

“DEATH OF GOD”: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

BALÁZS M. MEZEI

ABSTRACT

This essay will consider the philosophical and theological implications of the famous notion, familiar to the West since its pronouncement by Nietzsche, of the Death of God. I consider Nietzsche's dictum essential for a proper understanding of contemporary modernity. Not that Nietzsche invented this notion; before him classical German philosophy used it in a certain sense and a version of this idea belongs to the central tenets of Christianity. Yet post-Nietzschean thought gave a particular emphasis to the “death” (in a certain sense) of “god” (in a certain sense) so that new approaches to the divine emerged beginning with phenomenologists like Scheler, Husserl, or Heidegger to philosophical theologians like Richard Swinburne. However, the focus of my text will be given to the experience of “Auschwitz” and the subsequent realization of the need for a radical rethinking of the Classical concept of God in Jewish and Christian philosophical theology. Hans Jonas and Johann Baptist Metz are the most important authors I want to analyse, but other thinkers, such as Richard Rubinstein receive some consideration as well. I argue that the notion and reality of the divine has not fulfilled its fate with the experience of the Death of God in contemporary history and culture. A rebirth of the divine in some form, as for instance Levinas' *L'Autre* or Heidegger's *Ereignis*, is already underway; the variety of theistically oriented philosophies indicate surface phenomena of such a process. Finally, I raise the question whether the notion of the Death of God can be seen as representing evil; and if yes, then what role this evil may have in the history of the notion of the Death of God.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of the Death of God should be distinguished from the phrase “God is dead” originally formulated by Hegel and Nietzsche. The former refers to a complex cultural phenomenon stemming from ancient beliefs of dying and rising gods in Egyptian and Middle-East religions, religions fundamentally determined by the experience of biological and astronomical circulations. This kind of belief was

reinterpreted in Christianity so that the notion of the Death of God has become intrinsic to Christian faith. Nietzsche's dictum refers to the experience of the invalidity of nineteenth-century theistic beliefs and their metaphysical implications. As a result, the dictum "God is dead" can be seen as a modification of the ancient experience of the notion of the Death of God, a modification which led to intense cultural discussions throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. These discussions often refer to Nietzsche's dictum and the ancient notion of the Death of God as interchangeable; however, their relationship is like that of a genus and a species. In order to assess the significance of the related discussions in contemporary religious studies, theology and philosophy, we need to investigate various dimensions of the general notion and locate the significance of the phrase "God is dead" in this context. Only on the basis of such investigations will we be able to make an overall evaluation of the problem of the Death of God with special reference to its connection to the problem of evil. On a general level, the history of thought about the Death of God is also the history of thought about evil: while in our earlier sources evil is naturally present in all goings-on in the world, or even in the divine as well, later notions of evil gradually display its non-synthesizable, ultimately inconceivable character.

DEATH OF GOD IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

For the scholar of the history of religions it is a surprising fact that a fairly common motif in religious history, such as the death of a divine being, could have caused such an influential intellectual movement as the notion of "God is Dead" did throughout the twentieth century. For not only has death always been one of the central targets of reflection in religions and religious-like forms but the death of gods or a god is a recurring topic found in a number of religions. The significance of the death of a god is never small; death itself is central in all human endeavours. In most of the religious forms we are familiar with, nevertheless, the death of a god is one of the most important contents of their related mythologies, liturgies, philosophical and theological reflections. Charles-Francois Dupuis, the first systematic historian of religions in modern times, demonstrated this fact in a complex fashion in his monumental *L'origin de tous les cultes* of 1795. Although Dupuis' interest mainly concerned the Western history of religions, based especially on classical authors, his central thesis can be considered as the first promulgation of the modern notion of the Death of God. He quotes Firmicius' statement against the followers of the cult of Mithras: "It is a known fact that your god is dead" (Dupuis 1795, vol. V.: 241). Dupuis suggests that all important religions had an explicit or implicit astronomical framework, in which the birth, life and death of the chief god were

moments of an allegorical narrative of the experience of the daily and yearly circulations of the sun and other stellar bodies. Just as the sun sets every day and in the winter period it loses its energy, Tammuz, Marduk, Osiris, or Mithras were doomed to lose their life as well. Even if their death was conceived on the basis of a natural process, they were seen at the same time as victims of the murderous act of an evil god. As the Christian God is nothing more than a late reiteration of ancient forms of the sun-cult, as Dupuis simplistically held, this god can be considered “dead” not only in the metaphorical sense, but also in the sense that this genealogy reveals this god’s imaginary character.

