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Editorial Appraisals:

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. <>

CONSTRUCTING THE SACRED: VISIBILITY AND RITUAL LANDSCAPE AT THE EGYPTIAN NECROPOLIS OF SAQQARA by Elaine A. Sullivan Utilizing 3D technologies [Stanford University Press, www.constructingthesacred.org]

CONSTRUCTING THE SACRED addresses ancient ritual landscape from a unique perspective to examine development at the complex, long-lived archaeological site of Saqqara, Egypt. Elaine A. Sullivan focuses on how changes in the built and natural environment affected burial rituals at the temple due to changes in visibility.

The long-lived burial site of Saqqara, Egypt, has been studied for more than a century. But the site we visit today is a palimpsest, the result of thousands of years of change, both architectural and environmental. Elaine A. Sullivan uses 3D technologies to peel away the layers of history at the site, revealing how changes to sight lines, skylines, and vistas at different periods of Saqqara's millennia-long use influenced sacred ceremonies and ritual meaning at the necropolis.

The author considers not just individual buildings, but re-contextualizes built spaces within the larger ancient landscape, engaging in materially-focused investigations of how monuments shape community memories and a culturally-specific sense of place. Despite our modern impression of the permanent and enduring nature of the site, this publication instead highlights that the monuments and their meanings were fluid, as the Egyptians modified, abandoned, resurrected, forgot, or incorporated them into new contexts. Virtually placing the reader within a series of landscapes no longer possible to experience, the author flips the top-down view prevalent in archeology to a more human-centered perspective, focusing on the dynamic evolution of an ancient site that is typically viewed as static.

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Constructing the Sacred at Royal Funerary Landscapes in Egypt

Funerary rituals and landscapes acted as especially powerful stages for enacting and reinforcing dominant social ideologies and political authority in ancient societies. This work contends that the most elite Egyptians developed a consistent practice of sacred landscape creation, and that these practices created uniquely Egyptian funerary spaces that effectively intertwined community identity with state social order.

In Section 3, I argue that visibility was one key strategy harnessed by Egyptian royals and elites to create a sense of sacred space in the funerary landscape at Saqqara. While architectural monumentality and engineered aspects of visibility and experience were critical to forming a funerary landscape demarcated from both near and far as ‘sacred’ at Saqqara, examination of the site shows evidence for additional strategies in use. In this section, I identify a series of techniques for landscape intervention that repeat at Saqqara and appear at other ritual sites in the Nile valley. I focus in this work exclusively on periods of state unity and political power, those moments when monumental architecture flourished, and when its construction would have been influenced by royal control (in contrast with the Intermediate Periods, when construction may have acted as a means of asserting regional or personal influence outside the control of a single state-sponsored narrative).

Cosmic Connections & Symbolic Alignments

Contents

Visibility at Royal Funerary Landscapes in Egypt

Cosmic Connections & Symbolic Alignments

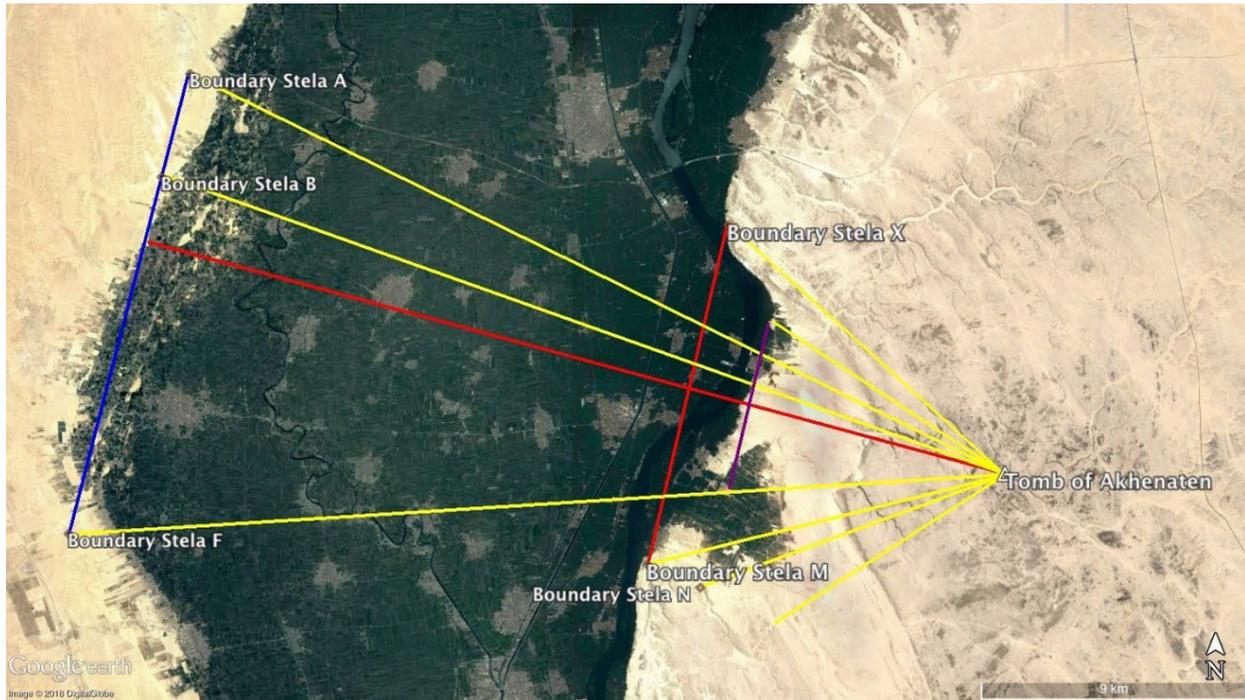
Ritual Movement

Nature as Metaphor

Localized Sacred Place-Making

That the king (and possibly other high elites) manipulated the siting, orientation, and form of monumental sacred architecture to express ritual concepts linked to the cosmos is well documented.²⁹ The temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel is the most famous example, with its deep inner sanctuary positioned so that the sun illuminated three of the four cult statues (the king, Amun-Re, and Re-Horakhte, solar gods, but not Ptah, a chthonic deity who was left in darkness) twice a year.³⁰ The remarkable accuracy to which the Giza pyramids were oriented to the cardinal points is another,³¹ which Assmann interpreted as an attempt by the Egyptians to “represent the heavens on earth,” the pyramid landscape “as an enclave in which the earth and its directions mirror the topography of the heavens.” A number of scholars have identified such large-scale choices made by the king to tie monumental building programs at the landscape level (especially funerary landscapes) in with cosmic concepts, both solar and stellar. A major focus of Egyptian state religion was the daily and yearly propagation of the cosmos, with temple ritual focused on supporting and encouraging the gods in their difficult task. The king’s role was to “establish and maintain Maat, or cosmic order” on earth, so he paralleled the actions of the gods in the celestial sphere. Crafting entire funerary landscapes that linked the king (especially his divine, reborn form) with such eternal processes was one means of creating uniquely powerful places.

Amarna



MAP BASED ON MICHAEL MALLINSON, "THE SACRED LANDSCAPE," IN PHARAOHS OF THE SUN: AKHENATEN, NEFERTITI, TUTANKHAMEN, ED. RITA E. FREED, YVONNE MARKOWITZ, AND SUE D'AURIA (BOSTON: MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, 1999), 78 AND FIG. 51, NOT INCLUDING ALL ASPECTS OF HIS ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATION. SATELLITE IMAGERY, COPYRIGHT 2018 DIGITALGLOBE, COURTESY GOOGLE EARTH.

More than 1200 years after the reign of Khufu, royal desire to connect the tomb to contemporary solar theology may also have influenced the layout of the city of Akhetaten. Akhenaten recounted his careful, personal planning of the design and boundaries of the city on a series of boundary stelae.³⁸ Mallinson examined Amarna's plan and noticed the remarkable arrangement of the first pair of stelae erected in regnal year 5 (the year of the move to Amarna), X and M, which created a parallel line later respected by the main royal constructions of the city (the North Palace, Great Temple, Small Temple, and Kom el-Nana), and stood perpendicular to the royal tomb (with the Small Temple at the midpoint of the line of their extension). When adding the later stelae into his analysis, he recognized a potential pattern linking the tomb of Akhenaten to the temples, palaces, and stelae in the city by a series of projecting lines. He hypothesized that these axes "radiat[ed] out from the royal tomb, mimicking the rays of the Aten in art." <>

THE LIGHT OF HERMES TRISMEGISTUS: NEW TRANSLATIONS OF SEVEN ESSENTIAL HERMETIC TEXTS by Charles Stein [Inner Traditions, 9781644114612]

A presentation of seven essential texts, central to the Hermetic Tradition, never before published together

- Includes *Theogony*, *The Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, *The Poem of Parmenides*, *The Poimandres*, *The Chaldean Oracles*, *Hymn to Isis*, and *On Divine Virtue*, each translated from the original Greek or Latin
- Presents interpretive commentary for each text to progressively weave them together historically, poetically, hermeneutically, and magically

Linked to both the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth, Hermes Trismegistus is credited, through legend, with thousands of mystical and philosophical writings of high standing, each reputed to be of immense antiquity. During the Renaissance, a collection of such writings known as the Corpus Hermeticum greatly inspired the thought of philosophers, alchemists, artists, poets, and even theologians.

Offering new translations of seven essential Hermetic texts from their earliest source languages, Charles Stein presents them alongside introductions and interpretive commentary, revealing their hidden gems of insight, suggesting directions for practice, and progressively weaving the texts together historically, poetically, hermeneutically, and magically. The book includes translations of Hesiod's *Theogony*, the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, the "Poem of Parmenides," the *Poimandres* from the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the *Chaldean Oracles*, "The Vision of Isis" from Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, and "On Divine Virtue" by Zosimos of Panopolis.

Through his introductions and commentaries, Stein explains how the many traditions that use Hermes's name harbor a coherent spirit whose relevance and efficacy promise to carry Hermes forward into the future.

Revealing Hermes as the very principle of Mind in all its possibilities, from intellectual brilliance to the workings of the cognitive life of everyone, the author shows how these seven texts are central to a still-evolving Western tradition in which the principle of spiritual awakening is allied with the creative. Never before published together, these texts present a new vehicle for transmission of the Hermetic Genius in modern times.

Review

"I have to go back forty years to Stanley Lombardo's pitch-perfect renderings of Parmenides and Empedocles to match Stein's resourceful lucidity and poetic nimbleness. His commentaries are rigorous and impeccable, and the translations are an exaltation unto themselves. Stein has sounded the depths. These are more than documents, they are vitalities." — *Jed Rasula, Helen S. Lanier Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Georgia, Athens*

"In alignment with the spirits of Thomas Taylor and G. R. S. Mead, Charles Stein has devoted decades to

a meticulous deep reading and research of the works collected now in *The Light of Hermes Trismegistus*, and the translations that have resulted are highly considered, musical, and shapely. We are thrice blessed with Stein's illuminating, fresh, and detailed commentary and his offering of a profound and original philosophical view of a possible past, present, and future of the Hermetic texts." — *Kimberly Lyons, author of Capella*

"Charles Stein's translations from the Hermetic tradition have the wildness and directness of great poetry, the precision and depth of profound philosophical inquiry, and the spiritual intensity and devotion that only comes from practice and experience in a number of sacred traditions." — *Marcus Boon, author of In Praise of Copying*

"This collection and commentary delivers what only the right poet's translation can: it recovers the vital Western sources of Being in a poesis true to our moment in time. 'The text itself is the secret,' as Stein takes from Henry Corbin, and here in these sacred renderings the secret is: the text itself is Hermes--for our eyes now." — *George Quasha, poet, artist, writer, and copublisher of Station Hill Press*

"In this embarrassment of riches, Charles Stein's electrifying translation of Parmenides is alone worth the price of admission, but there is so much more. The generous essays following each work--taking us along a deep journey into their unique poetic value--make his brilliant translations stand out all the more. While there is a certain irony in calling this a timely book, Stein offers us the kind of knowledge we should be hungering for." — *Ammiel Alcalay, author of After Jews and Arabs and editor of Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document*

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This book is an imaginative speculation on the possible present and future being of the God Hermes and his epiphany as the culture hero and initiating deity, Hermes Trismegistus—the Thrice Great Hermes, of the Hellenistic and Roman imperial period. The Greek Hermes had been identified as early as Herodotus (ca. 485-425 BCE) with the Egyptian god Thoth, whose provenance was, among many other things, magic. In the late Hellenistic period, when Greek and Roman pharaohs ruled pharaonic Egypt, Hermes Thoth was known to Greek-speaking Egyptians as Hermes Trismegistus. He became the central figure in the series of initiatory and speculative tracts known as the Corpus Hermeticum. These texts were recovered in the Florentine Renaissance and translated from Greek into Latin by Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). Hermes Trismegistus meanwhile, because the Greek Hermes was also the Roman Mercury, became associated with mercury, the metallic substance and with the practice of alchemy, where mercury plays a prominent role. The Hermetica—that is, the Corpus Hermeticum and other writings concerning Hermes Trismegistus—grew to be important texts during the Florentine revival of pagan mysteries and remained among the basic authorities for esoteric religion and syncretic philosophy that flourished until the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries all but suppressed that revival. They continue to be studied in esoteric circles today.

For this book on Hermes Trismegistus, I gathered and translated seven texts from antiquity. Two are poems with a prehistory of oral composition (Theogony and Homeric Hymn to Hermes); a third is a foundational text for Greek philosophy and indeed philosophy generally (an untitled poem by Parmenides, sometimes referred to as the "Poem of Parmenides"); and a fourth is the Poimandres, the initial prose tract from the Corpus Hermeticum, which I have found appropriate to treat as a poetic dialogue. The fifth is my selection and arrangement of the poem fragments that survive under the title the Chaldean Oracles. (The Oracles inspired Neoplatonic philosophy and were eventually transmitted to the esoteric traditions of both European and Near Eastern civilizations.) The sixth, "The Vision of Isis," is the one Latin text I translated and is from the final section in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (otherwise known as *The Golden Ass*). This text, though also originally in prose, was translated as verse by me to preserve something of the rhetorical richness of what really is a fully developed vision of the Goddess. The final text is "On Divine Virtue," a tract by the Egyptian alchemist Zosimos, written in Alexandrian Greek in the fourth century CE. It is among the earliest alchemical texts we have and serves for me to connect the various guises of Hermes in the ancient world to the Hermetic tradition in the modern one, through the self-consciously Hermetic practice of European alchemy.

The texts divide neatly into the two periods from which they derive, the classical (and so-called archaic) periods extending from the time the Homeric texts were first written down (ca. 800 BCE) to the death of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, and the Hellenistic Roman periods, 332 BCE until the deliverance of the Roman Empire over to Christianity. The classical texts are the *Theogony* by Hesiod, the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, and the "Poem of Parmenides." The Hellenistic-Roman texts are the Chaldean Oracles, the *Poimandres*, "The Vision of Isis," and "On Divine Virtue" by Zosimos. Each is given its own section, and between the two groups is an essay on the relation of Egypt to Greece.

Each translation is preceded by a brief introductory essay providing essential information for reading the texts, and each is followed by a commentary, working out in various ways how I construe these works to embody, express, reveal, and project for the present and oncoming times what I will call the Hermetic Genius or spirit. An extended introduction precedes the eight chapters, articulating some general notions about Hermes and a few concepts peculiar to my own way of thinking, which are useful for following the commentaries. Some of the introductory material may seem a bit abstruse, and I hope its presence will not interfere with the reader's reception of the translations, which should, I hope, stand alone. The same, though to a lesser degree, goes for the commentaries. Nevertheless, since there is a philosophical project behind my work, I wanted to make something of its scope and flavor available to the interested reader. But the heart of this book should be the poetry. 'Where poetry actually stimulates our attention, Hermes is "happening."

The seven texts were translated by me over the course of some fifty years. They are not intended as scholarly corrections of previous translations, and they do not aim at rendering more accurately the intent of their authors. They are, rather, gathered toward what I call the further life of the texts and, more sententiously, the further life of Hermes himself. The gods, in the active imagination of some readers (and translators!), survive the dissolution of their pantheon. That is peculiarly true of the Greek gods. The cosmos ordered by Zeus and his extended family no longer configures the world for us, and

yet these figures keep resurfacing and making themselves available to further entangle us in the mystery of "what is."

My experience again and again over the years in reading these texts has been that, as I work through the Greek, the translation forms itself in my mind and its voicing emerges on my tongue. I consider them more part of my work as a poet than as performances of scholarly control over the literary material. Nevertheless, they are not imitations in Robert Lowell's sense as opposed to translations (Lowell 1961). They are translations indeed, a conveyance of poetic substance across the distanceless distance between ancient Greek and contemporary English, between a time when mind grasped itself under a divine aegis and our time when the very absence of the gods prepares the stage for their further advent.

I have followed the literal sense of the poetry as much as possible, and I have made use of appropriate scholarly information to the degree that it has been available to me. That said, it is still the case that the entire effort has been to project the poetry. I imagine each text as being read continuously, so that one might engage the continuous gesture of its music.

Not all of these texts make explicit reference to Hermes, but all, in my configuration, manifest his spirit. And it is the further life* of that spirit that is my concern.

These seven texts are central to a still-evolving Western Esoteric Tradition in which the principle of spiritual awakening engages creativity exactly where its dark twin—the inalienably transitory character of being in time—is also in play. Solve et coagula, dissolve and bind together, the alchemists love to say. The Hermetic work involves breaking apart and bringing together, incursions of things appearing suddenly and phenomena vanishing from view. That which has become stultifying in its overbearing coherence or manically prolific without regard to context or use must be dissolved to reveal the fresh, creative ground that still underlies its elements. That which suffers in an agony of mere repetition or random incoherence must be recombined, reagggregated, forged and fused anew under the aegis of an emergent harmony. That which is impossible but desirable must be delivered to and from means available from the invisible; that is, the Divine Background to all that comes to appear.

Hermetic work, in spite of its comfortable fellowship with abstraction, is concrete and specific. Its values proceed from action appropriate to its phase, not the rigid insistence upon atemporally lodged, abstract generalities. And yet the work itself follows from a principle of radical immediacy that is in time but not of time and is nowhere apart from intelligence and Hegel's "labor of the concept," the intellectual concentration required to make thoughts cogent and appropriately communicable.

Though all seven texts have been translated before, they have never before been published together. The hope is that here their points of connection and mutual illumination might spark originary insights in their readers. The numen, godhead, or spirit, or what I think of as the Genius of Hermes, inspires the deepest kind of research—private, contemplative investigations into the nature of Being itself, as well as possibilities for new social formations. If, as one of the slogans of Occupy Wall Street had it some years ago, "Another world is possible," it is through a commonly communicable yet individually accessed ground of awakening that new sociality might evolve. What one discovers under such an aegis is the continuing reconstruction of the concerns of what, some years ago, the late Peter Lamborn Wilson and

Chris Bamford dubbed "Green Hermeticism" (Wilson, Bamford, and Townley 2007)—Hermeticism reconvened for the renewal of the world.

Hermeneutics: The Further Life of the Text As Further Life of the God

The word hermeneutics—the practice of interpreting texts—comes from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, whose root is the name Hermes itself and

means both to translate and to interpret. Every translation is an interpretation, and conversely, every act of interpretation translates—carries across—the sense of the text into a new situation. Hermes is the god of translators and interpreters and of the intimate connection between them. Hermeneutics elaborates the meaning of a text, but it can also bring it back to an original sense, lost in the course of its previous elaboration. The future of a text springs in part from a renewed exploration of its past.

The late Henry Corbin, the French philosopher, theologian, and professor of Islamic studies, introduced to the West the Islamic understanding of hermeneutics as *ta'wil*—a term that he translates both as "the interpretation that leads the text back to its truth" and, more esoterically, "the interpretation that leads one's soul back to its truth" (Corbin 1960; my italics). Interpretation is not an academic exercise if understood in this way. It involves the very being of the hermeneut. To read a text whose matter concerns one's being is to place oneself under the interpretive colors of that text. Inspired reception, translation, interpretation, and committed reading share an ontological itinerary.

Texts accumulate meaning over time, even as they grow more distant in time from their point of origin and, consequently, more distant from their original sense. As more readers read them, meanings accumulate—as language itself forms over many thousands of generations. But an original impulse may be lost when too lavishly spent.

Once we acknowledge these aspects of both textuality and language, we should be able to see that ancient texts like those translated in this book require a mode of translation, or hermeneutics, that is not just interpretation but "deep reading"—a reading that is receptive to the accumulated and accumulating density of the text, that participates in its further accumulation, and yet reads back to recover a sense that such elaboration is in danger of covering over.

A text is never only what it was at its moment of emergence (though it is always also its many moments of emergence—each moment that someone reads it); a text is also its further life—its projection toward the oncoming recovery of its accumulating sense. In this respect, no text exists, in and of itself, apart from the process of the recovery of it. The process of further discovery may very well take the form of an inquiry into a covered-over, hidden sense. That a text offers itself up for such recovery provides a primary impetus for its being read—again, its further life.

One's reading can proceed as a work of recovery even as it projects what one reads toward further life. And because the further life of the text takes place in a time not yet or only now arriving—that is to say, occurs in contexts different from those that obtained during its composition—the newly uncovered meanings may certainly suggest things not thought of in earlier readings, even readings nearly contemporary with the text's origin.

What is true of a text—if it is a text that harbors a theophany; that is, the coming to appearance of a deity—must also be true of the god that is its subject. The further life of the text opens onto the further

life of the god and does so by allowing possibilities that may not have been realized in earlier times to come to appearance now. As we recede from the time of the theophanic event that gave rise to the text, a hermeneutic search recovers meanings impossible to realize even at the site of its original incursion but that still are aligned upon the god's hermeneutic trajectory. <>

MYSTICISM AND EXPERIENCE: TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY APPROACHES edited by Alex S. Kohav [Lexington Books, 9781498599375]

This book embarks on scholarly investigations of mystical phenomena, including shamanism, near-death experiences, and the paranormal. Contributors address queries such as why religious experiences are ineffable, what the explanatory mechanisms of altered states of consciousness are, and how literature and art express the mystical.

MYSTICISM AND EXPERIENCE: TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY APPROACHES embarks on an investigation of the concept of mysticism from the standpoint of academic fields, including philosophy, anthropology, religious studies, mysticism studies, literary studies, art criticism, cognitive poetics, cognitive science, psychology, medical research, and even mathematics. Scholars across disciplines observe that, although it has experienced both cyclical approval and disapproval, mysticism seems to be implicated as a key foundation of religion, along with the highest forms of social, cultural, intellectual, and artistic creations. This book is divided into four sections: The Exposure, The Symbolic, The Cognitive, and The Scientific, covering all fundamental aspects of the phenomenon known as mysticism. Contributors, taking advantage of recent advances in disciplinary approaches to understanding mystical phenomena, address questions of whether progress can be made to systemically enrich, expand, and advance our understanding of mysticism.

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It is hardly an exaggeration to state that mysticism is one of the most misunderstood, or least understood, phenomena within the vast panoply of human experience. It has suffered a disproportionate share of cyclical approbation and disapproval, including condemnation and even contempt. Yet from the establishment of religions to the highest forms of social, cultural, intellectual, and artistic creations, mysticism seems to be implicated as a key, and often the key, impetus and trigger, source and foundation.

In the post-twentieth-century era, new perspectives and insights afforded by specialized disciplines—many with expertise not normally associated with the mystical realm—offer modern approaches to a more-complex, expanded meaning of mysticism. This book examines mysticism from the standpoint of several academic fields and the most recent, advanced opportunities they offer.

What qualifies the use of the term “mystical”? The question is important because of the wide-ranging claims to mystical status, which are often applied to non-mystical experiences that can range from common meditations that never rise to the level of altered states of consciousness—which, as this volume emphasizes, is the *sine qua non* of all genuinely mystical experiences—to merely being engaged in reading Scripture. To consider another pervasive but likewise misplaced claim, can contemplation or even mere discussion of such speculative notions as, for example, the so-called Sefirot of the kabbalah, be seen as mystical activity? Moshe Idel, speaking of the kabbalistic classic, is emphatic: “While [the Zohar’s] symbolism may invite contemplation, the awareness of certain theosophical and anthropological ideas does not change the nature of man.” For another type of example, just because someone may interpret a text in a manner that supplies answers that are meaningful in a spiritual sense, it does not necessarily follow that the explanation supplied is “mystical” (as is sometimes claimed). When in Christian theological hermeneutics the Song of Songs, for instance, is construed allegorically as the story of love between Christ and his church, such interpretations are symbolic rather than “mystical.” Likewise, when in a rabbinic Midrash “Adam is ... identified with Israel,” there is nothing mystical *per se* conveyed by such information.

The significance of such distinctions should be apparent. The ability to “change the nature of man” is, or should be, a key issue for the subject of mysticism, one that far exceeds merely becoming aware of “certain theosophical and anthropological ideas,” even of the exalted Sefirot. This becomes clear when one considers an aspect invariably associated with mysticism, namely, the experiencing of the so-called mystical states of mind. Mysticism and “mystical experiences” are experienced by mystics, so called precisely because they undergo or have undergone some unusual consciousness-related—that is, consciousness-altering—phenomena. An ability to achieve such mental states is a fundamental issue, even if we also need to differentiate between specific kinds of mysticisms within the enormous range of “altered states of consciousness” that are, in fact, achievable by human beings.

The book's introductory essay, "Unutterable Experiences of Consciousness Alteration," endeavors to offer an overarching, unifying perspective through its focus on the question of experience. Too often, when considering mystical experience, the emphasis has been on the former, with "experience" per se being neglected or even seen as irrelevant. Yet, as a prominent philosopher of mind David Chalmers, who is cited in the introduction, puts it, "The really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of experience." The subject of mysticism, for its part, is as complex and difficult—if not impenetrable—as that of consciousness itself.

What is experience? One is experiencing life, living; this, among other things, entails possessing—or being in—a "mode of getting into contact with reality" (as Christoph Siebert, an author also cited in the introduction, frames it). It is experience that, in spite of the sheer profusion of non-ordinary phenomena possible within the realm of human practices, in the end offers the ultimate unifying conception—as well as a key marker—that coalesces, not to say reduces, all such manifestations to one unquestionable and requisite feature: alteration of consciousness. It is alteration of consciousness and the related notion of altered states of consciousness that accounts for what may seem to be a bewildering variety of things mystical; they represent different kinds as well as levels of intensities of consciousness alteration.

The present volume is exploiting the sometimes vastly different approaches and perspectives of different academic disciplines that it has brought together under its covers. Their differing disciplinary tactics apropos things mystical do not aim to present a unified perspective on, or even the same perception of mysticism. Thus it may seem that we have perhaps drifted further away from a consensus and further complicated the already-overburdened, confusing picture of mystical and related phenomena.

Yet arguably the contrary is the case. On the one hand, the volume presents substantive indications that an apt and highly relevant way of looking at mystical phenomena is by viewing their fundamental underlying mechanism as alteration of consciousness. Looking at it from another angle, what the book does is the following: it takes us away from the traditional milieu of mysticism-related studies that is often confined to and circumscribed by individual religious traditions and practices. Notwithstanding occasional forays, it is still rare for the latter to engage directly such diverse contemporary approaches as cognitive science, consciousness studies, neurobiology, or psychology, which help pull us away from the discourse centered on what the traditions themselves are able or willing to disclose, often and necessarily only via the language of myths, secrets, and mysteriousness. And yet, because of the enormity of the challenge involved, and because we are still at the unenviable stage of being in a proverbial dark room with an indistinct elephant—attempting to ascertain from every conceivable side what exactly it is yet being distressingly unaware of the elephant's true identity—we should accept our still-enduring limitations and be content, for the time being, with amassing as much data and insight as we can muster.

The book is divided into four parts: "The Exposure," "The Symbolic," "The Cognitive," and "The Scientific"—thus covering several key aspects of and perspectives on the phenomenon known as mysticism and some additional forms of alteration of consciousness. The contributors examine these issues in the following broad areas: remarkable forms of religiosity, such as shamanic spirituality in contemporary Mongolia (chapter 1); the question of "religious experience" both generally and, more specifically, regarding the experiential, experimental, and medical/clinical aspects of alteration of consciousness (chapter 2) and the question of their purported ineffability (chapter 6); paranormal states of consciousness (chapter 3); mysticism as portrayed in contemporary Western literature and art

(chapter 4); the ancient Chinese mystical-philosophical classic, Tao Te Ching, illuminated by cognitive poetic analysis (chapter 5); the question of mystical-noetic knowledge from the perspectives of philosophy of language and cognitive science (chapter 6); the continuum of synesthetic states involved in mystical experiences, investigated via cognitive psychology (chapter 7); recent theoretical explanatory models of altered states of consciousness (chapter 8); and “mysterious emotions that are among the central enigmas of human existence,” elucidated by mathematical modeling (chapter 9). The volume concludes with an assessment of scientific claims by practitioners of meditation and other forms of mystical experiences (chapter 10).

Beginning part I: “The Exposure,” chapter 1, “Manifestations of Shamanic Spirituality: Mongolia 1999, 2002” by the anthropologist Eva Jane Neumann Fridman, describes her several encounters with well-known contemporary Mongolian shamans. The depicted events took place in September 1999 in Hövsgöl Province and in August 2002 in Bayan-uul Province, both in Mongolia. The anthropological approach generally considers cultural and historical contexts critical to understanding the reasons and meaning underlying behavior. Fridman tests this method against a more mystical point of view: Is what is required for understanding the dramatic events she has witnessed a Western-driven “scientific” methodology and attitude, or do these “shamanistic manifestations,” as she calls them, taking place in the Mongolian context present a more perplexing case?

Chapter 2, “Theoneurology: Bridging Hebrew Bible Prophecy and Clinical Psychedelic Drug Research,” reflects the research of Rick Strassman, MD, a clinical associate professor of psychiatry at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine. Based on his rare authorized medical research with participants taking psychedelic drugs in the early 1980s, Strassman presents an outline for understanding a particular type of spiritual experience, namely, the Hebrew biblical prophecy. He conceives this understanding as a new theoretical model of religious-mystical experience that is an alternative to the current model known as “neurotheology.” The chapter details how current biological models for spiritual experience are based on the belief that the brain generates such states. Strassman’s approach reverses the reigning paradigm of neurotheology, proposing instead his theory of theoneurology: as a top-down alternative to neurotheology, theoneurology proposes that God communicates with humans via the agency of the brain rather than the brain generating the impression of such communication. Strassman takes advantage of medieval Jewish philosophers who articulated a sophisticated metaphysical structure to account for the prophetic state. Interweaving such medievalism with contemporary biological sensibilities enables Strassman to revivify their approach, with strikingly original results.

Part 2, “The Symbolic,” opens with chapter 3, “Materializing the Symbolic in Paranormal Experience.” Its author, historian of religion Jess Hollenback, explores the significance and potential of some mystical experiences for deepening our understanding of symbolization processes. In particular, the chapter focuses on how the “materialization” of thoughts and desires has often played a role in shaping a variety of luminous phenomena that occur during paranormal states of consciousness. A key question in the chapter “pertains to the way that symbolization seems to focus and direct psychological energy.” This process, which Hollenback calls the “materialization of the symbolic,” is the polar opposite of creating abstractions. Materialization of the symbolic is manifested in psychosomatic lesions or stigmata induced by the suggestions of the hypnotist and in placebo and nocebo effects. Hollenback’s attempted “defamiliarization of the familiar” allows the reader to conceive phenomena and occurrences that he or she has likely never imagined or considered real or even possible.

Chapter 4, “Words and Images of a Transcendent Inner Mysterion: Mysticism in Contemporary Western Literature and Art,” is the work of Ori Z. Soltes, a Georgetown University–based author, whose wide-ranging interests extend from religion and art, to philosophy and poetry. The chapter looks at ways the arts have attempted to contend with the mystical and, especially, with “the innermost, hidden most recess of God—the mysterion.” Soltes’s essay presents two interrelated subjects united by one issue: contemporary literature and contemporary visual art, both taking up the subject of mysticism. As Soltes frames the essay’s context, given the view of God as visible for Christians and invisible for Jews and Muslims, the question of mysticism offers not only broad concerns but a range of embedded definitional issues pertaining to figuration and abstraction, words, letters, numbers, and vegetal and geometric forms and their symbolic uses. As a result, Soltes engages questions that are highly germane to the investigations of many writer-or artist-mystics today: If the goal of mystics is a transcendent mysterion that is both beyond reach and buried within our innermost being, are they using their art as an instrument of searching or of a would-be description? And what, in the end, are the purposes of art, both visual and verbal, vis-à-vis the reader/viewer, and how do those purposes naturally intersect—or oppose—the mystical enterprise? Literary works discussed in the chapter include Jorge Luis Borges’s “Death and the Compass” and “The Aleph,” Andre Schwarz Bart’s *The Last of the Just*, Cynthia Ozick’s “The Pagan Rabbi,” and Myla Goldberg’s *Bee Season*. The many contemporary visual artists considered who address the realm of mysticism include Barnett Newman, Hossein Zenderoudi, Yona Verwer, Mark Rothko, Parviz Tanavoli, Anselm Kiefer, and Makoto Fujimura. In summary, Soltes concludes that “only the mystic who has succeeded in having (as opposed to merely aspiring to have) a mystical experience can say that she or he has had one. We cannot know whether any of the writers whose work I have discussed has had the experience of feeling emptied of self and filled with God; all we can say is that, in one way or another, overtly or more subtly, each of them has found the idea of mysticism to be an effective—compelling—vehicle for the tales she or he tells and the ideas that she or he wants the reader to consider.”

Chapter 5, “The Dao Flickering through Words: A Cognitive-Poetic Analysis of Dao-de Jing,” opens part 3: “The Cognitive.” In their chapter Sivan Wagshal Te’eni and Reuven Tsur examine the ancient Chinese classic *Dao-de Jing* (*Tao Te Ching*) from a cognitive-poetics perspective, exploring the verbal strategies by which this text suggests the ineffable. Reuven Tsur, emeritus professor at Tel Aviv University and a recipient of the prestigious Israel Prize, is one of the principal founders of the new discipline of cognitive poetics. As the essay states, “ordinary consciousness attempts to cope with ... [the] excess of information” flooding the cognitive system “by organizing it into stable objects and categories, excluding much valuable information that may be captured, at best, by intuition. Some altered states of consciousness, such as varieties of mystic experience, are attempts to capture some of this excluded, precategorical information.” This process is often “interpreted as catching a glimpse of some inaccessible reality, beyond the ultimate boundary.” The illuminating discussion considers instances of three kinds of mystical insight in the *Dao-de Jing*, including (1) insight into “some inaccessible reality,” (2) insight into the “intrinsic nature of things,” and (3) “insight resulting from disorientation.” Given the more than 150 different English translations of this Chinese classic, all presumably with differing grasps of what may be involved, the authors effectively demonstrate the value of cognitive poetics in extracting meaning from this text.

Next, chapter 6—“Why Are Religious Experiences Ineffable? The Question of Mystical-Noetic Knowledge”—is by Albany, New York–based philosopher Laura E. Weed. Her essay considers one of

the most puzzling paradoxes of mysticism. Mystical experience is often characterized as ineffable, yet it is also purported to offer great knowledge. Weed explores such apparently contradictory claims from the perspective of philosophy of language and of cognitive science research about nonlinguistic functions performed by the brain. The chapter encompasses research in cognitive science indicating that language capacity is only one of many forms of mental capacity, some of which are not accessible to the language centers of the brain; research in embodied and environmentally situated knowledge indicating that not all forms of knowledge are “in the head,” cognitive, and propositional; and research in information theory indicating that information is a ubiquitous feature of the universe and is not as reducible to computational processes.

In chapter 7, “Toward a Cognitive Psychology of Mystical Experiences,” psychologist Harry T. Hunt, a prominent researcher of mysticism, introduces an alternative to that offered by neurobiology for understanding the mechanism of mystical experiences. He discusses a cognitive psychology of the continuum of synesthetic states involved in mystical experience, characterizing the more sensate forms of mystical states of consciousness as being intrinsically symbolic, offering support for understanding spirituality as a form of abstract emotional intelligence, akin to other specifically human symbolic forms, rather than as something more primitive or archaic.”

While part 3 of the book, “The Cognitive,” seeks to highlight the enormous strides that the new cognitive science has made in recent decades, its chapters overlap with the theme of the next section, “The Scientific.” In chapter 8, “Explanatory Mechanisms of Altered States of Consciousness: An Overview of Several Approaches,” I examine several recent advanced attempts at formulating coherent explanatory mechanisms for alteration of consciousness, among them mystical phenomena. Psychological approaches discussed first include those of psychoanalysis (regression to infantile ego state hypothesis; object relations theory) and transpersonal psychology (cross-modal translations and synesthesias; Harry Hunt’s Imaginal Body Experience). “Descending,” next, to human homeostatic and neurophysiological level, the chapter examines investigations of physiological hyper- and hypo-arousals by Ernst Gellhorn and William F. Kiely, Roland Fischer, and others, along the ergotropic-trophotropic continuum. Finally, a recent cognitive-neuroscientific theory of alteration of consciousness is considered: Arne Dietrich’s Transient Hypofrontality Hypothesis. These approaches, however, seem to claim explanatory powers exclusively for their respective methods and perspectives, excluding consideration of anything else that might be a contributing factor. With that, the chapter does illustrate a sense of the enormous potential that the sciences hold for our aspiration to understand the human mind and consciousness.

Chapter 9, “Mathematical Modeling of Cognitive Mechanisms of Meaning and the Spiritually Sublime” by Leonid I. Perlovsky, a noted mathematician and cognitive scientist, investigates the dichotomy between cognition and language. According to Perlovsky, this dichotomy creates a special kind of mysticism that originates due to a discrepancy between the two domains. He proposes a mechanism of the mind based on what he calls the “knowledge instinct,” which “drives conceptual-emotional understanding of the world.” Further, Perlovsky describes a “dynamic logic”—of which he is one of the founding theorists—as “the mathematical model of the knowledge instinct.” Specifically, “whereas usual classical logic can be used to describe static states (e.g., ‘this is a chair’), dynamic logic describes processes ‘from vague to crisp,’ from vague and unconscious mental representations (images, memories, thoughts, decisions, plans) to crisp and conscious ones.” According to the author, the mind is only partially conscious and mostly irrational, whereas language can be rational and conscious.

Finally, in chapter 10, “Transcendent Knowledge-Claims and the Scientific Study of Mystical Experiences,” the New York–based philosopher of mysticism Richard H. Jones tackles the following question: What bearing does the scientific study of meditators or people undergoing mystical experiences have on the truth of mystical knowledge-claims? Do scientific findings support or refute the claim that mystical experiences provide access to transcendent realities? The range of issues covered in the chapter includes whether mystical experiences are open to scientific study; problems with seeing philosophical conclusions in scientific findings; whether there are natural triggers of genuine mystical experiences; whether mystical knowledge-claims and scientific explanations are compatible; and whether the dispute between advocates of mystical claims of transcendent experiences and materialists can be resolved on scientific grounds. Jones’s key sobering takeaway from his incisive scrutiny of the chapter’s theme is that “the science of meditators and experiencers cannot answer the question of whether mystical experiences are purely natural phenomena or in fact involve a transcendent reality.” <>

STUDYING LIVED RELIGION: CONTEXTS AND PRACTICES by Nancy Tatom Ammerman [New York University Press, 9781479804344]

Look around you as you walk down the street; somewhere, usually hidden in plain sight, there will be traces of religion. Perhaps it is the person who walks past with a Christian tattoo or a Muslim hijab. Perhaps it is the poster announcing a charity auction at the local synagogue. Or perhaps you open your Instagram feed to see what inspiring images and meditations have been posted by spiritual guides to help start the day.

Studying Lived Religion examines religious practices wherever they happen—both within religious spaces and in everyday life. Although the study of lived religion has been around for over two decades, there has not been an agreed-upon definition of what it encompasses, and we have tacked a sociological theory to frame the way it is studied. This book offers a definition that expands lived religion's geographic scope and a framework of seven dimensions around which we can analyze lived religious practice. Examples from multiple traditions and disciplines show the range of methods available for such studies, offering practical tips for how to begin. The volume opens up how we understand the category of lived religion, erasing the artificial divide between what happens in congregations and other religious institutions and what happens in other settings.

Nancy Tatom Ammerman draws on examples ranging from Singapore to Accra to Chicago to show how deeply religion permeates everyday lives. In revealing the often overlooked ways that religion shapes human experience, she invites us all into new ways of seeing the world around us.

Review

"Meticulous, comprehensive, and intelligent, this marvelous book is a must-read for everyone interested in lived religion. Ammerman's alertness to case studies is matched by her alertness to the expansive repertoire of methods that animate this body of work."— DAVID D. HALL, Harvard Divinity School

"Offers both a theoretical underpinning for the sociology of lived religion and a useful guide for carrying out practice in the field. Either one of these would make a significant intellectual contribution. Nancy

Ammerman's accomplishment of both objectives makes this book pathbreaking." — MEREDITH MCGUIRE, Professor Emerita, Trinity University

"A master class in writing about subtle religion by a rare scholar who knows how to talk across disciplines and in ordinary language. 'Pay attention,' Ammerman says, to the eruption of the uncanny in unexpected places—in the stories we tell, stuff we hold dear, and the messy social circumstances in which it's all embedded. Sage wisdom here for scholars, journalists, and anyone else on the lookout for intimations of the 'spiritual dimension' breaking into the everyday." — STEPHEN PROTHERO, C. Allyn and Elizabeth V. Russell Professor of Religion in America, Boston University.

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Why "Lived" Religion?

How religion happens in everyday life has come to be called "lived religion." To study religion this way is to expand our lens beyond the official texts and doctrines so as to see how ideas about the sacred emerge in unofficial places. It is to include the practices of ordinary people, not just religious leaders. It is to expect to find religion both in "religious" places and in all those other everyday places. It is to focus on what people are doing, as well as what they are saying. Lived religion is dynamic and creative, and studying religion this way has opened the door to a wealth of new knowledge on which we can continue to build.

This kind of focus on lived religious experience emerged in the mid-1990s as scholars in multiple fields gravitated to the promise of an approach that could go beyond the seemingly narrow, largely Western, understanding of religion. The term "lived religion" originated with a 1994 conference hosted at Harvard University by historian David Hall. It was a gathering mostly focused on historical study of religion, but the idea of studying what ordinary people do in their everyday religious practices meant the inclusion of a few sociologists and other religious studies scholars. The group recognized that historical knowledge about religion had been limited because scholars had largely focused on ideas, and the ideas of elites, no less. They had traced patterns in traditional religious organizations, but only those substantial enough to leave historical records. But what were ordinary people actually doing? The conference papers,

published as *Lived Religion in America* (D. Hall 1997), marked the opening salvo in a reorientation that has taken hold in history and religious studies and has resulted in an outpouring of work documenting the religious activities of people who had previously been ignored.

Anthropologists, of course, have long documented religion as practiced in everyday life; but in the early days, there was an unfortunate division of labor between anthropology and other social sciences. The study of culture got divided between those on the "primitive" and "traditional" side (anthropologists and many religious studies scholars) of the divide and those on the "advanced" and "modern" side (sociologists, political scientists, psychologists)...

Studying lived religion began as something of a rebellion. Where, we asked, were the religious lives of women, children, poor people, and people of color? In setting out an exploration of "Material Christianity," historian Colleen McDannell documented how theologians and privileged people often denigrated religious images and material practices as inauthentic and not truly pious and sincere. They created a hierarchy of ideas over practices. For herself, McDannell says, "I am not drawn to criticize Christians who use Lourdes water or who wear 'Praise the Lord' T-shirts. I reject, however, the opinions of those who find nothing significant in these religious gestures" (1995, 13). Other religious studies scholars agreed, turning their attention to the material objects made by ordinary people, as well as the everyday rituals that had often been dismissed as mere "folk" religion.

A similar thing was happening among theologians. Long preoccupied with the thoughts of philosophers and preachers, a few began to wonder what theologies might look like in action and what the lived theologies of ordinary people might have to tell us. A growing field of "practical theology" suggested that theologians should begin their work with an assessment of what is actually happening on the ground, bring that into conversation with existing theological ideas, and aim toward gleaning new insights that would make theology strategic in its attention to the social world. Doing all of that meant that a growing number of theologians were taking their work into the field. They were seeking to learn from the understandings of God that emerge from and engage with everyday life.' They, too, were rebelling, in this case against a theology that only seemed to matter to a few other theologians.

Among sociologists, the rebellion started with the failure to squeeze the world's religious reality into a universal theory of secularization. Not every society fit the model of Western-style modernization leading to European-style religious decline. If religion was still around (or maybe always was), how should we treat it? One attempt at a different explanation—quick to be discredited—was to assume that all human beings are rational actors, that religions offer rewards everyone wants, and that people will choose the best bargain for their salvation. Perhaps consumers do attempt to maximize rewards and minimize costs when buying soap, although even there, habits and traditions can explain a lot. Perhaps churchgoers, too, may opt for the service that is the most fun, if given the choice; but human religious action simply cannot be reduced to the costs and benefits of paths to salvation. Indeed, some religions aren't concerned with salvation at all. People in all religions, in fact, engage in religious action simply for its own sake. To use McDannell's example, wearing that T-shirt is more about relationships (with Jesus and one's fellow believers) than about securing salvation.

In the 1990s, across the disciplines that were studying religion, then, there seemed to be a crisis begging for response. The turn to lived religion was one response. Rather than being confined to studying words and ideas and elites and rational bargains, students of lived religion focused on what ordinary people do.

The result has been new accounts of religious practice that have challenged old assumptions about how religion works in the social world. There is now ample evidence for arguing that discussions of secularization need to be specified, not universalized. It is a useful theory for some times and places but not one that explains the inevitable fate of religion in the modern world. Likewise, there is ample evidence that rational choices account for only a limited range of human action. Old theoretical approaches to the study of religion have been significantly undermined.

Removing those old theoretical blinders has now cleared the way for new possibilities. A rich body of research, across several disciplines, has described new people doing new (and old) things in new (and old) places. But blinders still remain. Social scientists and other scholars writing about lived religion have frequently been limited by a tendency to define their task over against the study of belief and doctrine, over against attention to organizations and memberships, over against the practices of elites and leaders (Ammerman 2016). That deemphasis on traditions and institutions has produced new insight, but it has also allowed research on religion to drift toward an individualist approach, as if each person is operating alone or in newly invented groups. It emphasizes choice and personal agency and expects to see a bricolage of religious ideas and practices that fit each person's individual preferences.

That emphasis on choice and individualism fits well the democratic, neoliberal context (where most lived religion scholars have been located), but it misses the many other kinds of cultural and legal contexts in which religion is practiced. The study of lived religion cannot afford to ignore its own cultural biases.

Nor can the study of lived religion afford to ignore the religious practices that take place inside religious institutions and those that are undertaken by religious elites. Surely religion is "lived" there, too. If we are to understand the presence of religion in the world, we need to pay attention to the official versions, as well as to the unofficial ones, to what happens inside the temples as well as what happens on the streets.

The study of lived religion began as a successful empirical and theoretical rebellion, but now it needs a more durable foundation on which to build. That foundation will allow lived religion research to live up to the global scope of our work, and it will allow social scientists and other scholars and citizens to rediscover and better understand the religious phenomena we encounter all around us. This book aims to offer that foundation and to invite you to be part of the continuing construction project.

Looking Ahead

Part I is about finding the right lens. If we are studying this full range of lived religion, not limiting it to seekers and bricoleurs, how should we think about that task? We begin in chapter 1 by looking at how the study of social practice can point us toward the kinds of analytical questions we should be asking of lived religion. If lived religion is about what people do, practice theories can provide a starting place for understanding the patterns of action we are observing. People who have been thinking about how social practices work can help us see lived religion more clearly. But our focus isn't just any kind of social practice, so we will suggest that it is the spiritual dimension of a practice that makes it distinctively religious. We will introduce the notion that the experience of engaging in any practice is, in fact, multidimensional, involving embodiment, materiality, emotion, aesthetics, moral judgment, and narrative. These are building blocks of all human social interaction and can be useful analytical angles from which to study lived religion.

What religious practices add to this list is that spiritual dimension. Some of these dimensions have been well studied by lived religion scholars, while others come to our attention from practice theories and other disciplines.

