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Introduction

ROMAN RELIGION, FROM INTUITIONS TO INSTITUTIONS

nullum est animal praeter hominem quod habeat notitiam aliquam dei, ipsisque in hominibus nulla gens est neque tam mansueta neque tam fera, quae non, etiamsi ignoret qualem haberi deum deceat, tamen habendum sciat.

There is no living being except man that has any conception of god, and among men themselves there is no race so mild or so wild that it does not know that one must believe god to exist, even if it does not know what sort of being one ought to believe god to be.

CICERO, *DE LEGIBUS*, 1.24

0.1. Roman Cult and the Question of Belief

Rome, 176 BCE. Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Hispallus ("Cornelius") and Quintus Petilius Spurinus ("Petilius") have won election to the consulship, Rome's chief executive magistracy, held jointly by two men for a term of one year. Before Cornelius and Petilius can assume office, each must sacrifice an ox to the gods on the Capitoline Hill, at the Temple of Jupiter, in order to ascertain divine approval of his consulship. When Petilius's ox, upon examination by his sacrificial assistants, turns out to have a deformed liver, a very bad omen, the senate instructs him to keep sacrificing oxen until he receives *litatio*, a positive sign.

Cornelius, meanwhile, has no better luck. His face registering distress [*confuso vultu*], he reports to the senate that the liver of the ox he sacrificed had dissolved when his assistants were preparing it for examination. He himself can hardly believe his assistants' announcement of this fact [*parum*

credentem ipsum], yet upon inspection he finds it to be true. The senators are terrified [*territi*] by this prodigy [*prodigium*].

Their concern [*cura*] only grows when Petilius returns with news that after sacrificing three more oxen, he has still not been able to obtain *litatio*. They order him to keep sacrificing until the gods accept one of his victims. The story goes that he eventually obtained acceptance from all the gods except for Salus, the goddess of health and safety, who persisted in rebuffing his offerings.

Later that year, Cornelius presides over the Feriae Latinae or Latin Festival, at which the Latin cities of central Italy come together on the Alban Mount, some miles south of Rome, to offer joint sacrifice to Jupiter. The festival is marred, and anxieties arise, as a result of a flaw in the ritual. The college of Roman priests prescribes that the entire festival be repeated (a remedy known as *instauratio*). Before this can happen, Cornelius falls from his horse as he descends the Alban Mount. He is paralyzed and soon dies. Not long after, while leading a battle against Rome's enemies in northwestern Italy, Petilius, who, recall, never could obtain a positive sign from the goddess Salus, is killed by a javelin strike.[1]

I summarize this story from the Roman historian Livy, who records these incidents in his sweeping history of Rome from its origins to his own day. Livy, a masterful storyteller, builds tension by interspersing the ominous details of failed sacrifice with mundane reports of the senate's ho-hum deliberations about state business and other daily affairs. I have had to leave most such details out, but the effect of Livy's full original is to cultivate a growing sense of dread that culminates in the deaths, one after the other, of the ill-fated consuls. For reasons not entirely discernible, the gods reject the leaders that the Roman people have chosen by ballot, despite the fact that the Roman senate and priests apply every ritual resource at their disposal in response to the gods' omens, seeking reconciliation with them. The consuls, for their part, are anxious to adhere to traditional cult practice and distressed when doing so fails to produce the anticipated results. It is a story of cult institutions, of their failure, of the inscrutability of the divine mind, of omens that beggar belief, of emotions such as anxiety and terror, and—so the narrative insinuates but does not assert—of almost inevitable deaths.

It is an oversimplification, but not a very egregious one, to say that in the past, scholars told us that the sort of ritual action described by Livy, and Roman cult as a whole, amounted to compulsory and obsessively precise, but

1. Liv. 41.14–18.

ultimately rather mindless, ritual performances. An emphasis on ritual is of course understandable, given the primacy of ritual in the texts and other relics of Roman culture that survive. Yet even when ritual performances have been construed as rather more than mindless, when they have been seen, as over the past four decades or so, to have done cultural-ideological work by reflecting, reinforcing, and reifying social hierarchies and material relations, nonetheless the tendency has been to discount affective dimensions of cult and, most relevant to this book, to discount belief as central or even important to the Roman ritual tradition.

Nineteenth-century scholarship informed us that Roman religious beliefs, especially in comparison to Christian beliefs, were pretty unimpressive. Twentieth-century scholarship often said that the Romans did not have religious beliefs or even *belief* at all, a claim that was sometimes extended to the ancient Greeks. We were asked to accept, as I detail in chapter 1, that Romans had ritual *instead of* belief. On this "ritual thesis," through hundreds of years of their history, Romans like Petilius and Cornelius just *did stuff* because that was the stuff they were supposed to do. Roman religion was a matter of objective institutions that prescribed physical gestures. To look for emotion or cognition, especially belief, was to import "Christianizing" prejudices about what religion was supposed to be and to ignore the empirical realities of Roman practice.

This book joins other recent works of scholarship dedicated to offering an alternative to the outline just sketched. Specifically, beginning at around the turn of the century, we have seen the appearance of compelling defenses of Roman (and of ancient Greek) belief. Today, many books and articles on Roman (and Greek) religion happily talk about "belief" or "beliefs and practices." This is all to the good. However, this book arises out of the conviction that more is needed. We need to do more than merely go from not using the word "belief" to using it once again. This introduction exposes the overall shape of the book and provides the essential theoretical resources that readers will need in order to get the most out of the chapters that follow.

I shall argue in these chapters that Roman belief was crucial to just about everything in Livy's narrative and, more broadly, to just about everything that we might care to describe as "Roman religion." We should not, of course, look to Roman religion for a creed, of the sort that Christianities were to develop. Nor should we imagine that we shall find any Romans obsessing about orthodoxy, or "correct belief," nor that we shall find them construing belief as a requirement for salvation. However, none of this entails that the Romans did not have belief. Indeed, I make the case in chapter 1 that these obvious differences

between traditional Roman and later Christian religious cognition—differences that have led some historians to relativize belief itself to a particular time, place, and religious culture—owe not to Christians having belief and polytheists lacking it. Rather, both engaged in the kind of cognition we call believing, which is merely, at a first approximation, mentally representing how matters stand in the world. Where they differed was not in their human capacities for cognition but in their cultural traditions of *metacognition*, that is, their ways of thinking about their own thinking, including their belief. Christians, unlike polytheists, "believed in belief."[2] They believed that their own beliefs and indeed their own capacity to believe possessed a religious value. It is not that traditional Romans could not sometimes "believe in belief"; it is merely that they believed in it rather differently.

