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Some qualified reviewers offer their own brief evaluation of the book. Otherwise most of our content represents the authors'-editors' own words as a preview to their approach to the subject, their style and point-of-view. <>

THE ENCHANTMENTS OF MAMMON: HOW CAPITALISM BECAME THE RELIGION OF MODERNITY by Eugene McCarraher [Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 9780674984615]

Far from displacing religions, as has been supposed, capitalism became one, with money as its deity. Eugene McCarraher reveals how mammon ensnared us and how we can find a more humane, sacramental way of being in the world.

If socialists and Wall Street bankers can agree on anything, it is the extreme rationalism of capital. At least since Max Weber, capitalism has been understood as part of the “disenchantment” of the world, stripping material objects and social relations of their mystery and sacredness. Ignoring the motive force of the spirit, capitalism rejects the awe-inspiring divine for the economics of supply and demand.

Eugene McCarraher challenges this conventional view. Capitalism, he argues, is full of sacrament, whether or not it is acknowledged. Capitalist enchantment first flowered in the fields and factories of England and was brought to America by Puritans and evangelicals whose doctrine made ample room for industry and profit. Later, the corporation was mystically animated with human personhood, to preside over the Fordist endeavor to build a heavenly city of mechanized production and communion. By the twenty-first century, capitalism has become thoroughly enchanted by the neoliberal deification of “the market.”

Informed by cultural history and theology as well as economics, management theory, and marketing, **THE ENCHANTMENTS OF MAMMON** looks not to Marx and progressivism but to nineteenth-century Romantics for salvation. The Romantic imagination favors craft, the commons, and sensitivity to natural wonder. It promotes labor that, for the sake of the person, combines reason, creativity, and mutual aid. In this impassioned challenge, McCarraher makes the case that capitalism has hijacked and redirected our intrinsic longing for divinity—and urges us to break its hold on our souls.

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Mammon's Lure

This Desert soil
Wants not her hidden
lustre, Gems and Gold;
Nor want we skill or art,
from whence to raise
Magnificence; and what can
Heav'n show more?
Our torments also may in
length of time
Become our Elements, those
piercing Fires
As soft as now severe, our
temper chang'd
Into their temper; which
must needs remove
The sensible of pain.

—MAMMON, speaking to his
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Excerpt: Once upon a time, the world was enchanted. Rocks, trees, rivers, and rain pulsed with invisible forces, powers that enlivened and determined the affairs of tribes and empires as well. Though beholden to the caprice or providential design of a variety of spirits and deities, the world of enchantment could be commanded by magic or humbly beseeched through prayer. But with the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and industrial capitalism in Europe, the company of spirits was evicted from the cosmos. If the medieval Church had preserved the pagan phantoms in its sacraments and saintly relics, its sober and industrious Protestant antagonists began the demolition of enchantment. Gradually, the sciences dispelled the realm of mystery; the prose of reason hushed the poetry of superstition; greed and calculation fostered callous disregard for the

earth and the bonds of community. Dispossessed from their ancestral homes, the remnants of enchantment fled into our private chambers of fantasy or faith. And as science, technology, and capitalism come to embrace the entire globe, the enchanted specters of other peoples will be duly banished or sequestered as well.

Entitled "the disenchantment of the world" by the German sociologist and historian Max Weber, this story is the predominant account of modernity in the West and increasingly beyond, and capitalism plays a pivotal role. In the course of releasing the making and exchange of goods from traditional restraints, capitalism evacuated sacredness from material objects and social relationships. Once capable of linking us to divinity or of binding us to one another, things lost their souls when they became commodities made and exchanged for profit. Avarice—once one of the seven deadly sins—morphed into the "self-interest" or "initiative" indispensable to wealth and innovation, while the inscrutable ways of Providence yielded to the laws of supply and history. Breaking the shackles of immemorial customs, capitalism offered the sale of commodities, not the dutiful worship of relics; the fulfillment of the self, not subordination to the past; the romance of the present and the promise of the future, not a vale of tears and a hope beyond the grave. In the words of journalist Michael Lewis, capitalists are "practitioners of liberty" who "do not suffer constraints on their private ambition" and who "work hard, if unintentionally, to free others from constraint." Firmly committed to the real world of disenchanted, manipulable forces, they represent the "spiritual antithesis of religious fundamentalists" who thwart this labor of liberty "in the name of some putatively higher power." Karl Marx wrote much the same thing a century and a half earlier, with greater flourish and prophetic grandeur. "All that is solid melts into air; all that is holy is profaned." Capitalism's most unlikely celebrant, Marx observed how the market, far from being a bastion of conservatism, dissolves "all fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices." History's assassin of enchantment, capitalism "drowns the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor ... in the icy water of egotistical calculation."

Yet despite the secular veneer of capitalist life, it's not at all clear that enchantment lies lifeless in the arctic mercenary deep. To journalist Naomi Klein, the neoliberal economics of the past forty years amounts to a veritable creed, "the contemporary religion of unfettered free markets." Indeed, "corporate business has always had a deep New Age streak," she observes, with branding as the most advanced form of "corporate transcendence." The Nike swoosh, the Starbucks siren, and other trademarks are neoliberal totems of enchantment. Journalist Barbara Ehrenreich discovers that, despite its reputation for a ruthless focus on the bottom line, corporate business is "shot through with magical thinking," inspired and mesmerized by a burgeoning portfolio of New Age quackery and bunkum. Evangelicals refer to Jesus Christ as their "CEO" or personal investment advisor, while management writers cull from Lao-tzu, Buddha, Confucius, and Carl Jung. Counting out "seven habits" or "four competencies" or "sixty-seven principles of success," business advice books can be as comically arcane as end-times prophecy, the oracles of Nostradamus, or another Dan Brown novel. Some writers see a sacramental significance in contemporary consumer culture. "Material things are shot through with enchantment," New York Times columnist David Brooks informs us. Suburban acquisitiveness stems from a "sacramental longing,"

Brooks believes, a desire to enter "a magical realm in which all is harmony, happiness, and contentment." Historian Steve Fraser believes that even in the stampede for consumer goods slumbers "a sacramental quest for transcendence, reveries of what might be." In search of some material grace, more Americans than ever seem willing to be impaled on William Jennings Bryan's cross of gold.

Contemporary writers are not the first to note the persistence of enchantment in capitalist societies. Reflecting on the misery of industrial England in the 1840s, Thomas Carlyle detected the presence of "invisible Enchantments" that bewitched the "plethoric wealth" that had "yet made nobody rich." Owners and workers walked "spell-bound" in the clutches of a "horrid enchantment," beguiled by some power that lurked in the factories and inhabited the things they produced. Carlyle traced this sorcery to "the Gospel of Mammonism," the good news that money possessed and bestowed a trove of "miraculous facilities." While this could be dismissed as rhetorical flourish, even Marx and Weber used the language of enchantment to explain the power of

capitalism. The capitalist, Marx and Engels wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, "is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world he has called up by his spells." Later, in the first volume of *Capital*, Marx included a seminal passage on "the fetishism of commodities," the attribution of human or supernatural qualities to manufactured objects. Four decades later, after marking the epoch of disenchantment, Weber mused that "many old gods ascend from their graves," resurrected as the "laws" of the market—spirits of "the Gospel of Mammonism." Far from being an agent of "disenchantment," capitalism, I contend, has been a regime of enchantment, a repression, displacement, and renaming of our intrinsic and inveterate longing for divinity. There is more than mere metaphor in the way we refer to the "worship" or "idolatry" of money and possessions. Even if many (if not most) of us believe in a disenchanted, desacralized cosmos—a universe devoid of spirits and other immaterial but animate beings—capitalism has assumed, in its way, the status of an enchanted world. Like the blood-sacrificial rites of nationalism that sanctify the modern state, capitalism represents what the theologian William Cavanaugh has called a "migration of the holy," a forced march of sanctity and devotion toward new, putatively secular objects of reverence.

To be sure, enchantment can take a variety of forms: magic; animism; the myriad shapes of the occult; or at its most elaborate, religion. Although Weber showed that capitalism, while an agent of disenchantment, had nonetheless received the sanction of Calvinist Protestantism, Walter Benjamin suggested almost a century ago that capitalism is a religion as well, a "cult" with its own ontology, morals, and ritual practices whose "spirit ... speaks from the ornamentation of banknotes." I take this as a point of departure and argue that capitalism is a form of enchantment—perhaps better, a misenchantment, a parody or perversion of our longing for a sacramental way of being in the world. Its animating spirit is money. Its theology, philosophy, and cosmology have been otherwise known as "economics." Its sacramentals consist of fetishized commodities and technologies—the material culture of production and consumption. Its moral and liturgical codes are contained in management theory and business journalism. Its clerisy is a corporate intelligentsia of economists, executives, managers, and business writers, a stratum akin to Aztec priests, medieval scholastics, and Chinese mandarins. Its iconography consists of advertising, public relations, marketing, and product design. Its beatific vision of eschatological destiny is the global imperium of capital, a heavenly city of business with incessantly expanding production, trade, and consumption. And its gospel has been that of "Mammonism," the attribution of ontological power to money and of existential sublimity to its possessors.

The Gospel of Mammonism sanctions the printing of counterfeit promissory notes, for the love of money misdirects our sacramental desire to know the presence of divinity in our midst. "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," as Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote. "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things"—a freshness spoiled, he ruefully added, "seared with trade, bleared, smeared with toil." The Enchantments of Mammon is an extended essay of the moral and metaphysical imagination: our ideals of self and the common good that emerge from the way we understand the nature of the cosmos—what philosophers and theologians would call our metaphysics, ontology, or cosmology.' What Carlyle dubbed "the Gospel of Mammonism" is the meretricious ontology of capital, in which everything receives its value—and even its very existence—through the empty animism of money. It proclaims that capital is the *mana* or *pneuma* or soul or *elan vital* of the world, replacing the older enlivening spirits with one that is more real, energetic, and productive.

Yet as Hopkins recognized, the dearest freshness "is never spent"; the sorcery of capital can ravage and deface but can never defeat the grandeur of God. The history of capitalism in America has been a tale of predation on that dearest freshness, an ambitious but inexorably grotesque and destructive endeavor in the manufacture of beatitude, and that story is arguably winding down to its conclusion. What better time to trace the outlines of that history and inquire into the possibilities that lie dormant in the present? I've written *The Enchantments of Mammon* out of the conviction that, rather than bewail or curse the twilight of American economic and geopolitical imperium, we should welcome the demise of our misenchanted way of life as an opportunity for repentance and renewal. But redemption can only come if we tell a different story about our country and its unexceptional sins.

How has the story of "disenchantment" been told, and why is now an opportune moment to revise it? The most cogent account is Weber's, contained in several scattered essays and in **THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM** (1905). According to Weber, the enchanted universe was inhabited by "mysterious incalculable forces" who animated or controlled the natural world. The enchanted world fused ontology and ethics—an account of what "is" was united with an imperative of what one "ought"—and so "the most ultimate and sublime values" formed part of the world's metaphysical composition. This infusion of the everyday world with sublimity undergirded enchanted communities; divinities of varying power and character provided the "pneuma" that "swept through the great communities like a firebrand." Embedded in the ontology of enchantment, the production and exchange of material goods were believed to partake of these forces. So they could never be left to the unregulated activity of "free" or "impersonal" markets; there was no "economy" unto itself, separate from other sacralized social relationships. As the historian Karl Polanyi explained in **THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION** (1944), "man's economy, as a rule" was considered by premodern peoples to be indivisible from "custom and law, magic and religion."

Protestant theology and capitalism played crucial roles in Weber's tale of disenchantment. Rejecting the "foolish and doctrinaire" idea of a direct causal link between the two, Weber argued that the connection inhered both in the "elective affinities" of Protestant theology and capitalist enterprise and in the "psychological drives" for accumulation sanctioned by the new religious doctrines. The "elective affinities" of Protestantism and capitalism originated in the repudiation of Catholic sacramentalism—a Christianized form, he implied, of the earlier enchanted universe, a cultic ensemble of rituals and relics in which matter and human relationships were believed capable of mediating the supernatural. In Weber's view, the marrow of Protestant divinity was a mistrust of such "sensual and emotional elements" in religion—specifically, the sacraments, which Calvinists in particular rejected as magic. Lacking the assurance of salvation provided by Catholic sacramental rituals, the Calvinist allayed the inevitable anxiety through "tireless labor in a calling." So the "spirit of capitalism" was not, Weber argued, just another term for greed; it was the rationalized accumulation of wealth, undertaken, Calvinists convinced themselves, for the sake of God's glory and majesty. In the process, Calvinist capitalists achieved a "sanctification of worldly activity" and cultivated an "innerworldly asceticism," which, once loosened from its theological moorings, became the classic trinity of bourgeois virtues: diligence, thrift, and self-restraint. Thus, the nexus of Protestantism and capitalism lay in a "disenchantment of the world," which by denying matter any sacramental character, unleashed upon it—and upon human beings—both the capitalist's energies of mastery and acquisition and the scientist's desire for knowledge.

While popular notions of disenchantment usually trace its origins to science, Weber insisted that capitalism was the primary culprit in the eclipse of the sacred. As "the most abstract and impersonal element that exists in human life," money displaced mana and dissolved the enchanted bond between ontology and "ultimate values." By demolishing this enchanted ontology, capitalist markets rendered the exchange of goods "ever less accessible ... to any imaginable relationship with a religious ethic of brotherliness"

Enchanted assumptions of abundance, fluidity, and generosity—articulated, in the Jewish and Christian traditions, by the opening verses of Genesis—gave way to the disenchanted verities of scarcity and competition, while shamans, magicians, and priests yielded to businessmen, bureaucrats, and technicians. Life in modernity's iron cage embodied Hobbes's infernal vision: "a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in solely in our heads, where the irrefragable and irksome reminders of disenchantment would still lurk, repressed in the shadows. Whether as art, or poetry, or play, or spirituality, re-enchantment would amount to little more than a tenuous and self-defeating therapy of consolation. Thus Taylor's hope for a "re-enchantment of the world" depends on telling a different story about disenchantment, one that does not rest on the ontological and historical foundations of the reigning account. To be genuine and enduring, a "reenchantment of the world" must begin in a dissent from the prevailing wisdom about disenchantment. Just as Bruno Latour has argued that "we have never been modern"—that we have never differentiated nature and society as cleanly and rigidly as we suppose—might it be better to claim that we have never been

disenchanted? Perhaps the story we've told about the evacuation of the sacred from everyday life has been a fable; perhaps the "immanent frame" has always been permeable, while the "buffered selves" that ward off transcendence have been more porous than we ever imagined.

Weber himself left clues for a rather different account of our condition. In this story, we abide between two eras; "we live as did the ancients when their world was not yet disenchanted of its gods and demons," as Weber speculated in **"SCIENCE AS A VOCATION"** (1915)—"only we," he wrote, "live in a different sense." Antiquity witnessed a long twilight of the gods, only to be followed by the dawn of a new one, whose own demise appeared to be the final senescence and annihilation of all enchantment from the world. Indeed, Weber observed, while "many old gods ascend from their graves" they are quickly "disenchanted," taking "the form of impersonal forces." But is that the only way to understand the "different sense" to which Weber alluded so nebulously—that modernity marks the crossing of the final Rubicon of disenchantment? Perhaps the sociologist who considered himself "religiously unmusical" heard faint notes of enchantment in modernity; perhaps, despite their wounds, the old divinities had not risen to give consent to their euthanization. Were they really "disenchanted" when they assumed their "secular" form? Or do they still roam among us in the guise of "secularization"? Capitalism has long been presumed to be a powerful solvent of enchantment—all that is holy is profaned, ecstasy is murdered in the waters of calculation. But what if those waters of pecuniary reason constituted a baptismal font, a consecration of capitalism as a covert form of enchantment, all the more beguiling on account of its apparent profanity?

Simon Critchley and Terry Eagleton might lend support to this conception of secularization as a disguise for enchantment. In **THE FAITH OF THE FAITHLESS** (2012), Critchley rejects the axial assumption of most modern political thought: that the modernity of modern politics resides in its utter secularity, its lack of foundation in the will of divinity. Political order depends, he maintains, on allegiance to a "fiction," "an act of creation that brings a subject into existence"—like something performed by a writer, or a deity. This fiction, or "original covenant," as Critchley puts it, is a sacred, unquestionable tale whereby a people is brought—or rather, brings itself—into existence. If premodern polities traced their origins to the creative act of some divinity, modern "secular" political forms are, in effect, no different in their fictional character; whether fascism, communism, or liberal democracy, they represent "a series of metamorphoses of sacralization."

Likewise, Eagleton has argued, in **CULTURE AND THE DEATH OF GOD** (2014), that the Supreme Being "has proved remarkably difficult to dispose of"; ever since the Enlightenment, "surrogate forms of transcendence" have scrambled for the crown of the King of Kings: reason, science, literature, art, nationalism, but especially "culture." Providing cold, imperious Reason with the wardrobe of mythology, poetry, literature, and art, Culture, its devotees fervently hoped, would successfully impersonate religion. Displacing the clergy, philosophers and poets aspired to establish a new, post-Christian clerisy who would educate the masses with new myths, icons, and epiphanies, "the sacred discourse of a post-religious age." But the modern project of surrogate transcendence failed; even Nietzsche's Übermensch represented, Eagleton writes, a "counterfeit theology." In our incorrigibly ironic era of postmodernism, the venerable questions of meaning and destiny are sloughed off as unreal and coercive "metanarrative"; even revolutionary hope—another grasp at transcendence—yields to the conquest of cool, the imperium of a hip plutocracy. "The only aura to linger on," Eagleton sadly concludes, "is that of the commodity or celebrity."

Although Eagleton insists that capitalism is "fundamentally irreligious ... and totally alien to the category of the sacred," his perception of an "aura" around the commodity suggests that capitalism is a "surrogate form of transcendence," another "metamorphosis of sacralization," a modern vessel of primordial enchantment decked out in the apparel of secularity. As Marx himself hinted, despite the ostensible profanity of its pecuniary ethos, capitalism is hardly post-metaphysical: its metaphysics is money, the criterion of reality, meaning, and identity in a competitive commodity culture. In *Grundrisse* (1857), Marx referred to "the divine power of money" and its status as "the god among commodities." As the realm of the commodity widens, money not only purchases everything; it also seems to bring things into being from nothing, performing all manner of astonishing feats of

moral and metaphysical alchemy. Money can buy you love: as the young Marx mused in an early reflection on "the power of money in bourgeois society," money enables its possessor to say "I am ugly, but I can buy for

myself the most beautiful of women.

Therefore I am not ugly, for the effect of ugliness—its deterrent power—is nullified by money." Under capitalism, money occupies the ontological throne from which God has been evicted.

THE WORLD IS CHARGED WITH THE
GRANDEUR OF GOD.

IT WILL FLAME OUT, LIKE SHINING FROM
SHOOK FOIL;

IT GATHERS TO A GREATNESS, LIKE THE
OOZE OF OIL

CRUSHED. WHY DO MEN THEN NOW NOT
RECK HIS ROD?

GENERATIONS HAVE TROD, HAVE TROD,
HAVE TROD;

AND ALL IS SEARED WITH TRADE;
BLEARED, SMEARED WITH TOIL;

AND WEARS MAN'S SMUDGE AND SHARE'S
MAN'S SMELL; THE SOIL

IS BARE NOW, NOR CAN FOOT FEEL, BEING
SHOD.

AND, FOR ALL THIS, NATURE IS NEVER
SPENT;

THERE LIVES THE DEAREST FRESHNESS
DEEP DOWN THINGS;

AND THOUGH THE LAST LIGHTS OFF THE
BLACK WEST WENT

OH, MORNING, AT THE BROWN BRINK
EASTWARDS, SPRINGS—BECAUSE THE
HOLY GHOST OVER THE BENT

WORLD BROODS WITH WARM BREAST AND
WITH AH! BRIGHT WINGS.

—GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, "God's
Grandeur"

I want to go one step further than Eagleton and Critchley: The world does not need to be re-enchanted, because it was never disenchanted in the first place. Attending primarily to the history of the United States, I hope to demonstrate that capitalism has been, as Benjamin perceived, a religion of modernity, one that addresses the same hopes and anxieties formerly entrusted to traditional religion. But this does not mean only that capitalism has been and continues to be "beguiling" or "fetishized," and that rigorous analysis will expose the phantoms as the projections they really are. These enchantments draw their power, not simply from our capacity for delusion, but from our deepest and truest desires—desires that are consonant and tragically out of touch with the dearest freshness of the universe. The world can never be disenchanted, not because our emotional or political or cultural needs compel us to find enchantments—though they do—but because the world itself, as Hopkins realized, is charged with the grandeur of God.

Hence the importance of theology for this book, as I root my affirmation of the persistence of enchantment in a theological claim about the world: that the earth is a sacramental place, mediating the presence and power of God, revelatory of the superabundant love of divinity. In Christian theology, another way to say that the world is "enchanted" is to say that it is

sacramental; in Graham Ward's words, the material world "bears the watermark of its creator." Of course, Christians are not alone in perceiving a sacramental quality in ordinary things; as anthropologist Marcel Mauss documented in *The Gift* (1922), tribal and ancient societies believed in various forms of what the Maori of New Zealand dubbed *mana*, an unseen presence that resided in things and knit together those who exchanged them. To be sure, unlike notions of *mana*, Christian theology (like its Jewish and Islamic relatives) asserts that things in themselves have no power apart from God. Still, material life has sacral significance, and how we make and use material goods has a sacramental and a moral dimension; there are sacramental—as well as perversely sacramental—ways of being in the world. Moreover, Christian ontology entails the conviction that abundance and peace are the true nature of things, not the scarcity and violence that leaven the cosmology of capitalist economics. As Pope Francis reiterated the sacramental imagination in his 2015 encyclical **LAUDA TO SI**, while the Judeo-Christian religious heritage certainly "demythologized nature"—stripped it of divinity in itself—it nonetheless insists that divine love is "the fundamental moving force in all created things," and that the world is "illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion."

That longing for "universal communion" is corrupted by a lack of trust in God, and our love spoils into a lust for power that mars the development of civilization. Without faith in the sacramental nature of the world, we anchor ourselves in the illusory and inevitably malevolent apparatus of domination: patriarchal lineages, property lines, police departments, surveillance networks, military-industrial complexes. This is what Augustine called the "earthly city," our inexorably unstable and unsuccessful attempt to construct a "celestial city" on the fissured foundation of our aberrant loves. Whether true or errant, our loves make us what we are; so if we are what we desire, history is the convoluted record of our loves in all their magnificent and ignoble forms. As the theologian Eric Gregory asserts, "love is the key to understanding world history." (Norman O. Brown once expressed much the same insight in psychoanalytic terms: "the riddle of history is not in Reason, but in Desire; not in labor, but in love.") Capitalism is one such desire for communion, a predatory and misshapen love of the world. (Capitalism is a love story.)

However significant theology is for this book, I have relied on a sizable body of historical literature on the symbolic universe of capitalism. Much of this work suggests that capitalist cultural authority cannot be fully understood without regard to the psychic, moral, and spiritual longings inscribed in the imagery of business culture. As Jackson Lears puts it, the corporation may well be "a triumph of bureaucratic rationality," but its advertising speaks lissomely to desires for release from Weber's iron cage of disenchantment. Attuned to popular anxieties about an increasingly rationalized and impersonal world dominated by large institutions, Lears demonstrates that advertisers used a variety of aesthetic strategies to generate a "reanimation of the world under the aegis of major corporations." Likewise, Roland Marchand observed how corporate image professionals attempted to "reanimate" the corporation itself. Since the late nineteenth century—when it was first defined as a legal person—the corporation has often figured in popular culture as a soulless leviathan, destructive of the creativity and moral virtue once located (so it was thought) among proprietors and local communities. Responding to this crisis of moral legitimacy, public relations departments conjured, Marchand argued, a "corporate soul," an image of the corporation as a friendly neighborhood behemoth solely interested in community service. It would seem that the iron in the cage of secularity has been leavened with enchanted materials.

Because I emphasize this enchanting carceral quality, some readers may complain that I overlook the real advances in human flourishing made possible by capitalism. Although I consider this objection a red herring, I want to make clear that I am not one of those churlish reactionary radicals who see nothing in capitalist modernity but one long, unrelieved nightmare of greed, brutality, and desiccating rationalization. The technological achievements of capitalism have surely improved the social and material conditions of billions of people; as none other than Marx asked in the **COMMUNIST MANIFESTO**, what earlier time "had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?" Still—and this needs to be reiterated at a time of wavering but nonetheless ascendant capitalist triumphalism—these improvements would

also not have been possible without labor unions, radical movements, welfare states, and political parties that mobilized unremitting popular struggle against the imperatives and institutions of capital. Moreover, it is essential to remember that, as Benjamin observed, every document of civilization is also a document of barbarism; during the tragically dialectical epoch of class struggle, all human achievement is tainted by oppression. It's a ruefully ironic observation with which Augustine would, I suspect, have concurred. Marveling in the City of God at "all the arts discovered and developed by human genius," Augustine still insisted that the aims and means of these creatures"—and "illth"—that which causes "devastation and trouble in all directions."

The arc of my narrative traces the enchantment of capitalism since the seventeenth century. Emerging from the fields and factories of industrializing England, capitalist enchantment migrated to the American continent and became the marrow of a proprietary dispensation, represented enthusiastically by Puritans, evangelicals, Mormons. In the late nineteenth century, the proprietary order gave way to the corporate dispensation with a soulful corporation at its center. Through much of the twentieth century, the corporation presided over the Fordist endeavor to build a heavenly city of business, a celestial metropolis of capital achieved through the mechanization of production and communion. By the early twenty-first century, capitalism has reached its highest meridian of enchantment in the neoliberal deification of "the Market." The enchantments of Mammon have had their critics, to be sure, but pride of place in this volume will go to intellectuals, poets, novelists, and artists with profoundly religious sensibilities. From Gerard Winstanley and Ruskin to Herman Melville, James Agee, and Kenneth Rexroth; from John Muir, William James, Vida Dutton Scudder, and Dorothy Day to Lewis Mumford, Mark Rothko, Theodore Roszak, and Thomas Merton—a pedigree of prophets saw capitalist enchantment as a desecration of some invisible grandeur. As Henry Miller realized, "the earth is a Paradise. We don't have to make it a Paradise—it is one. We have only to make ourselves fit to inhabit it."

Words such as "paradise" or "love" or "communion" are certainly absent from our political vernacular, excluded on account of their "utopian" connotations or their lack of steely-eyed "realism." Although this is a book about the past, I have always kept before me its larger contemporary religious, philosophical, and political implications. The book should make these clear enough; I will only say here that one of my broader intentions is to challenge the canons of "realism," especially as defined in the "science" of economics.

As the master science of desire in advanced capitalist nations, economics and its acolytes define the parameters of our moral and political imaginations, patrolling the boundaries of possibility and censoring any more generous conception of human affairs. Under the regime of neoliberalism, it has been ever faster to barbarism and ecological calamity. I wrote this book in part out of a belief that many on the "left" continue to share far too much with their antagonists: an ideology of "progress" defined as unlimited economic growth and technological development, as well as an acceptance of the myth of disenchantment that underwrites the pursuit of such expansion. The Romantic antipathy to capitalism, mechanization, and disenchantment stemmed not from a facile and nostalgic desire to return to the past, but from a view that much of what passed for "progress" was in fact inimical to human flourishing: a specious productivity that required the acceptance of venality, injustice, and despoliation; a technological and organizational efficiency that entailed the industrialization of human beings; and the primacy of the production of goods over the cultivation and nurturance of men and women. This train of iniquities followed inevitably from the chauvinism of what William Blake called "single vision," a blindness to the enormity of reality that led to a "Babylon builded in the waste."

Romantics redefined rather than rejected "realism" and "progress," drawing on the premodern customs and traditions of peasants, artisans, and artists: craftsmanship, mutual aid, and a conception of property that harkened back to the medieval practices of "the commons." Whether they believed in some traditional form of religion or translated it into secular idioms of enchantment, such as "art" or "beauty" or "organism," Romantic anticapitalists tended to favor direct workers' control of production; the restoration of a human scale in technics and social relations; a sensitivity to the natural world that precluded its reduction to mere instrumental value; and an apotheosis of pleasure in making sometimes referred to as poesis, a union of reason, imagination, and creativity, an ideal of labor as a poetry of everyday life, and a form of human divinity. In work free of

alienation and toil, we receive "the reward of creation," as William Morris described it through a character in *News from Nowhere* (1890), "the wages that God gets, as people might have said time a gone."

Rendered gaudy and impoverished by the tyranny of economics and the enchantment of neoliberal capitalism, our sensibilities need replenishment from the sacramental imagination. As Americans begin to experience the initial stages of imperial sclerosis and decline, and as the advanced capitalist world in general discovers the reality of ecological limits, we may find in what Marx called the "prehistory" of our species a perennial and redemptive wisdom. We will not be saved by our money, our weapons, or our technological virtuosity; we might be rescued by the joyful and unprofitable pursuits of love, beauty, and contemplation. No doubt this will all seem foolish to the shamans and magicians of pecuniary enchantment. But there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of on Wall Street or in Silicon Valley.

Despite the populist umbrage that has surged through American political culture since the presidential campaign of 2016, most Americans remain far from serious about a new way of life not indentured to capital. Hillary Clinton won the Democratic nomination for president while espousing the techno-meritocratic creed that flatters the professional-managerial classes and the elites of finance and digital capital. Defining "merit" almost solely in terms of its utility to capital accumulation, Clinton and her minions in the cultural apparatus were blithely and disastrously indifferent to the human wreckage wrought by neoliberal capitalism. With a moral imagination so gilded and tutored by Wall Street and Silicon Valley, a Clinton presidency would have remained as beguiled as former president Barack Obama's by the enchantments of money and cybernetic technology. Her opponent Donald Trump's populist bluster turned out, of course, to provide a cynical and successful prologue to the most unabashedly plutocratic government since the 1920s. Yet despite Trump's execrable racism and misogyny, his appeal stemmed, in large measure, from the dogged persistence of the capitalist idyll. Trump's boorish defiance of political politesse might be seen as a form of the creative destruction embellished in our cult of the Entrepreneur. His actual incompetence as a businessman (demonstrated in a dreary record of failures, bankruptcies, and flimflammed partners) is of no account; having flourished so gaudily in the turbulence of the market, Trump clearly believes that his prowess in business is an infinitely convertible wisdom—a conceit sustained by the American inclination to attribute all manner of ingenuity and virtue to the scrappy victors of capitalist competition. For all its grandiose banality, Trump's campaign slogan—"Make America Great Again"—evoked the waning but still mesmeric hope for a revival of the promise of capitalism, as well as for a time when the purchasing power of the wages of whiteness and masculinity were high. It would seem that most of "the 99 percent" want to "take back" the American Dream, not awaken from and definitively repudiate it; no depth or magnitude of failure seems capable of occasioning a fundamental reckoning with the futility of the original covenant.

Thus it would appear that the future of American capitalism will be irreversibly bleak and degenerative: "a consumerist Sparta," in Chalmers Johnson's words, a Huxwellian empire of consumption and militarism, or "rentism," as Peter Frase has dubbed it, a condition of plenty marred by wage stagnation, technological unemployment, and entrenched inequality. Perhaps the most dreary and terrifying scenario is that sketched by Wolfgang Streeck, who contends that capitalism has entered a protracted state of social and political senescence. Always "a fragile and improbable order," capitalism has always been in need of "ongoing repair work" to offset its tendency toward stasis and breakdown. But now—with economic inertia, ecological crises, and political impasse throughout the North Atlantic world—"too many frailties have become simultaneously acute while too many remedies have been exhausted or destroyed." And where reform or revolutionary movements once held out promises of a better future, capitalist society now disintegrates "but not under the impact of an organized opposition fighting it in the name of a better social order." Thus, Streeck envisions a revenant future, in which "before capitalism will go to hell" it will "hang in limbo, dead or about to die ... nobody will have the power to move its decaying body out of the way." Capitalism, he concludes, "is facing its *Gotterdammerung*"—with no new divinities ascending in the dawn.

Given the ghastly resilience of neoliberal capitalism, some of its most penetrating and articulate critics express a disheartenment that borders on despair. Surveying our "age of acquiescence," Fraser chronicles with a melancholy thoroughness the styles of resignation to the despotism of money: a "freedom" defined as reinvention of the self in accord with the vicissitudes of the Market, encouraging pathetic "delusions of self-reliance" and "hallucinations of self-empowerment"; a tranquilizing repertoire of digital devices and myriad forms of entertainment; and the analgesic pleasures of consumerism that allay a metastasizing boredom, solitude, and demoralization. But as long as Americans remain convinced that, in Fraser's words, "the evergreen hope that the road to self-enrichment remains open," their submissiveness will remain intractable; the reign of our "populist plutocracy" will remain thoroughly anchored in a plutocratic populism. If there really is no alternative, not even in the imagination, then conformity seems the sanest response to a world thoroughly structured by the metaphysics of capital. As Fraser reports the melancholy wisdom spreading among the despondent and politically hopeless, if nothing better beckons over the horizon, "to acquiesce may be less dispiriting."

What if we find acquiescence dispiriting? To mitigate, let alone prevent, our impending ecological and economic disasters, we desperately need, to borrow Naomi Klein's words, "a new civilizational paradigm." And yet, as Klein also realizes, "post-Enlightenment Western culture does not offer a road map for how to live that is not based on an extractivist, nonreciprocal relationship with nature." Both the advanced and the advancing capitalist worlds must not only forsake the promethean passion for domination and the mammonesque lust to accumulate; they must develop those alternatives whose existence their leaders have spent the past two generations denying. On what imaginative resources can the overdeveloped nations in particular rely to conceive these alternatives? Can we envision a different civilization and challenge the criteria of realism and practicality canonized by capital and the state?

Over the past decade, a desire for some new civilizational paradigm has surfaced, in however inchoate a form. The support for Senator Bernie Sanders and his "political revolution" in the Democratic primary race of 2016 demonstrated a profound and widespread longing for a break with the existing order. To be sure, Sanders's "democratic socialism" was, on close inspection, a mélange of the best of New Deal liberalism and European social democracy. As Jedidiah Purdy observed, it represented an updated version of "Eisenhower and FDR's world if Reagan had never happened." But it also named both a visceral and expansive disenchantment with the charms of neoliberalism and the persistence of a longing for solidarity and justice that was not shy about the language of "revolution."

Sanders's campaign was one efflorescence of the Occupy movement that had arisen in the fall of 2011. Not only in New York but also around the world, Occupy revived a languishing hope that capitalism was not the gilded End of History. The Occupiers rebuked the callous and insouciant rapacity that had marked the previous three decades, uttering heresies against the meretricious doxology of neoliberal economics. With their general assemblies, "peoples' mics," and free provision of food and medical care, Occupy appeared to represent an exotic uprising of apostates and infidels, as—however briefly—a gift economy supplanted the mercenary order of accumulation. It seemed like a joyous, pentecostal return of Mammon's forgotten but lingering victims, escaping the beast on a reconnaissance mission to the frontiers of paradise. Alas, it seemed that humankind cannot bear too much of heaven: Occupy and its tongues of fire were quickly extinguished or exhausted. The Occupiers dwindled as the weather grew cold and the times remained unmoved, and the police closed down and threw away what remained of the ragged outposts of utopia.

If it remains to be seen whether Occupy was, in Graeber's words, "the opening salvo in a wave of negotiations over the dissolution of the American Empire," its more immediate importance may lie in the realm of the spirit rather than the barricades. As Rebecca Solnit observed of Occupy San Francisco, "Occupy has some of the resonance of a spiritual, as well as a political, movement." Citing one declaration that "compassion is our new currency," Solnit marveled at the beloved community that transpired among the carnivalesque participants in utopia. However reformist their demands, the experiments in direct democracy were, in her words, "messy,

exasperating, and miraculous"; leaderless meetings did not proceed or conclude in confusion, listlessness, or violence. The "people's mics" enabled and even required men and women to "become the keeper of [their] brother's or sister's voice." Talking with Occupiers after the closure of their experiment in stateless, moneyless ways of being, Solnit remarked on "the extraordinary richness of their experience," noting without any irony or condescension that the sojourners "call it love."

The Occupiers exhibited the same existential joy that Solnit had chronicled among survivors of natural disasters in **A PARADISE BUILT IN HELL**. Describing the aftermath of the San Francisco earthquake a little over a century before, Solnit marveled not only at the improvisational ingenuity of people whose city had been reduced to rubble but also at the spontaneous generosity they displayed in the midst of the most horrendous circumstances:

Imagine a society where money plays little or no role, where people rescue each other and then care for each other, where food is given away, where life is mostly out of doors in public, where the old divides between people seem to have fallen away, and the fate that faces them, no matter how grim, is far less so for being shared, where much once considered impossible, both good and bad, is now possible or present.

Disaster kicks open "a door back into paradise, the paradise at least in which we are who we hope to be, do the work we desire, and are each our sister's and brother's keeper." This is hardly the sort of thing that can be readily translated into a technocratic or pecuniary idiom, the lingua franca of the digital and financial oligarchies who claim to monopolize the power to draw the boundaries of political possibility in our time.

The paradise that emerges from catastrophe embodies what William James called "another kingdom of being," that realm of "ontological wonder" that appears in the relinquishment of all desire for possession and supremacy. If nothing less than a new civilizational paradigm will enable us to weather and perhaps avert this century's maelstrom of impending disasters, it must be rooted in a deep and even rapturous ontological imagination of wonder. "We want larger selves and a larger world," Solnit writes, and people caught in disasters soon discover how multitudinous they and the world truly are. And yet, she muses, "we lack the language for that aspect of our existence... the language we need to describe what happens during disaster." What Solnit discerns in the history of calamities, Fraser sees in the broader story of modern America. Propelled by "ineffable yearnings to redefine what it meant to be human together," all the great crusades for justice began "in a realm before money" and looked to the fruition of "a realm beyond money." Even in the stampede for consumer goods slumbers "a sacramental quest for transcendence, reveries of what might be." For both Fraser and Solnit, one enormous obstacle to a breakthrough into paradise is the moral and ontological edifice of capitalism.

We do have a language for the human magnificence we witness in the wake of devastation; we do have a language that expresses our longings both for a sense of the world's magnitude and for fleshly access to transcendence. Our best hope for an imaginative and political antithesis to capitalist enchantment resides in the lineage of Romantic, sacramental radicalism. It understands calamity, injustice, and degradation as predicaments of human divinity, hardships that can reveal our suppressed or perverted but nonetheless godlike nature. It views the material universe as a cosmic theater of divine vitality, charged with the grandeur of God. Beginning with the squatters on St. George's Hill, the pedigree of Romantic modernity maintained that we already live in paradise, and that our blindness to the heaven all around us is the source of our descent into the hell of property, rank, and dominion.

The capacity to apprehend paradise had several names—"imagination," "wonder," "passionate vision," "sacramental consciousness"—but it has always been a way of seeing, a perception of some truth and goodness and beauty intrinsic to the material world, a view that embraces without nullifying the knowledge obtainable through the sciences.

So if we ask, along with T. J. Clark, "how deep does [the] reconstruction of the project of Enlightenment have to go?," all the way down is the answer, right down to the ontological roots. At its boldest, the sacramental vision

has beheld a superabundant love as the ontological architecture of creation, harmoniously blending unfathomable power and gracious, immeasurable munificence. The sacramental way of seeing has behooved a sacramental way of being, one described by James as "saintliness": not a blissed-out, puritanical sanctimony, but rather a fearless, vibrant, and open-handed life, sustained by a confidence in the bounty of the world, available to every person on condition that she become "worthless as a practical being"—"worthless," that is, by the pecuniary criteria of capitalist metaphysics and rationality.

By repudiating the standards of worth and practicality that discipline the capitalist way of being, the Romantic sacramental imagination has always borne revolutionary implications. Romanticism has represented an alternative modernity, a substantive critique of the Enlightenment's collusion with bourgeois sensibility and moralism that nonetheless never ended in utter repudiation. It has always rejected capitalism's ontology of pecuniary transubstantiation, its epistemology of technological dominion, and its morality of profit and productivity. Because Romanticism's passionate vision sees the presence of divinity throughout the material universe—especially in human beings—Romanticism has entailed an understanding of nature, work, and technics very different from that of capitalist societies, whose misconception of the world is encapsulated in the secular superstition of "economics." In the combative technological world constructed by capitalism, "human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to one another," as Pope Francis has echoed Walt Whitman; "the relationship has become confrontational"—characterized by the violence of the extractive paradigm, poisoned by the "bitterness and malice" that John Ruskin descried in the English heavens. Nature as revealed by the sacramental consciousness is both abundant and holy. Impressed with the trademark of its creator, it is not a stingy and punitive antagonist, but rather a fruitful, ever-evolving habitat, open to the rational and creative participation of humanity in its manifold generosity.

In this sacramental view, our laboring and technical collaboration with nature should take the form of self-development as well as production. Performed in conditions worthy of our human divinity, work would not constitute money-grubbing toil in pursuit of a rapacious enlargement of "productivity" but rather the care and cultivation of people—as Ruskin put it, "full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy-hearted human creatures." Along with artists and poets, artisans have also been archetypes of convivial, unalienated labor: the union of reason, imagination, and creativity amounting to poetry in labor—an inspiring alternative to the slavery of wages and to the ennui that beckons with total automation. Fusing conceptual and physical labor, the Romantic ideal of the artisan contravened the industrial paradigm of efficiency and productivity defined in capitalist terms. The recent renewal of interest in craftsmanship testifies to the persistence of this Romantic paradigm. Contrary to claims by many on the left that "craftsmanship" is merely a fantasy of reactionary nostalgia, a recovery of artisanal values would entail neither a revival of the Protestant work ethic—the slave morality of capitalism—nor a rejection of the possibilities for greater free time afforded by technological advance. The Romantic figure of the artisan both beckons to the goal of workers' control of production and reminds us to ask more fundamental questions about the nature and purposes of work. If *homo faber* is also *imago Dei*—the quintessential sacramental image of divinity—then the first question about labor is not how much can be produced in the shortest period of time, but what kinds of labor and what kinds of goods best contribute to human flourishing. Against the neoliberal inferno of 24/7 labor and consumption, "better work and less of it" should be the rallying cry of a revitalized workers' movement.

Romantic sacramentalism has evoked communist, anarchist, and artisanal visions, so pioneers of a postcapitalist future can draw on a rich imaginative trove of property forms and beloved communities. "Communism," of course, triggers nightmares of authoritarianism, misery, and incompetence; images of jackboots, prison camps, and queues would appear to dispel any resurrection of the hope for a communist paradise. Yet when even a Pope can write—and be tagged with the predictable epithet of "Marxist"—that "the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits should benefit everyone," then "Communists of the old school," as Ruskin called himself—communists who appeal to the spirit of the medieval commons, not, like Marx, to the spirit of the industrial factory—have an opportunity to educate our contemporaries in the longer and broader tradition of

communitas. Long after its dispossession from the fields and towns, the spirit of the commons persisted most heartily among the anarchist and Arts and Crafts movement, Romantics who envisioned some modern revival of the self-direction and solidarity practiced among artisanal guilds and peasant communities. Workers' control of technology and production, the eradication of class and the industrial division of labor, the removal of the commons from private ownership and its restoration to federated communities—consolidated in the word "socialism," these remain the compelling answers to the "social question" posed by capitalism.

A Romantic left would also help their fellow citizens to awaken from the spell of the American Dream, the trance that animates the feverish somnambulism known as the American Way of Life. We may already be waking up—the acquiescence may be dissipating to reveal a miasma of betrayal, anger, and resentment, all of which will intensify as more Americans realize that their way of life is neither blessed nor imperishable. If the events of the past few years have demonstrated anything beyond dispute, it's that our ruling class is not only venal and corrupt but rotten and putrefying as well. Certainly, judged by Ruskin's criterion, the American Empire is neither happy nor noble: our country, so deluded as to think itself rich, may well be among the poorest in powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. Indeed, the decline of the American Empire will be one of the pivotal episodes of the twenty-first century. What will Americans make of their future—not to mention their past and present—when they begin to doubt their divine anointment and eschatological mission? What will they do when they conclude that they never enjoyed the mandate of heaven? They may redouble their efforts in denial, unwilling to relinquish or even temper their faith in the enchanting verities of the Market. If they harken to the delusions of nativist populism, they will intensify racial animosity while entrenching the power of their mercenary overlords. If they affirm a renovated neoliberalism, they may attempt to prolong their economic and geopolitical imperium. Yet even if they succeed, their victory will be brief and pyrrhic, for they will have purchased their temporary reprieve in the currency of fear, recrimination, and death. Other peoples—perhaps even many Americans themselves—will not tolerate the expenditure in money, blood, and repression required to sustain the American Way of Life.

Or Americans could welcome the demise of the Empire as a liberating moment of possibility. Those who sense the impending twilight of empire as a way of life could greet the erosion of our hegemony, not with lamentation about the best days behind us, but with gratitude and even jubilation at the prospect of a better and lovelier country. Once relieved of the burdens of empire, and dispelled of the illusion that the world cannot survive without the escutcheon of American superintendence, we would surely be weaker. But we would also be wiser, freer to assess and rearrange our affairs by truer, saner, and more generous standards than productivity and technological innovation. Such a deliberate renunciation of capitalist enchantment will be arduous and sharply vilified, condemned as lethal and improvident heresy by the patricians and curates of the plutocracy. But the only alternative to apostasy from Mammonism will be a perdition of corporate thralldom perpetuated with unending and unavailing war.

The disassembly of the American Empire will require the acolytes of sacramental consciousness to imbue our politics with a hopeful, even joyful spirit. The barbarism of our current political culture has led some to call for a kind of inner, Benedictine expatriation: "a new—doubtless very different—St. Benedict," in Alasdair MacIntyre's words, or a "Benedict option" of cloistered, like-minded exiles from the toxins and failures of modernity. I reject this Benedictine disengagement as both impossible and undesirable. Rather, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have hinted, we need a new—doubtless very different—St. Francis as a model of revolutionary militancy. Amid the injustice and corruption of his own day, Francis discovered, they assert, "the ontological power of a new society"—"love, simplicity, and also innocence," an ontological wonder that entails anger at the profanation of human divinity. For those eager, in Charles Taylor's words, to "break beyond the limits of the regnant versions of immanent order"—for those "restless at the barriers of the human sphere"—any new radicalism must begin from a faith in this fundamental joy of being. A realized eschatology: if you will, the future in the present tense. Living the new world in the wreckage of the old.

That new world has always been present; history has not deprived us of an abiding and infinitely generous divinity. We can reenter paradise—even if only incompletely—for paradise has always been around and in us, eagerly awaiting our coming to our senses, ready to embrace and nourish when we renounce our unbelief in the goodness of things. And we can do this in the midst of imperial decay and in the face of seemingly impossible odds. Knowing that the world has been and will always be charged with the grandeur of God, we can practice, in the twilight of a senescent empire, love's radiant, unarmed, and penniless dominion. <>

RETHINKING IBN 'ARABI by Gregory A. Lipton [Oxford University Press 9780190684501]

The thirteenth century mystic Ibn 'Arabi was the foremost Sufi theorist of the premodern era. For more than a century, Western scholars and esotericists have heralded his universalism, arguing that he saw all contemporaneous religions as equally valid. In *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi*, Gregory Lipton calls this image into question and throws into relief how Ibn 'Arabi's discourse is inseparably intertwined with the absolutist vision of his own religious milieu—that is, the triumphant claim that Islam fulfilled, superseded, and therefore abrogated all previous revealed religions.

Lipton juxtaposes Ibn 'Arabi's absolutist conception with the later reception of his ideas, exploring how they have been read, appropriated, and universalized within the reigning interpretive field of Perennial Philosophy in the study of Sufism. The contours that surface through this comparative analysis trace the discursive practices that inform Ibn 'Arabi's Western reception back to the eighteenth and nineteenth century study of "authentic" religion, where European ethno-racial superiority was wielded against the Semitic Other—both Jewish and Muslim. Lipton argues that supersessionist models of exclusivism are buried under contemporary Western constructions of religious authenticity in ways that ironically mirror Ibn 'Arabi's medieval absolutism.

For over a century, Euro-American scholars and esotericists alike have heralded the thirteenth-century Spanish mystic Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240) as the premodern Sufi theorist of inclusive religious universalism who claimed all contemporaneous religions as equally valid beyond the religio-political divide of medieval exclusivism. *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi* calls into question this Western image of Ibn 'Arabi and throws into relief how his discourse is inseparably intertwined with the absolutist vision of his own religious milieu—that is, the triumphant claim that Islam fulfilled, superseded, and therefore abrogated all previously revealed religions. By exploring how Ibn 'Arabi's ideas have been read, appropriated, and universalized within the regnant interpretative field of Perennial Philosophy in the study of Sufism, *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi* theorizes Ibn 'Arabi's own absolutist conception of universalism in juxtaposition to his contemporary universalist reception. The contours that surface through this comparative analysis trace the discursive practices that inform Ibn 'Arabi's Western reception back to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conceptions of "authentic" religion where European ethnoracial superiority is wielded against a Semitic Other—both Jewish and Muslim. *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi* thus argues that in ironically similar ways to Ibn 'Arabi's medieval absolutism, contemporary Western universalist constructions of religious authenticity contain buried orders of politics concealing supersessionist models of exclusivism.

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Excerpt: *In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map.*

—Jorge Luis Borges, “On Exactitude in Science,” in [Collected Fictions](#), trans. Andrew Hurley (London: Penguin, 1999), 325.)

While my ostensive concern in this book is to analyze how particular ideas of the medieval Muslim mystic Ibn ‘Arabi have been translated within a contemporary field of interpretation, the meta-subject that frames this analysis is the larger issue of religious universalism. And while my approach is necessarily critical, I am not overly concerned to weigh in on the ongoing debate regarding the ontology of religion itself—that is, whether or not religion is “of its own kind” (*sui generis*). Yet, it seems fairly clear to me that the related, and likewise ongoing, scholarly struggle to find a universal definition of religion is well-nigh impossible. This is so, as Talal Asad has persuasively argued, “not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes.” For the methodological purposes of this study, I thus profess a type of philosophical quietism where my general aim, in Wittgensteinian fashion, is to take account of “language-games, describe them, and sometimes wonder at them.”⁴ In the following chapters, I therefore attempt to remain at the level of discourse by asking how those ideas and ideals we privilege as religious are conceived, received, and ultimately naturalized. More specifically, I seek to show how the speculative metaphysical ideas of Ibn ‘Arabi have been read, appropriated, and universalized within the discursive context of Traditionalism or the Perennial Philosophy (*philosophia perennis*)⁵ with a primary focus on the interpretive field of Perennialism associated with the *sui generis*, or “nonreductive,” tradition of religious universalism connected to Frithjof Schuon.

Thus, even though this book takes seriously claims of religious *terra firma*—that is, religion “as such”—its analytical concern revolves around the discursive “maps” that chart such claims. Of course, the metaphor of mapmaking in the field of religious studies is well worn, made famous many years ago by J. Z. Smith’s seminal essay “Map Is Not Territory.” Smith’s essay ends with his oft-quoted rejoinder to the mathematician Alfred Korzybski’s famous dictum, “‘Map is not territory’—but maps are all we possess.”⁶ Yet, Smith’s cartographic metaphor is equally applicable to the religious practitioner in the so-called real world as it is for the scholar of religion in the academy. In performing what he calls a “deep”—and indeed “transgressive”⁷—reading of Smith’s essay, Peter Wright has recently emphasized this essential point:

The student of religions . . . is not all that different from the practitioner of a religion. The practices of reading and writing, interpretation and criticism—i.e., the practices that . . . constitute for Smith the study of religions as a humanistic adventure among texts—belong to the same family of activities that constitute ordinary religious practice. The scholar of religions and the adherent of a particular religious tradition are both engaged in a quest romance that produces a species of “cartography.”

Thus, while there may be what scholars like to think of as a “critical distance” between the academic discipline of religious studies and the object of their study—the religious themselves—it nevertheless appears to be a difference of degree rather than of kind.

One of the ways that the differences among such maps have been categorized is by orders of abstraction away from the original “insider map of believers.” Yet, when dealing with contemporary scholars of religion who consider their own scholarship a vehicle for spiritual gnosis, as was famously the case with the comparativist Mircea Eliade, then any supposed distance between the academic study of religion and asserting religious truth rapidly vanishes into the thin air of theory itself. As Steven Wasserstrom observes, “Eliade’s Historian of

Religions himself somehow recapitulated the paradigmatic experience of the traditional believer; only thus could he see the real forms, and therefore only in this way could then show them to the reader.” Similarly, in his introduction to *The Essential Writings of Frithjof Schuon*, religious studies scholar and Perennialist Seyyed Hossein Nasr claims that “ideally speaking, only saintly men and women possessing wisdom should and can engage in a serious manner in that enterprise which has come to be known as comparative religion.”

To be sure, the art of mapmaking is an elitist enterprise. As cosmographical projections, maps assert particular correspondences to reality, able to be read and followed by anyone with skill enough to do so. As such, all maps inevitably claim, to one degree or another, *the universal* through their ability to offer privileged access to truth. In its most unassuming form, such universalism is based on the assertion that territory can be abstracted outside of time and culture—a particular locality can be reified and placed within a less complicated dimension, represented by semiotic simplifications. The usefulness of cartography in the history of humanity is of course beyond question. The notion, however, that maps are reliable representations of reality is more complicated. Indeed, the full quote of Korzybski’s popular maxim referred to above reads: “A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a *similar structure* to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness.” One of the best ways of articulating the problematics underlying Korzybski’s deceptively simple insight has been dubbed Bonini’s paradox by William Starbuck: “As a model grows more realistic it also becomes just as difficult to understand as the real-world processes it represents.” This paradox has numerous ramifications in many fields, but for my purposes here it is useful to consider what it brings to bear on the concept of the universal. The closer we approach any notion of “reality,” the more complex such ideas are, and increasingly less useful. The idea of the universal, like a map, is only of use when it simplifies reality; yet, when reality is simplified, there is always a choice involved—something *must always* be left out. Thus, the paradox of religious universalism is that all such discourse simultaneously reveals and conceals: the more it shines light upon a claimed universal perspective, the more it occludes others. As Milton Sernett observes:

Perhaps psychohistorians will someday explain for us why the archives of the past overflow with examples of how religion has, on the one hand, served as a cross-cultural unifying principle while, on the other hand, it has been a means by which insiders define themselves over against outsiders.

Even though universal perspectives are useful as models of unification, they are also necessarily divisive as discourses through which specific communities operating within particular times and places stake out their claims. In this sense, as Ernesto Laclau put it, “the universal is no more than a particular that has become dominant.” Yet, from a metaphysical perspective, the fact that universals are derived from so-called particulars does not necessarily diminish their universal status. In the case of universalizing religions such as Christianity or Islam, historical particulars constitute much of revelation itself. But to argue that such particulars can become universally applicable *is not necessarily* to argue that they transcend their particularity. Rather, part of the paradox of universalism is an inherent confusion between the universal and the particular, as Laclau observes: “Is it universal or particular? If the latter, universality can only be a particularity that defines itself in terms of a limitless exclusion; if the former, the particular itself becomes part of the universal, and the dividing line is again blurred.”

The concern that fuels the theoretical impetus behind this book thus focuses on universalist mapping practices that tend to lose sight of—or simply disregard—the inherent, dialectical tension between the universal and the particular as conceived within all religious discourse. As a pertinent example of this, and one that I revisit in chapter 4, the Perennialist scholar James Cutsinger recently asserted that to be objective, scholars of religious studies “must entertain the possibility” that Frithjof Schuon was able to directly access “the Truth—with that capital ‘T’ ” in ways that are not explicable through “*sheerly natural causes or purely human phenomena*.” Cutsinger goes on to make the even bolder claim (coming as it does from a professor in a religious studies department at a public research university) that such a gnostic “power of immediate or intuitive discernment [is] unobstructed by the boundaries of physical objects and *unaffected by the limitations of historical circumstance*.” Taking Cutsinger’s definition of gnostic power at face value, it stands to reason that if “limitations

of historical circumstance” could indeed be shown as constitutive for any given transcendent claim to universal knowledge, then such a claim would necessarily be called into question. Thus, setting aside the thorny question of ontology, and in response to Cutsinger, the contention that threads together the various arguments throughout this book is simply this: all universal claims *inevitably* carry the burden of their own socio-historical genealogies. That is to say, every map bears the situated perspective of its cartographer.

In regards to my personal cartographic perspective, one final note is in order. In terms of the field of Ibn ‘Arabi studies, the insights contained in this book are critically indebted to two of the most formidable, contemporary scholars who write on Ibn ‘Arabi in European languages: Michel Chodkiewicz and William Chittick. In the last several decades, their immeasurable contribution has enriched and transformed how Ibn ‘Arabi is read and understood. Both scholars are at pains to articulate the importance of sacred law for Ibn ‘Arabi—a point I revisit from different perspectives throughout this work. No doubt, they would also agree that Ibn ‘Arabi’s discourse would qualify as universalist in some fashion. Yet in terms of critically inspiring my particular theoretical interposition, Chodkiewicz has importantly, *albeit discretely*, brought to light the absolutist and exclusivist nature of Ibn ‘Arabi’s particular brand of universalism in opposition to Chittick’s more inclusivist interpretive framework. In the first half of this book, I spend significant time fleshing out this particular aspect of Chodkiewicz’s wide-ranging insight, while critiquing the aspect of Chittick’s work that has seemingly attempted to attenuate what I refer to as Ibn ‘Arabi’s political metaphysics and its embedded supersessionism. Yet, any critique of Chittick I proffer here must be understood as situated within a larger indebtedness owed to his prolific and careful expositions of the Andalusian Sufi’s corpus. Without having encountered and benefited from Chittick’s extraordinary erudition, I could never have begun my ongoing journey of understanding and appreciation of Ibn ‘Arabi’s work and thought. I thus offer the interventions of this book not in the spirit of opposition, but as additional vantage points to a necessary and ongoing conversation.

I should note here that part of my aim in this book is to problematize such definitions of “gnosis”—a definition that seemingly echoes a post-Kantian obsession with autonomy, be it of Platonic intellect or Kantian reason. Rather than transcending heteronomy, I argue that such knowledge is always constituted *through* it.

In ‘Arabi and the Cartography of Universalism

The introductory chapter broadly charts the theoretical and discursive problematics that the book addresses. Through the metaphor of cartography (a controlling motif throughout the work), this chapter begins with an overview of the book’s analytical trajectory by problematizing the notion of the universal in both the discourse of Ibn ‘Arabi and the interpretive field of contemporary Perennialism. In addition to a brief biography and establishing a framework for how Ibn ‘Arabi’s socio-political lifeworld can be read within an absolutist cosmology of a so-called perennial religion or *religio perennis*, this chapter introduces the racio-spiritual grammar of Schuonian Perennialism and the orders of exclusion it harbors. It concludes with a chapter overview.

