Bennie H. Reynolds III / Armin Lange /
Eric M. Meyers / Randall Styers (Eds.)

# Light Against Darkness

## Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World

Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements Band 2

=book

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# Introduction

In the summer of 2003, the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Department of Religion at Duke University organized an international symposium entitled "Light against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World." Because of the far-ranging nature of the subject matter of the symposium, many of the participants came into contact with issues and methods that were quite far removed their own field of specialization. For example, the presentation of Prods Oktor Skjærvø on "Zoroastrian Dualism" was particularly illuminating for many of the participants. Skjærvø explained how little is actually known about "Persian-period" dualism of the Achaemenid era and especially how tentative and inexact the dating of the most important Persian texts remains. This presentation vividly illustrated how a single scholarly paper can challenge time-honored and deeply-shared conceptions of religious history.

This volume took a long time in editing. The delays are mainly due to personal circumstances of members of its editorial team. A transatlantic move by a key member of the editorial team, a tenure procedure in regard to another key member, and new administrative responsibilities for most of us caused longer delays than we could have imagined.

Before introducing the reader to the topic of this volume, we would like offer a few brief words of gratitude to the many students and colleagues who helped to make the meeting such a success. Professors Thomas Tweed and Bart Ehrman of UNC-Chapel Hill supported us especially during the early stages of organizing the conference. The symposium would never have been possible without the logistical and administrative assistance of Hope Toscher of UNC. Graduate student assistants at Chapel Hill also provided invaluable service, especially Jared Anderson who assisted at the conference and then later helped both in editing many of these articles and in insuring the accuracy of foreign-language text in the volume. At Duke the conference was facilitated by Gay Trotter, staff assistant to the Graduate Program in Religion, other members of the staff of the Department of Religion, and Professor Steve Chapman of Duke Divinity School. When we came to compile and edit this volume, Prods Oktor Skjærvø made the valuable suggestion of including the article from Werner Sundermann and translated it into English himself.

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We are especially obliged to the sponsors of our conference. UNC's former Senior Associate Dean Darryl Gless provided the seed money for our meeting. Additional funds were provided at UNC by Associate Provost Steve Allred and the Department of Religious Studies. At Duke University, we benefited from the financial support of the Center for Jewish Studies, the Department of Religion, and the Trinity College of Arts and Sciences. We are also indebted to Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht and the editors of the series *Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements* (Armin Lange, Bernard M. Levinson, and Vered Noam) for accepting this volume for publication. The staff of Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, particularly its senior acquisitions editor Jörg Persch and Mr. Christoph Spill, supported the publication of this volume in exemplary fashion. It is also a great pleasure for us to thank each of the authors for their scholarly contributions to this volume.

On a formal note, we should also mention that the British and American spellings of the volume's articles have not been harmonized, since we have preferred to allow each author's essay to be reproduced in the way it was originally presented.

*The Appeal of Dualism*

Although all participants of the conference "Light against Darkness" were well aware of the breadth of our topic and its far-reaching implications, the conference itself proved that we still underestimated our topic. The juxtaposition of scholarship concerning dualism in the contemporary world with the study of dualism in the religious context of antiquity turned out to be far more fruitful and more challenging than we expected. This juxtaposition made it abundantly clear that dualism cannot be understood solely within religious frameworks, but must be contextualized in far broader social dynamics.

The term "dualism" was fashioned by Thomas Hyde at the turn of the eighteenth century to describe Zoroastrianism.[1] "Dualism" is thus an early modern descriptive term pointing toward religious and philosophical concepts or frameworks. Though the term is modern, the phenomenon of dualism itself has been prominent since the earliest stages of human culture. While monistic and pluralistic modes of thought have often been socially important, the binary oppositions of various dualisms—good and bad, light and darkness, eschatological bliss and contemporary suffering, transcendence and immanence, mind and body, heaven and earth—have had broad appeal throughout human history, and they persist into the modern world, even shaping contemporary political and ethical debates.

[1] Thomas Hyde, *Historia Religionis veterum Persarum eorumque Magorum* (Oxford: Sheldon, 1700).

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In contemporary parlance, the notion of dualism designates a tendency to classify phenomena into opposing groups. Dualist thought has provided one of the most pervasive conceptual grids through the history of human culture. Dualist frameworks are appealing because they offer a readily available and easily comprehensible scheme for mapping the world. But binary oppositions should not be underestimated as "the easy way out" in epistemology. Various theorists have argued that dualist bifurcations reflect a fundamental condition of cogniscent beings, the division between the perceiving subject and the object that is perceived. Dualist oppositions thus reflect a formative distinction between the individual and the other. Ancient cultures offer vivid examples of the dynamics through which this basic differentiation between the self and the other can be expanded to apply to broader cosmic wholes. So, for example, in ancient Egypt the non-Egyptian world was understood as the negative realm of Seth and the barbarians—a thought pattern that reappears in classical Greek culture and many other cultural contexts.

The foundational role of dualism as a mechanism of human perception and cognition explains both the prominence of dualisms in the history of thought and also their great variations. The number of possible binary oppositions is infinite. This range of possible dualisms cautions against attempts to create a descriptive list of basic dualist structures (cosmological, temporal, spatial, ethical, anthropological, psychological, ontological, etc.). While such classifications can be descriptively useful, they fall short of the infinite number of possible dichotomies. The present volume thus refrains from structuring its articles according to various forms of dualism but prefers instead an historical sequence.

Yet while dualistic conceptions of reality are pervasive in human thought and culture, they are not unavoidable or necessarily desirable. On the contrary, dualism can often serve to suppress human possibility by channeling multiplicity into narrowly prescribed binarisms. Even basic physics demonstrates how misleading dualist grids of perception can be—the atom does not consist of two categories of particles but three (positron, neutron, and electron). The contributions to this volume addressing contemporary philosophical critiques of dualism emphasize the difficulties entailed in attempting to move beyond the strictures of dualism, but they also underscore the conceptual and social value of that effort.

*Light against Darkness – Dualism between Antiquity and Modernity*

The modern critique of dualism has been fueled in large part by the increasingly pluralistic (and thus non-dualist) realities of the contemporary world. But this very pluralism can also provoke new modes of binary political thinking. Recent decades have also witnessed a revitalization of

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religious dualisms, illustrated most vividly by bellicose forms of religious fundamentalism. These modern political and religious dualisms are closely interconnected, and their social dangers are readily apparent.

The modern proclivity toward dualism reflects a dynamic that is well known to scholars of Persian and Hellenistic antiquity. The Persian Empire internationalized the ancient world on an unprecedented scale without imposing its culture on conquered populations. Hellenistic civilization, in contrast, assimilated a range of cultures into the Hellenistic cultural continuum, creating a new pluralistic society under an ecumenical Greek umbrella that spread over much of the civilized Western world. The rapid creation of this multicultural, pluralistic society dominated by Greek culture often resulted in cultural alienation and estrangement. This alienation produced new religious needs and made spiritual and philosophical dualisms attractive to many communities.

From the beginning of Hellenism, an underlying feeling of cultural dislocation marked the Hellenistic world and might even explain the rise of Christianity. In Judaism, for example, the steadily increasing popularity of apocalypticism can be understood as a response to this general sense of alienation and the cultural pressures exerted by Hellenism. When the so-called Hellenistic religious reforms of the years 175–164 B.C.E. threatened the existence of Judaism by way of enforced Hellenization, apocalyptic thought responded with an emphasis on cosmological and temporal dualisms as documented by the dualistic cosmologies and eschatologies of the Book of Daniel, the Enochic *Book of Dreams* (*1 Enoch* 83–90), and the *Teaching of the Two Spirits* (1QS III:13–IV:26). The Qumran community itself offers a rich example of how these dualisms continued to influence Judaism long after the original crisis had subsided, since Qumran rejected anyone outside the boundaries of its community as sons of darkness. Through late antiquity, dualistic religions were hugely popular, as exemplified by various Gnostic religions, Mandeism, Manicheism, and Jewish hekhalot mystism. Yet the Hellenistic kingdoms also mark a zenith of scholarship and philosophy (the famous Museion of Alexandria and its state sponsored scholars and scientists are just one case in point), and these scholarly traditions produced important philosophical challenges to dualism. Thus, for example early Stoicism opposed dualism through its advocacy of a monistic worldview.

