the connections are illuminating. No wonder she can confidently claim that Svasthānī's history is also a history of the establishment of a discrete, local, and—over time—increasingly conservative local Hindu tradition. Even more broadly, Birkenholtz asserts that Nepali culture is "clearly and unequivocally South Asian" and has been affected by South Asian, not Tibeto-Burman, influences (129).

I have no criticisms of this book, just awe for the magnitude of the work involved! If I could have a leisurely chat with the author about her topic, however, I would want to hear more about her field experiences (these are described well but rather infrequently in the book), I would be interested to hear how the sense of Nepali identity associated with Svasthānī compares with that of the much more well-known living goddess Kumārī, and I would be interested in learning more about caste in her story. The hilly-region, high-caste Hindus conquered the local Hindus in 1769; what is "local" a cipher for? Does caste matter in this story? Birkenholtz tells us that the Rana Shah-driven Legal Code of 1854 "structured and validated caste in unprecedented legal terms and privileged idealized notions of the Hindu state and society" (162). What does the goddess think about caste?

Svasthānī's first temple since 1674 was built in 2002, allowing modern people to visit her in "her own place." And now, as of 2018, the goddess is made known in an insightful, beautifully written scholarly book that widens her reach to those outside her place. As one of those people, I am most grateful to Jessica Vatine Birkenholtz.

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Rachel McDermott
Barnard College

The Joy of Religion: Exploring the Nature of Pleasure in Spiritual Life. By Ariel Glucklich. Cambridge University Press, 2020. 262 pages. $99.99 (hardcover), $29.99 (paperback), $24.00 (e-book).

To the oft-quoted declaration of Jeremy Bentham, Ariel Glucklich provides an invigorating counter: neither pain nor pleasure are sovereign masters for humankind. Instead, in his twin volumes, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (Oxford University Press, 2001) and now *The Joy of Religion: Exploring the Nature of Pleasure in Spiritual Life*, Glucklich analyzes the utility of both pain and pleasure for flourishing in religious contexts. And he does so by taking common-sense expectations about pain and pleasure and turning their assumptions inside out. By analyzing historical texts through an interdisciplinary blend of literary studies, continental philosophy, neurobiology, evolutionary psychology, anthropology, and a dash of ethnography, Glucklich illuminates the complexity of pain and pleasure's biology, history, and phenomenology in religious literary and ritual contexts. The main idea? Pain and pleasure both have adaptive functions in religious contexts, even if they seem strikingly maladaptive for individual flourishing.

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In *The Joy of Religion*, Glucklich situates pleasure in "a prosocial motivational context" defined through evolutionary theory, where "approach-avoid behavior . . . leads to beneficial adaptive consequences" (9). He uses the "behavioral-adaptive classification" (15) of three types of pleasure as an analytic throughout the book. First, *novelty pleasure* includes "sensory, addictive, socially dysfunctional and disintegrative pleasures" (13). Such sensory pleasures are tied to stimuli that need to be constantly replenished yet sate craving only temporarily. Second, *mastery pleasure* includes "difficult, socially integrative pleasures that depend on complex learning and are acquired with effort" (13). Mastery pleasure is honed over time by learning skills from other experts and laboring effectively toward a socially defined goal. Third, *play pleasure* is "free-flowing, imaginative and even fantastic, ego-transcending" (13). This innovative pleasure is not bound to sensory stimuli yet both requires and exceeds the discipline of mastery pleasure.

Glucklich argues that pleasure is important to study in religious contexts because of an apparent paradox, where "in virtually every religious tradition, some pleasures are excoriated while others are promoted" (36). He works to resolve this tension throughout *The Joy of Religion* by applying the analytic framework of the three types of pleasure to his cultural analyses of religious experiences from the Axial Age through his own scholarly present in Virginia. Glucklich engages a vast historical and geographical arc to unfold the development of mastery pleasure and play pleasure within an evolutionary framework attentive to "the link between behavioral adaptation and religious ideology" (27). He sees religious constructions as proscribing sensory, novelty pleasures to cultivate disciplined, mastery pleasures that prove adaptive for the transmission of religious practices, texts, and traditions. At their height, mystical experiences can include play pleasure where "spiritual achievement is described as steeped with highly satisfying affect" (36).

Pleasure is pervasive and a part of disciplined and peak religious experiences alike (which Glucklich argues particularly well in chapter 4). Yet "the ambivalence of religious sources on the subject of pleasure" (14) leads Glucklich to describe and explain pleasure in psychological-evolutionary terms to better read the place of pleasure in religious and philosophical texts. Explaining the paradox of how pleasure can be deemed beneficial in relation to certain objects and goals but damaging in relation to others, Glucklich produces a corollary to his argument on sacred pain, asking how certain pleasures have been a part of prosocial religiosity and others inimical to it. He asks, most pointedly: "The logical question is, why are pleasures of the body and senses so roundly condemned when the highest levels of religious experience is profoundly hedonic, so affectively positive?" (34). Piqued by how pleasure is neither prescribed nor proscribed as such, Glucklich pursues an explanatory account of the economy of pleasure in religious experience.

