression of the truest spirit of Hellenic philosophy, championed by Dodds, Ficino's Plotinus misused and abused the *Enneads*; he traded Plotinus's sustained philosophical rigour for the syncretism of his successors, i.e. those same 'disruptive forces' who, according to Friedrich Schleiermacher – the superb Plato scholar who in the early nineteenth century famously purified Platonic scholarship from historical contaminations – shattered 'the self-autonomy of Plato's corpus'.[169] From such perspectives, by introducing theurgy into his commentary, Ficino had handed over Plotinus to the 'irrational'. Admittedly, Ficino's exegetical enterprise produced a Plotinus who was partly immersed in the post-Plotinian fog of magic and superstition which Dodds tried to disperse. However, as I said in the Introduction, Ficino's Plotinus never ceased to be a sublime metaphysical philosopher. In fact, to the attentive reader of Ficino's *Commentary*, Dodds' s fog will appear as a clear aura in which daemons, the soul's spiritual bodies, and theurgic devices were integral to a lucidily constructed metaphysics which is resolutely and irreducibily rational. As we have seen, it was precisely because of Plotinus's luminous metaphysics that Ficino rebuked him for having admitted metensomatosis into animals' bodies into an otherwise impeccably rational system – for Ficino, a significant failure for a philosopher of Plotinus's stature.

If Plotinus's philosophical narrative made for fullness and rigour in Platonic thought about God and the world, in Ficino's view, the theurgy of Plotinus's successors enacted this narrative. By showing the relationship between Being and Becoming *in action*, theurgy proved the truthfulness and rationality of Plotinus's philosophy on a practical and even experiential level. Far from expressing a sense of philosophical sloppiness, Iamblichus represented the culmination of Plotinus's rationality; theurgy acted out the philosophical anthropology encapsulated in Plotinus's belief that 'the soul is many things, and all things, both the things above and the things below down to the limits of all life'. The metaphysical premises of interconnectedness and attunement find confirmation at the level of the natural world when, through theurgical practices, we become able to tune in to the divine. On these occasions, we join with the 'things above' without leaving the 'things below'.

The greatness of Plotinus, for Ficino, relied precisely in the fact that in interpreting Plato's world, he had structured it in such a way that not only could the human soul stand at the centre of the universe and belong in Intellect, but for the period of our sojourn on earth we *are* the universe. Just as both daemons and stars are both outside and inside our soul, so, is the universe. This, in Ficino's eyes, was the most important message of his Plotinus – a Plotinus who, for well over three hundred centuries after the publication of Ficino's translation and commentary on the *Enneads* in 1492, contributed to the diffusion in Europe of the three different traditions of Platonism (Platonic, Plotinian, and post-Plotinian) that converged and were blended together in him. <>

In the Presence of Schopenhauer by Michel Houellebecq, preface by Agathe Novak-Lechevalier, translated by Andrew Brown [Polity, 9781509543250]

The work of Michel Houellebecq – one of the most widely read and controversial novelists of our time – is marked by the thought of Schopenhauer. When Houellebecq came across a copy of Schopenhauer's Aphorisms in a library in his mid-twenties, he was bowled over by it and he hunted down a copy of his major philosophical work, The World as Will and Representation. Houellebecq found in Schopenhauer – the radical pessimist, the chronicler of human suffering, the lonely misanthrope – a powerful conception of the human condition and of the future that awaits us, and when Houellebecq's first writings appeared in the early 1990s, the influence of Schopenhauer was everywhere apparent.

But it was only much later, in 2005, that Houellebecq began to translate and write a commentary on Schopenhauer's work. He thought of turning it into a book but soon abandoned the idea and the text remained unpublished until 2017. Now available in English for the first time, **In the Presence of Schopenhauer** is the story of a remarkable encounter between a novelist and a philosopher and a testimony to the deep and enduring impact of Schopenhauer's philosophy on one of France's greatest living writers.

Contents

The history of a revolution

When, in 2005, Michel Houellebecq began this translation of and commentary on Schopenhauer's work — an arduous and somewhat surprising enterprise for Houellebecq, and one which alone testifies to the strength of his admiration — he had just finished writing *The Possibility of an Island.*[1] He devoted a few weeks to this new project, and initially thought of turning it into a book; then, rather quickly, he abandoned it. But he had in the meantime translated and commented on almost thirty extracts from two of the most famous works by Schopenhauer (1788-1860), *The World as Will and Representation,* and 'Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life'.[3]The former, the philosopher's main work, was also the work of a whole lifetime: the young Schopenhauer, who had just defended his thesis, worked intensely on it from 1814 to 1818, and a first version appeared in 1819; but he continued to add to it, and the work grew with successive editions until it became the imposing tome, often published in several volumes, which we know today. However, it was only with the publication of *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851), where he brought together various essays (including the 'Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life') setting out the essential points of his doctrine, that Schopenhauer finally — very late in life — found the public success he had always hoped for: `The comedy of my celebrity begins', he is supposed to have said, 'what am I to do with it now that my hair is grey?'

In the Presence of Schopenhauer, however, is not only a commentary: it is also the story of an encounter. At the age of around twenty-five or twenty-seven — which sets the scene in the first half of the 1980s — almost by chance, Houellebecq borrowed the 'Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life' from a library.

At the time, I already knew Baudelaire, Dostoevsky, Lautréamont, Verlaine, almost all the Romantics; a lot ofscience fiction, too. I had read the Bible, Pascal's Pensees, *Clifford D. Simak's* City, *Thomas Mann's* The Magic Mountain. *I wrote poems; I already had the impression I was rereading, rather than really reading; I thought I had at least come to the end of one period in my discovery of literature. And then, in a few minutes, everything dramatically changed.*

This was a decisive shock: the young man dashed across Paris, finally getting his hands on a copy of *The World as Will and Representation* which had quite suddenly become 'the most important book in the world'; and as a result of this new reading, he says, 'everything dramatically changed'.

`An author', says Francois, the narrator of *Submission,* `is above all a human being, present in his books', and 'only literature can give you access to a spirit from beyond the grave — a more direct, more complete, deeper access than you'd have in conversation with a friend'. No doubt it is precisely this mysterious and startling sensation that Houellebecq first felt on his discovery of Schopenhauer's work; no doubt, too, it was this encounter, so decisive for him, that he wanted to share with his readers by embarking on the writing of this text, significantly entitled *In the Presence of Schopenhauer.* The strength of the revelation of Schopenhauer's work was indubitably linked to the shock of recognizing an alter ego, someone with whom you immediately realize that you are going to enjoy a long companionship. Schopenhauer, the expert in suffering, the radical pessimist, the solitary misanthrope, proved to be 'reinvigorating' reading for Houellebecq — you feel less lonely when there are two of you. Indeed, one wonders whether Houellebecq was Schopenhauerian before reading Schopenhauer — or was it this reading that turned him into the man we know? Was he already, fundamentally, `unreconciled'? (with the world, with men, with life), or did Schopenhauer sow the seeds of conflict? Houellebecq already loved dogs better than he loved the human race — or should we recognize, here as elsewhere, the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer? Of course, it barely matters: we are here prying into the secrets of a long-term couple. What is certain, however, is that in 1991, the year when the first of Houellebecq's works were published, Schopenhauer was everywhere: in the (devilishly Schopenhauerian) title of his essay on Lovecraft, *Against the World, Against Life;* in the very first sentence of *Rester vivant (Staying Alive),*

`The world is an unfolding suffering', which angrily recalls the Schopenhauerian axiom that 'Suffering is essential to all life'; and even in these astonishing (to put it mildly) lines of verses from his first collection, *La Poursuite du bonheur (The Pursuit of Happiness):*

> I want to think of you, Arthur Schopenhauer,
> I love you and I see you in the reflection of the windows,
> The world is a dead end and I'm an old clown
> It's cold. It's very cold. Earth, adieu.