No single set of papers can cover the range of dualist thought in a comprehensive manner, so the papers in this volume have two major areas of focus. One is the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern world, which represents not only an important cradle of dualistic thought but also witnessed its Hellenistic flowering. The other focus is the modern world, which has been influenced by ancient dualism but has also produced both

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innovative new forms of dualistic thinking and important philosophical critique of binary logic. The contributions to this volume illustrate not only how changes in the socio-religious and philosophical structure of a culture can produce new modes of dualistic thought but also how established dualist and dualistic traditions are transformed in response to such changes. And, of course, contemporary dualisms can draw on ancient ones without necessarily reflecting them accurately. In some cases recent dualist binaries draw on earlier sources, while in others they develop independently in response to new social and religious circumstances.

The contributions to this volume focused in antiquity illustrate both how dualistic worldviews can exert mutual influence and how they can evolve independently. *P. Kyle McCarter* observes in his contribution a long tradition of dialectical dualisms in the ancient Near East. The shift towards a predominance of eschatological dualism in the second half of the second millennium B.C.E. in Egypt and in early Israel was caused not so much by the influence of Persian dualistic thought as by growing imperial pressure from the East, especially the Persian Empire. Earlier tensions between the people of Egypt and Israel and their respective neighbors was a productive tension (complementary or dialectical dualism, as McCarter frames it), but the second half of the first millennium saw new tendencies to demonize the Other. As McCarter states, "Dualism became predominantly eschatological in the region, unable to maintain the creative tension of the complementary systems of the past, and the ideal of living in creative tension with the Other was replaced by the anticipation of his obliteration."[2]

*Sydney Aufrère* focuses his analysis on Egyptian religion in the early Ptolemaic period. Aufrère argues that the emphatic dualism of traditional Egypt was masked in the work of Manetho of Sebennytus but continued to persist in a more subtle form. The example of Manetho illustrates how the native intellectual elite of Hellenistic Egypt could apply longstanding dualistic hermeneutics to Greek and Egyptian religious myths in a way that produced new formulations of both.

The dynamism of ancient dualism is also evident as *Prods Oktor Skjærvø* describes Iranian dualism and traces its development from the old *Avesta* up to the period of Islamic rule. In an extensive appendix to his article, Skjærvø demonstrates that the transmission history of Zoroastrianism makes it impossible to reconstruct Zoroaster's thought and raises significant questions about scholarly reconstructions of Persian religion in the Achaemenid period. The Zoroastrian texts themselves contain little historical data—the Iranians did not know "objective" history of the type that developed in Greece. More than a thousand years of oral transmission makes the

[2] See P. Kyle McCarter, 35.

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use of the *Gâthâs* as well as *Old* and *Young Avesta* highly problematic in attempting to reconstruct pre-Sassanid Zoroastrian thought. In addition, scholarly reconstructions are often highly influenced by the Judeo-Christian ethical tradition. Using such reconstructions of Zoroaster's message and the resulting Zoroastrian theology of the pre-Sassanid era in seeking to identify assumed Zoroastrian features in other Near Eastern religions—most prominently in Judaism—is all the more problematic as the Young Avestan language cannot have been well understood in late Achaemenid times (Old Avestan probably not at all).

*Eric Meyers* highlights the prominence of dualism in the Hebrew Bible. Israelite cosmology employs various elements of Ancient Near Eastern (especially Canaanite) mythology whose conceptions of "bad" and "darkness" are colored by dualistic presuppositions. The mythological roots of Israelite dualism were transformed into apocalyptic dualism under the influence of Zoroastrian thought, likely transmitted through other ancient Near Eastern cultures. In the Hellenistic period after the closure of the unofficial canon (Torah and Neviim) at the beginning of the second century B.C.E., Jewish dualism was again transformed as Greek philosophy and anthropology fed into Jewish philosophical dualism (exemplied by Philo of Alexandria) and changed Jewish ideas of resurrection in Rabbinic thought.

*Patrick L. Miller* examines Plato's distinctive combination of a psychological mind-body dualism with a cosmology that held monism and dualism in ambivalent tension. Plato bifurcates the human being into good and bad parts, identifying the self with reason and thus alienating it from the body. This concept of the supremacy of pure thought was influenced by Zoroastrianism and the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. Plato's segregation of pure thought away from material reality served an eschatological monism in assimilating the philosopher's self to the cosmic order—the Form of Forms—that is the Good. On the one hand, material objects cannot exist independent of Form, otherwise the cosmic unity guaranteed by the Form of Forms is compromised. On the other hand, material objects cannot be illusions either, because if only the perfect unity of the Forms existed, nothing could cause such illusions. To achieve unity with the divine Form of Forms, Plato devised a program of purification and divinization. The fundamental outlines of this program are Pythagorean, but it is influenced by the Milesians and Anaxagoras, Parmenides and Heraclitus, even the Sophists and Hippocratics. Humans are conceived as hybrids of stable reason above and the body with its motions below, and the cosmos as known by reasoning is distinguished from the cosmos as perceived through human senses. The philosopher should strive to purify divine reason from its association with human and mortal limitations.

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*Loren Stuckenbruck* considers the degree to which dualistic concepts are coordinated with an understanding of human nature in four Jewish texts from the second century B.C.E.: (1) Ben Sira; (2) *1 Enoch* 91–105 (esp. 91:1–10 and the so-called *Epistle of Enoch*); (3) *Musar le-Mevin* (also designated *Instruction* from Qumran Caves 1 and 4); and (4) the "Teaching on the Two Spirits" preserved in the Qumran *Community Rule* (1QS III:13–IV:26). Stuckenbruck argues that dualistic structures of thought played an important role in demarcating the identities of groups who saw themselves in religious conflict with either the conventionally wicked or with specific opponents. Ethical, cosmological, and anthropological dualisms were developed and deployed for this purpose, often in combination. The most elaborate conjunction of these three types of dualisms can be found in the *Treatise of the Two Spirits*. This text provided both the original community of the *Treatise of the Two Spirits* and, later, the Essenes with a theological framework that enabled them to come to terms with discordance between their religious ideologies and social identities on the one hand and their experience on the other.

*Philip S. Alexander* explores heaven and earth dualism as a special type of cosmological dualism through his study of sample texts from the *Book of Watchers*, *Sefer Yeṣirah*, *Heikhalot Rabbati*, *2 Enoch*, and *3 Enoch*, written over a period of approximately 1000 years. This dualistic tradition sees heaven as a parallel universe to earth. Reality is divided into two parallel worlds, which operate according to different physical laws. Movement between these worlds is possible only by way of physical transformation (apotheosis and incarnation). Heaven is understood either as a mono-elemental universe made of fire or as a multi-elemental one with primordial, antithetical elements eternally juxtaposed. Although the different formulations of heaven and earth binarism in ancient Judaism point to dynamic dualist thought, Alexander nevertheless observes an element of longstanding stability in this tradition. "The clearest examples I could find of the parallel-universe idea come, curiously, from the beginning and the end of the tradition, from some of the earliest layers of the Enochic corpus on the one hand and from the Heikhalot literature on the other."[3]

*Fred Horton* portrays earliest Christianity—the Christianity of the New Testament—as deeply dualistic in two case studies from Mark 10:2–12 and 1 Cor 6:10–20. Both passages address questions of human behavior, but their ethical and legal arguments do not support behavioral instruction. Instead, the two texts confront their audiences with novel dualistic structures. For Mark, a cognitive dualism exists between Jesus and the mass of humanity. Even the disciples stand in juxtaposition to Jesus, given their

[3] Philip S. Alexander, 178.