This foundational work in chapter 1 will be followed by the equally foundational reminder that practices happen in particular places. Chapter 2 argues that no religious practice can be understood without placing it in its particular cultural and historical context. People in different places have very different expectations about what religion looks like but also about where to find it and even how to name it. Every society has laws about which practices are allowed (or even mandated) and which are not. While the variations may seem overwhelming at first, there are some patterns that can help us get a start on understanding how to put our study of lived religion in that larger context. Studying lived religion requires that we take those constraints and opportunities into account.

The chapters in part 2 unpack each of the dimensions of practice and offer examples from actual research studies to show what we learn by focusing on each. We will travel around the world and across many traditions. We will see people doing very habitual and traditionally religious things, as well as inventing all sorts of new ways to be religious. Within each experiential dimension of practice, we will see how it is both personally experienced and socially defined. When we focus on embodiment or emotion, for example, what do we learn about how religious practice works, how it is embedded in social contexts, and how it can both constrain and liberate the people who are engaged in it? The realities of power and difference, race and class and gender, will always be in view.

These chapters are full of the evidence from research across disciplines, traditions, and places. Sometimes an example will be highlighted in some detail in a sidebar or discussed in detail within the text to help you see how practices work and how you might study them. When we encounter issues and themes that have been widely studied, notes will direct you to "Ideas for Further Study" at the end of the chapter. In other cases, specific research will simply be cited with the usual parenthetical in-text citations. There is much more good research than can be referenced in this small book, but these sources will give you good places to start your own reading list.

As we gradually add each layer to our understanding of lived religious practice, you can also think in new ways about the things you already know about, the things you see in your own everyday world. Think about how you might study them more closely. As we go along, try picking one lived religious practice and pay special attention to a single dimension of that practice. If you have a chance to do some direct observation, take advantage of it. If you love to read about religious practices, find a novel or historical account to explore. If you know someone you could interview, ask permission and then explore with them what they do. If you have access to a body of survey data and the inclination to do some statistical analysis, look for social patterns in the numbers. Look for how they might provide insight into the multiple dimensions of whatever practices the survey has asked about. Whether the practice is something done at home or in the street, in a place of worship or a place of work, think about all the dimensions.

The examples you will read about will suggest the methods you might adopt. Ethnography and interviews may be the most common, but we will encounter archival work and geographic analysis, as well. We will look at how people analyze both texts and visual evidence and even dip into the occasional survey. This is not a methods textbook, but you will learn a good deal by carefully observing what good

research looks like. We will think intentionally about how each particular method allowed the researcher to learn what they did, and when you are ready to start your own work, you can dig more deeply into the sources in the methods chapter at the end. There is still a great deal of lived religion to be studied. With new lenses and examples to spark your curiosity, you can make this as a springboard to your own discoveries.

The Big Picture

In the two chapters in part 1, we place the study of lived religion in two kinds of big pictures. First, we place it in the big picture that encompasses all sorts of social practices. By starting from theories about how people act in the social world, we can see how religious practices are like and unlike what people are doing when they engage in other everyday activities. How are religious practices socially defined activities that are both habitual and improvised?

Second, we increase the angle of vision. In order to think about practices in different places, we need ways to think about how the cultures and laws of those places create opportunities and constraints for religious practices. Societies around the world simply organize the practice of religion differently. People expect to find spiritual practices in different places and have different ideas about what is possible and desirable. With a framework for understanding that diversity, the study of lived religion can take context into account. We can break out of our often limited geographic box.

Zooming In

Studying lived religion means paying careful attention to what people are actually doing, and that means that no single aspect of that action can stand for the whole. Studying lived religion isn't only the study of embodiment or materiality, for example, it encompasses a more fine-grained focus on the multifaceted range and depth of experience that constitutes our action in the world.

In part 2, we will zoom in to look at seven key dimensions of lived religious practice—first the dimension that makes it religious, namely, a connection to spiritual realities. But then we will add embodiment, materiality, emotion, aesthetics, morality, and finally narrative. Not every practice will call for attention to all the dimensions in equal measure. Nor will every research inquiry be equally focused on all seven. What his approach calls for, however, is an awareness of that full range of human experience that is at play when people engage in activities that they and others recognize as religious. The dimensions are at play with each other, and stopping to look for the full breadth may spark new insight. Taking a cue from the examples along the way, we will look for how our methods of study can make that insight possible, and in an extended example at the end of chapter 9, all the dimensions come together, along with attention to cultural context, to illustrate the fruitfulness of this approach to studying lived religion. <>

PORTRAYING CICERO IN LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND POLITICS: FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN TIMES edited by Francesca Romana Berno and Giuseppe La Bua [CICERO: Studies on Roman Thought and Its Reception, De Gruyter: ISBN 9783110748420]

The series CICERO - Studies on Roman Thought and Its Reception publishes monographs, anthologies, editions or commentaries on all aspects of Roman philosophy, history, rhetoric, politics, legal and cultural history and their reception, including patristics and Christian philosophy.

M. Tullius Cicero, the eponym of the series, stands with his work not only as a politician, but also as a speaker and philosopher for the thematic versatility and interdisciplinarity of this publication organ. This volume collects a series of papers delivered at the International Conference “Portraying Cicero/Ritratti di Cicerone”, held in Rome on May 15th – 17th 2019. The papers deal with the reception of Cicero and offer different perspectives on the reconstruction and re-use of the image of Cicero throughout the centuries, from the early imperial age to modern times. Some of them are concerned with Cicero’s self-portrait and analyze how Cicero’s exemplary status was reworked in different cultures and ages. Others take a fresh approach to the impact exercised by Cicero on politics and society in the last centuries of modern era. We do hope that this volume will encourage scholars and readers to further delve into the fascinating world of the reception of one of the most discussed and loved men in antiquity.

The Basel-based foundation Patrum Lumen Sustine is the publishing institution of the series, which is subject to a peer review process, and the Société Internationale des Amis de Cicéron (SIAC, Paris) is responsible for scientific supervision.

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Ciceronis, cuius linguam fere omnes mirantur, pectus non ita (Aug. Conf. 3.4.7)

Augustine's sentence, a reassessment of the grandeur of Cicero's eloquence, echoes general admiration for the intellect and mastery of Latin language by the new man from Arpinum. Appreciated as the *nomen eloquentiae* from Quintilian onwards, remembered and reputed as the supreme model of Latin prose, Cicero embodied the essence of *Latinitas*, classical Latin whose learning was thought as essential to the intellectual maturation of the young. Augustine was just one of the countless admirers of Cicero. Within an extensive use of Cicero's works, from the lost Hortensius in the Confessions to the *De re publica* in the recreation of the *civitas Dei* in the City of God, he looked at Cicero as a source of wisdom and model of correct speaking and writing, re-adapting Cicero's thoughts and rhetorical precepts to Christian philosophy and education and redirecting readings of the republican orator towards the instruction and cultural formation of male elite students.

Yet Augustine also points to another significant aspect of the reception of Cicero, that is, criticism on Cicero's life and morals. As it has been noted, Cicero as a writer was distinct from Cicero as a man. Eulogized as the icon of Roman eloquence, Cicero encountered reproval for his ambiguous involvement in Roman politics and his lack of self-control and steadfastness, *constantia*. In particular, his dealing with the experience of exile, from the one hand, and the role he played in the transition from the Republic to the principate, on the other, placed him at the heart of a fierce debate, revolving around his perceived absence of morality and the behavior he held towards the leading political figures of his time.

A controversial man and, at the same time, an undisputed model of Latin prose: the reception of Cicero had centered around the oscillation between praise and censure throughout the ages, from Cicero's lifetime to modern times. Modern scholarship has long concentrated on the ambivalent approach to Cicero in early Empire and Late Antiquity. Gowing and McCormack have illuminated significant aspects of the re-use of Cicero in the early Imperial age and during the first centuries of the Christian era.¹⁰ Good attention has also been paid to the detachment of Cicero as a historical figure from Cicero as the embodiment of a classic in the schoolrooms and to the related inclusion of Cicero as *idoneus auctor* in the school curriculum. Altman's Companion to the reception of Cicero has enormously contributed to

our understanding of how the republican orator, statesman and philosopher has been recast and reworked over the centuries. Since the reception of an author starts with the author himself, recent scholarly works have placed emphasis on Cicero's strategy of self-fashioning, showing also that Cicero's construction of his persona, as both ideal orator and politician, serving the republican institution by his words and actions, impacted on later reception and elicited different, contrasting reactions from intellectuals and men of culture over the time.

Adding to this impressive mass of Ciceronian bibliography, this volume collects papers on the reception of Cicero in literature, philosophy and politics in a time span which goes from Late Republic to 21st century. It offers a new and fresh perspective of the multiple, divergent ways by which Cicero was received throughout the centuries. It sees Cicero not as much as an author as a character. The title itself of the volume, *Portraying Cicero*, intends to attract attention to a specific aspect of the reception of Cicero, that is, the 're-creation' of the figure of the republican orator in different times and cultures. It is not the reception of Cicero's textual corpus that triggers interest from the contributors to this book. Cicero's literary output, a wondrous assemblage of speeches, philosophical and rhetorical essays, and epistles, serves here as a means of understanding and evaluating the multiplicity of portraits of Cicero throughout the ages. Most significantly, taking Cicero's self-portrait as a jumping-off point for our reconstruction of what might be called the 'art' of portraying Cicero, we are also able to revisit significant moments of Western culture and politics. As Zielinski clarified in his seminal study more than hundred years now, every age had its own Cicero. Appreciated as an exemplary orator and a master of language from the early empire onwards, Cicero also emerged as a philosopher and a source of wisdom, as it appears in late antiquity and the Medieval times. Cicero as a wise statesman and politician became the dominant paradigm during the Humanism and Renaissance. Likewise, in the Enlightenment and the two following centuries intellectuals and men of culture interpreted Cicero as the embodiment of republican values, the 'new man' ennobling his persona by personal talents. Dictatorial regimes, however, silenced Cicero, never regarded as a politician worth emulating. Amid setbacks and lavish praises, invectives and positive judgments, every age reacted to Cicero with its own sensibility. So, every age had its 'portrait' of Cicero.

Following in the footsteps of Zielinski's suggestion, this volume aims to shed further light on how Cicero was seen and depicted by intellectuals, men of culture, politicians, and artists over the ages. It focuses on the reception of Cicero as a 'character' from old and new perspectives, by approaching Cicero not only as a model of prose writing and icon of Latinitas from early empire to the Renaissance but also examining the influence he exercised on the formation of modern political and philosophical thought. Many essays in this volume point to the role Cicero played in modern and contemporary politics (from the Enlightenment to the 20th century dictatorial regimes). The representation of Cicero in art and his character in modern fiction stories and movies are also considered. *Portraying Cicero* is a book that offers new possibilities in the study of the reception of the republican orator. It allows scholars to look at the impact exerted by the persona of Cicero on history, literature, rhetoric, politics, art, and culture from antiquity to modern times. A common thread links all the essays in the volume: the 'art of portraying Cicero' is a way through which we are enabled to understand how Cicero was reworked and re-imagined over the times and, above all, how changes in culture, politics, and aesthetics affected divergent responses to the personality and character of the 'new man' from Arpinum.

Portraying (and Defending) Himself

A self-referential author, Cicero devised a coherent long-term strategy of self-fashioning designed to construct his public persona of orator and statesman. Notably, he was a sophisticated narrator of himself. He himself laid the groundwork for canonizing his persona by providing his contemporary and future readers with an idealized version of his public and private life experiences. The opening essay of this volume, *Cicero Portraying Cicero* (Robert A. Kaster), introduces the figure of Cicero as a brilliant first-person storyteller. It shows that, by building a private narrative of his exile in the letters and offering a different public story of his 'heroic' return to Italy in the post *reditum* speeches, Cicero presented a two-sided image of himself. Contrasting with Cicero's private self-portrait as a feeble and timid man, terribly aware of inflicting sufferance on himself and his beloved Terentia and children because of his cowardice, the story narrated in the speeches depicts Cicero as a good man and good citizen, a patriot destroying his civic self for the sake of the Republican liberty. Adapting his narrative to present needs Cicero did for himself what later intellectuals and writers would do over the course of many centuries. He built – and propagated – different personae of himself.

Cicero's texts are also an exercise in self-justification. Repeatedly under attack for his ambiguous deeds and his controversial political choices, Cicero felt obliged to defend himself by revisiting – and propagating – his image in self-gratulatory terms. This first section of the volume illuminates Cicero's policy of self-defense as an integral part of his art of 'narrating himself'. As Cicero states on more than one occasion, popular consensus played a key role in the acquisition of power and prestige by the orator. Re-examining a brilliant passage from the dialogue *Brutus* (sections 183–200), the second contribution (Alfredo Casamento, *Mihi cane et populo. Cicerone e l'autorappresentazione del successo oratorio. La questione del consenso popolare*) focuses on Cicero's self-presentation as the ideal orator and reconsiders the relevance of the *audientium adprobatio* to the creation of the 'good man skilled in speaking' (*vir bonus dicendi peritus*). Though admitting to the decadence of eloquence in current times, in the *Brutus* Cicero integrates the key issue of the popular consensus into his self-fashioning strategy. Good eloquence relies on public approbation. In treating such a delicate and controversial topic Cicero paves the way for future debates on the nature of eloquence and rhetoric, debates perceived as 'Ciceronian' by generations to come.

Building essentially upon Cicero's private correspondence, the third contribution of the section (Alejandro Díaz Fernández, *A Ciceronian exemplum? Cicero's Portrait as Provincial Governor Throughout his Letters*) explores Cicero's experience as governor of the province of Cilicia (52–51 BCE), interpreted as a good example of provincial administration in late Republic. Through an accurate reading of the letters, it appears that Cicero depicted himself as the ideal governor, exercising his power with *aequitas*, *continentia* and *moderatio*. Cicero offered his deeds as models of political virtue. Within this process of self-canonization Cicero eulogized his governorship as an exemplary case of virtuous administration, radically opposed to past provincial commands and the praetorship in Asia held by his brother Quintus (Q. fr. 1.1). In presenting himself as a positive model and blaming predecessors for their negligence and irresponsibility, Cicero championed a Stoic-sounding ideal of governance sharing canonical elite virtues and showing lenience towards the provincial population.

Cicero's paradigmatic experience as exiled, a privileged target of criticism in later receptions, elicits further reflections on his strategy of self-fashioning. The fourth essay of this section (Rita Degl'Innocenti Pierini, *Cicerone esule: dall'autorappresentazione all'esemplarità letteraria (da Livio a Petrarca e*

Ortensio Lando) points to Cicero's negative, non-philosophical attitude towards exile, defined in tragic terms as calamitas. Refusing consolations from Atticus and his family and, at the same time, playing up his dolor, Cicero portrayed himself as a 'tragic hero', afflicted with physical and mental illness and not capable of overcoming adversity. This impacted unavoidably on later receptions of Cicero's exile. From Livius (Camillus' exile is probably modeled on Cicero's self-portrait as exul) and declamatory texts (the spurious *Pridie quam in exilium iret*) to Petrarch and Ortensio Lando's *Cicero relegatus et Cicero revocatus*, Cicero never achieved the status of exemplary exul. It might be tempting to say that Cicero himself was responsible for the flop of his strategy of self-justification.

Cicero's self-gratulatory portrait is advocated by Quintilian. As is well known, Quintilian's Ciceronianism put an end to the early empire debate over Cicero's style and the perceived mismatch between his perfection of language and his disputable personal and political life. The last contribution of the section (Rosalie Stoner, *The Difficult Defense of Cicero's Goodness in Institutio Oratoria* 12.1), focuses on Quintilian's rehabilitation of Cicero as both a man and orator in Book 12 of the *Institutio Oratoria*. Replying to earlier criticisms of Cicero as a 'good man' Quintilian portrays Cicero as a complex personality who acted in the supreme interest of the collectivity and committed himself to the common good with courage. In so doing Quintilian justifies and minimizes Cicero's flaws of anxiety, self-glorification, and questionable actions as advocate and consul, at the same time protecting his definition of the orator as *vir bonus dicendi peritus*.

Ciceros' Exemplarity

If it is true that Cicero never entered the canon of exemplary Republican heroes, it is undeniable that his charismatic personality elicited admiration throughout the centuries. His astonishing achievements represented a source of inspiration for generations of intellectuals and politicians. From the early empire to the Renaissance, men of culture, philosophers and artists depicted him not only as an icon of eloquence but also as a symbol of wisdom and sapientia, an intellectual never concealing his thirst for knowledge. At the same time, Cicero's heroic death, revisited and manipulated by declaimers and poets from the late republic onwards, offered an example of 'good death', teaching how to die and, above all, how to react to forms of political despotism.

Cicero's life provided the prominent reference point for debates about politics and society. Cicero embodied the ideals of a new political elite: his status as *homo novus* ascending the pinnacle of political career by virtue of his personal merits encouraged reflective musings on the significance of nobility and the development of a modern idea of society (and state), in which the acquisition of power depended on the public display of personal talents and the exercise of ancestral virtues. The first contribution of this second section (Giuseppe La Bua, *Homo Novus and Nobilis: Cicero and the Formation of the 'Modern' Aristocracy*) demonstrates that Cicero's persona as a new man played a key role in the formation of a modern ideology of nobility. Starting from a fresh reading of Velleius Paterculus (2.128.1–4) and Juvenal's praise of Cicero as the 'true' *nobilis* in *Satire* 8, it argues that the status of Cicero as 'new man' and 'new nobilis', a model of political man acting for the conservation of the *res publica* by *virtus* and *ingenium*, impacted on later reflections on human dignity and nobility throughout the Middle Ages and the Early Italian Renaissance.

Cicero's death at the hands of Antony represented a watershed in the history of his reception. Historians, poets, and declaimers read Cicero's final moments as the extreme manifestation of the

Republican orator's fight for Republican liberty. The second contribution (Tom Keeline, Cicero at the Symposium XII Sapientum) elaborates on this topic and examines the cycle of twelve 'epitaphs' for the dead Cicero contained in the *Anthologia Latina* (Anth. Lat. 603–614 R2), themselves part of a larger twelve-part cycle of twelve poems each, the *Carmina XII Sapientum* (Anth. Lat. 495–638 R2). Doubtless originating in the late-antique rhetorical schoolroom, these poems provide a mostly unexamined window onto Cicero's early reception. These epitaphs focus mostly on three themes: Cicero's heroic death, his eloquence and literary immortality, and his suppression of the Catilinarian conspiracy as consul. They offer an interesting view on later receptions of Cicero in the rhetorical schoolroom.

The two following contributions deal with Cicero's status as exemplar and model of style as well as good behavior, with emphasis on the reception of Cicero in figurative art and political literature. The third contribution (Cristina Martín Puente, *Iconografía de Cicerón en manuscritos*), analyzes portraits of Cicero in manuscripts from the 13th to the 15th centuries. As Cicero's image appears next to the personification of Rhetorica on more than one occasion, it follows that Cicero belonged to the medieval literary canon, especially as rhetorician and, to a lesser extent, as philosopher. This paper also considers a miniature in the French version of *De casibus virorum illustrium* by Boccaccio, portraying Cicero as a statesman before he was murdered and beheaded.

The fourth contribution of this section (Fabio Gatti, *Il "santissimo" Cicerone. La Quaestura di Sebastiano Corradi (1555) nella tradizione biografica sull'Arpinate*), illustrates the most important biography of Cicero of the 16th century, the *Quaestura* composed by the Venetian ecclesiastic and humanist Sebastiano Corradi, an imaginary dialogue between some learned men of the Renaissance, transposed in the late Roman Republic. Drawing on ancient (Plutarch, Cassius Dio, Appian) and modern (Bruni) sources, the dialogue rejects censure of Cicero along times and points to his moral integrity and intellectual level, depicting him as a *vir sanctissimus*, in tune with the pedagogic guidelines of the contemporary Counterreformation.

Shifting the focus to the early political history of the United States of America, the fifth contribution (Joanna Kenty, *Tully the Naïve: John Adams on Cicero*), discusses the reception of Cicero in John Adams, the second president of the United States. As an avid lifelong reader of Cicero's works, the 'new man' Adams was inspired from *De re publica* in the composition of his *Defense of the Constitutions*. As attested by several letters written in 1808–1809, he explained the American political scene by relying on Cicero and comparing his contemporaries to Caesar, Catiline, and Clodius. To Adams' eyes, Cicero embodied the ideal politician, a simple and innocent man acting for the safety of his fellow-citizens.

The last contribution (Kathryn H. Stutz, *Law and Orator: Depicting Cicero through Modern Mystery Fiction*), gets away from politics to confront contemporary narrative and tv series, showing another, captivating aspect of Cicero's afterlife. In the form of mystery stories, many modern fictions cast Cicero as a heroic all-in-one lawyer-detective, or at least as the patron to some lesser-known sleuth. This contribution argues that the mystery tropes appearing in modern receptions of Cicero show a preoccupation with the question of Cicero's morality. Whether Cicero is portrayed as the morally corrupt defender of a guilty client, or as the brilliant Sherlockian detective searching for the truth amidst the chaos of late Republican Rome, the fusion of detective tropes with popular portrayals of Cicero reveals a tension between Cicero's own competitive and persuasive priorities and our modern valorization of truth and virtue in our legal 'heroes'.

The Portrait of the Ideal Orator

Abstulit una dies aevi decus, ictaque luctu / conticuit Latiae tristis facundia linguae (“A single day snatched away the glory of the age, and, struck by grief, the eloquence of the Latin tongue sadly fell silent”: FRP 219.10 –11 H.). In the funeral eulogy of the orator, killed by Antony, Cornelius Severus laments the loss of the voice of Roman eloquence, a standard formula for identifying and immortalizing the memory of Cicero. One of the Roman historians and declaimers relating the death of Cicero (in *Suasoria 6* of Seneca the Elder), Severus testifies to the process of reduction of Cicero to intellect and pure form in the schools. It was in the school environment, as demonstrated by Robert Kaster, that Cicero was transformed into the embodiment of a classic, entering the canon of *idonei auctores* as the symbol of Latin’s stylistic excellence. In reconfiguring him as verbal *ingenium*, students turned the Republican orator into a new authorial figure. And ‘becoming’ Cicero was thought as essential to the acquisition of power and prestige in Roman elite society.

Needless to say, no one had ever questioned Cicero’s prominent role in Latin language and in the intellectual formation of the young. The third section of this volume (*The Portrait of the Ideal Orator*) tries to shed further light of the reception of Cicero as a master of the Roman language, at the same time exploring the impact exercised by Ciceronian Latinitas on ancient and modern education. The first contribution (Catherine E. W. Steel, *The Reception of Cicero’s Speeches in the Early Empire*) reads the reception of Cicero’s speeches in Seneca the Elder’s collection, Asconius Pedianus’ historical commentary and Quintilian’s pedagogical handbook as instrumental in determining the diversity of Ciceronian images which cultured readers were familiar with. As demonstrated by the variety of approaches by which students and scholars looked at the *Pro Milone*, in the early empire there were different ways to be a reader of Cicero’s speeches. Textual Cicero was not only used for didactic purposes. It was open to a plurality of readings reflecting the complexity of Cicero’s figure.

The second contribution (Henriette van der Blom, *Quintilian on Cicero’s Deliberative Oratory*) is specifically centered on Quintilian and his presentation of deliberative speeches. By re-examining Quintilian’s discussion of deliberative oratory (3.8) and observing how and at what extent changes in deliberative speeches and *contiones* mirrored new power dynamics in the Imperial age, this paper argues that Quintilian’s use of Cicero as a primary source for understanding Republican and Imperial deliberative oratory sets out rhetorical theory and oratory in historical perspective, serving as well the purpose to train contemporary would-be orators under a monarchical regime. For Quintilian, Cicero’s speeches in the Senate and *contiones* illustrate the true nature of great oratory and represent a perfect example of how the *vir bonus dicendi peritus* displays his oratorical qualities in debate speeches at best. In portraying a multi-faceted Cicero, deeply influenced by Cicero’s self-presentation and later reworkings of the Republican orator, and stressing the importance of deliberative speeches for Republican and contemporary society, Quintilian advocates the ideal of good oratory and instructs his pupils in building their careers as orators on Cicero, the undisputed champion of deliberative oratory.

In the third contribution (Andrew J. Sillett, *Quousque tandem: The Reception of a Catchphrase*) Cicero’s consular persona is revisited through the reception of the famous motto opening the first *Catilinarian* speech, *quousque tandem*, a catchphrase becoming synonymous with Cicero in the modern world. Looking at contemporary resonances and echoes of Cicero’s words, acquiring a canonical status through the times, this paper follows the fascinating journey of the Ciceronian formulation, starting with Sallust’s inversion in the mouth of Cicero’s archetypical foe (*Sall. Cat. 20.9*) and Livy’s redeployment in

Manlius' speech (6.18.5) to end with Pliny the Younger (ep. 2.10.1–2), Tacitus (Ann. 1.28–4–6; 1.13.4) and the unusual, parodic treatment in Apuleius *Metamorphoses* (3.27). It suggests that the manipulation of Cicero's phrase in different works and times reflects the moral ambivalence of its author, at the same time responding to the early empire process of simplification of Cicero into a caricatural figure.

The following contribution (Barbara Del Giovane, *Da iocosus a consularis scurra. Rappresentazioni del Cicerone umorista*), analyzes a minor but interesting aspect of Cicero's reception, i. e., the portrait of Cicero as a humourist. Starting from a re-examination of the ancient literary judgments on Cicero as a master of irony, it points to the commonly perceived absence of moderation in Cicero's use of jests and verbal jokes and observes that later receptions tended to focus on the opposition between the ideal of wit declared by Cicero in his works and the irony displayed outside theoretical and 'programmatical' contexts of his rhetorical corpus.

In the last contribution (Leanne Jansen, Christoph Pieper, Bram van der Vel-den, *Reperforming Cicero's Voice: Constructions and Negotiations of His Vox Publica*), Cicero's public persona as orator is revisited in connection with his self-portrait as a textualized 'voice'. After examining how the orator staged and reinvented his voice in his speeches, this paper turns its attention to the restaging and rewriting of Cicero's voice in later authors, also offering a comparative Renaissance example of re-vocalizing Cicero.

Cicero in Politics

The last section of the volume (*Cicero in Politics*) provides readers and scholars with a fresh account of the history of the reception of Cicero as a statesman in the latest centuries. Cicero as historical and political figure was crucial to the interpretation of some of the most dramatic political events occurring in the latest centuries of our era. Idealized as the ideal politician and at the same time heavily censured for his political deeds, Cicero represented a constant point of reference for intellectuals and politicians from the Enlightenment to the dictatorial regimes of the 20th century. The first contribution (Igor Moraes Santos, *Montesquieu on Cicero. Historiographical, Political and Philosophical Dimensions of a Modern Portrait*) illustrates Montesquieu's portrait of Cicero and its relevance to European culture of the following two centuries. It highlights three aspects of the French philosopher's interpretation of Cicero: Cicero as historiographical source, historical figure, and philosopher. By examining Montesquieu's several works, in which Cicero's life and ideas are discussed or his texts are used for argumentation, this paper is purposed to offer a comprehensive view on the role played by Cicero in Montesquieu's historical and political thought.

The second contribution (Francesca Romana Berno, *Cicero in the Shadow of the Bastille*), concentrates on modern politics, focusing on that critical moment of Western history which was the French revolution. Indeed, the *révolutionnaires* tried hardly to show their affinity with the most renowned Republic at all – the Roman one. Hence the idealization of Cicero, for his Republican ideals and battles against Clodius, Catilina and Antony. This paper shows how everyone, from every side, tried to present himself as Cicero, and his enemy as Catilina. Special focus is given to the famous trial against the King, which presents striking affinities with the trial against the Catilinarians, and to another, less known trial against a professor of Latin who was accused of reading Cicero in a dangerous way. In a similar way, this paper touches upon the figure of Robespierre, whose fascinating and controversial character was compared to both Cicero and Catilina.

The third contribution (Philippe Rousselot, *Cicéron face aux dictateurs*, 1920–1945), finally, calls our attention to Europe and dictatorship and totalitarianism of the first decades of the 20th century, a period that witnessed a significant lack of interest in the personage of Cicero. In three different ways, but with salient common features, the regimes of Stalin, Mussolini and Hitler forgot Cicero. While celebrating other figures of Antiquity, an Antiquity disguised by totalitarian ideology – Spartacus, Caesar, Augustus – they showed radical indifference to Cicero, reputed as a man incapable of understanding the reasons behind historical and political changes.

As we said at the outset of this Introduction, every age had its Cicero. Appreciated and despised, eulogized for his mastery of eloquence and at the same time heavily censured for his ambiguous involvement in politics, acclaimed as a martyr of the free Republic yet criticized for the limits of his endurance in unpleasant life experiences: Cicero had been at the very center of the debate over morality, politics, and literature since his lifetime. Nonetheless, Cicero had never ceased to be read, reworked, imitated, and depicted in different, often contrasting, ways. The multifaced portrait of Cicero is the portrait of one of the most discussed, yet most read, writers in Antiquity. The long history of the reception of Cicero demonstrates that it had never existed a single Cicero. Different personae in different cultures and ages: the wide spectrum of portraits of Cicero, from orator and model of sapientia to statesman and defender of Republican ideals, teaches us that when we look at the reception of Cicero, we must first think about what Cicero we are reading and examining, a ‘special’ Cicero, constantly revisited in tune with the social, political, and aesthetic changes occurring throughout the times. With a very few classical authors, Cicero has exerted so a durable impact on European and Western culture. Our civilization would not have been the same without Cicero. We might add that Western culture would not have been the same without such a great, fascinating variety of ‘Ciceros’.

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BELIEF AND CULT: RETHINKING ROMAN RELIGION by Jacob L. Mackey [Princeton University Press, 9780691165080]

A groundbreaking reinterpretation that draws on cognitive theory to show that belief wasn’t absent from—but rather was at the heart of—Roman religion

BELIEF AND CULT argues that belief isn’t uniquely Christian but was central to ancient Roman religion. Drawing on cognitive theory, Jacob Mackey shows that despite having nothing to do with salvation or faith, belief underlay every aspect of Roman religious practices—emotions, individual and collective cult action, ritual norms, social reality, and social power. In doing so, he also offers a thorough argument for the importance of belief to other non-Christian religions.

At the individual level, the book argues, belief played an indispensable role in the genesis of cult action and religious emotion. However, belief also had a collective dimension. The cognitive theory of Shared Intentionality shows how beliefs may be shared among individuals, accounting for the existence of written, unwritten, or even unspoken ritual norms. Shared beliefs permitted the choreography of collective cult action and gave cult acts their social meanings. The book also elucidates the role of shared belief in creating and maintaining Roman social reality. Shared belief allowed the Romans to endow agents, actions, and artifacts with socio-religious status and power. In a deep sense, no man

could count as an augur and no act of animal slaughter as a successful offering to the gods, unless Romans collectively shared appropriate beliefs about these things.

Closely examining augury, prayer, the religious enculturation of children, and the Romans' own theories of cognition and cult, **BELIEF AND CULT** promises to revolutionize the understanding of Roman religion by demonstrating that none of its features makes sense without Roman belief.

Review

“**BELIEF AND CULT** is the first book to comprehensively demonstrate the role of belief in Roman religion and indeed to show that Roman religion would not be possible without belief. Jacob Mackey breaks new ground by examining the role of mental states and intentionality in various cult contexts. This is an excellent and important book that will spark debate and discussion.”—**Jennifer Larson, Kent State University**

“**BELIEF AND CULT** has the potential to be a game changer—a seminal work and turning point in the study of Roman religion. Jacob Mackey’s wide-ranging and cogent book makes a constructive and highly valuable contribution to our understanding of Roman religion and Roman society more broadly. An impressive book.”—**James B. Rives, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill**

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...The Romans reasoned about gods much as they reasoned about one other, that is, as psychologically anthropomorphic agents intelligible by means of the mundane mental tools in the social-cognitive toolbox. As two cognitive scientists have stated, human beings' "intuitive assumptions about the psychology of agents purchase them vast amounts of knowledge about [gods] for free." When this intuitive knowledge about divine agents is coupled with cultural representations of divine beings, the result is what I shall call in chapters 2 and 8 (and throughout) "folk theology." Folk theology differs from the abstruse doctrinal theology of Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* or even of Cicero's *De natura deorum* in that it is a matter not of formal study and disciplined philosophical reflection but of the interaction of informal social learning and social-cognitive intuition.

In this section and previous sections, we have spoken about beliefs—about acquiring them, having them, and attributing them to others—and also about mental episodes such as perceptions, intuitions, desires, intentions, and emotions. All these mental phenomena share a single property, called "Intentionality," which relates them to one another systematically. I would maintain that it is innocence of belief's place in the economy of the mental, as one Intentional state among others, with its own discrete and indispensable cognitive task to perform, that has allowed some scholars to suppose it to be a modular, detachable, Optional, or historically contingent feature, to be denied or attributed to this or that culture, society, or epoch at will. So, let us now introduce this other central theoretical commitment of this book, to wit, the theory of Intentionality.

Intentionality and Belief

Cognition is famously embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended (hence "4E cognition"). On the 4E account, the mind and its cognitive processes do not reside in the brain alone. Instead, cognition is extended insofar as at least some cognitive processes include manipulations the cognizer performs on features of the environment. It is enacted insofar as some cognitive processes are constituted by causal couplings or actional transactions between a cognizer and its environment. It is embedded insofar as some cognitive processes depend for their occurrence on scaffolding to be found out in the world, external to the cognizer. And it is embodied insofar as cognitive processes include some of the cognizer's own nonneural bodily operations.

The excitement justly generated by 4E cognitive theory should not obscure the fact that cognition is also Intentional. Intentionalism is the thesis that a defining feature of mind is Intentionality, which is the property of being about or directed at objects in the world. That is, unlike anything else in nature, the mind's episodes and states—its fears, sorrows, hopes, desires, intentions, beliefs—represent the world and its objects. If I believe that Jupiter is the god of the Capitoline, I bear a mental state that is about Jupiter, a mental state that takes Jupiter as its object. My belief represents its object in a certain way, from a perspective, in this case, as god of the Capitoline. This perspectival representation constitutes my belief's content.

No book can do it all. Here, I largely leave out of consideration 4E approaches, which I take not so much to replace as to supplement Intentionalism. I focus on Intentionalism in the conviction that it provides the strongest theoretical grip on the question of belief, for if belief is anything at all, it is an Intentional state. (It is impossible to imagine a belief that is not about anything!) Moreover, it strikes me that only Intentionalism can fully account for cognition about non-existent objects, such as gods. To think and talk about gods—to believe or assert, for instance, that Jupiter is the god of the Capitoline—one has to be able to think and talk about an object that is a feature of no environment. This is not to say that Roman religion and Roman religious cognition were not deeply embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended in natural and artificial environments of groves, gardens, street corners, temples, and households that were replete with statues, images, sights, sounds, smells, and activity. It is simply that this is not the subject of this book. This book deals with Intentionality: belief, its objects, their representation, and the implications of these things for Roman cult.

In order to avoid confusion, it will be crucial to distinguish the everyday and narrower sense of intentionality from the technical but broader sense. The term "intentional" and related lexemes are ambiguous between the aboutness I have described and purposiveness. In everyday usage, we speak of intentions to act (that is, plans) or actions done intentionally (on purpose). However, to say that cognition is Intentional is not to say that it is purposeful, though of course it may be that, too. I use "Intentionality," with an uppercase I, to refer not to purposiveness but to that property of a mental episode, and indeed of a speech act or public representation, by virtue of which it is about, of, directed at, or represents some object. Both intentions and even actions are Intentional in this sense (see chapters 2 and 3). Plans to act, that is, intentions, are a class of Intentional mental phenomena. To say that our intentions are Intentional is to say that they share with our beliefs, desires, hopes, fears, and other mental episodes the property of being representational, of being about their objects. Beliefs, for example, represent as their objects states of affairs in the world, while intentions represent as their objects our action plans and goals in acting. For clarity, I capitalize the first letter of "Intentionality" and

related terms when I refer to Intentionality in this broader, technical sense. I shall put the first letter of all terms related to "intention," as in "a plan to act," in lowercase.

The term "mental episode" introduces another terminological matter to clear up. By "mental episodes," I mean to capture properly "episodic" mental phenomena, such as emotions, which arise and tail off, as well as mental events, like the sudden appearance to consciousness of an intuition, mental acts, like adding up two numbers in one's head, and, finally, mental states, like beliefs and desires, which may perdure indefinitely. All such episodes are Intentional.

Intentionality (uppercase I) was of theoretical interest to ancient philosophers, on whose work the modern study of Intentionality is founded. Franz Brentano is credited with initiating the modern study of Intentionality in the late nineteenth century. Inspired by Aristotle and the Scholastics, he posited that Intentionality was the "mark of the mental," the feature that distinguished mind from everything else in nature. He famously wrote (1874: 68):

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the Intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.

Mental phenomena differ from physical phenomena in that they contain—or as we have already put it, they are about or directed on—objects: "in presentation something is presented ... in desire desired." Brentano thought all mental phenomena and only mental phenomena were Intentional. Intentionality, on this view, defines the mental—everything that exhibits Intentionality is mental—and thus gives the science of psychology its own discrete object of study. We need not decide whether Brentano was right in order to accept that at least some mental phenomena, such as belief, clearly are Intentional.

From the standpoint of Intentionality, mental phenomena fall into clear classes. I have already distinguished a variety of mental episodes: emotions, mental events, mental acts, and mental states, like belief. Further distinctions are possible. Belief, for example, is a member of a class of Intentional states sometimes called "representational," "theoretical," "cognitive," or "doxastic," which is the term I use in this book. Such states aim to represent the way the world is. They maybe positive, such as belief, knowledge, conjecture, assumption, presupposition, and acceptance, all of which represent how matters stand. They maybe negative, such as doubt, denial, rejection, and disbelief, all of which represent how matters do not stand. And they may be neutral, as in the case of uncertainty. These Intentional states are "doxastic" because they seek to represent, fit, match, or be adequate to matters as they stand, to the world as it is. Thus, one can believe, accept, reject, doubt, or be uncertain that some state of affairs obtains.

Permit me here a brief aside. If knowledge, like belief, is a doxastic state, why not just speak of religious "kn[^]wledge"? I have several reasons to prefer "belief" First, knowledge is a kind of belief. For, according to a definition that goes back to Plato's Theaetetus, knowledge is a belief (a) that is true and (b) that the believer can justify with an account. Thus, if one knows something, one believes it, but if one believes something, one does not necessarily know it. So, belief is the higher-order category: it is, in fact, "the

generic, leastmarked term for a cognitive [i.e., doxastic] state." For this reason, knowledge does not appear to offer an especially useful alternative to belief.

Now, it maybe that "knowledge" has greater emic resonance in some contexts than "belief" After all, Cicero could speak of *scientia colendorum deorum*, "knowledge of how to worship the gods" (N.D. 1.116). However, this fact does not delegitimize the use of "belief" as an etic term. As Henk Versnel reminds us, "Scholarly discourse is always etic and should therefore be conducted in etic terms." Moreover, "knowledge" is not even the appropriate emic term in every context. The same Cicero that spoke of *scientia*, could also speak of adhering to the "beliefs" about the gods, the *opiniones*, of the ancestors (N.D. 3.5). And his contemporary, the scholar of Roman tradition Marcus Terentius Varro, theorized—or so Augustine tells us—the difference between divine and merely human cognition thus: "it is characteristic of man to believe, of god to know" (*hominis est enim haec opinari, dei scire*; Civ. 7.17).

Indeed, the Romans could even institutionalize not knowing. Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights* records an example. In centuries past, he writes, when an earthquake had occurred, the Romans used to dedicate a festival to the god that had caused it. Yet they declined to name the god to whom the festival was dedicated, in pious recognition of their ignorance of which one it was. Gellius reports on a finding of Varro's research into Roman cult traditions. If pressed to identify the deity, they eschewed names, substituting instead a formula that encoded lack of religious knowledge: the rituals were dedicated "to the god or goddess," *si deo si deae* (N.A. 2.28.2-3).⁵⁴ These early Romans believed gods caused earthquakes, but they did not know which gods, and they institutionalized their belief-cum-ignorance in the resulting cult tradition. In light of such examples and arguments, this book constitutes a defense of belief's legitimacy as a category of both etic and emic validity

So much for knowledge and its place among doxastic mental states. Representing states of affairs in the world is but one property of the mind. A complementary property is to represent it as we would that it were. Thus, in addition to the doxastic we have what I shall call practical mental states. These are often denoted by other terms, like "motivational," "volitive," and "conative." The practical class includes desires, which represent how we wish the world were, and intentions, which represent our goals, that is, how we would like to cause the world to be, and our plans of action for achieving them. Note that practical states, just like doxastic states, are representational, which is just to say, Intentional. However, while doxastic states seek to represent the way the world is, practical states represent the world as we would have it be or plan to make it.

These distinctions will be important when we explore the Intentionality of beliefs, desires, and intentions in chapter 2, of emotions and actions in chapter 3, and of collective cognition and collective action in chapter 4. Most broadly, I hope to convey a holistic conception of the mental. For belief must be understood in its cognitive context, where the doxastic and the practical components of mind have their proper place and relationships. For without practical mental episodes, we could not picture our interventions in the world. But without doxastic episodes, we could not picture a world in which to intervene. If the Romans had had no belief, they could hardly have represented the world as a religious space in which to act. In chapter 1, we trace two scholarly positions: first, that the Romans had belief but that it was not central to their religious life and, second, that the Romans did not even have the capacity for belief. I hope that the holistic Intentionalist understanding of belief presented in this book

will persuade those in each camp both that the Romans did have the capacity for belief and that this central doxastic mental state did occupy a central place in Roman cult.

I situate my Intentionalist account of belief in Roman cult within broader cognitive science and philosophy research contexts, not only CSR and developmental psychology, which we have already touched on, but also speech act theory, shared (or collective) intentionality, and social ontology. These latter three intimately interconnected theoretical programs take Intentionalism for granted. Thus, this is a theoretical book. If you dislike theory, this book may not please you. Yet I do not do theory for theory's sake here. Rather, I attempt to offer a clear application of theory to problems posed by Roman cult in the hope of inspiring new ways of thinking about this or any religion. And I should say up front: I present everything here in the spirit not of planting a flag to defend to the death but rather in a spirit of science, that is, of openness to better arguments and new evidence. Moreover, I do not pretend to have teased out every or even the most important implications for the study of Roman religion of the various theories that I have presented and employed here. Thus, I intend this book as a contribution to conversation rather than its closure.

The task before us is no small one. We must analyze what it means to believe; how having religious emotions derives from having religious beliefs; how belief guides individual action; and how the capacity, possessed by individuals, for sharing beliefs and other cognitive episodes collectively with others—shared Intentionality—enabled the performance of group cult acts. Finally, we shall have to investigate how it was that shared Intentionality, and especially shared belief, created and maintained Roman socioreligious reality and socioreligious power. For shared Intentionality and shared belief allowed the Romans to live in not only a natural world of earth, water, sky, flora, and other living things, but also a sociocultural world of religious institutions, festivals, cult practices, priestly statuses, and all the very real, very consequential coercive social norms and causal social powers that attended these things. The task is not small, but if we succeed, we shall have rethought Roman belief and cult, from intuitions to institutions. <>

KENOLOGISCHE VERSUCHE: DER JOHANNESPROLOG ZWISCHEN NAGARJUNA, VASUBANDHU UND MEISTER ECKHART (Kenological Experiments: The Prologue of St. John between Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu and Meister Eckhart) by Fabian Muller (German Edition) [Aschendorff Verlag, ISBN 9783402249192]

Angesichts dieser Bestimmung der Kenologie als Form der Mystik und Theorie stellt sich die Frage, wie sich die interkulturelle Methode zu dieser Bestimmung verhält, bzw. ob sie eher eine Inkompatibilität manifestiert oder einen Anhaltspunkt bietet, um eine gemeinsame Finalität der betrachteten Systeme aufzufinden. Zu Anfang der Untersuchung wurde darauf hingewiesen, dass der interkulturelle Aspekt nicht im Vergleich von Texten aus verschiedenen Kulturkreisen zu suchen sein werde, sondern in der Systematik, auf der die Abfolge der begrifflichen Momente beruht. Die Rechtfertigung der Implikation des Buddhismus in der Deutung des Johannesprologs liegt damit nicht in einer mutmaßlichen textuellen

oder weltanschaulichen Nähe, sondern darin, dass ein Systemelement ein anderes beleuchten kann, so dass am Ende eine Ordnung von Bausteinen vorliegt, die sich gegenseitig stützen und erklären.

Zuerst ist auf diese Frage zu antworten, dass die „kontemplative“ Bestimmung der Bewegung der einzelnen Momente der Untersuchung und die interkulturelle Perspektive insofern zusammenhängen, als letztendlich keiner Kultur, keinem Begriffssystem und keiner einzelnen Idee ein Vorrang eingeräumt wird. Jedem Systemelement kommt eine tragende Rolle zu und keines erscheint fundamentaler als irgendein anderes. Nāgārjunas Standpunkt der Leere wird dadurch gerechtfertigt, dass seine innere Spannung durch die Situierung im Denken eine Erklärung erfährt; Vasubandhus Idealismus ergibt sich aus dem Ansatz, die durch die Leere aufgeworfene Frage nach der Mitte zwischen Sein und Nichtsein zu beantworten; Meister Eckharts Behauptung, dass die Geistnatur eine absolute Begründung im Logos vollziehe, stützt sich auf den vorhergehenden Erweis der Inkonsistenz aller endlichen Wirklichkeit und der Notwendigkeit, für diese eine tiefer gelegene Grundlage anzunehmen. Es liegt damit ein Zusammenhang einheitlicher Gestalt vor.

Zweitens ist die für die interkulturelle Zielsetzung besonders bedeutende Möglichkeit hervorzuheben, dass der Zusammenhang des gesamten Systems von jedem seiner einzelnen Punkte aus und mit jedem anderen Punkt als Ziel nachvollzogen werden kann. Es bietet sich z.B. an, statt bei Nāgārjuna zu beginnen, Eckharts Metaphysik zuerst in den Blick zu nehmen, und zu zeigen, dass die Dynamik dieser Metaphysik auf das Nichts der Dinge hinausläuft, d.h. darauf, dass alles bestimmte Seiende an sich nichtig ist, dass es deswegen in die Leere übergeht, und dass es sich, als leeres Kontinuum, in der Gegebenheit des Geistes als höchste Abwesenheit des Selbstseins (paramārthanīsvabhāvatā) auflöst. Als Einstiegspunkt könnte aber ebenso Vasubandhus Feststellung dienen, dass jede Form subjektiver und objektiver Erkenntnis den Geist als Grund voraussetzt; daran anschließend stellt sich der in diesem Geist gemachte Anfang des Gegenstandsraumes jener Erkenntnis als Begriff dar, und die durch den Begriff in ihrer Bestimmtheit ermöglichten Dinge gehen wiederum, aufgrund

In der vorliegenden Untersuchung wird der Versuch gemacht, den Johannesprolog anhand der Methode der interkulturellen Philosophie neu zu deuten. Die Spezifität der Methode besteht darin, dass auf philosophische Bausteine zurückgegriffen wird, die dem Prolog historisch fremd sind. Dieser Rückgriff hat zum Ziel, das "ungeloste Gesamtproblem" (Schnelle) des Johannesprologs auf philosophische Weise neu anzugehen. Im Zentrum der Deutung steht der Begriff "Logos". Dieser Begriff wird mithilfe der buddhistischen Denker Nagarjuna und Vasubandhu, sowie des mittelalterlichen Philosophen Meister Eckhart erörtert. Mit Nagarjuna zeigt sich, dass das Seiende aufgrund seiner Inkonsistenz an seinen eigenen Seinsansprüchen zugrunde geht. Bei Vasubandhu hebt sich diese Inkonsistenz in der Form eines Geistes auf, der kein Inneres oder Auaeres mehr hat, sondern reines Denken ist. In Eckharts erster Quaestio Parisiensis zeigt sich, dass gerade diese Leere jeder Seinsbestimmung den Geist - Gott - dazu befähigt, als Grund des Seins zu fungieren. Der Ausdruck und die ursprüngliche Instanzierung dieser Begründungsfunktion ist der Logos, wie er am Anfang des Johannesevangeliums beschrieben wird. Durch das Ineinandergreifen von buddhistischen und neuplatonisch-christlichen Themen wird eine neue Dimension in der interkulturellen Philosophie offenbar: die Dimension systematischer Zusammenhänge, die Philosophien über Kulturgrenzen hinaus, ohne Über- oder Unterordnungsverhältnis aufeinander bezieht.