This encounter was almost love at first sight, then — but it also looks remarkably like a revolution. For Schopenhauer's philosophy, which aims to develop a `single thought' able to account for the real as a whole, in all its complexity, struck Houellebecq right from the start as a formidable operator of truth. Schopenhauer opened Houellebecq's eyes and taught him to contemplate the world as it is in itself — as entirely driven by a blind and endless 'will to live' which is the essence of all things, from inert matter to men, via plants and animals. In Schopenhauer, this foreign to the principle of reason, is the basis of the absurd and tragic character of all existence, whose sufferings are at once inevitable

(because 'all willing proceeds from need, and thus from deprivation, and thus from suffering') and devoid of any justification. It also explains the author's legendary pessimism. This is certainly a radical pessimism; but it is also a dynamic pessimism, since, according to Houellebecq, 'disillusion is no bad thing'. And. Schopenhauer, according to Nietzsche's formula in the third of his *Untimely Considerations,* proves to be the best of 'educators'. His words are comparable, says Nietzsche, to those of a father instructing his son: it is 'an honest, calm, good-natured discourse before an auditor who listens to it with love'.[16] Schopenhauer's work is a school of morality which instils into the reader the qualities of honesty, serenity and constancy which characterize its author; it is also, according to Nietzsche, a lesson in style (because morality and style are two sides of the same coin): `Schopenhauer's rough and somewhat bear-like soul teaches us not so much to feel the absence of the suppleness and courtly charm of good French writers as to disdain it' . Did Nietzsche always draw all the consequences of this? Houellebecq certainly did: it is no coincidence if he constantly replies to all those who eternally reproach him for lack of style by quoting Schopenhauer's famous saying 'the first — and virtually the only — condition of a good style is having something to say'.

As Michel Onfray has decisively shown, it is, in fact, the whole of Houellebecq's work that could be read through the filter of Schopenhauer's philosophy. In both cases, suffering is taken for granted, and there is the same pessimism, the same conception of style, and even the same central emphasis on compassion as the general basis for ethics; we also find the same salvific character of aesthetic contemplation, and the same impossibility of 'being at home' in the world. Once we have observed this influence, it comes as no surprise that Houellebecq initially conceived **IN THE PRESENCE OF SCHOPENHAUER** as a homage: 'I propose to show, through some of my favourite passages, why Schopenhauer's intellectual attitude remains to me a model for any future philosopher; and also why, even if you ultimately find yourself in disagreement with him, you cannot fail to be deeply grateful to him.'

But the enterprise — and herein lies its strength, and one of its major interests — reveals that Houellebecq does not stick to this project: in his dense, sometimes difficult commentaries on the extracts he takes the trouble to translate himself, Schopenhauer's work appears to him to be, not so much a lesson patiently and admirably assimilated, or even a model, as a formidable machine for thinking with. Little by little, the analysis emancipates itself from the letter of the text, and what we find is the outline of an investigation into the problems posed by splatter films and the representation of pornography in art, a criticism of the philosophies of the absurd, and, a little further on, a reflection on the emergence of urban poetry, the transformations of twentieth-century art, and the 'tragedy of banality' which 'remains to be written'. A wide-ranging set of ideas is reflected in this intensely personal exercise (everything here seems singularly Houellebecquian, including his note comparing 'the life of nomads' that arises from 'need', to the 'life of tourists' that arises from 'boredom'); and this thought experiment seems already to be opening up other horizons. Thus, it is doubtless no coincidence that *In the Presence of Schopenhauer* precedes *The Map and the Territory,* which is perhaps, of all Houellebecq's novels, the most Schopenhauerian.

Love stories end badly, and Houellebecq claims to have moved away from Schopenhauer 'a decade or so' after discovering him. Another encounter, with Auguste Comte, compelled him, he says, to become a positivist, `with a kind of disappointed enthusiasm': an (inevitably) reasonable new direction for him to take, but one without any warmth, deprived of the passionate exaltation that had accompanied the discovery of Schopenhauer. The article entitled `Approches du desarroi' (`Approaches to Disarray'), first published in 1993, must date back to roughly those years. In it, Houellebecq shows Schopenhauer overtaken by the very thing that he had refused to believe in and that lies right at the heart of the positivist doctrine: the movement of history. Schopenhauer's

revelation of the world as 'on the one hand existing as will (as desire, as vital impulse), and on the other hand perceived as a representation (in itself neutral, innocent, purely objective, capable as such of aesthetic reconstruction') now seems, he says, to have fizzled out. This revelation, one that Schopenhauer viewed as definitive, proves to have been defeated by the 'logic of the supermarket' that prevails in contemporary liberalism: instead of 'the total organic force obstinately striving for fulfilment' suggested by the word contemporary man only knows 'a scattering of desires' and 'a certain depression of the will's as for representation, 'deeply infected by meaning', weakened by a permanent state of self-consciousness, it has 'lost all innocence' — undermining `artistic and philosophical activity' at the same time as the very possibility of communication between men. We then slide 'into an unhealthy, fake, utterly derisory atmosphere'.[25] History will not have saved us from pessimism, then — far from it: by ruining the foundations of Schopenhauer's philosophy, it has ultimately merely aggravated its conclusions. Does this mean that history has deprived that philosophy of any validity? To answer this question, it is enough to read the solution that Houellebecq recommends at the end of his article: `Each individual, however, can produce in himself a sort of cold revolution, by moving for a while outside the flow of information and advertising. This is quite simple: it has never been so easy to adopt an aesthetic position towards the world: you just need to step aside.'[26] Suspend the will, be aware of the gap, actively practise being out of sync: Schopenhauer, now and forever. —Agathe Novak-Lechevalier <>

Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment (SECOND EDITION) by Phil Zuckerman [New York University Press, 9781479878086]

First edition "Silver" Winner of the 2008 *Foreword Magazine* Book of the Year Award, Religion Category

Before he began his recent travels, it seemed to Phil Zuckerman as if humans all over the globe were "getting religion"—praising deities, performing holy rites, and soberly defending the world from sin. But most residents of Denmark and Sweden, he found, don't worship any god at all, don't pray, and don't give much credence to religious dogma of any kind. Instead of being bastions of sin and corruption, however, as the Christian Right has suggested a godless society would be, these countries are filled with residents who score at the very top of the "happiness index" and enjoy their healthy societies, which boast some of the lowest rates of violent crime in the world (along with some of the lowest levels of corruption), excellent educational systems, strong economies, well-supported arts, free health care, egalitarian social policies, outstanding bike paths, and great beer.

Zuckerman formally interviewed nearly 150 Danes and Swedes of all ages and educational backgrounds over the course of fourteen months. He was particularly interested in the worldviews of people who live their lives without religious orientation. How do they think about and cope with death? Are they worried about an afterlife? What he found is that nearly all of his interviewees live their lives without much fear of the Grim Reaper or worries about the hereafter. This led him to wonder how and why it is that certain societies are non-religious in a world that seems to be marked by increasing religiosity. Drawing on prominent sociological theories and his own extensive research, Zuckerman ventures some interesting answers.

> This fascinating approach directly counters the claims of outspoken, conservative American Christians who argue that a society without God would be hell on earth. It is crucial, Zuckerman believes, for Americans to know that "society without God is not only possible, but it can be quite civil and pleasant."

Religious conservatives around the world often claim that a society without a strong foundation of faith would necessarily be an immoral one, bereft of ethics, values, and meaning. Indeed, the Christian Right in the United States has argued that a society without God would be hell on earth.

In **SOCIETY WITHOUT GOD, SECOND EDITION** sociologist Phil Zuckerman challenges these claims. Drawing on fieldwork and interviews with more than 150 citizens of Denmark and Sweden, among the least religious countries in the world, he shows that, far from being inhumane, crime-infested, and dysfunctional, highly secular societies are healthier, safer, greener, less violent, and more democratic and egalitarian than highly religious ones.

SOCIETY WITHOUT GOD, SECOND EDITION provides a rich portrait of life in a secular society, exploring how a culture without faith copes with death, grapples with the meaning of life, and remains content through everyday ups and downs. This updated edition incorporates new data from recent studies, updated statistics, and a revised Introduction, as well as framing around the now more highly developed field of secular studies. It addresses the dramatic surge of irreligion in the United States and the rise of the "nones," and adds data on societal health in specific US states, along with fascinating context regarding which are the most religious and which the most secular.

