Aramaic Incantation Bowls, including a discussion of the verbal images on the bowls. The fourth section covers ecstatic practices, such as prophetic activities and ascent ceremonies. The first of the three essays in this section is by John D. Turner and looks at baptismal rite of the “Five Seals” developed into a contemplative practice of union with the supreme deity. Niclas Förster addresses the understudied Marcosian rituals, which were precise in nature because of they were regarded as religious syncretism. The final essay in this section looks at ritual in the Hekhalot literature and is written by James R. Davila.

The three essays in the final section of this collection address Philosophic Practices, reflecting on the relationship between religious practice and ancient philosophy. Zeke Mazur examines the debate between Plotinus and Gnostics over the interpretation of Plato’s Sophist. In the second essay in this section, Michael A. Williams concentrates on the relationship of language about baptism in some Sethian texts to depictions of visionary ascents. The final essay in this section and collection is by Kevin Corrigan and it focuses on the characterizations of Plotinus in later Neo-Platonism.

With regard to the technicalities of the book, it is well organized and features a bibliography following each essay, making for easy reference for the reader. The extensive index allows the reader easy access to the vast information contained in this festschrift. The articles themselves are a testament to how the study of Gnosticism has grown. This book is an excellent example of the wealth of knowledge we can gain from studying the practices of the Gnostics.

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Giorgio Agamben, in his Profanations (2007), elaborates on the difference between consuming and using goods through discussing a Monastic form-of-life among Franciscans. In his The Highest Poverty: The Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life (2013), Agamben comes back to their form-of-life to extensively elaborate upon the political implications of the communal life of Franciscans. Agamben’s discussion about form-of-life is associated with his previous studies of Hegelian notion of absolute, which is derivative from “se” in Indo-European languages, as an ethos in which humans dwell and settle.

In the first chapter, Agamben discusses how in the monastic form of life in the fourth and fifth centuries the boundaries between life and rule became undecidable and indeterminate. Agamben’s discussion of meditatio illustrates how this boundary was blurred in their life. As Agamben mentions, it was Augustine who first addressed the role of meditatio in a Christian life, and from the fourth century onwards, silent reading spread all over Europe in such a way that it was the eyes alone that could reflect, and the heart alone that could grasp the meaning of any text. This skill—meditatio—helped monks to recite the secret prayers in every moment; indeed, a monk “meditates while he walks to his habituation” (25). Thus, monks started to live the Spirit of Christ through the act of meditatio in every moment of their lives. This change prompted monks to develop a new form-of-life in which specific acts such as praying or wearing designated clothes are not supposed be followed, but the very Spirit of
Christ should be meditated, evoked, and moved through their form-of-life.

Agamben’s discussion of liturgical texts, which should be daily recited in the monks’ life, sheds light on the notion of ‘use’ in chapter two. Monks, in their undecidable life with rule, ‘used’ their own liturgical texts. They put these “inert texts” into use by reading these written texts orally. They read liturgical texts not to follow specific orders mentioned in them, but to mingle the texts into their daily lives so as to dismantle the judicial nature of these texts by uniting their lives with these texts and letting the Sprite live and meditate through them. As a result, these texts became part of the daily life of monks. Indeed, liturgy was part of their form-of-life (77-78). The Franciscans, as Agamben argues, intended to abdicate the law by de facto use of goods in their form-of-life. The virtue of ‘poverty’ constitutes de facto use in Franciscans’ doctrine, as de facto use refers to monks’ use of goods without owning and possessing them. In the state of innocence, everyone was authorized to use everything without being able to monopolize what they used as their property. This de facto use, or monks’ poverty, will be resuscitated in the state of emergency. In these states, everyone is allowed to use everything, whereas regularly human beings have “license of use” which means they are permitted to use things they own (115). This de facto use of goods is a common use of everything. The way that sunshine is used is a representative example of this sort of use. Everyone uses sunshine in a communal way; however, no one can own and possess it (132). Poverty was a virtue that helped monks to develop their communal form-of-life, by which they were able to use everything. This form-of-life, which is a result of blurring the boundaries between life and rule, should never-endingly let the Spirit of Jesus permeate it, so that juridical law is constantly abdicated because everyone becomes a legitimate source for interpreting God’s will.