Belief may be, as noted, a matter of mentally representing how matters stand in the world. But there is plenty more to say about it, and chapter 2 is dedicated to gaining clarity on what exactly belief is. The discussion there prepares us to investigate, in the remaining chapters, the ways in which Roman belief, properly understood, was central to (1) emotions, such as the perturbation of Cornelius and the terror of Livy's senators; (2) action, such as the consuls' ritual acts; (3) norms, that is, the sort of rules—often unwritten and unspoken—that specified the gestures in the consuls' sacrificial performances, the terms of *litatio*, and the prescriptions for ritual failure and ritual error offered by the senate and the college of priests; (4) cooperation, as in the consuls' group acts of cult involving collaboration among various ritual specialists, the senate's collective deliberations over omens, and the communal celebration of the Feriae Latinae; and even (5) social reality, such as the sacral status of Jupiter's temple or the determinate and determinative religious powers of priests. For I shall defend the perhaps startling claim that the shared beliefs of the Romans played a central role in creating and sustaining all Roman socioreligious reality and all Roman socioreligious power.

Presumably, no one would deny that the Romans experienced emotions, undertook actions, adhered to and endorsed cultural norms, cooperated in collective cult, or inhabited a "world," a uniquely Roman socioreligious reality, made up of temples, priests, and rituals, all with distinctive social properties and powers. Yet if we do not understand the role that Roman belief played in causing, creating, and sustaining all these phenomena, then we have understood neither the phenomena nor indeed Roman belief. And if we do not understand these phenomena and the Roman beliefs that underlay, produced, and sustained them, then in an important sense we do not understand Roman cult.

2. Dennett 2006: 200ff.

This book thus seeks to understand pre-Christian Roman cult by way of understanding belief. Its core thesis is that Roman religious emotions, actions, rituals, norms, institutions, and socioreligious realities depended for their very existence on Roman beliefs. These features of Roman cult are thus unintelligible and inexplicable without reference to belief. Throughout the book, I try to show that this thesis holds not only from an etic or "outsider's/observer's" perspective, but also from an emic or "insider's/participant's" perspective.

The book consists of two parts: chapters 1 through 5 are theoretical, treating of the denial about belief that appears in the scholarship (chapter 1), belief as it is in fact (chapter 2), belief's role in emotion and action (chapter 3), belief and norms (chapters 3 and 4), collective belief (chapter 4), and belief's contribution to creating and sustaining socioreligious reality and power (chapter 5). Chapters 6 through 9 present case studies, treating of Lucretius's Roman theory of belief and cult (chapter 6), Roman children's acquisition of religious beliefs in ritual practice (chapter 7), belief in contexts of praying (chapter 8), and belief, power, and religious reality in the ritual of inauguration (chapter 9). An epilog concludes the book by looking at three ancient attempts to account for alien sacrifice. It asks what role the ancients assigned—and what role we should assign—to belief in attempts to explain the cult practices of other peoples. At stake in every one of these chapters is the fate of a commitment that has enjoyed wide acceptance and even now informs some scholarship on Roman and other ancient religions, to wit, the notion that in non-Christian religious traditions only ritual behavior, not belief, plays any essential role. We must overcome this venerable dichotomization between cognition and action, for it impoverishes our understanding of Roman belief and in so doing hollows out our conception of Roman cult practice.

0.2. From Roman Intuitions to Roman Institutions

This book offers an account of Roman belief and cult from intuitions to institutions. For present purposes, the intuitions in question will be Roman intuitions of divine agency, that is, an immediate *impression* rather than a reflectively arrived-at judgment about a more-than-human agent or that agent's handiwork. Later chapters explore intuition's role in the formation of Roman religious beliefs (chapter 2) and intuitions about ritual form and efficacy, that is, the impression that a given act of cult was successful (or not) and has created an effect (or not) in the religious world (chapter 9). All these types of intuitions are produced, as we shall see, by our faculties of social cognition.

Let us define at the outset "agent" and "intuition." An agent or, frequently in the literature but somewhat redundantly, intentional agent, is any entity

possessing agency, which is the capacity to *act*, or to move on purpose, in order to accomplish a goal, even if that goal is merely the action itself. As to intuition, about which we shall have more to say at section 2.6, we may note that the lexeme is ubiquitous in the cognitive science of religion (CSR), on which this book draws, and is subject to competing accounts.[3] Some cognitive scientists hold that intuition is the output of inferences that take place below the level of conscious accessibility.[4] Some philosophers, by contrast, offer an account of intuition as a noninferential process.[5]

We need not resolve such questions for our purposes in this book; however, we should note that the term "intuition" is ambiguous between process and product. One can speak of the cognitive process of intuition or of the cognitive products of the process, that is, intuitions. I shall endeavor to use the term in such a way as to make it clear whether I intend by it the process or its product. When I use "intuition" in the sense of "process," what I am referring to is the cognitive process that results in new thoughts (i.e., intuitions) carrying a degree of self-evidence that simply appear in consciousness, with no trace of any reasoning process that may have led to them, just as in perception certain features of the world simply become sensibly present. This definition implies the phenomenology of the cognitive product: "When we have an intuition, we experience it as something our mind produced but without having any experience of the process of its production."[6] Because of the immediacy with which intuition (process) puts intuitions (products) in our heads, we may think of the process as a kind of "intellectual perception"[7] that delivers, as product, cognitive "seemings." Some parallels and contrasts with perception are as follows: in "perception, the seeming is perceptual and the awareness sensory." (It perceptually *seems* that an object is in front of me and I am sensorily *aware* of the object.) In contrast, in "intuition, the seeming is intuitive and the awareness intellectual."[8] (It intuitively *seems* to me that gods are involved in this or that event, and my *awareness* of this proposition is mental, not sensory.)

Our faculties for social-cognitive intuition populate the world with (for this is social cognition's special domain) *agents*, not only visible and mundane, but also sometimes invisible and divine. Among such intuitions, the theological ones may settle, given the right support, into theological beliefs. In turn, out of intuitions and beliefs about more-than-human agents, religious institutions

3. On intuition in CSR, see Horst 2013. For philosophical accounts, see Pust 2019.

4. E.g., Mercier and Sperber 2017: 64–67.

5. E.g., Audi 2013: 83–96.

6. Mercier and Sperber 2017: 65.

7. Chudnoff 2013: 1 ("intellectual perception") and 41 ("seemings").

8. Chudnoff 2011: 641.

may arise. For as soon as intuition has settled into belief, people may engage with the believed divine agent, and those engagements may coalesce into a more or less determinate practice, and a discourse may develop around that practice, further elaborating or fixing it, and before long religious institutions—god-centered human constructs, such as ritual prescriptions, festivals, priesthoods, priestly functions, and so forth—may arise.