[In the present study, an attempt is made to reinterpret the Prologue of John using the method of intercultural philosophy. The specificity of the method is that it draws on philosophical building blocks

that are historically alien to the prologue. The aim of this jerk is to approach the "undivided overall problem" (Schnelle) of the Prologue of John in a philosophical way. At the center of the interpretation is the term "logos". This term is located with the help of the Buddhist thinkers Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu, as well as the medieval philosopher Meister Eckhart. Nagarjuna shows that the being perishes due to its inconsistency in its own claims to being. In Vasubandhu, this inconsistency is eliminated in the form of a mind that no longer has any interior or outside, but is pure thought. Eckhart's first Quaestio Parisiensis shows that it is precisely this emptiness of every purpose of being that enables the spirit - God - to function as the reason for being. The expression and original instantiation of this foundation function is the Logos as described at the beginning of John's Gospel. Through the intertwining of Buddhist and Neoplatonic-Christian themes, a new dimension in intercultural philosophy becomes apparent: the dimension of systematic connections that relate philosophies beyond cultural boundaries, without relationship of superiority or subordination.]

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Es gibt in der christlichen Literatur der Antike einen Text, der an einer vielzitierten Stelle in zwei voneinander abweichenden Fassungen überliefert ist. Es handelt sich bei diesem Text um den Brief an die Magnesier des Kirchenvaters Ignatius von Antiochien (2. Jhd.). Ignatius gilt als Urheber einer Sammlung von literarisch zuhöchst unkonventionellen Briefen, die sich durch eine markante sprachliche Emphase, unerwartete gedankliche Hiatus und beträchtlich viele Stellen auszeichnen, deren Hintergrund für die Forschung noch dunkel ist. In diesen Briefen finden sich wichtige Zeugnisse über die theologischen Konzeptionen im Frühchristentum wieder, aber auch Schilderungen über die konkreten Probleme der ersten Christengemeinden.

An einer poetischen Stelle in dem zu dieser Sammlung gehörenden Magnesierbrief, an der von der Forschung jüdische und gnostische Anklänge identifiziert wurden, liefert Ignatius eine einprägsame Formulierung der christlichen Glaubensgrundsätze. Er ruft mit dieser Formulierung die Christengemeinde in Magnesia zum Bekenntnis auf, dass Gott sich in Christus offenbart hat, „der sein Wort ist, aus Schweigen hervorgekommen“. Diese Textgestalt ist in der armenischen Übersetzung und in einem syrischen Zitat von Severus von Antiochien überliefert. Sie wird, obgleich sie weniger bezeugt

ist, mehrheitlich als die ursprünglichere Formulierung angesetzt. Die zweite Version spricht von Christus auf eine entgegengesetzte Weise: Nämlich als von dem, „der sein ewiges Wort ist, nicht aus Schweigen hervorgekommen“. Sie widerspricht der ersten Überlieferung also, was das Hervorkommen des Logos aus dem Schweigen betrifft, auf ganzer Linie.

Dieses merkwürdige Detail in der Überlieferung des Ignatius briefs kann, durch eine Abstraktion von seinem literarischen Kontext, auf einen anderen fundamentalen Text des antiken Christentums übertragen werden: das Johannesevangelium. Der Prolog dieses Evangeliums, in dessen Zentrum ebenfalls der Logos steht, wirft nämlich Fragen auf, die durch das Textproblem des „Schweigens“ auf überraschend passende Weise beschrieben werden können. Auf eine Weise kann nämlich gesagt werden, dass der Logos, in seiner Einbettung im Prolog des Evangeliums, zu uns „aus Schweigen“ heraus spricht und dies aus philosophischen wie auch philologischen Gründen.

Aus einem philosophischen Blickwinkel ist ohne die Hinzunahme von hermeneutischen und ideengeschichtlichen Hilfsmitteln kaum ersichtlich, was durch die Aussage in Joh 1,1: „Am Anfang war das Wort“ ausgedrückt sein soll. Wenn zuerst das Wort war, bedeutet dies, dass das Denken nicht hinter diesen Anfang zurückgehen kann, bzw. dass jenseits des Wortes überhaupt nichts gibt und dass von Anfang an prinzipiell alles begrifflich strukturiert ist? Was war dieses ursprüngliche Wort und was hat es bezeichnet? Sagt der Johannesprolog durch diese Aussage möglicherweise etwas über sich selbst aus? Darauf gibt der Text insofern keine Antwort, als er über die in ihm vorkommenden Begriffe Anfang, Wort usw. - keine Erklärungen liefert. Der Prolog spricht sich zwar aus, jedoch aus einem Schweigen heraus, das jeder möglichen Deutung ihren Anspruch auf absolute Geltung nimmt.

Das Schweigen kann in einem anderen Sinn auch verstanden werden als die religions- und dogmengeschichtliche sowie philologische Dunkelheit, die die Nennung des Logos im Johannesprolog umgibt. Wir wissen, auch nach den „kanonisch“⁶ gewordenen Versuchen Buhmanns⁷ und neueren Ansätzen⁸, sich dem Logos-Liedes auf dem Weg der Gnostik und anderer vorderorientalischer mythischer und religiöser Strömungen⁹ zu nähern, noch nicht auf gesicherte Weise, ob eine solche einzelne Rückführung Sinn ergeben kann und den Prolog nicht eher mancher Aspekte seiner Komplexität beraubt. Es scheint also - sogar mehr als vor einem Jahrhundert -, dass alsbald noch kein Ende „des ungelösten Gesamtproblems des Johannesprologs“ in Sicht sein und dass sich das „Schweigen“ um die Quelle und die Geschichte des Prologs nicht dissipieren wird.

Zugleich findet sich aber, diesem geschichtlichen Schweigen auf so radikale Weise widersprechend wie die zweite Magnesier brief-Überlieferung der ersten, eine Menge an exegetischer und philologischer Literatur zum Johannesprolog vor, über die mittlerweile kein Überblick mehr möglich ist. Der Johannesprolog bildet, als Gipfel des antiken Christentums, den Anfangspunkt einer exegetischen Arbeit, die von den Kirchenvätern begonnen wurde und auf ununterbrochene Weise bis in die moderne Philosophie und Theologie hineinragt. Der Johanneskommentar bildet geradezu ein eigenständiges Genre, zu dem wichtige Werke namhaftester christlicher Autoren gehören: So haben Origenes, Johannes Chrysostomus, Kyrill von Alexandrien, Theodor von Mopsuestia, Augustinus, aber auch Eriugena, Albertus Magnus, Thomas von Aquin und Meister Eckhart das Evangelium mit besonderem Hinblick auf den Prolog kommentiert.

Und wie das Schweigen doppelt - nämlich philosophisch und textuell - interpretiert werden kann, weist auch das nicht-Schweigen einen philosophischen Aspekt auf: Wenn am Anfang nämlich das Wort war,

dann kann dieses Anfangswort durch eine Unendlichkeit von Neuartikulierungen dargestellt und immer wieder in seiner ursprünglichen Funktion zum Ausdruck kommen. Die unüberschaubare Menge an Deutungsansätzen scheint auf die Natur des Johannesprologs selbst zurückgeführt werden zu können: Sie gleicht dem nicht Schweigen eines Textes, der sich immer wieder selbst erklärt.

Es liegt damit ein sich über Jahrtausende erstreckendes philosophisch philologisches „Sprechen“ über den Johannesprolog vor, in dessen Kontinuität gerade eben keine Spur von „Schweigen“ festzustellen ist. Der Logos spricht, wenn man jenes Sprechen in Betracht zieht, aus einer Masse von Lesarten und Erklärungen zu uns, die auf fast lärmartige Weise überpräsent wirken.

Die vorliegende Untersuchung ist einem neuen philosophischen Ansatz zur Interpretation des johanneischen Prologs gewidmet. Sie reiht sich damit notwendigerweise in das Spektrum der beiden anhand der Magnesierbrief-Stelle identifizierten Extreme ein. Sie zielt einerseits darauf ab, den Text aus sich sprechen und ihn somit in einer stillen Umgebung verständlich werden zu lassen. Andererseits muss sie zu diesem Zweck auch die notwendigen Mittel der Erklärung anführen, und somit vom Schweigen absehen.

Das *chic övrtö olyiN*, das „nicht-Schweigen“, besteht in diesem Fall in einem Wagnis, da zur Erklärung des Johannesprologs in einem ersten Schritt auf einen philosophischen Stoff zurückgegriffen werden soll, der schlichtweg nichts mit diesem Text selbst, der christlichen Literatur oder insgesamt der europäischen oder semitischen Geisteswelt zu tun hat. Als das *ovx erö atyil* soll in diesem Fall die buddhistische „Doktrin der Leere“ (*Sūnyavāda*) des indischen Philosophen Nāgārjuna dienen.

Da mit diesem Rückgriff, der nicht mit dem Johannesprolog selbst begründet werden kann, ein ganzer Problemkomplex mitgegeben ist, müssen mehrere Erklärungen und Argumente für den Rückgriff vorausgeschickt werden. So muss 1) angesprochen werden, worin überhaupt aus rein sachexterner, d.h. nicht spezifisch auf das Johannesevangelium bezogener Sicht, die Rechtmäßigkeit einer solchen Einbeziehung bestehen kann; 2) es müssen Argumente genannt werden, die begründen, warum gerade die Einbeziehung der buddhistischen Leere für das Verständnis des Johannesprologs nützlich sein kann; 3) als wichtigste Frage: Es ist zu präzisieren, wie sich die vorliegende Untersuchung damit in das bereits etablierte Feld der interkulturellen, buddhistisch-christlichen Forschung einreicht.

Am Anfang der vorliegenden Versuche stand ein Vergleich zwischen der Textüberlieferung der Ignatiusbriefe an die Magnesier und der Stellung des Logos im Deutungsrahmen der antiken Geisteswelt.

Es haben sich aus der Erörterung dieser Parallelen zwei Möglichkeiten zur Betrachtung des Logos ergeben: Entweder lässt man den Logos aus seinem historischen Kontext heraus sprechen und bringt ihn so „nicht aus Schweigen“ zur Äußerung, sondern aus einer durch literarische und philosophische Beziehungen geprägten und dadurch im Nachhinein rekonstruierbaren Situation; oder aber man lässt ihn „aus Schweigen“ hervorkommen, d.h. man blendet die unendlichen Probleme seiner historischen Situation aus und lässt sich von der inneren Organik seiner Elemente leiten.

Mit der vorliegenden Untersuchung wurde der Vorsatz verfolgt, diese Möglichkeiten unter der Leitidee einer interkulturellen Perspektive neu zu betrachten. Dazu musste einerseits „schweigend“ an den Johannesprolog herantreten werden, insofern nichts Historisches zu seiner Deutung herangezogen

werden konnte; andererseits musste der mit Nāgārjuna und Vasubandhu abgeschrittene Weg aber auch als „Sprechen“ dienen, das, wenn es auch außerhalb des Umfelds des Johannesevangeliums liegt, doch als Hilfsmittel zum Verständnis diene.

An der nun erreichten Stelle eröffnet sich ein neuer Blick auf die Anordnung dieser Elemente. Statt einer bloßen Bestätigung des ursprünglichen Plans findet sich nun eine radikale Umkehrung vor. Nāgārjunas Kunstgriff, sein Traktat durch einen Aufbruch der üblichen zeitlich-logischen Ordnung beginnen zu lassen und so geflissentlich eine vollkommen „haltlose“ Position einzunehmen, hat es erlaubt, zuerst einen Begriff der Leere (sūnyatā) und sodann mit Vasubandhu einen Begriff des Geistes (im Modus der dharmatā und tathatā) bzw. des transzendenten Wissens (lokottarajñāna) zu erarbeiten, die von jedem objektiven Inhalt frei sind. Insofern sich der Logos im Raum dieser Unbestimmtheit mitteilt, kann von ihm gesagt werden, er spreche, mit Ignatius gesprochen, ärtō „aus Schweigen“ zu uns. Er spricht nicht durch oder in etwas Anderem, sondern er spricht sich in reiner, durch keine bestimmte Methode erschlossener Unbestimmtheit aus. Er bildet so den Anfang eines selbstreflexiven Zirkels, der von nichts getragen wird, durch nichts in seiner ursprünglichen Position reformuliert werden kann und eben nur „betrachtet“ (contemplari, nach Eckharts eigenem Ausdruck) werden kann.

Die sich daraus ergebende Neuordnung ist also diese, dass gerade durch den Rückgriff auf den Buddhismus, auf ein nicht-Schweigen, das vollkommene Schweigen erzielt werden konnte. Die negative Formulierung der Ignatiusstelle führt in diesem Sinne zur positiven hin: Der Versuch, den Logos aus einem buddhistischen Ansatz heraus zu verstehen (nicht aus Schweigen), hat dazu geführt, dass der Logos nun aus der Leere (aus Schweigen) verständlich wird.

Was die damit erreichte Form des Denkens betrifft, wurde festgehalten, dass die Betrachtung des Logos vor dem Hintergrund der Leere als Form der „Mystik“ gelten kann, insofern sie durch die Analyse der endlichen Bestimmtheit alles dessen, was den Anschein des Seienden, bhāva bzw. svabhāva an sich hat zur Überwindung dieser Bestimmtheit anleitet und so die rationale Methode der Metaphysik auf deren Ur-ratio zurückbezieht. Bei diesem Gegenstand handelt es sich wiederum nicht um ein Objekt im alltäglichen Sinn, sondern um eine Form der Transzendenz, die durch einen Sprung (bzw. mit Vasubandhus Ausdruck, durch eine „Umkehrung der Grundlage“, āsrayaparāvṛtti) erreicht werden kann, der nicht durch den philosophischen Diskurs eingeholt werden kann. Die Kenologie hat damit keine philosophische Endbestimmung, sondern den Sinn, mit der philosophischen Methode bis zu dem genannten Punkt des Absprungs zur Transzendenz hinzuführen.'

Da sich die Orientierung hin zu dieser Transzendenz auf einem absoluten Standpunkt hält (Nāgārjuna), sich auf keine Subjekt- oder Objektnatur bezieht (Vasubandhu) und auf „mystische“ Weise von allem Sein absieht (Meister Eckhart), hat sich zuletzt zu seiner Bestimmung derjenige Begriff am geeignetsten erwiesen, der die höchstrangige geistige Tätigkeit bezeichnet: der Begriff der Theorie bzw. Kontemplation. Es handelt sich bei der Kenologie demnach um eine Theorie im buchstäblichen und ursprünglichen Sinn - nicht um ein hypothetisch aufgestelltes Gedankengebäude, sondern um eine philosophisch ausgedrückte Anleitung zu einer Anschauung, die selbst nicht mehr philosophisch artikuliert werden kann, da sie, als das „Vorher“, einer solchen Artikulation immer entgegen muss.

Angesichts dieser Bestimmung der Kenologie als Form der Mystik und Theorie stellt sich die Frage, wie sich die interkulturelle Methode zu dieser Bestimmung verhält, bzw. ob sie eher eine Inkompatibilität manifestiert oder einen Anhaltspunkt bietet, um eine gemeinsame Finalität der betrachteten Systeme

aufzufinden. Zu Anfang der Untersuchung wurde darauf hingewiesen, dass der interkulturelle Aspekt nicht im Vergleich von Texten aus verschiedenen Kulturkreisen zu suchen sein werde, sondern in der Systematik, auf der die Abfolge der begrifflichen Momente beruht. Die Rechtfertigung der Implikation des Buddhismus in der Deutung des Johannesprologs liegt damit nicht in einer mutmaßlichen textuellen oder weltanschaulichen Nähe, sondern darin, dass ein Systemelement ein anderes beleuchten kann, so dass am Ende eine Ordnung von Bausteinen vorliegt, die sich gegenseitig stützen und erklären.

Zuerst ist auf diese Frage zu antworten, dass die „kontemplative“ Bestimmung der Bewegung der einzelnen Momente der Untersuchung und die interkulturelle Perspektive insofern zusammenhängen, als letztendlich keiner Kultur, keinem Begriffssystem und keiner einzelnen Idee ein Vorrang eingeräumt wird. Jedem Systemelement kommt eine tragende Rolle zu und keines erscheint fundamentaler als irgendein anderes. Nāgārjunas Standpunkt der Leere wird dadurch gerechtfertigt, dass seine innere Spannung durch die Situierung im Denken eine Erklärung erfährt; Vasubandhus Idealismus ergibt sich aus dem Ansatz, die durch die Leere aufgeworfene Frage nach der Mitte zwischen Sein und Nichtsein zu beantworten; Meister Eckharts Behauptung, dass die Geistnatur eine absolute Begründung im Logos vollziehe, stützt sich auf den vorhergehenden Erweis der Inkonsistenz aller endlichen Wirklichkeit und der Notwendigkeit, für diese eine tiefer gelegene Grundlage anzunehmen. Es liegt damit ein Zusammenhang einheitlicher Gestalt vor.

Zweitens ist die für die interkulturelle Zielsetzung besonders bedeutende Möglichkeit hervorzuheben, dass der Zusammenhang des gesamten Systems von jedem seiner einzelnen Punkte aus und mit jedem anderen Punkt als Ziel nachvollzogen werden kann. Es bietet sich z.B. an, statt bei Nāgārjuna zu beginnen, Eckharts Metaphysik zuerst in den Blick zu nehmen, und zu zeigen, dass die Dynamik dieser Metaphysik auf das Nichts der Dinge hinausläuft, d.h. darauf, dass alles bestimmte Seiende an sich nichtig ist, dass es deswegen in die Leere übergeht, und dass es sich, als leeres Kontinuum, in der Gegebenheit des Geistes als höchste Abwesenheit des Selbstseins (paramārthanivṣabhāvatā) auflöst. Als Einstiegspunkt könnte aber ebenso Vasubandhus Feststellung dienen, dass jede Form subjektiver und objektiver Erkenntnis den Geist als Grund voraussetzt; daran anschließend stellt sich der in diesem Geist gemachte Anfang des Gegenstandsraumes jener Erkenntnis als Begriff dar, und die durch den Begriff in ihrer Bestimmtheit ermöglichten Dinge gehen wiederum, aufgrund dessen, dass sie eben nicht reiner Geist sind, in die Leere über. Im Kreisgefüge der Einzelmomente ist jedes dieser Momente zugleich Anfangs- und Endpunkt. Mit dem Logos ist in diesem Sinn nicht das letzte Wort gesprochen - aus kenologischer Sicht kann ebenso sehr die Doktrin der Leere oder der Yogācāra einen Endpunkt bilden.

Unabhängig vom kulturell artikulierten Anfangspunkt, der in Betracht genommen wird, bildet die kenologische Dynamik aufgrund des Verweises der Leere auf den Logos und des Logos auf die Leere also das Gegenteil eines linearen Verlaufs: Sie ist ein Kreis, in dem jedem Einzelmoment ein anderes Einzelmoment vorhergeht und in dem jedes andere Moment auch von einem anderen gefolgt wird. Die einfache Unmittelbarkeit der Leere geht in den Geist und in den Logos ein, aber vom Logos geht wiederum auch die endliche Welt aus, so dass mit jeder Erreichung des Logos auch wiederum ein Einstiegspunkt in die Leere gegeben ist. Oder, in einer theologischen Formulierung: Die Welt, die sich als leer erweist, verweist auf Gott als ihren Schöpfer; Gott wiederum erscheint als Ursprung der Bestimmtheit, die den Bereich der Welt bildet. Die Kenologie weist damit zwar mögliche Einstiegspunkte auf, jedoch keine Anfangs- und Endpunkte im strengen Sinn (entsprechend Nāgārjunas Widerlegung der Extreme des Früheren und Späteren, pūrvāparakoti, in MMK I I).

Mit diesen übergreifenden Bewertungen ist der Blick auf die in den vorliegenden Versuchen geleistete Ausführung der Kenologie freigegeben. Es handelt sich bei dieser Ausführung um eine theoretische Mystik, die, von ihrer Methode her, philosophisch und interkulturell verfährt; inhaltlich betrachtet, die Frage nach dem ersten Grund stellt; hinsichtlich ihrer Quelle, von der johanneischen Logosmetaphysik abhebt; von ihrer Finalität her, auf die Kontemplation des Logos in einem unergründlichen „Vorher“ (Barth) hinausläuft, das aber wiederum jenseits der philosophischen Methode liegt; was ihre Gestalt angeht, eine kreisartige Bewegung darstellt, die die Dynamik ihres Gegenstands widerspiegelt und zwischen den implizierten (an jeweils eine Kultur gebundenen) Momenten keinen Wertigkeitsunterschied setzt.

Die Frage nach dem philosophischen Sinn des Johannesprologs zählt nicht zu den Hauptfragen, die in der neueren Forschung gestellt werden. Die Fragen nach der Einheit, der Struktur, der Sprache und dem Autor des Evangeliums, dem Zusammenhang des johanneischen Berichts mit dem Leben des historischen Jesu, der Stellung des Evangelientextes gegenüber den synoptischen Evangelien, der Form des Prologs - ob es sich um einen frühchristlichen Hymnus, einen explikativen Text, eine Umarbeitung einer vorchristlichen Vorlage handelt -, den hermeneutischen Problemen, usw. haben eine klare Vorrangstellung und überschatten die philosophische Interpretation als den Versuch, den Text in seiner gegebenen Einheit zu lesen und philosophisch zu verstehen. Die vorliegende Untersuchung kann sich jedoch, trotz dieses Problems der Einordnung und Orientierung, auf Theo Kobuschs Idee berufen, das Johannesevangelium und insbesondere den Prolog als Grundtext einer „Metaphysik der christlichen Philosophie“ zu verstehen, d.h. als Text, aus dem sich erstens ein sinnvolles philosophisches Gesamtbild gewinnen lässt. Kobusch rechtfertigt diese Aussage anhand der zuerst von Origenes vorgebrachten Idee, die Philosophie selbst als Offenbarung Gottes an den Menschen zu verstehen, wodurch der Konflikt zwischen einer philosophischen und einer rein theologischen Exegese aufgelöst werden kann. Die in dieser Untersuchung vorgeschlagene Deutung des Johannesprologs kann, dieser Tendenz der von Origenes repräsentierten alexandrinischen Schule folgend, im Bereich einer philosophischen Theologie angesiedelt werden (im Gegensatz zu einer rein theologischen Theologie), d.h. in einem Bereich, in dem sich Offenbarungscharakter und philosophische Systematik nicht widersprechen, sondern darin in Eins fallen, dass durch die philosophische Methode ein Punkt erreicht wird, an dem die Notwendigkeit der Unergründlichkeit des ersten Grundes (ganz im Sinne des buddhistischen Soseins, der tathatā) offenbar wird. Zur Bezeichnung der Überwindung dieses Zwiespalts erscheint der Begriff am angemessensten, den Kobusch selbst zur Betitelung von Origenes' Philosophie herangezogen hat: „métaphysique contemplative“. Es handelt sich um eine Metaphysik, die auf die reine, jede diskursive Struktur überwindende Betrachtung des Ur-Begründungsgeschehens abzielt und die dementsprechend als „kontemplativ“ gelten kann, da an ihrer Spitze die Betrachtung einer einfachen Gegebenheit - des Logos - steht.

Diese Orientierung am antiken Ideal einer „christlichen Philosophie“ und die Hinzunahme der interkulturellen Methode dürfen dabei aber nicht als Absage an die historische Methode verstanden werden. Die philologische Erschließung des Logos-Hymnus, des möglichen religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrundes seiner Komposition, des Verhältnisses des Johannesevangeliums zu den synoptischen Evangelien usw. kann nicht einfach durch die zu Anfang angekündigte systematische Lesart verdrängt werden. Der gegenwärtige Versuch bietet dementsprechend zwar einen Ansatz, die Kohärenz der traditionellen Exegese, die in der vorliegenden Untersuchung von Kyrill von Alexandre, Gregor von Nyssa, Basilius von Kappadokien usw. vertreten wurde, erneut hervorzuheben und interkulturell zu

rechtfertigen, kann aber nur als eine mögliche Herangehensweise an die komplizierte Frage der Aufschlüsselung des Johannesevangeliums angesehen werden.

So eröffnen sich am Ende der vorliegenden Versuche einerseits ein Rückblick auf Nāgārjunas prinzipienlosen und reinen Standpunkt der Leere, Vasubandhus idealistische Geistmetaphysik, die die Welt als System einer ideellen Abstufung deutet, an dessen Spitze das reine geistige „Sosein“ steht, Eckhart Bestimmung des Logos als unergründlichen Ursprungs der Welt im Geist; andererseits ein Ausblick auf den Johannesprolog, der, obgleich er als Schlüsselmoment der Erklärung am Ende der Untersuchung steht und dort die Einheit des abgeschrittenen Wegs manifestiert, doch von Anfang an dagewesen zu sein scheint. Der Weg hat zwar von der Leere zum Logos geführt, aber es steht nun fest, dass, da die Leere sich auf die endlichen Dinge bezieht und diese den Logos zum Grund haben, der Logos schon von Anfang an seine Begründungsfunktion vollzogen haben muss.

Letztendlich stellt sich heraus, dass es von Anfang an der Logos war, der die Gedankenentwicklung angeführt und sich selbst artikuliert hat; oder, mit Johannes selbst gesprochen: Ex ET VO S ERU PLANTO - „jener ist es, der ged hat“ (Joh 1,18). <>

Translation

There is a text in the Christian literature of antiquity that has been handed down in two different versions at a much-quoted point. This text is the letter to the Magnesians of the church father Ignatius of Antioch (2nd century). Ignatius is regarded as the author of a collection of letters that are highly unconventional in literary terms, which are characterized by a striking linguistic emphasis, unexpected mental hiatus and a considerable number of passages whose background is still obscure for research. These letters contain important testimonies about the theological conceptions in early Christianity, but also descriptions of the concrete problems of the first Christian communities.

At a poetic passage in the Magnesian letter belonging to this collection, where Jewish and Gnostic echoes have been identified by research, Ignatius provides a memorable formulation of the Christian principles of faith. With this formulation he calls on the Christian community in Magnesia to confess that God has revealed himself in Christ, "who is his word, who came forth from silence". This textual form is preserved in the Armenian translation and in a Syriac quotation by Severus of Antioch. Although it is less attested, it is mostly regarded as the more original formulation. The second version speaks of Christ in the opposite way: namely, as having not come forth from silence from him "who is his eternal word". It therefore completely contradicts the first tradition as far as the emergence of the logo from silence is concerned.

This curious detail in the tradition of the Epistle of Ignatius can, through an abstraction from its literary context, be transferred to another fundamental text of ancient Christianity: the Gospel of John. In fact, the prologue of this Gospel, at the centre of which is also the Logos, raises questions that can be described in a surprisingly apt way by the textual problem of "silence". In fact, it can be said that the Logos, embedded in the prologue of the Gospel, speaks to us "out of silence" for philosophical as well as philological reasons.

From a philosophical point of view, without the addition of hermeneutical and ideological aids, it is hardly clear what is to be expressed by the statement in John 1: 1: "In the beginning was the Word". If the word was first, does this mean that thinking cannot go back to this beginning, or that there is

nothing at all beyond the word and that from the beginning everything is conceptually structured? What was this original word and what did it mean? Does the Prologue of John possibly say something about itself through this statement? The text does not provide an answer to this question insofar as it does not provide any explanations of the concepts of beginning, word, etc. which appear in it. The prologue expresses itself, but out of a silence that deprives every possible interpretation of its claim to absolute validity.

Silence can also be understood in a different sense than the darkness of religion, dogmatic history and philology that surrounds the naming of the Logos in the Prologue of John. Even after Buhmann's attempts to approach the Logos song on the path of Gnosticism and other Near Eastern mythical and religious currents, which have become "canonical"⁶ and more recent approaches, we do not yet know in a certain way whether such a single return can make sense and does not rather rob the prologue of some aspects of its complexity. So it seems - even more than a century ago - that soon there will be no end in sight to "the unresolved overall problem of the Prologue of John" and that the "silence" about the source and history of the prologue will not dissipate.

At the same time, however, contradicting this historical silence in such a radical way as the second Magnesier letter tradition of the first, there is a great deal of exegetical and philological literature on the Prologue to John, about which it is no longer possible to keep an overview. The Prologue of John, as the pinnacle of ancient Christianity, is the starting point of an exegetical work begun by the Fathers of the Church and extending uninterruptedly into modern philosophy and theology. The commentary on John forms a genre in its own right, which includes important works by the most renowned Christian authors: Origen, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Augustine, but also Eriugena, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart have commented on the Gospel with special regard to the prologue.

And just as silence can be interpreted twice - namely philosophically and textually - non-silence also has a philosophical aspect: if in the beginning there was the word, then this initial word can be represented by an infinity of new articulations and expressed again and again in its original function. The unmanageable amount of interpretative approaches seems to be traced back to the nature of the Prologue of John itself: it does not resemble the silence of a text that repeatedly explains itself.

There is thus a philosophical philological "speaking" about the Prologue of John extending over millennia, in its continuity there is just no trace of "silence" to be detected. The Logos, considering this speaking, speaks to us from a mass of readings and explanations that seem over-present in an almost noisy way.

The present study is dedicated to a new philosophical approach to the interpretation of the Johannine prologue. It thus necessarily joins the spectrum of the two extremes identified on the basis of the Magnesierbrief passage. On the one hand, it aims to make the text speak out of itself and thus make it understandable in a quiet environment. On the other hand, for this purpose it must also cite the necessary means of declaration, and thus refrain from silence.

The chic övrtö olyiN, the "non-silence", consists in this case in a risk, since for the explanation of the Prologue of John in a first step a philosophical material is to be used, which simply has nothing to do with this text itself, the Christian literature or the European or Semitic intellectual world as a whole. In

this case, the Buddhist "doctrine of emptiness" (Sūnyavāda) of the Indian philosopher Nāgārjuna is to serve as the *ovx erō atyl*.

Since this recourse, which cannot be justified by the Prologue of John itself, involves a whole complex of problems, several explanations and arguments for recourse must be sent in advance. Thus, 1) it must be addressed what the legality of such inclusion can consist of at all from a purely external point of view, i.e. not specifically related to the Gospel of John; 2) arguments must be given that justify why the inclusion of Buddhist emptiness can be useful for understanding the Prologue of John; 3) as the most important question: It is necessary to specify how the present study thus fits into the already established field of intercultural, Buddhist-Christian research.

At the beginning of the present experiments was a comparison between the textual tradition of the Ignatius epistle to the Magnesians and the position of the Logos in the interpretive framework of the ancient intellectual world.

The discussion of this parallel has given rise to two possibilities for viewing the logos: either one allows the logos to speak from its historical context and thus expresses it "not out of silence", but from a situation shaped by literary and philosophical relationships and thus reconstructable in retrospect; or else one lets it emerge "from silence", i.e. one ignores the infinite problems of its historical situation and allows itself to be guided by the internal organics of its elements.

With the present study, the intention was to reconsider these possibilities under the guiding principle of an intercultural perspective. On the one hand, the Prologue of John had to be approached "silently", insofar as nothing historical could be used to interpret it; on the other hand, the path followed with Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu also had to serve as "speaking", which, although outside the context of John's Gospel, nevertheless served as an aid to understanding.

At the point now reached, a new view of the arrangement of these elements opens up. Instead of a mere confirmation of the original plan, there is now a radical reversal. Nāgārjuna's trick of beginning his treatise by breaking up the usual temporal-logical order and thus deliberately assuming a completely "baseless" position has made it possible first to elaborate a concept of emptiness (sūnyatā) and then with Vasubandhu a concept of the mind (in the mode of dharmatā and tathatā) or transcendent knowledge (lokottarajñāna), which are free from any objective content. Inasmuch as the Logos communicates itself in the space of this indeterminacy, it can be said of him, speaking with Ignatius, to speak of himself. "out of silence" to us. He does not speak through or into anything else, but he expresses himself in pure indeterminacy that cannot be deduced by any particular method. He thus forms the beginning of a self-reflexive circle that is supported by nothing, reformulated by nothing in its original position. and can only be "considered" (contemplari, according to Eckhart's own expression).

The resulting new order is therefore this, that it was precisely by resorting to Buddhism, to a non-silence, that complete silence could be achieved. The negative formulation of the Ignatius passage leads in this sense to the positive: The attempt to understand the Logos from a Buddhist approach (not out of silence) has led to the Logos now becoming understandable from emptiness (out of silence).

As far as the form of thought thus achieved is concerned, it was stated that the contemplation of the Logos against the background of emptiness can be regarded as a form of "mysticism", insofar as it guides the overcoming of this certainty through the analysis of the finite certainty of everything that has the appearance of being, bhāva or svabhāva in itself, and thus relates the rational method of metaphysics back to its primordial ratio. This object, again, is not an object in the everyday sense, but a form of transcendence that can be achieved by a leap (or, in Vasubandhu's expression, by a "reversal of the foundation", āsrayaparāvṛtti) that cannot be caught up by philosophical discourse. Kenology thus has no philosophical final determination, but the sense of leading with the philosophical method to the point of the jump to transcendence.'

Since the orientation towards this transcendence is kept at an absolute standpoint (Nāgārjuna), does not refer to any subject or object nature (Vasubandhu) and "mystically" disregards all being (Meister Eckhart), the term that designates the highest spiritual activity has finally proven to be the most suitable for its determination: the concept of theory or contemplation. Kenology is therefore a theory in the literal and original sense - not a hypothetical structure of thought, but a philosophically expressed instruction to a view that itself can no longer be philosophically articulated, since, as the "before", it must always escape such articulation. of the fact that they are not pure spirit, pass into emptiness. In the circular structure of the individual moments, each of these moments is both the beginning and the end point. Logos is not the last word in this sense - from a kenological point of view, the doctrine of emptiness or the Yogācāra can also form an endpoint.

Thus, regardless of the culturally articulated starting point that is considered, the kenological dynamic, due to the reference of emptiness to the logos and the logos to emptiness, is the opposite of a linear course: it is a circle in which each single moment is preceded by another single moment and in which every other moment is also followed by another. The simple immediacy of emptiness enters the mind and the logos, but the logos also emanate the finite world, so that with each attainment of the logo there is also an entry point into emptiness. Or, in a theological formulation: the world, which proves to be empty, points to God as its Creator; God, in turn, appears as the origin of the certainty that forms the realm of the world. Kenology thus has possible entry points, but no beginning and end points in the strict sense (according to Nāgārjuna's refutation of the extremes of the earlier and later, pūrvāparakoti, in MMK 11).

With these overarching evaluations, the view of the execution of kenology carried out in the present experiments is released. This explanation is a theoretical mysticism which, by its method, proceeds philosophically and interculturally; from a substantive point of view, raises the question of the first reason; differs from the Johannine logos metaphysics in terms of its source; from its finality, amounts to the contemplation of the Logos in an unfathomable "before" (Barth), which again lies beyond the philosophical method; as far as its shape is concerned, represents a circular movement that reflects the dynamics of its object and makes no difference in value between the implied moments (each bound to a culture).

The question of the philosophical meaning of the Prologue of John is not one of the main questions posed in recent research. The questions about the unity, the structure, the language and the author of the Gospel, the connection of the Johannine account with the life of the historical Jesus, the position of the Gospel text vis-à-vis the Synoptic Gospels, the form of the prologue - whether it is an early Christian hymn, an explicative text, a reworking of a pre-Christian model -, the hermeneutical problems,

etc., have a clear primacy and overshadow the philosophical interpretation as an attempt to read and philosophically understand the text in its given unity. However, despite this problem of classification and orientation, the present study can refer to Theo Kobusch's idea of understanding the Gospel of John and in particular the prologue as the basic text of a "metaphysics of Christian philosophy", i.e. as a text from which, firstly, a meaningful philosophical overall picture can be obtained. Kobusch justifies this statement on the basis of the idea, first put forward by Origen, that philosophy itself should be understood as God's revelation to man, whereby the conflict between philosophical and purely theological exegesis can be resolved.⁴ The interpretation of the Prologue of John proposed in this study can, following this tendency of the Alexandrian school represented by Origen, be located in the realm of a philosophical theology (in contrast to a purely theological theology), i.e. in an area in which the character of revelation and philosophical systematics do not contradict each other, but fall into one, that through the philosophical method a point is reached at which the necessity of the inscrutability of the first reason (in the sense of the Buddhist being, the tathatā) becomes apparent. To describe the overcoming of this dichotomy, the term that Kobusch himself used to title Origen's philosophy seems most appropriate: "métaphysique contemplative". It is a metaphysics that aims at the pure consideration of the primordial process of justification that transcends any discursive structure and can therefore be regarded as "contemplative", since at its top is the consideration of a simple fact - the logos.

However, this orientation towards the ancient ideal of a "Christian philosophy" and the addition of the intercultural method must not be understood as a rejection of the historical method. Philological indexing Fact - of the logo - stands.

However, this orientation towards the ancient ideal of a "Christian philosophy" and the addition of the intercultural method must not be understood as a rejection of the historical method. The philological development of the Logos hymn, the possible religious-historical background of his composition, the relationship of the Gospel of John to the Synoptic Gospels, etc., cannot simply be superseded by the systematic reading announced at the beginning. Accordingly, while the present attempt offers an approach to re-emphasise and interculturally justify the coherence of traditional exegesis advocated in the present study by Cyril of Alexandre, Gregory of Nyssa, Basilius of Cappadocia, etc., it can only be seen as a possible approach to the complicated question of the breakdown of the Gospel of John.

Thus, at the end of the present attempts, on the one hand, a review of Nāgārjuna's unprincipled and pure standpoint of emptiness, Vasubandhu's idealistic mental metaphysics, which interprets the world as a system of ideal gradation, at the top of which stands the pure spiritual "Sosein", Eckhart's determination of the Logos as the unfathomable origin of the world in the mind; on the other hand, an outlook on the Prologue of John, which, although it stands as a key moment of the explanation at the end of the investigation and manifests there the unity of the path taken, seems to have been there from the beginning. The path has indeed led from emptiness to logos, but it is now clear that since emptiness refers to finite things and these are based on logos, the logos must have performed its function of justification from the very beginning.

In the end, it turns out that from the beginning it was the Logos who led the thought development and articulated himself; or, in John's own words: Ex ET VO S ERU PLANTO - "it is he who has spoken" (John 1:18).

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CONCEPTUALISING DIVINE UNIONS IN THE GREEK AND NEAR EASTERN WORLDS edited by Eleni Pachoumi [Ancient Philosophy & Religion, Brill, 9789004502512]

In the post-Enlightenment world, philosophy and religion have come to occupy different, even opposed, domains. But how were they related before this? What were the commonalities and dissimilarities between them? Did they already contain the seeds of their later division – or do they still share enough in common to allow meaningful conversation between them?

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The series’ subject matter is symbolized by its icon, used by courtesy and permission of the New Acropolis Museum in Athens. It represents a dialogue between philosophers, as shown on one of the reliefs of the funeral sacrificial table (mensa) from the “House of Proclus” on the Southern slope of the Acropolis at Athens, excavated in 1955. Dating from 350-325 BC, the reliefs of the mensa depict, after the lamentation and the farewell, the posthumous encounter of the deceased with the philosophers (1950 NAM 90).

The editors very much welcome proposals for monographs, edited volumes and even commentaries on relevant texts.

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It has now become almost commonplace, thanks in part to Walter Burkert's **THE ORIENTALIZING REVOLUTION** (1992) and Martin West's **THE EAST FACE OF HELICON** (1997), to argue that the development of culture and thought of archaic Greece cannot be studied in isolation from the history of the neighbouring cultures, many of which were undergoing their own intellectual ferment. It is also a commonplace that religious life in the Roman world was strongly coloured by influences that were widely perceived, from that time to the present, to be in some sense "oriental." Nevertheless, few writings on the religious culture of antiquity have attempted to embrace the whole of the Mediterranean and middle Eastern world. Such a project would, of course, be vast, and this volume may be regarded as a series of overtures rather than as an attempt to cover the whole field in a single collaboration. The present volume consists of thirteen papers addressing the theme of divine unions from various interreligious and interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives, according to each contributor's research expertise on Greek, Egyptian, Roman, Christian, Persian, Mesopotamian, Hittite, and Indian religion and literature.

The collection provides a systematic investigation and presentation in a single volume of an important but under-researched topic. A variety of papers investigates and contextualises various concepts of divine union in the private and public sphere of the Greek and Near Eastern worlds, focusing on human-divine interactions, intersection between kings and the divine, sexual unions with the divine, heroization and divinization rituals, divine epiphanies, mystic unions and assimilations with the divine, philosophical approaches for establishing union with the divine and theurgic unions with the divine. Some of the

papers were presented at an international conference organised by the editor at North West University, 20–22 April 2017.

In the first part “Religion, Kingship and Politics” of the volume, the divine unions are addressed, examining the intersections between kings and the divine in Assyria, Babylonia, Achaemenid Iran, Egypt, and the Roman Empire. These studies, looking at divine kingship and the intersection between kings and the divine, approach the theme of divine union in terms of the status of certain political figures within society. Kings are “unified” with the “divine” insofar as they are considered, depicted, or treated as divine figures. In Mesopotamia in the first millennium BCE the divine union between monarchy and the divine is based on a relationship of dependence between each other; indications of the divine status of the king involve the royal divine aura (*melammu*), the statues of the kings in temples and the offerings to them. In Achaemenid Iran the intersection of gods and kings is analysed, assessing the validity of fourth-century BCE Greek ideas that the king was an image of god. In Ancient Egypt the dynamics of human–divine intersections (between worshipper and god) reach the level of identification with the divine. The role of the king as an intermediary between gods and men, is laid out in the first three chapters and taken up in the title of Edwards’ chapter on how Christians subverted the tradition.

Philippe Clancier explores the divine status of the Mesopotamian king between gods and mankind in the first millennium BCE. The chapter examines the divine status of the king in Assyria and Babylonia, analysing the differences between them both, and their religious activities in their respective countries, focusing on their relationship and intersection with the gods (e.g., enthronement, divination, sacred marriages). The chapter also looks at the specific form of sacredness that the monarchy carried. This royal sacredness was expressed through radiance/aura, *melammu*, which made the king a separate human being but always dependent on the decision of the gods. The chapter also examines the evolution of the status of the king and their divinization from the end of the third to the first millennium BCE.

Christopher J. Tuplin examines the intersection of gods and kings in Achaemenid Iran. It has been something of a commonplace that the Persians did not see their king as a god, but that Greeks thought that they did. Perhaps this remains true. But there is a great deal of room for nuance on both sides, and it is the purpose of this chapter to explore some of that nuance. There has been recent scholarly flirtation with Achaemenid divine kingship. And there is little sign of an abatement in the discussion of a phenomenon that had a heavy impact on Greek ideas about the divine Persian king, while more generally the religious environment of the Achaemenid era is the object of energetic study. The chapter starts in Babylonia with a document of 485 BCE from Sippar about provision of cult for a statue of Darius. There are elements of novelty and political controversy in this document: they may conjecturally be associated with a more famous statue of Darius from Egypt, but, in any event, they are a reminder that the intersection between Achaemenid kings and the divine might be problematic not only for Greeks and that it was an area potentially open to manipulation in the new Persian imperial dispensation. The chapter then moves to material (non-Greek and Greek) that deals more directly with Persian attitudes in this area. The study lays out for inspection the strongest case that might be made for the fuzziness of the border between human and divine, where Achaemenid kings were concerned, and attempts, in particular, to assess the validity of fourth-century Greek ideas that the king was an image of god and that a royal *daimōn* might be the object of worship or reverence. All such matters lie within a wider landscape of questions: e.g., the way that royal ideology was framed in public utterances, the discursive choices made in different media (iconographic and textual), the religious choices implicit in the selection

of Ahuramazda against the background of a vividly polytheistic environment, and the extent of assimilation to or differentiation from traditional Mesopotamian representations of kingship. And what is at stake throughout is the character and degree of royal–divine union at the heart of the Achaemenid empire.

Robert K. Ritner discusses the dynamics of human and divine interactions in ancient Egypt. The distinctions between human and deity are not sharp in ancient Egypt, and the two categories frequently merge during formal religious ritual or private magical practice. The king, in particular, combines human and divine characteristics in his person during both life and death. For most non-royal individuals, however, true divine status becomes possible only with death and transfiguration on earth by funerary ritual and in the underworld by triumph over multiple obstacles, resulting in a judgment at the court of Osiris, god of the dead. After obtaining a successful verdict, the spirit of the deceased becomes an effective “limb” of the collective body of Osiris, fused with his identity, powers and privileges. Such a divine union is not limited to Osiris, and the deceased can claim equation with multiple traditional gods, sacred animals, plants and stars. Over half of the spells in the Book of the Dead declare a direct identity of the deceased, and his individual body parts, with gods, goddesses and divine epithets and powers. Most commonly, this equation is proclaimed with variations of the statement “I am God X,” but Spell 137A summarizes the theological principle: “May the Osiris so-and-so live in his true nature, in his intrinsic form of a true god.” The equation with deities is possible, because in Egyptian thought humankind was created from the essence of the creator himself, so that people are not categorically distinct from gods, but have divinity inherent within them. It is the knowledgeable who are able to recognize and utilize this force even while alive.

Expressions of unification between man and deities, and between the deities themselves, are a consistent and dominant feature of Egyptian religious literature from the earliest records (the Pyramid Texts) through the end of Egyptian religious traditions in Late Antiquity. The former practice is typically described as “deification,” while the latter is often termed “syncretism.” Both terms have been subject to scholarly dispute and attempts at refinement. Mark Smith (in the volume *Following Osiris* 2017) has declared most such unions illusory, limited to transient ritual or mythological contexts of little theological significance. The chapter reviews the unbroken tradition of human and divine unifications in ancient Egypt, with a refutation of Smith’s analysis and conclusions. Since humans contain inherent divinity in Egyptian theology, the relation between human and divine unifications is not one of sharp distinction but of comparability.

This notion of the king as an intermediary between gods and men is taken by Mark J. Edwards next, who looks at the Roman emperor Constantine and discusses his divine status as “god-man or man of god.” Eusebius celebrates Constantine, both in the *Life of Constantine* and in his *Tricennial Oration*, as the all-seeing eye of God, his vicar on earth – in fact, a surrogate for Christ himself. Constantine may hint at a similar assimilation, when he designs a monument for himself in the midst of twelve apostles. Other language used in the *Oration to the Saints* also suggests the role of a vicegerent for God. His panegyrists also credit him with visions assuring him of divine patronage, and since the accounts cannot all describe the same event, we may reasonably suppose that it was characteristic of him to make such claims. All these visions in some way involve light, a favourite symbol in his *Oration to the Saints*, and an attempt to evoke the vision of Paul at Acts 26:13 may be suspected in Eusebius. Without taking the view that he actually saw a solar halo, these visions may be associated with Constantine’s use of solar imagery on

coins, with the pagan use of the sun as an emblem of divinity, with the solar cults imposed by certain of his predecessors, and with the imagery of Christ as sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2). By investigation of the relevant texts, it may be possible to ascertain whether Constantine pretends to more than a merely representative status in his embodiment of the divine will, perhaps arriving at an Israelite, or even Egyptian, notion of his relation to God that takes him well beyond the “orientalising” innovations of the Tetrarchy.

The next part “Religion, Sex and Mythology” explores sexual unions with the divine in the Greek and Near Eastern mythological traditions. The first study is a comparative examination of human–divine sexual unions in the Homeric and Hittite literary texts, revealing a cultural syncretism in the Eastern Mediterranean world during the Late Bronze Age. The sexual union between gods and mortals in Ancient Greece is also addressed in another study, assessing examples from Greek mythology and ritual.