What we normally call universalism is a particularism thinking itself as universalism, and it is worthwhile doubting whether universalism could ever exist otherwise.—[Naoki Sakai, “Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism.”](#)

Revered by countless followers and admirers spanning over seven centuries and nearly as many continents, the Andalusian Sufi Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240), or more popularly Ibn ‘Arabi, is commonly referred to as “the Greatest Master” (*al-shaykh al-akbar*)—or as Bulent Rauf, one of his most seminal New Age commentators, once called him: “the universal Doctor Maximus.” In the chapters that follow, I will show how Ibn ‘Arabi imperially mapped the religious Other, while simultaneously exploring the ways in which his ideas have been mapped and universalized within the interpretative field of the prolific Swiss-German esotericist Frithjof Schuon (d. 1998). This book is thus an attempt to theorize Ibn ‘Arabi’s own conception of universalist metaphysics in juxtaposition to his contemporary universalist reception—a reception that I argue projects European concepts of religion upon the Andalusian Sufi’s discourse in the guise of transhistorical and transcultural continuity. I hold such

a theoretical lens essential in the study of Ibn ‘Arabi, and Sufism more broadly, for without it scholars run the risk of unwittingly perpetuating and further naturalizing long-standing European orders of religious authenticity. As such, I approach my subject first and foremost from the framework of religious studies, in the sense that I am preoccupied with how various discursive communities employ the protean and situated category of “religion.”

In this introduction, I broadly chart the theoretical and discursive waters through which this book attempts to navigate. Beginning with an overview of my analytical trajectory, I problematize the notion of the universal in both the discourse of Ibn ‘Arabi and the interpretive field of contemporary Perennialism. In addition to establishing a framework for how Ibn ‘Arabi’s socio-political lifeworld can be read within an absolutist cosmology of a so-called perennial religion or *religio perennis*, I introduce the racio-spiritual grammar of Schuonian Perennialism and the orders of exclusion it harbors. I conclude with a chapter overview.

Mapping the Double Bind of Universality

In his groundbreaking work on European imperialism, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, Walter Mignolo asserts that “maps are and are not territory.” Here, Mignolo alludes to Alfred Korzybski’s famous claim, which I have already referred to in the prologue—that is, “a map is not the territory it represents.” Yet, Mignolo goes on to argue that nevertheless, maps are territory “because, once they are accepted, they become a powerful tool for controlling territories, colonizing the mind and imposing themselves on the members of the community using the map as the real territory.” Here, Mignolo echoes Jean Baudrillard’s assertion that today it is the map “that engenders the territory.” It is through careful attention to this dual sense of cartography, and the controlling power of its universal pretensions, that I approach the subject matter of this book.

Within the contemporary study of religion, the term “universalism” presents a double bind, since it is used to represent both exclusivist and inclusivist perspectives. Premodern proselytizing religious traditions—what the nineteenth-century French scholar of religion Léon Marillier aptly dubbed “universalizing religions”—were framed within supersessionist doctrines of *universal* validity. Based on the original Latin *universus*, “all together, all taken collectively, whole, entire,” the term “universalism” as applied to such religions refers to how their truth claims are interpreted from within as valid for all people and all times. Yet the term “universalism” is also commonly employed to articulate a meaning that focuses on the essential unity of various religions as a *plurality* rather than on the universal nature of one particular tradition. This usage denotes various types of inclusivist and pluralist perspectives that recognize broader sets of valid doctrines or religious formations, typically understood as united within an underlying or transcendent universal truth or *ur-religion*—what Schuon has defined as “the underlying universality in every great spiritual patrimony of humanity, or what may be called the *religio perennis*; this is the religion to which the sages adhere, one which is always and necessarily founded upon formal elements of divine institution.”

Yet, a closer look at such apparently tolerant, pluralistic modalities of universalism in comparison with the seemingly coercive triumphalism of their proselytizing cousins reveals a disturbing paradox. Because maps purport intelligibility no matter who reads them or from what perspective, every map inherently claims an inclusive, universal validity. But like all ontological truth claims, maps can only offer a simplified perspective—a perspective that is, in keeping with the traditional metaphor, only two-dimensional. This two-dimensionality is thus an imposition upon the reader that reduces him or her to its flattened horizon. Such a coercive flattening can be likened to the anxiety articulated by the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas in the face of the horrors of the Shoah as “the tyranny of the universal and of the impersonal,” where the “irreducible singularity” of the individual is threatened by theorizations of ontic totality. Here, Levinas pushes back against the political ramifications of Western metaphysics as traditionally plotted at the cost of the Other subsumed within an egoistic whole—what Levinas similarly refers to as the “imperialism of the same.” In such an endeavor, ontology can be likened to an enchanted looking glass of great power within which situated ideals of the self are perceived at the level of a transcendence that claims to encompass the Other. In other words, every recourse to universalism, whether inclusive or exclusive, is an imposition of a particular homogenous perspective—a sameness ultimately based on exclusion. As the sociologist Ulrich Beck observes:

In any form of universalism, all forms of human life are located within a single order of civilization, with the result that cultural differences are either transcended or excluded. In this sense, the project is hegemonic: the other's voice is permitted entry only as the voice of sameness, as a confirmation of oneself, contemplation of oneself, dialogue with oneself.

While premodern forms of universal religious discourse—such as the medieval supersessionism of Christianity and Islam—are seemingly self-aware of their own hegemonic exclusivism, it is only in modernity where discourses of religious universalism claim to variously include all worldviews equally. Yet, just below the surface of modern universalist schemes of religious inclusivism lie orders of exclusivism that are seldom acknowledged, since any such acknowledgment would throw into question their entire *raison d'être*. From this perspective, cosmological maps should be understood as hegemonic projections of absolute knowledge. Indeed, the core argument of this book is that all modalities of universalism—both premodern, overtly imperial forms and modern, ostensibly tolerant forms—are particular instantiations of power. Thus, “the moment you embrace universality and the idea of truth *you are entangled in a struggle* with the partisans of particularity and of alternative versions of universal truth.”

While I read the cosmological maps of Ibn 'Arabi as naturally inscribed by medieval Islamic imperialism, I locate Schuonian Perennialism as similarly inscribed by European imperialism and its attendant colonization of knowledge under the auspices of a civilizing mission. In the conceptual spaces constructed within both of these mapping strategies, in the words of Mignolo, “a universal knowing subject is presupposed.” Moreover, there is a correspondence between universal knowledge and an assumed (in Ibn 'Arabi's case) or unspoken (in Schuon's) cache of power. How cosmic space is mapped in each of these two discursive regimes has a direct bearing on how religion itself is imagined. Yet with all of their obvious differences, their maps yield surprisingly similar enunciations of universal validity founded on premises of specific localities.

Charting the Discursive Trajectory

Echoing self-critical discussions in the field of religious studies that began over fifty years ago, Tomoko Masuzawa observes that “the idea of the fundamental unity of religions—or what may be reasonably termed liberal universalism—has been in evidence in much of the comparative enterprise since the nineteenth century.” Yet, Masuzawa submits that “many of today's scholars would likely contest, rather than accept, this presumption that the unity of ‘religious experience’ should be the basis of religion as an academic discipline.” While such a position may be less common in religious studies today, it still plays a critical role in the academic study of Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, with scholars who are sympathetic to the particular philosophical and theological orientation of Perennialism. Indeed, Seyyed Hossein Nasr has described Schuon as a “master of the discipline of comparative religion,” asserting that “from the point of view of sheer scholarly knowledge combined with metaphysical penetrations, *it is hardly possible to find a contemporary corpus of writings with the same all-embracing and comprehensive nature combined with incredible depth.*” Although Schuon's large corpus of over thirty works remains relatively obscure, his philosophical framework commands one of the most dominant knowledge regimes in the contemporary “Western” reception of Ibn 'Arabi. Indeed, James Morris, a leading expert on Ibn 'Arabi, has acknowledged Schuon's ubiquitous influence in interpreting and transmitting Ibn 'Arabi's thought to “academic specialists in the spiritual dimensions of religious studies.”

Ibn 'Arabi's monistic-leaning mysticism has a long-standing and popular correlation with the Islamic metaphysical axiom known as “the Unity of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Although this particular terminology was never explicitly used by Ibn 'Arabi himself, it has indeed come to emblematically represent his unitive metaphysics that professes God as the ontological reality of all things. Through his correlation with the doctrine of the Unity of Being, Ibn 'Arabi is often associated in the West with Schuon's thought and his ostensibly similar concept of “the Transcendent Unity of Religions”—the title of his first major work. In the second half of the twentieth century, Schuon not only served as the leader of the first organized traditionalist European Sufi order (*ṭarīqa*) but also, upon the death of the French Traditionalist René Guénon in 1951, became the foremost proponent of the Perennial Philosophy. *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (*De l'Unité transcendante des Religions*, 1948) argues

that a transhistorical religious essence unifies all religious traditions beyond the limits of exoteric absolutism, thus embracing all normative religious traditions as universally valid means to the divine. According to Perennialist thought, such religious universalism forms the basis of the most ancient wisdom and is the sacred inheritance of all great mystics from every religious tradition.

Indeed, Ibn 'Arabi himself is often alleged to have been a proto-Perennialist. For example, the Perennialist author and Schuonian William Stoddart has remarked that Ibn 'Arabi should be acknowledged as one of the main “forerunners of the perennial philosophy in the East” since he “explained with particular cogency how an ‘essence’ of necessity had many ‘forms.’” Stoddart’s statement appears to be an allusion to Ibn 'Arabi’s famous verses from his collection of poems, *The Interpreter of Desires (Tarjumān al-ashwāq)*—that claim a heart “capable of every form” and profess “the religion of Love.” Indeed, Schuon himself repeatedly mentions in his own writings these same lines of Ibn 'Arabi to help exposit the *religio perennis* as the underlying truth of all religions. In one such passage, he states:

The *religio perennis* is fundamentally this: the Real entered into the illusory so that the illusory might be able to return into the Real. It is this mystery, together with the metaphysical discernment and contemplative concentration that are its complement, which alone is important in an absolute sense from the point of view of *gnosis*; for the gnostic—in the etymological and rightful sense of that word—there is in the last analysis no other “religion.” It is what Ibn Arabi called the “religion of Love.”

As I will discuss momentarily, although Ibn 'Arabi’s *ultimate* soteriological vision is famously informed by a radical hermeneutic of mercy acknowledging that even those in eternal damnation will eventually find contentment and bliss, throughout this book I demonstrate how close readings of his positions on the religious Other reveal a traditionally derived supersessionism based on the exclusive superiority of Islam and its abrogation of all previous religious dispensations. In direct opposition to prominent universalist and Perennialist readings, I throw into relief how Ibn 'Arabi’s understanding of the religious Other is founded on a political metaphysics in which the Prophet Muhammad, and thus the religion of Islam, not only triumphs over but also *ultimately subsumes* all previous religions and their laws. While it is certainly true that Ibn 'Arabi’s “theomonism” is submersed within a unitive mysticism of love—a mysticism often taken in the West to be opposed to religious exclusivism—I argue that intertwined with this unitive love is a universal political metaphysics that discursively absorbs all religio- political competition.

Perennialism, Ibn 'Arabi, and the Universal

The idea of the universal has been directly associated with Perennialism since its early formation. While Guénon never used the term “perennial philosophy” (*philosophia perennis*) itself, preferring instead “the primordial tradition,”³³ the eminent historian and seminal Perennialist author Ananda K. Coomaraswamy did use it but with the additional term “universal”—that is, “*Philosophia Perennis et Universalis*”—noting that along with the idea of a perennial philosophy, “*Universalis* must be understood, for this ‘philosophy’ has been the common inheritance of all mankind without exception.” Moreover, in its direct connection with Perennialism, the idea of the universal is often imbricated with the thought of Ibn 'Arabi. For example, in his 1972 essay, “Islam and the Encounter of Religions,” Nasr connects Ibn 'Arabi’s aforementioned verses from *The Interpreter of Desires* with Schuonian Perennialism and the notion of the transcendent unity of religions. Not only is the Sufi “one who seeks to transcend the world of forms, to journey from multiplicity to Unity, from the particular to the *Universal*,” but also Sufism itself “is the most universal affirmation of that perennial wisdom which stands at the heart of Islam and in fact of all religion as such.” Nasr goes on to state that “it is this supreme doctrine of Unity . . . to which Ibn 'Arabî refers in his well-known verses in the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*. . . . It is a transcendent knowledge that reveals the inner unity of religions.” In his work *The Other in the Light of the One: The Universality of the Qur'ān and Interfaith Dialogue*, the Perennialist scholar Reza Shah-Kazemi similarly identifies his approach as both Schuonian and “universalist,” directly connecting it with Ibn 'Arabi and his doctrine of the “universal capacity of the heart,” thus also referring to Ibn 'Arabi’s famous lines from *The Interpreter*.

Yet, here it is important to contextualize the often confusing, and confused, idea of the universal in relation to Ibn ‘Arabi’s metaphysics. In *Islam and the Fate of Others*, Mohammad Khalil categorizes Islamic universalism in a soteriological sense in relation to its supposed binary opposite of “damnationism.” Here, these terms are used in the specific context of discourses having to do with the duration of Hell: universalists hold that all people will be granted eternal Paradise, while damnationists maintain that some will have to endure the Fire eternally. To complicate things even more, the category of universalism, for Khalil, includes the subgroups quasi- and ultimate universalism. Somewhat ironically, Khalil is forced to classify Ibn ‘Arabi as only a “quasi-universalist” since, according to Ibn ‘Arabi’s rather unique mixture of literalism and a hermeneutics of mercy, there will be people who will remain in Hell forever even though their punishment will cease and it will become blissful for them. As Khalil notes, the entire concept of “chastisement” for Ibn ‘Arabi is “therapeutic”—that is, “it rectifies” because it is issued from God through the ruling property of divine mercy. Thus, in one of his more well-known hermeneutical inversions, Ibn ‘Arabi takes the rectification of divine chastisement to its logical conclusion where he claims that the punishment (‘*adhāb*) of Hell ultimately transforms into a blissful “sweetness” (‘*udhūba*) for its denizens.

In addition to his binary universalism/damnationism, Khalil still further divides Muslim theological discourses into the now-standard threefold typology of inclusivism, exclusivism, and pluralism. However, in Khalil’s treatment he includes the additional subgroups of limited and liberal inclusivism. Indeed, Khalil’s proliferation of categories and final classification of Ibn ‘Arabi as a “liberal inclusivist” over that of a pluralist—in addition to a quasi-universalist—quickly reaches a point of diminishing returns where such categories grouped together seem too complex to be overly useful.

Yet, more important for the present discussion, Khalil jettisons the usual inclusion of truth claims within the standard threefold model mentioned above and situates his classifications from within a strictly soteriological basis. As such, Khalil asserts that Ibn ‘Arabi

affirms the salvation of “sincere” non-Muslims, because of his belief that every single path we take is not only created by but leads to God—a God of mercy (*rahma*) and nobility (*karam*)—he maintains that *all* of humanity, including even the most wicked, will ultimately arrive at bliss.

Because his ultimate soteriology is informed by such a radical hermeneutic of mercy, Ibn ‘Arabi holds that even those in eternal damnation will eventually experience eternal bliss. Yet, because Khalil does not address Ibn ‘Arabi’s views on the epistemological validity of other scriptural truth claims, the implications regarding a severe punishment for those in Hell during the interim period remain unarticulated.

Indeed, it is a popular contention, commonly encountered in Perennialist discourse, that Ibn ‘Arabi’s oft-mentioned notion of “the divinity of beliefs” (*al-ilāh fī al-i’tiqādāt*) is simply a doctrine on the universal divinity of religions or Schuon’s transcendent unity of religions. Yet, as I set forth in chapter 1, such assertions evince a reading of Ibn ‘Arabi at once colored by contemporary universalist axioms and anachronistically embedded within the ubiquitous modern understanding of religions as “systems of belief.” Even though Ibn ‘Arabi held that every human being is engaged in worship—since the very essence of creation is precisely that—he asserted that “the one who associates partners with God” (*al-mushrik*) is “wretched” (*shaqī*) since he or she has discourteously gone against revelation. And as I point out throughout the coming chapters of this book, there are multiple places where Ibn ‘Arabi castigates the Jews and the Christians for their supposed blasphemy and unbelief.

Khalil himself concedes that for Ibn ‘Arabi, “although all will eventually attain felicity as they proceed toward God, the righteous will be spared the ‘deserts, perils, vicious predators, and harmful serpents’ found along the way.” Here Khalil quotes a larger discussion from Chittick (who also writes within the Schuonian interpretative field) recounting Ibn ‘Arabi’s concept that all paths lead back to God. Chittick relates that for Ibn ‘Arabi, perfect saints understand with the “eye of the heart” that all things, good and evil, exist through God’s will and

His “creative command” (*al-amr al-takwīnī*). However, Chittick immediately qualifies this statement by asserting the dialectical necessity of God’s “prescriptive command” (*al-amr al-taklīfī*) in Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought, which is the origin of revealed law. Here, Chittick notes:

In no way does their acceptance of all beliefs negate their acknowledgement that everyone is called to follow the prescriptive command, which sets down the immediate path to felicity. This is why Ibn al-‘Arabī writes, “It is incumbent upon you to practice the worship of God brought by the Shariah and tradition [*al-sam‘*].” He explains that the person who sees things as they truly are “travels on the path of felicity that is not preceded by any wretchedness, for this path is easy, bright, exemplary, pure, unstained, and without any crookedness or deviation. As for the other path, its final outcome is felicity, but along the way are found deserts, perils, vicious predators, and harmful serpents. Hence no created thing reaches the end of this second path without suffering those terrors.”

Because Ibn ‘Arabi holds “wrath” as an eternal divine attribute, its consequence of “chastisement” is also considered by him to be an eternal attribute. It is therefore important to note that while Ibn ‘Arabi held that “every single path we take is not only created by but leads to God,” as Khalil does above, he also believed that the interim between any path and its destination of felicity is filled with either divine reward or chastisement. And as Chittick himself stresses in the passage above, the criteria that Ibn ‘Arabi used for distinguishing between them was based on revealed law—that is, the sharia.

All of this is to say that even careful treatments of Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought can fail to distinguish between his clear notion of ultimate, universal salvation and the interim implications of his supersessionism. Against the majority of Perennialist interpretations, including that of Chittick, Ibn ‘Arabi is a staunch supersessionist, claiming that “the abrogation (*naskh*) of all of the (previously) revealed laws (*jamī‘ al-sharā‘i*) by Muhammad’s revealed law (*sharī‘a*)” is divinely decreed. Although the sharia of Muhammad does permit the People of the Book to continue to follow their revealed laws, according to Ibn ‘Arabi, it does so only if their adherents submit to the Qur’anic injunction of verse 9:29 and pay the “indemnity tax” (*jizya*) “in a state of humiliation.” Ibn ‘Arabi clearly holds that the People of the Book are also guilty of “corruption of the text” (*tahrīf al-naṣṣ*), having changed the actual words of their once-pure revelation. Thus, in sharp contrast to the Perennialist notion of the “universal validity” of religions, here the spiritual efficacy of Judaism and Christianity appears to be determined by obedience to the revelation of Muhammad rather than any particular validity that Ibn ‘Arabi grants to the Torah or Gospel. While it may be initially comforting to hear that according to Ibn ‘Arabi all Christians or Jews will ultimately be “saved,” the implied potential for an untold number to suffer a prolonged period of “therapeutic” purification in Hell for following corrupted scriptures or abrogated dispensations without the salvific remuneration of an indemnity tax would seem to warrant pause for those who claim, like Sayafaatun Almirzanah, that Ibn ‘Arabi’s metaphysical approach “is very essential in enhancing interfaith dialogue and acceptance of different religious perspectives.”

Although exclusivist notions of religious supersessionism and socio-political authority in Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought remain largely unacknowledged or regularly relegated as accidental to his core metaphysics, his metaphysical cosmography was clearly formed within the medieval crucible of religious rivalry and absolutism. Thus, following Hugh Nicholson’s recent disavowal of “a nonrelational and nonpolitical core of religious experience,” I argue that the wider religio-political absolutism of Ibn ‘Arabi’s socio-historical location cannot be dissociated from his own metaphysical anthropology, cosmology, and cosmography. Ibn ‘Arabi’s monistic discourse purposefully blurs the dialectical boundaries between the human and the divine, thus marking modern attempts to decisively separate his mystical truth from his socio-political context as more reflective of longstanding Euro-American discourses on religious authenticity than Ibn ‘Arabi’s own historically situated political metaphysics.

Mapping Ibn ‘Arabi and the Political

Details of Ibn ‘Arabi’s life are strewn throughout the core texts of his vast corpus (currently estimated to comprise over 300 works of greatly differing lengths). Gathered together, these details can be read as

adumbrating something of an autohagiography. Rather than rehash all of its contours, here I will briefly rehearse some of its more essential features and then discuss how they have been variously configured in contemporary universalist retellings.

Born in Murcia, Spain, in 1165 CE, Ibn ‘Arabi’s father most likely served its independent emir, Ibn Mardaniš (r. 1147–1172), in some soldierly capacity. When Murcia fell in 1172 to the Almohads, Ibn ‘Arabi’s father moved his family to Seville, the provincial capital of the Almohad caliphate, where he pledged his allegiance and military service to the caliph Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf (r. 1163–1184). Coming from a military family, Ibn ‘Arabi was himself trained as a soldier and was a member of the caliphal army. When he was around fourteen or fifteen years old, he apparently experienced a formative spiritual awakening that would set the stage for a life filled with recurrent visions and claims of attaining the highest station of sainthood. Soon after, he took up learning the traditional religious disciplines and devoted himself especially to the study of the Qur’an and hadith.⁶⁴ When he was nineteen years old, he definitively left the army, his wealth, and his intimate friends, dedicating his life to the mystical path. It was during this time that he sat with and befriended mystics throughout Andalusia and Northwest Africa, whose stories he recorded in various places, but most famously in his hagiographical work *The Spirit of Holiness in the Counseling of the Soul* (*Rūḥ al-quḍs fī munāsaḥat al-nafs*).

In the face of the steady progress made by Christian armies in the Iberian Peninsula and believing he had learned all he could from his teachers in the Islamic West, Ibn ‘Arabi left Andalusia for good around the year 1200. This began a period of not only extensive traveling but also a prolific outpouring of writing, including his multivolume opus *The Meccan Openings* (*al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*), which he began in 1202—after encountering a theophanic youth (*fatā*) on the Hajj—and did not complete until 1238. Besides Mecca, his eastward travels led him to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, and Anatolia, where he spent various amounts of time and established several important relationships with powerful rulers. The most famous of these relationships was his friendship with the Seljuk Sultan of Anatolia, ‘Izz al-Dīn Kaykā’us I (r. 1211–1220), whom he advised to impose discriminatory regulations upon his “protected” (*dhimmī*) Christian subjects. In 1223, Ibn ‘Arabi permanently settled in Damascus with the support and protection of the Banū Zakī, a prominent Damascene family of *ulama*. There he spent the remaining seventeen years of his life transmitting his teachings to a small circle of intimate disciples and finishing his by now immense written corpus, including *The Ring Stones of Wisdom* (*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*), his *summa metaphysica*.

Although the ostensible purpose for historical narratives, and especially biographies, is to accurately reproduce events they report, they too are maps. Such narratives offer, as Hayden White observes, “a complex of symbols which gives us directions for finding an icon of the structure of those events in our literary tradition.” Indeed, in Euro-American accounts, Ibn ‘Arabi’s life story has taken on the classical and Romantic mythos of an epic quest for illumination, more specifically, the journey “from the Occident to the Orient.” In his discussion of Ibn Sīnā’s (d. 1037) famous “visionary recitals,” Nasr notes that

the Orient, being the place of the rising Sun, symbolizes the domain of pure forms, which is the domain of light, while the Occident, where the Sun sets, corresponds to the darkness of matter. . . . The gnostic’s journey takes him from matter to pure form, from the Occident of darkness to the Orient of light.

In a parallel construction, the distinguished Sorbonne Orientalist and esotericist Henry Corbin (d. 1978) imagined Ibn ‘Arabi as a “pilgrim to the Orient,” claiming that his turn eastward was an enlightened departure from a moribund Western legalism to an Oriental realm of spiritual enchantment. In Corbin’s mapping of Ibn ‘Arabi’s heroic journey, the Andalusian Sufi leaves behind his “earthly homeland” in the Arab Occident and emerges in the Persian Orient as the spiritual equal of the celebrated Persian poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273). In so doing, according to Corbin, Ibn ‘Arabi “attained to the esoteric Truth” and passed “*through and beyond the darkness of the Law and of the exoteric religion*.” Like Orientalist conceits about Rumi, Corbin held that Ibn ‘Arabi eventually liberated himself from the restrictive and dogmatic shackles of exoteric Islam. Such

assertions, similar to Schuon's own discursive practices, echo nineteenth-century European ideals of religious authenticity marked by a long-standing anti-Judaic tradition deprecating "legalism."

While framing Ibn 'Arabi's life story as an epic quest for illumination in the Orient is perhaps the most common topos in his contemporary Euro-American reception, it is not the only one. For example, in *The Other Islam: Sufism and the Road to Global Harmony*, Stephen Schwartz takes an analogously Eurocentric, yet almost opposite approach. Here, Schwartz claims that it was Ibn 'Arabi's so-called Spanish Sufism itself that "inaugurated a truly European Islam, providing a model for moderate Muslims living in Christian Europe in the twenty-first century." As such, Schwartz uncritically adopts a position that understands Sufism as an Islamic appropriation of Christian mystical and monastic traditions of a supposed European West. Indeed, he refers to this "view of the historical relations between Islam and the West" as "a secret history of the interreligious linkage of Europe and Asia in the past thousand years." The fruits of such a hidden past, according to Schwartz, have given rise to Sufism as an "alternative" to "the stagnation imposed in Islam today by radical ideology"—an alternative that reveals "tendencies toward an exalted spirituality, love of Jesus, and resistance to *Shariah*-centered literalism."

Even though more nuanced than the two extremes of Corbin and Schwartz, Claude Addas—Ibn 'Arabi's most erudite contemporary biographer—also configures the topos of a journey to the Orient in a narrative that attempts to dissociate Ibn 'Arabi's original metaphysical purity from his own locality and later political engagement. Here, Addas claims that Ibn 'Arabi's Western abode afforded him a sanctified space "*resolutely aloof from political life*," while his Meccan investiture as "the Seal of the Saints" (*khātam al-awliyā*), which I discuss more below, required that he enter the political sphere in "the role of 'advisor to princes' . . . among the Ayyūbids and the Seljuks." Even so, Addas insists that Ibn 'Arabi still managed to ultimately distance himself from the politics of his day since such "circumstantial issues" had really nothing to do with his spiritual mission.

Although all of the above narrative configurations are marked by different ways of interpreting Ibn 'Arabi's midlife sojourn eastward, they are at base universalist maps that attempt to show, in one way or another, the purity of Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysics as distinct from the corruptive particularism of time and place. In this book, I argue that such maps form part of a larger metaphysical tradition of cartography transmitted through a specific European intellectual and religious history. Indeed, since the theoretical intervention of the controversial German philosopher Carl Schmitt, the "depoliticization" of religious discourse in the modern West has become increasingly acknowledged and thus theorized in the field of religious studies. In his 1927 work, *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt situates the modern privatization of religion as originating in the European reaction to the religious disputes of the sixteenth century when "theology, the former central domain, was abandoned because it was controversial, in favor of another—neutral—domain." Schmitt therefore laments that "concepts elaborated over many centuries of theological reflection now became uninteresting and merely private matters." Thus, as Grace Jantzen more recently observes, the Enlightenment impetus to quarantine religion (and its attendant threat of violence) to individual belief has played a central role in the modern Western concept of authentic religious experience

as essentially a private, inner state, having nothing to do with outer, public realities. It was, instead, a strictly personal matter. It could, however, be cultivated; and could produce states of calm and tranquility which would enable return to those public realities with less anxiety and inner turmoil. Understood in these terms, *mysticism becomes domesticated, is rendered unthreatening to the public political realm*.

Thus, the metaphysical category of mysticism as the universal core of exoteric religion emerges in secular modernity as a discursive site carrying with it an aura of authentic religiosity that is often called upon as a refuge from politics and the discord of religious rivalry and absolutism. Indeed, it is precisely the anachronistic imposition of the modern notion of "universality" upon Ibn 'Arabi that depoliticizes his discourse, thereby subtly associating his inward mystical quest with the transcendence of outward religious difference. For example, in a 1963 essay, the distinguished Islamicist and comparativist Wilfred Cantwell Smith situates Ibn 'Arabi's

metaphysics (i.e., *waḥdat al-wujūd*) within a “universalist Ṣūfī interpretation of the Islamic order” in decided opposition to the “closed-system” of communal and “formalist” Islam. Here, Smith depoliticizes Ibn ‘Arabi’s “metaphysical monism” by universalizing it, stating that “to believe in the ultimate unity of the world and the universe is to believe also in the unity of humankind.” Thus, according to Smith, any type of metaphysics that acknowledges a divine unity must also acknowledge the unity of all religions. In this book, I wish to unsettle such attempts to dissociate Ibn ‘Arabi’s unitive mysticism from what might be called his “political theology”—a theology, I argue, that is constituted more by religious difference than by unity and forms an essential part of his own universalist tradition of metaphysical mapping.

The Perennial Religion in the Hierarchical Universe of Ibn ‘Arabi

In the thirteenth-century Muslim world of cartography, the geographic system of Ptolemy was used to help place the Arabs within a universal context. In such maps, “the center of space and memory is the Arabic world.” Like their Christian counterparts in Europe who did not even acknowledge the Islamic world in their ethnocentric maps, Muslim cartographers like Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (d. 1166) similarly ignored the existence of Europe. Just as medieval Muslim geography “took as its basic unit the Islamic Empire, the *Dar al-Islam*,” so too did Muslim theo-cosmology. “The original Muslim universalizing impulse,” as Amira Bennison notes, “rested on the idea, shared with Christianity, that the faith would ideally become the sole religion of mankind.”

Muslim universalism thus went hand in hand with the classical idea of the caliph, who “presided over a religion which was presented as the consummation of all previous divine revelation.” Indeed, as Peter Fibiger Bang observes, “At the heart of the notion of universal empire is a hierarchical conception of rulers and statehood.” And while Sufism is often imagined in the contemporary West as based on a type of inward “spirituality” that transcends all social and political divisions, medieval Sufism was in fact suffused with this type of imperial hierarchy. As Margaret Malamud notes:

The [Sufi] model of dominance and submission that structured relations between masters and disciples replicated the way in which power was constructed and dispersed in medieval Islamic societies: namely, through multiple dyadic and hierarchical relationships of authority and dependence that were continuously dissolved and reformed. This pervasive pattern was operative in the spiritual, the political, and the familial realms.

Malamud thus asserts that medieval Sufi discourse and practice affirmed and consecrated “hierarchy and inequality in the mundane world by connecting them to the divine will and order.” Yet, such hierarchical models within Sufism also played a critical role in the social cohesion of medieval Muslim societies, which “came to rely on authoritarian relationships grounded in esoteric doctrines to discipline and control the desires of its subjects.”

Though Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought was thoroughly inscribed by an Islamic imperial cosmology, his metaphysical vision did not simply promote the restoration of the original caliphal hierarchy. More radically, he envisioned himself as standing in for it altogether. As Marshall Hodgson perspicaciously observed, Ibn ‘Arabi’s own conception of spiritual hierarchy and the idea of a cosmic axial saint filled the political gap left by the disintegration of caliphal power beginning in the tenth century: “There might no longer be a caliph with power in the ordinary political sense. But there remained a true spiritual caliph, the immediate representative of God, who bore a far more basic sway than any outward caliph.”

Indeed, after claiming to attain to the Muhammadan Station and thereby inheriting “the comprehensiveness of Muhammad (*jam ʿat muḥammad*),” Ibn ‘Arabi located his cosmic function at the very apex of the earthly hierarchy of saints: the Seal of the Saints, or more specifically, the Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood (*khātam al-walāya al-muḥammadiyya*)—the historical manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality (*ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*) and thus the source of sainthood itself. As I point out throughout the following chapters, although Ibn ‘Arabi makes such extraordinary assertions regarding his own spiritual rank, his entire cartographic cosmology is nevertheless based on the hierarchical superiority of Muhammad as both “spiritual” exemplar and “prophetic” lawgiver. In a famous passage in *The Ring Stones of Wisdom*, Ibn ‘Arabi compares himself as the Seal of the

Saints to Muhammad as the Seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-nabiyyīn*), but qualifies this rather audacious correlation by asserting that his “inherited” perfection is only a single dimension of the comprehensive perfection of Muhammad. In other words, Ibn ‘Arabi continuously situates his own claims to spiritual perfection within the larger cosmology of the Prophet, who, regardless of anyone else’s spiritual rank, remains God’s ultimate caliph or “vicegerent” (*khalīfa*). Thus, Ibn ‘Arabi never tires of asserting in various ways the primordial nature of Muhammad, who was given the station of “lordship (*siyāda*) . . . when Adam was between water and clay.” Indeed, according to Ibn ‘Arabi, Muhammad was the very source of “spiritual support (*al-mumidd*) for every Perfect Human Being (*insān kāmil*),” beginning with Adam through “a continuous succession of vicegerents” until Muhammad’s physical birth.

If, then, we permit ourselves to speak of a so-called perennial religion or *religio perennis* according to Ibn ‘Arabi, we can only do so within the hierarchical confines of his all-encompassing Muhammadan prophetology, where Muhammad—and the attendant idea of the *primordial* Muhammadan Reality—is projected as the alpha and omega of all historical prophets and their revealed laws. For example, in *The Meccan Openings*, Ibn ‘Arabi discusses “the Religion” (*al-dīn*) in terms of the Qur’anic idea of the primordial “religion (*milla*) of Abraham”:

Consider God’s statement “follow the religion of Abraham” [Qur’an 4:125],¹⁰³ which is the Religion (*al-dīn*). Here, Muhammad was commanded to follow the Religion, because the Religion is from God and no one else. Consider further Muhammad’s statement, peace be upon him: “If Moses were alive it would be impossible for him not to follow me.” Here, following is attributed to Muhammad. Thus he, may God bless him and grant him peace, was commanded to follow the Religion and the guidance of the prophets, but not to follow them. For if the supreme leader (*al-imām al-a‘zam*) is present, then no judicial authority (*ḥukm*) remains for any of his deputies except his authority. Only when he is absent do his deputies rule by his injunctions (*bi marāsimihi*). So, Muhammad is the ruler (*al-ḥākim*), both unseen (*ghayb*) and visible (*shahāda*).

In this passage, Ibn ‘Arabi begins by drawing on the robust Qur’anic notion of Abraham as a primordial monotheist (*ḥanīf*) who has come to the realization of God through contemplation of nature. Yet, the very Qur’anic idea of “the religion of Abraham” is in itself adversarial, since the Qur’an stresses that Abraham was neither Jew, Christian, nor polytheist (*mushrik*). As Uri Rubin notes, implicit in such Qur’anic usage “is the notion that polytheists as well as Jews and Christians have distorted the natural religion of God, which only Islam preserves.” As such, the Qur’anic notion of Abraham’s primordial monotheism “retains this polemical context and is used to bring out the particularistic aspect of Islam as a religion set apart from Judaism and Christianity.”

In a sense that evokes the polemical Qur’anic notion of Abraham’s pure monotheism—and in opposition to Perennialist convention—Michel Chodkiewicz has used the term *religio perennis* to describe Ibn ‘Arabi’s hierarchical notion of the successive manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality “from Adam to Muhammad.” According to Chodkiewicz, in Ibn ‘Arabi’s teleological map of cosmic history, “the *religio perennis* is periodically both restored and confirmed,” and its “perfect and definitive expression” is the sharia of Muhammad, which “when it finally appears, *abrogates all earlier laws*.” As Chodkiewicz continues to note, and the abrogation of the previous revelations by the Qur’an is qualified in Ibn ‘Arabi’s discourse by the aforementioned fact that the People of the Book who pay the indemnity tax (*jizya*)—and thus submit to the injunction of Qur’an 9:29—are subsumed within the prophetic hierarchy of Muhammad.

Rather than the Perennialist universalist vision that all so-called orthodox religions are equally capable of guiding humanity because of an underlying perennial religion, Ibn ‘Arabi’s medieval universalism and its attendant traditional understanding of a so-called *religio perennis*, or primordial religion, appears to be much more exclusivist. As Jacques Waardenburg observes, the historical framework of medieval Islamic theology “is not one in which different religions succeed each other in a continuous history. It is, rather, the history of *the one religion* which has been revealed intermittently and which perpetuates itself through multiple histories.” Yet, such intermittent revelations

were thought to be inherently true but to have been tainted by people in the course of history, resulting in a betrayal of the divine, revelatory, primordial religion (*Urreligion*) common to all. In order to restore and further this primordial, monotheistic religion, Muhammad was sent to bring a conclusive revelation. Once memorized and written down, the Quranic revelation channeled by Muhammed, unlike earlier prophecies, was held to have remained authentic and pure.

Throughout the following chapters, I offer a reading of Ibn ‘Arabi that—while acknowledging his particular mode of medieval universalism—refuses to transcendentalize his thought beyond his own historical locality. As a Muslim mystic living and writing at the height of the Islamic Middle Period, Ibn ‘Arabi’s cosmological maps are deeply inscribed by the normative and hierarchical categories of his day. In the idiom of Mignolo, Ibn ‘Arabi was where he thought.

Universalist Regimes of Particularism

Mystical texts that express authoritarian or exclusionary attitudes often challenge common presuppositions about what is thought to reside at the so-called core of religion—a “spirituality” that is private, psychological, experiential, noncoercive, nonpolitical, noninstitutional, and universally applicable. Yet, such presuppositions have more to do with the conceptual categories of religion produced within the socio-historical matrix of Western Christianity and the European Enlightenment than they do with the views and practice of premodern mystics themselves.

As Sherman Jackson notes, the “tradition of classical Islam” is often romanticized as being “pluralistic, egalitarian, [and] aesthetically vibrant” in opposition to modern discourses of religious absolutism. Yet, this romantic idea “that ‘extreme’ or substantively repugnant views are the exclusive preserve of modern ‘fundamentalist’ interlopers who are insufficiently trained in or committed to the classical tradition *cannot sustain scrutiny*.” Of course, the Islamic tradition was not unique in producing discourses of so-called *unio mystica* that were also exclusivist. In the early and medieval Christian tradition, for example, Augustine (d. 430) believed that wars waged against heretics were charitable acts, and Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) and Catherine of Siena (d. 1380) strongly supported the Crusades. Bernard himself is often considered to be the first inquisitor, and Teresa of Ávila (d. 1582) was an advocate of the Inquisition.

Not only is the construction of *what* counts as mysticism reflective of “the institutions of power in which it occurs,” as Jantzen has observed within the context of medieval Christianity, but also the conceptual history that informs *how* mysticism is interpreted and received is embedded within the regimes of knowledge through which it is (re)mapped. This constructivist insight is critical to any contemporary study of mysticism; moreover, it is an insight that appears to cut two ways. Indeed, both Ibn ‘Arabi’s own mysticism and his Euro-American reception are products of particular knowledge regimes involved in the projection, universalization, and regulation of “truth.”

While Ibn ‘Arabi consistently enunciates Islamic absolutist frameworks, the Perennialist discourse that I analyze in this book variously denies or disregards them. As a result, a universalist ideal is imaginatively cast and historiographically instantiated, thus creating an iconic image of Ibn ‘Arabi. Such anachronistic instantiation is what Wendy Brown has called a “buried order of politics”—a mode of “identity production and identity management in the context of orders of stratification or marginalization in which the production, the management, and the context themselves are disavowed.” In other words, constructions of Ibn ‘Arabi’s image as a universalist who accepted all religions as contemporaneously valid impose a religious ideal beyond the purview of their original intellectual context. This type of ideological imposition on a historical figure has parallels with what has been called a “politics of nostalgia,” where an imagined truth is projected back onto a romanticized past to instantiate, and thus authorize, a particular ideology or worldview.

As I bring to light in the latter part of this book and specifically argue in my conclusion, a corollary to this anachronistic portrayal is that such Perennialist discursive practices are inevitably traceable to historically situated, Eurocentric categories of religious authenticity made through a post-Kantian dichotomy between an

imagined autonomous subject and its heteronomous Other. This dichotomy is readily apparent in a statement made by the Perennialist author Titus Burckhardt—a longtime friend and student of Schuon—in his now-classic work *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*:

For the most part Sufi masters have limited themselves to general indications of *the universality of the traditions*. In this they respected the *faith of simple folk*, for, if religious faith is a virtuality of knowledge (otherwise it would be merely opinion), *its light is none the less enclosed in an emotional realm attached to one particular translation of transcendent Truth*.

Burckhardt's rehearsal of the Schuonian transcendent unity of religions (here, "*the universality of the traditions*") evinces a thinly veiled universalist elitism that presupposes a unified tradition underlying all religions. And yet, the faith of the "*simple folk . . . is none the less enclosed in an emotional realm*" that causes them to be attached, or limited, to only one "translation" or religion. As I discuss in the conclusion to this book, such Perennialist discourse strikingly echoes Kantian notions of *heteronomy*, which categorize particular religious forms as *accidental* and based on "sensible nature" in opposition to the universal essence of religion itself as philosophically realized.

Thus, while Burckhardt's Schuonian position may at first appear to acknowledge and celebrate diversity, on closer inspection it imposes what Mignolo has called a "monotopic hermeneutics" upon its objects of discourse. From within the myopia of such an interpretive framework, there is only one unified intellectual tradition through which all meanings must conform. In the history of modern Europe, this hermeneutic has "served to maintain the universality of European culture at the same time that it justified the tendency of its members to perceive themselves as the reference point to evaluate all other cultures." Similarly, for the monotopic hermeneutics of Perennialism, of which the Schuonian interpretive field is the most prominent, religious people without the esoteric capacity for metaphysics are devoid of the true knowledge of religious unity. At the end of the same passage from which I quote above, Burckhardt goes on to precisely enunciate the "esoteric" axiom found within all modalities of Schuonian Perennialism: "those whose outlook is esoteric recognize the essential unity of all religions." In his own work on Sufism, as I discuss at the close of chapter 4, Schuon asserts that "*esoterism alone* is absolutely monotheistic, *it alone* recognizing only one religion under diverse forms." As the Perennialist scholar Patrick Laude notes (without irony), "Schuon went so far as to suggest that . . . religions are like 'heresies' in relation to *Religio Perennis*."

Indeed, close readings of Schuon's writings reveal that the spiritual traditions facilitated by the various religions of the world are essentialized within a hierarchical spectrum according to their supposed capacity to enlighten—a capacity directly connected to a racial hierarchy. For Schuon, this hierarchy ranges from the lowest mode of a passive Semitic theology that simply receives outward revelation to the highest mode of Aryan gnosis, which actively and directly *perceives* truth through esoteric realization. As such, Schuon criticizes Ibn 'Arabi himself for his mystical ambiguities, which he claims are due to "his at least partial solidarity with *ordinary theology*." Schuon is similarly critical of Sufism for being "fundamentally more moral than intellectual"—a trait he attributes to "Arab or Muslim, or *Semitic*, sensibility." The issue for Schuon is clearly racio-spiritual: the majority of Muslim mystics, including Ibn 'Arabi, succumbed to the so-called Semitic tendency for "inspirationism" that lacked the enlightened, Aryan "intellection" necessary to reliably discern the *religio perennis* from religious particularism.

Thus, while I argue that Ibn 'Arabi's universalism is built upon and permeated by a politics of absolutism, I also contend that the Perennialist interpretive field is burdened with the pernicious prejudices of a Eurohegemonic intellectual tradition. By making religious universalism the apex of transcendent truth, Perennialist interpretive communities paradoxically repudiate religious particularism and its attendant discourses of situated morality as theologically or historically immature. As Olav Hammer remarks, "The price to be paid for such a universalising approach is of course that any true divergence between traditions must be silenced, and those faiths that are too different from the imagined 'perennial philosophy' are excluded." In other words, the discursive practices of Perennialism promulgate a type of ideological exclusivism through a *universalization of sameness*. Mark Taylor

has summarized a parallel poststructuralist insight: “When reason is obsessed with unity . . . it tends to become as hegemonic as political and economic orders constructed to regulate whatever does not fit into or agree with governing structures.”

In the chapters that follow, I aim to bring into perspective the paradoxical double bind that gives life to the idea of the universal—an intertwining double helix of exclusivity and inclusivity. In his provocative essay “Racism as Universalism,” Etienne Balibar remarks on this double bind, noting that racism is particularism; the foundational notions of racism are always based on “divisions and hierarchies” that claim to be “natural.” Yet, according to Balibar, the idea of racism is also, paradoxically, based on the production of “ideals of humanity, types of ideal humanity if you like, which one cannot but call universal.” While the need for religious tolerance in global modernity is a truism, the use of universalism to sanction Eurocentric and racist categories of religious authenticity has become so naturalized within Euro-American history that it is often overlooked. It is precisely the aporia created by attempts to universalize religious truth, and the discursive politics attached to its cartography, that keeps the analysis throughout this book in play. Indeed, “the double-edged character of the ‘universal,’” as Elizabeth Castelli warns, “needs to remain both fully in view and under continued interrogation.”

Chapter Overview

I have set out my subject in two overlapping parts of five chapters (including the conclusion). In the first part, I analyze Ibn ‘Arabi’s universalism by comparing his original textual discourse with regnant claims made by interpreters who work within (or on the margins of) the interpretive field of Schuonian Perennialism. Such claims may be said to form a tradition of “strong misreadings” of Ibn ‘Arabi’s original texts in the Bloomian sense, where innovative interpretations have been seminal in establishing a foundational universalist scaffolding for understanding Ibn ‘Arabi and his perspective on the religious Other. By thus offering revised readings that challenge this Perennialist canon of interpretation, I set out a new backdrop against which the practices of Ibn ‘Arabi’s contemporary interpreters are made to stand in sharp relief. In the second part, I flesh out the emergent contours and then track them to earlier discursive practices of European knowledge regimes and their attendant rules of subject formation.

Chapter 1, “Tracking the Camels of Love,” is based on a revised reading of Ibn ‘Arabi’s most famous verses from *The Interpreter of Desires* (*Tarjūmān al-ashwāq*), which begin by laying claim to a heart “capable of every form” and conclude by asserting to follow “the religion of Love.” Here, I contend that modern Euro-American presuppositions regarding the nature of “religion” as a “system of beliefs” inform how the celebrated verses are commonly received and interpreted. While Ibn ‘Arabi’s claim to a heart “capable of every form” is synonymous with a claim to be capable of every belief (*i’tiqād*), it is not—as is often supposed—tantamount to accepting the validity of every religion. Rather, I argue that the celebrated verses of *The Interpreter* profess to inherit the comprehensive perfection of the Prophet Muhammad as God’s beloved and, in so doing, reflect a discourse of religious absolutism and a subsumptive cosmology of power. It is precisely this cosmology of power that has been almost completely occluded by readings equating religion with belief.

In chapter 2, “Return of the Solar King,” I challenge the widely held Perennialist view that Ibn ‘Arabi rejected the supersessionist doctrine of abrogation (*naskh*), by demonstrating that his positions on the religious Other should be understood within a larger religio-political cosmology that envisions all religions and their laws as subject to the cosmic rule of Muhammad. Even though this chapter clearly shows that Ibn ‘Arabi held Judaism and Christianity as abrogated by Islam, it nuances this assertion by showing that through obedience to the Qur’anic command requiring submission and the payment of the indemnity tax (*jizya*), the People of the Book are metaphysically subsumed within the broader cosmography of Ibn ‘Arabi’s conception of Islam and the absolute cosmological authority of the Prophet Muhammad.

In chapter 3, “Competing Fields of Universal Validity,” I situate Schuonian Perennialism within the larger discursive tradition of essentialist, religious universalism through a comparison with the universalism of Friedrich Schleiermacher (d. 1834). In so doing, I throw into relief how Schuon, and those writing within the orbit of his

interpretative field, make a Copernican turn away from Ibn ‘Arabi’s hierarchical Muhammadan cosmology to a multireligious model of cosmic pluralism united by a Schleiermacherian notion of a transcendent and universally valid religious *a priori*, or “religion as such.” To clearly demonstrate this turn, I historicize Ibn ‘Arabi’s discourse on the religious Other in relation to his Andalusian home of Seville and show how it notably echoes the polemical style of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) against Judaism and Christianity. Like Ibn Hazm, Ibn ‘Arabi claims that the People of the Book were guilty of textual corruption (*taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*) and not simply a corruption of meaning (*taḥrīf al-ma‘ānī*) as implied in Perennialist discourse. Rather than due to any particular soteriological power of Judaism or Christianity, or their respective symbolic systems, the salvation of the Protected People (*ahl al-dhimma*) appears to be metaphysically determined for Ibn ‘Arabi by their submission to Islamic authority and their participation in its political sphere.

In chapter 4, “Ibn ‘Arabi and the Metaphysics of Race,” I reveal a buried order of politics underneath the Perennialist cosmology discussed in chapter 3 ironically constituted by and through long-held European discursive strategies of racial exclusion. Through a detailed comparison of Schuon’s discursive practices with that of nineteenth-century Aryanist discourse, this chapter argues that although Schuon claims to recognize the universal validity of all religions beyond the limits of exoteric exclusivity, his work consistently presents as self-evident the *metaphysical superiority* of an Indo-European spiritual typology over that of the Semitic. Here, Ibn ‘Arabi’s “Semitic” propensity for subjectivism is understood as lacking the enlightened objectivity necessary to consistently discern the transcendent formlessness of essential truth from religious particularism. Thus, Ibn ‘Arabi’s own exclusive association with Islam and the Prophet Muhammad is rejected as an exoteric, and therefore *less authentic*, mode of spirituality in contrast to the more “essential” and autonomous religious truth of “pure metaphysics.” The extent to which Ibn ‘Arabi is thus decoupled from so-called Semitic subjectivism is the extent to which he is claimed to be an enlightened representative of Islam and authentic purveyor of the universal core of all religions—the *religio perennis*.

In the concluding chapter, “Mapping Ibn ‘Arabi at Zero Degrees,” I situate key discursive elements of Schuonian Perennialism within a genealogy of German idealism leading back to Kant (and ultimately Plato) to show metaphorical resonances with a Kantian metaphysics of autonomy and its attendant universalism. In contradistinction to Ibn ‘Arabi’s heteronomous absolutism explored in the first part of this study, here I track how Schuon’s religious essentialism *functionally* echoes the discursive practices that mark Kant’s “universal” religion as definitively defined against Semitic heteronomy. While both Kantian and Schuonian universalist cosmologies thus appear to reflect a similar Copernican turn where an autonomous, *a priori* universal perspective forms the essence of all religion, I argue that these respective discourses *also* metaphysically reflect the *imperial cartography* of the Copernican age itself and its attendant ideological conceit of a universal perspective that claims to transcend the confines of geocentric cosmology—that is, its own ethnocentric situatedness. I thus contend that it is precisely the discursive practices and grammar of this larger Eurohegemonic tradition of universalism—*along with its attendant religious, racial, and civilizational superiority*—that Schuonian Perennialism naturalizes within its interpretive field. I conclude by suggesting that the overlapping discursive formations of Kantian and Schuonian universalism conceal absolutist modalities of supersessionism that are ironically similar to those openly posited by Ibn ‘Arabi. The exclusivism inherent within such discourse not only calls into question the Western ideal of religious universalism and the possibility of nonexclusivist religious identity but also throws into relief the historically constituted and situated nature of all discourse that aspires to transcendent truth.

Mapping Ibn ‘Arabi at Zero Degrees

The conclusion situates key discursive elements of Schuonian Perennialism within a genealogy of German idealism leading back to Kant to show metaphorical resonances with a Kantian metaphysics of autonomy and its attendant universalism. In contradistinction to Ibn ‘Arabi’s heteronomous absolutism, this chapter tracks how Frithjof Schuon’s religious essentialism *functionally* echoes the discursive practices that mark Kant’s “universal” religion as defined against Semitic heteronomy. While both Kantian and Schuonian universalist cosmologies thus appear to reflect a similar Copernican turn where an autonomous, universal perspective forms the essence of all

religion, this chapter argues that these respective discourses *also* metaphysically reflect the *imperial cartography* of the Copernican age itself and its attendant ideological conceit of a universal perspective. The chapter concludes by suggesting that the overlapping discursive formations of Kantian and Schuonian universalism conceal absolutist modalities of supersessionism that are ironically similar to those openly posited by Ibn 'Arabi.

The mark of the true church is its universality. — [Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*](#).

Profane thought is always the portrait of an individual even when it is mingled with some glimmerings of knowledge, as must always be the case since reason is not a closed vessel.—[Frithjof Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*](#).

Metaphysics—the white mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own *logos*, that is, the *mythos* of his idiom, for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason.—[Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*](#).

In the preceding pages I have discussed critical ways that scholars working from within (as well as on the margins of) the interpretive field of Schuonian Perennialism have mapped out Ibn 'Arabi's universalism in contradistinction to the Andalusian Sufi's own cosmological mapping of the religious Other. In tandem with textual comparisons between Ibn 'Arabi and those of his Perennialist interpreters, I have endeavored to identify and trace the formative contours of Schuon's own universalist cartography. I compared Schuonian discourse to the nonreductive, religious universalism of Schleiermacher to contextualize the Perennialist reception of Ibn 'Arabi within the modern tradition of religious essentialism—that is, the concept of a universal religious essence underlying all historical religions. I demonstrated how Schuon's conflicted reception of Ibn 'Arabi strikingly echoes racist discursive practices of nineteenth-century Aryanism—a conceptual lineage that held its own notion of what counts for the universal and, more important, *who is most capable* of discerning it. In the conclusion that follows, I revisit the broader concerns alluded to in the introduction of this study regarding the nature of universalism itself and how the conceptual lineage of its modern Euro-American formation bears upon contemporary reading practices of Ibn 'Arabi and “religion” more broadly. As such, I discursively situate key elements of the Schuonian language-game within a deeper genealogy of German idealism to show foundational resonances with a Kantian metaphysics of autonomy and its attendant universalism. Schleiermacher is famous for developing the first systematic treatment of religion as an essence unique to itself. Yet, Schleiermacher's romantic reliance on intuition and feeling to describe the essence of religion was directly related to a larger Kantian tradition. Simply put, Kant famously argued that certain knowledge of the “noumenal” realm (i.e., the divine “*as such*”) was impossible through conceptual experience even though the *practical idea* of God was ethically necessary. Thus, as Grace Jantzen notes, “Schleiermacher, and the religious Romantics who followed him, sought to escape the Kantian strictures by affirming that while God could not be discovered in thought, it is possible to experience God in pure preconceptual consciousness.” Nevertheless, it is clear that Kant *also* believed there is an essence of “religion”—only he situated it within moral reason as opposed to Schleiermacher's romantic notion of intuition and feeling. Thus, as Jantzen notes, “what was up for debate in Schleiermacher's thinking was not whether such an essence *could* be postulated but *rather in what it could be said to consist*.”

Although the metaphysical perspectives of Kantianism and Schuonian Perennialism are situated at *polar ends* of a rather vast continuum regarding the human potential for knowledge of the divine, in what follows I set aside these differences and focus instead on their shared intellectual genealogy of religious universalism. As such, I trace how their discursive practices are imbricated within a particular grammar of what George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have called “metaphorical thought.” Building off of the Copernican metaphor I developed in

relation to how Schuonian universalism decenters Ibn 'Arabi's hierarchical cosmology, the ensuing analysis is framed against the metaphorical backdrop of the Copernican age and its imperial cartographic perspective. While I adumbrate this backdrop in broad strokes, the heart of my analysis centers on a comparison of Schuonian and Kantian language-games. Here, I not only argue that Schuon shares with Kant the philosophical and religious metaphors of Platonic idealism situated within a common Euro-Christian tradition, but that Schuon's exposition on the *religio perennis* also functionally echoes Kant's creation of a "universal" religion defined through the primacy of internal autonomy over its Kantian opposite of "heteronomy"—that is, externally received religious form devoid of true morality and systematically symbolized in Kant's late writings by Judaism itself. Reading Schuon alongside of Kant in this way thus suggests how deeply the Kantian conceptual grammar of universalism—including its attendant Othering of Judaism qua "the heteronomous"—is embedded within Perennialist interpretive approaches to religious universalism and the metaphysics of Ibn 'Arabi. Indeed, the force of this inherited conceptual lineage proves even more remarkable given the fact that Schuon roundly disavowed Kant's philosophy in shrill terms. In the end, I show how the discursive formations of Schuonian universalism paradoxically harbor absolutist modalities of supersessionism that are similar to those openly posited by Ibn 'Arabi. The exclusivism inherent within such discourse brings into view the historically constituted and situated nature of all claims to inclusive or "transcendent" universalism and the localized forms of religious subjectivity they authorize.

Copernican Cartography and the Hubris of Zero Degrees

The idea that there exists a "universal beyond time and space" has been a seminal conceit in European imperialism since the end of the fifteenth century. The modern European attempt to find an objective, "universal" perspective "independent of its ethnic and cultural center of observation" has been dubbed by Santiago Castro-Gómez "*the hubris of zero degrees*." Here, Castro-Gómez alludes to the agenda announced at the start of the 1884 International Meridian Conference in Washington, DC, "to create," according to the conference chair, Rear Adm. C. R. P. Rogers, "a new accord among the nations by agreeing upon a meridian proper to be employed as a *common zero* of longitude and standard of time throughout the world." The meridian thus agreed upon was at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, England.

Building on the work of Enrique Dussel and Walter Dignolo, Castro-Gómez observes that such a European positionality of "zero degrees" emerged as the result of the Spanish conquest of America and the imperial need for cartographic precision. Like the astronomical revolution of Copernicus, which transcended the confines of geocentric cosmology, European cartographers of the sixteenth century transcended the cartographic depiction of an ethnocentric world contained within a circular boundary. As Castro-Gómez notes, such a shift in perspective

completely revolutionizes the scientific practice of cartography. In making the point of observation invisible, *the geometric center no longer coincides with the ethnic center*. Instead, cartographers and European navigators who now possess precise instruments of measurement, begin to believe that a representation made from the ethnic center is prescientific, since it is related to a specific cultural particularity.

It was from this new notion of perspective, dissociated from an "ethnic center," that the Western conceit of "truly scientific and 'objective' representation" emerged as the "universal point of view"—"a sovereign gaze external to the representation." Indeed, Slavoj Žižek has called such positionality "the privileged *empty point of universality*" through which the acknowledgment of "the Other's specificity is the very form of asserting one's own superiority." Such universality assumes a clear view of "absolute knowledge," which, as Dignolo posits, amounts to "knowledge that hides its own geopolitical grounding."

As a seminal, and self-described, inheritor of this Copernican innovation of cartographic perspective, Kant's radical form of "transcendental" idealism definitively broke from the premodern metaphysical conception of innate ideas as transcendent a priori, while it nevertheless retained the metaphysical possibility of a necessary and universal a priori knowledge solely through autonomous reason (i.e., through conceptual categories) and its

cognition of external objects (as opposed to the *heteronomous effect* of objects on the self). This is what David Pacini has called the “Kantian ‘critical standpoint,’” which replaces the traditional “idea that the world constitutes me with the idea that I constitute the world.” Kant thus charted a new course between classical metaphysics and empirical science, comparing his own innovation to that of Copernicus.