Review

"Zuckerman has been at the forefront of the growing field of Secular Studies for the best part of two decades. From *Society Without God*, it's easy to see why: beautifully written and engaging, drawing on both deep scholarship and an insightful mind. This is classic Zuckerman." -- Stephen Bullivant, Professor of Theology and the Sociology of Religion, St Mary's University, UK

Sociologist Zuckerman spent a year in Scandinavia seeking to understand how Denmark and Sweden became probably the least religious countries in the world, and possibly in the history of the world. While many people, especially Christian conservatives, argue that godless societies devolve into lawlessness and immorality, Denmark and Sweden enjoy strong economies, low crime rates, high standards of living and social equality. Zuckerman interviewed 150 Danes and Swedes, and extended transcripts from some of those interviews provide the book's most interesting and revealing moments. What emerges is a portrait of a people unconcerned and even incurious about questions of faith, God and life's meaning. Zuckerman ventures to answer why Scandinavians remain irreligious—e.g., the religious monopoly of state-subsidized churches, the preponderance of working women and the security of a stable society—but academics may find this discussion a tad thin. Zuckerman also fails to answer the question of contentment his subtitle speaks to. Still, for those interested in the burgeoning field of secular studies—or for those curious about a world much different from the devout U.S.—this book will offer some compelling reading. *(Oct.)*

"Puts to rest the belief that you need God in order to be a moral person, that irreligious societies are wracked by social problems, and that godless people are unhappy and unmoored. . . . In the case of Scandinavia: God may be dead, but Swedes and Danes lead rich, full lives. *Society Without God* is a colorful, provocative book that makes an original contribution to debates about atheism and religiosity. Ideal for classroom use, it will get students thinking about their own lives and choices." - Arlene Stein,author of *Shameless: Sexual Dissidence in American Culture*

"For those interested in the burgeoning field of secular studies' or for those curious about a world much different from the devout U.S.—this book will offer some compelling reading." -*Publishers Weekly*

"**Society without God, Second Edition** succeeds in documenting how the conditions of a liberal social welfare state promote contentment." -*Choice*

"*Society without God* is both a sociological analysis of irreligion and Zuckerman's apologia *pro vita sua*. He wants us to know that, contrary to the deeply held beliefs of some Americans, a society without god can be a good society and an irreligious person can be a moral person, too. To his credit, Zuckerman provides enough nuance and detail to allow a skeptic like me to see what Peter Berger called 'signals of transcendence' in the society without god he portrays. Along with the volume's engaging writing style, this makes it ideal for classroom use. I know my students will enjoy reading and discussing *Society without God*." -David Yamane,author of *The Catholic Church in State Politics*

"His reporting of previously published material is invaluable to persons not previously familiar with such information." -*Humanism Ireland*
"Most Americans are convinced that faith in God is the foundation of civil society. *Society Without God* reveals this to be nothing more than a well-subscribed, and strangely American, delusion. Even atheists living in the United States will be astonished to discover how unencumbered by religion most Danes and Swedes currently are. This glimpse of an alternate, secular reality is at once humbling and profoundly inspiring— and it comes not a moment too soon. Zuckerman's research is truly indispensable." -Sam Harris,author of the *New York Times*

"*Society Without God*" offers a unique perspective on the active debate regarding the necessity of religion . . . By turning to one of the most secular societies in the world, Scandanavia, Phil Zuckerman offers an empirically grounded account of a successful society where people are happy and content and help their neighbors without believing in God. The book is fluently written and highly illuminating. It offers an accessible entry to important questions in the study of religion and secularism." -Michael Pagis,Journal of the American Academy of Religion

"Despite this book's weighty topic, with its conversational writing style, Society Without God is amazingly readable, even fun. It presents rigorous arguments that are deceptively simple to understand, but that are, when you think about them more deeply, quite transformative."-*PopMatters*

"[Zuckerman] tells of a magical land where life expectancy is high and infant mortality low, where wealth is spread and genders live in equity, where happy, fish-fed citizens score high in every quality-of-life index: economic competitiveness, healthcare, environmental protection, lack of corruption, educational investment, technological literacy . . . well, you get the idea. Zuckerman (who has explored the sociology of religion in two previous books) has managed to show what nonbelief looks like when it's 'normal, regular, mainstream, common.' And he's gone at least partway to proving the central thesis of his book: 'Religious faith—while admittedly widespread—is not natural or innate to the human condition. Nor is religion a necessary ingredient for a healthy, peaceful, prosperous, and . . . deeply good society. -Louis Bayard,Salon.com

"In an anecdotal and eminently readable manner, Zuckerman offers a novel idea within the study of religious sociology." -*Library Journal*

CONTENTS

It was the presidential election of George W. Bush, back in 2004, and then a statistical question posed to me about atheists that provided the inital seeds that would blossom into the writing of this book. Although Bush's presidency and statistics on atheists may have very little to do with each other, they became closely connected in my mind and played their part in propelling me to move to Denmark for over a year to conduct research on secular culture in Scandinavia.

Let's start with George W. Bush's election. It was the first week of November 2004, and Bush had just won a second term as president, beating the Democratic nominee, John Kerry, by two percentage points. The day after the election, I was sitting in my car, wedged between countless other cars, on a smoggy and crowded freeway in Southern California, *listening* to news radio. All the voices that day—from the progressive pundits on NPR to the right-wing personalities on the AM dial—were Bering their analyses of why Bush had won, and a main thesis put forth by all of them was that Bush's victory had been strongly linked to his ability to galvanize the support of "values voters," that is, those religious Americans out there compelled by "moral" issues. For example, in exit polls taken on the day of voting, one national survey found that people cited "moral values" as the issue that had mattered most to them in selecting their choice of candidate.' And many observers noted that Bush's victory had been bolstered by the fact that proposed legislation banning gay marriage had been placed on the ballots in eleven states; according to a *New York Times* article from November 4, 2004, these numerous anti-gay-marriage ballot measures "appear to have acted like magnets for thousands of socially conservative voters in rural and suburban communities who might not otherwise have voted," and "in tight races, those voters . . . may have tipped the balance" for the Bush ticket.

For weeks, various versions of this thesis were repeated, with pundits continually citing the significance of people of faith—mostly evangelicals—as being motivated by their "morals" and "values" in accounting for Bush's successful reelection.

But for me, the fact that morals and values would be of motivational importance for people when voting for a president didn't seem all that surprising. After all, doesn't everyone decide how to vote on the basis of their morals and values? Of course.

What was surprising to me, however, was what those Bush-voter "values" and "morals" specifically consisted of: antipathy toward gay marriage and opposition to abortion. I found it quite noteworthy that being against gay marriage and antiabortion were positions so readily spun by the political observers—and uncritically characterized by the news media—as "moral," with those who harbored such views being unanimously labeled as "values voters:'

Of course, it could be argued that opposing gay marriage is moral because it is in accordance with certain people's deeply held beliefs regarding their God's presumed disapproval of homosexuality. And many people believe that opposing abortion is moral because it expresses lifeaffirming care for potential life and concern for the well-being of zygotes, embryos, and fetuses. However, support for both gay marriage and abortion can also be framed in equally moral terms. Many people argue, for instance, that it is moral to support gay marriage because such a position propels fairness and equality, and gay marriage allows people who love each other to be legally wed, with all the rights, privileges, and symbolic stature that goes with such a union. As for abortion, many people believe that it is moral to support its legality because it allows women to control their own bodies, prevents unsafe, back-alley abortions that can result in injury or death, and protects women whose lives might be in danger due to complications during pregnancy. And yet, despite both sides of the gay-marriage and abortion issues being able to couch their positions in terms of morals and values, it was only the oppositional side that was dubbed "moral." It was only those who voted against gay marriage and were against abortion who were bequeathed with the mantle of "values voters."

But again, why? I think it has something to do with Americans' deeply entrenched association of morality with Christianity specifically and religion in general. In the United States, almost any value steeped in religious dogma is automatically seen as moral, whereas any value steeped **in** secular, nontheistic ethics is not granted such a vaunted status. And **this** has something to do with Americans' discomfort with a godless w**orldview, which** many see as inherently destructive and uncivil.

Such matters pounded in my head and heart in those postelection November days of 2004. And then, out of the blue, I was asked to find **out** how many atheists there are in the world.

Early into Bush's second term, I received an email from the late Michael Martin, who was then a professor of philosophy at Boston University. The author of many books on religion and atheism, Martin was putting together a new edited volume, **THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO ATHEISM** *(2007).* It would be a comprehensive resource, with chapters covering various aspects of atheism: its meaning and philosophical justifications; the history of atheism; atheism's relation to naturalism, ethics, evolution, feminism, and so forth. And Martin also wanted to include **a** chapter on the sociology of atheism. Specifically, he wanted a chapter **that** presented data on just how many atheists there are in the world, by country. And that's what he was hoping I would write. I accepted the invitation, not only out of personal interest but also because I assumed such statistical information would be readily available and easy to find.

I was wrong. No one had ever attempted to estimate the number of atheists in the world—and for good reason: reliable data on how many people lack a belief in God is hard to generate. First off, you need a lot of funding to conduct national or international surveys—composed of random, representative samples—that will render generalizable information about large populations. Second, even if you can conduct such surveys, response rates are notoriously low; most people, when asked to respond to a survey, don't. And when only a small percentage of a given population responds to a survey, their responses cannot be generalized. Third, many societies are nondemocratic, run by secular despots who are antireligious (such as Vietnam) or religious regimes that are antisecular

(such as Saudi Arabia). In such oppressive societies, being religious or nonreligious can have seriously dangerous ramifications. So, just as religious people living under secular dictatorships will be reluctant to admit to their belief in God, so too will atheists living under religious dictatorships be reluctant to admit to their atheism. Fourth, even in open, democratic societies without any threat of government reprisal, many individuals often feel that it is necessary to say that they are religious or that they do believe in God, simply because such a response is socially desirable or culturally appropriate, with atheism often being a highly stigmatized identity.' Finally, terminology in national or international surveys can be an intrinsic problem; definitions of specific words seldom translate well cross-culturally, with terms such as "faith," "religious," "God," or even "atheist" having different meanings in different cultures, making cross-national comparisons, or overall global assessments, tricky.

