

# Religion: Persistent Late Myths II

## Table of Contents

[The Oxford Handbook of Endangered Languages edited by Kenneth L. Rehg and Lyle Campbell \[Oxford Handbooks, Oxford University Press, 9780190610029\]](#)

[Walls: A History of Civilization in Blood and Brick by David Frye \[Scribner, 9781501172700\]](#)

[The Chosen Wars: How Judaism Became an American Religion by Steven R. Weisman \[Simon & Schuster, 9781416573265\]](#)

[Path of the Prophets: The Ethics-Driven Life by Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz \[The Jewish Publication Society, 9780827613096\]](#)

[The Many Faces of Maimonides by Dov Schwartz, translated by Batya Stein \[Emunot: Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah, Academic Studies Press, 9781618117809\]](#)

[Textual Tapestries: Explorations of the Five Megillot by Gabriel H. Cohen, Translated by David Strauss \[Maggid Tanakh Companions, Maggid, 9781592643981\]](#)

[Jeremiah: The Fate of a Prophet by Binyamin Lau, Translated by Sara Daniel \[Koren Publishers, 9781592641949\]](#)

[Longing: Jewish Meditations on a Hidden God by Justin David \[Cascade Books, 9781532631375\]](#)

[The Bible, Qumran, and the Samaritans edited by Magnar Kartveit, Gary N. Knoppers \[Studia Judaica, Studia Samaritana, DE GRUYTER, 9783110575224\]](#)

[Philosophic Silence and the 'One' in Plotinus by Nicholas Banner \[Cambridge University Press, 9781107154629\]](#)

[Virtue and Law in Plato and Beyond by Julia Annas \[Oxford University Press, 9780198755746\]](#)

[The Oneness Hypothesis: Beyond the Boundary of Self edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe, Owen J. Flanagan, Victoria S. Harrison, Hagop Sarkissian, and Eric Schwitzgebel \[Columbia University Press, 9780231182980\]](#)

[Unity and Aspect by Andrew Haas \[Orbis phaenomenologicus, Studien, Königshausen & Neumann, 9783826064500\]](#)

[Neoplatonic Demons and Angels edited by Luc Brisson, Seamus O'Neill, Andrei Timotin \[Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, Brill, 9789004374973\]](#)

[Plato and Xenophon: Comparative Studies edited by Gabriel Danzig, David Johnson, Donald Morrison \[Mnemosyne, Supplements, Brill, 9789004369016\]](#)

[Plato's Moral Psychology: Intellectualism, the Divided Soul, and the Desire for Good by Rachana Kamtekar \[Oxford University Press, 9780198798446\]](#)

## [Bibliography](#)

[The Oxford Handbook of Endangered Languages edited by Kenneth L. Rehg and Lyle Campbell \[Oxford Handbooks, Oxford University Press, 9780190610029\]](#)

The endangered languages crisis is widely acknowledged among scholars who deal with languages and indigenous peoples as one of the most pressing problems facing humanity, posing moral, practical, and scientific issues of enormous proportions. Simply put, no area of the world is immune from language endangerment.

[The Oxford Handbook of Endangered Languages](#), in 39 chapters, provides a comprehensive overview of the efforts that are being undertaken to deal with this crisis. A comprehensive reference reflecting the breadth of the field, the Handbook presents in detail both the range of thinking about language endangerment and the variety of responses to it, and broadens understanding of language endangerment, language documentation, and

language revitalization, encouraging further research.

The [Handbook](#) is organized into five parts. Part 1, Endangered Languages, addresses the fundamental issues that are essential to understanding the nature of the endangered languages crisis. Part 2, Language Documentation, provides an overview of the issues and activities of concern to linguists and others in their efforts to record and document endangered languages. Part 3, Language Revitalization, includes approaches, practices, and strategies for revitalizing endangered and sleeping ("dormant") languages. Part 4, Endangered Languages and Biocultural Diversity, extends the discussion of language endangerment beyond its conventional boundaries to consider the interrelationship of language, culture, and environment, and the common forces that now threaten the sustainability of their diversity. Part 5, Looking to the Future, addresses a variety of topics that are certain to be of consequence in future efforts to document and revitalize endangered languages.

#### CONTENTS

Foreword MICHAEL KRAUSS

Biographical Note

Introduction: Endangered languages LYLE CAMPBELL AND KENNETH L. REHG

PART I ENDANGERED LANGUAGES1. The status of the world's endangered languages ANNA BELEW AND SEAN SIMPSON

Assessing degrees of language endangerment NALA H. LEE AND JOHN R. VAN WAY

Language contact and language endangerment SARAH G. THOMASON

Indigenous language rights—Miner's canary or mariner's tern? TERESA L. MCCARTY

PART II LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION

The goals of language documentation

RICHARD A. RHODES AND LYLE CAMPBELL

Documentation, linguistic typology, and formal grammar KEREN RICE

The design and implementation of documentation projects for spoken languages SHOBHANA CHELLIAH

Endangered sign languages: An introduction JAMES WOODWARD

Design and implementation of collaborative language documentation projects RACQUEL-MARÍA SAPIEN

Tools and technology for language documentation and revitalization KEREN RICE AND NICK THIEBERGER

Corpus compilation and exploitation in language documentation projects ULRIKE MOSEL

Writing grammars of endangered languages AMBER B. CAMP, LYLE CAMPBELL, VICTORIA CHEN, NALA H. LEE, MATTHEW LOU-MAGNUSON, AND SAMANTHA RARRICK

Compiling dictionaries of endangered languages KENNETH L. REHG

Orthography design and implementation for endangered languages MICHAEL CAHILL

Language archiving ANDREA L. BEREZ-KROEKER AND RYAN E. HENKE

Tools from the ethnography of communication for language documentation SIMEON FLOYD

Language documentation in diaspora communities DANIEL KAUFMAN AND ROSS PERLIN

Ethics in language documentation and revitalization JEFF GOOD

PART III LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Approaches to and strategies for language revitalization LEANNE HINTON

Comparative analysis in language revitalization practices: Addressing the challenge GABRIELA PÉREZ BÁEZ, RACHEL VOGEL, AND EVE KOLLER

The linguistics of language revitalization: Problems of acquisition and attrition WILLIAM O'GRADY

New media for endangered languages LAURA BUSZARD-WELCHER

Language recovery paradigms ALAN R. KING

Myaamiaataweenki: Revitalization of a sleeping language DARYL BALDWIN AND DAVID J. COSTA

Language revitalization in kindergarten: A case study of Truku Seediq language immersion APAY AI-YU TANG

Māori: Revitalization of an endangered language JEANETTE KING

Language revitalization in Africa BONNY SANDS

Planning minority language maintenance: Challenges and limitations SUE WRIGHT  
PART IV ENDANGERED LANGUAGES AND BIO CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Congruence between species and language diversity DAVID HARMON AND JONATHAN LOH

Sustaining biocultural diversity LUISA MAFFI

Traditional and local knowledge systems as language legacies critical for conservation WILL C. MCCLATCHEY

Climate change and its consequences for cultural and language endangerment CHRISTOPHER P. DUNN

Interdisciplinary language documentation GARY HOLTON

Why lexical loss and culture death endanger science IAN MACKENZIE AND WADE DAVIS

PART V LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Funding the documentation and revitalization of endangered languages SUSAN PENFIELD

Teaching linguists to document endangered languages CAROL GENETTI

Training language activists to support endangered languages NORA C. ENGLAND

Designing mobile applications for endangered languages STEVEN BIRD

Indigenous language use impacts wellness ALICE TAFF, MELVATHA CHEE, JAECI HALL, MILLIE YÉI DULITSEEN HALL, KAWENNIYÓHSTHA NICOLE MARTIN, AND ANNIE JOHNSTON

Afterword DAVID CRYSTAL

Index

Excerpt: I am deeply reassured to see the progress the [Handbook of Endangered Languages](#) represents, the progress made over the last quarter century, in our concern for the survival of our intellectual heritage, our diverse languages. Twenty-five years ago, it seemed we had completely forgotten the lesson of Babel, and even linguists seemed altogether oblivious to the threat of unprecedented mass language extinction. American linguistics in the tradition of Boas, Sapir, and Bloomfield had at least considered documentation important and urgent; as anyone

could see, American languages were vanishing. Helping them not vanish was probably impossible in those days, but making written record of them was still an ancient tradition central to linguistics. My own training was in the 1950s, the very end of that period.

Then came Chomsky, say 1957 (Chomsky 1957) or 1962 (Chomsky 1964), whose intellect and personality, both, virtually redefined linguistics. That an extraterrestrial would find Earthese interesting though essentially uniform, with but trivial variation, was the new perspective. English, maybe with some other language for double-checking, would do for a sample. It might be said that up to 1957 theory in linguistics was languishing, but Chomskyan insight brought such impetus to theory in linguistics as to relegate documentation to the dustbin. I spent 1969-1970 at MIT, "to learn how to document languages better." That puzzled Chomsky, understandably, though it did not puzzle Ken Hale, who was not only tolerated but well appreciated at that very citadel. In fact, at MIT in those days, documentation was called "fact-grubbing," and the one course on the linguistics of the forerunners, such as Sapir and Bloomfield, was called the "bad guys" course. That terminology was half-satirical though, and I felt perfectly welcome there. The sad point is that the effect more generally elsewhere became such that mere "fact-grubbing" had to fall seriously beneath the dignity of True Linguists. The Chomsky effect pulled the pendulum so mightily in the direction of theory as opposed to documentation that it got stuck there for thirty years. It was Ken Hale who unstuck the pendulum by organizing the panel on Language Endangerment at the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) 1991 annual meeting that may be considered the turning point, and who invited me to speak on the scope of it. The only person in the whole audience who said anything to me right after my tirade there was in fact Morris Halle: "I hope you weren't blaming us [MIT] for the overkill." His eloquent choice of the term "overkill," in itself made me answer something like "Not really." An even better reason for not blaming MIT is the fact that MIT harbored Ken Hale, which made the difference in 1992. After all, there is a sociology to linguistics too.

There were complaints about the published version of that paper (Krauss 1992), about my comparing the dire endangerment rate of languages to biological endangerment rates—far higher than the rates for birds and mammals—appealing creatures. It was complained that the comparison was a "cheap shot." Fair enough, if we don't want to compare the value of languages with that of biological species, but the comparison of linguistics with biology has multiple important facets, and one of these, even a trivial one in fact, is the sociology of the field and the chronology thereof. It was also in the 1950s that biologists discovered DNA. The interest and importance of that galvanized the field of microbiology so dramatically that there were fears that what we might call macrobiology, the study of the biosphere, "butterfly-collecting," might be eclipsed, and "ecology" was almost becoming a bad word. Any such imbalance was short-lived in biology. After all, our lives depend on the biosphere, "why save [even] the snail-darter" was hardly a question, and Rachel Carson's 1962 *Silent Spring* was merely a clincher. Biology is a big profession, and we all need to breathe. Linguistics is tiny, and has the Chomsky effect. Small wonder, perhaps, that linguistics has taken so long even to start regaining some balance. Bad timing for imbalance! The comparison extends all too well to the issue of climate change and to how well we act at the brink of disaster.

The rate of endangerment may be a controversial issue, but now at least it is an issue. In 1992 it was of course mainly guesswork. We had only our own experience along with what was by far our best broad source of information or worldwide perspective, namely SILs Ethnologue. I unhesitatingly brandished that source at the LSA. Hardly irrelevant, but in fact symptomatic, was that only missionary rather than strictly academic linguists had cared enough to undertake a basic inventory of the world's languages. I had myself been on a National Science Foundation panel that granted support during the 1980s to advance the Ethnologue project.

As for personal experience about the endangerment rate itself, I remember talking about that especially with Ken Hale, Steve Wurm, and Robert Austerlitz. Their "impressions" basically

reinforced my 90% rate. Granted, we were strong in America and Australia, also Asia, weaker on Africa, tending to skew my guess somewhat upward, or failing to lower it. It seemed to me far easier and safer to guess what proportion of the world's languages were "Safe" rather than endangered, i.e., would still be neither extinct nor moribund for the foreseeable future. I defined that future explicitly as the year 2100, arbitrarily the end of the coming century; such languages being, I now add, still spoken then by a viable or sustainable proportion of children. The main criteria were sheer number of speakers (over a million), and some kind of governmental support. Those two groups of course greatly overlap and could total only in the hundreds of languages, even the low hundreds. My best guess for "Safe" in that sense was at most 10%, so the rest were "unsafe" or endangered, at least 90%. At the same time, I must confess I feel it better by far to err by being too careful than too careless, and would rejoice to find the 90% too high. Given the position of linguistics, at least in the United States at the time, it was hard for me to feel that my estimate could be too alarmist.

It is indeed gratifying to see the response in the progress of linguistics since then to the catastrophe looming, including serious research on the rate of language endangerment, especially now by the Catalogue of Endangered Languages Project. That project currently defines the rate at 45.9% (this volume), and that figure is uncannily close to recent SIL figures. I'm afraid I remain skeptical about a figure that optimistic. If it is at all true that the world's median-sized language has 7,000 speakers (a figure available still only from Ethnologue), that implies that languages averaging well below 7,000, at the 46th percentile on the population curve, are "Safe." The 46th percentile on Ethnologue's curve is around 5,000. It seems quite impossible or counterintuitive to me that an ordinarily situated language of 5,000 in today's world could in fact be safe. This would seem to be the case even in the still diverse parts of best-off /less unstable Africa, e.g., Cameroon, where perhaps no local languages widely dominate, with only ex-colonial English versus French doing that job, perhaps allowing 250 languages to last longer

than they would elsewhere; but for how long? How long can that "stability," such as it is, last in the ever-more-rapidly changing world? And if Africa is relatively stable or safe for languages, what then of New Guinea, Brazil, or China, for example? How many nationstates positively value all their indigenous languages, take active measures to support them all, or even allow them all to be valued?

At last facing the imminent loss of human language diversity, whatever the precise proportion of its massiveness may be, linguistics could hardly have picked a worse time to be caught so long off balance. Thinking again in terms of percentages, I would guess that from maybe 2% of linguists in academe concerned with language endangerment and prioritizing to do something appropriate about it in 1992, we now might have 25%, optimistically. That is significant progress toward a balance, whatever that is, considering the urgency. Theorizing can wait; documentation and activism can't, so it could be argued that the appropriate balance for that in these times should be not 50% of linguists but maybe 98%, until the situation is under control and we're ready for another Chomsky.

The ironies in all this are enormous. Microbiology, e.g., DNA, and macrobiology, e.g., ecology, biosphere, coexist nicely in biology as a science, even though macrobiology is "tainted" with issues of our survival as living creatures, and so is linked inevitably to environmentalism, to our benefit. Chomsky is thought by many to have made linguistics a True Science, while the other half of him is more than "tainted" with concern for the human condition. How ironic then that linguistic science is so separated from concern for the human condition instead of being inextricably linked by language, the very essence of our humanity. As humans, have we not evolved beyond mere "survival of the fittest" for language?

Things are still backward in academe for languages, unilaterally. Too often, languages must serve linguistics, and not the reverse. The National Science Foundation (NSF), in addition to its support for linguistics, now has a program specifically for documenting endangered languages, partly as a

result of the movement in linguistics starting in 1992.

Yet NSF's guidelines require a grant proposal to show how that documentation will be of value to Linguistic Science, presumably because NSF's charter is for science alone; taxpayers are paying the NSF for Science, not for good deeds, or even just for language facts that maybe going away.

Sadly, care is needed for fact-based prioritization as to what is truly an endangered language, but we should not have to show that documentation proposed for a truly endangered language will contribute to linguistic theory before it is even done, as though good documentation of a truly endangered language were not of sufficient value in itself. Even unskilled or random documentation could be of what I call scientific as well as humanistic value, and of course the more skilled the better, as documentation, again, is a science as well as an art.

The field of "conservation" of endangered languages has burgeoned dramatically, as this handbook shows. This movement needs of course to keep doing so, but with unity as well as vigor. The relation between the two obvious branches of preservation, i.e., documentation (including secure archiving) and support (maintenance, revitalization), is bound to be a big subject of concern for us. Any tension there should be kept healthy and productive.

My own experience in Alaska is typical enough, that there is a natural tension between the need to document languages as well as possible (particularly for any which will become dormant before that happens), and the needs or wishes of the community for language support. (The latter too often for revitalization rather than maintenance, unfortunately, as community awareness is all too liable to come only after its language is moribund.) The priority for documentation is inescapable if we rigorously consider posterity over the immediate desires of the community, not just for science but even for the community itself, if they want more of their moribund language to be left for future generations of their children to learn.

One quibble here with terminology tendencies. Let's not get carried away with euphemisms. "Moribund" is worse than "endangered" or "severely endangered." Certainly a living species that had lost all reproductive capacity would be definitively doomed to extinction. Continuing the biological comparison, "extinct" (of biological species) is much worse than "dormant" or "sleeping" (of languages) unless some day we can resurrect an extinct species from its DNA. A language with no living speakers is certainly extinct, not dormant, unless we have documentation. Insofar as we have documentation and a community, the language can indeed be "reawakened," insofar as Hebrew or Cornish or Miami can be considered living examples. Even ignoring those examples, archived documentation in principle not only provides for possible future resurrection but also provides knowledge for linguistic science, not to mention for other fields, history for one.

This handbook shows how the movement has begun to burgeon, not only for both the documentation and revitalization but more broadly to include the close relation it has with our concern for our biosphere and its essential diversity, which most people know we need to preserve. So should it be with the heritage of our linguistic diversity, essential to our humanity.

We've made real headway in academe, discussed already in simplistic terms of percentages. But, to repeat a 1992 question still unanswered, where can one get a PhD with something like a good dictionary of an endangered language for a dissertation? There is a dramatically increasing need for help, and hopefully a demand, in endangered-language communities, but that also requires people, linguists, and/or community members with training in appropriate language pedagogy as well as analysis. Where in academe is such training to be had?

Beyond academe and the language communities themselves, there are further domains we need to consider, some addressed in this handbook, others that may not be addressed here. One domain is the general public. We have written eloquently about the threat to our linguistic diversity, there is the lesson of Babel, and there have been pulses of

coverage in the press, but much more is needed for public awareness even to approach that for biodiversity. To what extent has it been broached, for example, in our educational system? This brings up the administrative domain, government. I have already asked the question of what governments positively value their linguistic diversity. We should know and act—not only at the nation-state level, but perhaps the more local the better. Just to take the case I know best, the United States in general and Alaska in particular, is a sad one. Highly negative until late last century, federal policy officially recognized indigenous languages as a national asset at last in 1992, with over 90% of its indigenous languages extinct or moribund. In Alaska, also as devastated as that, we got the legislature to allow indigenous languages in its schools in 1972, with a university center for documentation and support. The public voted for English Only in a 1991 referendum, a landslide, but in 2016 the legislature, voting almost unanimously, recognized all twenty Alaska Native Languages as official state languages, including Eyak with no living native speakers. The effects of these vicissitudes, of course, remain to be seen.

### The Structure of this Handbook

This Handbook includes thirty-nine chapters, organized into five parts: (I) Endangered Languages, (II) Language Documentation, (III) Language Revitalization, (IV) Endangered Language and Biocultural Diversity, and (V) Looking to the Future.

Part I, Endangered Languages, addresses some of the fundamental issues that are essential to understanding the nature of the endangered languages issue. It consists of four chapters that deal with such matters as the challenges of determining how many of the world's languages are endangered, how language vitality can be assessed, language contact and its potential consequences for language endangerment, and the significance of indigenous language rights in combating language endangerment and language loss.

Part II, Language Documentation, contains fourteen chapters that provide an overview of the issues and activities of concern to linguists and others in their

efforts to record and document endangered languages. It includes discussions of the goals of language documentation, the relationship between documentation and linguistic theory, the design and implementation of documentation projects for both spoken and signed languages, the tools and technology for documenting and revitalizing endangered languages, the products of language documentation (corpora, grammars, dictionaries, orthographies), the role of archiving in endangered-language scholarship, the ethnographic tools that can be employed to document the sociocultural contexts of endangered languages, the documentation of languages in urban diaspora communities, and the consideration of ethical practices in language documentation and revitalization. Part III, Language Revitalization, with ten chapters, encompasses a diverse range of topics, including approaches and strategies for revitalizing endangered and sleeping ("dormant") languages, a project to analyze revitalization projects globally and comparatively across cultures, an examination of the conditions under which language acquisition can take place, the three technologies that are essential to enabling a language in the digital domain, the stages of successful language recovery, three examples of language revitalization programs (Myaamiaataweenki, Truku Seediq, and Maori), a discussion of language revitalization activities in Africa, and the challenges and limitations of planning the maintenance of minority languages.

Part IV, Endangered Languages and Biocultural Diversity, extends the discussion of language endangerment beyond its conventional boundaries to consider the interrelationship of language, culture, and environment. It includes six chapters that deal with such issues as the striking congruence between the global distributions of species and languages, the concept of "biocultural diversity" and the goals and nature of efforts to maintain it, the value of collaborative efforts between linguists and other scientists in documenting traditional and local knowledge about biodiversity, the ramifications of climate change with respect to languages and cultures, the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary language documentation, and the vital but commonly undervalued importance of

the lexicon as a repository of cultural data and its potential to contribute to our understanding of human cognition.

Part V, Looking to the Future, consists of five chapters that address a variety of topics that are certain to be of consequence in future efforts to document and revitalize endangered languages. Included are discussions of the strategies for locating and obtaining funding, the teaching of linguists to document endangered languages and the training of language activist to support them, the design of a new generation of software that will enable linguists to collaborate with speakers to produce high-quality large-scale documentation, and, finally, the impact of indigenous languages on the well-being of their users. <>

[Walls: A History of Civilization in Blood and Brick](#)  
by David Frye [Scribner, 9781501172700]

For over ten thousand years, much of humankind has lived inside walls behind walls behind still more walls. Walls have protected us and divided us, but have they also affected the way we think, work, and create?

In a brisk and compulsively readable narrative of invasions, empires, kings, and khans, David Frye presents a bold new theory: walls haven't just influenced the course of history; they have profoundly shaped the human psyche.

For thousands of years, people have built walls and assaulted them, admired walls and reviled them. Great walls have appeared on every continent, the handiwork of Persians, Romans, Chinese, Inca, Ukrainians, and dozens of other peoples. They have accompanied the rise of cities, nations, and empires. And yet they rarely appear in our history books.

In [Walls](#), David Frye makes a powerful case for rewriting history. Drawing on evidence from around the world, as well as his own experiences on archaeological digs, Frye takes us on a provocative and occasionally humorous journey across windswept deserts and grassy, Northumbrian hills. As Frye guides us through a maze of exotic locales, investigating the coldest of cold cases, he gradually exposes a broader story with implications for the present as well as the past. The history of walls

becomes more than a tale of bricks and stone; it becomes the story of who we are and how we came to be.

Contents  
 Selected Timeline  
 Introduction: A Wall against the Wasteland  
 PART ONE: Builders and Barbarians  
 Midwife to Civilization: Wall Builders at the Dawn of History: THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST, 2500-500 BC  
 To Wall or Not to Wall?: GREECE, 600-338 BC  
 "Cries of Pain and Sadness": CHINA, 214 BC  
 Wallers and Warriors: Life outside the Walls: EURASIA, 2000 BC-AD 1800  
 PART TWO: The Great Age of Walls  
 Prologue to the Great Age of Walls: Alexander's Gates: TIMELESS FOLKLORE  
 Walls Connect Eurasia: CHINA AND CENTRAL ASIA, C. 100 BC  
 Hadrian's Walls: THE ROMAN EMPIRE, AD 117-38  
 Paradise Lost: THE ROMAN EMPIRE, C. AD 300  
 Defenseless behind Walls: THE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE EMPIRES, AD 400-600  
 Cycles of Walls and Despots: CHINA, AD 280-1600  
 Walls and the Apocalypse: WESTERN AND CENTRAL ASIA, AD 500-1300  
 PART THREE: The World in Transition  
 The Horrible Bombard: CONSTANTINOPLE, AD 1453  
 Beyond the Pale: IRELAND, SCOTLAND, AND THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE, AD 1494—C. 1800  
 Fort Brokenheart: SOUTH, CENTRAL, AND NORTH AMERICA, PREHISTORY—AD 1800  
 PART FOUR: A Clash of Symbols  
 The Last Battles: CHINA AND FRANCE, 1933-40  
 "A Hell of a Lot Better Than a War": BERLIN, 1961-89

### Excerpt: A Wall against the Wasteland

An ancient wall, at least four thousand years old, sits abandoned in a desolate region of Syria. To its west lie cities, some ancient, some modern, many

now ruined by wars, also both ancient and modern. To its east lies only wasteland, a vast dry steppe that becomes progressively drier as one follows it farther east until it finally ends in desert. The wall stretches well over one hundred miles, and at its southernmost tip it turns sharply west, as if to cut off the mountains to its south. It briefly climbs the Anti-Lebanon Range, where it ends abruptly on a crest.

The Syrian wall is a tumbled ruin now, so unremarkable as to have gone completely undiscovered for thousands of years. Even in its heyday, it wouldn't have been especially impressive. The dry stones that sprawl across the sunbaked ground couldn't have been stacked much higher than a few feet. An additional layer, consisting of dirt, might once have extended the height of the structure, but only by another foot or so.

Historians, frustrated by the lack of inscriptions on the stones, find the monument a bit of a cipher. They study a map whose design has changed little in four thousand years: civilization on one side of the structure, barren waste on the other. It's as if some ancient king had ordered the construction of a wall against the wasteland. But who builds a wall against wasteland?

\* \* \*

Well north of Syria, a far more famous wasteland sprawls across two continents, where interconnected meadows and deserts form the dominant physical feature of the Eurasian landmass. The immense Eurasian Steppe—the Great Steppe, to many—extends some five thousand miles from its western end in the Carpathian Mountains to its eastern end in Manchuria. It is a forbidding place. In many areas, its vast oceans of grassland appear only seasonally, before the summer sun roasts the hardy weeds and nearly extinguishes plant life altogether. Scorching winds then blow across the dusty landscape like the hot air released by the opening of an oven door.

Eventually, winter arrives, bringing not relief but another kind of hell. Unbearable cold prevails,



along with a layer of snow frozen so hard that grazing animals bloody their muzzles trying to poke through the icy shell for something to eat.

The steppe reveals its history only grudgingly. Immense monuments hint at its ancient past, but they are stubbornly difficult to find. Nature seeks to hide them. Endless cycles of hot and cold have cracked open the man-made structures, allowing them to become overgrown with vegetation long after most of their original glory has eroded away. To make matters worse, these monuments survive mostly in places few Westerners could even find on a map: Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Bulgaria, the Crimea, the Golestan province of Iran, Inner Mongolia. Together, they form a ruined blockade, facing the steppe from the south: walls, more than ten thousand miles of them, undefended, unguarded, and forgotten.

The walls lying south of the Eurasian Steppe are somewhat less ancient than their Syrian cousin—most are "only" fifteen hundred or so years old—but they evoke just as much mystery. Nearly all of them straddle the marginal zones that once divided the world into civilization and wasteland. In some cases, only wasteland remains. The locals who live closest to the walls have invented all manner of legends to explain their existence. Baffled by the long and unnatural mounds, they attribute them to gods, monsters, or famous conquerors. They relate fanciful stories about them. They give them quaint and colorful names.

For the most part, the folk names confound the mystery of the walls, tantalizing us with misleading clues to their origins. In southeastern Europe, a whole series of "Trajan's Walls" take the name of a second-century Roman emperor who probably played no role in their construction. To their west squat the remains of the so-called Devil's Dykes, and to their north the even more imaginatively named Dragon Walls. In Central Asia, the locals have acquired the peculiar habit of dubbing most of their long ruins Kam Pirak—"the old woman"—in reference to a legendary queen who built great fortifications to protect her people. Shorter barriers on both sides of the Caspian Sea invariably carry the name Derbent—Persian for "locked gate"—and nearly every pass through the Caucasus

Mountains features some ancient ruin known as the Caucasian Gates. Most of these have been attributed at one time or another to Alexander, who almost certainly never paused anywhere long enough to build a wall.

Ruined walls appear all over the world. The materials—some-times brick, sometimes stone, sometimes simply tamped earth—vary with the locale, but everywhere we find the same pattern: obscure barriers, adorned only by their colorful nicknames, nearly always facing desolate wastes. In Iraq, birthplace of the world's first civilization, ancient walls once formed barricades against the Syrian steppe in one direction and the even harsher wastelands of Arabia in another. Iraqi villagers dimly acknowledge these structures when they speak of the String of Stones, Nimrod's Dyke, and the Moat of Shapur. In Jordan, yet another barricade—the so-called Khatt Shebib, wrongly attributed to a medieval Arab ruler—once divided civilization from the Arab wastes.

The long wall in Syria takes pride of place for being the oldest. Perhaps for this reason it has no colorful nickname. No locals recall its history. The task of naming the structure eventually fell to the French archaeologists who discovered it. Amazed by the wall's length, they dubbed it simply *Très Long Mur* (French for "very long wall"). The modern label reeks of practicality more than poetry—the archaeologists were clearly determined not to attribute the barrier to the wrong king—and it's no wonder that most authors prefer the abbreviated form, TLM.

The physical remains of the TLM offer few clear indications of its origins, or, for that matter, anything else. Archaeologists puzzle over the wall's every detail. They wonder how a fortification only three or four feet tall could have been defended. They argue about who built it. Was it Bronze Age Ebla, so famous for its massive cache of cuneiform tablets? Or perhaps the lesser known city of Hama? They agree only that the TLM once functioned as a type of structure that, depending on your point of view, is either all too common in the modern world or not common enough. They have determined that the TLM was a border wall, the earliest ever built

and the first of many such predecessors to our modern border defenses.

Hadrian's Wall, or what is left of it, lies more than two thousand miles from Syria, in the much greener countryside of northern Britain. It was constructed about two thousand years after the TLM, and it was nearly another two thousand years after that before archaeologists started poking around the Wall in earnest. By then, the concept of a massive barrier, stretching for miles along a border, seemed ancient and obsolete.

When I joined my first archaeological dig at a site near the Wall in 2002, walls never appeared in the nightly news. Britain was still many years away from planning a barrier near the opening of the Chunnel in Calais. Saudi Arabia hadn't yet encircled itself with high-tech barricades. Israel hadn't started reinforcing its Gaza border fence with concrete. Kenya wasn't seeking Israel's help in the construction of a 440-mile barrier against Somalia. And the idea that India might someday send workers high into the Himalayas to construct border walls that look down on clouds still seemed as preposterous as the notion that Ecuador might commence construction on a 950-mile concrete wall along its border with Peru.

No one chatted about walls while we cut through sod to expose the buried remains of an ancient fortress in northern Britain. I doubt that anyone was chatting about walls anywhere. The old fortress, on the other hand, was generally considered the crown jewel of British archaeology. For more than thirty years, sharp-eyed excavators at the Roman fort of Vindolanda had been finding writing tablets—thin slivers of wood upon which Roman soldiers had written letters, duty rosters, inventories, and other assorted jottings. At first, the tablets had represented something of a technical challenge; their spectral writing faded almost immediately upon exposure to air, almost as if written in invisible ink. But

when the writings were recovered through infrared photography, a tremendous satisfaction came from the discovery that Roman soldiers complained about shortages of beer while the wives of their commanders planned birthday parties. The Romans, it turned out, were a lot like us.

Archaeology, even at such a special place, was tiring business, but after work I enjoyed taking hikes along the Wall. It was beautiful countryside—well lit by an evening sun that lingered late during the Northumbrian summer—and as I ambled over the grassy hills, occasionally enjoying the company of sheep, I sometimes imagined I was a lonely Roman soldier, stationed at the end of the world, scanning the horizon for barbarians while I awaited a resupply of beer. I'm ashamed to say that I took no detailed notes on the Wall itself. It made for beautiful photographs, the way it stretched languidly over the countryside, but my real interest lay in other things: the Roman soldiers, the barbarians, the letters. If anything I saw in Britain was to hold any significance for my research, it seemed obvious that I would find it in the wet gray clay of Vindolanda. There I hoped only to discern tiny clues about a particular period of Roman history. Such are the modest goals of the academic. For the duration of my stay, my focus was on the clay. All the while, I was standing right next to a piece of a much bigger story, a fragment of the past that was about to rise up from its ancient slumber to dominate contemporary politics on two continents. I was leaning against it, resting my hand on it, posing for pictures by it. I just didn't see it.

It was my interest in the barbarians that finally opened my eyes to the historical importance of walls. The barbarians were, in the main, inhabitants of every North African or Eurasian wasteland—the steppes, the deserts, the mountains. Civilized folk had erected barriers to exclude them in an astonishing array of countries: Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Iran, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Britain, Algeria, Libya, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Peru, China, and Korea, to give only a partial list. Yet somehow this fact had entirely escaped the notice of historians. Not a single textbook observed the nearly universal correlation between civilization and walls. It remained standard even for specialists to remark that walls were somehow unique to Chinese history, if not unique to Chinese culture—a stereotype that couldn't possibly be any less true.

The reemergence of border walls in contemporary political debates made for an even more surprising revelation. Like most people my age, I had

watched the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 with great excitement. To many of us it looked like the beginning of a new era, heralded by no less towering an international figure than David Hasselhoff, whose concert united both halves of Berlin in inexplicable rapture. More than a quarter century has passed since then, and if it had once seemed that walls had become a thing of the past, that belief has proven sorely wrong.

Border walls have experienced a conspicuous revival in the twenty-first century. Worldwide, some seventy barriers of various sorts currently stand guard over borders. Some exist to prevent terrorism, others as obstacles to mass migration or the flow of illegal drugs. Nearly all mark national borders. None faces the great Eurasian Steppe. By some cruel irony, the mere concept of walls now divides people more thoroughly than any structure of brick or stone. For every person who sees a wall as an act of oppression, there is always another urging the construction of newer, higher, and longer barriers. The two sides hardly speak to each other.

As things turned out, it was not the beer or the birth-day parties that connected the past to the present in northern England. It was the Wall. We can almost imagine it now as a great stone timeline, inhabited on one end by ancients, on the other by moderns, but with both always residing on the same side facing off against an unseen enemy. If I couldn't see that in 2002, it was only because we were then still living in an anomalous stage in history and had somehow lost our instinct for something that has nearly always been a part of our world.

How important have walls been in the history of civilization?

Few civilized peoples have ever lived outside them. As early as the tenth millennium BC, the builders of Jericho encircled their city, the world's first, with a rampart. Over time, urbanism and agriculture spread from Jericho and the Levant into new territories: Anatolia, Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Balkans, and beyond. Walls inevitably followed. Everywhere farmers settled, they fortified their villages. They chose elevated sites and dug ditches to enclose their homes. Entire communities pitched in to make their villages secure. A survey of

prehistoric Transylvanian farming villages determined that some fourteen hundred to fifteen hundred cubic meters of earth typically had to be moved just to create an encircling ditch—an effort that would have required the labor of sixty men for forty days. Subsequently, those ditches were lined with stone and bolstered by palisades. If a community survived long enough, it might add flanking towers. These were the first steps toward walls.

The creators of the first civilizations descended from generations of wall builders. They used their newfound advantages in organization and numbers to build bigger walls. More than a few still survive. In the pages that follow, I will often describe these monuments with imposing measures—their heights, their thicknesses, sometimes their volumes, almost always their lengths. The numbers may begin to lose their impact after a while. They can only tell us so much. We will always learn more by examining the people who built the walls or the fear that led to their construction.

And what about these fears? Were civilizations—and walls—created only by unusually fearful peoples? Or did creating civilization cause people to become fearful? Such questions turn out to be far more important than we've ever realized.

Since 2002, I've had ample time to reflect on the Roman soldiers who once guarded Hadrian's Wall. They certainly never struck me as afraid of anything. Then again, they weren't exactly Roman either. They came chiefly from foreign lands, principally Belgium and Holland, which were in those days still as uncivilized as the regions north of the Wall. Everything they knew of building and writing, they had learned in the service of Rome.

As for the Romans, they preferred to let others fight their battles. They had become the definitive bearers of civilization and as such were the target of a familiar complaint: that they had lost their edge. Comfortable behind their city walls and their foreign guards, they had grown soft. They were politicians and philosophers, bread makers and blacksmiths, anything but fighters.

The Roman poet Ovid knew a thing or two about the soft life, but he also had the unusual experience

of learning what life was like for Rome's frontier troops. The latter misfortune came as a consequence of his having offended the emperor Augustus. The offense was some peccadillo—Ovid never divulges the details—compounded by his having penned a rather scandalous book on the art of seduction. "What is the theme of my song?" he asked puckishly, in verse. "Nothing that's very far wrong." Augustus disagreed. Reading Ovid's little love manual, the moralistic emperor saw plenty of wrong. He probably never even made it to the section where Ovid raved about what a great ruler he was. Augustus banished the poet from Rome, exiling him to Tomis, a doomed city on the coast of the Black Sea, sixty-odd miles south of the Danube. This Tomis was a hardscrabble sort of place, a former Greek colony already some six hundred years old by the time of Ovid's exile in the first century AD and no shinier for the wear. Its distinguishing characteristics were exactly two: First, it was about as far from Rome as one could be sent. Second, it lay perilously close to some of Rome's fiercest enemies, in an area that didn't yet have a border wall. Like northern Britain, the region of Tomis would one day receive its share of border walls, but in Ovid's day the only barriers to invasion were the fortifications around the city itself.

Ovid suffered in his new home. It was one thing to live in a walled city, quite another to be completely confined within those walls. In his letters to Rome, Ovid complained that the farmers of Tomis couldn't even venture out onto their fields. On the rare occasion when a peasant dared to visit his plot, he guided the plow with one hand while carrying weapons in another. Even the shepherds wore helmets.

Fear permeated everyday life in Tomis. Even in times of peace, wrote Ovid, the dread of war loomed. The city was, for all intents and purposes, under perpetual siege. Ovid likened the townspeople to a timid stag caught by bears or a lamb surrounded by wolves.

Occasionally, Ovid reminisced on his former life in the capital, where he'd lived free from fear. He wistfully recalled the amenities of Rome—the forums, the temples, and the marble theaters, the

porticoes, gardens, pools, and canals, above all the cornucopia of literature at hand. The contrast with his new circumstances was complete. At Tomis, there was nothing but the clash and clang of weapons. Ovid imagined that he might at least content himself by gardening, if only he weren't afraid to step outside. The enemy was quite literally at the gates, separated only by the thickness of the city's wall. Barbarian horsemen circled Tomis. Their deadly arrows, which Ovid unfailingly reminds us had been dipped in snake venom, made pincushions of the roofs in the city.

There remained a final indignity for Ovid: the feeble, middle-aged author was pressed into service in defense of Tomis. Pitiably, he described his unique distinction as being "both exile and soldier." His reduced material comfort and constant anxiety already provided sufficient fodder for his misery, but how much more miserable was he when asked to guard the city wall? As a youth, Ovid had avoided military service. There was no shame for shirkers back in Rome, a city replete with peaceniks and civilians. Now aging, Ovid had finally been forced to carry a sword, shield, and helmet. When the guard from the lookout signaled a raid, the poet donned his armor with shaking hands. Here was a true Roman, afraid to step out from behind his fortifications and hopelessly overwhelmed by the responsibility of defending them.

From time to time, a Chinese poet would find himself in a situation much like Ovid's. Stationed at some lonely outpost on the farthest reaches of the empire, the Chinese, too, longed for home while dreading the nearness of the barbarians. "In the frontier towns, you will have sad dreams at night," wrote one. "Who wants to hear the barbarian pipe played to the moon?" Sometimes, they meditated on the story of the Chinese princess who drowned herself in a river rather than cross beyond the wall. Even Chinese generals lamented the frontier life.

Oddly, none of these sentiments appear in the letters written by the Roman soldiers at Vindolanda. Transplanted to a rainy land far from home, they grumbled at times about the beer supply, but had nothing to say about shaky hands or sad dreams. It was as if these barbarian-turned-Roman auxiliaries had come from another world,

where homesickness and fear had been banished. Perhaps they had.

Almost anytime we examine the past and seek out the people most like us—those such as Ovid or the Chinese poets, people who built cities, knew how to read, and generally carried out civilian labor—we find them enclosed behind walls of their own making. Civilization and walls seem to have gone hand in hand. Beyond the walls, we find little with which we can identify—warriors mostly, of the sort we might hire to patrol the walls. The outsiders are mostly anonymous, except when they become notorious.

The birth of walls set human societies on divergent paths, one leading to self-indulgent poetry, the other to taciturn militarism. But the first path also pointed to much more—science, mathematics, theater, art—while the other brought its followers only to a dead end, where a man was nothing except a warrior and all labor devolved upon the women.

This book isn't intended to be a history of walls. It is, as the subtitle indicates, a history of civilization—not in the comprehensive sense, but with the limited goal of exploring the unrecognized and often surprising influence of walls. I refer specifically to defensive walls. No invention in human history played a greater role in creating and shaping civilization. Without walls, there could never have been an Ovid, and the same can be said for Chinese scholars, Babylonian mathematicians, or Greek philosophers. Moreover, the impact of walls wasn't limited to the early phases of civilization. Wall building persisted for most of history, climaxing spectacularly during a thousand-year period when three large empires erected barriers that made the geopolitical divisions of the Old World all but permanent. The collapse of those walls influenced world history almost as profoundly as their creation, by leading to the eclipse of one region, the stagnation of another, and the rise of a third. When the great border walls were gone, leaving only faint traces on the landscape, they still left indelible lines on our maps—lines that have even today not yet been obscured by modern wars or the jockeying of nations for resources. Today, a newer set of walls,

rising up on four continents, has the potential to remake the world yet again. <>

[The Chosen Wars: How Judaism Became an American Religion](#) by Steven R. Weisman [Simon & Schuster, 9781416573265]

“Only rarely does an author succeed in writing a book that reframes how we perceive our own history. [The Chosen Wars](#) is one such book, and it could not arrive at a more appropriate time...fascinating and provocative.”—Jewish Journal

[The Chosen Wars](#) is the important story of how Judaism enhanced America and how America inspired Judaism.

Steven R. Weisman tells the dramatic history of how Judaism redefined itself in America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—the personalities that fought each other and shaped its evolution and, crucially, the force of the American dynamic that transformed an ancient religion.

The struggles that produced a redefinition of Judaism illuminate the larger American experience and the efforts by all Americans to reconcile their faith with modern demands. The narrative begins with the arrival of the first Jews in New Amsterdam and plays out over the nineteenth century as a massive immigration takes place at the dawn of the twentieth century.

First there was the practical matter of earning a living. Many immigrants had to work on the Sabbath or traveled as peddlers to places where they could not keep kosher. Doctrine was put aside or adjusted. To take their places as equals, American Jews rejected their identity as a separate nation within America. Judaism became an American religion.

These profound changes did not come without argument. [The Chosen Wars](#) tells the stories of the colorful rabbis and activists, including women, who defined American Judaism and whose disputes divided it into the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox branches that remain today. Isaac Mayer Wise, Mordecai Noah, David Einhorn, Rebecca Gratz, and Isaac Lesser are some of the major figures in this wonderful story.

## Contents

Timeline

Glossary

Introduction: Jews in America: A Part but Apart

Coming to America

Let Harmony Ascend

Rebellion in Charleston

The German Immigrants

S. German Rabbis in America

The Turbulent Isaac Mayer Wise

A Fistfight in Albany

The "Two Isaacs"

Jews in the Civil War

Prosper and Divide

Reformists and Radicals

The Trefa Banquet

New Divisions

Epilogue: An American Religion

Acknowledgments

Recommended Reading

Bibliography

Notes

Illustration Credits

Index

## Excerpt: Jews in America: A Part but Apart

Hundreds of guests gathered at the magnificent Plum Street Synagogue in downtown Cincinnati for a joyful celebration on a warm and rainy afternoon on July 11, 1883. The occasion was the graduation of four American-trained rabbis at the new Hebrew Union College, the first ordination of Jewish clergy on American soil. Participants from across the country came to salute an event they felt certain was marking another significant step in the arrival of American Jews as equals to Christians in the Gilded Age. From the afternoon ceremony at the temple, a grand edifice of Moorish design crowned by minarets and illuminated inside by chandeliers and candleabras, the guests repaired to a funicular railway ascending Mount Adams, two miles away. They then crowded into Highland House, a banquet hall near the Cincinnati Observatory, overlooking the Ohio River, for a gala dinner and more festivities.

It was there that an extraordinary debacle took place.

The furor was provoked by the menu. For reasons that remain unclear, the caterer decided to serve crabs, shrimp, clams, and frogs legs to the guests, an egregious violation of kosher laws. Traditionalist rabbis for whom shellfish and amphibians were considered trefa, or forbidden by the Torah's laws, were insulted by the mere sight of such a sacrilege at a Jewish occasion. Some of the rabbis stormed out, according to an eyewitness, and the event turned into a faux pas heard round the Jewish world. The controversy marked another step toward the unraveling of Jewish unity in the United States. And it would be known historically in Jewish circles as the Trefa Banquet.

The gossipous outrage was later ridiculed as overwrought by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, founder of Hebrew Union College. He called it much ado about "stomach Judaism." But the star-crossed banquet sounded a call to battle among traditionalists and helped drive American Jews apart into disputing (and disputatious) factions. Two years after the banquet, a convocation of rabbis declared a new set of principles for American Judaism in Pittsburgh, effectively establishing the Reform movement. In the following decades, the opposing factions coalesced into Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism.

These developments, in turn, marked the emergence of an American Judaism, more than 200 years after the first Jews landed on American shores. Even the splitting of American Judaism into three main branches was a singularly American phenomenon. In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville had observed the religious character of the American people, but also their propensity—so different from his native country's Catholicism—to find their fragmented way through a diverse variety of practices and beliefs. "There is no country in the whole world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America," Tocqueville wrote, while noting the innumerable Christian denominations defining morality as a religious and not just a social tenet.<sup>1</sup> In the late nineteenth century, the Jews were showing that their fissiparous tendencies were no different from those of many Christian believers. Like the proliferating Baptists, Southern Baptists, Episcopalians, Unitarians, Presbyterians, Methodists,

Quakers, Lutherans, Mennonites, Millenarians, Second Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Evangelicals, among others, Jews of traditional and nontraditional leanings were seeking their own distinct paths to God.

In 1880, the Jewish community in America was still small, though far-flung, barely more than a quarter of a million souls. Soon after that year, a flood of more than two million Jews, many of them Yiddish speaking, would be washing up on American shores over the next four decades. The new immigrants were escaping a wave of savage pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe. They made a decisive impact on Jewish culture and belief, engulfing an established population that responded with mixed feelings about their arrival, especially in New York and other large population centers. They were also to become the forebears of most American Jews today. But when these new Jews arrived, they inherited and over time largely accepted the legacy of Americanized Judaism created over the previous two centuries. That legacy had altered Jewish doctrines, teachings, and daily customs as they had been passed on to succeeding generations, and it continues to largely define Judaism in America today. The historian of American religion Sydney E. Ahlstrom has called this period of change "a most remarkable accommodation to the American scene" and the institutionalization of "a new and distinct stage in the history of Judaism."

How American Judaism emerged out of turmoil and tradition to redefine itself in its distinctive forms at the close of the nineteenth century is the subject of this book.

The chronicle begins with the landing of twenty-three beleaguered Sephardic Jews who had escaped by sailing ship from Brazil to Nieuw Amsterdam (New York City) in 1654. In short order, there arose fierce divisions in the New World between traditionalists and those who wished or needed to adjust and even discard Jewish practices and doctrines. Disputes unfolded in many places, and Jews of all sorts joined the fray—rabbis, intellectuals, businessmen, educators, civic leaders, and congregants themselves. As communities were ripped apart by disagreements and challenges, a

new generation of émigré rabbis and their followers codified American Jewish innovations in the early and mid-nineteenth century, influenced by reformist initiatives taking place in German-speaking lands of Central Europe. Many American Jews and their spiritual leaders increasingly feared that acceptance by non Jews might come at the cost of their religious identity. They wanted Judaism to survive. They believed it could do so only by adapting to the modern world.

Traditionalist foes of many of these adjustments waged a counterreformation of sorts in Europe, calling themselves adherents of orthodoxy. In America, these traditionalists failed to stem the tide of change for most of the nineteenth century, but their arguments lived on. They led to the establishment toward the end of the century of Orthodox Judaism and later in the twentieth century to the denomination known as Conservative Judaism, which embodied an attempt by traditionalists to Americanize Orthodoxy. Conservative Judaism, which held fast to an updated form of tradition, attracted many of the newly arrived Yiddish-speaking Jews in the 1880s who feared that the reforming rabbis and leaders were destroying Judaism in order to save it.

The rabbis and leaders who modified Jewish practices and doctrines did not see themselves as revolutionaries. Far from it. Rather, they argued that their modifications were themselves in the solid tradition of Jewish intellectuals and sages, over thousands of years. They certainly saw themselves as liberating Judaism from the legalistic explanations accumulated over the centuries, which they felt had become unreasonable and illogical. But they contended that the body of laws emanating from the ancient texts of the Talmud had themselves contained updated explications of biblical laws and narratives in response to contemporary demands and sensibilities. In a well-known example of such adjustments, the Torah commands "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth." The rabbinic interpreters had long ago agreed that such a definition of punishment was not to be taken literally, but rather to be interpreted as calling for the guilty party to pay an appropriate compensation to the victim. Still another example of Jewish sages adjusting

practice to contemporary needs, perhaps one of the most important, occurred in the closing centuries before the Common Era (i.e., BC)—their effort to elevate regular prayer and the reading of Scripture to a central place in everyday piety, replacing the offering of animal sacrifices at the Jerusalem Temple as the main act of worship in Judaism.

The thesis of this book is that the Judaism of America today—even as practiced by many in the traditionalist Orthodox branch—bears witness to a spirit of dynamism and change similar to what had existed among the rabbis and Jewish scholars throughout Jewish history. That spirit infused the rulings and actions of German reformers of the nineteenth century. The impact was different in the United States, however, where it produced a particularly American response, influenced inevitably by the culture of a country that disdained religious hierarchies while allowing and even encouraging citizens of all faiths to create institutions reflecting their own, distinctive understanding of God.

This book is a work of storytelling. It is derived from the historical record that these contending rabbis and congregations left behind, and from research by scholars delving into the debates and those who shaped American Jewish history. Its focus is on the drama and personalities that make up a narrative that is unfamiliar to most Americans and even most American Jews. From the narrative in this volume, one can experience the early disagreements over mixing men and women in worship services, the use of English, the introduction of sermons, the elimination of many obscure poems and prayers, and the inclusion of live organ music and choirs of men and women. The story of American Jews seeking to make their services more decorous, and in some cases consciously like services at church, has a contemporary feel. In South Carolina, the fight over an organ was settled by a precedent-setting court case.

But a major focus of the disputes of this earlier era was more theological and existential in nature. It centered in America on whether Jews should pray for an altogether human messiah to deliver them back to the Holy Land, there to worship at the

rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem destroyed by Titus's Roman legions in 70 CE. For as long as Jews have seen themselves as exiles—which they have done since that temple's destruction—they have prayed for a return to Zion. But in early nineteenth-century America, where Jews were emancipated and accepted as equal American citizens, they instead embraced the United States as their Zion. There was no longer a need in their view to pray for a messiah or for the prophet Elijah to come back to life and lead them away from the land to which they now happily extended their loyalty. The dispute over the Messiah grew so emotional that it provoked a fistfight and riot on Rosh Hashanah in 1850 on the pulpit of Isaac Mayer Wise's synagogue in Albany, New York, and the sheriff's police were called in to clear the sanctuary.

During the Civil War, loyalty tested the Jews in a different way. They divided over their fealty to the Union and the Confederacy but also over whether Jewish law permitted slavery. Many Jews, even in the North, noted that the Bible condoned slavery. But abolitionists invoked the biblical prohibition of returning a runaway slave to the master (Deuteronomy 23:16) and similar passages as evidence that slavery was morally unacceptable. In the eyes of many Jews, advocates of slavery who cited Jewish teachings legitimizing it did much to discredit the exercise of interpreting Scripture literally and yielding unquestioningly to its authority.

For all religious adherents, the nineteenth century was also a time of deep divisions over the difficulties of adjusting to a culmination in the influence of science, including Darwinism and recent discoveries in geology and paleontology. The divine authority of Scripture was also challenged by a growing realization, based on the work of biblical scholars following the practice of modern literary criticism, that biblical stories came from different authors and could no longer be taken literally. Many religious academics, Jewish and Christian, thought the Bible was to be understood as a collection of Bronze Age parables and legends, in which various personalities struggled over their own bad behavior, providing moral teachings for the ages. Thus, American Jews in the nineteenth century learned to seek the truth within



the stories while not necessarily embracing their literal veracity. They found solace in the idea that some Talmudic scholars, at least, understood that the moral teachings were the point of the stories, irrespective of whether the events in the Bible occurred. Here again their search for deeper ethical meanings of ancient texts has a modern relevance.

Nothing less than an evolving mission of Jews in contemporary society rose to prominence in the nineteenth century, redefined by reformers in a way that influenced Jewish beliefs among traditionalists as well. As Jews relegated to the sidelines the requirement to carry out hundreds of practices in clothing, diet, work, and prayer, they revised a fundamental tenet of the role of Jews in history. Instead of expressing belief in a messiah to reestablish the Kingdom of David in Zion, the reformers and Americanizers came to see the Jews themselves as a messianic people, a priestly tribe designated by God to bring the belief in one God to the rest of the world, not to bring about conversions but to set an example as created in God's image to seek justice and charity on behalf of God.

The idea of a Jewish "mission" to spread morality in the world, including the non-Jewish world, had been incubated in Germany. But the concept of this mission was brought to full flower by American Jews, who aligned it with a patriotism shared by their fellow Americans. Today it dominates Reform Judaism, but it echoes through Conservative Judaism and some Orthodox circles as well. The history recounted here helps to explain why a majority of American Jews say that they regard social justice for all peoples, not just Jews, as a central tenet of their religious beliefs.

Idealism and commitment to exemplary works is built into the DNA of a great many Americans as well as American Jews. It can be traced to the audacious pilgrims aboard the *Arbella* who escaped persecution in England and organized themselves in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 around John Winthrop's vision: "We shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us." American Jews have come to define a similar universalist mission from the divine message

conveyed by the prophet Isaiah, translated as: "I the Lord have called you ... and set you for a covenant of the people, for a light unto the nations ..." (Isaiah 42:1-7). Some modern theologians say the distinctive Jewish mission has been to survive genocide, persecution, and dispersal because they were true to the mysterious and uplifting spirit of texts of disputed provenance from the mists of antiquity. But one insight becomes obvious. The struggles among Jews of today to define their special status and mission—to serve as the custodians but not sole proprietors of universally applicable ethical precepts—are rooted in the debates and skirmishes of the past.

### Becoming an American Religion

Three factors contributed to the transformation of Judaism into an American religion.

First came the practical exigencies of living, and earning a living, for Jewish immigrants in America—the fact that they traveled, often alone and isolated, from community to community. Jewish peddlers had to travel and establish roots in places that lacked kosher butchers or effective means to carry out other dietary restrictions, such as separating meat and dairy consumption, using different sets of dishes. Many Jews journeyed while subsisting on bread and butter to avoid eating forbidden foods, but others succumbed to pressures or simply hunger and abandoned their longstanding dietary laws. As they set up stores, they found it difficult to close them during the Sabbath holiday, especially in communities that required stores to be closed on Sunday, the Christian Sabbath.

To survive and prosper, many felt they had to adapt. Revising doctrine to justify such adaptations came later. It was only after changing their customs that Jews sought religious leaders to provide the rationale for the changes in practice dictated by circumstance. Yet for all these adaptations, Jews strove to retain their identity with prayer, liturgy, Sabbath observance, circumcision for males, and display of Jewish symbols, such as mezuzahs on their front doors, the Star of David, the Ten Commandments, and passages from the Bible featured on their sanctuary walls.

A second factor was the determination of Jews to conform to American culture. Accepted as equals in their adopted nation, they followed in the path of some Jews in Europe and rejected their identities as a separate nation following a rigid code of behavior governing diet, clothing, relationships between husbands and wives, how and when one prayed, and how one marked the Sabbath and other holidays. These practices were enforced by rabbinical authorities that ran Jewish affairs in Jewish communities, apart from the secular governments in which Jews resided. In many cases, the alien governing authorities in Europe were happy to cede their writ over social customs to rabbis empowered to set the rules, reinforcing Jewish communities as a segregated and second-class or third-class grouping in ghettos. Jews could leave those communities to do business with non Jews, always fearful of persecution and violence, but no one doubted their authority to govern themselves, until modern times.

In America, however, Jews lived in a secularly neutral state, with guarantees of being treated as equal citizens considerably beyond the rights obtained in parts of Europe. As the historian Jonathan Sarna has noted, they felt liberated in their new land, and confident enough to effectively reinvent their faith with new roots in America. Influenced by Jewish "reformers" in Germany, they embraced American culture on an equal footing with adherents of other religions and beliefs, each allowed to operate irrespective of the state. Exercising the right to govern their own practices in each community, American Jews could be Jews in an American way. They wanted no "chief rabbis" to dictate rules for a disparate Jewish population. They could, and did, elevate the role of women in Judaism, bringing them down from behind barriers and authorizing them to establish religious schools to educate children. They allowed men and women to sit together in family pews, a step that did nothing less than transform the relationship between the synagogue and its congregants, now participating in services as families. Even the traditionalist Jews instituted rules of decorum to reduce the mumbling cacophony of individuals chanting at their own speed, and make the service

more like those at churches, with recitations and standing and sitting down in unison.

After a long history of following the teachings of the Talmud, American Jews wrested the leadership of their religion from rabbinical authorities. They did so in part because there were no rabbis in America until the 1840s, although there were learned lay leaders and *hazans*, or cantors. Even after rabbis arrived, it remained common for congregations, not rabbis, to assert the democratic spirit of their new country and dictate what went on at synagogues. It was believed that if democracy was good enough for American citizens, it was good enough for American members of Jewish congregations. Disputes between rabbis and lay leaders of their congregations became the norm. "We have no ecclesiastical authorities in America, other than the congregations themselves," lamented Isaac Leeser, a prominent exponent of Jewish orthodoxy. "Each congregation makes its own rules for its government, and elects its own minister, who is appointed without any ordination, induction in office being made through his election."

The terminology for what to call a house of worship also evolved. Following the practice of some Jews in France and Germany, American Jews adopted the word temple for their synagogues. Though temple was a universal term, it bore ideological significance especially for reformist Jews, who employed it to show that Jews did not need to pray for the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem because they had temples of their own in America. Jews also established myriad civic, charitable, and secular organizations like B'nai B'rith (Children of the Covenant) to establish their identity outside the practice of religion, adjusting to American cultural norms even as they felt excluded from some clubs in their communities. These secular organizations emboldened lay leadership to take control of how their synagogues would be governed.

A third and perhaps most American factor in how Judaism became an American religion was intellectual. Jews in America were educated in matters outside their religion. They had little choice but to come to grips with modern thought and the evolving revolutionary concepts of science,

citizenship, anthropology, history, and literary analysis in an egalitarian democracy.

Scientific discoveries since Galileo had long rendered obsolete the religious cosmology of the sun revolving around the Earth. Galileo was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church in 1633, but change in religious thinking was inevitable. Jews who were accomplished in medicine, the arts, and physical sciences had begun to thirst for secular knowledge in this same era. Shortly after Galileo, the philosopher Baruch Spinoza was excommunicated in Amsterdam in 1656, for unspecified "heretical" views. Spinoza later made clear that he could not believe in a god that designated Jews alone as his "chosen people." Going further, like some of the founders of America who were enlightened Christians, many American Jews felt they could no longer believe in a god who intervened daily in world affairs. They saw that stories of the Bible sometimes contradict each other or plain common sense. Whereas the prophets decreed that Jews were punished for their sins and rewarded for their virtue, the books of Ecclesiastes and Job teach the opposite, that reward and punishment are beyond human understanding. But it was discoveries in geology, paleontology, and archeology that shattered the literal foundation of the Bible beyond repair, just as Jewish populations proliferated in the United States. Although many Jews had always harbored skepticism toward biblical stories, it became impossible in the modern era for educated and uneducated alike to think that the Earth was six thousand years old or created in six days. Darwin's works challenged to the core the story of humanity's creation in Genesis.

Along with the widening of physical and life sciences came changes in the science of history—the birth of historical relativism, or what is known as "historicism," following the philosophy of Hegel that social norms are best understood as a product of a society's historical context. In the late nineteenth century, the study of other religions in the ancient Near East—many of them with legends, rituals, and beliefs so similar to those of Judaism—led to the view of Judaism as a body of beliefs of a particular tribe in the region with its own God rivaling the gods of other tribes. Of course, the

Bible itself makes clear that although "God is one," other peoples of the region had rival gods that Jews were implored to reject. But scholarly explorations of these other sects, based on recovered artifacts, helped to ignite a passion for seeing Jewish history as a product of its time and place as well as an inspiration for universal truths.

The study of religious traditions from other cultures, including Asia, also contributed to an intellectual awakening to the universal impulse toward faith. The Torah (or Pentateuch, i.e., the first five books of the Bible), was clearly written by several authors, according to the work of German scholars. How, after all, could the Torah have been handed down to Moses on Sinai if Deuteronomy vividly describes Moses's own death and burial? Many of the founding accounts of Judaism, even the Exodus story, came to be seen as etiological myths, written to explain and justify the origins and uniqueness of Jewish claims to the land of Canaan, or Palestine. Scholars believed a history of the Jewish people that could be told without the legends and miracles of the Bible made it easier intellectually for Jews to adapt to modern cultures and demands.

#### A PART BUT APART

The historian Arnold Eisen, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, recounts a story of an itinerant peddler, Joseph Jonas, one of the first Jews to travel west of the Alleghenies, in 1817. A Quaker woman was excited to meet him. "Art thou a Jew?" she asked with wonder. "Thou art one of God's chosen people." But then upon inspection she expressed disappointment. "Well, thou art no different to other people."

For American Jews, the idea of "chosenness" has always presented problems of how to identify themselves as a people "apart" but also a people as "a part" of America, accepted by Americans, like all other people. The Bible, Eisen notes, refers at least 175 times to the Jews as chosen by God to fulfill certain roles in their redemption. Jews are identified as a "special treasure" of God at Mount Sinai, for example. But it is not until the chapters of Isaiah—which scholars believe were written much later than the period of the prophet himself—that Jews are described as chosen to be what is often translated as "a light unto the nations." The special

status of Jews in these passages has evolved, especially among American adherents in the nineteenth century, but also among many others, into "an explicit mission" for Jews to become "the servant of mankind"—and even that Jewish suffering is proclaimed as evidence of "the mark of election" to carry out this task.' As Judaism came to flourish in the United States, American Jews struggled with this paradox: that Jews saw themselves as commanded to dwell separately from humanity to serve a divine purpose, as a beacon to humankind, but also to be grateful that they could belong in their new land as equal to others.

The growing acceptance of Jews by non-Jewish fellow citizens thus posed both a challenge and opportunity to integrate themselves in American society—while cherishing their separateness as a sacred mission. Many American Jews reconciled these two imperatives by redefining the nature of their history of Diaspora, or exile. They saw these punishments less as retribution for misdeeds committed in antiquity and more as a sacred assignment to disperse, proclaim justice, and set an example for a world in need of repair.

For many Jews today, the embrace of a distinctively Jewish social gospel, akin perhaps to the social gospel of Christianity, is an important part of their faith. But it was through the process of Americanization that the social gospel entered American Judaism. Doing God's work on Earth—a legacy of the Enlightenment, the Transcendental movement, the Second Great Awakening, Reform Judaism, and other intellectual strands in American history—is referred to by some American Jews today as *tikkun olam* ("repairing the world"), a distinctly modern phrase adapted and reinterpreted (indeed misinterpreted) from Jewish mystical writings. Some also use another contemporary term *B'tselem Elohim* ("in the image" of God), to describe the importance of treating all of humanity with compassion. But this task of religious believers tending to the secular world remains a contentious issue for Jews and non-Jews alike.

What is beyond dispute is that Jews are heirs to a long and much-debated history on this and many

other issues. How could it be otherwise? The Bible recounts many stories of Jews arguing with God—from Abraham to Jacob wrestling with the angel and changing his name to Israel ("contending with God") to Job to the prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah. Jews willing to challenge God could not but share a history of challenging each other.

But the story of the journey and all these disputes among American Jews begins with the landing of the first Jews in New York City more than 350 years ago. <>

[Path of the Prophets: The Ethics-Driven Life](#) by Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz [The Jewish Publication Society, 9780827613096]

Illuminating the ethical legacy of the biblical prophets, [Path of the Prophets](#) identifies the prophetic moment in the lives of eighteen biblical figures and demonstrates their compelling relevance to us today.

While the Bible almost exclusively names men as prophets, Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz celebrates heroic, largely unknown biblical women such as Shiphrah, Tirzah, and Hannah. He also deepens readers' interpretations of more familiar biblical figures not generally thought of as prophets, such as Joseph, Judah, and Caleb.

Schwartz introduces the prophets with creative, first-person retellings of their decisive experiences, followed by key biblical narratives, context, and analysis. He weighs our heroes' and heroines' legacies—their obstacles and triumphs—and considers how their ethical examples live on; he guides us on how to integrate biblical-ethical values into our lives; and he challenges each of us to walk the prophetic path today.

#### Contents

Acknowledgments

About This Book

Preface: Why the Prophets?

Introduction: The Ethics-Driven Life

PART I. TO DO JUSTLY

1. Abraham's Argument: The Path of Protest

2. Shiphrah's Defiance: The Path of Civil Disobedience

3. Moses' Encounter: The Path of Freedom

4. Tirzah's Challenge: The Path of Equality

5. Samuel's Warning: The Path of Rebuke  
 6. Nathan's Parable: The Path of Righteousness

#### PART 2. TO LOVE MERCY

7. Judah's Step Forward: The Path of Repentance  
 8. Joseph's Cry: The Path of Forgiveness  
 9. Ruth's Vow: The Path of Kindness  
 10. Elisha's Invitation: The Path of Healing  
 11. Jeremiah's Scroll: The Path of Hope  
 12. Jonah's Lesson: The Path of Compassion

#### PART 3. TO WALK HUMBLY

13. Miriam's Celebration: The Path of Joy  
 14. Caleb's Spirit: The Path of Faith  
 15. Hannah's Prayer: The Path of Prayer  
 16. Elijah's Voice: The Path of Humility  
 17. Isaiah's Vision: The Path of Peace  
 18. Ezra's Torah: The Path of Wisdom

A Prophetic Glossary

Study Guide: Living the Bible

Notes

Bibliography

Excerpt: I wrestled with how to capture the prophetic walk, the Bible's ethical legacy, in a compelling, readable way. Much of the classical prophetic books take the form of poetic oracles in archaic language that is challenging to understand. When people try to read the prophets, their eyes glaze over. At other times the biblical account is very sparse or enigmatic, especially when it comes to the prophets' lives. Like the sages who wrote midrash through the generations, one feels the need to fill in the gaps.

My response is to introduce the story of each prophet with a short first-person "historical-fictional" narrative—historical in that it is based on the known facts of the prophet's life, and fictional in my having weaved the narrative together with dialogue that is not recorded in the Bible.

Key Scripture citations form the second, "From the Bible," section of each chapter. Together with the creative retelling, the biblical text conveys the quintessential episode in the lives of our heroes.

I encourage readers to turn to a Bible commentary to fully appreciate the biblical text. Over the centuries Jews have approached the reading of biblical texts through the practice of *pardes*—an acronym that spells the word "orchard" or "garden"

(the word "paradise" is derived from it) — and which refers to four levels of interpretation: *peshat* (literal or historical), *remez* (allegorical), *derash* (analogical), and *sod* (mystical). Christians developed a somewhat analogous practice of sacred reading, known as *lectio divina*, that also moves in four steps from explanation to contemplation. Both approaches share the common goal of deep reading and reflection that make Bible study a transformative experience. The "Living the Bible" study guide at the back of this book is designed to support this process.

The third section of each chapter, "The Prophetic Moment," discusses the crucial turning point in the prophet's life, and its ethical import. I attempt to single out the quality of the prophetic spirit that best defines each shining moment and identify the Hebrew term associated with this quality in order to build the ethical vocabulary unique to the prophetic spirit. My special interest is how that ethical insight evolves through Jewish tradition. I trace how this ethical insight evolves over time in Jewish history and thought.

The fourth section of each chapter, "Walking with ...," examines how each prophetic moment lives on. I trace the legacy of the prophetic moment and incorporate relevant quotations from Jewish tradition and elsewhere to help us internalize the challenges and triumphs of our forebears.

The final section of the book contains a "Prophetic Glossary" of key Hebrew terms, followed by a chapter-by-chapter "Living the Bible" study guide. Biblical, Rabbinic, and modern sources from the chapter are highlighted with questions to facilitate group discussions. These, in turn, pave the way for sacred study and self-reflections designed to challenge us to wrestle with those sources and make them our own. After all, the true power of Torah is its capacity to simultaneously describe what happened long ago and what is happening in our lives right now. To paraphrase Heschel, "What happened once upon a time happens all the time." The deepest level of understanding is attained when we discern that the Bible is describing not only characters of old, but you and me!

The "Living the Bible" study guide often provides broader biblical readings for each chapter for

those who want to go beyond the excerpts provided in this book. So, along with a JPS TANAKH or similar Bible, this book can be used for a broad-based Bible study course.

Only one step is missing from the guide — turning study into action. That is the ultimate step each of us must take — the leap of action that comes from a leap of faith.

### Why the Prophets?

Why is this book different from all other books? Because at all other times we read books of political history, but at this time we read a book of prophetic history.

The lens of prophetic history is not power, but justice. The concern of prophetic history is not conquest, but compassion. The focus of prophetic history is not feat, but faith.

The heroes of prophetic history are not kings or generals, but visionaries and dreamers. They are seekers of justice and exemplars of compassion. They are often ordinary people who have moments of extraordinary courage and insight. They are unexpected heroes.

Most histories focus on political supremacy: who ruled and for how long. Far fewer testify to prophetic authority: who bore witness and for what purpose. As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the twentieth century's outstanding religious thinkers, memorably wrote: "Others have considered history from the point of view of power, judging its course in terms of victory and defeat, of wealth and success; the prophets look at history from the point of view of justice, judging its course in terms of righteousness and corruption, of compassion and violence."

In the wider world, this approach is sometimes called "moral history." There is a long tradition in world literature of presenting history through heroes or heroic themes. But the choice of heroes in a moral history is unconventional. Rather than focus on mighty warriors, moral history spotlights spiritual seekers. These pioneers of the spirit are sometimes called to their vocation from an early age. Others are common folk with uncommon experiences.

The Bible itself is part conventional history, part moral history. It chronicles the political and the prophetic. I believe that it is the latter voice that defines the Bible's essence: the true heart of the Bible. The political voice is concerned with who assumed power, and how they kept command. The prophetic voice is concerned with who challenged power, and how they kept the commandments.

The prophetic voice that courses through Scripture, often as a foil to the political establishment, is unprecedented and unanticipated. No one elected the prophets. We don't know where they came from or how they became so influential. Yet their burning spirit topples kings and unsettles clerics. More quietly, the prophetic spirit heals families and restores faith.

The stakes are very high. Heschel explained it this way: "The prophets' great contribution to humanity was the discovery of the evil of indifference. One may be decent and sinister, pious and sinful." Elucidating further: "The prophets were shocked not only by the acts of injustice on the part of scoundrels, but also by the perversion of justice on the part of the notables." This led to Heschel's famous declaration that in a free society, "few are guilty; all are responsible." No one is exempt from the pursuit of justice. In the words of an old adage, "If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem."

Heschel also noted, "To the prophets, a minor, commonplace sort of injustice assumes almost cosmic proportions." As a result, "Tranquility is unknown to the soul of the prophet. The miseries of the world give him no rest." One of Heschel's disciples, Rabbi Michael Lerner, elaborates on this theme:

For the prophets it was nothing less than a catastrophe that the Jewish people were using the language of the tradition but missing its essence. Having established a society in which they had power, the ancient Israelites were now acting the way the other nations acted, and had set up a society in which the ordinary evils of other societies appeared. Violence and cruelty were once again becoming regnant realities, and all this supposedly in a society embodying Jewish values! For the prophets this was a scandal, and with every ounce of their being they denounced the perversion built

into this accommodation with the way the world normally operates.

The prophets took it upon themselves to critique leaders and laymen alike. Many assailed society in the role of gadfly. Yet others were less confrontational and chose (consciously or intuitively) to effect change by more quietly modeling a higher code of ethics.

Some of the prophets dwelt in the public eye. Others lived unobtrusively in their families and clans. In common, they created enough of an impression so as to be remembered in the national saga that became codified as Scripture, what we call the Bible.

### An Echo of the Call

Moses becomes the first prophet to hear an echo of the call to covenant—he hears a voice from amidst a burning bush at the "mountain of God." Astonishingly, not long thereafter, an entire people will be party to that call at the same mountain.

Many biblical scholars have emphasized the unique quality of this epic event. As Jeremiah Unterman expresses it, "In the Jewish Bible, the most important event in the history of the Israelites was God's revelation at Sinai. Indeed, in all of recorded history, only in the Bible do we have the claim of a god's revelation to an entire people. This revelation is a democratization of divine communication which stands in stark contrast to the revelation claimed in the ancient Near East only by an elite—king, priest, or prophet. The undeniable message is that every single Israelite is significant to God." Walzer explains: "Israel was founded twice, once as a family, a kin group, once as a nation, a political and religious community—and both times the founding instrument was a covenant. The covenant was with Abraham ... the second covenant is with the people of Israel at Sinai ... the birth model and the adherence model."