Just a few decades after the death of Dupuis, Herbert Spencer began to develop the outlines of the “ghost-theory”, according to which divine beings of various sorts emerged from the belief in ghosts of deceased human beings. Accordingly, to be divine is to be dead, whereas the meaning of death here certainly differs from our sense of death today. As Spencer explains, death was considered as “a suspended animation” by primitive tribes, yet dead beings can be causes of natural occurrences, return to life and be killed and die again (Spencer 1921, vol. 1). The close connection between death and divinity, or supernatural causation, is variously argued for by Spencer, who did not change his euhemerism in view of the important criticism of Chantepie de la Saussaye. The latter is right in pointing out that, in most religious forms, the cult of the dead and the cult of the gods are clearly distinguished (Chantepie de la Saussaye 1891: 38ff.). As he writes: ‘Animistic conceptions may enter into the worship of ancestors, heroes, and saints; but other ideas are so essential to these cults, that they cannot be regarded merely as modifications of the worship of souls. Sometimes living persons as well as the dead enjoy divine veneration’ (*ibid.*: 112–3). Yet Spencer and E. B. Tylor have an important point in demonstrating the significance of dead beings in religious forms, beings that are divinities of some sort.

J. C. Frazer too realized the importance of the motif of the Death of God in various religious forms in the framework of his theoretically inspired anthropology. As he writes, for example,

The Greenlanders believed that a wind could kill their most powerful god, and that he would certainly die if he touched a dog. When they heard of the Christian God, they kept asking if he never died, and being informed that he did not, they were much surprised, and said that he must be a very great god indeed ... A North American Indian stated that the world was made by the Great Spirit. Being asked which Great Spirit he meant, the good one or the bad one, Oh, neither of them, replied he, the Great Spirit that made the world is dead long ago. He could not possibly have lived as long as this (Frazer 1911: 3).

Frazer also mentions commonplaces from the classical literature, which were quoted by Dupuis as well:

The grave of Zeus, the great god of Greece, was shown to visitors in Crete as late as about the beginning of our era. The body of Dionysus was buried at Delphi beside the golden statue of Apollo, and his tomb bore the inscription, Here lies Dionysus dead, the son of Semele ... Apollo himself was buried at Delphi; for Pythagoras is said to have carved an inscription on his tomb, setting forth how the god had been killed by the python and buried under the tripod (Frazer 1911: 3).

With the rise of the phenomenology of religion in the late nineteenth century, the relationship between death and religion became even more obvious. Chantepie de la Saussaye calls attention to two aspects of the importance of death in ancient Egypt. On the one hand, deceased human souls become united with the god of death, Osiris; on the other hand, Osiris himself dies a violent death; he is the archetype of the dying-and-rising-gods well-known from other religions of the Near-East (Chantepie de la Saussaye 1891: 421). Gerardus van der Leeuw speaks of the importance of death in Greek mystery-cults (van der Leeuw 1925: 65, 92 and 127). Mircea Eliade, the most important historian of religion in our age, emphasizes the moment of death in the framework of “the Myth of Eternal Return” (Eliade 1959 a). Eliade was planning to write a history of the mythology of death (Eliade 2010: 16), which he never accomplished. In his various works, he proposes outlines of such an overall consideration. Thus in *The Sacred and the Profane*, Eliade often returns to the motif of an initial and decisive death of a god. As he writes,

According to the myths of the earliest cultivators, man became what he is – mortal, sexualized, and condemned to work – in consequence of a primordial murder; in illo tempore a divine being, quite often a woman or a maiden, sometimes a child or a man, allowed himself to be immolated in order that tubers or fruit trees should grow from his body. This first murder basically changed the mode of being of human life. The immolation of the divine being inaugurated not only the need to eat but also the doom of death and, in consequence, sexuality, the only way to ensure the continuity of life. The body of the immolated divinity was changed into food; its soul descended underground, where it established the Land of the Dead (Eliade 1959 b: 101).

Ancient Greek imagination was flexible enough to create complex notions of serene immortality and miserable mortality with respect to various members of its pantheon. In Homer, the gods are passionately involved in human matters, but their passions are those of the never-dying. In a different tradition, though,

the genealogy of the gods is the genealogy of their death, a death which however rarely results in a cessation of all kinds of existence. Cronus violently seizes the highest power from his father Uranus; Zeus revolts against Cronus and dethrones him. Cronus castrates Uranus and Zeus overthrows Cronus in the war of the Titans – tales which contain in a certain form the notion of a divine death. While Uranus becomes a *deus otiosus*, Cronus has to remain in Tartarus, the realm of the dead. The well-known story of a lacerated Dionysus (and his alter-egos) leads to revival; still, the horrendous death of this mythological figure is worth mentioning for two reasons. First, his cruel death is unique in ancient mythologies; second, the reappearance of this figure in philosophical works in the nineteenth century led to the emergence of a new interpretation of the notion of the Death of God (Woodard 2007).