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uncertainty and anxiety concerning his mission. The experience of the kingdom is fearful, and Jesus' basic message is deeply ambiguous for his followers. For Paul, the spirit dwells within the Christian's own body, but it also serves to alienate the believer from that body. The Christian initiate lives in a profound, unresolved dualistic tension.

Through his study of the *Apocryphon of John*, *Zlatko Pleše* describes Gnosticism as an ethically oriented cosmic dualism. Gnosticism avoids a dualistic deadlock, first, through subsuming the primal dichotomy of ontological principles under the higher category of an all-encompassing principle of unity and, second, through the intercession of a third intermediary cause operating at the cosmological and anthropological levels. "Soul" as this mediating entity partakes in both the intelligible and sensible realms. The three basic levels of the Gnostic universe—intelligible or spiritual, animate, and fleshly or material—are the product of a respective pair of gendered male and female principles considered as simultaneously opposite and complementary. The male principle provides form and the female principle contributes matter to creation. Sophia, the universal Soul of the Gnostics, strives to unite with her consort Christ to return to her lost home in the spiritual realm, but remains at the same time imprisoned in the visible world of Ialdabaoth. Similarly, in soul, the Spirit of Life coming from Sophia fights with the Counterfeit Spirit of Death coming from Ialdabaoth.

Two further articles explore Manicheism as antiquity's most dualistic religion. *Prods Oktor Skjærvø* provides an invaluable overview of Manichean dualistic mythology in an appendix to the essay by *Werner Sundermann*. Sundermann himself discusses Manicheism as the most radical dualistic religion of antiquity (even in comparison to Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism). In his article, Sundermann offers the first bridge to modernity. As the most radical form of ancient dualism, Manichean dualism haunts the general conscience and judgment of people to the present day. These Manichean traces are at best a distorted reflection of ancient Manicheism, persisting largely through the anti-Manichean polemics of the former Manichean Augustine and other Christian polemicists. Through Augustine's influence, the term Manichean has become a negative term in current political discourse, designating harsh and divisive binary thinking. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the term Manichean was sometimes used to characterize merciless profiteering, and even this connotation had its roots in Augustine's polemic against the Manichean prohibition on giving alms to anyone but the Manichean elect. Beyond these negative traces, Sundermann also identifies a positive, but comparably distorted, adaptation of Manicheism in Anthroposophistic Christology, which again derives from themes found in Augustine.

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*John C. Reeves* studies a special aspect of Manicheism as antiquity's most dualistic religion, the Manichean use of scripturalism to disseminate dualistic thought. The seven books authored by Mani were intended to serve as a scriptural canon for his religion, and the Manichean church placed great importance on their accurate preservation and reproduction. Reeves examines Mani's counter-history to Genesis 1–6 in order to explore how Mani rewrote (pre)canonical Jewish texts to create his own canon of scriptures and to promulgate his dualistic message.

*Piet F. M. Fontaine* offers a second bridge between ancient and modern dualisms. Fontaine is less skeptical than Sundermann concerning the influence of ancient dualism on the dualisms of modernity. Fontaine uses the examples of imperialism and Gnosticism to trace the history of dualism in search of historical cohesion. Imperialism is paradigmic of how a monistic structure can generate dualisms. From the first Mesopotamian empires through the early modern colonial ones, the resistance of subjected nations gave rise to political dualisms. Gnosticism is also paradigmatic, both because it still persists in its Mandean branch and because of its distinctive form of two-world dualism. Fontaine claims that Gnostic dualistic thought has influenced all three monotheistic world religions. He sees Shiite cosmology as Gnostic and argues that the Syrian Nusairi-Alawites are an Islamic-Gnostic sect. He finds Gnostic elements manifest in the Jewish Kabbalah, and he finds examples of Christian Gnosticism in communities such as the Cathars and German mysticism. Fontaine also regards New Age religion as fundamentally Gnostic.

The articles examining more recent formulations of dualism illustrate both the influence of ancient dualism on modern dualistic thought and also the development of novel new dualistic conceptions in changed social and religious circumstances. *Kalman Bland* explores how human-animal dualism can find comparable expressions in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 1 and the book of Qohelet), in medieval thought, and in the responses to Darwin's evolutionary theory in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. As these examples illustrate, human-animal dualism can be used either to demonstrate basic differences between humans and animals or to create important notions of hierarchy. As Bland explains, "The semantic oscillation between difference and antagonism, fueled by contested notions of hierarchy and privilege, seems to obtain in other forms of dualism, as well."[4] The book of Qohelet acknowledges the differences between humans and animals, but their shared fate of death serves to level those differences. In Genesis 1, human priority is established through being created in the image of God, an omnivorous diet, and the dominion of the earth. In medieval Jewish

[4] Kalman Bland, 282.

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thought, the cosmological separation of mind and body combined with an epistemological dualism to confirm humanity's superiority over animals. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century Darwin's evolutionary comparison of humans with animals provoked religious declarations concerning the fundamental ontological differences between humans and animals.

*Rodney S. Sadler* examines the role of dualistic thought in relation to questions of race and racism in the United States. Sadler shows how three early African American exegetes of the Bible developed their interpretation of biblical texts in response to the racially motivated dualistic interpretative strategies of white supremacists. In the texts of Robert B. Lewis (1844), Rufus L. Perry (1893), and Fleming Aytes (1927), hermeneutics were influenced by a dualistic opposition of "racial" types—exegesis became a matter of black and white. Sadler establishes a general acceptance-reversal paradigm that underscores the dualistic aspect of this exegetical tradition. Early African American exegetes utilized the problematic theses of their ideological opponents to reach conclusions diametrical opposed to the Eurocentric hermeneutics of white supremacists. But African American exegetes do not simply invert the racial hierarchy; "their end was a world of parity and universal equality, which differs starkly from the supremacists' exclusivist ethnocentric ideal."[5]

For *Yaakov Ariel*, the pervasive dualistic ideology shaping contemporary American evangelical Christianity has its roots in a deep sense of America's (precarious and violated) superiority as a chosen nation: "dualistic evangelical values and beliefs have taken hold in America of the twenty-first century because they have fit so easily with long-standing American beliefs and the desire of many Americans to retain or regain their sense of righteousness and mission."[6] Contemporary evangelicalism reinforces the belief that America is not an ordinary nation but an exceptional, chosen one. Moral human beings are bound to succeed within the American system; dissenters and misfits must be removed as saboteurs. The uniformity of suburban consumer culture itself provides a fertile breeding-ground for the promulgation of dualism.

*Michael A. Rosenthal* explores the metaphysical and theological assumptions that govern the critical reception of the philosophy of Benedict de Spinoza. Rosenthal identifies a pervasive dualist discomfort with Spinoza's metaphysical monism as well as Spinoza's notion of divine immanence. Spinoza's critics have been motivated by antipathy both to his sociological account of the origin and function of religion and to his challenge to traditional understanding of the uniqueness of the Jewish people. Rosenthal

[5] Rodney S. Sadler, 292.
[6] Yaakov Ariel, 309.

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questions whether the ideas of transcendence and dualism are required in contemporary Jewish thought or whether the tradition can embrace a version of Spinozan monism and immanence. The Torah does not stipulate a dogmatic metaphysics, and aspects of Spinoza's philosophy fit well with Jewish tradition. Theology, Rosenthal concludes, should subordinate metaphysics to broader ethical and social values.