The Children of Israel's epic trek to the Promised Land recalls Abraham's journey. Like the patriarch's, it crosses a physical and spiritual wilderness: The Israelites move from enslavement to the false god of Pharaoh to the worthy servitude of the true God of the universe. And just as God spoke directly to Abraham, and to Moses, so God

will speak to the people at Sinai. Although Moses may be the mouthpiece, the call is addressed to the people.

There is no better restatement of the call to covenant and the mission statement of the Jewish people than God's first words to Moses when the prophet and the people first reach Mount Sinai: "The Lord called to him from the mountain, saying: 'Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to Me. Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exod. 19:3-6).

While the Exodus constitutes liberation, freedom is not the ultimate purpose of the escape from Egypt. Freedom from human tyranny is certainly a prerequisite to the service of God. But "freedom from" in the Torah is meant for the higher purpose of "freedom to." Freedom is responsibility. Freedom's fulfillment is in the assumption of the Torah covenant, with all its stipulations.

The biblical writers feared that moral autonomy (freedom for its own sake) could lead to moral anarchy. The point of the Exodus is to reach Sinai and revive the call to Abraham. The point of Sinai is to answer the call through the commanded life—the holy life. All the prophets will return to this theme time and again.

As such, the Exodus is the rebirth of a mission-driven people. The promise to Abraham that was lost through centuries of oppression is revived. The turning point comes early in the Exodus saga, when the Torah says, "God heard their moaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob" (Exod. 2:24). Long ago Abraham journeyed to a mountain, where he was given a test of faith. So too will the Israelites, who will respond anew to the summons. As God remembers the covenant, so will the people.

Birth imagery suffuses not only the micro-story of Moses, but the macro-story of the Israelites. A suffering but growing clan, once animated by a

sense of destiny, is gestated anew in the fertile but ultimately oppressive womb of Egypt. The long gestation is followed by the labor pains of the plagues, the parting of the waters, and finally birth upon the dry land of a new world. Through the painful experience of expulsion from Egypt (the name in Hebrew, Mitzrayim, means "narrow straights"—like a birth canal), a people are born. Indeed, it is only when we begin the book of Exodus that the Torah explicitly refers to the Israelites as a people, *am b'nei yisrael* (Exod. 2:9).

Every birth is a beginning ... but only the beginning. Like a newborn baby, the people of Israel precariously move forward to their brit. The covenant ceremony takes place at Sinai. The people hear the terms of the sacred pact between them and their God. They pledge their loyalty. Their pledge is their mark. The description in the Torah, complete with the dashing of blood, is reminiscent of circumcision: "Then he [Moses] took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, All that the Lord has spoken we will faithfully do!" Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord now makes with you concerning all these commands" (Exod. 24: 7-8).

### The Covenant Responsibility

What does it mean for a people in its entirety to witness and accept the covenant? A community has now been created with a defined and urgent sense of both individual and collective responsibility. Unterman spells it out clearly and succinctly:

For the first time in the ancient world, the individual is responsible for the fate of the community by his/her behavior. In reality, each individual now has a dual responsibility—as an individual and as a member of the nation. The community whom the Bible addresses is now apprised of the extraordinary importance of each individual. So, the community must take steps to ensure that its individuals obey the law. Additionally, this concern will be reflected in numerous Divine laws that enjoin the community and its members to care for the vulnerable elements of society. For the first time, the community becomes responsible for the fate of the individual. Thus is born the concept of communal responsibility.

The covenant responsibility is also intergenerational. This deeply embedded sense of mutual responsibility can also be seen as the source of the biblical imperative to educate our children. The most notable expression of this imperative is in Deuteronomy, in a passage that has become central to Jewish liturgy: "Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:6-7). Later, Moses reminds the people that they enter into the covenant with "your children" and with "those who are not with us here this day" (Deut. 29:10,14), traditionally understood to mean future generations. Moreover, recollection and celebration of the Exodus is to be observed "as an institution for all time, for you and for your descendants," and "When your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?' you shall say ..." (Exod. 12:24,26).

Furthermore, at Sinai, the entirety of a people accept the Abrahamic covenant as expressed in a specific array of laws, Torah, that are in effect a national constitution. Sacred scripture and civil law are indistinguishable. Both have their common source, according to the Bible itself and the community of the faithful that follow it, in divinely revealed legislation. As the contemporary philosopher Rabbi David Hartman wrote, "Sinai permanently exposes the Jewish people to prophetic aspirations and judgments.... Sinai requires of the Jew that he believe in the possibility of integrating the moral seriousness of the prophet with the realism and political judgment of the statesman. Politics and morality were united when Israel was born as a nation at Sinai."

Hartman then touches on the danger of nationalism divorced from ethics, a theme with relevance throughout Jewish and world history. The prophetic ethic cannot abide by such a separation; indeed, it rails against it with an incessant voice. "The prophets taught us that the state has only instrumental value for the purpose of embodying the covenantal demands of Judaism," Hartman insists. "When nationalism becomes an absolute for Jews, and political and military judgments are not related to the larger spiritual and moral purpose



of our national renaissance, we can no longer claim to continue the Judaic tradition."

### The Covenant Commemoration

The rebirth of a covenant people and their mission is annually commemorated in the great Jewish festivals of Pesach and Shavuot. Retelling the Exodus from Egypt and the Revelation at Sinai thus becomes living (as well as past) history instruction. However the trials and tribulations of the covenant people may continue, the covenant is alive and well, and needs to be reaffirmed b'kol dor v'dor, "in every generation." The Passover seder motif m'avdut leherut, "from slavery to freedom," replays itself in every age. There will be suffering, but there will be redemption.

So, too, in every generation the historical memory turns into moral demand: "You shall not oppress a stranger, ... having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 23:9). There is no escaping the journey or the mission.

Crucially, the Exodus-Sinai narrative is woven not only into Pesach and Shavuot, two central holidays of the Jewish year, but also into the weekly fabric of Jewish life. Its means is that uniquely biblical institution called the Sabbath.

So central is the Sabbath that the Torah understands it to be part of God's original plan of creation: "On the seventh day God finished the work which He had been doing and He rested on the seventh day from all the work which He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation which He had done" (Gen. 2:2-3).

And the Sabbath is embedded in the Sinai story, squarely in the middle of the Ten Commandments. The first commandment introduces God as the one "who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage" (Exod. 20: i). The fourth commandment expressly orders that on the seventh day "you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements" (Exod. 20:9). The Sabbath is a small taste of the radical freedom and equality envisioned by the covenant (even if the reality is

much more distant). As the Sabbath prayer over the wine, the Kiddush, proclaims, the Sabbath is both "a reminder of the work of Creation" and "a recollection of the Exodus from Egypt."

The Sabbath-Exodus connection is made ever more explicit in the second telling of the Ten Commandments (the Deuteronomy Decalogue), which adds, "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5:5). As Rabbi Ethan Tucker aptly notes, "According to this version of the Ten Commandments, Shabbat is about taking home the lessons of being a slave and making sure that the economically disadvantaged get a chance to rest. Shabbat here emerges from Jewish history. We have firsthand experience of a culture of incessant work; when God redeemed us from that state, we took on a corollary obligation: Never again to create a culture that economically enslaves people without a break."

Recollections of the Exodus-Sinai covenant journey are even present in the Jewish daily liturgy. Every morning and evening service features the singing of a selection from the "Song of the Sea," the Mi Khamokha (Exod. 15:11). The prayer continues, "With a new song the redeemed sang Your praise at the shore of the sea" in the morning, and "Your children witnessed Your sovereignty—the sea splitting before Moses" in the evening. Both versions conclude with praise to God "for redeeming Israel." For the observant Jew, not a day is to go by without remembering the liberation and revelation of Exodus and Sinai.

This message is likewise reinforced in a list of "daily miracles" recited early in the morning service. We give thanks to God "who has made me free." We give praise to God "who made me in the image of God." We acknowledge God "who girds Israel with strength" and "crowns Israel with splendor." We are grateful to God "who frees the captive" and "who lifts up the fallen." By reciting these elements of the covenant experience, we perpetuate the journey.

## The Covenant Journey Continues

Yet Sinai is not the end of the journey. Holy ground and place of revelation that it is ... Sinai is nevertheless a stop on the way to the final destination. In fact, according to the Torah, God needs to gently but firmly remind the people of Israel to keep going. God commands the Israelites with the words *lech aleh*, an echo of Abraham's *lech lecha*. Even from the heights of Sinai the people are told to ascend, *alah* — in effect, to keep climbing. They are instructed to do so *mizeh*, literally "from this place," but also "from this situation" (Exod. 33:1).

One cannot remain forever on the heights of Sinai. Descent is inevitable, but eventually ascent will follow. There are valleys to cross and other mountains to scale. The ultimate destination is not another Sinai, but Israel, the Promised Land. While this saga describes the Israelites, their journey became the archetype and inspiration for many others (like the Puritans) throughout history.

The long slog through the wilderness may well represent the years of adolescent wandering (why does it take so long to grow up?). You can take the child out of slavery but can you take slavery out of the child? Learning to become a servant of God rather than a slave of Pharaoh is a long road. Slowly, slowly the desert trek will impart the lessons of justice and compassion, of humility and faith, that will mark a people ready for the Promise. The people progress and regress. They often take one step forward and two steps backward. But they march on. At the end of the book of Exodus we are told that the Israelites will set out "on their various journeys" but only "when the cloud lifted" (Exod. 40:36). Confusion and uncertainty is a constant companion. At their lowest points the people are threatened with a paralyzing despair. The lessons will come slowly, but they will come.

In their moments of clarity, our ancestors sensed that, in the words of esteemed travel writer Bruce Chatwin, "their vitality lay in their movement." The journey must continue. At a critical juncture, when their morale is at its lowest, one of the unexpected and uncelebrated heroes of the Bible steps forward to convey just this message. Caleb is one of the twelve spies Moses sends to scout out the

Promised Land. The majority of the spies return with a deeply pessimistic assessment of the people's chances to prevail in their mission and fulfill their destiny. The resulting effect on the community's morale is so deleterious that a near riot ensues, and the tribes rail, "if only we had died in the land of Egypt... or if only we might die in this wilderness," and, astonishingly, "it would be better for us to go back to Egypt! Let us head back for Egypt" (Num. 14:2-4).

Only Caleb and Joshua dissent from the gloom and doom of the spies. Hushing the people, Caleb urges them to continue on, with the words *aloh na'aleh*, "let us by all means go up!" (Num. 13:30). Here again is an echo of God's words at Sinai, themselves an echo of God's words to Abraham. The language is of ascent. The Hebrew is what scholars call the "emphatic construct," a phrase that repeats the same word in two different forms: "By all means" or "Certainly, we shall ascend." Caleb's next words again employ the emphatic form, *yachol nuchal*, "We shall surely overcome!"

Little more is said about Caleb. He, like some of the other prophets we will observe, is one of those meteors in the night sky. Tellingly, though, the Torah concludes the account of his heroic moment by calling him "my servant Caleb" and emphasizing that he was imbued "with a different spirit" (Num. 14:24). He has not been counted as one of the classical prophets per se, but Caleb has the prophetic spirit. This spirit gives him the strength to stand against the majority and refuse to abandon the mission.

The prophetic spirit is indeed "a different spirit"—the very spirit that defines the prophets. Ancient Israel's great visionaries, it has often been noted, held no political power or elective office. More often than not they were neither priests nor even members of the religious establishment. Their journey was public but solitary. Their message was loud but unpopular; timely but shunned. An expression arose, *ein navi b'iro*, "there is no prophet in his own city." In the words of theologian Frederick Buechner: "There is no evidence to suggest that anyone ever asked a prophet home for supper more than once."

The late Bible scholar Yohanan Muffs described a prophet, borrowing from the memorable phrase of Ezekiel (22:30), as one summoned to "stand in the breach" between God and Israel. The prophets' primary task was to convey God's message to the stiff-necked people who were not inclined to hear it.

Yet, at the same time, the prophets, with Moses at the lead, also found themselves needing to plead with God on behalf of the people. As Rabbi Shai Held explains: "[The prophet] loves God and finds the people's corruption intolerable; but he also loves the people, and cannot abide the thought that they will meet with devastation and desolation." After the people's loss of faith following the spies report, for example, an incensed God wants to wipe out the entire generation of the Exodus, save for Moses' line. "How long will this people spurn Me, and how long will they have no faith in Me?" exclaims the exasperated deity (Num. 14:11). Moses must come to the people's defense. The prophet is holding God accountable, as it were, to the same standards of justice and compassion as the people.

Moses is successful, but only to a point. God's response, "I pardon, as you have asked" (Num. 14:20), averts an immediate calamity. The Exodus generation will die in the desert as punishment for their sins, but their children will live.

As intercessors from the people to God, the prophets have mixed results. As intercessors from God to the people, the prophets unfortunately succeed to an even lesser extent. Yet if the prophets are often ignored in the short run, their messages persist in the long run. Their stories and teachings are told and retold. Their words are passed down, later written down, and come to occupy a crucial portion of the Hebrew Bible. The prophets' challenge to the conscience of the nation lodges in the collective memory and is not forgotten. Each generation encounters the prophetic path and the opportunity to travel the road less taken.

### The Covenant Response: Here I Am

It is no surprise that the Israelites have trouble staying focused on the prophetic call. Genesis teaches that human beings seem to have an almost

genetic disposition toward evading responsibility. After Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, Genesis describes God as walking, *mithalech* (or, more idiomatically, "moving about") in the Garden of Eden. The human pair immediately hides: "They heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day; and the man and his wife hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3: 8). Evidently Adam and Eve know they have done something wrong. When the voice of God comes calling, when the threat of discovery and possible confrontation is looming, their first instinct is to evade.

Why is evasion our first reaction? Perhaps it is hardwired into our brains: flight or fight. When given the opportunity, flight is the response of choice. Our brains are signaling that this is the safest path. Yet, as the first human beings are about to learn, such behavior carries unavoidable consequences. The flight from the ethical will not stand. Our unique humanity as moral beings will depend on overcoming instinct.

God calls out to Adam and Eve with a simple but startling question. It is one word in the Hebrew: *Ayecha?* "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9).

Heschel teaches us that this is God's first, and eternal, question to humanity, "a call that goes out again and again. Religion begins with a consciousness that something is asked of us. The beginning of religiosity is the feeling of being summoned by a power greater than yourself."

Adam replies, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid" (Gen. 3:10). Adam does not say where he is, but rather what he is doing. He admits to hiding because he is fearful. This is no innocent game of hide and seek ... something has occurred, and Adam is not proud of it. Adam suggests that his nakedness is the issue, but nakedness is not something to fear, unless one is afraid of exposing something else.

Heeding God's call is never easy for the rest of us, either. Like children, sometimes we plug our ears, hoping the summons may pass us by. We distract ourselves with a million other pursuits. We are like a radio unable to tune in to the right frequency.

The signal is beaming but we do not receive the message.

And when we do hear the call, we may choose to ignore or suppress it. Whether out of insecurity or inertia, fear of disquiet or discomfort, we sense the summons but do not respond. The phone rings, and we pretend no one is home. The text message is received, and we press delete. We make a quick mental calculation that we can safely carry on without entering the conversation. Or, we offer a perfunctory response intended to avoid meaningful dialogue.

Adam hears God's question but does not respond admirably. He blames Eve, who in turn blames the serpent. Genuine dialogue does not ensue; acceptance of responsibility does not result. Adam and Eve will begin a journey, but it is not the prophetic path. The Torah describes an involuntary exile from Eden. There must be a better way.

Just as the prophetic query to humanity is embodied in one biblical word *ayecha* (Where are you?), so too is the response, *hineni* (Here I am!).

The prophets repeatedly use this expression of presence. When Abraham is called by name during his excruciating test of faith, he responds three times with this very word:

To God — "He said to him, Abraham,' and He answered, 'Here I am.'" (Gen. 22:1)

To Isaac— "Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'Father!' And he answered, 'Here I am, my son.'" (Gen. 22:7)

To the angel—"Then an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven: Abraham! Abraham!' And he answered, 'Here I am.'" (Gen. 22:11)

The great medieval biblical commentator Rashi labels this *lashon aniya*, "the language of response." Abraham stands in distinct contrast to the evasive Adam. He is ready to answer the call.

Later in Genesis, Abraham's grandson is also called. Jacob responds like his forebear: "God called to Israel in a vision by night: 'Jacob! Jacob!' He answered, 'Here I am'" (Gen. 46:2).

When Moses stands before the burning bush: "God called to him out of the bush: 'Moses! Moses!' He answered, 'Here I am'" (Exod. 3:4).

When Samuel is just a boy, his mother takes him to the priest Eli. One night, "The Lord called out to Samuel, and he answered, 'I'm coming.' He ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you called me'" (1 Sam. 3:4). This happens a second time and then a third, before Eli realizes what is happening and instructs Samuel to speak to God.

Isaiah sees himself among angels: "Then I heard the voice of my Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here I am; send me'" (Isa. 6:8).

Isaiah later declares of God: "I said, 'Here I am, Here I am,' to a nation that did not invoke My name" (Isa. 65:1). Yet Isaiah also envisions the

day when God will say definitively "When you call, the Lord will answer; when you cry, He will say: 'Here I am'" (Isa. 58:9).

As a rule, the prophets hear the call more keenly than the commoners. Perhaps the most vivid expression of this is Amos's declaration: "The lion has roared, who can but fear? My Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:8). The prophet is describing a calling that shakes him to the core.

Sometimes, the prophets' visions of being called are so powerful, they overcome our all-too-common denial and reluctance. "I behold my Lord seated on a high and lofty throne," says Isaiah. He demurs: "Woe is me; I am lost! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips.... Yet my own eyes have beheld the King, Lord of Hosts." Once an angel touches a live coal to his lips and declares, "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt shall depart, and your sin be purged away" (Isa. 6:1-8), Isaiah knows there is no turning back. His "Here I am; send me" ushers forth.

Jeremiah's prophetic call is even more angst-ridden. He begins his work by acknowledging that he is destined to the prophetic call, saying, "The word of the Lord came to me. Before I created you in the womb, I selected you; before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet

concerning the nations" (Jer. 1:5). Yet, like his reluctant predecessors—Isaiah claimed "unclean lips," Moses that he was "slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exod. 4:10)—Jeremiah objects. He contends that he is too young: "Ah, Lord, God! I don't know how to speak, for I am still a boy" (Jer. 1:6). However, when "The Lord put out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: Herewith I put My words into your mouth" (Jer. 1:9), Jeremiah too relents.

More than any other prophet, Jeremiah will suffer physically and emotionally. He will endure imprisonment and exile. He will repeatedly mourn his own birth: "Woe is me, my mother, that you ever bore me," "Accursed be the day that I was born!" and "Why did I ever issue from the womb, to see misery and woe, to spend all my days in shame" (Jer. 15:10, 20:14,18). Yet, Jeremiah will preach on.

With hineni, the prophetic journey is launched. The path will meander and wander, ascend and descend, through trepidation and affirmation, confrontation and cooperation, despair and exaltation, rebuke and consolation, fear and faith. Through it all, a commitment to the covenant mission will sustain us.

### The Covenant Goal: Holiness

Recall the mission statement to the Jewish people at Sinai: "Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:3-6). The reward of the covenant, and its goal, is holiness. So Moses declares to the people at the outset of their epic trek through the wilderness, and then again near its end, "The Lord will establish you as His Holy people, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways" (Deut. 28:9). In the middle of the Torah we are likewise reminded, "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:1).

We best understand covenant holiness as an exalted or sanctified state of being dedicated to a higher purpose — serving God. Interestingly, the first realm that the Bible describes as holy is time—the Sabbath. 'And God blessed the seventh day

and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation which He had done" (Gen. 2:3). One day of the week is elevated above the rest. The Sabbath is distinct and special by virtue of it being a rest day. In Genesis it is a rest day from the divine work of creation. In Exodus it is a respite from the human toil of daily existence.

The second realm the Bible describes as holy is space—the place where Moses meets God. 'And He said, 'Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5). One piece of geography is elevated above the rest. The burning bush on the mountain is distinct and special by virtue of its being the locale of human-divine encounter. In this early part of Exodus holy ground is Mount Horeb, "the mountain of God." Later in Exodus, it is Mount Sinai. Still later, it is the Tabernacle in the desert, and, finally, the Temple in Jerusalem, which preserves the memory of the mountain.

The third realm described as holy is humanity—the people when living in covenant with God. "If you will obey ... a holy nation ... a holy people ... if you keep the commandments ... you shall be holy" (Exod. :3, Deut. 28:9, Lev. 19: 1). The status of one people is elevated above the rest. These people are distinct and special by virtue of their commitment to the ethical life of the covenant. Note the conditional and future-tense language of the text. Holiness is not inherent but latent. The potential is always there, but it takes right behavior to realize holiness.

One might think that human beings are inherently holy based on the Torah's view that we are created in the image of God. Indeed, Moses' cousin Korah expresses such a view, contending that "all the community is holy, all of them, and the Lord is in their midst" (Num. 16:1). The esteemed Israeli philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz acknowledges these two conceptions, explaining, "The [first concept] of holiness is not a fact, but a goal. In the [second concept] holiness is something granted to us: we are holy."

Nonetheless, throughout his career, Professor Leibowitz advocated for the concept of conditional, rather than inherent, holiness. He saw the latter as

dangerous, whether applied to the land or the people of Israel. The land, he argued, is not holy until we sanctify it, and we are not holy unless we are ethically observant.

The connection between holiness and ethics is nowhere more explicit than in the famous "Holiness Code" of Leviticus. As Unterman observes,

Following the introductory declaration, "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy," Leviticus 19 enumerates over 60 positive ('Do ...') and negative (Don't do ...') commandments/laws, approximately two-thirds of which belong to (or are associated with) the ethical sphere, while the rest belong to the ritual domain. Herein one finds a wide range of moral requirements— on providing food for the poor and stranger, not lying or acting deceitfully, not defrauding or holding back wages, not exploiting the helpless or slandering, not rendering unfair judgment or cheating in business, not standing idly by while your fellow is in danger, and others. Most of these are written in the direct address style that we witnessed in the Ten Commandments. One of the effects of this style is to raise moral statements to legal status.

Unterman further notes:

Only in the Jewish Bible is ethical behavior presented as part of the requirements for holiness. This idea, similarly to the "image of God" of Genesis 1 and 9, represents an emulation of Divinity —*imitatio dei*... Obviously, the people's obedience to the ethical obligations of holiness is not a precise imitation of Divine ethical behavior— for God does not engage in business, revere parents, etc. Rather, if Israel strives for holiness by behaving ethically, they shall be separated from the nations, as God is separated from His world. So, by following God's rules, the people cannot become God, but they can become Godly.

### The Covenant Relationship: Love

Covenant is a relational term. In civil law it implies the reciprocal responsibilities between two parties. In the biblical conception it describes the divine-human encounter. The prophets understood the covenant as God's way of loving us, and obedience to the commandments as our way of loving God.

Our biblical ancestors would not have understood the distinction we draw today between love and law because in the Bible love of God is not a sentiment as much as a way of acting. In a recent study, Harvard professor Jon Levenson cites a variety of biblical passages connecting love with loyalty and obedience and concludes, "If we put all this together, we come up with an identification of the love of God with the performance of commandments. Love, so understood, is not an emotion, not a feeling, but a cover term for acts of obedient service."

In Judaism, actions speak louder than words and, in many cases, louder than feelings as well. The covenantal love of Israel for God is more like the love of children for parents than the romantic love of modern marriages. Deeds over time are what count the most, grounding and proving the relationship. Perhaps this helps us understand the Rabbinic dictum, "Greater is he who has been commanded and does the deed than he who had not been commanded and does the deed." For the prophets, the climactic moment of the covenant relationship may well be when the people as a whole say *na'aseh v'nishma* — literally, "we will do and we will obey," but also translated as "we will do what we have heard," or "we will faithfully do" (Exod. 24: 7; cf. Exod. 19:8, 24:3). It is as if the entire people are saying *hineni*, "Here I am," to the covenant and its demands.

The Torah memorably commands the love of God, the love of neighbor, and the love of the stranger. If we were to conceive of this love as sentiment, like the Greek notions of *eros* (romantic love) or *philos* (fraternal love), it would be difficult to understand how such a feeling could be commanded. Even if we were to define this love in the more spiritual sense as *agape* (altruistic love), the same challenge ensues. After all, short of the mystical devotion or cleaving to God (known to the kabbalists but not to the prophets), such rarified dedication and zeal is too elusive to attain. However, if we understand the commanded love of the Torah as loyalty and fidelity to the covenant and its commandments, things make more sense. Again, the proof of love is in deeds: in how one treats one's fellow and one's God.

A great talmudic teaching amplifies God's covenantal love for humanity:

"Beloved is man for he was created in the image. Extraordinary is the love made known to him that he was created in the image, as it is said, For in His image did God make man" (Gen. 1:27, 9:6). Beloved are Israel for they were called children of God. Extraordinary is the love made known to them that they were called children of God, as it is said: "You are the children of the Lord, your God" (Deut. 14:1). Beloved are Israel for to them was given a precious implement. Extraordinary is the love made known to them that they were given the precious implement with which the world was created, as it is said: "For I give you a good doctrine, you shall not forsake My teaching." (Prov. 4:2)

God's creation of humanity in the divine image is a first act of love. Granting our human awareness of this unique creation is another act of love. Offering a covenantal relationship with the children of Israel is a third act of love. Israel's awareness of the covenant is a fourth act of love. Giving the Torah is a fifth act of love. Israel's awareness of the commandments is a final act of love.

### The Ethics-Driven Life

Scholars have often dubbed the core prophetic message as "ethical monotheism"—the idea that righteous living is God's primary demand. For the prophets, the ethics-driven life is the heart of it all—our purpose and our task. While the prophets did not employ the term "ethics" per se (a philosophical concept from the ancient Greeks), their central preoccupation was morality. Yet the prophetic call to holiness through ethical living is not generic. While the prophets' soaring oratory was not deficient in ethical generalities, they nonetheless saw themselves in a covenant relationship with God, and the content of that covenant was something quite specific — the Torah. The prophetic message rests on a formidable list of detailed commandments bein adam l'makom, between us and God, and bein adam l'havero, between us and our fellow.

In the Torah, of course, all kinds of commandments cover every aspect of human life. The sages identified 613 commandments related to everything from food and sex to sacrifices and holidays. The prophets, however, emphasized those commandments that govern how

we relate to God and to one another. Micah's great formulation is prefaced by the declaration, "He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you" (6: 8). The Hebrew "require," *doresh*, is a strong term that could also be translated as "demand." The God of the prophets is demanding, and the stipulations are clear. While the Torah espouses its ethical principles through stories that are meant to set examples (*aggadah*), it is also very much a legal code of ethics (*halacha*) meant to be followed.

In the course of this book I follow both moral pathways. Recognizing that stories are the best teachers, I emphasize episodes in the prophets' lives that dramatize the ethical principles they espouse. That said, since the prophets themselves would insist upon a commandment-based blueprint for the ethical life, in each chapter I also connect these stories to biblical commandments and Rabbinic teachings that define the prophetic path. We are inspired by biography but guided by law.

In order to appreciate the dictates of the covenant that inform the prophets, I have compiled three sets of the Torah's most important ethical commandments. In the following text I order them according to the same three categories that structure this book: Micah's call to justice, compassion, and faith. These decrees are largely drawn from three sets of biblical commandments in the Torah: the Covenant Code of Exodus, the Holiness Code of Leviticus, and the Justice Code of Deuteronomy.

### Justice

The prophetic message of justice is built on the exhortation: "Justice, justice shall you pursue" (Deut. 16:20). The call to justice emphasizes the necessity of true impartiality before the law: "You shall appoint magistrates ... and they shall govern the people with due justice. You shall not judge unfairly: you shall show no partiality; you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the

discerning and upset the plea of the just" (Deut. 16:18-19; see also Lev. 19:15, Exod. 23:2-3,6-8). Basic rules against murder, theft, and perjury are familiar to us because they are enshrined in the Ten Commandments. Fair treatment of workers and timely payment of their wages is fundamental to a just society: "You

shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer; whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land" (Deut. 24:14). Also: "You must pay [a laborer] his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and urgently depends on it" (Deut. 24:15; similarly Lev. 19:13).

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the prophetic call to justice is the attention given to the needy and vulnerable: "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan" (Exod. 22:20-21; similarly, Exod. 23:9, Lev. 19:33, Deut. 24:17-18). The prophets recognized the hard truth of the human condition: those who live on the margins of society are easily neglected and oppressed. The heart of the prophetic ethic is a rebuttal of this injustice, and a rebuke to those who abuse power at the expense of the lowly.

### Ten Commandments of Justice

1. "Justice, justice shall you pursue." (Deut. 16:20)
2. "You shall appoint magistrates ... and they shall govern the people with due justice. You shall not judge unfairly; you shall show no partiality; you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the discerning and upset the plea of the just." (Deut. 16:18-19, Lev. 19:15, Exod. 23:2-3,6-8)
3. "You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer; whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay a laborer his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and urgently depends on it." (Deut. 24:14-15, Lev. 19:13)
4. "You shall not defraud your neighbor." (Lev. 19:13)

5. "You shall not stand idly by (or profit by) the blood of your neighbor." (Lev. 19:16)
6. "You shall not murder." (Exod. 20:13, Deut. 5:17)
7. "You shall not steal." (Exod. 20:13, Lev. 19:11, Deut. 5:17)
8. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Exod. 20:13,23:1, Deut. 5:17)
9. "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan." (Exod. 22:20-21, 23:9, Lev. 19:33, Deut. 24:17-18)
10. "You shall have one law for stranger and citizen alike." (Lev. 24:22, Num. 15:15).

### Compassion

"Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18) has been called the Torah's greatest biblical command. Rabbi Akiva termed it the *k'lalgadol* (great principle), and it is often considered the basis of the "golden rule" as espoused by Hillel and Jesus.

This supreme exhortation of compassion expresses the broadest ideal of compassion. Yet, again, those on the margins of society—the poor, the handicapped, and the stranger—are most frequently and dramatically singled out for special concern:

"You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind." (Lev. 19:14)

"You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old." (Lev. 19:32)

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of the field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger." (Lev. 19:9-10, Deut. 24:19-21)

"Do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman. Rather you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs." (Deut. 15:7-8)

"The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as



yourself for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Lev. 19:34)

### Ten Commandments of Compassion

1. "You shall not insult the deaf or place a stumbling block before the blind." (Lev. 19:14)
2. "You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old." (Lev. 19:32)
3. "You shall not hate a kinsman in your heart." (Lev. 19:17)
4. "Reprove your neighbor, but incur no guilt because of him." (Lev. 19:17)
5. "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge." (Lev. 19:18)
6. "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Lev. 19:18)
7. "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of the field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger." (Lev. 19:9-10, Deut. 24:19-21)
8. "Do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman. Rather you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs." (Deut. 7-8,11)
9. "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Lev. 19:34)
10. "When you approach a town to attack it, you shall offer it terms of peace." (Deut. 20:10)

The refrain about the stranger can be considered a leitmotif of the Torah. According to the sages, it is repeated thirty-six times.

I term this the doctrine of "historical empathy": We know the heart of the stranger because we were once strangers. Historical empathy is arguably the prophets' most important ethical legacy. The Bible bids us to learn from our experience. The moral lesson we draw from the past of our people is never again to perpetrate the oppression that was leveled against us. Even more, it is to replace the

hate that can easily fill our hearts with love instead. "The stranger who resides with

you shall be as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lev. 19:33).

In his careful study of biblical ethics, Jeremiah Unterman discerns seven distinct motivational reasons (or at least variations on the key theme of empathy) for justice and compassion toward the stranger:

Appeal to empathy through remembrance of the past in which you were in a similar inferior social situation — "for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exod. 22:20)

Appeal to empathy since your identity was affected in a similar fashion due to your similar precarious experience — "for you know the soul of the stranger." (Exod. 23:9)

Appeal to the ultimate moral authority, God, who commands the law— "I am the Lord your God." (Lev. 19:34)

Appeal to humanitarian impulse— "You shall not abuse a poor and destitute laborer, either from your brethren or from your stranger in your land in your gates. You must pay his wages on that very same day ... for he is poor and urgently depends upon it." (Deut. 24:14-15)

Threat of punishment— "Else he will cry against you to the Lord, and you will incur sin." (Deut. 24:15) Also: "Cursed is he who subverts the justice due to the stranger, orphan, and widow." (Deut. 27:19)

Imitation of God's ethics— "(God) loves the stranger ... so you must love the stranger." (Deut. 10:18)

In order to receive reward — "so that the Lord your God will bless you in all that you do." (Deut. 14:29)

An intriguing archeological footnote to this central Torah teaching: In 2008, an ostrakon (writing on a potsherd) was discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa in the Elah Valley in central Israel. The faded writing is in old (paleo) Hebrew and is very difficult to read. Still, two independent scholars, Gershon Galil and Emile Puech, have noted that the words for justice,

widow, and stranger (and, possibly, also orphan and poor) appear. Unterman comments: "As these terms appear for the first time together in the Torah, this ostrakon may provide extremely early evidence of the existence of Torah law. Scientific dating of the ostrakon in the precise place in which it was found has been very convincingly set at the end of the 11th century or the beginning of the 10th century BCE, i.e., the time of the founding of the Israelite monarchy." The oldest Hebrew inscription ever found deals with justice for the stranger and the needy!

The Bible itself presents two historical events that testify to its preoccupation with ethics. During the reign of King Zedekiah and King Nebuchadnezzar's campaign against Judea (c.588 BCE), the prophet Jeremiah reports that the King ordered the release of all Hebrew slaves. "But afterward they turned about and brought back the men and women they had set free, and forced them into slavery again" (Jer. 34:11). This moral outrage prompts Jeremiah to accurately predict the demise of the nation by Babylon.

Several generations later, upon the people's return from the Babylonian exile: "There was a great outcry by the common folk and their wives against their brother Jews" (Neh. 5:1). Creditors seized many returnees' lands and possessions—the returnees relinquishing prized belongings to secure immediate funds with which to purchase food (thereby avoiding starvation) and/or pay their taxes. Yet Torah law forbids seizure of land to pay a debt (see Exod. 22:20-25). The people cried out to Nehemiah, their governor, "Now we are as good as our brother, and our children as good as theirs; yet here we are subjecting our sons and daughters to slavery ... and we are powerless, while our fields and vineyards belong to others." To his credit, Nehemiah took control of the situation by castigating the offenders and declaring a jubilee. He is a shining example of turning theory into practice.

During many centuries of internal, self-rule in the diaspora, the Jewish community would practice what it preached by establishing free-loan societies and a variety of other measures intended to aid the disadvantaged.

In our own day, Jewish involvement in the civil rights struggle and other social justice causes realizes the prophetic insistence on justice and compassion. Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld articulated and embodied the love of the stranger when he responded to the call to join the civil rights campaign in Mississippi in 1966 (and was seriously beaten by Southern racists for doing so). "It does not diminish our dignity as Jews," he wrote, "when we seek to achieve the precious ability to feel empathy with Negro bitterness and frustration. The command that we do so comes to us directly out of the Torah: V'atem y'datem et nefesh hager— You should be able to know the very being of the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. And not only in Egypt 3,000 years ago; we were there yesterday."

In one of his last orations, Moses explicitly and remarkably commands, "Do not hate an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land" (Deut. 23:8). Mercy and compassion are not always natural human responses, especially in the wake of oppression. The prophetic ethic demands sure action against injustice, but at the same time urges us to rise to a most difficult challenge: letting go of hate. "You shall not hate a kinsman in your heart" (Lev. 19:17). "Reprove your neighbor, but incur no guilt because of him" (Lev. 19:17). "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge" (Lev. 19:18). The prophetic ethic understands that to achieve true goodness and freedom, we cannot be trapped in the past. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks comments, "Had the Israelites continued to hate their enemies, Moses would have taken the Israelites out of Egypt, but he would not have taken Egypt out of the Israelites."

Compassion and concern for the lowly in society course through all the classical prophets. Nowhere is this more evident than in Second Isaiah, whose challenging words the sages chose millennia ago to be read in the synagogue on Yom Kippur morning—a practice that continues to this day: "No, this is the fast I desire: To unlock the fetters of wickedness, and untie the cords of the yoke; to let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke. It is to share your bread with the hungry, and to take the wretched poor into your home; when you see the naked to clothe him; and not to ignore your own kin" (Isa. 58:6-7).

The Psalmist also affirms the mandate of social justice. After extolling God as the creator of heaven and earth, he lauds the One "who secures justice for those who are wronged; gives food to the hungry; sets prisoners free; restores sight to the blind; makes those who are bent stand straight; loves the righteous; watches over the stranger; gives courage to the orphan and widow" (Ps. 146:6-9).

Ultimately, the prophets were not against religious ritual, but religious hypocrisy. Sacrifice is no substitute for justice. As one biblical scholar, Shalom Paul, puts it, "In sum, the Lord wants right, not rite." Another scholar, Shalom Spiegel, echoes, "God requires devotion, not devotions."

### Faith

The final category of commandments relates to faith—what Micah called "the humble walk." These commandments address our direct relationship with God and with our families. The first of the Ten Commandments, "I am Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage" (Exod. 20:2, Deut. 5:6), has long been understood as a command to know that there is a God and to recognize God's active and redeeming presence in the world. Further commandments are insistent that worship of anything but God is idolatry, to be resisted at all cost.

In addition, we are challenged both to affirm God and to love/ obey God completely: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5). The prophets understood that while such devotion was ultimately expressed in outward acts, strength of spirit was also required. Although few commandments relate to inner thoughts, the last of the Ten Commandments is an injunction against jealousy: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife ... or anything that is your neighbor's" (Exod. 20:14, Deut. 5:18). Along these lines, many of the prophets speak about the inner spirit needed to turn from the wayward path to the one of righteous living.

Faithfulness, it should be noted, is built on devotion to God, but more concretely, to family as well. Honoring one's father and mother

and refraining from unfaithfulness in marriage are at the core of the Ten Commandments. We are commanded to observe a day of rest, the Sabbath, for ourselves and our family. A great act of faith — "Teach them to your children" (Deut. 6:7)— speaks to keeping faith with future generations by imparting our heritage. The prophets often avail themselves of family metaphors to explain unfaithfulness in the people. They understood that people comprehend best what they have experienced in the most intimate settings of family life.

### Ten Commandments of Faith

1. "I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage." (Exod. 20:2, Deut. 5:6)
2. "You shall have no other gods beside Me." (Exod. 20:3, Deut. 5:7, 6:4)
3. "You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness." (Exod. 20:4, Lev. 19:4, Deut. 5:8)
4. "You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God (or take God's name in vain)." (Exod. 20:7, Lev. 19:12, Deut. 5:11)
5. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deut. 6:5)
6. "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." (Exod. 20:8, Deut. 5:12)
7. "Honor your father and mother." (Exod. 20:12, Lev. 19:3, Deut. 5:16)
8. "You shall not commit adultery." (Exod. 20:13, Deut. 5:17)
9. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife ... or anything that is your neighbor's." (Exod. 20:14, Deut. 5:18)
10. "Teach them to your children." (Deut. 6:7)

Walking with the prophets is to acknowledge, as Rabbi Michael Lerner puts it, "that the way things are is not the way things have to be." Nudging the world toward the good is our covenant-demanding purpose. The path of the prophets is audacious. "They saw their task as remaking the social order," Lerner continues. "Justice, justice shall you pursue. And love your neighbor as yourself. Don't oppress

the stranger—use one standard for yourself and for the other. Take care of the powerless, the

orphan, the widow, and again the stranger. Don't be oppressive to animals. Redistribute the land. Don't withhold wages of those who have done work for you. Make sure the poor have enough to eat. Don't repeat the ways of the oppressor."

The path of the prophets is the road less taken. It spells the disruption of home and comfort. It entails toil and risk. This path was difficult to the point of desperate for Abraham and Moses, for Elijah and Jeremiah. Yet it was exhilarating too, for Tirzah and Miriam, for Ruth and Hannah. It is there before us; beckoning to us, children of the prophets. <>

[The Many Faces of Maimonides](#) by Dov Schwartz, translated by Batya Stein [Emunot: Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah, Academic Studies Press, 9781618117809]

This volume offers a new reading of Maimonides' [Guide of the Perplexed](#). In particular, it explores how Maimonides' commitment to integrity led him to a critique of the Kalām, to a complex concept of immortality, and to insight into the human yearning for metaphysical knowledge. Maimonides' search for objective truth is also analyzed in its connection with the scientific writings of his time, which neither the Kalām nor the Jewish philosophical tradition that preceded him had endorsed.

- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- The Passion for Metaphysics
- The Separate Intellects
- Astral Magic and the Law
- Idolatry as Mediation
- Immortality and Imagination
- Maimonides: A Philosophical Theologian
- Epilogue
- Bibliography
- Index

The present book will address mainly philosophical dimensions in Maimonides' thought, focusing on a new reading of several issues in [The Guide of the Perplexed](#). A figure like Maimonides would obviously have a variety of interests and goals and his writing will certainly be diverse and multifaceted. Even an esoteric interest or political and religious goals and motives do not exhaust the pursuits of Maimonides, who both transcended and

included all of these. I do not accept mystic explanations of his endeavor, and can only study his genius.

Medieval Jewish thought can be clearly split into two eras—before and after the appearance of *The Guide of the Perplexed*. No other philosophical treatise has ever evoked so many discussions, neither in the rabbinic nor in the scholarly literature, and no other work of Jewish philosophy has ever given rise to such polarized interpretations. The *Guide of the Perplexed* also had an essential influence on medieval (Christian) scholastic thought and, through it, on Western culture in general. My attempt in this introduction is to offer a brief outline of various reasons for this phenomenon.

The *Guide of the Perplexed*, which was completed in 1191, turned into a popular volume that, over centuries, gained acceptance not only among thinkers and scholars but also among the general public. This book's popularity is an impressive and paradoxical event, given that it absolutely contradicts its writer's original intention. At the end of his Introduction, Maimonides set a criterion—his book would please one in ten thousand readers:

To sum up: I am the man who when the concern pressed him and his way was straitened and he could find no other device by which to teach a demonstrated truth other than by giving satisfaction to a single virtuous man while displeasing ten thousand ignoramuses—I am he who prefers to address that single man by himself, and I do not heed the blame of those many creatures.

Maimonides knew that most people in the Jewish community would not understand the claims of the *Guide*, and wrote the book with this purpose in mind. Indeed, he actively tried to distance ordinary readers from his book and therefore wrote it using deliberate contradictions, as he admitted in the introduction. Maimonides thus adopted all possible means to ensure the book would not be popular but to no avail.

The paradox of the book's acceptance is evident in the fact that it was written for a specific student, R. Joseph b. Judah. Contrary to Maimonides' previous large treatises, *Commentary to the Mishnah* and *Mishneh Torah*, which were written for the Jewish

community in general, the Guide was tailored for Joseph: a scholar, interested in various scientific and philosophical fields, who had become perplexed. In the "Introduction to the First Part; Maimonides clarified that the work had been designed for one who is knowledgeable in Torah as well as in the theoretical and philosophical sciences but has difficulty reconciling them. The rabbi's personal guidance to his student thus opened up possibilities of deeper knowledge to many. In this book, I focus mainly on the Guide and only in Chapters Three and Five consider his other writings.

## Structure

Before attempting to consider the general principles of the Guide, I will briefly present its structure and its main conceptual approaches in the table below:

Part I
1-49 Negating corporeality: lexicographical discussions, focusing on the negation of corporeality. Almost every chapter interprets biblical attributes of God in non-corporeal terms.
50-70 Attributes: Denying any attributes to God, who is entirely indescribable.
71-76 Dispute: Polemic with Muslim theologians.
1 Demonstration: A series of proofs of God's existence, unity, and non-corporeality.
2-12 The Spheres and the Angels (separate intellects): The notion of emanation, which clarifies how the heavenly elements and the angels came into being.
Part II
13-31 Creation: The impossibility of demonstrating scientifically either the creation or the eternity of the world. Reasons for preferring creation.
32-48 Prophecy: Divine revelation is natural and subject to a set order. Its functions are political.
1-7 The Account of the Chariot: A meteorological and physical interpretation of the biblical chapters on the chariot. 8-24 Providence and Knowledge: God's providence protects only humans according to their level of

knowledge. God knows he details from his knowledge of himself.

## Part III

25-50 The Reasons for the Commandments: Rational arguments for all the commandments

51-54 Perfection: The ethos of worshipping the divine among those who attained perfection.

This division is only one way of presenting the contents of the Guide, but immediately raises questions about its structure and order, which have proven extremely controversial. For example, the polemic with the Muslim theologians is closer in its character and contents to the issue of creation than to the issue of negative attributes, but Maimonides nevertheless set it in Part I. Not only are the contents of the Guide puzzling, but so are the structure and order of the discussions. In the first two chapters of this book, I consider the structure and the order of two sets of chapters in the Guide, drawing lessons from them about Maimonides' philosophical writing in general.

## The Legitimation of Scientific Philosophical Pursuits

A fundamental principle of the Maimonidean approach that appears already in the introductions to the Guide is the equation of *macaseh bereshit* [the Account of the Beginning] with physics, and of *ma'aseh merkavah* [the Account of the Chariot] with metaphysics. What is revolutionary in this equation? *Ma'aseh bereshit* and *macaseh merkavah* reflect the most esoteric concerns of tannaitic thought—the former referring to the secrets of creation, and the latter, based on the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, to the supreme revelations of prophecy. Maimonides, then, at one stroke, interpreted these two terms according to the Aristotelian science that he had come to know through the Arabic translations of the Greek philosopher and through the writings of Muslim philosophers—Alfārābī, Avicenna, Ibn Bājjah, Ibn Tufail, and others. To Maimonides, *macaseh bereshit* conveys the physical order of the material world—the laws of motion, time, meteorology, and so forth—whereas *ma'aseh merkavah* conveys the order of the heavenly world—the movement of the spheres and their movers. In this daring interpretation, Maimonides

pivoted the most secret traditions of the Oral Law on the scientific laws of his time.

Furthermore, Maimonides adopted in the Guide (I:71) the approach that ancient Jews had displayed wondrous expertise and creativity in various sciences. When the Jewish people went into exile, Gentile nations learned these sciences from the Jews who, over the centuries, had forgotten them due to the hardships and persecutions afflicting them. With this explanation, Maimonides instantly legitimized the study of philosophy from the books of Muslim thinkers. The study of the great Muslim philosophers merely returns a lost item to its rightful owners. Maimonides tells the scholar, as it were, that learning about scientific problems from Arabic sources is, in fact, a return to the rabbis' esoteric tradition.

The acquisition of scientific knowledge as the supreme human purpose is an approach that Maimonides endorses in all his writings. This notion is already developed systematically in his Introduction to Commentary to the Mishnah and is the basis for the discussions in the Guide. Maimonides emphasized that the Torah and its commandments aim at "the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body." By "welfare of the body" he meant imparting normative and ethical foundations for the existence of the society, and by "welfare of the soul"—the acquisition of general and proper scientific knowledge. For Maimonides, then, philosophical and religious ideals coalesce. The Torah is unique because it directs us to acquire knowledge and scientific learning. Scientific knowledge, however, must be acquired from scientific sources, meaning Greek science through Muslim mediation, not from the Torah. In the following chapters, I consider the Muslim sources of the Guide and, specifically, the notion of idolatry as mediation that is manifest in Maimonides' attitude to astral magic and in his conception on the immortality of the intellect.

Maimonides was aware that many in the rabbinic world did not agree with the rationalist version he upheld. Indeed, toward the end of his life, a bitter polemic had already erupted regarding his thought, which would persist long after his death.

## Scientific Truth versus Religious Truth

For Maimonides, as noted, the authoritative scientific sources were the writings of Muslim philosophers from Alfarabi onward. What about the two centuries of Jewish philosophizing that had preceded his birth? Systematic theological and philosophical treatises had been written before the appearance of the Guide—Saadia Gaon's *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, Bahya ibn Paqudas' *The Duties of the Heart*, and Solomon Ibn Gabirol's *The Fountain of Life*. Maimonides did not flinch from controversy with his predecessors, and this matter requires an understanding of his view on the contrast between scientific and religious truth.

Maimonides sharply distinguished theologians, who focus on proving religious truths at any price, from philosophers, who seek scientific objective truth. Specifically, Maimonides addressed a phenomenon widespread in the Muslim world—the *Kalām*. The term "*Kalām*"—meaning thought, speech, logic, and so forth—denotes Muslim theological schools that strove to offer the truth of Islam in rational terms. These theologians used polemical and dialectic arguments to prove that reason supports Muslim religion. Since existing sciences did not meet the aims of the *Kalām* supporters (known as *Mutakallimūn*), they created an alternative science. The natural science of the *Mutakallimūn* relied on elements (atomism, the existence of a vacuum), which Maimonides strongly opposed. Interestingly, modern science accepts these elements, but the dominant paradigm in Maimonides' times was Aristotelian science, which negated them. Maimonides viewed Muslim theologians—and theologians in general—as self-serving and uninterested in objective truth, concerned only with the verification of their approach at any cost. He argued that they first made presumptions and only then turned to explain the reality facing them. By contrast, true scientists observe reality as is and then approach it to determine its laws.

A question could be raised—Maimonides is, after all, a religious man and he too wishes to verify the assumptions of religion. Theologians devoted their efforts to the endorsement of approaches such as creation and divine omnipotence, which were important to Maimonides himself. Why, then, not

endorse the view of the Kalām theologians? Maimonides would answer that objective truth is the supreme value and, as such, does not contradict religious existence. He did not shy away from stating that not every religious belief can be scientifically proven. Given his fearless adherence to truth, he never hesitated to criticize his forebears, pointing out mistakes by talmudic sages who had claimed that heavenly elements make sounds in their motion. He also criticized a group of thinkers whom he respected as halakhists and talmudists—the geonim. Maimonides noted that, when the geonim deal with conceptual and theological matters, they adopt the arguments of Muslim theologians (*Mutakallimūn*). Similarly, he was critical of Karaite thinkers because some of them had endorsed the Kalām natural science. He had praise only for "Andalusian" thinkers, that is, for philosophers who lived in his own surroundings. Unfortunately, we have no way of identifying who these "Andalusians" were.

Maimonides, then, recognized the existence of an objective scientific truth and thereby displayed intellectual integrity. The implication, however, is not that Maimonides blindly followed the determinations of the scientists. He held that it is definitely possible to criticize assumptions adopted by scientists when these assumptions cannot be demonstrated and are merely intuitions. Because he clung to scientific truth, Maimonides turned directly to the scientific writings of his time, which were not Jewish sources. It is thus clear why, generally, he did not relate to the Jewish philosophical tradition that had preceded him.

The present book seeks to contribute to the understanding of modes of thought adopted mostly in the writing of *The Guide of the Perplexed* and to the knowledge of its sources. The last chapter acts as a summary, presenting Maimonides as a "philosophical theologian" according to a model of his own design.

For generations, traditional commentators, scholars, and thinkers have offered numerous interpretations of Maimonides' thought. At times, this multiplicity leads the student to despair: Maimonides' "authentic" view recedes further and further away when so much is invested in the eager pursuit of its

foundations. This multiplicity of interpretations is indeed a distinctive sign or perhaps we should say an anticipation of postmodernism, but we may assume Maimonides' interpreters and scholars to be genuinely interested in delving into the depths of his thought.

One dimension evoking hope among scholars is the study of the sources. Thinkers develop in the context of scholarly, scientific, and intellectual traditions, and their views are therefore judged against a specific background. Concerning Maimonides, a dual body of sources is involved: on the one hand, the biblical sources in their rabbinic interpretation, and on the other, the Muslim philosophy whose representatives Maimonides himself details in the letter he sent to his translator, Samuel Ibn Tibbon. Maimonides was certainly acquainted with Jewish works, and even related to them implicitly in his writings. The more significant influence on the shaping of his views, however, is that of scientific and philosophical approaches that emerged in the Muslim world.

In this work, therefore, I have tried to highlight Maimonides' views according to his sources. On the study of metaphysics and regarding astral magic, I emphasized the role of the rabbis beside the Muslim influence. On the view of idolatry as mediation and on the immortality of the soul, I focused mainly on Muslim sources. On the matter of the separate intellects, I examined Maimonides' attitude toward his rabbinic sources. In Shlomo Pines' classic article on the sources of the *Guide*, which appeared as a preface to his translation of the book, he reviewed Maimonides' direct sources. Although his indirect sources and his approach to them is extensively considered, these issues still require further discussion.

The contribution of the current work to the study of Maimonides' sources ultimately prepared the ground for defining the type of thinker he created. I argued in chapter 6 that Maimonides was a theological philosopher or a philosophical theologian. Contrary to radical views claiming that Maimonides was a "pure" philosopher who interpreted religion solely in political terms, this work shows that the religious stance was an integral aspect of his personality and also carried

metaphysical significance. My discussions, though focused on a limited number of issues, suffice to trace the contours of Maimonides' philosophical concern, and if this book helps to open up research horizons, it can be said to have succeeded in its task. <>

[Textual Tapestries: Explorations of the Five Megillot](#) by Gabriel H. Cohen, Translated by David Strauss [Maggid Tanakh Companions, Maggid, 9781592643981]

The Five Megillot - the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther are among the most familiar of biblical texts. Yet in the hands of veteran educator and Bible scholar Gabriel H. Cohn, a leading disciple of Nehama Leibowitz, the megillot reveal untold depths.

Utilizing classical commentary and modern scholarship to explore literary, philosophical, and educational aspects of the megillot, he uncovers multiple dimensions of meaning, while always maintaining sight of the peshat, the plain sense of the text.

Upon its publication in Hebrew, [Textual Tapestries](#) was recognized as an instant classic. Dr. Cohn now invites readers of English to participate in the continuing dialogue between the Jewish people and their sacred books, and to join him on a journey to discover these books' religious meaning for the individual and the community.

Contents  
Preface  
Introduction: Reading the Five Megillot  
STUDIES IN THE SONG OF SONGS  
Chapter One: The Song of Songs in the Framework of Scripture  
Chapter Two: Allegory and Symbol  
Chapter Three: "The Song of Songs Which Is Solomon's"  
Chapter Four: The Inner World of the Song of Songs  
Chapter Five: The Songs and Their Singularity  
Chapter Six: The Sequence of the Songs  
Chapter Seven: The Song of the Land of Israel  
Chapter Eight: "The Daughters of Jerusalem" — "The Daughters of Zion"  
Appendix I: Select Songs for Self-Study

#### STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF RUTH

Chapter Nine: The Structure of the Book of Ruth log

Chapter Ten: The Language and Style of the Book

Chapter Eleven: Social Responsibility and Religious Consciousness

Chapter Twelve: Leaving the Land of Israel

Chapter Thirteen: 'And Be Famous in Bethlehem'

Chapter Fourteen: The Deeds of the Fathers Are a Sign for the Children

Chapter Fifteen: Your People shall Be My People, and Your God My God

Chapter Sixteen: Levirate Marriage and Redemption

Chapter Seventeen: Women and Family

Chapter Eighteen: The Meaning of the Book of Ruth

Appendix I: Commentaries and Study Questions

#### STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

Chapter Nineteen: Eikha

Chapter Twenty: The Literary Character of the Book 2

Chapter Twenty-One: Jeremiah and Lamentations

Chapter Twenty-Two: The Destruction of Jerusalem

Chapter Twenty-Three: "Jerusalem has Grievously Sinned"

Chapter Twenty-Four: Prayer and Hope

Appendix I: Midrashim on the Book of Lamentations

Appendix II: Kinot

#### STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Chapter Twenty-Five: Ecclesiastes and the Books of Scripture

Chapter Twenty-Six: Kohelet the Son of David

Chapter Twenty-Seven: "Vanity of Vanities"

Chapter Twenty-Eight: The Inner Structure

Chapter Twenty-Nine: "Because Its Words Are Self-Contradictory"

Chapter Thirty: The Concept of God in Ecclesiastes

Chapter Thirty-One: What Is Good for Man

Appendix I: Ecclesiastes in the Biblical Canon



Appendix II: A Unique Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiastes  
 STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER  
 Chapter Thirty-Two: The World of the Book of Esther  
 Chapter Thirty-Three: Rule and Dominion in Ahasuerus' Kingdom  
 Chapter Thirty-Four: The Hidden and the Revealed  
 Chapter Thirty-Five: Queen Esther in the Footsteps of Joseph  
 Chapter Thirty-Six: Continuing the War Against Amalek  
 Chapter Thirty-Seven: The Status of Women  
 Chapter Thirty-Eight: The Religious Meaning of the Book of Esther  
 Appendix I: The Laws and Customs of Purim  
 Appendix II: The Book of Esther in the Tempest of Time

The Five Megillot (scrolls) — the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther — belong to Ketuvim (the Writings), and are also the reading material for five Jewish holidays: Passover, Shavuot, Tisha B'Av, Sukkot, and Purim. For this reason, each megilla has a special status in Scripture and must be examined both as a biblical text and in relation to its holiday.

This book is not a commentary on the megillot. Every generation has its own commentaries to these books, from the days of the Midrash, through the Middle Ages, to the modern day. Rather, this work presents an analysis of the megillot, exploring conceptual, literary, and pedagogic themes arising from the texts.

While I have used both traditional and more recent Jewish exegesis for this study, it is entirely founded on the texts themselves. Anyone wishing to understand the megillot — irrespective of his or her theological position regarding the books — can thus benefit from the reflections in this book. I have dealt with the plain sense of the biblical texts, but have also tried to reach the depth of that plain meaning using various methodologies and relevant midrashim.

I invite the reader and student to engage actively in a conversation with the text that started with the

very writing of the megillot. This conversation demands familiarity with the text and a desire to connect with those who have already grappled with both the text and its commentaries. In this way, the megillot, composed in different historical, literary, and social contexts, can significantly enrich our national and personal lives. An encounter with the text demands intellectual, and at times emotional, effort, but the result is a powerful connection with the holy writings.

The Five Megillot breathe the air of different spiritual worlds: The Song of Songs and Lamentations are written as poetry — love songs, and mourning dirges; the books of Ruth and Esther describe events from the period of the Judges in the Land of Israel and from the days of the Persian exile; and the Book of Ecclesiastes joins the other wisdom books in Scripture. Even though the books' natures vary in genre and historical context, their study methods are identical. We will try to identify the unique character of each book, and to understand its messages. We will note the placement of each book in the framework of Scripture and consider its unique language and style. We will study the inner structure of the texts and analyze the linguistic, stylistic, and narrative connections between passages in the Torah and in the megillot, noting when the words of the Torah, echoed in the megillot, guide us toward the text's meaning. We will identify the fundamental ideas of each book, connecting us to classical and contemporary Jewish thought.

The appendices for each book are a starting point for further study of all the megillot. For the Song of Songs, I will offer units of study that the student can develop based on my investigations. For Ruth, I will present questions for further study. For Lamentations, I will discuss midrashim and piyutim (liturgical poems) that expound on the book's wording. For Ecclesiastes, I will consider the book's inclusion in the biblical canon, and offer a unique modern introduction to the book. For Esther, I will expand on the relationship between the halakha (the laws and customs of Purim) and the text, and trace the hostility toward the book's reception over the generations. All of these study methods can be applied across the megillot.

In studying the megillot, I have devoted only limited attention to historical questions outside the text, such as questions regarding the authors of the megillot, the circumstances under which they were written, and the identities of the characters and events mentioned in them (for example, who Ahasuerus was). These discussions, which have always accompanied the megillot, frequently overshadow the essential messages of the books themselves. My discussion of such questions as authorship and history will therefore be marginal.

The studies in this book maybe taught at different levels and can also serve as the basis for community and family discussions, as well as for productive individual study.

### Reading the Five Megillot

An old tradition indicates the days in the Jewish calendar on which we read the Five Megillot. Masekhet Soferim 14:1 teaches:

As for Ruth, the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther, one must recite the blessing "on reading the megilla," even though they are written in the Writings. One who reads from the Writings must say, "Blessed are You, O Lord, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to read the Holy Writings."

Masekhet Soferim then discusses in detail the occasions on which we read the megillot.

The Talmud makes no mention of the tradition of reading the megilla; the first we learn of it is at the beginning of the geonic period, when Masekhet Soferim was composed.<sup>1</sup> Presumably, though, the practice was based on existing convention. We know that reading Esther on Purim was already a binding obligation in the days of the Mishna (Megilla 1:1).

Many commentators have drawn parallels between the megillot and the holidays on which they are read. Nevertheless, there are differing customs regarding the reading of the Song of Songs, Ruth, and Ecclesiastes on the festivals. In some communities these megillot are not read at all in public. Even Lamentations, which all communities read publicly, is recited without a blessing according to the Sephardic and eastern customs.

Only with regard to Esther and its three preceding blessings, is there no disagreement.

The tradition of reading each megilla at a fixed time of year ensures that Jews study and become familiar with all five books. At the same time, the public reading of these books spiritually enriches their corresponding holidays, as expressed in the liturgy of those days. Here, I will examine the relationship between the Five Megillot and the occasions on which we read them, in Scripture, halakha, Jewish thought, and liturgy.

### The Song of Songs and Passover

'The relationship between the Festival of Freedom (Passover) and the Song of Songs is rooted in the traditional interpretation of the book, which sees the book's love song as an echo of God's love for His people, Israel. The Exodus from Egypt marks the beginning of that special connection, a "betrothal" that reaches its climax with the covenant — or "marriage" — at Mount Sinai. Throughout Scripture, the mutual love of man and wife represents the relationship between God and Israel, and the Song of Songs strongly reflects the Bible's conceptual world.'

The Exodus was a turning point in the development of the unique bond between God and His people: "I remember in your favor, the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, when you did go after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jer. 2:2). It is only natural, during the month of redemption, when we recall the loving relationship between God and His nation, that we should see the Song of Songs as a fitting expression of the festival's meaning. This is the time when the people of Israel perceive "the voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes" (Song. 2:1). This is the season when nature is rejuvenated, symbolizing the rebirth of a people, who have rejected slavery and embraced freedom. One need not interpret every verse in the book as a metaphor for the Exodus, but we can certainly understand the book as a whole as a song of the redeemed and reunited. The strong connection between the Song of Songs and the Land of Israel, with the book's elaborate descriptions of the land, also ties the book to the spring and to the renewal of Israel's national life in its land.

A strong proof of the ancient connection between the Song of Songs and Passover is that many Passover piyutim, dating back to the sixth-century poet Yannai, are based on the Song of Songs and its relevant midrashim. We read the Song of Songs at the Seder and in the synagogue on Passover and we must understand the many accompanying piyutim in the context of that book. It is precisely these piyutim that unite the Torah's love of redemption with the Song of Songs' redemption of love.

### The Book of Ruth and Shavuot

Many commentators explain the connection between Shavuot and the Book of Ruth. I will examine some of these explanations:

The primary events described in the book occur between the beginning of the barley harvest (1:22) and the end of the barley and wheat harvest (1:23), that is, from Passover until Shavuot. Since the Book of Ruth speaks of "the beginning of the barley harvest" (1:22), and Shavuot is celebrated at the time of the barley harvest (Sefer HaManhig, Hilkhos Sukka 58), the Book of Ruth and Shavuot are a fitting match.

The importance of tithes for the poor is celebrated in the Book of Ruth as on the holiday of Shavuot. Ruth's encounter with Boaz takes place during the wheat harvest that ends on Shavuot, when the two-loaf offering is brought from the new wheat.

In ParashatEmor, immediately following the section dealing with the two-loaf offering brought on Shavuot, we read: 'And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not altogether remove the corners of your field, when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning of your harvest; you shall leave them to the poor, and to the stranger; I am the Lord your God' (Lev. 23:22). Boaz faithfully fulfilled these obligations to Ruth, who was both poor and a stranger, as he says: 'And let fall also some of the handfuls on purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them' (Ruth 2:16). Thus, Ruth is read on that day (Levush, Orali Hayim, 494, 2)

The Book of Ruth describes the fulfillment of the commandments of the agricultural gifts that must be left for the poor. It is therefore read on Shavuot,

just as the laws of the festival and the laws concerning gifts for the poor are found next to each other in the Torahs.

Focusing on the conditions through which a person may acquire Torah, Midrash Zuta on Ruth (ed. Buber, 1, 1) states: "What is the connection between Ruth and Shavuot that it is read on Shavuot, the time of the giving of the Torah? This comes to teach you that the Torah was given only through affliction and poverty"

Rabbi Avraham Kalon, in Hayei Avraham, 28z, tells us that Ruth fulfilled the seven Noahide laws, and when she converted to Judaism, she accepted another 606 commandments (the numerical value of the Hebrew letters comprising her name: resh, vav, tan , to show that she now fulfilled all 613 commandments. We therefore read the Book of Ruth on Shavuot, the day on which the Torah was given. Likewise, our forefathers entered into the covenant at Mount Sinai by accepting the Torah, like all non Jews who convert. It is therefore fitting that on Shavuot, the day of the giving of the Torah, we read a book about a convert.

Just as the Book of Ruth focuses on loving-kindness, so too the Torah focuses in its entirety on loving-kindness, as we read: 'And on her tongue is a Torah of loving-kindness' (Prov. 31:26) — and the Torah was given on the festival of Shavuot (Lekah Toy on Ruth, ed. Bamberger).

The author of Zikhron Devarim writes:

I heard that a certain sage responded in connection with the Oral Law, saying: Surely everyone agrees that King David was a holy man, a wise man, and filled with the spirit of God. And he descended from Ruth the Moabitess, and it is written: 'An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord' (Deut. 23:4). If so, show honor to the truth of the words of the sages who said: 'A Moabite' — but not a Moabitess (Yevamot 76b). And the heretics are forced to admit that the words of the sages are true and just. Understand that he spoke well. I once had a debate with the Karaites on this matter, and they could not answer me, and they stood astonished. (Rabbi Eliezer Tzvi

HaKohen Tziffel, Sefer Sanigor  
[Warsaw, 5645], p. 146)

In other words, on the day of the giving of the Torah, we stress the importance of the Oral Law by reading a book that is based on a regulation that is part of the Oral Law, for all accept King David's legitimacy. The Book of Ruth is read on Shavuot in order to emphasize that the Written Law and the Oral Law entered the world together.

It seems to me that the correct reason here is that the Book of Ruth was written by the prophet Samuel in order to prove the lineage of King David descending from Ruth the Moabitess. Even God Himself agreed on the matter, and the book ends with the lineage from Peretz to David in his honor, as we find in several midrashim. Additionally, David was born on the festival of Shavuot, as we see in the Jerusalem Talmud (Hagiga 2:3) and cited by the Tosafot in Hagiga (17a, s.v. of atzeret). And it is well known that God completes the years of the righteous to the day; thus, David also passed away on Shavuot. It is fitting, therefore, to read the Book of Ruth on the birthday of King David, peace be upon him, in his honor (Rabbi Shaul of Amsterdam, Binyan Ariel [Turnov, 5665], 248).

The connection between David and Ruth the Moabitess also has contemporary significance, which can be understood from the words of Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Charlap, when he received the news of the United Nations' resolution regarding the establishment of the State of Israel on November 29, 1947:

This is the way that the light of the Messiah begins to shine. When the young David was brought before King Saul, the latter asked about him: "Whose son is the young man?" (I Sam. 17:56), as he saw royal signs in him. Does the Edomite said to him: Rather than ask whether or not he is fit for the monarchy, ask whether or not he is fit to enter the congregation (Yevamot 76b). At the very beginning there were those who cast doubt on the very suitability of the founder of the monarchy, and only over the course of time did it become clear that everlasting kingdom issued from him: "It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is sure" (Ps. 89:38). David, king of Israel, lives and

endures. (Maayanot 6 [Jerusalem, 5718]: 160)

There is a progression from the Song of Songs that we read on Passover to the Book of Ruth that we read on Shavuot. The former describes the youthful love between a lover and his beloved, and is read on the festival that always falls in Nisan, the month of the ripening of the produce. The latter describes the devoted love between a more mature woman and her redeemer, and is read on the festival that falls in the summer during the harvest season. The love between the people of Israel and their God developed in similar fashion: from the youthful love of those who had sought freedom at the time of the Exodus from Egypt, to the more emotionally mature love of those who were ready to accept the yoke of the commandments at the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

### Lamentations and Tisha B'av

On Tisha B'Av, Torah study is forbidden, because the words of the Torah fall into the category of: "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart" (Ps. 19:9). However, the books of Job and Lamentations and the prophecies of doom in the Book of Jeremiah are excluded from this prohibition, as it is stated in the Talmud:

Our rabbis have taught: All the restrictions that apply to the mourner hold equally well for Tisha B'Av. Eating, drinking, bathing, anointing, the wearing of shoes and marital relations are forbidden on that day. It is also forbidden thereon to read the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, or to study Mishna, Talmud, Midrash, halakhot, or aggadot; he may, however, read such parts of Scripture which he does not usually read and study, such parts of Mishna which he usually does not study; and he may also read Lamentations, Job, and the sad parts of Jeremiah; and the schoolchildren are free from school for it is stated: "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." R. Yehuda said: Even such parts of Scripture which he does not usually read he may not read, nor study parts of the Mishna which he does not usually study, but he may read Job, Lamentations, and the sad parts of

Jeremiah; and the schoolchildren are free [from school], for it is stated: "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." (Ta'anit 30a)

The Shulhan Arukh accepts the viewpoint of R. Yehuda, who restricts the scope of materials that may be studied on Tisha B'Av (Orah Hayim 554:1), but adds:

But one is permitted to study Midrash Eikha ... and also to study commentaries to Lamentations.

From here we see that studying the Book of Lamentations, even with its commentaries, is central to Tisha B'Av. Indeed, it is obligatory. The source for this obligation is Masekhet Soferim 14:1, referred to earlier, which states that one recites a blessing over the reading of the book. Masekhet Soferim explains the rules for reading the Book of Lamentations (18:5):

There are those who read the Book of Lamentations at night, while others delay it until the morning after the Torah reading. For after the Torah reading, one person stands up, his head covered in ashes, and his clothing hanging down, and he reads, weeping and wailing. If he knows how to translate it, that is well; if not, he hands over [the task] to someone who knows how to translate it well, and he translates it, so that the rest of the people, women, and children will understand it.

These practices are customs. They are not mentioned in the Talmud and are brought only in Masekhet Soferim, which dates from the period of the Geonim. They were, however, already accepted in all Jewish communities in the days of the early halakhic codes.

Over the course of time, the morning service of Tisha B'Av was expanded, as was customary on other special occasions, with the insertion of special prayers into the Shemoneh Esreh prayer, which were called kinot (dirges). When their numbers increased, these kinot were separated from the Shemoneh Esreh prayer, and pushed off until after the Torah reading. In the manner of mourners, congregants sat on the floor while reciting them.

The number of kinot grew over the centuries, and with them, different customs regarding which kinot to recite and in which order. Most kinot, based on scriptural verses and midrashim, relate to the Destruction of the Temple. Some recall the horrors of later periods, such as the kina written by the Maharam of Rothenburg, "Shaali Serufa BeEsh." A number of kinot are arranged acrostically, similar to the Book of Lamentations itself.

The wording and structure of the Book of Lamentations have served as the basis of many kinot. The numerous references to the terminology of the book indicate that they faithfully expressed the experience of loss and ruin in every generation.

It is significant that several kinot make associations in each stanza with words of rebuke found in the Torah.<sup>2</sup> This linguistic connection testifies that the authors of these kinot saw a fulfillment of the words of the Torah in the suffering that accompanied the Destruction. In this way, Lamentations became an essential element in the covenant between God and the people of Israel.

The connection between the Book of Lamentations and Tisha B'Av is a natural one. In the wake of the prohibition to study most of the other biblical books on Tisha B'Av, and considering that many commentaries, midrashim, and piyutim are based on the wording of Lamentations, study of the Book of Lamentations has logically become an intrinsic part of the day of Israel's commemoration of the Destruction.

**The Book of Ecclesiastes and Sukkot**  
Regarding the Book of Ecclesiastes, Masekhet Soferim states as follows:

As for Ruth, the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther, one must recite the blessing "on reading the megilla," even though they are written in the Writings. (Masekhet Soferim 14:1 [ed. Higger, New York, 1937])

Higger notes that a significant number of the manuscripts of Masekhet Soferim available to him omit mention of Ecclesiastes, and that a later scribe may have added it, so that the text would correspond to the prevalent practice.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Masekhet Soferim later notes the occasions on which we read all the other megillot (14:15-17;

18:5), but makes no further mention of the Book of Ecclesiastes.

Nevertheless, the medieval halakhic authorities certainly connected the reading of Ecclesiastes to Sukkot or Shemini Atzeret. Perhaps, after all the other megillot were established as holiday readings, they sought an appropriate occasion on which to read Ecclesiastes. The reading of Ecclesiastes is mentioned in Mahzor Vitry (ed. Horowitz, 44o), SeferHaManhig (HilkhotHag, 57), and SeferMaharil (HilkhotSukka, 53). In the last-mentioned source, we read: "Ecclesiastes is recited on the Intermediate Day of Sukkot that falls on Shabbat, and one recites over it the blessing 'on reading the megilla.'"

However, even today, the public reading of Ecclesiastes is not as widely accepted as that of the other megillot. It is likely that because of the debated standing of Ecclesiastes in Scripture, and because many demanded that the book be suppressed, halakhic authorities instituted the public reading of the book in the synagogue, if at all, at a relatively late date.

