
Sarah E. Tackett
University of Kentucky
DOI: https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.14.19

Follow this and additional works at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure

Part of the Arts and Humanities Commons, and the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License.

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.14.19
Available at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure/vol14/iss1/19

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Theory at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory* by an authorized editor of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.
made in not only understanding the allure and promise of Islamism, but also in linking Islamist discourse about economic and social justice with the broader social and political movements in the West.

**Works Cited**


Sarah E. Tackett

**Book Review**

Dorthee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001

Dorthee Soelle begins her interrogation of modern culture with the following question from the poet/mystic Rumi, “Why, when God’s world is so big, did you fall asleep in a prison of all places?” (p.1). Not only are we confined, we are asleep, and Soelle is attempting to stir us to consciousness, to draw our attention to the ‘light’ found within mysticism.

Questioning the blind rush of capitalism, she identifies the constraints of our prison as endless consumerism and the commodification of identity. We are what we buy and success is only measured by the objects we possess. Soelle criticizes the vacant apathy caused by such externalization and advocates a turn inward in response to the crisis of spiritual deprivation, ‘the silent cry.’

Soelle offers a number of narratives from childhood amazement to moments of connection with the natural world, arguing that mystical experience is not limited to the guru perched on top of the mountain, rather it is inherent to us all. Reminding us that “we are all mystics,” she retrieves mysticism from the nebula of the supernatural and defines it within the tangible world of experience (p.9).

The book itself takes the form of a journey, moving from the personal recognition of mysticism to the outward praxis of mysticism as resistance. In Part I, Soelle democratizes mysticism, acknowledging it as an experience that we all share. This section concerns ecstasy, methodology, articulation and the road to achieving such individual union with God. Part II defines the “places of mystical experience.” Soelle explains certain conditions that appeal to mystical experience, such as immersion in the natural world, eroticism, the emotional states of intense joy or suffering, and the connection of community. Finally, Part III opens the discussion outward, debating the practice of mysticism as social resistance. She compares globalization with individualization, ego with ego-lessness, possession with possession-
lessness, violence with non-violence. She concludes that the values and perspectives privileged in mysticism provide a viable model of resistance and liberation.

Throughout her book, Soelle makes pointed critiques of modern culture. She claims that experiences which lie outside the realm of scientific explanation are either trivialized or dismissed as moments of insanity, and points out that, "such experiences are explained away as an overactive imagination, indigestion, overexcitement, and the like," (p. 13).

She admits her concern with the binds of such dismissive cynicism, and explains, "We are losing dreams, those of night and those of day, and increasingly we lose the vision of our life," (p. 14). Soelle proposes this vision can be regained through acknowledging the divine within ourselves and heeding our own mystic sensibility. Making no excuses for the unknown, we should appreciate such experiences as they are, and revel in them rather than deny their existence.

Yet, she realizes the difficulty in expressing experiences of the unknown. Soelle admits that language is incapable of truly describing elements of mysticism such as the soul, ecstasy, and the longing for God. In dealing with such mysteries she explains that the use of paradoxical metaphors such as “darklight,” “eloquent silence,” and “filled emptiness,” help grasp the indefinable. She encourages the development of a new language that can embrace mystery as reality.

Soelle proposes efforts towards a new language that counters the psychologically manipulative language of domination and the market, a language that uncovers the forces of oppression to the free thinking individual. Soelle explains the basic problems of modernity in the simple, yet profound relationship between the ego, possessions, and violence.

In this period of late capitalism, she argues that the emphasis on consumerism drives the ego to unnecessary levels of consumption, making one dependent on violence as a means of protecting such possessions. Freedom is transformed into protecting what you have rather than protecting who you are and how you live. People therefore become owned by these possessions and lose their meaning of 'self.'

Soelle sees mysticism as the inner light leading back to 'the self.' She revolves her argument around the C.S. Lewis's quote "I am what I do," and encourages us to that as our mantra of resistance, questioning anyone or anything that leads us away from such conviction.

Soelle interweaves her knowledge of theology and social theory brilliantly in this book. She makes clear and insightful assessments of complicated power issues, ranging from the individual to political structures. Her understanding of resistance's connection to mysticism...
Tackett is both genuine and progressive, and encourages a new perspective of social agency and political praxis. Those who hear and are attentive to Soelle's 'silent cry,' in this book will indeed be awakened.

Steve Buttes
Book Review
R.S. Sugirtharajah, Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation
New York: Oxford UP, 2002

The Bible: It is a source of faith and an icon, a problem and a solution, a sacred text and a literary text. It seems appropriate in an issue on religion and identity to have a review of a book which has the Bible as its central focus. R.S, Sugirtharajah’s book, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, is an excellent example of the value a social theoretic approach can bring to biblical studies.

The study is divided into two parts. Part I details a brief history of postcolonial theory, citing literary precursors, such as C.R.L. James and Akiki Nyabongo, as well as theoretical precursors such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. The overview of postcolonial studies is useful to scholars approaching the field for the first time, and this discussion leads him smoothly into just how postcolonial theory can apply to biblical studies, a field which has been reluctant to embrace this particular theoretical approach.

What is important to note here, and throughout the book, is Sugirtharajah’s interdisciplinarity and his social theoretic approach to his chosen field of study. While he provides detailed “self-help exercises” which allow biblical interpreters to begin their postcolonial approach to the Bible, his theoretical discussions stretch beyond his narrow field of study to include Latin American, Asian and African studies, philosophy, and literary criticism. As he clearly states, “Postcolonial criticism opens up potential areas for biblical studies to work in tandem with other disciplines” (p. 25). He designs his approach to biblical interpretation “to see links between life and work, and to facilitate a dialogue with the world whilst discouraging an insular and universal mode of reading, writing, and theorizing” (p. 201). He deals with the sticky question of just who is “postcolonial” (i.e. is the African Diaspora in the United States, or is the United States itself postcolonial?), and as a good social theorist might do, he attempts to