Elias K. Petropoulos turns to a comparative examination between Greece and the Near East, examining the human–divine interactions and sexual unions in the Homeric, Hittite and other Near Eastern literary traditions. It has long been established that certain common elements and motifs can be traced between the Iliad, the Hittite and other Near Eastern literary texts. These documents, as well as important archaeological evidence, reveal an emerging complicated cultural syncretism among the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean area during the Late Bronze Age; a process which apparently continued in later times. The chapter is focused on the relationship between human and divine, as well as on conceptualization of the divine, as described in various religious texts. On many occasions, certain myths, beliefs and heroes are transmitted by word of mouth, and then further adapted to the local needs and requirements of the traditions of the diverse peoples of the Aegean and, more broadly, the Near East. The chapter analyses and compares such examples from Iliad, the epic of Ullikummi, and other literary traditions of the peoples of the Caucasus.

Robert Parker examines the sexual union between gods and mortals in ancient Greece. Sexual unions between gods and mortal women (less often goddesses and mortal men) are a standard theme – and probably the best-known kind – of Greek myth, and occasionally Greek ritual. But philosophers and historians early raise doubts about the reality of such unions. This does not prevent different stories emerging whereby a few individuals (e.g., Plato, Alexander) have been sired by gods not in mythical but in contemporary time. The chapter discusses these traditions in relation to the problem of belief. However, firm beliefs about the nature of relations between men and gods prove hard to extract from this welter of stories about the distant past and rumours about exceptional individuals of the present.

The third part, “Religion, Philosophy and Ritual,” explores the concept of divine intersection and union, focusing on religious, philosophical and ritualistic interactions. It is divided into three subsections: (a) Orphic heroization and divinization rituals, Platonic traditions and mystic rituals; (b) Neoplatonic theurgic unions; and (c) Stoic theology and the Christian thinkers.

Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui explores heroization and divinization in the so-called Orphic gold tablets (fourth-century BCE – second-century CE), which present a blessed afterlife for the initiates. However, the portrait that they offer is far from being homogeneous: some of them seem to depict a gradual process of heroization of the deceased, while others point to a sudden ontological leap which culminates in blunt deification. There are other tablets that seem to combine both models, and others that stay out of this dichotomy. The chapter analyses these differences and overlaps and some meaningful parallels

that help to understand the role and place of these striking documents within the larger context of Greek religion.

Richard Seaford turns to a comparative examination of the union with the divine in Greece and India, focusing on the mysteries and monetisation. The study examines those passages of Plato (in *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*) that may be said to prefigure Neoplatonist in that they describe as a kind of mystic initiation the close relationship of the invisible inner self (*psyche*, *nous*) to invisible true Being – a phenomenon that is itself prefigured in *Parmenides* and even in *Herakleitos*. The close relationship is formulated by Plato in an interesting variety of ways, including assimilation. This leads to the question of what is contributed to the phenomenon by – respectively – mystery-cult and the socio-economic development underlying the idea (new in Plato) of an incorporeal comprehensive inner self (*psyche*). The chapter also compares the Indian idea of an incorporeal comprehensive inner self (*atman*) (new in the *Upanishads*), and its assimilation and identification with the universal principle denoted by *brahman*: particular attention is paid to the roles played respectively by the rite of passage and by socio-economic development.

Robert Vinkesteyn examines the concept of personal *daimon* in the Platonic tradition. *Daimon* is a notoriously ambiguous word, that comes to play an important role in the ancient Greek philosophical tradition. In Greek literature until the fourth-century BCE, it seems to have such an exceptional range of meaning that it could refer to: a specific divinity; something divine in a more undetermined sense; fate or destiny in a general sense; some individual's particular fate or curse; a spirit of some kind, either vengeful or beneficial, haunting or guarding; a spirit in the sense of the soul of a deceased hero or important individual. Remarkably, in the Platonic and philosophical tradition, this word comes to play an important role. Not only is the daimonic portrayed as mediator between the human and the divine, starting from Plato's *Symposium*, but our very own rational soul is identified as *daimon* by many ancient philosophers. Also, the daimonic is considered to play a crucial role with regard to the possibility of the philosophical life. The *daimon*, in other words, comes to be associated or even identified with the philosophical self, or the self in as far as it has philosophical potential. The chapter sets out the ways in which Plato develops the philosophical potential of the category of the daimonic, in three different ways: the daimonic sign of Socrates, the depiction of Socrates as a daimonic man and the *daimon* as a being mediating between the human and the divine, and finally, the notion of our rational soul as a *daimon*. It discusses the different meanings of the word in Plato's work, from Socrates' daimonic sign, via the daimonic as mediator in the *Symposium*, to the identification of our rational soul with a *daimon* in the *Timaeus*. What these various Platonic engagements with the daimonic have in common, is that they all contribute to the way philosophy itself is conceptualized. In Plato, philosophy is a daimonic enterprise. The chapter presents a more generalizing and systematizing attempt to understand, in particular, the way the notion of the daimonic is used to understand and develop the philosophical self. It argues that this notion enables the ancient philosophers to talk about the extent to which our nature has the inner potential to be more than itself, to transgress the merely individual.

The next two contributions examine issues of divine epiphanies and theurgic unions in Proclus and other Neoplatonist philosophers. The Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus in his treatise *On the Hieratic Art* describes theurgy as an art combining Neoplatonic notions of mystic divine union with Egyptian ideas of divine identification and Chaldaean influences (e.g., the role of fire in the theurgic union); and analyses the stages of the theurgic union with the divine.

Robbert M. van den Berg analyses descriptions and discussions of divine epiphany by later Neoplatonists. Epiphanies mattered greatly to these last pagan philosophers, since these vindicated their most deeply held religious and metaphysical convictions at a time when Christianity had become the dominant religion. Taking their lead from, e.g., Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, the Neoplatonists thought of epiphanies first and foremost as encounters with perceivable manifestations of divine Beauty. Such an encounter brings about amazement (*thauma*) and confusion (*ekplêxis*) which forces the person who experiences it to turn away from the mundane to the divine. Since the gods themselves have no form, their presence (*parousia*) manifests itself in particular in works of art, such as beautiful statues and texts. In this way, the Neoplatonists link aesthetic theories to the religious practice of theurgy, which was all about attracting the divine, e.g., by rendering statues fit (*epitêdeios*) to receive the divine presence. The amazement and confusion that befalls the person who is exposed to a beautiful theurgic work of art confers this theurgical fitness upon that person, thus preparing him for further union with the divine.

Eleni Pachoumi examines the theurgic union of the individuals with the divine, looking at the final stages of theurgic unions according to Proclus' treatise *On the Hieratic Art*, and comparing them with other references in philosophy (e.g., the extracts from Proclus' *Chaldaean Philosophy*, Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* and the *Chaldaean Oracles*). Particular attention is paid to the association of these stages with the role of the divine light and fire in the divinisation of mortals. The chapter illustrates the concept of fire in the final stages of the theurgic union with examples from magico-theurgic texts, focusing on the philosophical and magical interactions reflected in the theurgic unions.

The final two chapters explore first the concept of divine intervention in Stoic theology in order to establish divine providence and justice to humans. Then it is examined how Christian theology adapted the Stoic image of fire and iron to understand their god. The Stoic 'iron and fire' metaphor, for example, was used by the early Christian and Byzantine theologians to describe the union with God, theodosis.

Maarten van Houte examines the notion of divine intervention in Stoic theology, looking at the divine punishment as a way to establish divine providence and justice to humans. The Stoics' natural theology and deterministic world view do not seem to leave much room for the idea of God actively intervening in human affairs and inflicting impromptu punishment on criminals and impious people. Indeed, we find several Stoics reinterpreting divine punishment more philosophical in terms of wickedness (i.e., moral evil) being its own punishment, much in the same way many ancient philosophers regarded virtue as its own reward. There is evidence, however, that suggests that certain Stoics did in fact recognize what appears to be a more traditional form of divine punishment as well, viz. God 'intervening' in the cosmos in order to punish vicious people, e.g., by sending plagues and famine. The chapter tries to reconstruct how they conceptualized such god-inflicted punishment, and argues that they did so in order to emphasize God's providence and justice towards humans.

Dmitry Biriukov, then, analyses the Stoic 'iron and fire' example and the union with the divine in early Christian and Byzantine theology. The chapter looks at the Stoic 'iron and fire' metaphor for describing the union with God in Early Christian and Byzantine theology. The metaphor of fire heating iron is used as a way of talking about the interpenetration of divine and mortal bodies. The example of iron and fire as an illustration of the interpenetration of bodies originates in a Stoic doctrine. The Stoics gave this example along with a number of others for substantiating their teaching on total blending of bodies (differentiating it from conflation and composition). According to the Stoics, the total blending of bodies takes place, when a body receives certain qualities of another, while remaining, nevertheless, itself; or

both the mixed bodies acquire the qualities of each other, preserving their own natures. The Stoic teaching of blending – whereby the mixed bodies retain their identity – was received and actively applied by the Christian authors. Like some other philosophical topics of great importance tied to theological intuitions, it first appeared in the writings of Origen, who illustrated the conjunction of Christ's soul with God with the example of the penetration of fire into iron. The further development of this topic by the Byzantine theologians comprised two principal lines presupposed in Origen's operating with this example: the Christological line, and that of the *theosis* of the human being. Generally, in Early Christian and Byzantine theological literature the example of fire and iron was usually applied within the narrative of two diverse natures interacting with each other, so that they form a unity in one way or another (in regard to the hypostasis of Christ; and to powers, properties or energies for the other cases). Depending on their objectives, with this example some authors emphasized the difference of interacting natures, and thus activated the distinctiveness of the two natures, whereas others did the opposite way and employed their uniting potential. The chapter traces manifestations of these potentials in early Christian and Byzantine theology in the framework of both kind of response.

In other words, then, the theme of divine unions is first addressed examining the intersections between kings and the divine in Assyria, Babylonia and the Achaemenid Iran. These essays approach the divine union in terms of the status of certain political figures within society; kings are unified with the divine insofar as they are considered, or depicted as divine figures. This notion of the king as an intermediary between gods and men is also analysed in the examination of the human–divine figure of the Roman emperor Constantine. Then, another aspect of the theme is addressed, that of the sexual union between gods and mortals in archaic and classical Greece, assessing examples from Greek mythology and ritual. A comparative also examination of human–divine unions in the Homeric and Hittite literary texts reveals a cultural syncretism in the Eastern Mediterranean world during the Late Bronze Age. Finally, the religio-philosophical aspects of the theme are examined in the third part on religion, philosophy and ritual, which is divided into three subsections, discussing Platonic traditions, mystic rituals and theurgic practices, Orphic heroization and divinization rituals, Neoplatonism, Stoicism and Christian theology. In Late Antiquity complicated notions such as divine epiphanies, divine identification, internalisation of the divine and divinization became the focus of Neoplatonist philosophers, Christian thinkers, theurgists and magicians. And in their texts we do find more complete, mystic unions of the invisible inner self with the so-called invisible One, or God, or the divine. <>

PHILOSOPHY AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE: THE CLAIMS OF COMMON SPEECH FROM PETRARCH TO LOCKE by Lodi Nauta [Cambridge University Press, ISBN 9781108845960]

- Provides a clear and comprehensive analysis of a fundamental, yet underexplored feature of the transition from medieval to early-modern thought
- Shows the philosophical significance of the humanist and early-modern critique of language
- Sheds light on current debates about the benefits and drawbacks of technical language in philosophy

Which language should philosophers use: technical or common language? In a book as important for intellectual historians as it is for philosophers, Lodi Nauta addresses a vital question which still has resonance today: is the discipline of philosophy assisted or disadvantaged by employing a special vocabulary? By the Middle Ages philosophy had become a highly technical discipline, with its own lexicon and methods. The Renaissance humanist critique of this specialised language has been dismissed as philosophically superficial, but the author demonstrates that it makes a crucial point: it is through the misuse of language that philosophical problems arise. He charts the influence of this critique on early modern philosophers, including Hobbes and Locke, and shows how it led to the downfall of medieval Aristotelianism and the gradual democratization of language and knowledge. His book will be essential reading for anyone interested in the transition from medieval to modern philosophy.

Reviews

'Nauta is among the most distinguished historians of philosophy today. His study breaks new ground by concentrating on a vital issue in the early modern rivalry between humanism and scholasticism which still has great resonance in modern academe: the advantages and disadvantages that accrue to philosophy, or any professionalized study, from employing a special technical vocabulary to discuss philosophical problems.' James Hankins, Harvard University

'This book is a great and inspiring tour d'horizon into philosophical reflection on the use of language – and, consequently, on linguistic practice – from the emergence of Renaissance humanism to major thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke. The author invites us into his novel and fascinating story of the genesis of Renaissance and Early Modern (and even contemporary) philosophy.' Jan Papy, Catholic University of Leuven

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Throughout the ages philosophers have questioned our common-sense view of the world, claiming that the world is not as it appears to be.¹ This claim is almost the philosopher's *raison d'être*. Philosophy thrives on the idea that there is a deep structure — matter, atoms, substance, essences, powers, forms, faculties, the absolute spirit, hypostases, Platonic Ideas, or what have you — behind the phenomena we perceive and claim to know; it would amount to naive empiricism to think that what we see is all there is to know, or that it would be enough to justify our claims to knowledge. As a distinguished historian of philosophy has observed: "Over the centuries, it has been practically definitive of the philosopher's job to subject naive empiricism to a withering critique. Indeed, stages in the development of philosophy can be measured in terms of how far they depart, and in which direction, from our natural but naive pre-theoretical orientation toward empiricism."

This departure from a so-called naive empiricism has often gone hand in hand with the development of a language that likewise departs from the way in which people commonly speak about the world. Like scientists, mathematicians, grammarians, lawyers, theologians, and practitioners of various professions, philosophers too developed their own technical language, sometimes staying fairly close to the common parlance of the time but often introducing a more technical, abstract, formal terminology, needed, so it was thought, to refer to and analyze these deeper (or higher) levels of reality, to bring clarity in our philosophical views, or to change our perspective on the world. Whatever it is that philosophers do, it usually comes with a terminology that for the non-initiated may look like mere jargon, but for the philosophers in question is necessary to reach the rigor and precision that philosophical analysis requires. Hence, understanding philosophers often begins with learning their language; mastering the terminology of, for example, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, or Heidegger, aided by books with titles such as *Le Vocabulaire de Spinoza*, *Kant Lexikon*, or *Hegel Dictionary*, is like learning a foreign language; and something similar is true of familiarizing oneself with the technical apparatus of analytical philosophy.

Dissonant voices have been heard over the centuries: Does ordinary language, in principle, not contain all the necessary terms, semantic nuances and distinctions, and pragmatic directions that we need for analyzing philosophical concepts? Do we not create rather than solve our philosophical problems by introducing all kinds of technical terminology? If technical terms can ultimately be translated into ordinary language, why not use the latter from the start? And if such a translation proves to be impossible, is that not a sign that we have been playing a game all by ourselves that has no longer any connection with the things we wanted to analyze or explain in the first place? Such questions have left most philosophers unperturbed, and they continued to believe that ordinary language is too imprecise, vague, and unstable for doing rigorous philosophy. Bertrand Russell spoke for many when he said: "Everybody admits that physics and chemistry and medicine each require a language which is not that of

every day. I fail to see why philosophy, alone, should be forbidden to make a similar approach towards precision and accuracy.'

Such debates about the language of philosophy are well known, in particular, from the twentieth century when philosophical Idealism and the rise of formal logic led in some circles to a defense of the use of ordinary language. But we find appeals to common language or the common understanding of words also much earlier in history. One of the most prominent case studies is the critique by humanists and early-modern philosophers of the Aristotelian-scholastic language developed and practiced in the schools and universities of medieval and early-modern Europe.⁴ It is the aim of this book to bring this critique into the narrative of Western philosophical history, showing that it reflected significant trends at that time that would ultimately effect a gradual erosion and demise of a paradigm that had ruled for hundreds of years. In several chapters devoted to a selective range of thinkers from this period, different aspects of this fascinating and highly complicated process will be studied.

This introduction serves to provide a general framework for the case studies that follow.

Aristotelian-scholastic philosophy was brimming with technical terminology. The reasons for this are too complex and too varied to discuss here, but the basic stages of its development are well known: Aristotle himself had already had to invent some technical vocabulary to express the central concepts of his philosophy and logic. Translators in antiquity from Cicero to Boethius struggled with his language and concepts, but succeeded in providing the Latin West with a corpus of writings that gradually became the curriculum in the schools and universities.' Translations of Aristotle from the Greek and Arabic as well as commentaries were added to the corpus in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and ever new forms of Latin vocabulary had to be coined to match the complexity of the logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics and all the other parts of this growing edifice: forma, intentio, species virtus, ens, entitas, esse, essentia, actus, potentia, haecitas, perseitas, ubicatio, intensio et remissio formarum, and suppositio, with all its all subdivisions and technical terminology such as restrictio, ampliatio, distributivus, confusus, mobilis immobilis, descensus, ascensus, and a myriad of other terms. Building on this Aristotelian corpus, medieval scholars also initiated new developments, for instance, in what we might call the philosophy of language (e.g. the speculative grammar of the Modists), logic (e.g. terminist logic), natural philosophy (e.g. the semantic approaches by the so-called Calculatores), and theology, and many fresh problems in virtually every corner of the Aristotelian building were formulated and discussed throughout the period till the end of the seventeenth century. Also in the twilight of its existence Aristotelian scholasticism was certainly not the retarded, conservative force it is often portrayed to have been, but could challenge the new philosophy in interesting ways.

The longevity, however, had perhaps taken its toll. Basic terminology had already been difficult enough to understand in all its complex uses and transmutations. But new terminology had to be coined to express ever new concepts and distinctions as specialization grew and debates intensified particularly in metaphysics and logic. What is true for almost any kind of theorizing is certainly true for the scholastic way of philosophizing: concepts require new concepts, and to clarify these new concepts still other concepts have to be introduced, and so on, till one might wonder whether the gains of this ever-growing complexity are not subject to the law of diminishing returns; whether our philosophical systems, in the words of Francis Bacon, are not "but so many stage-plays, representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fashion."? The higher we come in this conceptual building the more, it seems, we lose base with our initial object of study or question. It has become a game on its

own, with new concepts or entities requiring new terms. Even a highly sympathetic interpreter of scholastic thought such as Robert Pasnau admits that "one risk this kind of analysis runs is that we will end up not just up to our necks in metaphysical parts, but positively drowning — that once we begin to postulate such entities, we will be forced to postulate infinitely many more." We might think "that nothing of any explanatory value has been achieved by all this philosophizing." It is indeed "the timeless complaint made of all philosophy."

Whatever its truth-value, it was certainly a complaint made passionately by Renaissance humanists and early-modern philosophers alike. From the time of Petrarch onward humanists began to heap scorn on the so-called barbarous Latin of the scholastics, and this critique continued to be voiced by early-modern philosophers in various forms and in different contexts. Though a prominent feature of the humanist program of restoring classical Latin as the vehicle for learned communication and conversation, this critique of scholastic "jargon" has not attracted wide attention from historians of philosophy. While it is an exaggeration to say that the history of the critique of scholastic jargon is "virtually unexplored" — one need only think of the age-old contest between philosophy and reason on the one hand and rhetoric and eloquence on the other — it seems fair to say that the slow and gradual demise of Aristotelian scholasticism has usually been analyzed with reference to metaphysics, natural philosophy, and psychology (the *scientia de anima*). Changes in metaphysical and physical concepts such as substantial form, substance, final cause, space, impetus, matter, and motion, have seemed more promising and more telling evidence for the new directions philosophy was taking in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Less attention has been paid to the critique of language, though it is intrinsically connected to these changes. It is not difficult to understand the reasons for this relative neglect.

First, the critique of language in this entire period often has the character of a *topos*, a highly repetitious litany that scholastic language is obscure, incomprehensible, ungrammatical, in short "barbarous." Without further explanation or justification, such a critique easily becomes monotonous, sterile, uninteresting, and philosophically shallow. At first sight, there does not seem to be much variation in these complaints during the period, and while in the beginning of the humanist movement there was at least a dominant paradigm to fight against, by the mid-seventeenth century one might get the impression that the critique had sometimes become something of a straw man, as other new and interesting developments, such as the rise of mathematics and the increasing use of experimental observation, began to occupy a much more prominent role.

Second, the critique seems to be not only monotonous and philosophically superficial, but also unfair. The claim then is that the humanists simply failed to understand the nature of philosophical and scientific analysis, which cannot do without a certain technical terminology. On this view, the humanist complaint that the Latin of the schools is unnatural, artificial, ugly, and ungrammatical only shows that humanists failed to see that a special language is needed to match the rigor of philosophical analysis. In addition to the revival of a classicized Latin, the humanist attempt to revive and emulate ancient rhetorical practice is likely only to deepen the philosopher's suspicion — as if rhetoric can replace the standards of exact, clear, and technical language that philosophy requires.

These sentiments are understandable, and yet historically there are good reasons to pay more attention to critics of scholastic language. First, mere repetition over the centuries might also be a sign that there was more at stake than some aesthetic preference. As already noted, Aristotelianism in all its variety remained a vigorous, resilient tradition, so that it remained, in the eyes of its opponents, a powerful

paradigm worth attacking in the seventeenth century no less than in earlier times. Seen from this angle, the critique of language was not a by-product of a paradigm shift that took place elsewhere; it was a vital element in the critique of Aristotelian scholasticism as a whole. This leads to a second reason. We need not subscribe to a form of linguistic determinism to realize that language is deeply embedded in culture, giving expression to it and shaping it. We can therefore expect the language critique of this period to be more than just a critique of some barren expressions or some pieces of badly construed Latin. It could include the following items, starting with the critique of scholastic Latin itself:

- Scholastic Latin vocabulary and grammar (as opposed to "good" Latin following classical norms).
- The study of logic as an end in itself, a mere verbal art (as opposed to an examination of the things themselves, "res").
- The Aristotelian ideal of demonstrative science, characterized by notions such as deduction, demonstration, definition, universality, certainty, and truth (as opposed to induction, observation, experience, particularity, and also to less stringent requirements of knowledge such as verisimilitude and probability).
- The study of artificially constructed fallacies and forms of argumentation (as opposed to an examination of arguments in practice or real life).
- Disputations and other scholastic methods, denounced as cavillations, quibbles, and sophistry, that aim at solely promoting one's own position (as opposed to collaborative efforts in the search for the truth). The ipse dixit attitude ("he has spoken"); that is, an appeal to the authority of Aristotle that was supposed to clinch the argument (as
- opposed to the *libertas philosophandi* the freedom to philosophize). Scholastic terminology as quasi-precise but in fact "insignificant speech," devoid of any explanatory power.
- Scholastic language as the language of the Church and the university, used as a means to mystify, deceive, impress, or overpower the people (as opposed to the common language as an instrument of communication and bond of society).
- Technical language as a form of uncivilized behavior, and as pedantry (as opposed to civilized forms of conversation at court and in society at large).

We will meet these points in the chapters to come, but the point of listing them is simply to remind ourselves that the critique of language — again, whatever its historical plausibility — was a broad category, not limited to aesthetics or Latin philology. As an expression not only of thought but also of an entire approach and culture, creating identity and securing power, language was of course much more than a neutral verbalization of what went on in the mind. While humanists aimed at a reform of the language arts (the arts of the trivium: grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic) and the university curriculum based on the works of Aristotle, philosophers in the seventeenth century had sometimes different motives to criticize the language of the schools, but what many of them shared with their humanist predecessors was the conviction that the language of the schools was the expression of a culture that was hampering progress in the arts and sciences. Being more than just a critique of the barbarous concoction of a so-called unnatural and ungrammatical Latin, it could also target patterns of thinking and behavior that were deemed to be dangerously abstract or politically and religiously corrupt. Thomas Hobbes comes to mind of course, whose critique of the abstract nature of scholastic language went hand in hand with his rejection of a spiritual domain of souls of which the Church claimed to be the guardian and spokesman (see Chapter 7).

We can develop this point a bit more. Through the critique of language important notions, ideas, and attitudes were attacked that opponents had associated, rightly or wrongly, with Aristotelian scholasticism. This might look like a trivial point, for how else can one criticize a philosophical notion than by criticizing the linguistic expression used to speak about that notion? If one disagrees with the opponent's theory of free will, the argument is likely to start with the opponent's definition or use of the words "free" and "will." But while this is a valid point for any kind of (philosophical) debate, the critique of scholastic language often went further than the individual concept, rejecting an entire form of discourse because that discourse was believed to be intrinsically connected with a particular style of philosophizing. Because much of the rejected terminology referred to entities and distinctions of a metaphysical and logical kind, the language critique could easily lead, for instance, to a rejection of these entities and distinctions as well (see for example Chapter 5). Rejecting abstract entities is, of course, not an exclusively early-modern phenomenon; we need only think of a medieval nominalist such as William of Ockham, who was perfectly happy to use a technical, scholastic terminology himself, to realize that a critique of philosophical language exists in every philosophical tradition. It also does not mean that language critique inevitably led to a thoroughgoing nominalism or anti-essentialism. The point, however, is that certain philosophical and intellectual developments that are characteristic for this period were intrinsically linked to a critique of scholastic language: trimming scholastic ontology required trimming scholastic terminology, because the introduction of a new term, for example *haecceitas* (thinness) or *ubicatio* (being in a place) led to the postulation of a new entity, or vice versa. It could thereby easily become a critique that put a question mark over the existence or usefulness of various kinds of metaphysical and logical notions as well as distinctions such as the Aristotelian categories, transcendental terms, essence, act/ potency, matter/form, second intentions, common natures, universals, and so on. It is for this reason that language critique cannot be absent from a history of the gradual downfall of the Aristotelian-scholastic paradigm.

The questioning of abstract entities could also lead to a form of skepticism about the whole idea of reaching certainty and truth about essences, substantial forms, quiddities, haecceities, and the like. Scholars have detected skeptical tendencies in humanism, and the rise of forms of ancient skepticism has been seen as a hallmark of the early-modern period." These are controversial claims, but it is not implausible to suggest that the critique of scholastic terminology referring to these entities went hand in hand with a growing awareness that such ideals of certainty and demonstrative truth, widely perceived at the time as essential ingredients of the Aristotelian system, are out of our reach. Again, we need to be cautious here. On the one hand, among scholastics we already find the idea that essences cannot be known and that we must be satisfied with probable knowledge; the conjectural status of natural philosophical knowledge was widely conceded among scholastic commentators in the sixteenth century, followed by Hobbes, Gassendi, and many others in the seventeenth century." On the other hand, certainty was not given up tout court by early-modern thinkers, as testified by Descartes's search for indubitable truth, Hobbes's claim to have set the science of politics on a secure footing, Spinoza's philosophical system more *geometrico*, or Locke's attempt to show that morality is capable of deductive demonstration. But these seventeenth-century developments had been preceded by at least two centuries of a growing dissatisfaction with the demonstrative ideal of Aristotelian science; it was increasingly considered as a bookish and abstract affair that did not deliver the results its defenders had promised. Again, the rejection of (abstract) terms is of course not a sufficient condition for the rise of skepticism about the possibility of knowledge of the referents of those terms. But it seems plausible to

suggest that the critique of scholastic language by self-professed outsiders of the Aristotelian paradigm facilitated or helped to create the possibility for skeptical tendencies and renewed attention to the notion of probability in knowledge and reasoning, thereby creating the intellectual space needed to explore new paths in science and scientific methodology."

One development that is clearly linked to the critique of scholastic language — in this case the language and methods of the logicians — is what has been called the rhetoricization of dialectic. Medieval logic was thought to be too abstract, too technical and far removed from the practice of speaking and arguing. In humanist writings medieval logic was often reduced to its bare essentials, but the more innovative efforts came from Valla and in particular Rudolph Agricola, who aimed at bringing together dialectic and rhetoric into one system of topical invention, showing how to find arguments by using a set of places or topics (*loci*) such as definition, genus, species, place, time, similars, and opposites. In Agricola's hands dialectic became a practical tool of argumentation that aided the student not only in organizing any type of discourse but also in analyzing a text in terms of its underlying questions and argumentative structure." In the sixteenth century Peter Ramus launched an influential program of reorganizing the arts of dialectic and rhetoric, attacking Aristotelian logic and restricting rhetoric to style and delivery. Dialectic must be aimed at teaching what is of use in ordinary reasoning.⁶ Whatever the merits of the humanist critique of medieval logic — and many historians of logic are likely to see in the humanist turn to a pragmatic and much less formal art of argumentation an aberration, and a regrettable interruption of the progress logic had made in the hands of medieval and late-scholastic logicians? — it is a critique that is an intrinsic part of the general erosion of the Aristotelian paradigm. And here too the critique resonated for a long time, as testified, for instance, by Gassendi's youthful invectives against Aristotelian philosophy or Locke's discussion of the syllogism.

These examples suggest that language critique can be seen as an expression of wider feelings of discontent with the language, methods, and style of argumentation as practiced by the scholastics. Language critique is thus a broad phenomenon, which is not surprising: it was the scholastic idiom that immediately stared the reader of any scholastic book in the face, whether it were a logical handbook, a commentary on Aristotle, a theological summa, or a treatise on a specialized metaphysical topic. It was the language that was often regarded as not only an unnecessarily abstract and artificial form of Latin, but also as infecting the thoughts that it articulated and the social, religious, and political practices in which it was embedded.

So far we have given some reasons (illustrated by some examples) why, historically speaking, the study of language critique, in spite of its repetitious, sometimes superficial and polemical character, might be an interesting field of study. The focus so far has been on the destructive side of the critique. But the reasons are not exhausted by that, for there is also a constructive side to it, namely the formulation of an alternative to the rejected terminology of the schools. Given the broad character of the critique, which targeted not only particular "barbarous" words but also an approach, style, method, and even a wider culture that critics deemed pernicious for many different reasons, a study of alternatives can easily lead to an unwieldy field of research. Since everything has to do with language —whether one likes it or not, ideas have to be articulated in the first place —the formulation of alternatives to the scholastic language has necessarily a lot to do with changes in natural philosophy, metaphysics, logic, and argumentation, and many other fields that seem to transcend the critique of language as such. But without ignoring these wider dimensions, it is possible to focus on the conviction, widely felt though

difficult to put into practice, that the language of the schools had to be replaced by something else, something more transparent, more comprehensible, and more common. The phrase "common" is a key word here, used by humanists and early-modern philosophers alike, and in the following paragraphs we will briefly look at some important points to be developed and discussed in the chapters on individual authors that follow.

The introduction of a so-called common language was only the start of the problem, for what exactly is a "common language"? What are its criteria? How broadly do we understand to take the word "common"? Who defines what "common" is? How can we stabilize and regulate common language? Such questions, which remind us of similar ones raised about the use of "ordinary language" in philosophy in the twentieth century, were often not posed in such explicit terms: it was always much easier to attack something else as unnatural and uncommon than to formulate one's own alternative. Though we can find pleas for the use of common language throughout the period, the answers and strategies obviously differed, if only because the intellectual landscape was constantly changing.

For the humanists, as we will see, the alternative was of course classical Latin, though they realized that Latin had seen its own internal development also in antiquity so that debates necessarily broke out as to whether only Ciceronian Latin was acceptable as a language for learned communication, conversation and scholarship, or if a Latin that was based on a wider range of authors was also permissible! It was attractive for humanists in their fight against what they called the "barbarous" Latin of their opponents to present classical Latin as the common, natural language. But while it surely was a common language in the sense of the lingua franca of the learned and erudite, it was certainly not common in the sense of anyone's mother tongue, and not surprisingly tensions can be detected in their attempts to defend classical Latin as a common, natural language. Ironically, their efforts to recover classical Latin as a common language soon made people realize that it was a "dead language," an historical phenomenon of great importance and significance but also something of the past, or at least not a living organism anymore. While the core of the humanist program was the recovery, restoration, reappropriation, and emulation of the Latin of the ancients, it remained an uncomfortable truth that it was a language that had belonged to a particular culture and time, even though as a lingua franca it had survived that culture as an instrument of learning and token of civilization. In the end, the humanists' attack on the language of the schools was historically perhaps more successful than their promotion of classical Latin as the sole repository of learning and wisdom. <>

A BASIC THEORY OF EVERYTHING: A FUNDAMENTAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY by Atle Ottesen Søvik [De Gruyter, 9783110770926]

What are the basic building blocks of the world? This book presents a naturalistic theory saying that the universe and everything in it can be reduced to three fundamental entities: a field, a set of values that can be actualized at different places in the field, and an actualizer of the values. The theory is defended by using it to answer the main questions in metaphysics, such as: What is causality, existence, laws of nature, consciousness, thinking, free will, time, mathematical entities, ethical values, etc.? The theory is

compared with the main alternatives and argued to solve problems better than the existing theories. Several new theories are suggested, such as how to understand mental causation, free will and the truth of ethics and mathematics.

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There are many classical and unsolved problems in philosophy. Some examples: What is truth? How does the mind work? Do we have free will? What are the basic constituents of the world? What is time? What is goodness? And so on.

There are many different answers to these questions, but not only are there different answers, there are quite different ways of understanding the questions and their presuppositions. There are different theoretical frameworks, which means that there are different ways to conceptualize and categorize the basic structures and contents of the world. These theoretical frameworks determine how questions are understood and what are considered to be good or bad answers.

Different theoretical frameworks can be used to give different answers to problems, but in the end all theoretical frameworks will come to a point where no further explanation can be given. At these points, something is often said to be either a brute fact or something irreducible, and I will explain later why no theory can explain everything.

An interesting fact to note is that while some theoretical frameworks say that we have come to an irreducible entity that cannot be further explained, other theoretical frameworks may say that the entity in question does not exist at all, or that the whole problem is a misunderstood pseudo-problem.

Here are some examples (and I will get back to details on all of them): Different philosophers have different theories about what a cause is and what an effect is and how they are related. Others will say that there are no such things as causes and effects or an influence between them and that these concepts are superfluous; they are just imprecise ways of expressing something else that is really happening. While some find it important to discuss how to understand the influence from cause to effect or how absences can be causes, others will say it is pointless.

Another example: Different philosophers have different theories of free will. Some will say that being an agent is something irreducible and that agents cause their actions through an irreducible form of agent causation. Other philosophers will deny that there are agents in this sense at all, that there is agent

causation at all, or that there is free will or responsibility. Instead, everything is just physical processes in the brain, or something else. While some find it interesting to discuss how the agent can have a will that is free, others find it pointless as they claim there is no such thing as a will that can be free.

A common situation in philosophy is thus that people working within one theoretical framework can present something as a profound problem and suggest that something is the deepest answer that can be given, while people working in another theoretical framework can dismiss the whole problem as a pseudo-problem and say that the suggested answer refers to something that does not exist at all. Something that seems like an unanswered question about the world could be nothing but a problem resulting only from an incoherent theoretical framework introducing vague concepts that may not refer to anything at all.

Here are some more examples of problems where there is disagreement on whether there is a problem to solve at all: Should we try to solve the problem of how the present can move forward in time, or is there no present moving forward in time at all? Should we try to understand how the soul or consciousness can move the body, or is there no soul or consciousness at all? Should we search for objective truth, or is there no objective truth? Should we try to find out what the correct reference of a sentence is, or is there no such thing as the correct reference of a sentence? Should we try to find out how the laws of nature make things move, or are there no laws of nature making things move? Should we try to find out what kind of mind-independent existence numbers and geometrical figures have, or do they have no such existence at all? Should we try to find the exact probability of an event or a theory, or are there no such exact probabilities? The list could go on.

[In addition to the specific questions, the question of whether we have a problem to solve might make us ask when it is reasonable to seek for an explanation of something. The probability of life in the universe is very small, and researchers try to explain cases of so-called fine-tuning. The probability that I should be born is also very small, but nobody tries to explain why it happened, so what calls for an explanation? My own view is that as a point of departure, it is a goal to explain as much as possible. When it comes to actual resources used on finding answers, we find some questions more interesting than others. In many cases, chance is a perfectly good explanation, for example in the question of why I was born, and we see no reason to look further. In other cases, there are interesting alternatives on the table, for example in the question of fine-tuning, where multiverse hypotheses are discussed against God hypothesis and others. Interest in the question and interesting alternatives is thus what makes us continue looking for answers, even though ideally it would be nice to know the cause of as much as possible.]

In this book I am going to argue that very many problems in both philosophy and science come from theoretical frameworks that are ultimately incoherent, and that they can be solved (sometimes by being dissolved) by being translated into a more coherent theoretical framework. I will be suggesting a theoretical framework to test on several problems and argue that translating the relevant problem into the new framework shows either how the problem can be solved or why there was no real problem to be solved at all, but instead just a question with incoherent presuppositions.

Let us look at some examples of what various people think of as irreducible constituents of the world: physical particles, forces, gravity, space, time, fields, energy, mass, charge, spin, the wave function, laws of nature, causality, determinism or indeterminism, probability, modality (contingency, possibility,

necessity), truth, logic, language, understanding, thinking, intentionality, subjectivity, consciousness, persons or selves, freedom, responsibility, substances, properties, relations, dispositions, essences, universals, structures, numbers, moral values, beauty— and many more examples could be added to the list. The reader may want to ask him- or herself which of these entities are irreducible and necessary ingredients in a full description of the basic structures of the world and how it works.

While some claim that these are irreducible entities, others argue that they can be ontologically reduced, which means that what the concepts refer to is nothing but something that other concepts also refer to more precisely. A classic example is physical heat, which is ontologically reducible to molecular motion. That is not to say that we should get rid of the concept of physical heat, only that we can understand it even more precisely with other concepts and do not need heat in addition to explain what heat is. All theories of the world will have some basic constituents that cannot be reduced to something else, but these theories disagree on which are actually basic constituents.

Is it good to have as few irreducible entities as possible in your theory? Some are generally skeptical to reductionism, while others (myself included) find it a virtue in metaphysics to try to have as few loose ends as possible, in order to answer as many questions as possible. If you take the reductive approach, the following question is of high interest: What is the lowest number of basic constituents you need to explain everything else?

In this book I argue that the number is approximately four. That's right: 4 (and I will get back to why I added "approximately"). These four constituents (which will be thoroughly defined below) are (1) An area (or a field), (2) values that can be actualized at different places in the field, (3) something that actualizes the values, and (4) some rules that the actualizing follows. Everything else we have a name for (John, horse, jumping, brother, four, red, and absolutely everything else) is a structure we can discern among the values that can be actualized in the field (and even the event of discerning structures is a structure among the values in the field).

I wrote "approximately four" above, since I will return to the question of number of values and number of rules and whether these four entities can be reduced to each other. The rules will turn out to be implied by the structure of the actualizer, so one could well say that the number of basic constituents is three. But as an introductory statement, I will argue that any theory of the world must include values being actualized at a place according to rules, which means that no more basic coherent explanation can be given. I will also be arguing that very many problems in philosophy and natural science get solved or dissolved (with no interesting question left unanswered) when we translate the problems into this theoretical framework. The reader should of course initially be very skeptical towards such a claim, so the book itself must then be the defense of this claim.

Intended readers and goal of the book

When writing this book, I have imagined a stereotype reader, which is a young person studying first-year of philosophy wanting to know how everything in the world works— and I have been this young person myself earlier in life. Presumably, the book will be of greater interest to those who are familiar with some standard philosophical problems. But I have also noticed how many different kinds of people enjoy reading Bill Bryson's book *A Short History of Nearly Everything* or Yuval Noah Harari's books *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*, books which draws very big lines through all of history pointing out connections.

Reading such books gives a good feeling of understanding the big picture of how things work and how things are related in the world. When writing this book, I want to give readers the feeling that they can understand the workings of the world and the mind, and that even with just very simple mathematics, one can have a basic understanding of the relativity of time, the twin paradox, $E = mc^2$, the strange world of quantum mechanics, particle creation and annihilation, consciousness, free will, truth, and much, much more. Even if the theory I suggest in this book is wrong in different matters, at least it offers a good basis for considering other alternatives.

Another type of reader I have had in mind is a typical person working within science and getting in contact with bigger philosophical questions than what are usually dealt with within the particular discipline that he or she works within. The desire to see how things fit in a bigger picture is a desire I hope to contribute to satisfying. The theoretical framework in the book should at least fit well with your standard natural science.

There is not much history, context or background to each topic (which would have made the text extremely long), but instead the text is guided by numerous questions, to let the reader see how all these questions can be answered in a coherent way and get the feeling of understanding. Of course I may be wrong in many of the answers I suggest and still there will be questions that are not answered, but at least the book gives a unified suggestion of how to understand very many different basic things. It is not common for a book to cover such a large amount of topics, but it is a kind of book that I know I have been looking for, and maybe someone else has too.

The text may be longer than preferred by many, but I wanted it to be thorough enough not to be immediately rejected by people knowing the topics. If someone reads about these topics elsewhere after reading this book, I hope to have written enough about the topics here to be a serious discussion partner with other positions.

There are relatively more figures and details in the parts on physics than in those on ethics and politics. This is partly because the book has a greater focus on fundamental building blocks than on macro structures in society. Partly it is also because I assume that the general reader needs more help with understanding mathematics and physics than ethics and politics.

I realize that the outline of the book may be a bit confusing. The reason is that I want to do three things that are connected, in an order that makes it understandable, but with the unavoidable result that the big picture does not get really clear until the end. Some parts of the text are probably easier to understand if they are read again after having read the whole book. The three things I want to do is to answer a lot of different questions, but also to show how the answers are related and support each other, and finally to show how many things are reducible to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3. The topics are sorted in a way that let me explain first things I need in order for later explanations to make sense, but since everything is related, everything also gets gradually clearer.

Outline of the book

Here follows a detailed outline of the book. At the end of this section, there is a figure which summarizes the main points.

In Part One we look at what a “theoretical framework” means at all (in Chapter 2) before I present the specific theoretical framework that the book will be defending (in Chapter 3). Chapter 2 deals with

several methodological topics in addition to the concept of theoretical frameworks. What is it that we do when we understand something? How can our mind understand the world outside of the mind? What is truth and how do we know whether something is true?

I argue that we understand something by placing it at a certain place in a certain theoretical framework and relating it to other entities in the framework. A theoretical framework does not have to be words and sentences. Just relating images in our mind to each other without words is, in a broad sense, a theoretical framework and, in the deepest sense, what it means to understand something: to relate it to something else.

Understanding happens in the mind, but the mind wants to understand the rest of the world which is not mind (the world “outside” of the mind). However, we have no access to the world which is not mediated through our mind. How can the mind then discover something true about the world when there seems to be an unbridgeable gap between them?

The required link between mind and world is truth. I argue that the mind discovers what is true about the world by discovering what is the most coherent understanding of our experiences with the world. That a theory is coherent means that it is consistent, but also that it is more coherent the more data it is able to integrate and the more connections it is able to explicate between the data. I explain how coherence is a criterion of truth, which means that the most coherent theoretical framework is also the one best justified as true.

In Chapter 3 I present my own theoretical framework describing the basic ontological constituents of the world. This will be the theoretical framework used to answer all the other questions in the rest of the book. I use the terms “ontology” and “metaphysics” interchangeably simply to mean a theory of the most fundamental structures of the world.

I start by presenting some background knowledge from quantum field theory in physics. In this theory, there is a field for every elementary particle in the world, which includes the forces. Every field has its own field equation, and by using these we can find that certain qualitative values like mass, charge and spin come in different quantitative values (expressed by numbers) at different points in the field in accordance with the rules called field equations.

Similar to this picture from physics, I suggest that everything that exists is a field where qualitative values can be actualized in quantitative values according to rules. This idea is not very revolutionary when it comes to the physics, but I present a new suggestion on how to understand consciousness as a specific kind of qualia values actualized in a qualia field. Later in the book, I analyze different components of conscious experiences and how they could be structures of qualia values. This approach to understanding consciousness has some great advantages when it comes to the interaction between consciousness and the physical world, which I will say more about below.

According to the theory presented here, the basic constituents of the world are values actualized in a field according to rules. I argue that no ontology can be simpler, for any theory of the world must include something corresponding to fields, possible values, rules and actualizations, which again implies that the simplest ontology is the one employing just these basic entities and nothing more. But how should we understand more precisely the relation between these entities? What makes motion happen in the world according to rules?

I try to find the answer that gives as few unanswered questions as possible, but I also argue that whatever the most basic structure is, it has to be something quite incredible. The reason is that anything that has existed or happened in the history of the universe must have been possible from the very start, since otherwise it would not have existed or happened. That means that there must from the start have been something with an extraordinary potential for bringing forth things and events.

I find that the simplest combined understanding of the basic entities is to think that there is an actualizer which has a structure that implies that the values being actualized follow certain rules. This actualizer is again a structure in a field of possible values. This is certainly a complex structure, but it seems unavoidable to believe in the existence of its parts, and their combined existence is the simplest way of envisioning it.

Several other topics are discussed in Chapter 3. One of them is the question of existence. What is existence? What is it that all things that exist have in common? It seems very different to say that numbers exist, that horses exist, and that unicorns exist in our mind, but what is it that they have in common that legitimizes the use of “exist” in each case?

In the widest possible sense of the term “exist”, anything that has a structure exists. This then includes possible structures, like mathematical entities nobody has yet thought of. However, it is more common to use existence in a narrower sense than just referring to any possible entity having a structure. In the narrower sense of existence, anything that exists can be described by several features to exist is to be part of the fundamental structure, to be actualized, to be localized, to be registrable, and to have causal effect in a very wide sense of the term “causal”. This power to have causal effect, which could be thought of as the deepest sense of existence in the narrow sense, is the power of the basic structure to actualize values according to rules.

Another question discussed is the topic of modality. The three basic modal terms are “possible”, “impossible” and “necessary”, but what does it mean that something is possible, impossible or necessary? Is modality an irreducible part of the world, like many philosophers have suggested?

My suggestion is that modality is a theoretical framework where we use the concepts of possible, impossible and necessary to categorize entities in the world based on an initial set of presuppositions. That something is possible means that it expresses a consistent combination given the presuppositions. That something is impossible means that it expresses an inconsistent combination given the presuppositions. That something is necessary means that it is implied in the presuppositions and thus inconsistent to deny.

Here are some examples: Physical possibility, impossibility and necessity have the laws of nature as their presuppositions. Assuming that the laws are correct: If you describe something consistent with these laws, it is physically possible. If you describe something inconsistent with these laws, it is physically impossible. If you describe something implied by these laws, it is physically necessary. For example, in our universe it is physically possible to move slower than light; it is physically impossible to accelerate to a speed faster than light; and it is physically necessary that light travels at light speed in a vacuum.

Logical possibility, impossibility and necessity have the meaning of terms as their presuppositions. If you describe something which is consistent with the meaning of the terms used in the theoretical framework, it is logically possible. If you describe something which is inconsistent with the meaning of

the terms used in the theoretical framework, it is logically impossible. If you describe something which is (deductively) implied by the meaning of the terms used in the theoretical framework, it is logically necessary. For example, given that bachelor means unmarried man, it is logically possible that a bachelor is 40 years old, it is logically impossible that a bachelor is married, and it is logically necessary that a bachelor is unmarried.

Other kinds of possibility, impossibility and necessity are also dealt with in the chapter. We do not need modality as an irreducible entity on its own to describe the world. It suffices that there are rules according to which motion occurs, and that there are theoretical frameworks which can be consistent or inconsistent.

Other problems solved or dissolved in Chapter 3 are the following: What is a substance? How can a substance have properties? What is the haecceity or identity of a substance? What are universals, and how are they instantiated in particulars? What is the difference between abstract and concrete? What are dispositions and how do they work? I suggest that the concepts of substance, property, haecceity, universals and dispositions can all be ontologically reduced, and that they give rise to many pseudo-problems.

Having established a theoretical framework in Part One, we can start using it to solve problems, and in Part Two we look at problems in the philosophy of mind. How does the mind work? How can we think rational thoughts? What is consciousness and does it play a causal role in the world? Do we have free will and responsibility?

Some argue that there is something unique and irreducible to being an agent or a self who acts in the world. Persons cannot be reduced to nature; consciousness is non-physical, and we have free will and responsibility for our actions. Others argue that everything is reducible to causal processes in the brain and the body. Consciousness is physical and there are no such things as persons, selves, wills, freedom or responsibility.