Or so a plausible causal story—aetiology with an "a"—might go. The Romans had their own ways of doing this sort of explanatory work. A case in point may be found in Vergil's narrative of Aeneas's visit to the future site of Jupiter's great temple on the Capitoline Hill, in what would one day be Rome. Aeneas, Rome's primordial founding figure, gets a guided tour of the future site of Rome from King Evander, a transplant to Italy from Greek Arcadia. Natives of the area, aboriginal Romans, as it were, had already apprehended something numinous on the Capitoline Hill (*Aen.* 8.349–50):

iam tum religio pavidos terrebat agrestis
dira loci, iam tum silvam saxumque tremebant.

Even then the forbidding sanctity of the place used to frighten
the timorous rustics, even then they trembled at its forest and rock.

If we ask what the early inhabitants *saw* on the Capitoline Hill that caused them such awe, Vergil's unsatisfying answer must be "forest and rock" (*silvam saxumque*). Their arousal, then, derived not from what they *saw* but from what they *intuited* beyond or within the trees and stones, to wit, *religio dira*, "forbidding sanctity." So I have translated it, but bear in mind that the word *religio* often denotes simply—and fittingly, if we are to see here the first stirrings of a distinctive, local *Roman* religion[9]—"cult."

This episode reflects the Roman world's repletion with gods. Apart from their images, they were only rarely seen with the eyes, but their presence was regularly felt or intuited in just this way. Certain places just *seemed* haunted by them. Reports of such intuitive rather than perceptual epiphanies—that is, divine manifestations—permeate Latin literature. Natural settings, especially groves, seem regularly to inspire them. For example, the first poem of Ovid's third book of love elegy, *Amores*, begins thus (*Am.* 3.1.1–4):

Stat vetus et multos incaedua silva per annos;
credibile est illi numen inesse loco.

A wood stands, ancient and unhewn through many years;
it is credible that a divine presence is in that grove.

9. So Hardie 1986: 217–18.

Ovid uses the adjective *credibile*, "credible," not to suggest a settled theological belief, still less a sensory perception of a god, but rather, something conducive to belief, a theological *seeming* or intuition.[10]

Seneca the Younger describes how such intuitions—cognitive seemings or intellectual perceptions—arise and pass quickly into belief. When you enter a grove (*lucus*), the right conditions—"the high growth of the woods" (*proceritas silvae*), "the solitude of the place" (*secretum loci*), and your own "wonder at the shade" interspersed with clearings—may combine to "produce for you a credence of a divine presence" (*fidem tibi numinis faciet*).[11] I translate Seneca's *fides* as "credence," by which I intend to capture what I take to be his meaning: a kind of intuitive sense of divine presence.

Belief may also be inspired not by a peaceful grove but by violent storms, as in our Vergilian passage, to which we now return. Aeneas's guide Evander continues his tour with these words (*Aen.* 8.351–54):

> *"hoc nemus, hunc" inquit "frondoso vertice collem*
> *(quis deus incertum est) habitat deus; Arcades ipsum*
> *credunt se vidisse Iovem, cum saepe nigrantem*
> *aegida concuteret dextra nimbosque cieret."*
>
> "This grove, this hill with its leafy crown, a god inhabits,
> though which god is uncertain," he said. "My Arcadians
> believe that they have seen Jupiter in person,
> when, as so often, he shakes his darkening aegis
> in his right hand and rouses the storm clouds."

A profound interplay among cognitive processes of perception, intuition, inference, and belief is at work here. The aboriginal natives were struck, recall, by their intuition of the *religio* of the place. Evander believes that a god, though he knows not which, abides there. His Arcadians have seen—something—on the hill's heights, and they have come to believe, perhaps through inference from the buffeting storms, that it was Jupiter himself.

What we have here amounts to an aetiology for the origin of religious belief, more specifically, of belief about the god of the Capitoline Hill, the religious center of the Roman world. Indeed, the passage adumbrates a three-stage aetiology: the rustic natives represent primitive intuition, the more civilized Evander, belief mixed with uncertainty (on which, see section 0.4), and his Arcadians, settled belief. These three cognitive responses represent not merely

10. See Hunt 2016: 185.

11. Sen. *Ep.* 41.3.

successive stages in the human response to the numinous, but enduring and coterminous possibilities of Roman religious experience as well.

So much for Roman discourses of intuition and belief. Distinctively Roman modes of explaining the origins of institutions existed as well. A typical move is to ascribe an institution to the action of a founder, who is often (semi)divine. Once numinous intuitions have passed into a belief in the presence of divine agents, it is no surprise if practices are evolved for making contact and negotiating with them. Thus, as we shall see in chapter 9, Romulus founded at once Rome and the Roman practice of augury when he and his brother Remus, standing on hills that neighbor the Capitoline, ritually consulted the local gods for approval of their plan to establish a city.[12] On one Roman theory, surveyed in chapter 7, such authoritative ritual performances may spread from individual to individual through imitation and eventually settle into practices—become institutions—through repetition, habit, and *consensus,* that is, collective agreement.

This book endeavors to rethink the role of cognition in Roman cult from numinous intuitions to cult institutions. Such intuitions arise from developmentally natural mental processes (see section 0.3 and chapter 2). Cult institutions depend on our species-specific skills of "shared Intentionality,"[13] our capacity to share such mental states as intentions, desires, and beliefs (see chapter 4). We explore relationships among (in various combinations) intuition, inference, epiphany, and belief in chapters 2, 6, and 8. In chapter 6, we reconstruct a Roman aetiology of cult institutions. Chapters 5 and 9 apply to the case of cult a modern theory about the role played by collective belief—a form of shared Intentionality—in the ontology of institutions.

For now, it remains to introduce, in the next section, some theses about human social cognition and its relevance to theological belief that are central to this book. In the section after that, we do the same for the theory of Intentionality. Theories about our developmentally natural ways of cognizing other agents as well as the picture of belief offered by the theory of Intentionality underlie every chapter in this book.