However, rather than let the foregoing limitations discourage me, I went ahead and did the best I could, searching for whatever existing studies and published data I could find that would at least provide a rough estimate of the number of atheists worldwide. After all, in my field of expertise—the social sciences—we must work with whatever data we can muster in our ongoing attempt to make some sense of human existence, rather than just throw up our hands in defeat in the face of ever-present methodological stumbling blocks and evidence-gathering limitations.

Thus, in preparation to write the chapter for Martin's new volume, I spent about six months getting my hands on any and every contemporary national and international survey I could find that included any questions on belief in God. And from the various responses contained within that gathered heap of studies, I estimated that there were approximately somewhere between 505 million and 749 million nonbelievers in God in the world in the early 2000S.[5] It was a crude estimate, to be sure, and has since been greatly improved and updated by the sociologists Ariela Keysar and Juhem Navarro-Rivera, who, in 2013, put the global total of atheists more accurately at somewhere between 450 million and 500 million, constituting approximately 7 percent of the world's population.'

But what stood out for me in researching and writing that initial chapter was observing which specific countries around the world had the lowest levels of religious belief and behavior.

Enter Denmark and Sweden.

In survey after survey, I found that the people of Denmark and Sweden—in comparison with most other countries—exhibited some , of the lowest levels of belief in God, belief in heaven and hell, belief in the existence of sin, belief in life after death, and belief in the biblical miracles of Jesus. They also had among the lowest levels of weekly and monthly church attendance in the world. Thus, they seemed to be among the most secular societies on Earth—and not because some oppressive, atheist dictatorship persecuted religious people and made faith and worship illegal, as was the case in the former USSR, but because contemporary Danes and Swedes, on their own volition, in an open and free society, just didn't care all that much about God or church anymore.

Now, what does a high degree of secularity in Denmark and Sweden have to do with the presidential election of George W. Bush and all of the support he got from those religious "values voters" with moral concerns?

In my mind, it worked like this: having backpacked through Denmark and Sweden several times in my late teens and early 20S and having an aunt and cousin living in Copenhagen and having taken several classes on Scandinavia while an undergraduate at the University of Oregon, I knew that the nations of Denmark and Sweden were not only among the most peaceful and prosperous in the world and among the most egalitarian and just, as well as the happiest and most content—but also

among the most moral societies in the world: they had among the lowest rates of murder and violent crime and the lowest levels of corruption in government and business, along with excellent schools, child care, elder care, and health care.

And yet they were among the least religious democracies out there.

This, I thought, was something that my fellow Americans needed to know. Here were well-functioning, safe, and productive countries that were well-functioning, safe, productive, prosperous, and deeply humane without much in the way of religious faith or church attendance. And thus, while religion can often contribute to societal well-being, it clearly isn't necessary or required for such well-being. Societies in which God has been relegated to the margins can and do thrive and prosper—and not just economically but morally as well. Such information, I felt, should cause Americans to rethink the taken-for-granted connection between religion and morality.

While many of those "values voters" who supported George W Bush tend to think of atheists as immoral—and also to associate secularism with the breakdown of civil society—the existence of well-functioning, ethical, and healthy societies like Denmark and Sweden, with highly secular populations that are quite content and secure, provides strong counterexamples to such views. I wanted to flush this matter out in a sociologically rigorous fashion.

Thus, my desire to explore and expose a highly secular society that was also moral and humane was a major motivation for writing this book. But it wasn't the only one. I also wanted to dig beneath the survey data that I had found and uncover the nuances, contours, and meanings of secular culture in Scandinavia. How do men and women who live their lives without much in the way of religious faith or involvement do it, actually? For example, how do they find meaning in life? How do they deal with death? And what are their personal thoughts and opinions about God and religion? And what might an in-depth, ethnographic account of life in a highly secular society tell us about religion and secularization in the United States?

Such were the driving questions that sustained my initial research in Scandinavia, conducted over the course of 14 months in 2005 and 2006, published in the original edition of this book in 2008 and now revised, expanded, and updated in this new edition. While some aspects of religion and secularization have remained the same in Scandinavia since 2008, others have changed. And in the United States, unprecedented levels of secularization—popularly typified by the so-called rise of the Nones—have taken almost everyone by surprise. Additionally, a new discipline of Secular Studies has arrived on the scene, with pioneering social scientific research having been published since 2008 that directly looks at secular people and secular culture. Insights from and references to this new research, as well as reflections on and discussions of what has changed and what has stayed the same with regard to religiosity and secularity, both in Scandinavia and in the United States, are provided in the pages ahead. <>

How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others by Tanya Marie Luhrmann [Princeton University Press, 9780691164465]

The hard work required to make God real, how it changes the people who do it, and why it helps explain the enduring power of faith

How do gods and spirits come to feel vividly real to people—as if they were standing right next to them? Humans tend to see supernatural agents everywhere, as the cognitive science of religion has shown. But it isn't easy to maintain a sense that there are invisible spirits who care about you. In *How God Becomes Real*, acclaimed anthropologist and scholar of religion T. M. Luhrmann argues that people must work incredibly hard to make gods real and that this effort—by changing the people who do it and giving them the benefits they seek from invisible others—helps to explain the enduring power of faith.

Drawing on ethnographic studies of evangelical Christians, pagans, magicians, Zoroastrians, Black Catholics, Santeria initiates, and newly orthodox Jews, Luhrmann notes that none of these people behave as if gods and spirits are simply there. Rather, these worshippers make strenuous efforts to create a world in which invisible others matter and can become intensely present and real. The faithful accomplish this through detailed stories, absorption, the cultivation of inner senses, belief in a porous mind, strong sensory experiences, prayer, and other practices. Along the way, Luhrmann shows why faith is harder than belief, why prayer is a metacognitive activity like therapy, why becoming religious is like getting engrossed in a book, and much more.

A fascinating account of why religious practices are more powerful than religious beliefs, **How God Becomes Real** suggests that faith is resilient not because it provides intuitions about gods and spirits—but because it changes the faithful in profound ways.

Review

"Luhrmann has brilliantly illuminated the magical attunement that constitutes a great deal of evangelical charismatic belief."**---James Wood, *New Yorker***

"A generous and erudite study of how people believe." — *Kirkus Reviews*

"One of The New York Times' Three Books That Gaze Upward to Heaven and Inward to the Heart"

"Drawing voraciously on her own and others' research into faiths as far-flung as Messianic Judaism, the Goddess movement, Indigenous spirituality and Santeria, Luhrmann seeks to map how modern believers make their gods real."**---Ariel Sabar, *New York Times***

Review

"T. M. Luhrmann has a rare gift and this book is a rare achievement—beautifully accessible, intellectually humble, genuinely objective."**—Mark Noll, author of *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada***

"This is a brave, subtle book. Luhrmann draws on her rich career of fieldwork in a range of religious communities around the world to reveal the basic scaffolding of spiritual experience—the

combination of habits, practices, relationships, sensations, and stories that enable humans to experience God as real. She delves into the differences across faiths and cultures while also offering a bold, persuasive case for all we share in common."**—Molly Worthen, author of *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism***

"**How God Becomes Real** is bold, thought-provoking, and very accessible."**—Amira Mittermaier, author of *Giving to God: Islamic Charity in Revolutionary Times***

"This is a brilliant book that tackles an issue of great importance: How do our minds apprehend religion, how do we work to fashion our religious ideas and emotions, and how does that work change us? **How God Becomes Real** is profound—and also a great read."**—Pascal Boyer, author of *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought***

CONTENTS

We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars. —Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windemere's Fan*

When I ponder why faith endures, I am struck by how little our theories consider two straightforward features of religion. First, religion is a practice in which people go to effort to make contact with an invisible other. Second, people who are religious want change. They want to feel differently than they do. Yet instead of exploring these features, most theories of religion begin by treating belief in an invisible other both as taken for granted and as a cognitive mistake. They assume that a prayer for rain is actually a prayer for rain and that it fails. Then these theories go on to explain why apparently foolish beliefs can be held by sensible people. People are afraid of aloneness and so project a parent (Freud); the experience of the social is so powerful that people have symbolized it as God (Durkheim); people dream and have odd experiences that seem evidence of something supernatural (Tylor, James); people have evolved an attributional style such that when they think quickly and automatically they intuit the presence of an invisible other (Boyer, Barrett); translations of nature stories have slipped and stumbled so much over the course of time that a "disease of language" led to mythologies about otherworldly beings (Muller). These theories presume that belief is direct and unproblematic—that in most cultures, people simply take spirit and the supernatural to be there.