Schuon’s universalism is likewise inscribed as a self-conscious Copernican turn away from a premodern hierarchical religio-centrism to a heliocentric model of religious unity made possible through recourse to what could be thought of as a similar “transcendental” religious *a priori*, mediating between classical metaphysics and modern religious pluralism. As Schuon himself asserts:

It has become impossible to provide an effective defense for a single religion against all the others by declaring the rest anathema without exception; to persist in doing so—unless one is living in a society that is still medieval, in which case the question does not arise—is a little like wishing to maintain the Ptolemaic system against the evidence of verified and verifiable astronomical data.

Rather than the premodern, confessional understanding of heteronomous religious form as absolute for the religious subject, here the *a priori* category of the essence of religion as *such*—that is, the *religio perennis*—is absolute, by which all external religious forms are constituted as so many manifestations of the divine.

While both Kantian and Schuonian universalist cosmologies thus appear to reflect a similar Copernican turn where notions of an autonomous, *a priori* universal perspective form the bases of two (albeit very different) religious epistemologies, following the insight of Castro-Gómez I argue that these respective discourses also metaphysically reflect the *imperial cartography* formed within the Copernican age itself and the hegemonic universalism it produced. In such Copernican or imperial mapmaking, the cartographer is transposed from an ethnic location to a universal Archimedean metaposition. From this ethnically decentered position, the imperial cartographer is removed from the realm of the Other. Thus, while claiming scientific “objectivity,” imperial mapmakers of the Copernican age pictorially and discursively colonized geo-political space through naturalizing hierarchies of civilizational and religious difference in Euro- and Christocentric terms. As Mignolo notes, this cartographic “colonization of space (of language, of memory)” formed “a larger frame of mind in which the regional could be universalized and taken as a yardstick to evaluate the degree of development of the rest of the human race.” Like the Žižekian notion of the “empty point of universality,” such a *hubris of zero degrees* concealed its own situated position of enunciation and exported local European history as universal truth. Thus universalized, such world-ordering “would become the epistemological base that gave rise to the anthropological, social, and evolutionist theories of the Enlightenment.”

Although sixteenth-century European imperialism was therefore important in the Western conceptualization and production of the Other, it was the paradigm shift of Cartesian mind–body dualism in the seventeenth century that philosophically informed a discursive reduction of social subjectivities “to physical dimensions and correlates.” Indeed, as James Byrne points out:

The major effect of mind-body dualism was a privileging of the rational, intellectual and abstract over the physical, sensuous and practical. This in turn reinforced the trend in Western thought—a trend which had roots in a particular Christian anthropology—to view the body as the locus of error, weakness and sin.

Indeed, Cartesian mind–body dualism and its attendant primacy of reason “over the physical, sensuous and practical” was indeed a major problem for Kant and his contemporaries. By way of a solution, Kant sought a dual freedom: an *a priori* rational autonomy that justified not only a “freedom from metaphysical illusion” but also a freedom from all empirical and subjective sources of reality. The Kantian transcendental ideal of autonomy thus contends that there is a universal modality of reason that remains independent of and unconstituted by the external world, yet constitutive of it. Indeed, the universal power that Kant sought to harness through his idea of “the *autonomy* of pure reason” framed not only his mature philosophy but also his later conception of “pure” moral religious subjectivity—a subjectivity he fully fleshed out in his tellingly entitled work *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (*Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*),

published in 1793. Yet, to appreciate Kant's particular religious language-game articulated here (and its attendant *prelapsarian* metaphors), it is necessary to read it, as *it was intended*, not as mere philosophy (as somehow dissociated from religion), but as a work of "philosophical theology" in dialogical tension, *but not opposition*, to "biblical theology" as Kant himself clarifies. As such, *Religion* must be read in light of its own politico- theological context, as well as its deep genealogy of "Christian anthropology" that Byrne importantly points to above.

Kant's Religion: Platonism, Christianity, and the Jewish Question

Kant's north-German Protestant university metaphysics, as Ian Hunter observes, was deeply infused with Christian Platonic anthropology. Such an anthropology posited that while the human soul is created, it retains a trace of the divine image through its rationality and freedom. By freeing itself from "sensual slavery," the rational mind could attain to spiritual wisdom within the intelligible divine order through the indwelling Christ and divine law. It was the divine order, and not the created world, that was understood to be the source of all knowledge. While Kant maintained this strict epistemological divide, he situated human reason, instead of a purported indwelling divinity, as pure rational being (*Vernunftwesen*) and therefore pure intelligence (*homo noumenon*).

Thus, in *Religion*, Kant establishes human autonomous reason as self-regulating moral law—that is, "reason's inner voice of duty"—in place of divine intelligence by invoking the Christian Platonic idea of the *Logos* as the divine archetype: "the idea of him emanates from God's essence; he is to that extent not a created thing but God's only begotten Son, 'the word (the *Let it be so!*) through which all other things are, and without which nothing exists that has been made.'" As such, Kant claims that "to elevate ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection, i.e., to the archetype of the moral attitude in all its purity, is a universal human duty." Indeed, the Kantian idea of the pure rational being, as Hunter notes, not only exists independently of space and time but also has a dual intellectual function: (1) to intelligize pure forms of experience and (2) to govern the will by thinking the form of its law. It is through these intellectual processes that "Kant's *homo noumenon* or rational being is supposed to free himself from the 'sensual inclinations' that otherwise tie the will of empirical man (*homo phenomenon*) to extrinsic ends or goods."

Thus, in *Religion*, Kant theorizes this path to the autonomy of moral reason as the final phase of the development of religion in human history. Although presented as a philosophy of religion, *Religion* is equally a "history of reason" that prefigures Hegel's own dialectical teleology of history. Kant therefore emplots a teleological historical narrative in *Religion* that culminates in the realization of autonomous reason. Beginning with a Hellenized Judaism, Kant's religion evolves into a Christianity whose progressively mature forms increasingly discard the restraints of external religious law and finally emerges as an autonomous form of "pure rational religion." Kant's teleological, universalist approach to history can therefore be understood as an attempt to show a progressive development from *homo phenomenon* to *homo noumenon*, and his critique of religion theorizes this progression. Thus, in *Religion*, Kant states:

It is . . . a necessary consequence of the physical and simultaneously of the moral predisposition in us—the latter being the foundation and simultaneously the interpreter of all religion—for religion finally to be detached gradually from all empirical determining bases, from all statutes that rest on history and that, by means of a church faith, unite human beings provisionally in order to further the good, and thus for pure rational religion ultimately to rule over all, "so that God may be all in all."

Here, Kant posits a universal religious essence as a divinely given "moral predisposition" of the human being that has served as the foundation of all positive religions. The purity and sole truth of this autonomous morality has facilitated the progressive detachment of the positive religions from their historical accretions—that is, their scriptural laws. This emancipatory metanarrative finds its telos in the salvific emergence of a "universal rational religion and thus . . . a (divine) ethical state on earth."

Kant goes on to clarify that because we cannot know God in and of God's self, we can only approach God through our own moral sensibilities: "This idea of a moral ruler of the world is a task for our practical reason. We are concerned to know not so much what God is in himself (what his nature is) as what he is for us as moral beings." Such a statement perfectly exemplifies Kant's "Copernican" stance toward religion—a stance where, as Stephen Palmquist explains, "instead of viewing historical faith as the core and moral action as the secondary element, Kant views the latter as the core and locates the former on the periphery."

It is from this moral theological perspective that Kant therefore asserts that "the universal true religious faith" is *triune*: it has faith in a God that is a "holy legislator," "benign governor," and "just judge."⁴⁸ What is important here is that Kant subsequently notes that this *universal true faith* "offers itself on its own to any human reason and is, therefore, found in the religion of most civilized peoples." According to Kant, this is the reason most so-called civilized religious traditions have a conception of a triune God. Indeed, in a footnote, Kant offers "the religion of Zoroaster," "the Hindu religion," "the Egyptian religion," and "the Gothic religion" as direct examples. More important, however, Kant states that "even the Jews seem to have pursued these ideas in the last time periods of their hierarchical constitution." This is so, Kant argues, because they accepted the title of "son of God," but only differed from Christians in their rejection of Jesus as a truthful claimant.

Yet it is not Kant's provocative, if simply ignorant, assertion regarding Jewish theology that concerns me here, but his more discrete proposition that the Jews could be counted as a "civilized" people only "in the last time periods of their hierarchical constitution," when they supposedly took up the idea of a triune godhead. This is to say—in accordance with Kant's prior declaration—that they were originally uncivilized because they lacked such triune theology and were thus necessarily without "any human reason." While Kant, in the end, agrees that "Christianity arose from Judaism," he does so only within the context of the later history of Judaism when "this otherwise ignorant people had already been reached by much foreign (Greek) wisdom." Indeed, "the Greek philosophers' moral doctrines of freedom," Kant contends, "shocked the slavish mind" of the Jew. Kant thus notes that such Greek teachings enlightened Judaism and provided it with the morality and autonomous reason necessary to facilitate the coming of Jesus. Indeed, perhaps Kant's most infamous (if not *his most disregarded*) assertion in *Religion* is his categorical assertion that "Judaism is properly not a religion at all." Because the Hebrew Bible supposedly contains no conception of a "future life," Kant's rather puritan textual reductionism led him to assume Judaism was not ethically but only politically situated and thus "a sum of merely statutory laws, on which a state constitution was based." Indeed, even the invocation of "the name of God" in the Jewish tradition, according to Kant, does not make Judaism a religion, since in this theocratic context God is "venerated merely as a secular regent who makes no claim at all concerning and upon conscience." Kant thus describes Judaism as "an irksome but dominant church faith devoid of moral aim (a faith whose slavish service can serve as example of any other on the whole merely statutory faith, the like of which was universal at that time)."

In the second division of *Religion*, entitled "Historical Presentation of the Gradual Founding of the Dominion of the Good Principle on Earth," Kant maps out "not only a succession in time, but equally the ascent of the rational principle toward full self-consciousness." In this teleological metanarrative, where Christianity ultimately becomes the "true universal church," Kant refuses to admit Judaism any historical role in the emergence of such universal religion. Indeed, according to Kant, "the Jewish faith stands in no essential connection whatsoever, i.e., in no unity according to concepts, with this . . . history we want to examine."

Given Kant's open opposition to any religious tradition of "statutory faith" as emblematically epitomized in Judaism, it should come as no surprise that Jesus serves in Kant's historical teleology of reason as the founder of "the first true church." According to Kant, Jesus brought only "pure teachings of reason." Rather than demanding "the observance of external civic or statutory church duties," like Judaism, Jesus taught that "only the pure moral attitude of the heart shall be able to make a human being pleasing to God." Thus, Kant asserts that Christianity arose as "a pure moral religion in place of an ancient cult." Since Christianity was bound "to no statutes at all," it

contained “a religion valid for the world, not for one single people.” Thus, in the final section of *Religion* entitled “On the Pseudoservice of God in a Statutory Religion,” Kant states:

The true, sole religion contains nothing but laws, i.e., practical principles of whose unconditional necessity we can become conscious and which we, therefore, acknowledge as revealed through pure reason (not empirically). . . . Now, to regard this statutory faith (which is in any case restricted to one people and cannot contain the universal world religion) as essential to the service of God in general, and to make it the supreme condition of divine pleasure taken in human beings, is a *religious delusion* the pursuit of which is a *pseudoservice*, i.e., a supposed veneration of God whereby one acts directly contrary to the true service required by God himself.

Indeed, in *Religion*, Kant seldom grows weary of describing Judaism as a “delusional” *because* “slavish” religion mindlessly observing revealed law and tradition in opposition to the pure revelation of reason. In fact, this dualism between statutory bondage and reasoned freedom informs the entire metaphorical language-game of *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*—its framing metaphor equating the human moral predisposition with autonomous “bare rational faith.” For Kant, such religion “pure of all statutes, is inscribed in the heart of every human being.” By emplotting humanity’s progressive liberation from scriptural bondage, Kant puts forth his own teleological salvation history of “bare reason.” In perhaps the most iconic passage of *Religion*, Kant thus states:

The cloaks under which the embryo first formed itself into the human being must be cast off if he is now to step into the light of day. The leading string of holy tradition, with its appendages—the statutes and observances—which in its time rendered good services, is little by little becoming dispensable, indeed in the end a fetter, when he enters adolescence. As long as he (the human genus) “was a child, he was astute as a child” and knew how to combine with statutes—which had been imposed on him without his collaboration. . . . “But now that he becomes a man, he puts away what is childish.”

Here, Kant sounds a clarion call for humanity to divest itself of its religious clothing or “cloaks”—that is, the restraints of traditional “statutes and observances.” While such prescriptive veils were necessary in the beginning stages of human history, they must now in humanity’s maturity be “cast off” in the naked light of truth.

Of course, commentators are quick to note that in the aforementioned passage Kant refers nearly verbatim to Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (13:11): “As long as he (the human genus) ‘was a child, he was astute as a child. . . . But now that he becomes a man, he puts away what is childish.’” Yet what has seemingly gone unnoticed is how this passage more broadly echoes chapter four of Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians (1–11), which reads:

My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits? How can you want to be enslaved to them again? You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted.

In terms of both tone and import, the beginning of chapter 4 of Galatians is much closer to Kant’s passage above, whereas 1 Corinthians 13 addresses the importance of love. In this section of Galatians the problem Paul rails against is that his Christian followers have apparently been observing Jewish law, which he importantly equates with the subservience of slavery. Indeed, in Galatians 4:10 above, Paul complains that his followers are observing the Jewish calendar: “You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years.” As Ursula Goldenbaum notes, in Galatians:

Paul is eager to draw a sharp line between Jews and Christians, and he does not shy away from abusing Jewish religion and law as incompatible with Christian faith. He calls the Jews “immature”—in obeying their law they were immature children and indistinguishable from servants; in contrast, Christians were led into freedom by Jesus Christ. The law is considered to have served as the “pedagogue,” keeping us in line until the appearance of Jesus Christ, but no longer needed once the savior had come and set us free.

In an insightful analysis, Goldenbaum traces how Kant’s famous line and thesis “*Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity*” that opens his 1784 essay “An Answer to the Question: ‘What Is Enlightenment?’” draws upon German Lutheran readings of Galatians as part of a wider debate regarding Jewish emancipation. The policy of the Prussian state “towards Jews in the eighteenth century was characterized by attempts to keep the Jewish community small and their tribute payments high and to limit their economic activities to a few professions.” During Kant’s day, Jewish disenfranchisement was made worse by Frederick the Great’s 1750 *General-Privilegium*, which further limited the freedom of Jews in terms of property rights and trade.

In 1782, only two years prior to Kant’s famous essay on enlightenment, Joseph II of nearby Austria granted Jews unprecedented freedom in his Edict of Tolerance, which became the subject of heated debate in Prussia. A year later, Moses Mendelssohn, Kant’s most famous Jewish interlocutor, published his treatise *Jerusalem*—a text that would prove seminal to the Jewish Enlightenment by presenting “the Jews as capable of morals, and thus ready to become citizens.” On the other side of the debate was the popular Enlightenment theologian Johann Salomo Semler. As Goldenbaum observes, Kant’s discourse strikingly echoes that of Semler, who

contrasted Christian religion, which he saw as universal and moral, with Jewish religion, seen as particular and political with hardly any morals. Being bound by the Jewish statutory law, Jewish religion could not develop any further and thus remained essentially static. . . . Christian religion had changed from its early beginning until the present time and it would further change in infinity, becoming less and less dogmatic and more and more pure in terms of morals.

Indeed, for Semler, as with Kant, the infinite change that Christianity undergoes amounts to a teleological history where

no particular Christian dogma could be taken as its essential religious truth. Its true and pure message lay rather hidden in all parts of its doctrine and emerged with increasing clarity throughout history. Only at the end of the world, pure morality would appear as its actual message. . . . *Because the historical process would lead to more and more morality, it would create finally one universal religion of humankind, making all human beings Christians.*

As Goldenbaum notes, “the congruence” between Kant’s ideas and those of Semler is “*almost literal*” and she therefore concludes that “there is sufficient evidence as well that Kant found his model for enlightenment in Semler’s theology of history.” Moreover, Goldenbaum shows that Kant’s notion of “immaturity” (*Unmündigkeit*) in his first line of “An Answer to the Question” is similarly derived from a common German Lutheran translation of the beginning of chapter 4 in Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, which I quote above. Thus, Kant’s notion of enlightenment, which, according to Goldenbaum, “sees the development of pure morality as a progress within the history of Christianity, thus excluding Jews qua Jews from this process,” is indebted to the enlightenment theological discourse of his day, which he first put forth in somewhat coded language in “An Answer to the Question” and then “explicitly states in his *Religion*” nine years later.

While Kant does not use the word “immaturity” in *Religion* as he did in his essay on enlightenment, the notion of a progressive movement from immaturity to enlightened reason forms the millenarianist basis of the entire text. For my purposes here, this teleological evolution is best understood in Kantian terms as a historical progression from religious “heteronomy” to enlightened “autonomy.” Although Kant does not use this binary pair in *Religion*, evidence for its logical extension is found in his *Critique of Practical Reason* by way of definition:

The sensible nature of rational beings in general is their existence under empirically conditioned laws and is thus, for reason, *heteronomy*. The supersensible nature of the same beings, on the other hand, is their existence in

accordance with laws that are independent of any empirical condition and thus belong to the *autonomy* of pure reason.

Here, Kant defines “heteronomy” as human “existence under *empirically conditioned laws*”—that is, laws that are sensibly determined through external historical processes as opposed to those morally determined through internal reason. Similarly, in *Religion*, as I quote above, Kant asserts that as a consequence of the human “moral predisposition,” religion will “*be detached gradually from all empirical determining bases, from all statutes that rest on history.*” It is therefore quite clear that for Kant, positive religions—or what are sometimes referred to as “empirical religion[s]”—are *empirically conditioned* by history and thus heteronomous. As such, Kant’s definition of the binary pair autonomy/heteronomy can be directly mapped onto the narrative emplotted in *Religion*, where the heteronomously bound adherents of historical religions (symbolized first and foremost by Jews and Judaism) will naturally progress to enlightened autonomy by denuding their respective religions from “*all empirical determining bases*”—or in another translation, from “*all empirical grounds of determination.*” The *telos* of Kant’s evolution of religious autonomy is thus attained, as Kant confirms in the same passage, when “the abasing distinction between *laypersons* and *clerics* ceases, and equality arises from true freedom” because “everyone obeys the (nonstatutory) law that he prescribes to himself.” Indeed, this Kantian narrative on the teleological development of religious autonomy has helped to form how “enlightened” religious subjectivity is understood in the secular-liberal tradition. As Susan Meld Shell observes:

Kantian autonomy ennobles liberal concepts of freedom and equality by grounding them in an objective moral principle—a principle that is deemed to be accessible to all ordinary human beings on the basis of reason alone and *that does not depend on a particular religious dispensation or the blind acceptance of authority.*

The Metaphysics of Nudity in Kant and Schuon

As displayed most clearly in the titular framing metaphor of *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, as well as in Kant’s iconic passage above beginning with “*The cloaks under which the embryo first formed itself into the human being must be cast off if he is now to step into the light of day,*” Kant employs what Mario Perniola has called a “metaphysics of nudity,” which Perniola traces to Greek thought in contrast to a Hebrew “metaphysics of clothing.”

Although Perniola is quick to note that neither the Greek nor Hebrew tradition can be reduced to such rigid metaphysical categories, Perniola’s insight regarding the Platonic tradition of metaphysical nudity is particularly helpful in my comparison of Kantian and Schuonian language-games, which as I noted above can both be understood as (radically) different interpretations of Platonic idealism situated within a common German Lutheran intellectual history. Thus, as opposed to the symbolism of the ancient Near East, where nakedness was a mark of degradation and shame—and conversely, clothing symbolized divine splendor—the Greek metaphysical perspective understood nudity as “clarity of vision.” This idea is fully formed in Plato’s conception of truth, as Perniola notes:

In the myth of the cave, the path that leads to truth moves progressively from a vision of shadows and specular images to the contemplation of ideas. The metaphor of the “*naked*” truth comes from a conflation of the concept of truth as visual precision and the idea that eternal forms are the ultimate objects of intellectual vision. From this foundation, the entire process of knowledge becomes an unveiling of the object, a laying it entirely bare and an illumination of all its parts.

Yet, this Platonic metaphysical perspective of nudity takes as its ultimate object the soul and understands the body as an earthly obstacle. Thus, “only when the soul is naked—*psuchē gumnē tou sōmatos*, the soul stripped of the body (*Cratylus* 403b)—does it acquire complete freedom.” This idea is echoed in Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians: “Put to death, therefore, *whatever in you is earthly* (3:5). . . . These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you *must get rid of all such things.* . . . Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have *stripped off* the old self with its practices (3:9).”

Thus, in *Religion*, Kant echoes such a Christian Platonic metaphysics of nudity through the assertion, quoted above, that the human being's religious "appendages—the statutes and observances"—are "cloaks" of the material world that have been "*imposed on him without his collaboration*" and thus are "a fetter." Now that humanity has matured, such clothing "*must be cast off*" so that the naked truth can be realized. Here, Kant's metaphors also draw upon the anti-Jewish polemics of German Lutheran theology, thus making Judaism the "delusional" archetype of "pseudoservice" that serves no higher purpose than a heteronomous politics of coercion. As Kant writes in *Religion*, the subjects of the original "Jewish theocracy" were "attuned to no incentives other than the goods of this world," and thus "were capable of no other laws than partly such as imposed burdensome ceremonies and customs . . . in which an external coercion occurred and which were, therefore, only civil laws, the inside of the moral attitude not being considered at all." Judaism is thus understood as *merely material*—having nothing to do with a pure and universal religion of reason. Thus, as part of Kant's "transcendentally" idealist language-game that sought to overcome epistemological dependence upon the material world through recourse to universal reason, the Jews became a metaphor for "the impurity of empirical reality, of 'matter.'" As Michael Mack notes, it was precisely this Kantian discourse that essentialized "the Jewish as the 'heteronomous'" and thus set the stage for the nineteenth-century German stigmatization of Jews as *nonmodern* and thus politically corruptive.

In his late 1798 work *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant once again makes recourse to a metaphysics of nudity in relation to Judaism, stating that although "dreaming of a conversion of all Jews (to Christianity in the sense of a *messianic faith*)" is no longer sensible, still we can consider it possible even in their case if, as is now happening, purified religious concepts awaken among them and *throw off the garb* of the ancient cult, which now serves no purpose and even suppresses any true religious attitude.

After calling for Jews to thus *denude* themselves of the "garb" of their traditional observances, Kant goes on to explain that it is only their public acceptance of "the religion of *Jesus*" that would "call attention to them as an educated and civilized people who are ready for all the rights of citizenship and whose faith could also be sanctioned by the government." Thus, Kant concludes:

The euthanasia of Judaism is pure moral religion, freed from all the ancient statutory teachings, some of which were bound to be retained in Christianity (as a messianic faith). But this division of sects, too, must disappear in time, leading, at least in spirit, to what we call the conclusion of the great drama of religious change on earth (the restoration of all things), when there will be only one shepherd and one flock.

As may be supposed from Kant's telling call for "the euthanasia of Judaism," it was indeed "partly on the basis of its own Kantian premises that German nationalism emerged as a specifically anti-Jewish movement."

As I noted in my analysis of Schuon's Aryanist discursive practices, while Schuon understood clothing as "*form, or particularity*," he sacralized nudity as "*a return to the essence, the origin, the archetype, thus to the celestial state*." Schuon's discourse thus strikingly echoes the above Kantian metaphors and metaphysics of nudity as "pure" truth. Indeed, Schuon summed up his entire metaphysical approach through a metaphorized articulation of the binary between form and essence—that is, a movement away from "the *Religio formalis* [as] the garment" toward "the *Religio perennis* [as] the body."

Schuon's metaphors of nudity, like that of Kant's, is also tied to a particular conceptualization of Semitic religious subjectivity. This perspective nostalgically longs for a return to the primordial truth of a "Golden Age" before its apparent veiling by Semitic subjectivity. As Schuon states:

In the origin—in the "Golden Age"—the truth pure and simple was saving by itself, and this to a certain extent is the point of view of Platonism; later it was necessary to reveal the aspect most appropriate to its saving effect, and it was thus necessary to clothe it in an argument efficacious for certain mentalities, and this is what the Semitic religions have done.

While Schuonian Perennialism is thus based on a discourse of decline from an ancient golden age and hope of a palingenetic return to an original state similar to “Platonism,” the Kantian notion of “pure rational religion” is marked by a forward-looking, melioristic vision of history, which Kant himself likened to a “metamorphosis.” Yet these polar differences in metaphysical perspective notwithstanding, both Kant and Schuon evince a common metaphorical grammar in which Semitic religious subjectivity represents heteronomy, while a primary basis of “pure” autonomous or objective “truth” is located in “foreign (Greek) wisdom” for Kant and “Platonism” for Schuon.

Kantian Autonomy and the Schuonian Discourse of Relativity

For Kant, the difference between heteronomous and autonomous religion depends on the ability for any religion to be universalized. As Shell notes, for the Jews “to carry out ceremonial rites forever on the basis of an authority that cannot in principle be shared by man is to put heteronomy, as Kant conceives it, at the core of one’s faith.” In *Religion*, because such heteronomous religion is based on the idea of a God who sends revelation and its attendant laws—and “acquaintance with these laws is possible not through our own bare reason but only through revelation . . . propagated among human beings through tradition or scripture”—then such religion is what Kant describes as merely “a *historical faith*” and “not a *pure rational faith*.” Thus, according to Kant, it is “the pure moral legislation” attained through “bare reason” that “is not only the *inescapable condition of all true religion as such*, but it is also that which properly constitutes religion itself, and for which statutory religion can contain only the means to its furtherance and expansion.” Historical faiths are therefore for Kant multiple and can have “*different and equally good forms*,” while their “statutes, i.e., ordinances regarded as divine, . . . are chosen and contingent.” In other words, Kant sees outward religious form as relative and not essential. Thus, in his 1795 work *To Perpetual Peace*, Kant famously states:

Differences in religion: an odd expression! Just as if one spoke of different *moralties*. No doubt there can be different kinds of historical *faiths*, though these do not pertain to religion, but only to the history of the means used to promote it, and these are the province of learned investigation; the same holds of different religious books (Zendavest, the Vedas, Koran, and so on). But there is only a single *religion*, valid for all men in all times. Those [faiths and books] can thus be nothing more than the accidental vehicles of religion and can only thereby be different in different times and places.

Kant’s assertion here, that historical faiths and their scriptures “*can thus be nothing more than the accidental vehicles of religion*,” is representative of what Talal Asad has called “the missionary’s standpoint.” As Asad explains:

The missionary cannot reform people unless they are persuaded that *the formal ways they live their life are accidental to their being*, channels for which other channels can be substituted without loss. And thus from one religion to another, or from living religiously to living secularly.

An essential component of Schuon’s Perennialism is a discourse of “relativity,” or what Schuon calls “the principle of relativity,” as an integral ingredient for the coherency of Schuon’s logical break with the Aristotelian law of noncontradiction through symbolism and as another way of expressing Schuon’s emblematic notion of “the transcendent unity of religions”—that is, the idea that the contradictory differences among external religious forms are ultimately nonessential to the underlying essence that unifies them. Schuon himself asserts that although “Revelations more or less *exclude* one another, this is so of necessity” because God “expresses Himself in an absolute mode” and such absoluteness “concerns the universal content rather than the form, to which it applies only *in a relative* and symbolical sense.” As such, Schuon states: “Revelation is absolute in itself, *but relative in its form*.”

Indeed, the similarities between Kant and Schuon regarding the so-called relativity of religious form are worth exploring in more detail here. In *Religion*, written two years prior to the aforementioned passage from *To Perpetual Peace*, Kant asserts the following:

There is only one (true) *religion*; but there can be many kinds of *faith*.—One may say, further, that in the various churches, set apart from each other because of the difference in their kinds of faith, one and the same true religion may nonetheless be found.

Here, like Schuon, Kant asserts that in essence, religion is absolute, but in form, it is varied. Thus, Kant goes on to state:

It is therefore more fitting (as, indeed, it is actually more customary) to say, This human being is of this or that (Jewish, Mohammedan, Christian, Catholic, Lutheran) *faith*, than, He is of this or that religion. The latter expression should properly not be used even in addressing the general public (in catechisms and sermons); for, it is too scholarly and not understandable for them, as indeed the modern languages also do not supply for it any synonymous word. *The common man understands by it always his church faith, which strikes his senses, whereas religion is hidden inwardly and depends on moral attitudes.*

Once again, Kant here makes the distinction between “faith,” which he understands as *historically* occurring in various forms, and “religion”—that is, “*the true, sole religion*”—which he understands as “revealed through *pure reason* (not empirically).”

And again, Schuon’s language-game, although metaphysically distinct at the level of theory, is functionally identical., “*The ethnic diversity of humanity and the geographical extent of the earth,*” according to Schuon, are the sources of “*the need for a plurality of religions.*” Schuon thus argues that the idea “of one unique religion for all . . . does not escape contradiction” since it posits an “absoluteness and universality,” which opposes “*the necessarily relative character of all religious mythology.*” Like Kant’s aristocratic “*true, sole religion*” that is only universally revealed through “*pure reason*” but not understood by the “common man,” Schuon concludes that “*only pure metaphysics and pure prayer are absolute and therefore universal.*”

Thus, for both Kant and Schuon, the “pure” essence of religion—however individually perceived, either by reason or gnosis (respectively)—is marked by true autonomy, that is, a direct, internal realization of *naked truth* as opposed to an external, heteronomous revelation that is veiled by form. According to this Kantian and Schuonian perspective of autonomy, formal or historical religious traditions are received from outside of the self, and thus indirect and *nonessential*. In both Kant and Schuon, adherence to such heteronomous tradition is understood as ultimately “slavery” to an external form, while religious autonomy is the essence of freedom. Indeed, it is precisely Jewish adherence to heteronomous law and knowledge that, in the eyes of Kant (who as noted above echoes Paul [Galatians 4:1–11]), makes Judaism “*that slavish faith* (in days, confessions, and customs of the service of God).”

In a striking echo of Kant’s aforementioned assertions, Schuon similarly proclaims:

For the Semite, everything begins with Revelation and therefore with faith and submission; man is a priori a believer and consequently a servant: intelligence itself takes on *the color of obedience*. For the Aryan by contrast . . . Revelation is not a commandment that seems to create intelligence ex nihilo while at the same time *enslaving it*, but appears instead as the objectification of the one Intellect, which is at once transcendent and immanent. Intellectual certainty has priority here over a *submissive faith*.

While Semitic intelligence (no matter how divinely inspired) is, for Schuon, *enslaved* by external revelation, “Aryan thought” perceives the universal “nature of things” *itself*. Schuon therefore categorizes Semitic intelligence as passively “subjective” and Aryan thought as naturally in tune with “objective” truth. Here it is important to note that Schuon uses the idea of subjectivity in the common-sense notion of “being dominated by or absorbed in one’s personal feelings, thoughts, concerns” and is the antithesis of the Kantian notion of “transcendent subjectivity,” which refers to an idealized “thinking subject” as the essential ground of cognition that constitutes objective reality through the universal validity of a priori reason. As Jill Buroker importantly notes, such transcendental subjectivity “is not to be confused with the empirical subjectivity of contingent sensible qualities that vary from individual to individual.” Thus, in Kantian terms, Schuon’s Semitic “subjectivity” should be understood as *merely* empirical subjectivity that predominantly relies upon *heteronomous* recourse to jurisprudence and ritual practice—what Schuon refers to in *Castes and Races* as a Semitic “*need for external*

activities.” In Schuon’s deployment, Aryan objectivity “is none other than the truth,” and Christ’s “certain Aryan quality” is demonstrated “in his independence—seemingly ‘Greek’ or ‘Hindu’—toward forms.” Like Kant’s notion, quoted above, that Jews were “attuned to no incentives other than the goods of this world” and “capable of no other laws than partly such as imposed burdensome ceremonies and customs,” Schuon claims that the Semitic “style” of Muhammad “attaches itself meticulously to human things” and Semitic subjectivity is accidental and thus “enclosed in a dogma.”

Indeed, Houston Stewart Chamberlain (d. 1927), whose Aryanist discursive practices were compared to those of Schuon, was heavily influenced by Kantian idealist anthropology, going so far as to write an entire book on Kant that quotes from *Religion* as an anti-Semitic and pro-Aryan proof text. In his earlier and more well-known work *Foundations of the Nineteenth*, Chamberlain employs the Kantian “idealist” notion of pure religion against so-called Semitic religion:

Wherever the Semitic spirit has breathed, we shall meet with . . . materialism. Elsewhere in the whole world religion is an idealistic impulse . . . but the imperious will [of the Semite] immediately lays hold of every symbol, every profound divination of reflective thought, and transforms them into hard empirical facts. And thus it is that with this view of religion only practical ends are pursued, no ideal ones.

Here, Chamberlain follows the Kantian language-game of associating Judaism “as a group that has followed not the path of transcendental freedom but that of enslavement to the material world.”

Like Kant and Chamberlain, Schuon similarly associates materialism with the typology of the Semite as evinced not only in his aforementioned assertion regarding a Semitic “need for external activities,” but also in his description of Muhammad’s “Semitic” attachment “to human things” in contradistinction to Jesus’s “Aryan” tendency “toward the idealistic simplification of earthly contingencies.” Thus, Schuon’s notion of Aryan “independence . . . toward forms” is functionally analogous to Kant’s “autonomy of pure reason” as separate from empirically conditioned sensibility. Indeed, Schuon notes that the point is not to deny matter, “but to remove oneself from its seductive tyranny; to distinguish in it the archetypal and pure from the accidental and impure.”

Exclusive Inclusivity and the Accidental Nature of Relative Form

As I have shown, both Kant and Schuon display an analogous notion that commitment to an essentialist discourse of religious relativity is indicative of enlightened *autonomy*, while fidelity to a particular revelation and its law is *empirically* subjective and *heteronomous*—what Schuon in exasperation referred to in Ibn ‘Arabi as “unintelligible denominationalism.” Indeed, even William Chittick himself is not opposed to employing the Schuonian discourse of “relativity” when necessary, such as when he states in his work on Ibn ‘Arabi and religious diversity:

The stress of a given religious community on a specific self-revelation of the Guide brings into existence its hard edges. God’s guidance provides a (relative) divine justification for focusing on a single manifestation of the unqualified and nondelimited Real and ignoring others. But to make absolute claims for a revelation that by nature can only be one of many brings about a certain imbalance and distortion that modern-day observers quickly sense.

Chittick’s incongruous break with Perennialist antimodern “tradition” through deference here to the outside authority of “modern-day observers” against religious absolutism is telling and seems to be particularly constituted by a contemporary secular-liberal sensibility opposed to religious discourses of exclusivism. His clear Schuonian argument that there can only be “relative” and never “absolute claims for a revelation” rests on two premises: (1) there are “by nature” many (valid) religions, and (2) making such absolute claims “brings about a certain imbalance and distortion.”

Since I have shown in detail in the first three chapters of this book that Ibn ‘Arabi clearly *did make absolute claims* regarding the supersession of Islam and the Qur’anic abrogation of all previous revelations, I will not belabor these points again here. Rather, I wish to simply point out the unstable and situated logic of such a Schuonian argument for religious “relativity” at work in Chittick’s above statement. Although such discourse is

mobilized in the name of *inclusive* universalism and the “validity” of all religious laws, it nevertheless paradoxically ends up *excluding* those very same religious laws it ostensibly professes to include by denying the *absolute validity* of any given revelation. In other words, for a universalist insider, Chittick’s argument may certainly seem valid, while for a committed (nonuniversalist) adherent of any particular revelation, this same argument would in many (*if not most*) cases be totally invalid. As Hugh Nicholson observes, “The effort to dissociate religion from exclusionary, ‘us’ versus ‘them’ relations ends up merely transposing the act of exclusion to a meta-level where the excluded ‘other’—in the form of exclusivist theologies—is not immediately recognized.”

The work of the Perennialist scholar Reza Shah-Kazemi serves as an even more compelling example of the universalist paradox of *exclusive inclusivism* displayed by Chittick above. In *Paths to Transcendence: According to Shankara, Ibn Arabi, and Meister Eckhart*, Shah-Kazemi legitimizes his well-rehearsed and oft-repeated Schuonian discourse of relativity—or “transcendence”—through recourse to the authority of both Ibn ‘Arabi and Schuon:

The forms of the traditions may be seen as so many paths leading to a transcendent essence, realized as one by the mystics only at the summit of spiritual realization; short of this summit *the differences between the traditions are to be seen as relative* but nonetheless real on their own level. The forms of the traditions, at one in respect of their single and transcendent essence, are expressions of this essence, and, for this very reason, should be taken seriously as paths leading back to the essence, rather than rejected on the basis of their unavoidable relativity in the face of the Absolute. *This conclusion is in accordance with the principles made explicit by Ibn Arabi . . . and also with the universalist perspective associated chiefly with the name of Frithjof Schuon.*

In his universalist treatise on the Qur’an and interfaith dialogue, *The Other in the Light of the One*, Shah-Kazemi similarly grounds a discourse of relativity within the purview of Ibn ‘Arabi and Schuon, attempting to square the circle of what he himself refers to as “the paradoxical combination of particularism and universalism.”

In the introduction to *The Other in the Light of the One*, Shah-Kazemi confidently claims “the universalism expounded here upholds as irreducible the differences of outward religious forms, for these differences are seen as divinely sanctioned: they are diverse forms reflecting the principle of divine infinity, *not just accidental expressions of human diversity*.” Yet when he attempts to situate Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought from within such universalism, Shah-Kazemi qualifies his assertion thus:

The oneness of the message . . . implies a diversity of formal expressions, these expressions not being reducible to each other on the formal plane, even if they are considered, *in their formal aspect, as “accidental” in relation to the “necessary” import of the supra-formal substance.*

Here, Shah-Kazemi offers a typical Schuonian “esoteric” contradiction (conveniently resolved through the discourse of relativity) claiming that while the “formal expressions” of differing religions are indeed absolute and irreducible in relation to each other, *they are also simultaneously reducible*, and thus “accidental,” in relation to their common “supra-formal substance”—a substance Shah-Kazemi goes on to identify as “religion as such” in contradistinction to “such and such a religion”:

While such and such a religion is distinct from all others, possessing its own particular rites, laws and spiritual “economy,” *religion as such* can be discerned within it and within all religions; *religion as such being the exclusive property of none, as it constitutes the inner substance of all.*

Echoing the selfsame Kantian essentialist discourse of religion as “pure reason” (quoted above)—that is, “There is only *one* (true) religion; but there can be many kinds of *faith*”—here Shah-Kazemi’s “supra-formal substance” is none other than the unitive essence of religion itself (i.e., the *religio perennis*) that underlies all particular religious forms. Thus, in relation to his oft-repeated assertion regarding the simultaneous *absolute* and *accidental* nature of religious form, Shah-Kazemi is simply proposing a hierarchy of perspective, ultimately claiming that in the final comparison with the universal kernel of the *religio perennis*, the diverse particularities of competing religious forms are merely husks and thus *necessarily secondary*. As such,

Shah-Kazemi ends up operationalizing Asad's aforementioned description of the "missionary's standpoint"—a standpoint where outward religious forms become "*channels for which other channels can be substituted without loss.*"

While I will return to the implications of Shah-Kazemi's ultimate missionary stance in a moment, it is essential to note that in *The Other in the Light of the One*, Shah-Kazemi continuously struggles with a Schuonian preunderstanding of Ibn 'Arabi's so-called universalism and the subsequent contradictions that follow. For example, immediately after his above assertion regarding the irreducibility of the diverse religions "on the formal plane" and their simultaneous reducibility in terms of a common "supra-formal substance," Shah-Kazemi attempts to conciliate such discursive dissonance by turning once again to the thought of Ibn 'Arabi in relation to the evidential authority of Islamic prophethood:

One may assert, in accordance with Ibn 'Arabi's hermeneutical principles, that any attempt to abolish or ignore the formal differences between the revelations violates the divine intentionality; the diversity of revelations is divinely willed, and thus deploys rather than contradicts the unity of the message.

The diversity of laws, paths, and rites, however, must not obscure the fact that the religion ordained through the last Prophet is nothing other than *the one religion that was ordained through all previous prophets.*

Shah-Kazemi goes on to argue that for Ibn 'Arabi this "one religion" unites all religious dispensations within a single underlying "substance or principle." Yet, as I have shown throughout this work, to associate such an inclusive and essentializing universalism with Ibn 'Arabi's hermeneutics is a "strong misreading" of the Andalusian Sufi's prophethood and his attendant cosmography of religious difference. Rather than understanding this "one religion . . . ordained through all previous prophets" as a common esoteric core at the heart of all contemporaneous religious dispensations, Ibn 'Arabi clearly assents to the Islamic supersessionist view that Muhammad was *the ultimate and only universal* renewer of the primordial "religion of Abraham." Although all previous messengers revealed afresh this primordial religion, for Ibn 'Arabi, it is fully preserved *solely* in the Qur'an, which is the only revelation to remain divinely protected from corruption. Indeed, as I demonstrated in chapters 2 and 3, Ibn 'Arabi adhered to the classical Islamic supersessionist doctrines of abrogation (*naskh*) and textual corruption (*tahrīf al-naṣṣ*) of pre-Qur'anic revelations.

While Shah-Kazemi admits that for Ibn 'Arabi and other "normative" Sufis, "Islam in the particular sense would indeed be regarded as the most complete religion, *qua* religion, the final, comprehensive and universally binding revelation," he also asserts that these selfsame Sufis simultaneously affirm "the holiness, virtue and truth which are present in principle within other revealed traditions." Yet, because of his reliance on Schuonian preunderstandings, as well as canonical misreadings within the interpretive field of Ibn 'Arabi, Shah-Kazemi's discourse gives way to slippage concerning how "religion" is defined between medieval and modern contexts. Ibn 'Arabi defined religion primarily through the concept of obedience and *not* by the modern universalist notion of an underlying religious essence inhering in all revealed religions. Religion, *as such*, for Ibn 'Arabi, was marked by an external continuity of sacred prescriptions revealed by successive prophets beginning with Adam and ending with Muhammad. *As a matter of course*, Ibn 'Arabi affirmed the "holiness, virtue, and truth which are present in principle within other revealed traditions," but that says nothing about how he viewed the contemporary salvific efficacy of those traditions. Because all of the previous prophets were ultimately Muhammad's deputies (*nawwāb*) Ibn 'Arabi certainly understood them to be perennially integral. Yet, *it does not follow*, as I have shown, that Ibn 'Arabi viewed the dispensations that such prophets revealed as similarly integral throughout the course of history. For Ibn 'Arabi, all dispensations other than that of Muhammad have been either entirely abrogated or rendered subject to the conditions of the indemnity tax (*jizya*) prescribed by verse 9:29 of the Qur'an. In either case, it is clear that Ibn 'Arabi understood the religious Other as totally subsumed within the purview of the Prophet Muhammad and not religiously autonomous. In other words, Ibn 'Arabi's was a totalizing politico-metaphysical discourse, based around a perennial notion of the essence of Muhammad—that is, the "Muhammadan Reality" (*ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*)—and *not* a perennial religious

essence. Although Shah-Kazemi, who here follows Chittick, importantly emphasizes Ibn ‘Arabi’s profoundly heteronomous recourse to Islamic law, Shah-Kazemi’s and Chittick’s attendant assertions that Ibn ‘Arabi accepted all contemporaneous religious laws as equally valid *deny the very basis* of his (*universalizing*) Islamic universalism—that is, the absolute particularity of Ibn ‘Arabi’s heteronomy. That is to say, if each revealed legal tradition from every religion is equally absolute (as such Perennialist scholars claim), then the heteronomous formalities of each tradition are thereby *relativized* and rendered *nonessential*.

Indeed, in the same discussion of “religion as such” (i.e., “the one religion” or the *religio perennis*) referred to above, Shah-Kazemi once more attempts (and here “carefully”) to circumvent critiques such as Asad’s problematization of the missionary’s standpoint—that is, the accusation that he is simply arguing for a notion of inclusive universalism where competing religious forms are *made* accidental and secondary to (ideological) conceptions of an essential unity:

It must be carefully noted here that this view of a religious essence that at once transcends and abides within all religions does *not in the least imply a blurring of the boundaries between them on the plane of their formal diversity*. Rather, the conception of this “essential religion” presupposes formal religious diversity, regarding it not so much as a regrettable differentiation *but a divinely willed necessity*. . . . Each revealed religion is totally unique—totally “itself”—while *at the same time being an expression of a single, all-encompassing principle which integrates it within religion as such*. Each is thus different from all the others, in form, *and also identical to all the others in essence*.

While the supposed harmony between particularism and unity among religious forms and essence is here (yet again) asserted, Shah-Kazemi’s categorical slippage from *nonaccidental*—or “divinely willed necessity”—to “‘accidental’ in relation to the ‘necessary’ import of the supra-formal substance” exposes an underlying Schuonian discourse of religious authenticity. In his work *Echoes of Perennial Wisdom*, Schuon asserts that “*the essential takes precedence over the accidental*” and “*the Principle takes precedence over its manifestation—either by extinguishing it, or by reintegrating it.*” Thus, in the above passage, Shah-Kazemi directly echoes Schuon’s privileging of religious essence—that is, “*a single, all-encompassing principle,*” or the *religio perennis*—over all “accidental” religious forms.

Indeed, only several pages earlier Shah-Kazemi states with no apparent irony:

No one interpretation can therefore be put forward as right and true to the exclusion of all others. One must repeat: to exclude the exclusivist reading is in turn to fall into a mode of exclusivism. Thus, a truly inclusivist metaphysical perspective must recognize the validity of the exclusivist, theological perspective, even if it must also—on pain of disingenuousness—uphold as more compelling, more convincing, and even more “true,” the universalist understanding of Islam.

Although Shah-Kazemi here begins by claiming the universal validity of all religious subjectivities, he then emphatically asserts that such a claim *must* include exclusivism—yet he does so only to immediately contradict himself in the very next sentence. While he thus claims that no particular interpretation can be said to be “*right and true to the exclusion of all others,*” Shah-Kazemi is thereby compelled to admit that his universalist position is “*more compelling, more convincing, and even more “true”*” than the exclusivist (and now excluded) Other. Thus, even Shah-Kazemi’s careful attempt to embrace the exclusivist to avoid falling “into a mode of exclusivism” *fails*. Just as Kant’s so-called universal religion of autonomous reason must reject heteronomous religious form as “accidental vehicles of religion,” so too must Schuonian Perennialists exclusively reject similarly conceived *heteronomy* (i.e., exclusive attachment to particular religious dispensations) as ultimately less “true.” As Kant’s essentialist religion of “bare reason” (i.e., religion *as such*) ends up being a religion onto itself—that is “the true, sole religion”—so too does “*esoterism as such,*” that is, the *religio perennis*, as “the total truth” for Schuonian Perennialists. As Schuon himself states: “*esoterism alone is absolutely monotheistic, it alone recognizing only one religion under diverse forms.*”

As Wouter Hanegraaff observes, this type of a Perennialist position views exclusivist theologies as representing “‘lower’ levels in a hierarchy, or stages in a process of evolution towards genuine spiritual insight, which means that they are imperfect.” “It is difficult to see,” Hanegraaff trenchantly adds, “how this should be distinguished from other forms of exclusivism or, in some cases, dogmatism.” Indeed, as Wendy Brown notes:

The universal tolerates the particular in its particularity, in which the putative universal therefore always appears superior to that unassimilated particular—a superiority itself premised upon the nonreciprocity of tolerance (the particular does not tolerate the universal). It is the disappearance of power in the action of tolerance that convenes the hegemonic as the universal and the subordinate or minoritized as the particular.

Shah-Kazemi’s aforementioned special pleading—as *authorized* by a universalism ascribed to Ibn ‘Arabi—attempts to argue that all revealed religions are contemporaneously united within one single religious essence, yet his allegiance to Schuonian Perennialism ultimately must disenfranchise nonuniversalist religious Others as less free, that is, (slavishly) attached to the *material* particularities of *relative form*. As Shah-Kazemi states elsewhere: “all ‘religions’ are true by virtue of the absoluteness of their content, *while each is relative due to the particular nature of its form*.” Put in Kantian terms, that which is absolute in all religions—that is, for Schuonians, the underlying transcendent essence of the *religio perennis*—is *pure truth*, yet the particular “statutes and observances” of each religion are secondary and therefore *less true*. Thus, for Schuonian Perennialists, those who heteronomously adhere to the laws of only one religion, while not recognizing the universal validity of the pure truth of other religions, are mired in the materiality of form and thus, *necessarily*, Other.

Throughout this book, I have shown how much of the Schuonian field of interpretation surrounding Ibn ‘Arabi has attempted in varying degrees to separate his unitive mysticism from heteronomous modes of religious absolutism and its attendant political cosmography. Yet, rather than a manifestation of an ostensible “cosmic intellect”—an intellect, as James Cutsinger suggests, that is “unaffected by the limitations of historical circumstance”—Schuon’s “universalist” cartography clearly bears the burden of his own socio-historical genealogy. This cartographic burden, as I have argued above, can be understood as a hermeneutics of religious autonomy, which finds its full form in the ideas of Kant as carefully systematized in his late work *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*. Although such a hermeneutics has undergone meticulous and subtle refinement within the Schuonian field of interpretation—and especially regarding the thought of Ibn ‘Arabi—it is not unique to Schuon or even to Perennialism, but is to be found at the very beginnings of Sufi studies in the West.

Indeed, the first European scholarly article solely dedicated to Sufism strikingly echoes a Kantian metaphysics and metaphors of autonomy. In “A Treatise on Sufiism” (written in 1811 and published in 1819), Lt. James William Graham of the British East India Company relates that a Sufi may be “a person of any religion or sect.” Such a “mystery,” according to Graham, lies in the fact of the Sufi’s “total disengagement” from the sensory world, which entails “an entire throwing off . . . of the practical mode of worship, ceremonies, &c. laid down in every religion.” Yet, this process of “throwing off . . . the practical mode of worship”—what Graham also tellingly refers to as the “pharisaical mode of worship”—only happens when the mind of the Sufi is “properly nurtured and become[s] matured” through “tuition and due reflection.” According to Graham, this marks the first stage of the Sufi path when the mind “may throw off those things which it was at first taught to revere, and enter into the view of a sublimer system.” It is from the view of this “sublimer system” that “man arrives to a knowledge of his own nature” and thus “may himself then look upon those outward prescribed forms as nugatory.”

Graham’s interpretation of Sufism thus faithfully echoes the Kantian discourse of autonomy and its metaphors of nudity and teleology of universal truth attained by gradually shedding the veils of religious form, which is inevitably associated with Semitic heteronomy—in Graham’s words a “pharisaical mode of worship.” As Carl Ernst has trenchantly noted, when British Orientalists “discovered” the “Sooffees” in the latter half of the eighteenth century in India, the term *Sufi-ism* was invented “as an appropriation of those portions of ‘Oriental’ culture that Europeans found attractive.” In terms of religion, perhaps the particular thing that eighteenth-

century Europeans found *most* attractive was their own image. As Pacini observes, such thought marked a “shift from a conception of religion as conformity to the divine order of being to a conception of religion as conformity to the human ordering of ideas.” This “modern religion of conscience”—or “looking glass religion”—was based on the Kantian “view of the modern subject whose most enduring trait was its dissociation from the world around it, and what was more, its subsequent transformation of that world into an image of itself.”

Thus, in the Copernican cartographic revolution of such a Kantian looking-glass religion, the sanctified perspective of European subjectivity as an invisible “sovereign gaze”—or what Castro-Gómez also refers to as “the power of a *Deus absconditus*”—emerges as universalized truth. Here, Kant’s teleology of autonomous religiosity envisions “religion finally to be detached gradually from all empirical determining bases, *from all statutes that rest on history*.” In likewise fashion, the mapping strategy of Schuonian Perennialism—which claims an autonomous perspective based on “*the supra-formal substance*” within every religion—purports to transcend (and thereby *have power over*) the accidental, while those beholden to particular religious traditions are unwittingly controlled by such (*relative*) forms. Brown describes such strategic constructions as “*the autonomy of the subject from culture*—the idea that the subject is prior to culture and free to choose culture.” It is indeed the conceit of autonomy, and its attendant pretense to *culturelessness*, through which post-Kantian, Euro-American thought has removed itself from the map of history and universalized situated Western epistemology as truth *itself*. Such principles of autonomy continue to be employed in contemporary liberal discourse to legitimate the subordination of culture to the purported universal, while simultaneously perpetuating the claim that the political practice of universalization is not culturally imperialist since “as universals, these principles are capable of ‘respecting’ particular cultures,” while “nonliberal orders themselves represent the crimes of particularism, fundamentalism, and intolerance, as well as the dangerousness of unindividuated humanity.”

Under the weight of practices that echo strategies of universalism found from Kant through nineteenth-century Aryanism—strategies that I have shown are embedded within Schuonian Perennialism—Ibn ‘Arabi’s recourse to revealed law is *tolerated* within Perennialist discourse *only* as long as he is anachronistically understood to “transcend” religious and political rivalry and thus pluralistically acknowledge the contradictory truth claims and practices of other traditions by situating them as *secondary* and *accidental*. This type of distinction between religion and politics is maintained, as Russell McCutcheon points out, by the presence of the “idealist dualism of essence/manifestation.” Thus, Kantian and Schuonian idealism both share discursive strategies that claim to pluralistically accept *the essential core* of every religion, but at the ultimate cost of religious and socio-historical *difference*. This approach universalizes an imagined, internal “esoteric” wisdom as primary, thereby dissociating “all connections and associations with larger issues of context, politics, and power.”

Denuded of all trace of historical particularity, autonomy thus becomes a modern marker of religious, ethnoracial, and civilizational superiority, while heteronomy represents those inferior Others still epistemologically encumbered by their own socio-historical garb. David Theo Goldberg has referred to such a metanarrative of Othering as “racial historicism,” which “elevates Europeans and their (postcolonial) progeny over primitive or undeveloped Others as a victory of History, of historical progress, even as it leaves open the possibility of those racial Others to historical development.” Such racial historicism can be likened to what Ashwani Sharma has referred to as “whiteness as ‘absent presence,’ ” which “seeks to stand for and be a measure of all humanity. *It operates as a universal point of identification that strives to structure all social identities.*” Indeed, drawing on Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophical defense of heteronomy and his notion of “ontological imperialism,” Robert Young notes:

In Western philosophy, when knowledge or theory comprehends the other, then the alterity of the latter vanishes as it becomes part of the same. . . . In all cases the other is neutralized as a means of encompassing it: ontology amounts to a philosophy of power, an egotism in which the relation with the other is accomplished through its assimilation into the self.

Such a universalizing ontology of the self, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari note, can be understood as a mode of “European racism” that “never detects the particles of the other,” but rather “propagates waves of

sameness until those who resist identification have been wiped out (or those who only allow themselves to be identified at a given degree of divergence).” Indeed, the debate about Jewish emancipation in nineteenth-century Germany discussed above was fueled by a project rooted within Kantian universalism and such an imposition of *sameness*. Because Jews were perceived as lacking the Kantian ideal of autonomous religious subjectivity, they were “excluded from an idealist body politic.” To become a member of the modern German state, Jews needed to “lose their otherness”—that is, *to shed their clothes of historical difference*, in Kantian terms.

Thus, in both Kant and Schuon, calls to *cast off* religious form are tied to the assumed superiority of an imagined “white” European autonomous subjectivity—what Brown calls “the fiction of the autonomous individual”—over and against a purported “slavish” heteronomy of Semitic religious subjectivity. Such clear discourse conflating autonomy with racial superiority is thus a stark and ironic indication that Kantian and Schuonian so-called modes of “pure” universalism and “objectivity” are in fact quite the opposite—that is, historically situated European presuppositions regarding what counts as authentically religious.

While Ibn ‘Arabi enunciated a *universalizing* discourse of abrogation and the supersession of Islam over all other religions, both Schuon and Kant posited a universal religious essence or disposition accessible to all human consciousness and thus imagined their respective universalisms to be free of religious exclusivism and prejudice. Yet, as I have shown in chapter 4, Schuon understood that his divinely inspired “message” of the *religio perennis* was out of all religions the only true “monotheistic” way of knowing God, rising above the confusion of belief and the passivity of faith.” As such, Schuon replaced the Muhammadan Logos with the Virgin Mary, who as the representative of the *religio perennis* holds “celestial supremacy” and “spiritual and cosmic supereminence.” Likewise, Kant understood his ostensibly Christian, universal religion of autonomous morality to be superior to all “historical” religions—thus claiming “*pure rational religion ultimately to rule over all*.” Indeed, Kant’s final call for the “euthanasia of Judaism” (as quoted above) through an inner conversion to “pure moral religion” was, according to Paul Rose, “in effect nothing more than a secularization of the old Christian idea that the Old Testament and the Jewish religion had been superseded by the New Testament and Christianity.”

Thus, in ironically similar ways to the absolute religious discourse of Ibn ‘Arabi, Kant and Schuon offer their own versions of abrogative supersessionism. Yet unlike Ibn ‘Arabi, their discourse is additionally racist in particularly modern terms. Where, as I have shown, Ibn ‘Arabi is discursively open about his religious exclusivism, Kant and Schuon conceal theirs within so-called universal discourses that claim to holistically include all (*true*) religions by acknowledging their essential core. In the face of such schemas that obscure and thus naturalize their exclusivist presuppositions, Kantian and Schuonian universal assertions can only be construed as ideological. The radical incongruity inherent within these discourses further calls into question the entire premise of religious universalism and the possibility of nonexclusivist religious identity. These paradoxical inconsistencies are indeed a confirmation (of the postmodern truism) that exclusivism is inherent within the construction of any claim to truth. Thus, in discussing such contradictions in other related examples of universalist theology, Nicholson observes that “the entirety of religious discourse and practice . . . would appear to be implicated, either directly or indirectly, in relations of religious rivalry.”

Just as Castro-Gómez argues that the universal taxonomical categories that emerged in the sixteenth century were the products of local European epistemology in the service of imperial designs, Kant’s own discourse of universalism “pertains not,” as Hunter puts it, “to universal truth, but to a *particular regional* way of acceding to truth as ‘universal.’” Such regional particularity is especially significant in the face of Kant’s (and by extension Schuon’s) embedded racism. Thus, as Emmanuel Eze notes, the Kantian universal idea of pure human reason “colonizes humanity by grounding the particularity of the European self as center even as it denies the humanity of others.”