Glucklich clearly succeeds in his primary goal: to show just how complex and adaptive pleasure is in religious life. An extended paean to pleasure, *The Joy of Religion* is an engaging read although sometimes hard to follow. From the epics

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of ancient India (*Ramayana*) and ancient Greece (*Iliad*) in chapter 3, which "discover" the mastery pleasure of self-discipline, to Hellenistic stress on self-control in Philo of Alexandria's account of the Therapeutae and the elaboration of play pleasure in Plotinus' mystical philosophy in chapter 4, to magical praxis in chapter 5, to prosocial hedonic regulation in intentional groups (including the Jewish Qumran sect, the Hindu Pashupata, and the Anabaptist Bruderhof) in chapter 6, to the ritual contexts of the Rasa Lila and Nahman of Bratslav narratives illuminated by Paul Ricoeur's phenomenology in chapter 7, to Glucklich's own experience of Shabbat service informed by readings of Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Levinas in chapter 8, Glucklich navigates particular cultural frames of reference alongside the biopsychological constant of elevated affect. In an arc of staggering breadth, Glucklich argues that both evolutionary theory and cultural analyses are needed to understand the mechanisms of pleasure in religious life.

His argument involves the ambitious methodological goal to render analysis of pleasure a privileged site "to explore the link between the scientific theory and religion" (8). Glucklich uses biopsychological research to establish a rubric of forms of pleasure while insisting that cultural forms are not reducible to their biological grounds. He affirms, instead, the irreducible particularity of religious experiences as no two people come to even shared religious contexts with the same cultural, intellectual, and social frames of reference (as argued in chapter 8). Glucklich rejects scientific reductionism while also isolating a biophysical current in human behavior to identify pleasure as positive affect in different cultural contexts. And he helps address the knotted question of how cultural construction and biophysiology can both contribute to an explanation of human behavior. Preferring the ascriptive approach of Ann Taves over any perennialism (35), Glucklich refuses experiential universals even as he roots adaptive religious experiences associated with mastery and play pleasures in the mechanisms of human cognition.

From my perspective as a scholar of ethics and asceticism, Glucklich provides a marvelous account of how humans can overcome evolved needs for sensual (novelty) pleasures to recruit attention for higher level pleasures through "emerging techniques of self-control" (73). Relying on the neurobiological research of Jaak Panksepp and Joseph Moskal, Glucklich's account of mastery pleasure is particularly useful for understanding how affective religious motivations help suspend physical needs for nourishment and rest, functioning "as a psychological motivator for prosocial behavior" (147). Using Benjamin Zablocki's study of the Bruderhof community as one example, Glucklich stresses "joy as a socially integrative force" (162) and mastery pleasure as sustaining religious formations through the collusion of struggle and communal positive affect (particularly important for communities not maintained through procreation) that contribute to "depersonalization and new identity formation" (163).

What is less clear to me is the phenomenological distinction between mastery and play pleasures. Glucklich defines play pleasure as requiring mastery pleasure

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even as it exceeds such discipline in its exposure of how "conventional reality is but a play or a theatrical reality" (114). He reads in Plotinus and C. S. Lewis "a sort of wiggle room between the perfectly mundane and the perfectly sacred" (120), even coming to understand his own experience of "participating in a sacred play" (207) in the Shabbat liturgy. Invoking Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Spielraum* as a dynamic between constraint and freedom (208), Glucklich identifies play as both "the gateway to contemplative insight" (114n88) and as associated with the flow state of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (11, 107). I wonder, then, if play pleasure identified with "peak" experiences "divorced from commonplace reality" (218) belies a naturalist epistemology *or* if it extends to Csikszentmihalyi's "optimal experience" that anyone can achieve given rigorous training and therefore is not clearly differentiated from mastery pleasure. Perhaps the tripartite schema Glucklich draws from neurobiology and redescribes through mystical categories of ascent is actually a bipartite schema of sensory-evolved pleasures (novelty pleasure) and discursive, culturally bound joy (including both mastery and play pleasures). Analyzing ritual for how "the two types of affectivity—the sensory and the spiritual—pleasure and joy—can share a single context" (193), Glucklich suggests as much, differentiating between pleasure as animal and joy as "fully human."

In *The Joy of Religion*, Glucklich impresses upon the reader both how adaptive pleasure has been in religious life and how adaptive religion has been for human development, where "religion can be regarded as the cultural Everest of hedonic training" (50). Pleasure as behaviorally adaptive mirrors Glucklich's 2001 account of how pain is used "to transform destructive or disintegrative suffering into a positive religious psychological mechanism for reintegration within a more deeply valued level of reality than individual existence" (*Sacred Pain*, 6). For pain and pleasure, he does the inspired work of showing that while neither are sovereign masters, pain and pleasure are both transformed and transformative in religious contexts. The discrete readings of texts and contexts reflect the depth of thought and imagination that Glucklich no doubt poured into its research and writing, evincing both mastery and an extended activity of play.

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Niki Kasumi Clements
Rice University

The Public Work of Christmas: Difference and Belonging in Multicultural Societies. Edited by Pamela E. Klassen and Monique Scheer. McGill-Queens University Press, 2019. 284 pages. $120.00 (hardcover), $29.95 (paperback).

In the edited volume *The Public Work of Christmas*, Pamela Klassen and Monique Scheer lead a global team of scholars to address the "uses" of Christmas as they are, and have been, experienced across historical moments, cultures, and

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