One well-known and perhaps historical instance of the notion of the Death of God is famously described by Plutarch. The point of the story about the death of the “great Pan” is the mortality of divine beings. Plutarch writes:

As a lamp when it is being lighted has no terrors, but when it goes out is distressing to many, so the great souls have a kindling into life that is gentle and inoffensive, but their passing and dissolution often, as at the present moment, fosters tempests and storms, and often infects the air with pestilential properties (Plutarch 1999: 403).

In the Christian interpretation of Eusebius, the story of the death of the Great Pan referred to “the overthrow of the demons of which there was no record at any other time” (Eusebius 1903: 90–1, Ch. V/XVII). On a more general level, Clement of Alexandria speaks of divine death in a cryptic fashion, when he compares the fragments of divine truth, recognized by pagan philosophers, to the torn pieces of the body of Christ: “The barbarian and Hellenic philosophy has torn off a fragment of eternal truth not from the mythology of Dionysus, but from the theology of the ever-living Word.” Just as Christ (and by implication Dionysus) was brought back to life after a painful death, a new life of wisdom is generated from the dead fragments of the one truth (Clement 1913: 313). Since the one truth is the expression of divine reality, its tragic fragmentation can be seen as an early version of a theology of the Death of God.

DEATH OF GOD IN THEOLOGY

Christianity developed a delicate blend of the various kinds of notion of the divine that were present in its original cultural matrix. An overemphasis on the role of Judaism in this respect would eclipse the theological role of the Alexandrian syn-

thesis of mythology, tradition and philosophy, a synthesis ultimately determined by the cosmo-theological view of the universe (Calabi 2008; Mezei 2013: 34–5). The gospels often refer to the “heavens” in the plural (a remnant of a spherical understanding of the sky), and Jesus’ unique relationship to the divine is described in terms of his all too human life. At the same time, Christianity defines a notion of God in its official documents, which surpasses the mythological and cosmo-theological conceptions and leads to the emergence of “a transcendence of God known in Christianity and in Christianity alone” (Altizer 2003: 4).

There are two fundamental aspects of divine mortality in Christianity: first, the precise meaning of the death of the god-man Jesus Christ in a historical perspective; and second, the various theological interpretations of divine mortality in the framework of Christianity. In the gospels, the death of the god-man is put into the context of his pre-existence and resurrected life, that is, his eternal being. The authors of the gospels do not overemphasize the death of Jesus Christ, yet they offer factual and solid descriptions. The relevant texts call the reader’s attention to natural phenomena, such as the darkness during daytime, earthquake, the opening of shrines and the resurrection of many (Matthew 27:45ff.; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44f.). These phenomena are meant to signal the cosmic significance of the death of the god-man, a significance missing in the Gospel of John where the passing away of Jesus is depicted as a peaceful event. For John, death on the cross and elevation to glory coincide in the sense that it is death itself which glorifies Jesus (John 12:33). In the Pauline letters death is “the last enemy” to be defeated (1Cr 15:26); or rather death is already defeated by the death of Christ, which the faithful are invited to share (Rom 6:3). Death is annulled by the resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:9), which leads to eternal life (Rom 6:23). The general tenor of these texts is that the death of the god-man is centrally significant, since the faithful gain divine life in virtue of this death, whereby the death of Christ receives a universal importance.

In the early Christian literature it is nevertheless not the passion and death of the god-man that is the centre of attention but rather his resurrection and the human participation in it. “Death” is a means of salvation; and salvation proves to be incomparably more important than the death of Christ. This general feature of Christian theology in the first centuries is well expressed by the words of John Chrysostom:

Hades is angered because frustrated, it is angered because it has been mocked, it is angered because it has been destroyed, it is angered because it has been reduced to naught, it is angered because it is now captive. It seized a body, and lo! it discovered God (Chrysostom 1862: 721).