The dualism between transcendence and immanence has played a central role in Western philosophy, and *Randall Styers* examines the important critique of this particular dualistic structure in the recent work of Bruno Latour, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In late modern culture, the accelerating effects of material and intellectual change give contemporary efforts to move beyond dualism far greater cultural traction. So, for example, the turn towards radical immanence in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari points for Styers towards a new mode of religious thought that does not focus "on an overcoding of transcendence, but on an affirmation of the determinate and the concrete. Perhaps the divine may actually be found within immanent potentiality. At the very least, Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual framework compels us to recognize the multidimensionality and complexity of reality in ways that inevitably denaturalize any static sense of the immanent."[7]

Finally in the volume's last article, *William G. Lycan* reflects on the contemporary plausibility of one particularly important historical binarism, mind-body dualism. Lycan thus exemplifies the type of modern philosophical critique of dualism discussed by Styers. Lycan examines various philosophical positions opposing the monist doctrine of mind-body materialism, the notion that all mental or psychological states are entirely constituted by physical matter. In Lycan's view, the most intellectually viable option for opposing mind-body materialism lies in what he describes as "Weak panpsychism." Panpsychism surmises that every individual object in the universe has mental or psychological properties, an "inner" life of some sort. Although Lycan remains unpersuaded, he considers the state of pure consciousness reached in Buddhists and Hindu meditation as pointing toward a rudimentary mode of consciousness that might be available even to the most rudimentary being. Weak panpsychism might offer a response to materialism.

Through these articles, we see the power and pervasiveness of dualistic thought. Dualism has proved a potent cultural tool for clarifying and ordering reality. Particularly in times of social stress and psychological insecurity, it can offer a valuable conceptual grid that provides orientation to the world and a clear sense of identity. At the same time, though, there are

[7] Randall Styers, 347.

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important questions to be asked about the social effects of binary thinking. As history amply illustrates, dualistic notions can readily be deployed to legitimate cultural demonization and to rationalize violence. At a deeper level, a dualist worldview can also obscure the possibilities to be found in multiplicity.

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P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.

# Dualism in Antiquity

Anthropologists have amply documented a widespread, possibly universal tendency of human societies to view the world in terms of polarities, either with regard to daily experience, or to cosmology, or to both.[1] The former aspect of this tendency (perceived polarities of experience) often shapes social organization. The latter aspect (the cosmology understood according to polarities) has consequences for logic, ethics, and religion. The titles of the papers published in this volume show that our concern is principally with the latter (dualistic philosophies) rather than the former (binary social systems). It would probably even be correct to say that our topic is, more specifically, "religious dualism," although that expression is sometimes reserved in the social-scientific literature for a particular type of dualistic thought, that which envisions the world as the arena for an unconditional struggle between the principles of Good and Evil, and even more specifically for a struggle that will eventually (and only) be resolved in eschatological time by an unqualified victory of the forces of Good. It will come as no surprise that many of the papers presented here *are* concerned (often focally) with this kind of dualism, since it is found in one form or another in many of the traditions being treated (including Zoroastrianism, apocalyptic Judaism, Gnosticism and Mandaeism, Manichaeism, and certain sectarian theologies in medieval Christianity). These eschatological dualisms, as they are sometimes called, seem to have begun to assert themselves among the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia in the second half of the first millennium B.C.E.

Even so, there were societies in the same region long before that embraced worldviews based on dualistic principles understood more broadly. The polarities that animate and define the world, as perceived by these societies, are utterly opposed or at least opposite, and they are irreducible (that is, they cannot be resolved into a single entity). But they are not always relentlessly hostile, and the goal of history does not envision the ultimate elimination of one or the other, even though they can never be fully reconciled. This broader type of dualism is sometimes characterized as complementary or dialectical, to distinguish it from the eschatological dual-

[1] See, for example, Rodney Needham, *Reconnaissances* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1980).

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ism just described. In systems embracing this complementary view, the very separateness of the opposed principles produces a cosmic equilibrium that is the chief characteristic of the experienced world, so that living in such a universe requires recognizing and participating in the harmonious balance inherent in the relationship between the defining polarities. In the space allotted to me I want first to take note of the presence of complementary dualism in antiquity, recognizable already at a very early date, and then to illustrate the increasingly prominent role of eschatological dualism that developed during the second half of the first millennium B.C.E. Finally, I will suggest, schematically and very briefly, some factors that may have contributed to this development.

At the outset, then, let me return to the phenomenon of complementary dualism. Its chief characteristics are often illustrated by appeal to the well-known concept of *yinyang*, which emerged as a principle of East Asian philosophy in the third quarter of the first millennium B.C.E., during the so-called Warring States Period of the Chou Dynasty. It was at this time that *yin* and *yang* came to be thought of as primal cosmic forces, the former negative, weak, and passive, the latter positive, strong, and active. Under the influence of aspects of Confucian and Taoist philosophy, both also achievements of the mid- to late Chou period, the concept of *yinyang* was expanded to embrace a broad range of specific bipolar and interactive phenomena. The essentially passive *yin* was associated with Earth and the moon, and with water, coldness, darkness, and femininity. The active *yang* was linked with Heaven and the sun, and with fire, heat, brightness, and masculinity. The two forces, their bipolarity, and the interaction between them became essential to the language of metaphysics and phenomenology, not to mention science, medicine, etc., so that much later in the official treatises that promulgated the orthodox cosmology of the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644–1912) *yin* and *yang* had come to represent aspects of those things that were most important to the operation of the world, especially the agents of growth, change, and transformation. The creative interaction of *yin* and *yang* is sometimes cooperative but often conflictual. Even so, what Chinese philosophy sought to find in their interaction was cosmic harmony, a balance between the polarities. This is why the concept of *yinyang* is so often referenced to illustrate what I am referring to as complementary or dialectical dualism.

It is not necessary, however, to seek as far afield as East Asia to discover the existence of this type of dualistic thinking. The ancient Mediterranean world provides examples of its own, and in fact the case of pharaonic Egypt is cited in the social-scientific literature almost as often as that of China. Throughout their long history the ancient Egyptians characterized both the world in general and their own territory in particular in dualistic terms. Sky

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and Earth were a cosmological pair, expressed mythologically by the picture of Nut, the sky-goddess, separated from and stretched over her brother and consort, Geb, the earth-god. The cosmogonic separation of this pair at the command of the supreme god Re‘ established the basic dualistic pattern of creation (of existing reality) in Egypt. According to this pattern, as Eberhard Otto, writing in the *Lexikon*, has expressed it, “Every existing whole consists of two complementary opposite pairs [in which] the essence of existence resides.”[2] As is required for truly dualistic thought, the fundamental oppositions implied in Otto’s statement are irreducible and uncompromising, as in the ethical and moral dualism expressed by the contrast between *m3‘t*, “truth,” and *isft*, “falsehood, wrongdoing,” which appears characteristically in, but is by no means confined to, wisdom literature. But the complementarity of Egyptian dualism is perhaps mostly easily explained with reference to the pervasive geopolitical cosmology.

Egypt itself was “the Two Lands,” Upper and Lower Egypt, the Delta and the Nile Valley or, viewed from another perspective, “the Red Land and the Black Land,” the surrounding desert and the arable soil of the Nile Valley. That these latter dualities were as much cosmological as geographical (and no less mythological than the Nut-Geb polarity) is shown by the way they are incorporated into the political ideology of Egypt, which was dominated by the all-powerful figure of the king. The king’s names and titles are especially indicative. For example, the royal titulary, the five names that the king assumed at his accession, include at least two that refer directly to his sovereignty over the dual land. The second name of the five follows the expression *nbty*, a grammatical dual that means “the two ladies,” referring to *Nḫbt*, Nekhbet, the vulture goddess of Upper Egypt, and *W3ḏt*, Wadjet (Edjo), the cobra goddess of Lower Egypt. The fourth name, or prenomen, always follows the title *n-sw-bit*, “he who belongs to the sedge and the bee,” where the flowering sedge represents Upper Egypt and the bee Lower Egypt. Both of these names mean, in effect, “ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt.” If such names and the sovereignty they assert might seem to refer to Egypt as a mere geographical duality lacking the cosmological dimension that would be required for it to qualify as a cosmologically dualistic sphere, the same cannot be said for other royal titles, such as “the Two Lords,” which refers to the king’s sovereignty over the two lands through his identification with Horus, the god of Lower Egypt, and Seth, the god of Upper Egypt.