In this part, I will be defending a causal theory of the mind. I must therefore start with a discussion of what causality is in Chapter 4. This will be important also in the chapter on free will, since I shall argue that free will is about being the cause of your own actions, and that how we understand the role of contrasts when selecting causes is important for understanding free will.

In Chapter 4, I discuss what causes and effects are and how they are related. What is the connection between a cause and the effect which makes the cause have the effect it has? There are two main positions in this question. According to the first view— called probability-raising – causation is something that makes something more likely to happen. For example, throwing a rock at a window is the cause of the window breaking since throwing a rock at a window makes it more probable that the window will break. According to the second view— called process linkage – causation is a physical connection between cause and effect. This physical connection can be understood for example as transfer of energy or momentum or force or something else.

My own suggestion is somewhat similar to the analysis of modality. Categorizing something as causes and effects is a theoretical framework that can be used to categorize many relations in the world in many different disciplines. For example, a biologist could say that a mutation causes a new skill for an

organism, a psychologist could say that shame causes a man to blush, and an anthropologist could say that education for women causes them to have fewer children.

The theoretical framework of cause and effect is a coarse-grained and imprecise framework for analysis. There is nothing unique called causation that happens between these causes and their effects. There is no influence moving from the cause to the effect that is a physical connection or does something to raise the probability of the effect.

What happens is that we often see similar states of affairs followed by similar states of affairs and assume that this cannot be a coincidence, but rather we categorize the first state of affairs as the cause and the second state of affair as the effect. But nothing called causation happens between the cause as cause and the effect as effect. Rather, calling them causes and effects are coarse and shortcut descriptions of something that happens at a more basic level where values are actualized according to rules. Causation is thus an efficient way of saying that B follows (is caused by) A in virtue of laws of nature interacting with (among others) (the constituents of) A. Causation as an influence from cause to effect is thus ontologically reducible, and many philosophical problems of causation are pseudo-problems, like how can an absence have a causal effect, e.g. how could not watering the flower cause the flower to die?

After having discussed in Chapter 4 what causation is, I continue in Chapter 5 with describing how the mind can be understood causally. There are different philosophers, for example agent causationists or substance dualists, who will reject the idea that we can understand the mind as a normal causal process (similar to other causal processes). In order to argue that it is superfluous to include irreducible agents or souls into one's ontology, I must present a detailed causal understanding of the mind. I present in detail the topics of mind, thinking, consciousness and free will in one chapter each in order to show how it is possible that persons thinking and making free choices can be ontologically reduced to causal processes between values actualized in fields.

In Chapter 5, I start by presenting how mind could evolve as a causal process. We see many reasons to think that causal processes in the brain cause the content of our conscious experiences. When it comes to the experience of being a self, I use Antonio Damasio to distinguish between the autobiographical self, which is a storage of memories in the brain, and the core self, which is a stream of conscious impulses. It seems strange to think that a choice could be a causal process. Some philosophers will say that a choice means that certain motives or reasons have been considered rationally by an agent who then makes a free choice among them, and that this cannot be reduced to a normal causal process.

However, this description of agents making choices is a quite coarse-grained description of a choice. How does one of several motives get chosen and how does it lead to action? A common answer to questions like these is that irreducible agents employ irreducible agent causation through irreducible rationality. I argue instead that the claims of irreducibility show that the theory is unable to answer the questions because it uses the wrong categories to answer, but that we can do better.

Here is a way to understand a choice as a causal process: a sense impression enters the brain and activates from memory alternatives for action which again activate desires connected to each alternative for action. The alternatives also activate memories from the autobiographical self about previous experiences with the alternatives, and these memories are connected with emotions. The remembered emotions can influence which alternative we desire the strongest. When a desire is strong enough that a

threshold has been reached and nothing blocks it, a signal is sent to the motor neurons to activate an action scheme, and this constitutes making a choice.

Even if thinking is part of the mind, the topic of thinking has its own chapter in Chapter 6. Many could probably accept that emotions, memories and desires are causal processes, but how can thinking be rational if it is a causal process? Several philosophers have objected to the idea of thinking as a causal process by arguing that it undermines itself: thinking cannot be rational if it is causal. Then it is just particles being pushed around by laws of nature with no rational goal.

The chapter is based on the grounded cognition theory of mind, and argues that thinking works mainly by organizing parts into wholes. The brain registers features through feature-detecting neurons, and organizes them into wholes that we call objects, consisting of parts, which are their properties, all of which are stored in memory. Events are also stored in memory and can be understood as wholes consisting of parts (subevents).

Reasoning, like thinking in general, is about finding out which parts belong together in which wholes. Deductive reasoning is to determine whether something is part of a whole. For example, does the whole “All humans are mortals and Socrates is a human” include as a part “Socrates is mortal”? Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, is to group something together as a whole. For example, a lot of white ducks is grouped together as the whole “all ducks are white”; or “Jones having this and this motive”, “Jones having his fingerprints on the knife”, and “White being dead” is put together in the whole “Jones killed White with a knife for this and this motive”.

Through evolution, rationality has evolved as a means to reach goals, and finding out what is plausibly true is a useful means to many goals. Brains that operate with causal processes that also give rational results have been selected through evolution. I explain this in further detail in the chapter on the causal role of consciousness.

In Chapter 7, I discuss consciousness. What is consciousness, and how does it relate to the physical world? This topic contains some really big questions, and I will be proposing several new theories.

Conscious experiences are often defined by saying that there is something it is like for a subject to experience them (Nagel, 1974, p. 436). Presumably it is not like anything for a hat to be a hat or for a hat to hear a trumpet sound, but there is something it is like for me to be me, or for me to hear a trumpet sound, and the trumpet sound is different from a flute sound because they are different conscious experiences, the content of which are often called qualia. Qualia define like this are the same as phenomenal conscious experiences, the qualitative experiences we are aware of, like sense impressions, thoughts, feelings, and desires. I use “consciousness” and “qualia” in a very wide sense. Qualia are all the structures you can be conscious of: a red tomato that you consciously experience is a quale, consisting of the qualia red, round, tasty etc., and so is the conscious thought of a tomato, all of which I argue it is like something to have.

What is consciousness? We should distinguish the content of conscious experiences (like a tomato or a chair) from what qualia are made of (their ontological status). We know of physical values that can be actualized in physical fields, and I argue that qualia are values that can be actualized in a qualia field. The specific values give the content of the qualia. For example, conscious experiences of light come in degrees of qualia values of hue, brightness and saturation; conscious experiences of sound come in

degree of qualia values of pitch, loudness and timbre; and in this chapter I describe a similar analysis for tastes, odors, emotions, and thoughts.

How can something physical produce conscious experiences, which seem so different from everything physical that they deserve to be called non-physical? The interaction problem is a famous problem concerning how to understand the relation between consciousness and the physical. It is very difficult to understand how two such different things could interact at all, and it is difficult to combine with energy conservation and the fact that there always seems to be sufficient physical causes for every physical event.

I propose the following solution: From physics we know that fields can interact with each other. I hypothesize that physical activity in the brain – either at the neuronal level or at the fundamental level – can activate excitations in qualia fields– either at the fundamental qualia level or at higher levels of configurations of qualia values. This explanation has a great advantage when it comes to the interaction problem, since field interactions in physics happen at the level of their field equations. If there are rules for how physical fields behave and rules for how qualia fields behave, it does not seem like an impossible interaction that these rules could be combined, just like other rules combine at a mathematical level in the interaction between fields in physics. The physical events do the causal job, and so no energy conservation is disturbed. It thus solves several problems, but others are still unanswered: why is there any connection at all between consciousness and the physical world?

How could brains be connected to specific qualia values through evolution? The theory I propose is that in the beginning, brains connected to random qualia values in a chaotic manner from a much larger reservoir of qualia values than we know today, but over time, those brains that connected to qualia that were useful for survival were the ones that survived. But how is it possible for consciousness to have a beneficial effect when it seems that consciousness plays no causal role at all in our world? It seems that non-conscious zombies could have done everything we do with no causal role for consciousness.

Another huge problem to deal with is the problem that there are many reasons to think that consciousness can play no causal role in the world, since there seems to be a closed system of physical causes making anything happen where energy is conserved and where there is no place for consciousness. On the other hand, it seems that evolution has selected conscious beings for a reason, which gives us a reason to think that consciousness must have a causal effect. There are thus good reasons to think that consciousness plays no causal role and to think that it does play a causal role. How can this problem be solved?

To solve the problem, I argue that we must distinguish between on the one hand how neural patterns in the brain are connected to qualia structures in our conscious mind and on the other hand how neural patterns in the brain are connected to physical structures in the physical world (and this distinction is usually not made in discussions of the topic). Neural patterns have gotten consistently related to qualia structures that are simple and useful representations of the world. While there are many similarities, the qualia structures are also different from the physical world structures, and it has had a beneficial effect for brains to be consistently related to qualia structures as opposed to just being consistently related to structures in the physical world, especially when we make choices. The reason they are useful lies in being simpler than but partly structurally similar to the world, which allows for more efficient choices. What I argue in the chapter is that our brains work more efficiently when – through evolution– they

have been related to physical structures in the world via simple conscious structures in our conscious mind than if they had been merely connected to physical structures in the world and working non-consciously only.

The causal role of qualia is then not to be found in particular choices, because neural patterns do the causal work in every particular situation. But these specific neural patterns have been selected through evolution because of the qualia they were connected to. They have been selected because qualia which are structurally similar to— but simpler versions of— world structures have allowed neural patterns to make more efficient and beneficial inferences and to guide action in beneficial ways. This is probably not so easy to understand in a first presentation, and I must refer to the chapter for details. Several other problems on consciousness are also discussed in this chapter, such as why evolutionarily beneficial actions feel good; how to understand subjectivity; where consciousness is located; and how my consciousness is connected to my body and your consciousness to your body. Especially the theory of what consciousness is, how to understand the interaction between consciousness and the physical, and the causal role of consciousness are new theories presented here for the first time.

Chapters 4 to 7 on causality, mind, thinking and consciousness present a detailed understanding of the mind, which can be used to discuss free will and responsibility in Chapter 8. Having free will means that a choice is up to you, and that you are the ultimate cause or source of the choice, but how is that possible given that the world is either determined or indetermined? If the world is determined, what happens was determined long before we were born, but if the world is not determined, it seems that there is too much good luck or bad luck that make us who we are and what we do, so that we do not have enough control to have free will and responsibility.

I argue that a choice is a causal process and that the autobiographical self can influence which desire becomes the strongest and leads to action. This does not seem to help secure free will, for even if the autobiographical self can cause choices, there must be other causes that made the autobiographical self what it is.

I describe in this chapter how the autobiographical self can be the cause of its own content over time. It happens when the autobiographical self-causes choices which cause experiences which are stored in the memory of that autobiographical self. These experiences change the autobiographical self, which again causes new choices, and in this way the autobiographical self-shapes itself over time, which I call becoming a more independent autobiographical self (self-formation).

I argue that the world is indetermined, and that there will be indetermined scenarios where it is right to select the autobiographical self as the ultimate cause of the choice. Free will (and responsibility) come in degrees, and by developing a more and more independent autobiographical self which can be the cause of choices, we become more and more free and responsible.

To have control is fundamentally to be the cause of a choice (nuances to this claim will be added later). We are certainly influenced by luck, but over time choices are less and less dependent on luck to become what they become. Different people have different degrees of free will anyway, so the fact that luck influences us does not show that we do not have free will to different degrees.

I argue that holding people responsible is a general practice of cultivating moral behavior through blame and praise, even if this may not be the motive in many specific cases. This practice presupposes people

being responsible in the sense that they can take praise and blame into consideration in a normal process of deliberation.

This chapter on free will and responsibility concludes Part Two on the mind. All central concepts like persons, selves, thinking, deliberation, choices, free will, among others, are understood as configurations of values being actualized either in the physical field or the qualia field, and they are related to each other as elements interacting in a causal process.

Part Three of the book deals with various elements in the world different from the mind, and again an important goal is to show how very many things that could seem to be irreducible entities can be reduced to values actualized in a field.

I start with the concept of time in Chapter 9. There are many different questions that should be answered by a coherent theory of time, some of which are the following: What is time? Does time flow? What is “now”? Is time relative? What is the structure (topology) of time – how does past, present and future relate to each other? Are statements about the future true? What, if anything, is the cause of time? Are there points of time? Is time continuous or discrete? Why does time move forward– why does time have an arrow? Is time travel possible? How does time relate to the mind? Does time pass when there is no motion? Is time infinite in the past and forward directions? Was there time before the Big Bang? When will time end?

A central question in the philosophy of time is the question of whether time flows or not. On the one hand, you find those who defend a block universe where past, present and future all exist at once. This is called eternalism. All motion is an illusion according to this view, and it is the most prominent among philosophers of time. On the other hand, you find those who defend presentism– the view that only the present exists, and that now or the present is a special moment of time moving through history.

If eternalism is true, then we do not have free will in the sense that I described in Chapter 8. I will defend presentism in the chapter on time. An important argument in favor of the block universe is that there is no universal simultaneity in the theory of relativity. The argument is roughly as follows: There is no universal simultaneity, which means that what is future to me is past to someone else, but how can the future be open if it is already in the past of someone else? The lack of universal simultaneity thus implies that everything is fixed and no motion happens.

To deal with this argument I present the theory of relativity and explain why it is a very useful theoretical framework in physics. However, it is not impossible to define a universal simultaneity even if physics does not need it (and sometimes physics does need it, such as when determining the age of the universe).

I suggest a thought experiment to show that we can make sense of universal simultaneity: Imagine the reference frame of the universe as a lattice work of synchronized cameras permeating the whole universe and taking a picture at one point of time, as defined by this frame. The pictures could be combined into one big snapshot of the universe where one could see some objects being contracted. This cannot be done in practice, and black holes would disturb parts of it, and it is a definition of universal simultaneity which physics has no need for, but it is a definition of universal simultaneity that makes sense, contrary to those who say that no such concept can make sense given relativity theory.

For many of the problems in the philosophy of time, things get muddled because central terms can be understood in different ways. I solve many of these problems by specifying definitions of central terms like time, now, simultaneous, past and future. I argue that the basic meaning of “time” is motion, which means that time is not an entity with its own existence beyond motion. The word “time” can also be used for measurement of motion. Such measurement can be understood as an abstract and hypothetical measurement of time for the whole universe, but we also use it for actual measurements of time, either globally or locally, and with different means for measuring time. Finally, the word “time” is used for our conscious experience of motion. We should specify whether we speak of time as motion, time as an abstract or hypothetical measurement of motion, time as different actual measurements of motion, or time as experience of motion. Since time is merely motion which can be measured, it means that time is reducible to values being actualized in an area. The other terms connected to time are defined in Chapter 9.

The main point is that time as measurement is a theoretical framework that is used to categorize motion and events, which are actualizations of values in a field. Time is not needed as an irreducible ingredient in the world beyond the actualization of values according to rules.

Chapter 10 is on mathematical entities. Together with moral values they are typical examples of entities that many think cannot be reduced to something else, but rather they must have their own existence in a kind of platonic world. It is thus an extra challenge to see if it is possible to reduce it to the theoretical framework suggested in this book.

Mathematical truths are special in seemingly being a priori (not depending on natural states of affairs), necessary (they could not have been otherwise), and abstract (not part of space, time or causal chains). How can they be so? What are mathematical entities like numbers and geometrical figures, ontologically speaking?

Mathematical entities are possible structures and patterns among qualia values – structures that are thinkable, and which were possible to think about even before somebody actually thought of them – and many of the ones we have thought about, we may still only have a coarse understanding of, meaning that we do not fully see their implications.

When mathematicians develop theoretical frameworks, they have a roughly clear set of entities they think of as mathematical entities that they try to relate to each other coherently. Mathematical theories are developed by starting with some axioms and rules and exploring implications. Sometimes such exploration leads to inconsistency and the theory is thrown away, but often it also happens that one either faces questions that cannot be answered, so that one need more axioms, or there is a need for distinctions because of ambiguities (or to dissolve an inconsistency), or something that seemed meaningless can be made meaningful by introducing new elements to the theory. In other words: problems get solved by expanding the theoretical framework.

Here are some examples: All numbers can be multiplied with themselves– squared– or taken the squareroot of, and some will have a whole number as a result when you take the square root. Taking the square root of negative numbers was considered impossible until someone invented imaginary numbers, where the imaginary number i is defined as the square root of -1 . Some questions do not have definite answers given the theoretical framework. What is 0 divided by 0 ? It can be 0 , since 0 divided by

something is 0; or it can be 1, since a number divided by itself is 1; or it can be infinite, since a number divided by 0 is infinite. Some will say that the question of 0 divided by 0 is wrong or illegitimate. since it is not definable in the framework, but that is just to support my point. Asking for the square root of minus 1 was considered to be a wrong or illegitimate question until imaginary numbers were invented thus extending the framework. Distinguishing between infinities of different size would be yet an example of expanding the framework.

When discussing the truth of mathematics, we should distinguish between truth in two different senses: truth relative to theoretical framework and truth relative to the most coherent theoretical framework. Truth relative to theoretical framework, means that a statement is true if it is coherently connected with the rest of the framework of which it is part. For example, the statement that the sum of angles in a triangle adds to 180 degrees is always true in Euclidian flat geometry, but not always true in Riemannian curved geometry. It is true that $2 + 3 = 3$ in tropical geometry, since it is that theoretical framework that defines the meaning of the terms. It is the theoretical framework that determined what plus means and it is the theoretical framework that must determine how to answer the question of what 0 divided by 0 is. This is then truth relative to framework, determined by whether the framework is coherent. But we can also make sense of mathematical truth in the sense of what would be true relative to the most coherent mathematical theoretical framework (as opposed to just being true relative to a theoretical framework).

How can mathematical statements be true? They can be true relative to a theoretical framework by being coherently integrated in a theoretical framework, but we can also single out certain mathematical statements as the ones that are true in the most coherent theoretical framework. In any case they are made true by the integration in the theoretical framework and the fundamental possibilities of patterns in qualia values.

Why are mathematical truths a priori? They are a priori partly because their truth depends only on the meaning of the basic structures of the theoretical framework and not on our experiences, and they are a priori because they depend only on what are possible patterns among qualia values and not on which patterns have been actualized in the physical world.

Why are mathematical truths necessary? They are necessary in a theoretical framework because their truth is given by the basic axioms of the theoretical framework. That something is necessary means that it is true given the basic assumptions in the theoretical framework, and thus inconsistent to deny given the presuppositions, but the axioms themselves are not necessary (unless they are logically necessary in the sense that they are inconsistent to deny). They are also necessary because they are different descriptions of the same structure. There is a structure such that $2 + 2$ and 4 are both descriptions of its parts.

Why are mathematical truths abstract? The mathematical truths we have discovered are abstract because they are narrow relations abstracted by the mind where we disregard the individuals they can relate. Fundamentally, mathematical entities are possible patterns in qualia values, and thus abstract as opposed to actualized physical values.

Chapter 11 is on probability. This topic is important for understanding in more detail probabilistic causation, the role of probability in quantum mechanics, and the role of estimating probability when making ethical judgments about what to do.

What is probability? Is it an objective feature of the world which give events a certain probability of occurring? Is it a quality of theories depending on how much evidence there is for the theory? Or is it a subjective degree of belief— how probable an individual finds something to be?

In this chapter I argue that we make a mistake if we try to find out what probability really is. There are many different kinds of probability, and what makes them into types of probability is that probability is a theoretical framework with rules for how to calculate probability, which fits (more or less) with different phenomena in the world. Probability is not an entity of its own, but a set of concepts we can use to analyze and describe in more detail different phenomena in the world, such as the relation between causal powers, different pieces of evidence or different beliefs.

In other words, probability is a theoretical framework, the status of which can be understood more precisely in terms of the theoretical framework developed in this book. I distinguish between ontological probability and epistemic probability. Ontological probability claims are about states of affairs that will happen, and they are made true by how causal powers work in the world. Epistemic probability claims are about the relation between evidence and explanations. As objective statements they are made true by the coherence of the explanation. Subjectively understood, they are about the belief of persons, and are made true by mental processes in the mind of the persons.

I also distinguish between past and future, because it is useful for understanding epistemic probability claims. When subjective or objective epistemic probability claims are made about the past, what happened has ontological probability 1, and thus it is only the evidence which determines the suggested probability value. But when subjective or objective epistemic probability claims are made about the future, the ontological probability together with the evidence determines the suggested probability value.

Take for example the claim “the probability of rain tomorrow is 50%”. This may be a person’s statement expressing his own belief that he is very uncertain about whether it will rain, but without knowing any evidence. But an expert may also have seen all the evidence of what the weather will be and say that the probability of rain is 50%, and then the ontological probability of rain may be 50%, while the epistemic probability of that hypothesis may be almost 100% (because it is very certain that the world is such that rain may occur with 50% ontological probability).

These three kinds of probability thus relate to each other in the following way: Ontological probability is about states of affairs in the world; objective epistemic probability is about the evidence for which states of affairs actually occur in the world; and subjective epistemic probability is about how individual persons evaluate that evidence. Each kind depends on the previous to become what it is, while it is not the other way around. In other words, the subjective probability I assign to something is based on the evidence I have access to, which is based on facts about states of affairs in the world.

I have dealt in more detail with the basic qualia values in the chapter on consciousness, but throughout the book I often speak about basic physical values without going more into detail. Chapter 12 will look more into the fundamental entities in physics. In this chapter I deal with physical values like energy and

mass. By understanding some simple rules on how mass, energy and momentum relate, we can understand surprisingly much about how particles and objects move in the world, and even how particles are created and annihilated.

But what are values like force, mass and energy, and spin? Physicists can give very precise formal definitions relating the terms to each other, but there are very few suggestions at all when it comes to the ontological status of spin, charge, mass or energy (what they are “in themselves” – what their internal structure is as opposed to their relation to other concepts).

My hypothesis is that (most of) them are general relations that hold between many different individuals in the world, which fundamentally arise from structures to be found in the rules that nature follows in guiding motion in the world. This means that concepts like mass and energy, etc., do not refer to something that has its own physical existence at all, but instead express some common structures in the rules that nature follows.

This hypothesis is supported by the fact that there is nothing we can isolate that is a piece of energy or a piece of mass or a piece of momentum or a piece of spin or a piece of charge – nor are these properties that consist of something known. Their ontological structure is unknown, and we can only describe them in terms of their effects. Of course, they may be configurations of some deeper physical and yet unknown structure like superstrings or quantum foam, which physics may discover. I make a suggestion that physical quantities may be reduced to a force having magnitude and direction in points, and I relate it to the reflections previously made on the meaning of existence and actualization, unifying all three: the energy of motion, the essence of existence, and the power of actualization are one and the same fundamental actualizer.

Having looked at the physics of relativity and basic concepts in physics, reflecting on the basic structures of the world would not be complete without a visit to quantum mechanics, which is the topic for Chapter 13. It is a non-technical presentation focusing on how-to solve the typical mysterious problems of quantum mechanics.

I start by presenting a list of problems that a good theory of quantum mechanics should solve: The double slit experiment where particles behave like waves, and how the interference effects disappears when you monitor the particles; the effects of scrambling and reversing results depending on what you choose to measure; entanglement where measuring one particle has immediate effects on another particle regardless of how faraway it is; understanding the important Born rule and understanding the measurement problem: why do measurements have determinate outcomes, the probability of which is given by the Born rule instead of there just being a determined evolution giving superpositions, which the formalism would make you expect? And finally: what does quantum mechanics tell us about the world? What should we take to exist as irreducible entities and what are merely mathematical representations?

Contrary to what one should think reading much about what is written about quantum mechanics, surprisingly good answers can be given to these questions. In this chapter I lean heavily on how Tim Maudlin argues that the problems should be solved, ending with some suggestions of my own relating quantum mechanics to the rest of the book. The chapter also contains an excursus reflecting on why we have the laws of nature that we do.

The chapter on quantum mechanics ends Part Three, and then Part Four deals with the future, starting with Chapter 14 on ethics. It is placed in the part on the future, because I define the good in light of a future possible world.

The existence of moral values is another typical example of something which many claim cannot be reduced to something natural. Most ethicists are realists about moral values but have very different views on what makes moral claims true. On the one hand, moral claims seem to have the same form as other sentences that can be true, and it seems perfectly fine to say that it is true that one should not kill for fun. But how should one check to find out that it is true?

This is a central question in metaethics, where the supernaturalists refer to the will of God to explain moral values but non-naturalists refer to non-natural moral values— the good in the platonic world would be a typical example, while naturalists believe that moral values are something natural. One version of such naturalism holds that normative terms can be translated to naturalistic terms, and I defend such a reductionist naturalistic view.

I argue that the good is a concept we make up to describe a particular possible world in the future that we think is the best possible world according to a particular standard, and we hypothesize that there is also a best way to reach the goal. This is enough to give meaning to normative terms like “good” and “should”, and there is no normative force or moral values existing in a platonic world beyond the concepts invented by humans to describe a possible world. Ethics is thus a theoretical framework describing a path towards the future that the supporters of the framework suggest that people should follow.

In more detail, I suggest the following definition of The Good: The Good is that possible world which an all-knowing and all-sympathetic being would know would most probably be valued the most by the most. In simpler words, ethics is about finding the best possible way to the best possible world, based on what would be valued the most.

The definition of The Good is actually a definition of what is, morally speaking, the best. A lot of possible worlds and actions could still be good without being the best, so there is a sliding scale between good, better and best. On the other side, The Bad is that possible world which an all-knowing and all-sympathetic being would know would most probably be devaluated the most by the most. The Bad is then actually the morally worst possible world, so there is a sliding scale from bad to worse to the worst possible world. The terms “should” and “ought” can now be descriptively defined as means to a goal. Given that The Good is the goal, one should or ought to do this and this, while one should not or ought not do this and this, given that we want to avoid the bad.

I discuss this view against a series of objections and test cases, especially the trolley dilemma and the question of human value and human rights, and whether one can defend the view that all humans have the same value and also greater value than animals.

Chapter 15 is about the future, and there I try to draw some more concrete implications for three different topics about what has been said so far. The first topic is what to think of the meaning of life of individuals— what is the goal of an individual life and why is it worth trying to reach that goal? The second is what the theory of mind and free will in this book implies for the possibility of superintelligent

machines. The third is what the ethics implies for more practical political goals— how to proceed in reaching the best way to the best world.

Finally, Chapter 16 is an epilog reflecting on the deepest possible level of explanation, and even daring speculation on how to answer the question of why anything exists at all.

While I claim to answer a huge list of problems, I assume that many of the readers of this book will think that I have not really solved any big problems, but instead merely redefined terms and escaped the real problems. Instead of having explained things I can be accused of having explained them away. Instead of explaining causes, time, agents, substances, universals, etc., I have only explained something else and let the causes, agents, etc., remain unexplained.

My standard reply to such challenges is that I have tried to give a more coherent explanation in my theoretical framework of what those concepts are trying to express in their ultimately incoherent theoretical framework, and that the traditional understanding refers to something that does not exist. Whether I am right depends on whether there is something left unexplained that we have good reason to believe exists. Just throwing out a term for something I have not explained is not a good argument if we do not have a good reason to think that it exists.

This short comment is reminiscent of a discussion between P. F. Strawson and Rudolf Carnap where Strawson challenged Carnap by saying that he did not solve problems but changed them instead. Carnap replied that it is good if the doctor uses a scalpel instead of a pocket knife to solve the problem, meaning that sometimes a vague question needs to be translated into several more precise and different questions. Herman Cappelen thinks Carnap's answer is evasive, while I find it good: sometimes the best answer to a question is to point out that the problems are created by how the question is formulated.

This book is about the interrelations between many large topics, which means that there is not space to discuss each of them in the depth they deserve. The central point of the book is the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3. I develop a specific theoretical framework, and apply it to many different problems to show its usefulness. This approach allows me to show the significance of the main idea for a broad range of topics. As will be clear, the main issues in metaphysics are interdependent, and thus it is very useful to show how the main idea creates coherence across different areas. My intention is to show how the coherent interrelation between the topics support each other, and I hope that readers can see the potential of the main approach even if they have quarrels with details.

The disadvantage with this broad approach is that while I do respond to main objections, there remain many objections that I do not answer. I have published an appendix online with answers to objections for every subchapter that one can consult, and I appreciate being sent objections not yet answered. The appendix will be continuously updated, so it will always have a version number on it that one should refer to if citing it.

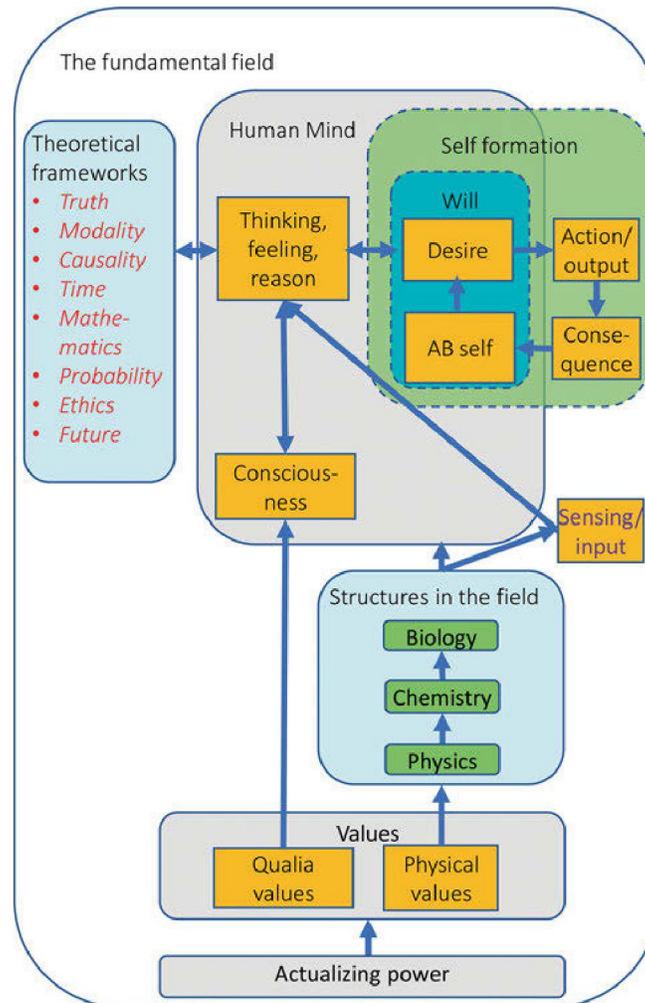


Fig. 1: The world

After this long presentation, I have tried to summarize it in a figure (Figure 1). There are three basic constituents: the actualize, the possible values and the field. These three together give us the content of the world with its laws, geometry, objects (including humans) and conscious experiences. When it comes to truth, modality, causality, time, mathematics, probability, ethics and the future, these are all theoretical frameworks that we use to sort the contents of the world (patterns in the values) and describe relations in the world (also patterns in the values).

Part One of this book covers the boxes in the bottom, describing how the fundamental actualizing power actualizes patterns in values. Part Two takes us through chemistry and biology to the two boxes above representing human mind and free will. Part Three unfolds the content of the box in the top left corner, representing different theoretical frameworks that the mind has constructed, describing the world outside of the mind. Part Four is about the last points in that box– ethics and the future. This

description of the four parts is only roughly true, since various subtopics have been moved around in order to be presented in the order that makes it easiest to understand.

Mind and world

We have good reason to think that there is something outside of our minds, in the sense that there exists something which is not identical to contents of mind, here used in the sense of conscious mental representations of the world. Some common reasons to think so: It seems clear that we can be wrong and that everyone can be wrong, for example if everyone thought the sun orbited the earth. It seems clear that some understandings are better than others, for example that it is better to believe that the earth is round rather than flat or square. And it seems clear that we cannot with our mind determine what the world should be like, but rather the world causes parts of our mind to have certain contents different from other contents. For example, I cannot choose to run happily through a hard wall; rather it is the case that if I try, the world then causes the content of my mind to be that my head hurts from trying to run through a hard wall.

On the other hand, we all experience that we have no access to the world except the access we have to the contents of our minds. When we discover that we were wrong about something, new content in our mind has replaced old content. If I, instead of thinking about a chair, go to experience the chair itself, all I experience is content in my mind – the visual impression of the chair, the feeling of the hardness of the chair, etc. All empirical tests of ideas that we make in order to grasp the world itself, and all data we collect, are experiences that we know as content of our minds. There is no experience and no access to the world that is not given to us as content in our minds. If you say to someone “Do not tell me how you think the world is, but how it actually is”, this is an impossible order, since nobody can say other than how they think the world is.

Note first the important difference between individual minds and mind at all. We can know and experience something outside the mind of a particular individual, but we cannot experience something outside of mind at all, or know anything about it. Note secondly that there is a distinction to be drawn between mind at all and what is outside of mind at all, but this is a distinction that we draw within mind. When we talk about what is inside of mind and outside of mind, everything we think about and talk about is still inside of mind. Yes, dinosaurs existed before humans and the universe existed before mind evolved on earth, but all of this we can relate to in our mind only.

There is still a difference between mind and something which is not identical to mind. We have reason to believe that something which is not mind makes it the case that the content of our minds is a certain way rather than another. The fact that our experiences are structured a certain way indicates that there also is structure outside of our minds. But we cannot say, think or know anything about it except as we relate to it in our minds. When we say something is true or exists or is independent of mind and language, all we talk about are still contents in our mind.

I find this frustrating. There is good reason to think that there is a difference between an individual's mind content which is that “John sits in the chair” and the state of affairs in the world that John sits in the chair (“states of affairs “will be further defined below). And still there is not one thing that we can say or think or know or experience about the state of affairs that John sits in the chair which is not also the content of some mind. There are and have been many states of affairs in the world that are possible for mind store late to before any mind has actually related to it, and yet we can only relate to it through

our minds. As seen above, there are many reasons to think that there is something which is not mind which makes us have a certain experience of John sitting in the chair, but everything we want to say about this mind-external something is still content of our minds. Similarly, we have good reason to think that there are atoms, but everything we know about atoms we know as contents of our minds. When we want to relate to the world directly, the mind is an impenetrable wall outside of which we cannot come.

A bit more detailed comment on the illustration: nothing can be said, thought or known about the area outside the circle because whatever you then say, think or know will automatically be located within the circle. From within the circle you can know that it is true that nothing can be said about the area outside of the circle because it would be inconsistent to deny this (since if you say something about the area outside of the circle it is automatically located within the circle). Within the circle you may hypothesize about the area outside of the circle, but anything you hypothesize is understood on the conditions within the circle, which means that anything you might discover would be something previously unknown but still within the circle.

In this section I have spoken only of mind as a process where entities are understood by being related to each other. Such a mind process can be understood as a very simple theoretical framework for understanding. In more advanced forms of understanding, theoretical frameworks are “instruments that make possible the articulation, conceptualization, and explanation of theoretical contents or subject matters” (Puntel, 2008, p. 24). A theoretical framework will have a language (semantics and syntax), a logic and conceptuality, and the different components of the theoretical apparatus (Puntel, 2008, p. 9). While usually expressed in normal words in spoken languages, I use the term “language” very broadly here to refer to any system of signs related to each other. This means that images in our mind related to each other also constitute a simple theoretical framework that we use to understand the world as long as there are some systematic relations between them.

Above I said that we understand something by relating it to something else. Another way of saying the same is that everything we understand we understand by placing it at a certain place in a certain theoretical framework. Nothing is understandable outside of a theoretical framework, since placing something at a certain place in a certain theoretical framework is what it means to understand something. You will never find an example of something you understand which is not something you understand in a theoretical framework. This means that anything gets its cognitive meaning from its place in a theoretical framework, and that its meaning is relative to the theoretical framework. We will get back to what that means for the question of truth.

The way that natural science tries to relate directly to the world is through predictions and experiments, which gives us good reason to think that certain claims about the world are true or false. But there is no direct access to the world, and it is not the world itself that corrects us. Rather, there are new understandings of the world which replace old understandings of the world because the new understandings are more coherent than the old ones. Understanding the relation between mind and the world is closely connected to how we understand truth... <>

Nothing can be said about this area

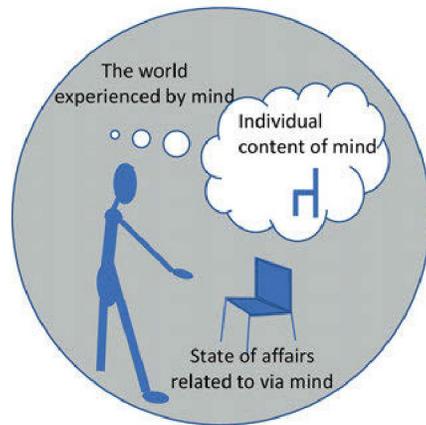


Fig. 2: Mind and world

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPINOZA

by Henry E. Allison [Cambridge University Press,
9781009098199]

Spinoza's thought placed in its historical and philosophical context, ideal for students new to his work.

Aimed at those new to studying Spinoza, this book provides a comprehensive introduction to his thought, placing it in its historical and philosophical contexts, and assessing its critical reception. In addition to providing an analysis of Spinoza's metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, and ethical views in the Ethics, Henry Allison also explores his political theory and revolutionary views on the Bible, as well as his account of Judaism, which led to the excommunication of the young Spinoza from the Jewish community in Amsterdam. Although the book's main focus is on the analysis of Spinoza's views, including a close reading of the central arguments of the Ethics, it also considers many of the standard objections to these arguments as well as possible responses to them. This completely revised and updated new edition, the third, of Allison's classic book, with two new chapters, will help a new generation of students to understand and value Spinoza's work.

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Preface

Acknowledgments

Note on the Text

List of Abbreviations

I The Life of Spinoza

I.1 The Jewish Community in Amsterdam and Spinoza's Life Within It

I.2 The Years at Rijnsburg, 1660-1663

- 1.3 The Years at Voorburg, 1663-1670
- 1.4 The Years at The Hague, 1670-1677
- 2 Spinoza's Philosophy in Its Historical Context
 - 2.1 The Roots of Spinoza's Philosophy in the New Science and Its Conception of Nature, and the Relevance of Descartes
 - 2.2 Some Central Themes in Spinoza's Philosophy
 - 2.3 The Geometrical Method
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- 8 The Individual and the State
 - 8.1 Natural Law and the Social Contract: Hobbes versus Grotius
 - 8.2 Spinoza's Critique of Hobbes
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 - 8.4 Forms of Governance
- 9 The Theology of the Theological-Political Treatise
 - 9.1 The Critique of Revelation
 - 9.2 The Critique of Jewish Exceptionalism
 - 9.3 The Interpretation of Scripture
 - 9.4 Faith and Superstition
- Bibliography
- Index

This is the third version of my introduction to the thought of Spinoza. The first, titled simply *Benedict de Spinoza*, was published by Twayne in 1975. The second, titled *Benedict de Spinoza: An Introduction*, was significantly revised in light of the intervening literature and was published by Yale University Press in 1987. In addition to the change of title, the present version has yet again been significantly revised and expanded in an endeavor to deal with the veritable explosion in the literature on Spinoza in the past thirty-odd years. While there has continued to be important work on Spinoza produced in the more

historically oriented European or, as it is commonly called, "continental" philosophical community, particularly in France and the Netherlands, the place of Spinoza's birth, there has also been a dramatic increase in such work in the Anglophone or "analytic" community. There are, I believe, two reasons for this. One is a renewed focus on the history of philosophy in this community, which marks a decisive break with the decidedly antihistorical views of logical positivism and ordinary language philosophy, which were the dominant trends in analytic philosophy for much of the twentieth century. This has also led to a rapprochement with much of continental thought, which, because of its Hegelian heritage, has retained its historical orientation. The other, which marks an even sharper break with its earlier concerns, is a renewed interest in metaphysics. And Spinoza's thought, particularly as it is contained in the first two parts of the *Ethics*, with its focus on the nature and existence of God, the laws of nature, and the mind—body problem, became a natural subject of interest for metaphysically inclined philosophers working in the analytic tradition. The renewed interest in Spinoza is not limited, however, to his treatment of these core metaphysical topics, but extends to his psychological, ethical, and political theories, as well as his views on religion, his relation to the views of his predecessors, and his subsequent influence; in short, it encompasses the whole range of Spinoza's thought.

This spate of new literature has provided me with an impetus to rethink my views on Spinoza. Although I cannot claim to have mastered all of the literature on the various aspects of his thought that has appeared since the previous version of this study, I have worked through a considerable portion of it. In some instances I have changed my views on essential points in interpretation and evaluation; in others I have attempted to defend my earlier views against some of the objections that have been raised in this literature; while in still others I have focused my attention on issues that I had either glossed over or treated only in a passing or superficial manner. There are, however, two changes to which I wish to call attention because they connect directly with my study of Kant, which has long been the central focus of my work. The first concerns my discussion of Spinoza's recast version of the classical ontological argument for the existence of God, which he identifies with nature. In light of recent work, which has refocused attention on the similarities between this argument and Kant's argument for the existence of God as the *ens realissimum*, which he defended in his earlier work, but criticized in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and later writings, I have amended my earlier treatment of this argument to incorporate the Kantian critique and to illustrate its applicability to Spinoza's. The second and most substantive change concerns my discussion of Spinoza's naturalistic moral theory. This theory is grounded in the proposition that the fundamental endeavor of everything in nature, including human beings, is self-preservation (Spinoza's *conatus* doctrine), and my treatment of it has two aspects. On the one hand, in contrast to commentators who tend to see this theory as providing a proto-Nietzschean deconstruction of traditional morality, I regard it as an attempt to reestablish much of traditional morality — more particularly, a version of the so-called Golden Rule, namely: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you," on this egoistic basis; while, on the other, wearing my Kantian hat, I question the viability of this project and challenge a recent attempt to defend Spinoza's position by way of a comparison with Kant's views.

These changes have necessitated a partial change in the format of the work. While its content has been significantly revised and expanded, the organization of the first four chapters, which dealt respectively with Spinoza's biography, a sketch of the historical context and central themes of his thought, and the first and second parts of the *Ethics*, which are concerned respectively with God and the human mind, has been retained. The previous fifth chapter, however, which dealt with the final three parts of the

Ethics and was concerned with Spinoza's account of the emotions, his moral theory, and his highly heterodox views on immortality, has been expanded into separate chapters. Although likewise rewritten and expanded in order to take account of the recent literature, Chapters 6 and 7 of the previous version, which dealt respectively with Spinoza's political philosophy and his views on the Bible, and more generally revealed religion, have become Chapters 8 and 9 in the present version.

Like the earlier versions, as an introduction to Spinoza's philosophy, this work is intended primarily for the general reader or student with some background in philosophy, though I hope that it will also be of interest to the more advanced student and perhaps even the specialist. As before, my aim is to provide a balanced and comprehensive account of Spinoza's thought that offers the reader a sense of its breadth, as well as its depth and historical importance. To this end, I have tried not only to provide an accurate account of Spinoza's doctrines and their historical context, but also to explain as clearly and concisely as possible the main arguments he provides in support of them. But while my main focus is on the exposition and explanation of Spinoza's views, I have also attempted to indicate the difficulties in and possible objections to many of these arguments and to present and evaluate to the best of my ability the major responses to them found in the literature. <>

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO SPINOZA 2ND EDITION edited by Don Garrett [Cambridge Companions to Philosophy, Cambridge University Press, 9781107096165]

An extensively updated guide to all aspects of Spinoza's philosophy written by leading scholars of his work and influence.

Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza (1632–1677) was one of the most systematic, inspiring, and influential philosophers of the early modern period. From a pantheistic starting point that identified God with Nature as all of reality, he sought to demonstrate an ethics of reason, virtue, and freedom while unifying religion with science and mind with body. His contributions to metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, ethics, politics, and the analysis of religion remain vital to the present day. Yet his writings initially appear forbidding to contemporary readers, and his ideas have often been misunderstood. This second edition of **THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO SPINOZA** includes new chapters on Spinoza's life and his metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of religion, and biblical scholarship, as well as extensive updates to the previous chapters and bibliography. A thorough, reliable, and accessible guide to this extraordinary philosopher, it will be invaluable to anyone who wants to understand what Spinoza has to teach.

CONTENTS

List of Contributors

List of Abbreviations and Method of Citation

Introduction DON GARRETT

1 Spinoza's Life POET STEENBAKKERS

2 Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance YITZHAK Y. MELAMED

3 Spinoza on the Metaphysics of Thought and Extension MARTIN LIN

4 Spinoza's Epistemology URSULA RENZ

5 Spinoza on Natural Science and Methodology ALAN GABBEY

6	Spinoza's Metaphysical Psychology	MICHAEL DELLA ROCCA
7	Spinoza's Ethical Theory	DON GARRETT
8	Kissinger, Spinoza, and Genghis Khan	EDWIN CURLEY
9	Spinoza's Philosophical Religion	SUSAN JAMES
10	Spinoza's Contribution to Biblical Scholarship	EDWIN CURLEY
11	Spinoza's Reception	PIERRE-FRANCOIS MOREAU AND MOGENS LAERKE
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In many ways, Benedict (or Benedictus, or Baruch) de Spinoza appears to be a contradictory figure in the history of philosophy. From the beginning, he has been notorious as an "atheist" who seeks to substitute Nature for a personal deity; yet he was also, in Novalis's famous description, "the God-intoxicated man." He was an uncompromising necessitarian and causal determinist; yet his ethical ideal was to become a "free man." He maintained that the human mind and the human body are identical; yet he also insisted that the human mind can achieve a kind of eternity that transcends the death of the body. He has been adopted by Marxists as a precursor of historical materialism, and by Hegelians as a precursor of absolute idealism. He was a psychological egoist, proclaiming that all individuals necessarily seek their own advantage and implying that other individuals were of value to him only insofar as they were useful to him; yet his writings aimed to promote human community based on love and friendship, he had many devoted friends, and even his critics were obliged to acknowledge that his personal conduct was above reproach. He held that the state has the right to do whatever it has the power to do, while at the same time he defended democracy and freedom of speech. He denied supernatural revelation and criticized popular religion as a grave danger to the peace and stability of the state; yet he devoted himself to the careful interpretation of Scripture and argued for toleration and freedom of religion. Rarely employing figures of speech or rhetorical flourishes of any kind, his works are nevertheless among the most magisterial and uplifting of all philosophical writings, and they have inspired more poets and novelists than those of any other philosopher of the early modern period. Providing explicit definitions of his terms and formal demonstrations of his doctrines, he sought to clarify his meaning and reasons more diligently than has perhaps any other philosopher; yet few philosophers have proven more difficult to interpret.

To understand how all of these things can be true of one person and his philosophy is to do more than merely resolve some fascinating interpretive puzzles. It is more, even, than to gain insight into the seventeenth-century intellectual world that produced him and the subsequent eras that have tried to understand him. It is both of those things, of course; but it is also to see into one of the deepest philosophical minds of the modern or any other era, and thereby to see deeply into philosophy itself.

The seventeenth century was a period of scientific, political, and religious turmoil that gave rise to many philosophical "systems." Of these, it is Spinoza's monistic and naturalistic system, so initially forbidding in language and presentation, that ultimately speaks most cogently and persuasively to the twentieth century. As Alan Donagan has written:

Most philosophies, whatever their superficial attractions, are incoherent, and so impossible. Others, while not impossible, either gratuitously assume what there is no reason to believe or deny what there is good reason to believe [T]he number of possibly true philosophies there is some reason to believe is very small indeed, and the philosophical interest of every one of them is correspondingly great. Spinoza's is of that number. (Donagan 1989: xiv)

Born and educated in the Jewish community of Amsterdam and strongly influenced by his study of Descartes, Spinoza was excommunicated in his early twenties, changed his name from "Baruch" ("blessed") to its Latin equivalent "Benedict," and lived out the remaining two decades of his life quietly as a lens-grinder in and near Leiden and the Hague. His personal insignia bore the motto "Caute" ("caution"), and he was indeed a cautious intellectual revolutionary, often expressing new and even radical doctrines in traditional terminology and formulae. Always careful about sharing his views with others, he published his Theological-Political Treatise — examining the relation between religion and the state through the interpretation of Scripture and the history of the Hebrew nation — anonymously under a false imprint; and he declined to publish his masterwork, the Ethics, during his own lifetime. He was not, however, a solitary individual working in personal or intellectual isolation. On the contrary, he influenced and was influenced by many of his contemporaries and was part of an active Dutch intellectual community. In Chapter 1, Piet Steenbakkers provides a lively, rich, and authoritative new narrative of Spinoza's life and work in context, drawn from exacting research into all available resources. It will be of enormous value to students and scholars alike.