In the end, it would seem that both Kantian and Schuonian thought reflect the cartographic approach of early modern European imperialism and its attendant ideological conceit of a universal perspective that claims to

transcend its own ethnocentric situatedness. It is precisely the discursive practices and grammar of this larger Eurohegemonic conceptual lineage of universalism—*along with its attendant religious, racial, and civilizational superiority*—that Schuonian Perennialism inherits and naturalizes within its interpretive field. While this study has shown that Ibn ‘Arabi’s mysticism was heteronomously constituted by his religious tradition and intellectual lineage, it has also shown that the modern Western conceit of “religion” as a universally transcendent essence cannot exist in vacuo. Although the long-standing European discursive tradition of autonomy claims a universal “empty” space, it would appear that not only nature but also the *nature of human discursivity* abhors such emptiness. “All knowledge,” as Young warns, “may be variously contaminated, implicated in its very formal or ‘objective’ structures.” Indeed, as the history of European epistemology shows—and the Schuonian discourses on Ibn ‘Arabi in the foregoing chapters corroborate—it is none other than the self-image of Western subjectivity that so often fills the void left by the transcendence it claims to have attained. <>

ISLAM AND THE FATE OF OTHERS: THE SALVATION QUESTION by Mohammad Hassan Khalil [Oxford University Press, 9780199796663]

Can non-Muslims be saved? And can those who are damned to Hell ever be redeemed? This book examines the writings of important medieval and modern Muslim scholars on the controversial question of non-Muslim salvation. The book pays considerable attention to four of the most prominent figures in the history of Islam: al-Ghazali, Ibn ‘Arabi, Ibn Taymiyya, and Rashid Rida. Also examined are works by a wide variety of other writers, from Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya to Mulla Sadra to Shah Wali Allah of Delhi to Muhammad ‘Ali of Lahore to Sayyid Qutb to Yusuf al-Qaradawi to Farid Esack to yet others. The book demonstrates that although the influential theologians featured in this book tended to shun a truly pluralistic conception of salvation, most envisioned a Paradise populated with non-Muslims—and a God of justice and, more significantly, mercy. Their sundry interpretations of the Qur’an and hadith corpus—from optimistic depictions of Judgment Day to notions of a temporal Hell and salvation for all—challenge commonly held assumptions about Islamic scripture and thought.

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Rethinking Our Assumptions

The Question

“what does Islam say about the fate of non-Muslims?” This ubiquitous question has clear and profound theological and practical implications. It also tends to evoke one-dimensional responses. And with academics, pundits, and politicians debating whether we are approaching, or even already engaged in, a “clash of civilizations,” there has been a recent proliferation of discourses that present the matter in black and white.

One popular sentiment is that Islam condemns non-Muslims to everlasting damnation. “In this light, the people who died on September 11 were nothing more than fuel for the eternal fires of God’s justice,” Sam Harris proclaims in his *New York Times* best seller, **THE END OF FAITH**. An entirely different response, less common but gaining currency, is that Islam, at its core, is ecumenical: it recognizes other traditions as divinely ordained paths to Paradise. In his celebrated book, **NO GOD BUT GOD**, Reza Aslan makes precisely this point, depicting Jews and Christians as “spiritual cousins” to Muslims.

Further complicating matters for the serious inquirer is the fact that there is a lacuna in the Western study of Islam on the topic of soteriology—a term derived from the Greek *sōtēria* (deliverance, salvation) and *logos* (discourse, reasoning), thus denoting theological discussions and doctrines of salvation. Yet nearly fourteen centuries since Islam’s inception, this remains a subject on which Muslim scholars write extensively. And rightfully so: salvation is arguably the major theme of the Qur’an.

In point of fact, the question at hand is not a simple one, regardless of whether by “Islam” one means the sacred texts of the faith or the theological positions presumed to be grounded in those texts. There has always been a general agreement among Muslim scholars that, according to Islamic scripture, some will rejoice in Heaven while others will suffer in Hell. But who, exactly, will rejoice, and who will suffer? And what is the duration and nature of the rejoicing and the suffering? These have long been contentious issues—issues that ultimately involve working out the precise implications of God being both merciful and just.

In what follows, I examine the writings of some of the most prominent medieval and modern Muslim scholars on this controversial topic, demonstrating, among other things, just how multifaceted these discussions can be. The four individuals I have selected for my analysis are Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935). These scholarly giants, whose names and legacies are familiar to any student of Islamic studies, continue to influence countless Muslims, from Jakarta to Jeddah to Juneau. But before attempting to elucidate their thought and assess their place in the Islamic soteriological narrative, we must first explore the nature of salvation in Islam and the attendant notions of Heaven and Hell.

A Brief Introduction to Salvation in Islam

Whether it takes the form of a soft whisper in prayer or a piercing chant before a crowd, the Qur’an’s most often recited sura (chapter) is its first, “al-Fātiḥa” (The Opening). In reciting it, believers highlight the role of God as “Master of the Day of Judgment” (Q. 1:4) and beseech His guidance to “the straight path: the path of those You have blessed, not of those who incur anger, nor of those who go astray” (1:6–7). There is a sense of urgency in this appeal. Toward the end of the Qur’an, we read: “By the declining day, humanity is [deep] in loss, except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth, and urge one another to steadfastness” (Q. 103:1–3). The message is unambiguous: people must choose their life paths wisely.

It is God’s messengers who bring this reality to light. The Qur’an frequently portrays the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632) (as well as the messengers before him) as a “bearer of good news” (*bashīr*, *mubashshir*) and a “warner” (*nadhīr*, *mundhir*) (2:119) to those whom he commands to “worship God and shun false gods” (16:36). Good news of continuous paradisiacal pleasure is given to “those who have faith and do good works” (Q. 2:25), while warnings of continuous anguish in the flames of Hell are given to “those who reject faith and deny [God’s] revelations” (2:39). Thus, although both outcomes come to fruition *only* through God’s will, the dichotomy between salvation and damnation is closely associated with the distinction between obedience and disobedience and what Toshihiko Izutsu describes as the Qur’an’s “essential opposition” of *īmān* (belief, faith, assent, sincerity, fidelity) and *kufr* (unbelief, rejection, dissent, concealment of the truth, ingratitude).

These themes are captured in the following plea to Pharaoh’s people by an unidentified “believer”:

My people, follow me! I will guide you to the right path. My people, the life of this world is only a brief enjoyment; it is the hereafter that is the lasting home. Whoever does evil will be repaid with its like; whoever does good and believes, be it a man or a woman, will enter Paradise and be provided for without measure. My people, why do I call you to salvation [*al-najāh*] when you call me to the Fire? You call me to disbelieve in God and to associate with Him things of which I have no knowledge; I call you to the Mighty, the Forgiving ... our return is to God alone, and it will be the rebels who will inhabit the Fire. [One Day] you will remember what I am saying to you now, so I commit my case to God: God is well aware of His servants. (Q. 40:38–44)

While there is a notion of salvation in this world (*al-dunyā*), the Qur’anic emphasis is undoubtedly on the next (*al-ākhirā*).² Indeed, the Qur’an has much to say about Judgment Day, which is referred to as, among other names, the Last Day (*al-yawm al-ākhir*) (2:8), the Hour (*al-sā‘a*) (6:31), the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāma*) (21:47), and the Day of Reckoning (*yawm al-ḥisāb*) (38:16). It is on this “day” that “whoever has done an iota of good will see it, but whoever has done an iota of evil will see that” (Q. 99:6–8), for all souls, none of which are born tainted with sin, are responsible for their own actions (6:164). Because humanity is generally prone to err, however, its deliverance, and indeed triumph, is predicated on self-rectification and, above all, divine forgiveness. Thus, the frequent claim that Islam has no concept of salvation because it has no doctrine of original sin is true only if we assume a narrow definition of salvation. When discussing eschatological reward and punishment, it is customary for Muslim theologians, including those examined here, to employ the Qur’anic term *najāh*, which appears in the plea to Pharaoh’s people in the passage quoted above and is typically—and for good reason—translated as “salvation” or “deliverance.”

Looking to prophetic traditions, or hadiths, we learn that individuals on the Last Day will be required to cross a bridge.³ Those believers (*mu‘minūn*, sing. *mu‘min*) who successfully traverse it will make their way into Heaven, which the Qur’an calls the Home of Peace (*dār al-salām*) (6:127), the Lasting Home (*dār al-qarār*) (40:39), Paradise (*al-firdaws*) (18:107), the Garden (*al-janna*) (81:13), and its plural, Gardens (*jannāt*) (4:13). Hell is described by names such as Gehenna (*jahannam*) (3:12), the Fire (*al-nār*) (2:39), the Crusher (*al-ḥuṭama*) (104:4), and the Bottomless Pit (*al-hāwiya*) (101:9), and it awaits sinners and unbelievers (*kāfirūn* or *kuffār*, sing. *kāfir*) who fall.

Underscoring the consequentiality of decisions made in this life, the Qur’an depicts both multileveled, multigated afterlife abodes in great detail. As Sachiko Murata and William Chittick observe, “No scripture devotes as much attention as the Koran to describing the torments of hell and the delights of paradise.” While some of these descriptions parallel features of the afterlife according to older traditions, including ancient Egyptian religion, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity, we also observe certain characteristics representative of the Arabian environment in which Islam arose. Apart from enjoying the peaceful presence of God (Q. 6:127), Heaven’s inhabitants will find, among other things, rich gardens (42:22), rivers (2:25), shade (56:30), green cushions (55:76), superb rugs (55:76), meat (56:21), fruits (77:42), youths who serve them cups overflowing with pure drink (56:17–18, 78:34), and companions with beautiful eyes (44:54)—a clear contrast to the pangs and burning agonies of Hell (22:19–22, 88:4–7), where the wretched will be veiled from God (83:15).

When considering Qur’anic references to the hereafter it is important to keep in mind that many such references are, to quote Michael Sells, “placed in an elusive literary frame that gives them a depth far beyond any simple-minded notion of heavenly reward and hellish punishment”; there “is an openness as to what the warning or promise actually means.” At the heart of these descriptions—interpreted literally or metaphorically—is the spur to transform and rectify the audience.

But it is precisely the Qur’an’s openness that helps to explain some of the more heated debates in Islamic intellectual history. Consider, for instance, that while the Qur’an declares that God “guides whomever He wills” and “leads astray whomever He wills” (14:4), it also states that those who disregard God’s message “have squandered their own selves” (7:53) and that their punishment is “on account of what [they] stored up for

[themselves] with [their] own hands, and God is never unjust to His servants” (3:182). It is perhaps not astonishing, then, that Muslim theologians have long debated the role of human agency. Without attempting to resolve the matter, it should suffice to note that the vast majority of Muslim scholars have affirmed in varying degrees some form of human responsibility, and it is generally presumed that the admonition of messengers can induce a bona fide moral response.

A righteous response is that which is in tune with the pure natural disposition (*fiṭra*) God instilled in humankind (Q. 30:30). According to a traditional reading of the Qur’an, at some point in the mysterious, primordial past, God brought forth all of Adam’s descendants and asked, “Am I not your Lord?” to which they replied, “Yes, we bear witness” (7:172). As Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains:

Men and women still bear the echo of this “yes” deep down within their souls, and the call of Islam is precisely to this primordial nature, which uttered the “yes” even before the creation of the heavens and the earth. The call of Islam therefore concerns, above all, the remembrance of a knowledge deeply embedded in our being, a confirmation of a knowledge that saves, hence the soteriological function of knowledge in Islam.... The great sin in Islam is forgetfulness and the resulting inability of the intelligence to function in the way that God created it as the means to know the One. That is why the greatest sin in Islam and the only one God does not forgive is *shirk*, or taking a partner unto God, which means denying the Oneness of God.

Accordingly, “every community has been sent a warner” (Q. 35:24), a “guide” (13:7), and a “messenger” (10:47), with Muḥammad being the “seal of the prophets” (33:40) sent to all of humanity (25:1). While it is clear that messengers warn of impending doom for the wicked, Muslim scholars continue to dispute over what awaits individuals who never receive this warning, that is, the “unreached.” (The verse “every community has been sent a warner” need not mean that each and every person has received the divinely inspired message or that all communities have “adequately” preserved it.) According to the Qur’an, it is because of messengers that people will “have no excuse before God” (4:165); “every group that is thrown in” Hell will confess that it received a “warner” (67:6–11); and in a passage that we shall revisit often, God, speaking in the plural, announces, “We do not punish until We have sent a messenger” (17:15). Nevertheless, the Qur’an also states that Pharaoh transgressed *before* receiving the warning of Moses (79:17). Can one “transgress” and still be saved solely on the grounds that one never encountered the message? Or, perhaps more controversially, should we broaden our understanding of “warners” and “messengers”? For instance, some theologians hold that these terms often connote “reason.” But assuming that the statement “We do not punish until We have sent a messenger” (Q. 17:15) refers to messengers as traditionally understood (that is, select humans who convey God’s message), and assuming that it represents a general principle applicable both to this life and to the next, we are left without an answer to the question of how exactly God will deal with the unreached in the life to come. Similarly unclear is the qualification(s) for being counted among the “reached” in the first place. Is mere exposure to the message all that matters? Or is there more to it?

The Qur’an, through its openness, undoubtedly allows for a wide variety of soteriological interpretations. Although it foretells the ominous destiny awaiting specific figures, such as Satan (Iblīs) (17:61–63), Pharaoh (Fir‘awn) (79:15–25), and the Prophet’s callous uncle Abū Lahab and his similarly heartless wife (111:1–5), the fact that its warnings are typically general in nature allows for an array of viewpoints regarding the fate of those whose destiny has not been revealed. The question of the status of those innumerable individuals who do not fit, or at least appear not to fit, the Qur’anic categories of righteous believers and unrighteous unbelievers is vexing. The Qur’an refers in passing to those who are in between the two groups (35:32) but never explicitly mentions their fate. It also provides a tantalizingly brief reference to the “people of the heights” (*al-a rāf*) standing between Heaven and Hell (7:46–49) but leaves us wondering whether they are outstanding on account of their elevation (on “the heights”) or in a state of limbo on account of their being in between Heaven and Hell. It is, therefore, not surprising that Muslim scholars have failed to reach a consensus on questions such as, What awaits unrepentant, sinning believers, particularly those who seem to reflect the rebellious (Q. 72:23),

evildoing (37:63), oppressive (78:22) nature of Hell-bound unbelievers? What about “sincere” monotheists who are not part of the Muslim community? Or even “earnest” polytheists, deists, agnostics, and atheists? What exactly constitutes salvific belief and damnatory unbelief?

Salvation for Whom?

Like other faiths, Islam has developed its own unique currents of soteriological intra- and, more relevant for our purposes, interreligious exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. I define these terms as follows: “exclusivists” maintain that only their particular religious tradition or interpretation is salvific and that adherents of all other beliefs will be punished in Hell. “Inclusivists” similarly affirm that theirs is the path of Heaven but hold that sincere outsiders who could not have recognized it as such will be saved. “Pluralists” assert that, regardless of the circumstances, there are several religious traditions or interpretations that are equally effective salvifically. This terminology would seem alien to premodern and many modern Muslim scholars, but this tripartite classification—versions of which are commonly employed by many contemporary philosophers of religion²³—allows us to develop a clearer conception of the Islamic soteriological spectrum. Needless to say, these categories are not monolithic, and I shall examine various subcategories, particularly in those cases where further distinctions are necessary.

Soteriological pluralists often point to Qur’anic passages such as 5:48, which indicates that God never intended for humanity to remain a single community with a single law:

We have revealed to you [Muḥammad] the scripture in truth, confirming the scriptures that came before it and as a guardian [*muḥaymin*] over them: so judge between them according to what God has sent down. Do not follow their whims, which deviate from the truth that has come to you. We have assigned a law [*shir‘a*] and a path [*minḥāl*] to each of you. If God had so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good: you will all return to God and He will make clear to you the matters about which you differed.

In this light, it is notable that while the Qur’an presents itself as “the criterion” (*al-furqān*) (25:1), it also states that it is only one in a line of divinely revealed books that includes the Torah (*tawrāh*) (3:3), Psalms (*zabūr*) (4:163), and Gospel (*injīl*) (3:3). This is why Jews and Christians are designated as People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*), and it is this proximity to Muslims that best explains why the latter may intermarry and share meals with the former (Q. 5:5). And while many Muslims argue as a matter of faith that the scriptures on which contemporary Jews and Christians rely have been corrupted, one pluralist position is that a careful reading of the Qur’an (particularly 2:75–79, 3:78, 4:46, and 5:13) leads only to the conclusion that *certain groups* among the People of the Book “distorted” scripture by misrepresenting its message and supplementing it with falsehoods. An apparent example of this distortion would be the Jewish and Christian exclusivist claim, “No one will enter Paradise unless he [or she] is a Jew or Christian” (Q. 2:111). The Qur’an rejects this claim and promises heavenly reward to “any who direct themselves wholly to God and do good” (2:112). Even more poignant are Q. 2:62 and 5:69, passages that portend the salvation of righteous, faithful Jews and Christians and a mysterious group called the Sabians:

The believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians—all those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good—will have their rewards with their Lord. No fear for them, nor will they grieve. (2:62)

For the believers, the Jews, the Sabians, and the Christians—all those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good—there is no fear: they will not grieve. (5:69)

Reflecting on Q. 2:62, which is probably the most often cited passage in pluralist discourse, Mahmoud Ayoub laments the fact that exegetes have generally restricted its message in several ways, such as declaring it abrogated (meaning that it was revoked and replaced by Qur’anic statements revealed later in time) or accepting “the universality of the verse until the coming of Islam, but thereafter [limiting] its applicability only to those who hold the faith of Islam.” Another restrictive interpretation maintains that the reference to Jews,

Christians, and Sabians is based on origins, affiliations, or even ethnicity, rather than religion.²⁸ In a similar vein, many theologians hold that the reference in Q. 5:48 to the divisions within humanity is not a vindication of this diversity, especially in a context in which Muḥammad's corrective message (a "guardian" over the previous scriptures) is made available: Islam alone is the "straight path" to God. This particular interpretation allows for declarations like that made by the famed scholar of hadith and jurisprudence Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) that anyone who follows a religion other than Islam is an unbeliever and the same applies to any self-professing Muslim who doubts this or considers other religions valid.

Along these lines, soteriological exclusivists often cite the Qur'an's condemnation of the unforgivable sin of *shirk* (associating partners with God) (4:116), as well as its censure of various beliefs and practices of Jews and Christians. Well known is Q. 9:29, which calls for war against those People of the Book "who do not believe in God and the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, who do not follow the religion [*dīn*] of truth" until they surrender and pay a tax called the *jizya*. (Needless to say, the precise meaning and implications of this command are issues of debate among Muslims.) The next two verses (Q. 9:30–31) rebuke Jews for taking their rabbis as lords and saying, "Ezra [ʿUzayr] is the son of God" (an ostensibly Arabian phenomenon),³² and Christians for taking Jesus and their monks as lords and saying, "The Messiah is the son of God." Two verses later, we find the pronouncement that it is God "who has sent His messenger with guidance and the religion [*dīn*] of truth, to show that it is above all [other] religions" (9:33). As such, the Qur'an characterizes those People of the Book who accept what was revealed to them (for example, the Torah) but reject "what came afterward" as "unbelievers" (2:90–91). We are also informed that "any revelation" God causes "to be superseded or forgotten," He replaces "with something better or similar" (Q. 2:106). Accordingly, Q. 5:3—believed by many to have been the last verse revealed—states, "Today I have perfected your religion [*dīn*] for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chosen *islām* as your religion." Most significant in exclusivist discourse, however, are Q. 3:19 and 3:85, which speak of *islām* being the only acceptable religion, or *dīn*:

True religion [*al-dīn*], in God's eyes, is *islām*. Those who were given the Book disagreed out of rivalry, only after they had been given knowledge—if anyone denies God's revelations, God is swift to take account. (3:19)

If anyone seeks a religion [*dīn*] other than *islām*, it will not be accepted from him [or her]: he [or she] will be one of the losers in the hereafter. (3:85)

One may object, however, that the Qur'anic conception of *dīn* may not be as rigid as later interpreters have made it out to be. And *islām* (to be precise, *al-islām*) may be understood literally and broadly as "submission" to God (or "the submission"), rather than simply reified Islam. In the words of one modern translator of the Qur'an, the "exclusive application" of *islām* to followers of Muḥammad "represents a definitely post-Qur'anic development." The Qur'an itself uses the term *muslim*—the active participle of the verb *aslama* (to submit) from which *islām* is derived—in a manner that is undoubtedly general in nature. To quote Mahmut Aydın,

When Joseph demanded to die as a "muslim" in his prayer [Q. 12:101] and Abraham described himself as a "muslim" [Q. 3:67], they did not mean that they were members of the institutionalized religion of the Prophet Muhammad. Rather, they meant to submit to God/Allah and to obey God's orders.

There is in fact more to be said about the role of semantics in this debate. As I indicated earlier, the Qur'an presents *īmān* and *kufr* as opposing orientations with contrasting soteriological consequences. While *īmān* is usually translated as "belief," it also denotes faith, assent, sincerity, and fidelity; while *kufr* is usually translated as "unbelief," it also denotes rejection, dissent, concealment of the truth, and ingratitude. In this light, although the Qur'an rejects certain Jewish and Christian truth claims, one could argue that it only condemns "wicked" People of the Book living in the Prophet's context who recognized the truth of his message yet deliberately

denied it (3:70–86), ridiculed it (5:57–59), and rebelled against it—a rebellion that would explain the Qur’anic call to arms. Although “most” People of the Book in contact with Muḥammad are described as being “wrongdoers” (Q. 3:110), what are we to think of the remaining Jews and Christians? Similarly, the scriptural censure of “associationists” (*mushrikūn*), that is, those guilty of *shirk*, could be contextualized in light of the injustices and antagonism that Arab pagans and others engendered in their defiance of the Prophet. In other words, rather than being entirely a doctrinal matter, *shirk* might also connote hubris and insolence against those seeking to devote themselves to God alone. It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that the Qur’an characterizes certain People of the Book—all or some of whom would qualify as monotheists by modern designations—as “associationists” in Q. 9:33, immediately after informing us that they “try to extinguish God’s light with their mouths” (9:32) and immediately before noting that “many rabbis and monks wrongfully consume people’s possessions and turn people away from God’s path” (9:34).

Soteriological pluralists need not maintain that the various, equally salvific religious paths are equally true ontologically. Many pluralists, for example, argue that although Islam and Christianity are just as effective salvifically, the truth claims of the former are superior to those of the latter. Some, however, are willing to go a step further. To quote the Iranian thinker Abdolkarim Soroush:

The vast scope of insoluble religious differences compounded by the self-assurance of everyone involved gives rise to the suspicion that God may favor ... pluralism and that each group partakes of an aspect of the truth.... Is the truth not one, and all the differences to paraphrase [the Persian mystic Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273)], “differences of perspective”?

For those who are not moved by the pluralist project, and also not satisfied with the exclusivist alternative, there is inclusivism. A group I classify as “limited inclusivists” maintain that, among non-Muslims, only the unreached may be saved (even if there is no consensus on how exactly they will be judged, if at all). This is based in part on a generalized reading of the scriptural pronouncement that God does “not punish until [He has] sent a messenger” (Q. 17:15), as well as the following prophetic proclamation (recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* hadith collection): “By Him in whose hand is the life of Muhammad, anyone among the community of Jews or Christians *who hears about me* and does not believe in that with which I have been sent and dies (in this state), will be among the denizens of the [Fire].”

Limited inclusivists reject the claim often made by exclusivists, especially in modern times, that the category of the unreached no longer exists. These inclusivists may insist that non-Muslims must encounter specific features of the final message—the message in its “true” form (however understood)—in order to be counted among the reached; should they then refuse to submit, they would be considered “insincere.”

On the other end of the inclusivist spectrum, “liberal inclusivists” assert that the category of sincere non-Muslims includes individuals who have been exposed to the message in its true form yet are in no way convinced. Thus, liberal inclusivists generally read passages such as Q. 17:15 and the aforementioned “*who hears about me*” hadith—assuming they accept the authenticity of this hadith (most Sunnis do)—in much the same way limited inclusivists (not to mention pluralists) read those verses that condemn Jews and Christians, that is, they elucidate, contextualize, and/or qualify the statements in light of other scriptural passages and assumptions.

The debate among inclusivists, then, revolves around the question, What qualifies as a sincere response to the Islamic message upon encountering it? For limited inclusivists, the answer is simple: conversion to Islam. For others, the answer is either conversion or active investigation of the content of the message. For liberal inclusivists, if the message were never seen to be a possible source of divine guidance, it would make little sense to speak of a sincere response. But however one qualifies sincere non-Muslims, inclusivists generally agree that these are individuals who never actively strive to extinguish the light of God’s message and never take on the rebellious, evildoing, oppressive characteristics of the damned. The God of mercy and justice, so goes the argument, would surely save such earnest non-Muslims, if only through some form of intercession on Judgment Day.

Such discussions of the fate of non-Muslims have intensified in recent decades. This discourse has fostered a unique debate, particularly evident in the context of Western scholarship, which pits pluralists against inclusivists. At the same time, however, numerous modern treatments of Islam seem to present the exclusivist paradigm in passing, as a foregone conclusion. Johannes Stöckle writes, “The impure who are not purified by Islam shall be in hell-fire,” while Muhammad Abul Quasem affirms that “entry into Islam fulfills the most basic requirement of salvation.” Neither Stöckle nor Abul Quasem qualifies these statements, leaving the reader with the impression that salvation is reserved only for Muslims, the adherents of reified Islam. Like many earlier scholars, Abul Quasem also presents a pessimistic view of the Islamic afterlife: on the basis of a famous hadith, he states that most of humanity, 999 out of every one thousand, “will fall down into Hell”; however, he adds, since sinning believers will attain “salvation after damnation,” it is “only infidels [who] will be suffering in Hell forever.” (I provide an optimistic inclusivist reassessment of the hadith on the 999 in chapter 1.) Pessimistic exclusivism is also a common theme in historical portrayals of the earliest Muslims. On the basis of historiographical writings and hadith collections, Patricia Crone argues that the common belief among those factions that evolved into the groups later referred to as Sunnis, Shi’ites, and Khārijites was that salvation could only be achieved through Islam and under the guidance of a single, “true” imam (leader): “Anyone who joined the wrong caravan became an unbeliever (*kāfir*), for there was only one community of believers.” Thus, all other leaders were illegitimate and led their “caravan[s] to Hell.” This image of a solitary, select caravan stands in sharp contrast to the conception of a faith that embraces and even promotes other religious paths. Despite occasional publications by scholars such as Fred Donner, who presents Islam as an originally ecumenical tradition embracing certain Jews and Christians, this and similar visions of Islam are, seemingly, less popular. This helps to explain why, particularly in recent years, growing contingents of Muslim pluralists have been active in promoting their own paradigms, leading, in turn, to inclusivist rebuttals by their coreligionists. I survey this modern debate, particularly in its Western manifestation, later in this book.

Salvation for the Damned?

While the discourse of salvation on Judgment Day has attracted a great deal of attention, another pivotal controversy hinges on the duration of punishment: are the inhabitants of Hell doomed to be chastised in the Fire for all of eternity, despite the temporality of their evil deeds and despite God’s ability to grant them an opportunity to reform themselves at some point in the hereafter? Here, too, we find a plethora of responses in the history of Islamic thought, with theological discussions of the eternality of Hell (and even Heaven) beginning to proliferate from around the second/eighth century. In fact, as we shall see, this may have been a divisive topic as early as the period of the first four caliphs (11–40/632–661). I refer to those who hold that everyone will be granted everlasting life in Paradise as “universalists.” In contrast, “damnationists” maintain that at least some will endure everlasting chastisement. Universalists who believe that all of Hell’s inhabitants will be admitted into Heaven following a significant period of time—the overwhelming majority of Muslim universalists—will occasionally be described as having interim and ultimate positions (for example, “interim inclusivism” or “ultimate universalism”).

It is perhaps only fitting at this point to restate my initial observation: discussions of salvation in Islam have generally been plagued with oversimplifications. One possible explanation for why this is true of modern scholarship is an overreliance on a limited array of Muslim creedal, theological, and popular works. Many of these works present “Islam’s position” as follows: while sinning believers may be punished in Hell for a finite period of time, eternal damnation awaits anyone who dies an unbeliever. This belief forms part of the Islamic creed according to theologians as prominent as Abū Jaʿfar al-Taḥāwī (d. 321/933), Shaykh Ṣadūq (d. 381/991), Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), and ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355). The famous Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935) implies it by stating that only a group of monotheists (that is, believers) will be taken out of the Fire—a Fire that he never characterizes as finite. This damnationism is also presented in a number of Muslim theological works as the consensus, or *ijmāʿ*, opinion. This is extremely significant given the

widespread acceptance of the prophetic report that reads, “My community shall never agree on an error.” Even so, from an academic standpoint, conscious of the realm of influential historical orientations and textual possibilities, regarding the everlasting damnation of unbelievers as “Islam’s position” is problematic. And yet the eternality of Hell is considered standard in many foundational Western academic works that describe either Muslim scholarly views or the Qur’an itself. The following examples serve to illustrate this point:

1. 1. In **ISLAM: THE STRAIGHT PATH**, specifically in a discussion of the Qur’anic afterlife, John Esposito writes:

The specter of the Last Judgment, with its eternal reward and punishment, remains a constant reminder of the ultimate consequences of each life. It underscores the Quran’s strong and repeated emphasis on the ultimate moral responsibility and accountability of each believer.... In sharp contrast [to Heaven’s inhabitants], the damned will be banished to hell, forever separated from God.

2. 2. In **MAJOR THEMES OF THE QUR’AN** by Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), we find a similar account of the life to come:

The central endeavor of the Qur’an is for man to develop ... “keen sight” here and now, when there is opportunity for action and progress, for at the Hour of Judgment it will be too late to remedy the state of affairs; there one will be reaping, not sowing or nurturing. Hence one can speak there only of eternal success or failure, of everlasting Fire or Garden—that is to say, for the fate of the individual.

3. 3. In **APPROACHING THE QUR’AN: THE EARLY REVELATIONS**, Michael Sells describes the Day of Judgment as a time when what “seems secure and solid turns out to be ephemeral, and what seems small or insignificant is revealed as one’s eternal reality and destiny.” Accordingly, we read in Sells’s translation of Q. 98:6 that unbelievers will have an “eternal” stay in the Fire.

To be sure, the field of translation can be a theological battleground. As we shall see, much debate revolves around the wording the Qur’an employs in discussing the duration of punishment in Hell and the extent to which it differs from depictions of heavenly reward. Two common word types cited in these discussions are those that have the three-letter root *kh-l-d* (for example, *khālidīn* or *khulūd*) and *-b-d* (for example, *abad* or its accusative form *abadan*). An expression like *khālidīn fihā* (Q. 9:68), used in reference to Hell, can be translated as “they will remain in it forever” or, simply, “they will remain in it”; *khālidīn fihā abadan* (Q. 72:23) can be translated as “they will remain in it forever” or “they will remain in it for a long time.” If we assume the latter translation, we are left with a series of questions: does the Qur’an contain *any* categorical affirmation of Hell’s eternality? Does the fact that “transgressors” will remain in Hell “for ages” (*aḥqāban*) (Q. 78:23) mean that there is a limit to their stay after all—even if they were guilty of *shirk*? Is the Qur’anic reproval of those Jews who maintained that the punishment in the Fire would only last “a limited number of days” (3:23–24) a forewarning that chastisement is everlasting or that it is just considerably longer? When the Qur’an states that “their punishment will not be lightened, nor will they be reprieved” (2:162), and “they will have no share in the hereafter” (2:200), is it speaking of a temporal or eternal reality? If the latter, is it not possible that such statements are ultimately qualified by God’s volition, as indicated by the Qur’anic pronouncement in 6:128 that Hell’s inhabitants will remain in the Fire “unless God wills otherwise”? Is the Qur’anic declaration that Hell’s inhabitants will remain in the Fire “for as long as the heavens and earth endure, unless your Lord wills otherwise: your Lord carries out *whatever* He wills” (11:107) significantly different from the pronouncement regarding Heaven’s inhabitants: “they will be in Paradise for as long as the heavens and earth endure unless your Lord wills otherwise—an *unceasing gift*” (11:108)? (The overwhelming majority of Muslim scholars take the expression “for as long as the heavens and earth endure” to mean “forever.”) Leaving aside the Qur’an, what are we to make of reports attributed to the Companions of the Prophet, several of which I examine in chapter 3, which seem to foretell the eventual salvation of Hell’s inhabitants? Can they be harmonized with other traditions that appear to affirm the exact opposite? And, from a theological standpoint, is salvation for *all* (including, for example,

Pharaoh, Abū Lahab, Hitler) just? Conversely, is *everlasting* damnation fair and congruous with God's merciful nature?

Many modern scholars of Islam have overlooked the fact that the eternality of Hell has long been a contentious issue among Muslim thinkers. To the best of my knowledge, the earliest English academic work to focus exclusively on this controversy is James Robson's article "Is the Moslem Hell Eternal?" Published in *The Moslem World* journal in 1938, the article is a response to the twentieth-century universalist Maulana Muhammad Ali. Robson's conclusion is that the Islamic Hell must be eternal and that this has historically been the consensus view of Muslim scholars. (I examine this debate between Ali and Robson in chapter 3.) Western scholarship has had little to say on the matter since 1938 besides those numerous instances in which the eternality of Hell is assumed. One interesting exception is Jane Smith and Yvonne Haddad's monograph **THE ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION** (1981). "In general," Smith and Haddad assert, "it can be said that the non-eternity of the Fire has prevailed as the understanding of the Muslim community" thanks to important scholars who took note of the careful wording of the Qur'an and certain hadiths—even though "the vast majority of reports support the understanding of the eternality of the Fire." This is to be sharply contrasted with Binyamin Abrahamov's relatively recent assessment that, despite the presence of detractors, the "orthodox" position has been Hell's eternality. I evaluate these conflicting statements below.

Salvation and God

One important corollary of exclusivist–inclusivist–pluralist and universalist–damnationist discourses is that they allow us to reconsider the nature of the Qur'anic God, the subject of considerable discussion in Western scholarship. Writing nearly a century ago, W. Knietschke describes Him as "an Absolute Despot" whose prevailing concern is justice rather than loving mercy. Along these lines, almost half a century later, Daud Rahbar argues that the Qur'an's "central notion is God's strict justice," and that "all themes are subservient to this central theme"—a theme that is constantly reaffirmed in reference to the Day of Judgment. To this he adds, "God's forgiveness, mercy and love are strictly for those who believe in Him and act aright. Wherever there is an allusion to God's mercy or forgiveness in the Qur'ān, we find that within an inch there is also an allusion to the torment He has prepared for the evil-doers."

Although Johan Bouman states that he is not completely satisfied with Rahbar's study, and acknowledges the fact that the Qur'an is replete with references to mercy, he ultimately agrees with Rahbar that divine justice trumps all other characteristics in the Qur'anic universe. In contrast, Sachiko Murata and William Chittick characterize mercy as "God's fundamental motive." Meanwhile, Fazlur Rahman, who speaks of God's "merciful justice," writes:

The immediate impression from a cursory reading of the Qur'ān is that of the infinite majesty of God and His equally infinite mercy, although many a Western scholar (through a combination of ignorance and prejudice) has depicted the Qur'ānic God as a concentrate of pure power, even as brute power—indeed, as a capricious tyrant. The Qur'ān, of course, speaks of God in so many different contexts and so frequently that unless all the statements are interiorized into a total mental picture—without, as far as possible, the interference of any subjective and wishful thinking—it would be extremely difficult, if not outright impossible, to do justice to the Qur'ānic concept of God.

David Marshall defends Rahbar and Bouman and argues that Rahman's emphasis on divine mercy is a function of what J. M. S. Baljon describes as a modern hermeneutic strategy that features both a "blurring out of terrifying traits of the Godhead" and "the accentuation of affable aspects in Allah." Marshall maintains, also in agreement with Rahbar, that the Qur'an presents the unbelievers as "utterly excluded from any experience of God's mercy" once this life ends. I assess these conflicting claims below.

It is worth stressing that these discussions are informed by particular understandings of Islamic soteriology. Despite its obvious salience, however, a search for contemporary critical studies on salvation in Islam leaves much to be desired. Many of the currently available works present a particular author's reading of Islamic

scripture; when Muslim soteriological discourse is examined, the analyses, with few exceptions, are relatively brief and superficial. It is my hope that the present work will demonstrate the benefits of delving further into this critically important field.

The Question Reconsidered

Each of the four chapters of this book explores the specific views of eminent Muslim scholars on the fate of non-Muslims. This is accompanied by an examination of their methodologies, specifically, how they develop their arguments, employ Islamic scripture, and situate themselves vis-à-vis the larger hegemony of Islamic thought. To be clear, my main focus is Muslim scholarly discussions of the soteriological status of adults of sound mind living in a post-Muḥammadan world who do not believe in the content of the Islamic declaration of faith, the *shahāda*, which affirms both the existence and the unity of God, as well as the messengership of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh. Other aspects of Islamic theology and even soteriology are beyond the compass of the present work. Where relevant, however, I address auxiliary topics, such as the line between belief (*īmān*) and unbelief (*kufr*), as well as the fate of those individuals who lived during the interstices between prophets, the so-called people of the gap (*ahl al-fatra*)—a category that includes Arab pagans who died just before the era of Muḥammad’s prophethood and were thus not exposed to the divine message, at least in what is considered its true, unadulterated form. These particular discussions become relevant when considering the soteriological status of individuals living in a post-Muḥammadan world who have not been “properly” exposed, if at all, to Islamic scripture. Because my chronological focus is on life beginning with the judgment of the Last Day, I do not examine specific deliberations on the nature of the period that immediately follows death and precedes Judgment Day, that is, the period of the *barzakh*. For our purposes, such discussions generally fail to provide meaningful additional or alternative soteriological insights. I should add that although I take into consideration the environments and periods in which these authors were writing (no one writes in a vacuum), it is not my intention here to provide a comprehensive sense of these circumstances and their influences on each author. Owing to the paucity of historical evidence available, especially in the case of medieval scholars, such an enterprise would be extremely speculative.

As I noted earlier, the four central figures of this book are Ghazālī, Ibn ʿArabī, Ibn Taymiyya, and Rashīd Riḍā. Although quite diverse, this sampling is by no means exhaustive or inclusive of all the major schools of Islamic thought, such as the Shiʿite, Māturīdite, and Muʿtazilite. Nor is it even representative of the diversity of viewpoints within the schools of thought represented here. With regard to milieus, although I reference scholars of various backgrounds, my main selections tend to represent Middle Eastern, Muslim majoritarian contexts. (Even the Andalusian Ibn ʿArabī made his way to the Middle East, where he composed his most important works.) And, needless to say, all four are men. Nevertheless, the authority of these four exceptional, paradigmatic figures extends well beyond their respective schools of thought, and they have long received and will likely continue to receive extensive attention throughout the Muslim world. Their interpretations of Islam, therefore, are extremely and unusually consequential.

Given the importance of each of the four scholars, and the benefits of comparative analysis as a means of evaluating their conclusions, I explore some related discussions by later thinkers, identifying instances of influence, convergence, and divergence. While these are not intended to be comprehensive analyses of all the potential issues that arise from the writings of the four central figures, they nonetheless shed light on the significance of the soteriological claims and contentions that we shall encounter. Chapter 1 focuses on Ghazālī’s optimistic inclusivism and includes a brief excursus on the comparable soteriological views of the much later twelfth/eighteenth-century Indian theologian Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1176/1762). Chapter 2 highlights Ibn ʿArabī’s distinctive mystical vision and briefly looks at its impact on Sufi thought, as seen in the works of the Persian Shiʿite philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1641). Chapter 3 is a discussion of the writings of Ibn Taymiyya, the controversy surrounding his universalist arguments for a noneternal Hell (including a dispute over whether this

was really his position), a response by the Ash‘arite scholar Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), an expanded defense of universalism by Ibn Taymiyya’s disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), and a strikingly similar twentieth-century debate between Maulana Muhammad Ali (d. 1951) of Lahore and the Western scholar James Robson (d. 1981). Chapter 4 features Rashīd Riḍā’s relatively eclectic approach and surveys some noteworthy modern trends, from the famous neorealist Sayyid Qutb’s (d. 1966) move toward exclusivism to South African activist Farid Esack’s promotion of pluralism.

Given the differences in both emphasis and audience, these discussions tend to be uneven. Compared with Ghazālī, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya devotes more of his attention to the question of whether Hell will one day cease to exist. Furthermore, the inclusion of the mystic Ibn ‘Arabī might seem out of place in light of his unique esoteric approach. T. J. Winter explains why, in his work, he chose to focus only on exoteric discussions of salvation:

Islamic mysticism has been excluded, not because it is less normatively Islamic than the [formal exoteric theology] but because of the difficulties posed by the elusive informality of much Sufi discourse, with its tropical and hyperbolic features of poetic license whose aim is typically to interpret or arouse transformative affective states rather than to chart fixed dogmatic positions.

Nevertheless, Winter rightly implies that were one to examine the esoteric, Ibn ‘Arabī would be a logical selection. Given his widespread influence, the inclusion of his vision provides an important additional layer of depth. And while it is true that Ibn ‘Arabī’s discourse is often elusive, the relevant aspects of his soteriology are sufficiently discernible.

I show that while none of the central figures of this book qualify as soteriological pluralists, neither are they exclusivists. Instead, all four represent different shades of inclusivism. While most leave the door of salvation open for sincere individuals who have encountered but not accepted the final message, Ibn Taymiyya, whom I classify as a limited inclusivist, vindicates only unreached non-Muslims. Yet this constitutes only his interim position, as he, along with Riḍā, favors ultimate universalism: both conceptualize Paradise as the final abode of every single person. Among the two nonuniversalists, Ghazālī maintains that all but a small group of people will be saved, while Ibn ‘Arabī argues that Hell’s inhabitants will eventually begin to enjoy their stay in the Fire despite being veiled from God—a view that I classify as “quasi-universalism.” Thus, all but one anticipate the ultimate deliverance of the damned from chastisement, and in the eyes of all four, *at least* the overwhelming majority of humanity will ultimately enjoy a life of pleasure and contentment.

In demonstrating this, I explain how some of these scholars’ views have been misunderstood and misrepresented in contemporary works. I also show that although they were motivated by diverse historical, sociocultural impulses (the precise identification of which is outside the scope of the present work), belonged to various schools of thought, and espoused dissimilar soteriological doctrines, their discussions of the salvation of Others emphasize the same two themes: (1) the superiority of Muḥammad’s message, which is often tied to the notion of divine justice and the idea that the way God deals with His servants is related to their acceptance or rejection of His final message when its truth has become manifest, and (2) the supremacy of divine mercy (*rahma*), which is often associated with the notion of divine nobility and the idea that God generously overlooks His right to punish those who may “deserve” it.

As we shall see, all four scholars seem to portray mercy as the Qur’anic God’s *dominant* attribute. This runs counter to the conclusions of scholars such as Daud Rahbar, Johan Bouman, and David Marshall, who instead reserve that description for God’s “strict” justice. This also discredits the notion that the emphasis on divine mercy is simply a *modern* hermeneutic phenomenon. What is more, like Fazlur Rahman, most of the central and peripheral figures of this book do not seem to view divine mercy and justice as being mutually opposed. Even when universalists characterize God as being overwhelmingly merciful and not bound by considerations of justice, they may nevertheless assert that it would be unjust for God to punish people in aeternum. This latter

assertion is to be sharply contrasted with those of scholars, particularly Muʿtazilites, who made it a point to stress the correlation between justice and unceasing torment. (In fact, the Muʿtazilites often included unrepentant sinning believers among Hell's eternal inhabitants.) Common among the four scholars is the view that mercy is—in either all or most cases—the reason God punishes in the first place: to rectify those plagued with moral imperfections. According to the universalists, chastisement cures all spiritual ills; once Hell's inhabitants submit to God wholeheartedly they will find themselves in a state of happiness—a position that is incompatible with the assumption held by scholars such as Rahbar and Marshall that, according to the Qur'an, divine mercy will never be granted in the afterlife to those who reject faith.

Be that as it may, we have no reason to think that either universalism or quasi-universalism has come to represent the prevailing view among Muslims in general and Muslim scholars in particular. I suspect that Jane Smith and Yvonne Haddad arrived at the conclusion that the conception of a noneternal Hell has “prevailed as the understanding of the Muslim community” for two reasons. First, Ibn Taymiyya's student Ibn Qayyim, whose arguments for universalism Smith and Haddad briefly cite, is a high-profile scholar whose writings have helped shape popular modern movements. Later in this book, however, I show that the intellectuals of these movements have responded to his universalism in radically different ways. Second, Smith and Haddad ascribe the position that punishment is of limited duration to the creeds of the major Sunni theologians Ṭahāwī, Ashʿarī, and Nasafī. But as I noted earlier, their statements on God pardoning Hell's inhabitants are strictly in reference to believers and should be regarded as responses to the position maintained by numerous Muʿtazilites and Khārijites that sinners, Muslim or otherwise, will be eternally damned. The material I present in this book corroborates Binyamin Abrahamov's assessment that the dominant stance among traditional scholars has been the eternality of Hell, specifically, damnationism. Yet I part company with Abrahamov in my assessment of the nature and degree of that dominance. Given the enduring influence of the scholars examined here (in general and in matters soteriological), it is problematic, particularly from an academic standpoint, to claim that damnationism represents orthodoxy—unless, of course, one chooses to side with a particular theological group. One would be justified to think of the matter as having been ultimately unresolved, especially since orthodoxy in Sunni Islam is generally based on *informal* authority, namely, the community of scholars. Indeed, there was never a formal council that declared (or could declare) the noneternality of Hell and/or its punishment a heresy. More important, while most traditional scholars have been damnationists, the proportion of those who were not is greater among the leading figures of Islamic intellectual history. Ibn ʿArabī's argument for a noneternal punishment has attracted scores of Sufis, and a wide variety of groups have adopted Ibn Taymiyya's universalism. A crucial component of the latter's argument is the notion that universalism, far from being discredited by appeals to an alleged consensus, can be traced to some of the most well-known Companions of the Prophet. If there is any truth to this claim, it would be an understatement to describe the implications as profound, and this would certainly cast a shadow of doubt over the prevailing reading of Islamic scripture. Whatever the case may be, the doctrine that every single person will one day live a life of contentment is significant enough that it cannot be placed in the same category as other minority opinions that have attracted far fewer advocates. The latter include the view that Hell's inhabitants will eventually perish, that is, ultimate annihilationism, and the rare opinion attributed to, among others, Jahm ibn Ṣafwān (d. 128/745) that both Heaven and Hell are finite in duration. To claim without qualification that eternal damnation is characteristic of Islam is to mask centuries of serious scholarly debate and alternative scriptural considerations.

Likewise, one must be cautious when addressing the seemingly more popular question of whether Islam promotes exclusivism, inclusivism, or pluralism. We can affirm that, while there is no one orthodox position, pluralism in Islam, as in Christianity, has historically been marginalized. The fact that, as we shall see, the inclusivists Ibn ʿArabī and Riḍā are recurring figures in contemporary pluralist works only seems to underscore this point. Indeed, it is not easy to locate *indisputable* examples of premodern Muslim pluralists. Even Rūmī, the Sufi poet invoked by the contemporary pluralist Abdolkarim Soroush in a quotation cited earlier, occasionally makes

statements one would not expect from a pluralist, as when he rebukes a man named al-Jarrāḥ for adhering to Christianity rather than Islam. (If these statements represent poetic license, might not the same be true of Rūmī's seemingly ecumenical declarations?) Even so, it is also not easy to locate *indisputable* examples of premodern Muslim exclusivists. Thanks in large part to scriptural statements such as “We do not punish until We have sent a messenger” (Q. 17:15), countless Muslim scholars have regarded limited inclusivism (the view that the unreached may be saved) as a bare minimum. Even Nawawī, whose ostensibly exclusivist pronouncement I cited earlier, maintains that God will excuse non-Muslims who never “heard” of the Prophet for not adhering to his way. Accordingly, when surveying classical commentaries of the Qur'an, we typically find both that pluralist interpretations are effectively ruled out and that salvation is rendered possible for the unreached.

Now between exclusivists and pluralists, it is perhaps not as difficult to identify premodern examples of the former. There is in fact at least one prominent medieval theologian whose proclamations are unmistakably exclusivist: the fifth/eleventh-century Andalusian scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). His exclusivism, developed in an Iberian context “fraught with *Reconquista* angst,” is predicated on the unusual belief that mere exposure to anything having to do with the Islamic message—even if all one hears are rumors and inaccuracies—makes one culpable for not converting to Islam. Ibn Ḥazm goes so far as to make the baseless, perhaps defensive assertion that this “minimal/superficial exposure” criterion represents the consensus view. What is more, he claims that all of humanity has somehow encountered the Prophet's message and—at least in the case of sane adults—can therefore be considered reached. For a medieval scholar, the combination of Ibn Ḥazm's stringent soteriological stance and his assessment of the facts on the ground is nothing short of bizarre. It is telling that when a scholar like Ghazālī argues for an inclusivist doctrine that clearly violates Ibn Ḥazm's alleged consensus, he never once bothers to mention this “consensus” view; if there really were anything near a consensus, we would have expected preemptive responses by Ghazālī to his many potential detractors. It is also revealing that Ghazālī wastes no effort to defend a claim that was surely obvious to most premodern scholars: some non-Muslims, especially those living far from Muslim lands, had never heard anything—positive or negative—about the Prophet.

I would hazard that the norm in Islamic thought, even in modern times, has been to recognize the existence of at least some contemporaneous non-Muslims who do not qualify as reached, and that, accordingly, inclusivism has generally prevailed. What is less clear, however, is which form or forms of inclusivism have been dominant. But since inclusivism covers a wide spectrum of orientations, this obscurity is hardly insignificant. Consider, for instance, the case of a limited inclusivist who espouses a minimal/superficial exposure criterion to determine which non-Muslims are culpable, while also holding that, in order to be saved, the unreached must independently arrive at a specific form of monotheism, one that rejects, for instance, mainstream Christian doctrines concerning Jesus. We might consider this an extreme form of limited inclusivism: although it allows for the salvation of some non-Muslims, the line between it and exclusivism appears blurry.

It is remarkable that only one of the four central figures of this book (Ibn Taymiyya) espouses limited inclusivism, yet not an extreme form, and only as an interim position. Again, the other three advocate more liberal versions of inclusivism (of varying degrees), and all four envisage a Paradise that is one day replete with non-Muslims. To be sure, none of these scholars—living in contexts far removed from our own—would have recognized a reading of Islamic scripture that leaves room for the contemporary assertion that “the people who died on September 11 were nothing more than fuel for the eternal fires of God's justice” (and not simply because some of the victims were Muslim).

More important is the following observation: all four scholars utilize most of the same texts (the exceptions being a few hadiths and other reports that usually function to supplement a particular argument), emphasize similar themes, and yet, because of differences in hermeneutic strategies and motivations, arrive at conclusions that are notably dissimilar. The dissimilarities become even more pronounced when one takes into consideration the other positions surveyed in this book. Whatever one's reading, Islamic scripture undoubtedly gives rise to the kind of

polysemy that makes the often monolithic characterizations put forth by numerous writers a demonstration of apologetic misrepresentation, polemical oversimplification, or intellectual laziness. Indeed, we would do well to avoid simply echoing a single side of a particular debate, even if that side happens to represent a majority.

“What does Islam say about the fate of non-Muslims?” This question should not be taken lightly, for its implications are far-reaching: how one views the Other affects how one interacts with the Other. While it is true that Islamic law (*sharī‘a*) lays out the rules of proper conduct, its interpreters are scholars whose theological presuppositions undergird their approaches to law. And while soteriology is but one of many factors that govern intra- and interfaith relations, it is a factor nonetheless. A universalist paradigm, for instance, might promote recklessness on the assumption that all will be made well; or it might spur people to acknowledge the good—actual or latent—within every single individual on the assumption that although life’s paths are many, they all somehow lead to the Garden. Exclusivists might go to great lengths to win over the hearts of non-Muslims in an attempt to save them; or they might look down upon them as the damned—and treat them as such. By the same token, what “Islam says” about the salvation of Others also affects how Others regard Islam and its adherents. However one chooses to approach the question at hand, I submit that a deeper appreciation of the rich diversity of possibilities is both necessary and overdue.

All Paths Lead to God: The Case of Ibn ‘Arabī

The Andalusian Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) is one of the most well-known mystics of world history. He argues that God will judge individuals according to what they can discern. But, because all paths lead to God, even the wicked, barred from Paradise, will one day be spared chastisement. This chapter explores Ibn ‘Arabī’s unique esoteric approach to the topic of salvation, and includes a brief look at the writings of another mystic, Mulla Sadra (d. 1640), also known as Sadr al-Dīn al-Shirāzī. Ibn ‘Arabī.

The epithet “the grand master” (*al-shaykh al-akbar*) belongs to Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, more commonly known as Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240). His is “the great name” in Islamic theosophical mysticism.¹ Not only have his teachings “dominated much of Sufism,” but it could be argued that, with the possible exception of Ghazālī, no intellectual figure has been more influential in the history of Islam. Born into an elite family in 560/1165 in the city of Murcia in al-Andalus (Muslim Iberia) and raised from the age of eight in Seville, he had the privilege of meeting eminent scholars, including no less than the renowned philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes, d. 595/1198). While still young and, as he puts it, unable to grow facial hair, he experienced a mystical moment that forever changed his life. He subsequently withdrew from society and began to receive additional “illuminations” (or “openings”). What followed was an extraordinary encounter with Jesus, who instructed him to abandon his worldly possessions. Before long, he met again with Jesus, this time accompanied by Moses and Muḥammad. The three Abrahamic giants are said to have received Ibn ‘Arabī under their protection. Feeling impelled to journey eastward, he eventually made his way to Mecca, arriving there in 598/1202. He was so moved by his experience at the Kaaba that he began to compose what would become his magnum opus, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (*The Meccan Openings*), a voluminous work containing an extensive exposition of his Sufi doctrine. In 620/1223, he finally settled in Syria, where he completed and revised the *Futūḥāt*. It was there that he produced another influential (albeit much shorter) work, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (*The Bezels of Wisdom*), which, he maintains, was dictated to him by the Prophet in a dream and which expounds the wisdom in the teachings of twenty-seven prophets, beginning with Adam and concluding with Muḥammad himself.

With hundreds of works on a variety of topics ascribed to him, Ibn ‘Arabī is widely regarded as the most prolific of all Sufi writers. Of all his writings, however, the *Futūḥāt* and the *Fuṣūṣ* often evoke the strongest reactions by both supporters and detractors, and it is the worldview expounded in these that allows us to make sense of Ibn ‘Arabī’s approach to the topic of salvation. While one might argue that his soteriology is either pluralistic or *indescribable*, I maintain that it would be safest to classify him as a liberal inclusivist. And, as we

shall see, while he affirms the salvation of “sincere” non-Muslims, because of his belief that every single path we take is not only created by but leads to God—a God of mercy (*rahma*) and nobility (*karam*)—he maintains that *all* of humanity, including even the most wicked, will ultimately arrive at bliss.

God Is All

Adorning the walls of countless homes worldwide are decorative lists of the ninety-nine “most beautiful names” of God. These names, most of which are taken verbatim from the Qur’an, signify God’s attributes. He is Allah, the Compassionate, the Caring, the Creator, the Shaper, the First, the Last, the Vast, the Victorious, the Glorious, the Great, the Light, the Living, the Loving, the Forgiving, the Finder, the Firm, the Affirming, the Avenger, the Abaser, the Exalter, the Enricher, the Rich, the Real, the Peace, the Patient, the Propitious, the Illustrious, the Incomparable, the Noble, the Holy, the One, and so on. These names, William Chittick observes, “are the single most important concept” in Ibn ‘Arabī’s works: “Everything divine or cosmic, is related back to them.”

This takes us to one of the most controversial yet crucial aspects of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings, a doctrine that eventually acquired the name “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). According to this often misunderstood doctrine, God is “all,” not in the “pantheistic sense” but in the sense that all of creation “is a locus of manifestation for the divine names.” In other words, everything reflects God in some way and is thus a “sign” of the divine (even if the Almighty Himself remains incomparable). People are exceptional in this regard because they are “created in the form of God” and are the only beings allotted every divine attribute. Hence, meditation on every divine name is required for those seeking both a better understanding of reality and the actualization of their potential for human perfection.

It is precisely the attempt to comprehend all the properties of the divine attributes that defines the *Futūḥāt*, and it can only be an attempt given the Almighty’s limitlessness. Indeed, “God is greater” than any of our conceptualizations of Him. But God’s vastness entails a complication. As Ibn ‘Arabī explains, “Neither your heart nor your eye ever witnesses anything but the form of your own belief concerning God.” Thus, people “worship only what they believe” about God; “they only worship that which is created.” This leads to the bold proclamation that everyone is, in a sense, an “idol-worshiper,” as each person’s conception of the divine represents a particular “carving” of an idol, and it is only through such idols that people can recognize God. Fortunately for humanity, the Compassionate pardons this form of idol worship.

By the same token, Ibn ‘Arabī simultaneously maintains that, because God is “all,” everyone, to some extent, “knows” God, even if many are oblivious to the fact that the very objects they witness (not to mention themselves) manifest divine names. What is more, because these names exist “within every conceptualization” of the human mind, every single belief is, in a sense, true and meaningful. This, Ibn ‘Arabī informs us, is a fact recognized by those attaining to perfection who actualize all the divine names latent in their pure natural disposition (*fiṭra*): they “have been given an all-inclusive overview of all religions, creeds, sects, and doctrines concerning God” and deem none of them erroneous and consider none of them vain, as it “was not without purpose that [God] created the heavens and the earth and everything in between” (Q. 38:27). And because all things—including all religions and systems of thought—reflect an aspect of the divine, they also lead to the divine. As the Qur’an itself affirms, “Everything is brought back to God” (57:5); “all journeys lead to Him” (5:18).

Even so, the many paths, however true and meaningful they may be, are not all the same. Some people, particularly those who fail to attain a “proper balance” of all the divine attributes contained in their pure natural disposition, approach God in a state of “wretchedness”; others approach Him in a state of “felicity.” “The road of felicity,” Ibn ‘Arabī proclaims, “is that set down by revealed religion, nothing else.” (This is despite the fact that the “felicitous” recognize the significance of the other roads.) Conversely, it is only “the existence of the revealed religions” that produces unbelief, “resulting in wretchedness.” Remarkable, therefore, are the implications:

God gives to His servants from Himself, and also on the hands of His messengers. As for what comes to you on the hand of the Messenger, take it without employing any scale. But as for what comes to you from the hand of God, take it with a scale. For God is identical to every giver, but He has forbidden you from taking every gift.

God's creation is replete with both the beneficial and the harmful. It is His revelations, however, that allow us to distinguish the one from the other and to recognize our moral responsibility: "accept whatever the Messenger gives you, and abstain from whatever he forbids you" (Q. 57:7). The ideal, therefore, is the narrow yet inclusive "straight path" of Muḥammad.

The Superiority of the Final Message

Although God has "assigned a law and a path to each" community (Q. 5:48) (such as the Torah revealed to the followers of Moses), one revelation, Ibn 'Arabī asserts, stands above the rest:

The Muḥammadan leader chooses the path of Muḥammad and leaves aside the other paths, even though he acknowledges them and has faith in them. However, he does not make himself a servant except through the path of Muḥammad, nor does he have his followers make themselves servants except through it. He traces the attributes of all paths back to it, because Muḥammad's revealed religion is all-inclusive. Hence the property of all the revealed religions has been transferred to his revealed religion. His revealed religion embraces them, but they do not embrace it.

In metaphorical terms, the "path of Muḥammad" is like sunlight, while all other divinely revealed religions are like starlight. With the appearance of the former, the latter disappear (which is not to say that they no longer exist) and, if anything, only contribute to the luminosity of the former. The final message is nothing short of exceptional.

