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Introduction

Self, Space and the Divine Embodiment Model

PREFATORY REMARKS

Since our incipient days on the earth, *Homo sapiens* have been on an introspective quest. We have sought not only to survive, to thrive, to grow but also to know who we are, what it means to be human. Interestingly, we tend to ask questions about the self within the framework of the transcendent or the divine. What is here (you, me, us) only seems to make sense in the light of what is out there (divine, gods, God). Indeed, in asking, what is the *human self*? we inevitably want to know, what *is* the human self? What is this mysterious *thing* really *made of*? And how is this self-thing similar to or different from that which is *out there*?

We think that we can know ourselves better when we hold our*selves* against some divine other. This is why such questions are especially visible in cultures in which religion and cult maintain a central role. In cultures at whose heart stands some concept of the divine – a God, a pantheon, a godlike ideal – humans openly ask: what is the relationship between this self-thing and the divine, deities, God? What can we know about our*selves* in the light of and in relation to the transcendent?

With an eye towards these perennial questions, I seek to understand what the peoples of the biblical world[1] believed about human nature. More specifically, I investigate ancient beliefs about the self's possession

[1] By 'biblical world', I mean the world of the peoples and traditions found in the Hebrew Bible, intertestamental Jewish literature and New Testament from the third mill. BCE to the first c. CE. I am aware that the biblical texts were not written in the third or second mill. BCE, and that there is ample debate about the historicity of the figures found therein. However, the ancient near eastern, Mediterranean and North African environments

of or potential for the divine ontological state in its present condition.[2] I thus investigate sources that indicate underlying assumptions about divine aspects of human nature.[3]

Relying on the work of experts, I examine ancient texts, inscriptions and artefacts in fresh light and offer a new conceptualisation of human nature in the biblical world. My aim is to gain a more profound understanding of the human self as it relates to the divine in the present life. I hope to provide more nuanced ways of imagining near eastern anthropologies and envisaging the relationship between the self and the divine.

My approach to the subject is historical, theoretical and comparative. I focus on sources that other scholars have recognised to shine light on beliefs or assumptions about the divine aspects of the self. Looking at a wide range of sources from Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Syro-Palestine, Greece and Rome allows us to consider multiple voices on human nature alongside one another.

I should note that I discuss some matters that are old news to experts of the Ancient Near East. Such scholars have long discussed ancient ideas about deities' ability to embody physical objects. However, I must discuss these matters for two reasons. First, readers who are not experts in the Ancient Near East are likely unaware of such discussions. Since these issues are of critical importance for how we understand ancient conceptions of human nature, I must discuss them at some length in each chapter. Second, I do not merely point out where we find such beliefs in the ancient sources. Rather, I seek to understand what the union between the deity and the embodied object looks like. If we can understand what the ancients imagined when they pictured a deity to reside within a physical object, this will shine light on how they imagined the divine to reside within the physical space of the human body.

nevertheless served as the historical, social and religious context out of which such traditions and writings emerged. Furthermore, given the debate about the relationship between the proper 'Ancient Near East' and 'Ancient Mediterranean' and given that I explore Greece and Rome in the following study, I shall refer to cultures and sources from the vast region surrounding the Mediterranean Sea as well as those areas that stretch North, South and East variously as the 'Ancient Near East', 'Ancient Near East and Mediterranean' and/or 'biblical world'. For a helpful discussion of defining this time and place in history, see e.g., Snell, 2011, 1–6.

[2] Ontology and ontological here refer to the nature, essence, condition, composition, constitution, construction, organisation, make-up or stuff of the self.

[3] The divine here can refer to the state or space recognised as participating in or possessing traits a given culture views as divine, including but not limited to the heavenly world, God, multiple deities or other so-called divine entities, forces or elements.

THE SELF AS SPACE

The Study of the Self

In his study of the self in Daoism, L. Komjathy aptly writes, 'Theoretically speaking, conceptions of self are ubiquitous. Every discussion, whether anthropological, historical, philosophical, psychological, or scientific, assumes some conception of self'.[4] Because understandings of the self abound in the literature, it is important that I express the way I conceptualise it in the present discussion.[5]

The Self As Bounded Space

I suggest that we understand the self as a bounded space.[6] Boundaries are intrinsic to identity and to selfhood. 'I' am 'me' because something differentiates me from 'you'. There are boundaries between 'us' – whether these are tangible (i.e., the body), social or other.