A number of commentators suggest a connection between Ecclesiastes and Sukkot:

In Orhot Hayim, Rabbi Aharon, son of Rabbi Yaakov HaKohen (early fourteenth century) summarizes the explanations offered by the authors of Mahzor Vitry and Sefer HaManhig:

It is the custom in France to read the Book of Ecclesiastes on Shemini Atzeret before reading the Torah. The reason for this practice is that it is written, "Give a portion to seven, and even to eight" (u:2), which alludes to the seven days of the festival and the eighth day; and it warns about vows, that one should not come to transgress because of them the prohibition of "You shall not delay" (Deut. 23:22). Some suggest a different reason, namely, that King Solomon said it [Ecclesiastes, in Hebrew Kohelet] in a great assembly (behak'hel) to offer rebuke to Israel, and it is written: 'And all the men of Israel assembled themselves (vayikahalu) to King Solomon at the feast in the month of Eitanim" (I Kings 8:2). It is good to read it in the synagogue ... in order to fulfill the

obligation of one who is not well versed in it. In Provence, it is read in the sukka.

According to this passage, the book itself alludes to a festival of seven days (Sukkot), as well as a separate eighth day (Shemini Atzeret), and it is precisely on this festival that the congregation must be instructed to fulfill its vows. On Sukkot, in the month of Eitanim (Tishrei), Solomon assembled the people; the Book of Ecclesiastes, which itself was written by Kohelet, the son of David, demands a great assembly of people for the sake of Torah study and moral rebuke. This call is apparent in his

very name, Kohelet, which contains the root letters K-H-L, "to gather." The author of the Levush suggests another explanation:

And the reason is that Sukkot is the "time of our joy" and the Book of Ecclesiastes praises and urges people to rejoice in their lot and not to run after money, for taking pleasure in that which one [already] has is a gift from God. (Levush HaTor, 663, 2)

Another, more recent, explanation connects three megillot to the three pilgrimage festivals:

The three pilgrimage festivals symbolize this cycle of the seasons of the year: In the ripening season, which corresponds to youth, we read the Song of Songs on Passover ("the time of the singing bird has come" — 2:12); in the harvest season, we read the Book of Ruth, in which the wheat harvest is mentioned; in the ingathering season — old age — we read Ecclesiastes which mentions the end of all men, and concludes with "the end of the matter.

Indeed, we read the Song of Songs, which describes a period of early love, when "the flowers appear on the earth" (2:12). The Book of Ruth, which we read in the harvest season, reflects the high point in man's life, when responsibility for his family and household is his central focus. In contrast, we read the Book of Ecclesiastes, which describes the end of life (in particular chapter 12), in the autumn, when the falling leaves herald the arrival of winter. The reflections of the author of Ecclesiastes are those of a person who is reviewing his life and parting from this world.

We may add to all of the above explanations that it is precisely the Book of Ecclesiastes that is most fitting to read on Sukkot, the "time of our joy

(simha)." Not only does the root s-M-x (rejoice) appear eighteen times in the Book of Ecclesiastes, far more often than it appears in the entire Torah (twelve times), but we see that the author's realistic perspective on life liberates him from false hopes, and allows him to use his days on earth positively. The reality of the world is a fact, but we must fill the cycle of life with significance. Hence, the repeated appeal of Ecclesiastes to rejoice:

So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work; for that is his portion; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? (Eccl. 3:22)

### The Book of Esther and Purim

The Book of Esther is the only megilla over which we recite a blessing both before and after reading it. Even a single individual who reads the book in order to fulfill his obligation must recite a blessing before doing so. The Mishna mentions the obligation to read Megillat Esther on Purim (Megilla i:i). Both the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud discuss at length the laws regarding the reading of Esther. R. Yehoshua b. Levi says: "One is obligated to read the megilla at night, and then again during the day" (Megilla 4a). The importance that the sages attached to reading the Book of Esther is evident from Tractate Megilla — named after the Megilla of Esther — in which the sages discuss the laws of reading the megilla in great detail.

The obligation to read the Book of Esther is so binding and cherished that:

Torah study should be neglected in order to hear the reading of the megilla. All the more so does this apply to the other mitzvot of the Torah, the observance of which is superseded by the reading of the megilla. (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 687)

The source for the mitzva of reading the Book of Esther is found in the book itself: 'And these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation' (Est. 9:28). Rashi comments on this verse:

"Remembered' — through the reading of the megilla."

The Book of Esther is read on Purim, that is, on the fourteenth or fifteenth of Adar. The book itself alludes to the fact that Purim does not have one uniform date: —To confirm these days of Purim in their times' (Est. 9:31) — [which indicates that] they laid down many 'times' for them" (Megilla 2a).

The Book of Esther spells out the two dates. The fourteenth of Adar:

"Therefore the Jews of the villages, who dwell in the unwalled towns, make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and holiday, and of sending choice portions to one another:' (9:19)

The fifteenth of Adar:

"But the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together on the thirteenth of the month, and on the fourteenth of it; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness:' (9:18)

The Book of Esther is read on the fifteenth, not only in the city of Shushan, but in other cities as well: "Cities which had been walled during the days of Joshua the son of Nun, read on the fifteenth" (Mishna Megilla 1:1).

R. Shimon said in the name of R. Yehoshua b. Levi: They showed honor to the Land of Israel that was desolate at that time, and set the criterion back to the days of Joshua the son of Nun. (Y. Megilla 1:1)

It was precisely through this megilla, which relates entirely to the exile, that the sages wished to honor the Land of Israel, which lay in ruins during that period. They therefore ruled that the cities that had been walled during the days of Joshua the son of Nun, observe Purim on the fifteenth of Adar, and this is the practice in Jerusalem to this very day.

### The Order of the Books

The Talmud (Bava Batra i4b) tells us that the Writings were originally arranged in chronological order:

The order of the Writings is Ruth, the Book of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of

Songs, Lamentations, Daniel and the Book of Esther, Ezra, and Chronicles.

The Book of Ruth, "the mother of the monarchy," preceded the books of Psalms (attributed to King David), Job, and Proverbs (attributed to King Solomon). Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs are also attributed to King Solomon. Lamentations mourns the Destruction of the Temple built by King Solomon, and the books of Daniel and Esther describe the exile that followed the Destruction. Ezra and Nehemiah recount the return to Zion, and Chronicles reviews the history of all these periods.

In the table below, we compare the different arrangements of the books of the Writings over the centuries. In the Middle Ages, the scriptural books were arranged in various ways; the example below (middle column) is from the thirteenth century. Today, almost all editions of the Hebrew Bible group the Five Megillot together, but not in chronological order of when they were written.

Whereas at first the books were organized chronologically, according to the time they had been written, over the course of the generations the megillot were rearranged in chronological order according to the time of year that we read them. In the post-talmudic period, the Five Megillot were arranged together after the three "wisdom books" (Psalms, Proverbs, and Job), and before the three historical books (Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, and Chronicles).

All Jewish communities began reading the megillot at their appointed times in the calendar, which influenced the piyutim of those holidays. These readings profoundly strengthened the connection between the Jewish people and the megillot. <>

[Jeremiah: The Fate of a Prophet](#) by Binyamin Lau, Translated by Sara Daniel [Koren Publishers, 9781592641949]

In [Jeremiah: The Fate of a Prophet](#), Rabbi Dr. Binyamin Lau breaks down the Book of Jeremiah, rearranging its chapters according to historical events and the chronology of the prophet's life. This groundbreaking reconstruction turns the biblical narrative from a collection of disjointed prophecies into a thrilling account of warring empires and

nationalistic struggle, social decay and political intrigue, soaring hope and crushing despair.

Contents

Preface

Introduction

PART I:

THE REIGN OF JOSIAH (640-609 BCE)

Background: Josiah's Predecessors

Jeremiah's Prophetic Initiation

627-622 BCE: Prophesying Reunification

627-622 BCE: Judah's Decay

622 BCE: Renewing the Covenant

609 BCE: The Death of Josiah

PART II:

THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM (609-598 BCE)

Background: Jehoiakim's Rise to Power

609-605 BCE: Jeremiah's Prophecies of Doom

605-604 BCE: Enter Nebuchadnezzar

PART III:

THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH (597-586 BCE)

597 BCE: The Exile of Jeconiah

597-586 BCE: Between Two Exiles

588-587 BCE: Babylonia Raids Judah

586 BCE: The Destruction of Jerusalem  
The Murder of Gedaliah

Jeremiah's End

Afterword

Index 1: The Chapters of Jeremiah —  
Original Order

Index 2: The Chapters of Jeremiah —  
Chronological Order

Excerpt:

My Creator, endow me with the insight to inherit

Your legacy. (from Shaharit of Rosh HaShana)

With God's blessing, I have merited to present my readers with my interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah. In my previous works, I have delved into the world of Torah scholars, seeking to sketch their characters for a modern audience. This is my first attempt to represent the Bible itself. Both those volumes and the book that you now hold are part of an overall attempt to build a bridge within Israeli society in particular, and the Jewish



community in general, between modern culture — our world today — and the multilayered Jewish tradition over the generations. I will endeavor to explain why I have begun with Jeremiah in the introduction. Here, I would like to simply thank everyone who has been a partner in my Torah study and my attempts to apply this study to everyday life.

First and foremost, my wife Noa, my partner in all I do.

Second only to her, the members of the Ramban community in Jerusalem, whose Shabbat afternoon lectures formed the initial outline of this work.

My friend Shlomo Greenberg, the director of the circulation department in the National Library, who offered ready and willing help to find every scrap of research that related to the Book of Jeremiah and its period.

On May 11, 2009, at the president's residence in Jerusalem, President Shimon Peres presented Pope Benedict XV with a gift: the smallest Bible in the world. In its entirety, the Bible was half a millimeter square. Developed by the Technion, Israel's Institute of Technology, to showcase its progress in the field of nanotechnology, the cutting edge of high tech, the nano-Bible declared: "Look how tiny the Bible can be!" I seem to be stuck in the old world; this book was written to show how great the Bible can be. How great and how relevant.

\*\*\*

The present volume was born from the desire to spark a deep and meaningful dialogue about the Bible within the Jewish world in general, and the Jewish state in particular. It is a sad truth of our time that the Bible — the foundational text and traditional cornerstone of Jewish existence — no longer occupies the space it once did in our lives. From a vital, pertinent guide to all matters spiritual and ethical, social and political, it's become a relic of days past — monumental and obscure and utterly distant. There are many who do not study it at all; there are many who study it, though scarcely; and there are many who study it extensively, but even they fail to infuse the word of God with any contemporary relevance.

This state of affairs is unfortunately no better in the Jewish state, where the unique and often challenging circumstances of daily life, coupled with a growing alienation toward religion among large segments of Israeli society, preclude any serious discussion of the question of Israel's Jewish identity, and of the Bible's place in it. While other discourses have successfully penetrated the country's public debate, the Bible, and certainly the words of the prophets, are studied disjointedly, in a sociopolitical vacuum: "a bit here and a bit there" (Is. 28:10).

This work aims to render the Book of Jeremiah accessible to the contemporary reader, reinstating the words of the prophets into the heart of our political, social, and cultural discourse. Before delving into the book itself, I will attempt to establish Jeremiah's status in modern society and explain why I have chosen to focus on him, of all prophets.

### The Status of the Prophet within Society: "Fool is the Prophet, Mad is the Man of Letters"

In terms of today's social milieu, the prophet might be regarded as something of a public intellectual, a man of letters. An eternal critic, an outsider to the system, a gadfly who must summon all his literary or oratory powers to persuade his audience of the truth of his words — and of the mortal danger of ignoring them. A prophecy does not depend upon its being heard. On the contrary, more often than not it is disregarded, though the speaker's own belief in it does not allow him to remain silent. How does society relate to one who determinedly, doggedly repeats his unheeded words? Practical men, when faced with adversity, will often state, unfazed, "The dogs may bark, but the caravan moves on." But while this might encourage the caravan on its way, what will be of the dogs? How does one shake the people of their complacency and alert them to the danger that is looming?

Throughout biblical history, prophets have repeatedly failed to penetrate the collective consciousness. Moses, the greatest of the prophets; Elijah and Elisha, the oratory prophets; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other twelve literary prophets — none were successful in getting their

message across and inspiring the people to repentance. Jonah is perhaps the only prophet who may be said to have fulfilled his mission, making the people of Nineveh see the error of their ways.

The words of the prophets have been preserved for us, their distant descendants, so that we may learn what is right in the eyes of God and man. But in their own days, in real time, there is hardly a prophet who has redressed the social, religious, or political wrongs of Israel; the prophets barked, but the caravan kept moving. Moreover, when a prophet dared to deviate from his usual message of morality and challenged the existing order, he was declared an enemy of the people. Thus, the prophet Amos was banished by the priest of Bethel, Amaziah, in the name of King Jeroboam: "Get thee out, seer!" (Amos 7:12).

The comparison of the prophet to a public intellectual is intended not to diminish the importance of the former, but to emphasize the responsibility of the latter. While the significance of the prophetic overture "Thus said the Lord" may be disputed, and it is difficult to distinguish a true prophet from a false one, certain hallmarks of true prophecy may be found. First among these is the prophet's readiness to pay a personal price for his vision; thus, the "prophet" who is eager to reinforce the dominant zeitgeist and the prevailing mores — who tells the people exactly what they want to hear — is immediately suspect. One of the most striking examples of this phenomenon is the story of King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah, who joined forces to free their territories from the Arameans. Before making the final decision to wage war, Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to seek the word of God. Ahab acceded to his ally's request:

Then the King of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I withhold?" And they said, "Go up; for the Lord shall deliver into the king's hand." (1 Kings 22:6)

When the press all sing the same tune, something rings false; the King of Judah indeed suspected that the four hundred "prophets" were merely pandering to the King of Israel. He could see that

their unanimous declaration had more to do with choreography than with actual prophecy. When Jehoshaphat asked if any others claimed to be a "prophet of the Lord" (22:7), Ahab admitted that there was indeed another prophet who had not been summoned, "for I hate him, for he foretells for me not good but evil" (22:8). Ahab preferred the cheerleading of false prophets to the foreboding word of God, and hated the bearers of such warnings.

The story goes on to describe how the hated prophet, Micaiah son of Imla, is summoned to prophesy before the king. The four hundred reiterate their prophecy, calling, "Go up to Ramoth-Gilead and be victorious, for the Lord shall deliver into the king's hand!" (22:12), and one of their number, Zedekiah son of Kenaana, triumphantly brandishes a pair of iron horns, declaring, "With these shall you gore Aram!" (22:11). When the king asks for Micaiah's prophecy, he weakly repeats the words of his false peers: "Go up and be victorious, for the Lord shall deliver into the king's hand" (22:16). Sensing that Micaiah's words are disingenuous, the king urges him to deliver the true message of God. Micaiah then pours forth a terrible vision of Israel scattered over the hills like sheep without a shepherd.

Upon hearing Micaiah's words, the King of Israel irritably turns to the King of Judah: "Didn't I tell you that he wouldn't prophesy any good about me, only evil?" (22:18). Micaiah, undeterred, ominously describes God sitting on His throne, asking the heavenly hosts,

"Who will entice Ahab to ascend and fall in Ramoth-Gilead?" One said this and one said that. Then a spirit came ... and said, "I will entice him ... I will go out and be a false spirit in the mouths of all his prophets." And [God] said, "You will succeed in enticing him. Go out and do so." (22:20-22)

The strength of the prophet as public intellectual derives from his faith and his deference to the word of God. His intent is never to mollify the masses. Four hundred prophets forecasting in perfect unison do not a true prophecy make. Does society want to hear that other still, small voice? Generally not. Wherever the government, press,

and tycoons form a controlling triad, any dissenting opinions will be quickly snuffed out. Worse, prophets are sometimes bought off by interested parties and, through the combined forces of money and media, forcibly mold public opinion. The voice of God should therefore be sought in those discordant voices that do not toe the party line. Of course, prophetic opposition is not necessarily right. Sometimes the ruling power finds itself torn between two opposing prophets, unable to declare a winner. Jeremiah himself faces such opposition, clashing with serious prophets who present their own systematic worldview, and it is wholly unclear which of them is the true messenger of God.

However, there is another criterion for a true prophet. He must love his people. Even when the harshest reproach is called for, the prophet must consider himself a divine emissary whose role is to help redeem the people, not to stand aloof and condemn. Indeed, journalists today take on the role of moral and social critics, though more often than not their criticism is laced with the venom of loathing. Criticism based on love, of the kind that distinguished Jeremiah, is not often found.

### Why Jeremiah?

Some prophets were defrocked or harmed because of their prophecies. First and foremost among these few was Jeremiah. As a prophet, his life was endangered more than once. The inner truth that burned within him took him to such extremes that he eventually betrayed the Kingdom of Judah. Under siege, during an attempt to expel the enemy from the walls of Jerusalem, he called for his people to cross the battle lines and surrender. He thus became despised and disparaged in the streets of Jerusalem, a menace to the public good. All rejected him — kings, priests, noblemen, and the masses.

Three kings were subject to the prophecies of Jeremiah: Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. The first barely acknowledged him, possibly due to his tender age; the second sought to eliminate him in order to ensure the stability of his reign; the third actually believed him, but could not overcome his own weakness and fears. The priests of the Temple regarded Jeremiah as one regards a gadfly — a pest and troublemaker. The Temple wardens

restricted his every step. Among the noblemen there were different leanings; some pandered to the king, while most took a belligerent stance against the rising Babylonian Empire. For the latter, Jeremiah was a menace. And the masses? They behaved as masses do. At times they sought to kill the prophet; other times they needed him desperately, their loyalties changing with the wind. Among the people, Jeremiah's most formidable opponents were the false prophets. They aroused the men of Zedekiah's time to rebel against the Babylonians and encouraged the king to form a pro-Egyptian alliance with the surrounding nations. For Jeremiah, these false prophets were the true enemy.

### Jeremiah in Zionist Eyes

There is no doubt that the greatest prophet who arose in the days of the kings before the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as the most despised, downtrodden, and daring, was Jeremiah. He was not afraid of imprisonment, of torture, even of death itself — and always chose to speak the bitter truth, until the bitter end .... He knew that invincibility would not last forever, and was sure that soon enough — certainly within seventy years — Babylonia would tumble and fall.... Jeremiah loved his people and had faith in its posterity — and his faith has proven true until this very day.

In today's world, Jeremiah is perceived as the prophet of the Temple's destruction, the composer of our Tisha B'Av lamentations. The modern word "jeremiad," meaning a work that mourns society and its imminent downfall, reinforces this perception. The Zionist ethos and the national Israeli spirit (secular and religious alike) have ignored Jeremiah and embraced Isaiah as the prophet who comforts Israel and announces its rebirth, and Amos as the prophet entrusted with the moral rehabilitation of society.<sup>1</sup> Enlightenment-era Jewish society and the founders of because of their parallels to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin.<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah's own story is known to so few that it has practically become esoteric. This is the void I seek to fill.

### Jeremiah: A Preliminary Sketch

Jeremiah began prophesying at a young age, and learned to bear this prophetic burden during one

of the most turbulent periods in Israel's history. His career commenced during the reign of Josiah, when there was a general sense that the nation was returning to the glory days of King Solomon. Josiah was seen as not only a religious reformer, but a national leader who strove toward the reunification of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. His vision was not unrealistic; Josiah exploited a political window of opportunity, when the great powers — Assyria, Egypt, and Babylonia — were too busy fighting among themselves to notice what was taking place in the lands of the Israelites. Jeremiah was torn between his desire to participate in this glorious vision of redemption and the ingathering of Israel, and his perception of the hypocrisy of Judean religious reform. His prophecies during Josiah's reign largely reflect this inner conflict: They appealed to the northern tribes to reconnect with Jerusalem and harshly condemned the corrupt lifestyle of those living in Judah and Jerusalem. The fall of Josiah during the unnecessary battle of Megiddo broke Jeremiah's heart.

The second phase of Jeremiah's prophecy began with the reign of Jehoiakim, a faithful follower of Egypt and its culture. During this period, the prophet focused on condemnation of the alienated and violent ruling class. Halfway through Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar rose to power, and Jeremiah started calling for surrender and subjugation to the Babylonian Empire. For the rest of his life, his refrain was "Serve the King of Babylon, and live." Jeremiah believed that there was no point in dying on the altar of imaginary independence. Subjection to Babylonia would allow religious and cultural autonomy in Judah and Jerusalem, whereas resistance would lead to destruction. The people around him docilely followed their Egypt-infatuated king. Jeremiah desperately tried to breach this wall of indifference and was eventually persecuted by the king for undermining the kingdom's stability.

Jeremiah's final prophecies took place under Babylonian rule in the Land of Israel. King Zedekiah, a puppet of Nebuchadnezzar, ruled a kingdom split between the pacifist followers of Jeremiah and the nationalist faction spurred on by the other prophet, Jeremiah's rival, Hananiah son of Azzur. Even those exiled to Babylonia during the

reign of Jeconiah, Zedekiah's immediate predecessor and the last independent King of Judah, were divided along these lines. The prophecies that span this final period are frightening, unsettling; no one could say for certain which side would prevail, including Jeremiah himself. The king finally sided with Hananiah, bringing destruction upon himself and his people.

This three-act drama has not yet been adequately presented to a modern Jewish audience. While all the elements of conflict in Jeremi-ah's world can be found in today's newspapers, the lessons of his story have never been applied to contemporary debates about questions of nationalism, autonomy, and identity.

### The Structure of This Book

The Book of Jeremiah is hard to follow. Some chapters seem coherent and complete, while others appear to be disjointed, as if the pages of the original manuscript had been scattered and haphazardly rearranged. Perhaps it's time they should be.

The difficult question that faces anyone who opens the Book of Jeremiah is: What is the connection, the bridge, between the historical personality and the book that lies before us? .... It contains all manner and type of prophecies, all mixed up.

I have therefore disassembled the Book of Jeremiah and reconstructed it according to the chronology of Jeremiah's life and the development of his prophecy. I have not inserted any ideas not found in the text. I have not embellished the narrative by indulging my imagination, or even that of the sages (with a few clearly indicated exceptions). This is essentially the original Book of Jeremiah, rearranged and reedited. The talmudic rabbis determined that "Jeremiah wrote his own book" (Bava Batra 15a), claiming that the prophet recorded his own visions but not ruling out the possibility that they were later edited.<sup>1</sup> I have recompiled Jeremiah's prophecies chronologically in an attempt to explore the prophet's personal development. In writing this book, I have attempted to read, and absorb the explanations, interpretations, and research of my predecessors, whom I have cited in footnotes. I emphasize, however, that this work is not a complete running

commentary on the Book of Jeremiah, nor is it meant to replace any other commentaries, old or new.

It is my hope that my rearrangement of the Jeremiah narrative will remove the barrier to plumbing its depths, and serve as a foundation for the in-depth study and systematic interpretation of every chapter and verse. In the course of my work, I found that I needed to interpret individual chapters and passages, and I did not refrain from doing so where necessary. I developed many new insights, and entire chapters suddenly took on new meaning. In restructuring the book in a correct, consistent, and chronological order, was forced to take issue with several classic interpretations. It is unfair to criticize early commentators, such as Rashi, for their ignorance of local geography or the histories of the great empires. I have thus mentioned the opinions of commentators and academics only when needed for proof or refutation. My greatest wish is that this book will inspire further exploration of the deeper recesses of the Bible, and equip the reader with the tools to master its challenges. <>

[Longing: Jewish Meditations on a Hidden God](#) by Justin David [Cascade Books, 9781532631375]

Longing is a universal human experience, born of the inevitable gulf between dream and reality, what we need and what we have. While the experience of longing may arise from loss or the awareness of a void in one's life, it may also become a powerful engine of spiritual growth, prompting one to draw closer to the hidden yet present "Other." Across the range of Jewish teachings, longing takes center stage in one's spiritual life. From the Bible through current frontiers in Jewish belief and practice, God is both known and unknown, immediate and remote, present and in constant eclipse. This book captures the sense of longing in Jewish tradition by creating a dialogue between the author's own struggles with an estranged father and a wide range of traditional and contemporary sources. Focusing on the story of the Hebrew prophet Elisha, the book takes the reader through a journey of abandonment, creative destruction, and ultimately repair and healing, engaging with currents in

biblical theology, rabbinic thought, Kabbalah, and contemporary Jewish philosophy. Written in a familiar yet probing style, this book is an accessible introduction to Jewish thought and spirituality as well as a thoughtful companion for more experienced students. "Justin David's probing reflections on longing are about humility and the limits of reason. With an erudition that is at once generous and insightful, he shows us that absence is presence, darkness is light, and emptiness is fullness. No matter where we find ourselves in life, the quest is always a work in progress." --Ilan Stavans, Author of *On Borrowed Words*; Lewis-Sebring Professor of Humanities and Latin American and Latino Culture, Amherst College "With unusual candor and an expansive heart, Justin David takes us on a personal journey of loss, searching, and longing. And beyond his eloquent exploration of loss in our lives and our longing for closeness with the divine, he gives us a map enabling us to travel to the very depths of our feelings and emerge stronger, clearer, and spiritually renewed." --Andrea Ayyayzian, Pastor, United Church of Christ; Founder of the Sojourner Truth School for Social Change Leadership "An unblinking exploration of heartbreaking personal narrative and a broad selection of classic Jewish texts and thought as creatively read each through the lens of the other. A sustained, synthetic reflection that tells a deep story of healing and Jewish meaning-making." -- Nancy Flam, Rabbi, Senior Program Director, Institute for Jewish Spirituality "Justin David is a true sage, as he demonstrates in this heartbreaking and luminous meditation. . . . By absorbing so much wisdom and teaching his lessons to us, Justin challenges us to be as searching as his own mind and spirit are. Those who learn along with Justin in this book will be challenged to explore the stories of their own lives." --Jeremy Kalmanofsky, Rabbi, Ansche Chesed, New York City Justin David is Rabbi of Congregation B'nai Israel in Northampton, MA. He has published numerous articles and essays on Jewish thought, social justice, and spiritual comfort.

Contents  
Acknowledgments  
Introduction  
Part 1—Beginnings

Chapter 1: Pulling Away  
 Chapter 2: Turning Toward  
 Chapter 3: Finding a Voice  
 Part 2—Shattering the Vessels  
 Chapter 4: Only I-You  
 Chapter 5: God Is Not God  
 Chapter 6: Sifting through the Broken Images  
 Part 3—Tikkun/Integration  
 Chapter 7: Finding Self and Community  
 Chapter 8: Toward the Other  
 Chapter 9: God as Ineffable  
 Epilogue—God as Everything and Nothing  
 Bibliography

Excerpt: Every Tuesday at 12:15, for the past fifteen years, I have led an adult study group as the Rabbi of a thoughtful and vibrant congregation in a lovely New England college town. The group started out as a way to engage an outspoken lady with a generous heart. Before my tenure officially began, I was helping movers bring boxes into our new house when this magnanimous woman dropped by and noticed the spacious patio facing the backyard. Surveying the space, she volunteered, "this can be where you have a study group. That's what I need" And so, in part to launch myself as a teacher in my new community and in part to win over a formidable personality, I started my downtown study group.

For three years, we studied Talmud, that engaging, sometimes Byzantine, sometimes maddening collection of discussion, interpretation, and argument at the heart of Jewish tradition. Despite the challenges of the text, the group came alive with vigorous discussion week after week. Nevertheless, I felt ambivalent about our trajectory. The conversation was lively, but not necessarily personal. We spent as much time wrestling with the underlying notions of rabbinic tradition—authority, obligation, and community—as we did with the teachings themselves. After a while, I began to sense that we all needed a change. Our conversations were becoming increasingly abstract, and it seemed that we would generate more juice by looking at texts that could both elicit and frame our personal stories. So in the late spring at the end of our third year together, I proposed that we take a break from the Talmud. Instead, I suggested that

we make our way through the Hebrew prophets, beginning at the Book of Joshua, where the Torah leaves off its narrative, and continuing through the famous stories of the Judges that would include Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, and Delilah, and onto the stories the first kings of Israel: Saul, David, and Solomon. We would learn about the first great prophets after Moses, such as Elijah and Elisha, and eventually the great literary prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. I stressed that the journey through these stories would take years, but along the way, we would confront the perennial questions of God, the Jewish people, belief, the Jewish future, and many more. But instead of facing these riddles as abstractions, we would see them refracted through the eyes of human beings like ourselves.

A palpable, approving sigh went through the room.

The truth was I needed a change as well, as I began to face the vicissitudes of being a congregational rabbi. I had come to the congregation riding a wave and a buzz. Although young, I was not newly minted, but had three successful years cutting my teeth in a large, urban congregation. I brought a needed dose of warmth and spirituality, with just enough experience to pretend like I knew what I was doing. But after a few years, the glow of being the new rabbi, the "young rabbi," was beginning to wear off. My presence was now taken for granted. I had made some difficult and not necessarily popular decisions. I began to wonder, in a new way, how to find satisfaction in this life to which I had dedicated myself. Intellectually, every rabbi knows that real happiness is not found in praise or approval. But the mind has a way of following the ego, and while I would not admit it to myself at the time, I so much wanted and tried so hard to be the epitome of the "good" rabbi, the "warm and caring" rabbi, the "smart" rabbi. I told myself that I was simply being authentically me, but I was also aware that some kind of unrecognized inner striving was wearing me down. I knew that I had to recover an inner dialogue that was true to me, apart from everyone and everything else, in order to achieve a sense of sanctuary and peace.

As if to mirror the changes taking place—in my relationship to the congregation, to myself, and to the texts we studied—the study group also changed. People left, the numbers diminished. It was hard not to experience this natural ebb and flow as a kind of judgment or abandonment. But in time, new people joined, and the group once again grew to a robust size as it found its own groove. The prophetic stories, initially from the books of Joshua, Judges, and the two Books of Samuel and Kings, energized the group with their epic drama, religious charisma, and their confounding portraits of God. The all-too-human heroes, prophets, and kings elicited fresh questions and insights from the group. Seeing these stories through their eyes, I rediscovered my love for the lives, the struggles, and the questions of the Hebrew prophets. Each week generated vibrant conversation as we wedded our personal questions to the themes of prophetic suffering, justice, and redemption. Over time, the group itself developed a new dynamic. We had succeeded in becoming a true chevra, or study partnership, in which we collectively discovered and often created the multiple meanings in these stories.

Together, we wrestled with the question of what a life of holiness really means or feels like. Most of us could articulate some understanding of the importance of moral living and the rituals that awaken our attention to seemingly insignificant moments. But all too often, our efforts to find language for some kind of transcendent spiritual frame, the ability to articulate "what it all means," fell short. It is easy to understand why. Often, we rely on culturally shared expressions, which being commonly used, feel clichéd: they may generally describe what we feel or aspire to, but without the bite of our specific experiences. The other problem is that, when talking about such heady subjects as the uniqueness of the Jewish God, God's demands of human beings, or the balance of love and justice in the world, it's easy to trail off to abstractions, losing contact with the immediacy of the concrete circumstances of our lives that give rise to these questions in the first place.

By contrast, the prophets address the "big questions" in real time and in personal terms. Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, take your pick, speak with

an emotional urgency that grabs you by the collar as if to say, "You self-satisfied, apathetic, narcissistic human being—wake up! Take a look at the suffering and pain of the world, of the sorry state of your own soul, and reconsider everything! Turn to a life without pretense, shun all illusion, and turn toward love. And, as you turn toward love, you will be pulled toward a life in pursuit of executing justice and encountering grandeur, helpless to resist."

These are not merely words of imposing moral and spiritual logic; they express a universal set of experiences, conveyed here in the unique key of Judaism's foundation. The prophets, as spokespeople of God to every human soul, convey a connection to mystery, and, conversely, the mystery of connection. We cannot fully account for why people across all cultures sense, against all reason, a reality that lies beyond our daily experience. Just as mysteriously, despite all we know about human behavior and psychology, we cannot explain the impetus behind the human need to love. The great rabbi, scholar, and philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel spoke of such deep encounters with nature, human beings, and what appears to lie beyond as "sublime" or "holy." He believed the prophets sensed in these moments not a static and entirely random universe, but a cosmic pathos that links God, all creation, and human beings in a shared emotional life. Over years of reflection on both personal triumphs and some heartache, I have come to realize how I, too, have always yearned to experience and understand that web of relationship in all its grandeur and depth.

Over time, the study group grew into a forum in which I puzzled over my own relationships to God and people, and the transcendent reality through which we are all connected. But something else happened that was a complete surprise to me, and brewed for a while without my ever being aware. In addition to becoming part of my story of looking toward Judaism to puzzle over the big existential questions, the group also became a forum in which I, mostly unconsciously, came to make a new peace with the central traumatic event of my own childhood.

My upbringing was shaped by early abandonment and subsequent attempts to make it better. My parents divorced when I was an infant. My mother, nineteen at the time, went to work while my father, a newly minted PhD, spent long days in his lab. I came to live with my grandparents, who raised me until I left for college, visiting with my mother most weekends except for those when I would go with my father. When I was ten, my father, remarried and with a two-year-old, ceased contacting me. While I have lived for the past thirty-five years as a happy, productive, and outgoing person, as if this trauma didn't happen, I always find myself circling back to its undeniable imprint on every aspect of my life.

My family did not provide Judaism as a salve for the instability around me, though I would later seek a refuge within Jewish life, particularly community and study. My home was culturally Jewish but light on any real sense of ritual or textual tradition. Although my family made sure that I knew about great literature, art, and music, my day-to-day pop culture as a child revolved around sitcoms, pop music, and a little sports. The nouveau riche, suburban town I grew up in was a place that valued material comfort over nurturing souls and minds. I always felt out of place. As someone who worked in my childhood synagogue reflected decades later, "If you weren't beautiful or rich, they didn't want you."

Growing up in such an environment, it was either a miracle or inevitable that I would later be drawn to the inwardness of study and prayer. I was always different—studious, curious, creative, and contemplative. As a child, I somehow knew that all the conventions of Hebrew school, despite themselves, expressed something more grand, something that was unseen yet real.

When I began studying the prophets seriously as a rabbinical student, I recognized their righteous anger from my own experience as a child and teen, when I first began to scorn the shallowness and materialism around me. Looking ahead as an adult, I was inspired more by their affirmations of everything that I aspired to: seeking justice and pursuing the care of the Other, upholding the dignity of the outsider and the oppressed, and

dedicating oneself to fundamental and abiding love.

As my relationship with the Tuesday study group deepened, I found myself engaging with two distinct and internal voices in our study together. As a rabbi, I reveled in each chapter of the prophets, uncovering hidden meanings in all the things we rabbis look for: connections to other texts; reflection of historical context; the poetic use of images, particular Hebrew words and phrases; the middot, or inner characteristics of the heroes, kings, prophets, and villains. But I also began to listen to the voice of my childhood self that has never given up on searching out a sense of refuge, security, and abiding love.

On the surface, our format was simple: read, pause, and talk. Usually, I would stop the group at a natural break in the text and the conversation would proceed organically. There was never a shortage of what to talk about. Our group included people who channeled their heartache into grievances against God and the very idea of God. There were psychologists who tried to see the balance of the good and the bad in God's frequently authoritarian brand of love. Others drew on their life experience to tease out themes of resilience, justice, fate, and compassion. Each of our sessions left me with more questions than answers.

But sotto voce, I looked to the group to reassure me that I was asking the right existential questions of myself. It was no accident that the group of learners who had organically formed around me was a generation older than me and included many people who shared my interests in music, literature, and other intellectual and cultural pleasures. In a quiet but meaningful way, the members of the group became my "teachers" on a number of levels. In fact, I recognized that with their anti-authoritarian ways and their unconventional spirit, many of the people in the group would have been wonderful parents for me. And so the study experience drew me deeper into a dialectic between different parts of myself. Week to week, I began each session in the role of "rabbi," with a program of study and methods to get at the text. But driving my curiosity was a



personal and ongoing search for love and refuge in Jewish tradition that had been with me since the first time I entered a synagogue as a boy. That yearning fueled my quest for insight and shaped the insights themselves. Often, the momentum of the group combined with the words on the page to elicit thoughts about God, Judaism, and spirituality that I never expected.

One moment stood out from all the others. Our group had been reading for weeks from the end of the First Book of Kings and the beginning of the Second Book of Kings about the prophet Elijah and his disciple Elisha, arguably the stars among the early prophets. They are, perhaps, the greatest prophets not to have books of their own. Elijah is the great wonder worker, and his life has a number of parallels to that prophet beyond all prophets, Moses. Elisha follows Elijah dutifully, attending to him and learning from him as they journey around the land of Israel. These are powerful and dramatic stories in which it seems the fate of the Israelite people is on the line all the time. In the presence of Elijah and Elisha, rain comes to slake drought; kingdoms rise and fall; entire populations are delivered from famine; the dead come back to life. Elijah and Elisha are not only vessels through which God communicates with the Israelites; they appear to be the moral and spiritual foundations upon which the people of their day depend for their very lives.

But then Elijah informs Elisha he is about to leave this world and be taken up to heaven. Elisha continues to follow Elijah across the hills of the Judean desert, across the Jordan River and back. The Bible records no special emotion or pathos around these last days of Elijah with Elisha. They both appear completely stoic.

And then, in an instant, Elijah is taken up to heaven—he doesn't die, but he is nevertheless lost to Elisha forever. At the moment of Elijah's ascent, Elisha cries out, "Avi, Avi! My father, my father!"

This is one of the few scenes in the entire Bible in which someone calls out in mourning for a dying parent. Except that Elijah isn't really dying, he is not Elisha's father, and Elisha does not really mourn. In this singularly heart-rending and confounding moment, Elisha's cry of "Avi, Avi" expresses

fundamental yearnings we all share. It is a moment of simultaneously losing and embracing a father, of feeling as a child being abandoned and as an adult coming into maturity, of gratitude to God for a fatherly mentor while protesting the inevitable loss, of seeking connection in this world to the surrogate father and to his being beyond it. Paradoxically, Elisha's loss and abandonment is also the first moment when he can emerge as himself. With Elijah gone, Elisha must come into his own as a mature prophet, literally taking up his mentor's mantle in order to bring healing to the world.

Because of our long-standing, multi-layered trust, the group gave me the space in which to consider all of these ways in which we all may cry "Avi, Avi" simultaneously. And with this space, I began to draw out some of the personal dimensions of this moment in Elisha's life. This kind of protest, from the depths of one's soul, I said, was integral to how we relate to God in Jewish tradition. But with a caveat: "Avi, Avi," the longing for a parent, is the kind of protest lodged only by someone who has deeply known the blessings of a loving father. Being on the "inside" of Jewish spirituality, then, seems to require that we have had loving parents in order to teach us the ways of love, longing, and protest Elisha embodies. What happens, then, when our loving parents fail? Where do we go to find surrogates for that love? Can we find them in a spiritual life, in God? In the comfort afforded by study? The communion of prayer? The embrace, however imperfect itself, of community? I spoke generally, but was really wondering about myself. The group was generous and patient with me that day.

This moment of unpacking "Avi, Avi" lingered in my mind long after that initial session, and I took the time to consider whether my personal questions reflected larger themes in Jewish thought and Jewish tradition. Expressing both his intimacy with and distance from God, Elisha's cry of "Avi, Avi" struck me as embodying the classic conundrum of the Jewish God: God is always close and present, like a parent, but also always remote, like a parent in retreat. More generally, Jewish tradition ponders a God whose absence is as much a compelling quality as its presence. For example, while the Torah describes God as "appearing" to Moses at

the burning bush, Moses still has to ask, "What is your name?" as if to remind us that God's unlimited power is bound up with God being mysterious and unknowable. God's answer, "Ehyeh asher ehyeh," literally "I will be that which I will be," is cryptic, and does nothing to silence Moses' reluctance to accept his mission. And even after Moses agrees to lead the people in pursuit of this perplexing and elusive God, Moses continues to yearn for God's proximity.

Later in the Exodus narrative, after the crisis of the Israelites constructing and worshipping a golden calf against God's direct commandment, Moses attributes the people's waywardness to the reality of God's distance. And so, in a scene that is a climactic showdown of wills, Moses demands of God, "Show me your glory," in other words, "fully disclose yourself to me." God responds generously but ambivalently, saying, "I will pass all my goodness before you, but you shall only see my back. For no human being shall see my face and live." As a Jew, to live with God is to accept that we may always yearn and try to draw close only to confront the ultimate hiddenness of God.

Elisha's cry of "Avi, Avi" translates this theological problem into human terms, expressed as a fundamental and existential longing. Personally, I believe that many of us harbor a version of Elisha's archetypal cry as an ongoing yearning for one, perhaps the One, who is always present yet elusive. It may be a specific longing for a parent, a child, a mentor, or a lover. It may be a more generalized desire for the independence, resolve, and purpose that comes with feeling secure and loved. It may be inchoate and not directed toward anyone or anything.

I believe that whether we are aware of them or not, we play out these longings on multiple stages: our relationships, our work, our families, and our spiritual lives to name a few. But I also believe we marshal these longings to provide the fuel and direction for our spiritual lives. While many of us are happy to see ourselves more generally "spiritual" than particularly "religious," my experience has shown me that the template of Jewish life—texts, traditions, rituals, communal engagement—offers fertile ground for exploration.

The biblical and talmudic stories of Jewish tradition set the stage for us, giving us a God who is the One who is most real and yet most elusive and hidden. Like all stories and texts in our tradition, engaging with Elisha's story draws us into a continual dialectic. We may begin by recognizing our yearnings in this story, and so acquire an expanded vocabulary with which to reflect. As we reflect on the story with our personal questions, we almost rewrite it, inserting ourselves as actors in the ancient biblical narrative. Engaging in this back and forth again and again over time transforms our first reading of the story into a journey. That journey may or may not take us to God, but Jewish tradition is much more interested in us being part of the story than arriving at its conclusion.

In this book, I invite us to live with the existential challenge inherent in Elisha's cry of "Avi, Avi": to uncover our longings for closeness against the inevitability of loss and abandonment, and in doing so to wrestle with Judaism's notion of a hidden God as a means to develop a sense of spiritual closeness. I have an open-ended view of what this means. For some of us, spiritual closeness is found in what Freud called an "oceanic feeling," of being swallowed up in the reality of God. Some of us may find the traditional Jewish paths to God through ritual, study, and acts of kindness to be sufficient, with or without some kind of numinous experience. The path of social justice, whether through direct action, advocacy, community organizing, or some other mechanism, may be the foundation of our spirituality. And at times, the workings of the rational mind may bring us to the level of insight we find most authentic, allowing that reason may bring us more often to confusion rather than certainty. There are certainly innumerable paths to God that I have not recounted here, and I would not privilege one over the other. In fact, I would imagine many of us drift among the various modalities I've mentioned above. I certainly have, and my goal in this book is to welcome us to experiment and explore. But the common factor among all of the above responses, I believe, is a sense of longing. Which is to say, I believe we all harbor a desire for something that we wish to have in our lives that we know may be ultimately unattainable.

Although my experience with an estranged father forms the narrative thread of this book, my own story is only an illustration of a dynamic between human beings and a hidden God that is as old as Jewish tradition itself. While a timeless struggle, it is also an urgent and current one. I believe that a thoughtful, nuanced, yet emotionally resonant discourse about God is much needed in our time. All too often, I encounter people who are alienated from religion because of all of the violence and oppression done in the name of God. Others simply are fed up with the social pettiness that can sometimes accompany religious life in community. However, both camps overlook the fact that dissatisfaction often drives spiritual seeking in the first place. Don't the varieties of disillusionment represent a kind of longing? Perhaps by casting our contemporary misgivings on the canvas of Jewish tradition, we can reclaim some of that authentic seeking for ourselves. As a rabbi trained to respect the power of dialogue, I believe that renewed conversations about God, both internal and with each other, can bring us unforeseen gifts both individually and collectively.

This book advances an argument from experience, namely, that living in the lonely space created by a seemingly absent God helps us foster the spiritual closeness we all need. If we have felt the closeness of God, whether directly or by naming an experience as such, we know the impact these moments have on our lives. But there is also much to be learned from those times when we feel alone. I have alluded to how I have arrived at this exploration through reflecting on how my own life was shaped by my father's abandonment. People often assume that because I am a rabbi, I have a deeply personal belief in God, that I believe God is present and interacting with me each day. But that has never been the case. At my core, I cling to an abstract, de-personalized view of God. One day, when having lunch with a mentor, I wondered out loud if I resisted a personal God because I did not have a meaningful experience of a loving father.

Eighteen years later (a "life" in Jewish tradition), I have a little more perspective on this question, having confronted my father, and, perhaps most importantly, experienced deep closeness of my

own. I have also invested time and energy in studying the texts of Jewish tradition, allowing them to shape and challenge me. While my own personal belief is closest to that of Moses Maimonides, who claimed that God's lack of form rendered all description meaningless, I am nevertheless drawn to the God of experience who is revealed in moments of awe and intimacy. I do not have any kind of static "belief in God," but rather, I move back and forth across different understandings and experiences day to day as my life changes.

In addition to setting my story and that of Elisha as frames to explore our personal longings, I also look to the mystical trajectory of sixteenth-century Lurianic Kabbalah to give this book a sense of scope and perspective. While this reference may seem esoteric to someone encountering it for the first time, I hope it is an accessible and meaningful way to think of the ongoing dynamism in our world and our spiritual lives. At the risk of oversimplifying, the Lurianic arc is a three-fold pattern of stages: tzimtzum (withdrawal), shevirat ha-kelim (shattering of the vessels), and tikkun (restoration). Originally, these terms describe the stages of creation of the cosmos, but have come to be seen as metaphors in the ongoing evolution of a person's interior life.

Tzimtzum refers to God's initial act of withdrawal into the Divine Self so as to create the negative space in which the universe could exist. As a result, like a balloon filled with too much air, God could not hold all of the divine energy, so God "burst," as it were, and the "shards" of the original divine being became the stuff out of which the universe was created. Tikkun, a term that may be more familiar, refers to the process by which each person releases the "light" from the "shards" of creation through acts of kindness and spiritual devotion, thereby restoring the universe and God to its original and unified wholeness. Thus, we have the ubiquitous phrase, "Tikkun Olam," a vision of a universe that has been healed through our actions. On a personal level, we may experience variations of all three of these stages: tzimtzum, or moments of withdrawal into solitude and isolation, shevirat ha-kelim, or breaking the vessels of our assumptions and tired ways of being, yielding ultimately to tikkun, a restoration of wholeness and peace. We

may experience these as a gradual ebb and flow or suddenly and unpredictably, or we may not have any idea if this framework bears any relationship to our actual experience. But maybe the vocabulary can prove useful in naming episodes from our past or perhaps our future.

In this book, I begin by personalizing the experience of "tzimtzum," or withdrawal. When have we experienced a fundamental sense of absence, and how have we, in turn, isolated ourselves? In this sense, our own "tzimtzum," may refer not only to God's remoteness, but our acts of alienating ourselves from other people or from the whole enterprise of Judaism and a spiritual life. Of course, it could refer to isolation that is sprung upon us, absolutely no fault of our own. For me, the "shattering of the vessels" encapsulates a period of creative destruction that is a common and perhaps necessary feature of our personal lives and contemporary religious life in general. While I have had many such periods, my first was probably my time in college when I became aware of the trauma of my early life and at the same time was reevaluating my views of God and Judaism. While daunting and painful at times, it can be an enormously creative process of reflection and discovery, as "shattering the vessels" compels us to entertain new modes of understanding and action. That something new, for me and for all of us, is tikkun: making peace, moving on, and incorporating a personal sense of Jewish meaning into a life of service to others. For a first-time reader, these ideas might take some getting used to, but it's my belief that all great religious ideas are basically simple. So if I have done my job, Luria's ideas will illumine and not confound.

While this book tells my spiritual story so as to elucidate powerful and sometimes contradictory Jewish ideas, I also hope to issue an invitation to my generation of Jews, Generation X and younger, to consider the depth of Jewish tradition and community as our existential questions take on more weight as we proceed further into middle age. I am concerned that we have not created a compelling collective story, and so are missing an important tool with which to understand ourselves and our lives. Our grandparents' generation lived lives we could only imagine: they fled Europe, the Middle

East, and North Africa, scraped through the Depression, fought World War II and helped build (sometimes literally) the State of Israel. Along the way, they also created synagogues, Jewish Community Centers, Hillel, Brandeis University, Jewish camps, basically the entire infrastructure of the American Jewish community.

Our parents' generation, some of whom comprise the alternately adored and reviled Baby Boomers, softened the conformist edges of their parents, and by doing so transformed the existing Jewish infrastructure. Boomers have given us feminism, spirituality, and organizational change. They have placed Tikkun Olam at the center of the agenda of American Jews, and their general political liberalism has broadened the conversation about the Jewish people and the role of Israel. They have introduced new rituals, new ways of being Jewish, and generally created more realistic expectations for their communal leaders.

What will be the lasting statement of Generation X and the generations who come after us? Studies show that, unlike our predecessors, the Baby Boom generation, we appear less inclined to reinvent Jewish life than to opt out. Perhaps more importantly, we have yet to define our generational narrative. While many cataclysmic events have occurred in our adulthood (the fall of Communism, genocide in Bosnia, the trauma of 9/11, two wars in Iraq and one in Afghanistan, mass incarceration, the unraveling of a social safety net, globalization, climate change, a new understanding of institutionalized racism, and now an unanticipated presidency), we have not galvanized ourselves to articulate a collective response.

Then again, not having a single, identifiable generational narrative may suggest its own kind of identity. I would assert that one aspect of the Gen X worldview may be to embrace that very feeling of outsider-ness, that sense of dislocation and loneliness, and to draw on that experience as a lens through which to see ourselves amid the depth of Jewish thought and spirituality. As a people, we are, after all, wanderers in the desert.

My interest in Elisha stems from the way in which Jewish tradition looks back to the prophets, those

original outsiders, in every generation. In the Hebrew Bible, our prophets came on the scene to stir the people, against the grain, to draw close to God through moral action and reverence for the source of creation. This prophetic perspective thus came to infuse the bulk of the Hebrew Bible and subsequent Jewish tradition as each new historical period sought to recapture the *ruach ha-kodesh*, the spirit of holiness, charisma, and moral authority of the prophets. In turn, the Talmud re-imagines the prophetic role as that of the rabbis, the master teachers of both written and oral Torah. In the Middle Ages, Moses Maimonides asserts that philosophy has claimed the prophetic mantle. The mystics of the Zohar in the thirteenth century see the words of the prophets as encoding the creation of the universe.

In modern history, the prophets have been the touchstone for those seeking to revive the spiritual and moral voice of Jewish tradition. The Reform Movement in America asserted the supremacy of the prophets over rabbinic tradition in order to establish a new kind of Judaism for a new land. At around the same time in late nineteenth-century Palestine, Jewish pioneers followed suit, absorbing the almost seismic resonances of the prophets to imagine an enlightened, just, universalist, and pluralistic Jewish society in the land of its birth. As Hitler launched his plan to conquer Europe and annihilate its Jews, a very young man breaking away from his provincial hasidic household wrote a PhD thesis for the University of Berlin on the psychological and spiritual experience of the prophets. Almost thirty years later, that young man, Abraham Joshua Heschel, was propelled by his prophetic sense of justice to forge a friendship and alliance with Dr. Martin Luther King, thereby establishing the pursuit of social justice as the cornerstone of American Judaism.

As a generation born around the time when Heschel and King met, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to renew our connection to this potent ground of inspiration and wisdom. It doesn't matter how much we know or don't know, whether we opt in or opt out. We live in a world of violence and generations of broken promises, both here in North America and in Israel. We have not been compelled to serve, or, finding service repugnant,

to rebel. We have been left to our own devices to choose our commitments. Since we have the opportunity to choose, I would follow the example of my teenage rabbi by encouraging us to learn about our tradition so as to understand that being on the outside gives us a special way in. And that once we have gotten a taste of the dialectical belonging and independence of thought Judaism asks of us, we will want to drink more deeply from this well.

More specifically, I hope that a consideration of Elisha, and his relationship to a remote God, offers a window onto the possibilities of a contemporary Jewish spiritual and ethical life for us all. Like Elisha, we have inherited narratives from previous generations, and have been left to puzzle whether or not they are our own. This particular and peculiar story speaks to my experience of recovering a sense of purpose and transcendence in a world of abandonment and confusion. We all suffer, and so this book invites us to consider the ways in which suffering provokes both the doubt and the yearning that helps us heal ourselves and this world. As Elisha's moment of crying "Avi, Avi" implies, there is no cure for suffering, no assurance that the pain of this world will be magically soothed. We live with paradox, fear, and uncertainty. But walking in the footsteps of Elisha does give us one bit of assurance—that there is "something" there, a "something" worth walking towards, becoming a part of, wrestling with, yelling at, and loving, even if that "something" is usually manifest as absence or veiled in loss.

And so, this book is a midrash, an interpolation of a moment in the biblical text as it intersects with human experience, a moment that weaves Jewish ideas, my personal life, and universal experiences. As I share my own experience, I tell my story not as a memoir, but as an illustration of a pursuit as seemingly futile and unattainable as closeness to God, but that nevertheless gives us wisdom and depth along the way. My experience is less important than the common struggles and questions that animate it. Tracing the echoes of Elisha's longing cry of "Avi, Avi" throughout my life, I hope to illumine for others a bit of what I believe we all share: the roots of sadness and disappointment, a yearning for connection, and hope in the prospect

of inner resilience and human community. And, as befits Jewish teaching, I hope a reader will come away with more questions than answers. <>

[The Bible, Qumran, and the Samaritans](#) edited by Magnar Kartveit, Gary N. Knoppers [Studia Judaica, Studia Samaritana, DE GRUYTER, 9783110575224]

Discoveries on Mount Gerizim and in Qumran demonstrate that the final editing of the Hebrew Bible coincides with the emergence of the Samaritans as one of the different types of Judaism from the last centuries BCE. This book discusses this new scholarly situation. Scholars working with the Bible, especially the Pentateuch, and experts on the Samaritans approach the topic from the vantage point of their respective fields of expertise. Earlier, scholars who worked with Old Testament/Hebrew Bible studies mostly could leave the Samaritan material to experts in that area of research, and scholars studying the Samaritan material needed only sporadically to engage in Biblical studies. This is no longer the case: the pre-Samaritan texts from Qumran and the results from the excavations on Mount Gerizim have created an area of study common to the previously separated fields of research. Scholars coming from different directions meet in this new area, and realize that they work on the same questions and with much common material. This volume presents the current state of scholarship in this area and the effects these recent discoveries have for an understanding of this important epoch in the development of the Bible.

Table of Contents  
 Qumran, Mount Gerizim, and the Books of Moses —Magnar Kartveit and Gary N. Knoppers  
 Overcoming the Sub-Deuteronomism and Sub-Chronicism of Historiography in Biblical Studies: The Case of the Samaritans — Konrad Schmid  
 Textual Harmonization in the Five Books of the Torah: A Summary — Emanuel Tov  
 Samaritan Studies — Recent Research Results — Reinhard Pummer  
 Cult Centralization and the Publication of the Torah Between Jerusalem and Samaria — Thomas Römer

Competing Attitudes toward Samaria in Chronicles and Second Zechariah — Christophe Nihan and Hervé Gonzalez  
 The Composition of Ezra-Nehemiah as a Testimony for the Competition Between the Temples in Jerusalem and on Mt. Gerizim in the Early Years of the Seleucid Rule over Judah —Raik Heckl  
 Ethnic Fiction and Identity-Formation: A New Explanation for the Background of the Question of Inter-marriage in Ezra-Nehemiah —Benedikt Hensel  
 An Update of Moses Gaster's "Chain of Samaritan High Priests"— Reinhard Pummer  
 Bibliography  
 List of Contributors  
 Index of Modern Authors  
 Index of Ancient Texts  
 Index of Subjects

Excerpt:

### Qumran, Mount Gerizim, and the Books of Moses

The study of the Pentateuch and research on the Samaritans have changed fundamentally over the last decades in refreshingly different ways.' In this book, the focus is on the change created by new material emerging from two sets of disparate sources: the ancient manuscripts from the area of the Dead Sea, especially from Qumran, and the archaeological excavations and ancient inscriptions at Mount Gerizim. Material from these two sites has created a common field of research for two different groups: scholars working with the Pentateuch and experts on the Samaritans. Earlier, scholars who worked in Old Testament/Hebrew Bible studies could leave the Samaritan material mostly to experts in that area of research and scholars studying the Samaritan material needed only sporadically to engage in the academic study of the Hebrew Bible. Scholars in the field of early Judaism might wish to consult early Samaritan evidence and scholars in Samaritan studies might wish to work comparatively with early Judaic texts, but the study of the Hebrew Bible was considered, for the most part, to be anterior and distinct from Samaritan studies. This is no longer the case. The pre-Samaritan texts from Qumran and the results from the excavations on Mount Gerizim have created an area of study common to previously

separate fields of research. Scholars coming from different directions meet in this new area and realize that they work on much the same questions and with much common material.

The first major change in Pentateuchal and Samaritan studies was the discovery of the pre-Samaritan texts from Qumran. This shift began in 1955 when Patrick W. Skehan presented what he called "Exodus in the Samaritan Recension from Qumran." His article announced that among the Qumran texts there was a scroll of Exodus with features that were previously only known from the Samaritan Pentateuch. With the following words, Skehan introduced 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup>:

The recension in question is the "Samaritan" recension, with all the essential characteristics of that fuller text, including its repetitious manner of recounting the plague episodes, its borrowings from Deuteronomy and its transpositions; this is true at almost every point where the extant fragments make verification possible.

The significance of this discovery was enhanced by these observations: "The script cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called Samaritan. ... Neither is the orthography Samaritan." Skehan's "surprise" was therefore that "the Samaritan recension ... is shown by this scroll to have been preserved with a measure of fidelity ... that compares not unfavorably with the fidelity of transmission of MT itself."

Skehan's presentation opened new insights into the history of the text of the Torah. With all the Dead Sea manuscripts now published, we are able to work with this material on a broader basis. There is no doubt that the Samaritan Pentateuch has predecessors in Qumran, not only in 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup>, but in several manuscripts of the so-called pre-Samaritan text type. They constitute some 11 percent of the total of Pentateuchal texts from the Dead Sea area.

The second major development in this field is constituted by the results from the archaeological excavations on Mount Gerizim. The site, Jebel et-Tur, had been excavated by A. M. Schneider from Göttingen in 1930, but new excavations were

undertaken by Yitzhak Magen and his team, beginning in 1982. During the next 25 years, they discovered 395 inscriptions and fragments of inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as a number of inscriptions in Greek. No images were found, but some 300,000 fragmentary animal bones from sacrifices were discovered—all this in addition to the buildings, monumental walls, towers, and chambers that were uncovered. Most importantly, a sacred precinct was discovered, the probable site for the Samaritan temple.

The temple on Mt. Gerizim was thus built in the days of Sanballat the Horonite (Sanballat I), governor of Samaria in the days of Nehemiah, who arrived in the Land of Israel in 444 BCE (Neh. 2:1-10). The temple remained in use during the Ptolemaic and Seleucid periods, as well, and also withstood the destruction of the city of Samaria and the construction of a Macedonian city on its ruins.

Josephus, however, wrongly ascribed its construction to the Sanballat who lived in the days of Alexander the Great; in fact, it was built by another Sanballat, who lived in the time of Nehemiah, some one hundred years earlier (Jos., Ant. 11: 302, 321-325).

In the third century BCE, in the Hellenistic period, the temple and the sacred precinct were rebuilt, and a city began to rise around them. The city expanded until it reached its maximal size in the second century BCE, with an overall area of about 400 dunams (800 m. long and some 500 m. wide), becoming the capital of the Samaritan people and its religious and cultic center.

If there was a Yahwistic temple on Mount Gerizim from the fifth to the second centuries BCE, the finalization of the contents and the text of the Pentateuch happened at a time when this temple existed. Old Testament/Hebrew Bible scholars have begun to realize over the last years the consequences of this momentous discovery and are increasingly relating their studies to this reality.

These two major developments in biblical and Samaritan studies formed the background for two sessions at the 22nd congress of The International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament

(IOSOT). The congress took place at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, from September 4 to 9, 2016. For the first time in the history of this organization, a research group for Samaritan studies was set up. The good attendance at the sessions showed that the time had come for a reorientation in this area of research. The invitations to the presenters at the research group were met with positive responses and most of the invited scholars were able to attend the congress and contribute to the research group. Their presentations were followed by lively and interesting discussions. The presenters were free to choose topics for their own lectures, but the overall idea was to delve into the area where Samaritan studies and Old Testament/Hebrew Bible studies overlap. It is no longer desirable or even possible to conduct these studies in isolation from one another, but to engage in a dialogue for the common good. It is a pleasure to present in this volume the contributions delivered in Stellenbosch. All the lecturers readily agreed to have their presentations published in the series *Studia Samaritana*.

It was, therefore, with great sadness that we received the message that one of the presenters in Stellenbosch, Peter W. Flint, had died on November 3, 2016. He had been involved in research of the Dead Sea Scrolls for over 20 years. He was one of the 70 official editors of the Dead Sea Scrolls worldwide, and worked on the great Isaiah scroll and on the Psalms. In addition, he published books and articles on the Dead Sea Scrolls and related subjects." It was an obvious choice to invite him to the research group inside the IOSOT-congress and he suggested a contribution on "Two Pre-Samaritan Scrolls found at Qumran: One Especially Close to the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Other a Transition Text between the S[amaritan] P[entateuch] and the Septuagint." The two scrolls were 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup> (4Q22) and 4QNum<sup>b</sup> (4Q27), but he also discussed a series of other texts of the pre-Samaritan and Reworked Pentateuch text types. Flint found 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup> to be close to the Samaritan Pentateuch, whereas he found 4QNum<sup>b</sup> to be a text in between the text type of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the text type of the Septuagint. In the presentation, he was able

to exploit insights from relevant scholarly contributions, and to locate his own solutions to the problems in relation to these discussions. The paper in detail analyzed the material at hand and discussed many instances in which the Dead Sea Scrolls present particularly interesting readings. A lively discussion followed his presentation.

Peter W. Flint was born in South Africa in 1951, and in 1972 he completed his first B.A., from Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. From the University of South Africa in Pretoria he earned a B.A. in Classical Hebrew in 1979 and a M.A. in 1983. Seven years later he completed his second M.A., this time at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, USA, followed by a Ph.D. in Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism at the same institution in 1993. It is a serious loss to this volume that Flint's paper cannot be included, but it is a small compensation to dedicate it to his memory. Full obituaries and overviews of his scholarly merits are offered elsewhere." In this context, it is only possible to acknowledge his contributions to our field, his insights and suggestions for understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls and related matters, his courteous and generous presentations of material and the results of his research. Our disciplines have suffered a great loss from his death, but through his publications we are still able to benefit from his innovative and sound scholarship.

In addition to the five Stellenbosch lectures presented here, some other essays are included. A few scholars were invited to contribute to this volume. Reinhard Pummer is one of the most renowned scholars in Samaritan studies and he willingly agreed to write for the volume, even submitting two chapters. Benedikt Hensel also concurred to contribute. It is, therefore, possible to present a book covering a wide range of topics related to the central issues posed by the research group at the IOSOT congress.

A broad orientation in the field is provided in Konrad Schmid's contribution. He describes the general situation in Old Testament/Hebrew Bible historical studies subsumed under the catchwords Sub-Deuteronomism and Sub-Chronism, expressions that describe general scholarly tendencies to replicate, whether consciously or unconsciously, the



assumptions, contours, and tropes of biblical presentations of Israelite history. Against such tendencies, it is incumbent to distinguish between the Israel as described in the Bible and the historical Israel as reconstructed by scholars. The two cannot be completely separated, but must be nevertheless held apart. The discoveries from the excavations on Mount Gerizim make this program more important than ever: the Samaritans of the north and the Samaritans of Shechem and Mount Gerizim are made invisible or neglected or even vilified in some of the ancient literary sources. Scholars have to redress the imbalance and describe the groups, as well as their theologies and histories, in fairer and more defensible terms. In this process we may be led to read biblical texts anew, as Schmid does with Joshua 24, with a fresh perspective.

Readers will be intrigued by many of Schmid's ideas. What if, for example, the composition of a text, such as Joshua 24, reflects a socio-historical situation, when two major Yahwistic sanctuaries, one in Jerusalem and one on Mount Gerizim, coexisted in the land? Schmid discusses this scenario and offers a glimpse of what a theology of coexistence looked like at a time, when contemporaneous Yahwistic communities could be found in Samaria and in Judah. If this was the situation in the fifth century BCE, traditional scholarly portrayals of the Northerners and the Southerners in this period will have to be rewritten.

Whereas Schmid explores the implications of the discoveries on Mt. Gerizim for gaining a better understanding of a critical biblical text, the essay by Emanuel Tov explores the implications of the other major area of discovery mentioned above: the Dead Sea Scrolls. His topic is the harmonizing tendencies in the Qumran biblical texts, in tefillin, and in liturgical texts. Summing up years of study on these texts, he offers a critical evaluation of his own and of other scholars' research. In particular, the feature of harmonization has been often cited as a major characteristic of the so-called pre-Samaritan texts, but Tov argues that the term requires clarification. As a rubric, the category of harmonization has been sometimes used broadly to include coordination and assimilation. Tov opts for a narrow definition of harmonization, in

differentiation from the classifications employed in many other scholarly publications. Yet, even accepting a narrow definition, harmonization on the textual level may be considered as widespread in biblical manuscripts. Considering the varied material found in the Bible, it is conspicuous that harmonization is a feature more prominent in the Pentateuchal manuscripts than in the manuscripts of the Former Prophets, Latter Prophets, and Writings. The historical texts of the Bible, especially those of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, present many stories that could invite harmonization, but generally this is not found. Of all the parts of the Hebrew Bible, the Pentateuch was the arena where harmonizing work took place.

Although this phenomenon is typical of the pre-Samaritan manuscripts, it is not prominent in the Masoretic text. Where it is most prominent, came as a surprise to Tov, as it will be to his readers, both when the individual books of Moses are compared with each other and when the different textual witnesses are compared. One of the most salient findings, for example, is that the largest contingent of harmonizations appears within the books of the LXX, followed by the pre-Samaritan manuscripts and the Samaritan Pentateuch. Statistics are presented which show the situation, and readers will be intrigued by the picture they present.

Over against the background of detailed studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran and other relevant textual evidence, scholars are beginning to develop new theories about the origins of the Samaritans. If we compare our present knowledge with the standard presentation on the Samaritans written by James A. Montgomery in 1907, it is conspicuous what a difference the empirical evidence from the area of the Dead Sea has made. Montgomery was on the right track in many of the assumptions he made, but he had no idea of the connection between the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the texts circulating in Jewish circles at the turn of the era. His comments on the Samaritan Pentateuch are telling of the state of knowledge in his time:

Indeed it is not the disagreement that is remarkable so much as the great similarity of the two texts [the Masoretic and the

Samaritan]. Apart from the few falsifications inserted by the Samaritans, there are no material differences, such for instance as would give the historian a different view of the age to which the composition belongs, or of the history which it relates ; the variations will never be more than of interest to the textual scholar, illustrative to him of the origin and processes of various text-traditions."

Montgomery could not know that most of the "few falsifications" in the Samaritan text were harmonizations and instances of content editing, which are now amply attested in Judean Dead Sea Scrolls texts. Both the Samaritan Pentateuch and the so-called pre-Samaritan manuscripts at Qumran share such special features.' Moreover, the literary techniques Samaritans employed to produce a

thin, but distinctive, theological layer in the Samaritan Pentateuch are consistent with the literary techniques attested elsewhere in the pre-Samaritan manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Samaritan Pentateuch itself. In this sense, the Samaritans and the Judeans of Qumran share some vital features, as far as their Scriptures are concerned.

Peter W. Flint's observation in this respect is to the point: 4QpaleoExodm (4Q22) is a version that comes very close to the Samaritan Pentateuch and may indeed have been one of the predecessors of that text. When the Samaritans produced their tenth commandment, appearing in the Samaritan Pentateuch of both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 (but not in other ancient witnesses), a text that draws almost exclusively upon the injunctions found in their Vorlage of Deut 11:29 — 30; 27:2-8, focusing on the commands to build an altar on Mount Gerizim and to inscribe the text of the Torah upon whole stones, they employed exactly the same literary method as was used for the content editing of the pre-Samaritan texts found at Qumran. By reusing, adapting, and expanding an existing Torah text type that was shared with Judeans and thus was non-sectarian, Samaritan scribes created an amplified Torah. Only the light additional stratum and not the base text the Samaritans shared with Judeans, may be viewed as distinctively Samaritan. By dealing intensively

with harmonizations in the wider textual corpus from Qumran, Tov's essay thus illumines the broader intellectual milieu in which the pre-Samaritan texts were produced and out of which the Holy Text of the Samaritans emerged.

The Books of Moses are one of the pillars in the theological edifice of the Samaritans, from their early history until today. This is manifest in their creed:

We say: My faith is in thee, Yhwh; and in Moses son of Amram, thy servant; and in the holy Law; and in Mount Gerizim Beth-El; and in the Day of Vengeance and Recompense.

Even though the date of this version of the creed is the 17th century CE, the first four elements are found in Memar Marqah/Tebat Marge, a collection of theological treatises in six books, the Aramaic parts dating from the late fourth century CE. Paralleled by Islam's article of faith in God's scriptures, but unparalleled in Judaism and Christianity, this article of faith in Scripture constitutes an old and central element of Samaritanism. Here, the Torah's status is in line with that of God, Moses, Mount Gerizim and the Judgment Day.

Scholars have therefore always known of these tenets of Samaritan theology, but not until recently realized the scope and content of the concentration on Mount Gerizim. The excavations conducted from 1982 onward have yielded a wealth of material that gives an impression of life in the city on the mountain, with its altar or temple. If a scholar needs texts to accompany the stones and structures, they are there: 395 inscriptions and fragments of inscriptions. Some are long, some contain a few letters, but together they present us with a congregation in existence around 200 BCE. From the same period come two inscriptions from the island of Delos in the Aegean Sea, also clearly Samaritan. A community with such a pronounced identity and self-awareness will have existed for some time before 200 BCE, and the enlargement of the city on Mount Gerizim around this time also testifies to such a situation.

All this and much more is described in Reinhard Pummer's first article in this volume. He not only

analyzes the implications of the excavations on the two summits of Mount Gerizim (Tell er-Rās and Jebel et-Tōr), but also discusses the literary evidence (biblical, Josephus, Patristic) relevant for the reconstruction of the history of the area during the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. As part of his essay, Pummer reviews the archaeological excavations of possibly Samaritan cemeteries and tombs at a variety of sites in Palestine, enabling scholars to gain a better picture of Samaritans and Samaritan material culture of the late Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods. Taken together, these material remains supply important evidence for the extent of the area occupied by the Samaritans in Palestine during different eras. Additionally, the Delos inscriptions show that a Yahwistic Samaritan Diaspora existed far in the west and Josephus describes the Samari(t)ans as part of the population in Egypt.

Yet, Pummer's study of material artifacts also raises questions about the state of Samaritan-Jewish relations during the periods surveyed. Discussing tomb types, burial caves, storage jars, and grave goods, Pummer observes how closely they resemble their Jewish counterparts. If "the culture of the Samaritans was to a large extent indistinguishable from that of Jews," as he points out, how likely is it that deep hostility characterized Samaritan-Jewish relations during this time? In short, the overview Pummer provides of recent studies of Samaritan material and literary culture furnishes readers with an up-to-date and insightful assessment of the field.

In light of the new situation created by the discovery of a cult on Mount Gerizim existing at a time when important parts of the Bible were produced, Thomas Römer in his article discusses anew the formation of the Pentateuch and of the Deuteronomistic History. Many recent scholarly discussions on the origins and development of the Pentateuch and of the Deuteronomistic History do not take the new discoveries into account and Römer recognizes the deficiencies of such approaches. This understanding leads him to take up questions hotly debated recently: how is the centralization command in Deuteronomy to be understood? Does Deuteronomy have a northern background? When was this book first created and

how was it reworked and extended? Is the Pentateuch witness to common efforts in Yehud and Samaria to create a foundational document or common constitution? What is the significance of the appearance of Shechem both in Genesis 12, as Abram's first stop in the land, and in Joshua 24, as the site of an all-Israelite convocation? Similarly, what is the significance of the site Moriah in Genesis 22? Readers may be surprised by some of his proposals.

One of the curious features about the last section of Genesis (37— 50), largely taken up by the Joseph Story, is that it features the progenitor of two of the most prominent northern tribes: Ephraim and Manasseh. Römer thus asks: where might the Joseph novella have originated? Römer's proposals concerning these and other issues he discusses may be met with consent by some scholars and with rejection by others. Whatever the case, all readers will benefit from dealing with the texts and problems taken up in this essay. Indeed, his intriguing study may open up new questions and stimulate new approaches to old questions, compelling scholars to reconsider traditional assumptions and positions.

While Thomas Römer covers much ground in his wide-ranging article, Christophe Nihan and Hervé Gonzalez in their chapter concentrate on only two particular verses in the Bible: 2 Chr 7:12 and Zech 11:14. Both essays will provoke, however, much discussion. Nihan and Gonzalez situate their studies of individual texts within the larger literary contexts of Chronicles and Zechariah, respectively. Yet, Nihan and Gonzalez, like Römer, attend to the issue of historical context, exploring the import of these passages in the (reconstructed) world in which they were written, a period in which a Yahwistic temple on Mount Gerizim coexisted with a Yahwistic temple on Mount Zion. Whatever precise nuances in the relationship between the Yahwists of Judah and the Yahwists of Samaria may have obtained at the times in which these two different texts were composed, it is safe to assume that relations between Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim were not yet completely severed.