Despite Ibn 'Arabī's clear preference for his own tradition, in recent years there has been an intensifying debate over whether he leaves the door open for the kind of religious pluralism that accepts other faiths in a post-Muḥammadan context as independently valid paths to Paradise (however conceived)—paths that are not necessarily equal to Islam in all respects but are at least equally salvific. The pluralist Frithjof Schuon (d. 1998), a leading thinker of the Sophia Perennis school of thought, maintains that he does. Schuon writes:

[It] has been argued that [Ibn] 'Arabī denied [the universality of religion] when he wrote that Islam was the pivot of the other religions. The truth is, however, that every religious form is superior to the others in a particular respect, and it is this characteristic that in fact indicates the sufficient reason for the existence of that form. Anyone who speaks in the name of his religion always has this characteristic in mind; what matters, where the recognition of other religious forms is concerned, is the fact—exoterically inconceivable—of such recognition, not its mode or degree.

It is easy to appreciate Schuon's contention when one considers what is reputed to be Ibn 'Arabī's most well-known lines of poetry, at least in the West:

My heart has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks.

And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's [Kaaba] and the [tablets of the Torah] and the book of the Koran.

I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take, that is my religion and my faith.

Nevertheless, as T. J. Winter rightly notes, claims of Ibn 'Arabī's pluralism "need to be tempered by a survey of his less eirenic statements." In the *Fuṣūṣ*, for example, Ibn 'Arabī explicitly rejects the doctrine of the divine incarnation in Christ (on the assumption that it restricts God) and says that its advocates are guilty of unbelief (*kufr*). As we shall soon see, this charge of unbelief is in fact qualified and does not entail the damnation of all or even most Christians. Still, in other writings, Ibn 'Arabī, in passing, pejoratively refers to certain Christians as associationists (*mushrikūn*), those who ascribe partners to God.

More significant, however, is the fact that within the *Futūḥāt* itself, Ibn ‘Arabī avers that Muḥammad’s message is not simply superior to other messages but supersedes them as well: it does not abrogate their sacred *truths*, but it does abrogate their sacred *rulings*. Thus, were the previous messengers alive during Muḥammad’s time, “they would have followed him, just as their laws [*sharā’i’uhum*] have followed his law [*shar’ahu*].”

Although it would be tempting to dismiss Ibn ‘Arabī’s ostensibly conflicting statements concerning religious diversity as contradictions resulting from his mystical approach, I submit that we have no reason to jump to this conclusion (even if such contradictions exist in other matters). Again, Ibn ‘Arabī’s so-called Oneness of Being doctrine renders all beliefs, religious or otherwise, “true” in at least one sense: they are of divine origin; they are “real.” From this standpoint, even “a temple for idols” can be worthy of love. But true or real is not necessarily the same as proper or salvific. It is the divine message that indicates which beliefs and practices lead to supreme contentment. In the pursuit of salvation, perfection, and satisfaction, Ibn ‘Arabī points to the “path of Muḥammad.” God, he writes, conveys to humanity “His actual situation on the tongue of His messengers so that He will have an argument against those who contradict His speech and who say about Him things that oppose what He has said about Himself.” In short, to reject Muḥammad’s message is to challenge God. But it is only the “insincere” rejection of this (or any other) divine message that leads to the lowest prospects.

“... Until We Have Sent a Messenger”

Ibn ‘Arabī writes extensively of the rewards awaiting the righteous and the punishments to be meted out to the rejecters. But what of those who do not recognize the very best of what God provides as such? What of those who are simply not convinced by the proofs of His messengers, particularly Muḥammad? Like Ghazālī, Ibn ‘Arabī does not present Islamic supersessionism as grounds for the damnation of earnest non-Muslims. Instead, he invokes the familiar theme of mercy. But he goes a step further than Ghazālī, espousing a liberal form of inclusivism comparable to the doctrine ascribed to Jāḥiẓ. As we saw in the previous chapter, Ghazālī concedes that Jāḥiẓ’s liberal inclusivism is rationally sound, yet he ultimately dismisses it as scripturally indefensible. Ibn ‘Arabī challenges us to reread scripture. Consider his explication of the Qur’anic pronouncement “We do not punish until We have sent a messenger” (17:15):

Note that [God] did not say, “until We send forth a person.” Hence the *message* of the one who is sent must be established for the one to whom it is directed. There must be clear and manifest proofs established for each person to whom the messenger is sent, for many a sign [*āya*] has within it obscurity or equivocality such that some people do not perceive what it proves. The clarity of the proof must be such that it establishes the person’s [messengership] for each person to whom he is sent. Only then, if the person refuses it, will he be taken to account. Hence, this verse has within it a tremendous mercy, because of the diversity of human dispositions that lead to a diversity of views. He who knows the all-inclusiveness of the divine mercy, which God reports, [*encompasses*] *all things* [Q. 7:156], knows that God did this only because of mercy toward His servants.

By extension, non-Muslims who do not recognize Muḥammad’s messengership are not culpable. Following this line of reasoning, it is noteworthy that the Qur’an speaks of unbelievers among pagans and People of the Book being damned only after having received “clear evidence” (*al-bayyina*) (Q. 98:1–6). The wording of this verse would suggest that the *clarity* of the final message must be established before one could be chastised for refusing to accept it. This interpretation arguably finds support in other passages such as Q. 4:115, a verse that condemns anyone who “opposes the Messenger, after guidance has been *made clear* to him [or her].”

Accordingly, sincere non-Muslims for whom the Prophet’s “messengership” (or “evidence” or “guidance”) has not been “made clear” may qualify as true *muslims*, even if some of their beliefs are incongruous with his message, as in the case of Trinitarian Christians. As Ibn ‘Arabī observes, the term *islām* in the Qur’anic context (specifically, 3:19) denotes “submission” (*inqiyād*), not reified Islam. Hence, owing to the wide range of human

submissions to the divine and the consequent wide range of manifestations of bliss, there are—on the basis of mystical insight—at least 5,105 “degrees of the Garden,” only twelve of which are designated specifically for “the Muḥammadan community.” Hell is the everlasting abode not of anyone who does not identify as a follower of Muḥammad but, rather, of those who refuse to surrender to God after the truth has been made clear to them. These are the “guilty ones” (Q. 36:59) who “deserve” their fate. Ibn ‘Arabī identifies these “people of the Fire who are its [true] inhabitants”—an expression derived from a prophetic report—as the arrogant (*mutakabbirūn*), who, like Pharaoh, claim to be divine; associationists (*mushrikūn*); those who divest God of His attributes (*mu‘aṭṭila*); and hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*). Their dismissal of the reality of the one God—a reality affirmed in the pure natural disposition—constitutes a failure to recall their primordial covenant with God:

When your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness concerning themselves, He said, “Am I not your Lord?” and they replied, “Yes, we bear witness.” So you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, “We were not aware of this.” (Q. 7:172)

Be that as it may, the “people of the Fire who are its [true] inhabitants” can only encompass those for whom the proofs of the message are established (in the manner I described earlier). This is why, again, it is only “the existence of the revealed religions” that produces unbelief “resulting in wretchedness.” The “people of the Fire,” therefore, do not include “earnest” individuals who have never had what they could recognize to be a compelling encounter with any form of the message, particularly the message conveyed to all prophets: “There is no god but Me, so serve Me” (Q. 21:25).

Nevertheless, Ibn ‘Arabī’s soteriology ensures that everyone will at some point—even after death—be exposed to at least one of God’s messages in a manner that is manifestly compelling prior to being consigned either to Heaven or Hell. This is implied by Ibn ‘Arabī’s position on the fate of deceased children, those who are mentally impaired, and those who lived during the interstices between prophets, that is, the people of the gap (*ahl al-fatra*). As reported in a hadith, and as a confirmation of divine justice, Ibn ‘Arabī maintains that such individuals will be distinguished from the rest of humanity and assigned a messenger on the Day of Resurrection. This messenger-of-resurrection, whose message would presumably be unanimously regarded as genuine, will present his people with a tremendous test: he will command them to enter the Fire. Those who obey will find it cool—just as Abraham found the fire of this life when his people cast him into it (Q. 21:69)—and they will proceed to the Garden; those who refuse to enter the Fire will be thrust into its painful depths. Interpreted literally or metaphorically, this is a daunting test, but one that is at least symbolically similar to those of this life. (As we shall see, although Ibn ‘Arabī writes about “the heights” [*al-a‘rāf*] [Q. 7:46–49], he does not identify this landmark as either the site of this test or a place of limbo.)

We may speculate, then, that non-Muslims in a post-Muḥammadan world who have never had a compelling encounter with any form of the message (that is, the Qur’an or any of the earlier revelations) will be treated in the manner of the people of the gap. As for righteous non-Muslims who, in this life, accept at least one form of the message (for example, the Torah) and do not reject other forms on account of insincerity, Ibn ‘Arabī’s soteriology suggests that they will be among the inhabitants of Paradise. We may suppose that the same is true of non-Muslims who earnestly investigate the final message after recognizing aspects of the truth within it yet who pass away without ever converting to Islam.

Compared with Ghazālī’s form of inclusivism, Ibn ‘Arabī’s criterion is ostensibly simpler (albeit more vague) and seems to expand considerably the circle of *muslim* non-Muslims. It would be superfluous for Ibn ‘Arabī to provide specific examples of “goodhearted” non-Muslims living “far beyond the lands of Islam” or to list the specific features of the messagethat one must encounter to be considered “reached.” Again, for Ibn ‘Arabī “proper” exposure is simply that which the recipient finds compelling. (According to Ghazālī, learning about certain qualities of the Prophet and his message is presumed to be necessarily compelling—even if the recipient fails to recognize this.) Additionally, unlike the soteriology articulated by Walī Allāh centuries later, Ibn ‘Arabī

does not—explicitly at least—limit his inclusivism to those who fail to recognize the reality of revelation on account of their “stupidity” or obsession with worldly affairs.

As with both Ghazālī and Walī Allāh, however, Ibn ‘Arabī’s inclusivism is predicated on a controversial reading of scripture. To be sure, it is not immediately apparent that Q. 17:15 leaves the door wide open for the salvation of sincere non-Muslims who would normally be considered among the reached. Yet one need not be rooted in Sufism to appreciate the logic of Ibn ‘Arabī’s tenable, thought-provoking interpretation. What is, therefore, most unusual about his soteriology is his stance regarding the wicked: although barred from the Garden, even they will come to enjoy a life of bliss—where one would least expect it.

A Paradisiacal Hell?

Among the denizens of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Hell, only believers (whatever their religious affiliation)—punished in the first place because of their sins—will one day delight in the rich gardens of Paradise. Those remaining behind will never leave. Yet while Ibn ‘Arabī’s interpretation of scripture renders Hell eternal, the same is not true of its punishment. This is borne out in his discussion of the following Qur’anic passage:

The wretched ones will be in the Fire, sighing and groaning, there to remain for as long as the heavens and earth endure, unless your Lord wills otherwise: your Lord carries out whatever He wills. As for those who have been blessed, they will be in Paradise, there to remain as long as the heavens and earth endure, unless your Lord wills otherwise—an unceasing gift. (11:106–108)

These verses, Ibn ‘Arabī explains, indicate that the “wretched” will remain forever in the Fire, but never describe “the state within which they will dwell” as “unceasing”—an adjective reserved for the “gift” awaiting the “blessed.” Instead, we are informed that God “carries out whatever He wills”—a statement Ibn ‘Arabī highlights. He also draws attention to Q. 56:33, which states that Heaven’s provisions will “neither be limited nor forbidden” (*lā maqtū‘a wa-lā mamnū‘a*). Islamic scripture, he observes, never offers a similar proclamation concerning the torments of Hell. This is notwithstanding the Qur’anic reference to the “lasting punishment” (*‘adhāb al-khuld*) (10:52) that “will not be lightened” (*lā yukhaffaf*) (2:162). Notice, however, that the “evildoers” will merely “taste” the “lasting punishment” (10:52). If “tasting” signifies a finite phenomenon, then it would only be during this “tasting” period that chastisement would “last” and “not be lightened.”

Ibn ‘Arabī’s conviction in the temporality of punishment is derived principally from his conception of divine mercy. Citing the Qur’anic pronouncement “My mercy encompasses all things” (Q. 7:156) and a prophetic report that quotes God as saying, “My mercy outstrips My wrath,” Ibn ‘Arabī asks rhetorically, “How could there be everlasting wretchedness? Far be it from God that His wrath should take precedence over His mercy ... or that He should make the embrace of His mercy specific after He had called it general!” Because wrath in the form of punishment experienced by the inhabitants of Hell is “a thing,” an ephemeral accident (in the philosophical sense), we should expect mercy to encompass it, limit it, and dominate it. It is not of the essence of God, the Necessary Being, and is therefore a fleeting “deviation”; it must necessarily “dwindle and become nonexistent.” Reality, therefore, is circular: it begins and ends in mercy. Reflecting further, Ibn ‘Arabī provides us with the following rumination:

I have found in myself—who am among those whom God has innately disposed toward mercy—that I have mercy toward all God’s servants.... The possessors of this attribute are I and my peers, and we are creatures, possessors of fancy and personal desire. God has said about Himself that He is “the most merciful of the merciful” [*arḥam al-rāḥimīn*] [Q. 7:151], and we have no doubt that He is more merciful than we are toward His creatures. Yet we have known from ourselves this extravagant mercy. How could chastisement be everlasting for [the wretched], when He has this attribute of all-pervading mercy? God is more noble than that!

Nobility is a recurring theme in Ibn ‘Arabī’s soteriological expositions, as it is often paired with mercy to explain why God does what is best and forgives what is worst. The Qur’an states, “Let harm be required by an equal

harm, although anyone who forgives and puts things right will have his [or her] reward from God Himself" (42:40). With this principle in mind, and given God's nobility and superiority, Ibn 'Arabī insists that He (the Forgiving) "will pardon, show forbearance, and make things well." How else would He treat His creatures, all of whom are weak and dependent on Him? As one hadith instructs, one should only assume the best of God. Even if we suppose that scripture both promises eternal reward and threatens eternal punishment, the Qur'an only tells us that we should "not think that God will break His promise" (14:47); there is no similar affirmation of His threat. And were God to limit or qualify His threat, it would allow for a deeper appreciation of His mercy. We know that God is "the best of those who are merciful" (Q. 23:109), but we have no evidence that He is "the best of those who punish."

It is true that mercy, nobility, and forgiveness are not the only divine attributes. They must be considered alongside those that denote "subjugation, domination, and severity." Ibn 'Arabī finds that both types figure prominently in the Qur'an. What allows him to accentuate mercy, however, is not only the aforementioned passages but also the special positioning of the divine names "the Compassionate (al-Raḥmān), the Caring (al-Raḥīm)" (Q. 1:1). These names appear in the *basmala* formula ("In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Caring") with which the first sura of the Qur'an begins and which precedes all but one of the remaining suras (the exception being sura 9). What better confirmation of mercy's precedence?

When, then, will mercy triumph over wrath through the cessation of chastisement? Ibn 'Arabī identifies this moment as the termination of the Day of Resurrection, a "day" that will likely last fifty thousand years. At that point, all of the "people of the Fire" will finally recognize what they had affirmed in the primordial covenant: they are God's servants. It is, therefore, only when the wretched end their discord (*shiqāq*) and submit to God wholeheartedly that their wretchedness (*shaqā'*) will cease. For, in the first place, their chastisement was the result of their protesting God's actions. Thus, they "will pluck the fruit of their words [at the primordial covenant], 'Yes, [we bear witness]' [Q. 7:172]. They will be like those who submit to God after apostasy. The authority of 'Yes' will rule over everything and finally give rise to their felicity."

This transformation will necessarily occur because the accidents of "falsehood, unbelief, and ignorance" are temporal, whereas "faith, truth, and knowledge"—attributes of the divine—endure forever. All people will continue to exist on account of their connection to the Necessary Being; it is only their evil accidents that will cease. What other possibility could there be? The very injunction to worship God, against which Hell's inhabitants rebelled, was itself an accident. Ibn 'Arabī classifies this kind of worship as "worship based on commands" (*'ibādat al-amr*), meaning that it accords with the precepts of the prophets. Because "every accident comes to an end" in the afterlife, the wretched, along with everyone else, will only engage in the form of worship they had always engaged in, without necessarily realizing it: "essential worship" (*al-'ibāda al-dhātiyya*). They will recognize that their very existence is defined by submission: "There is no one in the heavens or earth who does not come to the Lord of Mercy as a servant" (Q. 19:93) So while the wicked currently enjoy the freedom to sin, they will one day find true bliss in the removal of this freedom. (Although Ibn 'Arabī's God is "the only true and real actor," He has nonetheless "compelled" people "to have free choice" in matters of this life. God's "will in the things is that they be what they are.")

To his imaginary interlocutor who insists that Hell's denizens could never attain God's mercy because of His justice, Ibn 'Arabī invokes the Qur'anic message of hope: "My servants who have harmed themselves by their own excess, do not despair of God's mercy; God forgives *all* sins" (39:53). Accordingly, [God] brought forgiveness and mercy for the repentant and those who do good deeds, and He also brought it for those who are "immoderate," those who do not repent. The latter He forbids to despair, and He confirms the point with His word "all." Nothing could be greater in divine eloquence concerning the final issue of the servants at mercy.

One apparent problem with this assertion, however, is that although God "forgives all sins," as the Qur'an clarifies elsewhere, He forgives everything but *shirk* (associating partners with Him) (4:48). Associationists who

“choose other protectors beside Him, saying, ‘We only worship them because they bring us nearer to God’ ” (Q. 39:3), are therefore denounced. This, Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies, is not because of their *shirk* per se but because of their rejection of “worship based on commands”: they “set up” for themselves “a special road of worship which was not established” for them by a revealed law.⁸⁰ Yet, like everyone else, these associationists were a party to the primordial covenant. Even they will be forgiven, Ibn ‘Arabī intrepidly declares, once they come to realize that, in reality, they had only ever worshiped God, “for no worshipper worships any but God in the place to which he ascribes divinity to Him.” To support this claim, Ibn ‘Arabī points to the Qur’anic statement “Your Lord has ordained [*qadā*] that you should worship none but Him” (17:23). Thus, when the Qur’an states that “each party” of those who ascribe partners to God rejoices “in what is theirs” (30:32), Ibn ‘Arabī interprets this as real happiness in the hereafter, as such rejoicing is “not known in this life, or rather, it occurs for many but not all.” Similarly, the Qur’anic statement “God is pleased with them, and they with Him” (98:8) refers to everyone, and not, as most assume, those residing in Paradise.

Time and again, Ibn ‘Arabī challenges his readers to think outside the proverbial box. Interestingly, he finds an additional hint of mercy toward the wretched where one might least expect it: the Qur’anic term for punishment, *‘adhāb*. Although it is used frequently and only in the context of threats, given the common Sufi belief that scripture contains multiple layers of meaning and that God’s judicious selection of words contains lessons for those who reflect, Ibn ‘Arabī is keen to observe that the three-letter root of *‘adhāb* (‘-dh-b) connotes sweetness, pleasantness, and agreeableness. What this signifies is that the Qur’an’s recurring use of this particular term in referring to chastisement is “good news from God,” as it mysteriously suggests that the suffering in Hell will become “sweet when mercy envelops” those consigned to it. Thus, the punishment of the Fire is called *‘adhāb* “due to the sweetness [*‘udhūba*] of its food.” And it is precisely the initial agonizing torments that allow one to taste of this “sweetness.”

Like Ghazālī, Ibn ‘Arabī conjures the image of a compassionate physician causing a patient harm for the greater good. Chastisement is therapeutic; it rectifies. This is to be expected given mercy’s pervasiveness and predominance; “wrath disposes itself only through mercy’s ruling property. Mercy sends out wrath as it will.” “Sweetness,” therefore, will manifest itself once the punishment serves its purpose, that is, when the wicked reform themselves, consciously submit to God, and resign themselves to their fate, surrendering any hope of leaving Hell. At that point, in a dramatic show of compassion, the nineteen angels guarding Hell (Q. 74:30–31) will stand in the way of the angels of chastisement, and the Fire, like Abraham’s fire, will feel cool. After this first bliss, the “damned” will never again feel pain and will actually find their perpetual “punishment” pleasant. And this enjoyment will be tremendous: “There is no surprise if roses are found in rose gardens. Surprise comes from roses in the pit of the Fire.”

Meanwhile, the people of Paradise will find pleasure in climbing a wall separating Heaven and Hell, gazing at the latter, and appreciating their own peace and security, which they would otherwise take for granted. Interestingly, this very wall, which Ibn ‘Arabī conflates with “the heights” (*al-a rāf*), is taken to be yet another sign of the noneternality of punishment on the basis of its Qur’anic description:

On the same Day, the hypocrites, both men and women, will say to the believers, “Wait for us! Let us have some of your light!” They will be told, “Go back and look for a light.” A wall with a gate will be erected between [the hypocrites and believers]: inside it lies mercy, outside lies torment. (57:13)

According to the Sufi worldview, that which is inside (*al-bāṭin*) takes precedence over that which is outside (*al-zāhir*). Since mercy is located inside the wall, it constitutes the essence of the wall. And given mercy’s supremacy, it must eventually conquer chastisement, making it accessible to Hell’s inhabitants. Curiously, however, the gate within the wall will remain forever shut. But this impediment of passage is, as we shall soon see, to the benefit of people in both abodes.

The Veil

Although all will eventually attain felicity as they proceed toward God, the righteous will be spared the “deserts, perils, vicious predators, and harmful serpents” found along the way. Furthermore, God will continue to distinguish heavenly reward from hellish “torment” even after the completion of the Last Day. Wrath in the form of experienced chastisement will cease to be for the reasons I noted earlier. But since the divine attributes are necessarily eternal, and since wrath is one such attribute, the Fire must be everlasting, and the “attribute of chastisement” must “remain forever” with the true inhabitants of Hell. Accordingly, even though the latter will be in a state of bliss, there will always be a fear that they may once again be punished—an imagined scenario that will never actually take place. Ibn ‘Arabī explains:

No chastisement will remain in the Fire except imaginal chastisement within the presence of imagination, in order that the properties of the divine names may subsist. A name necessitates only the manifestation of the property that its reality demands. It does not specify the presence nor the individual.... Hence, whenever the property of the Avenger becomes manifest within an imaginal body or a corporeal body or in anything else, its rights are fulfilled through the manifestation of its property and effectivity. So the divine names continue to exercise effectivity and determine properties for all eternity in the two abodes, and the inhabitants of the two abodes never leave them.

In this way, although all of God’s “creatures are drowned in mercy,” the “property of mutual contradictoriness” of His names persists.

Imagined punishment, however, is not the only distinction between the inhabitants of the two abodes. More remarkable is “the veil.” According to the Qur’an and hadith corpus, Heaven has eight gates, while Hell has seven. All fifteen gates will eventually open, but a mysterious “eighth gate” of Hell will remain shut. This eighth gate constitutes “the veil” concealing God. While the people of Heaven will find true, euphoric pleasure in the indescribable vision (*ru’ya*) of the divine, the people of Hell will *always* be veiled (*maḥjūb*) from that vision.

The Qur’an states that the inhabitants of Gehenna (*jahannam*) will neither live nor die (20:74). As Ibn ‘Arabī explains, they will not “die” because they will “find relief through the removal of pain”; they will not “live” because “they will not have a bliss like the bliss of the folk of the Gardens, a bliss that would be something in addition to the fact that He has relieved them in the abode of wretchedness.” Yet even in the inability to behold their Lord there is mercy:

Were God to disclose Himself to [Hell’s inhabitants] in the Fire, given their precedent evildoing and their worthiness for punishment, that benevolent self-disclosure would yield nothing but shame before God for what they had done, and shame is chastisement—but chastisement’s period has come to an end. Hence they will not know the joy of witnessing and vision, so they will have bliss while being veiled. The goal is bliss, and it has been achieved with the veil—but for whom? How can the bliss of the vision of God be compared to bliss with the veil!

Despite Hell’s obvious inferiority, another reason its inhabitants will be better off barred from Paradise relates to their very nature. Because they are immoderate, Ibn ‘Arabī informs us, they will have extreme “constitutions,” either “hot” or “cold.” Hell itself consists not only of scorching heat but also of biting cold (*zamharīr*). This is made evident in the hadith corpus; the Qur’an is less explicit, stating that Paradise has neither scorching heat nor biting cold (76:13) and referring to a fluid in Hell that, according to one interpretation, is “extremely cold” (*ghassāq*) (38:57). Ibn ‘Arabī holds that God, out of His wisdom, will keep “the bitter cold of Gehenna for those with hot constitutions and the Fire for those with cold constitutions.... If they were to enter the Garden with the constitutions that they have, they would suffer chastisement because of the Garden’s equilibrium.”

As such, happiness has nothing to do with physical locations per se but everything to do with “what is accepted by the constitution and desired by the soul.” Thus, wherever “agreeableness of nature and attainment of desire are found, that is the person’s bliss.”

In the final analysis, Ibn ‘Arabī cannot be described as a universalist. But considering his belief that all of humanity will ultimately attain harmony and contentment, he is what I would describe as a quasi-universalist. And yet there are instances in which he appears to contradict himself and approach something resembling universalism. In the *Fuṣūṣ*, for example, he leaves open the possibility that Hell’s denizens may in fact enjoy “an additional, distinct bliss like the bliss” of the people of Paradise. There are other instances in which one wonders why he does not go the extra step of affirming this “additional bliss.” In his discussion of “the veil,” for example, Ibn ‘Arabī cites the Qur’anic statement “On that Day they will be veiled from their Lord” (83:15). Never does he point to the expression “on that Day” as a hint of temporary veiling. In contrast to his insistence that scripture never explicitly describes punishment as everlasting, it is curious that he stretches the meaning of this particular verse to reflect an eternal reality. Considering the esoteric nature of his writings, however, it is to be expected that some interpretations will seem selective.

Excursus: Corroborating Ibn ‘Arabī’s Quasi-Universalism: The Case of Mullā Ṣadrā

Ibn ‘Arabī’s quasi-universalism impressed a variety of Muslim scholars of later generations, from the Persian exegete ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 736/1335) to the Yemen-based mystical writer ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 832/1428) to the Ottoman “master of Islam” (*shaykh al-Islām*) Muḥammad ibn Ḥamza al-Fanārī (d. 834/1431) to, perhaps most significant of all, the Persian Shi’ite philosopher Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, more commonly known as Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640). As “one of the most profoundly original and influential thinkers in the history of Islamic philosophy,” Ṣadrā has left an indelible mark on Iranian and Shi’ite history. Born in approximately 980/1571 in Safavid Iran, he lived in an era in which Twelver Shi’ism was the official state religion. Ṣadrā’s own world, however, encompassed both Shi’ite and Sunni thought. In his search for “transcendent wisdom,” he mastered speculative theology (*kalām*) and the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), and Ibn ‘Arabī. Much of Ṣadrā’s eclectic study was conducted early in his life in the city of Isfahan; however, his Sufi leanings earned him the wrath of the religious establishment, and he was eventually forced into exile. Following a familiar pattern, he withdrew from society to connect with his spiritual self. This was followed by a return late in his life to his native city of Shiraz, where he spent much of the remainder of his days teaching.

The differences between Ṣadrā and Ibn ‘Arabī are many, thanks to Ṣadrā’s range of influences, but so too are their similarities. This becomes apparent when comparing their worldviews and soteriologies. Most relevant for our purposes are two of Ṣadrā’s works: his magnum opus, *al-Asfār al-arba‘a al-‘aqliyya* (The four intellectual journeys), which was completed by 1038/1628, and his commentary on the Qur’an’s first sura, which was composed four to six years later. Like Ibn ‘Arabī, Ṣadrā speaks of the human limitation in conceptualizing the divine and thus each individual’s “idol-carving,” God being the true object of all forms of worship, God being the final destination of all human paths, and essential worship. Ṣadrā also affirms that Hell will become an abode of bliss, as the end decreed by “the most merciful of the merciful” will be one of joy for all of creation. He even adopts the punishment-to-sweetness (*‘adhāb-to-‘udhūba*) argument and presents mercy as the “root” of chastisement. Thus, all harm is in fact beneficial; divine wrath is itself a manifestation of divine mercy.

Ṣadrā’s quasi-universalism may surprise those familiar with some of his other works, particularly *al-Ḥikma al-‘arshiyya* (*The Wisdom of the Throne*), which may have been his final work. In it, Ṣadrā quotes one of Ibn ‘Arabī’s many affirmations of bliss within Hell and then states, “Now as for myself and what I have learned from the studies and practical (spiritual) exercises to which I have devoted myself, it would appear that Hell ... is not an abode of comfort.” Instead, it “is only a place of pain, suffering, and endless torment; its pains are continuous and constantly renewed, without ceasing.” These particular statements, however, must be read in context. As Mohammed Rustom notes, given the Safavid repression of certain forms of Sufi philosophy (or theoretical Sufism), Ṣadrā occasionally conceals or minimizes his connection to Ibn ‘Arabī. The *Ḥikma*, compared with most of

his other writings, uses less technical language and is accessible to a broader audience. Thus, Rustom argues, in the *Hikma* Ṣadrā disassociates himself from his real views on Hell for the sole purpose of avoiding censure. (It should be recalled that he was expelled from Isfahan precisely for his Sufi views.) This is corroborated by James Morris's observation that "Ṣadrā's suppression here in [the *Hikma*] of all but the faintest allusion to his agreement with Ibn Arabī is in keeping with one level of intention in his work," that is, to reach a broad audience without undermining himself.

It is, therefore, telling that Ṣadrā uses the word *appears* in his statement on Hell in the *Hikma*. In contrast, in the *Asfār*, he writes, "There is no doubt that the entry [into Hell of] the creature whose end is that he should enter Hell" will be "agreeable" to "his nature and will be a perfection of his existence," and that which is agreeable "is not chastisement." As we have seen, and as we shall see in the next chapter, making the case for the salvation of the damned is often a recipe for controversy.

Closing Thoughts

In relation to his argument for inclusivism, Ibn 'Arabī's case for quasi-universalism requires a deeper appreciation of his esoteric approach to scripture: he reinterprets certain Qur'anic verses (for example, 30:32 and 98:8) and terms (for example, *adhāb*) in ways that a myriad of theologians have found especially unsettling and perplexing. It is thus not surprising that aspects of his soteriology have often been misunderstood. Yet Ibn 'Arabī maintains that any interpretation of scripture that differs from the "literal meaning" is a "most wondrous" error: how could one give preference to the authority of one's own "reflection and consideration" over that of the divine? Many of Ibn 'Arabī's opponents, of course, would ask the same question of him. And his response would be that his reading of scripture is guided by insights gleaned through mystical "unveiling" (*kashf*) and is, therefore, inaccessible to many. It is true that compared with most philosophers (*falāsifa*) and speculative theologians (*mutakallimūn*) Ibn 'Arabī appears to be less concerned with utilizing outside systems of thought. Nevertheless, given his obvious uniqueness, the claim made by Chittick that Ibn 'Arabī "places himself squarely in the mainstream of Islam by basing all his teachings upon the Koran and the Hadith" must be qualified.

Be that as it may, it is difficult to overestimate Ibn 'Arabī's contribution to Islamic soteriology. Inspired by the notion that God is "all," he casts a new light on Islamic scripture—one that draws attention to passages and linguistic nuances that buttress the case for universal mercy. As with Ghazālī, Ibn 'Arabī's writings represent a challenge to coreligionists who fail to recognize the extent of God's compassion. Yet Ibn 'Arabī moves beyond Ghazālī, espousing a notably more inclusive inclusivism. In the absence of any direct evidence, it is reasonable to assume that he, like Ghazālī, conceived of Paradise as being the more popular final destination. But even if this were not the case, Ibn 'Arabī speaks of mercy and forgiveness being granted to the "people of the Fire who are its [true] inhabitants"—a group Ghazālī designates as "those who will perish." Given the "accidental" nature of sin, Ibn 'Arabī's quasi-universalism addresses the theodicean problem we encountered in the previous chapter, of whether a merciful God would punish His servants eternally for having committed temporal sins. But Ibn 'Arabī's conception of overwhelming mercy also manages to account for divine wrath, which is made manifest through the very existence of Hell (however paradisiacal it may seem) and "the veil" blocking its inhabitants from the *real* reward.

Ibn 'Arabī was not the first proponent of quasi-universalism. The heresiographer Abū al-Faḥ al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) in his *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal* (Sects and creeds) traces this doctrine back to at least the third/ninth century: Jāḥiẓ, the same Mu'tazilite who reportedly espoused liberal inclusivism, is also said to have maintained that the inhabitants of the Fire will eventually be transformed, adopting a fire-like constitution and experiencing pleasure within an abode that is agreeable to their nature. Whether Jāḥiẓ actually advocated this is an issue of

debate, but this reference in a text that predates Ibn ‘Arabī is one indication that this doctrine was, in some form or another, in circulation early on. Even so, it would be reasonable to assume that Ibn ‘Arabī’s particular elucidations and elaborations are all his own. In a telling passage, he confesses that he knows of no other person who has ever portrayed God’s contentment with His creation in such a positive light: “I have called attention to it here,” he explains, “only because mercy has overcome me at this moment.” (Interestingly, Ṣadrā, writing four centuries later, would claim that he himself had met no one who realized just how merciful God will be in the life to come.) To those traditionally trained scholars who deem quasi-universalism unjustifiable and overly optimistic, Ibn ‘Arabī offers the following:

[There is a] difference between him who desires the spreading of God’s mercy among His servants—whether they be obedient or disobedient—and him who desires to take God’s mercy away from some of His servants. This second person is the one who prohibits the mercy of God that embraces all things, but he does not prohibit it to himself. Were it not for the fact that God’s mercy takes precedence over His wrath, the possessor of this attribute would never attain to God’s mercy.

Although Ibn ‘Arabī’s mercy-for-all approach has attracted many supporters, damnationist critics have long regarded it as a heretical innovation. Other critics include prominent advocates of an alternative vision of universal mercy. In the next chapter, we shall encounter a traditionalist rejection of quasi-universalism—in favor of universalism itself.

KNOWING GOD: IBN ‘ARABĪ AND ‘ABD AL-RAZZĀQ AL-QĀSHĀNĪ’S METAPHYSICS OF THE DIVINE by Ismail Lala [Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, Brill, E-Book: 9789004401648; Hardback: 9789004400511]

Can we know God, or does he reside beyond our ken? In Ibn ‘Arabī and ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī’s *Metaphysics of the Divine*, Ismail Lala conducts a forensic analysis of the nature of God and His interaction with creation. Looking mainly at the exegetical works of the influential mystic, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), and one of his chief disseminators, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 736/1335?), Lala employs the term *huwiyya*, literally “He-ness,” as an aperture into the metaphysical worldview of both mystics. Does Al-Qāshānī agree with Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception of God? Does he agree with Ibn ‘Arabī on how God relates to us and how we relate to Him? Or is this where Sufi master and his disciple part ways?

“Is God apophatic or kataphatic, according to Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī?” This was the first question I was asked at a medical ethics conference by a stranger who had discovered my doctoral study was to do with the ubiquitous Sufi. Notwithstanding the abrupt nature of the enquiry, or perhaps because of it, I felt vindicated, for my research addressed this very issue through analysis of the term *huwiyya* (literally, He-ness or ipseity). But, in so doing, it also followed advice I was given during my first lecture: “Most of you will not make it in academia,” our professor announced rather matter-of-factly, “for those of you who do, pick a guy.” A question and a guy—these, then, are the twin pillars upon which is constructed the edifice of my research. My question: What is the true nature of God? My guy: ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 736/1335?), a disciple of the enigmatic Sufi theorist, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240). So, technically, there are two guys, but one must go through the master to get to the disciple.

This work is about the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī and one of the chief disseminators of his thought, al-Qāshānī, specifically. But it is also about mysticism, generally, and the way we perceive God, and the way He interacts with us and we with Him. With articles devoted to him numbering in the thousands, commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* alone in the hundreds, and translations in the scores, Ibn ‘Arabī surely is, and has been, one of the most widely read and studied mystics of all time. His style is so tightly honeycombed with preciousness and involutions that it has at once enamoured and beguiled all who have had the good fortune, and bad luck, to stumble upon it.

So, what sets this work apart from its precursors? For the answer, we must reconnect with our two acquaintances: the idea—a detailed analysis conducted from primary texts on a single term that is conspicuously emblematic of his “monism,” and which is scrupulously contextualized in Ibn ‘Arabī’s two most enduringly popular works, the *Fuṣūṣ* and the *Futūḥāt*; and the guy—al-Qāshānī, who Toshihiko Iztusu in his seminal work, *Sufism and Taoism*, relies on more than Ibn ‘Arabī himself to elucidate his Sufi *Weltanschauung*. The former adheres to the Joycian maxim that in the is contained the universal and is a window that no one has yet peeked through; the latter a lacuna that no one has yet filled.

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Excerpt: “But words are things,” urges Byron, “and a small drop of ink, /Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces/That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.” It may make millions think, but it would be folly to suppose the millions were of the same epoch, or that it would make people of varying eras think in the same way. Equally, a word may elicit an effect alone, or may be contextually directed, or often be both, but in very different ways. The temporal aspect, following a synchronic/diachronic bifurcation, has already been

mentioned. But Toshihiko Izutsu also ramifies the denotations of terms into either “basic” or “relational” meanings. A hierarchy of words is further posited by the linguist with “focus-words” at the semantic summit. The worldview the Qurʾan creates and perpetuates, says Izutsu, is the product of an intricate lattice of key terms, which generate linguistic microcosms with a nominal nucleus, or focus word. These semantic fields, with the focus-word at their center and key terms orbiting them, are bound to other semantic fields by polyvalent key terms that act as connective tissue fastening these fields together to form an entire conceptual outlook. While this unitary, synchronic method frames our analysis of the lion’s share of Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī’s works, here a historical aperçu is dimly adumbrated, for if Ibn ʿArabī and al-Qāshānī use the term in their own way, their notion is still informed by huwiyya’s historical dimension. Huwiyya is an abstract noun from the pronoun huwa (he) and comes directly from the lexicon of Hellenistic learning. It has also been suggested that it is a loan-word based on the Syriac hāywā. The relationship between huwiyya and mawjūd, and which should be used for the same Greek word, constituted a significant dilemma for Arabic translators of Greek philosophical texts. Indeed, Ibn Rushd’s (d. 595/1198) “overwhelming interest” was “in the difference between ‘mawjūd’ or ‘huwiyya’ which signifies the essence of the thing and the ‘mawǧūd’ or ‘huwiyya’ which signifies the true. ... Should they use ‘mawǧūd,’ despite its misleading paronymous form, or coin a new word and say ‘huwiyya?’”

First appearing as a cameo in the works of Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī’s (d. 259/873) circle, there is a close association between huwiyya and the abstract noun anniyya as both are translations for the Greek terms on (“being”) and einai (“to be”). Huwiyya, nonetheless, is also employed by these early translators as an antonym for “otherness.” Adamson suggests that huwiyya is most used to denote on whereas anniyya is mainly reserved for einai. Yet there are cases when the converse is also true. The interchangeability between the terms suggests that the difference between them was not sufficiently delineated. Indeed, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) resolutely declares the two to be synonyms. In al-Kindī’s circle, then, huwiyya and anniyya are used to refer to God, in terms of his existence, which is often presented with the ordinal adjective alūlā (the first). This means the nature of God’s existence is not expressed by the term, only its priorness to everything. However, there are also passages of the Theology of Aristotle translated by al-Kindī’s circle that clearly deny that the First has being. Thus, the term is also applied to that which does have being first, which is the intellect. Adamson hypothesizes that: ... the Adaptor is trying to hold on to the idea that God is being, though he is prepared to admit that God does not have being, perhaps thinking that this would imply that God has being as something external attributed to him. In this case, huwiyya (and anniyya) is “the immediate effect and proper effect of the First, with all things being indirect effects through the mediation of the intellect.” There are other times, though, when it refers to the unknown-ness of God. We are told that His huwiyya is “not perceived in any way. He is the one whose name is unknown, to say nothing of His substance.” Another connotation of anniyya and huwiyya used by this early theologian/ translator is that it is an articulation of God’s simplicity, meaning, “His being [is] nothing other than what it is” because “if God had attributes distinct from His being, He would not be truly one.” Again, this is not an outright negation redolent of the hypertranscendentalism of the Muʿtazilites, for it is conceded that though God has no attributes because He is their cause, He is still connected to them in the way a cause is connected to the caused. In this sense, then, He does have attributes. Also, at other times, it seems positive attributes, at least in principle, can be said to be identical to God’s huwiyya. Al-Kindī himself further uses huwiyya to underscore the simplicity of God he equates God’s being to His simplicity. This means the primary difference, according to al-Kindī, is that God’s huwiyya does not have multiplicity; everything else, in contrast, does. The term huwiyya thus has the following early meanings:

1. It denotes God in terms of His priorness to everything else.
2. It is a term for the first thing to have being, that is, the intellect.
3. It connotes the unknown-ness of God, who cannot be apprehended by intellects.
4. It represents the positive attributes of God that are His being insofar as He is their cause but are not, He as He is one and simple.

5. It means the simplicity and unity of God, as opposed to the multiplicity of all other things.

By al-Fārābī's time, *huwiyya* was already very much part of the philosophical lexicon, which is why the late philosopher, Ibn Rushd, is somewhat of an outlier in seeking to explain the term. Al-Fārābī, without feeling the need to elucidate the term, makes an important distinction between *māhiyya* and *huwiyya*: the former connotes conceptual essence, and the latter, an individual, existing manifestation of that essence, such as man, and Fred who is a man. He also distinguishes between mental and extra-mental (that is, proper) existence, with *huwiyya* being employed for the latter. The only example where there is no distinction between *māhiyya* and *huwiyya*, according to al-Fārābī, is in God. This is because every essence needs an external stimulus to bring it into existence, notwithstanding God. *Huwiyya* seems to be a term of extraordinary versatility. In the *Liber de Causis*, it is applied to the whole gamut of beings, from God, the first Being, to pure intelligences, to beings with sensible existence. Indeed, in Ibn Rushd's commentary of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, it is "said to assume as many meanings as Aristotle has categories." Moreover, according to Ibn Rushd, not only may *huwiyya* be used for substances and accidents, it may also denote both the essence of a thing, and whether it is true, that is, actual or existing. In both cases, the word is the same, but the meaning very different. A.M. Goichon identifies eleven uses for *huwiyya* in *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā*, the primary denotation being "a concrete being considered universally." Ibn Sīnā expounds much on the distinction between *māhiyya* and *huwiyya* initially presented by al-Fārābī, and the term clearly plays a pivotal role in his philosophy. All these meanings and associations of *huwiyya* were available to Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī, and inform their own usage of the term, though one does not find in either a conscious philosophical use of it. Indeed, Ibn 'Arabī displays little appetite for the application of unvarnished philosophical explanations and categorizations for the nature of God. The absolute essence of God can never be comprehended, much less categorized. Yet we would be hasty if we assumed this was the Andalusian's last word on the matter. For God, in the manner he relates to His creation—through the Names—opens avenues for comprehension and categorization. And it is in this sphere that Ibn 'Arabī avails himself of every mode of thought and articulation in order to depict and display the nature of God and the nature of his interaction with the Cosmos.

The *huwiyya* of God, says Ibn 'Arabī, in its numinous transcendence does not admit of any of the Aristotelian categories. But shun the categories he does not because it furnishes him with an adaptable framework within which to characterize and convey the communicable nature of God—His comparability (*tashbīh*). And how this facet, though not God in His supra-rational transcendence (*tanzīh*), relates to and is realized in the phenomenal world. Denis Gril is correct, then, to adduce Ibn 'Arabī's treatment of the Aristotelian categories as an example of "the way in which a Sufi appropriates concepts that may originally be used for another purpose, for his own purposes." Yet to consider that Ibn 'Arabī would acknowledge his debt to, or even actively appropriate and absorb the categories, and use it as his point of departure for *huwiyya* would be presumptuous. Being part of his cultural heritage, these ideas palpitated in his mind, ideas that would be resurrected in the domain of his explanation and argumentation. To conflate organic absorption and conscious assimilation would, nevertheless, constitute an error and a leap, both of which play down his originality and play up the contribution of his precursors. Though I am unwilling to acknowledge active assimilation of Aristotle's categories, it is nonetheless undeniable that Ibn 'Arabī makes passive use of the categories to answer two fundamental questions, as Gril puts it: "What can we know about God and how did the universe come into being?"

In other words, what is the connection between "the Essence, the Attributes and the Acts?" The problem with these questions and the reason Ibn 'Arabī never employs the categories to delineate the transcendent reality of God is that "the knowledge we can have of God is strictly contrary to that which we have of the universe." This is because "the categories allow us to think about the world but not its transcendent principle." The true nature of God—His *huwiyya*—thus cannot be expressed in positive terms. This does not indicate that the Names of God, His Attributes, are extra-categorical, nor that they had not been subjected to categorization prior to Ibn

‘Arabī. Indeed, though not overtly associated with or connected to Aristotelian categories, divine Attributes and their implications for the Cosmos had kindled the curiosity of many philosophers and theologians in the Islamic tradition before Ibn ‘Arabī entered the scene. Ibn ‘Arabī’s contribution is not in the way he applies the categories; it is the way in which he adapts them. Not allowing application of the categories to God in His Absoluteness and even expressing displeasure at the mere contemplation of the absolute divine Essence (but contemplating it anyway), Ibn ‘Arabī applies the two categories of action and affection to the divine Names. Names such as “the Avenger” (al-Muntaqim), “the Grateful” (al-Shakūr) and “the One Who responds” (al-Mujīb) to advertize how God reacts and responds to His creation. His unique contribution, however, is in establishing a “correspondence between divine nature and the form of the world.” Each existent in the phenomenal world, Ibn ‘Arabī proclaims, has a noumenal counterpart on “the divine side.” The mystic thus theologizes Aristotelian categories. Furthermore, because he has installed an ontological connection between the divine Names and the cosmos, the function of the categories becomes ontological as well as theological. *Huwiyya*, then, is a term that sits at the intersection of the Venn diagram of Hellenistic thought, the philosophical tradition of Islam and Sufism. This study does not scrutinize the appropriation of the term from Hellenistic learning to Sufi literature, nor does it analyze the evolution and various incarnations of it in the Islamic mystical tradition. It simply charts Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Qāshānī’s own usage of the term and what they mean by it in their principal works: the *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ* for Ibn ‘Arabī (with a greater emphasis on the latter), and the lexicons of al-Qāshānī and his *Ta’wīlāt*. A direct comparison of the two mystics in the context of this term will then be attempted to disinter the similarities and display the differences, and to decipher what these say about the authors. As with any such study, the point of departure must be each author’s own definition of the term under investigation, inasmuch as it has been defined by them, and it is from this definition that this study, too, begins.

*** The foregoing attempts to explain why in al-Qāshānī’s works his methodology, his style and his content vary so widely from his master; why he is so reticent to explore all the meanings of *huwiyya* even though he clearly subscribes to them; why he bowdlerizes and expurgates Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysics; and why he modifies Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought. It is because his audience was different, and because his purpose was different. This is not to suggest that all al-Qāshānī has achieved is the production of a sanitized and simplified conceptual outlook of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought. It is indeed sanitized and simplified, but in emphasizing the uncontroversial aspects of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought and accentuating the pedagogical facet of the *Fuṣūṣ* and the *Futūḥāt*, al-Qāshānī forges a new worldview as well. This new conceptual outlook is the cumulative effect of all the small changes, additions and omissions al-Qāshānī makes to Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Weltanschauung*, thereby creating a metaphysics that is not only faithful to his Sufi master, but also one more in keeping with the spirit of his time. Al-Qāshānī’s world, though one of more religious tolerance in general, appears more restrictive in terms of the acceptance of Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas. Indeed, we know that al-Qāshānī was fending off attacks, not only from exoteric scholars, some of whom anathematized him, but also from powerful Sufi orders generally, and prominent Sufis specifically. The Andalusian, conversely, enjoyed widespread celebrity and renown in his final years. Al-Suyūṭī lists scores of masters in the traditional sciences of Ḥadīth, fiqh and tafsīr who approved of Ibn ‘Arabī during this period in Damascus. Many of these traditional scholars even considered the Sufi to be the pole (qutb) of his era. Ibn ‘Arabī could therefore afford to be daring, vibrant and even a little reckless. He could afford to direct his works solely to the Sufi adepts and obscure it for everyone else. Al-Qāshānī had no such luxury. In a new world of suspicion and cynicism towards Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas, of many exoteric and Sufi detractors, and few allies, he had to assume the mantle of defender and educator. And it is around these two objectives that all his works orbit. This meant that his works had to be instructive and succinct, they had to be faithful to the school but uncontroversial, they had to encapsulate the major tenets of Ibn ‘Arabī’s highly abstruse thought but be simple enough for a beginner. With all these demands, walking along the slenderest of tightropes, al-Qāshānī

produced his lexicons and the Ta'wīlāt, and if it does not meet all the above criteria, it certainly comes close.
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UNSAING GOD: NEGATIVE THEOLOGY IN MEDIEVAL ISLAM by Aydogan Kars [Oxford University Press, 9780190942458]

What cannot be said about God, and how can we speak about God by negating what we say? Traveling across prominent negators, denialists, ineffectualists, paradoxographers, naysayers, ignorance-pretenders, unknowers, I-don't-knowers, and taciturns, **UNSAING GOD: NEGATIVE THEOLOGY IN MEDIEVAL ISLAM** delves into the negative theological movements that flourished in the first seven centuries of Islam.

Aydogan Kars argues that there were multiple, and often competing, strategies for self-negating speech in the vast field of theology. By focusing on Arabic and Persian textual sources, the book defines four distinct yet interconnected paths of negative speech formations on the nature of God that circulated in medieval Islamic world. Expanding its scope to Jewish intellectuals, *Unsaing God* also demonstrates that religious boundaries were easily transgressed as scholars from diverse sectarian or religious backgrounds could adopt similar paths of negative speech on God.

This is the first book-length study of negative theology in Islam. It encompasses many fields of scholarship, and diverse intellectual schools and figures. Throughout, Kars demonstrates how seemingly different genres should be read in a more connected way in light of the cultural and intellectual history of Islam rather than as different opposing sets of orthodoxies and heterodoxies.

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Why Sufism, and Why the Thirteenth Century?

Traveling across negators, denialists, ineffectualists, paradoxographers, naysayers, ignorance-pretenders, unknowers, I-don't-knowers, and taciturns, this book aims to introduce the apophatic theological positions that developed in the medieval Islamic world. It is particularly interested in tracing their circulation among Sufis, and specifically in the thirteenth century. I should add a note, however brief, in justification of my choice to concentrate on thirteenth-century Sufism in this book. I will mention only three main reasons, which respectively correspond to the current literature on apophasis in Islam, comparative mysticism, and theories of mysticism.

First, Sufis of the thirteenth century compose the most unexpected yet prominent group cited in the current scholarship of apophaticism in Islam. The 1970s witnessed the rise of the concept "apophasis" in the study of religion, as a term that indicates not just a speech-act but also a new, ethicalized divine transcendence associated with mysticism. Within this broader turn in reinterpreting negative speech in religion and philosophy, a large body of works on Islam has cited primarily thirteenth-century Sufi masters, especially Ibn al-ʿArabi and Rūmī, as the foremost representatives of Islamic apophasis or negative theology.¹ In this background of scholarship, it is paradox and mysticism that widely come to mind when we talk about apophaticism. Ibn al-ʿArabi and Rūmī are by far the most cited names for apophasis in Islam, while Henry Corbin's (d.1978) list added Persian Sufi masters who lived in the same century, such as Najm al-Din Kubrā (d.1221), (Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī (d.1336), and (Aziz Nasafi (fl.13th CE). A closer focus on this period and its figures not only reveals how forms of apophaticism adopted by these Sufis fit into the larger Islamic world but also elucidates what was apophatic in theological context—in which sense, under which specific historical conditions and discursive regulations, and with which peculiar performative dimensions. Through a focus on Sufism, I will test whether the common equivalence of mysticism and negative theology is tenable. This study suggests that it is not.

Second, the description of thirteenth-century Sufism as the pinnacle of Muslim apophaticism reflects the broader description of the period in a comparative scholarly perspective. These were the most exciting times for the study of apophaticism—the golden age of Abrahamic apophatic theologies—as Michael Sells remarked:

The 150-year period from the mid-twelfth to the beginning of the fourteenth century constitutes the flowering of apophatic mysticism. Almost simultaneously, the apophatic masterpieces of the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian traditions appeared, which would include, among others, the writings of Ibn `Arabi (d. 1240), Rumi (d. 1273), Abraham Abulafia (d. ca. 1291), Moses de Léon (d. 1305), the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Beguine mystics culminating with Hadewijch (fl. 1240) and Marguerite Porete (d. 1310), and Meister Eckhart (d. ca. 1327).

Apophasis lived on after this period in the post-exilic Kabbalah of Isaac Luria [d.1572], in the Spanish mystics, in Jacob Boehme [d.1624], and widely throughout the Islamic tradition. Yet it never again held as central a place in mystical language.' This argument is extremely enticing for any student of comparative mysticism. What might be the reasons for such a synchronic and widespread blooming—if indeed this was the case—of apophaticism across kin religions? Why did such apophaticism never resurface?

While the depictions of the thirteenth century as the pinnacle of Sufism are widespread, the extent to which these representations inherit the earlier orientalist or Muslim modernist baggages is not always clear. The preeminent British scholar of Sufism, Arthur Arberry (d.1969), for example, adopted an essentializing yet popular decline paradigm of Sufism, wherein the thirteenth century became the period when Islamic mysticism reached its climax and then gradually decayed (for nearly eight centuries!), never to recover.' An in-depth study of apophaticism in Islam up to the end of the thirteenth century provides a better understanding for such larger comparative perspectives on mysticism. The present study does not find substantial evidence in support of a conspicuous flowering of apophaticism on the divine essence among Muslims during this period. Paradoxical forms of negative theologies did intensify, but we also witness the decay of other forms that were more powerful in the previous centuries. Hence this study refuses to uphold the thesis of the thirteenth-century flowering of apophatic theologies among "the daughters of Abraham." We will unearth strong trans-religious interactions of apophaticism, particularly among the Muslim and Jewish mystical and philosophical traditions. On the other hand, these cross-pollinations developed much earlier than the thirteenth century, and mostly beyond the mystical currents of these religions.

The final reason is related to an even broader theoretical challenge on the relationship between mysticism and its institutionalization. The supposed opposition between mysticism and institutional religion has long overshadowed the study of religion as well as Sufism. Like Arberry, Spencer Trimingham (d.1987) in his **SUFI ORDERS IN ISLAM** (1971), among other influential studies, depicted a progressively institutionalized history of Sufism, which meant for both men the gradual regression of authentic mysticism in Islam. This commonly presumed opposition between institutional religion and mysticism has been challenged since the late 1970s. Most remarkably, a group of comparative religionists developed what is called the constructivist approach, which has literally reversed the perennialist claims on mysticism and highlighted the importance of religious institutions, doctrines, scriptures, and established norms and practices in grounding, catalyzing, and even constructing mystical experiences. Accordingly, mysticism is not the experiential, authentic seed of religious institutions and doctrines but rather their fruit. Within this theoretical context, how apophaticism relates to the institutionalization of mysticism emerges as a pivotal question that awaits a historically grounded answer. Depending on the theoretical position a religionist adopts, the expectations will be diametrically opposed to each other. Does the organization of mysticism in the form of orders [tawā`if] and idiosyncratic methods [ṭarīqāt] associated with specific eponymous Sufi masters inhibit, or rather intensify apophaticism among Sufis?

The assumed flowering of apophatic mysticism curiously follows the beginning of the long process of the formation of Sufi orders. Yet an unresolved theoretical dilemma appears here: many scholars, including those who assume a golden age in the thirteenth century, also hold that apophaticism is inherently resistant to institutionalization, systematization, formality, and organization. Hence the relation of apophaticism with

institutionalization is yet to be addressed on historical grounds. With its focus up to the beginning of the organization of Sufism in the form of orders, the current study traces whether the emerging institutionalization catalyzed or hindered Sufi variations of apophaticism in the thirteenth century. The present analysis does not find any tangible intensification or waning in apophatic theologies as a direct result of the institutionalization of mysticism in the form of nascent Sufi groups beginning to construct and gather around the lineages, methods, and practices associated with charismatic eponymous figures. The absence of such correlation further suggests that the ubiquitous association of mysticism with apophaticism is a problematic one.

A Guide to Negative Theology: Are the Mutazilites Negative Theologians?

So who were the negative theologians among medieval Muslims? Until recently scholars of religion associated negative theology or negativist forms of theology in Islam particularly with a group of speculative theologians who emerged in eighth-century Iraq: the Mutazilites. Doxographers of other theological schools usually called them "the negators," or "deniers," of God's attributes. When Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'arī (d.936) introduced the Mutazilite view on divine unity in a few sentences, he employed the Arabic negations some seventy times in a dizzying one-page "description," if it can be called that.

The image of Mutazilites as the most famous standard-bearers of Islamic negative theology has persisted right up into modern scholarship, though what is meant by "negative theology" is rarely explained. The Mu'tazilite doctrine indeed indicates a fundamental weakness of "negative theology"—the standard term via which modern scholars of religion conceptualize apophatic performances in theology. While the Mutazilite firmly negated the reality and applicability of divine attributes to God, they did not follow the unknowability principle widely associated with negative theology. They maintained that God's essence, or the truth of Her ipseity [haqīqat dhāt Allah], was rather knowable. Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī (d.1209) observation is perceptive:

Dirār [d.815] among the theologians, and [Abū Hamid] al-Ghazālī among the later ones, argued that we do not know the truth of the ipseity of God—which is the claim of the philosophers. The majority of the theologians among us [i.e., the Ash'arites] and among the Mutazilites have argued that She is, indeed, knowable [annahā ma'lūma].

Al-Rāzī's point about the essential accessibility of God to human intellect is widely supported by a variety of prominent sources. Hence there is an unjustified leap from the negation of attributes to the divine unknowability and inaccessibility in calling a Mutazilite scholar a negative theologian. Medieval scholars were keenly aware of the difference between the two theological questions, and the Mu'tazilites embodied a reference point for scholars to clarify their own positions. In his correspondence with the eminent philosopher Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī (d.1274), the Sufi master Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d.1274) argued that "everybody who ponders seriously agrees that the divine reality is unknowable [majhūla]." In his response, Tūsī felt obliged to correct Qūnawī's generic statement, clarifying the philosophical stance that he followed:

it was necessary for Qūnawī rather to say: "the philosophers have agreed upon this (unknowability)."
For, the Mutazilite masters among the theologians assert that the divine reality is rather knowable to human beings as She is [haqīqatīhi ta'ala ma'lūma lil-bashar kamā hiya]."

In turn, Qūnawī indeed agrees with the refinement that Tūsī brings to divine unknowability. In his response to Tūsī's correction, Qūnawī indicates that he actually meant the Aristotelian philosophers and the verifier Sufis, and not theologians, by the phrase "everybody who ponders seriously." While Sufis and philosophers agree on divine unknowability, the Mutazilites state the opposite, both for Tūsī and Qūnawī. Observers like Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328) and al-Dhahabī (d.1348), however dissident they were toward these traditions, confirmed their schema.