This Franciscan legacy is, in Agamben’s perception, defensive and negative because they failed to have any definition of life outside the realm of law. Life, for Franciscans, is constantly abdicating juridical law by evoking the spiritual experience of Christ and having him dwell inside the individual. What Franciscans lack, in Agamben’s view, was a positive and affirmative definition of life, regardless of any connection to law. This lack stems from the fact that Franciscans did not consider life to be an ethos or a dwelling place in which we live (144). Agamben hints to his understanding of life as an ethos in this book; however, he has extensively written about this notion in his Potentialities (1999) and Language and Death: The Place of Negativity (1991). Life as an ethos, for Agamben, is a life in which we are sources for our own actions and practices. This proper life is achieved only at the end of time when all laws will disappear and we are not supposed to abdicate them by our form-of-life. Agamben’s notion of ethos builds up a Hegelian Agamben whose philosophical underpinning is beholden to Hegel’s definition of the absolute. Hegel’s notion of the absolute, for Agamben, forms a positive definition of life, which is outside law and is indifferent to it. Thus, an individual subject, for Agamben, is the one whose actions are not reactionary to any external force, but this subject independently constitutes his/her form-of-life.

Agamben in his Potentialities elaborates on his notion of life as an ethos with the help of the term se (a proper place for living), from which the concept of the absolute in Hegel’s philosophical system originated. Through a philological analysis of this Latin term, Agamben develops his Hegelian understanding of life as an ethos or as a place in which humans could live, be habituated, and accustomed (116). As Agamben mentions, the
Hegelian version of se, which is the ideal and absolute place for humans to live, is only achieved at the end of time. Humans can live in this proper place only when time is fulfilled and contradictions of the Spirit disappear (124). Only then, humans could shed external restrictions and limitations and be the source for their own actions.

As one can see, Agamben, inspired by Hegel, argues that the true home for human beings is where they can be source and ground for their actions. This messianic and apocalyptic vision of human dwelling place, for Agamben, is the true understanding of life, which is outside law because, firstly, at the end of time every single law will be already abdicated. Moreover, because humans will be the source for their actions, none of their measures and actions will be defensive and reactionary to outer forces. Only then the Spirit of Christ/truth can meditatio inside us in every moment of our daily life, which is our true habit or dwelling place. Briefly, Agamben in this book, through critical analysis of form-of-life among Franciscans, well explores his crypto-Hegelian notion of ethos.

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The transformative potential in pilgrimage exists not solely during the experience, but also in the stages prior to and following a pilgrimage. Although this theme is common in the anthropology of pilgrimage, the latter processes are often overlooked; an aspect of pilgrimage studies that Hillary Kaell aims to remedy with her inaugural book, Walking Where Jesus Walked. Developed from her doctoral thesis, Kaell engages with American Christian pilgrims and pilgrimage organizers in an exploration of what it means to be a modern American Christian abroad in a globally commercial world. This book is of great value to anyone working with pilgrimage, transnational exchange, or the adaptability of spiritual and personal boundaries.

Kaell explains her objectives in the introduction: an ethnographic exploration of the point where pilgrimage and the economy intersect, the complexities of what it means to “walk where Jesus walked” for modern Christians, and how Americans deal with anxieties that present when negotiating their identities abroad as ‘American’ and ‘Christian’ simultaneously. She identifies these as three key dichotomies, “home/away, transcendent/material, religion/commerce” (199), perhaps in reference to Ellen Badone’s work on polarities in Christian pilgrimage centres. Six chapters and a conclusion follow the introduction. Kaell uses archival research in the first chapter to understand how the tourism industry has procured an instrumental role in the pilgrimage market. The second chapter introduces the pilgrims and their inspiration before departure. Chapters three, four, and five cover their experiences in the Holy Land (Israel and Palestine) and investigate themes of materiality, Catholicism, and social tension, respectively. The final chapter returns home with the pilgrims, and in the conclusion Kaell discusses her results.

Kaell argues for a “more comprehensive map” (200) of the potential within pilgrimage to reorder ‘home’ as physical and intellectual space, and to alter how the pilgrims understand their roles in personal relationships with their peers and Jesus Christ. In order to situate the experience of the contemporary American Holy Land pilgrim within the contexts of identity negotiation and global commerce, Kaell shifts the focus of pilgrimage from the shrine to the peripheral