The self's boundaries distinguish it from others. Like a city, the body has two key sets of boundaries. It has a set of outer boundaries that separate it from the outside and from other selves. This set, of course, takes the form of the body. But it also has inner boundaries that divide it into any number of constituent parts.[7] What these inner boundaries look like depends on the way a given culture conceptualises the self. These may take the form of organs or appendages, or they may take the form of a soul or spirit, or a series of other inward parts. Because one could classify any physical object as a type of space, it should not be too difficult to see the human self likewise.

The Study of Space

If the self is a space, we must ask, what do we mean by *space*? And *in what sense* is the self a space? In helping us to conceptualise the self as space, I rely on the work of M. Foucault.

[4] Komjathy, 2007, 64. For bibliography on the study of the self, see e.g., Snell, 2005b; Putthoff, 2017, 3–5.
[5] See also Putthoff, 2017, 7–14. I am grateful to A. Gaidhu (private communication) for her thoughts on self and space.
[6] On the body and space in antiquity, see Worman, 2009, 45–62; cf. Komjathy, 2007, 65; Smith, 2010, 333, 343.
[7] Douglas, 2001, 116. Cf. Putthoff, 2017, 10–11. On the body and the city, see esp. Hopkins and Wyke, 2005. Cf. Brown, 1988, 26–27; Komjathy, 2007, 66.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Foucault, along with H. Lefebvre and others, began to make sense of this difficult concept.[8] In a lecture to a group of architects in 1967, Foucault would set forth a profound way of thinking about space:

> The space in which we are living, by which we are drawn outside ourselves, in which, as a matter of fact, the erosion of our life, our time, and our history takes place, this space that eats and scrapes away at us, is also heterogeneous space in itself. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, within which individuals and things might be located. We do not live in a void that would be tinged with shimmering colors, we live inside an ensemble of relations that define emplacements that are irreducible to each other and absolutely nonsuperposable.[9]

In this brief essay, Foucault discusses the two types of space: utopias and heterotopias. These are critical in that they connect 'to all other emplacements ... in such a way that they suspend, neutralize, or reverse the set of relations that are designated, reflected, or represented [*réflechis*] by them'.[10]

Before moving forward, I should briefly discuss two terms key to Foucault's observations. In the first place, the French term 'emplacement' (*l'emplacement*) is critical to the way he conceives space. As Foucault explains, 'emplacement is defined by the relations of proximity between points or elements'.[11] For Foucault, the term emplacement 'has the sense of *placing* in a certain location', P. Johnson explains. 'Usually referring to archaeological sites, the term makes explicit the action of marking out a position'.[12]

For Foucault, the term emplacement refers to more than mere geographical location. Rather, it designates the relationship between multiple elements. It points to what others like Lefebvre speak of in terms of 'thirdspace' (*l'espace vécu*) or 'lived space'. Here already Foucault demonstrates the complexity of space. It is not simply a fixed location, nor is it simply a social phenomenon. It is an amalgam of physical, social and other elements, and understanding it is hardly a simple task.[13]

In the second place, Johnson clarifies the way Foucault uses the French terms *espace* ('space') and *lieu* ('place'):

[8] Lefebvre, 1991; Foucault, 1998, 175–85. I am grateful to R. Pinto (private communication) for her insights into the complex nature of space.
[9] Foucault, 1998, 177–78. Translations of Foucault's 1967 (=1998) essay entitled 'Different Spaces' are from Foucault, 1998, unless otherwise noted.
[10] Foucault, 1998, 178. [11] Foucault, 1998, 176. [12] Johnson, 2006, 77.
[13] Lefebvre, 1991, 6–14. Cf. Kahn, 2000, 7.