The bold, complete title of Spinoza's mature presentation of his philosophical system is Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order. This "geometrical order," modeled on Euclid's Elements, evidently corresponds to what Descartes had called the "synthetic" method of demonstration:

As for the method of demonstration, this divides into two varieties: the first proceeds by analysis and the second by synthesis. Analysis shows the true way by means of which the thing in question was discovered methodically....

Synthesis, by contrast, employs a directly opposite method It demonstrates the conclusion clearly and employs a long series of definitions, postulates, axioms, theorems, and problems, so that if anyone denies one of the conclusions it can be shown at once that it is contained in what has gone before, and hence the reader, however argumentative or stubborn he may be, is compelled to give his assent. (CSM: 110-11)

Spinoza had already used this synthetic method, or geometrical order, as an expositor of Descartes in the only work that he published under his own name during his lifetime, Descartes's "Principles of Philosophy."

In the Ethics, Spinoza sought to demonstrate his ethical doctrines in proper order from the metaphysical principles on which he believed they depend and through which he believed they must be understood. His metaphysical ontology, like Descartes's, comprises substance, attributes (what Descartes called "principal attributes"), and modes. According to Spinoza, a substance is that which is "in itself and conceived through itself" (E 1d3); an attribute is that which "the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence" (E 1d4); and modes are "the affections of substance, or that which is in another through which also it is conceived" (E 1d5).

Because he maintained that all other things are causally dependent on God for their creation and conservation, Descartes had recognized a strict sense of the term "substance" in which God is the only substance. In a looser and more everyday sense of the term, however, he recognized two kinds of created substances, each with its own principal attribute: bodies, whose principal attribute is extension (i.e., spatial dimensionality); and minds, whose principal attribute is thought. From definitions and axioms

seemingly acceptable to Cartesians - with the main exception of an essential Aristotelian axiom requiring that things be understood through their causes (^ 1a4) - Spinoza's Ethics aimed to demonstrate that the only substance is an "absolutely infinite" being, God (^ 1d6). In Chapter 2, Yitzhak Y. Melamed carefully explains how Spinoza understood his definitions of "substance" and "God" in the context of the philosophies of Descartes and Aristotle, examines the nature of the three key relations of priority in which Spinoza's God is said to stand to other things (inherence, conception, and causation), and clarifies what Spinoza meant by "absolutely infinite." He then explores the nature of Spinoza's "monism" about substance, including the significance of his references early in the Ethics to "substances of one attribute" and the propriety of describing God as "One." Finally, he explains the nature, reality, and manner of existence of the "modes" — including human beings and all other particular things — that inhere in, are conceived through, and are caused by God

Whereas Descartes held that the body and the mind of a human being are two different substances, Spinoza sought to show that a human being's body and mind are "one and the same" mode of God expressed and conceived through extension and thought, respectively, as two of the infinite array of divine attributes. Whereas Descartes held that the body and the mind of a human being causally interact with each other, Spinoza states that there cannot be any causation between bodies and minds, or indeed, between the modes of any two attributes of God. In Chapter 3, Martin Lin astutely sets out many of the interpretative difficulties regarding Spinoza's notion of an attribute in general and describes Spinoza's conception of the attributes of extension and thought in particular, giving special attention to his argument for the structural similarity between the mental and physical realms and for mind-body identity. While granting that "there are as many different ways of interpreting Spinoza's views on psychophysical causation as there are ways of reading his philosophy of mind more generally," Lin then goes on to propose and defend a strikingly new interpretation of the relation between attributes, according to which they are fundamentally merely different conceptual languages for referring to the same things.

Spinoza, like Descartes, drew a fundamental distinction between the intellect and the imagination. He regarded the former as comprising nonimagistic adequate ideas and the latter as comprising imagistic inadequate ideas. As the title of his early and unfinished Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect suggests, part of his philosophical project was to improve and strengthen the former. In Part 2 of the Ethics, he proposed to demonstrate — as consequences of his metaphysics — the character of the human mind as the "idea" of the human body, the nature of sense perception, the relation between true and false ideas, and the way in which all ideas (including human minds) are contained in the infinite intellect of God. He also distinguished three kinds of "knowledge" or cognition (*cognitio*): the first kind, opinion or imagination, includes random or indeterminate experience and hearsay or knowledge from mere signs; the second kind, reason, depends on "common notions" (shared features of things that are "equally in the part and in the whole") and on adequate knowledge of "properties" (rather than essences) of things; the third kind, intuitive knowledge, "proceeds from an adequate knowledge of the essence or attributes of God to knowledge of the essence of things," in proper order, from causes to effects. Both the second and the third kinds of cognition are true and adequate, but the third kind provides the greater understanding and insight into the essences of things. In Chapter 4, Ursula Renz traces the development of Spinoza's epistemology from the early Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect to the Ethics; explains the meaning and significance of his technical epistemic vocabulary of "ideas," "truth," and "adequacy"; demonstrates how the distinction of three kinds of knowledge or

cognition is intended to address a wide range of epistemological issues; and analyzes the doctrine that human ideas and minds are literally contained in "the infinite intellect of God."

The theory of knowledge, on the one hand, and what we now call natural science, on the other, were closely related for Spinoza. In his view, the former serves as the basis from which the methods of natural science, like those of any inquiry, must be derived and through which they must be understood. In addition, however, it follows, from the parallelism of the two attributes of thought and extension and the identity of their corresponding modes, that the power of logical entailment itself — by which adequate ideas produce or give rise to other adequate ideas under the attribute of thought — is literally one and the same as the causal power by which modes of extension produce or give rise to other modes of extension. That is, logical power and physical power are the very same power, expressed in two different ways, under two different attributes. The Ethics itself devotes somewhat less discussion to the sciences of extended bodies, or what we would now call "physics," than it does to the sciences of thinking things, or what we would call "psychology." Nevertheless, Spinoza's concern with both the methods and the content of natural science is evident throughout his writings, from his Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect to his geometrical presentation of Cartesian physics in Descartes's "Principles of Philosophy," and from his so-called physical excursus following Ethics 2p13 to his correspondence with Henry Oldenburg (the first Secretary of the British Royal Society and a friend of Robert Boyle). In Chapter 5, Alan Gabbey locates Spinoza's scientific interests in the context of the disciplinary categories of the seventeenth century, investigates the authorship of two small treatises (on the rainbow, and on the calculation of chances) often attributed to him, describes his scientific correspondence, evaluates his strengths and weaknesses as an expositor of Cartesian physics, assesses the role of Cartesian physics in his own philosophy, and explores his conception of methodology in the natural sciences.

Spinoza's doctrine that there is only one substance raises the question of how individual things can be distinguished from one another. Because different individuals are not different substances, they must be distinguished, within the one substance, in some other way. Within the attribute of extension, individual things are constituted by "fixed proportions of motion and rest" — that is, persisting patterns in the distribution of fundamental physical forces. Within the attribute of thought, individuals are constituted by the ideas of such actually persisting patterns. Individuals each have a definite nature or essence and are, to that extent, finite approximations to substances. Part 3 of the Ethics argues that a thing's essence or nature must seek to exclude from itself what is incompatible with its own persistence, so that a thing can be understood as active — that is, as the adequate cause of effects — only to the extent that it endeavors, through its own nature, to persist. This striving or endeavor (conatus) to persevere in its own being is thus a consequence of the conditions for being an individual at all, and it constitutes each individual's own distinctive power.

In this way, Spinoza's solution to the problem of individuation entails a doctrine of necessary individual psychological egoism that applies throughout all of nature. He sought to derive the content of human psychology by adding to this general doctrine two further postulates about human beings in particular: (i) that they are affected in many ways that can increase or decrease their power of acting (in the sense of being an "adequate cause"); and (ii) that they are sufficiently complex to form and retain sensory images or traces of other things. On this basis, Spinoza defined three primary emotions or "affects": (i) desire (cupiditas), which is "appetite [i.e., the endeavor for self-preservation] together with

consciousness of the appetite"; joy (*laetitia*), which is an affect "by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection" or capacity for action; and sadness (*tristitia*), which is an affect "by which the Mind passes to a lesser perfection" or capacity for action. When an affect is produced by external causes, rather than through the agent's own power, the affect is a passion. Part 3 of the *Ethics* goes on to analyze and define a large number of additional affects in terms of these three — by varying their combinations, their causes, and their objects — and deduces from these definitions a number of consequences for emotional and motivational phenomena.

In Chapter 6, Michael Della Rocca analyzes and evaluates in detail Spinoza's argument for the metaphysical conclusion that "each thing, insofar as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being" (*E 3p6*); he describes and assesses Spinoza's attempt to apply this metaphysical doctrine to human psychology; he critically examines Spinoza's account of the particular laws governing human psychology; and offers new insights on the much-debated question of whether Spinoza recognized teleology or purposive explanation in nature. Throughout, he emphasizes both the importance to Spinoza of the Principle of Sufficient Reason — that is, the requirement that everything have a sufficient reason for being as it is — and the naturalistic character of Spinoza's project, which requires Spinoza to regard human psychological states as subject to laws that are instances or applications of more general laws operative throughout nature.

Spinoza's analysis of the emotions, or "affects," and his doctrine that each person necessarily endeavors to persevere in being, provide, together with his metaphysics and his theory of knowledge, the basis for the ethical theory that he developed in Parts 4 and 5 of the *Ethics*. There he sought to explain human susceptibility to passions (i.e., affects of which the individual is not the adequate cause), the ways in which the understanding provides power to control those passions, and the elements of "the right way of living." The "good," as Spinoza defined it, is whatever we know to be useful for preserving our being. Since all human beings do necessarily endeavor to persevere in their being, all human beings will be motivated, at least to some extent, so far as their own power permits, to pursue the good as they conceive it. Ethics, as knowledge of the "right way of living," is for Spinoza a kind of knowledge of nature that is at the same time knowledge that is necessarily motivating (to some extent) for human beings. He argues that the highest human good lies in adequate knowledge, which is itself eternal and thereby allows a part of the human mind to be eternal. Those who are most able to pursue their own advantage through adequate knowledge are "free men," who are "guided by reason" and possess virtue. The existence of human freedom is compatible with necessitarianism because freedom involves, not chance or indeterminism, but rather action from the necessity of one's own self-preservatory nature, in contrast to necessitation by external causes. Accordingly, only those who are guided by reason, rather than passion, are truly free. Part 4 of the *Ethics* evaluates a variety of affects and behaviors from an ethical perspective, praising friendship and nobility (because nothing is more advantageous to a human being than other human beings who are guided by reason), but condemning such Christian virtues as humility, repentance, and pity (because they are kinds of sadness). In Chapter 7, I outline Spinoza's ethical theory and related doctrines and examine several crucial but often neglected or misunderstood aspects of that theory: (i) the meaning of ethical language, (ii) the nature of the good, (iii) the practicality of reason, (iv) the role of virtue, (v) the requirements for moral freedom and moral responsibility, and (vi) the possibility and moral significance of altruism. The chapter also addresses in new detail the meaning of Spinoza's claim that the ideal "free man" always acts "honestly" ("*cum fide*").

Spinoza's psychological egoism provides the basis not only for his ethical theory but for his political theory. Like his ethical theory, his political theory is a branch of the study of nature; but whereas his ethical theory primarily concerns the power and advantage of human individuals, his political theory, as detailed in his Theological-Political Treatise and his later unfinished Political Treatise, primarily concerns the power and advantage of the political collectives that human individuals compose. Fundamental to his political theory is his doctrine that "right" and "power" are coextensive. Like Machiavelli, he sought to understand relations of political power practically, scientifically, and dispassionately. Like Hobbes, he held that citizens are well-advised to give up their right and power to the state in return for the protection that it can provide to them in their pursuit of self-preservation. Unlike Hobbes, however, Spinoza emphasized the breadth of the practical limitations on the individual's concession of power to the state; and also unlike Hobbes, he located a human being's highest advantage not in mere continued life and the pursuit of pleasure, but in the achievement of adequate knowledge and its resulting peace of mind.

For Spinoza, the state is itself an "individual," with its own endeavor for self-preservation. However, it is usually in greater danger from its own citizens than it is from external enemies; and in order to preserve itself, it must take care how it seeks to exercise its power over them. The wisest and most stable state, he maintained, is a limited constitutional democracy that allows freedom of expression and religious toleration. A free state is thus "free" in three different but related senses, for Spinoza: It places no restrictions on speech or religion; it is conducive to the development of "free men," in the sense of Spinoza's ethical ideal; and it is itself a free individual, because it acts through its own nature to achieve its own self-preservation. In Chapter 8, Edwin Curley explains Spinoza's relation to Machiavelli, to Hobbes, and to the concept of a social contract, and he critically assesses Spinoza's subordination of the concept of political right to that of political power.

Although he was a naturalist — in the sense of holding that nothing exists outside of or beyond Nature — Spinoza was more than a simple atheist hiding impiety in conciliatory or ironic theistic terminology. Rather, by reconceiving Nature as active and self-causing, and at the same time reconceiving God as nonpurposive and extended, he was able to conceive of God as identical with, rather than as the transcendent creator of, Nature. His God, like the God of many theologians, is perfect and infinite, is the self-caused cause of all, has an essence identical with its existence, and is the object of an eternal contemplative love and blessedness. Unlike the God of many theologians, however, the essence of Spinoza's God is directly intelligible to the intellect through the divine attributes of thought and extension. Indeed, since Spinoza's God is the only substance, in which everything is and through which everything must be conceived, all knowledge is knowledge of God, for Spinoza, just as all effects are effects of God's power. Spinoza's naturalistic and intellectual understanding of God as the absolutely infinite substance is largely coextensive with his metaphysics as presented in Part I of the Ethics. However, Spinoza sought not only to provide a philosophical understanding of God in the Ethics, but also to describe in the Theological-Political Treatise the kind of imaginative theology — that is, theology as grasped by the faculty of imagination — that could serve as the basis of a universal popular religion. In Chapter 9, Susan James shows how Spinoza's sharp distinction in that work between "theology" and "philosophy," as two separate realms with entirely different standards for belief, is compatible with his view that philosophy as well as imaginative theology can constitute a genuine kind of religion.

Spinoza saw the Bible as a work of great importance, capable of exacerbating social conflict and motivating persecution, but also capable of exercising a beneficial influence on the unphilosophical multitude, depending on the manner in which it was interpreted. In consequence, he himself sought to interpret it with great care, as a historical product of nature, on the basis of careful attention to the meaning of its authors, philological understanding of its language, and historical knowledge of its composition and transmission. In addition to writing a Compendium of Hebrew Grammar, he devoted considerable attention to the interpretation of Scripture in the Theological-Political Treatise. He concluded, from the content of Scripture itself, that prophets are distinguished not by the strength of their intellects but by the vividness of their imaginations, that revelations were accommodated to the minds of the prophets who received them, and that Scripture itself teaches nothing as essential to salvation except justice (i.e., obedience to the laws of the state) and charity toward one's neighbor. In Chapter 10, Edwin Curley provides the most accurate and thorough account to date of Spinoza's specific contributions to biblical scholarship on a variety of questions, while emphasizing that his most important contribution lay in developing a systematic method of interpreting the Bible that came to set the norm for the entire field.

Spinoza and his philosophy have meant many things to many people. Most of his own contemporaries regarded his philosophy as a thinly disguised form of atheism, while Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) served to reinforce the image of an absurd and heretical metaphysician who nonetheless lived an exemplary life, even as Spinoza exerted a powerful appeal on freethinkers and radicals. He has exerted a powerful influence on both German and French philosophy from the time of the Enlightenment to the present. Succeeding generations of natural scientists, psychologists, novelists, and poets have found in his writings a continuing source of inspiration. In Chapter 11, Pierre-François Moreau and Mogens Laerke chronicle the varied history of Spinoza's reception and influence from the seventeenth century onward. In spite of — and sometimes because of — his use of "geometrical order," Spinoza is among the most difficult philosophers to interpret; and as Moreau and Laerke make clear, he has been the subject of many divergent interpretations up to and including the present. Our understanding of what Spinoza meant to convey to his readers is by no means complete; it is, however, considerably greater than it has been at any time in the past.

More than half of the chapters in this volume — Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, and 10 — are entirely new contributions by leading scholars written specifically for this second edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*. The other chapters have been updated by their authors (and, in the case of Chapter 11, with a new co-author) to reflect recent developments in Spinoza scholarship. The chapters not reprinted from the first edition — W. N. A. Klever's "Life and Works," Jonathan Bennett's "Spinoza's Metaphysics," the late Margaret Wilson's "Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge," the late Man Donagan's "Spinoza's Theology," and the late Richard A. Popkin's "Spinoza and Bible Scholarship" — are all classics of their kind and have been frequently cited in the decades since their publication. They remain available in the first edition of this volume. <>

OBJECTIVE IMPERATIVES: AN EXPLORATION OF KANT'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY by Ralph C. S. Walker [Oxford University Press, 9780192857064]

Kant held the moral law to be an objective imperative, an entity in its own right. It carries with it prescriptive force, in parallel to other principles of pure reason, like those of logic and mathematics. Objective imperatives therefore do not derive their authority from any other source, such as common consensus or the will of God. In *Objective Imperatives*, Ralph C. S. Walker seeks to show that this is a highly defensible view: Kant's Categorical Imperative, properly understood, is broadly right. The key to it is rationality, and not universality, which functions only as an approximate test. Often, Kant sets the matter out badly, and most of the common objections to him can be shown to be due to misunderstandings. A morality that gives us an objective imperative does appear incompatible with the determinism to which Kant commits himself, but Walker argues that this appearance is misleading.

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The principal aim of the book is to show that Kant's understanding of the moral law as an objective imperative is eminently defensible. Indeed, I believe it to be correct. Recognizing the centrality of that idea can help considerably in coming to understand many of the things Kant has to say about morality. He could never be called a clear writer. He did try for clarity, but unfortunately his attempts frequently made things more opaque.

I start by explaining the idea of an objective imperative, as something we are familiar with in logic and mathematics; and seeking to show the plausibility of Kant's account of the moral law. That includes his own objections to the very different views of his predecessors, objections which still have force against accounts of moral philosophy that are dominant today. I then go on, in the second chapter, to show how misleading it is to think that the idea of 'universalizing one's maxims' is the key to the Categorical Imperative. That occupies the first three sections of that chapter. The fourth and fifth sections develop these ideas further, and provide more detail about what Kant means with the examples he presents: amongst other things, it is a mistake to ascribe to him a morality of rigid rules, as people often do. The sixth and final section explains—as he himself fails to do until much later—the important distinction between two words that can both be translated 'will'. Willkür is will as we would ordinarily think of it, and it is crucial to Kant that our will in that sense is free. Wille is the purely rational will that we derive from the objective imperative of morality. Unfortunately Kant does not draw this distinction in the *Groundwork*, though it is difficult to follow him without it.

He has sometimes been accused of holding that there can be no place for feeling in moral action. A number of recent writers have shown how wrong that is. In the third chapter I develop what they say and bring out a number of other ways in which he explicitly recognizes the importance of feeling in the moral life. Free will is also very important to Kant—only if we have free will can we respond to an objective imperative—and that is the subject of the fourth chapter, and the fifth as well. He takes himself to be committed to determinism, and the final chapter of the *Groundwork* attempts to show that free

will is compatible with determinism. It only succeeds in showing that we must think of ourselves as free, which does not really help. In the Critique of Practical Reason he recognizes that the moral law is given to us directly, as a principle that is as fundamental as any principle of logic. It requires us to think and act teleologically, and Kant recognizes that teleological and causal explanations are incompatible. Clearly this does not solve the problem. He does give a sort of priority to the moral law over theoretical reason, but without making clear what that might imply.

The fifth chapter suggests a solution. The transcendental idealism of the first Critique argues the need for determinism within the spatio-temporal world, but this determinism cannot really be absolute. It cannot be the case that every event has a cause, because for Kant the real world is the world of 'things as they are in themselves', and our spatio-temporal world is simply the world as it appears to us. There is therefore no such thing as 'every event' in our world. Kant may be right to say that we can recognize change in our world only by finding what we take to be a cause, but that is a different matter. There would remain a problem if the real world were wholly without time, but time as we know it may have an underlying real order, as formerly argued by McTaggart. So Kant can hold that there is indeed room for free will, and room for us to respond to the objective imperatives of morality.

The sixth and final chapter attempts an assessment of how far Kant is right. Some amendments are needed to his transcendental idealism, but the main idea needs to be taken a lot more seriously than it usually is. Kant comes to see that rational reflection gives us good grounds to believe (though not to know) that the world is ordered and will continue to be so. Rational reflection leads us toward truth in science; it helps us also to discern what it is that the moral law requires of us. <>

SPINOZA, THE TRANSINDIVIDUAL by Étienne Balibar, translated by Mark G. E. Kelly [Edinburgh University Press, ISBN 9781474454278]

Étienne Balibar, one of the foremost living French philosophers, builds on his landmark work 'Spinoza and Politics' with this exploration of Spinoza's ontology. Balibar situates Spinoza in relation to the major figures of Marx and Freud as a precursor to the more recent French thinker Gilbert Simondon's concept of the transindividual. Presenting a crucial development in his thought, Balibar takes the concept of transindividuality beyond Spinoza to show it at work at both the individual and the collective level.

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The Unity of Transindividuality: An Examination of Balibar's Philosophical Practice by Jason Read

Étienne Balibar is well known enough to Anglo-American audiences interested in philosophy and political theory that an introduction might seem superfluous. However, what I would like to argue here, albeit briefly, is that the texts collected in *Spinoza, the Transindividual* shed enough light on Balibar's particular philosophy and philosophical practice to constitute the basis for something of a reintroduction of Balibar. Balibar is primarily known, at least in Anglo-American circles concerned with philosophy, as initially a student and collaborator of Louis Althusser and subsequently as an incisive commentator on matters concerning citizenship, race, violence and the border; the former is due to *Reading Capital*, arguably Balibar's most famous text for many years, and the latter has emerged in the collections and essays on citizenship, Europe, violence and so on that have been published in translation in the last thirty years. In the first case there is the overwhelming image of influence, the influence of Althusser and also Marx, especially as the two are often combined in the idea of something called Althusserian or structural Marxism, while in the latter the plurality of interventions with respect to the crises of citizenship, borders and war has effaced the unity of any philosophical project or orientation. I would argue that the essays collected in *Spinoza, the Transindividual* challenge both aspects of this reception, in that the collection posits Spinoza as being as much of a central point of reference for Balibar's thought as Marx (which is not to say that Balibar has abandoned Marx's thought or the larger critique of political economy) and, perhaps more importantly, illustrates to what extent Balibar's thought is more than just a series of interventions on the political questions of the moment but constitutes a profound meditation on the ontology of relations and what such an ontology means for thinking and engaging in politics. Which is to say that *Spinoza, the Transindividual* constitutes the basis for rethinking the unity of Balibar's thought (to borrow a title from Georg Lukács's book on Lenin, another thinker burdened by the weight of influence and the exigency of situations).

Any argument about the unity of these texts confronts an immediate difficulty. Not only are they texts on Spinoza, thus apparently relegating them to the category of interpretation, they are texts that frame Spinoza's thought through a concept coined by, and associated with, the work of Gilbert Simondon. How to make sense of this detour, of this approach to Spinoza through another philosopher's texts? This question opens up the gap between concepts and problems, between the articulation of a term and its underlying conceptual implications. As Simondon defines the term, transindividuality is an attempt to overcome the binary in which the individual, or individuality, is posed against the collective in a kind of zero-sum game, putting in its place an examination of the constitution of individuality and collectivity. It is a term that Simondon coins, but which Balibar argues ultimately can be found at work in Spinoza *avant la lettre*. This is the case despite the fact that, Balibar argues, Simondon cannot be understood as an interpreter of or even as having been influenced by Spinoza. Simondon tended to dismiss Spinoza as a pantheist, reducing individuals to parts of nature. That Simondon did not recognise his proximity to Spinoza is nothing new: the history of philosophy is riddled with unlikely bedfellows in which proximities are occluded or misrecognised. What is striking is that Balibar's rectification takes a detour of its own. This is first through Alexandre Matheron's *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, which in its own way developed trans individuality, albeit without the concept, through an investigation of the relational nature of individual desire and power in the *Ethics*. Matheron does not so much mediate between Simondon and Spinoza, but demonstrate a different genealogy and a conceptual overlap. At the same time that Simondon was rethinking the ontology of the individual, Matheron was pursuing a similar

examination on the terrain of politics and ethics. Spinoza, according to Matheron, overcame a longstanding division between egoism and altruism, between the good of the self and that of others. For Spinoza, the pursuit of one's own power or right cannot be separated from the advantages of others, and vice versa. Spinoza's dictum 'Nothing is more useful to man than man' is a statement of an ideal in which the pursuit of individual power, the capacity to act, is not opposed to collective harmony and freedom, but is the necessary condition for it, and vice versa. What Simondon examines at the level of ontology Matheron finds to be already at the level of Spinoza's politics. Despite these differences of approach and problem, Matheron and Simondon share a similar interest in the broader conceptual histories and logics beyond the history of philosophy. In each case, the philosophical arguments against Aristotle or Hobbes, against hylomorphic concepts or the state of war, expand into a broader cultural and political sensibility. The belief in form and matter, in individuals as the entirety of what exists, or in egocentric individual actions as the basis for politics and ethics, expands beyond the debates of philosophers to become a general cultural sensibility. Simondon's and Matheron's books are interventions as much into a broader conceptual logic as they are examinations of specific philosophical positions, which in part accounts for their broad impact.

As Balibar argues, the history of philosophy has often been characterised in terms of division between individualistic conceptions of politics and society that ground social relations in individual choices and actions, most notably in the social contract tradition, and what could be considered holistic conceptions that place society as something existing prior to its individual members. The most famous (or infamous) of this latter tendency are Hegel and Marx, but one could also include Spinoza, especially in the tendency to understand nature as itself one individual. This 'cold war' in philosophy is not only a division between two 'camps', but an asymmetrical one as well. Individualistic perspectives emerged as dominant both epistemo logically and normatively, as holism or organicism is seen as not only incorrect but dangerous. In emerging victorious, individualism has not only cast holistic accounts of society to the dustbin of history, it has also made it difficult to interpret those philosophers who refuse or subvert this binary. For Balibar, transindividuality is less a third way, something between individual and holistic conceptions, but an attempt to challenge the very terms of the division, not just rescuing some of the holistic thinkers, most notably Spinoza, from the holistic dustbin, but also making it possible to develop a new way of understanding both the individual and the collective, or, more to the point, the constitution of individual and collective identities. As Balibar writes with respect to the critics of Spinoza's understanding of subjectivity and individuation:

They ultimately refer to the intrinsic difficulty which readers had (and still have) in understanding a doctrine which virtually escapes (or dismisses) the basic antinomies of metaphysics and ethics which arise from ontological dualism: individualism vs. holism (or organicism), but also the opposite ways of understanding the human community itself, in which either 'intersubjectivity' or 'civil society', 'interiority' or 'exteriority', is given primacy.

As much as Matheron shifts the terrain of the question of individuation from ontology to politics, underscoring that in the current conjuncture there is no discussion of the individual that is not political, he does so by limiting individuation to its political or ethical valences of egoism or altruism. The ethical and political reconciliation of the individual or community is an important part of Spinoza's philosophy, but it comes after, and is in some sense secondary to, the ontological transformation of individuation and relations. Transindividuality is not just an ethical or political value, but ultimately a rethinking of causality, of the way singular things are affected and determined by their relations. There are echoes

here of Althusser's original invocation of Spinoza in *Reading Capital* as providing a new model of causality, that went beyond linear (or transitive) causality of an empirical type and expressive causality of Hegel. In that text, causality was a matter of thinking the social structure, the mode of production as immanent cause, as a cause which exists only in and through its effects. Balibar's return to causality is less about an attempt to think the ultimate causality of the mode of production on other structures, but to understand every singular thing as necessarily determined by an intersection of causes and thus the necessary singular nature of every causal relation. To borrow the terms from Althusser's early work, we could say it is a matter of understanding the causality of the conjuncture rather than the structure.⁷ Balibar's detour passes from Simondon to Matheron and back to Spinoza, from ontology to politics and back to ontology.

Balibar's detour through Simondon and Matheron is not just a matter of the construction of an intellectual history, not just the history of his engagement, but a theoretical project. Most notably, Balibar refuses the primacy of either the political or the ontological. As much as Balibar understands that concepts of individuality and society ultimately anticipate and prefigure politics, he does not intend to reduce ontology to politics, seeing every understanding of nature and causality to be simply concealing a political agenda. At the same time, however, Balibar does not reduce every politics to an ontology. This places Balibar not only against a more ontological conception of transindividuality, like the sort argued for by Simondon, but also a general 'ontological turn' in contemporary philosophy. A transindividual understanding of social relations and individuation does not by itself prefigure or determine a politics, nor does a politics, such a particular commitment to equality and freedom, necessitate or dictate its own ontology.

To use a term from Balibar's broader work, it is possible to argue that ontology and politics both constitute an 'other scene' to each other. Ontological understandings of individuality and society must pass over into political practices in order to have political effects, while political transformations of society in relation to the individual have ontological effects by being transformed into concepts and relations. Balibar's own work reserves two separate terms for each of these. The first, as we have seen, borrowed from Simondon, is transindividuality, while the second, of Balibar's own coinage, is equaliberty. Like transindividuality, equaliberty is predicated on overcoming a division of the individual and society, of liberty, which is necessarily individual, and equality, which is necessarily collective. As Balibar argues, the proof of this is not to be found in an ontological postulate, but in political history. At the same time as a cold war was raging in philosophy, proclaiming the individual as the *sine qua non* of freedom, the actual history of the cold war was proving a different hypothesis, one that went against its official ideology. As Balibar writes, describing this hypothesis, 'equality and freedom are contradicted in exactly the same conditions, in the same situation, because there is no example of conditions that suppress or repress freedom that do not suppress or limit – that is, do not abolish – equality, and vice versa'. Rather than a political critique of ontology, or an ontological grounding of politics, there is a constant shifting from scene to scene as politics and ontology transform and inform each other.

Such an understanding is profoundly Spinozist, in the sense that many readers, especially in the continental tradition, have stressed that Spinoza's thought cannot be reduced to, or categorised as, an ontology or a politics, but must necessarily be thought in and through the way in which an ontology of relations transforms politics, or an understanding of the political force of superstition changes the understanding of reason and the imagination. On this point the continental, French and Italian, reception

of Spinoza strongly differs from the Anglo- American reception. While for the most part the Anglo- American reception has focused on the Ethics as a metaphysical work, relegating the Theological Political Treatise and the Political Treatise to secondary works, Spinoza scholarship in Europe works at the intersection of the political and ontology. Balibar's detour continues this tendency to think politics through ontology and vice versa, although Balibar differs from many of his contemporaries in that he maintains a gap, and detour, of a displacement of the two levels, refusing what could be called a literal identification of the political and ontological. The reason for this detour is derived directly from Spinoza. Understanding transindividuality as a transformation of causality has an epistemological as well as political and ontological dimension. It concerns not just the organisation of relations in political life or their ultimate bases in the qualities of things but also the relations constitutive of knowledge, including the knowledge of relations themselves. For Spinoza, affects and imagination are as transindividual as knowledge and reason. Such an assertion cuts across the individual bias on both sides. First, exposing the intimacy of affective life to its political and social relations, the imitation of affects inscribes a collective dimension to our most intimate experiences. Second, and in an almost inverse manner, Spinoza's insistence on the collective nature of the common notions, that it is humans in the plural rather than the singular individual that thinks, overcomes the bias of the solitary thinker that has been placed at the centre of philosophy since Descartes (as Spinoza puts it, 'Man thinks: Or, to put it differently we know that we think' – Ethics Part III, Axiom 2). Both our affects, the intimacy of our desiring life, and knowledge, the autonomy of the intellect, are more collective, more relational and thus less individual than we tend to think. The corollary of this is also true: collectivity, politics, is as much about the organisation of affects and knowledge as they are about power. The affects of fear and isolation, the imaginations of race and nation, are as transindividual as the affects of love and the knowledge of humanity's usefulness to humanity. As Balibar writes, 'Sociability is therefore the unity of a real agreement and an imaginary ambivalence, both of which have real effects'. It is because both reason and imagination, affects and knowledge, are transindividual, or what Balibar refers to as the 'double relation of the transindividual', that a trans individual ontology cannot directly lead to a politics of equaliberty. The transindividual relation poses a problem, that of the relation of affects to knowledge, that can be solved, or resolved, only in specific situations. This combination of affect and idea, of imagination and reason, traverses not only Spinoza's thought on politics but Balibar's as well. As Balibar stresses in his reading of Proposition 37 of Part IV of the Ethics, the imaginary constitution of the state stresses identity, an imagined similarity of love and object. It is hard not to see this as prefiguring the 'fictive ethnicity' that underlies national identity and national politics. This imaginary identity is set against the rational understanding of common interest that underlies liberatory politics; in other words, national identity is the imaginary corollary to the rational constitution of the citizen. Balibar's investigations into the intersecting identities of race, class, nation and gender are all attempts to think through the different imaginations and constitutions of sociality in concrete situations, or, in Balibar's term, specific conjunctures.

Such an assertion points to a larger study of Balibar's thought. My point here in this introduction is to make the suggestion that not only is there a unity in Balibar's thought, but that this unity is one in which Spinoza's thought is as important a point of reference as Marx. Far from relegated to the specific subfield of Spinoza studies, the essays collected here are a general introduction to a sustained rethinking of the constitution and conflict of the ambiguous identities of race, nation and citizen. Or, to be more exact, the specific conjunctural analysis of identity and violence of race, citizen and nation are themselves

specific individuations of a general problem that could be described as an ontology, politics and epistemology of the trans individual. In stating this, my point is to shed some light on Balibar's specific practice of philosophy as much as its particular theses. Balibar's practice of philosophy is one in which not only is Spinoza read according to the possibilities of contemporary philosophy, as Simondon's transindividual illuminates Spinoza's thought, but the philosophical transformation is turned towards, and informed by, the current conjuncture. <>

KANT, LIBERALISM, AND THE MEANING OF LIFE by Jeffrey Church [Oxford University Press, 9780197633182]

In the wake of populist challenges throughout the past decade in the U.S. and Europe, liberalism has been described as elitist and out of touch, concerned with protecting and promoting material interests with an orientation that is pragmatic, legalistic, and technocratic. Simultaneously, liberal governments have become increasingly detached from the middle class and its moral needs for purpose and belonging. If liberalism cannot provide spiritual sustenance, individuals will look elsewhere for it, especially in illiberal forms of populism.

In **KANT, LIBERALISM, AND THE MEANING OF LIFE**, Jeffrey Church addresses the "meaning deficit" in contemporary liberal societies. Focusing on Immanuel Kant's largely neglected early lectures on anthropology from the 1760s and 1770s, Church argues that Kant's work can serve as a basis for a more meaningful liberalism, one that conceives of freedom and equality for all as a moral vocation of citizens and institutions. Church also asserts that Kant's early view of the meaning of life has important implications for understanding his political theory. Kant saw liberal community as something that helps us realize our destiny on earth as the distinctively free creatures we are. Liberalism, then, is not elitist but a participatory project of all members of society. It is not concerned primarily with material things but with our moral destiny. It is not pragmatic but principled.

Church holds that Kant's liberalism rests on a view of the meaning of human existence, and so analyzes Kant's view of the meaning of life and its application to his politics. In particular, Church contends that a fundamental concern included in Kant's liberalism, largely unrecognized by scholars, is to foster the meaning of life for citizens of liberal republican orders. At the same time, Church applies Kant's views of the meaning of life to contemporary problems in liberalism. In particular, he argues that Kant's view of a meaningful liberalism can provide a counterweight to the recent rise of illiberal nationalist or religious forms of community that seem attractive to liberal citizens hungering for meaning in a disenchanted world. Compelling and ambitious, Jeffrey Church provides the first extended treatment of Kant's understanding of the meaning of life and a powerful alternative to procedural liberalism.

Review

"Kant's anthropology has long been treated as an afterthought or an embarrassment to his monumental critical philosophy. Jeffrey Church audaciously argues that Kantian anthropology can not only be salvaged, but can anchor a liberalism as ambitious in its scope as it is capacious in its vision. This book brilliantly reconstructs a Kantian liberalism for our contemporary fractured political reality, centered on an ideal of independence that speaks to human purposes without determining them. Rigorous in its

exegesis and normatively sharp, Church extracts an embodied and humanized liberalism from unlikely territory. Rich, provocative, and utterly original, *Kant, Liberalism, and the Meaning of Life* shows that Rawls by no means exhausted the liberalisms that we might draw out of Kant, and may himself not have drawn the right one out at all." -- Inder S. Marwah, author of *Liberalism, Diversity and Domination: Kant, Mill and the Government of Difference*

"A brilliant and original analysis of Kant's politics broadly conceived. Church's careful and compelling consideration of contemporary 'liberalisms' through a Kantian lens is especially valuable and should be of interest not only to specialists but also to the broader educated public. In short: a 'public use of reason' in the true Kantian sense." -- Susan Shell, Professor of Political Science, Boston College

"In this book, Jeffrey Church explores the substantive, rather than merely formal, elements of Kant's pre-critical writings on ethics, and traces the resonance of those elements in the critical philosophy itself. The analysis is deeply informed and brilliantly argued. Indeed, what we have here is nothing less than a major and bracingly provocative intervention in the ongoing conversation concerning not only Kantian thought but, more broadly, the very idea of liberal politics." -- Peter J. Steinberger, Robert H. and Blanche Day Ellis Professor of Political Science and Humanities, Reed College

"Church breathes new life into familiar debates about Kantian liberalism by mining the pre-critical writings that most liberal theorists leave behind." -- Bernard Yack, Lerman Neubauer Professor of Democracy and Public Policy, Brandeis University

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The notion of the "vocation of humanity" in Kant is not unfamiliar in the literature, however, and has been examined by several scholars. The focus of this literature, however, tends to be on the moral vocation of humanity, that purpose we give to ourselves. As such, this literature overlooks the fact that for Kant humanity displays natural purposes as well, not just a moral purpose, as revealed by his anthropology. Indeed, Kant's anthropology is typically regarded as an afterthought to his Critical philosophy, an empirical vehicle for the realization of the moral law. By contrast, in his pre-Critical work, he held his anthropology to have foundational significance. My contribution to this literature is to reveal an anthropological motivation for our moral vocation in Kant's work. For Kant, our natures are internally torn between a telos for wholeness and a telos for perfection. These ends conflict because wholeness requires that we cease striving and achieve a state of harmony or oneness with our natural and social worlds. Perfection, by contrast, requires the opposite, that we constantly overcome given, established orders and long for ever higher states of excellence. This conflict of our natural vocations generates all manner of strife, vice, and unhappiness in human life. Humanity suffers from the unfortunate state of longing to realize two ends simultaneously but frustrated in its achievement of either. Unique among species on Earth, humanity finds itself unable to realize its natural telos. With our freedom, distinctive among the animals, we can thereby reflect on our natural division and call into question the value of human existence. By nature, then, for Kant, human life seems to have little worth.

The irrationality of our natures drives and justifies human beings to give ourselves our own vocation, a moral vocation that can bring peace to our warring natural ends. Our moral end can supply a form of communal wholeness in the Kingdom of Ends or Perpetual Peace, and it can realize perfection through the perfect achievement of moral virtue. In sum, then, human nature gives us conflicting ends, which undermines the value of our existence. With our freedom, humanity gives itself its own purpose, which redeems our nature. We can thereby bring value and meaning to our lives by participating in the long historical process of realizing humanity's moral vocation, bringing about a heaven on Earth. In seeking this overarching end, our lives can gain meaning in a wide variety of ways, since there are many ways that we can contribute to the achievement of our moral end and the harmony among our conflicting ends—for example, we can devote ourselves to the perfection of humanity's capacities by contributing to the end of scientific or literary achievement; we can devote ourselves to humanity's wholeness by fostering happiness and supporting communities close and distant, from our families to the suffering of the impoverished far from us; we can devote ourselves to humanity's moral perfection by improving systems of education and religion, by supporting and cherishing moral exemplars, by working toward the ideal republic as a citizen, bureaucrat, or legislator.

In making this argument, I build especially on the work of Richard Velkley and Susan Shell, who have examined Kant's pre-Critical work to attain a fuller account of the purpose of Kant's Critical project. Velkley (1989) argues that Kant's engagement with Rousseau in the 1760s leads him to appreciate the contradictions that reason entangles itself in, and to see moral ideas, constructed by reason over and against our natural desires, as the path toward reason's purpose and redemption. Shell (1996) also sees Rousseau as a crucial figure in Kant's development. Following Rousseau, Kant turned from abstract metaphysical speculation about the reciprocal relationship between mind and body to a concrete,

anthropological analysis of that relationship. Like these scholars, I understand Rousseau's influence to be decisive in the development of Kant's anthropological views. My own account is less ambitious in that I am not attempting to offer an account of Kant's development or his Critical project as a whole. It also differs from them in my focus on the purpose of human existence and in my examination of the conflicts between our natural purposes that motivate our moral vocation.

I proceed in part I by analyzing Kant's changing views as to the purposes of human life in two naturalistic, genealogical accounts of human development he offers. In chapter 1, I discuss Kant's earliest naturalistic genealogy of the vocation of humanity as expressed in his *Universal Natural History* (1755), a speculative history of the genesis and development of the cosmos. Before his transformative encounter with Rousseau, Kant held that to understand the purpose of human life, we must first understand nature as a whole.

Kant adopted the ancient view that the contemplative life is the highest life. However, he argued, the conflict within human nature made it difficult if not impossible for us to live this sort of life. The *Universal Natural History* concludes by questioning the value of human existence and raising the question of the purpose of humanity, which, at this point in his career, Kant could not answer.

Faced with the question of the value of human existence, Kant was particularly susceptible to what became Rousseau's momentous influence in the 1760s. Chapters 2-4 are devoted to Kant's reconsideration of the vocation of humanity under Rousseau's influence. I argue that Rousseau decisively shapes not only the substance of Kant's revised account of our vocation—a moral vocation—but also the method Kant employs, a moralgenealogical approach that Kant says was "unknown to the ancients" (Ann 2:312). Following Rousseau, Kant makes his "Socratic turn" from examining the cosmos to investigating the nature of humanity. As in his earlier work, Kant offers a speculative history of genesis and development from the state of nature to constitutional order, but now he does so with regard to humanity, influenced by the famous speculative history provided in Rousseau's second *Discourse*. In chapter 2, I argue that the crucial insight Kant gleans from Rousseau is that we have two contradictory vocations, not one: our animal nature drives us to wholeness and community with others, while our human nature drives us to independence and distinctness from others. For Kant, the development of the civilized state increasingly destroys any possibility of the simultaneous satisfaction of these vocations, and calls into question the very value of human existence, I argue in chapter 3. However, this very questioning of our existence, possible because of the freedom given to us by nature, also makes possible the transcendence of nature and the unification of our two vocations through the realization of our freedom in our moral conscience, establishing a moral constitutional order to end the state of nature that is our natural vocation. Nature's irrationality licenses humanity to use its freedom to transcend nature and give itself its own purpose and hence value. As I argue in chapter 4, we give ourselves a moral vocation, such that individuals and the species as a whole gain worth in contributing to this purpose, because this vocation satisfies our distinctively human need for freedom, while also bringing harmony to our divided nature.

Finally, in chapter 5, I summarize Kant's overall account of the meaning of life. I do so first by arguing that Kant provides us with a persuasive account of the relationship among the questions of the purpose, value, and meaning of existence. The purpose and value of existence are perennial questions facing humanity, but the meaning of life is new, emerging only in the 19th century. Though Kant never uses the phrase "the meaning of life his philosophy creates the logical space for that question, as humanity's self-

given purpose requires extended historical progress in order to achieve. Unlike, say, in Aristotle, human beings cannot achieve our telos in one generation. However, this species-wide purpose raises the question of the role or significance of each individual in humanity's broader story. The meaning of life, then, on Kant's view involves contributing to the progress of human emancipation, which can be realized in many different ways, especially, as I argue, through advancing the ends of culture, civilization, and moral community. I conclude chapter 5 by responding to an important criticism of Kant's anthropology, namely, that it is racist and Eurocentric. While I agree that Kant himself harbored racist and Eurocentric prejudices, I argue that his early anthropology contains resources to critique these prejudices.

In making this case, I focus on Kant's anthropological and ethical writings from the 1760s and 1770s, particularly those that demonstrate Rousseau's influence: the remarks in the *Observations* (1764), the *Friedlander Anthropology lectures* (1775-76), and the *Kaehler/Collins lectures on ethics* (1774-77).¹³ The main evidence I draw on here are unpublished notes and student transcriptions of lectures, which poses a few challenges. First of all, Kant does not develop his anthropology into a systematic treatise, but presents it in scattered notes and in lecture form. The unsystematic nature of the material requires me to engage in a reconstruction of Kant's argument. Second, occasional remarks and lecture notes may not be a reliable guide to what Kant actually believed. Unfortunately, Kant published very little between 1763 and 1781—a period of time that includes his "silent decade. Moreover, those texts that he did publish—such as the *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (1766) and *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770)—do not directly touch on issues in anthropology. Nevertheless, recent scholars have made a case for the reliability of these remarks and lectures for grasping Kant's thought. At the same time, I have tried as much as possible in what follows to draw on published Critical period texts that reinforce the views expressed in these remarks and lectures. Tracing the anthropological writings into his Critical works both substantiate the reliability of the earlier texts while also demonstrating their abiding influence.

Kant's pre-Critical anthropological view of the value and purpose of human existence is significant, then, because it represents a fundamental challenge to the typical rationalistic and deontological approach to Kant's ethics. Instead of focusing on ideal rational agents, it examines embodied human ends. Instead of assuming that our moral life involves the simple application of moral rules, his view of the meaning of life involves the comprehensive governance of our entire nature. Finally, his pre-Critical work does not rely on questionable metaphysical premises, but rather represents a naturalistic path not taken by Kant in his Critical work, as Guyer (2007) and Zammito (2002) have argued.¹⁵ It is clear that Kant revises his ethical view in important ways with the Critical turn in his thought, yet nevertheless, his anthropological approach persists in part in the political philosophy, as we will see. It also represents an important philosophical effort worthy of attention in its own right.

Kant on a Meaningful Liberalism

It may seem strange, of course, to turn to Kant's political community as a realization of the vocation of humanity. After all, it might be better to look to Kant's moral community—his view of the Kingdom of Ends or the rational religious community. Politics is the realm of self-interest and coercion, a place where even "intelligent devils" may reside (PP 8:366). Politics is governed by the ends of nature rather than the ends of freedom. According to a dominant interpretation, the political community is valuable, but only instrumentally, to discipline and constrain our desires so that we can pursue our genuine vocation in voluntary ethical communities. There is no denying that moral communities play an essential role in realizing our vocation for Kant. This claim is so well established in the literature that I largely set

Kant's moral theory to one side in this book. Instead, I focus on Kant's political theory because the standard scholarly account of Kant's liberalism holds that politics is for him instrumental toward a higher moral end (Riley 1983).¹⁷ By tracing Kant's pre-Critical anthropology into his Critical period political theory, we can see that this interpretation too narrowly conceives of Kant's liberalism and misses an opportunity to connect it to our comprehensive human vocation, not just our moral end.

In the second part, then, I examine the role of the meaning of life in Kant's political thought. I begin with the pre-Critical anthropology lectures, in which Kant situates his view of the purposes of politics within our comprehensive vocation in life. In the remainder of the part, I turn to Kant's major political writings from the 1780s and 1790s, particularly "What is Enlightenment?," the *Metaphysics of Morals*, and the *Conflict of the Faculties*. By reading these familiar texts against the backdrop of Kant's early anthropological motivations, we develop a different picture of Kant's liberalism, one that is not merely instrumental toward external ends, but meaningful in itself.