In their essay, Nihan and Gonzalez discuss foreign policy developments in the southern Levant during

the transition from Persian to Hellenistic overlords. In their view, the authors of Chronicles and Zechariah 9 —14 confronted the situation in the North with different attitudes. While Römer finds cooperation between Yehud and Samaria in the production of the Pentateuch, Nihan and Gonzalez find nuanced attitudes in the particular historiographic and prophetic texts they discuss. On the one hand, Chronicles emphasizes the priority of the Jerusalem temple, while recognizing the Yahwists of the North to be Israelite in identity. Hence, the people of the North are approached with the view that they can and should support the sanctuary in Jerusalem. What this means, can be seen in the unparalleled divine proclamation presented in 2 Chr 7:12 in which YHWH employs the phraseology of Deuteronomy to speak of the Jerusalem temple as "chosen" by him to be for him a "place of sacrifice."

On the other hand, the second part of the book of Zechariah presents us with a complex and shifting set of attitudes toward the North. There are several new beginnings in Zechariah 9 —14 each of which builds upon previous passages and develops themes from preceding literary units. The text of Zech 11:14 provides one window into this reality. What can be seen in the detailed contribution by Nihan and Gonzalez is the existence of a variety of theological stances within Jerusalem during this period—and Römer's proposals for growth in the development of the Pentateuch nicely adds to this picture. The essay by Römer and that of Nihan and Gonzalez thus illustrate two ways in which the excavations on Mount Gerizim have sparked a spate of new scholarship on the Pentateuch, in particular, and the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, in general.

After all of the research that has been undertaken on Ezra-Nehemiah, is it possible to say something new? Evidently there is, as shown by two new monographs on the book by two German scholars, published in the same year, with the same publisher, in the same series. At first glance, it might seem to be a coincidence that the two monographs appeared simultaneously, but Raik Heckl's and Benedikt Hensel's extensive studies on Ezra-Nehemiah are both written against the background of the new insights gained from the Mount Gerizim

excavations and so it is probably no coincidence. To some extent, the works follow the same line of thinking, yet the two are strikingly different. The editors of this volume are pleased to present articles by both scholars, because such an inclusion of different perspectives allows readers to have the opportunity to read and

compare. Both contributions testify to the need to re-evaluate our understanding of well-known biblical texts on the basis of fresh material.

Raik Heckl presents a literary analysis of Ezra-Nehemiah so as to describe the discourses that resulted in the literary history of the book. He discusses the hermeneutical strategies that its last authors used to persuade their readers to accept the new text over against its Vorlagen. He emphasizes that the Cyrus edict, contextualized at the beginning of Ezra 1 represents the hermeneutical key to understanding Ezra 1-6. He provocatively contends that the version of the Cyrus edict in Ezra 1 anticipates not only the main elements of the Aramaic temple chronicle in Ezra 5 — 6, but also the versions of the Cyrus edict in Ezra 5:13-15 and 6:2-5. The opening of the Ezra story performs a similar function, connecting Jerusalem with the Torah through the person and activities of Ezra. As for the lists of persons in Neh 7 (/Ezra 2) and the communal covenant of Neh 10, the author argues that they are placed relatively close to the end of the exile.

One of the aims of the essay is to show how the literary growth of the book reveals a change in theological preferences over time. In this perspective, the literary material discussed in Ezra-Nehemiah does not reflect the historical circumstances of the Persian period. The writers wish to provide the Jerusalem temple with royal legitimacy and with a more ancient pedigree than the competing temple on Mount Gerizim. Additionally, they claim the Torah, understood as dating to an earlier time (the Persian period) and stemming from within a broad Yahwistic context, exclusively for the Jerusalem community and not for others.

Heckl readily acknowledges, of course, that the facts on the ground, pertaining to the two sanctuaries, could differ quite markedly from what

one finds in the presentation of Ezra-Nehemiah. In this respect, the whole of Ezra-Nehemiah should be read as a text emerging from a later era than is often assumed by scholars. Readers will find in Heckl's essay suggestions that should trigger further reanalysis of the history of the relationship between Samaria and Jerusalem. In this reconstruction, Ezra-Nehemiah becomes a programmatic text in worsening relations between the two communities.

Taking as his starting point the separation from foreignness in Neh 13:30, Benedikt Hensel finds the focus on separation to be a leading motif in the Ezra-story in Ezra 1-10 and in Neh 8 —10. Hensel addresses the particular notion of foreignness in the two books against the background of our present knowledge of the constitution of the population in the area. In so doing, he discovers an enigma, namely that there were not many foreigners to dissociate from. So what would have been the purpose of the injunction to separate from almost non-existent aliens? An answer to this question can be found by paying attention to the use of the term "Israel" in these books, a designation reserved for the returnees from exile. As "Israel" was a self-designation also of the emerging community around the Gerizim sanctuary, this usage in Ezra-Nehemiah attempts to redefine the relevant power relationships in the period, pro-Jerusalem and antiSamaritan. Readers will be struck by a number of Hensel's proposals, including the suggestion that the designation of the "foreigner" functions in the text as a cipher for a particular conflict, by which the "Israelite" authors of Ezra demarcate themselves from other post-exilic Yahwisms, specifically the Samaritan YHWH worshipers. Hensel's study thus revives suggestions of anti-Samaritan polemics in Ezra-Nehemiah, but with new material from Mount Gerizim and Delos as the impulse for a renewed attempt to understand the theological thrust of the book.

Any theory of the creation and redaction of the final stages of the Pentateuch will have to take into account the evidence furnished by the Pentateuchal scrolls discovered near the Dead Sea. Along with the inscriptions and material results from the excavations on Mount Gerizim, they constitute empirical evidence that needs to be weighed and

sifted by scholars engaged in the study of the cultures of Samaria and Judah during the Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods. The essays here presented all testify to this situation, and they show how scholars are now wrestling with old questions in the light of new evidence.

"The head of the Samaritan community is the high priest," says Reinhard Pummer in his second contribution to this volume. Whatever the vagaries of human history during the many centuries of the Common Era, this fact has remained largely constant. The Samaritans assert a continuous chain of high priests from Aaron, the brother of Moses, to the present high priest, who they say is number 132 in an unbroken line of succession. Indeed, the lineage of the first high priest (Aaron) is itself traced back to the first human (Adam). The Samaritan claim of a distinguished pedigree, extending from contemporary times back into hoary antiquity may be contrasted with the Judean assertions found in Neh 13:28 f:

And one of the sons of Jehoiada, son of the high priest Eliashib, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; I chased him away from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, the covenant of the priests and the Levites.

The text of Nehemiah acknowledges a marital connection between the Jerusalem priestly elite and the family of the contemporary governor of Samaria (Sanballat), but criticizes it by equating it with polluting the sacerdotaly. One of the grandsons of the high priest Jehoiada had violated the covenant of the priests and Levites by defiling his ancestral lineage. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus, whatever the precise version(s) of his source (a variant form of Ezra-Nehemiah or 1 Esdras with additional material), presents an account that recalls certain features of the Nehemiah narrative, but also makes additional claims:

Now the elders of Jerusalem, resenting the fact that the brother of the high priest Jaddus was sharing the high priesthood while married to a foreigner, rose up against him, for they considered this marriage to be a stepping-stone for those

who might wish to transgress the laws about taking wives and that this would be the beginning of intercourse with foreigners. They believed, moreover, that their former captivity and misfortunes had been caused by some who had erred in marrying and taking wives who were not of their own country. They therefore told Manassēs either to divorce his wife or not to approach the altar. And, as the high priest shared the indignation of the people and kept his brother from the altar, Manassēs went to his father-in-law Sanaballetēs and said that while he loved his daughter Nikasō, nevertheless the priestly office was the highest in the nation and had always belonged to his family, and that therefore he did not wish to be deprived of it on her account. But Sanaballetēs promised not only to preserve the priesthood for him but also to procure for him the power and office of high priest and to appoint him governor of all the places over which he ruled, if he were willing to live with his daughter; and he said that he would build a temple similar to that in Jerusalem on Mount Garizein—this is the highest of the mountains near Samaria—, and undertook to do these things with the consent of King Darius... But, as many priests and Israelites were involved in such marriages, great was the confusion which seized the people of Jerusalem. For all these deserted to Manassēs, and Sanaballetēs supplied them with money and with land for cultivation and assigned them places wherein to dwell, in every way seeking to win favour for his son-in-law. (Ant. 11.306 - 312)

Josephus thus acknowledges that the Samaritans had a high priest with appropriate genealogical roots, but asserts that the circumstances of his appointment and the arrival of the high priestly institution in Samaria are driven by pure political expediency, rather than by any longstanding sacerdotal tradition. In this construction, the Samaritan high priesthood is late, suspect, and derivative of authentic Judean tradition. Moreover, the status of Manasseh, as a Judean priest, is sullied by his being "married to a foreigner." This would be a defilement of the priesthood in

Jerusalem, according to the terminology employed in Nehemiah.

Yet, as the list within Pummer's essay makes clear, Samaritan tradition does not know of such an incident, much less a high priest named Manasseh dating to this time. Research on the Samaritans, as well as on the historical relations between priests in Samaria and Judah, thus has to take strikingly different views into account: the Samaritan tradition, the claims made by Josephus, and all other relevant sources. Pummer's critically annotated and updated list of Samaritan high priests provides both basic data for further research and supplies us with the Samaritan view. Their voice should be heard in our volume.

So where will future scholarship lead us? The essays in this book represent a re-orientation in a period, when the full impact of new discoveries is being felt. Still, some scholars work as if the material presented and presupposed here is not very relevant. But increasingly, the relevance and significance of the pre-Samaritan texts at Qumran and the discoveries on Mount Gerizim can be seen in publications. The present volume is situated at the crossroads at which scholars are looking back and seeing forward. There is no better moment than when we have exciting times ahead. <>

[Philosophic Silence and the 'One' in Plotinus](#) by Nicholas Banner [Cambridge University Press, 9781107154629]

Plotinus, the greatest philosopher of Late Antiquity, discusses at length a first principle of reality - the One - which, he tells us, cannot be expressed in words or grasped in thought. How and why, then, does Plotinus write about it at all? This book explores this act of writing the unwritable. Seeking to explain what seems to be an insoluble paradox in the very practice of late Platonist writing, it examines not only the philosophical concerns involved, but the cultural and rhetorical aspects of the question. The discussion outlines an ancient practice of 'philosophical silence' which determined the themes and tropes of public secrecy appropriate to Late Platonist philosophy. Through philosophic silence, public secrecy and silence flow into one another, and the unsaid space of the text becomes an initiatory secret. Understanding this

mode of discourse allows us to resolve many apparent contradictions in Plotinus' thought.

Contents	
Preface	
List of Abbreviations	
Introduction	
PART I The Cultural Roots of Platonist Philosophic Silence	
1 De philosophorum	
Græcorum silentio mystico: Preliminaries	
2 The Silent Philosopher	
3 Perennial Wisdom and	
Platonist Tradition	
4 Plotinus and The Ancients':	
Tradition, Truth and Transcendence	
PART II The Transcendent Absolute, the Ineffable and Plotinian Poetics of Transcendence	
5 The Development of the	
Transcendent Absolute in the Middle	
Platonist Milieu	
6 The Transcendent	
Absolute and the Ineffability of Reality in Plotinus	
7 The Poetics of	
Transcendence in Plotinus	
Conclusion	
Appendices	
Appendix A The Plotinian Idea of Tradition and 'Platonism'	
Appendix B Esoteric Hermeneutics, Plato and Aristotle in Plotinus	
Appendix C Some Useful Notes on Plotinian Metaphysics	
Appendix D Modern Theories of Philosophic Silence	
Select Primary Bibliography	
Secondary Bibliography	
Index	

Excerpt: [Philosophic Silence and the 'One' in Plotinus](#) is a study of a recondite aspect of Plotinus' philosophy: his use of tropes of secrecy and silence in his discussions of the nature of his ineffable first principle. Recondite and perhaps obscure, but not unimportant: because Plotinus tells us that the One cannot be spoken of — writes that the One cannot be written about — the tropes of secrecy and silence cast a kind of shadowy paradox over his entire project. Plotinus tells us many things about the One, only to contradict them later, often denying that he can tell us anything about it at all,

and if one were to arrive at a clear-cut conclusion from all this, it ought to be that Plotinus, by his own admission, should not be writing. The One, for Plotinus, is utterly 'silent' and the philosopher should seek to emulate this silence. And yet, were Plotinus to have kept silent, there would be no one to tell us of the need to keep silent about the One.

It has been noted that reading apophatic language or 'negative theology' can be a fairly agonising process, and any work which has apophasis as its theme tends to be agonising in direct proportion to its fidelity to the subject matter. The present work, it is hoped, treads an elusive middle path between self-negating obscurity and facile 'explanation' which enables some new insights into Plotinus' practice of written silence but is also somewhat readable. The goal has been to explore and describe some of Plotinus' techniques of written silence in an intelligible way without straying too far from the intrinsically mind-bending difficulty of the subject matter. The author craves the reader's indulgence for the many points at which the text falls too far in one direction or the other.

Plotinus has only one thing to say ... and yet, he never will say it. Hadot, 1993

The present study is an enquiry into 'philosophic silence' in Plotinus!

The line of enquiry pursued arose from wonder at a seeming paradox: Plotinus posits a radical truth available to the philosophic seeker, a truth that is an ontological transformation as much as it is an epistemological attainment, but refuses to speak this truth, and denies that it may be spoken. Why, then, write about it? The ineffable nature of the One or Good for Plotinus, coupled with what may be termed its transcendence and immanence at all levels of being and knowing, naturally gives rise to this tension between utterance and silence.

Plotinus also positions himself as an exegete of an esoteric philosophic tradition, with a concern for keeping certain philosophic matters out of the hands of the vulgar crowd. He claimed a great reluctance to write and publish his philosophy. Yet publish he did, as well as teaching a philosophic seminar open to all, and to questions from every

quarter. How should we account for these apparent contradictions?

The most common account of Plotinus' use of the intensive negative language known as apophasis, of the rhetorics of silence and secrecy and of the paradoxes of transcendence and immanence, is that all these techniques are legitimate philosophical responses to the ineffable first principle of later Platonism. Viewed from the perspective of the philosophic history of ideas, Plotinian paradox and indeed what is widely termed Plotinian 'mysticism' arise from Middle and Late Platonist' hermeneutics of Platonic premises, and are simply logical. Since the publication in 1928 of Dodds' seminal *The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonist One*, the dominant tendency in Classical scholarship has been to regard the rise of the transcendent first principle in Platonism, and particularly in Plotinus, as an outcome of exegesis primarily of the Platonic dialogues and secondarily of other Greek philosophical materials, particularly of Aristotle and the commentary tradition. [The last phase of Greek philosophy has until recently been less intelligently studied than any other, and in our understanding of its development there are still lamentable lacunae. Three errors in particular have in the past prevented a proper appreciation of Plotinus' place in the history of philosophy. The first was the failure to distinguish Neoplatonism from Platonism: this vitiates the work of many early exponents from Ficinus down to Kirchner. The second was the belief that the Neoplatonists, being 'mystics,' were necessarily incomprehensible to the plain man or even to the plain philosopher. To have encouraged the persistence of this superstition in the nineteenth century is the least pardonable of Creuzer's many sins. The third was the chronological confusion involved in the ascription to Saint Paul's contemporary of the works of the pretended Dionysius Areopagita, which contain a fully-developed Neoplatonic theology. Though the fraud had been exposed by Scaliger, these writings continued down to the beginning of the nineteenth century to be used as evidence that the 'Neoplatonic trinity' was an inferior imitation of the Christian one. When this false trail was at length abandoned the fashion for orientalizing

explanations persisted in another guise: to the earliest historians of Neoplatonism, Simon and Vacherot, the school of Plotinus was 'the school of Alexandria,' and its inspiration was mainly Egyptian. Vacherot says of Neoplatonism that it is 'essentially and radically oriental, having nothing of Greek thought but its language and procedure.' Few would be found to-day to subscribe to so sweeping a pronouncement; but the existence of an important oriental element in Plotinus' thought is still affirmed by many French and German writers]

The intellectual history which has emerged, painted in broad strokes, describes a more or less linear progression toward an idea of a first principle which, whether it is an intellect, a monad, or something else, surpasses being and essence. The 'Good beyond being' of Republic 509e8-9, the 'beautiful itself' of Symposium 210e2-211b3, the 'One beyond being' of Parmenides 142a3-4 and many other passages read in the light of these, provided exegetical materials for interpreters of Plato seeking the primordial first principle, and contributed to their setting it, in an absolute sense, beyond.' It 'makes sense' that the Good, conceived through exegesis of Plato's dialogues as 'beyond being' and subject to paradoxical conditions in its relationship to the manifest world, is beyond normal human thought and discourse.' While this is a perplexing and problematic aspect of Plotinian philosophy, it is one which has been addressed with considerable success in twentieth-century scholarship.

The further problem which arises from this first, namely the paradox of Plotinus' extensive writing about this unwritable 'subject', is the central impetus for the present inquiry. We may conclude, based on the premises and arguments found in the *Enneads*, that it makes sense for Plotinus to define his first principle as ineffable, and we may even assent to his extensive writings on the subject, on the grounds that he is attempting to explain the ineffable nature of the One as far as possible. But Plotinus does not simply define the One with a kind of written silence which aims to show the absence from the text of the subject of discourse; he also describes it using rhetorics of secrecy. The Plotinian One is described as both self-hiding by its very nature, and in need of concealment from those



'uninitiated' in the mysteries of philosophy. Why should Plotinus desire to defend the highest philosophical achievement, the direct encounter with the One, with secrecy, if it is by its very nature incommunicable?

Previous scholarship has occasionally touched on this paradox, but no answers have been forthcoming. The present thesis seeks an answer by looking not only at the strictly philosophical content of Plotinus' work, but also at the broader cultural context of the norms, style and culture of Platonism. It posits a set of tropes, collectively called 'philosophic silence', which governed the way in which the highest realms of Platonist enquiry were to be discussed, and in what ways they were to be 'concealed'.

The question this study attempts to answer is this: what is Plotinus doing when he tells us that he cannot, or will not, tell us something? The answer it gives has not only philosophical, but social, religious and literary ramifications, and, in the light of these, expands our understanding of the question of Plotinian ineffability itself, asking a question instead about literary and philosophic practice. This is not to abandon the logical side of the question of the ineffable in Late Platonism; rather, it is an attempt to enhance our understanding of the late antique project of writing the ineffable by understanding it qua writing: as the textual expression not only of the play of ideas and the search for truth through reason, but of the norms of deportment, ideas of philosophy as a way of life and a tradition and notions of the lived encounter with higher truths so central to Late Platonist thinking.

### 'Cratylan' Silence

A quick survey of the Classical dilemmas of silence and discourse will help to orient the enquiry at the outset. When faced with an ineffable truth, the philosopher has a limited number of options. The first is simply to keep silent. This is the solution of Cratylus, who 'finally decided that speech was not needful, but just moved his finger'," immortalised in Plato's dialogue where the claims of language as a tool for the transmission of truth are subjected to scrutiny. Plato evidently rejected the Cratylan solution, and we know of no Platonist thinkers who

followed the lead of Cratylus on this matter, abandoning verbal discourse. The Cratylan distrust of language, however, did not die with its eponymous proponent, and it was especially prominent in the sceptical Academy which the Platonists were concerned with refuting. The Platonists, by contrast, while agreeing that language is an inferior tool for the transmission of truth (and even appropriating sceptical arguments with a view to demonstrating this), defuse the basic problem of language by positing direct modes of knowledge which bypass words and verbally conditioned thinking altogether, modes of knowing which are themselves in a sense 'silent'.

While the literal silence of Cratylus was rejected by the Platonists, the evocation of the refusal to speak became a powerful cultural gesture in the first centuries CE, appearing in the context of the mysteries philosophically reconceived or of the tropes of Pythagorean initiation and practice, and more generally as a mark of the Platonist sage, whose control of higher knowledge and maintenance of it as the province of an elite philosopher-class was a defining characteristic. Examples survive of 'silent philosopher' stories from late antiquity which shed an interesting light on this image of the 'serious philosopher' or *spoudaios*, a kind of gnomological biographic writing wherein the philosophic protagonist, be it Apollonius of Tyana or 'Secundus, the Silent Philosopher', enters into an actual state of verbal silence. But it is a decidedly non-Cratylan silence which emerges from this literature, silence based in the signification (*semeiosis*) of a higher truth rather than the mere *aporia* inherent in the nature of language; a positive, rather than a negative silence. Philostratus attributes a kind of discursive silence to the ancient Pythagoreans in his *Life of Apollonius*: they understood that 'to keep silence is also to speak'.

Aristotle, in the section of the *Metaphysics* cited above, goes on to mention Cratylus' critique of Heraclitus on the possibility of stepping in the same river twice (fr. 41 Bywater); Cratylus counters that to do so even once is an impossibility (11. 13-15). While this critique may be conceived of as having been delivered in Cratylus' early, still vocal days, as presented by Aristotle it constitutes an early example of what becomes, in the later history of

philosophy, a surprisingly common paradox: that of the silent philosopher who delivers sententiae.

### Negative Discourse

A second philosophical option is to restrict discourse to the purely negative; able only to say what the transcendent truth is not, late antique philosophic and religious writers developed sophisticated negative vocabularies and techniques for outlining (insofar as they deemed it possible) the absence of what they wished to designate. This is the basic dynamic of 'apophatic' language. Full apophasis goes a step further than simple negativity by incorporating paradox and self-negation into discourse in order to heighten the ability of writing to convey the radical indeterminacy of the non-subject of discourse, be it the Plotinian One, the nature of emptiness in Zen tracts, or the radical alterity of the deus absconditus in many of the theistic currents arising in the first centuries CE.

Plotinus tells us in Treatise 39, for instance, that the One is the origin of all noble and majestic things, and in another way not their origin (VI.8.8.8-9); that it is wholly unrelated to anything (13-14) and yet related to everything as the principle of all (9.6 et passim); that it cannot even be described with the verb 'to be', but that this and all other predications must be stripped away from it (8.15). It is at this second level of 'silence' that we begin to see the outlines of the contradiction created by the Platonist rejection of Cratylus alongside a strong concept of the ineffable: the One for Plotinus is completely unsayable (and indeed even the 'lower' hypostases of the Plotinian universe are 'very difficult to say'), but the task of discourse requires that the philosopher continually make the attempt. While this attempt is never successful in the task of expressing the ineffable, it is by no means seen as vain discourse; it is part of an active philosophic process which 'drives' the Plotinian seeker toward the ineffable One.

Plotinus makes complex use of many different types of apophatic and negative language, and part of what follows will consist in a detailed analysis of how, exactly, he employs different types of negation as part of his philosophic pedagogy. Sometimes Plotinus simply recognises that analogical or equivocal use of normal language is

inadequate but not false in discussing the One, and that, since it cannot be named, 'One' is a satisfactory and normal way of speaking of it. More characteristically, however, he tends to emphasise precisely the tensions inherent in such an unsatisfactory arrangement; the 'One' and 'Good' are both false appellations.

It will be argued that one of the key differences between Plotinus and his Middle Platonist and Neopythagorean predecessors is that Plotinus seems, based on the extant evidence, to have taken most seriously the task of unsaying the ineffable; he is committed to the internal logic of transcendence and his writing grapples with it in a uniquely sustained way. At the same time, apophasis — simple negation or the negation of negation — does not account fully for what Plotinus is doing in his discourse of the One, as he himself recognises, Plotinus maintains in several places in the *Enneads* that apophatic negations themselves remain at the level of *logismos* or *dianoia*, the level of human thought from which all true knowledge of the One is excluded by its nature. Apophasis can point out the need for the aspiring philosopher to transcend discursive thought and outline the edges of the discursive thought-world, but it cannot itself cross over into that which lies beyond.

### Plotinian Poetics of Transcendence

This book argues that Plotinus is doing something more complex with his philosophic writing than either simple silence or simple negativity will allow. It argues that there is a third philosophic option which incorporates but goes beyond both the silence of Cratylus and the negative discourse of the theologians. Strong claims will be made for Plotinian poetics as an intrinsic and powerful element in Plotinian philosophy, and the discussion will attempt to elucidate the way in which Plotinus' use of written silence is in fact intended as a practical, performative philosophic method in his pedagogic writing.

What is meant by 'poetics' here is an approach to literary creation which emphasises the performative power of text; in this case, the ability of written philosophy to change its reader. One of the assumptions of the present study is that philosophical content cannot be stripped of its

literary context, and one of its aims is to show how the literary character of Plotinus' philosophy is an integral part of the account which Plotinus gives and is essential to understanding that account fully. 'Poetics' is thus to be understood as referring not to the narrow genre of writing poetry, but to any theory and practice of writing qua writing which takes into account the status of writing itself: its epistemological possibilities including truth-claims, its ability or otherwise to evoke things-in-themselves, and of course, taken I in a Late Platonist context, its ontological claims. On the philosophic level, then, a primary aim of this work is an analysis of Plotinian writing in context.

More specifically, a certain speech-act is being investigated, namely the positing of a truth and the simultaneous denial that it may, or can, be spoken of. This simple dialectical device, the revealing of a hiding or the hiding of a revealing, lies at the heart of a complex philosophic topos, elements of which developed in the first centuries CE both among Platonist and Neopythagorean philosophers and among more demotic Platonising religious movements, referred to in what follows as Platonist 'philosophic silence'.

The growth of this topos will be traced in the development of three interrelated trends: on the conceptual level, in the rise of the transcendent absolute and of a conception of certain aspects of reality which are truly ineffable; on the social level, in the changing face of Platonist elitism transformed by the new challenges of late antique ideological struggles for control of the truth; and on the literary or rhetorical level, in the Platonists' new methods of reading Plato and of constructing a broader wisdom tradition within the cultures of the past wherein the absolute truth is contained and transmitted by a specially sanctioned, or even divinely ordained, chain of transmission, to be accessed only by the philosophic elite. Having established a historical model for these developments within philosophy, this book will investigate Plotinus' place within these traditions of written silence. It will outline his poetics of unsaying in a way that is both historically contextualised and which allows us access, as readers of the *Enneads*, to a greater understanding of what Plotinus was doing when he employed techniques of secrecy and

silence in his pursuit of literary access to true knowledge about reality.

## Modes of Reading and Writing Philosophical Silence

To begin by illustrating some of the dynamics of these literary techniques, we may pose a preliminary question to an example of *Enneadic* text, a quotation from the early Plotinian Treatise 9, *On the Good or the One*. This treatise is a sustained discussion of the highest level of hyper-ontology in Plotinus' world-view, the *One* or *Good*, and of the soul's means of access to this hypostasis, and shows the degree to which Plotinus' discourse is already immersed in the methods of philosophic silence from quite early on in his career as a writer. A single sentence will serve as a condensed example of some of the themes and methodologies which Plotinus uses in unsaying the truth and revealing its hiding. This passage comes near the end of the treatise; having discussed from several perspectives the ways in which the *One* is unnameable, indescribable by normal predicates and unapproachable by normal cognitive means, Plotinus tells his reader:

This is the intention of the command given in the mysteries here below not to disclose to the uninitiated; since the *Good* is not disclosable, it prohibits the declaration of the divine to another who has not also himself had the good fortune to see.

## Reading the Truth Hidden in Tradition

As has been noted, Plotinus' philosophical discussions of the *One* and of the soul's relation to the *One* are usually approached through Philosophical analysis, and it is worthwhile by way of contrast to begin by looking at the way Plotinus is using culture in this text. Plotinus reads the ancient injunction to silence associated with 'the mysteries here below', an injunction to secrecy in the interests of cultic exclusivity as concealing a philosophical doctrine of ineffability. We may note, firstly, that Plotinus is applying a method of philosophic reading to a cultural institution which is itself extra-textual; such appropriation of religion in the service of philosophy is an important dynamic in Platonist thought explored. We note further that this 'reading' of the mysteries is itself hidden from the

'uninitiated' — that is, from anyone untrained in the particular hermeneutic of Platonist exegesis which discovers (or constructs) the hidden meaning. A second hermeneutic level of secrecy is thus layered below the first, manifest one, attributing to the true philosophy which is able to discover such hidden meanings the status of initiation and the privileged knowledge of the mystês.

This reading of tradition is part of a larger programme which Plotinus embraces, and in some respects pushes forward, of re-reading not only Plato, 'Pythagoras' and Aristotle through late antique eyes, but also Hellenic religion, Homer and other texts and traditions of the Hellenic past, constructing from these materials a perennial tradition with claims to absolute authority and privileged access to the truth. Plotinus' wellknown claim to be merely an expounder of ancient wisdom rather than an original thinker amounts to the location of a type of absolute philosophical authority in a non-existent, or silent, textual tradition, but one which is paradoxically subjected to the hermeneutic rigours of Late Platonist exegesis. This process in Plotinus embraces re-reading of the ancient mysteries as ageless philosophical wisdom, as seen above, as well as allegorical interpretation of traditional myths, and of Homer and other poets,

as repositories of inspired but hidden truths of theology, and, most interestingly, the reading of Plato and other philosophers as though they too were writing with a hidden subtext in precisely the same way. The following discussion will bring out a technical hermeneutic vocabulary for reading the unwritten tradition both within and outside the canonical texts of Platonist philosophy. It will also problematise to some degree the easy identification of Plotinus as a 'Neoplatonist', or even a self-styled 'Platonist', arguing that Plotinus defined himself simply as a 'right philosopher', an interpreter of a chain of perennial wisdom of which Plato constituted a single link.

### Hiding the Secret, Revealing the Hiding

It is characteristic of the discourse of secrecy and revealing employed in this kind of exegesis of the ancient mysteries that, considered logically, it contains an inherent self-contradiction: Plotinus here

betrays the 'intention of the command given in the mysteries' even as he reveals its true meaning. In declaring the true nature of the injunction to silence of the mysteries, Plotinus ought surely to be profaning them.

Moreover, Plotinus is revealing the mysteries in a written text, a Platonic *bête noire* when the arcana of philosophy are under discussion; the traditional Platonic privileging of orality over the written word in philosophical teaching constitutes a paradoxical dynamic underlying all Plotinian writing which seeks to uncover the absolute truths of philosophy.

The theme of 'the secret revealed' takes many forms in Platonist writing, and will appear again and again in the discussion that follows. At the same time, the 'revelation' is often simultaneously a hiding: Plotinus can reveal the true meaning of the injunction, but he is ultimately prevented from disobeying the injunction by the essential incommunicability of the nature of the Good.

### The Self-Hiding Secret

In this sense, the secret of the mystery is a self-hiding secret, and Plotinus can only point to the fact of this hiding, not to the hidden itself. He is discussing 'the mysteries self-defended, the mysteries that can not be revealed. Fools can only profane them. The dull can neither penetrate the secretum or divulge it to others. The parallel here between the inaccessibility of the Good, its self-hiding nature which is only accessible to the serious philosopher if at all and the inaccessible nature of the true meaning of the mystery injunction, also to be unearthed only by the adept, is striking. I discuss ways in which the 'self-hiding' secret of the transcendent added a new dimension to philosophic silence not to be found before the second century CE, and which we see seriously explored for the first time in Plotinus works. The juxtaposition of the rhetoric of hiding and the revelation of the secret is also of note; we will find again and again in our history of Platonist philosophic silence the revelation of a secret not indeed hidden but actually flagged by the rhetorics of secrecy and silence.

### Secrecy as Silence, Silence as Secrecy

Further consideration of the passage reveals an exegetical sleight of hand: the traditional law of

non-disclosure of the mysteries is smoothly transferred to an indication of the philosophical truth of a Plotinian claim, viz. the ineffability of the Good. In other words, the prohibition of disclosure becomes the impossibility of disclosure, secrecy becoming silence; again, Plotinus is telling a secret while simultaneously withdrawing it.

We find in this passage an interplay of two modes of what might be called written silence: writing the prohibition of disclosure and writing the impossibility of disclosure. This interplay, which Plotinus and later Platonists employ extensively, is fostered by ambiguities in the Greek vocabulary of silence itself: the mysteries were traditionally, 'unsayable', i.e., 'not to be spoken of', words which in the course of time and with the rise of the idea of the ineffable in post-Hellenistic philosophy and religion, came more and more to signify 'unsayable' in an absolute sense — that is, 'impossible to reveal'. As I argue, however, these terms never lost their original signification, and always suggested secrecy as well as ineffability. A key aspect of philosophic silence is thus the interplay, or interference, between the concepts of secrecy and silence.

### The Indeterminacy of Ineffability and Philosophic Register

As will be discussed, there are many loci in Plotinus and his Middle Platonist predecessors where neither meaning can be exclusively accurate; the term 'unsayable' hovers between the two meanings, and signifies neither in a full or absolute sense. Apophatic language is characterised by a tension between predication and its impossibility brought about, in its simplest form, through an immediate and systematic gainsaying of any predicative statement. The rhetorical alternation and interference between the two modes of 'cannot speak' and 'must not speak' result in further, deeper layers of indeterminacy in Plotinian language. Plotinus incorporates an indeterminacy of 'register' into his treatment of the ineffable, blending the concerns of philosophy with those of religion while refusing ever to set foot firmly on either side of the fence. Similarly, he sometimes switches register from the dispassionate discussion of concepts to the first-person language of the personal encounter

with higher metaphysical entities, often with a disconcerting abruptness which leaves the boundaries between the two modes of discourse blurred, and the nature of the ineffable reality under discussion further removed from any concrete concept which the reader might form.

Attempts at translation serve to illustrate how difficult it is to maintain this suspension of register in interpretation. Simply by capitalising 'the Good', we risk evoking a theistic mindset foreign to, or at least irreducibly uncertain in, the original text (while the alternative, leaving terms such as 'one' or 'good' uncapitalised, puts unjustified strain on readers). Plotinus tells us that 'the good is not disclosable', but 'the Good' is already disclosing something of the translator's interpretative approach, and adding an element of determinacy which the author strives to avoid. It should be understood that the capitalisation of 'One' and 'Good' in the present work are for ease of reading, and the reader should strive to attribute no personal or theistic characteristics to Plotinus' first principle.

### The Paradox of Writing the Ineffable

A final seeming contradiction may be extracted from our passage, one which returns our reading to the initial question which sparked this inquiry: the status of the Enneads themselves as written works. The impossibility of disclosure of the Good through language to anyone who has not already seen it himself is a challenge to the very enterprise of philosophic writing. It would seem that writing about the One or Good cannot, according to Plotinus, serve as an exposition of its nature, nor can it be of use to such as 'have seen', whose knowledge will be, by definition, perfect and self-confirming. It is left to the reader to determine why Plotinus undertakes such a project at all. This problem has largely been ignored in interpretation; after all, Plotinus clearly felt it worthwhile to write his treatises, and who are we to take him to task for this? Nevertheless, the question remains a cogent and significant one, and one which we sometimes see Plotinus pondering in the Enneads themselves.

## Outline of the Present Work

The foregoing discussion has highlighted some of the ways in which philosophical culture, rather than philosophy simpliciter, influenced the ways in which Plotinus wrote about the ineffable. Plotinus was not writing in a cultural vacuum: there was a tradition of *silentium philosophorum* in which he both participated and took a defining role, and which determined part of what it was to philosophise rightly in his day and time. Part of this book will establish the theoretical parameters of philosophic silence and draw up a historical model of its development up to Plotinus' time. The book as a whole will contextualise the *Enneads* in terms of this tradition. Chapter i begins by outlining the interpretative difficulties which the recondite nature of the subject presents.

The following three chapters conduct a basic historical investigation of the rise of elements of philosophic silence. Chapter Two examines the surviving pre-Classical and Classical sources which were later developed by Platonists into a tradition of esoteric philosophy, and examines the figure of the 'silent philosopher' as he appears in late antique accounts. Chapter 3 examines the development in the first centuries CE of the ideas of tradition and of esoteric transmission which informed the writings of such thinkers as Alcinous, Numenius, Celsus, Maximus of Tyre and Plutarch. It charts the development of concepts of a *philosophia perennis* among Platonists, a simultaneously culturally embedded and transcendent truth which serves, in later Platonism, as the historical location of the hidden, ineffable truth of philosophy, and the concurrent development of a Platonist hermeneutic which read Plato as the propounder of a hidden, dogmatic message. Chapter 4 turns to Plotinus, showing the development of these same 'traditional' materials in the *Enneads*. Not surprisingly, it emerges that Plotinus, like all philosophers, was writing within a tradition and, like all great philosophers, bending the tradition's contours and lexicon toward a set of needs which were his own.

In Part II the discussion turns to the theoretical side of the philosophy of transcendence. Chapter 5 examines the rise of the transcendent absolute in

Middle Platonism, concentrating on theories of the limits of discourse and of esoteric and other indirect modes of expression as envisioned by these philosophers. This chapter considers Middle Platonism as a broad cultural movement incorporating the Platonising religious movements of the first centuries CE as well as philosophy proper (and several gradations between these two, somewhat artificial, extremes), and examines the concurrent rise of strong tropes of transcendence, silence and ineffability in these movements. Chapter 6 again turns to Plotinus, analysing his stance on the problems of transcendence, which he treats with a striking depth and rigour that draws on both his philosophical and religious predecessors. This chapter will use the preceding discussions to cast light on the metaphysical situation of Plotinian discourse, particularly the status of *nous* and *noêsis* as regards truth-claims, and the anthropology which situates the human agent within the Plotinian world. Taken together, Chapters 5 and 6 describe the conceptual space within which Plotinus is writing and address the problems of the nature of writing, both for the writer and for the reader as philosophical agents, the ability of discursive thought to attain to and transmit true knowledge and the theoretical potential for philosophic writing to surpass the limits of the discursive.

Chapter 7 is a detailed analysis of Plotinus' strategies of writing with regard to the limits of discourse, conducting a close reading of an exemplary passage and setting it in dialogue with other passages from the *Enneads*. It begins with investigations of Plotinian techniques of *aphairesis* and *apophasis*, and shows, through case studies from the *Enneads*, the ways in which these techniques, with their function of 'stripping away' false ideas (indeed, all ideas) about reality and of unsaying the partially true statements of ontology (that is, all statements), are used as tools of written philosophy. After the first section delineating the self-imposed limits of discourse in Plotinus, the second investigates the ways in which Plotinus transcends (or transgresses against) these limits in his writing. A third section makes some proposals as to how Plotinus is using the unsaid and unsayable in his work as a whole in the service of his philosophy

of transcendence, while also considering the social aspects of his philosophic silence.

Finally, the Conclusion draws together the cultural and social themes of Part I with the theoretical discussions of Part II, delineating a model of philosophic silence in Plotinus which incorporates both aspects of philosophy in a single discursive topos. Several appendices expand on points of interest which lie outside the main arguments of this book. Footnotes throughout direct the reader to these essays, which are designed to be helpful and enriching, rather than essential, to the main text.  
<>

[Virtue and Law in Plato and Beyond](#) by Julia Annas [Oxford University Press, 9780198755746]

Julia Annas presents a study of Plato's account of the relation of virtue to law: how it developed from the Republic to the Laws, and how his ideas were taken up by Cicero and by Philo of Alexandria. Annas shows that, rather than rejecting the approach to an ideal society in the Republic (as generally thought), Plato is in both dialogues concerned with the relation of virtue to law, and obedience to law, and presents, in the Laws, a more careful and sophisticated account of that relation. His approach in the Laws differs from his earlier one, because he now tries to build from the political cultures of actual societies (and their histories) instead of producing a theoretical thought-experiment. Plato develops an original project in which obedience to law is linked with education to promote understanding of the laws and of the virtues which obedience to them promote. Annas also explores how this project appeals independently to the very different later writers Cicero and Philo of Alexandria.

Contents  
Introduction  
Law in the Republic  
Changing from Within: Plato's New Approach in the Laws  
Virtue in a Framework of Law  
Law and the Divine  
Citizen Virtue  
Cicero on Natural Law and Ideal Laws  
Philo on Virtue and the Laws of Moses  
Bringing Things Together  
Bibliography

## Index

### Excerpt:

In this book I aim to do two things. I explore a strand in Plato's Laws, a work which after much neglect is now the object of a growing and very interesting body of work. And I also aim to follow up two authors influenced by this Platonic strand, an under-studied way of thinking about virtue, law, and their relationship. The book is not a general study of the Laws, which would be a far larger undertaking.

It has always been noticed that Plato in many dialogues, and particularly the Republic, has a great deal to say about virtue. He has something to say about law, too, in the Crito and Statesman. In the Laws he explicitly turns to the topic of law and spends a great part of the work setting up a model law code for a projected city. It is in the Laws that we find the issue of the relation of virtue to law raised and given an extensive answer; this is something that the Crito and Statesman do not develop.

There is clearly a noticeable contrast between the Republic and the Laws, one often put broadly as follows. In the Republic the aim of the ideal state is to make all the citizens happy, which they are to do by developing the virtues appropriate to their ways of life. The rulers or 'guardians' are qualified to rule the others by virtue of their long and demanding training; this will produce virtuous and expert rulers, who manage the society in the way that expert doctors manage medical treatment or expert steersmen manage boats. Their training in virtue brings understanding of what is best for all the citizens and the society as a whole, which they impose on the others to produce virtue and happiness for all. In Magnesia, the ideal projected city of the Laws, on the other hand, the rulers are officials; they manage society in a more ordinary and familiar way, by enforcing the laws. In Magnesia the law code organizes every aspect of life, from (and before) birth to death, and this is imposed on all, rulers and ruled alike, to be strictly obeyed. Magnesians are to be made virtuous, and so happy, by obedience to law rather than to virtuous rulers.

There is clearly something right in this contrast, but without further examination it can be taken too hastily as the claim that Plato's focus has moved from virtue as what renders citizens happy to obedience to law as what does so. We go, apparently, from 'the "guardian" unfettered by law; to the "guardian of the law" who is its "servant" and even its "slave"', a move which 'cleaves Plato's political theory into two distinct halves', of which the first has been found far more philosophically interesting than the latter.

Sometimes Plato's stress on obedience to law in *Magnesia* has been attributed to increasing pessimism about human nature as he grew older. The *Laws* was Plato's last work, and it was left unfinished when he died at the age of 81; he may of course have been working on it for some time along with other dialogues, but it certainly seems to belong to his later years. We have no basis, however, to infer that old age made Plato pessimistic, or, even if we had independent evidence that it did, that his writing expressed it. In fact I shall be arguing that the *Laws* presents us with a remarkably fresh and original approach to social and political issues, and that to treat it as the product of a crabby and depressive old age is to miss most of what is interesting about it.

As I show in Chapter 2, there is a great deal about law in the *Republic*, far more than we tend to assume. It is not the case that the rulers of the ideal city, *Kallipolis*, rule without laws, or with a loose relation to laws. Law is very prominent in *Kallipolis*, so it is interesting that law is not usually prominent in the way we think about it. In the chapter I discuss the relation in *Kallipolis* of law and virtue, especially the development of the rulers' virtuous lives. Law is by no means a new theme in the *Laws*, and we shall see that when it comes to the relation of virtue and law the two dialogues are drawing on fairly similar material. There is certainly a marked contrast between *Republic* and *Laws*, but the contrast does not lie in the *Republic*'s defending the rule of virtue while the *Laws* defends the rule of law. The difference lies rather in the relationship in the two dialogues between virtue and law. In the chapters on law in the *Republic* and the *Laws* (Chapters 2-4) I explore what this is, and fill out the ways in which the later dialogue is making a subtler

and more interesting claim about the role of law than it is often taken to contain.

In Chapter 3 I lay out Plato's new approach to considering a projected ideal society. It has often been noticed that the *Laws*' approach is much closer to experience and history than that of the *Republic*, in which great efforts are made to turn the seeker for virtue away from taking seriously what experience tells us about the world, and to get her to rely instead on her powers of thinking and the world of thought thus revealed. It is striking that in the third book of the *Laws* we find that in seeking the best society we find it useful to look at actual societies and the way that they have developed. But Plato's turn to learning from experience goes deeper than this. In Chapter 3 I will show that Plato's ideal society is no longer conceived purely theoretically. Rather, he is trying to produce a combination of two kinds of existing society which are normally taken to be opposites: those of a type represented by Sparta and those of a type represented by Athens. The laws of *Magnesia* are firmly rooted in a communal culture of the Spartan kind, with a compulsory common education designed to produce citizens who think in terms primarily of the common good rather than the good of themselves and their own families. But much of the law code introduces institutions of an Athenian type, designed to produce citizens-who are active participants in the governing of their society. As we shall see, Plato's idea of participation in government is not just that of his contemporary Athens; nor is his idea of communal culture just that of his contemporary Sparta. He is trying rather to produce something new by taking over what he sees as the best in each type of government, while blending it with what is normally seen as its opposite, the product being what he hopes is an idealized unified combination with the good points of each and the bad points of neither.

This is a grandly ambitious claim, as grand as any other in Plato, not a feeble retreat from theorizing. How successful it is, is a question that can't be posed until we have a properly full understanding of it. Most relevant to my purpose is the point that Plato's new approach requires him to deal with an issue which he did not feel the need to face in the *Republic*, namely, what is the place of obedience to



law in the development of virtue. In the Republic this question goes unasked, and therefore unanswered; in the Laws it is faced and answered by a new approach to the citizen's attitude to law. In the Laws, I argue in Chapter 4, Plato now insists that education for virtue on the part of the citizens requires them to learn explicitly, and internalize, obedience to the city's laws. Care is needed in establishing precisely what this involves, since obviously any society requires its citizens to see themselves as law-abiding, and to have some degree of awareness of this. What distinguishes the approach of the Laws is, to put it broadly, the specific and explicit role of conscious commitment to strict and unquestioning obedience to the laws, accompanied by commitment to understanding them in the process of acquiring the virtues. This is something absent both from the Republic and from Aristotle's ideal state in the Politics, though both of them require the development of citizen virtue to include awareness that the city's laws are to be obeyed. What is sometimes called, in modern terms, the virtue of law-abidance is built into the citizens' education in the Laws in a way not to be found in the more famous works that come before and after it. It is this distinctive position of the Laws which I focus on, one I think is interesting in itself, as well as for its position in ancient political thinking, one without the resonance or later fame of Republic or Politics, but finding a place within two later traditions utterly different from the world of the classical Greek polis.

Plato also breaks new ground in giving a metaphysical background to the laws of Magnesia, as the ideal city of the Laws is to be called. This is the concern of Chapter 5. Law is not, he thinks, to be understood merely as the product of people in cities devising solutions to the problems of living together. Such laws have no more authority than the political compromises which produced them. Plato's ambitious alternative is that law in our society is a part of the working of reason in the cosmos, and in Book 10 of the Laws he develops a cosmology which fills out this idea. Law is the objective force of reason in the cosmos, which we can appreciate both at the cosmic level in the regularities of the heavenly bodies' movements, and also in ourselves as members of communities.

Law is what produces order and regularity, and in identifying with our reason, the aspect of us that appreciates the cosmic force of law, we are doing our part to keep ourselves, and hence from our perspective the cosmos, orderly. Since cosmic reason turns out to be what the nature of god is, when we understand god, law is also divine, and indeed in one passage Plato comes near to calling Magnesia a theocracy. Given the importance to Magnesia's citizens of having the right attitude to the laws, this cosmic story has wide implications for the role in citizens' life of religion, not just in the sense of partaking in community rituals but of having the right beliefs about God, and this in turn has impact on the kind of civic virtues that are to be developed. This is the point at which Plato departs furthest from the mainstream of ancient political thinking about religion, but was found more resonant in the ancient Jewish and Christian traditions. In Chapter 6 I follow up one implication of the relation of virtue to law, namely that in Magnesia the dominance of virtue results in a reordering of values and priorities in people's lives, and thus a more different way of life than might have been suspected at first.

In Chapter 7 I start with different responses to the Laws. The ideal city in Books 7 and 8 of Aristotle's Politics has many affinities with the Laws and it seems clear that there was influence between the Laws and these two books. But the work turns out to have more in common with the Republic than with the Laws as concerns the issue foregrounded here, that of the relationship of law and virtue. There is, however, a real affinity between ideas at the end of the Laws and the Stoic idea of natural law; the Stoic idea can be seen as a comprehensible development of ideas about law and cosmic reason in the Laws (and also the Timaeus). There are some important changes. The most important, and the most striking, is that for the Stoics natural law, to be identified with the force of cosmic reason, is universal, applying to everyone in the cosmos, an idea that goes far beyond Plato's more limited claim that reason in the cosmos underwrites the laws of a model Greek polis. The Stoics also identify law in this sense with the reason of the ideal virtuous person or 'sage'. This latter raises the question of the relative importance to law in this

sense of normativity on the one hand—its being reason which, although it functions frictionlessly in the virtuous person, presents itself to us in the form of a command—with lawlike form on the other, actual laws being typically presented in general terms.

Cicero in his *On the Laws* (*De Legibus*) puts forward an account of an ideal law code with markedly Platonic features, and his explicit literary references to Plato's *Laws* are not merely decorative. Cicero, who knows the *Laws* well, is taking over Platonic ideas as developed and nuanced by the Stoics, and follows them in two ways. One is the Stoic direction of taking the law we find in nature to apply to all humans. The important distinction is not between types of people but between the wise and virtuous, whose thinking is aligned with natural law, and the rest of us, whose thinking is not; being unresponsive to it we experience it as demanding obedience from us. The other new feature in Cicero is that he takes universal natural law to be embodied, mostly, in existing Roman law, modified at parts. This last point has raised objection and even ridicule, and apart from that it certainly seems to clash with the claim about universality. Cicero's position, however, turns out to be defensible and interesting, once we take account of reasonable interpretations of natural law, and in particular of how Cicero is developing what he sees as a Platonic version of it. Looking at Cicero's work in the light of its Platonic forebear brings into focus some points which enable us not only to see it more sympathetically but to appreciate Cicero's interesting choice of tradition in political thinking.

In Chapter 8 I will look briefly at the works of Philo of Alexandria on the Ten Commandments and the Special Laws. Philo occupies a different position in regard to Plato from Cicero; he sees him not as a philosophical forebear but as a pagan, in a different tradition, whose writings can nevertheless be put to useful work in Philo's overall task of commenting on the Torah. Still, he clearly knows Plato's *Laws* well, and in important ways shows the influence of Plato's ideas in that work about virtue and law. Like Cicero, Philo both claims universality for the law which he sees as based in nature, and identifies it with a particular law code, in his case

Mosaic law. Again, this is not a weakness of his position but a strength, once we appreciate the roles in Philo of virtue in relation to law. Unlike Cicero's, Philo's development of Platonic ideas about virtue and law leads to a considerable redefinition of the virtues to be developed in a good society, a project in which he follows Plato more than he does Cicero.

Chapter 9 sums up the main strands of the discussion. Plato's distinctive position about virtue and law in the *Laws* does not give rise to a historically continuous tradition. Cicero is familiar with Plato, and so is Philo, but there is no reason to think that Philo knew of, or was interested in, Cicero's unfinished work. Rather, what is of interest is the way in which ideas in Plato's *Laws* could find resonance in two very different later contexts.

This approach in ancient political thinking is nowadays not very familiar to us, because of the more mainstream traditions of both influence and more recently scholarship on the Republic and Politics. Nor is it likely ever to challenge the attention which those theories get. It is, though, worthy of interest and study in its own right. One reason for this is that it illuminates something often assumed to be absent from ancient political thinking—namely the relation of political organization to religion. Religion is often taken to have only indirect relevance to ancient political thought. Ancient religion occupied a very different place in society and culture from the place it has today, mostly because contemporary forms of religion place far more weight both on creeds and belief, and on religion as unifying communities of believers, while ancient religion is better understood in terms of practices and rituals, unifying communities of culture. (Although a brief statement of this contrast inevitably oversimplifies it, it is basically correct.) However, Plato in the *Laws* takes up a position about religion which is unusual for his time and place, one which failed to resonate with Aristotle and mainstream ancient political thought, but interested both Cicero and Philo, in ways reflecting the differences in their culture and in their own attitudes to religion. Philo had great influence on some early Christian thinkers, notably Clement of Alexandria, but I will not here follow Platonic influence further into this tradition.

There are two issues which I will leave aside in this work. One is the fascinating recent development of work on law and virtue in philosophical and legal studies. I have read some of this literature and found much of interest in it, but I have consciously refrained from trying to apply it to the ancient texts. Rather, I think that the ancient texts have to be interpreted in their own contexts in order to bring into focus what is of most interest in them to us, and it is only then that we can reasonably take them as partners in contemporary debate.

The other issue is that of the so-called 'development of Plato's thought'. I don't engage in any debates about the development, or not, of Plato's overall thinking between *Republic* and *Laws*. I take it as obvious that *Laws* is the later dialogue, but I also take it that we are likely to gain obscurity rather than clarity from trying to find an arc of development of Plato's overall political thinking that starts with the one work and ends with the other. My own position is that Plato consistently, throughout his intellectual life, held to a very general thesis about political and social life, namely that the only good society, one worth living in, is one which has the unified overall aim of making its citizens happy, and that this can be achieved only by having them educated and formed to develop the virtues and so to live happily. How you think this is best to be achieved can obviously take many forms, and presupposes very different levels of generality on which the achievement of the good society can be envisaged. *Republic* and *Laws* are two ways in which Plato worked out his vision of how the good society can be achieved. Neither is a blueprint for overexcited idealists to go out into the countryside to try to put into practice. Nor is their relationship well described by saying that *Republic* believes in the possibility of philosopher-rulers whereas *Laws* is pessimistic about this. Nor are these the only two ways in which Plato thought about the achievement of the good society; apart from the *Statesman* there is also the Atlantis story in the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, a Utopian narrative with a philosophical purpose.' In general, seeing Plato's works as stations on a line of overall development of his thought is unhelpful. I hope that this study of the

*Laws* will contribute to the growing body of work studying it in its own right.

### Bringing Things Together

By this point the main theme of the book is, I hope, clear. We tend to accept a story about the relation of Plato's *Republic* to his *Laws* which, stated generally, goes like this: Plato first thought that virtue (involving a high notion of knowledge) gave the right to rule, and in his later work moved to thinking that citizens should all be ruled by the law in the absence of suitably virtuous people. As so stated this story is clearly right, but we tend to come to it with certain assumptions moving us to interpret it in terms of stronger contrasts, which I have argued are false. That virtuous people should be the rulers in no way implies that they rule without laws, or that laws are for them mere suggestions which they can overrule. Kallipolis is a city of laws, and the citizens, especially the rulers, are to be brought up to obey them. When in Magnesia citizens are brought up to obey the laws and to be aware of their role in their education, this in no way implies that Plato has given up on the idea that they should become virtuous, or that he thinks that reliably obeying laws is all there is to virtue. When these points are taken seriously, it becomes harder to see the *Laws* as Plato giving up on the project of creating the ideally virtuous and so happy city, the only kind of city he thinks worth reflecting about. Magnesia is a different attempt to do the same thing that Kallipolis does: sketch a city in which the citizens are to be educated to be virtuous, and so to live happily. Lowering the level of intellectual attainment, and hence of virtue, that any citizen is to reach enables Plato to extend the attainment of virtue to the entire citizen body. (I have not in this book discussed the resulting problem, which Plato shares with the Aristotle of *Politics* 7 and 8, that this more egalitarian attitude to the relations of citizens among themselves goes with an exclusionary attitude to foreigners, slaves, and, in Aristotle, many workers, and hence to an unaccounted exploitation of them.)

Virtue and its importance are not weakened in the *Laws*; I have argued that Plato is trying a new and innovative way of having citizens be educated to be virtuous, and so live happily, and that this

affects his whole approach to the law code and its role. Magnesia is to have virtue as the aim of its laws and institutions, and Plato sets the project in the context of Cretan society, which is like Sparta in having laws and customs whose aim is openly that of producing virtue in the citizens, and so gives a model of universal public education and a citizenry respectful of the laws which organize their lives. But he needs to look elsewhere to find the kind of institutions which produce citizens who will aim at virtue as a whole, not merely courage, and he looks to Athens; the Athenian introduces laws and practices which will produce citizens who actively participate in governing themselves, and who expect to hold their officials to account; Magnesia is to have a citizen body which is ready to be ruled and to rule. Magnesians will not, like Athenians, expect law making to be an ongoing citizen occupation; they will obey the law as a fixed system. But they will not, like Spartans and Cretans, have too much deference to authority, and so remain satisfied with institutions which give some individuals too much power.

Plato's attempt to integrate aspects of Athenian and Spartan culture is based on profound reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of each, and the need to craft institutions which will make the blend not only politically excellent but stable. The result is arguably as bold a piece of political philosophizing as the creation of Kallipolis, if less dramatic. (The *Laws* notoriously lacks the exciting metaphysics and epistemology of the *Republic*, as well as being stylistically less accessible.) Plato's new methodology, drawing out from members of conservative societies their agreement with extensions and enlargements of their political views, does not signal a collapse of confidence in philosophical reasoning. The philosophical thinking underlies the whole production of *Magnesia*, from the cautious beginning to the development of the laws to the sketch of the cosmic view that underlies the Athenian's conception of law. The philosophical structure is there; it is not so obvious as in the *Republic* because it is not developed in conversations between the interlocutors—even in Book 10 the Athenian does not need them to develop the view he puts forward.

It tends to be easier to see how we can go wrong in interpreting the *Laws* than to come to a just understanding of it. We are unfamiliar with the idea that genuine virtue could be the result of an education in which obedience to laws is prominent. The two models represented by Athens and by Sparta are parts of history to us, not pressing contemporary representations of good government. We think of law making as an ongoing enterprise, because we are aware of constant changes in a far wider cultural world than that of Plato. We are rightly appalled by some of the harsh punishments in the law code, and by the acceptance of slavery; here we are on the right side of history, and we have to remember the society he lived in. Many features of the work, including the diffuse style, set barriers to the kind of close engagement that the *Republic* has long had. I have tried in this book to show how the *Laws*, in a different way, contains significant ideas in political thinking, and a significant methodology, which are as interesting and worthy of study as those in the *Republic*. Despite recent renewed attention to the *Laws* it is unlikely to match the more exciting earlier dialogue in engagement from students and researchers; but there is much in it which is now rightly getting serious attention.

The *Laws* is occasionally mentioned in ancient discussions, but historically had no practical influence. Cicero and Philo are both independently influenced by the work, and what attracts them is the major point in the *Laws*, that the virtues of citizens who are to live together happily are to be developed through strict adherence to a law code. I have sketched their differing takes on this idea; the influence of Plato is clear even though there is no direct tradition they are both drawing on. They both share the Stoic development of natural law rather than drawing directly on the idea of divine law in *Laws* 10, but I have argued that this is not a rejection of Platonic ideas about law; rather it is a further development of them. The Stoic extension of the ethical reach of natural law to all humans takes both Cicero and Philo beyond the parochial model of the Greek city-state, and gives their projects a different shape. Rather than producing a law code which is to enable citizen virtue, and so happiness (whether purely theoretically or drawing on

experience), they ask how far a given law code embodies natural law, and thus has ethical authority that other systems of law lack. What they retain is the firm idea that inculcating obedience to law is the way to produce virtuous citizens, and that Plato is right to insist that persuasion as well as force is needed to do this effectively. While neither literally takes over the preambles, they take their function to be important, and provide it in differing ways.

Finally, Philo in particular points out the interesting way in which Plato in the Laws foreshadows the idea of a community in which cultural unity is accompanied by, and can be seen by some to be based on, religious unity. Philo is talking to and about the community of the Jewish Second Temple diaspora, and he very stringently sees religious unity as based not merely on ritual observance but on the sharing of basic monotheistic beliefs. Plato is not a monotheist, but we can see here one way in which his thought appealed to ancient Jewish and Christian thinkers, who took it further in terms of a universal community rather than a particular type of Greek city. I do not here discuss more deeply the relation of political to religious thinking in the ancient world, but I take it to be notable that Plato influenced a tradition so different from that of other ancient philosophers who thought about the gods.

If the task of the state is to make people virtuous, and laws and institutions should be shaped to that end, there has to be some relation between following laws and becoming virtuous, and surely, if virtue is to be more than routine, the relation has to be richer than simply reliable rule following. Contemporaries disagree about the project itself and ways in which it could be carried out. In this area the Laws still gives us plenty to think about.

[The Practicing Stoic: A Philosophical User's Manual](#)  
by Ward Farnsworth [David R Godine,  
9781567926118]

The great insights of the Stoics are spread over a wide range of ancient sources. This book brings them all together for the first time. It systematically presents what the various Stoic philosophers said on every important topic, accompanied by an eloquent commentary that is clear and concise. The

result is a set of philosophy lessons for everyone - the most valuable wisdom of ages past made available for our times, and for all time.

## CONTENTS

Preface

CHAPTER ONE Judgment

CHAPTER TWO Externals

CHAPTER THREE Perspective

CHAPTER FOUR Death

CHAPTER FIVE Desire

CHAPTER SIX Wealth and

Pleasure

CHAPTER SEVEN What Others Think

CHAPTER EIGHT Valuation

CHAPTER NINE Emotion

CHAPTER TEN Adversity

CHAPTER ELEVEN Virtue

CHAPTER TWELVE Learning

CHAPTER THIRTEEN Stoicism and Its

Critics

Excerpt: This is a book about human nature and its management. The wisest students of that subject in ancient times, and perhaps of all time, were known as the Stoics. Their recommendations about how to think and live do not resemble the grim lack of feeling we associate with the word "Stoic" in English today. The original Stoics were philosophers and psychologists of the most ingenious kind, and also highly practical; they offered solutions to the problems of everyday life, and advice about how to overcome our irrationalities, that are still relevant and helpful now. The chapters that follow explain the most useful of their teachings in twelve lessons.

That was a brief statement of the book's purpose. The reader who finds it enough can proceed to Chapter 1. For those wanting a fuller account of the rationale for what follows, here is a more complete statement.

1. The body of ideas known as Stoicism contains some of the finest and most durable wisdom of any age. The Stoics were deep students of desire, fear, status, emotion, and much else that bedeviled the human race thousands of years ago and bedevils it still. They were philosophers of a down-to-earth sort, seeking by force of their insights to free ordinary people from their sufferings and illusions. The Stoics had their limitations, of course; they held some beliefs that very few people do anymore. But

in other ways they were far ahead of their times. They said a number of the best things that anyone ever has.

The teachings of the Stoics are as interesting and valuable now as when first written — maybe more so, since the passage of two millennia has confirmed so much of what they said. The idiocies, miseries, and other discouragements of our era tend to seem novel or modern; hearing them described in a classical dialogue reminds us that they are nothing new. This itself was a claim of the Stoics: that the stories and problems of humanity don't change, but just put on new masks. The same can be said for the remedies. The most productive advice anyone offers nowadays, casually or in a bestseller, often amounts to a restatement or rediscovery of something the Stoics said with more economy, intelligence, and wit long ago. The reader does better by going straight to the sages.

2. The Stoicism in this book is a set of ideas developed by philosophers in Ancient Greece and Rome. To repeat what was mentioned at the outset — for it cannot be said enough — Stoicism did not mean for them what the word now means to us. Stoicism usually refers in current English to suffering without complaint. Our subject is something else and more; philosophical Stoics don't do much complaining, but for them that is a small point. (A Stoic would probably be glad to complain if it helped anything.) "Stoic" also is sometimes thought to mean grim, which is likewise inaccurate. A Stoic is more likely to be distinguished by mild humor in the face of things regarded as grim by others. Or some imagine that Stoics seek to remove themselves from the world — that it is a philosophy of retreat into oneself. Again, the opposite is true. Stoics are supposed to involve themselves in public affairs. The result of all this confusion is a minor nuisance for the student of our subject: most people don't know what Stoicism is, but they don't know that they don't know.

Stoicism got its name because Zeno of Citium (c. 334—c. 262 BC), the founder of the school, did his teaching in a public colonnade or porch ("stoa") overlooking the Agora of Athens. Stoicism was known on this account as the Philosophy of the Porch, as opposed to the Philosophy of the Garden

(that of Epicurus), or the Philosophy of the Academy (that of Plato), or the Philosophy of the Lyceum (that of Aristotle), with each name referring to the place where the teachings of the school were imparted. So if "Stoicism" sounds too forbidding because of the word's popular meaning, you could try telling your family that you are studying the philosophy of the porch. They might like that. More probably, readers who take an interest in our subject will also have to get used to explaining that when they refer to Stoicism, they mean the old kind.

3. Many books about the Stoics have been written already. I should say a word about why another one seemed worthwhile, and what this book does that others don't.

Stoicism has come to us largely through the works of three philosophers who lived in the first two centuries AD: Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. Seneca and Marcus Aurelius were Romans; Epictetus was Greek, but he, too, lived and taught for part of his life in Rome. The works they left behind tend to be miscellaneous in character. Often they consist of notes written without much order, or sorted in ways no longer meaningful to most readers. Nor are their writings cross-referenced. As a result, what any one of the Stoics taught about a given subject, let alone what they all said, cannot easily be found in one place. Seneca's comments on a topic might be spread over three letters and an essay; the same issue might be addressed at the start and end of the discourses attributed to Epictetus, or at a few different places in the journals of Marcus Aurelius. This arrangement can have its advantages (sometimes unsystematic is better), but it is inconvenient for the student of Stoic thought who wants to see it as a whole, or to gain a sense of one writer's views, or the views of all of them, on a particular topic.

This book is a response to the state of affairs just set forth. It has three main features. First, it seeks to organize the ideas of the Stoics in a logical manner that might be described as progressive. Foundational principles come first, then their applications. I've tried to put the applications into a sequence that builds naturally, and, where relevant, that follows their growth in complexity. This approach is roughly reflected in the order of the

chapters, in the order of the headings within each chapter, and in the

order of the discussions under each heading. Those who don't care about the progression can roam around at random; the chapters are self-contained, so you don't need to read one to understand the next. But having a framework may still make the relationships between different parts of the philosophy easier to see.

Second, the book aims to draw together the most important points that the different Stoics made about each subject and each division of it. Sometimes they spoke to different aspects of an issue; Seneca addresses one part of it, Epictetus takes another. In other cases the same topic was discussed by all the Stoics. In that event it is interesting to compare what they said and how they said it. The format lets them talk to each other.

Third, this book mostly presents the teachings of the Stoics in their own words — or, more precisely, in the translated words of the writers who stated them best. The introduction that comes after this preface, and then the introductions to each chapter, provide summaries for those who want them, and the first chapter contains more exposition than the others because it is the beginning. But the reader can skip all this with no harm done. Those who prefer restatements of Stoicism have other books to read, including some fine recent entries. The goal of this one is to concisely present what the Stoics themselves said. There is a distinct pleasure to be had, for those with a taste for it, in receiving these lessons from their original sources. An observation about our world that seems sharp and accurate gains a different kind of force when we see it expressed twenty centuries ago. The truth improves with age.

Carving up long works into excerpts, as is done here, necessarily means a sacrifice of context. Isolated sentences from a letter that Seneca sent to Lucilius can't capture the larger purpose for which his point was offered, for example, let alone the full thrust of the letter or the place of it in the series that Seneca wrote. Nuances inevitably are lost. More generally, selecting and editing and arranging the words of different writers can't help but affect the way the reader takes their meaning.

The same is true of the book's organization. It presents Stoicism under a series of headings meant to be intuitive — for us. It is not the organization that any of the Greeks or Romans would have used (in any event, none did).

In short, the choices this book makes about what to include, and in what order, amount to an interpretation of Stoicism. That will be plain enough to anyone familiar with the primary sources. I emphasize the point for the sake of those who are not. My hope is that readers who like what follows and haven't yet read the originals will do that next.

This book means to offer a short course on Stoicism taught principally by the Stoics. In the living version of the class that I now and again imagine, though, we might have guest speakers as well. Montaigne, for instance, would make a lively visitor. So we also will hear from him and some others who might be regarded as intellectual descendants of the Stoics because they were strongly and visibly influenced by them. The descendants typically depart from Stoicism on certain matters of theory but agree on points more germane to this book. They give memorable expression to Stoic tenets and offer variations on them; sometimes they pilfer them outright. Their writings are instructive to read for their own sake, and because they let us see Stoicism as a tradition of thought that has lived beyond its classical origins.

We sometimes will hear as well from Greek and Roman writers who were not Stoics themselves but agreed with them in ways that will interest us. It is usually the same story: philosophers of nearby schools dispute the answers to questions about the purpose of life or the nature of the universe or comparably large matters; but they have some of the same views on more immediate questions, such as how to think about money or fame or hardship or death. They converge as they descend.

In sum, this book treats Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius as canonical sources. If they said it, I've been prepared to include it here and to regard it as a Stoic teaching, whether or not it follows from anything the Greeks are thought to have said earlier. (More on this in a moment.) And once a proposition is so identified, the book will frequently pause to show how other writers —

cousins or descendants of the Stoics — have expressed the same point, or illustrated it, or elaborated on it.

The book preserves some redundancies in the writings of the Stoics and eliminates others. If different writers are shown to have said similar things, it is because their agreement is of interest. If one writer is shown to have made the same point in different ways, it is because each restatement offers a detail of possible value to the student of the idea. But those who find that they have had enough of a theme can move on to the next without penalty.

Stoicism originated in Ancient Greece. This book nevertheless gives little attention to the early Greek Stoics. It might seem unjust as well as unfortunate to leave out Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, and other charter members of the school while including the later writers just mentioned. The difficulty is that only fragments from the Greeks have survived; while there are texts from Galen, Cicero, Plutarch, and others that talk about what the early Stoics said, we have no extended works in which they speak for themselves. The secondhand accounts we do have are enough to allow scholars to piece together many of the earliest Stoic ideas. But the results don't fit well in a book of this type.

The approach this book takes instead, in which the late Stoics are treated as canonical, is open to objection. Stoicism might better be defined by the oldest and most consistent precepts of the philosophy that we can make out, rather than by the views of writers who came later and who have sometimes been accused of heterodoxy. In the late Stoic writings we do find some departures from what the Greeks seem to have said, or tension with it, or digressions from it. Not everything a Stoic says is Stoicism, on this view, and some of the entries in this book shouldn't have qualified for inclusion because they don't hew closely enough to the core principles of the philosophy.

My view is that the late Stoicism of the Romans deserves its own attention and credit. It was not as theoretically subtle and original as what the Greeks developed, no doubt, but it has other strengths. The late Stoics were more than popularizers of what the earlier ones said; they

were innovators in adapting it to ordinary life. Granted, we don't have much of what the Greeks wrote (or all that the Romans did). But what we do know suggests that the late edition of the philosophy was a more pragmatic enterprise than the early one, as Roman undertakings are apt to seem when set next to Greek examples of the same. The late Stoic writings thus hold up as a separate body of work with its own advantages and choices of emphasis, and can be read with profit and without apology for however it might differ from the Greek variety.

The most important example of this point should be stated directly: I include some positions of Seneca's, and call them Stoic, that some would say are departures from Stoicism. Seneca's views on certain subjects (especially involving emotion) are, in my judgment, more helpful and convincing than those of other Stoics. Readers who like what he had to say should not have to be described as "Senecaists" or some comparable deformity. Seneca was the most prolific Stoic writer whose work has survived. I think it makes best sense to treat his teachings, even where they occasionally departed from those of the Greeks, as a version of Stoicism rather than a mix of fidelity and lapses from it. If the result must be named distinctly, let it be called Reform Stoicism or some such thing.

7. Stoicism covered many topics, so a comment is in order about which ones are discussed here and which are left out. This book is, first, about ethics. In casual current usage, "ethics" usually means rules about what behavior is right and wrong, particularly in how we treat other people. For philosophical purposes, though, the term also refers to larger questions about how to act and the meaning of the good life. Much of what follows belongs under that heading, though some of what the Stoics thought about ethics, including much of their theoretical apparatus, is not included.

The subject of the book can also be described as psychology, a topic we regard as separate from philosophy but that the Stoics did not distinguish from it. Most chapters take as their topic some aspect of human irrationality and how it might be tamed. These inquiries of the Stoics will appeal to some readers for the same reasons they find



modern cognitive psychology appealing. Understanding our own minds helps us become conscious of our misjudgments — a little more perceptive, a little more self-aware, a little less stupid. In some respects cognitive psychologists, too, can be counted as successors of the Stoic philosophers, and the Stoics anticipated a number of their findings, as we shall see. But the Stoics, while less rigorous in their methods, are more ambitious in the questions that they try to answer. They propose a way of life.

The Stoicism of this book, then, amounts to a blend of philosophy and psychology, and is weighted toward the latter. It is so weighted because the Stoics, from where we now sit, are at times more enduring psychologists than philosophers. Some of the philosophical claims they regarded as most important — about what it means to live according to nature, for example, and why it matters — have not aged well. Their observations of how our thinking betrays us have more often stood the test of time. There admittedly can be a loss as well as a gain from this choice of emphasis. Some Stoic teachings might appear incomplete or unsatisfying unless they are joined to first principles of ethics or metaphysics of a kind largely avoided here. But I expect that readers will bring along their own first principles regardless, and will find the counsels of the Stoics compatible with a wide range of them.

Stoicism originally included much besides ethics and psychology. The ancients would have identified logic and physics as additional headings; within physics they would put theories that we might assign to cosmology and theology, including some that, as just noted, have few subscribers left. The Stoics believed that reason infuses the universe. They saw nature as intelligent, and events as expressing the will of a benevolent Providence. This book does not present any of those doctrines or show how the ideas discussed here relate to them. They would require a volume much longer than this, and meanwhile most readers today don't believe in Stoic theology and don't need it to learn from what else the Stoics said. Such is the argument of this book: that the writings of the Stoics have retained vitality not because their beliefs about the cosmos still have resonance but because their insights about human nature do.