In the mythology of Horus and Seth, the Two Lords were enemies, and their mutual antagonism was the central feature of their relationship, a topic to which I shall return. Even so, the divine pair represents a principle of

[2] Otto s.v. “Dualismus,” *Lex.d.Åg.* 8, 1148.

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world order that was central to Egyptian cosmology from a very early date. An indication of the high antiquity of this principle and the dualistic conceptualization of the Egyptian state that it implies is the Pre-Dynastic royal name *ḥtp sḫmwy*, Hetepsekhemwy, which means "The Two Powers are at peace" (or "…are pleased"), *sḫmwy* being a grammatical dual that refers to "the Two Powers" or "Mighty Ones," (Horus and Seth). Hetepsekhemwy was the first ruler of the Second Dynasty (*ca*. 2890–2686), which, to judge from the state of affairs with the establishment of the Third Dynasty at the beginning of the Old Kingdom, must have been the time when the political foundations of the unified dual monarchical state were laid. Indeed the *last* ruler of the Second Dynasty is sometimes thought of as a principal architect of the centralized state. At the beginning of his reign he called himself *ḫa'sḫm*, Khasekhem, which means "The Mighty One [i.e., the Mighty Horus] is crowned," but after asserting (or reasserting) central control over the two kingdoms he changed his name, evidently symbolically, to *ḫa' sḫmwy*, Khasekhemwy, "The *Two* Mighty Ones are Crowned," writing his name in a *serekh* surmounted by both the falcon that represented Horus and the so-called Typhonean animal that stood for Seth.

If the dualistic nature of the geopolitical cosmology of ancient Egypt is illustrated by the mutual importance of Horus and Seth (and of their relationship), the complementary or dialectical character of this dualism is shown especially clearly by the persistence of Seth's cosmological roles after his defeat by Horus. Horus was among the oldest and most consistently important of the Egyptian gods, and his association with the reigning king was unique (or, to put it in Egyptian terms, the king was the living Horus). Thus Horus was not only the god of Lower Egypt, but in a sense of Upper and Lower Egypt together. He attained to this position of ascendancy by achieving victory in his struggle with the god of Upper Egypt, Seth, who was consequently banished to become the powerful and feared god of the desert and of foreign lands. Seth was not destroyed, however, nor was he going to be. This was no eschatological dualism. The struggle between Horus and Seth was always ongoing in mythological time, and indeed Seth had a continuing and important function in the operation of the cosmos. The clearest example of this may be the central role he plays in the repulsion of *'3pp*, 'Apep (Apophis), the serpent who attempts to devour the sun on its daily voyage across the sky and through the underworld. In Egyptian art the powerful Seth, brandishing a spear, stands guard against Apophis on the prow of the solar barque, and he is the principal figure in (for example) Coffin Text 160, which includes a narrative account, much of it with Seth speaking in the first person, of the daily defeat of the serpent, a mythological event that was essential to the maintenance of world stability.

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If such texts demonstrate an essential and even positive role for Seth in Egyptian cosmology, the fact remains that he was, in the first place, the enemy of Horus, the guarantor of order. Seth was a strong, dangerous god who, like the desert or Red Land he represented, was a constant threat to the inhabitants of the Black Land. If he played a positive role in political ideology, he was nevertheless the chief antagonist in the story that is generally thought of as the foundation myth of Egyptian kingship. Ironically, we have a complete version of this myth only from a non-Egyptian source, Plutarch. This means that the full story, as we know it best, includes numerous Hellenistic elements; but there is no concern that the basic myth is artificial or late, since there are allusions to it in hymnic and liturgical texts surviving from the full expanse of Egyptian civilization, as well as a folksy narrative account of the contest between Horus and Seth preserved in Papyrus Chester Beatty I (recto 1.1B16.8) of the Twentieth Dynasty (twelfth century B.C.E.). So there need be no apology for drawing upon Plutarch's version in trying to understand the relationship between Horus and Seth. In fact, a brief look at Plutarch's treatise *On Isis and Osiris* will be helpful to us in two ways. It will give us the opportunity to note (once again, but this time from a different perspective) the persistence of Seth after his defeat by Horus, with all that implies for the complementary character of Egyptian dualism. It will also provide an occasion to take a brief look at another kind of ancient dualism, the Platonic dualism of Plutarch himself, which was of a substantially different kind from anything we have considered so far.

The broad outlines of the kingship myth, as it is known both from native Egyptian sources and (in much more elaborated form) Plutarch, are as follows. The four children of Geb and Nut (Earth and Sky) were Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. As Geb's firstborn and heir, Osiris was given rule over Upper and Lower Egypt; Isis was his queen. Seth was jealous and murdered Osiris, dismembering his body. Isis, however, gathered up the severed parts and reanimated them. When Osiris became sexually active again, Isis conceived and gave birth to Horus. The young god then set out to avenge his father's murder, and, with Geb and the other gods sitting in judgment, he defeated his uncle in a series of ordeals. Horus then assumed the double throne of his father, who now ruled in the Underworld, while Seth was banished—not killed—and became the god of the desert and foreign lands, or, according to the Chester Beatty papyrus, of the sky, where, as the adopted son of Re', he would intimidate the world with his roar, an allusion to his identification with the Syro-Canaanite storm-god Ba'al.

Plutarch was a Platonist, and he transformed the Egyptian story into Platonic allegory. He wanted to show that there are two opposing principles in the universe, as seen in his allegorical treatment of the Egyptian myth, according to which Osiris is the pure and immaterial principle of good and

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Seth (Plutarch calls him Typhon) is the earthy principle of evil. These principles are coeval (not only is the good eternal, but also the bad), so that Seth emerges as a presence necessary to maintaining the harmony of the world. This is consistent with Plutarch's Egyptian sources, as we have seen, and its articulation in Plutarch's account may be testimony to the stubborn persistence of the complementary character of Egyptian dualism (that is, Plutarch may have found it difficult to ignore). The eternality and necessity of evil, however, is somewhat surprising in the context of Plutarch's Platonism.

Plato's basic contrast between the unchanging eternal realities (the Forms), which can be perceived only through thought, and the changing things of the physical world, which are perceived by the senses, is the starting point for another kind of dualism. This dualism is one of mind and body, which would have its own profound impact on the ancient world, including the ancient Oriental world after the establishment of Hellenistic civilization. In Plato there is a very strong tendency to restrict the list of Forms to those things that are good and virtuous. Only in a single passage in one of the Late Dialogues (*Theaetetus* 176–77) is the possibility admitted that there are Forms of evil things, an admission Plato seems reluctant to make elsewhere. Yet in the story of Horus and Seth, Plutarch, good Platonist or Middle Platonist that he is elsewhere, presents evil as essential, thus preserving the belief, intrinsic to the complementary dualism of Egypt, that Seth has an ongoing role in the universe.

As already noted in the case of Plutarch, the Greeks identified Seth with Typhon, the roaring, hundred-headed monster overcome by Zeus, who according to Hesiod (*Theogony* 819–69) hurled him into Tartarus. The story of Zeus and Typhon is a Western example a mythic theme that was very widespread among the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean, perhaps especially those of ancient Western Asia. This theme involved the victory of a creator god (or at least a god representing order) over a chaos dragon or monster. Typically, though not always, the creator god was associated with the predictable and beneficial aspects of nature, perhaps most commonly rainfall (i.e., the "storm-god"). Antithetically, the chaos dragon was associated with the unpredictable and often destructive aspects of nature, such as the ocean with its potential for dangerous storms and its constant erosion of the coastline. The juxtaposition in these myths of creation and order on the one hand and destruction and chaos on the other is suggestive of a cosmological dualism, at least when it is broadly defined. Moreover, since the chaos dragon, though defeated, is not annihilated but restricted (that is, confined to some location in the cosmos or even physically transformed into a part of the cosmos), the type of dualistic universe that is produced is one in which the hostile principles of order and chaos remain in a perpetual tension (the dragon is always a threat, lurking at the boundaries). Divine

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and human society live within this tension, and this is consistent with the type of dualism we have described as dialectical or complementary.