That doesn't make sense. Gods and spirits cannot be seen. You cannot shake their hands, look them in the eye, or hear their voice when they speak. It seems odd to assume that people just take for granted that they are present. Moreover, people sometimes have elaborate ideas about what these invisible beings will deliver to them, and these promises often fall short. In many cases, gods are supposed to know one's thoughts and determine one's fate, and in many cases they promise justice

and rewards to those who worship them. Yet even for the faithful, life can sometimes feel arbitrary and unfair. We should not assume that it is easy to feel that such powerful, benevolent, invisible beings are simply available and responsive.

If we start not with a presumption of belief, but with the question of whether the effort people invest in their faith helps them to feel that their gods and spirits are real, we are forced to focus on what people do when they worship gods and spirits, and on how those practices themselves might affect those who engage in them. Then we can ask whether the practices themselves help to make the beliefs compelling. And once we allow ourselves to ask whether people everywhere need to persuade themselves that their gods are real, religious rituals suddenly make more sense. After all, if spirits are believed to be unproblematically present—simply there, responsive and available—why do you need an all-night drumming ceremony to call them forth? If God is always present and aware, why does anyone need to pray?

I argue here that the puzzle of religion is not the problem of false belief, but the question of how gods and spirits become and remain real to people and what this real-making does for humans. This is not a claim that gods are not real or that people who are religious feel doubt. Many people of faith never express doubt; they talk as if it were obvious that their gods are real. Yet they go to great lengths in their worship. They build grand cathedrals at vast cost in labor, time, and money. They spend days, even weeks, preparing for rituals, assembling food, building ritual sites, and gathering participants. They create theatrical effects in sacred spaces—the dim lighting in temples, the elaborate staging in evangelical megachurches—that enhance a sense of otherness but are not commanded in the sacred texts. They fast. They wear special clothes. They chant for hours. They set out to pray without ceasing.

Of course, one might say: they believe, and so they build the cathedrals. I am asking what we might learn if we shift our focus: if, rather than presuming that people worship because they believe, we ask instead whether people believe because they worship. I suggest that prayer and ritual and worship help people to shift from knowing in the abstract that the invisible other is real to feeling that gods and spirits are present in the moment, aware and willing to respond. I will call this "real-making," and I think that the satisfactions of its process explain—in part—why faiths endure.

By "real-making," I mean that the task for a person of faith is to believe not just that gods and spirits are there in some abstract way, like dark energy, but that these gods and spirits matter in the here and now. I mean not just that you know that they are real, the way you know that the floor is real (or would, if you paused to think about it), but that they feel real the way your mother's love feels real. I mean that people of faith come to feel inwardly and intimately that gods or spirits are involved with them. For humans to sustain their involvement with entities who are invisible and matter in a good way to their lives, I suggest that a god must be made real again and again against the evident features of an obdurate world. Humans must somehow be brought to a point from which the altar becomes more than gilded wood, so that the icon's eyes look back at them, ablaze.

This book describes some of the ways through which invisible others come to feel real to humans. I focus my anthropological attention on the mind, or on inner awareness, because knowing the unseen involves the imagination: the human ability to conceive of that which is not available to the senses. As Maurice Bloch (2008) reminds us, the capacity to imagine makes religion possible. Much of what I describe involves microprocesses of attention, ways of using the mind so that the invisible other can be grasped—sometimes more vividly, sometimes more indirectly, but always in a way that enables the person of faith to hold on to the possibility of presence. I call these acts of real-making "kindling," because they are small events, like the twigs and tinder from which a great fire can be lit, that shape

where and how the fire burns. The microprocesses of attending—socially shaped, locally specific—kindle divine presence for a person of faith by using the mind to shift attention from the world as it is to the world as it should be, as understood within that faith. I will argue that the kindling processes through which invisible others come to feel real changes people and that the change becomes a powerful motivation for their faith.

This book lays out a set of hypotheses that emerged from my previous ethnographic work with evangelical Christians. I have explored many other faiths—British magic, American Santeria, Indian Zoroastrianism, and others. It was, however, in the evangelical tradition that I saw a process of real-making that I set out to understand in depth. Much of what I saw there occurs in other religions. Much is different, of course.

But the problem that spirits are invisible is common to many social worlds. Here I ask whether the basic processes I saw at work in the religions I know may illuminate something about religion in other social worlds.

The basic claim is this: *that god or spirit—the invisible other—must be made real for people, and that this real-making changes those who do it.* When I look at the social practices that surround what we call religion, I see a set of behaviors that change a practitioner's felt sense of what is real. These behaviors both enable what is unseen to feel more present and alter the person who performs them.

Each chapter of *How God Becomes Real* lays out a step in the argument—a proposition, or a hypothesis. Each chapter leaves open how widely the hypothesis can be generalized to other religions and other social worlds. Readers will disagree with each other. No one has ever settled the question of what counts as religion, nor whether gods are necessarily invisible, nor whether a football fanatic is engaged in the same kind of activity as a devout Catholic. There is also the problem of whether real-making is more important for the "big gods" (as Ara Norenzayan [2013] describes them) who are powerful, omniscient, and moral, than for the "little gods" who hang around particular trees or rivers and whose powers are limited. But I do think that the practices I describe here are common to many, many religions, and that these practices explain something about how unseen and invisible others come to be experienced as present.

And so the book is an invitation—a provocation, as we say these days. It lays out some hypotheses and asks you, the reader, how much of what we call religion they explain. Here is a list of these main hypotheses. It is a roadmap to the chapters of this book.

- First: *People don't (easily) have faith in gods and spirits.* People do not, in fact, behave as if gods and spirits are real in the way that everyday objects are real. The great realization of the cognitive science of religion is that people quickly, easily, and automatically generate ideas about agents they can't see when they are scared or startled. But to have a sustained commitment to the reality of invisible agents, the deeply held feeling that gods and spirits are real in a way that matters, someone must interpret the world through a special way of thinking, expecting, and remembering. I will call this a faith frame. That faith frame coexists alongside the ordinary ways people make sense of the world, and sometimes contradicts them. The priest says, *this is my body,* but it looks like a dry cracker. The sermon insists, *my God can do anything,* but God didn't stop the divorce. And so faith is hard—particularly when an invisible other is supposed to love you, care for you, and keep you safe.
- Second: *Detailed stories help to make gods and spirits feel real.* Detailed stories make the faith frame more accessible and help people to experience invisible others as more real. The

work of making an invisible other feel present begins with a good story, and good stories are compelling because they have rich and specific detail. Good, detailed stories—vividly imagined worlds—enable suspended disbelief. They also introduce invisible others as characters who interact with people, and they set out ways to talk with these others and to experience them as talking back.

- Third: *Talent and training matter.* What people do and what they bring to what they do affect the way they experience gods and spirits. People who are able to become absorbed in what they imagine are more likely to have powerful experiences of an invisible other. Practice also helps. People who practice being absorbed in what they imagine during prayer or ritual are also more likely to have such experiences. This absorption blurs the boundary between the inner world and the outer world, which makes it easier for people to turn to a faith frame to make sense of the world and to experience invisible others as present in a way they feel with their senses.
- Fourth: *The way people think about their minds also matters.* The intimate evidence for gods and spirits often comes from a domain felt to be in between the mind and the world, from the space betwixt a person's inner awareness and the sensible world—the thought that does not feel like yours, the voice that feels whispered on the wind, the person who feels there and yet beyond the reach of sight. How people in a particular social world represent the mind itself—how they map the human terrain of thinking, feeling, intending, and desiring into a cultural model—shapes the way they attend to these odd moments so that the moments feel more or less sensory, more or less external, more or less real, more or less like evidence of gods and spirits.
- Fifth: *The sense of response is "kindled."* A person's sense of an invisible other's presence is not only kindled from the tinder of these small practices of attention, but kindled in a particular way. The fire reignites more easily, but also in more specific ways. The chapter lays out a theory of what kindles spiritual presence and how. These moments when someone hears a god, sees a spirit, or feels the presence of the dead are important because they become evidence, for the person of faith, that does not rely on the testimony of others. Such moments make it easier to reach for a faith frame to make sense of the world.
- Sixth: *Prayer practice changes the way people attend to their thoughts.* Prayer is a specific way of using a faith frame, and it changes people because it changes the way they attend to their own awareness, their inner worlds. Prayer is an act of thinking about thinking. Prayer shifts the way those who pray attend to their own thoughts in much the same way that cognitive behavioral therapists teach their clients to alter the attention they pay to theirs. Prayer is the first extended example of how real-making changes people.
- Seventh: *People create relationships with gods and spirits.* This is the second extended example of how real-making changes people. As people practice, as the invisible other becomes more real to them, people remake themselves in relationship with that other. These relationships can be intensely intimate and drenched in feeling—something not quite captured by the word "belief." When real-making works, it makes that god real in a particular way, and people create particular relationships with that god that have in some ways the back-and-forth qualities that all social relationships do. That now-real god will change what feels real to people in other ways, sometimes in ways dramatically different from those in other faiths who have relationships with different gods. These relationships anchor the faith frame in the ordinary world and make it matter.