> 'Space' is more abstract than 'place'. The former term can refer to an area, a distance and, significantly in relation to Foucault's concept of heterotopia, a temporal period (the space of two days). The latter, more tangible term, refers to an event or a history, whether mythical or real (Augé, 1995, 81–84). Foucault uses 'place' when there is a sense of intimacy or subjectivity, as in his description of the mirror, but it is also noticeable that he can use both words generally within the same sentence, as well as exchanging 'difference' and 'other' quite freely as in 'these different spaces, these other places' [*de ces espaces différents, ces autres lieux*].[14]

The important point to note is the abstract quality of *espace* against the more concrete *lieu*.[15] This is vital for the way Foucault's theory of space applies to our conceptualisation of the self. Although the self is a physical, bounded entity, it is too complex to define using a term that otherwise refers to a concrete, physical location. Therefore, *lieu* does not help us in conceptualising the nature of the self the way *espace* does. To speak of a *place* is to speak of a fixed geographical location, a topographic point that can be located. However, to speak of a *space* is to speak of an area, a sphere, a realm that can be either unbounded (infinite) or bounded (finite). As a concept, space (*espace*) applies to any number of *things* that are not so static that they have a fixed topographical place (*lieu*).[16]

With these two terms on the table, let me now move forward in discussing Foucault's two types of space. The first is the utopia, or utopian space. Of utopias, Foucault writes,

> Utopias are emplacements having no real place. They are emplacements that maintain a general relation of direct or inverse analogy with the real space of society. They are society perfected or the reverse of society, but in any case these utopias are spaces that are fundamentally and essentially unreal.[17]

According to Foucault, a utopia is not real space. Rather, it is a mirror or idealised representation of real space. Real life – lived space – is never homogeneous but 'heterogeneous'.[18] Therefore, utopias can only exist in the ideal realm of the mind or of a mirror.[19] Utopian space is simply too perfect or too imperfect to be real. It is either too wholly perfect or imperfect, sacred or profane, holy or impious. Utopian space is so much

[14] Johnson, 2006, 77. [15] Cf. Tuan, 1977, 6.
[16] I am grateful to Crispin Fletcher-Louis (private communication) for his remarks on the issue of distinguishing space from place.
[17] Foucault, 1998, 178. [18] Foucault, 1998, 175–85. [19] Foucault, 1998, 178.

of one extreme quality that it simply cannot exist in reality.[20] In reality, all space possesses at least some element of otherness. Because such utopian space cannot exist in reality, Foucault concludes that all space is heterotopian space.

A heterotopia is literally a 'different space' or an 'other space', an emplacement that is by nature a *mixed* space. Heterotopian space is space characterised by its intrinsic otherness. A heterotopia is the opposite of a utopia in that it is a space in which various things, phenomena, experiences, conditions or states exist simultaneously alongside one another.[21] Whereas utopian space must be *either* sacred *or* profane, for example, heterotopian space can be *both* sacred *and* profane simultaneously. It can consist of both good and bad, pure and impure, or as I argue in the following chapters, divine and nondivine, at the same time.

Self Space As Heterotopian Space

If we think of the self as a bounded space, we must recognise its intrinsically heterotopian nature. Humans naturally conceive of the self as a bounded space with outer and inner boundaries. From Foucault's analysis, we can draw out four notable characteristics of self space that will help us in understanding ancient near eastern conceptions of the self.

First, as noted already, every space contains some element of otherness, so that all space is heterotopian space. Whatever the self is, as a type of space, it must always be inherently different on or in itself in some way.

Second, all space is intrinsically relational. By nature, space relates to and interacts with other space, including the space next to it and around it. Self space must always be examined in the light of the type of space that surrounds it.

Third, as a bounded entity, the self is simultaneously open and closed to external influences. Sometimes it voluntarily opens itself to such influences (e.g., ingestion), while at other times the other invades it without permission (e.g., possession). The boundaries of the self are in constant renegotiation such that they undergo transformation as a result of the activity taking place in, on or upon them.

Fourth, as relational space, the self tends to be mimetic. Under the right circumstances it tends to reflect, represent or mimic adjacent or surrounding space when that space is somehow perceived to be greater or stronger than the self. However, because of the self's heterotopian nature, what

[20] Foucault, 1998, 177–78. [21] Foucault, 1998, 178–79.

happens to one part of the self may not happen to the other. Again, an activity occurring in or on one part of a city does not necessarily affect all other parts of that city. The same can also be true of the self.