I do not mean to suggest that the Stoics have nothing worthwhile to say about the largest problems of life. On the contrary, Stoicism is rewarding in part because it addresses some of the same questions about how to live that many religions do, and sometimes reaches similar conclusions, but it gets there by observation and reason alone. Or rather it can. The Stoics did have a theology, as I've said, but you may remove that pillar and the temple still stands; their analysis and advice hold up well enough without it. To put the point differently, the Stoics, when speaking in the manner shown here, will sometimes be found to arrive at the same summit as the followers of other philosophical or spiritual traditions, but they go up the mountain by a different face. Their way will be congenial to many modern readers. It is the path of logic, reflection, and knowledge of humanity.

8. The title of this book is open to more than one reading. The discussion just offered will suggest the intent behind it. I regard a practicing Stoic as someone who tries to remember the wisdom of the Stoics when dealing with life and thinking about thinking — one attracted to Stoicism not as a creed or theology but as valuable counsel and as a form of psychological hygiene. This book, in other words, is for those more interested in the practice of Stoicism than the theory of it. (Of course I do not begrudge any others their love of the high theory of Stoicism, and they are entitled to books, too — but they already have them.)

The title also means to suggest humility. A practicing Stoic can be considered one who is trying to learn what the Stoics had to teach and not doing it well enough to yet claim success. The book is not *The Proficient Stoic* or *The Complete Stoic*, but merely *The Practicing Stoic*, which is no doubt the most that anyone should say. ("Are you a Stoic?" "No, no — just practicing.")<sup>9</sup> Stoicism has been subject to many criticisms over the years, and a reader of this book should know something about them. My interest here is not so much in the technical critiques of Stoicism made by academics or rival philosophers, many of which I would concede or leave to the specialists. I'm more interested in knocks the Stoics have taken in literary conversation, because those assessments strike closer to the teachings that are the subject of this

book. Chapter 13 shows three of the most standard of those criticisms and makes comments on them. It is healthy for those getting to know the Stoics to see what people who don't like them have said, and to consider what might be said back.

I will offer here my general view that many critics of Stoicism treat it uncharitably. They seize on the most extreme things the Stoics said but don't account for ways in which those points were offset or qualified elsewhere. Or they judge the whole philosophy by its least appealing adherents or features or moments. That's too bad, not because it is unfair to the Stoics (they don't care), but because it distracts from all that they said that was better. But the criticisms still stick. Many of those who have a view about Stoicism base it on what they have heard, and what they have heard is calumny. Or they associate Stoicism with some single idea that seemed memorable when they heard it, probably because it was jarring. If you study the subject and talk about it with others who haven't, you quickly will see for yourself. Opinions about Stoicism outrun knowledge of it by a hundred to one.

The critic might reply that I make an opposite sort of mistake, displaying the more attractive parts of Stoicism and giving short shrift to the rest. That may be true. I have tried to fairly introduce, in a modest space, the applied ethics and psychology of the late Stoics. But if there are more and less reasonable versions of a teaching available, the book goes with the more reasonable one. I've sought to take the Stoics at their best and to present them that way — not for the sake of persuading anyone to think well of Stoicism, but for the sake of producing a useful book.

10. The concessions in the last few comments invite a specialist's criticism that I wish, finally, to anticipate: that this book isn't about Stoic philosophy after all — that what it contains isn't Stoicism or philosophy. It isn't Stoicism because it leaves out too much that the Stoics thought necessary. It isn't philosophy because it leaves out too much that is foundational. Maybe it's good advice, but then it's just advice.

Distinctions of this kind may be boring to lay readers, but they mean something to academic scholars, and as an academic I sympathize. In view

of this project's purpose, though, they are of little consequence. I have attempted to create a book for those interested in what the Stoics had to say of lasting value about the challenges of being human. If leaving out deeper precepts, or including ideas that stray from them, makes the result something other than Stoicism or other than philosophy, our subject can just be described as the practical teachings of those once known as the Stoics. I waive claims to anything more.

Nobody should care much anyway about being called a Stoic or not a Stoic. There are no membership benefits that I am aware of. If we want to read our authors in the spirit in which they wrote, we do best to focus on the questions that they thought were of higher priority. They weren't principally seeking to raise the status of a philosophical school or decide who was entitled to join. They were trying to help people see more clearly, live more wisely, and bear the burdens of their lives with greater ease. Let us see how they did.

Dramatis persona. Getting acquainted with the Stoic teachers for oneself is a distinct pleasure of the study of our subject. For the benefit of those not already familiar with them, here are short introductions to the writers who will appear most often in the pages to come.

9. Major figures. Three Stoic writers dominate this book. On some topics all of them comment; on others, one specializes more than the rest.

Seneca the Younger (Lucius Annæus Seneca) lived from about 4 BC to 65 AD. He was born in Spain; his father, who had the same name (and so is remembered as Seneca the Elder), was a teacher of rhetoric. The son — our Seneca — was taken to Rome when he was young. After a period spent in Egypt, an early career as a lawyer and politician, and a banishment to Corsica, he became a tutor and advisor to Nero, an emperor of odious reputation. Seneca also became very wealthy.

Seneca was accused in 65 AD of joining the Pisonian conspiracy, which had unsuccessfully plotted the murder of Nero. He was ordered by the emperor to commit suicide, which he did; he cut open his veins and sat in a hot bath, though they

say it was the steam that finally did him in. The episode is the subject of a fine allusion in *The Godfather Part II*.

Seneca wrote letters, dialogues, and essays on philosophy, and also a number of plays. His writings are the most substantial surviving body of work on Stoicism and the largest source of material for this book. His wealth and political life have sometimes caused him to be condemned as a hypocrite whose life was inconsistent with his teachings; this issue is discussed in a brief essay in Chapter 13.

Epictetus lived from approximately 55 to 135 AD. He was born in the region we now know as Turkey, and spent most of the first half of his life in Rome. (On that account I sometimes refer to him as one of the Roman Stoics.) When philosophers were banished by the emperor Domitian, Epictetus moved to Greece and established a school there. Epictetus left behind no writings. The words attributed to him are the notes of Arrian, a famous student in his school. From Arrian we have works known as the *Discourses of Epictetus*, as well as the *Enchiridion* (or handbook; Arrian wrote in Greek). We also have some fragments of less certain authenticity preserved by Stobæus (c. 500 AD). When you read Epictetus, it is best to imagine that you are seeing a rough transcript of what he said in class.

Epictetus led a life very different from those of our other principal writers. He had a crippled leg. He was born a slave, and his later liberation gave him a curious connection to Seneca. As noted a moment ago, Seneca was accused of joining a conspiracy to murder Nero. The conspiracy was revealed in part by Epaphroditos, a secretary to the emperor.

Epaphroditos was the owner of Epictetus and may have been responsible for freeing him, though this and much else in the life of Epictetus involves some conjecture. (Epaphroditos was later put to death for failing to prevent Nero's own suicide. It was an age of hardball.)

Epictetus studied in Rome under Musonius Rufus, another Stoic who left behind no writings of his own (but later we will see a couple of fragments from him, too). Musonius Rufus is probably best known

now for teaching that women are as suitable for philosophical training as men.

Marcus Aurelius (in full, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus) (121-180 AD). In 138, the emperor Hadrian selected his own successor, Antoninus Pius, by adopting him. Hadrian also arranged for Antoninus to adopt Marcus Aurelius, who was then a teenager. Antoninus Pius ascended to the throne soon thereafter and was emperor for more than twenty years. Upon his death in 160, Marcus Aurelius became emperor and reigned for nearly twenty years more — for the first eight years in partnership with his adoptive brother, Lucius Verus, and during the last few years in partnership with his son, Commodus, of whom the less said the better. For a stretch of time in the middle, Marcus Aurelius was emperor by himself, an improbable moment in which the most powerful person in the world may have been the wisest.

Mostly while on military campaigns during the last decade of his life, Marcus Aurelius wrote philosophical notes to himself in Greek that we call his *Meditations*. He never described himself as a Stoic in his writings, but he was a devoted student of the philosophy and has long been treated as one of its defining authors.

As is apparent from these notes, our Roman Stoics lived overlapping lives, but just barely. The first died when the second was young, and the second died when the third was young. So far as we know, none of them had any contact with each other. Marcus Aurelius does thank one of his Stoic teachers, Junius Rusticus, for giving him a copy of the *Discourses of Epictetus*, and he occasionally quotes from that work.

Supporting classical characters. A few other classical writers — not quite Stoics, but friends or cousins of them — will appear less regularly.

Epicurus lived from 341 to 270 BC. He is associated, of course, with a philosophy of his own: Epicureanism. By reputation Epicureanism and Stoicism are opposites. The first is said to be a philosophy of sensual enjoyment and indulgence, the second a philosophy of austerity. Both reputations are misleading; the English word "Epicurean" nowadays gives an impression of

Epicurus about as inaccurate as the word "Stoicism" does of the Stoics. The two schools of thought do differ in many significant ways, most prominently in the relationships they propose between virtue and happiness. Epicurus regarded pleasure as the only rational motive for mankind, whereas the Stoics thought that our sole rightful purpose is to act virtuously — to live by reason and to help others, from which happiness follows assuredly but incidentally. Despite these differences, however, the Epicurean and the Stoic agree on some important points in their analysis of judgment, desire, and other subjects.

Like many other Hellenistic philosophers, Epicurus produced books and essays that have not survived. But we do have a small set of his writings — mostly a few letters and some sets of quotations. One of the larger sets was found in a manuscript in the Vatican Library during the 19th century (the so-called "Vatican Sayings"). Epicurus is also quoted here and there in the writings of other classical authors. Indeed, a number of the entries from Epicurus in this book were pre-served by Seneca himself, who saw it as no cause for embarrassment.

I shall continue to heap quotations from Epicurus upon you, so that all persons who swear by the words of another, and put a value upon the speaker and not upon the thing spoken, may understand that the best ideas are common property.

This book will take the same liberty.

Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero) lived from 106 BC-43 BC. He was one of the leading statesmen and philosophers of Rome and the most eloquent of its orators. His life was spent largely in political activity as a lawyer, quaestor, praetor, and consul. After the assassination of Julius Caesar he advocated the rescue of Rome as a republic; when Mark Antony secured his place as one of the dictators of the Second Triumvirate, he ordered Cicero to be executed and mounted his head and hands in the Forum.

Cicero turned to philosophical writing in the last phase of his life. Though much of his aim and achievement was to preserve Greek philosophical learning, he also made contributions of his own. His

philosophical books were, until recent times, among the most widely read and influential of all ancient works. The extent to which Cicero can be considered a Stoic has been subject to debate; he shared some of their positions and rejected others. But he agreed with the Stoics on many points of ethics, and described Stoic principles in ways that sometimes are helpful to see.

Plutarch (Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus) (c. 46-120 AD) was a prolific biographer and philosopher, and the author most notably of *Parallel Lives* and his essays collected as *Moralia*. He was born in Greece and lived most of his life there, though at some point he became a citizen of Rome. He also was a priest at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi for his last 25 years. In his philosophical writings he followed Plato and made many direct criticisms of the Stoics; he probably would not have wanted to appear in a book about them, though his feud seems mostly to have been with the earlier Greeks and to have involved claims not at issue here. At any rate, his ethics sometimes overlapped with those found in late Stoicism, as we will see.

Supporting modern characters. This book sometimes offers passages from more recent writers who, as explained earlier, might be regarded as descendants of the Stoics. They can't be called Stoics themselves because they parted company on too many questions. But they all read the Stoic philosophers and all expressed Stoic views on some of the topics in this book.

a. Montaigne (Michel Eyquem de Montaigne) (1533-1592) was a French lawyer, statesman, and philosopher. His essays, written over a 22-year period after he mostly withdrew from public life, popularized that format as a kind of literature. Their topics are wide-ranging and often personal. He provides a more extensive discussion of certain Stoic principles, and sometimes a more felicitous statement of them, than is found anywhere else. Montaigne was raised to speak Latin as his first language, and he retained a lifelong love of classical learning. At one point he was referred to as the French Seneca, and he openly acknowledged the debts he owed to Seneca and to Plutarch.

When I transplant the reasoning and ideas of others into my own soil and mix them with mine, I deliberately conceal the names of the authors. I do this to rein in the temerity of those hasty criticisms thrown at every kind of writing, especially contemporary writings by living authors, and writings that use common language — language that invites anyone to be a critic, and that can make the conception and design of the book seem just as common. I want them to tweak Plutarch on my nose, and to burn themselves by insulting the Seneca in me.

The truth of this assessment will be seen in the pages ahead.

Montaigne also presents some challenges for our purposes because he was an endless fount of ideas, many of which were not Stoic. He was a skeptic, and so could not subscribe to the more theoretical claims the Stoics made. And some of his views changed over time; I will treat 1580 as the date of publication of his essays, but he wrote and revised them over two decades. So I have generally proceeded as explained earlier: by asking first whether a given claim is found in the ancient Stoic sources. If so, restatement or elaboration of it by Montaigne will sometimes be provided.

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was an English essayist, poet, critic, and producer of various other sorts of writings. He was author of the most celebrated and amusing of all English dictionaries, and subject of the most celebrated and amusing of all English biographies (Boswell's *Life of Johnson*). Though Johnson has occasionally been described as a Stoic, that label is best avoided. It is not a fit to his writings as a whole, some of which disparage Stoicism. In Johnson's writings on ethics, though, he agrees with the Stoics often and gives excellent form to many of their ideas. Johnson often wrote in a style that now seems grandiloquent; he liked to use fancy words. This makes his prose hard for most people now to enjoy in long stretches, but our doses of it will be modest.

Adam Smith (1723-1790) was a Scottish philosopher and economist who was a close reader of the Stoics and much influenced by them, though his own philosophy departed from Stoicism in many ways. He critiques it in detail in *The Theory of*

*Moral Sentiments*, but agreed with the Stoics on some particulars.

Smith was a contemporary of Samuel Johnson's (and a professor of James Boswell's at Glasgow University), but it is not clear whether they met. A well-circulated anecdote describes Smith and Johnson as encountering each other for their first and only time at a party in Scotland and briefly exchanging insults, but it has been challenged (alas) as a fabrication.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was a pessimistic German philosopher and essayist. He wrote about a large range of topics, many of them far from the concerns of this book, but touched on a number of our themes in essays he wrote late in his life. He, too, did not accept Stoicism in full; he made criticisms of it and did not believe happiness could be achieved through reason. But as with all the others mentioned here, he read the Stoics carefully and had much in common with them on subsidiary points. He is good to have around in a book like this, because his interpretations of Stoic ideas have a different and more modern intellectual flavor than that of our other writers.

There will be appearances by some other writers as well, including Guillaume du Vair, a French contemporary of Montaigne's. He attempted explicitly to reconcile Stoicism with Christianity (a movement sometimes known as neostoicism). His interpretations are of occasional interest, as are those of various others who appear too infrequently in the book to introduce here.

As this book is meant for a general audience, I have not used endnotes. When explanatory comments have seemed worth including, they appear directly in the text. They consist mostly of brief notes on ancient characters who are referenced by the Stoics or their friends. Part of the fun of our topic is the chance to touch and learn a bit about the classical world, inexhaustibly fascinating ancestor of our own.

Translations. This book contains many passages not originally written in English. Translations of all the original texts exist in the public domain; when those versions were found suitable for our purposes, I have not hesitated to use them. This book is

especially indebted to many venerable translations in the Loeb Classical Library, and the translations of Schopenhauer done by T. Bailey Saunders. In most cases, however, the translations have been revised or redone entirely to bring them into clearer modern English that remains faithful to the originals.

There is at times some sexism in how the Stoics expressed themselves that I have not expunged, as my aim has been to show what they said as accurately as can be managed. I hope the reader will look past that issue. While the political thinking of the Stoics is mostly beyond our scope, they were notable for welcoming women to the practice of their philosophy and favoring equality for them in other ways as well, sometimes to a degree that was radical for their times.

[The Embodied Soul in Plato's Later Thought](#) by Chad Jorgenson [Cambridge Classical Studies, Cambridge University Press, 9781107174122]

Chad Jorgenson challenges the view that for Plato the good life is one of pure intellection, arguing that his last writings increasingly insist on the capacity of reason to impose measure on our emotions and pleasures. Starting from an account of the ontological, epistemological, and physiological foundations of the tripartition of the soul, he traces the increasing sophistication of Plato's thinking about the nature of pleasure and pain and his developing interest in sciences bearing on physical reality. These theoretical shifts represent a movement away from a conception of human happiness as a purification or flight of the soul from the sensible to the intelligible, as in the *Phaedo*, towards a focus on the harmony of the individual as a psychosomatic whole under the hegemonic power of reason.

## CONTENTS

Preface

Introduction

1 Thymos

The Unity of Thymos  
Thymos and Honor in  
Homeric Epic  
Philotimia and Philonikia

2	The Good Horse Appetitive Soul Pleasure and Pain as Impurities of the Soul The Hedonist's Dilemma The Ontological Foundations of Appetitive Soul
3	Rational Soul The Immortal Soul and the Self The Soul as Daimon Godlikeness and the Cognition of Becoming
4	Measuring Pleasure A Science of Measuring Pleasure The Origins of False Pleasures Medicine and the Measurement of Pleasure
5	Eudaimonia The Mixed Life and the Good The Teleological Critique of Pleasure Intellectual Pleasure and the Divine Life
6	The Political Sphere The Philosopher and the Polis The City as Incubator of Virtue The Political Arena Philosophy and Political Action
7	Eschatology The Undiscovered Country The Mirror of the Soul The Immanent Eschatology of the Timaeus

Conclusion

Bibliography

Index Locorum

General Index

Excerpt: The *Phaedo* casts a long shadow. The immortality of the soul, the violent rejection of the body, the stark opposition between the intelligible and the sensible, the elaborate eschatology, the definition of philosophy as an exercise in dying: all these elements are intimately associated with

Plato's thought and most are to be found here in their purest form. More than any other dialogue, the *Phaedo* reflects the unparalleled brilliance with which Plato was able to interweave philosophical argument, literary portraiture, and mythological symbolism. While other dialogues may be more accomplished on the literary or the philosophical level, no other work synthesizes as skilfully the poetic with the dialectical. Moreover, the theses put forward in the *Phaedo* are lent considerable weight by the setting. On the day of his execution, surrounded by an intimate circle of philosophically minded friends, Socrates argues that, far from being an evil, death is the consummation of a life philosophically lived, when the soul, freed once and for all from the taint of incarnation, recovers its pristine condition as a pure intellect. Here if anywhere, it seems, we find a suitable place for Plato to reveal his own views about the nature and destiny of the human soul.

The *Phaedo* looms large in Neoplatonic interpretations of Plato, which despite local variation are broadly characterized by a focus on the metaphysical and epistemological at the expense of the political and the ethical, the latter being almost wholly assimilated to the metaphysical purification of the soul.

Plotinus, the outstanding figure in the Platonic tradition after Plato, firmly insists on the separation of the soul from the body as the ultimate end of the philosophical life. Contemporary attempts to recover the authentic Plato, so far as possible, on the basis of a close reading of the dialogues has generated considerable hostility to explicitly Neoplatonizing interpretations, but there is still a good deal more residual Neoplatonism in the air than is commonly acknowledged. If the increasingly baroque metaphysics of the Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists is broadly rejected as a gross distortion of Plato's thought, the same cannot be said of their strategy of reading Plato's ethics in terms of the isolation and separation of the rational soul from the body.

I refer to such interpretations, with deliberate inaccuracy, as Neoplatonic, not because I wish to claim that this conception of human nature is a wholesale invention of later Platonists — the

*Phaedo* and the later books of the *Republic* provide textual support for Plato having held such a view — but because this approach involves either projecting this conception onto the whole of Plato's work, including those passages where he seems to offer a rather different account, or introducing a sharp distinction between political and intellectual virtue, along Plotinian lines, where the purificatory 'political' virtues of the tripartite soul are thought to ultimately give way to the higher 'intellectual' virtues of the purified rational soul.

At issue is not the pre-eminence of the rational soul for Plato — a point on which there is little room for disagreement — but rather the nature of its relationship to the lower strata of human nature, particularly to what the *Timaeus* calls the 'mortal parts' of soul. The Neoplatonic reading of the dialogues privileges the imagery of separation and withdrawal drawn from the *Phaedo* and the later books of the *Republic*. But this is not the only way of conceptualizing the soul that we find in the Platonic corpus. In the early books of the *Republic*, in the *Timaeus*, and, with some variations, the *Philebus*, we are presented with a rather different conception of the human good in terms of an equilibrium between the parts of the soul or, in the case of the *Philebus*, as a harmonious mixture of different psychic elements. These passages emphasize the hegemonic function of the rational soul, as a principle of order and reason within the living being, but do not reduce the good of the individual to the good of the rational soul, recognizing that in some cases its interests need to be balanced against, and perhaps even subordinated to, those of the other parts of the soul or even the body.

Much hinges on the question of who we, as ethical subjects, are. For Plato, to give an account of the good of a particular being ultimately requires us to give an account of what that thing is, of its nature. To understand what a good city is and why it is identical with a just city, rather than with a rapacious oligarchy or tyranny, we must understand what a city is: what parts it has, how these parts function, and how they are integrated

into a unified whole. The question of what is good for a particular being cannot be separated from the question of what its nature is, for to be good precisely is to be the sort of thing that it is in the fullest sense. We will arrive at rather different outcomes, ethically speaking, if we take ourselves to be pure rational souls, embodied souls, or composites of body and soul.

The late dialogues present what I take to be the most sophisticated and nuanced account of human nature and of the interrelation of body and soul, and it is on these that I have focused my attention. However, it is not my intention to tell a just-so story about the evolution of Plato's thought from dialogue to dialogue or from period to period. While I do see evidence for a subtle, though important shift in Plato's views between the middle and the late period, with a softening of many of the oppositions and an ever-increased insistence on the role played by mediating terms, to talk of a sea change would risk obfuscating the fact that many of the elements that I single out as important in the late dialogues are to be found in embryonic form in earlier discussions. The positions that I take to be characteristic of the last period of Plato's life are less a product of the rejection of his early views in favor of entirely new ones than the result of the elaboration and weaving together of strands of argument that were left underdeveloped in his earlier work.

In attempting to move between so many different dialogues, choices must naturally be made about how certain passages are to be read, choices that cannot always be as comprehensively justified as one might like. Attempting to read a particular dialogue on its own terms is a worthwhile and often illuminating exercise, but I am equally convinced that we cannot escape the problem of the immensity and complexity of the Platonic corpus by focusing exclusively on individual dialogues. Although the nature of the relationship between a thesis defended in one dialogue and a different or even contradictory thesis found elsewhere is often problematic, the complexity of the conceptual echoes and the interplay of literary references makes a highly atomistic account of the relationship between the individual dialogues exceedingly difficult to defend. The boundaries between them

are simply too porous. To reach an adequate understanding of what Plato is up to, we must look not only at how arguments develop within particular dialogues, but also at how they develop between dialogues. If we cannot take any particular character as Plato's mouthpiece, not even Socrates, the dialectical movement of the arguments as a whole is nonetheless the expression of the cogitations of a single mind ruminating on a remarkably consistent set of problems.

The approach I have adopted aims to be neither excessively modernizing nor excessively archaizing, but to present a reconstruction, within my own historical and cultural horizons, of some of the principal currents of thought running through the later dialogues. Naturally, some of these currents will be of more immediate interest to the reader than others. It is difficult to imagine any reader, ancient or modern, who would be willing to adopt wholesale Plato's much-maligned account of pleasure. But if I have taken the pains to reconstruct it here, it is not as a mere historical curiosity. Problematic though his account of pleasure and pain is, in many respects, it represents an attempt to provide an ontological foundation to the often astute psychological observations that inform his reflections on human nature and the various forms it can assume. If the end result has its share of absurdity and involves some rather audacious modifications of the phenomena to fit the theory, it also provides deep insights into the ephemerality of pleasure and the self-defeating character of vulgar hedonism.

One of the great charms of reading Plato is that the skill and subtlety of the characterization creates a tension within the dialogues between the complexity of the individual in his concrete existence and the system of ideal types with which the philosopher works. The systematizing and schematizing impulse, important though it is, never entirely overshadows his sense for the uniqueness of personalities and events. Although I have taken into account the literary style of each particular dialogue, where relevant to the argument, my focus is primarily on the theoretical content. The more literarily sophisticated reader may feel that the dramatic context has been unduly neglected, but I suggest that any such dissatisfaction be taken as an



invitation to return to the inexhaustible richness of the dialogues themselves.

\*\*\*

Death, according to the *Phaedo*, is the consummation of a life philosophically lived. If we have been placed in this world by some higher power and are thus divinely mandated to hold our ground, the body is less an instrument for the soul to master than a prison for it to escape. The wisdom that the philosopher seeks can only be acquired through the purification of the soul from the body, a purification cloaked in religious symbolism, even if its essence is rationalistic. The middle books of the *Republic* take up the same themes, recasting the philosopher's education as an ascent from the insubstantial shadow-play of sensible existence towards the contemplation of divine paradigms. To practice philosophy is to flee from the temporal to the eternal, from the image to the reality it feebly reflects. This flight is not merely a matter of epistemological concern, for in it, the soul finds its own distinctive form of *eudaimonia*, realizing its nature as a knowing being, possessed of the purest pleasures, and leaving behind, so far as it is able, the murky, alien underworld into which it was born.

Like its Cartesian cousin, with which it is often confused, Platonic dualism has become an overused stock phrase. It refers in the first instance to the often crudely construed separation of the intelligible and the sensible that is the most distinctive characteristic of Plato's ontology, but also to the division between body and soul in which this metaphysical dualism is mirrored. Yet even in the *Phaedo*, Plato never goes so far as to identify the soul with the intelligible. Rather, there exists an affinity which the soul seeks to maximize through the contemplation of the highest realities. In the best of cases, according to the eschatological imagery of the *Phaedo*, the properly purified soul manages to escape wholly from material existence to live a life that lies beyond the powers of our imagination.

The *Republic*, while providing some of the most memorable images for the flight of the soul from the body, also suggests a different way of looking at things. At least in the best of cities, the properly

ordered rational soul, and by extension the individual who possesses it, is no mere static contemplator of higher realities, but a dynamic ruling principle that imposes order and harmony on physical reality. At the same time, the existence of intermediary sciences that lead the philosophical soul from bare sense perception to intelligible Being suggests that material reality is perhaps not as opaque to reason as we have been led to believe. If it is naïve to think that sense perception alone can lead us to the truth, physical reality is nonetheless underpinned by an intelligible, mathematical structure capable of being grasped by the rational soul. While these lower sciences cannot aspire to the certainty or the clarity of knowledge of Being, and consequently cannot be called episteme in the fullest sense, they nonetheless represent ordered, teachable bodies of knowledge concerned with the world of Becoming.

The increasing emphasis in the later dialogues on the role of nous as a cause of order and harmony, one that structures material reality, within the limits of necessity, in accordance with an eternal paradigm, suggests an altogether more positive vision of the intermediary status of the soul. Rather than being characterized by ontological deficiency with respect to a higher reality to which it aspires, but fails, to assimilate itself, the rational soul, as bearer of nous, functions as conduit linking together and uniting the diverse strata of reality, both on the level of the cosmos as a whole and within the bounds of the individual life. The unidirectional flight of the *Phaedo* or *Republic* VII yields to a more multifaceted conception of the soul as a simultaneously ordered and ordering principle, stretching upwards, in the contemplation of the ultimate structuring principles of reality, and downwards, in the acquisition and exercise of the lower sciences bearing on Becoming.

The central aim of this work has been to examine the key points of contact between the body and the soul and to indicate how Plato's thinking in the late period dialogues differs, at least in emphasis, from that of works such as the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*, which, due in part to their accessibility, in part to their literary brilliance, have exercised a disproportionate influence on the reception of Plato's thought in modern times. If the picture of the

philosophical life that has emerged is not one that is characterized by an excessive preoccupation with practical concerns, nor can it be said that the philosopher lives, or even desires to live, wholly immersed in the contemplation of the eternal. Like the divinity it seeks to imitate, the soul is a dynamic, creative principle that engages with reality in all its diversity and complexity. <>

[The Oneness Hypothesis: Beyond the Boundary of Self](#) edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe, Owen J. Flanagan, Victoria S. Harrison, Hagop Sarkissian, and Eric Schwitzgebel [Columbia University Press, 9780231182980]

The idea that the self is inextricably intertwined with the rest of the world—the “oneness hypothesis”—can be found in many of the world’s philosophical and religious traditions. Oneness provides ways to imagine and achieve a more expansive conception of the self as fundamentally connected with other people, creatures, and things. Such views present profound challenges to Western hyper-individualism and its excessive concern with self-interest and tendency toward self-centered behavior.

This anthology presents a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary exploration of the nature and implications of the oneness hypothesis. While fundamentally inspired by East and South Asian traditions, in which such a view is often critical to their philosophical approach, this collection also draws upon religious studies, psychology, and Western philosophy, as well as sociology, evolutionary theory, and cognitive neuroscience. Contributors trace the oneness hypothesis through the works of East Asian and Western schools, including Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Platonism and such thinkers as Zhuangzi, Kant, James, and Dewey. They intervene in debates over ethics, cultural difference, identity, group solidarity, and the positive and negative implications of metaphors of organic unity. Challenging dominant views that presume that the proper scope of the mind stops at the boundaries of skin and skull, The Oneness Hypothesis shows that a more relational conception of the self is not only consistent with contemporary science but has the potential to lead to greater happiness and well-being for both

individuals and the larger wholes of which they are parts.

## CONTENTS

Conventions

Acknowledgments

Introduction PHILIP J. IVANHOE, OWEN FLANAGAN, VICTORIA HARRISON, HAGOP SARKISSIAN, AND ERIC SCHWITZGEBEL

Oneness: A Big History Perspective VICTORIA S. HARRISON

Oneness and Its Discontent: Contesting Ren in Classical Chinese Philosophy TAO JIANG

One Alone and Many STEPHEN R. L. CLARK

Oneness, Aspects, and the Neo-Confucians DONALD L. M. BAXTER

One-to-One Fellow Feeling, Universal Identification and Oneness, and Group Solidarities LAWRENCE BLUM

The Relationality and the Normativity of An Ethic of Care EVA FEDER KITTAY

Oneness and Narrativity: A Comparative Case Study MARK UNNO

Kant, Buddhism, and Self-Centered Vice BRADFORD COKELET

Fractured Wholes: Corporate Agents and Their Members KENDY M. HESS

Religious Faith, Self-Unification, and Human Flourishing in James and Dewey MICHAEL R. SLATER

n. The Self and the Ideal Human Being in Eastern and Western Philosophical Traditions: Two Types of "Being a Valuable Person" CHO GEUNG HO

Hallucinating Oneness: Is Oneness True or Just a Positive Metaphysical Illusion?

OWEN FLANAGAN

Episodic Memory and Oneness JAY GARFIELD, SHAUN NICHOLS, AND NINA STROHMINGER

Confucius and the Superorganism HAGOP SARKISSIAN

Death, Self, and Oneness in the Incomprehensible Zhuangzi ERIC SCHWITZGEBEL

Identity Fusion: The Union of Personal and Social Selves SANAZ TALAIFAR And WILLIAM B. SWANN, JR.

Tribalism and Universalism: Reflections and Scientific Evidence DIMITRI PUTILIN

Two Notions of Empathy and Oneness  
 JUSTIN TIWALD  
 Contributors  
 Index

Excerpt:

### The Oneness Hypothesis

A number of East Asian and Western thinkers argue that, in various ways, the self is inextricably intertwined with, a part of, or in some sense identical with the rest of the world. In recent interdisciplinary work, this general idea has been described as the "oneness hypothesis" (Ivanhoe 2015). The relationship between the self and the rest of the world at issue is more than the simple claim that we are connected with other people, creatures, and things—a claim that is not only in some sense obviously true but practically and morally ambiguous. At times, we find ourselves connected with other parts of the world to which we would strongly prefer not to be connected and have no obligation to be so united (think of malignant bacteria or tumors). The connections the oneness hypothesis advocates are those that conduce to the health, benefit, and improvement of both individuals and the larger wholes of which they are parts. This is why, as we shall see, the ideal of oneness often gets expressed by metaphors of natural organic unity and spontaneous activity, for example, about how a healthy person is connected to the various parts of her own well-functioning body.

While the oneness hypothesis is often described in terms of a "loss" of independence, self, or autonomy, the idea of organic unity shows this to be mistaken; the oneness that serves as the ideal is more accurately and helpfully understood as an argument for, or as providing ways to imagine and achieve, a more expansive conception of the self—a self that is seen as intimately connected with other people, creatures, and things in ways that conduce to their greater happiness, advantage, and well-being. In contemporary analytic philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science, this general issue is more commonly discussed in terms of the "boundaries of the self," and versions of a oneness view are found in such areas as epigenetics and process ontology for organisms in biology. Eric Scerri draws upon a notion of oneness

that he rightly sees as an "aspect of Eastern philosophy" to propose an alternative account of the history of science in which "the development of science should be regarded as one organic flow in which the individual worker bees are all contributing to the good of the hive". Kathleen M. Higgins, developing R. G. Laing's insights about the importance of being "ontologically secure," argues that music has the capacity to engender a greater sense of connection between the self and the world, including "feelings of being at home in and supported by the world". Recent work in the field of extended cognition also challenges traditional assumptions that the proper scope of the mind and by implication the self stops at the boundaries of the skin and skull. The implications of such a view are quite remarkable and directly challenge accounts of the self that are found in a broad range of disciplines including (but not limited to) philosophy, religion, political theory, sociology, environmental studies, and psychology. This volume focuses on philosophy, religion, and psychology but draws upon other disciplines, such as evolutionary theory and cognitive neuroscience, when these are revealing or otherwise analytically helpful. This more expansive view of the self challenges widespread and uncritically accepted views about the strong (some would say, hyper) individualism that characterizes many contemporary Western theories of the self, but it also has profound implications for a range of practical concerns such as how we conceive of and might seek to care for the people, creatures, and things of the world.

The aim of this volume is focused on describing versions of the oneness hypothesis as found in a variety of philosophical, religious, and psychological writings, evaluating their plausibility, and exploring some of their major implications. We intend this anthology to serve as an important first step in the larger project of developing a new and psychologically well-grounded model for reflecting on conceptions of the good human life and, in particular, our relationship to and responsibility for the rest of the natural world that can inform and guide a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. How would our view of ourselves change, and how would our approach and views about ethical, social, political, or spiritual

life change, if we begin with the belief that we all are deeply and inextricably interconnected with other people, creatures, and things, and that our own flourishing and happiness is bound up with the well-being of the rest of the world?

\*\*\*

Two aspects of the oneness hypothesis can be distinguished: a metaphysical aspect and a normative aspect. Metaphysical oneness involves an expansive conception of the self as a metaphysical object—a self that extends to include or partly include family, community, or large parts of the environment. Normative oneness rejects the idea that rationality depends on an individualistic conception of one's "self-interest." The metaphysical and normative aspects of oneness are separable. For example, a philosopher might accept a strict metaphysical individualism while embracing normative oneness. However, they are also related in that commitment to a strong form of metaphysical oneness renders the normative individualistic conception of "self-interest" incoherent.

Indeed, much contemporary ethical, political, economic, and social theory assumes, without evidence or argument, a picture of the self that is strongly individualistic, what we call the hyperindividualistic conception of the self. Such a self is thought to pursue largely self-centered calculations and plans and to enter into agreements and contracts with others in a strategic effort to maximize its own best interests. Even though this model has been shown to be extremely poor at predicting how people actually behave, and is even less successful in leading people to actually track their best interests, it is still widely employed and largely regarded as representing not only the best way to be but also the way people are. The first of these claims is highly dubious and the last is patently false. Many cultures around the world, especially those in Africa, South and East Asia, Southern Europe, and South America have developed and employ conceptions of the self that are relational—organically and inextricably interrelated with other people, creatures, and things. Similar views have been and are defended in regard to ethical and political forms of life.

Buddhism, a complex, venerable, and influential global religion, is well known for its view that there is no separate and enduring self, and that the delusion that such an enduring self exists is the source of all suffering. While the expression of this core claim about the nature of the self varies across the different strands of the tradition, the idea can be understood as describing the polar opposite of the hyperindividualist view. People in Buddhist societies throughout time and around the world have lived perfectly normal lives in light of such a conception of the self, and many have lived lives of exemplary virtue and especially of immense compassion. Daoism is another of the several East Asian traditions that maintain the world is a grand interconnected whole, with each and every aspect enjoying the same moral status; as Zhuangzi (370-287 BCE) describes it, conceiving the world in such a fashion is a "sorting that evens things out." Many Daoists believe that it is only humanity's propensity to puff itself up and see itself as the only locus of genuine value among things that leads it to disrupt the natural harmony of the world and prey upon one another as well as other creatures and things. Like Buddhists, Daoists do not deny the genuine and healthy everyday regard we have for our own interests; the object of their criticism is not so much a concern with the self but a mistaken conception of the self that leads to self-centeredness and even selfishness (a related but different failing). Confucians agree with Buddhists and Daoists that the self is more a corporate than isolated entity, that human beings are familial, social, and cultural creatures whose natural state is community, and whose innate tendencies for cooperation and compassion have made their distinctive form of life possible. Such a view of human nature highlights the degree to which meaningful, satisfying, and happy human lives require recognizing, respecting, and caring not only for other people, but for other creatures and things as well. Under the influence of Daoism and Buddhism, later Confucians, known collectively as neo-Confucians, developed a dramatic version of such a view based on the idea that morally cultivated people "regard heaven, earth, and the myriad things as one body" (tiandi wanwu wei yiti).

Such a conception of the self is by no means exclusively South or East Asian. In the West, the notion of the Great Chain of Being (*scala naturae*), an idea with a long and venerable history, offers another example of this kind of view. It finds some of its earliest forms in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, and was later dramatically developed into a powerful new form by Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, in the third century CE. Primarily through Neoplatonism, it became an important part of a great deal of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic thought, evolving into its most mature expression in the early modern Neoplatonism of the Middle Ages. For our purposes, the Great Chain of Being is important because it links every part of the natural world—living and nonliving—as well as every feature of the supernatural world in a strict, hierarchical structure believed to have been designed and decreed by God. At the top of the hierarchy stands God and below God are all supernatural beings—the different forms of angels and demons. Farther down the hierarchy one finds the stars, planets, moon, and other celestial bodies, then kings, princes, nobles, commoners, domesticated and wild animals, plants, precious stones and metals, and more mundane and common minerals. Setting aside the strictly hierarchical ordering, the crucial thing to note in this grand scheme is that not a single thing exists in isolation, and each and every thing has a form and function within the whole. Human beings are not independent individuals who set and pursue ends that are largely of their own design; rather, they too have a distinct and normatively binding role to play in the great drama that is the cosmos.

Modern thought has generated several wholly naturalized versions of the oneness hypothesis, and the present project reflects several of these. In general, environmental ethics begins with the recognition that human beings are related in complex and intricate ways not only to other people, but also to other creatures and things as well. We are not separate from but integral parts of the greater environment or world, both historically and relationally, and through recognizing this connection and its implications for all concerned we come to see that we have moral obligations that are not evident or salient from the

hyperindividualist perspective. Political philosophy too arguably begins with some kind of recognition of at least our relationship with and obligations toward other people (though the strength and degree to which this insight is maintained and defended varies considerably). Political theories like communitarianism express a view of the self that is closely related to the general form of the oneness hypothesis, insisting that human beings are inevitably embedded within, and partly defined by, the complex set of relationships they find themselves suspended within—simply by virtue of being human. We are not—as hyperindividualist theories of politics would have it—"unencumbered selves" (Sandel 1984) but beings who are to a significant extent constituted by our relationships. More directly and fundamentally, some modern theorists of the self take their inspiration from recent work in evolutionary biology, arguing that environment—from cytoplasm, to uterus, to family and social setting—plays a dominant and underappreciated role in the formation of the self: epigenetic factors take precedence over things like genes. A related, social-scientific expression of such a view is found in those theorists—American Pragmatists as well as advocates of the dialogic self—who emphasize the primacy of the social over the individual.

### Brief Descriptions of the Contributions to This Volume

In our first contribution to part i of this volume, "Oneness: A Big History Perspective," Victoria S. Harrison explores the oneness hypothesis from the perspective of big history, seeking to place the idea that we are intertwined with other people, creatures, and things in the "broad context of global intellectual and cultural history." Big history conceives of human history as marked by a fairly small number of dramatic and large-scale transformations in social and cultural paradigms, patterns, and practices. Such transformations result from complex processes that often build up gradually over time but then profoundly and fundamentally alter the way human life is conceived, lived, and experienced. On such a view, history is seen more in terms of paradigm shifts, which punctuate the course of historical events and alter its trajectory. Most big historians recognize at

least three examples of such major historical transformation. The first occurred about fifty thousand years ago in response to the challenges posed by the last ice age and marked by the earliest appearance of various forms of symbolic representation. The second occurred at the end of the last ice age, about eleven thousand years ago, when humans started to show a preference for more settled life, marked by things like the domestication of animals and plants. The third episode occurred around five thousand years ago, when the first cities and states began to take shape.

Harrison contends that big history can offer important insights into "ideas about the self and the significance of human life in the context of the wider cosmos," which might well lead us to conclude that "prior to the move towards urbanisation the self was predominantly experienced and understood within the framework of possibilities provided by ... a oneness perspective." Very roughly, the thought is that prior to this time people experienced and conceived of themselves primarily in terms of the clear roles they played and the positions they held within families, tribes, and the larger biological environment; in other words, they saw themselves as intricately interconnected with other people, creatures, and things—as one with them. The Axial Age (800–200 BCE) marked a dramatic shift away from forms of life focusing on one's place in the cosmos and one's obligation to maintain it through ritual and sacrifice to those calling upon individuals to engage in different forms of more personal spiritual transformation. This change reflected a profound big history shift in how human lives were lived during this period: life in urban settings presupposed complex and fine-grained divisions of labor, opened up new vocations, and called on people to negotiate other dramatic, novel, and fast-changing social conditions that did not sit well with the earlier perspective of oneness.

Nevertheless, since these new forms of human life emerged out of and overlaid older models that had existed and shaped human beings for vast stretches of time, the old ways were never wholly effaced. As Robert N. Bellah, echoing Hegel, notes, "nothing is ever lost" (Bellah 2011, Xiao 2015). As

a result, "traces of a oneness perspective can still be discerned within later philosophical and religious worldviews that do not seem immediately aligned to it." Harrison suggests that perhaps a general form of the oneness hypothesis may explain features of human experience that are embedded in "our biology and our long history as a species." This would not only leave open but to some extent favor the development of contemporary conceptions of the self that either are based upon or incorporate important features of the oneness perspective. In any event, if Harrison's account is true, it shows that such a perspective is not only a possible resource for contemporary people but also comes with a long, complex, and well-attested history.

In our second contribution, "Oneness and Its Discontent: Contesting Ren in Classical Chinese Philosophy," Tao Jiang identifies and analyzes what he sees as an important underlying tension between humaneness (ren IT), which he understands as expressing a conception of oneness, and justice, which he understands as offering a contrasting picture of the self and morality, among pre-Qin Chinese philosophers and in particular among early Confucian and Mohist thinkers. He understands humaneness as an agent-relative virtue defined by the natural tendency to care more for, and on this basis show partiality toward, "those who are spacio-temporally close to us, especially our family members." In contrast, justice is an agent-neutral virtue characterized by disinterested appraisal based upon clear, publicly available standards. One of Jiang's aims is to challenge the common scholarly tendency to associate humanness with Confucianism and justice with Mohism; rather, we should note that the tension described by the juxtaposition between these two moral ideals served as a shared theme and site of contention within both schools of philosophy, with the Mohists highlighting and harmonizing the tension expressed by the Confucians.

The tension that Jiang explores is represented clearly in Analects 13.18, where Kongzi (Confucius) famously claims that an upright son should cover for his father if his father steals a sheep. Rather than seeking to resolve this tension, Jiang argues we should use it as a lens through which to understand

and appreciate the conflicted "moral universe presented in the Analects." He does this by proposing readings of several passages in the Analects that concern ren, that present it as deeply and centrally concerned with justice. Another way Jiang works to make his case is by offering an interpretation of Kongzi's formulation of the Golden Rule—which explicitly concerns the concept of ren—that highlights the ways in which it supports an obligation to treat others with justice. In particular, Jiang notes and develops the idea that Kongzi's version of the Golden Rule insists that actions be "reversible" between agents and recipients, generating "a leveling effect ... neutralizing the moral agent's personal preference and privileged status when it comes to the determination of what is and is not proper" and that such "reversibility lies at the heart of any conception of justice."

One of the most original and provocative aspects of Jiang's essay is his claim that members of the Mohist school "disambiguate the notion of ren in Confucius's teaching by putting the Golden Rule into practice and push ren to its logical conclusion, thereby pioneering a powerful theory of impartial care and universal justice in Chinese intellectual history." In other words, Jiang sees the Mohists as taking up Kongzi's idea of the Golden Rule, following out its implications, and developing it into a systematic and powerful moral theory. This theory is most clearly represented in their signature teaching of impartial care (jian ai V). Impartial care is the "logical conclusion" of applying the Golden Rule to ren. The thought seems to be that we should love or care for others as we want to be loved and cared for. If we reinforce this idea with the Mohist belief that Heaven cares for all impartially, we might come to believe we should care for all in the same manner and can do so by expanding and being guided by our own desire for care. Such a view combines benevolence with justice by advocating an obligation to take care of, and perhaps even care for, all, with partiality toward none.

Many systems of ethics challenge us to give greater consideration to the needs, desires, and dignity of other people, creatures, and things and thereby to overcome a natural human tendency toward self-

centeredness and selfishness. In this respect, ethics often and perhaps fundamentally ought to be concerned with encouraging a greater sense of oneness between ourselves and other parts of the world. Ethical systems that encourage care or benevolence certainly rely upon our inclination to believe that others feel, need, and value in ways quite similar to the ways in which we feel, need, and value; they thereby endorse the idea that in these respects we are one. On the other hand, those who advocate justice in its various forms insist in one way or another that we owe others many of the same basic rights and goods that not only we desire but that every creature of a certain kind merits and can demand. This leads, in thinkers like Kant, to embracing the ideal of a kingdom of ends, or in the case of the Mohists to an imperative to take care of and perhaps care for all impartially. Perhaps such views as well can be understood as more formal ways to express the normative ideal of oneness.

In "One Alone and Many," Stephen R. L. Clark provides a nuanced and original reading of Plotinus that seeks to illuminate the connection between his mysticism and his moral outlook. Clark argues that a correct interpretation of Plotinus will regard "the flight of the alone to the Alone" not as a rejection of community and morality, but rather as a turn toward these. Monos, as Clark explains, is often misleadingly translated as "solitary," and this leads to an unfortunate misunderstanding of Plotinus's position. Plotinus was not principally concerned with solitude, Clark avers, but with purity and undistractedness—both of which have profound implications for moral practice. In line with this interpretation, Clark provides a way of reading certain passages of Plotinus that have struck other readers as uncompassionate and as having little bearing on practical moral action.

Clark begins his argument by exploring the contours of the contrast frequently drawn between "mysticism" and "morality." Clark argues that the familiar neat contrast between the mystic, who is concerned with matters beyond this world, and the moralist, who regards the desire to improve the world as of primary importance, cannot help us to understand Plotinus. According to Porphyry, as Clark recounts, Plotinus was actively concerned with

practical moral issues and acted according to his moral convictions. Clark provides the example of Plotinus looking "after the property of the orphans left in his care, in case they turned out not to be philosophers." As Clark also notes, Plotinus was not lacking in practical ambitions for the betterment of society. He wanted, for instance, to found a city. Yet this was the same man who wrote that "we should be spectators of murders, and all deaths, and takings and sacking of cities, as if they were on the stages of theatres" (Enneads III.2 [47] .15, 44f).

The first step toward reevaluating Plotinus's moral position and coming to a more accurate appreciation of the delicate balance he achieved between "morality" and "mysticism" lies in ceasing to read him through the lenses provided by our contemporary moral assumptions, which are permeated, Clark argues, with the conviction that pain is to be avoided. As Clark points out, in the ancient world much pain simply could not be avoided. The pressing moral question concerned how it could be borne. Plotinus's answer to this question was presented within the framework of his account of the relationship between the One and the many, a relationship that Clark discusses using Plotinus's metaphor of a dance to depict the all-encompassing reality of which every individual is a part. Through this metaphor and a careful rereading of key passages, Clark persuasively argues that in Plotinus's work "we find a mystical expression of oneness that entails a practical morality of profound and universal care."

In "Oneness, Aspects, and the Neo-Confucians," Donald L. M. Baxter defends the characteristic neo-Confucian metaphysical claim of identity with the universe and everything in it as well as its related normative teaching that "this identity explains a natural concern for everyone and everything, not just for our narrow selves." Baxter sees clearly the critical and tight relationship between neo-Confucian metaphysics and ethics and recognizes that if the metaphysical picture cannot be defended, neo-Confucians will lose the primary foundation for their distinctive ethical claims. Neo-Confucian metaphysics is not self-evident and in fact seems to involve some rather challenging claims. Many of the things we encounter in the

universe differ from one another in the sense that they have qualities that others lack. But if all of these apparently different things are in the end one and the same, then the one thing they all turn out to be differs from itself and this seems to involve a contradiction. Baxter draws upon his theory of aspects—a theory of qualitative self-differing—in order to resolve the apparent contradiction; according to his account "I and everyone else and everything else are aspects of the One—the universe itself." After introducing, motivating, and defending his theory of aspects, he goes on to discuss two objections concerning the ethical view that rests upon neo-Confucian and other related claims about oneness, namely, that it challenges the possibility of altruism, and that it entails equal concern for everyone and everything, including concern for unappealing or despicable aspects of the universe.

Baxter begins by introducing his theory of aspects, which explains how numerically identical things can differ qualitatively. Aspects are not entities nor are they qualities, though they possess qualities. Aspects are numerically identical to but not the same as the individuals of which they are aspects; they are not the same because they lack some of the qualities the individuals have yet they are not simply parts of these individuals. Baxter refers to such cases as "qualitative self-differing" and stipulates that what self-differs in such cases are the "aspects" of the individual. He sums up the view by saying, "For the case to be one of differing, one aspect must have a quality that somehow the other aspect lacks. For it to be a case of self-differing, the aspects must be numerically identical with the individual that self-differs."

Baxter motivates his theory of aspects by presenting an account of someone who is torn about what to do or how to feel. Euripides's Medea struggles with herself about whether to kill her children to punish their father, Jason, who has abandoned her. Deploying his notion of aspects, Baxter argues against any interpretation that describes this struggle in terms of different parts of Medea being in conflict. The struggle is within a single person, a unified consciousness; it is between two aspects of Medea, "Medea insofar as she is



enraged at Jason versus Medea insofar as she loves her children."

One common objection to views like Baxter's theory of aspects is that it violates Leibniz's Law (also known as the Indiscernibility of Identicals), which claims, roughly, that if two things are identical then anything true of either is true of the other as well. Baxter fends off such objections by arguing that Leibniz's Law "applies only to complete entities such as individuals." Since aspects are not complete entities they escape this objection and provide a way to defend conceptions of identity or oneness like that espoused by neo-Confucians, which claims there is only one individual—one body—the universe itself and that "everyone and everything, including oneself, are aspects of the One."

Baxter then turns to address two apparently troubling ethical implications of such a view. First, if all is One, there are no others who can stand as the recipients of altruistic concern; second, even if there were such others, it would seem that our universal concern would extend to the undeserving and even the repugnant as well as the deserving good among them. Baxter defends his aspect account of oneness from both these challenges. In response to the first, he notes that, on his view, beyond the aspect of the One that is the narrow self are other aspects of the One, and these can be fitting objects of altruistic concern. In response to the second challenge, Baxter argues that the fitting concern one should have for everyone and everything as aspects of the One does not entail equal and indiscriminate concern for each and every aspect. It is fully consistent with and possible under the theory of aspects to recognize that some are more deserving than others: "Universal concern need not entail universal impartiality." This final point might appear to reintroduce grounds for excessive partiality for the narrow self and its interests and concerns. Baxter fends off such criticism by noting that the oneness that lies at the heart of his theory of aspects removes the foundation needed to justify "our overweening concern with the narrow self." Having eliminated this foundation, self-centeredness and selfishness have no basis or support.

In "One-to-One Fellow Feeling, Universal Identification and Oneness, and Group

Solidarities," Lawrence Blum explores four related themes concerned with compassion or fellow feeling for other human beings, which are sometimes expressed in the language of "oneness." The first of these is whether compassion is particularized by being directed toward a specific human being or universally expressed toward all. Blum's second concern is the nature and extent to which subjects of fellow feeling are aware of, and focus upon their identities as distinct from, those toward whom they have fellow feeling. Third, he examines the relationship between oneness and different group solidarities, such as those of a racial or ethnic character. Blum's fourth and final concern picks up a theme that animates much of Flanagan's contribution: the relation between metaphysics and ethics.

Blum begins his essay by describing and analyzing the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who argued that compassion, by which he meant "an affective phenomenon involving taking the weal or woe of another as a direct motive of action to assist the other," is the basis for morality. He notes that Schopenhauer regarded compassion as psychologically mysterious—a form of "practical mysticism"—and that he offered several not wholly consistent accounts of what compassion means, ranging from recognizing and loving "his own inner nature and self in all others," which seems problematically self-centered, to "making less of a distinction" between self and other, which seems quite preferable. We need metaphysics in order to justify compassion: "In the noumenal world, everything is one, a unity, so the compassionate person is in touch with the reality of that world because he makes no distinction between himself and others." It is not altogether clear, though, whether for Schopenhauer the compassion follows from a grasp of the metaphysical truth or is simply an expression of the way things fundamentally happen to be. Here we see themes that also engaged the attention of Flanagan.

Max Scheler, who was influenced by Schopenhauer, writes on many of these same topics but emphasized, in a way Schopenhauer did not, that the person expressing compassion must have a clear sense of herself as an individual distinct from the one toward whom she feels compassion; she

must not confuse herself with the target of her feelings, as compassion does not involve the identity of self and other but rather extends the self to include others, thereby transcending the self. Without this vivid recognition of the difference between self and other, the person feeling compassion will lack the appropriate sense of the other as other and this is necessary in order for concern to have moral worth.

Blum notes the similarity between this aspect of Scheler's views and those of a number of contemporary feminists. He also provides a careful comparison with the related but contrasting view of Iris Murdoch, who proposed a more cognitive, perceptual view grounded in a larger frame of moral realism. Her view refocuses attention on the ways in which metaphysics can and perhaps must play a role in ethics and how it does so in views, like hers, inspired by Plato.

Group solidarities present a clear example of nonmetaphysical oneness and Blum offers a range of insights based on the particular example of ethnic or racial group solidarities. One can identify with other members of such groups based on their shared group identity while being clearly aware of other differences between oneself and other members of the group—for example, through a different understanding of a shared experience. Group solidarity entails concern for a group and for members of the group as members. However, in almost all cases such concern is not all encompassing, but instead limited to particular features of shared experience or history, or to certain circumstances or times. Here we see a permeable, fungible, and complex array of different senses of oneness within groups. Blum introduces the African American philosophers Charles Johnson and Tommie Shelby as offering particularly interesting and powerful insights regarding how such group identity can offer a ground and starting point for group or universal teaching and identity. It is simply true that as a group African Americans have suffered more than most. This can be the source of solidarity within the African American community, but it can also testify to a basic condition of humanity—the fact of suffering—and inspire solidarity beyond the community.

Blum further explores the sense of oneness and solidarity by discussing aspects of the film *Selma*, about a march for voting rights led by Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1965 in Alabama. The film "vividly recreates the sense of solidarity among the marchers, all seeing themselves as part of a single entity, a movement, with which they all identify. When some marchers are beaten, others rush to help them. They do not feel a sense of separateness from one another." This sense of oneness need not be confined to race- or ethnicity-based forms of solidarity and indeed this was shown (both in history and in this film) when King reached out to those beyond the African American community to join in the pursuit of its noble ends. This example leads Blum to argue for three bases of solidarity: experience, group membership, and political commitment. Such sources of solidarity can inspire a form of universalism expressed in Martin Luther King's vision of "the beloved community," which Blum describes as "a vision of the future in which white, black, and other would live together in harmony, accepting one another as fellow citizens and fellow human beings in an overarching community of care and concern." Reprising some of the themes with which he began his contribution, Blum makes clear that King's vision did not aim to erase racial identity or the distinct individuality of members within the different communities that comprise it. In these ways, the beloved community and the different racial and ethnic groups that constitute it offer important lessons about and an ideal example of healthy forms of oneness.

It should be evident to all that the capacity for and practice of care has been critical for the success of our species and profoundly shapes the forms that human societies take and the values we find within them. Nevertheless, as Kittay points out in her contribution to this volume, "The Relationality and the Normativity of An Ethic of Care," a description and analysis of care "as moral theory is still in its infancy—at least in the West." Most of the work aimed at articulating different expressions of an ethics of care has been done by contemporary women philosophers; the most influential examples of such work not only explicitly address the question of the nature of the self but also challenge the dominant hyperindividualism that is

characteristic of mainstream philosophical writings. Such views clearly should be understood as expressions of the oneness hypothesis; they hold, as Kittay explains, that "selves are porous and connected, situated in a web of relationships where even those far from us are bound to us with invisible but morally important threads."

At the heart of Kittay's essay is a highly original, insightful, and challenging account of the nature of care. One of the first features she argues for in crafting her account of care is the need to care about care. Drawing a parallel with Royce's analysis of loyalty, she shows how caring about care is necessary in order to ensure that one works to create and protect the conditions to pursue what we might call first-order care. Without such second-order concern, caring will lack the "moral validation that makes a practice fully normative." This point is related to another key feature of her account of care, which concerns attending to what she refers to as "people's CARES"; she means by this term "those things people care about, which figure in their flourishing and in the case of persons who need care, they cannot accomplish without the proper assistance." Attending to people's cares offers an example of caring about care, for it keeps us alert and attentive to creating and preserving the conditions and environment required to perform acts of first-order care. This not only honors care as our supreme and organizing good, but also keeps in focus the importance of interpersonal connection, which is part of the conception of self associated with this expression of oneness. If we recognize the priority of care, we accept the priority of relationships as constitutive of the self and will work to preserve conditions and environments conducive to such relationships as well as the particular relationships we are in.

Drawing upon her extensive and inspiring practice of care, Kittay goes on to explore another important but unrecognized dimension of caring: the ways in which the reception of care-constitutes a critical part of the practice and how it completes care. The core claim here concerns what Kittay the course of different human lives but also allows us to examine some of the similarities and differences manifested in these variations on the shared theme. Unno carefully presents and analyzes three

contemporary first-person narratives for examination: one Zen Buddhist, one Pure Land Buddhist, and one Protestant Christian. The Zen Buddhist narrative describes the life path of an Irish American woman, Maura O'Halloran (1955-82), who went to study Zen Buddhism in a rural area of northern Japan. The Pure Land Buddhist narrative presents the story of a Japanese man, Shinmon Aoki (b. 1937), who, through a series of unanticipated events, finds himself making his living as a mortician, which, even more unexpectedly, ushers him on a journey that leads to Pure Land Buddhist awakening. The third and final narrative, that of a Protestant Christian, is the tale of Michael Morton (b. 1954), who after being wrongfully convicted of murder, spends nearly twenty-five years in prison, which leads him to embark upon a journey toward faith and to encountering the light of the Divine.

In each of these narratives, some element of the protagonist's dominant master narrative proves oppressive or inadequate, generating counterstories that retell, alter, or overturn it. The emergence of these counterstories hinges on critical junctures or turning points where a personal realization of oneness either erupts from "deep within" or descends from a "higher power." In the first case he explores, Maura O'Halloran sought a way to free herself from the master narrative of free-market capitalism in the global economy, which she found wholly unfulfilling. She set out on a different and demanding path, pursuing a three-year period of intensive Zen practice at Kannonji in rural Iwate Prefecture, Japan. After a prolonged and strenuous course of study, practice, and reflection, she was recognized as an awakened teacher; she fully realized the distinctive Zen understanding of oneness, the state where "'ought' issues spontaneously from 'is'-ness," as well as that great compassion "is the self-expression of the practitioner's own self-identity as inseparable from the world." Unno explores other dimensions of her life narrative and how it served as a vehicle for the expression of oneness by discussing and analyzing her struggles with the male-dominated, patriarchal culture of the Zen monastery at Kannonji, poignantly described in *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind*, a collection of her journals and letters. This adds further richness, texture, and nuance to the

story of her exemplary life and our understanding of oneness.

The next narrative, that of Shinmon Aoki, author of the memoir *Coffinman*, turns around the more lay-oriented Shin tradition of Pure Land Buddhism, the largest sectarian development of Japanese Buddhism, which focuses on the dynamic between blind passions and boundless compassion or foolish being and Amida Buddha. As a young man, Aoki finds himself facing the collapse of his business and with a family to support. Raving few prospects, he answers a vaguely worded help-wanted ad, only to find out after accepting the job that it was for mortuary service, cleaning and dressing corpses for funerals. Shin Buddhism has made a special effort to embrace those on the margins of society, subject to prejudice because of "impure" livelihoods, such as morticians. And so, through the turning of fate, Aoki finds himself excluded by society's master narrative, pushing him to develop his own counterstory that resonates with and finds support and fulfillment in the Pure Land tradition.

One day, Aoki's practice leads him to a situation that holds great dread but proves to be of singular spiritual significance: he is asked to perform a coffining procedure at the home of his former girlfriend. Prospectively mortified to appear before her in this capacity, Aoki instead finds her deeply appreciative of him and his work. She becomes the conduit for boundless compassion, embracing him, a foolish being, just as he is. This acceptance and embrace lead him to see and embrace others and to understand and appreciate the work he does in a wholly different light, seeing it—and his own dignity and worth—for the first time. Aoki's story presents multiple visions of oneness that "break through the conventional or master narrative of social expectations, and ... empower Aoki to propel his self-narrative."

In 1986, Michael Morton was wrongly convicted of his wife's murder and separated from his three-year-old son, and he spent the next twenty-five years of his life in prison. It was only because of DNA evidence produced through the work of the Innocence Project that his conviction finally was overturned, and he was released from prison. The tragic course of his incarceration and struggle,

however, led him to discover and embrace a greater truth and brighter light, the truth and light of the Divine, which he experienced one night in the darkness of his prison cell: "What I had seen and felt and heard was divine light—and divine love—and the presence of a power that I had sought, in one way or another, all my life." This miraculous turning point in Morton's life was preceded and precipitated by a great deal of suffering and a bottoming-out, reaching the point of having been ground down and worn away, standing without any sense of power or hope on the edge and staring into the abyss. In that moment the experience of being bathed in the oneness of the divine light gave Morton the strength to endure and to forgive; it freed him from the master narrative that had consumed him and everything he had held dear and opened up a new path for him to follow: a path that led him to freedom, redemption, and reconciliation. The counterstory he constructed, along with those of O'Halloran and Aoki, allows us to touch in imagination different manifestations of oneness and feel its palpable presence in these three remarkable lives.

In "Kant, Buddhism, and Self-Centered Vice," Bradford Cokelet argues that the Kantian conception of treating people as ends in themselves and not mere means, while offering us an important insight into moral behavior, cannot be adequately understood much less attained within a Kantian framework, and that Buddhist philosophy has resources that can help address such shortcomings. In order to achieve the goal of treating others as ends we need to begin with a substantive account of the ideal that, Cokelet suggests, "calls on us both to reach out to others in a positive way (to treat others as ends in themselves) and to exercise self-restraint in our interactions with others (to never treat them as mere means).... The ideal calls on us to act with both love/devotion and respect." A full account of the ideal of treating people as final ends will also describe and explain negative motivations or vices that obstruct the attainment of (and are ruled out by) the realization of this ethical ideal. Cokelet focuses on the first requirement and is particularly concerned with the positive aspect of the ideal, which calls on us to treat others as ends in themselves by acting out of love or devotion. His

view, roughly, is that realizing the moral ideal of treating people as ends requires an agent to overcome self-centeredness and that, contrary to what the Kantian account implies, self-centered people cannot be perfectly morally motivated.

Cokelet develops a line of argument described and advanced by David W. Tien (2012) and Philip J. Ivanhoe (2017) that contends that self-centeredness is distinct from selfishness and that one can be problematically self-centered while acting altruistically. Among the insights he adds to this discussion is the general point that self-centered motivation is problematic primarily because it tends to involve an undue concern with getting or meriting approval, esteem, or pride. Inordinate concern with, or false beliefs about, the worth of one's self often is manifest in self-centered patterns of thought and behavior that can impede treating others as ends in themselves. Cokelet divides such inordinate concern into three categories, "self-centered attention, self-centered judgment, and self-centered interpersonal interaction," and then shows how each of these can seriously impede our ability to behave morally. For example, excessive self-centered attention will inhibit one's ability to empathize well simply because one will not notice others at all, how they are doing or what is happening to or with them. Some forms of self-centeredness lead to disrespect, others to failing to nurture healthy independence and confidence; in such cases, self-centeredness directly undermines the ideal of treating others as ends in themselves.

Self-centered people can fail to treat others as ends in themselves because they either fail to respect the other person's dignity or treat the person in a loving way. Cokelet draws upon Iris Murdoch's rich and productive example of a mother-in-law judging her daughter-in-law to make the case that Kant's moral philosophy lacks the resources needed to explain fully how such moral failures can occur. Kant claims that self-centered vice is motivated by an agent's concern for her own happiness and that respect for the law strikes down her self-conceit and thereby curbs her self-love. But Cokelet offers an interpretation of Murdoch's case in which the mother-in-law "nonetheless has a Kantian good will because she treats the daughter-in-law with respect and benevolently wishes that

she ends up happy," which shows that "good Kantian moral motivation is insufficient for treating people as ends in themselves."

In the final section of his essay Cokelet takes up the challenge of showing how certain Buddhist insights into oneness, understood here in terms of an appreciation of the true empty nature of both self and world, can help overcome self-centeredness. Roughly, his argument is that Buddhist insight into oneness undermines the efficacy of—and may even succeed in eliminating—those self-interpreting emotions that support the kind of self-centered vice he has identified in the course of his study. This is achieved through a variety of related paths having to do with Buddhist claims about the limitations of one's propositional understanding of oneself and the world and Buddhist arguments aimed at undermining a clear sense of a separately existing self. Buddhism is famous for its assault on the notion of a separately existing self and its general claim about the impermanence of all existing things, and Cokelet presents a compelling case that versions of these claims can serve us well in undermining a pernicious tendency toward self-centeredness and enabling us to attain the noble goal of treating others as ends in themselves.

Whereas most of the essays highlight the positive potential in oneness, Kendy M. Hess's "Fractured Wholes: Corporate Agents and Their Members," questions such a too-ready acceptance of oneness as tending toward the good. As she puts the point, "There are ways of forming wholes, of 'being one' that are not wholesome, and these are increasingly common and increasingly problematic." Her particular concern is the way that people come or are brought together to form collective, corporate agents. Such aggregation often produces large, powerful, efficient, and productive entities, but too often such agents are indifferent to the harm associated with their self-organization. She is careful to point out that there is no necessary connection between the formation of corporate agents and bad results; to the contrary, one of her primary points is to alert us to the potential hazards and urge us to create " 'wholesome wholes' rather than the incomplete and fractured wholes we've usually created thus far."

Hess begins by sketching an account of what it is to be a collective agent that engages in action-expressing shared intentions. Such shared intentions are needed to establish the kind of agency and responsibility that distinguishes robust examples of such agents from mere groups. The members of a team usually share a number of important beliefs, commitments, and aims that help to organize and execute their collective behavior in ways that a crowd of people waiting to get into a concert do not. There are, however, collective agents—Hess refers to these as "corporate agents"—that do not share commitments or intentions in this way. (For example, the members of a modern corporation, university, or state, while governed by a shared set of commitments, need not and often do not personally hold the commitments by which they are governed and that inform and direct the action of the corporation or firm to which they belong. Often, in fact, the members of such organizations have personal commitments that conflict with those of the corporate entity to which they belong and for which they work.) And so, "the unity of a corporate agent is not the intimate, internal unity of most collective endeavor, driven by the distinctive, shared commitments of their members.... A corporate agent is not ... bound by the commitments of the members and closely linked to the members' own goals and preferences." Such agents are what she calls "fractured wholes," entities that are unified from the outside or top-down rather than the inside or bottom-up.

The members of such organizations almost all have to adapt in order to fit into the preexisting structure, ethos, and aims of the corporation, and often are asked to leave many of their personal commitments and aims "at the door" while taking on its values, commitments, and style of reasoning. As Hess describes this, "the 'fractured wholes' of the title comprise 'fractured selves.' The members of corporate agents need to sever (or at least repress) those aspects of themselves that run counter to the corporate project ... bringing only that part of the self that fits with and is valued by the corporate agent." This is where we begin to see the potential for moral hazard and in particular a threat to healthy versions of personal and social unity or oneness; anyone working in such a

corporation must abandon the hope of harmonizing many of her basic values and commitments with the work that she performs each day. In many cases, she will find her personal values and commitments in deep conflict with those of the organization for which she works. This harms and may destroy any sense of personal unity or oneness and preclude enjoying the kind of psychic harmony that has been valued across a variety of philosophical and religious traditions. Moreover, there is equal threat to the aim of attaining some kind of unity between the corporation and the larger society and world. If a corporate agent acts hermetically sealed off not only from the values and commitments of its constituent members but also from those of those outside the corporation, it may and probably will often find itself in conflict with the values, commitments, and aims of society at large and perhaps humanity in general. Such conflict does not conduce to the health of the corporation any more than to that of those inside or outside of it.

In her conclusion, Hess sketches some possible response to the problems she has described and analyzed in the course of her work. She makes a good case for steering clear of more utopian approaches that seek to find a way to preserve the complete wholeness of individuals who enter into such corporate entities or that hope to reshape and refine the corporate cultures in ways that bring them into complete harmony with the rest of the world. Among other things, the former approach would undermine the organizational capacity and efficiency of corporations in ways that largely defeat their very purpose; the latter would damage the capacity of corporations to set and pursue the more limited goals, which gives them their reasons to exist. Such efforts undercut the need for individuals to, at times, suspend their personal agendas and join in cooperative ventures with others whose values and commitments they do not share, which is an important aspect of life in a pluralistic democratic society. In different ways, the aim of excessive harmony or oneness is harmful and arguably even more harmful than the current state of affairs. Instead, Hess advocates pursuing a more ameliorative approach that aims to respect the personal or private but allows for, protects, and appreciates the impersonal corporate point of view

as well. Her contribution highlights some of the potential dangers of conceptions of oneness while making clear that there are healthy conceptions of oneness that not only can accommodate but also see value in tensions they allow.

In "Religious Faith, Self-Unification, and Human Flourishing in James and Dewey," Michael R. Slater compares the religious philosophies of James and Dewey with particular attention to their respective views on religious faith, self-unification, and human flourishing. Slater argues that both philosophers endorsed a version of the oneness hypothesis, understood broadly in terms of two claims: "first, human beings are capable of realizing a more expansive sense of self by making connection with, and understanding their personal identity as inextricably intertwined with, an object of faith that exceeds and transcends themselves (a descriptive claim); and second, that realizing an expanded sense of self of this kind is an important, and possibly even an essential, ingredient in human flourishing at both the individual and social levels (a normative claim)." Slater goes on to argue that the differences in their respective accounts of oneness arise primarily from differences in their metaphysical commitments and epistemological theories but that both have important insights to offer "about the relationship between religious faith and the widespread human longing for happiness and a sense of wholeness."

James is well known for insisting that religion is primarily a practical as opposed to theoretical affair with the basically therapeutic aim of providing happiness—understood not hedonically but in terms of human well-being or flourishing. This helps us understand his deep study and broad use of psychology and why he saw this as essential for addressing the question of the nature and role of religion in human life. His research and reflection led him to conclude that religion plays an important role in human happiness (a claim supported by a great deal of contemporary empirical research), that this is the result of people achieving a proper relationship with an "unseen order" or a transcendent higher power that is concerned about human happiness, and that these shared features of religion are equally present in and accessible through a variety of different traditions and

experiences. The nature of the proper relation between the self and the transcendent brings us to James's conception of oneness; he thought what is needed is to identify with a higher "wider self" that incorporates the transcendent within the everyday or ordinary self. This is where James parts company with those who insist on a strict naturalism; he defended a limited appeal to the supernatural. As Slater is careful to note, though, his defense of piecemeal supernaturalism is made indirectly, on the basis of the practical importance such beliefs have in the actual lives of religious people.

Dewey argued for a wholly naturalistic conception of faith on pragmatic grounds: in terms of its power to unify the self and to strengthen commitment to a set of secular moral values and ideals. He sought to locate such faith in the territory between traditional religious belief and militant atheism by rejecting what he took to be their common focus on supernaturalism. In other words, he sought to shear supernatural claims from religion but retain what he rightly saw as the power religion has to give unity, shape, meaning, and moral direction to life. For Dewey religious faith is the expression of a strong commitment to worthy ideal ends. Such a commitment takes as its object a not-wholly-specified and open-ended moral vision, which stands in place of traditional theistic teachings about God. Dewey claimed this secular faith has the power to bring unity to the self, to connect the self with the rest of humanity and ultimately with the rest of the world. This is a sketch of the nature and function of Dewey's ideal of oneness between the self and other people, creatures, and things.

One profound challenge for Dewey's ideal, ironically, concerns the pragmatic force of his secular substitute for God. As Slater insightfully notes, "an idea of God all by itself does not plausibly have the power that Dewey wants to ascribe to it, any more than the idea of Batman all by itself could frighten criminals or make a large city a safer place to live." Just as James's defense of piecemeal supernaturalism tends to leave confirmed naturalists underwhelmed and perhaps bemused, Dewey's secular God will strike most religiously inclined people as hollow and uninspiring; Dewey promises a great show and sets an impressive stage, but in the end no one shows up

to perform the main act. This by no means implies that his or James's view is without considerable merit, insight, or force. Slater's comparative study makes clear that they have much to teach us and that among the most interesting and powerful shared feature of both James's and Dewey's writings on faith and human flourishing is the critical role that conceptions of oneness play in their respective accounts.