In contrast to the standard approach to Kant's politics, I argue that liberalism partially realizes our human vocation for Kant. And indeed, it does so in a distinct way to the moral community by realizing a distinctive view of freedom, what I call "political autonomy." We can see this political autonomy at work in two different ways—in the dynamic character of Kantian politics and in the indeterminate nature of Kantian right.

First of all, unlike the moral community, the political community must govern our nature in addition to our freedom. Historically, Kant argues, politics emerges in order to realize our natural ends of wholeness and for perfection. In his anthropology, Kant connects these fundamental natural ends with forms of community that human beings create in order to satisfy these ends. Perfection is achieved through culture, the form of community devoted to disciplining our desires and cultivating our capacities or "skills" to accomplish any end we wish. In chapter 6, I argue that politics may adopt the end of fostering culture as a way to realize our natural end, a precondition for a system of rights. In contrast to typical readings of "What is Enlightenment?," I argue that Kant's commitment to freedom of communication in that essay is largely devoted to advancing culture rather than improving politics.

At the same time, civilization fosters wholeness. Civilization is that form of community—comprising the norms of politeness and honor—that reduce conflict and ensure order and stability in society. In chapter 7, I argue that politics may also take as its end for Kant the advancement of the norms of civilization insofar as those norms are necessary to the protection of our rights. I focus in particular on Kant's mostly ignored passages on the police power of the state, which, he argues, licenses liberal governments to control smells, loud noises, prostitution, and other threats to our sense of public "decorum." In these and other passages, Kant recognizes that politics may maintain and transmit civilization from one generation to another so long as these norms provide the condition for the possibility of a system of right.

However, because of the conflict in our natural ends, those communities that attempt to realize our natural ends—culture and civilization—also come into conflict. As such, human beings are motivated to develop the principle of liberal right—to adopt the overarching end of independence—in order to settle the conflict between culture and civilization. Just as in the case of morality, right aims to limit and govern our conflicting natural ends. However, I argue, right never completely overcomes the conflict between culture and civilization. Indeed, the existence of the political community itself presumes that its members

have not overcome the tension between nature and freedom in themselves. As such, liberal politics requires the continual exercise of judgment to balance and harmonize conflicting ends as far as possible, a preeminent expression, I argue, of political autonomy. Participation in politics, then, is meaningful insofar as it requires us to synthesize the conflicting contributions to our conflicting ends into a harmonious whole.

There is a second way that the liberal community for Kant is a meaningful enterprise, I argue in chapter 8. Namely, it affords the community the capacity to constitute right itself. Most commentators on Kant emphasize the parallels between morality and right. After all, both involve formal principles legislated by pure practical reason. However, right differs from the moral law in that its content is radically indeterminate without positive, empirical legislation. This is not simply a matter of needing empirical context to apply a given rule—after all, Kant repeatedly insists that the moral law also requires application and so judgment sharpened by experience. Rather, the rule of right itself needs to be "laid down" by a sovereign (MM 6:306). In the state of nature, the moral law still applies, but it is a condition "devoid of justice," not simply because right cannot be enforced, but also because it is not fully determinate (MM 6:312). As such, the sovereign is accorded a distinctive form of freedom: an empirical agent has the capacity to make determinate a pure practical law. Political autonomy is thereby a significant and meaningful human activity, even if carried out by self-interested agents. Liberalism is the proper regime for realizing this political autonomy, because it extends this freedom to all members of the community in its promise of independence for all. With this understanding of the noble, even sacred purpose of sovereignty, we can make sense of some of Kant's more puzzling doctrines, such as his condemnation of the right to revolution and strong retributivism in his view of punishment.

By tracing the conflict in our human nature into Kant's politics, we can develop a novel account of Kantian liberalism, one immune from the usual objections to Kant. Kant does not conceive of liberalism as a pact among self-interested devils, or even as a rational procedure for arriving at rights-claims. Rather, it has a high moral purpose, namely, the achievement of humanity's purpose on Earth and an opportunity for human beings to find meaning in life. In addition, Kantian liberalism, on my view, is not the legalistic application of rules. Instead, it involves real politics, with all its tumult and deliberations over conflicting ends. It is thereby much more dynamic and pluralistic than is often appreciated. My account conceives of Kant's liberalism as having a strong civic republican character, which has largely been overlooked in accounts of Kant.

Kant against Rawls and Sandel

In the final part of this book, I make the case that this Kantian liberalism improves on other theoretical models of contemporary liberalism, and so can be an important guide for the future of liberalism. My Kantian liberalism takes as its end the fostering of the meaning of life for its members. In this way, it is a form of liberal perfectionism in contemporary philosophical parlance. In chapter 9, I argue that current liberal perfectionist theories have largely been successful in rebuffing the major criticisms against them. However, they still succumb to the criticism of paternalism, that liberal perfectionist theories infantilize members by choosing their ends for them. My Kantian form of perfectionism improves on these theories by adopting a single goal as its end, namely, independence, thereby not infantilizing members, but encouraging their self-sufficiency. At the same time, Kantian liberal government can still advance the ends cherished by contemporary perfectionists—friendship, art, excellence—by reconceiving them as essential instruments for the cultivation of independence.

In addition, Kantian liberal perfectionism improves on contemporary perfectionism by focusing on the meaning of life as central to government's efforts, rather than the good life. As I argue, the good life tends to focus perfectionist governments' attention on the present, fostering temporary goods enjoyed by individuals here and now. They fail to address, then, enduring, communal goods which will outlast all human beings living now on Earth. As we have seen, Kant understands meaning in life to consist in the participation in and contribution to the gradual liberation of humanity. This task will take innumerable generations to accomplish. Liberal governments, then, must consider long-term over short-term goods in support of advancing the cause of independence. One important means to accomplish this end is for the political community to conceive of itself in terms of an evolutionary historical development, or perhaps a narrative, in which each citizen could make intelligible and vivid her role in the contribution to this saga. This self-understanding of the political community as an aspirational partnership differs from those self-understandings that focus on the goods of identity or national belonging and so tend to be backward-, rather than forward-facing, in nature.

However, the main worry of the critics of perfectionist liberals—what contemporary philosophers call political liberals—is that perfectionists will exclude groups from the community who disagree with their vision of the good. According to this critique, perfectionists will coerce groups into adhering to a view of the good that those groups could reasonably reject, thereby violating their freedom. Political liberalism, in remaining neutral among the many different views of the meaning of life, accommodates the diversity in society while still grounding community on shared principles of justice. For political liberals, moreover, perfectionist societies will be unstable, as they bring into legislative discussion what cannot reasonably be expected to be resolved—disagreements over the meaning of life—and so arouse unnecessary conflict and division. By contrast, political liberals offer the promise of stability in bracketing disagreements over the good, leaving them for the private sphere, while maintaining stability on those principles of justice we can reasonably be expected to find consensus on.

In chapter 10, I argue that these concerns are overblown in the case of my Kantian perfectionist liberalism. Unlike other forms of perfectionism that adopt controversial views of the good life, Kantian perfectionist liberalism advances only one facet of the meaning of our existence, independence, an aim that is not divisive in liberal societies. Indeed, I turn the tables on Rawlsian political liberalism by arguing that Kantian liberalism can be reasonably expected to command a wider overlapping consensus than Rawls' liberalism. It can include more disagreement, I argue, because of its thin account of liberalism's end, namely, the single principle of independence. As Thomas Pogge has argued, the simplicity of Kant's political theory—in its appeal to the single principle of external freedom—allows it to be affirmed from a Hobbesian or Millian view, or indeed from many religious views. At the same time, Kant's distinction between legality and morality means that citizens need not abide by the law for moral reasons. They can obey for any reason, so long as they obey. Indeed, Kant goes so far as to claim that "intelligent devils" can constitute a republic. Accordingly, Kant's perfectionist liberalism may outperform Rawls' political liberalism in its aim to accommodate the "fact of reasonable pluralism" in modern societies, as Kant includes even rational egoists and those interested in a modus vivendi relationship to the political community in the overlapping consensus.

This may seem an incoherent form of liberalism—on the one hand, the political community aspires to a collective solution to life's biggest problems, while on the other hand, it accommodates those who conceive of the community as instrumental to their personal aims. Kant can combine these two diverse

forms of liberalism into one synthetic view because of his view of the central principle of right, independence. Independence may be regarded from one perspective as part and parcel of our moral vocation, but it may be regarded from another perspective as a convenient means to do what one really wants to do. Indeed, intelligent devils can live meaningful lives participating in politics even if they are not morally motivated nor feel that their lives have meaning through political activity.

Both sides of this seemingly incoherent liberalism are crucial, however, because of the nature of the liberal political community. A moral community on Kant's view can adopt as its exclusive end the moral vocation of humanity, while an economic partnership or social group can have as its exclusive end one or both of the natural ends of human beings. By contrast, the liberal community is unique in its role in mediating the natural and moral ends of humanity. Liberalism disciplines and channels our natural ends, but then develops a perspective of right with the recognition of the essential conflict in our natural ends. Kantian political liberalism, then, must reflect this mediation between our natural and moral ends. It must accommodate those pursuing natural ends alone, those trying to balance natural and moral ends, and those seeking moral perfection alone. Kantian political liberalism is uniquely suited to balance such conflicting perspectives because of the way it seeks only to affirm and protect the external liberty as part of the meaning of the lives of everyone, while leaving everyone otherwise free to pursue their diverse ends as they see fit.

Chapter 11 concludes the book by arguing that Kantian liberalism is compelling because it meets some of the challenges of our contemporary age. In this chapter, I take up some of the main challenges that communitarian thinkers have leveled against liberal societies. According to Michael Sandel, the focus of my attention in this chapter, modern liberal societies generate a sense of anomie, apathy, and alienation from community. For Sandel, Kant and the neo-Kantian view of liberalism is largely to blame in facilitating these ills. Instead, Sandel argues, we should infuse a commitment to communal purpose and a common view of the good life into our politics in order to overcome the centrifugal tendencies of modern liberalism.

In large part, I agree with Sandel's description of the problems facing modern societies, but disagree with his critique of Kantian liberalism. By conceiving of Kantian liberalism in the way I do in this book, we can gain a deeper account of the problems facing contemporary liberalism and offer some more satisfying solutions than those on offer by communitarianism. In particular, the main problem facing Sandel's form of communitarian perfectionism is that its view of the good life is underdetermined. Sandel affirms a form of Aristotelian perfectionism, that politics should realize our human telos, but he never examines what that telos is. As such, his communitarianism veers into conventionalism, affirming whatever view of the good a community happens to hold. My Kantian liberalism provides a deeper account of the meaning of life that can provide a solid, common ground for liberalism, and a source of guidance for liberal citizens.

In this chapter, I take up three particular issues facing contemporary liberalism and argue that Kant provides a better response to them than does Sandelian communitarianism. First, Kant's conception of human dividedness captures the plight of contemporary liberal societies, divided as we are between community and individual, nation and cosmopolis, happiness and striving. In liberal societies, we find ourselves torn between, for example, the demands of family and the striving of capitalism, the so-called work-life balance, or between the rapid transformative, innovative nature of modern technology and the stability and harmony of tradition, nature, and place. Kant gives us a framework for understanding the

basis for and persistence of this conflict. But he also helps us see a potential way to overcome these conflicts in the activity of liberal citizenship, which confers limits on our perfectionism and some encompassing context for our desire for wholeness.

Second, Kantian liberalism also addresses the "meaning deficit" in contemporary liberal communities. What our societies are lacking is not happiness, but a sense of meaning in life. Communitarians have long recognized this deficit in the form of a sense of anomie or rootlessness. Yet their injunction to participate in community often seems arduous, since they do not connect this duty to our highest human aspirations. Kant does so, and so what emerges is a form of liberal communitarianism that connects our civic responsibility and participation to our vocation in life.

Finally, in providing this meaning to liberalism, Kant's political theory provides a centrist rival to the two forms of identity politics on the left and the right that have commanded such political power recently because of their ability to supply their adherents with a sense of purpose and meaning. Kant's liberalism offers a liberal sense of meaning, one that is centrist in nature, which means that his political theory contains both progressive and conservative features. This centrism points toward a possible way to overcome the deep polarization besetting our age.

In sum, this book aims not only to contribute to Kant studies, but to apply Kant to contemporary philosophical and political problems. One of the unexpected benefits of working on Kant is the enormous amount of excellent scholarly literature on Kant that I have drawn on. As a result, I have found it not necessary to rehearse extremely well-known features of Kant's thought, but rather narrow my focus in my textual analysis, while also relying on the scholarship in the application of his views. The result, I hope, is a book that will appeal to Kant scholars as well as to contemporary liberal theorists.
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KANT'S TRANSCENDENTAL DEDUCTION AND THE THEORY OF APPERCEPTION: NEW INTERPRETATIONS

edited by Giuseppe Motta , Dennis Schulting and Udo Thiel
[series Kantstudien-Ergänzungshefte, de Gruyter, 9783110737585]

This volume examines (1) the philosophical sources of the Kantian concepts "apperception" and "self-consciousness", (2) the historical development of the theories of apperception and deduction of categories within the pre-critical period, (3) the structure and content of A- as well as B-deduction of categories, and finally (4) the Kantian (and non-Kantian) meaning of "apperception" and "self-consciousness".

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The Project

In the Critique of Pure Reason, the theory of apperception belongs to the transcendental deduction, and thus, in accordance with the juridical sense of the word 'deduction', to a justification - before the court of reason - of the use of the categories as necessary and universally valid functions of the understanding. Hence, the tasks of interpreting (1) the Kantian notion of apperception, and (2) the argument of the transcendental deduction both relate to the issue of synthetic a priori judgments that are based on the pure concepts of the understanding and whose use in determining the objectivity of the objects of experience requires justification. It is plain, then, that understanding Kant's account of apperception will assist our understanding of the transcendental deduction, and vice versa.

The present volume contains 22 essays (11 in English, 11 in German) that explore these two closely related topics in Kant's philosophy from four distinct perspectives:

1. Through an examination of the philosophical sources of the Kantian notions of 'apperception' and 'self-consciousness';
2. Through a historical investigation of the development of the theory of apperception and the deduction of the categories in the so-called pre-critical period;
3. Through an analysis of the content, form, and structure of the A- and/or B- Deductions of the categories in the Critique of Pure Reason;
4. Finally, through an examination of the notions of apperception and self-consciousness in both Kantian and non-Kantian contexts.

We believe that, in general, the project of combining these different perspectives is essential to an understanding of Kant. There can be no serious philosophical discussion of his thought unless it is accompanied by precise historical and even philological examinations of Kant's texts in their proper contexts, and historical reflections cannot reasonably dispense with a systematic analysis of notions such as 'apperception', 'synthesis', and 'objectivity'.

Thus, the present volume attempts to combine a variety of approaches to those fundamental themes in Kant's philosophy and bring them into a dialogue with one another. In addition, this introduction provides a historical overview of the most important and well-known interpretations of Kant's theory of apperception and the transcendental deduction, as the history of interpretations of Kant on these topics is diverse, rich, and illuminating, and provides essential context for present-day readings.

All contributions to this volume have been written within the past three to six years. The essays in sections 1 and 2 are based on talks presented at two conferences held at the University of Graz: (1) Immanuel Kant. Die Quellen der Apperzeption (Immanuel Kant: The Sources of Apperception), 16 and 17 March 2018; (2) Immanuel Kant. Die Apperzeption and ihre Quellen (Immanuel Kant: Apperception and Its Sources), 26 June 2019. Both events were organized by Giuseppe Motta and Udo Thiel and were part of a project funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). While some essays in sections 3 and 4 were especially commissioned for this volume, most of them were previously given as talks. (1) At a conference titled Kant's A-Deduction, held at the Institute of Philosophy at the KU Leuven, organized by Henny Blomme and Karin de Boer, on 12 and 13 December 2016; (2) as part of the "Kant in Graz" lecture series, organized by Giuseppe Motta and Udo Thiel. <>

KANT'S GROUNDED COSMOPOLITANISM: ORIGINAL COMMON POSSESSION AND THE RIGHT TO VISIT by Jakob Huber [Oxford University Press, 9780192844040]

Two kinds of cosmopolitan vision are typically associated with Kant's practical philosophy: on the one hand, the ideal of a universal moral community of rational agents who constitute a 'kingdom of ends' qua shared humanity. On the other hand, the ideal of a distinctly political community of 'world citizens' who share membership in some kind of global polity. Kant's Grounded Cosmopolitanism introduces a novel

account of Kant's global thinking, one that has hitherto been largely overlooked: a grounded cosmopolitanism concerned with spelling out the normative implications of the fact that a plurality of corporeal agents concurrently inhabits the earth's spherical surface. It is neither concerned with a community of shared humanity in the abstract, nor of shared citizenship, but with a 'disjunctive' community of earth dwellers, that is, embodied agents in direct physical confrontation with each other. Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism as laid out in the Doctrine of Right frames the question how individuals relate to one another globally by virtue of concurrent existence and derives from this a specific set of constraints on cross-border interactions.

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Reconceiving Kant's Cosmopolitanism

While Kant's status as a key figure in the history of philosophical cosmopolitanism has never been in doubt (e.g., Kleingeld 2016; Kleingeld & Brown 2014), for long his ideas were primarily absorbed only indirectly through his moral philosophy. First-generation cosmopolitans in contemporary global justice debates (e.g., Caney 2005; Tan 2004), for instance, prominently invoked Kant's ethical idea of all humans as members of a single, all-encompassing moral community (Gr 4: 433-440, see also Kleingeld 2016 pp. 19-21). In so doing, they reflected a wider, long-standing tendency to politicise Kant's moral writings. The primary 'culprit' in this regard was John Rawls (2000 pp. 143-328), who had effectively turned the Groundwork's account of ethically good willing as self-legislation into a 'decision-making procedure' for the generation of universally binding principles of justice: this, despite Kant's own insistence on a sharp distinction between right and ethics. Consequently, Kant was read as a kind of proto-constructivist about justice (Rawls 1980 pp. 143-328), vindicating the political ideal of a well-ordered democratic society constituted by collectively self-legislating citizens of equal moral standing.'

This has changed over the last few decades, as interpreters have begun to study Kant's actual political writings in their own right. In particular, two interpretive tendencies have emerged, which are in some tension with each other. On the one hand, a set of innovative work on his occasional political essays, in particular Perpetual Peace (e.g., Hoffe 2006; Lutz-Bachmann 1997), occasioned a resurgence of interest in Kant's cosmopolitanism. Presenting Kant as a theorist of cosmopolitan constitutionalism (Brown 2009) or even global democracy (Held 1995), authors focused on his prescriptive agenda for a global political order laid out in the essay's three 'Definitive Articles. The latter call for every state to have a republican constitution, demand the creation of a league of free states, and envisage a 'cosmopolitan right' to interact across boundaries. The ensuing debates primarily investigated Kant's rationale for vindicating this specific set of cosmopolitan institutions instead of some equally conceivable alternative: for instance, his choice of a limited, voluntary league of states instead of the coercive form of world

government that he had preferred earlier. This led to further debates about the essay's applicability and hence its continued relevance under contemporary circumstances (Habermas 1998).

The second and even more recent interpretive trend was driven by a revival of interest in the Doctrine of Right, the first part of Kant's late *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) and arguably the most systematic formulation of his political philosophy. The spoilt state of significant portions of the text was among the main reasons why the Doctrine of Right received only little attention until the late 1980s.² Yet, Bernd Ludwig's (1988) crucial rearrangement of what he had identified as editorial errors at the printing stage elucidated crucial parts of the argument and initiated a systematic and philosophically oriented body of interpretive work (e.g., Byrd & Hruschka 2010; Flikschuh 2000; Ripstein 2009).

Interestingly, the elevation of the Doctrine of Right to Kant's most significant work in political philosophy has come with a 'statist backlash' of sorts. Until recently championed as a cosmopolitan figurehead, Kant is increasingly associated with a particularly compelling argument in favour of a distinctly moral justification of the modern state (e.g., Hodgson 2010; Ripstein 2009; Stilz 2011). This is not without textual warrant: while earlier essays such as *Perpetual Peace* are emphatic and unconditional in their cosmopolitan commitments, large parts of the Doctrine of Right seem to focus on a cluster of ideas—around (the relation between) property rights, political obligation, and state entrance—familiar from the classical social contract tradition.

Kant's own acknowledgement that he had 'towards the end of the book worked less thoroughly over certain sections than might be expected in comparison with earlier ones' (DoR 6:209), may easily be taken to confirm this impression. Precisely at the point at which Kant has developed and delineated the domain of right most systematically, he appears also to have become more sceptical of anything like justice beyond the state and appears to have pulled back from the earlier uncompromising cosmopolitanism. So, for example, whereas *Perpetual Peace* had included sharp criticisms of state power and of warfare, the Doctrine of Right arrives at a much more favourable view of the

state as a distinct kind of juridical agent in virtue of being a necessary enforcer of individual rights claims. To some interpreters, Kant's considerations on international and cosmopolitan right seemed to be little more than appendices to a view of justice, prominent in early liberal thought, as effectively terminating in state establishment.

On an interpretive level, Kant's much-discussed property argument, around which Bernd Ludwig (1988) himself had constructed his philosophical case for a reconceived approach to reading the Doctrine of Right, was seminal to that effect. For long regarded as obscure, inaccessible, and largely a failure, the idea that the connection between state authority and the possibility of individual property rights is at the heart of the Doctrine of Right and its most original innovation has rapidly become a commonplace among interpreters.³ In a wider context, the 'statist backlash' was further fuelled by the fact that it proved conducive to the incipient absorption of Kant's political thought into contemporary normative theory. His distinctly moral justification of state authority could not only be nicely juxtaposed to Hobbesian, Lockean, and Communitarian alternatives;⁵ it also coincided with a more general return of statism even in contemporary global justice debates, where a growing camp of internationalists revisited earlier cosmopolitans' farewell to the idea of sovereign statehood and argued for a system of nationally independent though internationally interdependent states (e.g., Buchanan 2004; Sangiovanni 2008; Valentini 2011).

The argument that I will develop in this book defies both these interpretive tendencies. I believe that it is precisely in the Doctrine of Right that Kant develops his most sustained, systematic, and original cosmopolitan vision. At the heart of this framework is a thought to which interpreters have thus far paid scant attention: the mere fact that they can affect and constrain each other with their choices by virtue of sharing the limited space of the earth's spherical surface unites humans in a particular interdependence relation of 'possible physical interaction' (DoR 6:352). The pertinent kind of community is one of 'earth dwellers' (Byrd 2009 p. 107), that is, embodied agents in direct physical confrontation with one another. The book proposes to read what Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism in the Doctrine of Right as an attempt to spell out the distinct type of community among earth dwellers, together with the conditions under which it can be transformed into a 'rightful' community of juridical subjects.

Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism

Two kinds of cosmopolitan vision are typically associated with Kant's practical philosophy: on the one hand, the ideal of a universal moral community of rational agents who constitute a 'kingdom of ends' qua shared humanity. Human beings, on this view, have universal rights and obligations by virtue of being joint members of a 'supersensible world' (Benhabib 2004; Kleingeld 1999a p. 509). On the other hand, the ideal of a distinctly political community of 'world citizens' who share membership in some kind of global polity. This approach, briefly mentioned previously, takes the notion of 'world citizenship' literally, aiming to lay out a normative agenda for a global political order from which we could draw specific institutional blueprints, substantive principles of distributive justice, or even concrete lists of human rights.

The aim of this book is to introduce a novel account of Kant's global thinking, one that has hitherto largely been overlooked: a grounded cosmopolitanism concerned with spelling out the normative implications of the fact that a plurality of corporeal agents concurrently inhabit the earth's spherical surface. It is neither concerned with a community of shared humanity in the abstract, nor of shared citizenship, but with a 'disjunctive' community of embodied agents in direct physical confrontation with each other. Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism frames the question how individuals relate to one another globally by virtue of concurrent existence and derives from this specific constraints on cross-border interactions.

Textually, this framework takes its cue from an underappreciated passage in § 13 of the Doctrine of Right's section on 'private right'. There, Kant ascribes to all individuals a 'right to be wherever nature of chance (apart from their will) has placed them, adding that this possession 'is a possession in common because the spherical surface of the earth unites all the places on its surface' (DoR 6:262). This claim is usually absorbed by interpreters into a larger argumentative sequence that leads from the idea of innate right via the property argument into the state. By contrast, I insist on its conceptual and justificatory independence. In the relevant passage, Kant introduces a distinct kind interdependence relation that is not constituted, for instance, by economic or political ties, cultural affinity or shared interests, but by the bare fact that those who share a globe cannot 'get out of each other's ways once and for all' (DoR 6:267).

Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism is not concerned with the way we each relate to land or the resources on it, or to provide a kind of a distributive standard for carving up the earth. It spells out a specific way in which we relate to one another given that, as embodied agents who jointly inhabit a

bounded territory, we can affect and constrain each other with our choices. Nor does Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism depict humanity as already unified, either in a shared idea of humanity (as in accounts of moral cosmopolitanism) or in a shared set of distributive principles or institutions (as in accounts of political cosmopolitanism); it depicts a more antagonistic kind of community of agents capable of physically interacting with one another in real time and space. What I call Kant's 'global standpoint' is constituted by a plurality of perspectives in disjunctive interaction. To act from this standpoint is to encounter others as justificatory equals in the process of structuring the shared space in which we find ourselves.

In order to spell out the normative implications of this interpretive framework, the book turns to Kant's discussion of cosmopolitan right (DoR 6:352/353), which is concerned with the interaction between states, non-state peoples, and foreign individuals. Having repeated the earlier argument from earth dwellers almost verbatim, in this section Kant ascribes to individuals an enigmatic right to roam around the earth's surface and attempt contact with distant strangers in order to offer all kinds of cultural, intellectual, economic, or political exchange, while prohibiting them from staying or settling anywhere without the locals' explicit permission.

I show that both the constraining and the permissive aspects of this 'right to visit' can be illuminated against the background of grounded cosmopolitanism. On the one hand, it allows Kant to articulate a distinctly juridical critique of colonialism. What constrains Western travellers in their interaction with non-state peoples even in the absence of a shared property practice is their shared earth dwellership. On the other hand, earth dwellers have a right to move around freely and without hindrance on the earth's surface, including those parts privatised by individuals or states, in order to seek what Kant calls 'commerce, in the first place. By establishing exchange and interaction, cosmopolitan agents 'on the move' create the conditions for lawful peace among the entire cosmopolitan plurality, including both states and non-state peoples. In conjunction, the two complementary aspects of the cosmopolitan 'right to visit' specify the conditions for transforming the disjunctive community of earth dwellers into a juridical community of legal subjects united by public (though noncoercive) law. Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism not only asks us to solve the shared predicament of concurrent existence within finite space. It also normatively structures this process under conditions of a real plurality of perspectives and diversity of collective forms of life.

Importantly, Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism is not predicated on the property-mediated logic of entrance into the civil condition that is at the forefront of recently popular statist accounts of the Doctrine of Right. That is not to deny, however, that the state plays a crucial role in it. In fact, I will reconstruct how Kant folds his long-standing cosmopolitan commitments (which are themselves reconceived in 'spatial' terms) into a juridical theory of statehood that he developed systematically only in the 1790s. We come away with a cosmopolitically transformed notion of the state that contributes to realising a condition of peace among states and non-state peoples through both its internal constitutional arrangements and its outward comportment. Kant's global standpoint provides a critical perspective on our own institutional arrangements as much as a normative standard for interactions with distant strangers.

The argument of this book

Chapter 1 lays the groundwork for my account of Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism through a close analysis of § 13 of the Doctrine of Right. Against the widespread tendency to absorb the relevant passage into the property argument, I argue that it articulates a distinct thought concerned with the relation between physical beings that act and affect one another in virtue of inhabiting the particular, limited space of the earth's circumference. As a first step to make good on what I call the argument from earth dwellership, I cast doubt upon the assumption that the 'right to be somewhere' is analytically contained in the innate right of humanity. Simply by virtue of (unavoidably) claiming a place for ourselves as we come into the world as corporeal agents, we find ourselves in a distinct kind of spatially mediated interdependence relation with everyone else globally.

Chapter 2 unpacks this relation further by focusing on the idea of original common possession of the earth. I argue against the widespread attempt to liken Kant's notion to that prevalent in the natural law tradition, that is, as constituting a community of proto-ownership. For Kant, the notion does not provide a distributive standard for carving up the world. Instead, it spells out our shared task of coming to terms with the fact that embodied agents who jointly inhabit a bounded territory can affect and constrain each other with their choices; a challenge that normatively transcends any division of the earth's surface into slices of property and territory. A detour into the Critique of Pure Reason helps to illuminate that Kant's disjunctive community of original common possession describes a system of mutual exclusion in which a plurality of different persons stand in a relation of 'possible physical interaction. To act from what I call the 'global standpoint' is to respect distant strangers as justificatory equals in the process of coming to terms with the fact that we have to share the earth in common.

Chapter 3 turns to Kant's discussion of cosmopolitan right, where the argument from earth dwellership reappears. Starting with the 'constraining' dimension of the cosmopolitan right to visit, I make sense of Kant's anticolonialism against the background of his grounded cosmopolitanism. The primary systematic question is on which juridical basis Kant can radically curtail the comportment of Western emissaries abroad, denying them in particular a right to force non-state peoples to enter the civil condition, for instance by simply settling in their vicinity. I argue that it is their shared earth dwellership which constrains travellers to cautious offers for interaction and exchange even in the absence of a shared property practice. Construing a regress from the property argument to the more fundamental domain of earth dwellership, I show how Kant is able to conceptualise a distinctly juridical critique of colonialism as wrongful comportment. The chapter thus highlights that Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism is a cosmopolitanism of self-constraint vis-à-vis distant strangers or unfamiliar forms of collective life and political association.

Chapter 4 addresses the complementary, permissive aspect of cosmopolitan right, which is concerned with global mobility. I argue that individuals have a right to roam the earth's surface in their capacity as earth dwellers. As cosmopolitan agents 'on the move, they create the conditions for lawful peace among the entire cosmopolitan plurality, including both states and non-state peoples. Earth dwellership thus limits exclusive claims to land or territory to the conditions of global mobility, which is a fundamental precondition for transforming the disjunctive community of original common possession into a juridical community of legal subjects. Both dimensions of the cosmopolitan right to visit are integrated in that they spell out the conditions for realising a cosmopolitan political order in the future under conditions where such an order can neither be brought about nor maintained by force.

Approaching the project of bringing the community of disjunctive possession under law from a perspective of historical time, Chapter 5 zooms in on Kant's conception of cosmopolitan progress. I distinguish two dimensions of political progress in Kant, which concern the perfection and the creation of political institutions respectively. These two domains intersect in the idea of a cosmopolitan state, i.e., a state that contributes to cosmopolitan progress by binding itself and its citizens to rightful comportment towards other states and non-state peoples. The path to a global institutional order proceeds via radically reformed states. If we do our part in establishing a condition of peace, we may reasonably hope for the willingness of other states and non-state peoples to reciprocate our efforts, such that the idea of a perpetual peace does not remain a 'pious wish' (DoR 6:355).

The Conclusion transcends the book's primarily exegetical ambition by pointing to some of the ways in which Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism is of continuing relevance. By foregrounding its relational and reflexive dimensions in particular, I point to the framework's ramification for a number of ongoing normative debates for instance around global mobility, the boundaries of territory and membership, colonialism or transnational institutional frameworks beyond statism and cosmopolitanism as they are traditionally conceived.

Some remarks on method

This project originally started out with the aim of making Kant's mature political philosophy fruitful for contemporary disputes about global justice. My initial worry was that, despite the fact that the debate has by now gone through a number of consecutive 'waves' (Wollner 2013) and is already in the process of being historicised (Forrester 2014; Moyn 2016), its heavily practice-oriented character continues to drive its proponents towards a certain kind of philosophical impatience. Consequently, the deep and systematic reflection on the question what unites individuals globally that I hoped to find in the Doctrine of Right promised to directly enrich global justice disputes.

As I went along, however, I quickly noticed that by seeking to simultaneously interpret and normatively defend Kant's cosmopolitanism, I was running the risk of inheriting the very predicament I associated with the prevalent 'normative Kantianism' that I had set out to avoid. For the compromises that such an endeavour unavoidably requires would have allowed me neither to go beyond the philosophical surface textually speaking (such that I would end up saying hardly anything new or surprising as far as Kant is concerned) nor normatively to justify the ensuing position in a way that would satisfy contemporary proponents of global justice. Lest I fail to successfully speak to either audience, I thus decided to engage with Kant's cosmopolitanism on its own philosophical terms, going much more into interpretive depth than initially expected.

Concretely, this means that I read Kant's cosmopolitanism not only as intricately connected to the notion of right but also through the lens of his philosophical system as a whole. In this, I depart from much work at the heart of the recent revival of Kant's political thought particularly in the Anglophone context, which proceeds from the assumption that isolating Kant the political theorist from Kant the systematic philosopher goes some way in making the former more accessible to contemporary readers (e.g., Ellis 2005; Ripstein 2009). By contrast, I shall claim that we will not be able to come to terms with the form of Kant's global thinking unless we link it, at least to some extent, to the general form of his philosophical thinking. I doubt that the most promising way to demonstrate the continued practical

relevance of Kant's politics is necessarily to vindicate it 'without taking on the full commitments of his broader project in practical philosophy' (Ripstein 2009 p. 356).

That is not to say, however, that this book should be read as a purely exegetical exercise in Kant scholarship or a project of historical reconstruction. I say this not only because I will indeed indicate at several points throughout the book (and sum up more systematically in its Conclusion) where I see striking links and contrasts between the Kantian conceptual framework and contemporary normative debates in political philosophy. It also speaks to a more fundamental view about the point of studying the history of philosophy in the first place: that it is precisely engagement with great thinkers that can help us understand and get a new perspective on our own concerns and philosophical problems, be it in virtue of coming to appreciate an entirely different way of approaching the pertinent questions. As Allen Wood pointedly puts it, 'solving a philosophical problem is not like solving a problem in engineering' (Wood 2002b p. 218). The issue, that is to say, is not primarily to find a solution that enables us to do something in the future that we could not do in the past, but rather to come to better understand the problem in the first place. And, given that most of our philosophical questions have been created and shaped through a long historical process in which philosophers over and over again adopted, criticised, and modified the thoughts of earlier ones, we cannot even fully understand them unless we understand their origins.

In interpreting a text, however, our aim should not be to rethink an author's thoughts—this would be an impossible task, particularly when it comes to a contested and at times obscure work such as the Doctrine of Right, where we can hardly hope for a single correct interpretation (which is not to deny that there are more or less coherent and convincing ones). Our aim should rather be to work out what the author meant by what they said, and that may include asking a text our own questions and making sense of it using concepts and ideas that the author herself may not have had at their disposal (Wood 2002 p. 223). The corollary is that the very attempt to recover, understand and articulate the meaning of a text can provide the most original and surprising insights into our own contemporary problems—it can tell us who and where we are philosophically. This, however, requires that our interpretive engagement is serious, detailed, and sustained lest we simply find our prior commitments reflected in the text. Given that my aim in reconstructing Kant's grounded cosmopolitanism is thus to speak to Kant scholars and normative political theorists alike, I have tried to employ his technical vocabulary sparingly—while remaining aware that there are insights we would genuinely miss if we dispensed of it altogether and likened Kant's vernacular outright to that of contemporary political philosophy. <>

KANT AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE edited by Hyeongjoo Kim and Dieter Schönecker [De Gruyter, 9783110706543]

How are artificial intelligence (AI) and the strong claims made by their philosophical representatives to be understood and evaluated from a Kantian perspective? Conversely, what can we learn from AI and its functions about Kantian philosophy's claims to validity? This volume focuses on various aspects, such as the self, the spirit, self-consciousness, ethics, law, and aesthetics to answer these questions.

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Minds, Brains, and Deep Learning: The Development of Cognitive Science Through the Lens of Kant's Approach to Cognition by Tobias Schlicht

Abstract: This paper reviews several ways in which Kant's approach to cognition has been influential and relevant for the development of various paradigms in cognitive science, such as functionalism, enactivism, and the predictive processing model of the mind. In the second part, it discusses philosophical issues arising from recent developments in artificial intelligence in relation to Kant's conception of cognition and understanding. More precisely, it investigates questions about perception, cognition, learning, understanding, and about the age-old debate between empiricists and rationalists in the context of so-called deep neural network architectures as well as the relevance of Kant's conception of cognition and understanding for these issues.

Introduction

If you follow the headlines, you can easily get the impression that much of contemporary cognitive science is heavily influenced by Kant's philosophy. Philosopher Andrew Brook (1994) called him the "intellectual godfather" of cognitive science, since Kant allegedly already defended a functionalist theory of mind, arguably the philosophical foundation of artificial intelligence. Neuroscientist Georg Northoff (2018, viii) reports that rereading Kant's Critique of Pure Reason has awakened him from his dogmatic slumbers, just like reading Hume had awakened Kant. Impressed by empirical evidence about self-generated brain activity, Northoff and others speak of the "Kantian brain" and associate this activity with Kant's notion of spontaneity (Fazelpour/Thompson 2015). Francisco Varela (Weber/Varela 2002) acknowledged Kant's enormous influence on his own autopoietic approach to life and cognition, and

more recently Link Swanson (2016) has traced the popular predictive processing paradigm back to Kant's general project. This is striking, given that Kant's project was not primarily concerned with issues in the philosophy of mind but driven rather by epistemological concerns. But although Kant may not have subscribed to all these views attributed to him, such writings present various ideas from his theoretical philosophy as having had or still having an enormous influence on contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science.

In this review paper, I will first sketch several ways in which Kant's approach to cognition has been influential and relevant for the development of cognitive science. Kant's relevance goes well beyond some vapid and superficial similarity of certain concepts; many philosophers claim that Kant already anticipated several tenets of classical cognitivism, enactivism, and the predictive processing model of the mind. In the second part, I will add one more piece to this story by discussing philosophical issues arising from recent developments in artificial intelligence. More precisely, I want to sketch some of the philosophical issues associated with so-called deep neural network architectures and the relevance of Kant's conception of cognition and understanding for these issues. As will become clear, the performance of deep neural networks (DNNs) raises important questions about perception, cognition, learning, understanding, and about the age-old debate between empiricists and rationalists; this has led some researchers in machine learning to revive some of Kant's core ideas regarding cognition, developing a Kantian cognitive architecture to overcome the shortcomings of existing deep learning architectures.

Cognitive Science Through the Lens of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy

Kant's general influence on contemporary thinking is unquestioned and familiar. Gomes (2017) lists an impressive number of mental phenomena for which Kant's philosophy has been and still is very influential, e.g., the connection between consciousness and self-consciousness (Schlicht 2016/2017) or the debate about conceptual and non-conceptual perceptual content (McDowell 1994, Hanna 2008). I Brook (1994) already considered several of Kant's central claims about the mind as having fueled cognitive science more directly; most notably the claim that "most representations require concepts as well as percepts", and Kant's method of transcendental argument, understood as the attempt to "reveal the conditions necessary for some phenomenon to occur" (Brook 1994, p. 12). Based on this initial familiarity of Kant's stance on issues in the philosophy of mind, cognitive science and contemporary debates, one can reconstruct the historical changes that cognitive science underwent through the lens of various aspects of Kant's theoretical philosophy and find traces of some specific ideas of his thinking in the works of cognitive scientists.

Kant and Functionalism

When John McCarthy coined the term 'artificial intelligence' (AI) in the context of the famous Dartmouth conference in 1956, he described the goal of this project as "that of making a machine behave in ways that would be called intelligent if a human were so behaving" (McCarthy et al. 1955). In a similar vein, Margaret Boden describes the overarching goal of research in AI as "to make computers do the sorts of things that minds can do" (Boden 2016, p. 1). The focus in the first research phase that followed was already set by McCarthy et al. They intended to "attempt [. . .] to find how to make machines use language, form abstractions and concepts, solve kinds of problems now reserved for humans, and improve themselves" (McCarthy et al. 1955, p. 12). While this has been achieved in some areas like speech production and chess computers, in which AI systems sometimes even outperform

humans in very specialized problem-solving tasks, the “holy grail” (Boden 2016, p. 18) of AI research has always been the development of an AI system that exhibits “general intelligence”, understood “as the ability to perform tasks and attain goals in a wide variety of environments” (Shanahan 2019, p. 91, cf. Legg/Hutter 2007). This broad-stroke characterization of intelligence bypasses the apparent vagueness of the notion which may otherwise yield “terminological quibbles” (Walmsley 2012, p. 3). Walmsley does not regard the terminological choice of “intelligence” as significant but thinks that – echoing McCarthy’s goal – “the central issue of AI [. . .] is a comparative one: whatever we (humans) have, whether we call it intelligence’, ‘thinking’, ‘cognition’, ‘mind’, or something else, can machines have it too?” (Walmsley 2012, p. 3).

Boden’s and Walmsley’s characterizations put computers and machines into focus. But, as Boden observes, computers or machines themselves aren’t what matters. AI is not about hardware, but about what artificial hardware can do. Therefore, the focus is not on machines, but on virtual machines (Boden 2016, p. 3), which are nothing but information-processing systems that can be implemented in a variety of hardware. Consequently, the favored philosophical background theory supporting the possibility of AI has been functionalism, according to which mental states in general are conceived in terms of their functions (or causal roles). Every mental state is identified by its set of causal relations to system inputs and outputs as well as other system states (Putnam 1965). The realization of this causal network of functions is taken to be contingent because the functions are considered to be multiply realizable (Polger/ Shapiro 2016). Thus, Classical Cognitivism, the first paradigm in cognitive science, conceived of cognition as information processing along the lines of that present in digital computers. In particular, cognition was understood as constituted by syntactically driven manipulations of symbolic representational structures in the brain that are “sandwiched” (Hurley 1998) between sensory inputs and motor outputs (Fodor 1975, Pylyshyn 1984). For example, when I look at the coffee mug in front of me, sensory information hitting my retina is processed in specialized modules that eventually produce a detailed three-dimensional image of the mug that can guide actions like grasping it. Marr (1982) has provided an exemplary theory of perception in this regard.

One claim relevant for thinking about artificial intelligence is that Kant allegedly defended a functionalist conception of the mind. In *Kant and the Mind*, Andrew Brook (1994) interprets Kant’s agnosticism about the underlying substrate of the mind in this way. Despite Kant’s “implacably hostile” attitude towards materialism, Brook argues that “materialism fits remarkably easily into his overall theory” (Brook 1994, p. 15). Impressed by Kant’s position that “so far as the real nature of the mind is concerned, strict neutrality has to be the order of the day”, Brook takes this agnosticism to be an instance of the contemporary functionalist idea of the “multiple realizability” of mental functions; as do Sellars (1974) and Meerbote (1989).

However, this functionalist interpretation of Kant’s philosophy of mind faces some problems: Firstly, it ignores Kant’s peculiar conception of matter as mere appearance, which leads Ameriks (2000) to interpret Kant’s position as a form of “mere immaterialism”. He arrives at this interpretation by allowing for a minimal knowledge about substrates of appearances, i.e., that they are not material. But this presupposition of knowledge of things in themselves, strictly rejected by Kant, makes Ameriks’ interpretation itself problematic. Secondly and relatedly, the functionalist interpretation of Kant’s philosophy of mind collides with the fact that contemporary functionalism is typically formulated as entirely ontologically neutral, but rather put forward as a stepping stone to materialist reductionism,

since the analysis of mental phenomena in terms of their causal roles is usually complemented by an additional claim about (possibly multiple) physical realizations of these mental functions (Chalmers 1996/Kim 1998/Levine 2001/Block 2015). Interpreted this way, Kant would clearly oppose functionalism. Thirdly, it is questionable whether Kant would have taken all “functions” of the mind (KrV: A78f/B103f) to be ‘functionalizable’ in the sense required for being “realized” by a physical mechanism. For example, what Kant calls the “spontaneity” of mind, properly understood and characteristic of the understanding, seems incompatible with materialism. Allison, for example, is less optimistic than Brook and argues that Brook’s functionalist-materialist interpretation of Kant’s theory of mind cannot be right, since, in Kant’s view (or, rather Allison’s interpretation of it), “cognition must be conceived as more than an elaborate information processing procedure, one which begins with raw sensible input and ends with the relatively reliable products of the understanding (cognitions). [. . .] What is missing in such a picture of cognition (at least from the Kantian perspective) is precisely its self-conscious, apperceptive character” (Allison 1996, p. 63).

Whether there is a way of incorporating the notion of spontaneity (with or without its alleged intrinsic self-conscious aspect) and the unity of apperception within a broadly naturalist framework, is an interesting further question that I cannot pursue in depth here. Hanna and Thompson (2003), Northoff (2012), and Fazelpour and Thompson (2015) consider the brain’s self-generated activity as a candidate for a neural correlate of the function that Kant calls spontaneity, but this interpretation has not been justified in any detail (for a critical discussion see Schlicht & Newen 2015, cf. Northoff 2013/2014 for further connections to neuroscience).

Kant and the Cartesian Theatre in the Brain

Whether functionalism provides us with an accurate portrayal of the mind depends partly on the features of the biological implementation of mental functions in human (and animal) brains. Can cognition be conceived of as a set of causal functions in abstraction of the biological features of its realization, such that this set of functions could in principle be realized by a machine using a non-biological realization? Or is cognition a biological phenomenon whose realization depends on the presence of a complex dynamical biological system, namely, an organism (with a brain and nervous system), exhibiting crucially biochemical means of information processing? For example, might mental representational states be “aspects” of neural computations, i.e., biological, rather than being abstract functions enjoying some independence from their realizers (Piccinini 2020)?⁵

In the 1980s, new imaging techniques in neuroscience initiated a research focus on the brain, resulting in connectionist neural network models of cognitive phenomena. They still remained computational and representational, but information (about the coffee mug in front of me, say) was now supposed to be processed subsymbolically; representations were proposed to have a non-linguistic structure (Smolensky 1988, Clark 1991, Sejnowski 1992, Churchland 1997). This turn was accompanied by new developments in robotics and artificial intelligence, since some researchers now rejected the need for full-fledged models of the world in favor of much sparser “subsumption architectures” that do not rely on a detailed representation of the world (Brooks 1991). As we will see in the second part of the paper, this turn towards brain architecture also inspired the more recent machine-learning techniques, with deep learning being the most prominent one.

Against the background of this controversy over functionalist and biological approaches to cognition, it is striking that on the one hand, Kant anticipated certain problems with the precursor to functionalism, namely the identity theory of mind and brain (Place 1956/Smart 1959), which later resurfaced as Dennett's 'Cartesian Theatre' objection against materialism about consciousness, while on the other hand Kant was also impressed by the brain's features that might explain certain cognitive phenomena. This tension can be brought to light by having a look at his exchange with the physician Samuel Thomas von Sömmerring.