0.3. HADD and Social Cognition

Belief really has only five possible etiologies (without the "a": "causal origin"), which may work their effects alone or in combination. These are: sensory perception, memory, testimony, inference, and intuition. This book touches on

12. See Liv. 1.6.4.

13. Tomasello, Carpenter, et al. 2005.

all but memory.[14] Chapter 6 explores how (apparent) sensory perceptions may lead to religious belief, as they did in the cases of Livy's Cornelius and Vergil's Arcadians. The latter, recall, saw something that they took to be Jupiter, while the former needed to see his ox's dissolved liver for himself in order to accept the omen. "Testimony" I construe broadly to include any cultural representation of the divine. This includes the reports of Livy's consuls to the senate and ranges from explicit pedagogy (chapter 7) to prayer (chapter 8). Intuition, such as the numinous intuitions of Vergil's aboriginal Romans, as well as processes of theological inference are dealt with in chapters 2, 6, and 9. It will be useful, now, to say some introductory words about the intuitions that derive from our faculties of *social cognition*.[15] For we return repeatedly in these chapters to social cognition and the intuitions it delivers.

This book operates on the premise that social cognition and social-cognitive intuitions contribute to theological belief and cult practice. Social cognition may be defined, for our purposes, as the suite of developmentally natural, species-specific human cognitive faculties that give rise to intuitions of *agency*, intuitions about the mental states of *agents*, and intuitions about how agents' mental states inform their *action*.[16] It is, in a sense, the human skillset for seeing conspecifics as "Others" (in Levinas's sense) with whom the Self may engage and interact. Precisely because it populates the world with agents, social cognition is central—according to the interdisciplinary field of CSR—to the generation and maintenance of theological beliefs and ritual practices for engaging with gods.[17]

14. For which, see, e.g., Cusumano et al. 2013.

15. For a full but concise discussion of social cognition, see Frith and Frith 2012. I am concerned in this section primarily with the social-cognitive faculty that is often called "folk psychology." For present purposes, we need take no position on whether folk psychology is a "Theory of Mind Module" (Leslie 1994), an "Intentional stance" (Dennett 1987), a "simulation" (Goldman 2006), an "embodied simulation" (Gallese and Sinigaglia 2011), "narrative practice" (Hutto 2008), or "direct perception" (Gallagher 2008a).

16. For cross-cultural evidence regarding the core faculties of social cognition, see especially the analysis of the components of social cognition and an assessment of their universality in Malle 2008; For cross-cultural testing of basic social-cognitive capacities, see, e.g., Callaghan, Rochat, et al. 2005; Callaghan, Moll, et al. 2011; Shahaeian et al. 2011. Given basic social-cognitive capacities, nothing prevents and everything conduces to the elaboration of local folk-models of mind: for a Roman one, see Short 2012.

17. See now Larson 2016 for a CSR approach to Greek religion and an expert overview of the CSR field.

A core, and no doubt primitive, task of social cognition is to help us distinguish animate agents from inanimate objects. Cicero conceptualizes the distinction (*Rep*. 6.28):

> *inanimum est enim omne, quod pulsu agitatur externo; quod autem est animal, id motu cietur interno et suo*.
>
> *Inanimate* is anything that is moved by external force; *animate* is anything that is driven by an internal impulse of its own.

Inanimate nonagents move only with the application of external force, while animate agents move on their own, as a result of internal forces. These, for Cicero, come from the mind or soul, *anima* (hence "animate"), whose "property and power," *natura et vis*, it is to move bodies. An agent is thus any animate, minded entity capable of purposefully *acting*.

This distinction comes naturally to the neurotypical mind.[18] That is, neurotypical social cognition automatically distinguishes agents from nonagents. Social cognition also provides us with a set of pretheoretical, intuitive expectations about different entity types.[19] Even young infants intuitively expect inanimate objects to be bounded, solid, and impenetrable by other objects, to fall downward if not supported, to move continuously along inertial paths rather than to jump from place to place, and to require outside physical contact in order to get moving in the first place, among various other properties.[20] By contrast, even infants expect that animate entities and especially human agents initiate their own movement, which is not restricted to inertial paths, and that their movement is purposeful or teleological, that is, that their movement is *action* that is directed toward a *goal*.[21] Infants also expect agents to interact with one another and to exert not merely contact causation, but also

18. Neuro-atypical development and neuropathology may affect cognition about animacy and agency. Autism reduces detection of animacy (Congiu et al. 2009) and of agency or biological motion (Blake et al. 2003). Frontotemporal dementia also reduces detection of both (Fong et al. 2017).

19. For brief summaries of research into several "core systems" or domains of "core knowledge," about objects, agents, number, the layout of space, and so forth, see, respectively, Kinzler and Spelke 2007 and Spelke and Kinzler 2007. For "core social cognition," see Spelke, Bernier, and Skerry 2013. Cf. Barrett 2011a: 58–68 for developmentally natural cognition regarding objects, space, biological entities, and so on.

20. See Baillargeon 2004 for a succinct account and Baillargeon, Gertner, and Wu 2011 for a more expansive account of children's understanding of objects and object events.

21. On animacy and especially human agency, see Carpenter 2011; Meltzoff 2011a; Opfer and Gelman 2011.

causation-at-a-distance, or "social causation," on one another, through gestures and vocalizations.[22]

Social cognition inclines us to intuit agency, and to construe objects and events in agentive terms, on the basis even of exiguous cues.[23] Cognitive science of religion researchers speak of the mind's "Hypersensitive Agency Detection Device" (HADD), a "mental tool" (to use a figurative expression often found in CSR) that attributes, and is prone to overattribute, agency.[24] This mental tool, HADD, delivers intuitions of the presence, sometimes in their actual absence, of agents. To be clear: our social-cognitive faculties need stimuli to produce intuitions of agency, but it would be wrong to say that it is the *behavior* of agents that produces intuitions of agency. Rather, the *agent* and its *behavior* are themselves intuitions produced for us by our social-cognitive faculties in response to stimuli. Agency and behavior are not simply "given" in any sensory percept but must rather be interpreted in.[25] A sensitivity to agency has clear advantages, even if it may yield "false positives." As Simon Baron-Cohen notes, "in evolutionary terms, it is better to spot a potential agent . . . than to ignore it."[26] Obliviousness to agents is death. Overidentification of agents is, in most cases, a modest inconvenience. In other cases, it may play a role in the etiology of theological belief.

The workings of HADD and its relevance to theological belief may perhaps be discerned in some verses of the republican satirist Lucilius and in Lactantius's commentary on them. The Christian polemicist attacks what he regards as the superstitious adherents of traditional Roman cult by quoting the poet, prefacing his quotation with the words, "in the following verses, Lucilius scoffs at the stupidity of those who suppose that cult images are gods":[27]

ut pueri infantes credunt signa omnia aena
vivere et esse homines, sic isti somnia ficta
vera putant, credunt signis cor inesse in aenis.