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

Space and Existence in Early Judaism and Christianity

Recent scholarship on early Judaism and Christianity has made great progress in understanding the relationship between the self and space. Scholars have shown a direct link in the ancient mind between human nature and the space in which one exists. We should benefit from a brief review of some of these works.

Early Judaism and Jewish Mysticism

For some time, scholars have demonstrated that early Jews widely assumed that the self participated in the divine state when in contact with divine space. C. Morray-Jones insists that certain humans could experience glorious transformation in the presence of God.[22] M. Himmelfarb argues that such figures could become ontologically akin to the angels in heaven when in their presence.[23] In a somewhat different context, A. Orlov demonstrates that the (evil) demons mirrored or imitated the (good) angels on various levels.[24] C. Fletcher-Louis maintains that the Qumran sect, as God's true people, thought they could enter divine space during worship and become like the angels therein.[25] M. Schneider holds that the High Priest could take on the ontological properties of God himself during his annual entry into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur.[26] D. Forger claims that, according to Philo Judaeus, the human self was an embodiment of the divine even in the present life.[27] Elsewhere, I examine the link between the self, space and human nature in multiple varieties of early Judaism.[28]

Early Christianity and the New Testament

Scholars have examined this concept in the New Testament as well. V. Rabens argues that, according to Paul, by being filled with the Spirit

[22] Morray-Jones, 1992, 1–31.
[23] Himmelfarb, 1993. Cf. Bousset, 1901, 136–69, 229–73.
[24] Orlov, 2011; 2015.
[25] Fletcher-Louis, 2002.
[26] Schneider, 2012a; 2012b.
[27] Forger, 2018.
[28] Putthoff, 2014; 2017.

and brought into proximity with other Spirit-filled persons, the Christian would undergo divine ontological transformation.[29] E. Rehfeld suggests that, in Paul's thinking, participation in the 'Christ-relationship' would lead to participation in Christ's divine state.[30] M. Lakey describes the believing community in terms of a 'cosmic space' whose boundaries 'circumscribe that part of the κόσμος that is ordered correctly εἰς God'.[31]

Interest in pertinent issues surrounding deification and theosis has also expanded rapidly in recent years.[32] B. Blackwell examines Paul's remarks on deification alongside those of the Church Fathers, providing us with very useful categories for analysing these matters.[33] D. Litwa has argued that Paul, like many in his ancient context, believed that the human self could share in the divine identity through participation in the Spirit.[34] A. Byers similarly highlights the ontological nature of Christian participation in the divine in John's Gospel.[35] M. Thiessen contends that Paul believes that Christ enjoyed a fluid constitution such that he could inhabit multiple physical bodies simultaneously.[36]

Christian 'Theological Anthropology'

The current investigation is not a proper theological enterprise. However, it does rely on various disciplines in exploring the ancient sources. With that said, my work also draws on the insights of 'theological anthropology'.[37] Theological anthropology seeks to understand more about the human person as it relates to God. It is largely a Christian theological endeavour, but it incorporates the thinking of biblical writings and historical thinkers.[38] Thus, it considers the many issues surrounding the biblical view of the self as the 'image of God'.[39] Moreover, just as contemporary theologians assert, ancients likewise believed that humanity and the divine could not be understood apart from one another.[40]

[29] Rabens, 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2014c. [30] Rehfeld, 2012. [31] Lakey, 2010, 91.
[32] Cf. Kharlamov, 2012. [33] Blackwell, 2011.
[34] Litwa, 2012; cf. 2008; 2013; 2016. [35] Byers, 2017. [36] Thiessen, 2013.
[37] See esp. the recent works of Schwarz, 2008; 2013; Cortez, 2010; 2016. See also the standard works, including: Moltmann, 1974; Murphy-O'Connor, 1982; Thunberg, 1985; Zizioulas, 1985; Pannenberg, 1999; Zeindler, Graf and Mathwi, 2004; Hopkins, 2005.
[38] See Cortez, 2016.
[39] E.g., Barth, 1958, 184–85; Lossky, 1967; Moltmann, 1985, 188; Harrison, 2010; Cortez, 2016, 14–40.
[40] Cf. Schwöbel and Gunton, 1991; Torrance, 1996.