In 1796, Samuel Sömmerring published a short book, *On the Organ of the Soul*, in which he speculated about the possible function of the liquid contained in the brain's ventricles with respect to the unification and separation (synthesis and analysis) of sensory data. Prior to publication, he had an exchange with Kant about his ideas, specifically that of a sensory organ or seat of the soul in the brain. In one of his letters, Kant respects Sömmerring's position but expresses his explicit doubts about the general approach, since "it is the concept of a seat of the soul that occasions the disagreement of the faculties concerning the common sensory organ and this concept therefore had better be left entirely out of the picture, which is all the more justified since the concept of a seat of the soul requires local presence" (AA 12, 31–32). In contrast to this approach, Kant suggests taking seriously the idea of a mere "virtual presence" of the mind in the brain, which makes the whole question of what could serve as a 'seat of the soul' disappear, or so he claims. Sadly, he does not clarify what he means by virtual presence here. A further striking passage in this regard can be found in his *Lectures on Metaphysics (V-Met)* where he stresses that "the location of the soul in the body [. . .] cannot be determined [his emphasis] [. . .] I cannot feel the place in the body where the soul resides." (AA 28, 281) Yet, despite this epistemological restriction, Kant puts forward an argument that sounds like he is alluding to the contemporary idea of supervenience, which posits the ground of all sensations in the brain. It is worth quoting this passage in full (Kant's emphases):

But the cause of all sensations is the nervous system. Without nerves we cannot sense anything outer. But the root of all nerves is the brain; the brain is accordingly aroused with each sensation because all nerves concentrate themselves in the brain; accordingly, all sensations concentrate themselves in the brain. Thus the soul must put the seat of its sensations in the brain, as the location of all conditions of the sensations. But that is not the location of the soul itself, but rather the location from which all nerves, consequently all sensations as well, arise. [...] When, e.g., I hold a finger to the fire, then I experience pain in it; but in the end all sensations from every particular part of the body are concentrated in the brain, the stem of all nerves; for if the nerves from one part of the body are cut, then of course we feel nothing from that part. Accordingly, the principle of all sensations must be in the brain. [...] When we imagine a position in the brain which is the first principle of the stem of the nerves where all nerves run together and end in one point, which is called the seat of the senses <sensorium commune>, but which no physician <medicus> has seen, then the question arises, does the soul reside in this seat of the senses <sensorio communi>? Has it taken up a little spot there from which it directs the whole body, somewhat like an organist can direct the whole organ from one location; or does it have no location at all in the body, so that the body itself is its location? Granted, if the soul took up a little spot in the brain where it plays on our nerves as on an organ, then we could believe that if we had gone through all the parts of the body we ultimately would have to come upon this little spot where the soul resides. Now, if one took away this little spot, the whole human being might still be there, but the location would be lacking where the organist is

supposed to play, as though on an organ: but this is thought very materialistically. (V-Met, AA 28, 281–282)

I want to highlight two impressive features of this passage and of Kant's engagement with Sömmerring's proposal in the present context. Firstly, these passages in effect anticipate Dennett's (1991) objection against what he calls 'Cartesian materialism', a position allegedly shared by many contemporary neuroscientists who try to identify certain brain areas or processes as being causally responsible for (or identical with) consciousness.⁶ The terminological contrast between a local and a merely virtual presence of the mind in the brain has a very modern ring to it, considering Dennett's characterization of the mind as a "virtual machine implemented in the parallel architecture of a brain" (Dennett 1991, p. 210), indeed anticipating the functionalist view of the mind. It is difficult to determine, though, whether Kant's use of "virtual" in his discussion of Sömmerring's proposal is akin to Dennett's.

Secondly, Kant even engages with Sömmerring's specific proposal concerning the liquid contained in the brain's ventricles, expressing his "great scruple" that this candidate substrate is not organized. Only something having some sort of organization or "purposive disposition of its parts" could serve to locate the mind. This is reminiscent of Kant's own groundbreaking and very influential discussion of organisms as natural purposes, i.e., self-producing and self-organizing beings in his Critique of the Power of Judgment. In contrast to a mere mechanical organization, Kant considers what he calls a "dynamical organization" to be crucial for the mind. Again, what he means by this is not specified any further in the passage quoted, but it can be illuminated by his discussion of the contrast between mechanistic and teleological explanation in the third Critique. This discussion of the immanent purposiveness of living organisms has inspired generations of philosophers, leading up to the present-day development of so-called "enactive" approaches to the mind (Varela et al. 1991, Weber/Varela 2002, Thompson 2007).

Kant and Enactivism

In one of his last texts, Francisco Varela acknowledges his debt to Kant's groundbreaking discussion of organisms for the development of the 'autopoietic' or 'enactive' conception of cognition in the early 1990s (Weber/Varela 2002). Together with Brooks' (1991) work in robotics, the enactive-embodied approach to cognition challenged both the representationalist paradigm and its explicit separation of perception from action in the traditional 'sandwich conception' (Hurley 1998) of cognition in favor of a dynamic view. In contrast to a traditional linear progression from sensory input via cognitive computation to action, enactivism conceives of perception and cognition not simply as functional brain states but as entangled and intertwined embodied activities of whole organisms (agents, systems) that can be explained without appeal to mental representations (e.g., Varela et al. 1991, Noë 2004, Chemero 2009, Hutto/Myin 2013, Gallagher 2017). Indeed, in this framework, the equivalence of intentionality and mental representation is no longer taken for granted (Schlicht 2018). Applied to our example used above, perceiving a coffee mug not only requires multiple actions like eye-, head- and body-movements (gaze turning etc.); perceiving is in the service of detecting action possibilities (like grasping) from the start (Gibson 1979).

All enactivists subscribe to what Thompson (2007, p. 128) calls the "deep continuity of life and mind", i.e., the claim that the organizational features of mind are an enriched version of those of life (Noë 2009, p. 41; Colombetti 2013, p. xvi; Gallagher 2017, p. 102; Di Paolo et al. 2017, p. 3, 178). In an evaluation of Kant's influence on current cognitive science, this is the crucial aspect of enactivism. At the heart of this conception is the notion of autopoiesis (Maturana/ Varela 1980). An autopoietic system – the minimal

living organization – is one that continuously produces the components that specify it, while at the same time realizing it (the system) as a concrete unity in space and time, which makes the network of component production possible (Weber/Varela 2002, 115). In his second Critique, Kant conceives of organisms as ‘self-organized’ and ‘self-producing’, i.e., autopoietic, systems that cannot be explained in purely mechanistic terms, but which we have to ‘make intelligible’ to us by relying on teleological principles that are not part of natural science but borrowed from practical contexts. Impressed by certain animals’ (e.g., zebra fish, salamanders) ability to regrow damaged or even severed body-parts (Simon 2012), Kant discusses examples to demonstrate that animals exhibit a certain form of organization that, if conceived merely as the result of blind mechanistic causal processes, appears completely contingent. Yet, “since reason must be able to cognize the necessity in every form of a natural product if it would understand the conditions connected with its generation”, our understanding must borrow the concept of final cause to make sense of this organization.

This leads Kant to his conception of organisms as “natural ends”, i.e., as natural products and as ends at the same time. This looks like a contradiction, since the notion of an ‘end’ or ‘purpose’ – being a “stranger” (KU, AA 05: A390) in natural science – must be projected into nature for the sake of an understanding of (some of) its products. Unlike a watch, the parts of an organism, its organs, must be taken to produce themselves rather than being produced by an external power, and they arrange themselves in relation and mutual dependence to each other. Analogously, unlike a watchmaker, in the case of organisms the guiding idea is not to be found outside the product (the watch), but within it (the organism itself). “An organized being is thus not a mere machine, for that has only a motive power, while the organized being possesses in itself a formative power, and indeed one that it communicates to the matter, which does not have it (it organizes the latter)” (KU, AA 05: A374). Thompson (2007, p. 62) refers to this formative power as “circular causality”, i.e., a causal dependence which goes two ways: on the one hand, the features of the whole (organism) are determined by its parts (organs); on the other hand, the local interactions of the parts (organs) are determined by the whole (organism). But as Kant makes explicit in the third Critique, this assumption is to be taken only in an epistemological sense, i.e., we only regard it as if organisms were possible only through reason, since as natural products they must come about through purely mechanistic causes, and thus be amenable to a mechanistic explanation. We cannot prove that organisms indeed exhibit this formative power, since we cannot acquire an intuition of it.

Francisco Varela regarded Kant’s position as important, because he took Kant to have “developed the possibility of a third way between a strong teleology and a brute materialism” (Weber/Varela 2002, p. 99). Varela acknowledges Kant’s insight but considers his position “unstable” and in need of revision “on the basis of modern developments of biological research and thinking”. According to Weber and Varela, Kant’s conception of an organism as a self-organized and self-producing being is closely analogous to the definition of an organism in Varela’s own theory of “autopoiesis”. In this view, biological autonomy and individuality warrant the assumption of an “intrinsic teleology”, to the effect that “organisms are subjects having purposes according to values encountered in the making of their living” (Weber/Varela, p. 102). The theory of autopoiesis as a theory of living systems is supposed to help naturalize Kant’s original theory of organisms. The question of whether Kant’s epistemic and critical position on this issue of teleology or Varela’s naturalistic theory of autopoiesis is warranted, is beyond the scope of this review.⁸ But this illustrates how Kant’s philosophy of biology left a footprint with wide-ranging implications in the historical development of cognitive science.

One particular implication of the autopoietic approach to cognition and the mind-life continuity thesis is that all organisms may exhibit at least some basic form of cognition, whereas such views have a problem allowing for genuine cognition in artificial systems. In contrast to more traditional cognitivist approaches, the possibility of cognition in ‘simple’ biological systems has recently been taken seriously with respect to organisms such as bacteria (Ben Jacob et al. 2006), plants (Calvo/Keijzer 2011, Calvo et al. 2020, Mancuso 2018, Sims 2019), and slime molds (Vallverdú et al. 2018), for example. Whether Kant would have regarded the life-mind continuity thesis as credible must be left open here, although Nunez (forthcoming), drawing on the Critique of the Power of Judgement (§65), argues that Kant would have had to at least ascribe desires to plants on the basis of how they move and on how Kant himself treated the notion of being alive.

Developmental biologist Michael Levin somehow takes this story full circle by arguing that we should apply the computational approach not only to animals with brains and nervous systems, but also to simple organisms without a brain. Rather than continuing to contrast the brain with the rest of the body (even in the so-called embodied cognition research program, see Shapiro 2011), Levin invites us to consider the body as performing calculations as well, so as to overcome the traditional life vs. machine dichotomy and according to an updated notion of ‘machine’ (Bongard/Levin 2021). Puzzled by an organism’s formative power, Levin speculates that cells and tissue may exhibit some basic forms of memory and action, using bioelectricity to communicate and decide or plan development (Levin et al. 2021, Pezzulo et al. 2021). For example, he succeeded in ‘reprogramming’ a planarian worm to grow a second head in place of its tail which he had cut off. What he’d done was to change the bioelectrical signals or ‘code’ which would normally have led to the growth of a new tail. Levin’s work suggests a convergence between biology and computer science and is thus highly relevant for the future of artificial intelligence.

Kant and Predictive Processing

Major developments in machine learning also heavily inspired recently popular predictive processing models of the brain which are taken to provide “the first truly unifying account of perception, cognition and action” (Clark 2016, p. 2) by conceiving of the brain as a prediction machine. This view implicates a delicate balance between bottom-up and top-down processing, in contrast to traditional serial bottom-up processing accounts: Perception and cognition are defined in terms of the brain testing hypotheses about the (sources or causes of) incoming sensory stimulation; hypotheses are generated by a hierarchical generative model of the world and constantly updated in response to prediction error signals (Friston 2010, Hohwy 2013, Clark 2016, Metzinger/Wiese 2017). To return to our example, perceiving the coffee mug is a process already informed by underlying brain processes that constitute a set of more or less likely expectations about sensory input and its causes. These expectations are constantly compared to the actual incoming sensory information, resulting in prediction errors (deviations) that are processed in the brain. The traditional picture of the brain using incoming sensory information to build up a representation of the world is thus turned upside down, since the new picture holds that “the rich representation of worldly states of affairs is signaled in the top-down predictions of sensory input, maintained by the perceptual hierarchy in the brain” (Hohwy 2013, p. 47).

Link Swanson (2016) argues that this most recent paradigm in cognitive science also has roots in Kant’s philosophy and tells a convincing story tracing back this influence via Helmholtz’s thesis of perception as unconscious inference, which in turn was a primary source for Friston’s (2005; 2010) original proposal

regarding predictive processing as a unified brain theory. The radical reversal of processing (top-down hypothesis-testing rather than bottom-up model-building) characteristic of predictive processing finds an analogue in Kant's so-called Copernican revolution with its combination of intuition (providing the material) and concepts (generating an understanding of what's perceived), presenting "us with a view of perception as a Kantian in spirit, 'spontaneous' interpretative activity, and not a process of passively building up percepts from inputs" (Gładziejewski 2016, p. 574). But Swanson also links more specific concepts from the predictive processing story to specific analogues in Kant's theory – e.g., generative models and schemata, which are both heavily informed by intuitions as well as concepts in the process of object recognition. Indeed, it's striking that both Clark and Hohwy choose a starting point that sounds very familiar to Kantians, only formulated from the perspective of the brain whose task, "when viewed from a certain distance, can seem impossible: it must discover information about the likely causes of impinging signals without any form of direct access to their source" (Clark 2013, p. 183). Put this way, the central issue is understanding causation, i.e., understanding relations between worldly causes and sensory inputs. Assuming a Humean framework, this is impossible according to Kant, who posits an innate conceptual machinery (the categories) that must be applied to sensory input in order to enable such understanding.

But only Hohwy's interpretation of the predictive processing framework is internalist like Kant's. Indeed, Hohwy argues that the prediction error minimization theory "reveals the mind to be inferentially secluded from the world", showing that strong embodied views of cognition and mind should be rejected in favor of "a more old-fashioned, skepticism-prone view of the mind-world-relation" (Hohwy 2014, pp. 259–260). Thus, Beni (2018) complains that Swanson's reconstruction only holds true for Hohwy's version of predictive processing, while it ignores the dominant embodied and action-oriented versions put forward by Clark (2016) and Bruineberg and Rietveld (2014) or Bruineberg, Kiverstein and Rietveld (2016), which are much more inspired by Gibson's (1979) ecological psychology than by Kant's transcendental idealism. Whether the embodied variety of predictive processing is tenable and coherent, given the epistemic starting point it shares with Hohwy's version, cannot be pursued further in this paper. In any case, the view that predictive processing is rooted in Kant's view of the mind must thus be taken with a grain of salt, just like the idea that assimilates Kant's view of the mind to functionalism.

With respect to the alleged roots of functionalism, enactivism, and predictive processing in Kant's philosophy, it is important to keep in mind that these different paradigmatic backgrounds take different stances towards the relation between cognition, intentionality, and representation, and propose different explanatory strategies in cognitive science. It seems unlikely that Kant would have subscribed to all of these views at once, given the opposition (and genuine incompatibility) of some of the contemporary stances. While classical cognitivism alludes to mental representations, embodied enactivism eschews them (Gallagher 2017, p. 7). While the former is based on functionalism and explicitly allows for the possibility of cognition in artificial systems, the latter is based on a strong continuity of life and mind, making this possibility problematic.

Interlude: Aspects of Kant's Account of Cognition

As we saw, at the heart of the predictive processing approach is the project of understanding causal relations. This is also the recurrent theme linking Hume's empiricism with Kant's transcendental idealism and his 'Copernican Revolution'. Hume recognized that an understanding of a causal relation between A and B cannot be grounded in sensory input alone, since this does not provide us with a connection

between events A and B but only with their temporal succession, yielding his skepticism about an understanding of causation. Kant followed Hume in his assessment of the inadequacy of sensory experience in accounting for an understanding of causal relations; at the same time, he was willing to borrow a priori concepts from the rationalists and claim that it is the faculty of understanding itself which is the source of a system of concepts that provide the necessary unification. It is now worth reminding the reader of the core of Kant's theory of cognition, prior to the discussion presented in the second part of the paper.

In two very instructive papers, Marcus Willaschek and Eric Watkins (Watkins/Willaschek 2017, Willaschek/Watkins 2020) outline the complex usage of the notion of cognition in Kant's works. The most prominent usage is what they call cognition in the narrow sense, which requires a unification of intuition and concept, i.e., the combination of sensory receptivity and spontaneity of the understanding. Cognition in the broad sense, by contrast, allows for several "degrees of cognition", sketched in different, yet not necessarily incompatible, ways in the so-called Jäsche Logik (AA 16: 64–65) and in the Critique of Pure Reason (KrV: A320/B376). In the latter, they are presented as more or less demanding cases of "representing something", be it unconsciously, consciously, through perception, understanding or reason, with or without concepts or intuition being involved. The most basic degree of cognition is "to represent something", without any further conditions; the highest or most complex degree is to "comprehend something" through reason and a priori. Importantly, in Kant's taxonomy, cognition does not imply truth or assent, and is therefore to be distinguished from the notion of knowledge (Willaschek/Watkins 2020). Taken in the broad sense, any conscious representation that represents an object counts as a case of cognition, even if the object does not exist (or if it cannot be given in experience).

But despite the variety of dimensions of the concept of cognition, as used by Kant, cognition in the narrow sense is singled out as "cognition in the proper sense" (KrV: A78/B103) and this is the notion that will concern us here. Cognition in this sense can be described as a "conscious representation of a given object and of (at least some of) its general features" (Watkins/Willaschek 2017, p. 86). For cognition of an object to obtain, this must be given and a concept must be applied to it. The former is the task of sensibility, the latter is performed by the understanding. And such cognition is actively achieved rather than simply happening by chance, since it is a product – "the mere effect" – of the synthesis performed by the imagination, "without which we would have no cognition at all", at least not in this crucial narrow sense. This passage places great emphasis on the function of synthesis, which is conceived as "the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition" (Watkins/Willaschek 2017, p. 86). An act of synthesis, as such the beginning of an answer to the problem posed by Hume, "collects the elements for cognitions and unifies them into a certain content". Without such a unificatory process of concept application to a given object, intuitions remain "blind" and thoughts "empty" (KrV: A51/B75-76). Kant therefore stresses that if we are interested in "the first origin of our cognition", we have to focus on synthesis.

What the conception of degrees of cognition in the Jäsche Logik and the "progression" passage in the Critique of Pure Reason have in common is the idea that cognition in the narrow sense presupposes consciousness. In the Jäsche Logik, where Kant outlines a gradual concept of cognition, this idea is found in the fourth degree, defined as "to be acquainted with something with consciousness, i.e., to cognize it"

(AA 16: 65), whereas in the “progression” Kant develops it as follows: “The genus is representation in general (repraesentatio). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (perceptio). A perception that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a sensation (sensatio); an objective perception is a cognition (cognitio)” (KrV: A320/B376). Taking the progression seriously, Tolley (2020) argues that Kant classifies sensing, intuiting, perceiving and mere thinking as “lying earlier” than, and providing conditions for, cognition, while still considering cognition as being placed on a “psychologically elementary level” compared to knowledge, understanding, and explaining. In contrast to Watkins and Willaschek, Tolley argues that Kant’s concept of cognition is unified rather than equivocal.

Without intending to settle this dispute with respect to Kant’s use of “cognition”, all sides agree that he emphasized cognition in the narrow sense, where the other candidates fall under the umbrella of the concept of cognition as it is used in contemporary cognitive science. And since cognition in the narrow sense, in Kant’s view, is a “distinctive form of consciousness of a real object by way of a specific kind of combination of representations” (Tolley 2020, p. 3217), consciousness is a condition of cognition in this proper sense (I will return to this point in the last section of this paper). By Kant’s lights then, for an artificial system to be capable of cognition in the narrow sense, it would have to be capable of consciousness as well. This is certainly not a view of cognition that is widespread among contemporary cognitive scientists. Proponents of the predictive processing approach to perception and cognition also do not hold that these processes require consciousness, although they often claim that the framework can also be applied to explain consciousness (Hohwy/Seth 2020, Clark 2019). But even if an artificial system may not be conscious in the relevant sense, it may still be capable of cognition in the broad sense. That is, it may be said – minimally – to have representations of something or other.

With these reminders of Kant’s view of cognition, we can now turn, in the second part of this paper, to more recent developments in artificial intelligence, namely, the ascent and success story of deep learning architectures that led to the recent AI spring. As I will try to show, this fascinating development raises interesting philosophical issues about the nature of perception, learning and understanding and about the more general question of empiricist vs. rationalist approaches.

The Potential and Limitations of Deep Learning

After a series of dark winters, AI research has made considerable progress, pushed forward by the advent of so-called “deep learning architectures” (LeCun/Bengio/Hinton 2015; Buckner 2018/2019, Sejnowski 2018). This has been – so far – the result of a development in which the connectionist approach to AI superseded the “Good Old-fashioned AI” (or GOFAI-) approach. Current discussions of AI often focus on software that does not only process fixed programmed algorithms, but can be trained using algorithms, such that part of the process can be developed by the software itself. This machinelearning approach to AI is one among many and includes supervised, unsupervised and reinforcement learning. Deep Learning on the basis of artificial neural networks is currently the most promising and most widely discussed (and used) approach, which is why we will focus on it here.

The crucial difference compared to traditional GOFAI-approaches is that these neural networks are inspired by the organization of the human brain – more specifically, the layered architecture of the visual cortex – while the main difference compared to their historical precursors, the connectionist networks from the 1980s and 1990s, is the number of layers of simulated neurons. Whereas classical networks only consisted of an input layer, one hidden layer and an output layer, deep neural networks are deep in

the sense that there are many more than one hidden layer, indeed there are numbers reaching hundreds of layers. This increases their computational power exponentially, enables them to represent even abstract features of the environment and is taken to be largely responsible for their recent success in many applications. Thus, although this new phase already started in the 1980s, researchers only developed computers with the necessary computational power in the late 2000s. The nodes of the network are connected – just as real neurons are connected via dendrites – and the connections between them have different weights. The larger the weight between A and B, the greater the influence of A on B, and vice versa (since weights are symmetric).

Using cats, neuroscientists and Nobel laureates David Hubel and Torsten Wiesel (1962) discovered that light of different wavelengths activates cells in the back of the eye and that this activation is then processed via the optic nerves into the brain, ending up in the hierarchically organized series of layers of neurons in the visual cortex. Neurons in different layers have specific preferences (or receptive fields) and thus detect increasingly complex features, from edges via simple and complex shapes to whole objects, like faces. The nodes of the network are like simplified, formal neurons. The input layer provides the data for the network – images, spoken words, hand-written digits, games –, whereas the output layer produces the desired results, e.g., a classification of an image or object, a number or word. In between, multiple hidden layers perform calculations that produce this result:

An image, for example, comes in the form of an array of pixel values, and the learned features in the first layer of representation typically represent the presence or absence of edges at particular orientations and locations in the image. The second layer typically detects motifs by spotting particular arrangements of edges, regardless of small variations in the edge positions. The third layer may assemble motifs into larger combinations that correspond to parts of familiar objects, and subsequent layers would detect objects as combinations of these parts. The key aspect of deep learning is that these layers of features are not designed by human engineers: they are learned from data using a general-purpose learning procedure. (LeCun/Bengio/Hinton 2015, p. 436)

Several major factors are important for their performance:

- (1) First, as the name suggests, these networks are able to learn and can therefore be trained on the input data; they are not pre-programmed (although the programmer chooses the input data). Learning takes place by adjusting the weights according to sensory feedback. These networks start with arbitrary weights and adjust them in the course of a training phase in which they are bombarded with data. If the goal is to learn recognizing objects, the inputs will be images; if the goal is to learn playing games, the input will be games of this sort. And so on.
- (2) This is the second important factor: Using internet databases such as image-net, the training set for a given network can consist of millions of examples, e.g., millions of images of dogs and cats, or millions of games of Go – many more dogs and cats and games than any human being could encounter or play in their lifetime. Note well: the point is not that since DNNs can rely on so much data, they have a significant computational advantage when compared with humans; the point is that they must rely on so much data to achieve this significant level of performance. Children, by contrast, can learn very quickly from just a few examples (Carey 2009). That's an important difference. Since the real world does not come as neatly labeled as suggested by a supervised learning training set for networks, this cannot be the route to mimic human learning or understanding. It is different from the very start. But that does not

preclude us from considering the procedure “intelligent” or as an instance of “cognition”, since these phenomena may allow for multiple realizations.

Yet, if the images come already labeled (this is a dog, this is a cat) – which is the most common method of machine learning – the network will eventually learn to produce confident results (outputs) in recognizing dogs and cats. In general, the output does not consist of a single answer, but comes as a “vector of scores, one for each category” where the goal is to get the machine to give the desired category the highest score (LeCun et al. 2015, p. 436). For example, if the input is an image of a dog, the network might spit out 70% dog, 20% fox, 10% cat, i.e., outputs with different confidence ratings. Eventually, after initially making many errors, performance increases because these errors are processed using so-called ‘backpropagation’: it calculates the difference between the intended and the actual output and sends this error signal (this is not a dog) back through the hidden layers of the network. By adjusting the weights along the way, the network can perform better the next time it encounters this image.

Although it isn’t clear whether there is a biological analogue to this process of backpropagation, it works well for these networks. Since what a network can ‘recognize’ on each layer is not pre-programmed, it must find out about the most salient and characteristic features that are central for the task (of recognizing dogs, say). This is important for the test phase in which the network is supposed to classify and recognize with high confidence new objects (more cats and dogs) which weren’t in the training set. So far, DNNs do not make it intelligible to us how they reach a decision when they recognize an object with high confidence, for example, 60% dog, 30% cat, 10% fox. The most prominent artificial neural networks today – convolutional neural networks, or ConvNets (Mitchell 2020, pp. 73–88) are named after the operation leading the DNN to yield a certain output: convolution.¹³ Convolution is a mathematical procedure that works like a filter that slides across an image and creates a layer of features across this image (Sejnowski 2018, p. 130–131). It thereby determines whether a certain portion of an image, say, a set of pixels in a grid, contains or signifies a certain feature and then assigns a certain numeral to that part of the grid. Repeating this procedure for several layers covers ever increasing portions of the image and detects ever more abstract features, thus corresponding to Hubel and Wiesel’s ‘simple cells.’

The network is still relying on human expertise in the form of feedback (labels) about its results. That makes the learning process “supervised”. The inputs are fixed and the results are determined; the network must learn to get from A to B using only its own resources, simulated neurons in multiple layers connected by different weights. After having received the input image, the network performs its layer-by-layer calculations and finally produces an output. This can be formulated as a certain degree of confidence (between 0 and 100%) regarding every image and category. Some networks have already achieved more than 90% accuracy in the image-net competition (Mitchell 2020, p. 101). Nevertheless, their performance is limited, since they can only succeed or fail in categorizing an input-picture (or word) correctly but they cannot produce any new insights. This seems possible in unsupervised learning when the result (the label “dog”, say) is not given but found by the network by associating and clustering certain patterns with each other. For example, the network might be able to detect words in social media feeds which are used more frequently than others or might recognize that customers who bought product A also often bought product B, which can then be recommended to new customers who bought A.

(3) A third and peculiar aspect of DNNs concerns the kinds of errors they make and how different these errors are from the kinds of errors humans make. Since humans also make mistakes – being subject to visual illusions, for example –, such networks need not be perfect in their performance. But it is instructive how easily they can be fooled:

While they also get confused by images containing multiple objects, unlike humans they tend to miss objects that are small in the image, objects that have been distorted by color or contrast filters the photographer applied to the image, and “abstract representations” of objects, such as a painting or statue of a dog, or a stuffed toy dog. (Mitchell 2020, p. 105)

Moreover, and most disconcertingly, DNNs are easily duped and fooled, both by intentional manipulation of the input data and by new situations in the real world that the network is not sufficiently prepared for. Thus, a self-driving car’s autopilot mode got confused by salt lines which had been laid out on a road in anticipation of a storm, since they looked just like lane markings – an unlikely yet possible situation. Mitchell (2020, p. 120) reports results from her colleague Will Landecker who had trained a network in classifying images into “contains an animal” and “does not contain an animal”. But the test phase revealed that the network had classified all photos with a blurry background as containing an animal since there was a high correlation between a macroscopic picture taken of an animal and the photo having an otherwise blurry background. That is, the network ‘overfitted’ to its training set and thus failed to accurately predict future data that are slightly dissimilar but nevertheless belong to the same relevant category. Another, rather embarrassing and inexcusable because discriminatory, mistake happened to the Google Photos App when it labeled a selfie taken by an African-American couple as “Gorillas” (Vincent 2018).

DNNs can be fooled more systematically using so-called “adversarial examples”. These are images which have been intentionally distorted by making very small changes that the human eye cannot detect but lead a DNN to classify the object depicted on it in an arbitrary manner, even though it had correctly classified the original image before. For example, a lion was now classified as a library, both times with high confidence (Szegedy et al. 2015). Subsequently, Nguyen, Yosinski and Clune (2015) showed that it is possible to produce copies of images showing an object A where the copy contains differences which are unrecognizable to the human eye and yet allegedly recognized as showing another object B with 99% confidence by a DNN. This seems to show that not only do DNNs learn very differently than humans – “at the most specific grain of detail, DCNNs [Deep Convolutional Neural Networks, T.S.] and human perceptual cortex do not produce exactly the same phenomena” (Buckner 2018, p. 28)¹⁴ – they also cannot be trusted. Thus, it remains obscure why ConvNets work as well as they do. This opacity of the learning and decision-making process makes it difficult to understand what and how such networks learn. Mitchell (2020, p. 132) concludes that “something very different from human perception is going on”.

Philosophical Interpretations of Deep Neural Networks

As we saw in the first part, one crucial aspect of Kant’s theory of cognition is that he posits a balanced interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing, in his terminology between intuition and concept. A second, yet different, aspect of his approach is the positing of a priori contributions to cognition, i.e., contributions that are independent and systematically prior to experience or learning. With respect to our understanding of causal relations, for example, Kant shared the same starting point with Hume, stressing that it cannot be conceived as a “direct consequence of data-driven learning”

(Butterfill 2020, p. 93). However, contrary to Hume’s skepticism, Kant concluded that there must be a contribution to understanding that is not learned which is often identified with being “innate”.¹⁶

Considering the preceding paragraphs, DNNs also raise a number of interesting issues concerning perception, classification, abstraction, conceptual learning, and understanding, and also concerning the debate about innate vs. learned against the background of the controversy between empiricists and rationalists. Buckner argues that in today’s debates, the question is no longer whether the mind starts out as an unstructured ‘blank slate’ but whether categorical representations “are due mostly to domain-specific or domain-general cognitive mechanisms” (Buckner 2018, p. 3). A typical example for a domain specific cognitive mechanism is Chomsky’s universal grammar, which constitutes a language acquisition device underlying our learning of all natural languages; it is domain-specific since it only pertains to language. By contrast, one may posit only one domain-general all-purpose learning device allowing one to acquire knowledge across domains (as done, for example, in Skinner 1957, the book criticized by Chomsky 1959). Crucially, opponents in the debate would not count the latter as evidence for a nativist position, since, as Long (ms., p. 3) argues, everyone agrees that learning requires that something be innate. He proposes, following Margolis and Laurence (2013), to frame the controversy in terms of this contrast, with nativism holding that cognition (in a given domain) requires domain-specific mechanisms, and empiricism holding that (for any domain) domain-general mechanisms are sufficient. The questions we are facing then are the following: Given that DNNs do not start from scratch, do they require domain-specific mechanisms or can they make do with domain-general ones in order to achieve general intelligence? (2) Does Kant’s system of categories constitute a domain-general or a domain-specific cognitive mechanism?

Regarding question (1), Long (ms.) has usefully framed the development of artificial intelligence in terms of this opposition and formulated more finegrained theoretical options. To keep things as simple as possible, we will focus on only two of them: “Necessity Nativism is the claim that necessarily, a humanlevel AI system will be a nativist system” (Long, ms., p. 6). That is, in this view general intelligence requires nativist (domain-specific) mechanisms. By contrast, Possibility Empiricism “is the claim that it is possible for a humanlevel AI system to be an empiricist system” (Long ms., p. 6); i.e., general intelligence, in this view, does not require domain-specific mechanisms but can be acquired by relying on domain-general mechanisms alone. Long argues that “empiricist human-level AI is at the very least possible” (Long, ms., p. 1). That is, Long belongs to a group which we may dub “optimists”. Optimists claim that developers may overcome the obstacles that current AI systems face compared to human-level understanding without having to rely on domain-specific mechanisms. Pessimists, by contrast, claim that developers will not succeed in building AI systems that can achieve human-level understanding solely by relying on domain-general mechanisms. Domain-specific, i.e., innate mechanisms are necessary for this feat.

(a) Optimists

In a seminal article, LeCun, Bengio and Hinton (2015, p. 436) claim that DNNs are able to “learn representations of data with multiple levels of abstraction”. If that were so, this would be fantastic, since – according to Mitchell (2020, p. 319) – “abstraction, in some form, underlies all of our concepts, even from earliest infancy” and it would therefore open the door for the possibility that DCNNs may acquire concepts and understanding simply from being exposed to data. That is, LeCun, Bengio and Hinton are optimists. So is Buckner (2018), who is impressed by the success of ConvNets and discusses them in the

context of an empiricist philosophy of mind, claiming that they “model a distinctive kind of abstraction from experience”, and thereby “one crucially important component of intelligence – a form of categorial abstraction”, among other components necessary for general intelligence (Buckner 2018, p. 3). He also highlights several core features of DNNs – multiple layers, convolutional filters, and pooling – and argues that “they jointly implement a form of hierarchical abstraction that reduces the complexity of a problems feature space [. . .] by iteratively transforming it into a simplified representational format that preserves and accentuates task-relevant features while controlling for nuisance variation”, i.e., variations that are irrelevant for categorization (size, location etc.). He calls this process “transformational abstraction” (Buckner 2018, p. 18). In his rich and densely argued paper, Buckner nicely presents both Locke’s as well as Berkeley’s and Hume’s somewhat mysterious and unsatisfactory accounts of abstraction, culminating in the puzzle of how the mind can get from specific exemplars to abstract categories (Locke) or from abstract categories to exemplars (Hume). Where does the knowledge come from which details should be left out (Locke) or added (Berkeley, Hume) along the way? While at one point he acknowledges that what he is developing “begins to look more like the theory of abstraction provided by Kant (and contemporary Kantians like Barsalou [. . .] who emphasized the need for rules of synthesis to generate a range of specific possible exemplars corresponding to an abstract category” (Buckner 2018, p. 12), he nevertheless argues, along the lines of possibility empiricism, that this challenge may be met by an empiricist account. He is content to have shown that DNNs perform abstractions that vindicate “elements of the Lockean, Berkeleyan and Kantian views”, without committing himself neither to any one of these historical interpretations, nor to the crucial differences between these accounts.

(b) Pessimists

At the time being, it is fair to say that the group of pessimists pointing out several limitations of Deep Neural Networks is larger, or at least louder than the group of optimists (depending on whom you talk to). As Buckner (2018) notes, contemporary rationalists are skeptical about domain-general mechanisms being sufficient. Indeed, Mitchell (2020, p. 132) argues that the main problem of deep neural networks is “one of understanding”. The networks lack the rich background knowledge – about functions of objects (affordances), memories, and context dependent cognition – which informs human perception. She suggests that “humans are endowed with an essential body of core knowledge” (Mitchell 2020, p. 309), appealing to the influential work by Spelke and Carey (1996) which posits domain-specific core knowledge systems enabling the recognition of objects, agents, numbers, and so on – i.e., concepts like cause, number, object, and agent. The list of features of these systems typically contains “innateness”.

An even more dismissive assessment of what deep neural networks can achieve is that given by Marcus and Davis (2019, p. 145). They agree with Mitchell but go further, objecting that what DNNs provide is just more of the same that was already possible with their precursors. They complain that “machine learning people, for the most part, emphasize learning, but fail to consider innate knowledge” (Marcus/Davis 2019, p. 144). Also appealing to Spelke’s work, they submit that

humans are likely born understanding that the world consists of enduring objects that travel on connected paths in space and time, with a sense of geometry and quantity, and the underpinnings of an intuitive psychology. Or, as Kant argued [...], an innate ‘spatio-temporal manifold’ is indispensable if one is to properly conceive of the world. (Marcus/Davis 2019, p. 145)

Leaving Kant and the question of whether Marcus and Davis' charge against machine-learning researchers is justified aside for the moment, it should be emphasized that innateness is not a necessary feature of the core systems identified by Spelke and Carey. As Butterfill (2020, pp. 93–103) shows, the evidence for such systems being innate is far from clear, and “poverty of stimulus arguments” have been provided only in the case of syntax (Chomsky 1959), whereas other works in developmental psychology suggest an agnostic position on innateness of core systems. Thus, one may accept the evidence mentioned in favor of a distinction between a limited number of core knowledge systems but nevertheless reject the claim that they can be cited in favor of necessity nativism.

In a similar vein, and with a focus on the goal of developing an artificial system exhibiting general intelligence, computer scientist and philosopher Judea Pearl (2018, p. 10) considers “machines' lack of understanding of causal relations” as being “perhaps the biggest roadblock to giving them human level intelligence [. . .] I believe that strong AI is an achievable goal and one not to be feared precisely because causality is part of the solution.” “A causal reasoning module will give machines the ability to reflect on their mistakes, to pinpoint weaknesses in their software, to function as moral entities, and to converse naturally with humans about their own choices and intentions.” Yet, despite his optimism, he considers present-day learning machines still only as “sharing the wisdom of an owl”. Despite regular news about rapid advances in machine-learning systems – self-driving cars, speech and face recognition systems, and the like – even recent deep learning networks have only “given us machines with truly impressive abilities but no intelligence. The difference is profound and lies in the absence of a model of reality” (Pearl 2018, p. 30).

In order to illustrate what's missing compared to the human level of understanding, Pearl sketches a threefold “ladder of causation” (Pearl 2018, pp. 23–52), specifying three levels of cognitive ability that a learner must achieve for a true understanding of causal relations. The first and most basic level, which we share with many animals, consists in detecting regularities through observation. An owl may observe a rat and figure out where it will be next, for example. Such reasoning proceeds merely by association and seeing such regularities enables a cognitive agent to make predictions guided by the question ‘What if I see []?’

Only some of such observations may actually discover causal relations, and the data themselves do not disclose cause and effect. The second cognitive level is characterized by action which enables a cognitive agent to bring about changes in the world. Actions are interventions into the physical causal order. To use Pearl's example, “seeing smoke tells us a totally different story about the likelihood of fire than making smoke” (Pearl 2019, p. 31). Humans use such interventions all the time, e.g., when taking an aspirin to cure a headache. Tool use in the animal kingdom is an illustration of the range of creatures capable of this cognitive level. The guiding question on this level is: ‘What if I do [. . .]?’ The final cognitive ability, enabling a human-level understanding of causal relations, is counterfactual reasoning. Once the headache is gone, we can ask why and consider the probabilities of different causes, asking, in effect, ‘What if I had done [. . .]?’ An instance of this question is, e.g., ‘What would have happened if I had not taken the aspirin?’. Such thinking opens up new possibilities, taking us beyond data into an imaginary world where some facts, obtaining in the real world, do not hold, or are even contradicted. This hallmark of human intelligence enables the development of scientific theories, art, and improving on our past actions.

The point of all this is that, in Pearl's view, present-day AI has not yet progressed beyond level one because even DNNs operate entirely in association mode, being fully driven by a stream of data. Recall that being a direct consequence of data-driven learning was how we identified the empiricist position. According to Pearl then, this empiricism is limited. Even the successful computer program Alpha Go only churns through accumulated data, its database consisting of millions of Go games, "so that it can figure out which moves are associated with a higher percentage of wins" (Pearl 2018, p. 29). But this is all that it is capable of, obviously exceeding human memory by far, but not achieving any understanding. By contrast, humans make use of a mental "model of reality" (Pearl 2018, p. 30, see also Mitchell 2020, ch. 14) which Pearl considers as a necessary ingredient to achieve our level of understanding. While many researchers in AI attempt to solely rely on data for all cognitive tasks, Pearl emphasizes "how profoundly dumb data are about causes and effects" (Pearl 2019, p. 16).

Whether optimists or pessimists may turn out to be correct is an empirical question, and not one to be settled in this paper. At least, the limitations and challenges are more or less known. Cremer (2021) presents a survey of expert interviews on the potential and limitations of deep learning wherein such experts list forty limitations. Success in this area depends on whether the question is if AI systems are supposed to exhibit cognition and intelligence that is like cognition and intelligence in humans or if we would be content with such systems being successful in a sufficiently high number of tasks or in a sufficiently high number of domains, regardless of whether the way they achieved this resembles the way humans do. I highlighted the potential connections to (and relevance of) Kant's theory of cognition in this context as well as to its borderline position between empiricism and nativism. This was the second question we posed above. On the one hand, given that his system of categories is characterized as being a priori (and thus systematically prior to any experience), his position would be classified as nativist. On the other hand, given that his system of categories can be considered domain-general, his position would be classified as empiricist. Thus, given the different terminological systems used by Kant and contemporary cognitive scientists, it is challenging to formulate a clear statement on this issue that is both true to Kant's writings and to the way dichotomies are characterized in today's debates. As a final remark in this review, it is worth introducing a very recent approach to machine learning that specifically alludes to Kant's view of cognition in its formulation of a cognitive architecture, namely the position developed by Richard Evans (2022, this volume 39–103).

Start Making Sense!

Like Pearl and Mitchell, Richard Evans and his colleagues – computer scientists at Deep Mind, one of the leading companies developing state-of-the-art AI – allude to mental models and add specifications about its ingredients and constraints (Evans et al. 2021). Concerned with the problem of how to make sense of a sensory sequence, they allude to Kant's theory, since "Kant defines exactly what it means to make sense of a sequence: to reinterpret that sequence as a representation of an external world composed of objects, persisting over time, with attributes that change over time, according to general laws" (Evans 2022, this volume, p. 40). This "involves constructing a symbolic causal theory that both explains the sensory sequence and also satisfies a set of unity conditions" (Evans et al. 2021, p. 1). More specifically, they postulate the "requirement that our theory exhibits a particular form of unity: the constituents of our theory – objects, properties, and atoms – must be integrated into a coherent whole [. . .] This extra unity condition is necessary, we argue, for the theory to achieve good accuracy at prediction, retrodiction, and imputation" (Evans et al. 2021, p. 2). To meet these unity requirements on sense-making, Evans suggests interpreting Kant's first Critique as providing a cognitive architecture, specifically

“as a precise computationally-implementable description of what is involved in making sense of the sensory stream” (Evans 2022, this volume, p. 40). That is, according to Evans, it is possible to capture Kant’s cognitive architecture in rigorous algorithmic form and implement it in a machine in order to test it in experiments.¹⁸ Although not all details of Kant’s account can thereby be captured, the gain is a detailed and precise description on the level of a computer algorithm. That is, Kant’s a priori psychology here forms the template for a machine-learning system which requires translating the various faculties that are involved in cognition in the narrow sense and their interaction into one program. In terms of concrete results, these are the understanding – with its capacity to form judgements – corresponds to an unsupervised learning program, the power of judgement, which subsumes intuitions under concepts, is implemented as a binary neural network, and the imagination which is responsible (and indispensable) for the connections between intuitions (productive synthesis) in terms of a set of non-deterministic choice rules (Evans 2022, this volume, p. 95). The fourth and final condition is sensory intuition, which provides the input for the cognitive architecture.

In a more recent article, Evans et al. (2021) describe a particular computer system they call “Apperception Engine”, designed to perform an “unsupervised program synthesis” (Evans et al. 2021., p. 2) and to implement the various faculties in one unified system.¹⁹ Delving into the rich details of this implementation is beyond the scope of this review and must be left for another occasion, but the readers may consult Evans’ contribution to this volume themselves (Evans 2022, this volume, ch. 2). This requirement explicitly exceeds the typical empiricist approaches that are purely data-driven, as criticized by the “pessimists” such as Pearl, Mitchell and Marcus & Davis (see above). But it does not mean that Evans thereby takes his Apperception Engine to constitute a nativist system, as demanded by Marcus and Davis. With respect to the debate between optimists and pessimists, Evans objects to Marcus’ interpretation of Kant as a nativist, because it is important what is taken to be innate. That is, it makes a difference whether one claims that concepts are innate or faculties (capacities) whose application produces such concepts. Kant allegedly did not conceive of the categories as innate concepts: “The pure unary concepts are not ‘baked in’ as primitive unary predicates in the language of thought. The only things that are baked in are the fundamental capacities (sensibility, imagination, power of judgement, and the capacity to judge) [. . .]. The categories themselves are acquired – derived from the pure relations in concreto when making sense of a particular sensory sequence” (Evans 2022, this volume, p. 74). Evans follows Longuenesse (2001), who grounds her interpretation in a letter Kant wrote to his contemporary Eberhard; in it, he distinguishes an “empirical acquisition” from an “original acquisition”, the latter applying to the forms of intuition and to the categories. Evans is right in saying that, as far as the cognition of an object is concerned – like the “I think” – the categories come into play only by being actively (spontaneously) applied through the understanding, and can thus be derived, if you will, through a process of reverse engineering which reveals that they have to be presupposed in the first place, being a transcendental condition of experience. But this is compatible with the claim that, given their a priori status (and given that they can be applied also in the absence of sensory input, though not to yield cognition in the narrow sense but still cognition in the broad sense, as characterized above), “they have their ground in an a priori (intellectual, spontaneous) capacity of the mind” (Longuenesse 2001, p. 253). In contrast to Evans, Barsalou (1999, p. 581) firmly categorizes Kant as a nativist, arguing that Kant “assumed that native mechanisms interpret and organize images”. If such mechanisms are supposed to be the categories, then this interpretation speaks against Kant’s elaboration in his letter to Eberhard, but we need not settle this issue here.

One way the categories are applied is described in the schematism chapter of the first Critique. Thus, when the question is how we “form the general idea of a triangle when we have only been exposed to a series of particular and idiosyncratic exemplars” which we are forced to “unify” (Buckner 2018, 8), then Kant’s answer can be framed in terms of the combination of sensory and conceptual representations, arguing that unificatory concepts (categories) are “schematized” when combined with a series of exemplars. A schema, in Kant’s parlance, is a third kind of representation which can mediate between an intuition and a concept and can thus enable the application of a concept to a given intuition. Analogously, the schematism is the process of applying the concepts of the understanding to appearances. Kant distinguished between schemata for empirical concepts like “chair” and schemata for pure sensory concepts from geometry like “triangle”, which is Buckner’s example. In Kant’s theory, which can only be hinted at, schemata result as an effect of the imagination’s task to produce a given concept’s image (KrV, AA: A140/B179). While the understanding produces a concept that acts like a rule, the imagination produces a general Gestalt (the schema of that concept) and a concrete image, either in free association or based on sensory input. Schemata are sensory by being imagistic representations, and yet general rather than merely particular, guided by the rule provided by the concept. I will leave it at these brief remarks on schemata, as there are many interpretative problems to do with this important notion (see Pippin 1976, Pendlebury 1995 and Matherne 2014 for further discussion).²⁰ The upshot is, of course, that this consideration leads us away from a purely empiricist account towards a mixed account that incorporates rationalist elements. It is an area of research that deserves a closer look on another occasion.

Another way in which Kant’s theory of cognition is quite different from the typical empiricist approaches has to do with the central notion of spontaneity. As Evans notes, apart from the passive sensibility which only receives information, all other faculties involved in cognition in the narrow sense contain a spontaneous element. It is crucial for Evans’ interpretation that spontaneity is free of any constraints, such that the cognitive agent is “continually constructing the program” that she can execute, being “free to construct any rules whatsoever – as long as they satisfy the unity conditions” (Evans 2021). Yet, Evans is well aware that a number of features that are important for Kant are either not represented in the Apperception Engine or represented differently, for example, space, time, and self-consciousness. Thus, while Kant takes the spontaneity of the understanding to be typically a self-conscious activity – i.e., an activity being conscious of itself (B 153) which allows the subject performing the spontaneous synthesis to become conscious of “the identity of the consciousness in [. . .] conjoined [. . .] representations (B 133) –, this has as yet not been implemented in Evans’ program. Evans himself acknowledges that there is still much more work to be done in order for the Apperception Engine to be fair to Kant’s original theory. But what’s more important for his practical purposes is whether the resulting performance of the program is in need of further elements. It is of course an empirical question of whether Evans’ Kantian machine-learning approach is superior to competing deep-learning architectures or whether alternative routes are sufficient or yield better results. But given the purpose of this paper, which was to present an overview of where Kant’s conception of cognition has been and still is influential, it is fascinating to see that many of his ideas are still very much alive and relevant.

Conclusion

In this paper I presented a survey intended to outline various approaches developed by researchers in cognitive science and artificial intelligence with an eye on the influence of Kant’s theory of cognition on these respective approaches. As it turned out, many elements of Kant’s philosophy have been influential

and are still relevant in the search for the right paradigm to explain and experimentally approach cognition. It was not the purpose of this paper to remain faithful to all of Kant's texts and engage in Kant-exegesis. Rather, this text was an exercise to see what cognitive scientists and contemporary philosophers of mind can take from Kant's philosophy and apply it usefully to address open questions such as what's needed for an artificial system to make sense of sensory input, or to develop cognitive models such as the predictive processing paradigm to capture neural processing in the brain. This is a fascinating area of study. Time will tell what elements of Kant's philosophy of mind will remain fruitful and necessary in the best theories of cognition and the development of artificial systems exhibiting general intelligence. <>

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