Professor Cho Geung Ho provides our next contribution, "The Self and the Ideal Human Being in Eastern and Western Philosophical Traditions: Two Types of 'Being a Valuable Person,'" which offers a far-ranging exploration of cultural differences in terms of two contrasting conceptions of the relationship between individuals and their societies: the culture of individualism, which is the cultural type dominant in North America, Oceania, and Northern Europe, and the culture of collectivism, which is dominant in East Asian countries. Professor Cho argues that these alternative conceptions of the relationship between individuals and their societies have led to different concepts of selfhood and worldview, and to contrasting schemes of personal character and behavior among those raised and living within these respective cultures.

Professor Cho pursues two primary lines of arguments in his contribution. First, he maintains that the cultural differences just sketched between Western individualism and East Asian collectivism have their ideological roots in liberalism and Confucianism, respectively. Second, he seeks to show that Western liberalism and East Asian Confucianism develop and advocate characteristic and contrasting ideals for being a human being. These contrasting ideals in turn lead to different accounts of what is valuable in life and different conceptions of what constitutes a good person in each of these two cultural spheres.

In arguing that the culture of individualism offers the philosophical underpinnings of Western liberalism, Professor Cho defends the very strong claim that such a liberal point of view "is a system of thought that attempts to find human ontological significance in the individuality of persons who are independent and have clear boundaries from one

another." He further claims that such a system of thought entails an eliminative reductionism in regard to social phenomenon resulting in the view that "society is no more than an aggregate of independent and equal individuals." In stark contrast, Professor Cho claims that collectivism provides the dominant character of East Asian societies. In this case, the correlate of Western liberalism is Confucianism, "a theoretical system whose goal is to find human ontological significance in the sociality of a person." Drawing upon a particular interpretation of the Confucian self, Professor Cho asserts that persons exist within Confucian societies only in terms of their social relations; "outside of such relations, the person loses her very ontological significance." This seems to imply not only that there is no person apart from social relationship but also that society is not an "aggregate of independent and equal individuals" but a collection of instantiated social relationships.

The contrast between Western liberalism and East Asian Confucianism supports and generates a range of differences in their respective understandings of what a human being is and what the ideal human being might be. According to Professor Cho one important difference that connects views about what a person is and can be concerns whether human beings are stable entities or variable beings. The former seems to be the view that human beings have fixed and unchanging characteristics, while the latter is that each human being "is in a constant process of changing." The precise meaning of these alternatives is not altogether clear, but at the very least the former seems to imply that people are destined to live out a particular, preassigned character and personality in the course of their lives, while the latter highlights the ongoing challenge of developing and improving oneself in the quest to realize an ideal of human goodness.

Western liberalism conceives of each and every person as free and the bearer of rights, a view that engenders and prizes attitudes such as personal independence and autonomy and focuses on the individual person's inner qualities. Professor Cho argues that this leads to more self-centered psychological and behavioral characteristics that emphasize individual uniqueness and independent



action. East Asian Confucianism understands individuals in terms of their particular social relationships and Confucian societies generate and prize attitudes such as caring and harmony. As a consequence, such collectivist societies highlight and advocate emotions such as compassion, sympathy, and a sense of shame, which support and engender the building of interpersonal relationships.

Professor Cho explores other dimensions of the individualistic (Western liberal) and collectivist (East Asian Confucian) ideals he describes and concludes by discussing the degree to which such cultural differences determine one's conception of what is valuable in life and what constitutes a good person. It would of course be wrong to assume that one's cultural context determines one's values and ideals; some born and raised in Confucian cultures are more individualistic and some born in Western liberal cultures are more collectivist in orientation and action, and "Cultural differences only reflect average differences between cultures." Nevertheless, the cultural differences Professor Cho has identified, analyzed, and discussed are real and significant.

In his concluding remarks, Professor Cho poses the question of the future of the individualist and collectivist ideals he has explored. In an increasingly global and interconnected world, where ideas, values, and practices flow more quickly and widely around the world, one might be inclined to believe that such cultural differences will be mitigated over time, as cultures increasingly blend into one another and "converge somewhere in the middle." This is surely one possibility, but other scenarios are equally in play; for example, one or another of the two ideal types might absorb or come to dominate the other. Alternatively, societies that represent one or the other of the two ideals might hold more tightly to their distinctive ways of life or, perhaps, individuals or groups within one or another cultural type might choose or adopt or adapt the alternative view and make it their own.

In "Hallucinating Oneness: Is Oneness True or Just a Positive Metaphysical Illusion?," Owen Flanagan begins by noting some recent arguments, declarations, and initiatives dedicated to the goal

of achieving what Pope Francis called a "global ecological conversion," in which "the oneness and indivisibility of the natural, social, and spiritual realms is fully recognized and then acted ('make-believe') in no-self, and that it is even better, morally good, to hallucinate no-self, and then to live as if the hallucination was true." Embracing no-self is necessary if one is to successfully live the kind of life that such a view seems to imply. The question, though, is whether one needs the reasons provided by the truth of the metaphysical view in order to generate and sustain the ethical life with which it is aligned.

Things are more complicated even than this for, as Flanagan notes, there are many different conceptions of oneness even within Buddhism. He describes five possible interpretations of Buddhist-like oneness, with each making a stronger or weaker claim for metaphysical identity or connection between self and world. (Even the weakest of these, care oneness, which holds that we "naturally care ... about the weal and woe of others," works to undermine self-centeredness, offering what we might describe as a "less myself" rather than "no-self" view.) None of these five, though, provide what is needed to support a life of compassion and loving kindness, for none entails that "my well-being is ONE with the fate of the universe." This highly robust form of oneness, what Flanagan tags as ONENESS\*, is characteristic of religious views that link a metaphysical view of oneness with a heroic obligation to care for all the world. A question remains: Would it be good to hallucinate one's way to such a view and be able to live such a life?

Flanagan gives several examples where believing in views one deems false or highly likely to be false seems to have nothing but upside, and he notes that work in contemplative neuroscience and renewed research on hallucinogens at several leading medical centers (as part of their whole life treatment of terminally ill patients) appear to offer evidence in support his view. Yet it is important to appreciate the radical nature of his proposal, which, as he makes clear, goes beyond the ethics of belief (or right to believe) espoused by people like Clifford or James. Flanagan is proposing an existentially more strident alternative. At the very

least, Flanagan's bold excursion challenges the traditional linkage between metaphysics and ethics and presses us to consider the possibility that the latter should inform or at least influence the former. This line of argument might lead one to think more about, and draw upon, Freud's helpful distinction between illusions and delusions.

According to Freud, an illusion differs from a simple error in two ways: illusions are derived from human wishes and are not necessarily contrary to reality (though they can be). More importantly, they are beneficial to oneself and those around one. In contrast, it is part of the essence of delusions that they conflict with reality and prove harmful to oneself and others. Freud was an avid advocate of the power of art and its role in good human lives, and of course art is a clear example of an edifying illusion. By contrast, Freud considered religion an infantile and largely debilitating illusion best banished from awareness or rendered impotent in ordering and motivating our beliefs and actions.

Now there are reasons, some along the lines provided by Flanagan, to take issue with Freud's view. But if we are to save religion or versions of the oneness hypothesis from being delusions, we need to ground them at least to some extent in reality. Perhaps the best illusions will always involve some connection to actual states of affairs and will enlarge, extend, or embellish a feature or features of the world in ways that preserve some sense of reality within a symbolic or metaphoric expression that conduces to the human good. Perhaps even our wildest hallucinations (like all acts of imagination) can't but be grounded at some level in our experience of the real world. Or perhaps we should simply not remain tethered to the world but embrace metaphysical hallucinations, according to which "the shape of reality and the structure of values are envisioned in a fantastical but entirely appealing and transformative way." Whether such are good or bad may depend more or simply on the range of their application and the nature of the good they provide and not whether or to what degree they are connected to actual states of affairs.

One common theme across the contributions just discussed is that self-centeredness can interfere

with a person's having such a more expansive conception of the self, or experiencing oneness. This continues in "Episodic Memory and Oneness," where Jay Garfield, Shaun Nichols, and Nina Strohminger discuss how Buddhism has traditionally tried to undermine "egocentricity," or the tendency to focus on oneself. Their contribution begins by outlining the views of the eighth-century Buddhist philosopher Śāntideva on moral progress.

Śāntideva notes that before one has realized the emptiness of the self (and, indeed, of all phenomena) one's "cognitive and conative states are still pervaded by an instinctive ego-grasping that she or he nonetheless knows—at a more reflective level—to be deluded." Put another way, coming to an inferential or "merely cognitive" understanding of the truth of no-self and the emptiness of all phenomena is by itself insufficient to dislodge one from egocentricity. The latter is only possible through direct realization or immediate awareness of these truths, after which one can start to give up the idea that one matters more than others and begin to see oneself as part of a greater whole. The process begins with an aspiration to see the world as it really is, and only ends when one directly experiences it as such.

Garfield, Nichols, and Strohminger go on to argue that at the heart of ego-centricity is a particular form of memory—namely, episodic memory or memory of experiences. "It's widely thought that when a person remembers an experience, she remembers the experience as having happened to her. Theorists in both Eastern and Western traditions maintain that episodic memory involves representing an event as having happened to one's self. The memory has to present the experience as having happened to me." They note the prevalence of this idea in thinkers ranging from Thomas Reid, James Mill, and William James, on the one hand, to such Indian philosophers as Uddyotakara (of the Nyaya school) and Dignāga (a Buddhist), on the other, before pointing out that "there are within the Buddhist tradition conceptual resources for understanding episodic memory in the absence of self or of self-consciousness"—for example, in the teachings of Candrakīrti and Śāntideva in India and Tsongkhapa in Tibet. This is because one can think of an organism-centered egocentricity, as

opposed to a self-centered egocentricity. Rats, plausibly, have organism-centered egocentricity, including egocentric spatial memory and recollection; representations are relative to the position of the rat as an organism, even without having any representation of the rat as a self. So even though episodic or experiential memory may inevitably be egocentric, this may not run afoul of the view that there is no self, because `Buddhists, like those in many other philosophical traditions, reject the idea that the organism is the self."

The problem, then, is not egocentricity, but rather how the self is interjected into memory during the process of recollection. "The real problem posed by experience memory ... is that when we reflect on our experiences—something rats can't do—we naturally represent the experiences as having happened to the self ... as an experience that happened to me." Buddhists, of course, hone in on this problem and recommend that we rid ourselves of the illusion of the self. But is this possible? Here, Garfield, Nichols, and Strohming draw on empirical studies suggesting that it is indeed possible to recall experiences without identifying with them (that is, thinking of them as having happened to oneself) under certain conditions, and suggest that there may be legitimacy to the classical Buddhist strategies to rid one of the notion of a self—for example, through analysis and meditation. However, more recent and targeted work on Tibetan monks suggests a potential stumbling block: despite denying the reality of the self and saying that this realization helped them cope with death, these advanced Buddhist practitioners nonetheless showed great fear of death and pronounced selfishness in wanting to extend their own lives, especially when compared to Christians and Hindus. Garfield, Nichols, and Strohming try to explain this unexpected empirical result by highlighting the stubborn recalcitrance of identity in episodic memory and the sustained effort required to overcome it, using examples drawn from autobiographies of advanced Tibetan practitioners to illustrate the point. They conclude that, "although it might be possible to have experience memories without the sense of personal identity, this seems to be a

remarkably difficult feat to accomplish in an enduring way."

Several of the essays just discussed advert to notions of relational or collective selves as being ways by which to think of oneness, or more expansive notions of the self. This theme continues in "Confucius and the Superorganism," where Hagop Sarkissian articulates a particular sense of oneness that he finds operative in early Confucian thought. It is a sense of oneness that, he argues, is accessible to many persons today, as accepting it requires no commitment to any demanding metaphysical or spiritual views. It is not a sense of oneness with all of humanity, let alone with all the creatures under the sky or all the elements of the cosmos. Instead, it is a sense of oneness that stems from the existence of large, coherent, and interconnected social networks.

Sarkissian takes as his starting point a passage in the *Analects* suggesting that the dao of the founding sage kings of the Zhou Dynasty (mythical heroes long since dead) remains embedded within the people of Confucius's home state of Lu (the cultural inheritor of the Zhou). Drawing on this and other passages, Sarkissian claims that the people of the state of Lu comprise a latent superorganism—a term he borrows from social and natural sciences. However, this superorganism remains scattered, disorganized, and unrealized, for it lacks a central node through which it may become organized and coherent. Confucius plays precisely this role, facilitating the revival of the Zhou superorganism by threading it together. Confucius both is constituted by the larger Zhou superorganism (in the sense of being embedded, shaped, and connected with it) and constitutes it in turn (by being a central node through which its culture, practices, and ethos flow).

The superorganism, then, consists of a large social network, including all the connections and ties within it. The nodes of the network are the individual selves, and constitute both particular points upon which the forces of the larger network impinge and particular points from which various forces emanate. These forces can be understood as behaviors, norms, and information, as well as moods, dispositions, and other forms of affect. They

spread from one node to another (also known as dyadic spread), but also continue to influence other nodes several links away (also known as hyperdyadic spread). Sarkissian relates these ideas back to some central passages in other key Confucian texts such as the *Daxue* (or Great Learning). He also argues that the classical Confucian concept of *de*, which refers to the particular ways in which individuals influence others in their midst through noncoercive, effortless ways, can be fruitfully compared to the ways in which nodes influence one another in the networks within which they're embedded.

Sarkissian argues that this helps us understand the great importance placed on the ruler in early Confucian thought. He points out that "one of the fundamental axioms of network theory is that the opportunities and constraints of any particular node—the degree to which it is both susceptible to network effects and susceptible of affecting the network—hinges on its position within the network." The ruler, being at the center of the superorganism, is positioned to have enormous effects on it, and so the power of the ruler to shape the polity (as emphasized in several early Confucian texts) can be explained by his central position, from which he had tremendous potency. A ruler's *de* influences his senior ministers, who in turn affect their subordinates, engendering a resonant chain that would extend out to villages and clans. Through his own personal excellence, and owing to his centrality, the ruler would thus bind the network together.

Sarkissian concludes by suggesting the utility in thinking of oneself as a node of influence on one's own network, and the importance of minding the ways in which one might be both influenced by it while also being a source of influence within it. A paradigmatic way of influencing others is, of course, through discrete, volitional actions. However, this corresponds to a very narrow conception of agency and a very strict and unrealistic conception of the boundaries between individuals. A more expansive notion suggests it is naïve to think that influence consists merely in such acts. Instead, influence across networks occurs automatically and effortlessly; one cannot be a

node without shaping the network to some extent or other, even while being subject to influence in turn.

The relationship between death and oneness is explored again in the following chapter. In "Death, Self, and Oneness in the Incomprehensible Zhuangzi," Eric Schwitzgebel portrays the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi as having an "incomprehensible" view, that is, a view so loaded with contradiction that it defies coherent, rational interpretation. Schwitzgebel's Zhuangzi is a philosopher who openly shares his confusions and shifting opinions, inviting us to join him as he plunges into wonder and doubt, including wonder and doubt about what constitutes the boundaries of the self.

On the question of death, Schwitzgebel argues that Zhuangzi embraces three inconsistent ideas: (1) that living out one's full life span is a good thing and preferable to dying young, (2) that living out one's full life span is not preferable to dying young, and (3) that we cannot know whether living out one's full life span is preferable to dying young. All three of these views appear to be advocated more than once in the text, and although there are various ways in which they might be reconciled (including attributing the relevant passages to different authors who separately contributed to the text we now know as the *Zhuangzi*), Schwitzgebel argues that the passages have a similarity of voice, style, and vision. Although when reading most of the great philosophers in history it makes sense to attempt to render passages consistent with one another when possible, even if superficially they seem to conflict, this interpretative principle should not, Schwitzgebel says, be extended to the particular case of Zhuangzi. Both the content of the text and facts about style and presentation suggest that if any philosopher is OK with expressing contradictory views in different passages, it should be Zhuangzi. Schwitzgebel recommends that we relish, rather than attempt to resolve, Zhuangzi's inconsistency.

One advantage of this interpretive approach is that it allows the reader to take Zhuangzi's sometimes radical-seeming claims at face value, without having to tame them to render them consistent with his more moderate-seeming claims—

and also without treating Zhuangzi's radical claims as fixed dogmas. (Interpreted as such, they might be indefensible.) We can instead treat the radical ideas as "real possibilities" worth entertaining, without taking those possibilities too seriously. For example, one of the many quirky sage-like figures in Zhuangzi's text speculates that after his death he might become a mouse's liver or a bug's arm. Schwitzgebel interprets this as a humorous, colorful way of imagining that after one's bodily death one might find one's consciousness continuing in some other form, perhaps in some other part of nature. Even without positive evidence for such continuation, we can entertain it as a real possibility. And doing so might help us break out of our ordinary assumptions, creating a more vivid and skeptical sense of the possibilities.

Schwitzgebel's portrayal of Zhuangzi feeds into the oneness hypothesis as follows. The ordinary reader might enter the Zhuangzi with an ordinary set of suppositions about the boundaries of the self: I begin at my birth; I end at my death; I am essentially a human being; my hands and feet are part of me but the trees and rivers and people in Yue and Chu are not part of me. Maybe the reader is hyperindividualistically committed to a picture of the self as entirely distinct from everything else, or maybe the reader is only a moderate individualist. In reading the text, the reader encounters radical possibilities presented nondogmatically, in a charming way: I might wake to find that all of what I took to be normal life was in fact a dream; I might die and become a mouse's liver; my feet are no more or less a part of me than the people in Yue and Chu; human form is just a temporary manifestation that I should be happy enough to give away. If Zhuangzi is successful, he induces doubt and wonder, shaking the reader's commitment to individualism, opening the reader to the possibility of a more radical oneness, or at least to the possibility of a moderate view with a less sharp, fixed, and certain sense of the boundaries of the self than you had before.

"Identity fusion" is an important concept in social psychology that has been explored at length over the past decade in a series of papers by William B. Swann, Jr., and collaborators. In "Identity Fusion: The Union of Personal and Social Selves," Sanaz

Talaifar and Swann synthesize this work along with work by other authors, exploring the history of the concept of identity fusion and the social and psychological importance of feeling "fused" with a social group. Like Putlin in his chapter, Talaifar and Swann see their work as partly growing out of classic work by Henri Tajfel, which showed that even nominal or trivial group memberships tend to trigger in-group/outgroup favoritism. One feature of Tajfel's view is that there is a competition between personal identities and social identities, so that attention to one's status as an individual tends to diminish attention to one's status as a member of a social group. The essential insight behind the concept of identity fusion is that the personal and social selves need not compete. To the extent that one's personal identity is "fused" with one's social identity, attention to one can harmonize with attention to the other. High commitment to a social group needn't require subjugating personal identity; instead, in identity fusion, the personal self "remains a potent force that combines synergistically with the social self to motivate behavior."

Strongly fused people identify intensely with a social group—for example, their nation. They feel a visceral sense of union, or oneness, with that group. They tend to agree with statements like "I am one with my group" or "I have a deep emotional bond with my group." When asked to select a depiction of their relationship to their group, they will favor pictures in which a circle representing the "self" and a circle representing the "group" are largely overlapping rather than separate or minimally overlapping.

As Talaifar and Swann detail, high levels of identity fusion predict a range of behaviors, including whether a person is likely to undergo gender reassignment surgery (higher fusion with the future gender predicting follow-through with surgery) and extreme pronational behaviors, including fighting and dying for one's country. Evidence from a variety of sources, including observation of combat troops and controlled studies using hypothetical scenarios, suggests that highly fused people tend to reason more intuitively, emotionally, and spontaneously than less-fused people when acting on behalf of their group.

Talaifar and Swann suggest that part of the underlying explanation is that people who are highly fused tend to think of other members of their group as "fictive kin," thereby drawing upon well-known, evolutionarily selected psychological mechanisms that favor loyalty to and sacrifice for one's kin group.

Talaifar and Swann acknowledge that high levels of fusion are morally bivalent. High levels of fusion can lead both to heroic action and to extreme violence against outgroups. However, they conclude with the hopeful thought that people might expand the group with which they feel fused until eventually, ideally, it includes all of humanity, giving those people an emotionally powerful reason to work toward the good of everyone.

In "Tribalism and Universalism: Reflections and Scientific Evidence," Dimitri Putilin begins with the unambiguous—and disconcerting—results of research on in-group versus outgroup attitudes and behavior. Work by Henri Tajfel and others has shown that even ad hoc, arbitrarily established groups of people immediately behave preferentially toward their in-group and discriminate against the outgroup. Moreover, those within each group "expected outgroup members to behave as they did." In-group favoritism is the dominant and default form of behavior; fairness and care tend to operate only when dealing with members of one's in-group.

Many religious and philosophical teachings around the world offer a starkly opposing view, calling on us to have equal and universal concern for all others and not just for oneself and the members of one's in-group. This, in essence, is what the Golden Rule—a principle found throughout the various religious and philosophical traditions of the world—teaches. Putilin notes and is encouraged by the ubiquity of the Golden Rule, but is interested in the question of whether such advice is "plausible as a practical guide to behavior"; he seeks to answer this question by exploring some of the psychological abilities and barriers that are relevant to the effort to live according to this high-minded moral principle.

One of the first issues he examines is whether we are psychologically able truly to care about

another's needs at all: Are we capable of genuinely altruistic behavior? C. Daniel Batson's research offers compelling evidence that human beings are capable of genuine altruism. Moreover, he shows that empathic concern, by which he means the emotional state of valuing the well-being of another who is in distress, is an important source for altruistic motivation. After presenting a detailed account of Batson's work and analyzing a number of its key features, Putilin summarizes this research: "Batson and his colleagues have successfully demonstrated that, when exposed to a person in need and instructed to consider how that person is feeling, people are more likely to value his or her well-being as an end in itself, to experience the emotional state of empathic concern, and to be increasingly willing to engage in helping behavior at a cost to themselves."

In response to Batson's research, R. B. Cialdini, J. K. Maner, and others have produced research that shows that the degree of kinship or perceived similarity between an observer and observed sufferer simultaneously increases empathic concern, helping behavior, and what they called "oneness" on the part of the observer. Arguing that such "oneness" constitutes a merging of observer and observed, they conclude that "by helping the victim the participants were in fact selfishly helping themselves." If their conclusion is valid, altruism is simply an illusion masking distinctive forms of selfish behavior. Putilin shows that this conclusion is unwarranted and for a number of overlapping reasons. First, a careful examination of the research shows that observing participants recognized "both the majority of their own identity and that of the victim as unique and separate from whatever it was they shared in common." In other words, there was a sense of deep connection but no complete merging of self and other. Second, even though participants came to see the victim's problems as to some extent their own, an important asymmetry remained: "the actual victim has no choice but to deal with the aversive circumstances in which she finds herself, the potential helper (that is, the participant) has the ability to walk away from the problem." Such asymmetry would not persist in cases of genuine merging between self and other.

While Putlin shows why we should reject some of the conclusions of the advocates of oneness, he maintains that they make a compelling case for the role of a sense of interdependence or oneness and care, for "although the motivation produced when we feel empathic concern for another is altruistic—that is, focused on increasing their well-being, rather than attaining some benefit for oneself—such motivation is most likely to arise when we are exposed to the suffering of another with whom we are interdependent: a member of the ingroup." Putlin explores a number of evolutionary advantages such a predisposition seems to offer but notes that such a disposition is neither inevitable nor ideal, since a "trait evolved under one set of conditions may become maladaptive when environmental circumstances change." In our increasingly global and interdependent world, we may need to work against our evolutionary inclinations—what Putlin calls our "disinclination to altruism with outsiders"—which is reinforced by a "misguided pragmatism" concerning our interests.

To address this, Putlin draws upon the work of William James, whose ideas are insightfully discussed by Michael R. Slater in chapter 10 of the present work. Specifically, James argued that our degree of closeness with others not only can fluctuate significantly over time but also is something we can influence and control. We are capable of expanding our sense of connection or oneness with other people, creatures, and things, and thereby transforming our initially tribal altruism so that it embraces "more universally inclusive ends." Putlin goes on to explore a number of techniques for achieving this more inclusive sense of care, including recategorization (the changing of group boundaries) and identity fusion.

Putlin concludes his contribution by providing justification for the more expansive view of the self and more capacious feeling of care just described. Roughly, he argues for a richer account of what constitutes well-being and concludes that "altruism may not be the optimal way of amassing material fortunes, but it provides wealth of a different kind." So, in the end a life of care reflects a form of enlightened self-interest, though one, perhaps, that is supported by a goal one cannot aim at directly; we must in some sense give up caring about a

narrowly construed conception of the self and genuinely care for others in order to nurture and enjoy the goods associated with a greater self. Putlin goes on to describe how certain exemplary individuals—specifically Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.—seem to have advocated and lived in accordance with such an expanded sense of self or oneness and its corresponding imperative to care for all the world. The encouraging implication of his analysis and discussion of our psychological resources and limitations is "that the gulf between ourselves and ... exceptional individuals ... may not be as unbridgeable as it appears at first glance: it may be one of degree, rather than kind."

In "Two Notions of Empathy and Oneness," Justin Tiwald explores two forms of empathy and two conceptions of oneness and, drawing upon the writings of two neo-Confucian philosophers, relates these to the moral ideal of seeing oneself as part of a larger whole and the role this might play in supporting moral motivation and other-directed moral concern. The first type of empathy, in which one reconstructs the thoughts and feelings someone else has or might have, is "other-focused" or "imagine-other" empathy. The second type, "self-focused" or "imagine-self" empathy, involves imagining how one would think or feel were one in another person's place. Tiwald explains that the Song dynasty neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi (1130-1200) insisted that other-focused empathy is more virtuous or "benevolent" (ren 4E) than self-focused empathy, because self-focused empathy tends to undermine the sense of oneness with others, whereas Dai Zhen (1724-77) defended the superiority of self-focused empathy because, on the one hand, he rejected Zhu's metaphysical beliefs and, on the other, he relied instead on human psychology and anthropology as the basis for ethical concern.

Tiwald begins by noting that Zhu Xi understood "being one with a larger whole" in terms of "forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things" and believed that contributing to and caring about "widespread lifeproduction" make us one with other people, creatures, and things, and thus warrant seeing oneself as one with them. Tiwald is careful to make clear that for Zhu, it

was by virtue of caring and contributing in this way that we are one with the people, creatures, and things of the world. Zhu explicitly rejected subtly different views, for example, that such caring and contributing are a natural consequence of being metaphysically one or that it is some unanalyzable brute fact and intuition.

Moreover, Tiwald explains that Zhu believed attaining a proper state of oneness "requires eliminating attachment to one's own interests as such, a primarily subtractive project directed at oneself, rather than the more constructive, bidirectional project of building relationships in which one becomes more attached to others in light of the fact that contributing to their well-being tends to enhance one's own."

Like Zhu Xi, Dai Zhen rejected more mystical accounts of oneness and believed we attain oneness by contributing to the widespread production of life. But Dai insisted that the role we play in nurturing life requires a special sense of mutual identity—"mutual nourishment" and "mutual growth." In contrast to the kind of self-abnegation advocated by thinkers like Zhu Xi, he insisted that we are united with others through mutually beneficial relationships. Dai also rejected the metaphysical picture underlying Zhu's notion of oneness, which held that oneness requires the recognition of a fundamental identity between our nature and the nature of others. On Zhu's view, oneness was in some sense a discovery, an insight into the underlying oneness already there in the universe; for Dai, oneness is an achievement, something we come to through sustained and concerted efforts at developing and embracing relationships of mutual fulfillment, seeing ourselves as contributing to life-production more generally, and coming to identify ourselves with the world and our inextricably shared welfare.

Tiwald next notes that neo-Confucians were interested in the relationship between their core virtue of benevolence (ren) and a certain kind of empathic state described in ancient texts as shu, a term and concept associated with Confucius's formulation of the Golden Rule: "Do not do to others as one wouldn't want done to oneself." While shu was widely regarded by neo-Confucians

as the proper method for cultivating benevolence, it was also seen as falling short of benevolence itself. Zhu Xi believed that the principal difference between shu and the full virtue of benevolence is that when we rely on shu, we need to make the effort of comparing others to ourselves in order to elicit right feelings and motivations, whereas the fully benevolent need not make such effort or refer to themselves; their care for others flows freely, unencumbered by thoughts of themselves. A number of leading psychologists focusing on empathy, such as C. Daniel Batson, Ezra Stotland, and Martin Hoffman, distinguish these two forms of empathy using paired terms such as imagine-self and imagine-other or self-focused and other-focused empathy, and their research provides solid empirical support for this conceptual distinction.

In opposition to Zhu, Dai advocates self-focused empathy. Tiwald characterizes one of Dai's most important arguments by saying, "If we really want to use empathy to understand and be motivated to act upon the interests of others, we need to simulate not just their first-order desires for things like food and shelter, but their broader-scope and often higher-order desires that their lives go well in various respects." Since Zhu strongly implies that dwelling in this way on one's own needs and interests will undermine the effort to effectively adopt another's point of view, Tiwald offers a number of responses consistent with, and in defense of, Dai's view. First, he notes that at times "our own needs and interests converge with those of others, because we want what they want." Second, as Martin Hoffman has shown, while we often learn to empathize through perspective-taking, empathy can become automatic, and so it need not rely on adopting another point of view at all. Tiwald summarizes and concludes his essay by expressing the hope that his description and analysis of two types of oneness and empathy in light of Zhu Xi and Dai Zhen's philosophy are sufficient "to elucidate the tremendous importance of these connections between feelings of oneness and the two kinds of empathy, and to show that there are historical resources that address these issues with great subtlety, subtlety unmatched by contemporary treatments of the issue."

\*\*\*



Among the most fundamental and important points to be learned from this collection of essays is that one's conception of oneself is not something that simply can be discovered, like the orbit of a planet or the mass of a stone, but is instead the product of a range of biological and psychological facts about the needs and capacities of human beings in combination with culture, imagination, and reflective endorsement. There are many alternative conceptions of the self to be found in philosophy, religion, and psychology and there are yet more to be crafted; among these are various conceptions of a more expansive self connected with the oneness hypothesis. Until recently, no one has sought to press the more general point about the open nature of the self or explore the implications of conceptions of oneness in a careful and systematic manner, with the aim of ascertaining whether such alternatives might prove more conducive to human well-being, their happiness, satisfaction, and fulfilment, and thereby perhaps more attractive as personal and cultural ideals.

This volume is part of a larger, ongoing project, [Eastern and Western Conceptions of Oneness, Virtue, and Happiness](http://www6.cityu.edu.hk/ceacop/Oneness/index.html) (<http://www6.cityu.edu.hk/ceacop/Oneness/index.html>), supported by the John Templeton Foundation. The goal of the larger project is to explore what different fields of endeavor look like when pursued with a view about the self as organically and inextricably interrelated to other people, creatures, and things as opposed to proceeding, as they often do, with the assumption of hyperindividualism. We believe this will constitute a paradigm shift or at least an important and productive disruption to many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. It seems eminently clear that as a matter of fact, throughout almost all of their history and much of their prior evolution, human beings have existed and understood themselves as deeply embedded in personal, familial, social, and cultural contexts, and as systematically related to other creatures and things—in other words, as in some sense "one" with the rest of the world. Equally clear, as a matter of fact, human beings are inextricably embedded in complex relationships with other people, creatures, and things; no human being exists or can clearly conceive of herself

apart from these different parts of the environment. One thought motivating this far-ranging exploration of the oneness hypothesis is that our most pressing moral, political, social, and spiritual problems often arise from trying to conceive of ourselves as wholly distinct and separate from the rest of the world and to live as if there were a sharp moral and metaphysical boundary between ourselves and other people, creatures, and things. To accept hyperindividualism as self-evident, metaphysically well-founded, or psychologically inevitable is simply untrue; indeed, as has been argued in this introduction and shown in many of the contributions to this volume, to deny certain senses of oneness—for example, to deny that we are partly constituted by our relationships to the other people, creatures, and things of this world—is not only to have a bad view of the self but also to have a false one. <>

[Unity and Aspect](#) by Andrew Haas [Orbis phaenomenologicus, Studien, Königshausen & Neumann, 9783826064500]

What is first philosophy today? In *Unity and Aspect*, the questioning begins with a new (old) approach to metaphysics: being is implied; it is implied in everything that is; it is an implication. But then, the history of philosophy must be rethought completely — for being implies unity, and time, and the other of time, namely, aspect. The effect on the self and on self-understanding is radical: we can no longer be thought as human beings; rather, reaching back to the ancient Greek name for us (phos), Haas seeks to rearticulate us as illuminating, as illuminating ourselves and others, and as implicated in our illuminations. *Unity and Aspect* then, provokes us to problematize words and deeds, thoughts and things — and this means reconsidering our assumptions about history and survival, meaning and universality, sensibility and intimacy, knowledge and intentionality, action and improvisation, language and truth. And if Haas suspends the privilege enjoyed by our traditional philosophical concepts, this has implications for fields as diverse as ontology and phenomenology, ethics and

aesthetics, education and linguistics, law and politics.

And so unity too. And aspect. Unity and aspect, like a kind of discovery, although maybe missed, and for years, even centuries. In a way that would, nowadays, probably not be called a science. But something that might have previously been named first philosophy or metaphysics, or at least just philosophy, if there is such a thing.

So begins Haas' [Unity and Aspect](#), a work of first philosophy, however much this approach has fallen out of favor. And yet, we do not think this is an argument against the work, but far more for it, as the problems of first philosophy have neither "gone away" nor been resolved. Rather, if the problems of "being as such" or "first causes," or even "wisdom," have been cast aside, that is perhaps symptomatic of our times, and should in no way stop us from engaging with a work such as this one, however unfashionable, irritating or difficult. And if contemporary philosophy has not been able to advance much in this direction, it is clearly not for lack of trying; on the contrary, there is probably more philosophical activity than ever before, although its scope (if it looks at first philosophy at all) tends towards arguing for what first philosophy is or is not, how it has been surpassed or not, and thus relegated to questions of fixing and maintaining its proper categories: right or wrong, analytic or continental, ancient or modern. Then the problem is that remaining true to what counts as important may in fact prevent philosophy from truly advancing.

Indeed, the reader might wonder, having picked up this book, why first philosophy is overlooked today? Why bother, if the question of "being" is seen as solved, unimportant, or a sign of that which is metaphysical or religious, mad or seriously skewed? But another question begs itself: if we do not grapple with first philosophy, is it because it is a bigger problem than we admit? And if the problem is ignored, perhaps even willfully, the reader might wonder: is philosophy today a willing advocate in its own demise? Has the Queen of the sciences been dragged from her throne, while we weren't looking, in order that we might finally stop asking the same questions? For it seems that if we were to stop

asking such questions, we might not only rid ourselves of the original problems of first philosophy, but rid ourselves of philosophy, full-stop.

In this context, Haas' [Unity and Aspect](#) is unique, at least today: for it returns to the most essential of questions, to the meaning of being, and it simply asks the reader to read. With this in mind, and to avoid getting caught up in further arguments about what first philosophy really is (for such arguments should neither be mistaken for first philosophy, nor prejudice us against it; and would perhaps be more appropriately considered at the end, rather than at the beginning), we think it may be helpful to consider both the form and matter of the text.

In terms of form, [Unity and Aspect](#) is arranged into thirty-seven sections, many of which deal with entirely new discoveries—such as implication (being's way of being), aspect (and time), suspension, survival (and history), intuition and intention and intimation, illumination and suggestion. The reader is thus introduced to a new vocabulary and new concepts through which to interpret the problem of being and metaphysics, even philosophy as a whole. In this way, each section may be seen as a small window, which propels the argument from a different vantage point, although every section is nonetheless deeply connected to the larger text. Because of the nature of this reflective and refractive progression, the reader will find that some sections overlap, or concepts and examples return in order to reorient us and aid our entry into an unfamiliar or recently introduced concept.

In addition to this larger structure, there is the question of style. Unity and Aspect is composed in a way that defies a "natural" or "simplistic" reading. This denatured effect means that the writing defies the assertoric or apodictic modes of science (Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A76/B101). The mode is what we might loosely term the "optative" or "subjunctive." Certainly, it is opposed to the "indicative" mood (that is, of facts, stating what "is"). Additionally, Haas resists the use of academic footnotes, proper names, citations, etc. But we do not wish readers to think this is a purely grammatical exercise, or some kind of "literary

game"—for it is none of those things, and if it has a model, it is the rich philosophical tradition of using other modes of expression to say that which is most resistant to "explication," or "expressability," that is, to imply what cannot simply be stated. The extent to which this way of implying is philosophically necessary, rather than for some purely personal reason, can probably only be decided in relation to the work as a whole.

In its uncompromising approach and resistance to scientism, *Unity and Aspect* recalls the mode of Plato's dialogues, Nietzsche's aphorisms, and Heidegger's later essays, although it is unlike any of these. The point then, is not whether Haas actually writes in this or that mood, but what it means to write in a non-assertoric way, that is, a way which conjures up the problem of implication (and being as implying and implied). *Unity and Aspect* is thus by necessity, an implicative text, and one in which form and matter are fundamentally intertwined. To this effect, Haas, for the most part, employs the English habit of expressing possibility and probability, ambiguity and uncertainty, and that which is problematic, through modal verbs, such as might, may, could, can, would, will, shall, should, were. The gathering doubt and ambiguity, the need for the reader to go through the text not once, but twice, even multiple times, the lack of a scientific ground in plain sight, arises partly from Haas' extended use of the conditional, and his sensitivity to the implied in language. And whether the author intends it or not, the grammar of implication, or what the author calls "problematization," makes the experience of reading the work not simply philosophical—for if everything that "is" is only implied—the reader is forced into a state of sensory dizziness—what Haas names "suspension," as presence becomes subject to implication: "if what we seek to illuminate does not come to presence, but is only implied, our illumination thereof may have to be suspended as well, whether we continue with such a task or not". And it is soon clear that we as readers must hang on, if only for the sake of hanging on, as we too, are one of those beings who are "suspended," and "hung or hung-up," whether we agree or not, or whether we side with Lady Bracknell or Gwendolen:

Lady Bracknell. I wish he would arrive at some conclusion. Gwendolen. This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last. (Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 3.142-3)

Indeed, the mode of "implied" language is perhaps ironically the most explicit way *Unity and Aspect* can sensitize the reader to the problems at stake in first philosophy. For Haas, this not only means resisting the idea of being as a simple unity, an essence or substance, unit, or as presence, or presence-absence; but to consider at every turn the way in which such problems have been "explicated" or "solved," simplified or reduced in the history of philosophy, and continue to manifest themselves in the language of metaphysics and the arts and sciences. In order to understand, for example, how "presence" dominates the discourse of metaphysics, and every science, [Unity and Aspect](#) proceeds by excising, as much as it can, the commonest markers of presence in the text. Thus, nothing in the text "is"—rather, only "implied." And this economy functions just as strongly in Haas' argument. Assertions and apodictions are made by "making present"—by first insisting that something "is" so. With this in mind, the reader will discover a text that is strangely un-assertive, that does not make a ground of clear and present discoveries, nor insist on things being in a certain or uncertain way. *Unity and Aspect* thus appears as a work which is set out as a problem, one which has barely begun, and whose labor stretches out before us. Haas' attempt to withhold what is, in order to demonstrate that which is implied, namely, implication, is a deft philosophical and linguistic achievement. It is also one which is bound to goad some readers, alienate others, and perhaps ignite among the few a renewed interest in the questions of metaphysics. Among such readers then, [Unity and Aspect](#) may work to suspend what we think we know about first philosophy, or about "being as such," and lead us to think again about the unresolved and the irresolvable—not just being, but also unity, time and aspect—and their relation to Haas' first philosophy of implication.

[Unity and Aspect](#) ends with an extended appendix, which is a series of quotes, ruminations, questions and problems posed. This is a fascinating appendage which the reader should find of great

interest, not only to understand "the thinking of thought," but also to follow the author in his early questioning and influences, his way towards thinking being, unity, time and aspect—as well as their modes of implication, illumination and suspension. We think it helpful to dip into this after reading the text, for it is a Benjaminian Arcades of sorts, which provides a fragmentary but no less revelatory look (as a painting might uncover many sketches underneath, or a writer's drafts or palimpsestic notebooks shed light on their texts) at a major work of first philosophy.

Now, in terms of matter, [Unity and Aspect](#) begins with the Greeks, with Aristotle's insight that metaphysics, as the ground of any philosophical thinking whatsoever, is the study of being—but being and unity imply one another (Metaphysics, 1003b22). This has two results: on the one hand, metaphysics must study both being and unity; on the other hand, it must study the relationship between being and unity, that is, implication. In other words, metaphysics must be not only ontology, but also henology (from the Greek, hen, unity), or onto-henology.

But for Haas, the how of being and unity is determinative for what they are. And as being and unity imply one another, it is this implying that is essential. Indeed, implying expresses the way being and unity are, and are one, a unity—as well as how each is and is one. And it is out of being and unity's way of being, that is, implied, that they can be determined to be what they are, namely, being and unity. Thus, Haas calls being and unity "implications" because they imply one another, which is what allows them to be that which they are.

But if being and unity are implications—because they are implied—what is an implication? In fact, an implication is what is neither present, nor absent. For example, the secret meaning of being is neither "presence" nor "absence"—nor is it any of the traditional understandings of being, such as existence or essence, predicate or copula, or some kind of substance (ousia or parousia or apousia, matter or form, God or the gods, mind or will, etc.). Rather, "to be" means neither "to be present" nor "to be absent." And the secret is: "being" means "implying" and "to be" means "to be implied." So

first, being's way of being ours is implied: being is not present in us, but only implied in us. And second, our way of being is implied—so when we are in the office where we work, we are implied in our offices and in our work, not simply present; and even when we are at home, we are still implied in the office and in the work. Or, like Achilles' Patroclus, we are haunted by our dead friends, the friends who are neither present, nor merely absent, but implied in our lives, and so even somehow implicated in how we live. Thus, thinking being as an implication means understanding being's way of being as implied, and understanding our way of being as implied.

Implication then—rather than presence, and/or absence—is the discovery that guides (or rather, implies) the rest of Unity and Aspect. For if being and unity imply one another, and everything that applies to being also applies to unity, then unity is an implication as well. So unity is implied in us, and our way of being one with others is our way of being implied in them. For instance, we are one with our bodies, not because we are inside them, separable or inseparable from them; and we are neither just present in our bodies, nor absent from them—rather, we are implied in our bodies. In this way, Haas' concept of implication allows us to respond to a number of classical philosophical problems: ideas (Platonic or otherwise) and concepts are not one with things, but implied (and implicated) in things; the subject or consciousness is not in the body, but implied therein; the doer is not in the deed, but only implied (and so implicated, not just "responsible") thereby; the author is not in the work, but only implied there; friends and lovers are not simply one with each other, or in one another, or through the presence of a unity in their relation, but implied in and by one another.

And yet, [Unity and Aspect](#)—as the title suggests—does not stop with being and unity. For although being is implied (no longer merely to be conceived as presence or absence), it is still a verb. All verbs, however, on the one hand, have tense (which expresses "time," past-present-future, now-then, and are studied by "chronology"). But on the other hand, all verbs also have aspect (which expresses how the action of the verb is done, whether completely or incompletely, discontinuously or

continuously, and is studied by what is here renamed "phenomenology"). In other words, although we are familiar with discussions of time (and even tense) in philosophy, Haas introduces a philosophical concept of aspect—a term usually relegated to linguistics. But what is aspect in a philosophical context? Like time, aspect is how being and unity are; it is the way in which being presents itself (as coming-to-presence or going-out-into-absence), and the way in which unity presents itself (as separability or inseparability, divisibility or indivisibility). Thus, [Unity and Aspect](#) seeks to think how being and unity, time and aspect, are implied in anything whatsoever—and this is why Haas names them "implications."

\*\*\*

As Plato then, looks for justice in the city in order to find it in the soul, Haas seeks to illuminate implications in phos in order to consider implications themselves. To this end, [Unity and Aspect](#) becomes an investigation into our way of illuminating thoughts and things, ourselves and our others, our particular situation and the universe itself—that is, our way of being and being one, our time and our aspect. And here, Haas returns to Aristotle's insight that the origin of all action (speaking and doing, thinking—even being and being one, temporally and aspectually) is improvisation understood as self-schematization (*Poetics*, 4.1448b). Thus, we are phos, the one who illuminates; but illuminating is a way of improvising, or self-schematizing.

So what is improvisation? Or, how do we self-schematize? In fact, for Haas, whether in the arts and sciences, in normal, everyday life or extraordinary situations, we improvise a way of being one in order to survive historically. We could say, more precisely, if illumination is our way of being one "theoretically," improvisation is our way of being one "practically." And this means that, not only are we implicated in our actions, but that we are one insofar as we make or do anything whatsoever. For example, using a piece of glass to get a fire going is not just the improvisation of a light or heat, or causing an effect; it is an improvisation of us, a self-schematization of phos that illuminates our way of also being one with the glass, and the fire, even somehow one with a (self-

schematizing) survival situation. But this also illuminates how the fire too, for its part, self-schematizes in its own way (being one in itself and with us, even implicated in our very survival). So on the one hand, the doer is no longer present in the deed, nor the thinker in what is thought, nor the author in the work, but rather only implied therein—which certainly causes problems for concepts of action and responsibility, cause and effect, as well as our will to assign guilt or innocence, credit or blame. On the other hand, Haas' notion of implication opens up another way of thinking about practical activity, whether in the arts or sciences, ethics or epistemology or aesthetics—that is, one no longer based in a philosophy of presence.

But how is it possible for us to improvise and illuminate ourselves and our world? It is neither because we come to presence in the world, nor because things present themselves to us; but because we are implicated. The unity of an improvised fire, for example, and the way it illuminates us (as well as things around it), implies not simply a space in which it burns, nor just a place to which it belongs—rather, it implies that which Haas calls a "situation," that is, the particular unity implied by a fire, which itself implies the unity of the "universe" (which is itself a problem). In this way, things like fires (and phos) are "universal," insofar as they are implicated "in" the universe; and their "universality" is how so (necessarily, possibly, problematically). Thus, eschewing the philosophy of presence, [Unity and Aspect](#) implies a radically different understanding of our way of being one with things, others, a situation, even the universe itself. And yet, all of this talk of implication (rather than presence and absence) is problematic as well. In fact, this may very well be the point of [Unity and Aspect](#): implication is a problem—for it suspends everything we have thought about metaphysics and the philosophical, about being and unity, time and aspect, about ourselves and others, about thinking and acting, words and deeds. Or rather, suspension is the "essence" of implication, which is what makes suspense so suspenseful. Thus, we do not simply see that which presents itself to the eye, and think that which is in the mind, and speak of that which comes to



presence in language; rather, we "intuit" what cannot be seen, and "intend" what cannot be thought, and "intimate" what cannot be said (apodictically, assertorically, problematically). Although if all these deeds, these ways of being one (temporally and aspectually), imply suspension, it is not just because they suspend the object of sight or thought or language—but us, too. And this would seem to imply that Unity and Aspect is somehow problematic as well. <>

[Neoplatonic Demons and Angels](#) edited by Luc Brisson, Seamus O'Neill, Andrei Timotin [Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, Brill, 9789004374973]

[Neoplatonic Demons and Angels](#) is a collection of studies which examine the place reserved for angels and demons not only by the main Neoplatonic philosophers, but also in Gnosticism, the Chaldaean Oracles and Christian Neoplatonism.

Contents  
List of Contributors  
Introduction  
The Daimon and the Choice of Life in Plotinus' Thought by Thomas Vidart  
The Angels in Ancient Gnosis: Some Cases by Madeleine Scopello  
Demons and Angels in the Chaldaean Oracles by Helmut Seng  
What is a Daimon for Porphyry? by Luc Brisson  
Porphyry of Tyre on the Daimon, Birth and the Stars by Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum  
Daimones in Porphyry's On the Cave of the Nymphs by Nilufer Akcay  
Evil Demons in the De Mysteriis: Assessing the Iamblichean Critique of Porphyry's Demonology by Seamus O'Neill  
Proclus' Critique of Plotinus' Demonology by Andrei Timotin  
The Angels in Proclus: Messengers of the Gods by Luc Brisson  
Ontology, Henadology, Angelology: The Neoplatonic Roots of Angelic Hierarchy by Ghislain Casas  
Dionysius the Areopagite on Angels Self-Constitution versus Constituting Gifts by Marilena Vlad  
Index

Excerpt: According to Sallustius, a Roman statesman and Neoplatonic philosopher, who composed a summary of Neoplatonic thought in the fourth century, "the wider the gap is between our nature and the first God, the more powers must be there between us and Him." Henri Dominique Saffrey has emphasised that there are two sides to this propensity in Late Neoplatonism: "First of all, the tendency to monotheism, which generates a supreme and first God, but confines it as far away as possible from the grasp of intelligence and human knowledge; this is the unknown god. Correlatively, between this inaccessible God and us, the intermediaries (secondary gods, angels, demons and heroes) multiply, but these are the agents of an ascension towards the first God." The intermediaries are theoretically necessary within the Neoplatonic theological system and their *raison d'être* directly ensues from the absolute transcendence of the first principle. A thorough understanding of their nature and function is, therefore, one of the major imperatives for the study of Neoplatonic theology.

This book, which originates from a panel on Demonology and Theurgy organized at the annual ISNS meeting in Lisbon in June 2014, aims to study the place of angels and demons in Neoplatonic thought. The topic was chosen not only because their theological significance is undeniable, but also because these beings are mutually dependent within the various Neoplatonic metaphysical systems. This book brings together eleven studies which examine in chronological order the place reserved for angels and demons not only by the main Neoplatonic philosophers (Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus), but also in Gnosticism, the Chaldaean Oracles—an essential, though still understudied ingredient in Neoplatonic thought—, Christian Neoplatonism, and especially by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, as well as by other important precursors to Neoplatonic and Christian angelology such as Philo of Alexandria.

An important reason for studying the notions of "angel" and "demon" together is that they belong both to religious and philosophical vocabularies, although demons admittedly have enjoyed a more prominent philosophical career than have the angels. As a general characterization, one could

say that “demon” (Σαίμων) designates, in the Greek religion, a kind of divinity, without specific cult and mythology, distinct from the gods and the heroes, although Σαίμων may be often understood as an equivalent term for Αεός. It can refer to fate (Μοῖρα), to revenging spirits (Erinyes), or to the souls of the dead. The semantic fluidity of the term is one of the reasons why the notion of the “demon” became an important factor for the philosophical rationalisation of religion, especially in Plato’s dialogues, but already in Pre-Socratic philosophy, and in the Pythagorean and Stoic traditions. Plato defined the “demon” as an essentially good middle-being between gods and humans (Symposium 202d–203a), as a personal tutelary being (Republic 617d–e, 620d–e, Phaedo 107d), or as an equivalent to the divine part of human soul, the νοῦς (Timaeus 90a–c). Plato’s authority and influence were enormous in Middle- and Neoplatonism to such an extent that the philosophical demonologies of Late Antiquity can be analysed as an exegesis of his texts concerning “demons.”

In Neoplatonism, with which this volume deals specifically, this attempt to interpret and explain Plato’s writings about demons is observed first in Plotinus—as shown by the study of Thomas Vidart—who tries to harmonise, notably in *Ennead* III 4 [15], a series of Platonic references to the demons (especially Republic 617d–e and Timaeus 90a–c) with the principles of his own philosophy. Plotinus’ demonology is intertwined with his theory of the soul, but Vidart shows the limits of Plotinus’ interest in demons, an attitude significantly different than that of the Later Neoplatonists.

Porphyry seems to have been the first Neoplatonic philosopher to assign demons a specific place within a complex theological system. Luc Brisson accurately defines this place by reconstructing the Porphyrian theology and by highlighting its debt to Plotinus and, of course, to Plato. Porphyry does not hesitate to use the demons to criticize popular religion, but he tried to make demonology compatible, at least in part, with philosophical religion. Porphyry’s mythological exegesis, like that developed in *De Antro Nympharum*, poses nevertheless, specific problems regarding the relationship between the demons and human souls

or the gods, and this aspect of Porphyry’s thought is explored by Nilufer Ackay. From a different perspective, Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum highlights the importance of astrology (underestimated so far) in Porphyry’s thought. Greenbaum shows how Porphyry’s astrological concerns have informed a significant part of his approach to different topics like the personal demon, the incarnation of the soul, and its choice of the way of life.

The polemical function of demonology in Neoplatonism is particularly noteworthy in Iamblichus and Proclus, as shown by Seamus O’Neill and Andrei Timotin, who focus on the criticism respectively of Porphyrian demonology by Iamblichus and of Plotinian demonology by Proclus. In Late Neoplatonism, demonology is no longer thought of only in relation to the soul, and the place of demons in the kosmos is defined according to a different theological basis. Iamblichus’ views on demons are not, however, devoid of ambiguities, as O’Neill shows, especially concerning the respective descriptions of good and evil demons in the *De mysteriis*, and given that Iamblichus denies some of the ontological and psychological grounds to which his predecessors appealed to account for how and why demons can be evil.

By analysing Proclus’ criticism of Plotinian demonology, Timotin explains why Proclus does not refer in this context to the doctrine of the undescended soul, on which Plotinus’ theory relies, and which Proclus refuted on various occasions. Timotin shows that Proclus’ strategy is related to the fundamental change in the reading order of Plato’s dialogues introduced by Iamblichus, which, in turn, increased the importance of Symposium’s demonological passage and, correspondingly, decreased the significance of Timaeus’ locus equating daimon with νοῦς.

The new functions that the demons perform in Late Neoplatonism are not unrelated to the influence of the Chaldaean Oracles, the “pagan Bible” (the appellation belongs to H.D. Saffrey) of Late Antiquity. Helmut Seng assumes the arduous task of studying the place of demons in this challenging work. He shows that in the Chaldaean Oracles, demons appear as evil beings (related to Hecate or to the Moon), which are understood to disturb

the theurgical rituals and to keep human beings close to material life. Seng also highlights the mediating function of *ovvoXeîç*, borrowed from the Symposium, and raises the question of whether these middle-beings are to be regarded as demons.

In Ancient Greece, the word “angel” (which means “messenger”) designates either a specific function of gods (especially Hermes) and humans, or a specific type of divine being, like, for instance, the psychopomps. The notion had no philosophical career prior to the post-Hellenistic period. This new usage begins only when the angels in Jewish thought are equated with Platonic *daimones*. Philo of Alexandria is probably the first to assimilate the two terms, and thus, he plays an essential role in acclimatizing the notion, borrowed from the Semitic heritage, into Hellenic culture.<sup>9</sup> The Semitic heritage (especially esoteric Judaism) also inspires the various Gnostic angelologies of Late Antiquity, and to a lesser extent was influenced by Middle- and Neoplatonism, as Madeleine Scopello convincingly shows.

In Late Antiquity, angels become a religious reality in their own right in the Greco-Roman world. They are distinct from their Jewish and Christian parallels, though perhaps not always unconnected to them.<sup>10</sup> During the same time, the philosophical life of the notion continued in the works of authors such as Cornelius Labeo, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Calcidius, and in the Chaldaean Oracles. The presence of angels in the Chaldaean Oracles is studied by Seng, who analyses their function and their analogical relationship relating to the figure of the theurgist and also questions their relation to the Platonic (good) *daimones*.

Starting with Iamblichus, the angels have a permanent presence in Late Neoplatonic theology.<sup>11</sup> Luc Brisson defines their place in Proclus’ theological system and their office on the earth through rituals performed by priests who play the role of messengers, making the gods appear to human beings, and transmitting the prayers of human beings to the gods. Ghislain Casas examines Christian Neoplatonic angelology, studying the Neoplatonic heritage in Pseudo-Dionysius’ angelology and highlighting the

differences between the latter and the angelology of Philo of Alexandria. A comprehensive study of the place of angels in Pseudo-Dionysius’ theology is offered by Marilena Vlad.

This book aims to encompass and address a wide spectrum of problems raised by the place of angels and demons in the various Neoplatonic theological systems and in related works, such as the Gnostic texts and the Chaldaean Oracles. Without pretending to have exhausted such a wide and complex subject, we hope that significant progress has been made towards understanding this essential aspect of Neoplatonic metaphysical and religious thought. We would like to extend our thanks to the General Editors, Robert Berchman and John Finamore, for accepting this volume into the series. We would also like to thank the anonymous referee for his or her insightful and helpful comments, which served to improve scholarly quality of the volume.

### The Daimon and the Choice of Life in Plotinus’ Thought by Thomas Vidart

A whole treatise is devoted by Plotinus to the nature of the *daimon*: it is the fifteenth treatise in the chronological order, entitled, *On our Allotted Daimon*. This treatise has to do with a very particular demonology which is developed out of exegetical concerns: Plotinus aims to account for the different passages that deal with the *daimon* in Plato’s work. In particular, according to the myth of Er, the soul has to choose before incarnation a *daimon* which will guide it during its existence: it does not change its *demon* during its incarnate life. This would imply, if we follow Plotinus’ understanding of the nature of the *daimon*, that one has to let the same power prevail in one’s soul throughout one’s entire existence. How could one keep one’s *daimon* during one’s entire life if this means that one is deprived of the possibility of moral improvement? The aim of this paper is to show that Plato’s statement cannot be accepted by Plotinus because of its consequences. For instance, one could not become wise because becoming wise means making the intellect be dominant in the soul, thereby changing one’s *daimon*. Thus, we have to inquire into how it is possible that the soul makes a choice in the course of life itself.



## The Nature of the daimon according to Plotinus

We first have to explain what the daimon is in Plotinus' thought. In a general manner, the daimones are characterized by their intermediary situation between the place where men are and the realm of gods. This way of describing the daimones is in particular inherited from the Symposium (202d–203a), in which Plato maintains that Eros and the other demons are intermediaries between human beings and gods. When he evokes the influence of magical incantations in the Treatise On Difficulties about the Soul II, Plotinus explains that the daimones are wont to pay attention to prayers made by people living in the sensible world. It is tempting to establish a link between this thesis and the event that Porphyry narrates in his On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books. He illustrates that Olympius of Alexandria was jealous of Plotinus in an anecdote dealing with the latter's own daimon: to explain why the different hostile practices of Olympius of Alexandria failed, Porphyry underlines the fact that Plotinus' soul was outstandingly powerful. In this way, he relates that an Egyptian priest invited Plotinus to come to the Iseion, a temple devoted to Isis in Rome, and succeeded in making Plotinus' daimon appear. The latter was in fact a god:

When the daimon was summoned to appear a god came and not a being of the daimon order, and the Egyptian said, 'Blessed are you, who have a god for your daimon and not a companion of the subordinate order.'

This anecdote suggests that the power of one's soul is the result of the rank of one's daimon. According to Porphyry, this event is important since it highlights the reason why Plotinus was interested in the question of the daimones and more precisely in the hierarchy between them. He explains that the fact that Plotinus' soul was directed towards his own daimon, which was actually a god, may account for his writing the Treatise On our Allotted Daimon:

So the companion of Plotinus was a daimon of the more god-like kind, and he continually kept the divine eye of his soul fixed on this companion. It was a reason of

this kind that led him to write the treatise 'On Our Allotted Daimon, in which he sets out to explain the differences between daimon-companions.

There is a contrast between this anecdote and the ideas that Plotinus develops in the treatise On our Allotted Daimon. We thus have to be cautious when we study the way in which Plotinus considers the manifestation of daimones: that he is interested in the effects of magical incantations does not thereby mean that according to him demons manifest outside the soul as a result of spells.

Plotinus does not discuss daimones from the perspective of theurgy, that is to say, the ritual practices that reveal the presence of deities in the world in which human beings live and enable the latter to unite with those deities. He puts the emphasis on the fact that the daimon is to be found within the soul itself. More precisely, the daimon is defined in chapter 3 of the Treatise On our Allotted Daimon as the part of the soul that is above the one that is active in the human soul:

Who, then, becomes a daimon? He who was one here too. And who a god? Certainly he who was one here. For what worked in a man leads him [after death], since it was his ruler and guide here too. Is this, then, 'the daimon 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. If the working principle is that by which we have sense-perception, the daimon is the rational principle; but if we live by the rational principle, the daimon is what is above this, presiding inactive and giving its consent to the principle which works. So it is rightly said that 'we shall choose.' For we choose the principle which stands above us according to our choice of life.

We have to notice a shift in this text: the first question concerns the kind of beings who can become daimones through reincarnation, and when he defines the demon that is mentioned in the

Phaedo (107d6–7), Plotinus refers to the one that each human being has. The daimon is not a particular power of the soul: its identity depends on the power of the soul that is the most active.

According to Plotinus, a hierarchy between the different kinds of life corresponds to the hierarchy between the different parts of the soul. Indeed, the kind of life that one has depends on the part of the soul that dominates and therefore on the position of the daimon in the soul.

The daimon thus appears as a psychological function: it is described as a power of the soul which stands just above the active power in the soul. It is not itself active, but it is dominating the power that is active. There is indeed a hierarchy between the different powers of the soul: the rational principle is, for instance, above sense-perception. What is the role of the daimon, if it is not active? It is the guide of our existence: it agrees with the power that we have chosen, but it also shows the way that has to be followed. Indeed, it leads us to adopt the kind of life that is just above the kind of life adopted at the present time.

In the following lines of chapter 3, Plotinus opposes the wicked man to the one who is good. The latter is able to coincide with the life of the daimon which is located above the active part of his soul:

But if a man is able to follow the daimon which is above him, he comes to be himself above, living that daimon's life, and giving the pre-eminence to that better part of himself to which he is being led; and after that daimon he rises to another, until he reaches the heights.

The good man thus does not keep the same daimon: he has in fact successively several ones. Plotinus insists that the soul's many different powers account for the different ways of life that people adopt. To make a choice means that the soul pays attention either to the sensible world or to the intelligible one, since the human being holds a position intermediate between them. In this way, the daimon is not allotted to the soul from the outside: its allotment depends on the world which is chosen by each soul. This conception holds human beings liable for the choices that they make.

## The Responsibility of Each Soul for Its Choice of Life

The choice of a kind of life implies the responsibility of the one who chooses. According to the myth of Er, which can be found in book X of the Republic, the different souls choose before their reincarnation the new kind of life they are going to experience. The myth sets out what Er has observed concerning the path followed by souls separated from the bodies after death. As he himself died in the battle, Er could accompany the souls of the dead, but he has been allowed to come back to life. What interests us in this myth deals with the step that precedes the reincarnation of the soul: Plato underscores the fact that each soul has to choose a daimon which will accompany it during its new life until its next reincarnation, one thousand and one hundred years later. There are, more precisely, two different stages: first, each soul receives a lot which gives it a rank to make the choice, and next, the soul has to make the choice itself. Plato thus stresses that each soul chooses its kind of existence and therefore is responsible for the life it will have, as we can see when we read the speech of the one who is presented as a kind of interpreter of the Fates:

The word of the maiden Lachesis, daughter of Necessity. Souls of a day, this is the beginning of another round of mortal kind that ends in death. No daimon will select you by lot, but you will be the one to choose a daimon. Let the one who draws the first lot be the first to choose a life to which he will adhere of necessity. But virtue has no master; by honoring or dishonoring it, each will have a greater or lesser share of it. The responsibility is the chooser's; god is not to be blamed.

The daimon is chosen, and its assignment is not the result of fate. It is even the case for the soul that chooses last: it has the opportunity to make a choice which will be advantageous for it since there are more samples of lives than souls. Among the different samples of lives, one can find lives of human beings and lives of animals. After the choice of a kind of life, each soul is allotted a daimon, which will guide it during the new life. As a result, when one chooses a life, one chooses a daimon. When the souls choose their future life,

they are supervised by the Fates and especially by Lachesis. But the latter does not impose the different daimones on the souls that are present. She only grants to each soul the daimon that it has chosen:

So when all the souls had chosen their lives, according to the draw they approached Lachesis in order and she gave each the daimon they had chosen to escort them as protector through their lives and as fulfiller of their choices.

The daimon appears in this way as a guide and associate of a soul. The choice that each soul makes is in tune with the kind of life that has been experienced during the previous existence. But according to the myth of Er, the choice is made only once, and it determines the whole life. We have to notice that the choice made by the soul can lead it to become more virtuous or less so: its moral characteristics depend on the sample of life that has been chosen. Moreover, the one who succeeds in being virtuous is happy. In agreement with Plato's description of the conditions of reincarnation in book X of the Republic (617d–e), Plotinus underlines that the soul chooses its daimon, and thus its kind of life. Moreover, he agrees with the idea that virtue has no master.

When he discusses the change of daimon that occurs when one dies, he also seems to consider that the same demon accompanies the soul during its entire life:

It is not possible for the principle which led the man in life to lead [after death], but only before, when the man lived; when he ceases to live the principle must hand over its activity to another, since he has died in the life which corresponded to that daimon's activity.

But in order to be more or less virtuous, one has to change one's daimon: the moral change implies the possibility of changing one's demon. In this respect, there seems to be a conflict between Plotinus' conception and the myth of Er: according to the myth, the choice made by the soul determines the entire future existence. Plotinus understands Plato's thought in this way since he maintains in chapter 5 of the treatise, *On our Allotted Daimon*, that according to Plato the soul keeps the same daimon:

But if the soul's purpose is decisive, and that part of it dominates which lies ready to hand as the result of its previous lives, the body is no longer responsible for any evil which may affect the man. For if the soul's character exists before the body, and has what it chose, and, Plato says, does not change its daimon, then the good man does not come into existence here below, and neither does the worthless one.

The thesis that the daimon does not change during life, which is defended by Plato, makes moral change impossible according to Plotinus.

### The Change of the Individual Daimon Appears to be Moral Necessity

The choice that the soul makes has two different aspects which are strongly connected with each other: we choose at the same time our daimon and our life, or rather, we choose our daimon because we choose our life. It has to be noticed that the platonic idea of a choice made by the soul is deeply modified. There is indeed a choice, but this choice is not made by the soul before its reincarnation: it is made in our life itself when we let one of the powers of our soul be active. For instance, if we make the rational principle active, we choose our life, which is the rational one, and therefore we choose the daimon, since it stands above the active power. But this is a choice that comes second and not first, in so far as we choose what power is active in the soul and not the one which stands above. Plotinus' interpretation of the myth of Er puts the emphasis on the preliminary choice: in chapter 5 of *Treatise 1.5*, the choice evoked in the myth of Er is defined by Plotinus as a preliminary choice. We have perhaps to understand that this choice is made before the other ones, but most importantly, this word refers to a moral tradition. Plotinus borrows the term from Aristotle and from the Stoics. According to the latter, the preliminary choice is the tendency that precedes the different actions and gives them their moral signification. In order to have moral signification, our actions thus have to be explained by a preliminary choice, and not by a lot that is imposed. Things depending on chance do not have any influence on preliminary choice. If one is to be responsible for one's life, one has to make a preliminary choice of one's life. One must therefore

have the opportunity to follow one daimon and then another one in order to get wiser. One has indeed to change one's life, as explained in the treatise *On Virtues*:

Perhaps the possessor of the virtues will know them, and how much he can get from them, and will act according to some of them as circumstances require. But when he reaches higher principles and different measures he will act according to these. For instance, he will not make self-control consist in that former observance of measure and limit, but will altogether separate himself, as far as possible, from his lower nature and will not live the life of the good man which civic virtue requires. He will leave that behind, and choose another, the life of the gods: for it is to them, not to good men, that we are to be made like. Likeness to good men is the likeness of two pictures of the same subject to each other; but likeness to the gods is likeness to the model, a being of a different kind to ourselves.

Plotinus highlights in this text the way the wise man lives. Even if those who have the civic virtues become similar to gods, the latter are themselves beyond these civic virtues. The wise man has therefore to reach a kind of life that is higher. He does not only have to improve his life: he has to change his life, that is to say, to leave the life that he has and to adopt a new one, the life of gods themselves, which is above the life corresponding to the civic virtues. This implies that the soul has to adopt a new life, the life of the Intellect. In this way, Plotinus appropriates the precept presented by Plato in the *Theaetetus* (176a–b) according to which one has to escape and to be similar to the god.

There must be a mobility in existence that enables the human being to favour a specific part of his soul and therefore a particular kind of life. The soul has to be able to make a choice in the course of life itself. Plotinus seems to preserve the power of the soul to choose its kind of life and therefore to change its daimon, which is underlined in chapter 7 of the treatise *On Love*. We can find in this chapter and the following ones Plotinus's reading of the myth dealing with the birth of Eros that can be

found in the *Symposium* (203a–204c). When he studies the link between Eros and the other daimones, Plotinus underlines the fact that the characteristics of Eros, and especially the insatiable desire, enable us to conceive the identity of the demons:

But one must consider that the whole race of daimones is like this and comes from parents of this kind; for every daimon is able to provide himself with that to which he is ordered, and impelled by desire for it, and akin to Love in this way too, and is like him, too, in not being satisfied but impelled by desire for one of the partial things which he regards as goods. For this reason we must consider, too, that the love which good men in this world have is a love for that which is simply and really good, not just any kind of love; but that those who are ordered under other daimones are ordered under different ones at different times, leaving their love of the simply good inoperative, but acting under the control of other daimones, whom they chose according to the corresponding part of that which is active in them, the soul.

Plenty and Poverty are the parents of Love and the other daimones. This parentage accounts for the fact that the daimones are, as is Eros himself, at the same time ingenious and deficient. We can find in this text an opposition between good men who love the good itself and people who follow one daimon and then another one: good men act in agreement with Eros whereas the others do not follow only one demon. They choose their daimon: we can find here the idea of choice, which comes from the myth of Er, but Plotinus appropriates this idea since the choice depends on the part of the soul that is active. How can we explain that good men only follow one daimon? It is implicit that change is not necessary since one has reached one of the highest levels. According to Plotinus, love and true things are indeed linked since the object of love is the intelligible realm: "hence our love is of simple realities, for so are our thoughts." The other people follow one daimon and then another because they only desire particular things. Good men do not have to be guided by various daimones because

the change has been made before: they have indeed chosen to live the life of the Intellect.

The soul's choice of one life rather than another is not only, according to Plotinus, the stage that precedes its reincarnation, but it is also the condition that enables it to become moral. In particular, this choice is necessary for the one who wants to reach happiness, since Plotinus maintains in the treatise *On Well-Being* that the latter consists in adopting the life of the Intellect, which is characterized by its perfection:

If then man can have the perfect life, the man who has this life is well off. If not, one would have to attribute well-being to the gods, if among them alone this kind of life is to be found. But since we maintain that this wellbeing is to be found among men we must consider how it is so. What I mean is this; it is obvious from what has been said elsewhere that man has perfect life by having not only sense-life but reasoning and true intelligence.

Plotinus explains that a hierarchy has to be found between the different kinds of life, and the perfect life is described as a life characterized by its brightness. One adopts the perfect life, which is the life of the Intellect, or rather, one becomes this life itself, in so far as one's own intellect is not separate from the Intellect as principle. Such a thesis implies that one's life does not coincide at once with the perfect life of the Intellect, and therefore that the daimon is not from the beginning of existence situated above the Intellect. Only the soul of the wise man possesses this configuration.

Indeed, he is characterized by his ability to make the intellect dominate his entire soul. In the last chapter of the *Treatise On our Allotted Daimon*, Plotinus underlines the fact that in order to be wise, one has to make the best part of one's soul, that is to say the intellect, be active. If the intellect is active, the daimon necessarily is to be found at the level of the One. But how can the daimon stand at the level of the first principle, which is simple in an absolute manner? The answer consists in maintaining that the daimon is not different from the One, the intellect, the rational principle and so on ... In other words, the daimon is not located at the level of the power that is above the active power in the soul,

rather, it is the power that is above the active power in the soul.

This leads us to conclude that Plotinus does not seem to give great importance to the existence of the daimon: he only tries to harmonize his own doctrine with the myth of Er and other passages of Plato's work dealing with the demons. But he has then to face a problem: if the daimon is chosen once before incarnation, moral improvement is not possible since the demon is, in his doctrine, the power of the soul that is above the one which is active. The daimon is only a psychological function. As a result, it cannot move from a power to another one, and the soul has to change the daimon it follows. The thesis that the daimon changes during life is deeply called into question by Proclus. In his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* (75–76), he criticizes the identification of the daimon with the principle that directs in the soul or with the aspect of the soul that dominates the active power in the soul. In this last option we recognize the thesis defended by Plotinus. According to Proclus, this idea has to be dismissed because its consequences are absurd: a change in the soul would imply a change of the daimon itself. Proclus does not accept that the activity of a new faculty in the soul could lead a new daimon to take the place of the present one. He maintains indeed that only one daimon is allotted to a person during his entire existence.

### The Angels in Ancient Gnosis: Some Cases Madeleine Scopello

Ancient Gnosis has given much attention to angels, as evidenced by both the excerpts transmitted by the heresiologists and the first-hand sources preserved in Coptic. In my opinion, Gnostic angelology constitutes a sort of canvas on which metaphysical, cosmological, and anthropogonic themes have been grafted. The reflection on the angels is closely intertwined with the founding theme of Gnosis, which dissociates an inferior creator and enemy of mankind from a perfectly good and transcendent god, who is the source of knowledge. Both are accompanied by angels: evil angels surround the creator, and good angels, the transcendent God.

