

theory allows us to acknowledge and engage with overlap and integration at the intersection of distinct conceptual categories, rather than insist on the strict and clear binaries that are prominent primarily because of academic convenience rather than analytical value.

## OUTLINE OF THIS BOOK

My first chapter constructs a theoretical model for the nature and origins of deity concepts. Rather than begin with contemporary models of deity, however, it begins with a theoretical model for the origins of deity concepts drawn from the cognitive science of religion. I will then argue that deity concepts originated in elaborations on the intuitive conceptualization of human persons, including deceased kin.<sup>40</sup> The most important function of deities within this framework relate to the facilitation of social cohesion through full access to strategic information, through social monitoring, and through the provision, via ritual, of opportunities for costly signaling and credibility enhancing displays. Cultic media will be shown to be critical not only to the materialization and transmission of deity concepts, but also to the presencing of deities and their agency.

The second chapter treats the material encounter of deity and divine in ancient Southwest Asia, applying the theoretical framework developed in chapter 1 to the material remains of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia, and finally ancient Israel and Judah. This will demonstrate the heuristic value of that framework and set the stage for the discussion in subsequent chapters of YHWH's presencing media. Chapters 3 and 4 will address deity in the Hebrew Bible, employing insights from cognitive linguistics to bridge the gap between the material and phenomenological aspects of deity and divine agency and their representation in the biblical texts. Chapter 3 will explore the contours and boundaries of the semantic field of the generic concept of deity. Chapter 4 will then interrogate YHWH's profile as an instantiation of that generic concept. Deprivileging YHWH's conceptualizations by examining them through the frameworks of generic deity will reveal their roots in that generic framework, and also show that the more distinctive aspects of YHWH's divine profile do not represent conceptual revolutions, but incremental elaborations on generic features and functions.

In the fifth chapter I interrogate YHWH's own divine agents, focusing on the ark of the covenant and the *kābôd* (traditionally translated "glory"). By tracing the developmental trajectory of these agents, this interrogation will demonstrate that there was no revolutionary paradigm shift that resulted in the abandonment of Israelite or Judahite presencing media. Rather, the nature of those media was

---

<sup>40</sup> My discussion will focus on the cognitive science of religion. A related discussion from archaeological and anthropological perspectives, with several points of contact, is found in Wunn and Grojnowski 2016.