On the other hand, as Hans Urs von Balthasar points out, Patristic literature sometimes emphasized the deeper significance of the notion of death with respect to the godhead; for instance, Origen formulates the question as to whether even the Father takes part in the suffering of Christ (von Balthasar 1990: 36). In a historical perspective we can say that the overwhelming insight into the crucial importance of the death of Christ as a divine occurrence only gradually emerged. The debates about the supposed teachings of Sabellius and related heresies, such as monarchism, circled around the problem of the nature of God. If the emphasis is put on the eternal and immortal nature of God, as the Fathers usually teach, then the death of Christ shifts into a salvational perspective, where the significance of his death is aligned with the general framework of God's eternal happiness. If however we turn away from this Greek philosophical pattern and emphasize Christ's concrete uniqueness, his personal character and thereby in some sense the personal nature of the godhead as well, then there is a better chance to reach a more solid view of the passion of Christ and thus God's close relation to its significance. Sabellianism possibly taught that God's unity precedes the plurality of divine persons, who are merely aspects or modes of the one divine substance. Monarchism likewise overemphasized the unity of God. In these perspectives, the personal nature of the godhead and thereby the importance of the personhood of Christ can only be weakly stressed. In the orthodox view, which was established between the two ecumenical councils in Constantinople (381 and 680), God's personal nature is unambiguously confirmed in the sense of the unity of the one substance and the three divine persons; thereby the theological emphasis on Christ's death received a sharper outline.

In this development, the emergence of the notion of the Death of God depends on two factors: on the one hand it depends on the proper appreciation of the person of Christ as truly human and divine at the same time; and on the other hand it depends on the recognition of the personal nature of God. While Greek and Latin theologians both applied these emphases, they did so differently. In the Greek Orthodox tradition, the perception of the human nature of Christ remained in a fairly general framework, represented by the traditional iconography and expressed in the ecumenical dogmas. In this context, the divine substance, as opposed to the "persons" of the Trinity, cannot be meaningfully characterized as "personal". In the West, however, the legal traditions of the Roman notion of personhood led very early to a different emphasis, an expression of which was the introduction of the *Filioque* into the Nicene Creed. As a consequence, an emphasis was added to the individual human character of Christ. The personal nature of the divine substance, which never received a dogmatic formula, could arise only on the basis of this emphasis on personhood. The main difference between Greek and Latin medieval mysticism consists in this, that the Greek tradition retained a massive Neo-Platonic influence, mediated especially by the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius,

while in Latin mysticism we see the growing importance of a personal relationship between God and man, Christ and the believer (Haas 1996). This feature developed into an ever more natural perception of the divine as expressed in the concrete human personhood of Christ.

The great synthesis of Thomas Aquinas was influenced by Greek theology and philosophy; its soberly rational and synthetic character, however, was a peculiar achievement. Aquinas's realism in his description of the human life of Christ is noteworthy (Aquinas 1933, Part III, q. 46). As Francesca Murphy has shown, this treatise was the first "life of Jesus" in a systematic Christian theology; and its simple directness reflected a non-mystical perception of the divine which has since become characteristic of Western theology (Murphy 2015). Aquinas's explanation of the passion of Christ with respect to the godhead is especially significant, because we find here a sophisticated solution of the problem of divine suffering. As Thomas writes, "The Passion is to be attributed to the suppositum of the Divine Nature, not because of the Divine Nature, which is impassible, but by reason of the human nature." (Aquinas 1933: 12) As to the death of Christ we find a similar solution: "The union of the Godhead with Christ's flesh never dissolved; Christ's soul is united with the Word of God more immediately and more primarily than the body is; Christ truly died." (Aquinas 1933, Part III, q. 50) Thus, to speak about the death of the divine nature is theologically possible if and only if we conceive this death with respect to the unity of divine and human natures in Christ.

The profound presence of the motif of death in Western mystical literature is too obvious. In such authors as Bernard of Clairvaux, John of the Cross, or Thomas à Kempis we find an ever deeper understanding of the need to share the death of Christ by the faithful. For instance, in *The Imitation of Christ*, à Kempis writes:

In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life ... Take up therefore thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He went before thee, bearing His cross and died for thee on the cross, that thou mightest also bear thy cross and desire to die with Him on the cross (Thomas a Kempis 1959: 102–3).

This mysticism of death continues the emerging Western tradition of the concrete personhood of Christ with the additional emphasis on the most personal feature of his death.

The Theology of the Cross, as Jürgen Moltmann expounds it, can be seen as a logical consequence of the Western tradition of theology. The specific emphasis on a *theologia crucis* has been the merit of Protestantism, which delineated the notion of the "crucified God" in various ways (Moltmann 1993: 200). On the one hand, Protestantism deepened the perception of the concrete personal nature of Christ; on the other hand, it has succeeded in offering a Trinitarian solution

to the problem of divine suffering by stressing that “the divinity of Jesus is revealed precisely in his humiliation and his manhood in his exaltation. We can say with Karl Barth that ‘*God* was in Christ, *God* humbled himself, *God* himself was on the cross” (*ibid.*: 203). Yet “theopaschite talk of the ‘death of God’ can be a general metaphor, but on closer inspection it will not hold”. If “there is a Trinitarian solution to the paradox that God is ‘dead,’ to conceive it properly we need to abandon ... the simple concept of God” (*ibid.*: 203). This simple concept of God is thoroughly criticized and transformed by von Balthasar’s formula of a “kenotic” theology, in which not only Christ’s death is depicted as the Father’s self-emptying in a crucial historical instance, but the Trinitarian nature of the godhead itself is conceived in terms of the unity of mutual acts of an eternal *kenosis* (von Balthasar 1990: 23ff.).