This is not an atheist's book. It is not a believer's book. It is an anthropologist's book and a work of the anthropology of mind, that filter through which humans become aware of their world. Nothing I say here speaks for or against the genuine reality of gods and spirits. What anthropologists can see is

the human side of the relationship with the invisible other. The complexity and ambiguity of that relationship are as apparent to the person of faith as they are to the skeptic. We all of us see through a glass darkly, and none of us have direct access to the Real...

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Both on a cellular level and in the brain, the invisible other is experienced as a social relationship. That is, we know that the nature of one's relationship with God affects immune function and loneliness, and we know that the act of talking with God looks (from the point of view of an fMRI machine) like talking with a friend. Moreover, people certainly talk as if they have social relationships with their gods. They talk about speaking with their gods, being teased, comforted, encouraged, chastised, and so forth.

In 1953, D. W. Winnicott invented the term "transitional object" to capture that which was not quite part of a child's body but not part of external reality, neither separate from the self nor identical to the self, "an area of experiencing to which inner reality and external life both contribute" (1953: 90). He argued that this in-between realness enabled children to use toys to substitute for their mothers in their absence, and to feel that love emanated from toys despite their awareness that the bear is not "really" alive. Winnicott also argued that this was the psychic domain from which creativity, art, and religion were born—that gods, in effect, worked the way teddy bears did.

Self-psychologists have a name for the mental construct this trust creates in the mind: a "self-object." This is a term coined by the Chicago analyst Heinz Kohut (1971), who argued that what made intensive long-term psychotherapy effective was that patients learned to experience the empathic therapist as an internal "object" that was loving, caring, and concerned with what was best for them. A patient who was helped by therapy was able to act and think and feel as if always aware of that therapist's loving concern, as if the patient became the person created within that responsive, attentive relationship. From this perspective, the ideal self-object is a cross between a coach and a teddy bear, always available, never intrusive, whose emotional presence keeps hope alive and self-doubt at bay.

In her study of a Mexican convent, Rebecca Lester (2005) described a trajectory through which religious practice might create God as a soothing self-object, that wise internal teddy bear coach. She set out a seven-stage process through which postulants—women (really, girls) who have not professed their vows—travel across the course of a year if they come to experience their vocation as rightly chosen. The seven-stage process is not simply a movement toward the acceptance of a vocation but also a process of coming to have a relationship with God.

1. *Brokenness:* the postulant acknowledges a sense of discomfort as a call from God to become a nun.
2. *Belonging:* the postulant comes to feel socially integrated within the convent.
3. *Containment:* the postulant comes to experience her body as complete within and contained within the convent walls.
4. *Regimentation:* the postulant learns to enact certain practices that she experiences as remaking her rebellious, desiring human body into one more suitable for God.
5. *Internal critique:* the postulant chooses to subject herself to intense self-scrutiny, and identifies her faults as the source of the broken relationship with God.
6. *Surrender:* the postulant chooses to turn herself, faults and all, over to God.
7. *Recollection:* the postulant comes to experience herself as truly present with God.

The sequence depends first and foremost on "brokenness." The postulant deliberately makes herself feel badly, and again and again practices replacing that feeling with a sense of being in relationship with a loving God. See also Johanna Richlin (2019) on the way God works as a therapeutic presence for Brazilian immigrants in the United States, and Thomas Csordas, *The Sacred Self*

Meanwhile, on the way presence can be understood as an interaction, see a very interesting essay by Cordelia Erickson-Davis and Anna Corwin (2020) and work by Herbert Clark, *Using Language,* where he argues that interaction generates presence.

Having said that anthropologists tend to treat God as a belief and to not write ethnographies about the way God works as a relationship, it is with pleasure that I report that Amira Mittermaier is writing an ethnography of God. <>

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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Light of the Lord (Or Hashem) by Hasdai Crescas, translated with Introduction and Notes by Roslyn Weiss [Oxford University Press, 9780198724896]

This book is the first complete English translation of Hasdai Crescas's **Light of the Lord (Or Hashem)**, widely acknowledged as a seminal work of medieval Jewish philosophy and second in importance only to Maimonides' **Guide of the Perplexed, Volume 1**; **Volume 2**. In it Crescas takes on not only Maimonides but, through him, Aristotle, and challenges views of physics and metaphysics that had become entrenched in medieval thought. Once the Aristotelian underpinnings of medieval thought are dislodged, Crescas introduces alternative physical views and reinstates the classical Jewish God as a God of love and benefaction rather than a self-intellecting intellect. The end for humankind then is to become attached in love to the God of love through devoted service. <>

Nahmanides: Law and Mysticism by Moshe Halbertal, translated from the Hebrew by Daniel Tabak [Yale University Press, 9780300140910]

A broad, systematic account of one of the most original and creative kabbalists, biblical interpreters, and Talmudic scholars the Jewish tradition has ever produced

Nahmanides, the greatest halakhist of the thirteenth century, was one of the most original and creative expositors of the Bible that the Jewish tradition has ever produced, and one of the most influential kabbalists and mystics. In this broad, ambitious account, Moshe Halbertal provides a systematic analysis of Nahmanides's thought.

Rabbi Moses b. Nahman (1194–1270), known in English as Nahmanides, was the greatest Talmudic scholar of the thirteenth century and one of the deepest and most original biblical interpreters. Beyond his monumental scholastic achievements, Nahmanides was a distinguished kabbalist and mystic, and in his commentary on the Torah he dispensed esoteric kabbalistic teachings that he termed "By Way of Truth."

This broad, systematic account of Nahmanides's thought explores his conception of halakhah and his approach to the central concerns of medieval Jewish thought, including notions of God, history,

revelation, and the reasons for the commandments. The relationship between Nahmanides's kabbalah and mysticism and the existential religious drive that nourishes them, as well as the legal and exoteric aspects of his thinking, are at the center of Moshe Halbertal's portrayal of Nahmanides as a complex and transformative thinker. <>

Mystifying Kabbalah: Academic Scholarship, National Theology, and New Age Spirituality by Boaz Huss [Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism Series, Oxford University Press, 9780190086961]

Most scholars of Judaism take the term "Jewish mysticism" for granted, and do not engage in a critical discussion of the essentialist perceptions that underlie it. Mystifying Kabbalah studies the evolution of the concept of Jewish mysticism. It examines the major developments in the academic study of Jewish mysticism and its impact on modern Kabbalistic movements in the contexts of Jewish nationalism and New Age spirituality. <>

A History of Kabbalah: From the Early Modern Period to the Present Day by Jonathan Garb [Cambridge University Press, 9781107153134]

This volume offers a narrative history of modern Kabbalah, from the sixteenth century to the present. Covering all subperiods, schools and figures, Jonathan Garb demonstrates how Kabbalah expanded over the last few centuries, and how it became an important player, first in the European then subsequently in global cultural and intellectual domains. Indeed, study of Kabbalah can be found on virtually every continent and in many languages, despite the destruction of many centers in the mid-twentieth century. Garb explores the sociological, psychological, scholastic and ritual dimensions of kabbalistic ways of life in their geographical and cultural contexts. Focusing on several important mystical and literary figures, he shows how modern Kabbalah is deeply embedded in modern Jewish life, yet has become an independent, professionalized subworld. He also traces how Kabbalah was influenced by and contributed to the process of modernization. <>

The Chosen Will Become Herds: Studies in Twentieth-Century Kabbalah by Jonathan Garb, translated by Yaffah Berkovits-Murciano [Yale University Press, 9780300123944]