The creator, the demiurge, identified in several systems with the god of the Bible, shapes the cosmos in order to imprison man and make him his slave, depriving him of the spark of knowledge which the transcendent God had provided him. In his creative act, this ignorant and incapable god is assisted by entities often qualified in the texts by the term “angel.” In several Gnostic systems, creation is also attributed to angels acting collectively. These angels, who are co-responsible, or even responsible for creation, can also be characterized by the term “demon”, or by the more technical Gnostic term “archon”. These (bad) angels also produce the body of man, likened to a dark jail wherein the spark of light that he possesses is stifled and extinguished. Other functions are exercised by the associate angels of the demiurge: they govern the cosmos and are the merciless guardians of the spheres who strive to block the Gnostic on the road to his heavenly abode.

As for the transcendent God, the Unknowable, towards whom those who have revived in themselves the cognitive spark try to return, he is also surrounded by angels. They form his heavenly court and honour him with a perpetual worship. But the angels can also act as intermediaries to lead the man who aspires to knowledge to the One; they instruct and support him in mystical experiences, most often throughout his journey to heaven: they are the agents of revelation. In addition, the enunciation and invocation of angelic names foster mystical experience and help to attain the celestial mysteries.

Within the limits of this article I will provide an overview of Gnostic angelology, using both the heresiological sources and the first-hand documentation preserved in Coptic. We shall first examine the function of the angels in their relation to a defective demiurgy and, in a second stage, the various roles of the angels in the wake of the transcendent God.

Let us remind that the texts preserved in the codices found in Egypt—the codex Askew, the codex Bruce, the Berlin codex, the Nag Hammadi codices, and the codex Tchacos—were translated from Greek into Coptic towards the middle of the 4th century. The lost Greek texts had been composed

by anonymous Gnostic authors between the middle of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century, which situates them at about the same period as the refutations of the Fathers of the Church. The only treatises that were probably written later in Greek at the end of the 3rd or even the beginning of the 4th century, and which are therefore closer in time to their Coptic translation, are those transmitted by the codex Bruce and the codex Askew.

### The Angels in the Sphere of Demiurgy

To illustrate this fundamental theme of the Gnostic doctrine, I will present, by way of example, the theories of some teachers and Gnostic groups mentioned by the heresiologist Irenæus of Lyons, and by the primary documentation, notably the Nag Hammadi texts.

### The Angels in the Gnostic Systems Known by Heresiology

The theme of the activity of the angels in demiurgy is well illustrated by three teachers whom Irenæus of Lyons considers to be the first representatives of the Gnostic doctrine in his work *Against Heresies: Detection and Refutation of the So-Called Gnosis*, composed about 180. These teachers are Simon of Samaria, Menander, also a Samaritan, and Saturnine of Antioch.

Before considering their systems, it is worth recalling how Irenæus constructed his work. The Bishop of Lyons first gives a general overview of the most well-known Gnostic teachers, taking as his point of departure those who were his contemporaries—notably the Valentinians—and then goes back to the origins of the doctrine. He thereby sets up a kind of heresiological genealogy, albeit an artificial one, in order to emphasize, on the one hand, the lack of originality of thinkers who are only deemed to repeat the theories of their predecessors by making some “innovations,” and on the other hand, to put this heretical path in opposition to the apostolic succession, the sole depository of truth: one Creator God, Incarnate Son, Holy Spirit. Simon, Menander, and Saturnine are all of Jewish origin, and have in common an extremely polemical exegetical reading of the Bible and in particular of the Genesis narrative.

In the section dedicated to Simon of Samaria, the so-called Magician, who lived in the time of the Apostles, Irenaeus relates that Simon identified himself with the supreme Power. Having rescued in Tyros, in Phoenicia, a prostitute named Helen, he claimed that she was his first Thought (Ennoia), the mother of all things, from whom he originally got the idea to make the angels and archangels (angelos et archangelos). Now Ennoia had descended to the lower places and had given birth to the angels and powers (angelos et potestates) who later created the world. But these entities were jealous of their mother and subjected her to all kinds of outrages so that she would not go back to her Father. They also enclosed her in a female body and subdued her to the cycle of transmigrations. Simon then intervened to deliver her and to provide humans with knowledge of himself. His purpose was to correct things: the angels were badly governing the world, for each of them wanted full command over it. Here we find a trace of the Jewish conception of the angels of the Nations: God had kept Israel for himself, and gave a nation to each angel. Manlio Simonetti underlined the Jewish origin of this theme (cf. for instance, Daniel 10:13, Jubilees 15, 31, and 1 Enoch 89, 51) which Gnostic thinkers resume by charging it with a more negative tonality. The theme of the angels of the Nations is also to be found in Basilides. Simon further asserts that these angels who created the world had also inspired the Prophets. The humans were made slaves by the observance of the precepts established by the angels.

In the few lines that Irenaeus dedicates to Menander (c. 80 CE), presented as Simon's successor, the emphasis is also on the role played by angels in creation. Being a magician like his teacher, Menander posits the existence of a first Power (Virtus) unknown to all and presents himself as the Saviour sent from the invisible places for the salvation of humans. The angels, he says, created the world after being emanated by Thought (ab Ennoia emissos). Through the magic he practiced, Menander asserted that he communicated a knowledge capable of defeating the demiurgical angels.

Irenaeus then presents Saturnine and puts him in the wake of Simon and Menander. Originally from Antioch, Saturnine founded a school of thought in the first half of the 2nd century. The place of angels in creation is the leitmotiv of his doctrine. According to Saturnine, the unknowable Father made angels, archangels, virtues, and powers (angelos, archangelos, virtutes, potestates). The world and all that it contains were made by seven of these angels, and man is also *factura angelorum*. Saturnine develops an exegesis of Genesis 1:26, which highlights the incapability of the angels: a resplendent image of the supreme Power appeared to them, but they could not hold it back, for this image had immediately ascended to the heights. The angels exhorted one another, saying, "Let us make a man according to the image and to the likeness!" (Genesis 1:26). But, because of their incapability (*imbecillitas*), the work they had shaped (*plasma*) could not stand up, but it squirmed like a worm. Moved by pity, the Power from above sent a spark of life that raised man and made it alive. After death, this spark of life ascends alone to that to which it is akin, while the rest from which man was made dissolves. This polemical explanation of the Genesis narrative is a leitmotiv of Gnostic thought, and appears in several sources under much amplified and elaborated forms. Saturnine also maintains that the god of the Jews is one of the angels.

At this stage of the doctrine, creation is still the collective work of the angels, and the figure of the demiurge, the biblical god, is not clearly distinguishable as the main artisan of creation. It is in the presentation of the doctrine of Basilides that the character of a single creator begins to appear. Moreover, the terms "angel" and "archon" are almost interchangeable. Let us also note that with Basilides, the founder of a school in Alexandria and active between 120 and 150CE, we leave the territory of the very first thinkers, anchored in Samaritan Judaism (Simon and Menander) and Antioch (Saturnine), to penetrate into multicultural Egypt, where Gnosis had developed and flourished. Basilides proclaimed that his doctrine came from a secret tradition dating back to the apostle Matthias.

If one keeps to the report of Irenaeus, the presence of the angels in the system of Basilides is of foremost importance. Virtues, archons, and angels (virtutes, principes, angelos) are born of the union between Power and Wisdom and are called “the first ones” because they made the first heaven. From these, other angels came into existence by way of emanation, who made a second heaven similar to the first, and so on, down to the constitution—through a process of degradation (ab derivatione)—of successive series of archons and angels and 365 heavens. At the end of the section devoted to Basilides, Irenaeus mentions that “the Basilidians determine the position of the heavens in the same way as the astrologers: by borrowing their principles, they adapt them to the proper character of their doctrine.” Here we find a recurring motif in Irenaeus and, more generally, among heresiologists who accuse the Gnostics of taking up, in various fields—from the Bible to philosophy or astrology—already existing theories which they shamelessly adapt to their needs. Irenaeus, in this passage, adds that “the chief of heaven is Abrasax, and that is why he possesses the number 365.” The name Abrasax (or Abraxas), whose secret numerical value is the number 365, also appears in some treatises of Nag Hammadi and in the magical literature.

Basilides also asserts that “the angels who occupy the lower heaven, which we see, have done all that is in the world, and have divided between them the earth and the nations that are in it.” It is at this point in the mythical narration that the presence of a chief of the angels is mentioned: “Their leader is he who passes for being the god of the Jews.” As he had wished to subdue the other nations to his own people (the Jews), the other nations and other archons stood up and waged war against him. Faced with this situation and seeing the perversity of the archons, the unbegotten Father sent the Intellect, his first-born Son, Christ, to release those who believed in him from the power of the creators of the world. Basilides further maintains that the prophecies of the Old Testament originate from the world’s archons, but that it is from their leader that the Law comes. According to the testimony of Irenaeus, the disciples of Basilides perpetuate their teacher’s interest in angels. In fact, they invent

names which they claim to be those of the angels, by classifying them heaven by heaven: “they endeavour to present the names of the archons, angels, and virtues of their so-called 365 heavens.” According to them, the knowledge of the angels and their primary causes would enable those who possess this Gnosis to make themselves invisible and elusive before angels and powers.

Irenaeus later examines the theories of Carpocrates who taught in Alexandria during the first half of the 2nd century. His teaching reached Rome, carried there by his disciple Marcellina, at the time of Anicet (about 154). The starting point of the doctrine of Carpocrates is also constituted by the demiurgical activity of the angels; largely inferior to the ungenerated Father, they created the world and what it contains. These, who are also defined by the term ‘archon’, hinder the rise of Jesus to the Father as well as that of souls. But souls can redeem themselves if they despise these entities. The Carpocratians claim that they can already dominate the archons and the creators of the world by magic techniques. As for the devil, the Adversary, he is one of the angels in the world. He was created to lead the souls of the dying towards the Archon, who is the first author of the world. This archon delivers the souls to another angel, who is the guardian of the sky, that he may shut them up in other bodies, for, according to the Carpocratians, the body is a prison.

While nothing is said about angels or archons in the passages that Irenaeus devotes to Cerinthus, the Ebionites, the Nicolaites, Cerdon, and Marcion, such is not the case for the sectae which Irenaeus examines later. The Barbeloites affirm that the First archon, author of the universe, having carried a part of the power of his mother Wisdom, and having moved to inferior places, made the firmament in which he lives. Being himself Ignorance, he made powers and angels, as well as firmaments and earthly things, and in joining with Presumption (Authadia), he also produced negative entities: Wickedness, Jealousy, Envy, Discord, and Desire (Zelum, Phthonum, Erin, and Epithymian). When his mother finally departed from him, saddened by his son’s actions, the First Archon saw himself as the only God, which is why he said: “I am a jealous God, and apart from me it is not God”



(Exodus 20:5, Isaiah 45:5–6, 46:9). This expression has often been interpreted in Gnostic milieus, in contexts characterised by a very negative image of the creator, identified with the biblical God.

As for the Ophites, to whom Irenaeus devotes a long section, the terms of ‘angel,’ ‘heaven,’ ‘power,’ and ‘creator’ are allotted to the seven sons of the Mother. The first of them is called Yaldabaoth. This name also appears in the primary sources in which the character enjoyed some popularity. The etymology of Yaldabaoth is uncertain: the meanings, “begetter of powers” (Heb. yāld + (s)aba’oth) and “son of shame” (Heb. Behūthā) have been proposed. Yaldabaoth is surrounded by a hebdomade that governs the things of heaven and earth. Likewise, angels, archangels, virtues, powers, and dominions were made by Yaldabaoth. But as soon as these entities came into existence, they rose against their creator claiming the first place. The myth continues with a series of episodes. Let us mention the episode based on Exodus 20:5, where Yaldabaoth proclaims his authority and encourages the powers collectively to create the First Man: “Come, let us make a man according to the image” (cf. Genesis 1:26). Thus, six powers convened and shaped a man of prodigious length and breadth, who, however, wriggles like a worm (scarizante autem eo tantum). Only an intervention from above can straighten it out. This last theme was already present in Saturnine. In this passage one could find the echo of the speculations of mystical Judaism on the cosmic size of the First Man, which are grafted on those of the incommensurable dimensions of God (Shiur’ Qomah, “the measure of stature”).

### Angels and Demiurge in Nag Hammadi Texts

The theme of the role of angels in *malam partem* in demiurgy is also widely discussed in the writings of Nag Hammadi, where a number of mythic large-scale frescoes depicting creation have been preserved: the Apocryphon of John (NH II, 1; III, 1; IV, 1; BG 2), the Hypostasis of the Archons (NH II, 4),<sup>51</sup> and the treatise On the Origins of the World (II, 5).

We will take as an example the case of the Apocryphon of John. Let us first mention that the

term “angel” is present about 150 times in the collection of Nag Hammadi, and that it appears in 23 treatises (the collection contains). It is rendered without exception by the Greek, transcribed in Coptic. As in the Gnostic excerpts preserved by heresiologists, the term “angel” is applied either to the evil entities associated with the act of creation or to the positive entities of the higher world. In the narratives of creation, the terms “angel” and “archon” are interchangeable.

### The Apocryphon of John

The Apocryphon of John is one of the treatises of the Nag Hammadi collection in which the work of revision and interpretation by the Gnostic exegetes of the Scriptures is particularly perceptible. Originally composed in Greek in the second half of the 2nd century, it has been preserved in four copies: three in Nag Hammadi and one in the Berlin codex. There are two versions: two are long (Nag Hammadi codex II, 1 and IV, 1) and two are short (Nag Hammadi codex III, 1 and Berlin Codex [BG 2]). The short versions are older. Irenaeus of Lyons most probably used a Greek version of the short text, which he summarizes in order to construct his account of the Barbeloites.

The Apocryphon of John is a discourse of revelation delivered to John by the risen Jesus, whose starting point is the account of Genesis which the anonymous author of this text reinterprets in the light of the Gnostic myth in order to answer the questions about the origin of evil and human destiny. This very rich and complex presentation has been called the “Gnostic Bible” by Michel Tardieu since it deals with the history of origins “until now,” according to the words of its author.

The central character of the treatise is the evil creator, the archon Yaldabaoth, the bestial abortion born of Sophia. Following the version of Nag Hammadi Codex II, we will consider the episodes in which Yaldabaoth builds his angelic court, then, with its help, shapes the first man. Yaldabaoth, the first archon (ὁπXwv), having retained a part of the power of his mother Sophia, first creates his own aeon and, copulating with Ignorance, generates Authorities, whose names are indicated (II 10, 22–11, 4). He also established seven kings for the seven heavens and five kings of

chaos to reign there (II 11, 4–7). Yaldabaoth actually has three names: Yaldabaoth, Saklas, and Samael. He is arrogant and impious, and claims to be the only god (II 11, 7–22). Seven powers (sot-t, the Coptic equivalent) constitute the hebdomad. Each possesses a name, and together they create 365 angels (II, 11, 23–35). Having proclaimed himself god, Yaldabaoth unites to the powers (sot-t), which are with him, 7 authorities, by giving a name to each of them (II 12, 10–13, 5).

Seeing the creation that surrounds him and the crowd of angels stemming from him, Yaldabaoth affirms that he is a jealous god and that there is no other god apart from him (II 13, 5–13). Contemplating the figure of the primordial man reflected in the water, Yaldabaoth urges his acolytes to reproduce it: “Come on! Let us make a man in the image of God and in our likeness, so that his image becomes for us light!” (cf. Genesis 1:26). It is first of all the psychic body of Adam, which is shaped by the seven powers (II 15, 13–29). This body is made up of a bone-soul, a sinew-soul, a flesh-soul, a marrow-soul, a blood-soul, a skin-soul, and a hair-soul. Then the authorities, whose names are provided, undertake the task of creating the different parts of his body, from the head to the toenails (II 15, 29–17, 32).

The nomina barbara attributed to the entities mentioned in these sections were mainly studied by Sören Giversen and Michel Tardieu. Interpreting these names is often extremely difficult. As Michel Tardieu says, “Quant à la fabrication de noms barbares, ils sont composés la plupart du temps par jeux de métathèses sur des racines sémitiques ou sur des noms grecs déformés, désignant les fonctions attribuées aux démons parle folklore.”

The names of the 5 governors of the sensitive soul (II 17, 32–18, 2), of the demons (Σαίμωες) that govern the body (II 18, 2–14), as well as those of the leaders of the passions (II 18, 15–19, 1) are also mentioned in the next part of the Apocryphon of John. The angelic account concludes with an indication of the number of angels (II 19, 2–10), totalizing 365. The author refers here to the “Book of Zoroaster” for further information. This book, according to Michel Tardieu, could be part of the “opuscules astrologico-apocalyptiques des

‘nouveaux Chaldéens’ de langue grecque.” The purpose of this construction, both detailed and complex, is to enclose Adam in a material body which will be his tomb (II 21, 10–14): “This is the tomb of the body (vwμα) with which the robbers have clothed the man, the fetter of forgetfulness. And he became a mortal man.”

The rest of the narrative indicates that the psychic body of Adam, created by angels and demons, remains inactive and motionless for a long time (II 19, 11–14). Through a trick, Sophia leads Yaldabaoth to blow on Adam’s face: the archon loses some of the power that he possessed, which penetrates through the breath into the psychic body of Adam. Adam is vivified, begins to move and becomes luminous and intelligent. Afterwards, Yaldabaoth’s acolytes, devoured by envy, deliver Adam into matter and shape him a body from earth, water, fire, and breath in order to deprive him of his superiority.

### The Angels of the Spheres

In addition to their cosmogonic role, the angels who accompany the demiurge also have other functions, including guarding the spheres. They try to prevent the return of souls to their heavenly homeland; they question them and demand answers or passwords to let them cross the heaven over which they preside. In the First Apocalypse of James, preserved in two very close versions at Nag Hammadi (codex V, 3) and in the codex Tchacos (treatise 2), Jesus reveals to James the answers that he must pronounce to escape the guardians of the spheres when he faces them. These guardians are called “toll collectors”. The content of James’ answers represents “redemption”: “The Lord [said] to [him]: [James,] behold, I shall reveal to you your redemption. When [you] are seized, and you undergo these sufferings, a multitude will arm themselves against you, that they may seize you. And, in particular, three of them will seize you—they who sit as toll-collectors. Not only do they demand toll, but they also take away souls by theft. When you come into their power, one of them who is their guard will say to you: ‘Who are you or where are you from?’ You are to say to him: ‘I am a son, and I am from the Father’. He will say to you: ‘What sort of son are you, and to what father do

you belong?’ You are to say to him: ‘I am from the Pre-[existent] Father and a son in the Preexistent One’” (V 32, 28–33, 24).<sup>66</sup> And further: “[Why have you come?]” (33, 25). And finally, later in the text: “‘Where will you go?’ you are to say to him: ‘To the place from which I have come, there shall I return’. And if you say these things, you will escape their attacks (V 34, 16–20).”

In this passage we can recognize the echo of the existential interrogations expressed in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* (78, 2), transmitted by Clement of Alexandria: “Who were we? What have we become? Where were we? Whither have we been cast? Whither do we hasten? From what have we been set free?” This striking formula, which the Gnostics probably pronounced, appears, with variations and additions, in several writings. As in the case of the First Apocalypse of James, this formula is often inserted in a dialogue, articulated in questions and answers, between the toll collectors and the soul at the end of its life. In the First Apocalypse of James, the answers that James must provide reveal the privileged relationship between James, who symbolizes every soul, and the pre-existing Father, as well as his connection to the supra-celestial world outside of the grasp of the archons. This same dialogue occurs in the writing entitled *James from Codex Tchacos* (T 20, 2–22, 3), which is very close to the Hammadi text. This passage from the Apocalypse of James has parallels in Irenaeus’ section on the Marcosians, in which are cited the ritual words they pronounce when they are going to die.

The motif of the guardian entities of the spheres also appears in the Apocalypse of Paul (Nag Hammadi V, 2). During his journey through the skies, Paul sees the punishment of a soul at the door of the fourth heaven: angels whip the soul and a toll collector interrogates it, before it is rushed to earth into a body (20, 5–21, 20). In the fifth heaven, Paul sees “a great angel holding an iron rod in his hands and three other angels with a whip in their hands, rivalling each other: they are goading the souls on to the judgment” (21, 26–22, 12). At the sixth heaven, Paul directly confronts a toll collector and tells him: “Open to me and the [holy] spirit who is before me!” The toll collector obeys, and Paul with his companion ascends to the

seventh heaven (22, 19–24). Paul converses here with a character called the Ancient, a version of the figure of the Ancient of Days, familiar in apocalyptic Judaism. We find in this passage the Gnostic questioning concerning the origin and the end. To the question “Where are you going, Paul?”, Paul answers: “I am going to the place from which I came.” The identification between the place of origin and the place of destiny deserves to be underlined. This knowledge constitutes the central point of both the Apocalypse of James and the Apocalypse of Paul, and of many other Gnostic writings.

I shall not deal here with the angelic categories mentioned in the Nag Hammadi collection, having already done so elsewhere. These categories come from the Bible, but also from the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, an important stream of Second Temple Jewish literature. Some of these angelic classes, which intervene in the world of the demiurge as well as in that of the transcendent God, have a clear Gnostic origin.

The negative angelology developed in these texts is part of a program of critical interpretation of the Bible, carried out by Gnostic authors, who had a deep knowledge of the Scriptures and skilfully used allegorical exegesis. Nevertheless, in several writings, there is also a positive repurposing of angelic material from Judaism. In my opinion, Gnostic authors drew several motifs from the rich angelic heritage of Jewish pseudepigrapha to elaborate a reflexion about the angels of the transcendent God. These borrowings are nevertheless adapted to Gnostic thought and to its fundamental opposition between the creator and the superior god.

### The Transcendent God and His Angels: The Angelus Paedagogus

The figure of an angel having the function of an instructor appears in Gnostic narratives relating the journey of a seer to heaven during which the secrets of the higher worlds and their entities are revealed to him. The Gnostics borrowed the theme of the journey to heaven from a form of marginal Judaism exhibiting mystical and apocalyptic tendencies. This esoteric literature paid close attention to the celestial adventures of Enoch (I and

Il Enoch), who during his journey receives revelations from an angel and experiences ecstatic visions. Nevertheless, the heroes of these heavenly journeys also include other important characters such as Abraham (Apocalypse of Abraham), Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch; Greek Apocalypse of Baruch), Ezra (Apocalypse of Ezra), and Jacob (The Ladder of Jacob).

Several Gnostic texts have taken up the theme of the journey to heaven, and among them, are some treatises having a strong philosophical content, inspired by Middle-Platonism and, in some cases, by Neoplatonism. These writings combine in an original way a philosophical perspective with the traditions of esoteric Judaism. In several of my works, I have highlighted this aspect, which had been neglected in the research which had mostly emphasized the contribution of philosophy to these Gnostic treatises. Let us note that, in comparison with the Jewish texts, in three treatises from Nag Hammadi—namely Zostrianos (VIII, 1), Marsanes (X, 1), and Allogenes (XI, 3)—this ascent gets interiorised and becomes an ascent through the levels of the intellect to the One.

These esoteric Jewish traditions—some of which include speculations on the divine throne and chariot (the Merkabah)—have been skilfully revisited in light of Gnostic doctrine. The elements that, in the Jewish texts, illustrated the glory (kavod) of a unique god are now applied to the *ὁἰοῦστος*, opposed to the lower demiurge.

As in the Jewish esoteric texts, the Gnostic angelus paedagogus suggests to the seer how to behave before the mystery, strengthens him in the difficult moments during his rise, supports him in ecstasy, and reveals to him the hidden meaning of what he hears or sees. Indeed, this journey is also dangerous; because the seer could be lost in the infinity of the intelligible, the angel teaches him the best attitude to adopt: to stand still, to withdraw, to pronounce a hymn or an invocation in silence, for example.

The pattern of the angelus paedagogus was already partially sketched in the Bible. In Ezekiel 40:3, a man whose appearance was like bronze (who is not identified as an angel) instructs the prophet about the rebuilding of the Temple; in

Zechariah 1:9.19 (cf. 4:1–6, 6:4–5) an angel explains the visions the prophet had received; in Daniel 8:15–17 “a vision of man,” that is, an angel, interprets the meaning of a vision to Daniel, and in 9:2 the angel Gabriel gives him instruction concerning the future.

But the Gnostics drew their inspiration mainly from Jewish apocalyptic writings having strong mystical features. The numerous literary relations between the treatises of Nag Hammadi and these Jewish texts suggest that some Gnostic authors had a first-hand knowledge of this literature and used it to fuel their narrative.

### The Case of the Treatise Allogenes (Nag Hammadi XI, 3)

As a case study, I choose the Nag Hammadi treatise entitled Allogenes. This treatise, strongly coloured by Middle-Platonic elements, also contains Neoplatonic concepts. This suggests that Allogenes, in its lost Greek version, is to be placed at a date later than most of Nag Hammadi writings, probably in the second half of the 3rd century. The Coptic translation of this treatise dates, however, from the middle of the 4th century. In its Greek original, this text had a certain diffusion, as the philosopher Porphyry testifies. The studies on Allogenes rightly emphasize its philosophical content, but it seems to me that other traditions had played an important part in its composition.

This treatise is an account of a journey to heaven that a seer, who bears the symbolic name of Allogenes, the Stranger, gives to his disciple and spiritual son, Messos, after he returns to earth. In fact, Allogenes makes this trip both inside himself and in the celestial spheres, to the threshold of the One. During this journey, Allogenes receives five secret teachings delivered by an angelic entity bearing the name of Youel “she-of-all-the-Glories.” Of the seven instructions that Allogenes receives during his itinerary, five are actually transmitted by this angel, while the last two<sup>85</sup> are communicated to him by entities called the Luminaries of Barbelo: Salamex, Semen, and Armê. The first revelation of Youel deals with the aeon of Barbelo and the Triple Powered One (XI, 3 45, 6–49, 38). The content of this revelation arouses in Allogenes a feeling of terror to such an extent that he is

tempted to turn to the “crowd,” that is, to the world of matter. The second part of Youel’s teaching concerns Barbelo again (51, 1–38). The angel states that this is a revelation that “nobody can hear, except the great Powers” (50, 22–24). Youel also recalls that the power that inhabits Allogenes allows him to escape, going up to his origins (50, 33–34)—the theme of the return to the heavenly homeland is frequent in Gnostic literature. The third revelation of Youel is preceded by Allogenes’ mystical experience: he suffers a loss of consciousness and falls into an ecstasy during which he becomes god (52, 7–13). Youel puts an end to this ecstatic state by touching Allogenes and bringing him back to consciousness (52, 14–15). Now Allogenes can listen to Youel’s third teaching on the Triple Powered One. The angel instructs the seer to keep this teaching secret and in silence because only those who are worthy can hear it (52, 16–28). Then Youel invokes angelic powers, probably of a higher degree than his own (54, 6–37). Having listened to the names of these angels, Allogenes has a vision (55, 11–16) that introduces the fourth part of Youel’s teaching, on the Triple Powered One (55, 17–30). The fifth and final part of the revelation concerns the Triple Male. Youel announces to Allogenes that after a hundred years of meditation, a teaching will be provided by the Luminaries of Barbelo (55, 33–57, 23). Then Youel leaves the scene and departs. At the end of the treatise, Allogenes states that he has been ordered to record in a book the secrets he received from Youel and the Luminaries.<sup>88</sup> He also instructs his spiritual son Messos to communicate the contents of this book to those who will be worthy to hear them.

The name of Youel had aroused my curiosity. It was indeed astonishingly close to the name of the angel Yaoel, which appears in some Jewish mystical texts. The Hebraic name of Yaoel, because of the lack of vocalization, could have become Youel in the Greek and Coptic transcriptions.

But the presence of a similar name was not enough to support a comparison. It had also to be determined whether the angel Yaoel from Judaism had a role analogous to that of the angel Youel from Nag Hammadi. I found an interesting track to explore in the Apocalypse of Abraham. This apocalypse, preserved in Slavonic, consists of two

parts: the first one (I–VIII) relates the calling of Abraham and the destruction of the idols made by Terah; the second (IX–XXXI) narrates Abraham’s sacrifice, but especially his journey to heaven under the guidance of the angel Yaoel, and the ecstatic vision he experiences. This second part, as first noted by George H. Box, bears the mark of Chariot mysticism, the Merkabah. The two texts could therefore be compared, for the angel Yaoel of the Apocalypse of Abraham has the same function of accompanying the heavenly traveller and revealing secrets to him that we find in the Nag Hammadi tractate Allogenes.

In the Apocalypse of Abraham, Yaoel is an angel of ineffable beauty and bears royal attributes: purple and sceptre (XI). For forty days and forty nights, Yaoel and Abraham travel together to the mountain of Horeb. The angel instructs Abraham on the sacrifice that God has commanded him to perform (XII), and tells him how to escape from the unclean angel, Azazel (XIII–XIV). Then Yaoel and Abraham ascend to heaven, the angel on the left wing of a turtledove, and Abraham on the right wing of a pigeon (XV). Abraham has a vision that makes him feel completely lost (XVI: “and the place of highness on which we were standing now stopped on high, now rolled down low”). The angel advises Abraham to recite a hymn with him (XVII), and then the ineffable vision of the heavenly throne, the Merkabah, opens to Abraham and to his guide (XVIII).

Let us first say a word about the name of Yaoel, whose meaning is given in the Apocalypse of Abraham: Yaoel is the angel of the Tetragrammaton. The name Yaoel is formed out of two letters drawn from the Tetragrammaton to which are added two letters of the name Elohim (or of “El”, which represents its abbreviation). Exodus 23, 20–21 is the point of departure of this theme: “See, I am sending an angel before you, to keep you on your way and to be your guide into the place which I have made ready for you. Give attention to him and give ear to his voice; do not go against him, for your wrongdoing will not be overlooked by him, because my Name is in him.”

We read in the Apocalypse of Abraham (X, 4): (words of God) “Go, Yaoel, you who bears My

name, through My ineffable name ...”; and in X, 8: (words of Yaoel) “I am Yaoel, and I was called so by Him who causes those with me on the seventh expanse, on the firmament, to shake, a power through the medium of his ineffable name in me.” Finally, we read in XVII, 13–14, in the hymn that Abraham sings with Yaoel before having the vision of the throne: “Eli, eternal, mighty one, holy Sabaoth, most glorious El, El, El, El, Yaoel.” The angel Yaoel is also associated with the Tetragrammaton in 3Enoch, where he is identified with Metatron.

The treatise *Allogenes* does not bear any indication of the identification of the name of Youel with the Tetragrammaton. This identification is nevertheless present in another Nag Hammadi text, the *Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* (codex III, 2), wherein it is stated that Yaoel<sup>94</sup> is the “angel who presides over the Name of him (...), the incorruptible one” (65, 23–26).

But we could go further in this comparison. In *Allogenes* 52, 7–15, the protagonist’s fright and weakening at the threshold of ecstasy are described in terms very close to what one finds in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* X, 1–5. We read in *Allogenes* 52, 7–15: “[My s]oul [became] weak and [I] esca[ped], I was] very [distur]bed [and I] turned to my-se[lf]. I saw the light [that] was[ar]ound me and the good that was in me. I became god. Then Youel, she of all the Glories, touched me and gave me strength back.” We read in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* X, 1–5:

I heard the voice telling such words to me and I looked here and there. And behold there was no human breath, and my spirit was filled with terror. My soul escaped from me. And I became like a stone, and fell face down upon the earth, for there was no longer strength in me to stand upon the earth. And while I was still face down on the ground, I heard the voice of the Saint speaking: ‘Go Yaoel, who bears my name, through my ineffable name, put his man on his feet and strengthen him, dispelling his fear.’ And the angel who he had sent to me came to me in the likeness of a man: he took me by my right hand and put me on my feet.

Let us note that the expression “my soul escaped from me” in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* X, 3 is very similar to the phrase used in *Allogenes*: “[My s]oul [became] weak and [I] esca[ped]” (52, 8). Let us also observe the link established by the author of this apocalypse between the moment when the soul escapes—when Abraham leaves his psychic state—and the moment when he falls with his face to the ground: this indicates the state of the mystical torpor (*tardema*). This self-abandonment is temporary, and the angel Yaoel puts an end to it by seizing Abraham by the hand and putting him back on his feet (*Apocalypse of Abraham* X, 5). The same is true for *Allogenes*, whereby the angel Youel, with a gesture, puts an end to the visionary experience of the initiate, giving him his strength back (52, 15).

But all borrowing involves modifications. In *Allogenes*, Youel is a feminized angel. The same is true in *Zostrianos* and in the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*, which reinforce the feminine character of Youel by calling her “Male Virgin.” The author of *Allogenes* thus elaborated, or adopted a Gnostic tradition that feminized the angel Yaoel. A trace of this tradition also appears in some Manichaean texts mentioning an angel called loel, who is also defined as “Male Virgin” and “Virgin of light.”

The complete name of Youel in *Allogenes* is “Youel, she-of-all-the-Glories”. The “glories” have not attracted the attention of scholars either. The Coptic word *EooY* used in *Allogenes* translates the Greek which in turn renders the Hebrew *kavod* and its synonyms, *tifearah*, *tehillah*, *hod*, *yadah*. These are the founding terms of a mysticism of Glory based on the book of *Ezekiel* and its mysticism of the throne.

In *Allogenes*, however, the term “glory” is used in the plural, which seems to refer to a category of angelic entities. I thought of the angels of Glory, or the Glorious Ones, who stand around the throne of Glory. The starting point of this tradition is *Exodus* 15:11 where, in the interpretative translation of the LXX, the of God are quasi-personified entities. The Glories also appear in the Testament of Judah XXV, 2 (the Powers of Glories) and especially in 2Enoch, where the Glorious Ones are in charge,

night and day, of the liturgical service of the Lord (XXI, 1); Gabriel is one of them (XXI, 5). The Glorious Ones also grant Enoch permission to ascend into the heavens. At the summit of his mystical quest, Enoch, after having received the attributes of a celestial high priest, will become like them, without difference of aspect (XXII, 7). The Glorious, or the Glories, would therefore be a particularly high category of angels, as is confirmed by 3Enoch 22B6, where “600,000 myriads of angels of Glory, carved in flaming fire, stand facing the throne of Glory.” The angels of Glory, with the Ophanim and Cherubim, pronounce the Qedousha. The Glories are mentioned in the New Testament, and also appear in the Greek magical papyri, where they are characterized by the uninterrupted service offered to the Lord, an element that was already highlighted in 2 Enoch. In the Untitled Text chapter 13, myriads of Glories are given to the Forefather with the aeons. This one is called “self-glorified”, because he reveals himself with the Glories he possesses. In chapter 14, the Glories are members of a list of categories which also includes angels, archangels, and ministers.

Allogenes provides an additional clue that makes it possible to consider the Glories as an angelic category. In 49, 21–25 it is stated that those who truly exist “have brought nothing beyond themselves, neither Power, nor Rank, nor Glory, nor Aeon, because they are eternal beings.” The four terms in this list refer, in my opinion, to the categories of angels forming the celestial court of the Triple Powered One, and this interpretation makes sense in light of comparisons with Jewish angelology.

\*\*\*

Further examples could be provided. In the course of my research I have been able to trace the traditions of esoteric Judaism in several Nag Hammadi writings. I provide a few examples here. The treatise Zostrianos (VIII, 1) includes, in the narrative of the ascent of the seer, two quasi-literal quotes from the Book of the Secrets of Enoch. These passages deal with the identification of the visionary patriarch with the angels of Glory (2 Enoch XXII 7 = Zost 5, 15–17) and also the privilege of knowing secrets that even angels do

not know (2 Enoch XXIV 3 = Zost 128, 14–18). In addition, the language of Zostrianos is entirely woven out of terms characteristic of Jewish mysticism.

Other Nag Hammadi treatises infused with motifs from mystical Judaism are worthy of further study, as it is the case with Eugnostos (Codex III, 3 and V, 1), which offers a highly structured angelological system. The same is true for the Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit (Codex III, 2 and IV, 2), which describes the sumptuous hall of the throne of Glory and emphasises the ritual and liturgical functions of angels.

If we turn to codex Tchacos, the Gospel of Judas contains very interesting angelological elements. For example, Judas' vision 108 of “the house in the heights” of immeasurable dimensions, surrounded by “great men”—“man” is a technical term for angels in esoteric Judaism—is a motif that appears both in the books of Enoch and, later, in the literature on the divine palaces (Hekhaloth).

But research on angels should also be extended, on the one hand, to the Gnostic excerpts preserved in the refutations of the Church Fathers and, on the other, to the Bruce Codex, rich in mystical, theurgical, and ritual elements, without forgetting the codex Askew.

This research could be pursued in order to obtain an accurate overview of the impact of marginal Judaism, not only on the theme of angels but also on other esoteric issues. Such an enquiry should also permit us to trace contacts between mystical Judaism and Gnosis that went beyond a literary level and reached the social fabric of mystical groups. <>

[Plato and Xenophon: Comparative Studies](#) edited by Gabriel Danzig, David Johnson, Donald Morrison [Mnemosyne, Supplements, Brill, 9789004369016]

[Plato and Xenophon: Comparative Studies](#) contains a wide variety of comparative studies of the writings of Plato and Xenophon, from philosophical, literary, and historical perspectives.

Contents  
Acknowledgements

Abbreviations  
 Notes on Contributors  
 Introduction to the Comparative Study of  
 Plato and Xenophon by Gabriel Danzig  
 Introduction to This Volume by David M.  
 Johnson  
 PART 1: Methods  
 Comparative Exegesis and the Socratic  
 Problem by Louis-André Dorion  
 Xenophon's Intertextual Socrates by David  
 M. Johnson  
 Division and Collection: A New Paradigm  
 for the Relationship between Plato and  
 Xenophon by William H.F. Altman  
 Xenophon and the Socratics by James M.  
 Redfield  
 Xenophon on "Philosophy" and Socrates  
 by Christopher Moore  
 Xenophon and the Elenchos: A Formal and  
 Comparative Analysis by Geneviève  
 Lachance  
 PART 2: Ethics  
 Laughter in Plato's and Xenophon's  
 Symposia by Katarzyna Jazdzewska  
 Socrates' Physiognomy: Plato and  
 Xenophon in Comparison by Alessandro  
 Stavru  
 Xenophon's Triad of Socratic Virtues and  
 the Poverty of Socrates by Lowell Edmunds  
 Pity or Pardon: Plato, Xenophon and  
 Aristotle on the Appropriate Response to  
 Intentional Wrongdoing by Roslyn Weiss  
 Mechanisms of Pleasure according to  
 Xenophon's Socrates by Olga  
 Chernyakhovskaya  
 Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon on the Ends  
 of Virtue by Gabriel Danzig  
 Socrates Erotikos: Mutuality, Role Reversal  
 and Erotic Paideia in Xenophon's and  
 Plato's Symposia by  
 Francesca Pentassuglio  
 Socratic Economics and the Psychology of  
 Money by Tazuko Angela van Berkel  
 PART 3: Friendship and Politics  
 Xenophon's Conception of Friendship in  
 Memorabilia 2.6 (with Reference to Plato's  
 Lysis) by Melina Tamiolaki  
 Socrates' Attitude towards Politics in  
 Xenophon and Plato by Fiorenza  
 Bevilacqua  
 Plato and Xenophon on the Different  
 Reasons that Socrates Always Obeys the  
 Law by Louis-André Dorion

Plato's Statesman and Xenophon's Cyrus  
 by Carol Attack  
 PART 4: History  
 Sparta in Xenophon and Plato by Noreen  
 Humble  
 Plato, Xenophon and Persia by  
 Christopher J. Tuplin  
 The Enemies of Hunting in Xenophon's  
 Cynegeticus by David Thomas  
 Index of Passages  
 General Index

#### Excerpt:

**Introduction to the Comparative Study of  
 Plato and Xenophon by Gabriel Danzig**  
 This is the first collection of papers comparing the  
 work of Plato and Xenophon ever to be published,  
 as far as I know. Its publication reflects a growing  
 recognition of the value of Xenophon's writings in  
 general and of the mutual importance of bringing  
 his Socratic writings into more fruitful contact with  
 those of contemporary Socratic writers such as  
 Plato. These papers move the comparative agenda  
 forward by considering complex kinds of  
 interaction between the two writers, including  
 Platonic reactions to Xenophon, by focusing more  
 on the comparison of ideas than on the value of the  
 writings as evidence for the historical Socrates, and  
 by enlarging the range of comparative studies to  
 include the non-Socratic writings as well. They also  
 reflect the growing recognition that the "Socratic"  
 writings of both Plato and Xenophon need to be  
 treated as expressions of their author's own spirit,  
 and hence that they must be treated within the  
 context of their author's work as a whole and not  
 merely through the lens of Socratic studies.

Most of the papers in this volume were presented,  
 sometimes in a very different form, at a conference  
 held at Bar Ilan University in 2014. The idea for  
 this conference occurred to me while attending  
 another conference in 2011. Dustin Gish had  
 invited Louis-André Dorion, Dave Johnson, James  
 Redfield, and Michael Stokes, to assess my recent  
 book on the portraits of Socrates in Plato and  
 Xenophon at a session of the Northeastern Political  
 Science Association conference in Boston. Since I  
 knew Louis-André was then finishing his massive  
 commentary on the Memorabilia, I thought I should  
 return the favor by organizing something on a



larger scale in honor of that. Louis-André's work has been an inspiration for everyone working on Xenophon's Socratic writings for the past fifteen years, including me. I was not able to organize anything in time for the publication of the commentary, but I asked him if he would agree to my organizing a conference in honor of his subsequent collection of essays, *L'autre Socrate*. Louis-André's reaction was typical: he said he did not want the conference to be devoted to a critical review of his previous achievements. He preferred that it be devoted to new studies furthering the project of comparative studies. And that is what we did. The papers collected here were written by junior and senior scholars from a wide variety of academic backgrounds, all sharing an interest in using the comparative study of Plato and Xenophon to clarify the teachings of both of these great writers.

In this introduction I will review the field of comparative studies of Plato and Xenophon and consider some of the central methodological issues that entails, suggesting also directions for the future. In the second introduction, Dave Johnson will discuss the papers contained in this volume.

### Chronology and Conversation

As the two students of Socrates who left us significant literary productions, Plato and Xenophon offer a particularly rich and fruitful field for comparative study. Since antiquity, scholars have discussed the alleged conversation between the two authors, focusing in particular on same-named compositions (*Apology* and *Symposium*) and emphasizing the rivalry between them. Scholars today agree that in at least one instance, Xenophon refers quite openly, although not explicitly, to the work of Plato (*X. Symp.* 8.9–11, 8.32–34; see *P. Symp.* 178a–185e).<sup>3</sup> It seems likely that Xenophon refers to Plato's *Apology* in the opening of his own composition by that name (*X. Ap.* 1).<sup>4</sup> There is also a reference to Plato's Socratic conversations, or to something very like them, in Xenophon's programmatic statement in *Memorabilia* 1.4.1.<sup>5</sup> These references, if they are references, show not merely that Xenophon read Plato, but that his Socratic writings aimed to respond to Plato and to his portrait of Socrates.

Xenophon attacks the shameless speeches of Plato's characters Phaedrus and Pausanias (mentioning only the latter) in *Symposium*; he corrects Plato's portrait of Socrates' behavior in court, informing us of his suicidal intentions and altering the tone and content of his speech in *Apology*; and he also corrects or supplements Plato's portrait of Socrates' conversations, devoting his *Memorabilia* to portraying the kind of unconventional, useful advice Socrates offered his friends. In none of these cases does he name Plato. But if this is the right way to understand these references, the entire agenda of Xenophon's Socratica was deeply affected by his reading of Plato and his desire to react.

Most scholars agree that Xenophon has read Plato. But his critical references and corrections to Plato's writings would be pointless if Xenophon did not expect that some of Plato's readers, and perhaps even Plato himself, would read what he had to say. These references are never absolutely explicit—they never contain the name Plato—so if Xenophon expects his audience to notice them, he must be addressing an audience that is quite familiar with Plato's writings. This does not imply that Xenophon is addressing only the close circle of Plato's students, however; it must be an audience that, in Xenophon's view at least, is willing to entertain the kind of criticism and correction he has to offer. While Plato's close students were quite possibly part of the audience, Xenophon must have aimed also at a wider, more neutral audience whose opinions could be swayed. Most likely Xenophon was addressing the same broad audience that all the Socratic writers addressed, and if this was an appropriate context in which to correct Plato, it follows that Plato was read by this larger audience as well. The commonality of the audience raises a question about Plato's relationship to Xenophon. If Plato's readers read Xenophon's writings, including his criticisms and corrections of Plato's portrait, Plato would have heard about it. Did Plato also read them?

\*\*\*

The literary conversation that the ancient critics describe clearly implies a give and take over time. But how would that square with our chronological evidence? On the basis of apparent references to

contemporary events, scholars today date most of Xenophon's writings to the period of 368–354.8 If Plato's so called early and middle dialogues preceded this period, they could not very well respond to Xenophon. Xenophon may have read early Plato and responded, and then Plato in his turn may have responded to Xenophon in his later writings such as *Laws*, but earlier influence would hardly be possible. Indeed, *Laws* contains the one passage (*Laws*, 694c–695b) in which scholars, ancient and modern, suspect that Plato is reacting, critically, to Xenophon's writings, as it happens, to *Cyropaedia*.

If this is the right scenario, Plato may have influenced Xenophon's agenda and portrait of Socrates, but there is little room for genuine give and take prior to Plato's late period. This conclusion, however, assumes a degree of certainty in our chronological picture that is unwarranted by our evidence.

We cannot really be certain that Xenophon's works are as late as we assume they are. One reason for assigning a late date to Xenophon is the assumption that when Xenophon treats themes that are found in Plato, this reflects Platonic influence on Xenophon. But in some cases the reverse may be true. Xenophon's references to contemporary events in some of his writings, including *Memorabilia*, provide more objective evidence for a late date for his writings. These references would provide a powerful reason for dating Xenophon after Plato, if we knew that Plato wrote at least some of his writings earlier than this. However, it is notoriously difficult to date Plato's dialogues. And Xenophon's seemingly conclusive references to historical events are not necessarily as conclusive as they seem. In some cases, a seemingly late reference may refer to events that are not so late. Aside from this, there is considerable evidence to show that ancient authors frequently rewrote their compositions, producing new editions with revised contents. Could all the references to late events be late additions by the author? Such an assumption would not be as arbitrary as it may seem. One likely reason for authors to revise is that they felt a need to respond to new developments. So it makes sense that later additions would refer to later events, not only historical ones but also literary ones. The implication

is clear: even a reference to a literary work produced by another author may be a late addition and, hence, does not provide proof of posteriority for the composition as a whole.

For this reason, the evidence used to assign a late date to Xenophon's writings is not as compelling as it may seem. While references to late events do set a terminus post quem for the work as we have it, they say nothing about the date of publication of any previous editions. I do not mean to suggest that we throw all our chronological assumptions into the waste bin, but recognizing that our chronological picture is tentative may help offset the tendency to transform chronological hypotheses into facts and then to interpret the texts within the limits they set. We should not limit the range of intertextual studies by means of chronological assumptions that are not facts; rather we should allow the evidence of the texts to speak for itself. While it is legitimate to suspect that Xenophon's writings postdate Plato's, this is only a probability, and transforming it into more than that will inhibit rather than advance further study.

If Xenophon published substantial writings earlier than we think, we cannot dismiss the possibility that Plato reacts to Xenophon even in his so-called early and middle dialogues. Similarly, if Plato revised his early and middle dialogues toward the end of his life, they may well contain passing references even to Xenophon's latest writings, although on this scenario the influence would not run as deep.

### Mutual Intertextuality

Revision would have offered an ideal means of responding to other works on a similar topic, particularly works that are critical of one's own. The phenomenon of revision, therefore, raises the possibility of a more complex kind of literary intertextuality than we usually have in mind: a single pair of works may be mutually intertextual, each containing responses to the other.

Such a situation may have arisen in the case of the two Symposia. Clearly the two compositions stand in some relationship one to the other, but which one preceded which? Xenophon's Symposium contains clear references to Plato's—but only in the penultimate chapter. The many other correspondences between the works can be

explained alternatively as Platonic responses to Xenophon. While in *Apology* (1) Xenophon seems to refer to Plato's *Apology*, in *Symposium* the situation looks to be the reverse: Plato's reference to an oral version of a Socratic symposium told by one "Phoenix son of Phillipus" looks like a derogatory reference to Xenophon's work by the same name. Bury believed it was a reference to a written composition, but because he assumed that Xenophon wrote later than Plato he postulated that Polycrates was the target. But the relative dating of the two *Symposia* is far from certain. Aside from the general doubts I have raised above, there are particular reasons to doubt the generally accepted date for Plato's *Symposium*. Contrary to Dover, Plato's *Symposium* must have been published after 378 or even after 371. The reference to Phoenix, whose name is almost a misspelled Xenophon, and whose father's namesake (Phillipus) is an insipid clown appearing in Xenophon's *Symposium*, may indeed be a reference to Xenophon's *Symposium*. At the very least, we know of no other Socratic *Symposium* to which this comment could refer, if it is indeed a veiled reference to a published work.

Obviously, both compositions cannot have been published after the other. The possibility that Plato is referring to Xenophon would therefore be prohibited as long as we discount authorial revision of Xenophon's chapter eight. But if there was revision, we can easily envision either 1) Plato wrote first and then, after Xenophon reacted to him in chapter eight of Xenophon's *Symposium*, added these derogatory remarks to his preliminary introductory scene (indeed, this might explain his motive for introducing this part of the unusual double-prologue) or 2) Xenophon wrote first and then added his criticisms of Plato in chapter eight as a response to Plato's derogatory reference to "Phoenix, son of Phillipus" and to Phaedrus' vile distortion of Critobulus' innocent suggestion concerning the benefits of beauty in a military commander. In fact there is room for several rounds in this exchange. The study of this kind of phenomenon is of interest primarily not for its implications for establishing a better chronological picture, but for the light it sheds on the relations between Plato and Xenophon and on the modes of literary interaction between them.

There are other cases of potential Xenophonic influence on Plato. In *Memorabilia* 1.4.1 Xenophon refers to the bad impression made by portraits of Socrates as someone who merely refutes others: 'If some people, relying on what some write and say about him, think that Socrates was most capable of turning men towards virtue but was not able to lead them to it, let them examine (*dokimazontōn*) whether he was able to make his companions better after considering not only the refutations he inflicted for the sake of chastisement (*kolasteriou*) by interrogating those who think they know everything, but also the things he said on a daily basis to his companions.

It has been suspected that this is a reference to Plato's early dialogues. Leading people to virtue, or making them better, is something that Socrates arguably fails to do in Plato's early dialogues. Here Xenophon suggests a new path for Socratic writers: instead of presenting only Socrates' aporetic conversations, they should highlight his success in improving others. Xenophon does this himself in *Memorabilia*; and in fact one finds a similar effort in Plato's middle dialogues such as *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Republic*, as well as in a supposedly early dialogue like *Crito*, where Socrates expounds positive doctrines concerning virtue. From this, one thing seems clear: Xenophon is not referring to those dialogues. And since his criticism would be superfluous if the middle dialogues were already circulating, he has probably not read them, and they may not have been published yet.

No one knows why Plato changed his direction and began writing dialogues with positive Socratic teachings. The profundity of the ideas he develops in these dialogues and the intimations of them found already in the earlier dialogues, show that he has contemplated these ideas for a long time. But what stimulated him to begin publishing them in an open manner and to attribute them, implausibly, to Socrates? It is certainly possible that Xenophon's critique of the earlier portrait of Socrates played some role, whether as a direct stimulus or as reflecting a more widespread critique attested also in Clitophon.

Similarly, the introduction of largely passive interlocutors who agree to Socrates' every claim, in dialogues like *Republic*, may reflect the influence of Xenophon's Socrates, who is notorious for his ability to win assent from his interlocutors (*Mem.* 4.6.15; *Symp.* 4.56) and for his harangues. The greater stress on good character traits, as opposed to theoretical knowledge, in accounts of virtue in the later Platonic dialogues may also represent a Xenophontic influence.

These and other directions in intertextual research should not be dismissed on the basis of uncertain chronological theories. Once we cease to allow these theories the power of veto, other considerations become more prominent. Are the simpler writings of Xenophon evidence of priority, of misunderstanding, of a different audience or literary sensibility, or even of a false-naïve response? Is a shorter statement in Xenophon a summary of a longer passage in Plato or the inspiration that led to a Platonic expansion? Each case must be judged on its own merits. And if the literary case is strong, we may have to complicate our chronological scheme in accordance.

### The Socratic Question

In modern times, the comparative study of Plato and Xenophon has focused mainly on the "Socratic question." Readers have asked themselves which of these two accounts of Socrates reflects the historical Socrates with greater fidelity? What can we learn from them about Socrates and his characteristic philosophical methods and doctrines?

Nowadays, those scholars who seek the historical Socrates tend to identify him with Plato's portrait in the early dialogues. Aside from other virtues, this makes Socrates into a fascinating figure, a tempting lure for the intellects of bright young university students. It also creates an easily formulated explanation for the differences between what we call early Platonic dialogues and middle and late ones.

Beginning with Schleiermacher, scholars have argued that Socrates must have resembled Plato's brilliant portrait because otherwise he could not have had such a huge influence on ancient philosophy. This argument was never very cogent. The huge influence on ancient philosophy to which

its proponents refer was effected largely by means of Plato and his influence on Aristotle. If the Platonic dialogues misrepresent the historical Socrates, then it would be false to say that Socrates himself had an enormous influence on the history of philosophy: it would be Plato who deserves the credit for the influence of "Socrates." Moreover, this argument ignores the fact that other Socratic writers, including Xenophon, also had a great influence on important schools such as Stoicism. If Plato's influence demonstrates the accuracy of his portrait, why wouldn't Xenophon's influence show the accuracy of his? It should be obvious, in fact, that influence is no proof of historical accuracy at all: an accurate but dull portrait might have no influence just as an inaccurate and fascinating one might have great influence. It is the quality of the portraits that is responsible for their influence, so Plato's extraordinary portrait would have been influential regardless of its relation to the historical Socrates.

Scholars insist: if Socrates resembled the portrait in Xenophon, he could never have attracted a student like Plato in the first place. If this were convincing it would show only that Xenophon got it wrong, not that Plato got it right. But it is not convincing. We do not really know very much about Plato's youthful tastes, and what we do know does not support this argument. There is really no evidence that Plato was attracted to Socrates for the sake of his philosophical discourses. He may have been attracted to him for his charismatic personality, dramatic behavior, and verbal virtuosity. He may have thought, like Alcibiades and Critias (*Mem.* 1.2), that associating with Socrates would help him succeed in the political career he was so devoted to at the time (see the Seventh Letter, 324b–d).

In fact, we cannot even be certain that Plato was a close companion or student of Socrates in the first place. Unlike Xenophon, Plato never portrays himself in conversation with Socrates. Moreover, when he offers a list of Socrates' associates in *Apology* he mentions "Adeimantus the son of Ariston, whose brother Plato is present" (34a). If Plato had associated personally with Socrates, why would his Socrates, in listing his associates, refer to Plato as the brother of an associate rather than as an associate himself? This is almost a proof that

Plato was not a close companion of Socrates. In *Republic* Plato portrays his brothers as associates of Socrates, and Xenophon too portrays Socrates in conversation with Glaucon rather than with Plato (*Mem.* 3.6.1). As far as we know, the other Socratic writers fail to take notice of Plato also.

It is possible that neither Plato nor Xenophon were close students of Socrates. They certainly cannot be counted among the older generation of Socrates' closest associates such as Aeschines, Antisthenes, and even Aristippus. Their contact with Socrates, if they had any, may have been extremely superficial. This would only serve to emphasize the importance of treating their writings as expressions of their own views rather than as reflections of the historical Socrates. But it is worth noting that there is more evidence of Xenophon's connection with Socrates than there is of Plato's. Plato's failure to mention Xenophon can be attributed to his general tendency to efface rival Socratic writers—he barely mentions Aeschines, Antisthenes, or Aristippus (noted by Vander Waerdt 1993: 3, n. 11). Xenophon too is selective in his references to rival Socratic writers: he gives prominent place to Antisthenes, but does not mention Aeschines, Phaedo or Euclides (see S. Prince 2015, 14). He does mention Plato, but only once, and he never portrays him in conversation with Socrates (or anyone else). Nor does Plato present himself in conversation with Socrates. Xenophon at least claims (problematically) to have been present at many of Socrates' conversations and is able to portray himself in conversation with Socrates twice (*Mem.* 1.3.8–13, *Anabasis* 3.1.4–7). And it is worth noting that our meager fragments of Aeschines attest to Xenophon's presence in the Socratic circle but not to Plato's.

Although Plato spent most of his literary career depicting Socrates, this is not in itself evidence of a close philosophical relationship with him. Sokratikoi logoi were the genre in which philosophical writings were published in his day, and this alone, bolstered by his brothers' association with the man, would provide a sufficient explanation for Plato's joining the crowd. This is not to say that Plato had no connection at all with Socrates. Most of the authors of Sokratikoi logoi had some connection with Socrates, and Plato probably had some connection

as well. But his connection may not have been a very close one, which makes it perilous to assume that his writings accurately reflect the ideas of Socrates.

Plato's personal references to Socrates suggest that he was a family friend and a moral exemplar rather than a philosophical inspiration (*Seventh Letter*, 324d–325c). Philosophically, Plato's writings show the influence of a wide variety of philosophic schools—Pythagorean, Parmenidean, Heraclitean, Sophistic. We don't know what elements, if any, from his dialogues can be attributed to the influence of Socrates. Even the technique of interrogation that he emphasizes so frequently, and which is found also in Xenophon and Aristophanes, may reflect a common contemporary eristic practice. We certainly don't know that the theoretical orientation of Plato's Socrates, which is what most distinguishes him from the Xenophontic Socrates, was inspired by Socratic philosophy, or that an interest of this kind underlay his purported youthful association with him.

The claim that a Socrates like that portrayed in Xenophon's writings is too unphilosophical to have attracted a young man like Plato faces a reverse objection at least as strong: if Socrates resembled Plato's theoretical Socrates, how would he have ever attracted a practical-minded man like Xenophon, who claims, among other things, that Socrates heaped ridicule on those who engaged in useless theorizing (see *Mem.* 1.1.14; 4.7.2–9)? All things considered, it maybe easier to imagine that Plato, who was undoubtedly a creative thinker of the first rank, has embroidered vastly on the historical Socrates than it is to imagine that Xenophon was unaware of what kinds of subjects he discussed.

The most recent and influential attempt to defend the historicity of the Platonic Socrates was made by Gregory Vlastos, widely recognized as a seminal figure in the contemporary study of Socrates. Vlastos argued that there is a high degree of philosophical coherence among the dialogues commonly regarded as early as opposed to those regarded as middle or late. He also argued that these dialogues present the same picture that we get in Plato's *Apology*, a work that he regarded as

being faithful to the spirit of the historical Socrates. If *Apology* is reasonably accurate, and the other early dialogues agree with it, then it follows that the early dialogues present a reasonably faithful portrait of the historical Socrates.

This impressively neat argument has faced serious criticism. Scholars have rejected the claim that *Apology* is accurate even to the spirit of the historical Socrates, seeing it more as an expression of Plato's own vision of Socratic philosophy. Others have argued that the early dialogues already contain the seeds of the later teachings, so that the division between the teachings in the early and middle dialogues is not as clear as it seems. In fact, aside from a recognizable late period, there is no consensus on the order of the dialogues. As a result, few scholars today have the temerity to claim Plato's Socrates as the historical Socrates.

Even supporters of Vlastos have retreated from some of his stronger claims. Brickhouse and Smith have recently defended the historicity of the Platonic Socrates by arguing merely that it is possible that the Socrates represented in early Plato is true to life. Of course, almost anything is possible; and it is notoriously difficult to disprove historical claims. But we do not ordinarily reach conclusions on the basis of the absence of a decisive refutation of any given claim. Brickhouse and Smith argue that it would be impossible in principle to demonstrate any divergence between the portrait and the original since we do not have independent evidence about the original: "Plainly, however, such a conclusive refutation of this thesis would require precisely what most critics claim we cannot have: an accurate knowledge of the historical Socrates, or at least a source whose testimony about him was demonstrably reliable" (15). In fact, however, we do not need to know what the historical Socrates said in order to know that Plato's portrait is non-historical. We only need to know what he could not possibly have said. And much of what appears in Plato's *Apology*, at least, falls in that category, as I have shown elsewhere.

Even when conceived as a literary investigation of the philosophy of Plato's Socrates, the Vlastonian enterprise remains problematic. The effort to piece together a consistent philosophy from the Platonic

dialogues implies a degree of literary esotericism not far distant from those of the Straussian and Tübingen schools, but without any theoretical justification. Proponents of this systematizing approach would need to explain why Plato failed to present his ideas as a coherent system but scattered them in dialogic compositions that seem to contradict each other.

It is no coincidence that Vlastos' scheme for recovering the teachings of Socrates went hand in hand with the disregard or denigration of Xenophon's writings. Xenophon represents an essential piece in the puzzle for anyone considering the Socratic problem or the literature about Socrates. But as Morrison has shown, Vlastos' appreciation of Xenophon was extremely superficial, and this is true as well for students of Vlastos, many of whom fail to consider Xenophon at all except in cases when he can be recruited as evidence for the historical validity of Plato's Socrates.

Xenophon has also had his partisans. They have tended to argue that since Xenophon had some interest in historical writing, he was more likely to have attempted to be faithful to Socrates. They also argue that Plato was too caught up with his own brilliant philosophical agenda to even attempt an historically accurate portrait. This latter argument has, to my mind, considerable merit, but it serves more to invalidate Plato's portrait of Socrates than to validate Xenophon's. The former argument has some merit as well, but when we consider the leeway that ancient historians took with their material, the didactic intentions they so often reveal, the fact that Xenophon himself was a self-acknowledged didactic historian, mentioning both didactic and apologetic aims in his Socratic writings, we are forced to recognize the limits of his historical reliability as well.

As most scholars recognize, the Socratic writers were engaged in writing fiction, and that means that their readers did not even expect a portrait that would be faithful to the original. This has been well-known at least since the time that O. Gigon published his *Sokrates, Sein Bild in Dichtung und Geschichte* in 1947, even if it did not always impact the English-speaking world. If the Socratic

writers were writing fiction, it seems obvious that their texts cannot be used as historical evidence, at least not without huge qualification.

This argument is sometimes taken too far, however. Although fiction, the Socratic writings are historical and apologetic fiction, and this means that they do bear some significant relationship to the historical Socrates or at least to public perceptions of him. While Plato and Xenophon may have great room to distort the portrait of Socrates, the very fact that they are addressing a public debate about an historical figure sets some limits to their creativity. In order to be recognizable, the figure they create must bear some significant relation to the historical figure. So some of the elements in these portraits are undoubtedly historical; the trouble is we do not know which ones they are.

The apologetic element takes us a bit further. Xenophon is explicit about his apologetic aims, and although Plato cannot make his apologetic aims explicit, since he does not employ an authorial narrative voice, it seems obvious that the image of Socrates he presents in works such as *Apology*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Republic*, and others is designed in part to reply to popular criticisms of Socrates. These apologetic aims almost guarantee distortion in the portrait of Socrates, but they also provide a clue for reconstructive research. At the very least the apologetic efforts respond to a common core of historical accusations against Socrates. Once we are aware of the apologetic tendencies of our two authors, we are in position, in theory, to get closer to the historical Socrates by discounting or neutralizing these tendencies. It should be possible to say something substantial about the historical Socrates by focusing on the issues addressed by both Plato and Xenophon rather than on their responses, identifying and eliminating the apologetic and imaginative elements in their portraits, and arriving at some Ur-Socrates. But it would be a Herculean task, and there is no guarantee that it would yield results even remotely proportional to the effort that would be necessary to reach them.

Scholars have sometimes thought that agreements between the two writers must reflect a common experience of the historical Socrates. Unfortunately,

however, these agreements rarely concern philosophical concepts. The writings we have agree that Socrates was a colorful figure, a sharp talker, abrasive but charismatic, uninvolved with political office or serious economic enterprise in Athens. He was an Athenian citizen, of the Alopeke deme, was involved in the trial of the Athenian generals in 406, was married to a woman named Xanthippe, had some children by her, and was executed by the Athenians for religious offense and corruption of the youth in 399. Clearly too, he did not give public lectures or charge fees for teaching. Most of this is probably accurate, but how far does it get us? Skeptics have doubted almost everything apart from this basic biographical material. And it says nothing about his thinking. As Chroust put it in his most positive formulation, “the Socratica of Xenophon offer some promise of definite success in establishing, not what the historical Socrates actually had been—this would be too much to expect—but what he probably might not have been”. The Platonic Socrates is no better, since he only expresses “the highest possible view of Socrates’ personality and thought—the maximum potentialities of Socrates”.

Undoubtedly, Socrates did discuss many of the topics that are reflected in the writings of his students. But we have no way of knowing what he said about those topics. Even when we find agreements in our sources, we do not know if they reflect common experiences with Socrates, or common themes in the literary endeavor known as Socratic literature. John Cooper has argued that Xenophon only accepts Platonic claims that accord with his own experience of the historic Socrates. But that is only a convenient hypothesis, and plausible only if we assume both that Xenophon knew Socrates personally, and that he was pursuing historical truth in *Memorabilia*.

Vlastos has argued that when Xenophon contradicts his own portrait of Socrates in order to agree with Plato he must be telling the truth (1991: 105–106). Thus when Xenophon has Hippias criticize Socrates for always asking questions and never giving answers (*Mem.* 4.4.9), qualities that are rarely if ever displayed by Xenophon’s know-it-all Socrates, he is reflecting the truth about Socrates. In effect, he is admitting that Socrates was more like Plato’s

Socrates than like his own. This argument has more weight than Cooper's, since it seems valid even on the assumption that Xenophon is a creative writer. But it is still problematic. It seems arbitrary to credit statements by Xenophon only when they are convenient for establishing the validity of Plato's portrait. If Xenophon is reliable on some issues, why not trust him on others? To this Vlastos replies that it is reasonable to trust Xenophon in cases where he contradicts his own general portrait, since only in those cases can we discount agenda-driven distortion. But there is a more substantial objection. Here is where intertextuality affects the Socratic question. Since Xenophon has probably read Plato, he may have been influenced in these statements not by his recollection of Socrates, but by his reading of Plato. To return to our example, Mem 4.4.9 appears on other grounds to be a response to Plato, and this suggests that Xenophon is not reporting his own experience of Socrates, and that his agreement with Plato cannot serve as independent evidence.

This kind of argument can be employed in two directions, however, and it seems somewhat more forceful when used to confirm Xenophon's portrait. While no one will deny that Xenophon read Plato, even those who believe that the reverse is true do not generally claim that Plato relied heavily on Xenophon for his portrait of Socrates. It follows that while Xenophon's slips cannot be adduced in support of Plato, since Xenophon has certainly read Plato, Xenophontic elements in Plato may have some weight as supporting Xenophon. While it is certainly possible to deny the independent validity of Plato's testimony by attributing it to the influence of Xenophon and others, this would be to acknowledge a level of influence that has rarely been suspected.

Plato and Xenophon provide two very different portraits of Socratic philosophy. While both attribute to Socrates a question-and-answer method, Plato has a tendency, particularly in the early dialogues, to portray Socrates in eternal disagreement with his interlocutors, while Xenophon highlights Socrates' ability to gain assent from his interlocutors (Mem. 4.6.14; Symposium 4.56). While Plato does show Socrates reaching agreement in some dialogues, these are mainly

middle period dialogues such as Republic, Phaedo, and others, which may show Xenophontic influence, as I suggested above. In terms of doctrines, Plato's Socrates focuses on definitions and concepts, while Xenophon's offers unconventional practical advice. There could be no greater contrast than that between Plato's star-gazer (Rep. 448d–449a) and Xenophon's Cyrus as opposing images of the ideal political leader, and Xenophon's Cyrus bears a close resemblance to his Socrates, who completely rejects theoretical speculation as a worthless waste of time (Mem. 1.1.14, 4.7.2–9). While Plato's Socrates is an idealistic speculator, Xenophon's is a master of practical political, military, and even economic advice.

The most decisive argument against the historical reliability of either author in portraying Socrates' views is the fact that they each attribute such different, incompatible, but internally cohesive views to Socrates. It is mainly a lack of understanding of the comprehensiveness and cohesiveness of Xenophon's vision that misleads readers into thinking his is a hodge-podge account that includes genuine impressions of Socrates. In fact, Plato and Xenophon disagree in the most fundamental ways, not only in their attitudes toward theoretical contemplation, but also in their attitudes toward virtue, education, happiness, wealth, and virtually every other fundamental issue in Greek ethical and political thought. Although they may both have been influenced by the same Socrates, their views cannot be brought together into a single composite portrait of Socratic philosophy. Although there are many commonalities, in the most essential matters Socrates is a mouthpiece for two rival views of human flourishing.

What little knowledge we have of Socrates' other students does not tend to support one or the other of these portraits, but rather to suggest still more variety in the depiction of Socratic philosophy. Beside Plato the idealist and Xenophon the euergetist, we have to consider Aristippus the hedonist and Antisthenes the ascetic. This variety of views suggests that the Socratic writers used Socrates as a mouthpiece for their own ideas, a notion that has been dismissed out of hand by some interpreters of the Platonic dialogues, who insist



that a character cannot be identified with an author and then draw the false inference that a character cannot express the views of an author.

But if these Socratic writers were students of Socrates, inspired by his conversations in one way or another, this variety of views may have a more interesting implication and one which does reflect, paradoxically enough, on the historical Socrates. I referred above to Schleiermacher's famous dictum:

The only sure path seems to be to ask instead what else could Socrates have been, over and above what Xenophon says about him, without however contradicting the character-traits and the practical maxims which Xenophon presents as specifically Socratic, and what must he have been to give Plato a right, and an inducement, to present him as he has done in his dialogues?

As Dorion points out, this formulation assumes a fundamental compatibility between the two portraits, a subject that is a matter of dispute in this volume. Given the fictional character of the Socratic writings, we can no longer assume that the character traits and practical maxims of Xenophon's Socrates are authentically Socratic. Nor can we assume that Socrates was the inspiration for Plato's dazzling speculations. Today, therefore, the question is a simpler one: what can Socrates have been to have inspired such a wide variety of followers, including not only the philosophic types listed above, but also political figures like Critias and Alcibiades? One likely answer is that he was someone with extraordinarily flexible views and arguments, someone who questioned the kinds of lives that people can lead without imposing a single answer. Such a Socrates would not be identical to the portrait in either Xenophon or Plato: Xenophon's Socrates has definite opinions that underlie all his conversations, and Plato's Socrates also shows a clear interest in a particular range of questions and characteristic kinds of answers. The historical Socrates must have had wider interests if he was the inspiration and instigator of speculations that lead in so many different directions. Once the fundamental divergence between Plato and Xenophon is recognized, it is possible to acknowledge the full diversity of Socratic

philosophy, to compare the remaining portraits of Socrates from a broader perspective, and to give adequate expression to those areas in which the portraits do agree.

### Plato and Xenophon

Further than this we probably cannot go in our effort to recover the teaching of the historical Socrates. But we turn away from this enterprise not merely because the search for the historical Socrates is a wild-geese chase (wild geese are sometimes caught, after all), but also because whatever we maybe able to find out about him would be far less interesting than the Socratic literature we have before us. At best we would find that some fraction of the material we have reflects the historical Socrates, but why would we be better off with a fraction than with the whole? With two fat geese in the hand, why go chasing a scrawny bird in the bush?

As long as the Socratic question dominated, it diverted attention from the more interesting and no less historically or philosophically important questions of the diverging attitudes, opinions, theories, and methods of the two writers themselves, Plato and Xenophon. As long as the Socratic question dominated, contradictions and divergences between the two authors could reflect their mistaken impressions of Socrates or at most their subjective tendencies in describing him. But once we leave the Socratic question aside, these contradictions and divergences become valuable clues for understanding the writers themselves.

I have referred above to places where Plato and Xenophon seem to refer or react to one another. This is an interesting and potentially valuable subject, but it is also an extremely elusive one in the absence of a reliable chronology. There are other kinds of comparative studies that do not depend on chronology and are in some ways more interesting. These kinds of studies compare treatments of similar themes, literary, biographical, or philosophical, as a means of understanding the two authors.

The treatment of the two Apologies may serve to illustrate the evolution of this form of comparative study. An early study by L. Shero (1927) treated Socrates as a quasi-historical figure and tried to

redeem Xenophon's portrait by reducing some of the seeming contradictions with Plato's *Apology*, denying suicidal intention and reducing the appearance of excessive boastfulness. Thomas Pangle, a student of Leo Strauss, was the first to treat Xenophon's *Apology* as an expression of its author's own vision of Socrates, although he did so in a highly speculative and idiosyncratic manner. Paul Vander Waerdt (1993) took the challenge further, offering a theoretical defense of a program of comparative study and a detailed treatment of the two *Apologies*. He showed that the two portraits of Socrates' speech should not be seen as recollections of the actual trial, but as divergent visions of the behavior of Socrates confronting this challenge. The differences in tone and content, especially the two versions of the story of the oracle of Delphi, reflect philosophical differences between Plato and Xenophon themselves. But Vander Waerdt could not completely free himself from the presumption that Plato's portrait is essentially right, and in interpreting Xenophon he continued the trend of denying or marginalizing suicidal intent and boastful arrogance, proposing elevated martyr-like aims for Socrates, and attributing to him a concern with the future of an enterprise he calls "philosophy" where none is evident.