22. See Schlottmann and Surian 1999; Rochat et al. 2004; Schlottmann et al. 2009.

23. Heider and Simmel 1944, in "An Experimental Study of Apparent Behavior," initiated the empirical study of this cognitive phenomenon. Michotte 1963 details further such experiments. See Scholl and Tremoulet 2000 for an overview of research in this field. Cf. the experiment reported in Barrett and Johnson 2003.

24. HADD was coined in Barrett 2000. For updates on HADD research, see Andersen 2019 and Van Leeuwen and van Elk 2019.

25. I hope it is obvious that I am not asserting that agents and their behavior do not exist apart from our cognizing of them. Of course they do.

26. Baron-Cohen 1995: 35.

27. Lact. *Inst.* 1.22.13: *nam Lucilius eorum stultitiam, qui simulacra deos putant esse, deridet his versibus*. The verses quoted are Lucil. 15.526–28.

> Just as infant children believe all bronze statues live and are human beings,
> so those [i.e., the superstitious] suppose that imagined dreams are true, they believe that a heart lies within bronze statues.

For Lactantius, the adults are in a sorrier state than the children, "for the children suppose statues are people, but the adults suppose they are gods."[28]

Lucilius's verses and Lactantius's discussion provide a testament to HADD's power to inspire religious belief by generating intuitions of animacy and agency. Researchers usually discuss HADD in relation to motion, which HADD may interpret as the goal-directed behavior of an agent, but we must recognize that the mere "visual form" of a statue may "trigger agency-intuitions" as well.[29] When Lucilius's children encounter statues, they believe (*credunt*) them to be alive (*vivere*) and human (*esse homines*). Certainly no one *teaches* them this, nor do they appear, on Lucilius's account, to work through a process of *inference* to get to it. The mind's Hypersensitive Agency Detection Device causes them simply to *intuit* it: the statues just *seem*, immediately and self-evidently, to be living people. In their innocent minds, these intuitions—agential seemings—easily settle into beliefs that the statues are agents.

Roman adults, too, could experience such agential intuitions in their encounters with naturalistic representations, as suggested by the common observation that statues seem to breathe, *spirantia signa*, or live.[30] However, whereas most Roman adults knew that some intuitions of animacy were not to be trusted, and therefore declined to *believe* that statues were alive, Lucilius's credulous man follows his intuitions and comes to believe that the statue contains a living heart (*credunt signis cor inesse in aenis*). Lactantius extends this class of people to include superstitious pagans "who suppose that cult images are gods" (*qui simulacra deos putant esse*). Notice how both Lucilius and Lactantius, though separated by centuries and by religious culture, agree in taking it for granted that their contemporaries could believe that statues were gods. Presumably, HADD's intuitions of agency played a role in conducing to such

28. Lact. *Inst*. 1.22.14: *illi enim simulacra homines putant esse, hi deos*.

29. Van Leeuwen and van Elk 2019: 241.

30. Verg. *G*. 3.34. Cf. Verg. *Aen*. 6.847–48: *spirantia . . . aera*; *vivos . . . de marmore vultus*; Apul. *Met*., 11.17: *simulacra spirantia*; Plin. *Ep*. 3.6.2: *etiam ut spirantis*; Petr. *Sat*. 52.1 sends up the trope: *pueri mortui iacent sic ut vivere putes*; cf. Ov. *Met*. 10.250–51: *virginis est verae facies, quam vivere credas, et, si non obstet reverentia, velle moveri*. Plin. *H.N*. 35.95 notes that even animals can be fooled, as by a picture of Apelles: *picturas inductis equis ostendit: Apellis tantum equo adhinnivere, idque et postea semper evenit*.

beliefs. (We explore some further implications of Lactantius's response to Lucilius's verses at section 2.6.2.)

Our agent-sensitive minds may even lead us to *treat* as agents objects that we could not possibly *believe* to be agents. Augustine notes, for example, that people may become angry at inanimate objects (*rebus inanimis irascatur*), such as a malfunctioning pen, and smash it as if exacting vengeance on an agent who has wronged them.[31] Augustine's smasher of pens surely does not *believe* that this object of wrath is a malicious agent. However, as this example suggests, we need neither naturalistic representations, such as bronze statues, nor any other agency cue, such as self-propelled motion, in order to invest an inanimate object with agency and treat it accordingly.

If HADD's intuitions that an agent (or for that matter, the handiwork of an agent, i.e., an artifact) is present are not dismissed as false positives, other social-cognitive resources, especially "folk psychology" (roughly equivalent to "Theory of Mind" or "ToM" and sometimes also called "mindreading"),[32] kick in to tell us what might be going on in the agent's head, so that we can both predict and explain the agent's behavior. Theory of Mind is a set of social-cognitive skills that permits us both implicit and explicit reasoning about others' emotions, desires, goals, intentions, and beliefs. It permits us to see others' behavior as teleological, spontaneously generating for us (quite fallible) understandings about the *desires* and *intentions* on which they are acting, about the *goals* they are pursuing, and about the *sensory perceptions* and *beliefs* about the world that are guiding them. It allows us to see bodily gestures as "trying," "avoiding," "chasing," "hesitating," and so on.

Romans had their own ways of talking about all of this, of course. When theorizing about matters philosophical or rhetorical, for example, they could remark on the intersubjective transparency of one person's psychological states to another. Take, for example, two texts of Cicero, one from *De legibus* and the other from *De oratore*:[33]

31. Aug. *Civ*. 14.15: *nam et ipsam iram nihil aliud esse quam ulciscendi libidinem veteres definierunt; quamvis nonnumquam homo, ubi vindictae nullus est sensus, etiam rebus inanimis irascatur, et male scribentem stilum conlidat vel calamum frangat iratus*. Cf. Sen. *Ira*. 2.26.2–3 for anger at books and clothing.

32. The term "mindreading" as used in the psychological literature usually refers in the first place to our indispensable social-cognitive *faculty* of intuiting, inferring, and reasoning about others' mental states, not to the cognitive *distortion* of making unfounded assumptions about others' thinking.

33. Cf. Cic. *De Or*. 3.221: *imago animi vultus, indices oculi: nam haec est una pars corporis, quae, quot animi motus sunt, tot significationes et commutationes possit efficere*. Cf., e.g., *De Or*. 3.222; Cic. *Pis*. 1.1.