A narrower kind of death-of-god theology emerged in the works of Gabriel Vahanian, Paul van Buren, William Hamilton, John A. T. Robinson, Thomas J. J. Altizer and the rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein. We must distinguish between the properly so-called theological approaches to this important subject and the philosophical ones (about which see below). Admittedly, in Protestant theology most theological and philosophical interpretations of the Death of God coalesce. Nevertheless, we may safely say that Vahanian’s ground-breaking work of 1957, *The Death of God*, was meant to be a critical reflection on liberal developments of then contemporary Protestant theology, a theology attempting to face the explosion-like unfolding of a non-Christian secular culture first in the United States, then in Western Europe. There have been two characteristic reactions to this development. On the one hand, strong death-of-god theologians, such as Vahanian, van Buren, or Hamilton argued for the end of Christian theism, or even theism in a more general sense as well, because

The mythological view of the world has gone, and with it went the possibility of speaking seriously of a Heilsgeschichte: a historical ‘drama of salvation,’ in which God is said to have acted at a certain time in this world to change the state of human affairs (van Buren 1963: 11–2).

Weak death-of-god theologians, such as Robinson, Altizer, rabbi Rubenstein and the classical Protestant theologians of the twentieth century (Barth, Tillich, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer, and Pannenberg) are in line with the diagnosis of the former group, but proceed to a different conclusion, namely the need to renew theology and faith in accordance with the challenges of modern secular culture, especially the post-Second World War situation of Western civilization and the emerging new media world with its crushing effects on the traditional forms and contents of religion and religiosity.

However, the notion of the Death of God remains deeply embarrassing. If we follow the kind of interpretation offered by Alasdair MacIntyre in his review of Robinson's *Honest to God*, where MacIntyre identifies the problem as the sign of "plain atheism", we do not only simplify the problem; rather, we fail to comprehend it (MacIntyre in Edwards 1963: 214). First, the historical presence of the notion of the Death of God should be an indicator to the effect that this is one of the most important problems of religious history. Second, to form a well-balanced assessment of this notion and its significance we need to scrutinize the exact meaning of the expression of "the Death of God" (we need to "abandon the simple concept of God", as Moltmann suggested). Here we nevertheless meet various obstacles, for what most of the interpretations offer is only an aspect of the richness of the notion. It must be noted (see the following section) that there is a significant difference between the phrases "God has died" (as Hegel has it) and "God is dead" (in most English translations). If "God has died", he certainly lived a life still worth considering. On the other hand, the semantic narrowness of the expression "God is dead" suggests a different picture, a good starting point for a narrow kind of death-of-god theology, which may well be just the matter of an inappropriate translation. On a general level, the notion of the Death of God is not merely about the rise of a methodological, practical, or philosophical atheism; it is not only about the uncontrollable spread of laicism and secularism in modernity; it is not just about the end of a certain world-view or a kind of culture our forefathers lived in; it is not just a linguistic problem and perhaps not even a narrowly defined theological problem. Rather, the Death of God is like a cultural meme which propagates itself in ever new forms, while its core reality remains hidden in all its variations. Or in a deeper sense the Death of God may be seen as being an occurrence, which belongs not simply to history but rather to a realm the exact nature of which is still to be outlined. Perhaps we need to go beyond theology in order to grasp the genuine significance of this notion and even recall Carl Gustav Jung's insistence on the mysterious character of this notion (Jung 1964: 255).

The strong kind of death-of-god theology was too closely attached to premises it did not sufficiently investigate; often it accepted a state-of-the-art philosophy without questioning the underlying epistemology, such as the too simple conclusions of van Buren, which reveal a certain state in then contemporary philosophy of language, a state which has been repeatedly overwritten. The idea of the impossibility of meaningful talk of God in theological language has not only been successfully criticized by theologically interested philosophers over the last decades of the twentieth century; theologians of the same period were reluctant to accept strong death-of-god theologies and offered instead various interpretations of the weak kind. Such an interpretation is presented by Johann Baptist Metz, who accepts the expression of the "Death of God" in quotation marks so that he

can analyse what he rephrases as “the Crisis of God”. The Crisis of God entails a certain understanding of the death of God, the death of a theological vocabulary, a methodology and above all a general theological attitude, which turns its back on the universal presence of suffering in human persons and societies. The notion of the Crisis of God does not abolish the valuable developments of theological thought which were instrumental to the radical change in our theological culture, but reassess this change in a way that allows us to believe that the Death of God is dependent on a more fundamental notion, that of the everlasting and ever-changing God. This God remains an inscrutable mystery while at the same time being a legitimate theme of theological investigation now and in the future (Metz 2006: 69ff.).