There is more work to be done in the comparison of same-named compositions, the *Apologies* and the *Symposia*. Despite its brevity, Xenophon's *Apology* is one of his most revealing works, precisely because it has proved so hard to appreciate. It portrays a Socrates who, in contrast to Plato's portrait, fulfills Xenophon's own ethical ideals. Xenophon's *Symposium* is a rich treasure of Socratic behavior and conversation, in some ways more revealing than *Memorabilia*. These works are not only interesting in themselves; their study also promises to shed light on the Platonic works of the same names, not only because of their almost palpable intertextuality, but even more so because the divergent treatment of a single topos reveals so much about what is distinctive to Plato and to Xenophon.

Louis-André Dorion extended the range of comparative study beyond same named compositions to focus on common terms in Plato and

Xenophon, such as the kingly art, the daimonion, and, in his commentary on *Memorabilia*, a host of other terms. A similar kind of study focuses on characters who are common to Plato and Xenophon.

There is a limit, however, to the range and effectiveness of studies that concern common terms, despite the convenience of such research in the computer age. We know that Plato and Xenophon (and also Aristotle) are not consistent in their use of terminology within their own writings, so why should we expect another author to discuss a topic in the same terms that were used by his or her rival? In the clearest example of a reference by Xenophon to Plato (*Symp* 8.9–11, 8.32–34), he uses none of Plato's vocabulary, and this is a place where he evidently wanted the readers to notice the reference. In places where Xenophon or Plato simply discusses a topic that the other had discussed without intending to offer a direct response there is even less reason to expect them to deviate from their personal vocabulary and adopt that of their rival. So comparative studies demand an extensive reading familiarity with the writings of both authors and an ability to perceive common themes even where common language is lacking.

One particularly sharp way of engaging in thematic comparison is by investigating the contrasting reasons for a common behavior in the portrait of Socrates. In this kind of study the single, common behavior provides a constraint under which the two authors must construct their contrasting explanations. The very existence of a constraint suggests some connection to the historical Socrates, while the contrasting explanations reflect the visions of the two authors. The contrasting portraits of Socrates' behavior in court, discussed above, is an example of this kind of study. Louis-André Dorion has investigated the contrasting reasons for which both Plato's and Xenophon's Socrates decline to participate in political life.

Another kind of thematic comparison focuses on philosophical issues and methods that are treated differently by the different authors without regard to Socrates' behavior. This is an area of research that deserves much more attention. We are held back in part because we are still in need of more

detailed and careful studies of Xenophon's philosophical positions. Xenophon does not provide the kind of abstract philosophical arguments that we find in Plato and Aristotle, and in order to clarify his philosophical commitments we need to take account not only of the brief philosophical comments he presents in his Socratic and Socratic-style writings, but also of the descriptions and exempla found in his historical writings. For the same reason, it can be useful to make use of the more fully articulated philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle to shed light on Xenophon. I will consider this point further in the following section.

### Non-socratic Writings

One of the innovations of this volume, reflected in its title, is the decision to move beyond the Socratic context and explore the interrelation of the other Platonic and Xenophontic works. Xenophon's non-Socratic writings are easy to identify: although some reference or image of Socrates appears in all his major compositions, including *Anabasis* (3.1.4–7), *Hellenica* (1.7.15), and even *Cyropaedia* (3.1.38–40), these works are clearly different in character from the truly Socratic works, *Memorabilia*, *Oeconomicus*, *Symposium*, and *Apology*. So too are the very interesting short compositions. *Hiero* is anomalous in taking the form of a philosophical dialogue without Socrates. The situation is more delicate with Plato. Socrates is absent from *Laws*, but there are other dialogues as well in which Socrates is present but barely participates, or in which he participates in a largely passive way. Taken together, these “non-Socratic” works have rarely been subject to comparative studies.

The ancient critics indicated the validity of this kind of research when they suggested that *Republic*, *Cyropaedia*, and *Laws* are somehow interrelated. In the last two of these works both Plato and Xenophon seem to have outlived their interest in Socrates and to be turning in new directions. But this does not mean that they are no longer reacting to each other's work or that they are not addressing common themes. It is possible that the common turn away from Socrates is itself a sign of influence one way or another.

This direction of research is valuable in its own right for the light it sheds on these writings and their mutual relations, and on public conversation about political issues in the fourth century generally. And it may have some implication for our understanding of the portraits of Socrates as well. If the Socratic writings are products of the two authors' spirits rather than reflections of the historical Socrates, won't similar ideas be found in their non-Socratic writings as in their Socratic ones? On the other hand, if we can identify differences between the ideas contained in the Socratic writings and those contained in the non-Socratic writings, at least in the case of Xenophon where the distinction is clearest, would this enable us to distinguish between Socrates' ideas and those of Xenophon? Or would such differences merely reflect the difference between the ideas Xenophon attributes to Socrates and those he reserves for himself? Or would they reflect Xenophon's own evolving views?

The study of Xenophon's non-Socratic writings is valuable in another way. Those who read Xenophon's Socratic writings solely in relation to the writings of Plato and the other Socratics stand in constant danger of assimilating Xenophon's Socrates to the more familiar portrait in Plato. Errors of this sort are unfortunately common: for example, as I mentioned above, there are those who assume that Xenophon's Socrates, like Plato's Socrates, was on some kind of mission, divine or otherwise, to promote the study of philosophy. The problem is not merely that Xenophon refers so rarely to philosophy (a mere twentytwo times in his entire corpus) and that when he does refer to it the context is frequently humorous or ironical, but also that he never speaks of any kind of mission that Socrates might be engaged in. No one who came to Xenophon's Socratica without having read Plato would make such a mistake. And while it is impossible to erase all one's memories of Plato, a familiarity with Xenophon's historical writings can provide an effective antidote for this kind of speculation.

Placing Xenophon's Socratic writings within the context of his writings as a whole is vital simply for understanding them correctly. Despite the possibility that Xenophon evolved and changed his ideas over time, there is a great deal that is the

same across his diverse catalogue of writings, and knowing what he says in one place is often crucial for understanding what he says somewhere else. This project is made difficult by the division of Xenophonic scholars into philosophers and historians. This division causes damage to both halves of Xenophon studies, for Xenophon's historical writings—didactic writings emphasizing the role of virtue in political life—can be illuminated by reference to his Socratic writings just as much as his Socratic writings can be illuminated by reference to his historical writings. Vivienne Gray's recent volume *Mirror of Princes* shows how essential it is to understand the general teachings of Xenophon when approaching any particular passage, especially since Xenophon is an author with certain fixed conceptions that he never tires of promoting in ways both varied and otherwise.

This kind of study is a necessary preliminary to the study of Xenophon's philosophical ideas. It is often said that Xenophon is not really a philosopher, and by modern standards that is certainly true. But philosophy in the ancient world was not merely a commitment to a program of theoretical research. One of the central questions that philosophers asked was: what is the best life? The question of whether theoretical speculation is or is not the best way to spend one's life is itself a philosophical, or perhaps a meta-philosophical, question. It is a question that Xenophon was uniquely able to address, and which he does address, at least by implication, in almost every one of his writings. Xenophon clearly advocates a life that is not devoted to theoretical speculation, but he does so consciously, in awareness of the contrary opinion of Plato. He is not a pre-philosophical writer simply describing his own preferences, but someone with experience in philosophy and awareness of its issues. His construction of a coherent view of the good life in which theoretical speculation plays no role gives him a special interest, if not to professional philosophers, then at least to those for whom the questions of philosophy, including the question of the best life, are important.

Because our understanding of Xenophon's views lags far behind our knowledge of Plato, a special effort is needed to reconstruct the terms and positions that Xenophon adopts before we can

engage in comparative analysis. Valuable work has been done on his leadership theory and on some of his central political and ethical concepts. Helen North treated *enkrateia* and *sophrosune* in a chapter on Xenophon and the orators. Bodil Due investigated traits such as *philanthropia*, *enkrateia*, *sophrosune*, *philomatheia*, and *philotimia* in *Cyropaedia*. L.-A. Dorion, and more recently Olga Chernyakhovskaya, have written on *enkrateia*, *philia*, and *sophia*, basing themselves primarily on *Memorabilia* but referring also to material in Xenophon's other writings. Vincent Azoulay has treated *charis* as a central theme in Xenophon's corpus. Pierre Pontier has studied concepts of order in Plato and Xenophon. Norman Sandridge has treated fundamental virtues such as *philanthropia*, *philomatheia*, and *philotimia*, basing himself primarily on *Cyropaedia*. No one has done more than Donald Morrison to clarify Xenophon's philosophical positions. His article on justice and the law, for example, has provoked a continuing controversy. Michel Narcy and David Johnson have produced valuable literary-philosophical studies. L.-A. Dorion has investigated numerous topics, including the role of the *elenchos* in Xenophon, arguing that its relative lack of prominence does not reflect Xenophon's unawareness of this Socratic mode of investigation, but rather his conviction that it is not the most useful method of education.

The investigation of Xenophon's philosophical views is a particularly tricky endeavor. Although he is obviously an important witness to philosophical debates in fourth-century Greece, Xenophon does not address these issues in a detailed, expository manner but offers a variety of material related to the virtues: short definitions and discussions in his philosophical writings (*Memorabilia* and scattered elsewhere), longer descriptions of virtues in his encomiastic and instructional writings (*Agésilaios*, *Cynegeticus*, and scattered *encomia*) as well as illustrations of exemplary behavior in his extended narratives (*Anabasis*, *Hellenica*, *Cyropaedia*). Because the philosophical material in Xenophon is so terse, and conducted in such simple terminology, there is often a need to explicate it by reference to philosophical conceptions and discussions outside of Xenophon's writings. This is also a form of comparative study. To do that, exponents of

Xenophon's philosophy must be deeply familiar with the ethical and political writings of Plato and Aristotle.

This familiarity, however, brings its own danger. The temptation to import basic notions from the Platonic-Aristotelian milieu can barely be resisted. Are all virtues necessarily acquired character traits? Is happiness an activity? Is virtue something to be pursued for its own sake or for the sake of other more valuable ends? Such philosophical heresies must be seriously considered before any conclusions can be reached. One can explore the possibility of agreement, of course, but few writers of any distinction publish works in order to repeat what has been said better by others. However much he may react to other writers, we should presume that Xenophon published what he published because he thought he had something new to say. We may call this the presumption of originality. But the originality or non-originality of Xenophon's views is not the crucial question. Clarifying his views would not be a less important task if it turns out that they derive from Antisthenes or others, or even if they reflect common opinions in Athens or Sparta. Whatever name we give to these views, it is important to understand what they are and to evaluate the degree to which they are coherent and sensible.

Whether they are original to him, or merely reflective of opinions he absorbed from Socrates and others, Xenophon's views are clearly very different from those of Plato and Aristotle. Therefore, the study of Xenophon promises to open a window on an alternative ancient account of ethical and political questions, one that has never been fully explored. In pursuing this question, we can probably gain a great deal by bringing Aristotle more fully into the picture. If Xenophon wrote many of his works toward the end of his life, as most scholars believe, they may be more or less contemporary with Aristotle's writings. Aristotle's views are closer than Plato's in some ways to those of Xenophon, and, most importantly, he offers an expository account of ethical and political issues that contains a conceptual apparatus useful for analyzing any Greek thinker. It is particularly valuable for investigating a thinker like Xenophon, who seems to have a coherent set of ideas, but who

does not provide the kind of detailed exposition that is needed for modern analytic purposes.

Plato represents a different challenge. His works have been subject to far more scrutiny, and treated with far greater charity, than Xenophon's works. Plato's interpreters make extraordinary allowances for what seem to be deeply flawed arguments, but rarely if ever extend the same courtesy to Xenophon. Plato's works remain elusive largely because Plato wanted it that way, and it is a question how much further we can go in clarifying what exactly Plato "thought" about any particular question. Given the continuing perplexities occasioned by Plato's writings, the best way forward may be by pursuing comparative studies. By placing Plato's works in contrast with those of Xenophon some of the more salient and characteristic aspects of his work can be put into relief. Of course it is always useful to contrast writers with their contemporaries, and our understanding of the uniqueness of Plato can certainly be improved by contrasting him with writers such as Isocrates or even Demosthenes. But as a rival author of Socratic writings, Xenophon is probably the best place to start.

### Introduction to This Volume by David M. Johnson

Essays in this volume apply a great range of approaches to a variety of topics. Our authors include classicists, philosophers, and historians, and they represent various national traditions in scholarship (Britain, English- and Frenchspeaking Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United States). We engage in some depth with questions of methodology, as the first part of this introduction has already shown, but for the most part, we avoid old questions like the value of the Straussian approach or the relative merits of analytical versus literary readings of Plato. Socrates certainly receives all due attention, but mainly our essays skirt what have been the standard terms of comparative study of Socrates: the Socratic Question, comparison of Symposia or Apologies, and the all but certain cross references—Xenophon's reference to (Plato's) Pausanias at Symposium 8.32–35 and Plato's reference to (Xenophon's) Cyrus at Laws 3.694a–

695b.2 Instead, we include essays on Socrates' approach to philosophy, on central issues in ethics and politics, as well as laughter, Socratic physiognomy, eros, and Socrates' refusal to take payment for his services. And a number of essays consider the relationship between Xenophon and Plato outside of Socrates or Socratic works: Humble and Tuplin study how Xenophon and Plato made use of Sparta and Persia; Atack studies post-Socratic political thought, and Thomas spots Plato lurking in Xenophon's *Cynegeticus*. Even papers devoted to issues discussed at length by Socrates draw from Xenophon's non-Socratic works, as Danzig and Chernyakhovskaya do when making use of the *Cyropaedia*. Nor do our authors hesitate to compare Xenophon's Socratic works to Platonic works often considered to date from Plato's post-Socratic phase, particularly *Republic* and *Laws*. So this volume is about Plato and Xenophon, not just about two portraits of Socrates. Given how much more is written on Plato than Xenophon, we make no apology for the fact that most essays here are rooted in a Xenophontic perspective, from which they consider Plato. This also no doubt reflects the brute fact that while all scholars who work on Xenophon read Plato, many work on Plato with nary a glance at Xenophon—a situation we hope this volume will make some progress in remedying.

There are several possible ways to classify these essays. One would be to consider their different approaches to comparative study. Among the variables would be whether one sees more similarities than differences between Xenophon and Plato, or whether one sees the two as being in direct conversation, and, if they are conversing, who is responding to whom. About half the essays in this volume stress differences between Xenophon and Plato. For the most part, these essays show that Xenophon and Plato had different views but do not raise the question of which author was responding to the other, or indeed whether the authors were responding to one another at all (Chernyakhovskaya, Danzig, Dorion, Jazdzewska, Moore, Pentassuglio, Redfield, Tamiolaki). In this volume only Danzig (in his introduction) and Thomas make a point of identifying an explicit criticism made by one author of the other. There are good reasons for not attempting to unravel the direction

of influence, given difficulties in identifying publication dates, the possibility of revision, and possible interaction with other authors, many now largely lost to us. There are also theoretical disadvantages with making authorial intent the locus for intertextuality; it is safer and perhaps more prudent to emphasize the intertextuality constructed by readers of the texts, including today's readers. We can use one author to contextualize the other without identifying the direction of influence or even positing that any influence took place. Of the papers that stress similarities between Plato and Xenophon, almost half identify an overt conversation between the two authors (Altman, Atack, Humble, Johnson, Tuplin), while the others find similar views in our authors without positing a direct relationship between them (Bevilacqua, Edmunds, Stavru, van Berkel, Weiss). Perhaps, given a tendency of late to identify disagreements among our authors, those who see agreement between the two find a need to buttress their views by authorial intent. Among those who lump Plato and Xenophon together, Johnson takes the traditional tack of seeing Xenophon as responding to Plato, but Altman, Humble, and Tuplin identify influence flowing in the other direction, while Atack argues for a more complex give and take along the lines suggested by Danzig in his introduction. Of course any attempt to classify essays as lumpers or splitters will oversimplify things in multiple ways. All comparisons are based on some similarity—generally a shared topic—and some essays attribute the same or at least similar views to Xenophon's and Plato's Socrates but find that view supported by different arguments, or leading to different ramifications (Dorion, Edmunds, Pentassuglio, Stavru, van Berkel). In these cases, the question as to whether to lump Xenophon together with Plato or split them apart will be a matter of whether one stresses the position taken by Socrates or emphasizes the arguments with which he supports that view or the consequences he draws from that view. And agreement or disagreement, overt or implicit, hardly exhausts the gambit of comparative study. Agreement or disagreement may be rooted in our texts' adherence to or independence from history, be it historical Sparta, historical Persia, or the historical Socrates. We, in fact, considered grouping essays according to

whether or not they were “Socratic,” but to do so we would have to beg the central questions of how Socratic Xenophon’s Socratic works are and how much of Xenophon’s worldview outside his Socratic works was shaped by Socrates. Most of the essays in this volume study what we might call the propositional content of our texts (for example, Socrates’ view on *akrasia*, or Xenophon’s and Plato’s views on Sparta), including the reasoning behind Socrates’ behavior (e.g., his decision not to escape from prison). But we may also ask what sorts of rhetorical goals Xenophon and Plato were trying to accomplish by discussing these views. Thus Redfield suggests Xenophon wasn’t really playing the same game as the Socrat-ics, and Moore argues that Xenophon, unlike Plato, did not want to limit his Socrates to what philosophers do; but Humble and Tuplin show Xenophon and Plato making similarly critical use of history for philosophical ends, while Altman suggests that Plato was inspired by Xenophon to collect his dialogues into a single reading order, and to split off Xenophontic jokes into separate dramatic gems. If we look beyond Xenophon’s Socratic works, this question broadens to one of genre: is the *Cyropaedia* really in the same genre as the *Republic* and, if not, how should generic differences inform comparative study?

Thus the various takes on comparative study include:

- Do Plato and Xenophon agree or disagree about a given topic?
- Do they agree or disagree with each other, as opposed to merely staking out different positions?
- Do they agree or disagree about propositions, arguments in support of propositions, or consequences of those propositions?
- Or do the differences result from differences in rhetorical goals?
- Are both authors doing philosophy, or does that only describe Plato, while Xenophon more often aims to provide advice, teaching, or models for emulation?

So much for other possible ways of organizing (and navigating) this volume. We’ve chosen the tried and

true route of organizing our essays via subject matter. Part 1 leads off with questions about method, both comparative methodology and Socratic Method. Part 2 includes essays on a range of ethical topics, from laughter and Socratic physiognomy, to questions of the virtues, pleasure, wrongdoing, eros, and wealth. Part 3 covers politics, starting with politicized friendship and moving on to political theory. Part 4, on history, considers our authors’ takes on Persia and Sparta, and ends with an effort to uncover the historical target of Xenophon’s criticism in the *Cynegeticus*. For an overview of topics covered, consider the brief thematic index; we hope a more selective list of themes, terms, and persons that are discussed at some length in a given essay will be at least as much use as a more detailed (and therefore cluttered) index would be.

### Methods

LOUIS-ANDRÉ DORION describes how a suspension of judgment regarding the Socratic Question opens up possibilities for comparative study of Socrates. The Socrat-ics, he suggests, wrote not to capture the historical Socrates but to defend Socrates and, above all, to promote their own portrayals of Socrates in opposition to those of their rivals. Comparative analysis of differing accounts of shared Socratic themes is thus far more in keeping with the original intent of the Socrat-ics than making their works out to be sources for the historical Socrates. Furthermore, comparative study allows one to see a multitude of differences not as one-off failures or successes in capturing the historical Socrates, but as coherent parts of rival portraits of Socrates, each of which forms a unity of its own. Comparative study, which puts all Socratic works on an equal footing, will counter the tendency of past scholarship to marginalize all Socratic works outside of Plato; it does not “excommunicate” certain authors as unreliable sources for the historical Socrates. Rather, one can learn to appreciate each work in its own terms, instead of judging Xenophon in terms of a Platonic ideal he did not aim to reach. Dorion confesses himself a radical skeptic regarding the Socratic Question but notes that comparative study is an indispensable first step even for those who wish to seek the historical Socrates. Those who wish to reconsider the

Socratic Question will however have to address the numerous differences between the two authors that have been uncovered thanks to comparative scholarship freed from the old fixation on the historical Socrates.

DAVID M. JOHNSON argues for a different understanding of intertextuality in the study of Xenophon and Plato. Both Dorion and Johnson employ an intertextual approach, as both find meaning in the relationship between the texts; but where Dorion finds meaning in the differences between Xenophon and Plato, Johnson finds meaning where the two overlap. And where Dorion argues that skepticism about the Socratic Question has allowed for a renaissance in the study of Xenophon's Socratica, Johnson worries that emphasis on contrasts between Xenophon and Plato may provide a new reason for scholars in Socratic studies to ignore Xenophon. Johnson argues that when Xenophon alludes to other Socratics, he generally says that he is adding to the conversation, rather than replacing their views with his. Moreover, Xenophon's occasional "slipups," in which he characterizes his Socrates in ways we find more characteristic of Plato's, suggest that he did not regard his Socrates as distinct from Plato's. Rather, Johnson argues, when Xenophon says "Socrates" he means not "my Socrates" but "our Socrates," i.e., the Socrates shared by the Socratic authors, as reshaped by Xenophon. To show the relevance of this broad claim, Johnson examines the ways in which Xenophontic *enkrateia* replaces Plato's *sophia* as the chief item in Socrates' ethical vocabulary. In Johnson's view, the two Socratics are more compatible here than Dorion and others have suggested, as *enkrateia* can provide a foundation for intellectual virtues. Johnson hopes to rediscover an intertextual Socrates who, regardless of his precise relationship to the historical Socrates, offers us a coherent philosophy that supports Platonic intellectualism with a Xenophontic foundation in self-control.

WILLIAM H.F. ALTMAN argues that Xenophon had a profound influence on Plato's conception of his works, inspiring him to fashion them as an interconnected series of dialogues, leading the reader from the introductory Alcibiades to Socrates' death in the *Phaedo*. Altman's own

inspiration comes, at least in part, from a passage in Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights* 14.3), which rejects the notion that Plato and Xenophon were rivals and replaces it with the image of the two authors as teammates running the same race, toward the same goal. Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and *Cyropaedia* proved models for what Altman calls "collection," the process of combining separate conversations into a literary whole. If we have collection, we'll also have division, and Altman sees this in Plato transforming Xenophon's quick jokes about escaping death at the end of his *Apology* into the dramatic masterpieces of the *Crito* and *Phaedo*. Plato maybe il miglior fabbro, but in Altman's reimagining of their relationship, Xenophon is no longer a second-rate copyist but a pioneer.

JAMES REDFIELD suggests that we set aside our pursuit of the historical Socrates and consider the historical Xenophon instead. Xenophon, Redfield argues, probably wrote his Socratic works after those of the first-generation Socratics had been published. While the works of the so-called minor Socratics are largely lost to us, Redfield suggests that the spurious dialogues attributed to Plato may provide one guide to the genre. Redfield argues that the spuria and, therefore, presumably, the works of the other Socratics resembled Plato more than Xenophon. Plato and the spuria feature quick, dialectical argumentation where Xenophon prefers a more didactic mode; Xenophon largely avoids interlocutors common in other Socratics, including Alcibiades and the great sophists; and we find nothing in other Socratic writings much like Xenophon's continuous authorial presence in the *Memorabilia*. Plato's Socrates, whom Plato seems to have resembled in this respect, has an adversarial relationship to other intellectuals and is not shown in conversation with other major Socratics. Xenophon's Socrates is no isolated genius but rather a practical man quite at home both with other Socratics and with interlocutors from all walks of life. Plato is "ironic all the way through," forcing readers to evaluate his arguments for themselves; Xenophon would play Boswell with Socrates' Dr. Johnson and present himself as the authoritative guide to Socrates. But Xenophon, Redfield argues, became a Socratic only in his old age and was interested not so much in defending or remembering Socrates



as in demonstrating his own claim to be a Socratic, by presenting idealized memories of “his youth as it was and as he wished it had been.”

Our first four essays thus introduce rather different takes on the relationship between Xenophon and Plato. At the risk of some simplification, we may say that Dorion and Johnson argue primarily about whether Plato and Xenophon offer philosophically compatible portraits of Socrates, while Altman and Redfield offer contrasting literary analyses.

Johnson and Altman agree in seeing Plato and Xenophon more as partners than rivals, but Johnson sees Xenophon as providing a missing foundation for Plato’s Socrates while Altman argues that Xenophon inspired Plato to imagine his corpus as a coherent whole and provided him with the seeds for the *Phaedo* and *Crito*. Dorion and Redfield both emphasize differences between Xenophon and Plato and reject efforts to uncover the historical Socrates. But where Dorion thinks that Xenophon’s portrait of Socrates is a rival to Plato’s, a rival we can better understand by studying contrasts between the two, Redfield sees Xenophon as more of an outlier, with a goal distinct not only from Plato but from other Socratics. Redfield’s Xenophon is interested not so much in producing a rival vision of Socrates as in demonstrating his own personal connection to Socrates; in this Redfield differs not only from Dorion but from Johnson and Altman, all of whom see Plato and Xenophon as engaged in the same sort of literary enterprise.

CHRISTOPHER MOORE argues that Xenophon subtly distanced Socrates from the philosophers of his day. Xenophon’s usage of *philosophos* and its cognates shows that he did recognize philosophers as a distinct group of individuals who practiced abstract reasoning about ethical matters, and whose teaching was supposed to enable their students, who paid them, to speak well and achieve practical results. But the philosophers were also controversial, and Moore argues that Xenophon, unlike Plato, had no interest in refuting the general attacks on philosophy, promoting philosophy as a way of life, clarifying what counted as true philosophy, or distinguishing philosophy from sophistry. Xenophon’s interest was in defending Socrates as a moral exemplar, and associating Socrates with a controversial contemporary group

would only have complicated matters. Hence, while others in Xenophon’s Socratic writings imply that Socrates is a philosopher, Xenophon never calls him one in his own voice; nor, Moore argues, does Socrates ever clearly claim the name for himself. Moore carefully analyzes each of the uses of *philosophos* and its cognates in Xenophon, aiming to show that despite Socrates’ affinities with the philosophers, Xenophon consistently passes up the opportunity to identify his Socrates as one. Xenophon’s Socrates is his own man.

GENEVIÈVE LACHANCE studies the logical form of the Socratic *elenchos* in Xenophon, comparing it with its much more frequent use in Plato. As she notes, there has been a tremendous amount of formal study of the *elenchos* in Plato, and some comparison with Xenophon, but the comparison has focused on Xenophon’s attitude toward the usefulness or propriety of the *elenchos*, rather than on its logical form. By Lachance’s count, there are only two examples of the *elenchos* in Xenophon, Alcibiades’ refutation of Pericles (*Mem.* 1.2.41–46) and Socrates’ refutation of Euthydemus (*Mem.* 4.2). The first consists of three examples of *reductio ad absurdum*, a technique we also find used twice in *Memorabilia* 4.2. Like Plato, Xenophon often leaves it to readers to draw the final explicit conclusion of the argument after the basic absurdity has become clear. While she raises questions about the validity of Xenophon’s arguments—and suggests Xenophon may have knowingly attributed an equivocation to the irresponsible Alcibiades—Lachance sees his use of the *reductio* as being similar in form to that of Plato. Xenophon’s other technique is the use of a counter-example to defeat a universal claim, as the claim that stealing is always unjust. Plato too uses counter-examples, Lachance notes, but more often in clusters and as part of more complex arguments. Lachance argues that Xenophon’s refutations do not resemble the model of the *elenchos* influentially articulated by Gregory Vlastos (1994), in which an initial proposition is found to conflict with multiple other propositions the interlocutor agrees to. Nor does the *elenchos* play a positive role of the sort Vlastos assigns to the Socratic *elenchos* in Plato. Xenophon would thus limit it to the initial phase of education, as that of Euthydemus in *Memorabilia* 4.2, rather

as Plato limits the use of the elenchos by the time of the Sophist.

We might pause to ask whether Lachance's account of the elenchos is in tune with Moore's view that Xenophon's Socrates was not (really, or at least explicitly) a philosopher. Moore argues that Xenophon did have a fairly specific understanding of what philosophy entailed, and Lachance would presumably agree that Xenophon had a fairly sound grasp on the elenchos. But at least if Vlastos' account of the Socratic elenchos is on the right track, the absence of any positive elenchos in Xenophon could be taken to imply that Xenophon's Socrates was not really in the philosophy business at all.

### Ethics

KATARZYNA JAZDZEWSKA studies the terminology of laughter in the two Symposia and finds important differences in the ways Plato and Xenophon characterize it. The relaxed atmosphere of the symposium provides a natural venue for laughter, but laughter tends to be ambiguous in Greek literature, as it so often shades over into ridicule or derision and tends to reflect poorly on the one who is laughing. There is not much actual laughter in Plato's Symposium, but a fair amount of discussion of laughter or the ridiculous; one key passage is Aristophanes saying, with a laugh, that he is eager to say humorous things (γελοῖα) but not things that would make him a butt of ridicule (καταγέλαστα; Symp. 189b). In fact, a certain concern about appearing ridiculous or contemptible characterizes the discussion of laughter in Plato's Symposium, though Aristophanes, Socrates, and Alcibiades all pride themselves in different ways on being willing to risk appearing somewhat ridiculous. Xenophon's Symposium contains both more examples of laughing and more discussion of laughter. What is missing, Jazdzewska notes, is any worry about seeming ridiculous; καταγέλαστος and related terms do not appear. Speakers instead appear happy to arouse laughter at their own expense. Plato's relative severity makes sense given his views on laughter, expressed in the Republic and Laws: laughter is often based on ignorant misunderstanding, and strong laughter is a sign of the dominance of emotion over rationality.

Plato allows for more laughter in the Phaedo, where it lightens the mood and there is no risk of derision among a group of committed Socratics. Xenophon, for his part, shows in the Cyropaedia both an appreciation for Cyrus' ability to mix laughter with seriousness and a willingness to allow Aglaïtadas to question the proper role of laughter (2.2.1–2.3.1). Jazdzewska concludes that while Xenophon appears less concerned about the risks of laughter than Plato, both recognize its ambiguity; while it serves as a healthy social cohesive in some circumstances, it can also result in antisocial derision (Plato), upset the rule of reason (Plato), or distract one from more somber lessons (Xenophon's Aglaïtadas).

ALESSANDRO STAVRU studies the famous descriptions of Socrates' physiognomy in Xenophon and Plato. Both describe Socrates as a satyr (or silen, a term not clearly differentiated from satyr), albeit one with large protruding eyes, which were not a typical feature of satyrs. Stavru suggests, as have others, that actors playing Socrates on the comic stage likely wore satyr masks. But Xenophon and Plato were the only Socratics, to the best of our knowledge, to describe Socrates as a satyr, and their descriptions were the basis for all subsequent representations of Socrates' physique, including those in art. Xenophon and Plato found different meanings behind Socrates' strange features. In the beauty contest of his Symposium, Xenophon has Socrates argue that his features are beautiful because they are useful. His bulging eyes provide a wide field of vision, his broad nostrils take in smells from all directions; Socrates' interlocutor, himself volunteers that Socrates' big mouth allows him to eat more efficiently, and suggests that his thick lips make for softer kisses. This is in keeping with Xenophon's emphasis on how Socrates was useful and on defining the good and beautiful in terms of use. Xenophon caps these utilitarian arguments with a mythological one: where Plato's Socrates never compares himself to a satyr, Xenophon's does, the better to lay claim to an unseen divine beauty—for lovely nymphs do give birth to satyrs, after all, and thus Socrates has a hidden, beautiful divine lineage. Plato's Socrates, as described by Alcibiades, is not so much ugly—though that is the implicit contrast with the beautiful

Alcibiades—as strange, out of place. And Alcibiades stresses the contrast between Socrates’ coarse, silenic exterior and the divine wisdom hidden inside. Stavru also considers what Xenophon tells us of Socrates’ belly, which he suggests may mark a change inhabits from the austere and skinny Socrates of the *Clouds* to the more comfortable Socrates of Xenophon’s *Symposium*, who says he dances to work on his waistline. Finally, Socrates’ bulging eyes enable not only stronger vision, but a gaze that shows his imperturbability on the battlefield or while awaiting the hemlock. As Stavru puts it, both authors transform the satyr’s persona, mask, into a philosophical paradeigma. The comparison is more than skin deep. Socrates’ physiognomy is thus, in Stavru’s hands, a case study in how the Socratics transformed the comic image of Socrates, one with no small element of ridicule, into a positive and serious lesson about the depths of Socrates. They thus meet the risk posed by the sort of derisive humor Jazdzewska discusses by turning the joke inside out and revealing its incongruity. We laugh at Socrates’ silenic appearance precisely because he is no lustful, gluttonous beast.

LOWELL EDMUNDS reexamines Socrates’ *enkrateia* (“self-mastery”), *karteria* (“endurance”), and *autarkeia* (“self-sufficiency”). Edmund’s starting point is Dorion’s view that while these traits are all but ignored in early Plato, in Xenophon they form a Socratic triad of virtues, in which *enkrateia* provides the foundation in mastery over our desires, *karteria* enables us to withstand external threats like heat and cold, and the two traits combined produce self-sufficiency. Edmunds notes that in Xenophon *enkrateia* and *karteria* are closely connected and even overlap in meaning. Such traits are also repeatedly attributed to Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium*, even if Socrates does not subject these traits to examination in the early dialogues. But Edmunds thinks we should remove *autarkeia* from the so-called triad, as Xenophon also connects it to intellectual ability (*Mem.* 4.7.1–3, 4.8.11): since *autarkeia* can be based on something other than *enkrateia* and *karteria*, the triad is really just a dyad. To understand *autarkeia*, Edmunds suggests, we need to consider the discourse surrounding Socrates’

poverty. Xenophon and Plato alike reject the charge that Socrates’ poverty forced him to practice self-control; rather, Socrates’ choice to train himself in living an austere life resulted in him living the life of a pauper. For Plato’s Socrates, austerity avoids any distractions from philosophy. Xenophon’s Socrates chooses self-sufficiency because it is godlike (*Mem.* 1.6.10), and his self-sufficiency is enabled by his deliberate choice to live an austere life. Edmunds argues that Socrates’ interest in self-sufficiency can be seen as part of a conversation aimed at addressing the archaic conception of human incapacity. Where Periclean Athens, at least in Thucydides’ telling, aimed for a political self-sufficiency only to come up against the plague, Hippias, Aristippus, and Socrates all made individual self-sufficiency a goal, if in very different ways.

ROSLYN WEISS studies how Plato’s Socrates, Xenophon’s Socrates, and Aristotle apply pity, pardon, or both to those who deliberately do wrong. To do so, she must first show that Plato’s Socrates did, in fact, believe in deliberate wrongdoing, contrary to the common scholarly position that Socrates denied *akrasia* and thus found all wrongdoing to be unintentional. Plato’s Socrates, Weiss notes, is a champion of justice—an odd position for one who thinks that all injustice is involuntary. Socrates explicitly denies the possibility of *akrasia* only in the *Protagoras*, and Weiss argues that the argument there is an *ad hominem* demonstration of the hollowness of sophistry. When Socrates denies that anyone willingly does wrong outside of the *Protagoras*, he means that when people deliberately choose evil over good, they unwillingly damage their souls and thus fail to live the good life that all people truly want. Weiss examines the two passages in Xenophon that have been taken to deny *akrasia*—*akrasia* in our sense of knowing what is right but doing otherwise, rather than *akrasia* in Xenophon’s sense, the failure to be in control of one’s desires (via *enkrateia*). In one of them, *Memorabilia* 4.6, Weiss finds an intentionally weak argument offered to a simpleminded interlocutor (Euthydemus) after Socrates was forced to provide a worthless answer to a pest of a sophist (Hippias). Weiss finds it incredible that Socrates could simply equate justice with obeying

the law, or claim that everyone who knows the law follows it. The other passage, *Memorabilia* 3.9.4, is more complex. Here Weiss argues that Xenophon says that some know what should be done yet fail to do it—akrasia in our sense.

But they do so because they lack the wisdom to see that the right thing to do is always to one's advantage; knowledge of what should be done, she argues, is different from wisdom, knowledge of the fine and good. Such men lack wisdom because they lack *enkrateia*, which is a precondition for acquiring it.

Weiss now argues that it is actually Aristotle who is the closest thing to a moral intellectualist. Aristotle insists that the wicked must be ignorant of what should be done—as otherwise knowledge would be dragged around like a slave. The Aristotelian *akratēs*, who is merely half-wicked, wants to do what is right and knows what should be done but is momentarily confused because he does not actualize his relevant knowledge. Aristotle thus attempts to square the phenomenon of *akrasia*, which he thinks Socrates was wrong to deny, with a highly intellectualist stance. His position ends up being close to the *ad hominem* position Socrates adopts in the *Protagoras*, a position that Aristotle, wrongly in Weiss's view, takes to be genuinely Socratic. Weiss also suggests that Aristotle was wrong to follow the hedonism of the *Protagoras* not only because it isn't Socratic but because it isn't sensible; a more commonsensical approach, following Xenophon, would have allowed him to see the value of *enkrateia* rather than to seek out minute distinctions between various subcategories of knowledge. But for her Plato's Socrates has the most subtle view, as he can distinguish between pity and pardon: wicked men who voluntarily choose injustice cannot be pardoned, but because no one willingly pursues a self-destructive way of life, even the wicked can be pitied.

Edmunds and Weiss differ from most others in this volume in casting their comparative nets rather wider than our two title authors, Plato and Xenophon. Where Edmunds shows how the two Socratics participated in a discourse about self-sufficiency dating to Socrates' own day, Weiss considers Aristotle's take on Socratic *akrasia*. In

Edmunds' essay, the external perspective helps show that the *autarkeia* of Xenophon's Socrates is more than the result of his *enkrateia*, despite the importance of that term for Xenophon. In Weiss's account, Aristotle provides a sort of bridge between antiquity and the standard intellectualist reading of Plato's Socrates, a reading she endeavors to reject with the help of her reading of Xenophon.

OLGA CHERNYAKHOVSKAYA studies the workings of pleasure and happiness in Xenophon's Socratic works. Xenophon's Socrates, unlike Plato's, is often held to believe that happiness is based on one's practical, material success. Chernyakhovskaya grants that this appears to be the case for collective happiness but argues that individual happiness instead functions much as pleasure does. To be happy, the individual must work, must engage in *ponos*; this toil is undertaken to meet a need, and must meet with success that the individual is aware of. One must, therefore, choose a form of activity within one's capabilities, but Chernyakhovskaya argues that for Xenophon's Socrates all people have access to *enkrateia* and knowledge. Unlike Plato, then, the "one man one job" rule is not settled at birth, based solely on innate qualities; people may choose, and change, their own tasks. For Chernyakhovskaya's Xenophon both pleasure and happiness are subjective, as what pleases you, with your needs, your capabilities, and your choice of tasks, may well not please me. Higher pleasures differ from bodily ones in requiring propitious external circumstances, as bodily needs can be met with limited resources and provide pleasure so long as they follow upon deprivation. But happiness is generally within our own power, so long as we secure the aid of the gods, which allows us to choose the right tasks to undertake. Happiness also requires self-awareness; to be happy we need to be aware of our success, and to believe that our success is worthy. It is this last condition that makes old age intolerable for Socrates: he has chosen a life of intellectual self-improvement, which is no longer possible for him, and cannot imagine enjoying a lesser life. Others might adjust their goals and find happiness in other ways. Yet Xenophon's Socrates does not, as Plato's Socrates does in the *Republic*, present any

argument to back up his claim that his philosophical way of life is superior to others, so he has no good reason to believe his pleasure in self-perfection is any greater than that of other happy people. Finally, given the dynamic nature of pleasure and happiness in Xenophon's view, Chernyakhovskaya argues that *autarkeia* cannot be the ultimate goal for Xenophon's Socrates, though he certainly does prize activities that allow for success even in the absence of external goods that are beyond our control. In any event, in Chernyakhovskaya's view, happiness, as the highest form of pleasure, is firmly rooted in Socratic moral psychology and no mere matter of material success.

GABRIEL DANZIG considers the relationship between virtue and happiness in Xenophon, distinguishing it from the better known views of Plato and Aristotle. Xenophon's ethics have frequently been characterized as utilitarian, in contrast with the virtue ethics of Plato and Aristotle. Danzig refines this distinction on both sides. He first notes that even for Plato and Aristotle there is a sense in which virtue is not its own reward, but rather the quality which allows us to engage in the highest form of activity, theoretical contemplation. But he also argues that for Xenophon practical ends are not the only rewards of virtuous activity. Xenophon is certainly no fan of theory for theory's sake; his Socrates urges his companions to avoid useless theoretical study, and he frequently stresses the usefulness of the virtues. In a key passage for Danzig, Cyrus tells the Persians that their forefathers were foolish to practice virtue but not to enjoy its rewards: while fine warriors themselves, they failed to make war and so saw no profit from their valor, but were like farmers who sowed and toiled but failed to harvest their crop (Cyr. 1.5.8–10). But Danzig argues that practical ends are not the only things that justify virtuous activities in Xenophon's view. Virtuous toil in pursuit of a practical goal is pleasant in itself, rather as running while on the hunt is more pleasurable than just running. So too reflection on one's accomplishments is the highest sort of pleasure. Returning with a hare killed on the hunt brings a greater reward than simply buying one in the market. So there is something to be gained from virtuous accomplishments above and beyond the practical

results: pleasure, pride, and honor. But for Xenophon any activity, even a virtuous one, is unrewarding and frivolous if it doesn't produce material rewards.

Both Danzig and Chernyakhovskaya reject the common view that Xenophon's Socrates is interested solely in practical, material results, while retaining the idea that success of some sort is required for the best sort of life. Even with this more refined sense of success, Xenophon's Socrates remains distinct from Plato's Socrates, for whom the essential element in happiness appears to be virtue; this virtue may enable theoretical contemplation, but that is presumably not a telic activity at which one can succeed or fail. For both Chernyakhovskaya and Danzig, Socrates' words provide a guide to Xenophon's thought, but for both, Socrates' life presents us with something of a conundrum. Chernyakhovskaya finds Socrates' privileging of what she calls "the Socratic pleasure" unjustified, and Danzig's view raises questions about Socrates' lack of interest in the practical goals he spent so much time promoting to his followers. Given Xenophon's emphasis on Socrates' example as a guide,<sup>3</sup> a contrast between Socrates' words and his deeds raises important questions. Perhaps we see here some hint of what has been a sort of Holy Grail for Xenophonic scholarship, the search for daylight between Xenophon and his Socrates. Xenophon could perhaps have managed to assimilate Socrates' views fully to his own (or developed his own views to be in keeping with his sense for the core teachings of Socrates), but not have been able to reconcile these views with undeniable facts about Socrates' life. Alternatively, of course, we might question whether we are missing a coherence that lies beneath the surface. Or we maybe picking the wrong Xenophonic character to contrast with Xenophon. Both Danzig and Chernyakhovskaya believe we can look to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* to help us understand Xenophon's views; but it is conceivable that the odd man out in Xenophon is not Socrates but Cyrus.

FRANCESCA PENTASSUGLIO examines Socratic eros in Xenophon, Plato, and Aeschines. Common to all, she argues, is the belief that mutual love can inspire the pursuit of virtue. While the notion of role-reversal in Plato has been long appreciated,

less attention has been paid to the parallel concept of mutuality in Xenophon's Socratic writings. Both portraits of Socratic eros thus represent a break with the common concept of the one-sided erotic relationship. Pentassuglio shows the central role that the demand for mutuality plays in Xenophon's theory, and how this demand serves as the engine for sublimating erotic desire between men. While Plato's concept of role-reversal allows room for sexual relations between men, even while consigning such relationships to a lower rank on the ladder of love, Xenophon's Socrates demands complete abstinence. While both seek to sublimate the erotic relationship, Xenophon characteristically bases the highest erotic attachment on mutual admiration of noble communal achievements, while Plato channels erotic passion into philosophic pursuit. Pentassuglio supports her interpretation with a careful analysis of the terminology of love, clarifying distinctive uses of *philos* and *eros* terminology. Xenophon breaks with the standard asymmetrical language of homosexual eros by altering the role of the lover, whose feelings he characterizes most often as *philia*. Plato, on the other hand, attributes desire (*epithumia*) to the beloved, whose feelings were generally limited to *philia* terms. Plato makes the beloved more like the lover, where Xenophon makes the lover more like the beloved.

TAZUKO ANGELA VAN BERKEL examines why Socrates refuses to be paid by those who benefit from his conversations, showing how Plato's and Xenophon's distinct understandings of money led to rather different justification for Socrates' refusal to accept payment. Both thinkers characterized wealth as something relative to an individual's needs and knowledge: nothing, not even money, is valuable, unless one knows how to use it aright. They differ in what they find problematic about wealth. For Plato, wealth is dangerous because it ties us to the body rather than the soul. And the goods of the soul are different in kind from those of the body; the latter can be quantified, and hence measured by money, while the former cannot. So you cannot buy wisdom. This is the point of the joke about just how much one learns in Prodicus' forty-drachma course as compared to his one-drachma one, though Plato never explicitly integrates Socrates' rejection of

pay with his ontology of body and soul. For Xenophon, an interest in wealth can lead us to privilege short-term gain over our more essential interest in the shared goods we can achieve when partnering with friends in long-term relationships. Thus Xenophon's Socrates rejects pay on formal grounds, because it conflates the friendship between Socrates and his companions, based on trust, generosity, and gratitude, with a one-off commercial transaction. Taking pay is also wrong on substantive grounds, as healthy relationships with friends constitute part of the virtuous life for Socrates. Hence, too, Xenophon's emphasis on *enkrateia*, as the trait that allows us to overcome momentary desires and pursue our long-term interest. While Plato on occasion speaks of the sophists' failure to win gratitude, he is more calling attention to a sophistic euphemism—they speak of gratitude but care only about pay—than attempting to promote a contrasting analysis of student-teacher relationships like that offered by Xenophon. So the two thinkers share fundamental ideas about economics, with each rejecting the commodification of wisdom, but where Plato's understanding is rooted in his ontology, Xenophon's is based on his understanding of reciprocity on human relationships.

Van Berkel and Pentassuglio thus show that the relationship between Socrates and his followers can be misunderstood by analogy to commercial transactions or by assimilation to a conventionally asymmetrical view of love. While Socrates for the most part rejects characterizing his relations with his companions as a sort of commerce, he appears to welcome language drawn from the erotic realm, if only on his own terms. This is presumably because mutuality and reciprocity are key themes for both authors, and while commerce seems to allow for no possibility of real mutuality, eros can be reconceptualized so as to feature it. Plato's rejection of the commodification of wisdom and relegation of sex to the lower rungs of his ladder of love are further based on his insistence on the qualitative divide between body and soul. Conventional eros and commerce lead us astray because they serve the body, which stands in the way of philosophy. Xenophon's Socrates sees no such body/soul dualism, but rejects commerce and

conventional eros because they stand in the way of friendship. Friendship and philosophy can be joined in the shared pursuit of virtue, though in Plato's Symposium philosophical relationships culminate in the vision of Beauty Itself, something utterly distinct from the political aspirations of Socrates' lover, Alcibiades. Xenophon in his Symposium instead imagines, realistically or not, that a man as flawed as Callias could put his love for Critobulus to political use. For Xenophon, Socrates' views are rooted in ethics and politics; for Plato—at least by his middle period—ontology provides the foundation.

### Politics

MELINA TAMIOLAKI argues that we can better understand Xenophon's account of friendship if we view it as a projection of ideas about leadership into the realm of friendship among peers. She confirms this political turn by contrasting Xenophon's most extended treatment of Socratic friendship, *Memorabilia* 2.6, with Plato's *Lysis*. Xenophon's Socrates, unlike Plato's, says rather little about the affective side of friendship. Tamiolaki suggests that Xenophon's *kaloikagathoi*, who are a political rather than a moral class, have more in common with the "neither bad nor good" men of the *Lysis*, the sole type of men who are capable of friendship in the *Lysis* scheme, than with the simply good men, who need nothing, including friends. Xenophon's moral imagination rests in practical political connections rather than some idealized notion of philosophical perfection. And when he wants to provide examples of the right way to promote friendship, Xenophon's Socrates thinks of how Themistocles and Pericles won over the Athenians. Xenophon also has Socrates argue that one should praise would-be friends, but only truthfully, whereas Plato's Socrates advises against praise of any sort, calling upon the lover to humble his beloved instead; Tamiolaki finds Xenophon's attitude in keeping with the role of the encomium in public life. A political explanation also sheds light on Xenophon's rather odd comment that the *kaloikagathoi* can enjoy moderate good fortune without toil (*ponos*); Xenophon was an advocate of toil on the private level, but was thinking here of the toil associated with Athenian imperialism. Xenophon may have fallen prey to the temptation

to promote his own political ideas under the guise of Socratic talk about friendship, Tamiolaki concludes, but in so doing he makes an original contribution to the discourse about friendship.

FIORENZA BEVILACQUA argues that Xenophon's Socrates is even more of an oligarch than he has usually been made out to be. She thus counters the tendency in recent years to argue that Plato's Socrates and even Xenophon's Socrates were what we might call loyal critics of Athenian democracy. Certainly Xenophon's Socrates is a political teacher, providing lessons about success in the public arena to a wide variety of people. Bevilacqua notes that the beneficiaries of Socratic advice include the future oligarch, Charmides, whom Socrates urges to enter politics by arguing that he has nothing to fear from the ignorant masses that make up the Athenian Assembly (*Mem.* 3.7). But it is above all in *Memorabilia* 2.6, Socrates' long conversation with Critobulus, that Xenophon's Socrates presents a positive political program, Bevilacqua argues, as he there openly promotes an oligarchic regime at Athens. Socrates observes that politics, unlike Greek athletics, is a team sport; thus nothing prevents the *kaloikagathoi* from working together in pursuit of honor, to promote their mutual benefit, and benefit their cities. Socrates notes that a team of top athletes would win all prizes; thus the *kaloikagathoi* should also win all public offices. As Socrates' moral vocabulary has clear connections to social class, he is calling for a restricted group of socio-economic elites to dominate Athens, sharing the goods among themselves. This amounts to a call for a revival of the political program of the Thirty, which was itself inspired by the Spartan model. Bevilacqua next discusses whether Socrates himself would count as a *kaloskagathos* and, hence, be part of such a regime, and why Xenophon does not even hint at how this radical political program should be carried out. She concludes that Xenophon's political views here got the better of his desire to defend Socrates; but he did bury this political bombshell in a chapter on friendship, and he may have thought that the *kaloikagathoi* should use only peaceful means to dominate Athens, perhaps even leaving the democratic constitution intact, while dominating it from within. Bevilacqua then looks at two key

passages to dispute the view that Plato's Socrates was relatively friendly to democracy. In *Apology* 31c–32a Socrates notes the mortal danger faced by anyone who stands up against the injustices of the multitude, and while in the *Crito* (51c–53a) the personified Laws argue that Socrates choose them over other regimes, voting for them by his very decision to remain in Athens, they also grant that he frequently praises oligarchies. Thus Bevilacqua identifies an oligarchic Socrates lurking beneath the apologetic facades of both authors, a figure who may well accurately reflect the historical Socrates.

Both Tamiolaki and Bevilacqua see political issues lurking behind the language of friendship. But where Tamiolaki would presumably say that Xenophon is using political terminology and political ideas to talk about friendship, Bevilacqua sees at least some discourse about friendship as euphemistic talk about oligarchy. We see a similar slipperiness in moral and political vocabulary, where good men are both virtuous and anti-democratic. Much here will depend on what one means by “political.” The question is particularly tricky in the case of an author like Xenophon, who insists that the same qualities will produce the proper relationship with one's self, one's friends, and one's fellow citizens. For the Platonic analogue one need only consider whether the *Republic* is really a work of ethics or of politics. Both authors see continuity between ethics, which includes a teaching on friendship, and politics, areas that we as readers are accustomed to separate—as we have tried to do with the very arrangement of essays in this volume. There is, then, at least some risk here that when we see Xenophon or Plato conflating politics and friendship they may have been doing nothing of the sort, precisely because in their world politics and friendship had never been separated from one another in the first place.

LOUIS-ANDRÉ DORION argues that while both Xenophon and Plato defend Socrates by stressing his obedience to the law, they do so in very different ways. Neither Socrates is willing to break the law by escaping from jail, but while Plato's Socrates defends this choice to *Crito* based on his obedience to the law, Xenophon offers no explicit explanation. Presumably his Socrates does not escape from prison for the same reason he does

not attempt to secure his acquittal: he is ready to follow the gods' advice that it is time for him to die. The two authors also credit Socrates with different understandings of the law, as Xenophon's Socrates is a legal positivist who identifies justice with the law, while Plato's Socrates holds a more idealistic conception, as he allows for persuasion when a law is unjust. Both authors speak of an expert regarding justice, but where Xenophon's Socrates is himself the expert, in the *Crito* it is the laws that play this role. In both *Memorabilia* 4.4 and the *Crito*, there are arguments in favor of obeying the laws, but while Xenophon's Socrates speaks of the benefits of obeying the law, Plato's personified Laws convince Socrates of the disadvantages of disobedience. Thus despite the multitude of distinct arguments for obedience in each text, no individual argument is shared. Other political disagreements include the fundamental claim made by Plato's Socrates that it is never just to wrong anyone, even an enemy; Xenophon's Socrates holds the traditional view that the virtuous man helps friends and harms enemies. So too the role each thinker assigns to exemplary political leaders differs, as Xenophon, in keeping with his view on the educative power of examples, argues that good leaders make for good regimes, while Plato suggests if anything that good regimes are required for good leadership. In other areas, the two authors are arguably more in sync. Dorion suggests that in both authors Socrates' disobedience of the Thirty is based on the fundamental illegality of their regime, and that both believe that divine laws are in harmony with human ones. Finally, each Socrates refuses to stoop to rhetorical tricks to secure approval in part because doing so is illegal, though while Xenophon implies rhetorical tricks are *ipso facto* illegal, Dorion argues that Plato's Socrates would consider them illegal only inasmuch as they violate the juror's oath.

CAROL ATTACK discusses the shared discourse on political thought she finds in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Plato's *Statesman*. While the chronology of these works is uncertain, Attack suggests that *Cyropaedia* responds to *Republic*, and that Plato responds to *Cyropaedia* in *Statesman*. The Socratic authors here both move beyond Socrates in their analysis of monarchical



rule, leaving behind the Socratic concept of the basilike techne in pursuit of a new understanding of monarchical rule. Xenophon in *Cyropaedia* appears to resuscitate the image of the shepherd-king as a positive ideal after Thrasymachus had rendered it so problematic in *Republic 1*. But Plato, by projecting the shepherd king back into mythological time, suggests this is no longer a plausible ideal. Xenophon perhaps came to agree, at least by the time he wrote the final chapter of *Cyropaedia*, which portrays contemporary Persia as inalterably corrupt, thus placing Cyrus in an unrecoverable past. Both authors also stress the importance of the *kairos* to any real-world leader. Thus Plato's contemporary *politikos* must master the *kairos*, whereas a king in the golden age of Cronus did not have to worry about the proper amount in an age of abundance or proper timing in an essentially atemporal era. Xenophon's Cyrus for his part shows increasing sophistication in his understanding of the *kairos* as he develops. Thus while the clearest evidence for intertextuality is between *Laws* and *Cyropaedia*, the similar discussions of the themes of the shepherd king and *kairos* suggest that the political conversation between Xenophon and Plato was far richer than previously thought.

These two papers on political thought obviously differ in many ways, as Attack studies post-Socratic ideas in both authors, while Dorion is firmly rooted in early Plato and Xenophon's Socratica. Noteworthy from a methodological or perhaps rhetorical standpoint is how differently Attack and Dorion characterize the relationship between Xenophon and Plato. Dorion finds numerous differences between the two, while not explicitly discussing whether the two were in conversation. For Attack, on the other hand, the fact that the two are in conversation is central—central, among other things, to the rehabilitation of Xenophon's status as a political thinker. For Attack, agreement about the identification of vital topics for political discourse overrides differences in how those topics are handled, whereas for Dorion the shared interest in defending the rule of law is much less worthy of note than the different arguments for the rule of law, and different understandings of law itself.

## History

NOREEN HUMBLE suggests that Plato was a “perfect reader” of Xenophon's Spartan Constitution. Plato and Xenophon both see the Spartan educational system as too obsessed with military affairs and too reliant on fear and force rather than persuasion, Humble argues; as Sparta failed to teach her citizens that virtue was intrinsically rewarding, they retained a covert desire for wealth which ultimately burst into the open and degraded the Spartan regime. This shared analysis of flaws in Sparta could be the result of discussion of these issues in the Socratic circle, the result of Xenophon reacting to Plato, or of Plato reacting to Xenophon. If Xenophon was reacting to Plato, Humble would argue that Xenophon, far from being a knee-jerk laconophile, gave a more critical portrait of Sparta than Plato's portrait of the timarchic regime, which was, after all, the second best on Plato's scale of constitutions. But she finds it most likely that Plato, recognizing Xenophon's greater expertise on Sparta, made use of his mixed portrait of Sparta, but reshaped it to fit his purposes in the *Republic*. Humble argues that Plato rather clearly made use of Spartan material from Xenophon in his *Laws*, making it more likely that the influence flowed from Xenophon in this case as well. Humble closes by noting that while the consensus view is that Xenophon reacts to and differs from Plato about Socrates, when it comes to Sparta, it is Plato who is influenced by Xenophon, and the two authors are essentially in agreement.

CHRISTOPHER TUPLIN compares the use Plato and Xenophon make of Persia. Xenophon's Persian connections are obvious enough from *Anabasis* and *Cyropaedia*, but Plato also had significant biographical connections with Persia, thanks to the famous Persian embassy of his uncle and stepfather Pyrilampes. References to Persia are actually more numerous in Plato than in Xenophon's Socratica; Xenophon rarely mentions Persia in the *Memorabilia*. Persians are thus not just background noise, part of the mental armature of someone like Xenophon who spent so much time engaged with Persia, but were deliberately introduced to serve some particular function. Tuplin catalogs and comments on the appearances of Persian institutions, Persian characters, and events from

Persian history, and endeavors to determine the role played by the Persian material in each case. Persia can certainly be used as part of a serious argument, as the history of Persia from Cyrus to Xerxes serves as evidence in the *Laws*. But on other occasions the tone and purpose behind Socratic Persika is trickier. Tuplin argues that Plato, inspired by Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, deliberately garbled and undermined his account of Persian royal education in the *First Alcibiades*, in hopes of leading Alcibiades to drop Cyrus and Xerxes as his models. Xenophon had earlier made strange use of Persika to question Ischomachus' status as a model. In both cases there are other historical anomalies—Spartan education is also oddly treated in the *First Alcibiades*, and Ischomachus' biography undermines his claim to be the ideal *kaloskagathos*. Thus readers should not assume that Xenophon and Plato, who were after all writing a creative form of historical fiction, were not playing games with their references to historical Persia.

Both Humble and Tuplin, it is perhaps worth pointing out, see what we might characterize as “darker” Xenophonic takes on history (Xenophon being critical of Ischomachus and Sparta) as inspiring similar approaches in Plato (Persia as a flawed model in the *First Alcibiades*, Spartan inspired timocracy as flawed regime type in the *Republic*). Save in the case of the timocratic regime, whose flaws are evident, many readers do not see darkness here;<sup>5</sup> we might wonder whether a darker reading in one author supports the presence of a similar reading in another, particularly where the subject matter is the same. For example, does Plato's criticism of Sparta in the *Republic* support Humble's position that Xenophon made similar criticisms in his *Spartan Constitution*?

DAVID THOMAS attempts to track down the anonymous enemies of hunting Xenophon attacks near the end of the *Cynegeticus*. Thomas follows others in considering the work relatively early (probably before 388). Xenophon's brand of hunting involved use of nets and hounds to catch hares, rather than hunting larger prey ultimately brought down by the huntsmen themselves, without nets; Thomas suggests that Xenophon's opponents thought that it was only the pursuit of big game that was a manly enough pastime to be worthwhile.

Xenophon depicts opponents of hunting in terms that would be surprisingly strong were the disagreement only about hunting itself, and Thomas argues that the crimes attributed to the enemies of hunting resemble those of the Thirty. Thomas finds it easy to imagine Critias unfavorably contrasting tough Spartan hunting with effete hunting of hares. In the midst of his vigorous attack on the enemies of hunting, Xenophon attacks the sophists of his day (13.1–9). Xenophon's phraseology here, his Gorgianic style early in the *Cynegeticus*, and his positive treatment of Prodicus in *Memorabilia* 2.1 show that he cannot be attacking the sophists of the previous generation. The Socratics Aristippus and Phaedo have been suggested as possible targets, but Thomas argues that the key to the identification is a connection to the Thirty, which leaves him with only one plausible candidate: Plato. Plato's only explicit response to Xenophon, at *Laws* 3.694a–695b, is hardly scornful, but the relationship between the two could have been less cordial early on. Plato does attack hunting with hounds in *Laws* (7.824a) and tells us that he was initially hopeful about the Thirty (*Seventh Letter* 324d). Moreover, Xenophon's attacks on sophists for failing to provide moral maxims and for engaging in eristic argumentation could betaken to apply to Plato's early dialogues, and the attack on their hedonism is compatible with Xenophon taking an adverse reaction to the hedonism of the Protagoras. If Plato was Xenophon's true quarry, he failed to catch him in his nets, as Plato distanced himself from hedonism in the *Gorgias* and elsewhere, and painstakingly distinguished himself from sophistry in the *Sophist*; so complete was Plato's escape that it is only now that he has been rediscovered as Xenophon's target.

It is perhaps fitting that we close the volume with the essay that posits the most direct confrontation between Plato and Xenophon, albeit a rather critical one from Xenophon's youth. If Thomas is correct, Plato fills a gap in our understanding of Xenophon, solving along-standing mystery in Xenophonic interpretation. Indeed, if the essays from this volume have any shared thesis, it would be that we will best understand Plato and Xenophon when we consider them together, whether as rivals, as partners, or simply as

contemporaries who were both informed by their youths spent together in Athens with Socrates, and who, for all their disparate experiences and efforts thereafter, both contributed to a larger conversation inspired by the philosophical and political questions of their age. <>

[Plato's Moral Psychology: Intellectualism, the Divided Soul, and the Desire for Good](#) by Rachana Kamtekar [Oxford University Press, 9780198798446]

[Plato's Moral Psychology](#) is concerned with Plato's account of the soul and its impact on our living well or badly, virtuously or viciously. The core of Plato's moral psychology is his account of human motivation, and Rachana Kamtekar argues that throughout the dialogues Plato maintains that human beings have a natural desire for our own good, and that actions and conditions contrary to this desire are involuntary (from which follows the 'Socratic paradox' that wrongdoing is involuntary).

Our natural desire for our own good may be manifested in different ways: by our pursuit of what we calculate is best, but also by our pursuit of pleasant or fine things - pursuits which Plato assigns to distinct parts of the soul. Kamtekar develops a very different interpretation of Plato's moral psychology from the mainstream interpretation, according to which Plato first proposes that human beings only do what we believe to be the best of the things we can do ('Socratic intellectualism') and then in the middle dialogues rejects this in favour of the view that the soul is divided into parts with some good-dependent and some good-independent motivations ('the divided soul').

Contents  
Acknowledgements  
Introduction  
Doctrine and Dialectic in Plato's Dialogues  
Psychology for Sophists  
Why is Wrongdoing Unwilling?  
The Divided Soul  
Why is the Divided Soul Tripartite?  
Psychological Eudaemonism and Explanation  
Bibliography  
Author Index  
Index of Passages  
Subject Index

Excerpt: If we want to know how we might live well, or live a good life, it is natural to ask who we are (Alcibiades I 128e-129a), and in particular what the capabilities and limitations are that we as human beings and as individuals bring to living our lives. Famously, Plato's Socrates identifies that by which we live well or badly, and by which we are just or unjust (Crito 47e-48a), with that by which we live, that is, the soul (psyche). So by Plato's moral psychology I understand Plato's account of the soul insofar as it is relevant to our living well or badly, virtuously or viciously. While Plato's moral psychology ranges more widely than this book, taking in topics that I cannot do justice to here, such as the nature of pleasure and the relationship between our souls and the soul of the world, I focus on the core of Plato's moral psychology, human motivation.

This book argues for a new account of Plato's thinking about human motivation across the dialogues. A new account is needed because the dialogues do not seem to present a consistent account of human motivation, and existing accounts of how Plato's views about human motivation developed are not convincing. In Plato's early dialogues, Socrates seems to maintain that

1. virtue is knowledge (e.g. Protagoras 360c-d; Laches 192c-d)
2. and vice ignorance;
3. wrongdoing is involuntary (e.g. Gorgias 509e);
4. we always do what we believe is the best of the things we can do (Protagoras 358c).

According to the mainstream account of Plato's moral psychology, (1), (2), and (3) belong to a 'Socratic intellectualist' package, with (3) being the theoretical basis for (1) and (2), and implying that there are no non-rational or good-independent motivations.

On this interpretation, Plato rejects (3) and (4) with the introduction of the divided soul in the Republic on the grounds that they are incompatible with certain phenomena of psychic conflict, such as action contrary to one's belief or knowledge about what's best, and that they cannot account for the behaviour of pre-rational human children or non-rational animals? Instead of (3) and (4), Plato's

middle and late dialogues suppose the soul to be divided into rational or good-directed and non-rational or good-indifferent parts, each independently capable of moving us to action, sometimes contrary to what we know or believe to be best.

There are several problems with the mainstream account. First, the dialogues that reject (4) and acknowledge that we have motivations contrary to our judgement of what's best (such as thirst or the desire for drink even when we know that the drink is unhealthy for us), and arguably also reject (3), countenancing akratic action, nevertheless maintain (2), that no one is willingly bad (this is the case in the Republic, Timaeus, and Laws). But if (3) is the theoretical basis for (2), on what grounds can these dialogues reject (3) but uphold (2)? Second, in the Protagoras Socrates introduces (3) after considering a case of apparent akrasia in which one's knowledge of what is best seems to be overcome by the pleasure of something else, and shows how (3) can explain it, so how can this same phenomenon be his grounds for rejecting (3) in the middle dialogues? Third, in several early dialogues where Socrates is supposed to hold (3), he seems to deny (4) and to recognize that we have desires for things other than what is best for us. For example, in the Charmides Socrates contrasts appetite, which is for pleasure, with wish, which is for a good (167e). What is to stop such desires from motivating us to act?

Recently some scholars have proposed alternatives to the mainstream account, arguing (a) that Plato, or the Socrates of the middle dialogues, also denies that non-rational motivations generate action without the mediation of reason (thus continuing to maintain (3) and (4)), or (b) that the Socrates of the early dialogues also recognizes non-rational motivations but holds that they motivate action only indirectly, by influencing the agent's beliefs (thus rejecting (4) and complicating (3)).

However, the idea (a) that Plato retains (3) across the dialogues is difficult to square with his clear rejection of (4) and recognition that there are motivations that can operate independently of one's reasoned judgement in the Republic, Timaeus,

Phaedrus, and Laws. And the idea (b) that even the early dialogues reject (3), so that the difference between them and the middle dialogues is whether non-rational motivations cause our actions only via the mediation of reason or also directly, leaves it mysterious what philosophical reasons Plato could have for such a shift.

The main thesis of this book is that rather than (3), human beings only do what we believe to be the best of the things we can do, it is (3\*) human beings have a natural desire for our own good that is the moral psychological foundation for both Socratic intellectualism and the divided soul of the middle dialogues. This natural desire for our own good may be manifested in different ways: certainly by our pursuit of what we believe to be best, but also by our pursuit of pleasant things and fine things.

Here is a very brief outline of the argument to come. Chapter 1 lays out the methodological approach employed throughout the book, which is to pay attention to the dialectical dependence of what the main speaker in the dialogue says on the intellectual problem(s) set up in the dialogue both by himself and the other speakers. To illustrate, Chapter 1 describes Socrates' use of hypotheses to answer questions that go beyond his claims to knowledge in the Republic.

Chapter 2 argues that in the Protagoras, Socrates hypothesizes (1) 'virtue is knowledge and vice ignorance' because if true, it would explain how virtue can be taught (as Protagoras claims), and then argues for a 'higher' hypothesis, (3) 'we always do what we believe to be the best of our options', on the basis of a 'highest' hypothesis, 'pleasure is the good', for if true, these higher hypotheses would explain how virtue can be knowledge (as virtue's teachability seems to require). The identification of the good with pleasure serves not only to introduce (3) in the Protagoras but also to replace a popular conception of the agent as moved to act by the strongest of competing forces with a conception of the agent as a subject representing actions as good or better and bad or worse and acting on what appears best. However, the dependence of (3) on ethical hedonism in the Protagoras should caution us from exporting (3) to other dialogues, since in

every other dialogue, Plato's Socrates argues that pleasure is not the good.

Chapter 3 argues that (2) and various related expressions across the dialogues—'no one does wrong willingly' (Gorgias), 'no one does bad or shameful things willingly' (Protagoras), and 'everyone is bad or vicious unwillingly' (Republic, Timaeus, and Laws)—are based not on (3) but on (3\*). (2) generalizes an argument-form used by (roughly) contemporary intellectuals to excuse agents from blame for bad actions—namely, that the agent was overwhelmed or compelled by some force (such as, for example, a god, or passion), for an agent would have to be compelled to pursue what is contrary to their natural desire for their (real) good (3\*). Like his contemporaries, Plato treats contrariety to the agent's natural desire for good as grounds for calling an action or state unwilling. As for ignorance, it is a condition that makes compulsion possible. In dialogues before the Republic, Plato also uses contrariety to the agent's natural desire for good to 'de-attribute' desires or beliefs from an agent, despite that agent's avowals. (This isn't the same as denying that there are any good-independent motivations; rather, it is disowning them.)

However, unlike his contemporaries, Plato develops (3\*) by giving a teleological account of a complex human soul. If the argument of Chapters 2-3 is correct, soul-division can't be for the sake of rejecting (3) to acknowledge the existence and independent motivational efficacy of good-indifferent desires as on the mainstream interpretation. Instead, Chapter 4 argues, the point of soul-division in the Republic, Phaedrus, and Timaeus is to recognize human nature's multiple and potentially conflicting natural orientations, an upshot of which is to block deattribution of motivations, even 'unwilling' and self-destructive ones. Nevertheless, none of these motivations are good-indifferent, insofar as they are constructed to be sensitive to some aspect of goodness. Chapter 4 argues that this good-sensitivity is captured in the Republic's characterization of soul-parts as homuncular sub-agents, each having a more or less limited conception of goodness—a characterization of soul-parts that also enables us to manage our own conflicting motivations as we aim at virtue.

Chapter 5 is concerned with tripartition—with why Plato insists that there is, in addition to the reasoning and appetitive parts of the soul, a third, 'spirited' part. I argue that by isolating a spirited part of the soul that is 'by nature a helper' of the reasoning part, Plato is able to distinguish a conception of reason as seeking theoretical knowledge from a conception of reason as belief in conformity with law and calculation; this distinction is the basis for his conception of philosophical virtue as distinct from ordinary virtue.

Finally, Chapter 6 discusses the relationship between these claims about Plato's account of human motivation and psychological explanation, arguing that (3) does not by itself provide sufficient explanations for actions. While an intelligent agent's beliefs about what is good explain her actions, an unintelligent agent's false beliefs themselves call for explanation. <>

<>

## Bibliography

[The Oxford Handbook of Endangered Languages](#)

edited by Kenneth L. Rehg and Lyle Campbell  
[Oxford Handbooks, Oxford University Press,  
9780190610029]

[Walls: A History of Civilization in Blood and Brick](#)

by David Frye [Scribner, 9781501172700]

[The Chosen Wars: How Judaism Became an](#)

[American Religion](#) by Steven R. Weisman [Simon & Schuster, 9781416573265]

[Path of the Prophets: The Ethics-Driven Life](#) by

Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz [The Jewish Publication Society, 9780827613096]

[The Many Faces of Maimonides](#) by Dov Schwartz,

translated by Batya Stein [Emunot: Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah, Academic Studies Press, 9781618117809]

[Textual Tapestries: Explorations of the Five Megillot](#)

by Gabriel H. Cohen, Translated by David Strauss  
[Maggid Tanakh Companions, Maggid,  
9781592643981]

[Jeremiah: The Fate of a Prophet](#) by Binyamin Lau,  
Translated by Sara Daniel [Koren Publishers,  
9781592641949]

[Longing: Jewish Meditations on a Hidden God](#) by  
Justin David [Cascade Books, 9781532631375]

[The Bible, Qumran, and the Samaritans](#) edited by  
Magnar Kartveit, Gary N. Knoppers [Studia  
Judaica, Studia Samaritana, DE GRUYTER,  
9783110575224]

[Philosophic Silence and the 'One' in Plotinus](#) by  
Nicholas Banner [Cambridge University Press,  
9781107154629]

[Virtue and Law in Plato and Beyond](#) by Julia Annas  
[Oxford University Press, 9780198755746]

[The Oneness Hypothesis: Beyond the Boundary of  
Self](#) edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe, Owen J. Flanagan,  
Victoria S. Harrison, Hagop Sarkissian, and Eric  
Schwitzgebel [Columbia University Press,  
9780231182980]

[Unity and Aspect](#) by Andrew Haas [Orbis  
phaenomenologicus, Studien, Königshausen &  
Neumann, 9783826064500]

[Neoplatonic Demons and Angels](#) edited by Luc  
Brisson, Seamus O'Neill, Andrei Timotin [Studies in  
Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition,  
Brill, 9789004374973]

[Plato and Xenophon: Comparative Studies](#) edited  
by Gabriel Danzig, David Johnson, Donald  
Morrison [Mnemosyne, Supplements, Brill,  
9789004369016]

[Plato's Moral Psychology: Intellectualism, the  
Divided Soul, and the Desire for Good](#) by Rachana  
Kamtekar [Oxford University Press,  
9780198798446]