The claim that "God is known" (in the sense of both ma'lūm and ma'rūf) is repeated and underscored in Mutazilite texts from early on. In the Epistle of Whoever Seeks Guidance [Kitāb al-Mustarshid] al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm (d.860) employs both Arabic verbs to emphasize that God is knowable: "people know that things can

be perceived as they really are and certainly known even if they are absent from us, for God is cognized and after the quotations will consistently use singular female pronoun. In both cases, the pronouns addressing God will be capitalized. I find four benefits in distinguishing my voice from the voice of my sources in terms of gender, creating a tangible tension. First, it faithfully transmits my original sources. Subtle examples of gender play in my sources will become visible, and possible anthropomorphic inclinations will make better sense, as we will see particularly in the final chapter. Second, the gender difference between the voices of author and of the sources and scholars explored in the book will better highlight the gender tension inherent in Islamic theological writings. It will constantly remind the English reader that the Arabic "He" of my sources is predominantly a term that transcends gender when referring to God. The popular Muslim conception of "He beyond 'h' and 'e'" will be better transmitted to the English reader. Third, differentiating my voice will distance me from the conventional linguistic practice in Anglophone scholarship. Through this distance, I will be able to challenge the implicit normativity of an English and Arabic (rather than, say, Persian or Turkish) theology and gender ideology in academic writing. "He" is a valid pronoun to address God only in some of the languages that Muslims speak, and this author aims to avoid the common practice of endorsing theologies that are meaningful only in these languages. Finally, my use of feminine pronouns will not only remind us of the trans-male nature of the referent, but also the unjustifiable use of male pronouns today as a transgender term in Anglophone scholarship. I hope to resist the hegemony of androcentrism in academic and theological discourse without compromising historical rigor in rendering my sources.

Compass

The current chapter has introduced the framework, content, and the basic conceptual problems in discussing "negative theology" as such. Accordingly, the move from "negative theology" to "negative theologies" is not sufficient to solve our conceptual problem in approaching Islamicate theological landscapes. Any question about "negative theology," in singular or plural, does not have a precise answer, mainly because "negative theology" is too broad and vague a term if we survey the theological questions that were asked or if we recall the breadth and depth of theological discourses. The current chapter has provided a conceptual introduction and narrowed down the scope of the next chapters to the negative theologies of the divine essence.

The following four chapters of the book thus focus on the wellspring of the field of theology: the divine ipseity. Within this narrower theological and dearer conceptual topography, they trace four distinct yet interconnected paths of negative speech on the nature of God that widely circulated in the medieval Islamicate world. These families of negative speech formations are loosely defined as "double negative," "philosophical," "paradoxical," and "amodal" apophatic paths. The formation and career of each of these paths are analyzed in a separate chapter of this book. These studies suggest that Islamicate scholars could apply more than one of these methods of negating the discourse on God's essence in different works or contexts. Moreover, the same methods of negation could be adopted by rival groups. For example, the set of strategies that define philosophical apophaticism were also adopted by the critics of philosophy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the transmission of philosophical apophaticism in Andalusia from al-Kindi to Moses Maimonides, not only polymaths like al-Batāyāwī (d.1127), but also surprising names such as the ascetic mystic Ibn Masarra (d.931) played significant roles. On the other hand, the Jewish theologian Nethanel al-Fayyūmī (d.n65) and the Shāfiʿī judge of Fa-timid Cairo, al-Qudāʿī (d.1062) followed Ismāʿīlī apophaticism by adopting not only their famous "double negation" but also their complex cosmology. In the same vein, the apophatic strategies that Sufis applied were often shared with non-Sufis, and even anti-Sufis. The cases the book introduces illustrate not only the plurality of negative theologies of the divine essence but also the porousness of intellectual boundaries between schools, sects, and religions, Judaism and Islam in particular. Conversations on "Islamic," and for that matter "Jewish" or "Christian," negative theologies, should bear in mind the theological osmosis that took place across religious traditions. If we tend to define religions as separate belief systems—and we still widely do—such definition attributes theology a decisive yet undeserved role in determining religious differences and boundaries. This study encourages finding another definition of religion that goes beyond beliefs and ideas,

insofar as it demonstrates that theologies were shared intellectual projects that had little respect for religious boundaries.

The presence of multiple ways of negating discourses on divine essence indicates that there is no single "negative theological tradition" even with reference to one problem within the Islamic intellectual heritage. While there is no unified theology or creed among Muslims in the absence of an authoritative "church," clergy, or consistent state regulation, the questions asked and the answers provided were not only diverse and contextual but also considerably overlapping among scholars and intellectuals from different backgrounds and religious affiliations. From a wider methodological perspective, the study adopts a historicist, contextualist approach to the study of negative theologies and apophysis. Accordingly, every discourse is composed of a finite set of connected propositions and performatives, and there is neither one method nor infinite methods of negating a given discourse. Apophatic possibilities are discourse-dependent insofar as the rules, methods, performative dimensions, and wider implications of negating a discourse are partially defined by the discourse itself. The book hopes to convince the reader that there is no unbounded, absolute, or infinite negation; negative speech is a historically embedded performance that should be contextualized within the multilayered discursive spaces that it affirms in order to operate.

This study displays the inherent affirmativity in any given speech performance, and its findings are in stark contrast with the popular associations of "negative theology" with broad themes like "infinite critique," antidogmatism, mysticism, or morality. Yet, the book avoids extended theoretical discussions, comparisons, or reflections on the contemporary significance of, or appeal to, apophysis and negative theology in philosophy, comparative religion, or constructive theology. The primary purpose of the current book is to inform readers about negative theologies of divine essence in Islam, introducing a historical perspective, vast fields of scholarship, and diverse intellectual schools and figures. It has a clear theoretical framework, while theoretical discussions are either completely removed or minimized in favor of deeper analysis of Islamic intellectual history. Such valuable and unavoidable philosophical discussions and comparisons should wait until we have a better grasp of Muslim negators, denialists, ineffectualists, paradoxographers, naysayers, ignorance-pretenders, unknowers, I-don't-knowers, and taciturns. Their diverse self-negating speech formations not only stated but also performed the unsayability of the excessive, saturated theme of theological discourse through their own failure of saying. <>

MYTHO-POETICS AT WORK: A STUDY OF THE FIGURE OF EGMONT, THE DUTCH REVOLT AND ITS INFLUENCE IN EUROPE by Rengenier C. Rittersma [Brill's studies in intellectual history, Brill, 9789004345850 (E-book), 978900427083 (hardcover)]

In **MYTHO-POETICS AT WORK** Rengenier Rittersma offers an account of the posthumous fame of the Count of Egmont (1522-1568), whose public decapitation triggered the Dutch revolt. Drawing from numerous European sources – pamphlets, chronicles, and literature – this monograph tries to unravel why and how the alleged freedom fighter became an icon in European thought. It demonstrates that Egmont unfurled an evocative power over several centuries and cultural regions, as his name could be deliberately instrumentalized by different groups of people in order to corroborate their own confessional and political programs.

In addition, this book offers the very first systematic study of the phenomenon of mytho-genesis and provides a conceptual model that can be applied to analogous historical myths.

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Miniature portrait of Egmont on a board game piece, Courtesy Rüstammer, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Photo: Estel / Klut.

Excerpt: For some reason, the homo ludens garners more attention than the homo prudens, and the inexperienced gambler excites the imagination more than the vigilant observer. After all, it was Lamoral of Egmont who managed to have a significant afterlife, not William of Orange, who, thanks his circumspection, outlived the Count by sixteen years. The fact that the Count of Egmont lived on after his beheading in Brussels on June 5, 1568 was not least due to this tension between playfulness and urgency, clearly shown by the frequency with which his name is mentioned in gaming contexts. Especially popular was the Count's connection to the most common symbol of early modern politics, the board game and the game of chess in particular. Between 1587 and 1787, Egmont appeared in a chess or board-game context no less than four times and, remarkably, even found material expression as "Graf v.

Egermonde" and in both literary and historiographical thematizations in the form of a copper board game piece. The counter in question must originally have been the bottom portion of a game, as it has been handed down to us with three uniform portraits of Emperor Charles V, Count Hoorne, and prince William of Orange. Given their mutual resemblance, they appear to have formed an ensemble, which only affirms the original political significance of this gaming society. In fact, since the Middle Ages, the world in general and the political power structure in particular was frequently represented by the image of the game board. It was precisely because of the mysterious realm of politics (arcana!) that this practice fulfilled an elementary need for discovery. The game was reductive insofar as it simplified the complicated vortex of political operations in terms of intersecting horizontal and diagonal lines. Did Egmont find his way into the transparent miniature world of a board game due to the disbelief that arose in the wake of the Count's conviction and execution? This would explain the existence of a cognitive match between game and myth, which, not coincidentally, often stood in relation to each other in the afterlife of Egmont: game and myth, each in their own way, offer epistemological shortcuts to complicated or incomprehensible contexts. They establish simple contours of a complex situation, which corresponds at the same time to the most elementary human life experiences. This is nothing less than an avowal of André Jolles' myth concept which, although now perhaps somewhat dated (1928), still provides fundamental insights into this phenomenon. Supplemented by the relevant studies of Hans Blumenberg and Roland Barthes, it also provides a theoretical linchpin for the present work. As the words "fundamental," "relevant" and "linchpin" already suggest, the aim here is not to apply a theoretical model. These works are rather representative of junctures that encourage reflection on the phenomenon of myth in general and "touchstones" that can be used to occasionally check and contextualize gained insights. Before highlighting the consulted myth research, a preliminary remark about the use of the words "myth" and "afterlife" is called for. "Myth" is a collective term that can be sub-divided into many categories: there are sense-giving, orientation,

foundation, origin, and end-of-time myths. As this list already shows, myths serve not only as a key cognitive tools for responding to the state of thrownness in an unfathomable universe, but also shape patterns of general human experience. For this reason, the predicate “mythical” in my view is apposite to Egmont, for its effect goes far beyond the historical figure and, at the same time, “provides normative claims and has formative power.” The mythical potency of Egmont as one of the founding figures of the young Belgian nation also shows that “history was not just known here, but (...) inhabited” and “made into an have formed an ensemble, which only affirms the original political significance of this gaming society. In fact, since the Middle Ages, the world in general and the political power structure in particular was frequently represented by the image of the game board. 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Unlike the mostly static category of the motif, which can only be expressed in a different form, the myth is distinguished by a multilayered, metamorphic and, at times, almost auto-poetical tendency. Thus, an examination of the Egmont motif would be limited to the manifestations of a fictional character, whereas its layered development and innate capacity for transformation would be ignored altogether. Yet this is exactly where the present study takes its point of departure. The terms “afterlife” and “motif” also wouldn’t cover the entire range of meaning and development of Egmont because both concepts mainly concern the phenomenon of longevity and the figuration as a literary or artistic theme, without however necessarily speaking to the aspect of its potential significance and instrumentalization. “Myth,” on the other hand, is an appropriate guiding concept for this study precisely because “myth” is an inflationary concept in German-speaking regions. For instance, it can also be applied to natural phenomena like the river Rhine and, at the same time, convey the aspect of broad cultural influence. Since the term “afterlife” is entirely applicable to certain facets of the Egmont myth, the terms “afterlife” and “myth” will be used interchangeably in the following when they signify the same thing. The theoretical work on myth is notably diffuse. One is therefore compelled – especially with regard to the specific historical approach of the present study – to take an eclectic approach by culling together relevant insights from several different fields. André Jolles’ most important contribution, for example, is the fundamental conception of myth as a “simple form,” that is, as an extraction of simple everyday life experience. With this term, he grasped the dynamic between the collective formational process (what Jolles calls “mental activity”) and mundane, but existential realms of signification and was thus able to articulate both the aspect of compression and the element of the “simple form” as a kind of “cognitive lightning rod.”

With respect to Jolles' identified simple forms, the myth is particularly suitable as a conceptual medium which offers a way out of the primordial orientation crisis for it responds to the plight of aporias by formulating concise and coherent answers: "There, where the world invented by humans is brought into being through question and answer, a form is applied which we choose to call myth." Jolles thus understood myth to be a wholly cognitive phenomenon alongside reason, which nevertheless had its own process: "Myth, which invokes concision, goes hand-in-hand with judgment, which claims universality." Hans Blumenberg was on the same wave length, though, unlike Jolles, he was mainly concerned with the philosophy of history, not morphology. He was consequently able to arrive at additional insights, such as concerning the continual appeal of certain mythical elements:

If you look at the question of where the iconic permanence of mythologems comes from, there is one answer that seems trivial and too simplistic to satisfy our expectations: the basic patterns of myths are so concise, so valid, so binding, so poignant, that they continue to persuade and remain the most useful material for any attempt to disclose the elemental facts of human existence.

Blumenberg's analysis presents nothing less than a phenomenology of myth, which, through a frequently imaginative perspectival questioning and examining of this manifestation, succeeds in revealing unsuspected dimensions. With regard to the present study, his discussion of momentousness as a formative instance and the stages of its recognition as defining moments of a myth were critical for understanding the mythogenetic process. Also serving as a key point of orientation were the reflections of the Kiel philosopher, who repeatedly emphasized the functionality of myth and especially its fundamental role in spiritual preparation. The work of Roland Barthes was also instrumental for this study, as the French theorist approached myth in a way that was yet again highly novel. In postulating the basic susceptibility of all things to mythologization – from car models to the Tour de France to food – he penetrated, as it were, the myth's mythical veneer by directing attention to its underlying structure. He thus examined his driving mechanism – the semiotic (or, according to Barthes, semiological) chain – and showed how, as in the case of a myth, the logical sequence of a given semiotic system is essentially subjected to a quarter turn: "Tout se passe comme si le mythe décalait d'un cran le système formel des premières significations." ("Everything happens as if myth shifted the formal system of the first significations sideways.") At the heart of this transposition is that the sign itself – usually just a referential husk – aggregates all meaning in this form and thereby is transformed into an identifier. Characteristic of the myth is that this act of transformation is presented as a given circumstance and culture is thus depicted as nature. The entire potency of the myth arises from this natural manifestation. This explains why la Citroën Déesse, le bisteck, Panzani pasta, but also names like Fausto Coppi, William Tell or Robin Hood, produce a wealth of associations.

The theoretical orientation of this study does not exactly agree with the tenor of the mytho-theoretical research which claims that the myth is pure artifact. Appropriate distinctions will therefore need to be made on a case-by-case basis, for some stages in the William Tell, Joan of Arc, Arminius, Batavi, Luise, the socialistic Faust or the fascist Horst Wessel myths show obvious signs of deliberate tinkering. While myths are ultimately human constructs, it is also as such that they clearly take on their own dynamic in some phases. Indeed, the afterlife of Egmont evinces a high degree of individual momentum, so much so that essentially non-mythical elements and interpretations also eventually prove susceptible to myth. In this case (to overstate things only slightly), the creators are reduced to mere amplifiers. Returning to the book's theoretical framework: it was the reductive nature of the game and the myth, and the dynamic they both triggered, that caused the name Egmont to no longer be simply limited to the eponymous historical figure, but to stand concisely and trenchantly for other issues and thus have an impact that transcended individuals, regions and epochs. For whether the concern is Don Quixote's remark that he had witnessed the Brussel's beheading, or Madame de Staël's treatment of Goethe's drama for the French stage or Napoleon's alleged visit honoring the tomb of the Count; whether it is Gustav Gründgens' embodiment of the title role in Goethe's Egmont at the Berlin Schauspielhaus in the presence of Hitler and Goering in 1935, or Louis Aragon and Walter Ulbricht, who tried to coopt the historical hero for their communist ideology: in all these cases the preoccupation with the Egmont figure was the common denominator.

Given the enormous extent of the imaginary Egmont's impact, the question remains as to what allowed his evocative power to persist over the span of several centuries and cultural regions. How and why did the name Egmont achieve such resonance throughout the centuries, from the Mediterranean to East Berlin? What did he represent? What fears and desires did he communicate? For whom did he serve as a scapegoat or figurehead? What was it about this figure and his story which sparked the imagination of different individuals and groups in distinct periods? What constituted its epoch-specific utility, and why did this historical figure lend himself so readily – at times as if made to order – to future generations? These are the questions that will guide this book. Just the same, it will not deal with the whole spectrum of Egmont's impact as a myth, but instead be limited to its mythogenetic aspect. This choice was, on the one hand, required because of the unmanageable wealth of Egmont references. On the other hand, it is also justified in view of the state of the research that has been done so far on afterlife and imagination historical literature. Not only is a separate treatment missing of the Count's evolution as myth, which is especially well-suited to reconstruction (if only partly) given the figure's relatively well documented stages of historical transmission. An additional motivating factor was the general state of research on mythical figures which, to my knowledge, has not yet examined in depth the issue of the emergence of an afterlife. Jean-François Bergier's phenomenal Tell study is, for instance, "limited" to a contextual analysis of the reality content of the Swiss national myth, and Marina Warner's Joan of Arc monograph, on the one hand, explores the actual origin of the impact of La Pucelle while, on the other, it prefers to discuss the diversity of its entire role spectrum as opposed to its historical linearity. Although Silvana D'Alessio's Masaniello treatment occasionally provides insights into the developmental process of the afterlife of the rebellious fishmonger, it mainly focuses on the event of the Neapolitan uprising and its linguistic and metaphorical expression during and after the revolution. By the same token, a useful point of reference was the research project "Mythen Europas. Schlüsselfiguren der Imagination" (European Myths. Key Figures of the Imagination, KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt), which is nothing less than a gallery of systematically conceptualized Occidental myths from ancient times to the present. Along with the Eichstätt sequence, this book divides both the figure-centered approach and the primary historical research. However, where the former wants to demonstrate the potential impact of effectively mythical (and sometimes even fictional) figures on the imagination, the latter's aim is to show the textually verified developmental process towards myth. As for the actual design of this study, the mythogenetic research perspective sets out to accomplish the following: starting from Egmont kairos around 1787 – a period in which the Count at last achieves myth status – the crystallization process of the myth will be reconstructed da capo, specifically based on these central questions:

– What do the textual Egmont references that formed the pattern of his mythogenesis tell us about the underlying interest in this historical figure during various periods? – Instilled with significance in this way, how did Egmont realize its specific documentary or generic expression in the respective phases of the mythogenetic process?

The book consists of three parts, which proceed chronologically and also have intertextual connections. The first part, which is based on sources like eyewitness reports, pamphlets, and chronicles, is dedicated to the immediate impact of the Brussels' scandal on the European public. It begins with a rather provisional, introductory discussion of the political execution as a constitutive moment of Egmont's afterlife. What went on at the Brussels' market? What caused the victim to achieve immortality? Divided into different aspects, the analysis intends convey the widest possible cross-section of the complexity of the incident's immediate impact. The book's middle section narrows the focus by closely examining the historiographical sources according to author or category. Recourse is taken now and again to the original eye witnesses discussed in the first part who have been shown to have had a decisive influence on later mythical manifestations. Finally, the third part is dedicated to the phase of Egmont's final development into myth in literary, historiographical, and essayistic accounts. The reason for its myth status is a qualitative leap, for it had acquired an appeal that transcended specific individuals, regions, and epochs. From this point forward, a halo in essence encircled the Count's decapitated head, and its radiance – as we shall see – was by no means limited to the cultural space of Weimar. This study is deliberately broken off before the watershed of the French Revolution. On the one hand, there was a desire to avoid any

appearance of finalism. The storming of the Bastille and the events that followed, namely, would have such a strong associative and explicative power that they would inevitably shape the interpretation of the preceding Egmont reception, even given a strict temporal delineation. On the other hand, it does no harm to direct the spotlight at the subversive tendencies in the neighboring countries. Moreover, because of their richness, relative simultaneity, and representativeness, the sources consulted here lend themselves well to pausing just before the outbreak of the revolution and measuring the “spiritual temperature” on the European continent at different locations. In order to determine both the general and the specific in Egmont’s mythological development, the analysis is occasionally interspersed with comparisons to similar figures, while the concluding remarks of the respective parts consist in, among other things, comparative observations. In this way, the present study hopes to contribute to knowledge in the humanities in two ways: on the one hand, to an understanding of the afterlife of Egmont, and, on the other, to a comprehension of the phenomenon of mythogenesis. Parenthetically: readers who may turn to this book to find the last “scholarly anointed” word – if such a thing is even possible – on the question of guilt and all the circumstances surrounding the decapitation of the counts Egmont and Hoorne will be disappointed. References to the Spanish Egmont reception will also be sought in vain, for the simple reason that Iberian witnesses – excluding two Spanish authors who were active abroad – are not part of the source corpus of transmission. This study is also not dedicated to the iconographic dimensions of the afterlife of Egmont because the author is not sufficiently familiar with visual cultural history. Furthermore, it was textual references that made the reconstruction of Egmont’s mythogenesis possible.

For those who devote themselves to demystification and as “historical accountants” want to verify the myth’s reality content, it also recommended that they look elsewhere. This book is concerned with the epoch-typical manifestations of the posthumous Egmont, not the extent to which the myth may have distorted the original historical reality. In conclusion, the present work, with its focus on the imaginative dimensions of history, is undeniably an expression of a specifically contemporary historical interest (also implying of course that this thematic focus governed the selection of material and the entire process of reflection and preparation). While this may sound like a matter of course, it is nevertheless important to remember that this book was also written according to contemporary standards, preferences, and prejudices, and has thus distilled one story out of history. <>

SCHOLARLY PERSONAE IN THE HISTORY OF ORIENTALISM, 1870-1930 edited by Christiaan Engberts and Herman J. Paul [Brill, hardcover: 9789004395237 ebook: 9789004406315]

This volume examines how the history of the humanities might be written through the prism of scholarly personae, understood as time- and place-specific models of being a scholar. Focusing on the field of study known as Orientalism in the decades around 1900, this volume examines how Semitists, Sinologists, and Japanologists, among others, conceived of their scholarly tasks, what sort of demands these job descriptions made on the scholar in terms of habits, virtues, and skills, and how models of being an orientalist changed over time under influence of new research methods, cross-cultural encounters, and political transformations.

All interested in the history of orientalism, the role of virtues and vices in scholarly self-understanding, and changing scholarly personae in the history of humanities.

Contributors are: Tim Barrett, Christiaan Engberts, Holger Gzella, Hans Martin Krämer, Arie L. Molendijk, Herman Paul, Pascale Rabault-F Feuerhahn and Henning Trüper.

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Excerpt: In 1884, the Lebanese philologist Ibrāhīm al-Yāziḡī (1847-1906) filed a harsh complaint about Arabic studies in Europe when he reproached the then just-deceased Reinhart Pieter Anne Dozy (1820-1883) for never having visited the Middle East. How could Dozy or any of his colleagues in Europe claim Arabic expertise without ever having heard the language spoken on the street or sought the opportunity to meet and learn from native speakers? Al-Yāziḡī dissociated himself from generations of European Arabists when he concluded:

In spite of all research proficiency, in spite of the high ambitions, in spite of all patience in observing and writing, the man [Dozy] lacked the best means for understanding the Arabic language, the classical and the modern alike, because, to our knowledge, he has never traveled to one of the Arabic-speaking countries, such as Egypt or Syria, and conversed orally with only few Arabs, but learned the language solely from books, with the help of people among his fellow-countrymen whom are called Orientalists.

By the late nineteenth century, such complaints were voiced not only in the Middle East, but also among younger European Orientalists such as Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) and Martin Hartmann (1851-1918). Even at Dozy's *alma mater*, Leiden University, where Michael Jan de Goeje (1836-1909) faithfully built upon Dozy's legacy, disparaging words on Dozy's philological heritage could be heard. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) was the most outspoken of these critics. Although his doctoral dissertation on *Het Mekkaansche feest* (1880) still contained a few polite words on his *Doktorgroßvater*, his dissociation from Dozy became apparent when, in 1884, he deemed it necessary to travel to Mecca to do fieldwork in the center of Islam. Such fieldwork required different qualities than manuscript study as practiced by Dozy. It demanded not only active command of, in this case, Arabic, and the ability to gather relevant data, but also, as Snouck's adventures illustrated, social and political skills for acquiring funding, organizing research on foreign territory, and winning support from local communities – not to mention contempt for death in the case of scholars reckless enough to join the Hajj.

Recent scholarship mostly treats this late nineteenth-century dissatisfaction with “armchair philology” as indicative of a paradigm shift that took place in Arabic studies. Suzanne Marchand, for example, distinguishes between the “lonely Orientalists” between 1820 and 1870, who devoted most of their energies to “specialized, historicist study,” and a generation of “furious” Orientalists in the decades around 1900, who for various reasons dissociated themselves from a philological heritage and instead attached increasing value to conducting fieldwork, studying contemporary problems, and rendering services to colonial administrations. Consequently, in Marchand's assessment, “going there” became nothing less than a career requirement. Likewise, Sabine Mangold highlights the frustration that German Arabists around 1900 felt about the philological inheritance of especially Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer (1801-1888), the influential Leipzig Orientalist. Drawing on the cases of Carl Heinrich Becker (1876-1933) and Georg Kampffmeyer (1864-1936), among others, Mangold shows how an increasing interest in Arabic *realia* (economics, politics, religion) went together with growing disdain for philological text fetishism.

Obviously, not all fields of Oriental studies underwent the same changes as did Arabic studies around 1900. At the time, Orientalism (*Orientalistik*, *orientalisme*) was the name of a cluster of fields, including but not limited to

Islamic, Sanskrit, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese studies.² Although these subfields were related, and populated by overlapping groups of scholars, the historical trajectories of these emerging disciplines took different forms, depending, among other things, on national contexts, colonial politics, and commercial interests. Chinese studies, for example, underwent a transition almost opposed to that of Arabist studies. Here a philological ethos, defended in terms of *Wissenschaftlichkeit*, only emerged in the early twentieth century, after a period of mostly “practical,” linguistically oriented teaching and writing aimed at educating interpreters and civil servants. Field-specific patterns of development and national differences notwithstanding, the Arabist examples mentioned above hint at something important. They suggest that the emergence of new research questions, new methods, or new societal demands could change the very idea and reality of “being an Orientalist.” Just as, at Leiden University, Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak (1889-1954) represented a new type of Sinologist, compared to his predecessor Gustaaf Schlegel (1840-1903), so Goldziher, Hartmann, and Snouck represented a generation of Orientalists that conceived of themselves, their academic tasks, and their professional identities in terms that would have been implausible to Fleischer or Dozy.

This raises a question that so far has received only limited attention in the historiography of Orientalism, or in the history of the humanities more broadly: how did scholars experience and define their professional identities? What did it take for them to be a professor, *Privatdozent*, or non-academic researcher in the field of Oriental studies? What talents, virtues, or skills did this require? Also, how were these skills and virtues acquired or molded, especially but not only in educational practices, and what positive or negative models were invoked in contexts of socialization? If the models that Dozy and Fleischer had embodied came to be regarded as old-fashioned, what alternative models did Snouck, Hartmann, and Goldziher put in their place? And how were these different understandings of what it meant to be an Arabist, Egyptologist, or Sinologist related to professional identities in other areas of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, not to mention the emerging social sciences?

Historians of science have developed the concept of “scientific” or “scholarly personae” to capture such different, overlapping, and often conflicting templates of scholarly selfhood that scholars developed, tried to appropriate, and sought to instill in their students. In what follows, I will (1) briefly introduce this concept in its three main variants, (2) explain why scholarly personae need to be studied empirically, in different fields of study, (3) make a case for Orientalism as a suitable case study for trying out this concept, and (4) briefly summarize how the chapters brought together in this volume contribute to this project.

Scholarly Personae

The newly founded journal *Persona Studies* represents a first approach to our subject: an approach that is largely rooted in cultural studies but appeals to scholars throughout the humanities. Central to this approach is the assumption that social life requires people to present themselves in ways that are recognizable to others as well as effective in granting people “identities” that help them navigate the demands of social life. Drawing on the old Latin *persona*, which among other things could refer to a mask worn by theater actors, advocates of this first approach conceive of *personae* as shorthand for identities that people articulate or “perform” in contextually sensitive ways. Although adherents of this first approach acknowledge that identities are not created *ex nihilo*, but are indebted to social traditions that make certain public identities appear as more plausible than others, the founding editors of *Persona Studies*, P. David Marshall and Kim Barbour, highlight the agency of individuals to shape their own *personae*. For Marshall and Barbour, then, *personae* are performances of identity, acts of self-fashioning, or tools for public “impression management” (to borrow a term from Erving Goffman). Accordingly, their analysis of the use and function of *personae* focuses near-exclusively on how individuals “produce,” “perform,” “enact,” “inhabit,” “negotiate,” and “manage” their identities – in personalizing their game avatars or through playful mixture of professional role identities in work environments.

Applied to the history of scholarship (or the history of science, if this is understood to cover the social sciences and humanities, too), this first approach encourages research on what Richard Karwan calls “scholarly self-fashioning.” A noteworthy contribution to this research agenda comes from Mineke Bosch, who highlights the

importance of scholarly self-fashioning in the claiming of academic authority. To be accepted as a trustworthy member of a scientific community, scholars not only need to engage in serious research, but also must follow social conventions extending well beyond the realm of ideas. In Bosch's own words,

The scholarly identity makes use of specific bodily practices such as dietetics and routines of physical conduct (sexuality and sports for instance), but also of dress and other tools to keep up the appearance of a "truth-speaker" – beards and moustaches, or for women "ascetic dress" or "comfortable footwear" instead of high heels.

Bosch thus uses the persona concept to draw attention to how scholars present themselves to each other, not only verbally, but also with their bodies and through their "emotion management." Like Marshall and Barbour, Bosch acknowledges the importance of culturally shared repertoires, but highlights the unique touches that individuals add in adapting such models to their own purposes. Consequently, she can attribute *personae* to individuals, speaking for instance about "[Robert] Fruin's scholarly persona" and "[Pieter] van Winter's scholarly persona."

This would be inconceivable within the second approach that must be mentioned here – an approach inspired by the anthropology of Marcel Mauss but articulated most forcefully by Lorraine Daston and H. Otto Sibum in a seminal 2003 theme issue of *Science in Context*. For Daston and Sibum, scientific *personae* are cultural templates for the social role of a *Gelehrter*, *savant*, man of learning, or scientist. Although these templates can be adapted to new circumstances or even disappear in favor of others, as happened to the *Naturforscher* and the *femme savant*, they usually change at a slow or even very slow pace. As time-, place-, and discipline-transcending models of how to be a scientist, *personae* belong to what historians of science, with a nod to Fernand Braudel, call a *histoire de longue durée*. Consequently, *personae* are best regarded as collective entities, of which Daston and Sibum claim that they ontologically precede individual social existence:

To understand *personae* in this sense is to reject a social ontology that treats only flesh-and-blood individuals as real, and dismisses all collective entities as mere aggregates, parasitic upon individuals. *Personae* are as real or more real than biological individuals, in that they create the possibilities of being in the human world, schooling the mind, body, and soul in distinctive and indelible ways.

Applying Daston's and Sibum's definition of scientific *personae* to the world of early modern learning, Gadi Algazi likewise treats *personae* as "materials that persons are made of." As his discussion of Johannes Kepler suggests, men of learning in early modern Europe could navigate between several *personae*. But as Kepler found out, they could not easily transform them: the power of these cultural institutions was too large for individuals to challenge. As collective representations, *personae* could not be changed "by force of personal decision."

This implies that real differences exist between the first and second approaches to the concept of scholarly *personae*. While the first one revolves around self-fashioning and self-presentation, the second one focuses on broadly shared images of what it takes to be a scientist or man of learning. While the former zooms in on individuals in specific cultural settings, the latter engages in macro-level analysis, tracing scholarly *personae* across centuries. And if Daston and Sibum are right about the social ontologies underlying these persona concepts, these are more than differences in emphasis. Insofar as the two approaches are rooted in different anthropological assumptions, or different metaphysical views of human agency, they are irreconcilable.

Yet as Algazi rightly notes, we are not left with these alternatives. There is a third approach – a conception of scholarly *personae* of which Algazi is not entirely uncritical, but one that has the advantage of occupying a middle-range position between the biographical and the social, or between individuals engaged in "impression management," on the one hand, and powerful cultural institutions, on the other. This third approach, to which most chapters in this volume relate, is specifically tailored to situations of disagreement or uncertainty about the marks of a good scholar. Treating scholarly *personae* as "models" of what a scholar is, characterized by distinct

combinations of talents, virtues, and/or skills, this third approach is premised on the assumption that personae never come in the singular. The persona that Dozy embodied became visible only when it was contrasted with others – when al-Yāziǧī and others began to criticize it, when Snouck began to adopt a different model of “how to be a scholar,” or, much earlier, when Dozy and his colleagues advocated philological criticism as a mark of *Wissenschaftlichkeit* over against older, theologically-inspired modes of Arabic scholarship.

Personae, in this third definition, are models, past or present, inherited or invented, of what it takes to be a scholar. Usually, they are attributed to influential individuals, who thereby come to serve as their embodiments, positively or negatively. Thus, for Carl Heinrich Becker, “Fleischer’s era” referred to a time in the history of Orientalism when philological criticism such as practiced by Fleischer was regarded as the defining mark of an Orientalist scholar. This is not to say that Fleischer created his own persona, as the first approach would say, but rather that, for various reasons, the name Fleischer came to serve as shorthand for a persona that assigned great significance to source critical attitudes. The proper name was thus turned into a generic one, sometimes (not necessarily in Fleischer’s case) even to the point of becoming a stereotype that no longer maintained a clear relation to its name-giver.

The third approach encourages research on how personae served as models for imitation, emulation, and dissociation alike. It draws attention to how virtues, vices, skills, and talents were associated with specific individuals – the name of Heinrich Ewald (1803-1875) being widely perceived as synonymous to dogmatism and arrogance, for instance – and how such embodied personae were remembered, positively or negatively, for the sake of advocating (or criticizing) certain constellations of virtues and skills. Also, it examines why scholarly personae were often defined in contrastive terms, as means for remedying the perceived shortcomings of other personae. Scholarly personae are thus a conceptual tool for distinguishing between competing models of how to be a scholar, as defined by historical agents or as distinguished in hindsight by historians of science. This implies that the third approach is particularly suited to examining clashes or tensions between generations, schools, traditions, or cultures, each with their own expectations regarding the virtues or skills characteristic of a scholar.

Case Studies

To what extent, then, did al-Yāziǧī’s criticism of Dozy, with which I started, reflect a clash between different, perhaps even incompatible personae? Admittedly, the persona cultivated by al-Yāziǧī and his Arabic nationalist compatriots in the Syrian Scientific Society, among other associations, cannot be neatly classified as a *scholarly* persona (one that only professional scholars could appropriate). This, however, was the whole point of al-Yāziǧī’s criticism: the philologist, poet, and journalist that was al-Yāziǧī had little patience for “bookish” scholars such as Dozy. His ideal of philological scholarship in the service of Arabic nationalism made him rebel against what he perceived as a much too narrow persona.

At the same time, academic Orientalists defended “narrow” professional identities by dissociating themselves from “accidental Orientalists,” or from non-academic authors writing about their experiences in the Near or Far East. Clearly, such criticism served purposes of academic boundary work. However, as Max Müller (1823-1900) experienced, such demarcation strategies could also be employed within the academic world, even against famous Orientalists. When Müller, a prolific author of popular books on Hinduism and Sanskrit literature, was criticized for “cater[ing] to the public so long that scholarly work had become of only secondary consequence,” this showed that at least part of his work was seen as not befitting an Oxford professor. In Arie L. Molendijk’s analysis, Müller’s problem was that he tried to combine a scholarly persona with the persona of a sage in a time and place where this was deemed inappropriate. Likewise, Dozy’s controversial study of the Israelites in Mecca, published in 1864, elicited critical feedback from colleagues who believed that speculation did not befit a serious student of Arabic – one that Dozy had been, judging by his *Recherches sur l’histoire politique et littéraire de l’Espagne pendant le moyen âge* (1848). The persona at stake in this controversy, then, was one that Dozy himself was perceived as having embodied in an earlier phase of his life.

What these examples show is that scholarly personae can be located, or indeed were located, at different levels: within fields of research, in and outside of academic scholarship, as well as geographically, between Europe and the Arab world. If scholarly personae are often defined in contrastive terms, this implies that the contrasts can be drawn at different levels of generalization. This, in turn, suggests that a concept like scholarly personae is better not defined in the abstract. Empirical historical research is needed for adding muscle and flesh to the bones of the concept, that is, for showing when, how, and why historical agents felt a need to distinguish between different models of being a scholar.

Orientalism

Orientalism is obviously not the only field of study in which the scholarly persona concept (in the third variant) can be tested. In the past few years, attempts have been made to apply and refine the concept in fields as diverse as nineteenth-century history and twentieth-century statistics. In the meantime, stimulating work has been done on how funding agencies in the early twentieth century helped shape scholarly personae. Still, the work has only just begun: comparisons with other disciplines, in and outside of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, are as of yet hardly possible. There are three reasons, then, why Orientalism in its late nineteenth and early twentieth-century European incarnations seems an interesting case for further exploring and testing the persona concept.

First, just like other emerging humanities disciplines at the time, late nineteenth-century Orientalism went through processes often referred to as “professionalization.” Concretely, this meant that a field in which academic scholars had always found themselves accompanied by “a broad range of explorers, adventurers, and travelers: missionaries, theologians, and preachers; eccentrics, frauds, and crackpots; social reformers, political advocates, soldiers, spies, and diplomatic representatives of various European regimes” tried to define itself in more academic terms. As Suzanne Marchand puts it: “Part of this effort was focused on pushing out, or at least getting around, the aristocrats, missionaries, and diplomats who still contributed much to Oriental studies”: they were perceived as embodying different personae than those befitting a serious Orientalist.

Secondly, Orientalism was a field fraught with religious, political, and ideological struggles, with perennial disagreement not only over the boundaries, but also over the very essence of what constituted Oriental studies. The degree of divergence was even such that, in Robert Irwin’s assessment, “there was hardly an Orientalist type or a common Orientalist discourse” in Europe. Regardless of whether this is true or not, correspondences in which Oriental scholars continuously evaluated each other’s scholarly conduct – not only their academic output, but also their teaching and their political engagement – suggest that issues of scholarly selfhood ranked high on the agenda, perhaps precisely because agreement was hard to reach. Time and again, Orientalists quarreled over the relation between academic reputation and popularizing work, the desirability of studying living languages, or the pros and cons of doing advisory work for colonial administrations.

A third and final reason as to why Oriental studies in the decades around 1900 is an interesting case study for testing the concept of scholarly personae is that intercultural exchanges such as al-Yāziǧī’s criticism of Dozy were more likely to occur there than in history or statistics. In comparison to other humanities disciplines in Europe, Oriental studies was a field that found itself more frequently subjected to critical evaluation from outside of Europe. Did al-Yāziǧī’s criticism of Dozy and his colleagues “whom are called Orientalists” have any impact on what it meant to be an Orientalist? How was the Orientalist persona affected by fieldwork in countries far away from European libraries and universities?

This Volume

This volume thus approaches the world of Oriental studies between, roughly, 1870 and 1930 through the prism of scholarly persona. Its key question is a heuristic one: to what extent does the persona concept (in the third variant) contribute to a better understanding of unity and disunity among European Orientalists around 1900? In pursuing this question, the chapters that follow touch upon a range of sub-questions. What were the crucial factors that made some scholarly persona more successful, or at least more visible, than others? How did

scholarly personae relate to non-scholarly ones, or to hybrid role identities like the “missionary–scholar,” the “political professor,” and the “public intellectual”? How did such personae affect day-to-day practices, such as the writing of book reviews – a genre in which evaluative standards often became quite explicit? And how different or similar were the subfields of Arabic, Semitic, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese studies in these respects? Although this volume cannot possibly pretend to address these questions in satisfactory depth, it tries to put them on the agenda, so to speak, by showing in some detail what kind of historical analysis can be done through the prism of scholarly personae.

In his opening chapter, Holger Gzella shows how late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German Semitists (Hebraists and Aramaicists) struggled with the emerging persona of a “secular” university professor. Although this persona with its corresponding intellectual virtues was recognized as a new professional ideal across the discipline, it posed difficult dilemmas for scholars whose confessional loyalties made them prefer different configurations of the “sacred” and the “secular.” Drawing on the cases of Gustav Bickell (1838-1906), Jacob Barth (1851-1914), Mark Lidzbarski (1868-1928), and Hans Bauer (1878-1937), Gzella shows how different German Semitists responded differently to these tensions, thereby suggesting that, for them, scholarly personae served as points of orientation more than as models for imitation.

As Arie L. Molendijk shows in his chapter on Max Müller, transgressing standards of conduct embodied by scholarly personae was not without consequences. Although Müller in many respects personified the philological virtues that late nineteenth-century students of Sanskrit perceived as marks of scholarly virtuosity, his popular lectures and publications targeted at “young ladies and easy-going people” (as one critic phrased it) were not seen as befitting a real academic. Likewise, the entrepreneurial qualities that Müller needed for successfully carrying out his *Sacred Books of the East* project (50 vols., 1879-1910) did not fit a philological persona. Like other nineteenth-century pioneers in “big humanities” projects, then, Müller had to navigate between multiple personae, thereby invariably invoking criticism from colleagues committed to distinguishing sharply between “scholarly” and “non-scholarly” personae.

Henning Trüper explores the moral dilemmas in which Orientalists could get entangled by presenting themselves and their colleagues as virtuous scholars, even in cases where this was less than obvious. When the Strasbourg Semitist Enno Littmann (1875-1958) edited the travel diary of the German Orientalist Julius Euting (1839-1913) from his journey to “Inner Arabia” in 1883-1884, Littmann tried to present Euting as an epitome of scholarly virtue, even if this required editing or reworking problematic passages in Euting’s manuscript. Ironically, then, Littmann’s defense of scholarly virtue required committing a philological vice – an observation that clearly challenges rigid distinctions between scholarly virtues and vices.

If Littmann was an arduous scholarly traveler – in the early 1900s, he conducted fieldwork in Eritrea and Ethiopia – so was the German-born Iranologist and Indologist Martin Haug (1827-1876). As Pascale Rabault-F Feuerhahn shows in her chapter on Haug, German Indology underwent a transition like Arabic studies in that “armchair philology” was increasingly perceived as an old-fashioned mode of Orientalist scholarship. Yet, as illustrated by the opposition that Haug met with among his German colleagues after his Indian travels, this development was neither linear nor uncontested. The emergence of new scholarly personae might be better understood in terms of accumulation than in terms of succession.

Timothy Barrett’s chapter on Herbert Giles (1845-1935), the second Professor of Chinese at Cambridge University, nonetheless shows that certain scholarly practices, such as hostile book reviews in *ad hominem* language, became increasingly rare, and therefore more spectacular when they still made it into print. During Giles’s lifetime, the lonely Sinologist, working in splendid isolation from others, was gradually replaced by a new persona: a university professor with colleagues and students, working in professional environments where “old-fashioned warriors” like Giles himself were no longer given much space. What this example shows, among other things, is that scholarly personae must be understood against their social backgrounds. A discipline

with journals and conferences requires more collegiality, and therefore different standards of public evaluation, than the non-institutionalized field that was Sinology in Giles's young years.

Just like Chinese studies, Japanese studies was a field to which Christian missionaries actively contributed. Also, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Buddhist priests from Japan played a major part in furthering the study of Japanese religion. This leads Hans Martin Krämer to wonder to what extent the category of *scholarly* personae can be applied to the founding fathers of Japanese studies. Isn't the adjective too restrictive, especially if "scholarly" is treated as synonymous with "academic"? A persona perspective nonetheless enables Krämer to distinguish between three groups of actors in early Japanese studies: European philologists like August Pfizmaier (1808-1887) and Léon de Rosny (1837-1914), Japanese scholars and practitioners of Buddhism such as Akamatsu Renjō (1841-1919), Nanjō Bun'yū (1849-1927), and Kasawara Kenju (1852-1883), and, finally, European missionaries *cum* fieldworkers like Robbins Brown (1810-1880), James C. Hepburn (1815-1911), and Hans Haas (1868-1934).

Christiaan Engberts, finally, examines how classic tensions between nationalism and internationalism, such as experienced most dramatically in times of war, affected the scholarly persona as defined by Dutch and German Semitists in the 1910s. During World War I, Carl Heinrich Becker and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje came to disagree sharply, not only on Germany's colonial politics, but also, more importantly, on the relation between scholarly work and nationalist commitments. Was Snouck's scholarship still respectable when the Leiden Orientalist, much to Becker's annoyance, failed to acknowledge Germany's world historical role? Was international cooperation, for instance in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1913-1938), still possible when its contributors found themselves taking different political stances?

Scholarly personae, then, were invoked at different occasions and contrasted in different ways. As shown by the chapters in this volume, personae were not etched in stone: they took shape in response to circumstances that varied across time and place. Often, they were articulated in response to perceived threats, or held up as alternatives to "others" in time (old-fashioned armchair philology), place (non-European learning), or social position (amateurism). This is hardly surprising: only when a mode of being a scholar was perceived as being under threat, or as new and not yet sufficiently accepted, did its defining features have to be articulated and defended. Interestingly, this not only explains why scholarly personae were debated most explicitly in contexts of controversy, but also why relative outsiders such as Ibrāhīm al-Yāzīgī often had a sharp eye for them.

This, finally, reveals one of the most important historiographical differences that looking at scholarship through the prism of scholarly personae can make. While existing literature on the history of Orientalism and the history of the humanities more broadly often focuses on *diachronic development*, especially in employing teleological categories like "professionalization" and "specialization," the prism of scholarly personae encourages historians to acknowledge *synchronic variety*, especially insofar as scholarly identities are concerned. Consequently, it is much better equipped to deal with non-European scholars like al-Yāzīgī, or with Buddhist students of Japanese religion as discussed in Krämer's chapter, than are histories that focus on the "development" of Western scholarship. Even if only applied to European case studies, the prism of scholarly personae naturally draws attention to "internal subaltern" groups, such as the Jewish and Catholic scholars examined by Gzella. If only for this reason, the promise of the perspective adopted in this volume reaches well beyond the field of Oriental studies. <>

THE ART OF MYSTICAL NARRATIVE: A POETICS OF THE ZOHAR by Eitan P. Fishbane [Oxford University Press, 9780190073176]

In the study of Judaism, the *Zohar* has captivated the minds of interpreters for over seven centuries, and continues to entrance readers in contemporary times. Yet despite these centuries of study, very little attention has been devoted to the literary dimensions of the text, or to formal appreciation of its status as one of the great works of religious literature.

THE ART OF MYSTICAL NARRATIVE offers a critical approach to the zoharic story, seeking to explore the interplay between fictional discourse and mystical exegesis. Eitan Fishbane argues that the narrative must be understood first and foremost as a work of the fictional imagination, a representation of a world and reality invented by the thirteenth-century authors of the text. He claims that the text functions as a kind of dramatic literature, one in which the power of revealing mystical secrets is demonstrated and performed for the reading audience. **THE ART OF MYSTICAL NARRATIVE** offers a fresh, interdisciplinary perspective on the *Zohar* and on the intersections of literary and religious studies.

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"Fishbane's study of the interplay between fictional discourse and mystical exegesis combines the Kabbalah scholar's mastery of Jewish intellectual history with the literary critic's sensitivity to language and form. Through engagement with modern frameworks of criticism-characterization, dramatic speech, degrees of fictionality, structural framing-Fishbane draws the reader deep into the literary world of the *Zohar's* Iberian Jewish author(s) and readers and its unique vision of reality. The book is pioneering in that it truly appreciates the *Zohar* for what it was a work."--Jonathan Decter, Edmond J. Safra Professor of Sephardic Studies, Brandeis University

"In this groundbreaking and brilliant study, Fishbane explores the poetic artistry of the *Zohar*, enabling us to appreciate the masterpiece of Kabbalah in radically new ways. He highlights the theatrical/performative dimension of zoharic narrative and its magical realism. Significantly, he locates the *Zohar* in the context of medieval Spanish literature, both Jewish and Christian. Fishbane's erudite and fascinating book demonstrates how the *Zohar* is simultaneously a bold mystical interpretation of the Torah and an experiment in medieval fiction."--Daniel Matt, author of the multi-volume annotated translation *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, and *The Essential Kabbalah*.

"A work of dazzling literary scholarship. This penetrating analysis of a Judaic classic employs the full range of tools and insights available to the contemporary reader. The *Zohar* is a profound and mysterious work that has long attracted scholars who seek to swim in its depths. In Fishbane, it has found one who happens to write in English and knows the whole Western literary canon. That in itself is a miracle worthy of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai. If you have the *Zohar* in your heart, you must have Fishbane on your shelf."--Arthur Green, Rector and Irving Brudnick Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Religion, Hebrew College.

"In his exquisite and wonderful book, Eitan Fishbane illuminates the ways in which the literary aspects of the *Zohar* are intimately woven to the core of the *Zohar's* mystical and interpretive insights. From Fishbane's masterful presentation we learn that the poetic and dramatic dimensions of the *Zohar* do not serve merely as a narrative frame to its content, but rather they embody, enact and perform the calling of the master of the mystical circle and his disciples. Fishbane's careful and brilliant readings add another dimension of depth and wonder to our encounter with the *Zohar* and his work is a major contribution to the ongoing exploration of one

of the greatest literary and religious achievements of the Jewish tradition."--Moshe Halbertal, Gruss Professor of Law at New York University, and John and Golda Cohen Professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Excerpt:

Fiction as History: The Collapse of Time in Zoharic Narration

Though it may seem simple enough at first glance, we must begin with an observation that orients the literary approach: the zoharic narrative is a work of the fictional imagination, a representation of a world and reality invented by the medieval authors of the text. The landscape and ontology of the tannaitic figures in the Zohar are (despite the use of the names of some actual historical personalities) ultimately figurations of a medieval mind, a resurrection and reinvention of second-century time, wholly reconstructed and indeed constructed through the fictional musings of one or more Castilian kabbalists. This point is underscored not to reinforce the old pejorative characterization of Moshe de León as consummate forger, but rather to better appreciate the power and alternate reality of invented fictional worlds, of a narrative discourse that transports the reader not back in time to a historical condition long gone, but into the depths of the fictional imagination where the abyss of time between the tannaitic and high medieval periods is collapsed and recast into a seemingly living world of discipleship and sacred conversation, creating the image of a spiritual master that would proceed to dominate the kabbalistic imagination for centuries to come—indeed down to our own day.

This methodological starting point is no small matter in light of the Zohar's reception-history within traditional Jewish circles of learning and piety, and it represents an interpretive dilemma embodied in a range of traditional narratives: is there a line to be discerned between the construction of sacred history and the complete inventive freedom of prose fiction? Robert Alter underscored this point some thirty years ago in his pioneering monograph on biblical narrative, and the problem can certainly be extended to most generations of authors and redactors have no doubt exercised considerable liberty in the merger of historical fact with creative legend. Contemporary philosophers of history have even taken this matter a step further, arguing for the deeply ambiguous lines between objective history and the fictional narrative received as collective memory; in the view of some theorists (roundly critiqued by defenders of documental historiography), there is no substantive distinction between prose fiction and the writing of historical narrative. But even if we acknowledge that this extreme position leads to an unnecessary nihilism with respect to the historiographical enterprise, we must note that traditional communities regularly absorb fiction into purportedly realist representations of the past. Indeed, such is the case when we turn to the pseudepigraphic narrative fragments found in the Heikhalot literature of Late Antiquity, as well as to the phenomena of storytelling and idea-attribution in midrashic and talmudic sources.¹ The historicity of transmitted anecdotes about individual sages and interpretations given in their names is uncertain at best; the place where history ends and fiction begins is highly unfixed for the reader. The narratives that are retained as canon recreate the past, and thereby become the touchstones of cultural memory. Indeed, this has been a central point of debate in rabbinic studies, in which scholars have moved decisively toward the fictionality and literary character of midrashic and talmudic stories and away from the historicity of such narratives.

Like these great predecessors (which the authors of the Zohar undoubtedly took to embody an objective and realist historical truth), the Zohar constructs a narrative that is woven out of the whole cloth of a retrospective imagination, a fiction that ultimately constructs a new ontology in the reader's imagination, in the sociology of received knowledge. Here I am thinking particularly about the implications of the work of theorists such as Thomas Pavel and the problem of ontology in fictional discourse. What, we may ask, is the "reality-status" of this "made-up world," both for the pseudepigraphic author of the Zohar and for the reader of the text? Is it at all possible to discern the beliefs and intentions of the medieval authors in this regard? Indeed, the process of studying the zoharic narrative as fiction is complicated and textured by the mysterious veils of pseudepigraphy. For despite the fact that modern scholarship has proven the medieval provenance of the Zohar, the Castilian

kabbalists sought to convince readers that the narratives about Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai (RaShBY) and his disciples record a historical truth—that they represent the past “as it truly was.” Thus the act of pseudepigraphy dissimulates a realist historical representation about tannaitic times and the life of RaShBY—re/imaging the ontic status of the past in the eye of religious memory. Unlike a modern story, in which there is a shared presumption of fictionality and invention between author and reader (even as the reader might strive toward an effective suspension of disbelief), this medieval pseudepigraphic fiction seeks to represent itself as accurate historical memory. In this respect, the fictional project of the Zohar remakes the past through the trick of pseudepigraphy, and the lives of RaShBY and his disciples are “remembered” through the lens of the medieval fiction. The fiction that succeeds as history for the traditionalist irreversibly recasts cultural memory, and the imagined world becomes—for all intents and purposes—the enduring truth of the culture, a representation of the “real.”

In a related vein, we have yet to fully appreciate the narrative complexity and irony involved in the traditional claim that Shimon bar Yohai was the author and narrator of the Zohar. For it runs counter to intuition that a story that primarily celebrates the greatness of Shimon bar Yohai—that narrates his life through the distance of the third-person voice—would also have been authored by that same master! Indeed, what does this reveal about conceptions of narrative focalization, or “point of view; among the Castilian kabbalists? Could the kabbalist really imagine that the paragon of spiritual masters could write about himself in such a laudatory way when the virtue of humility was deemed so fundamental to the life of moral piety? Here we should voice some caution in light of the observations articulated by Boaz Huss in his study of the gradual emergence of the idea of Sefer ha-Zohar (more on this below), especially with respect to the traditional notion that the manifold zoharic literature was authored by the ancient sage Shimon bar Yohai. As Huss argues, this was a claim that only emerged in a much more developed and mature phase of the zoharic compositional process. But if we are to reconcile the eventual convergence of putative author and protagonist, then we must ask after the perspective or focalization of the zoharic narrator. To what extent does that narrator assume the model of omniscience with regard to the inner workings of his character’s minds? Can we discern shifts in perspective through the different voices in the text? Is perspective inserted at a remove from the narrated action, or does the consciousness of the character truly come to the fore as an independent focalization?

The convergence of these issues intrigues the gaze of the student of religious memory and its narrative forms. Perhaps one answer lies in the literary conventions of medieval Europe in which the author of a text would sometimes speak about himself in the third person, whether as author or as a character in the narrative. Examples of this phenomenon reach as far from Jewish sources as Dante Alighieri and Margery Kempe, and as close to Iberian Jewish poesis as Yosef Ibn Zabarah’s Sefer Sha’ashu’im and Juan Ruiz’s Libro de Buen Amor.

The Shape of this Study

Allow me to conclude this introduction with a brief overview of the structure and chapters of this book, underscoring the core findings and insights that are developed in the pages to follow.

Chapter 1 is devoted to matters of voice and dramatization in zoharic narrative—an inquiry that explores the intersecting forms of dramatic monologue, the representation of interiority in the character’s mind and emotion, and the theatrics of secrecy and its disclosure. Here I consider the engagement of soliloquy and dramatic monologue as narrative techniques for the disclosure of interior consciousness. This is unpacked as a central component of the theatrical/performative dimension of zoharic narration, and includes study of the interplay between the monologic and dialogic voices—the use of relational interaction and the rhythms of dialogue in zoharic discourse. How are the relationships between companions, between teachers and disciples, represented through the act of shared speech? What techniques are employed to make this work? And how is the ever-present third-person omniscient narrator’s voice integrated into the text? Who is speaking, and what does this removed narrator know about the inner lives of the characters, as well as their interactions on the stage of the zoharic theater? In this chapter I examine the ways in which one voice in the text gives way to another, how the

text moves in and out of different modes of discourse through its use of removed and immanent narrational voices; how consciousness, intention, emotion, and drama are represented to the reader. The reception of esoteric wisdom in the Zohar quite often is intertwined with a particular response on the part of the disciples to their master. In receiving the kabbalistic secrets, the disciples frequently move to exclaim about the incomparable greatness of their teacher—a dramatic monologue that leads to a recurrent anticipatory lament for the inevitable day when R. Shimon will die to this world, for the time when the world will be orphaned of his great light. As narrative anticipation, this oft-recited refrain foreshadows the envisioned culmination of the epic—a moment embodied in the drama of the 'Idra gathering, the proto-messianic assembly of R. Shimon and his disciples with the aim of redemptive cosmic *tiqun*. This dramatization is frequently accompanied by a range of physical gestures (weeping, kissing, prostration, etc.) and radical self-humbling of the disciple before the master. In this chapter, I study the phenomenon of performative gesture as a mode of theatricality.

Chapter 2 ("Encounters along the Way") studies the numerous instances in which the narrative scene provides a stimulus for kabbalistic insight, one that is then pursued in depth through the discourse of one of the companions. Such stimuli often emerge through the depiction of narrative encounters—either through something observed in the world (e.g., an observation of the natural realm; an object seen along the way) or through the rather dominant motif of an encounter with a mysterious stranger. In both cases, the master and disciples discern some hidden truth of Divinity in these encounters—the master teaches his disciples to notice the sublime mystery contained in a blade of grass; the seemingly crude or simple stranger turns out to be the bearer of the greatest mystical wisdom. These events of surprise and discovery participate, I argue here, in the venerable genre and literary topos of recognition—referred to in the critical vocabulary as *anagnorisis*, a term used influentially by Aristotle in *The Poetics*. What is more, each of these moments in the Zohar becomes an occasion to recognize the providential hand of God in the world; the companions frequently dramatize such an encounter with an exclamation about the sublime involvement of Divinity in the happenings of life. As with the dramatic monologues after the receipt of a particular teaching, here too the exclamatory mode serves the function of performative closure: it is the seal of discourse placed in the mouth of the receiving or observing party.

Chapter 3 examines the myriad ways in which the genres of storytelling and exegesis interact meaningfully in the course of zoharic discourse. I advance the claim—informed by existing scholarship on the causal relationships between narrative and exegesis in Jewish religious literature—that the narrative frame-tale is not a mere flourish for the more substantive mystical midrashic homilies, but rather functions in dynamic interplay with the interpretive imagination and homiletical creativity. Here I will seek to answer the following guiding questions: What can we observe about the transition points in zoharic discourse, the move from narrative to exegesis and metaphysics and back again? Is there something causal and resolute, or does it appear to happen at random? Are there discernible bridges between these distinct modes of discourse, or do they appear to be artificially juxtaposed? This chapter will seek to clarify the seams of zoharic rhetoric, the techniques by which the tapestry of the text has been sewn together. What impact does one modality of writing have on the other, and how do these transitions and integrations produce an experience in the reader of the work?

