

about deity still would have been quite strong, and with an understanding of that intuitive foundation, those perspectives that appear to serve the specific structuring of power of those elite groups can be distinguished from other more representative perspectives. The second assumption is that the perspectives of elite groups will betray the perspectives of less elite groups (with varying degrees of accuracy) to the degree they engage in polemics against them. In other words, if biblical authors and editors polemicize a specific perspective regarding deity, or insist a problematic perspective was widespread among Israelites and Judahites, we can excavate from that rhetoric data regarding more widespread conceptualizations of deity.

A further note of caution, however: any attempt to discern the conceptualization of generic deity in the Hebrew Bible is complicated by the fact that the overwhelming majority of references to deity in the texts are to YHWH, the deity of Israel. While conceptualizations of YHWH in the earliest periods of their worship were more directly influenced by the features of more generic conceptualizations in circulation within other societies, by the time of the rise of the biblical texts, YHWH had developed, through generations of curation in competition with other nations and their deities, a more distinctive profile.² In an effort to mitigate the potential for inadvertently reading uniquely Yahwistic features into my reconstruction of the generic concept of deity, my primary data set for this chapter will be those texts from the Hebrew Bible and other inscriptions that refer (or most likely refer) specifically to deities other than YHWH (or to the abstract concept of divinity) (cf. Wardlaw 2008). There obviously remained a significant degree of overlap between conceptualizations of YHWH and those of other deities, and even where Yahwistic conceptualizations diverged into unique roles and features, the prototypical features of deity and divine agency will show themselves to have been remarkably resilient (Hayman 1990, 8; cf. Ben-Dov 2016). YHWH's divine profile did not escape the gravitational pull of prototypical features of generic deity, but rather remained firmly anchored to them.

Prototype theory was introduced briefly in the introduction, and it will continue to inform this chapter's engagement with conceptual categories, but in the next section I will also briefly introduce semantic profiles, bases, and domains, which will be more directly relevant to the conceptual structures that were evoked by the terms for deity. This will go a long way to reducing the influence of contemporary philosophical frameworks and scholarly assumptions in the construal of the data.

² In *The Early History of God*, Mark Smith (2002) referred to "convergence" and "differentiation," and in *God in Translation* (2008, 18), he refers to "the general shift from translatability to non-translatability." For a related discussion, see Dearman 2020.