> *Leg*. 1.26–27: *speciem ita* [sc. *natura*] *formavit oris, ut in ea penitus reconditos mores effingeret.* [27] *nam et oculi nimis argute quem ad modum animo affecti simus loquuntur et is qui appellatur vultus, qui nullo in animante esse praeter hominem potest, indicat mores.*
>
> Nature has so shaped the appearance of the face that it has portrayed on it the character hidden deep inside. [27] For the eyes tell all too clearly how we have been affected in our mind, and that which is called the expression, which can exist in no living thing except the human being, reveals our character.
>
> *De Or*. 3.223: *isdem enim omnium animi motibus concitantur et eos isdem notis et in aliis agnoscunt et in se ipsi indicant.*
>
> The minds of all people are excited by the same emotions and people recognize these emotions by the same signs in others as they reveal them in themselves.

For Cicero, human beings are united by and made intelligible to one another, even without a common language, by deep cognitive, affective, expressive, and bodily commonalities.[34] He proposes that we perceive in the eyes and the expression of others what is going on in their minds as well as the nature of their *mores,* or character.[35]

Quintilian extends the Ciceronian analysis to include the expression of emotion in animals: animals' minds "are grasped through their eyes and through certain other signals of the body" (*oculis et quibusdam aliis corporis signis*). Thus, although they lack language, the anger, joy, and other dispositions of beasts are apparent to us.[36] We see in Quintilian's thesis social cognition at work. For he sees even animals as minded agents, not wholly unlike ourselves, with affective and cognitive episodes similar to our own.

Needless to say, if the Romans could extend their social-cognitive intuitions to animals, they could extend them to gods. For this reason, we return to social cognition throughout these chapters and address its ontogeny (i.e., its

34. Cf. Fantham 2004: 296. See Fögen 2009b on the universal language of gesture, *vultus*, and nonverbal vocalization in Roman thought.

35. Paul Ekman has famously posited and tested for a few "basic" emotions (1999a) that are universally recognized in facial expressions (1999b). On cross-cultural continuity in emotion recognition, see also Scherer et al. 2011.

36. Quint. *Inst*. 11.3.66: *quippe non manus solum sed nutus etiam declarant nostram voluntatem, et in mutis pro sermone sunt, et saltatio frequenter sine voce intellegitur atque adficit, et ex vultu ingressuque perspicitur habitus animorum, et animalium quoque sermone carentium ira, laetitia, adulatio et oculis et quibusdam aliis corporis signis deprenditur.*

development and maturation) in chapter 7, where we discuss the contributions of Roman children's maturing powers of social cognition to their religious learning. For now, it is worth mentioning one cognitive milestone: false belief understanding. By age four or five, children begin to manifest full-blown ToM.[37] At age three, children understand and use only desire-talk, attributing wants and desires to others and recognizing that these wants and desires affect their behavior. However, a year or so later, children begin to "theorize" about the beliefs of others. Under the age of four or five, children do not understand that if mom did not see dad remove the milk from the fridge, she should believe—wrongly—that it is still there. At this young age, children mistakenly assume that mom's beliefs track the same reality to which they themselves have perceptual access. To grasp that mom can have false beliefs due to her limited perceptual access to relevant information is a cognitive achievement of the kindergarten year.

Social cognition begins, then, in cognition *about* other agents, about mom, for example, and her desires and (possibly false) beliefs.[38] But social cognition also has a collective dimension, to wit, cognition *with* other agents.[39] Cognition *with* others enables us to share mental episodes—attention, perception, desires, emotions, intentions, goals, and beliefs—with others in mutual recognition that we are so sharing, and even that a plural subject "we"—not just individuals, an "I" and a "you"—is the collective bearer of the mental episode. Chapters 4, 5, and 7 show how this capacity for cognitive sharing—shared Intentionality—allowed Romans to collaborate in joint activities, engage in cultural learning, and thus create and maintain their social reality, that is, the unique world of cult practices, priests, institutions, and associated socioreligious powers and obligations that they inhabited.

Let us now sum this section up. The connection between social cognition and Roman religion is this. The faculty of HADD tuned ancient minds, as it does our own, in favor of believing that agents are or have been present, at work in the world around us. And ToM made it possible for Romans to conceive of, hold beliefs about, reason about, and communicate about the workings of the minds of gods. To be clear: HADD's intuitive sensitivity to agency and ToM's intuitive expectations about agents are not themselves beliefs, but

37. The term "Theory of Mind" (ToM) was coined by the psychologists D. Premack and G. Woodruff (1978). See Wellman 2014 for a comprehensive treatment of ToM. See Barrett 2011a: 74–77 for a brief discussion of ToM from a CSR perspective. For a history of ToM research, see Boden 2006: 1.486–92. Cross-cultural studies of ToM include, for Chinese children, Tardif and Wellman 2000; Wellman et al. 2006; D. Liu et al. 2008; for Iranian children, Shahaeian et al. 2011; for Micronesian children, Oberle 2009.

38. Carpenter 2011: 106–10.

39. Carpenter 2011: 106, 110–17; Tomasello, Carpenter et al. 2005.

they lead to intuitions about agents that can in turn lead to beliefs. Because social cognition predisposes the mind to see agency everywhere and to interpret even nonagential phenomena in agential terms, it is an anthropomorphizing cognitive faculty. This predicts that gods across cultures will be represented as agents—more-than-human agents, but agents nonetheless—and thus as deeply anthropomorphic where it really counts: in their psychologies.

Thus, the Romans reasoned about gods much as they reasoned about one other, that is, as psychologically anthropomorphic agents intelligible by means of the mundane mental tools in the social-cognitive toolbox. As two cognitive scientists have stated, human beings' "intuitive assumptions about the psychology of agents purchase them vast amounts of knowledge about [gods] for free."[40] When this intuitive knowledge about divine agents is coupled with cultural representations of divine beings, the result is what I shall call in chapters 2 and 8 (and throughout) "folk theology."[41] Folk theology differs from the abstruse doctrinal theology of Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* or even of Cicero's *De natura deorum* in that it is a matter not of formal study and disciplined philosophical reflection but of the interaction of informal social learning and social-cognitive intuition.

In this section and previous sections, we have spoken about beliefs—about acquiring them, having them, and attributing them to others—and also about mental episodes such as perceptions, intuitions, desires, intentions, and emotions. All these mental phenomena share a single property, called "Intentionality," which relates them to one another systematically. I would maintain that it is innocence of belief's place in the economy of the mental, as one Intentional state among others, with its own discrete and indispensable cognitive task to perform, that has allowed some scholars to suppose it to be a modular, detachable, optional, or historically contingent feature, to be denied or attributed to this or that culture, society, or epoch at will. So, let us now introduce this other central theoretical commitment of this book, to wit, the theory of Intentionality.