Chapter 4 delves into the rich phenomenon of magical realism and the fantastic in zoharic narrative, a genre form in which the narrators resist and transcend the typical boundaries of natural law, instead constructing a world in which earthly caves open up into the Garden of Eden, astral human spirit-guides shape-shift into eagles, and the spirits of the dead and buried emerge to speak and lament to the visiting mystic friends. Perhaps best known for its prevalence in contemporary Latin American fiction (most famously in the novels of Gabriel García Márquez), this modality has been studied in a range of contexts by scholars of literature, and I argue that the rubric of this genre may be applied productively to a myriad of zoharic passages as well. In this enchanted realm, we observe a markedly different set of assumptions about what constitutes the scope and possibility of the real; the veil that divides the natural and the supernatural is frequently lifted, allowing for the one to cross into the other. This ambiguity between realism and illusion—the uncertainty as to the ontological status of that which has transpired—is the quality that defines the phenomenon of the fantastic (as developed

by Tzvetan Todorov). In this chapter I seek to clarify this literary dimension of zoharic rhetoric, situating the fantastic and the magically real in the larger context of the mystical imagination and the fictional craft of representation.

In chapter 5 I turn to the deployment of narrative ethics in the zoharic storytelling craft. With due attention to existing philosophy and criticism on this subject, I consider a series of moral virtues that are dramatized through the deft use of narrative—ranging from the imperative of forgiveness and compassion toward the poor to the importance of hospitality and the restraint of anger. Seeking to build upon the work of Martha Nussbaum and others, I develop the argument that the zoharic authors frequently utilize stories as exempla in their attempts to cultivate empathy for the suffering of others and emulative reverence for the ideal behavior of paradigmatic holy men. The heights of piety and justice are presented to the reader through this interplay between narrative and homiletical exhortation, highlighting a taut connection between mysticism and the moral life, and exhibiting a further key purpose and method in zoharic literary artistry.

Chapter 6 considers zoharic narrative in the broader context of the frame-tale genre in medieval Iberian literature—a key component in the endeavor to create a methodological bridge between the study of religion and literature in Zohar studies. As I intimated earlier in this introduction, scholars of Jewish mysticism have paid little attention to the striking commonality that may be observed between the Zohar and non-kabbalistic Jewish fiction that was in full bloom in this very time and place. The Hebrew *maqāma* form (modeled on Arabic antecedents), and, more broadly, the medieval frame-tale tradition, are rich sources for this comparative analysis—they flourished in the very same sociocultural context into which the Zohar was born. It is highly likely that the authors of the Zohar were aware of, and influenced by, the flowering of fiction-writing in Castile and elsewhere, and contemporary readers would no doubt have heard the resonances of that broader literature in the pages of the Zohar. Wisdom concealed and revealed; the wandering sage in disguise—these and other motifs were the stock-in-trade of Jewish authors of fiction in thirteenth-century Iberia. In addition to highly illuminating correlations that may be drawn to works such as Yehudah Al-Harizi's *Sefer Tahkemoni*, Yosef Ibn Zabarah's *Sefer Sha'ashu'im*, and Yizhaq Ibn Sahulah's *Meshalha-Qadmoni*, we will also do well to consider non-Jewish parallel works such as Juan Ruiz's *Libro de Buen Amor*, Don Juan Manuel's *El Conde Lucanor*, and the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* of King Alfonso El Sabio. <>

VISUALISING PLACE, MEMORY AND THE IMAGINED by Sarah De Nardi [Critical Studies in Heritage, Emotion and Affect, Routledge, 9781138052277]

This book probes into how communities and social groups construct their understanding of the world through real and imagined experiences of place. The book seeks to connect the dots of the factual and the imaginary that form affective networks of identities, which help shape local memory and sense of self and community, as well as a sense of the past. It exploits the concept of make-believe spaces – in the environment, storytelling and mnemonic narratives – as a social framework that aligns and informs the everyday memory worlds of communities. Drawing upon fieldwork in cultural heritage, community archaeology, social history and conflict history and anthropology, this text offers a methodological framework within which social groups may position and enact the multiple senses of place and senses of the past inhabited and performed in different cultural contexts.

This book serves to illustrate a useful visualisation methodology which can be used in participatory fieldwork and thus will be of interest to heritage specialists, ethnographers and cultural geographers and oral history practitioners who will particularly find the methodology cheap, easy to replicate and enjoyable for community-based projects.

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Excerpt: This book explores imaginative and multivocal ways of visualising senses of place, community-held values and memories. A series of field-based collaborative mapping practices illustrate and articulate the workings and potential merit of such methods (and many variations thereof). This book and the visualisations therein conceptualise place through the lens of affectual layers produced and shared by the expectations, imaginaries and ambitions of many. The actual mapping process is part of a wider framework of grassroots world-building and local place-making with communities, of which the mapping experiments and visualisations seek to capture ethnographic detail at the intersection of place, heritage, history and identity. Encountering through academic discourse and storytelling the workings of communities who imagine, remember and tell their own stories, we can perhaps hope to glean how social groups imagine and remember together.

Other leitmotifs of the present volume observe and critique affectual interplay among heritage, memory and place and the role of heritage co-production as imaginative practice. The implementation of the concept of co-production, initially articulated by Elizabeth Olstom in the field of development studies (1996), found growing success in the humanities: more in the following. Indeed, the idea of collaboration as heritage-making process is central to this book's project. I view heritage is a social experiment, created and driven by community input, something that people 'feel' and 'do' as part of their everyday lives in places. The development of heritage is the development of connections. Further, heritage is what Watson and Waterton define as a 'process': "linked to memory, identity, politics, place, dissonance and performance". Our connections to the past, contend Watson and Waterton, are "tangible, and [...] have a materiality upon which they depend that makes them objects of heritage". Tangible or otherwise, heritage connections may be more or less strong or tenuous depending on our own personal investments, our own agendas and our own affectual stakes in these knowledges. The intangible materiality of certain heritage practices may even replace physical presence without compromising the bonds between people, place and the past.

I am most intrigued by the ways in which we, as listeners and scholars, capture the mood, the feeling, the here-and-now of participation and involvement. We are present at the moment in which the person or people we are talking with remember, relive and relay their experience. We become a part of that moment and of the experiential assemblage. The impact of empathetic bonding among social groups resonates with each community introduced in this book in the most varied ways. In reflecting on the importance of social support networks and empathy in memory work, I also consider the need to integrate more fully the social and the cultural in our professional outputs.

Outputs

A note about outputs. After all, to research means to publish, and publishing a piece of work in a scholarly context we attempt to 'visualise' a cultural framework in order to share knowledge we have co-created with communities. Alongside the power and workings of the imaginative collective and individual mind, we engage with the contingent issues of interpretation, representation and dissemination. For instance, how does a reflexive researcher go about making sense and even visualising entanglements of facts, data, imaginaries, changes of

heart, gossip and art that make up communities' attachment to place and links to their pasts, presents and futures?

The way to go about this is, I think, to trust publications to do something with and for the communities we work with, even if ephemeral and partial. In community research, we will never have the full picture. We can at least ensure that the community members are the main agents in our precarious experiments. Increasingly we publish and visualise not only in the interest of academic transparency and honesty but to empower communities to bring their knowledge and identity politics into a broader arena: scholarship, the digital world, international recognition and so on (Dedrick, 2018). The notions of "intersubjectivity, countertransference, and the dynamically interacting forces of projective identification, introjection and incorporation [...] dissolve the boundaries of self and are 'other'. They are difficult to teach effectively, and have to be learned experientially" (Barbour, 2016: 96). Heritage fieldwork can benefit from a toolkit for experiential learning and should strive for the communication of co-produced, negotiated values and knowledge before anything else.

Stories, memories and their telling are mediated not only by the cultural context in which they are produced and enacted but also by the body of the tellers and the gestures of the group (Pink, 2009). We should be mindful that research interviews and storytelling act as embodied exchanges of recollections during which information is shared but stories and impressions simultaneously occur, affect and are affected by our reciprocal presence. The strategies, tricks and dynamics through which we, as researchers, come to frame, represent and ultimately transform events and places through our intervention are as varied as the multitude of cultural groups and human societies we come to work with. And still, the multisensory experiencing of the past in the present is usually lost in official accounts and academic outputs; as experientially leaning fieldworkers and scholars, we may have to live with this fact. We can acknowledge with an amount of healthy frustration how publication 'flattens' our and our co-researchers' experience in the field. On a positive note, by engaging with communities through mixed media we can go some way towards opening up occluded layerings and linkages of memory-presents. For example, we can make this happen by inviting co-researchers to record, to draw, to map, to take photographs or simply to wander around talking to each other. Local actors' perceptual channels and agencies can then come to the fore, above and beyond our 'learned' thick descriptions.

The maps in this book only hold temporary meanings: their significance has changed since this book went to press. It is inevitable and yet promising. The maps are boundless. The potential of the mapping practices outlined here is as open-ended as life experience itself; the process is made of, and reflects, multiple affectual linkages, experiential assemblages and imaginaries. As I type now, of course, the book has not yet been published, which is why it is with a sense of expectation that I can only speculate on the outcome of these experiments.

The maps themselves

This book introduces completed fieldwork projects based on collaborative mapping (the three Italian case studies) and a project in-becoming (the memory mapping in collaboration with Beamish Museum in England at two sites: Ryhope and Kibblesworth). These five visualisation experiments may shed light on the openendedness and collaborative nature of cultural heritage production. These examples embody highly diverse understandings of, and engagements with, material culture. I happened to become involved with the different locations and communities present in this book at different times in my life and academic career. In some cases I was an insider, mingling with my own; in others, an outsider looking in. The deep mapping methodology developed as a way of 'feeling in place' together with others during fieldwork, initially as a medium to express autobiographical insights captured during research in the field, but then developing into a gathering of agencies and affects shared with others. Eventually, the method became a methodology with which to experience the past, present and future of place. In this spirit, this book offers practical strategies for capturing some of the essence of place as the framework for the real and the imagined, the remembered, the present moment and anxious, perhaps impatient futures.

Is it even worth attempting to visualise place, memory and the imagined? A map, although at some point realised and visible to persons other than the mapmakers, is not prescriptive in light of its transient materiality. It is vulnerable, and it is objectionable. A map with many makers is a visual storytelling rich in sensory, more-than-textual, affectual textures. I have successfully used this mapping experiment, alongside other ethnographic methods, to facilitate a group's wish to visualise the sense of place and the plurality of affects that circulate at heritage sites, at historic landscapes or in the urban fabric.

Open-endedness was key from the start, as the maps led me to consider a wealth of possible pathways and openings for this affect-facing heritage research. The experiments and the thick stories and counter-stories told in place shaped theoretical insights, making unpredictable snags in the frameworks I came to think with and through. The process of collaborative map-making disrupted most of what I knew about these communities. I often witnessed the instability of the cultural-mnemonic assemblage whose unexpected tilts and patterns became part of the relationship between people and place. Exchanged stories and secrets merged with the strokes of a drawing pen. I embraced the textural inquisitiveness of the visualisation method, which became so absorbing as to completely blur the line between research and experience even in unfamiliar contexts like the northeast of England and, later, Swat Valley in Pakistan. The maps usually shape my research questions, rather than solidifying the questions into the visual medium.

In practical terms, the visualisation experiments and mapping strategies I introduce here may prove useful in complementing and even enriching traditional ethnographic strategies of field observation. Bottom-up visualisations may provide more nuance to autoethnographies in the field by positioning our agencies and those of others in the same affectual spaces. This kind of collaborative mapping may well insert itself as novel practice in the toolkit of participatory research across disciplines. The multivocal and informal nature of the visualisation exercises as presented in this book reflects the spontaneity of much community-based expertise and the affectual roots of many a local historical society. For instance, the visualisations may illuminate ambiguous emotional links between dwellers and region (or site); they may also elucidate the experiences of inhabiting spaces dense with histories and stories, memories and imaginaries that animate place. For heritage scholars and field researchers, the mapping experiments may prove to be an informal and often playful avenue to explore place meanings, real and imagined. The process of feeling, observing and mapping experience together, as a group, can then be useful to make room for hard-to-define, more-than-narrative moments that we live in everyday life and fieldwork. After all, working with any given community entails an engagement with layers of perception and the fragile interplay of private and public lives — any community is "an elusive ideal" unless we patiently and respectfully work through its many aspects past and present, accepting the worth of the memorable and the forgotten, the proudly displayed, the hidden and the hurtful.

The 'thick' (or deep) memory maps present in this volume and first articulated in a paper are not simply a colourful metaphor for memory: they also make spatial connections meaningful. To visualise something is to own up to it, to declare 'it' present even if intangible, hidden or invisible. The act of mapping out, of drawing to visualise something, brings out things that are meaningful, even if they are painful to verbalise or ephemeral and hard to quantify. Often, making the present-past visible means mapping out meaningful places and things that have disappeared before they fade from memory. In some cases, this effort entails the presencing of invisible traces; in others, the mapping process is a means of materialising loss, of making loss evident. Are visualisations a potential alternative model to individual remembrance narratives? Are they a gentle incentive to bring forth something or to let go of something else? Either way, storytelling in visual form (or storyboarding, even) may be able to build on, grow from and reframe a politics of memory to create a reflexive and more inclusive platform for future-making. I explore these implications further in Chapter 2.

Road map to the Study

This is not a memory-studies treatise. This is not because I do not find the notion of memory endlessly fascinating and even compelling — I do, and memory (and its related process of postmemory) is ever-present in the stories

unfolding throughout the book. What I want to do here is slightly different, although it hopefully adds a methodological 'something' to the debate on 'affecting' memory by facilitating the visualisation of some of memory's aspects, such as the imagined, the constructed or the fabricated memory. In working through the stories in this book, I privilege the creative side of social memory, that is, I observe what memory can do and become when visually expressed and collectively decanted in the context of community fieldwork and workshops. The maps leave traces of themselves as material culture items even after eyewitnesses and social actors elect to move on, pass away or lose interest. Often, one map is the start of many follow-up experiments, as is the case for several schools in Italy and the Swat Museum in Pakistan, trying out the method in novel ways that render the process their own.

The ideas of 'place' and 'trace' are closely tied to the rituals and practices of remembrance enacted by the five groups of co-researchers present in this book. As this volume also seeks to act as a guide or companion to the mapping methodology it illustrates, I provide summary bullet points at the end of Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. These summary points articulate the steps taken in the devising and making of the maps and visualisations, as well as go over the main ideas and arguments proposed in each chapter. In the Appendix, I provide a step by step breakdown of the mapping methodology in order for the process to become easy to follow and, if desired, implement in other fieldwork.

In Part I, based on three Italian case studies, I reflect on my decade-long work with Archaeoclub Gruppo Archeologico del Cenedese (GAC) and with two local historical societies, ISREV and the Istituto Storico Bellunese Della Resistenza e Dell'Eta' Contemporanea (ISBREC). These groups are, respectively, a Vittorio Veneto and environs-based avocational archaeological society (GAC) and two non-governmental organisations dedicated to the research and memorialisation of the anti-Fascist partisan struggle in northeast Veneto during the Second World War. Mapping became a part of the fieldwork with each community and nonprofessional historians as if growing out of a desire to not only investigate time, but also to interrogate the persistence in the present of spaces and places where atrocities and violence took place during the war.

In Part II, dedicated to the northeast of England, I recount the process of collaboration together with the Community Participation Team at Beamish Museum in an experiment with memory visualisation. Beamish Museum, myself and two local communities joined forces to craft memory maps of the 1950s which will be exhibited as part of Remaking Beamish — the big 1950s development due to be completed in 2021. One chapter in this section (7) includes a contribution by the Beamish Museum's community participation officer, Geraldine Straker. The reflection part of the chapter is an informal and to an extent dialogic assessment of what it was like to embark on this particular kind of collaborative fieldwork and reminiscence work. Geraldine and I articulate our collaborative endeavour side by side: we reflect in turn on how we listened to community voices to ascertain how they wanted the 1950s to be represented in the museum and beyond. The reflection section of this chapter outlines our attempt to visualise, through deep maps, the ways our co-researchers wanted their communities to be remembered ahead of the museum's 1950s town extension.

The book title's self-appointed 'visualising' mission is eclectic, so different chapters explore or foreground different contexts, themes and priorities which do not necessarily speak to one another. Similarly, the outputs and processes that make up the various cases studies may be of interest to a varied spectrum of practitioners. For instance, the deep heritage map presented in Chapter 3 may be of use to cultural heritage practitioners and archaeologists who wish to explore ways of participating in representation and ownership of cultural and historical assets, tangible as well as intangible. This case study may be of benefit to scholars and those who are interested in moving beyond top-down representations and would like to encompass community views into their outputs by 'thinking' about place and memory in a more imaginative and even playful manner.

Chapter 4 explores the urban memory of the civil war in an Italian town during the years 1943-1945. The production of emplaced, 'mobile' memory maps of the war as experienced in place by town residents across generations may be of interest to urban researchers and those interested in how history and memory work in

motion: the visualisations in this chapter occurred during and after experiments in walking and embodying the past in the places where 'it' all happened — in the field, as it were — as opposed to the more usual interview context in a static location.

Chapter 5 pieces together through communal effort and togetherness the fragmented agency of a non-place, Bus de La Lum, a contested Second World War grave site. This chapter tackles an apparent impossibility — that of mapping experiences tethered to a non-place or a negated place of memory. The intense, fraught process of excavating and representing the unrepresentable — fratricidal wartime killings — may be of use to scholars of civil war and the disappeared across Europe and beyond or to those whose research deals with what clinicians have termed 'ambiguous loss'. This site became a "memory they buried without legal burial place". Any effort to visualise or even imagine this non-place would entail a leap of faith that may not be easily accomplished. With hindsight, the physical 'bringing together' into a room of persons who remember or 'feel' the pull of the mass grave has accomplished more than individual interviews and solitary exploration ever could.

In England, Chapters 6 and 7 offer a foray into the social memory practices of residents of Ryhope and Kibblesworth, two former coal mining English villages at the edges of Sunderland and Gateshead respectively; the stories therein complicate the selective process of museum 'message-setting' and narrative strategies, opening up the floor to the small-scale and proudly personal memories of groups. The English case studies may prove of interest to cultural historians of post-industrial communities in understanding bottom-up politics of representation in a colourful, lively and inclusive manner.

The concluding chapter then sums up the main ideas presented in the book, trying to pull together strands and threads of lived experience, both visible and invisible. After a review of the individual case studies I attempt a calibration of the mapping process, measuring the successes and failures of the experiments, and argue for the usefulness of visualising the affectual density and unpredictability of emplaced heritage and memory.

Finally, the Appendix outlines the stages through which the visualisation and mapping projects take place, drawing on the case studies presented in the preceding chapters and on best-practice observations learned through trial and error in the field. The Appendix is intended not as a guide or a manual, but more broadly as a loose breakdown of steps, activities, decisions and practices that make up the wider 'ensemble' and process of the 'final maps' as presented in this volume.

Memory in the present context

Structures of feeling, networked affects, power struggles and collective memory all compose the daily entanglements between past, present and future as they are lived and shared by communities. In this book, the decision to 'stick with' certain versions of the past validates the identity of a subgroup (the avocational archaeologists; the descendants of the coal miners; the offspring of the civil war combatants): this identity is deeply affectual rather than territorial, but the emplaced element in this tethering and attachment is given by affectual links to a 'belonging together'. This emphasis on belonging and sharing ties in with Margaret Wetherell's critique of Brennan's conception of affect as something which is transmitted unilaterally — from A to B, without external deviations or interference. The problem with this model is the intrinsic individualism that other scholars of affect refute. Moreover, Wetherell reminds us that affectual transmission is not about inert recipients awaiting instruction — it is an infectious energy, unpredictable, that can catch us unprepared as it circulates. Drawing on Halbwachs, Connerton dismantles the analytical separation of individual and social memory as meaningless. To consider the formation of social memory, it follows that one must consider how those memories are constructed and conveyed through such commemorative ceremonies and imaginative acts.

The heritage field has embraced the challenge of building stories on memory — albeit usually of a more official, visible and tangible nature. Much work has been done on the multiple intersections of memory and

heritage and memory and history. Waterton and Watson, following Smith, qualify heritage as a 'process' "linked to memory, identity, politics, place, dissonance and performance".

What is place?

This chapter articulates some of the core themes in this book, starting with the metaconcept of place. "In memory, time becomes 'place'", contends Alessandro Portelli (1997: 32). Place can be built up, revisited or discovered anew; the very idea of place is imbricated in a constant process of becoming (Belcher et al., 2008: 501). The many constituents of place could be disassembled and analysed, but, if one were to attempt to piece them together again, they would not achieve the same configuration as before — least of all would they find themselves in the same place.

Place is certainly one way that remembrance is attached to the visible, tangible world. But this is not always the case. Michel de Certeau has asked, "Of all the things everyone does, how much gets written down?". Emplacement, or the situating of memory in a meaningful space, does not necessary lead to an objective or streamlined way of remembering. My main concern in this book is the ephemeral and unstable nature of stories that generate, shape and transform place. From place, to the body. For Curti, when we explore "bodies and how they affect and are affected by one another, the material conflicts bound to politics of memory and place may also be understood as political strategies to relationally re-shape and re-constitute (Other(s)) emotional geographies". The performative element of 'heritage' negotiations and experience is notoriously difficult to translate and represent in traditional scholarship and (paper-based) academic outputs, yet it lends a whole new dimension to place and memory of place, in place.

I suggest that perhaps communities, in their imaginary bond or through shared ingroup logic, construct and experience place as so many real and imagined facets to make sense of the world and the stories told therein. They do not simply transmit these knowledges to each other as much as construct them, enact them and share them together. Community as a way of learning. Sometimes these constructions affect the tangible, the material, and sometimes they do not. The broadness and slipperiness of definitions of place single it out as one of scholarship's foundations so much so that "if two different authors use the words 'red', 'hard', or 'disappointed', no one doubts that they mean approximately the same thing. [...] But in the case of words such as 'place' or 'space', whose relationship with psychological experience is less direct, there exists a far-reaching uncertainty of interpretation".

Place is hard to define as it is forever caught in a process of becoming; it is embroiled in an unfolding dynamic that the material feminists designate as 'agential realism'. Place is articulated through multiple intersecting processes enacted by human and more-than-human agencies and affects; these entangled agencies are what make the spatial experience unique, ineffable and complex. Affects may attach themselves to objects as well as places and human and non-human animals. Beyond socialisation, place is enmeshed in a network of affects, energies and agencies that exceeds the verbal and the discursive. The situated nature of affect is connected to the shifting significance of place, to which affects are typically tethered.

First to highlight the impossibility of place remaining unaltered for more than a few instants, rendering it impossible for someone to step into the same stream twice, was Herodotus of Samos: the Greek philosopher unkindly dubbed "The Obscure" was anything but that, for he astutely pinned down the changeable and subjective nature of place in one brief yet effective metaphor. Later in the classical world, the Greek and subsequently the Roman imagination anthropomorphised place by assigning it personhood and identity as a Genius, a spirit dwelling and dictating site-specific terms and modes of interaction between a site, humans and their lives.

The ways in which space and place are conceptualised rely on several factors and agencies. Places are what they are because "people and things occupy them, give them shared meanings and situate them in collective

memory". Place is, above all, intensely embroiled in the politics of identity, and community is always (or almost always) tethered to a real or imaginary place. "With few exceptions, community always denotes a there".

Whenever we think about the power or knowledge gained by 'interpreting' a place, it is helpful to identify practices and behaviours deemed appropriate or unsuitable for those places. Allowances and affordances and acts of resistance to established rules offer insight into the perception of place and to the make-up of its socialised nature. Performativity and the body politics work in synergy as emplaced practices: one is the channel of the other, and they act as emergent agencies understood through the lens of relational attachments. Judith Butler has advocated the primacy of the emplaced body and of an interpersonal stance in the performance of identity and social and cultural norms under the rubric of 'performativity'. Performativity in place does not cohere into "a singular 'act', being instead the reiteration of a norm or set of norms". The ideas of resistance to the norms and conventions of a social norm find purchase in this context: the enacted memory-stories in the following chapters resonate with the concepts of resistance and performance, which help frame the ethnographic experience of 'working with' community memory.

And yet material feminists have questioned the peculiar bodilessness and lack of 'matter' in Butler's articulation of her pervasive theory of performativity. The idea of a cultural or political separation from nature in the affectual make-up and experience of place has also been extensively dismantled in scholarship. Affect permeates the 'cultural' — whatever that means — and that which is not in the traditional sense. As in Tim Ingold's still deeply persuasive essay on the practice of dwelling, the place-experience process does not imply any effective inertness on the part of nature. Above and beyond environmental determinism, the natural milieu effectively teaches and shapes human agency, and 'nature' communicates something of herself to human animals in a mutual relationship. An action, a memory, takes place somewhere or is tethered to a specific location. Thus, place is as much of a subject and character in any story, geographically situated or otherwise.

In contrast to the porous and fluid process of mutual learning expressed in the dwelling perspective, place-making is a process of appropriation: it means making one's mark on the landscape. Place-making is all about imposing an interpretation or meaning onto place as opposed to revealing and exploring existing themes, as opposed — in essence — to establishing a dialogue with nature. In place-making, new meanings are negotiated. Place experience is always more than visual and definitely never abstract; place engulfs us through the senses. The encounter of person and 'environment' ultimately takes place through sensory engagement. The maps and strategies the reader finds in this book seem to suggest that sensory and political interpretations of place are possible at the same time, through a process of learning and making together.

Place is capable of haunting, lingering and resonating long after we have moved away from it or erased it. Any process "harnessing these placed-practices has the effect of developing social understandings into socio-spatial understandings of knowledge"— social knowledge, always situated somewhere. The maps I use in this book might just represent one such process, and these maps are certainly 'placed practices'. Placed or emplaced practices do not just underline and nurture presences, however: they can also mourn absences and expose wounds. Communities that once defined themselves spatially do not necessarily need to be located in a place to nurture a strong sense of belonging. Imagination and fantasy notions of place, long-distance longings and nostalgia for a homeland, a town, a street, can all fulfil the need for closeness to a thing, a place, an 'idea' of a place which may or may not correspond to an objective truth (see also Miller and Parrot, 2009). But the hauntings, the experiences, they remain, they linger, they are potent and exhilarating and they are contagious. The sites and memories in this book demanded to be confronted, explored, and they asked us to get to know them for better or for worse.

In Chapter 3, the communal imaginary of a township draws inventive, more-than-spatial maps of a longue durée landscape through the senses and citizen science. The resulting map is a palimpsest of ideas, impressions, memories and expectations. In Chapter 4, a town in northern Italy is held captive by the invisible traces of

fratricidal violence during the Second World War. In an intangible yet haunting mesh of places and non-places, memory and postmemory intersect to conjure up a network of affects.

In Chapter 5, the dead once contained in a sinkhole deep in a forest inhabit a double identity as invisible yet haunting ghosts of Italy's fratricidal Fascist past. To visualise a place like this is an experiment in ghost photography: the attempt to capture an ephemeral, melancholy moment in time that defines a local culture and shapes a community's sense of place in relation to the outside world. In Chapter 6, an open-air social history museum sets the (staged) scene for a collective postmemory and longing for the golden age of coal mining in the deindustrialised northeast of England. The affectual engagement of many storytellers crafts new stories, striving against forgetfulness. Chapter 7 takes a dialogic form in tracing a double journey of experiments with mapping, narrated and led by an academic and a museum Engagement and Participation officer. The double vision/double journey we create in that chapter contains many overlapping layers of meaning, affects and projects.

Meeting the imagined

The lure of the imagined has long fascinated thinkers and artists alike. The notion of 'imagined communities', also critiqued by Harris, was initially espoused as part of Benedict Anderson's (2006) critique of nationalism. Anderson conceptualised imagined communities as social networks reliant on the idea of an identity constructed and enacted by individuals — but those individuals need not ever meet in person. Their imagination provides the stuff to fill the social blanks, leading a certain 'imagined community' to feel united by a common 'way of belonging', or bound by shared ingroup logics. Geography and history, or rather the concepts of place and time, "play out in the psychic words of individuals"; they are encased in the notions of selfhood and community, and they shape experience in all its many facets. In our imagination, we can be at one place and in many places at once. Exploring Giorgio Agamben's idea of the 'exception', Belcher et al. define it as "situated on the edge of materiality, the state of exception has the potential to materialize or not to materialize actual spaces of exception". The idea of exception can contribute a nuanced layer of interpretation to the idea of the potentially disruptive, almost-but-not-quite present notion of the collective imagination. Barbara Misztal has written extensively on the configurations and grammars of social remembrance, but imagination does not appear as central to her conceptions. She does explore the idea of invented traditions, but the two 'ideas', while they intersect and mutually inform each other, are not that closely aligned or mutually unpacked.

In cultural geography, imaginaries of place loom large as subjects with an agency of their own. Bachelard's poetic phenomenology leads to framing the imagination as a "perpetual interaction between the human subject which imagines and the image itself. Imagination is thus recognized to be conscious of something other than itself which motivates, induces and transforms it". In the introduction to their edited volume, Jane Kenway and Johannah Fahey argue that allowing the imagination to become an important and active part of the research process and project allows us to get closer to communities and to better enable the sharing of knowledge. They muse about the way that "certain people take us to such untravelled words". I love this definition of the imagination: not an unreal world, but more like an unexplored territory. Being mindful of the power implications and the ever-present danger of colonising the other's imagination, framing the imagined as a potential place to discover, enjoy and explore is a good starting point to shape the 'reality' and 'verisimilitude' of memories and perceptions that seem to eschew factual events, objects and spaces. The realm of the imagination bridges the inner and outer nuances of place-making and place understanding and influences knowledge-building in myriad ways.

Imagination is central to this book, and, I argue, to any holistic and grassroots notion of heritage and memory, cultural or otherwise. Imagination colours pasts and presents and paints futures, shaping experience and shaped by experience and potential things-to-be. Here, I build on the idea of imagined communities and Harris's idea of community as assemblage to think about the ways communities and social groups navigate, give meaning to and remember place.

The communities I worked with told spatial stories in ways that suggest the past as an 'insistent' force in the shaping of place and in the framing of their presents and futures. This insight aligns with current thinking on identity-making linked to 'sense of place' and to multiple senses and appreciations of the past. Edward Said's conception of the 'invented' is crucial in framing place-identity configurations and national narratives, as is the idea of the manufacture of heritage as a transforming society's desire to shape place narratives and communicate selected place understandings. A drive to self-represent, making use of imaginative and creative processes to foreground one specific image of a country or regional identity, is innate to humans. We often encounter this imaginative self-shaping process among and within social groups (and individuals) who have undergone dramatic change, slow decline or dispossession or who have been the victims of intense trauma such as genocide, the annihilation of the Shoah or the ongoing ferocity of the Palestinian Nakba.

To an extent, however, a self-image shaping grounded in the collective imaginary is common to most societies. On a small scale, as in a town or a neighbourhood, imagination and invention pervade local understandings of place even when there is no need or desire to purge traumatic memory. When talking to people about what place means to them, listeners are inevitably going to be surprised by the range of responses received. Researchers (or simply sympathetic listeners) will be presented with things or interpretations they may have been quite unaware of prior to their questioning. We may not always be able to fathom the full extent of the intersections of the imagined and the real in the way we experience or even understand space and time. This will take us by surprise not because our research has not been sufficiently thorough, but because in this way fieldworkers learn about things that do not necessarily qualify as 'truths' outside of a given co-researcher's imagination. Researchers are successful when they not only gather data and information grounded on fact and observable realities but also learn about the 'what ifs' and make-believes their co-researching communities live by.

"In community, self and terrain are intertwined", writes Suzanne Keller. Often, these ties are imperceptible to the naked eye. Sometimes, perceptions or understandings of the self/terrain dynamics and the world one makes therein are intimate, sacred and not to be shared with strangers. This diversity is what, to my mind, makes qualitative research such a precious, intriguing process even when the imaginary edge of some of the tales and interpretations held by our co-researchers veers towards the stuff of legend. The imagination ought to be foregrounded in scholarly research as community-made, community-dreamed and community-performed agency across self and terrain.

The logics of co-production enable the building of stories from the ground up, stories that then take on a life of their own as they unfold and reach multiple, ever wider publics. Co-produced fieldwork insights and shared knowledges rework and reframe recent events in unique ways, even if they may appear unorthodox or unwarranted. This 'sharing' approach is especially critical in fields such as cultural heritage, where people's perceptions of the past (and place) are key to their present positioning (Dicks, 2010). How may we convey a version of a group's sense of place which also involves them directly as co-researchers and curators, not simply as participants or subjects? In this book, I attempt to show how we might implement this strategy through collaborative fieldwork and mapping; I also explore the way in which an institution, Beamish Museum in England, is already carrying out work of this kind.

Experiential learning is central to many of the experiments described in this book and is a core theme in my wider research. Rudy Koshar's idea of memory-landscape, for instance, encompasses the material and immaterial elements of memory and landscape as intertwined in experience and encounter (2000). The memory-landscape is said to include objects and markers that we can see, touch and hear, such as monuments, parades, performances and street names, but also wider 'sense of place' (Agnew, 1987), which is arguably closer to a feeling or a sensorial exposition of memory than to a tangible thing. The imagined, then, becomes a quality of affects, atmospheres and things that are tied together by stories and bound together by human and more-than-human experience. "Bodies, things, social formations, ideas, beliefs and memories can all possess capacities to materially affect and be affected". It follows that not only are memories materially produced, but

that place understandings are created and given meaning through affectual palimpsests of perception and memory. This intersection occupies a meaningful space in social and individual sense of place and identity, and heritage experience is but one of such interlinked affects dynamically negotiated through real and imagined assemblages present understandings in a hands-on, proactive way. Reframing and sharing stories means getting one's hands dirty with glue or ink or soil, navigating places, capturing sensations, shaping new memories in the everyday. Despite new efforts to engage communities and open up collaborative scholarship in the historical sciences, more work is needed to develop new ways of ensuring empowerment and representation of community values that exceed the quantitative or representational canon. We can do more. Scholars and fieldworkers wishing to involve communities to create co-produced outputs and narratives should be able to do so from the beginning of a research project. We should expand the range of communities that we work with, seeking to give a voice to, and empower, ever more marginalised or silenced groups. Professionally speaking, we should write co-production and collaborative fieldwork so that we enlist citizen science as a framework for knowledge-building, not as a footnote on methods.

From doctoral student experiment to professional 'modus operandi', the mapping and visualisation experiments have been with me through the years and helped me think through making and showing data and stories. I am obviously partial in advocating this methodology, but not in order to feel clever — rather, because I have honestly found that it works. The collaborative fieldwork-and-mapping strategy is effective in engaging the participation and stimulating the curiosity of avocational members of the public in what 'heritage' and 'memory work' can accomplish. To perceive themselves as the architects and gatekeepers of knowledge leads to the public's sense that the workings of academic production and heritage policy have to do with them. The feeling that the field methods are centred around their experience, rather than milking them for information, may boost communities' sense of worth and reinforce their pride of place.

The process of mapping has not only bridged the gap of communication and interaction with the communities in which I found myself working, but it has also shaped my thinking and sharpened my scholarly intuitions. As a teaching tool, I love getting students enthused about this fun way of engaging communities in their research and fieldwork. All students of mine have thoroughly enjoyed getting involved with real-world things, textures, images and impressions. Coresearchers and learners alike have expressed an enjoyment in playing with data and information in a slightly different way. This is the point where I modestly suggest that readers with a role in education and training in the historical and social sciences and community-facing arts and humanities should think about recommending this method for their own students and trainees.

I attempt to sum up some of the findings of this technique and its application as follows:

- It is easy, cheap and quick to assemble and produce
- No advance knowledge of computer or image editing is necessary
- Groups of all ages and abilities can get involved.
- It benefits and involves local communities: stakeholders who feel they belong there directly or indirectly literally put their own geographical and cultural values 'back on the map'.
- It can be integrated, or form the foundation of, formal academic outputs and publications and student papers and projects — from summative report to doctoral dissertation. <>

HANDBOOK OF NARRATIVE ANALYSIS, SECOND EDITION by Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck [Frontiers of Narrative, University of Nebraska Press, 9781496217141]

Stories are everywhere, from fiction across media to politics and personal identity. *Handbook of Narrative Analysis* sorts out both traditional and recent narrative theories, providing the necessary skills to interpret any story. In addition to discussing classical theorists, such as Gérard Genette, Mieke Bal, and Seymour Chatman, *Handbook of Narrative Analysis* presents precursors (such as E. M. Forster), related theorists (Franz Stanzel, Dorrit Cohn), and a large variety of postclassical critics. Among the latter particular attention is paid to

rhetorical, cognitive, and cultural approaches; intermediality; storyworlds; gender theory; and natural and unnatural narratology.

Not content to consider theory as an end in itself, Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck use two short stories and a graphic narrative by contemporary authors as touchstones to illustrate each approach to narrative. In doing so they illuminate the practical implications of theoretical preferences and the ideological leanings underlying them. Marginal glosses guide the reader through discussions of theoretical issues, and an extensive bibliography points readers to the most current publications in the field. Written in an accessible style, this handbook combines a comprehensive treatment of its subject with a user-friendly format appropriate for specialists and nonspecialists alike.

HANDBOOK OF NARRATIVE ANALYSIS is the go-to book for understanding and interpreting narrative. This new edition revises and extends the first edition to describe and apply the last fifteen years of cutting-edge scholarship in the field of narrative theory.

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Excerpt: People cannot do without narratives. From the oldest myths and legends to postmodern fabulation and beyond, narration has always been central. Postmodern philosophers may have submitted that there are no longer any grand, encompassing narratives, but they also contend that everything amounts to a narrative, including the world and the self. If that is correct, then the study of narrative is not just a pastime for literary theorists in their ivory towers. Instead it unveils fundamental culture-specific opinions about reality and humankind, which are narrativized in stories and novels.

Theory and practice

Theories of narrative are misconstrued if they insist on abstraction and lose touch with actual stories. This handbook aims to avoid this. It is geared to a concrete illustration of the relevance—and the potential shortcomings—of major narrative theories. This is why we refer to two short stories that we briefly present in this introduction and that we have made available in the appendix to this book: "Pegasian" by Charlotte Mutsaers and "The Map" by Gerrit Krol. Although these short stories have been selected pretty much at random, they can still serve to illustrate several issues in narrative theory. In the introduction we only indicate what these problems might be, and we formulate a number of related questions. The rest of the book consists of the various answers to those questions.

Obviously we will not restrict ourselves to an analysis of just two stories. When discussing the various theories, we will quote from a number of other narrative texts but always from literary narratives in prose. Literary prose has in fact always been the starting point of the study of narrative, which since its upsurge in the sixties and seventies has come to be known as narratology and which provides the framework for our undertaking. There are many other forms of narration, and (mostly in chapter 3) we will therefore repeatedly turn to an example of graphic fiction, "City" by Wasco, which is also included in the appendix. Still, our main point of interest remains literary prose.

Traditional Questions

Contrary to poetry and drama, a prose story cannot do without a narrator, or so most people seem to think. The first lines of "The Map" seem to feature one of those good old narrators who knows everything and hovers over the universe of the story. He tells about the Christian shops whose shades were rolled down on Sundays. Yet in the second paragraph it becomes clear that this seemingly objective voice is in fact subjective since it belongs to an I-narrator. It seems obvious to imagine that this I-narrator is present already in the first paragraph but that he remains more or less in the background. However, it is not that simple. Let us suppose that the first paragraph is expanded into an entire chapter and the second paragraph into yet another full chapter. In that case, are we speaking of different narrators? Or are we going to think of these two voices as belonging to one and the same narrator who switches back and forth between the relatively impersonal voice of an all-knowing third-person narrator and the very personal voice of a first-person narrator?

The narrator problem

The answer to this question may well depend on the size of the passages at hand. The briefer the passage, the more one tends to choose the single-narrator option. The first sentence about the shops with their rolled-down

shades could be followed by "But one of these Sundays, on my way to children's church, I saw part of a map." In that case the first sentence would be attributed to the first-person narrator as well. In the case of a paragraph this becomes less obvious, and in the case of a chapter even less so. All this may seem quite irrelevant, but in fact it amounts to a fundamental problem. Is it possible to say that a text is narrated by one specific type of narrator? Or is there a constant change? Would it be correct to suggest that a traditional nineteenth-century novel, for instance, is narrated by a third-person narrator?

The narrator's scope

Put in more abstract terms, we are dealing here with the demarcation of units for investigation. Does a narrator have to be defined for every unit, or does every unit have to fit into a larger subdivision of the novel or story? A case in point, to which we will return, is the famous monologue by Molly Bloom in the final chapter of *Ulysses*. If you consider this chapter separately, you could say that Molly narrates what is going on in her mind. However, if you consider this chapter in conjunction with the rest of the novel, you could say that there is an omniscient narrator who quotes or recounts Molly's thoughts. Drawing a borderline between narrative units is therefore of paramount importance. If the chapter is a separate unit, then the character is the narrator. If the chapter is part of the larger whole, then the narrator is not a character at all.

Narration and perception

Let us reconsider the first-person narrator of "The Map." The act of seeing seems to be very important for him. One Sunday in his childhood he notices that the shades of one particular shop window have not been fully rolled down, and he goes on to spot a cycling map through the slit that has remained: "Never had I seen such a map, with such minute detail." Is this I-witness the same as the figure who reports the discovery? Or do we have to say that the I-witness is a little boy and that the I-narrator is much older, perhaps the adult who is looking back? In retrospect he does not see in the same way as the child. These two figures are not only separated in time, they also do not share the same view. The story does not explicitly thematize this distinction. It could have been thematized as follows: "Later I would see many more maps, but none of them would entrance me as much as this one." In "The Map," the rift in question is only addressed toward the end of the story. What amounts to an exciting discovery for the child has become routine for the adult. In the last paragraph, a sentence such as "[Later] my dream would fade away" proves that the I-narrator differs from the boy who makes the discovery. Indeed, how could the child know that his dream would fade away later? The narrator knows more than the boy, especially the disenchanting outcome of the story that leads him to throw out the map: "I haven't kept it either."

Narration and Interpretation

The reader who puts all the I-figures in this story into the same bag misses out on the thematic essence of the story—the loss of a childlike enchantment. This loss only emerges when the reader realizes the difference between the boy and the narrator. This is just one example of the way in which a narratological analysis can contribute to an interpretation focusing on content. In this case the act of seeing is indeed the main theme. The narrator announces it in the opening sentence with the closed shops, and he develops it in "those two forbidden inches" that enable the boy to see the map, which in its turn enables him to see mapped for the first time the areas he would otherwise have crossed and biked unthinkingly. The real enchantment resides in the graphic representation of reality. The transition from reality to representation on the level of content reflects the narratological development from someone who sees and acts to someone who narrates. We will repeatedly stress that a narratological analysis does not have any value as long as it does not connect with the contents of the story.

Narrator and character in "The Map"

There are a few other problems with the so-called I-narrator in "The Map." The first paragraph features the following sentence: "There was a counter behind which ('he's nice, she's wearing the pants') Mr and Mrs Paalman

operated as if it were a grocery store." The brief comment in parentheses describes Mr and Mrs Paalman, but as a reader you never get to know who does the actual talking. Perhaps this view corresponds to the village opinion. In any case, the speaker is not a character in the story. He or she is merely a voice instead of an embodied figure. This abstract and general agency might relate to "one," who is mentioned a little later in the text and becomes a speaker: "One waited one's turn and when it was finally there, one uttered one's wishes, in the manner of 'a light novel for a girl of seventeen' or 'a historical novel, preferably illustrated....'" The narrator quotes impersonal visitors who do appear in the story and who therefore differ from the impersonal village opinion in "he's nice, she's wearing the pants." Quoted figures can apparently hail from inside as well as from outside the story.

Obviously, figures do not only appear in the guise of quotation marks. The narrator can summarize what they think or say, in which case these talking and thinking figures actually recede in favor of the summarizing narrator. Take a sentence like "The village contended that Mrs Paalman was the boss at home and that her husband was a mere meek shadow." If the narrator had summarized the village opinion in this way, these different words would also create a different view. In the imaginary summary the wife becomes more threatening while the husband seems to disappear altogether. For a reader it is often very difficult to make a clear distinction between what was originally said and what the narrator made of it.

Narrator and character in "Pegasian"

This certainly applies to the story by Charlotte Mutsaers. Since she does not use any quotation marks, it is often impossible to differentiate between the words of the characters and those of the narrator. "The riding master" answers that you catch a very special wind with it," is a summary in indirect speech by the narrator. The original words of the riding master are not directly reproduced, but instead they are paraphrased and presented in a that-clause. It is impossible to decide whether the summary remains close to the original. One might surmise that the riding master said, "You catch a very special wind with it," in which case the summary is extremely true to the original, but there is no way to be sure. Indirect speech always betrays an intervention by the narrator. Less so in the case of direct speech because it quotes the original expression. The fourth paragraph of "Pegasian" might be such a direct quotation, even though there are no quotation marks. "Do they make you go faster?" would then equal the actual question the female character asked her riding master.

Problems, however, are just beginning. Who says "true dressage, just like real life, doesn't have anything to do with racing"? Is it the riding master and is he quoted literally? Or is it the narrator who is speaking here? And if so, is the formulation his, or does he choose an unusual way to represent a statement by the riding master? This strange method of speech representation occurs again and again, as for instance in the following sentence: "Little girls ... did well not to shoot off their mouths." This is not a direct quotation, otherwise the sentence would read, "Little girls do well not to shoot off their mouths." Neither is it a summary, since in that case the sentence would read, "The riding master thought that little girls did well not to shoot off their mouths." The actual sentence sits somewhere in between the two, which makes it very difficult to decide which words belong to the riding master and which ones to the narrator. That position which belongs to neither of the two traditional methods of speech representation is occupied by free indirect speech. As we will see, this intermediate form has caused many controversies in structuralist narratology, and it has also become central to more recent proposals on the evocation of speech.

At the end, "the riding master doesn't feel like explaining anything anymore. Sometimes your patience simply runs out." Who pronounces the latter sentence? The narrator? Or, in the case of free indirect speech, the riding master, who may have sighed, "Sometimes my patience simply runs out"? This is important, since in free indirect speech "your patience" seems to be that of a specific character; that is, the riding master. However, if it is the narrator who says, "Sometimes your patience simply runs out," then "your" is much more general and refers to a general agent outside the story: "People will sometimes run out of patience." The next sentence, "Furthermore, all this questioning ruins the class, notably for the other ladies," is probably a statement by the riding master,

represented in free indirect speech. This makes it more probable that the brief sentence about patience is also a statement by the riding master. But one can never be sure.

In the last paragraph another "you" appears: "Whatever. As long as you take off." Either this is an idea of the female character, and in that case the "you" can be a general "one" or a transposition of "I" into free indirect speech; or this is a statement by the narrator, in which case only the general interpretation is possible. The general "one" does not appear in the story as an embodied figure, but the transposed "I" of course does.

Inside or outside the story

In "Pegasian" by Mutsaers, this ambiguity concerning inside or outside the story is present from the beginning. In the first sentence, the main female character might consider that "when horse riding you might best be wearing a real pair of riding breeches." Who is this "you"? Is it the main character to whom the riding master says that she should wear proper riding pants, or is this another general you figure, a "one" that hovers over the story and is not really addressed? Does this really matter? As we will see, it really does since the difference between elements within the narrative world and those outside it is one of the most fundamental distinctions made by traditional narratology. It has already become clear that stories are somewhat casual with regard to this abstract difference, and we will find this repeatedly in the course of our investigation.

In "The Map," the distinction is mostly easy to make. In "he's nice, she's wearing the pants," we have a general agent, the village opinion, that does not appear as a character. If this agent were to be turned into a customer in the bookshop, then she or he would become a character in the story, for instance someone who would wish to buy "a light novel for a girl of seventeen." Even if the you-figure in "The Map" does not speak, it is relatively easy to decide whether it belongs to the narrative world or not. "On the corner of little Brouwerstreet and Ebbingestreet, for instance, you had the Paalman bookshop." This "you" can be understood as "one," a general and abstract agent who does not assume any concrete form. He or she does not appear as a visitor to the small town, while the "one" who talks does, as a bookshop customer. On the other hand, it could be said that also the I-figure as a young man is contained in the abstract "one" since he too obviously knew the bookshop on the corner. As a result, Krol's general "one" also occupies a position between the I-figure within the narrative world and the abstract agent outside it.

The fact that "Pegasian" often does not allow us to decide the position of the you-figure is highly significant. The reader can connect the form of narration with its content. Maybe the "you" in the story cannot properly be separated from a general "one" because the story has allegorical dimensions. That which holds for the female "you" on the horse does in fact hold for everyone. One could even speak of a moral, which, as happens often, the story reserves for its last few sentences: "Whatever. As long as you take off." In other words, the thing the you-figure learns in this short story resembles that which the reader (and human beings in general) must learn as well. The method of overcoming gravity is not important as long as you take off.

Inside or outside: interpretation

We do not believe it is farfetched to connect the confusion of figures inside and outside of the story with the story's content. This connection is precisely what makes narratology relevant. If narratology becomes a mere formalistic game in which the distinction of various narrators does not go hand-in-hand with a discussion of what they actually tell us, then the contents of a narrative remain mistakingly untouched. Conversely, it would be wrong to forget the narrative aspects of a story and to focus exclusively on content. Whoever insists on doing the latter not only misses out on various thematic and interpretive layers but also reduces a text to its supposed content or message. In fact it is the way in which a story is narrated that turns it into what it is. Those who insist on denying the importance of the method of narration by reducing a story to content might just as well go to the movies or watch television because both of them can offer similar content.

Only a narratology that deals both with the narrated world (content) and also with the way in which this world is represented (form) has any relevance for text interpretation. We consider interpretation precisely as the

effort to connect the content of a particular object—in this case a literary text—with its form. This connection works both ways. Form always implies content, and content in its turn clarifies the meaning of form. Such a connection is by no means readily evident. The reader has to discover it, and such a discovery always reveals a certain ideology. Reading and ideology will therefore be addressed momentarily.

New Questions

The problems we have dealt with so far all have to do with borders, such as those between the story's various passages; narrating and seeing; then and now; talking and acting; inside and outside the story; and the words of a character and those of the narrator. In general, traditional narratology tries to draw these borders as clearly as possible, while more recent theories of narrative emphasize the transitions and potential confusions. The interest in transitions also explains why recent approaches no longer consider a literary narrative in terms of a closed system. They insist that a text always functions in a context, while traditional theory largely remained blind to this.

Ideology and context

Context always has to do with ideology. We conceive of ideology in its widest sense as the collection of conscious or unconscious views of the world and what it is to be human, which means that for us the term need not have any negative connotations.¹ This view of ideology allows for the study of various elements. In "The Map," one could look for the narrative's religious aspects. Indeed, the story deals with Christian shops whose shades are rolled down "so that people would not be seduced on Sunday to return and buy something on Monday." This ironic formulation suggests that religion wants to hide things but in the process only makes them more attractive. This explains the attraction of the "two forbidden inches" that enable the boy to see the map. Seeing and not seeing do not merely constitute the story's themes or its technical aspects, but they also have a major ideological import. Religion doubtlessly plays a role in the boy's desire, which is not coincidentally described with a word—"prospect"—related to seeing: "The prospect I was going to cover the earth with my body. To be everywhere ..." The latter is only given to God.

In "Pegasian," ideology could be thought to relate to the difference between male and female aspects of narrative. The riding master can easily be simplified so as to appear as the representative of male attitudes. He demands submissiveness, imposes rules, and thinks that the heavenly feeling at stake in the story can only be attained by seriousness and study. To the psychoanalytically oriented reader, the riding master might even represent the paternal agent. The female figure, on the contrary, comes across as much more frivolous. In her view study and rules do not matter all that much, and she promotes that which is carefree and unregulated. The unorthodox narration in this story could then be thought to undermine (male) discipline and to promote the free-floating transience of (female) lightness.

Literary context

When extending narratology to the study of the narrative's context, attention must obviously be paid to the literary context as well. In this respect, "Pegasian" might be compared to the story "Up in the Gallery" by Franz Kafka. This story likewise deals with a pupil in a riding school and her ruthless riding master who enjoys cracking the whip. Also in "Up in the Gallery," the male and female perspectives clash. The story consists of only two paragraphs. In the first one we get a description of how the female rider would be bullied by the male character. In the second we get exactly the opposite. The male character adores the female rider. The reader who knows this story will undoubtedly hear echoes of Kafka in the story by Mutsaers, which will affect the narrative. This means that the analysis of a story cannot remain independent of the reader who brings the story to life. While the traditional approach hardly makes any room for the reader, more recent theories give him or her a central position.

Reader and context

The reader and the context—literary as well as ideological—perhaps constitute the most important new ingredients of contemporary narrative theory, but narratology has expanded in other directions as well. Since the 1980s a number of new approaches have been developed, some of which contain significant revisions of classical structuralist theory. In the final chapter of this book, we discuss a representative selection of these new "postclassical" approaches, highlighting their potential for interpretation and making sure to show just how they improve narrative theory. However, it is important not to throw out the narrative baby with the structuralist bathwater, and therefore the second chapter of this handbook will provide a sizeable summary of traditional narratology geared to classroom treatment. Starting from a traditional division between story, narrative, and narration—terms we have so far used in their non-technical meaning—we have brought together all narrative elements structuralism can be thought to offer as potentially important for interpretation. Obviously, structuralist narratology did not come into being in a vacuum, which explains why in the first chapter we discuss the early stages of narrative theory and also some important theories that were developed simultaneously with structuralism and that therefore already betray an awareness of its approach. Our overall aim in this handbook is to make narrative theory available to those who are interested in close and ideologically relevant readings of literary prose. We are aware of the ideological dangers inherent in our self-appointed status as facilitators, but we have tried to come up with (con)testable possibilities rather than take-it-or-leave-it solutions. <>

HOW TO READ DESCARTES'S MEDITATIONS by Zbigniew Janowski [St. Augustines Press, 9781587313554]

HOW TO READ DESCARTES'S MEDITATIONS consists of seven independent studies of Descartes's Meditations. The discussion in each chapter is organized around one problem which either has never or very seldom been explored in Cartesian scholarship. For example, in the study of the Letter to the Sorbonne, Janowski centers his discussion around the decree of the Lateran Council, showing the unorthodox character of Descartes's conception of the soul. Further, in his chapter devoted to the notoriously difficult proof for the existence of God in the Third Meditation, Janowski shows that to understand properly Descartes's explicitly Scholastic proof is to read it as a reformulation of Duns Scotus's own proof. And in the final chapter on the Sixth Meditation, the author shows that Modern (Cartesian) Man – the man whose soul is no longer the Scholastic anima but blood that animates his bones, veins, and muscles - germinated in the writings of Francis Bacon, a predecessor never properly acknowledged by Descartes.

HOW TO READ DESCARTES'S MEDITATIONS is the first collection of essays on the Meditations that makes a conscious effort to read Descartes's philosophy as a reaction against or an acknowledgment of Scholastic, Renaissance, and the Reformation sources. It will become a standard book for students of modern philosophy.

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Excerpt: This collection of articles is neither a systematic exposition of the Meditations nor is it a collection of studies of each Meditation.

Rather, it is a collection of "insights" into Descartes's Meditations.

Each chapter deals with a fairly narrow point of Descartes's philosophy that has not been given an elaborate account in Cartesian scholarship nor has been sufficiently explored.

My focus is primarily the influence of past thinkers on Descartes: Aristotle, St. Thomas (Meditations II and VI), Duns Scotus (Meditation III), St. Augustine (Meditation IV), and Descartes's use of some of the ecclesiastical documents (Letter to the Sorbonne).

The name of Aristotle pops up throughout Descartes's letters. However, it is not always clear whether Descartes has in mind the ancient philosopher or his medieval interpreters, particularly St. Thomas. Descartes knew Aristotle's writings first-hand. But which ones in particular did he read or positioned himself against while writing the *Meditations*? One could assume, as I did in writing chapter III, that he read *De anima*. However, *De anima* is only one among many works which form a long chain of considerations that explain the Aristotelian theory of the soul, cognition, and the movement of animals, including man. Many of Aristotle's writings — e.g., *De motu animalium*, *parva naturalia*, *De generation animalium*, etc. — are hardly of interest to anyone but Aristotle scholars, and only seldom are they read by Cartesian scholars. To properly understand Aristotle's theory of movement, and thus Descartes's alternative explanation, one needs to go beyond *De anima*.

While I was writing the chapter on the Second and Sixth *Meditations*, in which I try to read Descartes against Aristotle, I realized the vastness of the topic. An analysis that does justice to Aristotle's or Aquinas's cannot be comprised within the confines of a single chapter. This chapter, I hope, provides valuable hints and will make others devote their scholarly energy to a full-length study of the relationship between Aristotle, St. Thomas and Descartes.

Other chapters in this collection deal with St. Augustine and Duns Scotus. As I showed in my Augustinian-Cartesian Index and Cartesian Theodicy, St. Augustine's influence can be felt throughout the *Meditations*. Here, however, I wanted merely to point out the role which the Augustinian theology played in the notoriously difficult-to-understand Cartesian metaphysics in Meditation IV. In the chapter on Meditation III, I explore the possible influence of Duns Scotus on Descartes.

In contradistinction to *Meditations* II, III, IV, and VI, Meditation I is relatively free from an obvious influence of a single thinker. My concern in the chapter on Meditation I is the implicit presence of the Doctrine of the Eternal Truths. However, once again, this does not mean that one could not point out to someone's influence on Descartes in Meditation I. The most suitable candidate, in my opinion, is Francis Bacon. His impact, which I briefly presented earlier in my Augustinian-Cartesian Index, does not limit itself to textual affinities. It may come as something of a shock to suggest that of all the items in Descartes's armory the least Cartesian of all is what is Cartesian par excellence: the method of doubt. Doubt as the starting point of philosophy is prominent in Francis Bacon under the term "Idols." It is enough to juxtapose Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* and Descartes's *Meditations* to notice that what Bacon calls "Idols" Descartes calls "preconceived opinions." Like the "Idols" in Bacon, the "preconceived opinions" in Descartes cloud one's mind.

However, there is more to textual influences. Unlike Descartes, who was a philosopher working within the Catholic tradition, and very aware of his theological "commitments," Bacon was a Protestant. The general idea underlying the Great Reformation was the rejection of Tradition and, consequently, much of the Catholic dogma. Thus what was initially an approach in Protestant theology — to purify the faith of all its dogmatic, "Catholic," ornaments — took on the form of a method in the philosophy of the Protestant Bacon, and via Bacon to Descartes. In other words, the core of Descartes's "Catholic" philosophy sprang, paradoxically, from the seeds planted by the Protestant Reformation. <>

THE MESSIANIC VISION OF THE PENTATEUCH by Kevin S. Chen [IVP Academic, 9780830852642]

Did Moses write about Jesus? Jesus himself made this bold claim (recorded in John 5:46). Yet while most readers of the Bible today recognize a few Messianic prophecies in the Pentateuch, they don't often see them as part of its central message. In **THE MESSIANIC VISION OF THE PENTATEUCH**, Kevin Chen challenges the common

view of the Pentateuch as focused primarily on the Mosaic Law, arguing instead that it sets forth a coherent, sweeping vision of the Messiah as the center of its theological message. Each Messianic prophecy in the Pentateuch contributes to the fuller vision of the Messiah that emerges when it is appropriately related to the others and to the Pentateuch as a whole. Giving priority to exegesis of the author's intent, Chen's approach focuses on the meaning of the Old Testament on its own terms more than typological arguments do. Building on the work of John Sailhamer, he sheds new light on the topic of the Messiah using compositional exegesis of the Pentateuch as a unified literary work. From the prophecy about the "seed of the woman" in Genesis 3 to Moses' climactic blessing in Deuteronomy 33, careful examination of key passages reveals the intrinsic Messianic glory that shines through the Pentateuch and its compositional strategy. For Bible scholars, pastors, and thoughtful lay readers, **THE MESSIANIC VISION OF THE PENTATEUCH** provides a fascinating study and an exegetical basis for a Christ-centered biblical theology.