In one of the principal Mesopotamian creation myths, best known from the *Enuma Eliš*, the conflict was generational, involving young gods and old. This pattern accords with the one also found in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Order was established as the result of the victory of a young rain-god (Marduk of Babylon or Ashur of Assyria) over Tiamat, the raging she-dragon of the cosmic ocean. Marduk-Ashur fashioned the physical world out of Tiamat's carcass, and she and the other deities of her primordial generation became components of the cosmic structure. Hesiod aside, there were similar myths in Greece, including the already-mentioned defeat of Typhon by Zeus, who trapped the monster beneath Mount Aetna, the volcanic fumes giving testimony to the ongoing danger of Typhon's smoldering fury, and the defeat of Python by Apollo at the cosmological center of the world, the spot that became the site of the Delphic oracle. In Syria and Canaan, there was the pervasive creation story of the defeat of the sea-dragon by the storm-god, best known from the Ugaritic epic in which Ba'al accepts Yamm's challenge to the divine assembly, defeats the sea-dragon, and then erects his own house or temple.

The same cosmogonic myth was known in ancient Israel, as shown by a series of archaic or archaizing biblical passages in which Yahweh defeats a cosmic sea-monster and creates the world. Thus in Ps 74:12–17, for example, the god of Israel is addressed as "the maker of the beneficial things that are in the world" (v 12) and praised for having destroyed the chaos monster, who is depicted as a many-headed dragon associated with the ocean and other bodies of water:

13 It was you who split up Sea by your strength,who shattered the heads of the Serpent upon the waters!

14 It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan,
who made him into food for wild animals!

15 It was you who split both spring and wadi,
who dried up the ever-flowing rivers!

16 The day belongs to you, also the night!
It was you established the luminaries and the sun!

17 It was you who fixed all the boundaries of the earth!
Summer and winter, you created them!

Note that creation in this poem is equated with the establishment of order, especially boundaries, not only physical but also temporal.

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Ps 89:6–13 [English 5–12] presents a similar picture, beginning with a scene strongly reminiscent of that in which the Ugaritic Ba'al stands in the divine assembly and accepts Yamm's challenge. Here the chaos dragon is called Rahab, and his defeat is again cosmogonic, with the created world being praised in binary, if not necessarily dualistic, terms:

6 Let the Heavens praise your wonders, O Yahweh,
yea, your constancy in the assembly of the Holy Ones!

7 For who in the sky can be compared to Yahweh,
Which of the gods can be likened to Yahweh?

8 A god who causes trembling in the council of the Holy Ones,
greater and more feared than all those around him!

9 O Yahweh Sebaoth, whose power is like yours,
whose constancy, among those who are around you?

10 You are the one who mastered the uprisings of Sea!
When his waves lifted up you subdued them!

11 It was you who split up Rahab when he was slain,
with your mighty arm divided up your foe!

12 The skies are yours, yea, the earth is yours!
The world and all that fills it, you formed them!

13 North and south, you created them!
Tabor and Hermon, they cry out in your name!

Rahab is again the adversary in Isa 51:9–10, where the mythic motif of the battle of creation has been combined with the tradition-historical motif of the rescue of Israel at the Red Sea. This passage is from the exilic poet of Isaiah 40–55, and it invokes ancient cosmogonic tradition in appealing to Yahweh to stir into action.

9 Awake! Awake! Gird on armor, O arm of Yahweh!
Awake as in ancient days, as in primeval times!
Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces,
who slew the Serpent?

10 Was it not you who cut Sea to pieces,
the waters of the Great Deep?
who made the depths of the sea into a road
for the ransomed to cross?

Habakkuk 3:8–13, 15 sounds the same themes, providing an unusual amount of detail:

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8 Was your wrath against Sea, O Yahweh,
your anger with River, your fury with Sea,
when you rode upon your horses,
your victorious chariot?

9 You kept your bow bent!
Your venomous arrows were sated!
The earth was split with rivers!

10 When they saw you the mountains writhed!
A torrent of water crossed by!
The Deep gave forth its voice!
The sun on high lifted its hand,

11 the moon stood still at the zenith
in the light of your arrows as they flew,
in the radiance of your flashing spear!

12 In fury you trod the earth,
in wrath you trampled the nations!

13 You came forth to rescue your people.…

15 You trod on the sea with your horses,
churning up the mighty waters!

As already stressed, the primary pattern in Israel and elsewhere seems to be the defeat by a god associated with order of a chaos monster, who is then confined to its appropriate part of the cosmos. As a further example of this, we might mention the Mesopotamian account of subjugation by the god Ninurta of the demon Asag and his confinement between the banks of the Euphrates.[3] Our final biblical example seems to be a variant of this pattern. Embedded in Job 38 is an allusion to a creation story in which the threatening Sea is confined to boundaries immediately at his birth rather than defeated and imprisoned in a cosmogonic battle. It is part of the great rebuke of Job by God speaking out of the whirlwind:

4 Where were you when I established the pillars of the earth?
Tell me if you have the knowledge!

5 Who determined its measurements (if you know),
and who stretched out the line upon it?

6 Upon what were its foundations sunk,
and who laid its cornerstone,

7 while the morning stars sang together,
and all the gods shouted their acclaim?

[3] *ÁZAG*, *asakku* is a Mesopotamian word for "demon."

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8 Or who shut up Sea within doors
when he burst out of the womb?

9 When I set a cloud as his clothing,
a mist as his swaddling clothes,

10 and set limits for him,
and put a bar and doors in place?

11 And I said, "This far you may come,
and no farther!
Here you must stop when your waves swell up!"

In these examples from Western Asia and Greece, I have stressed not only the conflict between the creative force of a cosmogonic or state god and a destructive force of chaos and danger, with the dualistic cosmology that such a conflict implies, but also the continuing presence envisioned for the principle of chaos by its confinement within cosmological boundaries. Although there is always the danger that the monster will escape, the bounded situation is understood to be eternal, and human life is conducted in a world where the two principles of creation and destruction are always present. This, again, is a complementary type of dualism.

In the literature of the mature Israelite cultus, as represented by the so-called Priestly materials preserved in the Tetrateuch, the concept of a bounded universe remains central, although at this point we are at a considerable conceptual distance from the battle between Yahweh and the chaos dragon. The Priestly creation account in Gen 1:1–2:4a may not on the surface of things seem a particularly dualistic document, despite the fact that its basic structure is organized by a series of creative separations into binary pairs: light and dark, the super-celestial and sub-celestial waters, the gathered waters and dry land. Even so, Genesis 1 draws in its own way upon the ancient concept of the world as defined by boundaries, by the opposition of clear, irreducible, and opposing principles within which life goes on. It begins with chaos, understood not in Greek fashion as a gaping chasm but as a primordial broth with four characteristics, all negative (lack of shape, lack of content, lack of light and lack of solid matter), a time when "the world was formless and empty and there was darkness on the surface of the deep" (Gen 1:2a). At the conclusion of the account, this chaos has been transformed into order by a series of divinely mandated separations and divisions. In the cultus and in the marketplace, according to Priestly understanding, worship was to be performed and daily life conducted with careful respect for the established boundaries. To cite a simple example, a bird that flew in the sky and also waded in the water, elements separated at the time of creation, was not eligible as food for an Israelite.

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The Genesis 1 creation account (and this example of an "unclean" wading bird in particular) points us towards a central feature of Israelite or Jewish religious thought that clearly, in my view, represents another ancient Near Eastern example of complementary or dialectical dualism. It is an aspect of biblical religion that probably originated in early times, though it persists into mature Judaism. Indeed its articulation is most clearly preserved in the literature of the exilic and early post-exilic periods, a time when apocalypticism (and with it a clearly *eschatological* form of dualism) was beginning to make important inroads in Jewish thought. In this example, however, the eschatological element is not yet present. The polarities are constants in the world of experience, and there is no expectation that one or the other will disappear as a consequence of a decisive eschatological struggle.