0.4. Intentionality and Belief

Cognition is famously embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended (hence "4E cognition").[42] On the 4E account, the mind and its cognitive processes do not reside in the brain alone. Instead, cognition is *extended* insofar as at least

40. McCauley and Lawson 2007: 227.

41. I borrow the term from Barrett 2004a: 10.

42. For a handy overview of 4E cognition (which is sometimes a synonym for and at other times distinct from both "situated cognition" and "distributed cognition"), especially in its relevance to humanistic study and classics in particular, see Anderson, Cairns, and Sprevak 2019.

some cognitive processes include manipulations the cognizer performs on features of the environment. It is *enacted* insofar as some cognitive processes are constituted by causal couplings or actional transactions between a cognizer and its environment. It is *embedded* insofar as some cognitive processes depend for their occurrence on scaffolding to be found out in the world, external to the cognizer. And it is *embodied* insofar as cognitive processes include some of the cognizer's own nonneural bodily operations.

The excitement justly generated by 4E cognitive theory should not obscure the fact that cognition is also *Intentional*. *Intentionalism* is the thesis that a defining feature of mind is *Intentionality*, which is the property of being *about* or *directed at* objects in the world.[43] That is, unlike anything else in nature, the mind's episodes and states—its fears, sorrows, hopes, desires, intentions, beliefs—*represent* the world and its objects. If I believe that Jupiter is the god of the Capitoline, I bear a mental state that is *about* Jupiter, a mental state that takes Jupiter as its object. My belief *represents* its object in a certain way, from a perspective, in this case, as god of the Capitoline. This perspectival representation constitutes my belief's *content*.

No book can do it all. Here, I largely leave out of consideration 4E approaches, which I take not so much to replace as to supplement Intentionalism.[44] I focus on Intentionalism in the conviction that it provides the strongest theoretical grip on the question of belief, for if belief is anything at all, it is an Intentional state.[45] (It is impossible to imagine a belief that is not *about* anything!) Moreover, it strikes me that only Intentionalism can fully account for cognition about non-existent objects, such as gods. To think and talk about gods—to believe or assert, for instance, that Jupiter is the god of the Capitoline—one has to be able to think and talk about an object that is a feature of *no* environment. This is not to say that Roman religion and Roman religious cognition were not deeply embodied, embedded, enacted, and

43. Crane 2001a: 4–8. See Searle 1983a: 1–4.

44. Cf. Andy Clark 2016: 291–94. Hutto and Myin 2017 represents a radical enactive attempt to see how far one can get with content-free "basic minds" before one must introduce the notion of content.

45. One cannot be all things to all people. I also do not offer a diachronic account of religious change at Rome or a history of republican religion (see now Rüpke 2012), or any account of the interactions of religious and other institutions in a given period, for example, divination and politics at the end of the republic (Santangelo 2013), or an account of religious individualization (Rüpke 2019). What I try to do is offer a way to think productively about belief, and Intentionality more generally, in Roman religion. The framework I offer here is meant to complement other cognitive (such as 4E), theoretical, and indeed straightforward historical accounts of Roman religion.

extended in natural and artificial environments of groves, gardens, street corners, temples, and households that were replete with statues, images, sights, sounds, smells, and activity. It is simply that this is not the subject of this book. This book deals with Intentionality: belief, its objects, their representation, and the implications of these things for Roman cult.

In order to avoid confusion, it will be crucial to distinguish the everyday and narrower sense of intentionality from the technical but broader sense. The term "intentional" and related lexemes are ambiguous between the *aboutness* I have described and *purposiveness*. In everyday usage, we speak of *intentions* to act (that is, plans) or actions done *intentionally* (on purpose). However, to say that cognition is Intentional is *not* to say that it is *purposeful*, though of course it may be that, too. I use "Intentionality," with an uppercase *I*, to refer not to purposiveness but to that property of a mental episode, and indeed of a speech act or public representation, by virtue of which it is *about*, *of*, *directed at*, or *represents* some object. Both intentions and even actions are Intentional in this sense (see chapters 2 and 3). Plans to act, that is, intentions, are a class of Intentional mental phenomena. To say that our intentions are Intentional is to say that they share with our beliefs, desires, hopes, fears, and other mental episodes the property of being *representational*, of being *about* their objects. Beliefs, for example, represent as their objects states of affairs in the world, while intentions represent as their objects our action *plans* and *goals* in acting. For clarity, I capitalize the first letter of "Intentionality" and related terms when I refer to Intentionality in this broader, technical sense.[46] I shall put the first letter of all terms related to "intention," as in "a plan to act," in lowercase.

The term "mental episode" introduces another terminological matter to clear up. By "mental episodes," I mean to capture properly "episodic" mental phenomena, such as *emotions*, which arise and tail off, as well as mental *events*, like the sudden appearance to consciousness of an intuition, mental *acts*, like adding up two numbers in one's head, and, finally, mental *states*, like beliefs and desires, which may perdure indefinitely. All such episodes are Intentional.

Intentionality (uppercase *I*) was of theoretical interest to ancient philosophers, on whose work the modern study of Intentionality is founded.[47] Franz Brentano is credited with initiating the modern study of Intentionality in the

46. I also capitalize the "I" in *Intentionality* and related terms when those terms appear in my quotations from other authors.

47. For Intentionality from Aristotle to Brentano, see Sorabji 1991. For ancient philosophy of Intentionality, see Sorabji 1992; V. Caston 1993, 1998, 2002, and 2008; essays in Perler 2001, especially V. Caston 2001. See Crane 2001a: 8–13 for a very brief history of research on Intentionality.

late nineteenth century. Inspired by Aristotle and the Scholastics, he posited that Intentionality was the "mark of the mental," the feature that distinguished mind from everything else in nature. He famously wrote (1874: 68):

> Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the Intentional (or mental) inexistence[48] of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.

Mental phenomena differ from physical phenomena in that they *contain*—or as we have already put it, they are *about* or *directed on*—objects: "in presentation something is presented . . . in desire desired." Brentano thought *all* mental phenomena and *only* mental phenomena were Intentional. Intentionality, on this view, defines the mental—everything that exhibits Intentionality is mental—and thus gives the science of psychology its own discrete object of study. We need not decide whether Brentano was right in order to accept that at least some mental phenomena, such as belief, clearly are Intentional.

