

**Cambridge Element on Lou Andreas-Salomé**  
for the series *Women in the History of Philosophy*  
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**Abstract:**

The proposed Element will provide the first detailed study of Lou Andreas-Salomé's writings on philosophical topics. Following an overview of her biography and her major fictional and nonfictional works, her accounts of life and religion, erotic experience and gender, and the philosophical foundations of psychoanalysis are examined in detail. For each theme, her contributions to contemporary debates will be considered, taking into account the historical context and the intellectual exchanges she had with various important intellectuals of her time throughout her life.

Section 2 explores her account of life and religious experience as manifest in her early non-fictional writings, e.g., "The God" (*Der God*, 1910). It examines her critique of monotheistic religions and her own proposal of a faith in life, focusing specifically on her positive accounts of the distinctive creativity of intellectual life, the role of the body, the holistic character of lived experience and of living with others. Special attention is given to Salomé's intellectual and personal relationship with Friedrich Nietzsche (and his philosophy) and to the context of contemporary philosophy of life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Section 3 investigates her account of erotic and gender-specific experience in works such as "The Human being as a Woman" (*Der Mensch als Weib*, 1899) and *The Erotic (Die Erotik)*, 1910) in light of contemporary feminist discourse. Her holistic account of erotic love as a physiological, psychological, intellectual, and social phenomenon is discussed in detail, as well as her conception of a female way of life, which serves more as an ideal-typical depiction of women than as a realistic description. Her personal relationship with the young poet Rainer Maria Rilke and her influence on his artistic work are also highlighted.

Section 4 examines her major contributions to the philosophical foundations of psychoanalysis, draws connections to her earlier philosophy of life and pays attention to her personal exchanges with Sigmund Freud and other leading psychoanalysts of her time. In particular, it addresses her conception of the unconscious as the primordial ground of life, her account of self-development and the dual directedness of healthy narcissism, and her gender-specific understanding of psychoanalysis.

The Elements concludes with a final assessment of the significant of Salomé's work for philosophy, psychoanalysis, and the human studies more broadly.

## **Outline of contents:**

1. Salomé's Life and Work
  - a. Biography
  - b. Major Fictional and Nonfictional Works
  
2. Salomé on Life and Religion
  - a. Salomé and Nietzsche
  - b. Religious Experience and Critique of Monotheistic Religions
  - c. Life, Lived Experience (*erleben*), and Co-Living (*mitleben*)
  
3. Salomé on Erotic and Gender
  - a. A Holistic Account of Erotic Experience
  - b. A Feminine Way of Life
  - c. Salomé and Rilke
  
4. Salomé on the Philosophical Foundations of Psychoanalysis
  - a. Salomé, Freud, and the Viennese Psychoanalytical Society
  - b. The Unconscious and the primordial ground of life
  - c. Self-Development and the Double Direction of Narcissism
  - d. A Gendered Account of Psychoanalysis
  
5. Conclusion: Salomé's Significance

## **Distinctive features:**

- First study of Salomé's philosophical writings in historical context;
- Reevaluation of Salomé's intellectual contributions to philosophy and psychoanalysis without reducing them to her personal relationships with male intellectuals or artists of her time;
- Critical examinations of her accounts of life, religion, eroticism, and gender;
- Evaluation of the significance of her thought for current discourse.