separated the latter, likely contributing to concern with worship directed at it. The more independent it was understood to be from the locus of divine selfhood, the more of a threat it may have been perceived to be. The next chapter will discuss some rhetorical methods used by authors and editors used to exploit that compartmentalization while mitigating the potential threats.

ANTHROPOMORPHISM. Similar to the representation of other deities, YHWH is predominantly presented in the Hebrew Bible as thoroughly anthropomorphic (Stavrakopoulou 2021). However—and also similar to the representation of other deities—there was a concerted effort at times to mitigate or obscure that anthropomorphism. In the case of the other deities, this could be part of a campaign of denying their relevance, influence, and access, but in the case of YHWH, it was usually a corollary to efforts to rhetorically exalt the deity and safeguard control of access to them. This rhetorical tug-of-war seems to have been a product of the conflict of intuitive and reflective reasoning about deity. A host of reflective conceptualizations served the structuring of power and values on the part of cultic authorities, while more intuitive conceptualizations based more directly on familiar anthropomorphic frameworks facilitated the more efficient transmission and perseverance of deity concepts. Curating a divine profile that maintains the fundamental invisible and non-anthropomorphic nature of a deity across all domains and dimensions cuts against the intuitive grain and would require intentional, authoritative, and sustained reflective reasoning that would be difficult to achieve outside of the frameworks of powerful social institutions.

Even then, however, unless a person is consciously subordinating their deity concepts to those authoritative frameworks, they will frequently default to more intuitive conceptualizations. Experiments conducted by Justin Barrett and his colleagues in the 1990s and 2010s demonstrated that firmly held theological beliefs in all-present, all-powerful, nonanthropomorphic deities still gave way to thoroughly anthropomorphic conceptualizations when those theological frameworks were not the active focus of cognition (Barrett and Keil 1996; Barrett 1999, 2011). In the case of YHWH and the Hebrew Bible, the reflective conceptualizations of deity that served the authors' structuring of power opposed the gravitational pull of intuition, and so there was a need for constant curation.[49] Removing the deity from the narratives, however, created a disconnect from earlier narratives where the deity appears to interact directly with figures like Abraham and Moses. One tool for getting around this problem was the messenger of YHWH, whose literary utility will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

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[49] A convenient modern example of this conflict is the Christian concept of the Trinity, which is authoritatively maintained in the interest of specific rhetorical needs, but is difficult to reduce to cognitively efficient frameworks.