DEATH OF GOD IN PHILOSOPHY

It is a rarely noticed circumstance that the meaning of “death” has importantly changed throughout the centuries. In Plato, death is defined as “the separation of the soul from the body” (e. g. *Phaedo* 64 c), a definition which remained influential during the Christian centuries. In this notion, death is not only a separation but a transition too, a transition from one kind of existence to another, from the earthly existence to a transcendent one. This notion is further developed in Christianity into the ultimate occurrence of a total resurrection. Christianity’s emphasis on the death of Christ, which became especially strong in the Middle Ages, added a particular weight to the importance of human death. This importance, however, became decisive only with the emergence of the notion of a unified person as the essence of human individuals (especially in the works of Fichte and Kant). If human beings are ultimate unities, then the end of life does not only concern one “part”, the body, but rather the whole human being as such. A different conclusion, namely that human personhood has a basic permanence or immortality, emerges only rarely in philosophical arguments, because the relationship between a dissoluble physical body and a permanent centre of personhood is not easily clarified (Taliaferro 2005: 161ff.). Nevertheless, a dramatized notion of death receives apocalyptic emphases only on the basis of a certain epistemology, which may be labelled as simple empiricism, according to which the unity of human beings is given in their physical identity. As the cumulative effect of all these factors – the drama of death in Christianity, death as the end of a unified human individual, simple empiricism as the underlying epistemology – we gain a new notion of death already distant from the idea of the ancient notion of separation or transition. Death, then, is something definitive. This latter notion of death appears fundamental in philosophical theories of the Death of God.

In Hegel, however, the dramatized notion of death, as an ultimate and ultimately isolated occurrence, is not yet fully displayed. It is indeed Hegel who first formulates the notion of the Death of God on a philosophical level. In the *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* we read:

Formerly, the infinite grief existed only historically in the formative process of culture. It existed as the feeling that 'God himself is dead,' upon which the religion of more recent times rests ... By marking this feeling as a moment of the supreme idea, the pure concept must give philosophical existence to what used to be either the moral precept that we must sacrifice the empirical being, or the concept of formal abstraction. Thereby it must re-establish for philosophy the idea of absolute freedom and along with it the absolute passion, the speculative Good Friday in place of the historic Good Friday (Quoted in Anderson 1996: XVI).

Similarly we read in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that “God is dead” (“Gott ist gestorben”, Hegel 1977: 455 and 585). In both passages, Hegel broadens the historical idea of a divine death into the general significance of negativity in the universal history of the Spirit. This negativity, even if crucial in an important sense, is not ultimate but calls for the positive and overwhelming reaction of the Spirit. Thereby Hegel remains attached to the pattern of the historical framework, in which the notion of the Death of God as the death of Christ is emphatically pronounced. Indeed, Hegel’s reference to the Death of God originates in Protestant pietism, especially the seventeenth century church hymn of Johann Rist (“O grosse Noth! Gott selbst ligt todt”). Hegel universalizes this simplified theological notion into a phase in the universal history of consciousness, in which the Absolute Spirit is outside itself, alienated from itself, and thus is in an external or dead state. The death of God as a phase in the universal history of the Spirit is superseded (*aufgehoben*, sublated) by the fullness of the Absolute; the “speculative Good Friday” is followed by the fulfilment of the Spirit. Negativity or the consciousness that “God has died” belongs essentially to the process of the universal synthesis. Thereby Hegel continues the Western emphasis on death and attributes a universal importance to it in the framework of his system.

As soon as this system is questioned, its moments begin an independent life. This is what happened to the notion of the death of God in the thought of Ludwig Feuerbach. For him, the notion of God is already a matter of abstraction and thus it embodies the end, or death, of the natural life of human beings. More concretely, Feuerbach says that “The Divine Being is the human being glorified by the death of abstraction; it is the departed spirit of man” (Feuerbach 2008: 60). Feuerbach comes close to the “ghost-theory” we saw above; and thus he expressed the growing dissatisfaction of Western intellectuals with the traditional Christian notion of

God and formulated its implausibility in the framework of his otherwise mystical kind of anthropology. In art, especially in the music of Wagner, a similar insight is formulated in a musical form of mythological content, such as the *Twilight of the Gods* of 1876, at the end of which the gods are consumed by an apocalyptic fire.