Divine Embodiment in the Ancient Near East

In seeking to understand ancient beliefs about divine embodiment, scholars have likewise made great progress in understanding the relationship between space and existence in the Ancient Near East.[41] They have moved us forward in how we now understand the divine nature and how deities in particular and the divine essence in general related to physical spaces, including cult objects and the human body alike. Many scholars have made contributions to this study, and I discuss these in the following chapters. But three in particular need to be mentioned at this point. Their work forms the foundation for the framework within which I examine ancient conceptions of the divine nature of the self.

In his ground-breaking monograph, B. Sommer examines ancient Israelite and near eastern ideas on divine 'fluidity'.[42] Scholars have long been aware of the notion of divine embodiment in the biblical world. However, Sommer presses our understanding of Israel's god to a new level. He finds that the ancients widely believed deities could install themselves within cult objects, which served as physical bodies for otherwise disembodied deities. Israelites were no different: they too believed that YHWH could inhabit *many* bodies without ever losing his singular identity.[43] On the contrary, in doing so he could expand his presence in locations beyond his sanctuary.

Sommer does not pursue this matter in ancient anthropologies. However, his findings are of direct relevance for how we understand divine embodiment in the context of the human self. If the divine can reside in the material spaces of a cult object, it is worth considering how this helps us understand ancient conceptions of the self as potentially embodied space.

M. Hundley expands Sommer's exploration, looking specifically at the role of temples and earthly dwellings as spaces of divine residence.[44] He demonstrates how the peoples of the biblical world envisioned the gods to have lived in sacred, physical objects.[45] Humankind could encounter, worship and even feed the deities, whose real presence inhabited material temples and shrines. Furthermore, Hundley notes the ability of the divine

[41] Important works that I do not review here but return to throughout the following chapters include Hamori, 2008; Kamionkowski and Kim, 2010; Allen, 2015; Smith, 2016.

[42] By body, Sommer, 2009, 2, means simply: 'something located in a particular place at a particular time, whatever its shape or substance'.

[43] Sommer, 2009, 124. [44] Hundley, 2013; cf. 2011.

[45] See e.g., Hundley, 2013, 139–52.

to deify objects in their immediate proximity. Such objects could become participants in the divine state by virtue of their closeness to the divine.[46]

Hundley does not pursue the anthropological implications of his findings. However, like Sommer, he moves us forward in our own exploration of ancient conceptions of the embodied self. Hundley helps us understand how the ancients believed deities could not only embody but also deify material objects. With this in mind, we must ask how the divine presence – or divine space more generally – could effect the same changes in the human self.

S. Herring examines biblical conceptions of the human as the divine image within the framework of divine embodiment.[47] He argues that the biblical writers believed that YHWH embodied the human – the image of God – the way that their ancient neighbours believed their deities could embody images resembling them. Such images were not considered mere replicas. Rather, they were physical extensions of the deity inside them.[48] Through ritual deification, cult statues could *become* the deities inside. Likewise, in biblical anthropology, humans were the bodily incarnations of God on earth.[49] As Herring insists, humans were not merely bearers of the divine rule but of the divine presence as well.

Herring's exploration of divine embodiment in the context of biblical anthropology provides a bridge between ancient near eastern beliefs about gods and humans. My study will find much agreement with that of Herring. But I will provide additional insights into the anthropologies of the Israelites and their neighbours.

The Divine Embodiment Model

In the following chapters, I argue that the peoples of the biblical world envisioned the self as divine embodied space. While they disagreed on certain details, they imagined that the human was capable of embodying the divine, in its natural condition, even in the present life. As a type of space inhabited by and/or comprising divine components, the self enjoyed a natural share in the divine state. Which aspects and *in what sense* the self participated in the divine would differ in some ways from one culture to the next.

[46] Hundley, 2013, 125, 367. [47] Herring, 2013. [48] Herring, 2013, 47.
[49] Herring, 2013, 48.