

Cambridge Elements

Elements in Religion in Late Antiquity

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THEORY, HISTORY, AND THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Speculative Worlds

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-01200-3 – Theory, History, and the Study of Religion in Late Antiquity
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Frontmatter
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
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103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009012003

DOI: 10.1017/9781009025560

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First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-009-01200-3 Paperback

ISSN 2633-8602 (online)

ISSN 2633-8599 (print)

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DOI: 10.1017/9781009025560
First published online: January 2023

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Abstract: Theory is not a set of texts, it is a style of approach. It is to engage in the act of speculation: gestures of abstraction that reimagine and dramatize the crises of living. This Element is both a primer for understanding some of the more predominant strands of critical theory in the study of religion in late antiquity, and a history of speculative leaps in the field. It is a history of dilemmas that the field has tried to work out again and again – questions about subjectivity, the body, agency, violence, and power. This Element additionally presses us on the ethical stakes of our uses of theory and asks how the field's interests in theory help us understand what is going on, half-spoken, in the disciplinary unconscious.

Keywords: religion, late antiquity, theory, gender, postcolonial studies

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ISBNs: 9781009012003 (PB), 9781009025560 (OC)
ISSNs: 2633-8602 (online), 2633-8599 (print)

Contents

Introduction	1
1 Gender, Difference, Thereness, and Representation	3
2 Foucault and Defamiliarization, or “Keeping Late Antiquity Weird”	22
3 Colonial Histories and the Vexations of the Global	34
Conclusion: Theory and Its Uses	49
References	53