While Feuerbach refused to use the Hegelian language of the universal Spirit, Friedrich Nietzsche, the next influential author in the present context, returns to a figurative language closer to the hymn of Rist. Just as Rist expressed spiritual pain over the death of Christ by referring to the death of God, Nietzsche applies a poetic style in his writings. In *The Gay Science*, the “madman” seeks God in vain in the marketplace and then gives a peculiar explanation of the reason why God cannot be found:

‘Where is God?’ he cried; ‘I’ll tell you! We have killed him – you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun?’ (Nietzsche 2001: 119–20).

During the same period of the 1880s, Nietzsche used a more moderate formula in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: “God is dead; God died of his pity for mankind” (“Gott ist todt... ist Gott gestorben”, Nietzsche 2006: 5 and 69).

Nietzsche still moves in the then traditional framework of the notion of the Death of God: God is dead, because “we have killed him” and he is dead, because he died of his pity for mankind – motifs we regularly find in Christian theology and mysticism with respect to Christ. However, Nietzsche’s understanding of a figurative death of God was clearly meant to express the idea that not only Christ is the victim of our sins, as traditional Christian mysticism would have it, but God himself, the very notion and reality of God is victimized by the human race. Thereby he expressed his deep conviction of the implausibility of the classical notion of God in the *fin de siècle* atmosphere, and charges his own generation with committing an act of metaphysical murder.

The most important interpreter of Nietzsche’s dictum has been Martin Heidegger. It was Heidegger who created a complex yet enormously fruitful philosophical explanation of Nietzsche’s idea and thus determined the course of philosophical discussions in the subsequent decades. There are two important parts of Heidegger’s interpretation (Heidegger 2002: 157–200). In the first part, Heidegger elucidates Nietzsche’s understanding in the context of the latter’s thought. In the second part, Heidegger offers his own ontological interpretation of the importance of Nietzsche’s dictum in general and the notion of “God is dead” in particular. In a general sense, Heidegger defines the importance of Nietzsche’s phrase so that “for Nietzsche, Western philosophy understood as Platonism is at an end” (*ibid.*: 162).

As he explains, the end of Platonism is the beginning of “nihilism”, that is the notion that the God of the Biblical revelation has become implausible and thus “the highest values devalue themselves” (*ibid.*: 166). Devaluation is expressed especially in Nietzsche’s “revaluation of all values”, which is the inversion of the traditional Platonic understanding of reality. Heidegger’s appraisal of the philosophical importance of the notion of value can be grasped in that “value” for him is only a variant of the Platonic idea; and once Platonism as such becomes implausible, the talk about values does not help to stop the tide of nihilism and its consequences, such as “world catastrophes” (*ibid.*: 163). On the other hand, Nietzsche’s teaching of the “will to power” – which is of a metaphysical and not of a quotidian political importance – can be seen as the actual possibility of a new becoming, the central actor of which is “the overman” (*ibid.*: 187). The overman expresses the fundamental feature of all reality, the will to power and realizes by it a new shape of humanity leading beyond the tradition of Western metaphysics in which “Being has become value” (*ibid.*: 192). This change is identical with the forgetfulness of Being, one of Heidegger’s notions in which he goes beyond the narrow interpretation of Nietzsche and offers a more encompassing understanding: Nietzsche is regarded as the ultimate metaphysician who not only brings Western metaphysics to its fulfilment by unmasking Platonism and pointing out the emptiness of the supranatural, but defines a new understanding of Being as the will to power in the context of which Western metaphysics proves to be “an epoch of the history of Being itself” (*ibid.*: 198). Nietzsche opens the possibility of a broader and deeper experience, in which nihilism appears as a shadow of Being, which is conceivable only by our “remembrance” (*Andenken*). Yet Nietzsche was not able to grasp the essence of nihilism, because he never reached Be-ing (*Seyn*), in which thinking as thinking of Be-ing originates. Only this thinking of Be-ing is capable of sublating nihilism, or the onto-theological understanding of Being, into a newness of, what Heidegger calls, enowning (*Ereignis*): “The flight of gods must be experienced and endured. This steadfast enduring grounds the most remote nearness to enowning. This enowning is the truth of be-ing” (Heidegger 1999: 20).