The popularity of Kabbalah, a Jewish mystical movement at least 900 years old, has grown astonishingly within the context of the vast and ever-expanding social movement commonly referred to as the New Age. This book is the first to provide a broad overview of the major trends in contemporary Kabbalah together with in-depth discussions of major figures and schools. <>

Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah by Jonathan Garb [The University of Chicago Press, 9780226295800]

In **Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah** Jonathan Garb uncovers a crucial thread in the story of modern Kabbalah and modern mysticism more generally: psychology. Returning psychology to its roots as an attempt to understand the soul, he traces the manifold interactions between psychology and spirituality that have arisen over five centuries of Kabbalistic writing, from sixteenth-century Galilee to twenty-first-century New York. In doing so, he shows just how rich Kabbalah's psychological tradition is and how much it can offer to the corpus of modern psychological knowledge. <>

Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture by Eliezer Diamond [Oxford University Press, 9780195137507]

The existence of ascetic elements within rabbinic Judaism has generally been either overlooked or actually denied. This is in part because asceticism is commonly identified with celibacy, whereas the rabbis emphasized sexuality as a positive good. In addition, argues Eliezer Diamond, it serves the theological agendas of both Jewish and Christian scholars to characterize Judaism as non- or anti-ascetic.
In fact, however, Diamond shows that rabbinic asceticism does indeed exist. This asceticism is mainly secondary, rather than primary, in that the rabbis place no value on self-denial in and of itself, but rather require of themselves the virtual abandonment of familial, social, and economic life in favor of an absolute commitment to the study of the Torah. It is an asceticism of neglect, rather than negation. He also notes that this asceticism of neglect dovetails with the rabbinic theology of sin and punishment, which encourages delaying gratification in this world in the hopes of a greater reward in the next. The rabbis believed, moreover, that every pleasure taken in this world detracts from what awaits one in the future. <>

ASCETICISM OF THE MIND: FORMS OF ATTENTION AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION IN LATE ANTIQUE MONASTICISM by Inbar Graiver [PIMS, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts 213, 97808884421 30]

Asceticism is founded on the possibility that human beings can profoundly transform themselves through training and discipline. In particular, asceticism in the Eastern monastic tradition is based on the assumption that individuals are not slaves to the habitual and automatic but can be improved by ascetic practice and, with the cooperation of divine grace, transform their entire character and cultivate special powers and skills. **ASCETICISM OF THE MIND: FORMS OF ATTENTION AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION IN LATE ANTIQUE MONASTICISM** explores the strategies that enabled Christian ascetics in the Egyptian, Gazan, and Sinaitic monastic traditions of late antiquity to cultivate a new form of existence. At the book's center is a particular model of ascetic discipline that involves a systematic effort to train the mind and purify attention. Drawing on contemporary cognitive and neuroscientific research, this study underscores the beneficial potential and self-formative role of the monastic system of mental training, thereby confuting older views that emphasized the negative and repressive aspects of asceticism. At the same time, it sheds new light on the challenges that Christian ascetics encountered in their attempts to transform themselves, thereby lending insight into aspects of their daily lives that would otherwise remain inaccessible. **ASCETICISM OF THE MIND** brings rigorously historical and cognitive perspectives into conjunction across a range of themes, and in so doing opens up new ways of exploring asceticism and Christian monasticism. By working across the traditional divide between the humanities and the cognitive sciences, it offers new possibilities for a constructive dialogue across these fields. <>

Method and Mysticism: Cosmos, Nature and Environmental Islamic Mysticism by Seyyed Shahabeddin Mesbahi [Fons Vitae, 9781891785863]

In this pioneering work, Seyyed Shahabeddin Mesbahi offers a new methodology for approaching Islamic mystical concepts by examining the importance, place, and manifestation of the concepts of cosmos, nature, and environment in Islamic mysticism. The study presents a framework for understanding the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of these concepts, within selected stations (maqamat of the mystical path tariqa), and how, in a reciprocal interaction, they weave a "symbiotic whole." This work also reexamines the concept of "mystical experience" with regards to the Islamic mystics' approach toward the concepts of cosmos, nature, and environment, especially in the

thoughts of great masters, such as Hallaj, Bayazid Bastami, Ghazali, Ruzbihan Baqli Shirazi, Ibn 'Arabi, Rumi, and Mulla Sadra. <>

Piety and Rebellion: Essays in Hasidism by Shaul Magid [New Perspectives in Post-Rabbinic Judaism, Academic Studies Press, 9781618117519]

Piety and Rebellion examines the span of the Hasidic textual tradition from its earliest phases to the 20th century. The essays collected in this volume focus on the tension between Hasidic fidelity to tradition and its rebellious attempt to push the devotional life beyond the borders of conventional religious practice. Many of the essays exhibit a comparative perspective deployed to better articulate the innovative spirit, and traditional challenges, Hasidism presents to the traditional Jewish world. **Piety and Rebellion** is an attempt to present Hasidism as one case whereby maximalist religion can yield a rebellious challenge to conventional conceptions of religious thought and practice. <>

Time and Difference In Rabbinic Judaism by Sarit Kattan Gribetz [Princeton University Press, 978-0691192857]

How the rabbis of late antiquity used time to define the boundaries of Jewish identity.

The rabbinic corpus begins with a question— "when?"—and is brimming with discussions about time and the relationship between people, God, and the hour. **Time and Difference In Rabbinic Judaism** explores the rhythms of time that animated the rabbinic world of late antiquity, revealing how rabbis conceptualized time as a way of constructing difference between themselves and imperial Rome, Jews and Christians, men and women, and human and divine. <>

Nature and Norm: Judaism, Christianity, and the Theopolitical Problem by Randi Rashkover [New Perspectives in Post-Rabbinic Judaism, Academic Studies Press, 9781644695098]

Nature and Norm: Judaism, Christianity, and the Theopolitical Problem is a book about the encounter between Jewish and Christian thought and the fact-value divide that invites the unsettling recognition of the dramatic acosmism that shadows and undermines a considerable number of modern and contemporary Jewish and Christian thought systems. By exposing the forced option presented to Jewish and Christian thinkers by the continued appropriation of the fact-value divide, **Nature and Norm** motivates Jewish and Christian thinkers to perform an immanent critique of the failure of their thought systems to advance rational theopolitical claims and exercise the authority and freedom to assert their claims as reasonable hypotheses that hold the potential for enacting effective change in our current historical moment. <>

The Unity of Body and Soul in Patristic and Byzantine Thought edited by Anna Usacheva, Jörg Ulrich, and Siam Bhayro [Contexts of Ancient and Medieval Anthropology, Brill, 9783506703392]

This volume explores the long-standing tensions between such notions as soul and body, spirit and flesh, in the context of human immortality and bodily resurrection. The discussion revolves around late antique views on the resurrected human body and the relevant philosophical, medical and theological notions that formed the background for this topic. Soon after the issue of the divine-human body had been problematised by Christianity, it began to drift away from vast metaphysical deliberations into a sphere of more specialized bodily concepts, developed in ancient medicine and other natural sciences. To capture the main trends of this interdisciplinary dialogue, the

contributions in this volume range from the 2nd to the 8th centuries CE, and discuss an array of figures and topics, including Justin, Origen, Bardaisan, and Gregory of Nyssa. <>

VIRTUE IN THE CAVE: MORAL INQUIRY IN PLATO'S MENO by Roslyn Weiss [Oxford University Press, 9780195140767]

In this radical new interpretation of Plato's Meno, Roslyn Weiss exposes the farcical nature of the slave-boy-demonstration and challenges the widely held assumption that the Meno introduces "Platonic" metaphysical and epistemological innovations into an otherwise "Socratic" dialogue. She shows that the Meno is intended as a defense not of all inquiry but of moral inquiry alone, and that it locates the validity of Socratic method in its ability to arrive not at moral knowledge but at the far more modest moral true belief. <>

PHILOSOPHERS IN THE "REPUBLIC": PLATO'S TWO PARADIGMS by Roslyn Weiss [Cornell University Press, 9780801449741]

In Plato's Republic, Socrates contends that philosophers make the best rulers because only they behold with their mind's eye the eternal and purely intelligible Forms of the Just, the Noble, and the Good. When they are endowed with an array of moral, intellectual, and personal virtues and appropriately educated, surely no one could doubt the wisdom of entrusting to them the governance of cities? Although it is widely assumed that all the Republic's philosophers are the same, the Republic actually contains two distinct portrayals of the philosopher. According to the book, Plato's two paradigms of the philosopher are the "philosopher by nature" and the "philosopher by design." Philosophers by design, as the allegory of the Cave vividly shows, must be forcibly dragged from the material world of pleasure to the sublime realm of the intellect, and from there back down again to the "Cave" to rule the beautiful city envisioned by Socrates and his interlocutors. Yet philosophers by nature, are distinguished by their natural yearning to encounter the transcendent realm of pure Forms, as well as by a willingness to serve others—at least under appropriate circumstances. In contrast to both sets of philosophers stands Socrates, who represents a third paradigm, one that is only hinted at in the Republic. As a man who not only loves "what is" but is also utterly devoted to the justice of others, Socrates surpasses both the philosophers by design and the philosophers by nature. This book aims to challenge Plato scholars to revisit their assumptions about Plato's moral and political philosophy. <>

