Goetschel’s thought is saturated with postcolonial thinking. He speaks of Jewish thought as relating to general philosophy in a subaltern manner (43; 116) and refuses from the very beginning to offer a grand narrative, instead opting to maintain the particularity of moments of thought. Chapter 10 is exemplary in this regard. It provides a close and enlightening reading of Mendelssohn’s political theory as part of a discourse on colonization and emancipation in Germany. There is an apparent interesting trajectory here between Jewish and postcolonial thought, but unfortunately it is not developed. Goetschel, while hinting at this exciting possibility with his terminology, does not clarify his alliance with—or divergence from—postcolonial thought and thereby misses what seems to be a very exciting and productive venture to explore.

This is not an easy text to read and some of the nuances in the book require effort from the reader before their full implication can be deduced. Yet it is worth the while, for The Discipline of Philosophy and the Invention of Modern Jewish Thought is a thought provoking work that problematizes the foundations of Jewish thought, and of philosophy itself.

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In her introduction, Rowena Robinson asserts that minority or ethnic studies is not an established field of study in India the way it is in other parts of the world. She attributes this gap in scholarship to a view by historic Indian leadership of religion as detrimental to the masses, and as an oppositional tactic to colonial endeavours, which used religion as a mode of division. As a term, “minority studies” is a creation of the western academy referring primarily to a homogenous ethnic “other.” As such, this term is useless in the predominantly homo-ethnic landscape of India.

Robinson’s robust introductory chapter lays out foundational knowledge for the trajectory of “minority studies,” as well as the current state of minorities—both religious and otherwise—in India today. Through this, Robinson lays out insightful reasoning for why “minority” as a term has difficulty existing in the Indian context, despite numerous historic attempts to address the status of minorities in India. Robinson’s assertion that any investigation of “minority studies”—particularly in India—needs to be interdisciplinary, is certainly reflected in the breadth and depth of the dozen papers included in this volume.

Though each chapter is a stand-alone piece of writing—each exploring its own set

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1 This point is reiterated particularly well by Clara A. Joseph in her essay on the identity constructions of Syro-Malabar Christians in the diaspora. She argues that countries in the West, to which a significant population of Indian Christian immigrants have migrated, utilize the term “multiculturalism” as a catchphrase indicating a respect for differences, “where ‘difference’ stands for a strictly homogeneous ‘racial’ other.” Instead of allowing emic constructions of difference to identify members of the South Asian diaspora, these immigrant communities in the West are invariably classified under the “convenient rubric” of country of origin, instead of religio-cultural identity. Clara A. Joseph, “Rethinking Hybridity: The Syro-Malabar Church in North America,” in South Asians in the Diaspora: Histories and Religious Traditions, eds. K.A. Jacobsen and P.P. Kumar (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
of “minority” issues—the chapters seem to be grouped thematically. The first three chapters, for instance, deal with the categorization of “minority” as an over-arching Indian issue. Herein, Michael Seymour’s “India and the Concept of a Multinational Federation” explores the legal provisions afforded to Indian minorities, and where these provisions lie in relation to a broader comparative framework. Rina Verma Williams’s “Making Minority Identities: Gender State, and Muslim Personal Law” is a powerful piece on the state construction of the majority-minority dynamic. Through the exploration of Muslim personal laws, particularly those regarding gender, Williams is able to highlight the role of the state in identity formation. In the final chapter of this first section, “Scheduled Castes, Christians, and Muslims: The Politics of Macro-Majorities and Micro-Minorities,” Laura Dudley Jenkins brings forth the hot-button issue of caste, in its intersection with non-Hindu religions where its presence is still visible: particularly with Muslim- and Christian-Indians. By renegotiating the boundaries between religiously different but socio-economically similar groups, Jenkins is able to articulate a thoroughly nuanced and sensitive discussion on various Scheduled Caste issues in India.

