periods, and I will address them as the discussion warrants, but for the most part, I understand them to primarily reflect the social and ideological circumstances of the periods in which they were completed. Because these later texts will not be particularly germane to my discussion, I will address any questions of dating or sources, again, as the discussion warrants.

One main motivation for the ongoing revision, expansion, rearrangement, and reinterpretation of the texts of the Hebrew Bible in these periods is particularly relevant to this discussion, and that is the exigencies (that is, needs or demands) of social memory. The redaction of old material, the composition of new material, and the reconfiguring and reinterpreting of both socially narrativizes the circumstances and experiences of the group. This contributes to the making of meaning by renegotiating the past in light of the present and emplotting the group within the broader historical macronarrative, which reinforces identity and orients members towards desired values and goals. As Jan Assmann (2010, 14) has put it, "Memory enables us to orient ourselves in time and to form out of the stuff of time a 'diachronic identity.' Political myths are about forming a collective or political identity, and they achieve this by giving time the form of a narrative structure and charging this structure with values, emotions, and ideals." Controlling that narrative emplotment also facilitates boundary maintenance and the structuring of values and power. Conceptualizations of deity and divine agency are deeply entangled with those dynamics of power, values, and identity. The same is also frequently true of the contemporary study of deity and divine agency, which brings us to the cognitive sciences.

In order to disrupt the categories and conventions I believe have prevented researchers from more productively engaging with the problem of deities and their agents in the Hebrew Bible, and to address the frequent methodological myopia of a purely historical-critical approach, my approach in this book will be informed by insights from cognitive linguistics and the cognitive science of religion.[21] The material remains of ancient Israel and Judah that bear on the question of deities and divine agency are material products of mental representations within socio-historical contexts. Historians have long worked under the unstated assumption that "understanding arises simply by situating mental products in their context" (Martin 2013, 16), but the cognitive sciences have made clear that environmental input alone is not sufficient to determine mental output—the mind is not a blank slate (*tabula rasa*). The shared cognitive features of humanity's evolutionary history contribute, along with top-down environmental affordances, influences,

[21] While the cognitive science of religion is only beginning to be applied to the study of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Maiden 2020), Ellen van Wolde (2003, 2005, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2013) has been productively applying the insights of cognitive linguistics for years. For the use of prototype theory to interrogate deity in relation to divine kingship in Mesopotamia, see Selz 2008.