Socrates Dissatisfied: An Analysis of Plato's Crito by Roslyn Weiss [Oxford University Press, 9780195116847]

In **Socrates Dissatisfied**, Weiss argues against the prevailing view that the Laws are Socrates' spokesmen. She reveals and explores many indications that Socrates and the Laws are, both in style and substance, adversaries: whereas the Laws are rhetoricians who defend the absolute authority of the Laws, Socrates is a dialectician who defends--in the *Crito* no less than in the *Apology*--the overriding claim of each individual's own reason when assiduously applied to questions of justice. It is only for the sake of an unphilosophical Crito, Weiss suggests, that Socrates invents the speech of the Laws; he resorts to rhetoric in a desperate attempt to save Crito's soul even as Crito sought to save his body. Indeed, as Weiss shows, Socrates' own philosophical reasons for remaining in prison rather than escaping as Crito wishes are clearly and fully articulated *before* the speech of the Laws begins. In this book, Roslyn Weiss contends that, contrary to prevailing notions, Plato's *Crito* does not show an allegiance between Socrates and the state that condemned him. Denying that the speech of the Laws represents the views of Socrates, Weiss deftly brings to light numerous indications that Socrates provides to the attentive reader that he and the Laws are not partners but antagonists in the

argument and that he is singularly unimpressed by the case against escaping prison presented by the Laws. Weiss's greatest innovation is her contention that the Laws are very much like the judges who preside at Socrates' trail--interested not in justice and truth but in being shown deference and submission. If Weiss's argument is correct, then the standard conception of the history of political thought is in error--political philosophy begins not with the primacy of the state over the citizen but with the affirmation of the individual's duty to act in accordance with his own careful determination of what justice demands. <>

Studies in Early Greek Philosophy: A Collection of Papers and One Review *by* Jaap Mansfeld [Philosophia Antigua, Brill, 9789004382053]

The collection of nineteen articles in Jaap Mansfeld's **Studies in Early Greek Philosophy: A Collection of Papers and One Review** span the period from Anaximander to Socrates. Solutions to problems of interpretation are offered through a scrutiny of the sources, and also of the traditions of presentation and reception found in antiquity. Excursions in the history of scholarship help to diagnose discussions of which the *primum movens* may have been forgotten. General questions are treated, for instance the phenomenon of detheologization in doxographical texts, while problems relating to individual philosophers are also discussed. For example, the history of Anaximander's cosmos, the status of Parmenides' human world, and the reliability of what we know about the soul of Anaximenes, and of what Philoponus tells us about the behaviour of Democritus' atoms. <>

Plotinus on Love: An Introduction to His Metaphysics through the Concept of Eros *by* Alberto Bertozzi [Philosophia Antigua, Brill, 9789004441002]

Plotinus' metaphysics is often portrayed as comprising two movements: the derivation of all reality from a single source, the One, and the return of the individual soul to it. Alberto Bertozzi argues that love is the origin, culmination, and regulative force of this double movement. The One is both the self-loving source of the derivation and articulation of all reality in levels of unity and love and the ultimate goal of the longing of the soul, whose return to its source is a gradual transformation of the love it originally received from the One. Touching on virtually all major concepts of Plotinus' philosophy, **Plotinus on Love: An Introduction to His Metaphysics through the Concept of Eros** is at once an investigation of a lesser-studied Plotinian theme and an introduction to his metaphysics. <>

The First Principle in Late Neoplatonism: A Study of the One's Causality in Proclus and Damascius by Jonathan Greig [Philosophia Antigua, Brill, 9789004439054]

In **The First Principle in Late Neoplatonism: A Study of the One's Causality in Proclus and Damascius**, Jonathan Greig examines the philosophical theology of the two Neoplatonists, Proclus and Damascius (5th–6th centuries A.D.), on the One as the first cause. Both philosophers address a tension in the Neoplatonic tradition: namely that the One was seen as absolutely transcendent, yet it was also seen as intimately related to other things as the source of their unity and being. Proclus' solution is to posit intermediate causes after the One, while Damascius posits a distinct principle, the 'Ineffable', above the One. This book provides a new, thorough study of the theories of causation that lead each to their respective position and reveals crucial insights involved in a rigorous negative theology employed in metaphysics. <>

On the Nature of Love: Ficino on Plato's Symposium *t*ranslated from the Tuscan by Arthur Farndell [Commentaries by Ficino on Plato's Writings, Shepheard-Walwyn, 9780856835094]

On the Nature of Love is a translation of Marsilio Ficino's commentary to Plato's *Symposium*. This edition makes Ficino's Tuscan version available to English readers for the first time. On November 7, 1468, nine men gathered at Careggi, outside Florence, to honour Plato's birthday. After the meal, the Symposium was read, and the guests – now reduced to seven – spoke on the nature of love. Ficino, who was also present, recorded what was said, and his report constitutes the text of his commentary. His work was eagerly taken up by court circles throughout Europe and became part of their standard fare for the next two centuries. In more recent times, Ficino's commentary has exercised the minds of theologians, philosophers, and psychologists. <>

The Renaissance of Plotinus: The Soul and Human Nature in Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on the Enneads by Anna Corrias [Routledge, 9781138630895]

Plotinus (204/5–270 C.E.) is a central figure in the history of Western philosophy. However, during the Middle Ages he was almost unknown. None of the treatises constituting his ***Enneads*** were translated, and ancient translations were lost. Although scholars had indirect access to his philosophy through the works of Proclus, St. Augustine, and Macrobius, among others, it was not until 1492 with the publication of the first Latin translation of the ***Enneads*** by the humanist philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) that Plotinus was reborn to the Western world. <>

In the Presence of Schopenhauer by Michel Houellebecq, preface by Agathe Novak-Lechevalier, translated by Andrew Brown [Polity, 9781509543250]

The work of Michel Houellebecq – one of the most widely read and controversial novelists of our time – is marked by the thought of Schopenhauer. When Houellebecq came across a copy of Schopenhauer's Aphorisms in a library in his mid-twenties, he was bowled over by it and he hunted down a copy of his major philosophical work, The World as Will and Representation. Houellebecq found in Schopenhauer – the radical pessimist, the chronicler of human suffering, the lonely misanthrope – a powerful conception of the human condition and of the future that awaits us, and when Houellebecq's first writings appeared in the early 1990s, the influence of Schopenhauer was everywhere apparent. <>

SOCIETY WITHOUT GOD: WHAT THE LEAST RELIGIOUS NATIONS CAN TELL US ABOUT CONTENTMENT (SECOND EDITION) by Phil Zuckerman [New York University Press, 9781479878086]

First edition "Silver" Winner of the 2008 Foreword Magazine Book of the Year Award, Religion Category

Before he began his recent travels, it seemed to Phil Zuckerman as if humans all over the globe were "getting religion"—praising deities, performing holy rites, and soberly defending the world from sin. But most residents of Denmark and Sweden, he found, don't worship any god at all, don't pray, and don't give much credence to religious dogma of any kind. Instead of being bastions of sin and corruption, however, as the Christian Right has suggested a godless society would be, these countries are filled with residents who score at the very top of the "happiness index" and enjoy their healthy societies, which boast some of the lowest rates of violent crime in the world (along with some of the lowest levels of corruption), excellent educational systems, strong economies, well-supported arts, free health care, egalitarian social policies, outstanding bike paths, and great beer. <>

How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others by Tanya Marie Luhrmann [Princeton University Press, 9780691164465]

The hard work required to make God real, how it changes the people who do it, and why it helps explain the enduring power of faith

How do gods and spirits come to feel vividly real to people—as if they were standing right next to them? Humans tend to see supernatural agents everywhere, as the cognitive science of religion has shown. But it isn't easy to maintain a sense that there are invisible spirits who care about you. In *How God Becomes Real*, acclaimed anthropologist and scholar of religion T. M. Luhrmann argues that people must work incredibly hard to make gods real and that this effort—by changing the people who do it and giving them the benefits they seek from invisible others—helps to explain the enduring power of faith. <> <>

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