The remainder of the volume is a piece-by-piece examination of issues facing minorities in the Indian context. Each has its merits, though there are a few that bear discussion for the strength and nuanced nature of their subject exploration. Farhana Ibrahim’s chapter, “Representing the ‘Minority,’” is based on her own ethnographic fieldwork with the vadha kohlis of Kachchh, Gujarat. Here, she situates her subject population within a discourse of religious pluralism, as is found in the village. The majority-minority dichotomy breaks down for Ibrahim, when the actual complexities of socio-economy and issues of minority rights are raised. While not discounting the bearing that political mishigas has on this village setting, Ibrahim is cognizant of the need to stay away from generalizing the ways in which identities are presented and represented. This sentiment is re-explored by Joseph Marianus Kujur in “Christian and Tribal,” wherein he explores the intersection of tribal and Christian identities. Kujur’s fieldwork with Oraon Christians, and their affiliation to a tribal identity, highlights the need for continued representation of tribal communities in conversations about Indian minorities. These sustained conversations will be beneficial to the negotiation of multiple identities and the particular difficulty that arises from navigating multiple minority identities. Also bearing mention is “Sikh Minority Identity Formation,” by Natasha Behl, an insightful exploration of Indian Sikh identity. By using what she terms a public Sikh narrative, Behl is able to develop a theory of how Sikh identity serves not only to formulate a cohesive communal identity, but also to create a public perception of who the Sikhs are within broader Punjabi and Indian society.

To attempt to subsume the aforementioned and other minorities into some theoretical, monolithic Indian narrative would be to erase all texture and nuance from the landscape of Indian diversity. Where this volume’s strengths lie are in its multi-dimensional, multi-perspectival, and indeed inter-disciplinary approach to the topic at hand. Robinson has put together papers that work together to create a cohesive and dynamic narrative of the state of minority studies in the Indian academy and in the broader field of India Studies. At times, the volume-wide suggestion of systemically recognizing and institutionalizing minority rights seems as if it could bring with it its own set of issues—not the least of which would be the validation of minority status resulting in the lessening in authenticity of these minority groups’ Indian-ness, thus further alienating these already marginalized groups.
Overall, Robinson’s curatorial and editorial prowess is patent. In a country of over one billion people, spanning more than a million square miles, with a history as long as memory serves, and where the term “minority” begins to lose its meaning, Robinson has woven together an impressive volume on the essence of what it means to do minority studies within the cacophony of India’s religious landscape.

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One of the richest sources for pre-modern Central and West Asia is undoubtedly the vast corpus of writings produced by authors whose religious practices and spiritual expressions identify them in modern scholarship as adherents of Sufism—a term that, as the author of the book presently under review points out, refers not to an ahistorical coherent system of practices and beliefs but instead to a variegated set of intellectual and social inclinations worthy of serious analytic consideration. For historians, these sources include hagiographic accounts of Sufis meant to memorialize, exemplify, and instruct; prose, poetic, and epistolary expositions on a variety of concerns regarding rituals, philosophy, and terminology; and the physical manuscripts of these works themselves whose rich illustrations offer a visual archive of self-representation and perception. Needless to say this embarrassment of riches poses numerous challenges, which include not only the overwhelming volume of materials—both published and in manuscripts—but also the difficulties of reading “texts” whose preoccupations do not lend themselves to a straightforward analysis of the milieu in which they were produced.

Shahzad Bashir’s _Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam_ is an exploration of the social and cultural landscape of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Iran and Central Asia through the examination of Sufi representations of the body. Bashir’s approach is to read in tandem moments of corporeal conspicuousness in hagiographic works, theoretical expositions on the body by Sufi authors, and depictions of the body in the visual culture of the chosen time and place in order to reconstitute the social imagination of his subjects. Acknowledging the phenomenological, sociological, and hermeneutical contributions of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Pierre Bourdieu, and Gabrielle Spiegel respectively to the theoretical underpinnings of his work, Bashir argues that such a reconstitution of the social imagination is made possible by the fact that the corporeal representations in Sufi texts both mirror and generate a series of attitudes towards the body that are understood by the authors and audiences as normative reflections of social, cultural, and personal experiences.

Bashir’s examination progresses across seven chapters, which are bookended by a substantive introduction and a brief epilogue. Chapter 1 explores the relationship between representations of the body and the Sufi dichotomy of the bātain (internal/esoteric) and zāhīr (external/exoteric) by looking at discourses on the human embryo, the body’s relationship with the _ruḥ_ (animating spirit), and the role of the heart ( _dil_ in Persian and _qalb_ in Arabic) as the organ of esoteric cognition. Chapter 2 looks at how Sufis discussed bodily self-fashioning and overcoming corporeal impurities through ascetic and ritual practices—the latter included the remembrance of God ( _zikr_ ) and audition