What I have in mind is the biblical system of ritual distinctions and regulations known as "purities." This material is found primarily in the Priestly literature of the Tetrateuch, which, though widely agreed to be of exilic or post-exilic composition, is nevertheless thought to preserve concepts and practices of an earlier date. There are also instructive references to purity ideas in earlier biblical documents, such as the so-called Yahwistic or "J" narrative and in particular the Yahwistic account of the Flood. A number of the Priestly texts (most densely the materials collected in Leviticus 11:1–16:34) set forth rules regarding a fundamental pair of opposed ritual principles described by the Hebrew terms *ṭāhôr* ("pure" or "clean") and *ṭāmē'* ("impure" or "unclean"), terms that have clear parallels in numerous religious traditions worldwide. In the conduct of their daily lives, Israelites are enjoined to associate with that which is "pure" and avoid "impurities." Since not all paired categories of this kind are diagnostic of an underlying cosmological dualism (even non-dualistic religions abound in simple dualities), it is important to keep in mind that the biblical concepts of *ṭāhôr* and *ṭāmē'* are grounded in a fundamental concept of social identification, and that this concept is in turn sanctified with reference to one of the central tenets of the religion, the intimate association of Israelite society with the god of Israel. To express this in the language of Leviticus 15:31, which is cast as divine speech, "You must keep the people of Israel separate from their impurity, so that they will not die from their impurity by defiling my dwelling-place, which is in your midst." Living in accordance with the purity regulations (that is, in proper relationship to the pure-impure polarity) establishes the community's identity as Israel and distinguished its members from other peoples who do not respect the purities.

Pure and impure are not good and evil. Both the clean and unclean animals enumerated in Leviticus 11 are divinely created, and both types were kept alive on Noah's ark according to both Priestly and Yahwistic tradition.

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Yet only clean or "pure" animals are suitable for food for the Israelites, while non-Israelites are not subject to the same rules. The purpose of the polarity, then, is ethnic identification, an essential part of cosmology. Within the Israelite community, moreover, priests are subject to more stringent rules of purity than laypeople, as detailed in Leviticus 21, and in this way the social cosmology is further defined and refined. *Ṭāhŏrâ* ("purity," "the pure") is associated with *qōdeš* ("holiness," "the holy"), which has its own binary pair in *ḥōl* ("the profane"). In principle, *qōdeš* is defined as a characteristic of Yahweh, so that the social maintenance of holiness is what permits the society's association with its god to continue without danger. In language that echoes that used to describe the cosmogonic separations or distinctions made in the Priestly account of creation in Genesis 1, Leviticus 20:26 stipulates that "You shall be holy to me, because I, Yahweh, am holy, and I made a distinction between you and the (other) peoples so that you would be my own." The ideal set forth in this material is for everyone (priests, laypeople and non-Israelites) to live in proper relation to the cosmological polarities of the pure and the impure, the holy and the profane. This is an element of complementary dualism that survived in Judaism even after the introduction of eschatological dualism beginning in the late biblical period.

In Judaism, the concepts just described become associated with an eschatological type of dualism only at a later date, and never exclusively so. This came about in the context of certain developments within Judaism that took place probably in the Persian Period, certainly in the Hellenistic Period and later. A chief characteristic of these developments was the increasing importance of apocalyptic thought. Apocalypticism looked forward to an imminent period of catastrophic upheaval that would mark the end of the present age and usher in a new world order characterized by the fulfillment of divine promises. These promises were ancient, and in the newly arrived Kingdom of God (as it was often called) the old would become new, in accordance with a perceived relationship between the time of the end and the salient and salvific events of human and cosmic history. Jewish apocalypticism in particular expected a role to be played in the momentous events to come by a savior figure with royal, priestly, and/or prophetic characteristics. The kingdom of God would be established on earth by the installation of a new regime or government, often under the leadership of the royal and/or priestly savior figure or figures and implemented by the glorious restoration of the ancient capital (the New Jerusalem).

Jewish apocalypticism deserves special attention here because it was characterized by a strong eschatological dualism. The present time was viewed eschatologically (that is, there was an acute sense that the end of a period of history was near, so that the present age was understood as the last

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days). Those who were living through the last days experienced the world in sharply dualistic terms. Humanity was divided between the just and the unjust, the good and the evil, the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness; and this polarity was not confined to the human realm alone, because Jewish apocalyptic thinking included an elaborate angelology and demonology. In the world to come, there would be eternal rewards for the just and punishment for the unjust. When the kingdom of God finally arrived, however, the victory of good over evil would be absolute. There would be no ongoing role for the powers of darkness, and it is especially in this respect that this kind of eschatological dualism is to be distinguished from the complementary or dialectical dualism already discussed.

Apocalyptic Judaism is heavily represented in the library of the self-exiled Jewish community that is thought to have lived at Khirbet Qumran from the second century B.C.E. until the early years of the First Revolt against Rome. Although the sectarian literature from Qumran is thoroughgoingly apocalyptic throughout, the principal apocalyptic document may be the so-called War Scroll (1QM, 4QM), which is a script for the final war between the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness. According to the opening words of the scroll, the forces of Darkness comprise the traditional enemies of Israel as well as the "new" enemy, "the Kittim," in this case evidently the Romans. In one sense, then, this will be a battle between Israel and the nations, so that the old ethnic boundary markers of the Priestly regulations in the Bible have now hardened into the final demarcations of a struggle for annihilation. Also included among "the army of Belial," the demonic commander, are "the ungodly of the Covenant" or "those acting wickedly against the Covenant" (the apostate Jews). The forces of Light include the sectarian community itself, divided between "the children of Levi" (the priests) and "the children of Judah and Benjamin" (the laypeople), who will march from their desert camp towards Jerusalem. They are reinforced by angelic forces under the command of the archangel Michael, who counterpoises Belial. The fundamental dualism is underlined by stress placed on the military equality of the two sides.

The purpose of the document is to prepare the members of the community for the war, of which both the battles and the ultimate outcome (the final destruction of the Kittim) are preordained. Ultimately God will intervene on behalf of the Children of Light, but only after a series of battles in which the two sides will be defeated and victorious in alternating "lots." The fighting will proceed according to rules of war practiced by the Gentiles, but also according to the Law of Moses (angelic participation obliges human soldiers to observe biblical purity laws). The camp of the army of the Children of Light is modeled after the organization of Israel's camp in the wilderness in Numbers 1–10, and the ritually impure are excluded from the

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camp in according with the rules in the first four verses of Number 5 (1QM VII:3–7).

An important element in the war is the malediction of Belial and his cronies by the High Priest (1QM XIII:4–16), whose language reflects the eschatological dualism of the community[4]:

> Cursed be Belial for his sinful purpose and may he be execrated for his wicked rule! Cursed be all the spirits of his company for their ungodly purpose and may they be execrated for all their service to uncleanness! Truly they are the company of Darkness, but the company of God is one of [eternal] Light…Thou hast created us for Thyself, [O God], that we may be an everlasting people. Thou has decreed for us a destiny of Light according to Thy truth. And the Prince of Light Thou has appointed from ancient times to come to our support; [all the sons of righteousness are in his hand], and all the spirits of truth are under his dominion. But Belial, the Angel of Malevolence, Thou has created for the Pit; his [rule] is in Darkness and his purpose is to bring about wickedness and iniquity. All the spirits of his company, the Angels of Destruction, walk according to the precepts of Darkness; towards them is their [inclination]…[For Thou hast appointed] the day of battle from ancient times…[to come to the aid] of truth and to destroy iniquity, to bring Darkness low and to magnify Light…to stand for ever, and to destroy all the sons of Darkness…

There is no ongoing role here for Belial and his associates—they are destined for "the Pit," for utter destruction. The pronounced dualism of the War Scroll and similar literature is not complementary or dialectical but eschatological.