From the standpoint of Intentionality, mental phenomena fall into clear classes. I have already distinguished a variety of mental episodes: emotions, mental events, mental acts, and mental states, like belief. Further distinctions are possible. Belief, for example, is a member of a class of Intentional states sometimes called "representational," "theoretical," "cognitive," or "doxastic," which is the term I use in this book. Such states aim to represent the way the world *is*. They may be positive, such as *belief*, *knowledge*, *conjecture*, *assumption*, *presupposition*, and *acceptance*, all of which represent how matters stand. They may be negative, such as *doubt*, *denial*, *rejection*, and *disbelief*, all of which represent how matters do *not* stand. And they may be neutral, as in the case of *uncertainty*.[49] These Intentional states are "doxastic" because they seek to represent, fit, match, or be adequate to matters as they stand, to the world as it is. Thus, one can believe, accept, reject, doubt, or be uncertain *that* some state of affairs obtains.

48. Brentano 1874 wrote not of "nonexistence" but of "*Inexistenz*," that is, "existence-in," which means that a mental state or episode contains within itself an object, which "exists-in" it.

49. See Mulligan 2013.

Permit me here a brief aside. If knowledge, like belief, is a doxastic state, why not just speak of religious "knowledge"?[50] I have several reasons to prefer "belief." First, knowledge is a kind of belief. For, according to a definition that goes back to Plato's *Theaetetus*, knowledge is a belief (a) that is true and (b) that the believer can justify with an account. Thus, if one knows something, one believes it, but if one believes something, one does not necessarily know it.[51] So, belief is the higher-order category: it is, in fact, "the *generic*, least-marked term for a *cognitive* [i.e., doxastic] state."[52] For this reason, knowledge does not appear to offer an especially useful alternative to belief.

Now, it may be that "knowledge" has greater emic resonance in some contexts than "belief." After all, Cicero could speak of *scientia colendorum deorum*, "knowledge of how to worship the gods" (*N.D.* 1.116). However, this fact does not delegitimize the use of "belief" as an etic term. As Henk Versnel reminds us, "Scholarly discourse is always etic and should therefore be conducted in etic terms."[53] Moreover, "knowledge" is not even the appropriate emic term in every context. The same Cicero that spoke of *scientia*, could also speak of adhering to the "beliefs" about the gods, the *opiniones*, of the ancestors (*N.D.* 3.5). And his contemporary, the scholar of Roman tradition Marcus Terentius Varro, theorized—or so Augustine tells us—the difference between divine and merely human cognition thus: "it is characteristic of man to believe, of god to know" (*hominis est enim haec opinari, dei scire*; *Civ.* 7.17).

Indeed, the Romans could even institutionalize *not* knowing. Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights* records an example. In centuries past, he writes, when an earthquake had occurred, the Romans used to dedicate a festival to the god that had caused it. Yet they declined to name the god to whom the festival was dedicated, in pious recognition of their ignorance of which one it was. Gellius reports on a finding of Varro's research into Roman cult traditions. If pressed to identify the deity, they eschewed names, substituting instead a formula that encoded lack of religious knowledge: the rituals were dedicated "to the god or goddess," *si deo si deae* (*N.A.* 2.28.2–3).[54] These early Romans *believed* gods caused earthquakes, but they did not *know* which gods, and they institutionalized their belief-cum-ignorance in the resulting cult tradition. In light of such

50. With Ando 2008, and Rüpke 2016: 44.

51. See Saler 2001: 50.

52. Dennett 1998: 324, emphasis in the original, cited by Saler 2001: 57, in an excellent defense of "belief" in the study of religion.

53. Versnel 2011: 548.

54. On the ancient formula *si*(*ve*) *deus si*(*ve*) *dea*, "whether god or goddess" for invoking an unknown god, see Alvar 1985.

examples and arguments, this book constitutes a defense of belief's legitimacy as a category of both etic and emic validity.

So much for knowledge and its place among doxastic mental states. Representing states of affairs in the world is but one property of the mind. A complementary property is to represent it as we would that it were. Thus, in addition to the doxastic we have what I shall call *practical* mental states. These are often denoted by other terms, like "motivational," "volitive," and "conative." The practical class includes desires, which represent how we wish the world were, and intentions, which represent our goals, that is, how we would like to cause the world to be, and our plans of action for achieving them. Note that practical states, just like doxastic states, are representational, which is just to say, *Intentional*. However, while doxastic states seek to represent the way the world is, practical states represent the world as we would have it be or plan to make it.

These distinctions will be important when we explore the Intentionality of beliefs, desires, and intentions in chapter 2, of emotions and actions in chapter 3, and of collective cognition and collective action in chapter 4. Most broadly, I hope to convey a holistic conception of the mental. For belief must be understood in its cognitive context, where the doxastic and the practical components of mind have their proper place and relationships. For without practical mental episodes, we could not picture our interventions in the world. But without doxastic episodes, we could not picture a world in which to intervene. If the Romans had had no belief, they could hardly have represented the world as a religious space in which to act. In chapter 1, we trace two scholarly positions: first, that the Romans had belief but that it was not central to their religious life and, second, that the Romans did not even have the capacity for belief. I hope that the holistic Intentionalist understanding of belief presented in this book will persuade those in each camp both that the Romans *did* have the capacity for belief and that this central doxastic mental state *did* occupy a central place in Roman cult.

I situate my Intentionalist account of belief in Roman cult within broader cognitive science and philosophy research contexts, not only CSR and developmental psychology, which we have already touched on,[55] but also speech act theory, shared (or collective) intentionality, and social ontology. These latter three intimately interconnected theoretical programs take Intentionalism for granted. Thus, this is a theoretical book. If you dislike theory, this book may not please you. Yet I do not do theory for theory's sake here. Rather, I attempt to offer a clear application of theory to problems posed by Roman cult in the hope of inspiring new ways of thinking about this or any religion. And

55. For Roman "developmental psychologies," see Mackey 2019.

I should say up front: I present everything here in the spirit not of planting a flag to defend to the death but rather in a spirit of science, that is, of openness to better arguments and new evidence. Moreover, I do not pretend to have teased out every or even the most important implications for the study of Roman religion of the various theories that I have presented and employed here. Thus, I intend this book as a contribution to conversation rather than its closure.

The task before us is no small one. We must analyze what it means to believe; how having religious emotions derives from having religious beliefs; how belief guides individual action; and how the capacity, possessed by individuals, for sharing beliefs and other cognitive episodes collectively with others—shared Intentionality—enabled the performance of group cult acts. Finally, we shall have to investigate how it was that shared Intentionality, and especially shared belief, created and maintained Roman socioreligious reality and socioreligious power. For shared Intentionality and shared belief allowed the Romans to live in not only a natural world of earth, water, sky, flora, and other living things, but also a sociocultural world of religious institutions, festivals, cult practices, priestly statuses, and all the very real, very consequential coercive social norms and causal social powers that attended these things. The task is not small, but if we succeed, we shall have rethought Roman belief and cult, from intuitions to institutions.

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