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Excerpt: Although written without assuming all readers would notice, this book is an attempt to continue and extend the work of John H. Sailhamer. Thankfully, such a task falls not to one person or one book but to all who were influenced by him, especially those of us who are so privileged to be teaching or writing. Many of his former students have become fine teacher-scholars and are quite accomplished, even more so than I am. I am grateful to have studied with some of them and to have them as friends and conversation partners. As just one voice in a broader conversation, I consider it a tremendous honor that IVP Academic, which published Sailhamer's magnum opus ten years ago (*The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 2009), has seen fit to publish a follow-up book written by someone still relatively early in his career (Lord willing). Part of the impetus for this book is that Sailhamer's two major works on the Pentateuch (the other being *The Pentateuch as Narrative*), while certainly emphasizing the centrality of the Messiah in the Pentateuch, necessarily also deal with other issues at length, especially the Sinai/Deuteronomic law. I felt that it would be helpful to produce a work that almost exclusively focuses on the Messiah in the Pentateuch and gives more extensive treatment of the Pentateuch's Messianic texts, including several that have not commonly been understood as such.

Familiarity with Sailhamer's work is not required to understand this book, but those who are familiar with it will quickly recognize that this book follows the general path that he trod, especially with respect to methodology and overall interpretation of the Pentateuch based on its structure and key poetic texts. At the same time, careful comparison would reveal that this book differs exegetically from his views at some key points (e.g., Gen 3:15) and goes significantly further at others (e.g., Gen 27:27-29; 49:8-12). As such, I do not expect that Sailhamer would have agreed with some of my conclusions. Of course, if it were my goal to follow him at every

point, then this book would be unnecessary. That I have followed him at key places shows that I have often found his arguments convincing. At the same time, I have discovered other things in the Pentateuch that I believe fill out its Messianic vision even further. Sailhamer himself once remarked to me that he believed there was still much to be discovered in the Pentateuch. I hope I have discovered some of those things. Until that day when its Messianic vision is fully realized and the work of every person is tested by fire (1 Cor 3:13), it will be up to each reader to decide the extent to which I have faithfully set forth the Messianic vision of the Pentateuch.

The Pentateuch as Instruction rather Than Mere Law or Historical Record

The Pentateuch is more commonly referred to in Scripture as "the Law of Moses" or simply, "the Law" (e.g., Mal 4:4; Lk 24:44; Rom 3:21). At first glance, this presents a significant obstacle to the possibility of a Messianic vision occupying the center of its authorially intended message. If the Pentateuch is repeatedly called "the Law" by the Scriptures, then how can law not be the focus of its compositional strategy? The answer lies in the meaning of the Hebrew word *torah* that has been traditionally translated in these contexts as "law." As is widely acknowledged, *torah* is better understood to mean "instruction" in a broader sense. For example, Proverbs 1:8 speaks of a mother's *torah* or parental instruction. Likewise, Psalm 78 begins with a call to heed the psalmist's *torah* (Ps 78:1), which consists of lessons drawn from stories about past generations of Israelites. Neither of these examples give any hint of the legal context that the English word *law* implies. To be sure, *torah* can be used in legal contexts, and in such cases should be understood and translated as "law" (e.g., Ex 12:49; Lev 6:9), but the point is that the word itself does not always mean "law" or imply a legal context.

As it relates to the Pentateuch, one important implication is that this book should not automatically be viewed as "law," even though Scripture so frequently refers to it as "the Law" or "the Law of Moses"! Instead, the Pentateuch should be viewed as "instruction" in a broad sense. The common references to the Pentateuch in Scripture do not specify a priori what kind of instruction it contains, only that it is a book of instruction of some kind.

Determining the precise nature of this instruction requires further study of the compositional strategy of the Pentateuch. Though counterintuitive and perhaps even wearisome, readers of Scripture must therefore constantly remind themselves that "the Law of Moses" should really be thought of as "the instruction of Moses," despite the traditional, entrenched English translation of this phrase. Accordingly, this work only uses "the Law" to refer to the Pentateuch when citing a biblical passage that translates *torah* (or its Greek translation *nomos*) in this way. Otherwise, it will be referred to as the Pentateuch and its laws usually as "Sinai/Deuteronomic law." This latter phrase is shorthand for the laws in the Pentateuch, the vast majority of which were given at Sinai and then expounded on in much of Deuteronomy. There will also be occasions when "Sinai law" is used because the laws in Deuteronomy are not in view. Relatedly, the Hebrew word *torah* will never be used to refer to the Sinai/Deuteronomic law.

This distinction between the Pentateuch and its laws, both of which are referred to in English translations as "the Law," is essential not only for understanding the Pentateuch but also for biblical theology, especially in the Pauline epistles. Whereas Paul uses *nomos* in still more ways—e.g., the law of the conscience (Rom 2:15), the entire Old Testament (Rom 3:19); marriage law (Rom 7:1-2)—a distinction between his use of *nomos* as referring to the Pentateuch and as referring to the Sinai/Deuteronomic law can be detected. For example, the "law" that came 430 years after Abraham is not the Pentateuch but the Sinai law, "ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator" (Gal 3:17, 19; see Ex 12:40; Deut 33:2-4; Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2). That Paul believed the Pentateuch teaches the gospel is clear from his citation of Genesis 15:6 with reference to Abraham's justification by faith in Galatians 3:6 and his follow-up citation of Genesis 18:18 as having "preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" (Gal 3:8). Therefore, when Paul says that "the law is not of faith" (Gal 3:12), he is not referring to the Pentateuch but to the Sinai/Deuteronomic law. In fact, Schmitt has shown that the Pentateuch has a "faith theme" (*Glaubenthematik*) (Gen 15:6; Ex 4:31; 14:31; 19:9; Num 14:11; 20:12). For Paul, the close relationship between the Sinai law and Deuteronomic law is evident through his successive quotations of

Deuteronomy 27:26, Leviticus 18:5, and Deuteronomy 21:23 in Galatians 3:10, 12-13, with no indication of any difference in subject matter.

The distinction between the Pentateuch's message of faith and the system of the Sinai/Deuteronomic law is also found in Romans. The "righteousness of God" is manifested "apart from the law" (i.e., Sinai/Deuteronomic), but borne witness to by "the Law [i.e., the Pentateuch] and the Prophets" (Rom 3:21). Paul's extended discussion of Abraham as an example of justification by faith in Romans 4 immediately follows his claim that his preaching of the gospel "upholds the Law" (i.e., the Pentateuch, or perhaps the OT; Rom 3:31). On the other hand, when using covetousness as an example of how "the law" reveals sin (Rom 7:7), he was referring to the Tenth Commandment, which is part of the Sinai/Deuteronomic law. It is this law that has "snuck in" secondarily (Rom 5:20). Thus, for Paul the Pentateuch teaches the new covenant of the Messiah, whereas the Sinai/Deuteronomic law, if taken in isolation from the holistic Torah/instruction of Moses (i.e., the Pentateuch), can lead to a mistaken reliance on "works of the law" (Rom 3:20; Gal 3:10).

Another important implication of understanding the Pentateuch as a book of instruction is that it is more than just an accurate historical record of ancient history. It certainly is that and does provide accurate accounts of creation, the patriarchs, Israel's experiences in Egypt and in the wilderness, and so forth, but it also does more. In particular, it bears a prophetic message from God (2 Pet 1:20-21). Accurate historical accounts by themselves do not necessarily do this. Stated differently, the Pentateuch as a whole not only records accurate history but also bears a coherent message. To be sure, its message is intertwined with the history it records, but its purpose is certainly not limited to accurately recording the past. This distinct prophetic message is observed especially in key predictive passages. Thus the Pentateuch's message and theology are not reducible to the historical facts it records. As a point of comparison, the Gospel of John likewise contains accurate historical accounts, but the book as a whole was written for the purpose of encouraging faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (In 20:30-31). Its author did not simply collect everything that he could find about the life and ministry of Jesus but carefully chose what to include and exclude for the purpose of his book (In 21:25). The Pentateuch should likewise be understood as having selective, accurate historical accounts that have been carefully woven together into a unified literary work so as to communicate a message of "instruction" from the author.

Understanding the author's message in a biblical book is best achieved by focusing on the book itself and its contents for its compositional strategy, rather than trying to reconstruct the historical events it describes, despite the increasing availability of material from archaeology and modern historical research. These things have value in understanding the historical circumstances themselves and in apologetics, but the author's intent must still be discerned by focusing on what the author himself wrote. Historical reconstruction beyond the biblical record is important and has its appropriate place, but it should never be confused with understanding the message of a biblical book. Whereas the former attempts to generate as complete a picture of a historical situation as possible, the latter seeks to understand history as it has already been interpreted in the biblical text by the biblical author under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A believer's primary goal in reading Scripture is an accurate, dynamic understanding of this inspired text (2 Tim 3:16), rather than a comprehensive knowledge of the historical events described in the Bible, as might be sought by a professional historian.

The Structure of The Pentateuch and Its Importance

If the Pentateuch as a whole bears a coherent message and if we are to focus on the text itself to discern the author's intent, where is the reader to begin? Certainly, the fundamental steps would be to read it (Deut 17:18-20), discuss it (Deut 6:7), and meditate on it (Josh 1:8). Another important step, especially with such a lengthy book, would be to determine how it is organized. Like a table of contents in modern books, understanding the structure of the Pentateuch can help readers see how the author organized his work and provide an important first step in understanding the whole book. Stated differently, the structure of a book can be a key part of its compositional strategy. For modern readers of the Pentateuch, perhaps the most natural way of understanding

the structure of the Pentateuch is to simply divide it into the five sections that modern Bibles do: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Direct, textual evidence for such a division goes as far back as the great Greek biblical codices of the fourth and fifth century AD, with even earlier references to the same in Josephus and Philo. However, as was pointed out above, the New Testament never refers to "Genesis," or any of the other four "books," as such. In other words, there is no inherent reason why the structure of the Pentateuch as designed by its author centuries before actually corresponds to this fivefold division. In fact, many believe that the present fivefold division of the Pentateuch was influenced by practical limitations on scroll length. This required its division into smaller portions, which was done in a standardized fashion at an early stage.

In any case, the most reliable way to determine the structure of biblical books, which do not come with tables of contents, is to look for repeating literary patterns in the books themselves. For example, scholars have long observed the structural function of lengthy teaching discourses in the book of Matthew. Each of these five discourses is punctuated by a concluding statement (Mt 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). In contrast to a table of contents which stands apart from the body of the book, these structuring elements are part of the flow of the book itself. As such, they have the potential not only to provide organization but also to communicate key ideas. In the case of Matthew, they bring a clear emphasis on the content of Jesus' teaching. Similarly, Sailhamer has shown that the disparate material in the Pentateuch follows a recognizable pattern of narrative, poetry, and epilogue. This cycle repeats four times.

Of particular importance in this overall design are the four sections of poetry (Gen 49:2-27; Ex 15:1-18; Num 23:7-10, 18-24; 24:3-9, 15-24; Deut 32:1-43; 33:2-29), which are the longest in the Pentateuch. Sailhamer has further noted that three of them bear the remarkable similarities of the appearance of the phrase "in the last days" (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29), a main human character of the preceding narrative calling others together to listen, and the giving of a Messianic prophecy (Gen 49:8-12; Num 24:7-9, 17-19; Deut 33:7). The other poem (Ex 15:1-18) also involves a main human character leading others (in song), and it is closely linked to the other three poems. These passages will be analyzed in more detail in the subsequent chapters, but for the present purposes the key point is that through these poems the coming of the Messiah is intertwined with the structure of the Pentateuch and hence its overall compositional strategy.

By themselves, these four major poetic sections provide a significant piece of evidence that the coming of the Messiah is central to the composition of the Pentateuch and its theological message. Although Messianic prophecies are much shorter and less frequent than listings of laws, they are given at crucial junctures (or "seams") throughout the Pentateuch. In contrast, the Sinai Law begins only in Exodus 20. Moreover, the change in literary form from narrative to poetry should pique readers' interest and encourage them to pay even closer attention. The same literary device is also used in the Messianic prophecies of Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 27:27-29, which appear in shorter poems.

"My Lord and My God!"

Following the death of Jesus, the disciples were so distraught that they doubted reports of his resurrection, even though he had repeatedly told them about it. Perhaps the most famous example of this was "doubting Thomas," who declared that he would not believe unless he saw the nail marks on Jesus' body and touched his wounds (Jn 20:25). Remarkably, eight days later Jesus appeared again to the disciples, this time with Thomas present, and the disciple was indeed invited to touch Jesus' wounded body (Jn 20:26-27). At this, his doubt disappeared, as he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28).

In a broad sense, Thomas's doubt concerning the resurrection of Jesus parallels many Christians' doubt concerning the centrality of the Messiah in the Old Testament, especially the Pentateuch. Perhaps we are so used to equating the Pentateuch with the Sinai/Deuteronomic law that we don't expect much else. It may also be that sometimes we don't even know what to look for amidst the many laws, genealogies, and historical narratives. My conviction is that the Messiah really is there in the Pentateuch, and my experience is that seeing him in these texts as the ancient author intended leads to the same declaration of wonder and worship as

Thomas's "My Lord and my God!" I hope that this book will help you see for yourself that the Bible is a work of genius, beauty, and glory, surpassing even the greatest masterpieces humanity has ever produced, and as such is itself a powerful testimony to the triune God and the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed on its pages.

Uncover my eyes so that I may see wonders from your law. (Ps 119:18) Then he opened their mind to understand the Scriptures. (Lk 24:45) <>

Essay: Basil and the Legacy of Origen

Origen's metaphor of secular knowledge as Christianity's servant is a lens through which we may interpret the various ways in which he and Basil used that knowledge when interpreting Genesis 1. I have argued throughout this book that this metaphor brought with it a dialectical tension between a servant as someone who helps and as someone who is subordinate. Thus, the relationship between secular knowledge and biblical interpretation in their works was marked by a certain ambivalence.

On the one hand, its subordinate character was apparent when they forcefully rejected the hypothesis that prime matter was eternal and uncreated. Though it was coherent within the broader framework of hylomorphism and widely accepted by philosophers of different schools (including Basil and Origen themselves), both theologians unambiguously rejected it because it contradicted the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Matter, if uncreated, would be a second principle alongside God, like a mother and father. Similarly, both Basil and Origen rejected astrological fatalism as incompatible with Christian doctrine, which teaches that human beings are free, morally responsible, and subject to divine judgment, not the slaves of the stars and planets.

On the other hand, the useful character of secular knowledge was demonstrated over and over again, every time either theologian invoked an insight from philosophy or another secular subject to help interpret Scripture. These uses were often uncontroversial and straightforward, as, for example, when Basil relied on zoology to discuss the animals God creates in Genesis 1, or meteorology to discuss how the sun and moon affect the earth. At other times, secular knowledge was used in direct connection with the controversial points: hylomorphism was accepted with the aforementioned modification. Basil even used the theory to argue against Eunomius for the incomprehensibility of God's substance, which he likened to characterless prime matter, which the mind can scarcely imagine. In a similar way, Origen maintained the basic theory of astrology, only rejecting fatalism and genethliology. Even in areas of controversy, Basil and Origen made careful distinctions, rejecting only what could not be reconciled with Christianity (e.g., eternal matter and fatalism), while maintaining whatever related ideas could be salvaged (e.g., hylomorphism, the natural positions of the four elements, and, for Origen at least, astrology). In spite of some strong rhetoric from Basil (and sometimes even Origen), neither desired to discredit secular knowledge itself. On the contrary, they made great use of it whenever they could.

It is to be expected that, as individual theologians, Basil and Origen did not always agree on exactly which secular ideas fell into which category. While they had much in common, they disagreed about the super-heavenly water and the nature of the stars. For Origen, the elemental cosmology that placed water below air helped him to conclude that the reference to super-heavenly water was not to be taken literally. Intertextual references to this "water" revealed that it symbolized the angels. Basil, however, insisted upon the literal character of Genesis 1 as a divinely-revealed cosmology and cosmogony, and thus maintained the existence of this water in just the same way that he opposed the eternity of matter. Nevertheless, he recognized the conundrum this created, since he did not reject the idea of the four elements and their natural positions. His solution was to re-interpret this water as "aerial water" and the "firmament" as some kind of filtration system, heat shield, and cosmic waterclock counting down to the end of days! Although it was a different kind of solution than Origen's, resulting from the different ways in which they saw Genesis 1 as a text, both interpretations emerged from the same science-as-servant framework. Recognizing the danger that dualisms posed, Basil chided Origen for failing to recognize the unique status of Genesis 1 and allegorizing it. For Origen, the early

chapters of Genesis were exactly the sort of texts that called out for allegoresis. After all, Scripture is full of allegories, so why insist that there is water above the sky when the physics of the day said that was impossible? To take everything in the Bible literally was, in Origen's opinion, the error of Jews and uneducated Christians. Thus, scriptural references to water above the sky necessitated neither a literal interpretation nor a defense in the way that doctrines like *creatio ex nihilo* did. Certainly, if he had considered the physical existence of water above the sky as part of the "apostolic preaching," he would have accepted and defended it. In reality, though, Christian doctrine was not about physical things but spiritual things.

My analysis has noted the rhetorical differences in how Basil treated these issues compared to Origen, such as Basil's emphasis on the mistaken origin of the hypothesis of eternal matter (by analogy with a human artisan). These differences were not hermeneutical, nor did they result from differing attitudes about cosmology. Rather, they were differences of rhetorical form. Basil's thoughts on cosmology have been preserved for us in his homilies on the six days. Their major goals were to delight, entertain, and edify. Most of what Origen had to say on these topics came from his scholarly works, such as the Genesis commentary and *On First Principles*. This scholarly context made a big rhetorical difference compared to sermons.

Basil and the Anti-Origenist Movement

It is illuminating to analyze Basil's criticisms of Origen within the larger historical context of the anti-Origenist movement. The controversy over Origen did not break out fully until the 390's. Basil died in 379 at the latest. However, Epiphanius first attacked Origen in the 370's, while Basil was still living. Basil engaged, at least in passing, three points of the later controversy. In chapter 4, I showed how his opposition to Origen's interpretation of the super-heavenly water was shared by both Jerome and Epiphanius. In chapter 5, I showed how his rejection of the idea that the stars were alive is paralleled in Theophilus of Alexandria and the emperor Justinian. To these we may add the fact that Basil's only explicit reference to Origen in his entire corpus, although generally positive, criticizes him for calling the Holy Spirit a "creature." The same reproach was made by Epiphanius, Jerome's and Theophilus of Alexandria. In addition to these three specific examples, there is a significant argument from silence: nowhere does Basil ever endorse Origen's doctrine of the fall of the soul from the spiritual realm into the material, only to be restored after many ages. He does, however, recast some of Origen's fall language that associates flesh with "heaviness" into an orthodox context.

The fact that Basil did not attack Origen for having held such views shows the positive esteem in which he held him. By no means could Basil be considered on a par with people like Epiphanius and Jerome, who waged a public campaign against Origen's theology. Rather the reverse: by drawing upon Origen's works, Basil continued his legacy. Even when he criticized him, he left his name unmentioned out of respect. Nevertheless, he did not follow Origen on the controversial points. He knew and respected the bounds of fourth-century Christian orthodoxy, and he was smart and critical enough to distinguish between what was valuable in Origen and what was not. Basil preceded the anti-Origenist controversy, but he seems to have sensed that the winds of theological change were beginning to turn against Origen. He died before the controversy breaks out in full force and thus never had to confront the problem the way Jerome and Rufinus did. The former chose to renounce Origen, while the latter defended him by claiming that his works had been tampered with by sneaky heretics. We do not know what Basil would have done, had he lived to that time. It is not impossible that he would have, like Jerome, formally renounced the man he previously admired. Still, even had he made such a renunciation, it would not have erased the mark that Origen made upon Basil's theology any more than it did for Jerome. On the other hand, given Basil's brother's undiminished affection for Origen, perhaps he would have stayed the course, too.

Origen and Basil as Models for the Modern Science–Religion Debate

I believe that Origen and Basil's metaphor, or model, of philosophy as a servant to Christianity is of abiding value for the modern debate about religion and science. On the one hand, this model carries with it all the positive value of science as a helper, a discipline that can help advance our theological understanding of the

universe God made. The servant model is comparable to Ian Barbour's "integration" model, in which science can both support theological ideas and even "affect the reformulation of certain doctrines." Under this heading one may include interdisciplinary work that looks at theological questions in the light of modern science. For example, some theologians and scientists see non-deterministic quantum mechanics as a possible medium through which God may act in this universe without breaking the laws of nature that he made. In a similar way, the physicist Stephen Barr believes that quantum mechanics may explain how the immaterial soul can affect, through our free will, the material world.

On the other hand, this model also states that modern scientific theories may be rejected by Christians if they conflict with defined doctrine. In this respect, it may seem more like Barbour's undesirable "conflict" model. Several modern scientific theories have been interpreted by some as conflicting with Christian teaching. For instance, James Wiseman has examined no less than four "real or apparent discrepancies between scientific findings and the traditional tenets of Christian faith." These are creation, providence, the soul, and eschatology. Although people will disagree with how real or apparent each of these conflicts is, even a cursory look at them will reveal how Christian doctrines about creation and eschatology at least seem to be at odds with modern cosmology. It is no less apparent that the traditional doctrines of providence and of the soul are difficult to reconcile with evolution. As such they require theological elaboration in dialogue with modern science. If we accept the approach of Origen and Basil, it is permissible for one to reject aspects of modern physics and biology that contradict these doctrines. However, if their example is to be followed authentically, any such rejections would have to be carried out with maximum precision and nuance. It would not be acceptable to jettison evolution and cosmology wholesale without examination: only those specific ideas judged to be in irreconcilable conflict with doctrine could be rejected. It is well known that many Christians today, whom Basil and Origen would call "simple," do reject evolution and cosmology without nuance. To reject some aspects of modern science is not the exclusive purview of uneducated fundamentalists. Barr, for instance, insists on the Catholic doctrine that God created the universe "from the beginning of time" (*ab initio temporis*), a doctrine at odds with some cosmological hypotheses that posit an eternal universe. He defends his position by arguing that it seems impossible for science to disprove the doctrine because it will probably never be able to determine what, if anything, happened prior to the Big Bang. Similarly, Pope Pius XII insisted in his encyclical *Humani Generis* that evolution could be accepted by Christians only if one maintained the literal existence of an original pair of human beings (Adam and Eve), lest it run afoul of the doctrine of the fall and original sin. It goes without saying that not even all Catholic theologians today agree with Pius's teaching, but it is a good example of faith-science conflict outside the realm of Christian fundamentalism.

While rejecting certain scientific ideas is possible within this model, it is by no means the only, let alone ideal, possible response to difficulties. The positive side of the model—science as helper—is as important as the negative, if not more so. Consider how Origen and Basil accepted the cosmological theory of elements and their natural places in the universe, even though it seemed to conflict with Genesis 1. Or consider how Origen accepted a non-fatalistic version of astrology, even while rationally refuting the practice of genethliology forbidden in Christianity. The most striking example is how Origen—but not Basil—gave a symbolic interpretation to the super-heavenly water in order to avoid a scientific absurdity. Following this example, Christian interpretations of the Bible and even doctrinal formulations may need to be modified by modern cosmology and evolution in order to avoid unscientific conclusions. For example, Wiseman has proposed a new understanding of God's providence in the light of evolution. He is only one of many theologians who have undertaken the difficult work of trying to re-examine theological questions in the light of modern science. They also continue the tradition of seeing science as a useful servant. Different theologians, of course, will reach different conclusions, just as Basil and Origen disagreed about the super-heavenly water. The servant model does not lead to an automatic resolution of every problem. It may be that some narrow instances of conflict persist, while other reinterpretations are offered. For Origen, the point of reference was "the apostolic preaching" and not individual verses of Scripture. This was true for Basil as well, but he also considered a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 a must, whereas Origen did not. In this way, Basil may serve as a model for

conservative Christians today who also insist on a literal reading of Genesis 1, whereas Origen offers a freer approach.

One wishing to follow the servant model must also take into account the difference between ancient and modern science. Basil, as we have seen, criticized the natural philosophers for their inconsistency, inconclusiveness, and sectarianism. These criticisms are not applicable to the modern scientific community. Modern science is empirical and verifiable in a way that was not true of ancient philosophers like Aristotle. It is one thing to maintain a religious doctrine against an unproven philosophical hypothesis. It is quite another to do so against a theory substantiated over a long period of time by empirical evidence from many different scientists. There is thus a limit to the strength of the analogy between ancient philosophy and modern science. Theologians today who wish to adopt the servant model would be well advised to be much less bold in questioning a scientific theory supported by empirical evidence than Origen and Basil were when they confronted the notion that prime matter was uncreated.

There are, of course, other ways to imagine the relationship between faith and science. One can imagine different metaphors for their relationship, such as colleagues or partners, neither subordinate to the other. Such a model would give both disciplines autonomy. The possibility for conflict would remain, as scientists might insist on one thing while theologians insisted on another, separately. With neither field in the superior position, there would be no way to resolve disputed questions. There could only be ongoing dialogue and research that might or might not lead to eventual reconciliation or harmonization. The disadvantage of this model is that Christians would be left in a state of perplexity and indecision on points where science and faith seem at odds. The main advantage of this model is that it would prevent Christians from setting themselves against scientific hypotheses that might eventually be proven true. The classic case of such a disastrous occurrence is when the Catholic Church opposed Galileo Galilei's promotion of heliocentrism in the seventeenth century. If one feels uneasy about the idea of Christians opposing a scientific idea on the basis of faith, it is because the specter of Galileo is still with us.

Another possibility for imagining the relationship between faith and science is one of complete separation, as in Stephen Jay Gould's proposal that science and religion be regarded as "nonoverlapping magisteria." The problem here is that, as we have seen, Christianity traditionally makes claims that do overlap with science, as, for instance, with the Catholic doctrine that the universe had a temporal beginning or the doctrine of the fall and original sin. Such historical doctrines would first have to be abandoned in order to keep the two domains truly separate. Christians would only be allowed to make claims that could on principle never be evaluated by science. Thus, Christians might be compelled to abandon their beliefs in free will, divine intervention, and the soul, if a strictly deterministic physics were to return to dominance over against quantum theory. Thus, the separation model is not far removed from a model in which science is the mistress and Christianity the servant. Such a model would no doubt appeal to many people today, if for no other reason than that scientific claims are usually supported by empirical evidence, which is not true of Christian doctrine. However, it goes without saying that most Christians would judge this an unacceptable compromise of their faith, which is based on divine revelation, not science. Furthermore, the nature of science as a constantly self-correcting, progressive enterprise should prevent it from holding epistemological superiority. Otherwise, one might feel compelled to reject certain religious claims because of a scientific theory, only to find that theory itself rejected by later science. Nor can one simply hold one's beliefs in perpetual abeyance (unless one decides that orthopraxy is the only thing that matters). It took about two hundred years for Newtonian physics, which tends toward fatalism and an eternal universe, to give way to the entirely unexpected discoveries of the Big Bang and non-deterministic quantum physics. A religious belief that seems hard to reconcile with science at one historical moment may be easier to reconcile in the future, as we have seen. Of course, new advances in science may also make existing difficulties more acute or even give rise to new difficulties. The point is that we do not know. For all these reasons, either the servant model or the colleague model is preferable to the nice-sounding but problematic model of separation.

The utility of the approach of Origen and Basil, which I have set forth and explained, is that it simultaneously affirms science and upholds the integrity of Christian teaching. Even for those who do not wish ever to rule out scientific theories for doctrinal reasons (the colleague model), their examples are valuable for how they attempted to harmonize, as best they could, the secular knowledge of their time with the Bible and Christian faith. For this reason alone, they are still worth studying today. <>

PARTICIPATION IN GOD: A STUDY IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND METAPHYSICS by Andrew Davison [Cambridge University Press, 9781108483285]

Few ideas have excited greater interest among theologians in recent decades than the idea of 'participation'. In thinking about creation, it is the notion that everything comes from, and depends upon, God, inviting the language of sharing, or of an exemplar and its images; in thinking about redemption, it points to the restoration of that image, and is expressed in the language of communion with God and with the redeemed community. In this volume, Andrew Davison considers these themes in unprecedented breadth, investigating the fundamental character of participation as it can be applied to a wide range of theological topics. Exploring what it means to know, to love, to do good, and to live together well, he shows how these ideas animate a particular understanding of human life and how we relate to the world around us. His book offers the most comprehensive survey of participation to date, contributing to detailed discussions of these themes among academic theologians.

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Excerpt:

For that Source is the beginning of everything and from it come Being itself and every kind of being, all source and all end, all life and immortality and wisdom, all order and harmony and power, all

maintenance and establishment and arrangement, all intelligence and reason and perception, all quality and rest and motion, all unity and intermingling and attraction, all cohesiveness and differentiation, all definition, and indeed every attribute which by the mere fact of being gives a character thereby to every existing thing. —Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names*, 5.7.

Approaching the world in terms of sharing and receiving should be the bedrock of a Christian understanding of reality, and of Christian doctrine. That is the claim of this book. The heart of that perspective, which often goes by the name of 'participation', rests in perceiving all things in relation to God, not only as their source but also as their goal, and as the origin of all form and character. In that way, notions of likeness and exemplarity lie close at hand, and an inclination to celebrate the variegated particularity of things, as a creaturely expression of the goodness and beauty of God.

For the participatory thinker, a wide range of themes bear the stamp of this perspective, some more theoretical and some more practical. For instance, people who think in these terms tend to be objective, or 'realist', over how we know things, and about the nature of good conduct: their epistemology and ethics, that is to say, tend to be worked out in terms of recognition and reception rather than invention or projection.

A participatory vision is also likely to recognise a depth to things, grounded in their origin in God. This suggests that our apprehension of what is good or true will also always be mediated and incomplete: it will be a real encounter with a goodness and a truth that also always outstrip us. Ethics and epistemology, approached this way, will have a strong note of 'realist' objectivity to them, but combined with humility, creativity, and attention to the context and particularities of the situation in which and through which we think and act.

Within Christian doctrine, participation concerns not only creatures, and what they are like, and how they come to be, but also the difference of God from creation, and consideration of what God is not. A stress on a participatory origin for creatures underlines not only that creatures have being from God but also that God has being from no one and nothing else.

In some of its forms, participation stands in the positive or 'cataphatic' approach to theology, stressing what can be known about God. The contrasting cautious or negative outlook, however — the 'apophatic' approach to God — is also part of a participatory account, stressing as it does that creatures and God are incommensurate. These two strands — one of affirmative statements about God and one of cautious denials — are woven together, in what I take to be a definitive character of a participatory approach, in the 'superabundant' way: the approach to God set out in terms of exceeding excellence, which stresses that our knowledge of God fails not out of poverty but out of abundance. We must retain modesty about what we can know, for instance, when we say, that God is good. That, however, rests not on any sense that God is anything other than good, but rather on acknowledgement that the goodness of God incomparably exceeds anything we understand by that term. Linguistically, this is the territory of analogy, and themes of analogy run parallel to many aspects of participation.

Alongside this, a participatory approach to theology will stress that God is not one more being among beings, and consequently that the relation of creation to God cannot be one of competition: not when it comes to goodness, for instance, or to worth, or to how divine action relates to creaturely agency. The inexpressible difference between God and creatures becomes as much the basis of intimacy as of distance. The relationship between God and creatures is exactly not one of competition or comparison, because the creature and God share nothing in common, in the sense of deriving from some imagined yet more ultimate source, and yet everything about the creature comes to it as a matter of sharing from God: everything, that is, apart from evil, which is a failure of participation, and therefore a lack, or privation. That makes participation resolutely non-dualist. There is nothing, good or evil, that can be ranked alongside God, nor anything prior to or coeval with God.

In this book, I follow a venerable lineage of Christian theologians in setting out a Christian vision of world that has the notion of participation, and relation to God, lying at its heart. I do that across four main parts. Parts I

and II are more abstract, and ask what Christian theologians have meant in talking about participation, especially in relation to God and creation. Parts III and IV explore how participation has been put to work, first in some further aspects of Christian theology, and then in a theological vision of human life.

In Part I, I explore the relation of creation to God, as a matter of participation or donation, by working through the idea of four aspects of causation, taken from Aristotle (384-322 BC). With those 'four causes', I consider what it means for God to be the agent behind creation (its efficient cause), the source of all of creation's characterfulness (its formal cause), and the destiny of all things (the final cause, with that destiny itself set out in participatory terms, as a form of union). Attention to the fourth (material) cause further hones our thinking about creation as a matter of coming forth, since creatures derive from God, but with no continuity between God and the world of a 'material' kind: God is not the 'stuff' from which creation is made. In Chapter 3, then, I discuss why participation is not pantheism. In this first part, I also think about a tradition, running through ancient and mediaeval Christianity, of relating aspects of God's creative action to the divine threefold Personhood of the Trinity.

Part II is about language, first in the sense of surveying terms and ideas that have been used to think about participation, and then in a chapter on how language itself is participatory, not least when it comes to speaking about God. In Part III, I expand the range of theological topics beyond creation and the doctrine of the Trinity, which feature prominently in Part I, with chapters on Christology, human action and freedom, the nature of evil, and a survey of how the themes of redemption and the fruits of the work of Christ might feature in a theological vision articulated in a participatory way.

In the final section, Part IV, I look at how a participatory approach, grounded in notions of sharing, reception, and likeness, bears on various topics that are integral to human life — knowledge, love and desires, ethics, and law among them. I end, in the Conclusion, with an argument that to approach existence in terms of participation it is necessarily also to approach it in terms of relation. For all things to come forth from God is for all things to come forth related. As well as introducing a further theoretical consideration (in the connection between participation and relation), I address some of its implications for common life, or politics.

Sources

Three comments may be useful when it comes to sources. The first is that I want to root discussions in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. I do not claim this book as an exercise in what is sometimes called 'Biblical theology' (a theology elaborated in response to particular Biblical texts), but I have wanted, as a Christian systematic theologian with philosophical interests, to demonstrate that a participatory perspective is not an import, foreign to the perspectives found in the scriptures. We read there, after all, that 'all that we have done, you have done for us' (Isa. 26.i2), that 'every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change' (James 1.17), and that 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17.28).² I have sought to show that perspectives from across Biblical sources cohere within a participatory scheme — aspects of which surface across the arc of Biblical writing — most particularly in relation to Christ.

A second comment about sources is to point out that Christian writers in this tradition have typically not been afraid to read non-Christian texts, and to think in their company. I have commended that position in an earlier book, and it will be in evidence throughout this volume. I do not wish to deny that, for the Christian, the scriptures offer the privileged and irreplaceable revelation of God. However, a willingness to think about what might be true alongside all who seek the truth follows from the participatory picture itself: if the world has a participatory character etched upon it and woven into its depths, then celebration of the light of scripture does not imply unremitting darkness elsewhere. All reality, in some way, bears witness to the one who made it, and what other people have noticed about it — people such as Plato (429-347 BC) and Aristotle — is worth attention.

Plato is the philosophical father of explicitly participatory thinking as we know it today.¹ Aristotle stands in more complex relation to this approach, but he had drunk too deeply from Plato's wells to eschew this scheme altogether. Indeed, Aristotle had drunk too deeply from the wells of reality (if we take it to proceed in a participatory fashion from its eternal wellspring) for his thought not also to yield frequent insights for a participatory way of thinking. While this book is most obviously Platonist in philosophical outlook, it also often draws on the thought of Aristotle. As I have previously written, to my mind the ideal combination is to supplement Plato's sense of the broad picture of metaphysics with Aristotelian detail, worked out against the backdrop of Biblically derived principles.² In that way, as Jacob Sherman has written, participation 'seems to reach for a theological canopy far beyond its Platonic roots'.³ Here we encounter one of the ironic joys of intellectual history: that a significant philosophical project in late antiquity was the attempt to synthesize Plato and Aristotle, in order to shore up a rival system of belief to burgeoning Christian monotheism, and yet it was in fact within monotheism — historically chiefly Islamic and then Christian — that such a synthesis would in fact reach its fullest conclusions...

While this book is written from a Christian perspective, themes of participation are found in other religious traditions. Shared origins and trajectories sometimes underlie those similarities of outlook, as when Christian and Jewish thinkers have reflected on the same Biblical texts, or when they — alongside Muslim scholars — have tried to judge what can and cannot be considered wise in the writings of the Greek philosophers, not least in relation to monotheism. More broadly, however, the questions that have received participatory answers — such as the relation of the finite to the infinite, or of the many to the one — stand before all humanity. The reader wanting to explore how some of the themes in this book have been discussed in other religious traditions will find a perceptive study in David Bentley Hart's *The Experience of God*.⁴ Agnes Arber's *The Manifold and the One*, although considerably older and less scholarly, and indeed somewhat idiosyncratic, was written with beguiling enthusiasm and provides another view into a wider, interfaith perspective on some of what is discussed here.

A third note about sources relates to particular Christian texts. A participatory approach is found throughout the writings of the Church Fathers, and while the Greek Fathers might feature particularly prominently in any such list (not least Gregory of Nyssa [AD 335-94], Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite [5th-6th century], Maximus the Confessor [AD ca. 580-662], and John of Damascus [AD ca. 675-749]),⁵ a participatory outlook was also profoundly important for Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430), the pivotal Western Father. I concur with Mark Clavier's recent assessment that participation is the 'key' to understanding Augustine's theology of 'God, creation and the mechanics of salvation'.⁶

In the later Western tradition, a wide range of thinkers wrote in this vein, including Anselm (1033/4—1109), Bonaventure (1221-74), and other scholastics. In this book, however, I have given central place to Thomas Aquinas, as a clear master of the participatory perspective.

No book on themes of participation in Christian thought could hope to do justice to anything but a tiny fraction of Christian writing. Choosing a single main author on which to focus grounds my discussion in historical texts in a way that is concrete and specific. I have added discussions of other authors either because they have some particularly valuable insight to offer, or in order to indicate the breadth of historical sympathy for this way of thinking.

Some other writer from the scholastic period could have been chosen to represent Christian accounts of participation, but Aquinas is easy to justify: his thought is woven through with participatory language, and his pattern of asking searching questions of himself and of his sources makes him an ideal interlocutor. He drew upon a remarkably wide range of influences, and was a deeply Biblical thinker. Next to the Apostle Paul, for Aquinas, came Augustine, who was, as we have just noted, another profoundly participatory thinker. Aquinas was also deeply influenced by some daringly participatory texts, which were only just being translated into Latin in his day, or were only then receiving a wide readership, written by Christians such as Pseudo-Dionysius,

and by the Neoplatonists who had influenced them, such as Proclus (AD 412-85). Part of Aquinas's greatness is to have stood at the confluence of these traditions. He is also significant for our purpose both because he sought so strenuously to think about Christian ideas in the context of Christian life and practice, not least in terms of prayer and social life, and because of his influence on subsequent theology. Historically speaking, Aquinas has come to play the leading part in Christian participatory thought, at least in the Western Church. Finally, Aquinas is also a topical choice: in the early twenty-first century, he is enjoying widespread attention across churches and traditions.

There are references to the works of Aquinas throughout, even if some are no more than citations. With them, I wish to acknowledge his influence on my own perspective, and to indicate passages in his writings that the reader may wish to consider, if she wishes to explore these themes in his thought in greater detail. On other occasions, I provide a full quotation, and a discussion, where what Aquinas wrote bears particularly upon the fundamental structure of what I wish to describe and argue for.

I am willing to make a claim for a fundamental convergence of outlook — for a participatory approach — that spans doctrines and authors. There is a broad, shared approach that we can call participatory. The differences in approach within it are not without significance. In choosing Aquinas as my primary interlocutor, I recognise the vigour with which he explored such an approach. All the same, the sense of a broadly shared participatory framework is profound, for instance — to name only a few examples — in Paul, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Nicholas of Cusa, and then — in some cases with greater ambiguities and departures — in Lancelot Andrewes, Richard Hooker, the Wesleys, Jonathan Edwards, C. S. Lewis, and many others. I am not claiming complete uniformity of outlook, even among the most undeniably participatory writers, and I take their differences to bear witness to the health of this outlook, not to poverty. The work of demarcating differences of emphasis, not least in terms of the vocabulary and imagery employed, remains of considerable value, but I take that to be more a matter of variation in accidents than in substance.

Prayer and Spiritual Life

In his 2009 paper, 'The Retrieval of Deification', Pavel Gavrilyuk criticised contemporary Western treatments of theosis, and more broadly of participation in God, for failing to relate their discussions to sacramental and ascetical theology, as the context in which they were typically found in the Early Church, and later in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. A distance from ecclesiology might be another deficit, although I would have more confidence than Gavrilyuk that such themes have featured in a good deal of Catholic writing on participation.

The themes of sacramental theology, prayer, spiritual discipline, and ecclesiology are likely underrepresented in this book. That is not because I consider them to be unimportant, but rather that I have already written about both ecclesiology and sacramental theology from a participatory perspective." Ascetical theology receives some attention in Chapter 14 of the present book, but perhaps not the full attention it deserves (as another emphasis that Gavrilyuk wishes to stress). I may have opportunity to make a contribution in the future, but for the most part I look to others, more competent in that field than I am.

Doctrine and Metaphysics

The subtitle of this book is A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics. That may raise hackles among those who wish for a more fundamental separation of philosophy from theology, for whom there is therefore no such thing as a distinctively Christian approach. The business of metaphysics is to offer an account of the nature of the world, and especially of its fundamental structure at the level of being. In that sense, representatives of various different religious traditions can indeed concur to a significant degree in their metaphysical outlook. Anyone might come to the conclusion, for instance, that analysis of physical objects in terms of form and matter pays dividends, or that one understands causation all the better by seeing four dimensions to it. In that sense, I come closer to conceding a degree of independence to philosophy than I have done in the past. On the other

hand, it also seems to me naïve to suppose that people hold their philosophical convictions in isolation from their theological convictions, and vice versa. Nature might stand open before all, but we do not all draw the same conclusions from it. As witness to that, it is clearly not true that an analysis of the world in terms of form and matter is simply obvious to all insightful people everywhere, or that according four dimensions to causality is sensible (to return to those two examples). Certain religious traditions open our eyes to certain philosophical accounts, and vice versa. Religious convictions play a part in whether those ideas get a hearing: speaking up for causation at all, or seeing form and not only matter, has not been a universally popular position of late, and a good proportion of those who have defended causation, and the non-reduction of material things to the bare fact of their material components, for instance, have been inspired by a religious perspective. That is not incidental.

Approach

For the most part, with this book I have sought simply to present the rudiments of a participatory approach to theology and metaphysics, and to let that vision commend itself. I have adopted that method, rather than offering a great deal by way of criticism of other approaches. Only in a couple of places have I sought to show the inadequacies of a contrasting position, for instance in relation to Anders Nygren, and desire for the good, in Chapter 14. I have brought in such an element of criticism where I thought that it would help to underline what a participatory perspective might say, by way of contrast. I considered closing several of the chapters, perhaps all of them, by asking what would be lost were one to take a path strongly diverging from a participatory one. That, however, is not the way I eventually chose to proceed. Participatory theology belongs firmly in what my first tutor in Christian doctrine called the 'warm stream' of Christian theology, not its 'cold stream', and I hope that the almost universally positive tone of the treatments offered here will allow form to follow content.

Finally, a few words may be in order about how readers might approach this book with different ends in mind. I have attempted to write it in such a way that it is both accessible to those for whom these ideas are relatively new, and so that it possesses sufficient scholarly rigour and freshness of thought to be of interest to those with a longer-standing interest in participation. With that in mind, I have made a twofold distinction among notes and supporting discussions. Sources and short asides are found in footnotes, which appear throughout the book in the usual way. Here and there, however, some particular idea or set of texts warranted a longer discussion, which might be of less interest to the reader approaching these discussions for the first time. I have collected these discussions as Further Notes at the end of each chapter.

Participation, Relation, and Common Life

Time and again, in thinking about participation, relation has come into view: first, in terms of the relation of the creature to God, and then, because of that prior relation, also in terms of the relation of creatures to one another. If all things come from God, as their common source, they come forth related. As Aquinas put it in *On Power*: 'the order of the parts of the universe to one another results from the order of the whole universe to God.'

Creaturely interrelation, which is the theme of this concluding chapter, is therefore not something added to the creature; it is not overlain upon a collection of beings that are otherwise, and first of all, isolated. Relatedness, rather, is part of the constitution of creatures. As Ian McFarland comments, a sense of this interrelation underlies why we properly talk of a creation at all, and not simply of just so many creatures.' Such communality does not exclude individuality, or vice versa: 'talk about the wholeness of creation must affirm the integrity of every creature in God's sight, such that ... no creature exists merely for the sake of some other ... though ... each is so constituted that it cannot flourish in isolation from other creatures'. In this, creatures bear a likeness to their source, to God as Trinity, who is constituted by relation.

Interrelation underlies other doctrines besides the doctrine of creation. As we saw in Chapter it, many accounts of the atonement rest on what Christ is said to share, as a human being among human beings. We might also

consider how much hangs, for Paul, on humanity's being summed up in Adam, when it comes to sin, and in Christ, as the Second Adam, when it comes to redemption (Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15). The author of Hebrews, for his part, found it perfectly natural to work with a corresponding idea of 'seminal identity' — where what happens to someone happens to all who will be descended from him (or her, we would add) — when he wrote that 'one might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him' (Heb. 7.9-10). Edward Oakes pointed to the significance of this idea of commonality and summing up in the recent decision by the Roman Catholic Church to dismiss the idea of a limbo of unbaptised infants, holding instead that these infants can enter into the fullness of eternal life. As a crucial part of their argument, the International Theological Commission wrote, 'We wish to stress that humanity's solidarity with Christ (or, more properly, Christ's solidarity with all of humanity) must have priority over the solidarity of human beings with Adam, and that the question of the destiny of unbaptized infants who die must be addressed in that light's Oakes added, quoting Henri Rondet, that 'Christ cannot have been less powerful to save us than Adam was to ruin us'. Pope Benedict XVI stressed this point about relation in his encyclical *Spe salvi* (issued the same year as the statement on limbo):

Our lives are involved with one another, through innumerable interactions they are linked together. No one lives alone. No one sins alone. No one is saved alone. The lives of others continually spill over into mine: in what I think, say, do and achieve. And conversely, my life spills over into that of others: for better and for worse. Relation is crucial across Christian doctrine, and many more examples could be given. The relational corollary of participation also bears far-reaching practical consequences, some of which we will discuss in this chapter.

Creaturely Interrelation, Or 'Intra-Finite Participation'

Maximus the Confessor provided an arresting account of creaturely interrelation in his *Ambiguum*, where, as we have seen, he described the form of each creature as its own *logos*, a 'word' that is a likeness, in some aspect, of the divine Word, or *Logos*. His discussion of the relation of creatures to God led Maximus also to address relation within the world. In contrast to God, who is absolute (literally, 'without ties'), he writes, finite creatures are characterised by 'existing in relation to other things'. Similarly, while the *Logos* is beyond the 'totality of things', each part of that creaturely sum is 'known in relation to other things': it is characterised not only by its own *logos* but also by its relation to the *logoi* of others." If the individual *logos* provides an internal limit and definition, the *logoi* to which it is related provide a different kind of limit: an 'external context'. There is a similarity here to Wolfhart Pannenberg's comments, in the second volume of his *Systematic Theology*, that a finite creature 'has its distinctiveness only vis-à-vis other finite things. Only in this distinction does it exist. Hence the finite exists as a plurality of what is finite'.

Not all relations between creatures will be alike in importance: some will be given, obvious, and constitutive; others will be a matter of development, chance, and choice. The first way corresponds to creatures' coming forth from God already related; the second corresponds to their coming forth apt to be related further. Approaching this in terms of human community, for instance, there are intrinsic and constitutive relation in the form of family and civic identity, and there are also further relations, which we are inclined to make, such as friendship, business partnerships, and marriage.

Part of the commanding place given to relation in a participatory scheme involves the idea that creatures can be said to participate in one another: the world has a dynamic to it that might be called one of 'intra-finite participation'. We have already seen how this undergirds a participatory account of knowledge in Chapter 13: the knower participates in the known. Later in this chapter we will see how it works out in terms of the 'common good': how the good of the individual flows from, and in another way, to, the good of the community or communities to which he or she belongs.

Intra-finite participation operates not only in knowing, and in ethics, but also in the internal story of creatures coming to be: in the way in which their 'having from' God unfolds according to a pattern of 'having from' other

creatures. On a creaturely level, one created thing receives its being from another, whether that refers to the begetting of a child or to the fashioning of a dwelling. Such things are often then also dependent upon one another into the future, whether we think about that child in its infancy, or about the dwelling that, whether it is a nest or a house, continues to exist only because of ongoing upkeep. This dynamic of receiving from, of coming through, and of depending upon can readily be seen, from a participatory perspective, as a refraction within the world of the great and constitutive reception and dependence (on God and from God) by which creation exists at all. To have being by participation from God is to be constituted with a form of openness and potential to receive from other creatures. As we discussed in Chapter 9, in one sense God gives absolutely and directly, and in another sense he gives through creatures. Recalling the discussion of creation in Chapter 1, we can say that the constitution of the world *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) and *de deo* (from, but not out of, God) means that the world is marked, through and through, with the character of being *ex* and *de*: 'out of' and 'from'. We see that, for instance, in the emergence of wholes out of parts, which so marks the realm of life, and all it touches.

These intra-finite participations set up structures of mediation within the world. One example would be the participation of means in the desirability of ends, so that what one has to do in order to achieve something else becomes infused with a desirability, which engages the will, derived from the goodness of the goal we seek ultimately to accomplish. Further, what serves as an end at one level is a means for the next level up: I make a journey for the sake of buying a saucepan; I want the saucepan for the sake of cooking a meal; I wish to cook for the sake of entertaining friends; and so on. Ultimately, the goodness and beauty of God are what infuses any chain of actions such as these — this catena of mediations — with the desirability that leads to motivation, but a sense of this metaphysical foundation for all desire need not be in mind. One need not be able to understand the origin of all good to be able to judge some particular thing to be good.

Participation and The Common Good

We can grasp the wider, social, nature of participation by turning to a pivotal contention for Aquinas, that what we share with our neighbour is 1, not simply our nature, nor even a shared destiny, but also common work, and the common good: the good of all that redounds to each. This common good, in which all participate to their own benefit, is the common work of all, severally and together. While that communal good, which benefits all, can only be achieved by common effort, it is not as if this common good were one thing, and the work by which we achieve it entirely another. Work undertaken in common is itself not the least part of where human flourishing is to be found. Happiness, or fulfilment, consists in realizing what one has within oneself to be, and, as social animals (or, as it is sometimes put 'political animals'), human beings find happiness in, and through, social cooperation.

It is integral to Aquinas' vision that the foundation for all human flourishing is found in belonging to a flourishing community. In participatory fashion, the paradigm here is one of cooperation not competition: one person's good is not played off against another's; a sense of the zero sum is to be avoided. As Aquinas put it, 'He that seeks the good of the many, seeks in consequence his own good.'" Since it is impossible to achieve the best goods, even seemingly individual goods among them, other than as part of a flourishing whole, seeking the common good is therefore ultimately more sensible than it is sacrificial, even if it cuts against short-term calculations about maximising what might superficially look like private benefit. Here, as is often, even typically, the case, participatory theology refuses to make sacrifice ultimate. It is always only ever a means, not an end. Judged from a participatory perspective, approaches to ethics and spirituality that revolve around a foundational logic of sacrifice will be seen to rest on principles or perspectives that are simply too narrow in their vision. We might take the example of a person who votes 'against her financial interest' in a general election, for instance by voting for a party that will increase the rate at which she will be taxed. To call this a sacrifice, if it is justified as a contribution to the common good, is less than half the story. If voting for the party that will increase taxation were the morally and socially responsible thing to do — the thing that would improve

the common lot — then such a voter would not be voting against her interests at all, only against her interest as defined in too narrow a fashion.

Economics

Patristic writers on economics frequently took their bearings from the idea of a common, participatory origin for all that we are and that we possess. The point was particularly evident for the Greek Fathers, since one of the principal scriptural words for participation, *koinonia*, also held the concrete resonance of practical sharing. Consider, for instance, how Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 150—ca. 215) circled around this word in a passage in his *Paedagogus*:

God created our race for sharing [*koinonía*], beginning by giving out what belonged to God, God's own Word, making it common [*koinós*] to all of us, and creating all things for all. Since, therefore, all things are common [*koiná*], let not the rich claim more than the rest: to say 'I have more than I need, why not enjoy?' is neither properly human nor proper to sharing (*koinonikón*).

This recalls Paul's comments in I Corinthians about sharing the necessities of life with those in need (1 Cor. 11.2.1-3), which is worked out in that epistle in the context of *koinonia* used in a sacramental sense (1 Cor. 10.16). If later writers did not always advocate something quite as radical as Clement in relation to economics, a particularly Christ-like form of Christian life (the 'religious life') involved renunciation of personal property and sharing in common.

On a wider scale, the Christian tradition has been informed here by the assumption of a basic commonality between human beings, and between believers. Scriptural sources include 'From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth' (Acts 17.16) and 'you are the body of Christ and individually members of it' (1 Cor. 11.17), such that 'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it' (1 Cor. 12.16). Responsibilities follow from this, in relation to a common participatory origin by nature, and later from a common participatory reception of grace. A question arises as to which moral and civic responsibilities are laid upon Christians principally in relation to fellow Christians, and which with regard to the whole of the rest of humanity. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25.31-46), for instance, talks about 'these my brothers and sisters', and it is a matter of contested interpretation how wide that reference should be taken to be. This question, of working out the order of the responsibilities that come from different sorts of relation, is often called the question of the *ordo amoris*, or ordering of love. Paul, for his part, stressed both aspects — towards all, and towards fellow members of the church — but also stipulated an order: 'Whenever [we] have opportunity ... work for the good of all and especially of those of the household of faith' (Gal. 6.10).

Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) set the foundations for contemporary Catholic social teaching, in terms familiar from a participatory perspective, in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), crystallising a tradition that has been widely admired since, across the churches. The following passage illustrates the participatory basis of what he argues. Having defended the validity, even necessity, of private property, Leo qualifies what he means by 'private', using unmistakably participatory language, derived from Aquinas. He writes that all of what one has comes from God, that it never loses this quality of being derived, and that it should therefore be put to work for the perfection of natures beyond one's own:

If the question be asked, How must one's possessions be used?, the Church replies without hesitation in the words of the same holy doctor [Aquinas]: 'Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without difficulty when others are in need'... when necessity has been supplied, and one's position fairly considered, it is a duty to give to the indigent out of that which is left over... Whoever has received from the divine bounty a large share of blessings, whether they be external and corporal, or gifts of the mind, has received them for the purpose of using them for perfecting his own nature, and, at the same time, that he may employ them, as the minister of God's Providence, for the benefit of others.

Leo is principally drawing upon *Summa theologiae* II-II.66, where Aquinas writes that all things belong to God, but that God allows human beings to use the good things of the earth. It is lawful to earn, sell, give, and receive things, but when it comes to how to use the things that come to us this way, his rule is to seek 'to possess external things, not as [one's] own, but as common', so that one is 'ready to communicate them to others in their need'. He quotes 1 Timothy 6.17-18: 'As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share [κοινωνικοῦς].'

Moreover, Aquinas thinks, while we might divide possessions in ways that follow human law and convention, those principles are secondary in relation to the yet-more-fundamental principle that the good things of the earth are given 'for the purpose of succouring human needs'. That means that 'in cases of need ... need has made [things] common' and that 'whatever certain people have in super-abundance is due, by natural law, to the purpose of succoring the poor'.

Like Leo, and a succession of subsequent popes, Aquinas did not wish to abolish private property, but he, and they, urged their readers to treat whatever they might possess as coming to them a gift. The point is participatory: whatever anyone has, he or she has received. That cautions against an attitude towards the world's goods that grasps them too closely, or that treats them as abrogated to oneself. Property, from the perspective of Catholic social teaching, is in the first place to be considered as something that has fallen under our care, so as to allow us to look after ourselves, and those under our responsibility. In the second place, it has come to us so that it can pass on, out of our hands, to be shared by acts of charity.

This principle of having as having — received is underlined in the Old Testament practice of jubilee. Since the land was understood to have been given to supply the needs of God's people, and not for private gain or accumulation, while land could be bought and sold in the short term, it returned to the ancestral family every fifty years (Lev. 5.8-13). The land was a perpetual gift, and could not therefore be so completely arrogated as a purely private possession that it could be passed forever out of the hands of one family and into that of another. We see some parallel to this in English law, where, ultimately, land is not vested in private individuals but in the Crown. Seemingly 'private' land is held in trust from the Crown. The Coronation Service then serves to stress that the monarch, in turn, holds the realm in trust from God. This understanding forms the basis on which landowners must respect public rights of way; it is also why wrecks and lost items pass to the Crown and the common good (in the law of treasure trove), and why mineral rights are vested in the crown not in the landowner. It also undergirds the principle that an estate passes to the Crown when someone dies intestate and without known kin, and is why property passes to the Crown when a company that owned it is dissolved, rather than becoming ownerless. We could hardly wish for a better illustration of the idea that we are all custodians — monarch and subjects — and that to have is always to have received.

Every Perfect Gift Is From Above

In this way, as in others, what might seem to be the most abstract of metaphysical principles have turned out to have profound practical consequences. From the conviction that the structure of created being is characterised through-and-through by participation — or sharing, or likeness — comes a vision of our relation to our neighbours that is nothing short of revolutionary in the twenty-first century. Those repercussions should not be surprising: our particular sense of metaphysics, articulated or implicit, profoundly informs how we perceive the world, and — on that basis — how we act. Participation lies at the heart of the account of Christian doctrine and metaphysics that has been spelt out in this book; it also, and therefore, undergirds a parallel sense of Christian perception, habitation, and action in the world, and a theologically informed way of life.

The conclusion of a participatory vision is to see the world as a gift from God, bearing some trace of his likeness, such that nothing exists, or is had, that is not given and received. Evil, for its part, amounts to an occlusion of that reception. Those two aspects — gift and reception — reinforce and condition one another. The likeness intensifies the gift: the world is no tokenistic offering; like all the best gifts, it reveals its giver. While

creation may be only a likeness, it is profoundly precious because of the one who gives it to us, and whose likeness it bears: God himself.

That observation may be the best answer we have to those who fear that participatory or 'Platonic' accounts of the world's origin — as coming from outside itself — devalue what lies around us. We do not downplay the world when we say that it rests upon God, when we say that it comes to us as an inter-related panoply of finite images of the One who is Being Itself, Goodness Itself, Beauty Itself: coming 'from above, coming down from the Father of lights' (James 1.17). <>

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