There was an increasing preference for this kind of dualism in the ancient world from the middle of the first millennium B.C.E. onward. How is this trend to be explained? Since it was precisely in the middle of the first millennium that the Persian Empire conquered the world, it has often been suggested that the rise of eschatological dualism was a symptom of the pervasive influence of Zoroastrianism, which, at least in its mature form, provides a paradigmatic example of this kind of thinking and which, from the time of Darius I (522–486 B.C.E.) onward, was the official religion of the Achaemenid Empire. The question we would like to be able to answer is whether Zoroastrianism is simply another example of the trend, or its primary impetus.

In assessing the influence of Iranian (and specifically Zoroastrian) thought on the religions of Western Asia and the Mediterranean, however, one faces a compound difficulty about which Iranologists are extremely cautious: the paucity and lack of clarity of the early sources, and the degree of confidence with which these sources can be regarded as authentically

[4] The translation is that of Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1997), 176–77.

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early. The *Avesta* in its final composition is a document of the Sassanid Period (third-seventh centuries C.E.), compiled from surviving fragments of a much larger earlier collection. It would be helpful to us to be able to identify within it relics of Old Iranian religion and the early ideas introduced by Zarathustra's reforms and to distinguish these from the teachings of orthodox Zoroastrianism (the official religion of the Achaemenid Empire under Darius I and his successors) and still later developments. If we cannot make these distinctions confidently, however, we can take some comfort in the probability that it was a developed form of Zoroastrianism rather than the unrevised teachings of the prophet himself that so deeply influenced, for example, the development of apocalyptic Judaism in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods.

Assuming that it is his thought that is preserved in the earliest Avestan sources, Zarathustra seems to have seized upon a basic distinction in Old Iranian religion between truth and falsehood and developed it into a dualistic cosmology that viewed the world as an arena in which these two opposing principles and their adherents contend. The starting point of his religious teaching was the worship of Ahura Mazdâ, "the Wise Lord" and supreme creator by whom "Truth" (*ṛta, asha*), the physical and moral order, was created. In Zarathustra's dualism, therefore, the opposing forces of Truth and Falsehood are not coeval with Ahura Mazdâ and not, therefore, primordial. They made their first appearance as emanations of the Wise Lord. If this is correct, it distinguishes the dualism of Zarathustra himself from that of the orthodox Zoroastrianism, according to which Falsehood existed alongside Ahura Mazdâ himself from the beginning. In a difficult phrase in one of the most discussed passages in the Gāthic corpus (*Yasht* 30.3) reference is made to the secondary appearance of twin (*yəma*) spirits, who are diametrically different in thought, word, and deed: the Beneficent *Spənta Mainyu* and the Destructive *Angra Mainyu*. Here, then, Truth and Falsehood, though coexistent from their origin, are not preexistent; they are the creations or emanations of Ahura Mazdâ. In orthodox Zoroastrianism, however, the Destructive Spirit, *Angra Mainyu* or rather Ahriman, was paired with Ahura Mazdâ himself, with whom it was coeval. The Wise Lord has been merged with the Beneficent Spirit. This presents a more radical dualism, according to which Truth and Falsehood existed together from the beginning.

The two original Spirits were different in every aspect of their beings (*Yashna* 45.2). One of the differences listed is "choice," and the diametrical divergence in their exercise of free will established a primordial pattern for human behavior. Later on in the Gāthic passage already referred to (*Yashna* 30.5), we are told that "Of these two Spirits, the deceitful…chose the worst course of action, (while) the most beneficent Spirit…(chose) Truth, (as)

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also (do) those [people] who believingly propitiate Ahura Mazdâ." It is difficult for anyone familiar with the Qumran library not to see in this Old Avestan text a direct adumbration of a central tenet of the so-called "Doctrine of the Two Spirits" (1QS III:13–IV:26) of the *Serek Hayyaḥad*, according to which God

> …created man to govern the world, and…appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and injustice. Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of injustice spring from a source of darkness…. Until now the spirits of truth and injustice struggle in the hearts of men and they walk in both wisdom and folly. According to his portion of truth so does a man hate injustice, and according to his inheritance in the realm of injustice so is he wicked and so hates the truth. For God has established the two spirits in equal measure until the determined end…. He has allotted them to the children of men that they may know good [and evil, and] that the destiny of all the living may be according to the spirit within [them at the time] of the visitation.[5]

The Gāthic literature suggests that Zarathustra himself had a clear expectation that the just would be rewarded and the wicked punished, although he may have expected these judgments to occur in the present world. However clear Zarathustra's own concept of "last things" was or was not, however, Zoroastrianism developed a full eschatology that could be viewed as a model for many elements in Jewish apocalypticism. Ahura Mazdâ would triumph over Ahriman and his followers at the end of history.

It seems clear that Iranian thought deeply influenced the specific ideas of Jewish apocalypticism and similar movements, and it was certainly the case that early Zoroastrianism, at least in its mature form, included a conceptual basis for what we have called eschatological dualism. To acknowledge these things, however, is not enough to show that the shift towards eschatological dualism in the second half of the first millennium was a consequence of the spread of Zoroastrian ideas in the historical context of Persian imperialism.

*Conclusion*

I would like to suggest a simple historical explanation for the shift in dualistic thinking from dialectical to eschatological. As we have seen, cosmological dualism envisions a polarized world, in which irreducible and often hostile principles exist in a relationship of opposition. In the complementary or dialectical type of dualism, this opposition, though it may be hostile, is permanent and even beneficial; the goal of life is to seek the harmonious position between the two polarities. As we saw, for example,

[5] Translation from Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 101–3.

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in the case of Horus and Seth, the opposition corresponds to (among other things) the distinction between Egypt, of which Horus was the governing principal, and the foreign lands, of which Seth was god. In Israel, the maintenance of the distinction between the pure and impure served to establish community identity by distinguishing between Israelites (who were required to respect the purities) and foreigners (who were not). Even apart from questions of cosmological dualism, the distinction between those who were native-born and foreigners was essential in these traditions, as in most. Both Egypt and Israel, in fact, had conventional lists of foreigners with whom they lived in a kind of dialectical relationship, sometimes hostile, sometimes productive, sometimes both. In Egypt, these included Libyans, Nubians, and Asiatics, among others, or, in traditional language, the Nine Bows, the foreign peoples whom Pharaoh subdued. In Israel, they included, in the first place, the kindred nations of Ammon, Moab, and Edom (the children of Lot and Esau) and the Arameans, but also the truly foreign peoples, such as the Canaanites and the Egyptians.

For the Egyptians throughout most of their long history, and for the Israelites in the early period of their existence, it was natural enough to think of themselves as living in a creative tension with these foreigners. Foreigners they were, and not infrequently hostile, but they were familiar nonetheless. Beginning in the first half of the first millennium, however, new peoples began to appear on the borders of Egypt and Israel, partly as a result of developing long-distance trade but primarily, and most threateningly, as a result of the westward spread of eastern peoples with imperial ambitions. Here was a new kind of foreigner, quite unlike the original Nine Bows or the Children of Lot. The new foreigners were totally alien (or alien in a qualitatively different way). When the Assyrians in the seventh century and the Persians in the sixth reached (and crossed) the border of Egypt, they were identified with Seth, the god of foreign lands, according to time-honored tradition. But now the figure of Seth grew darker; he was demonized, and his desert temples were dismantled. The creative tension between native-born and foreigner had become too strained. As far as I know, Egypt never adopted a fully eschatological dualism, but Israel did, with the demon Belial leading an army of Kittim, mythological foreigners who were radically alien. Dualism became predominantly eschatological in the region, unable to maintain the creative tension of the complementary systems of the past. The ideal of living in creative tension with the Other was replaced by the anticipation of his obliteration.

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