The reception of Heidegger’s study on Nietzsche began in the 1950s and led to various approaches to the notion of the Death of God. Some of these approaches were explicitly theological. However, no theological reflection on the notion of the Death of God was initiated merely in the framework of theology; not even the theology of Karl Barth, which was a reaction to anthropomorphic religion and its theological implications, directly reflects on the crisis of the Death of God. Von Balthasar’s *Mysterium Paschale* is indicative of a kind of theological response, which goes far beyond the scope of the original impetus and produces a forceful theological structure, in which at least the problematic of the Death of God appears. The philosophical reactions, however, have already built a complex tradition, which is

still present; here we can identify the following types: a) Theological-philosophical responses, such as those of Altizer, Hans Jonas, or Metz; b) Critical philosophical responses, such as those of Emmanuel Lévinas or Jacques Derrida; c) Reductive philosophical responses, such as those of Gianni Vattimo or John. C. Caputo; d) We also see a response which answers the challenge by reshaping earlier forms of metaphysics and conceptual argumentation.

a) Among the most faithful death-of-god theologians Altizer's work is unique. Although he belonged to the founders of the movement in the 1960s, his development went far beyond the scope of the narrow kind of death-of-god theology and reached a peculiar philosophical and religious climax in which the notion of the Death of God is not simply the end of God, not even the impossibility of belief in God. Rather, the notion expresses a fundamental change in the divine itself, a change leading to a new development within the godhead. This latter cannot be termed religious, if "religion" is conceived as onto-theology; I suggest that Altizer's most appropriate term for it is "*coincidentia oppositorum*", the coincidence of opposing powers of light and darkness, good and evil, past and future, a coincidence in which "truly" apocalyptic thought becomes possible (Altizer 2002: 69; Altizer 2003: 35, 69 and 105). We have fulfilled the destiny of Western metaphysics and religion, the God of onto-theology is "dead"; we have thereby already trespassed into another age's understanding of the divine which cannot yet be properly described. What we can offer is a description of the metaphysical and moral dichotomies we inherited from classical systems of thought. We are facing "an absolutely new totality", that is 'possible only through the *Nihil*, only through the dead body of God, but this is that abysmal body which is not only a body of nothingness, but a body of nothingness embodying an ultimate sacrifice of itself, and only that sacrifice releases an ultimate and final joy' (Altizer 2003: 158; for a criticism of Altizer's "Gnosticism" see O'Regan 2001: 66ff.).

Hans Jonas' reaction is summarized in his text *The Concept of God after Auschwitz* (Jonas 1987). Jonas attempts to answer rabbi Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz* (Rubenstein 1966), in which the author offers a weak death-of-god theology from the perspective of Judaism. Rubenstein raises the question of God's non-existence or death after the historic trauma of the Holocaust. Jonas' answer to this challenge – again "A Jewish Voice", as the subtitle has it – is twofold: on the one hand, he rejects the simple epistemology behind a plain interpretation of the Death of God; on the other hand he describes a story, a "myth", which he borrows from the Cabalistic tradition of *tzimtzum* or God's self-restriction. It is God's self-restriction that makes possible human freedom – and also the emergence of various evils at the same time. God's self-restriction is in a sense God's death, a death which bestows epochal responsibility on human beings to restore God to a new life. In Jonas' interpretation, Auschwitz cannot be rationally explained; however it still

can be put into the narrative of the *tzimtzum*. The possibility of an understanding, however, is not given merely by a narrative, but rather the understanding and practicing of responsibility on the cultural, political and theological levels. This responsibility is capable of contributing to the emergence of a new notion and reality of God (Jonas 1984; Mezei 2013).

Metz's theological reflection on the problem focuses on "the crisis of God". His theological assessment is based in many ways on the work of contemporary philosophers, such as Jürgen Habermas, but as a whole his understanding of God as going through a "crisis" in modernity is the best example of a theological *Aufhebung*. By emphasizing the importance of suffering, Metz outlines a "political theology" by which Christians living in the age after Auschwitz may become able to face the overall presence of horrendous evil in our world without losing their faith in an omnipotent and benevolent God. The living "memory of passion" helps us to develop an alternative to weak or strong death-of-god theologies, an alternative indicating practical changes in the life of the faithful (Metz 2006).

b) Some of the philosophical responses to Heidegger's study of Nietzsche can be qualified as critical, because their opposition to the notion of Death of God, and especially Heidegger's interpretation of it, goes beyond the mere hermeneutical framework. Lévinas' thought can be read as a continuous discussion with Heidegger's fundamental points, among which the idea of onto-theology – that is the misleading understanding of Being in terms of particular beings – plays an important role. Onto-theology as the criticism of Western metaphysics is central for Lévinas as well; it corresponds to his idea of the full exteriority of God, his complete otherness, his appearance as the Other, as Infinity. Lévinas criticizes Heidegger on the ground that genuine onto-theology is not merely about the reduction of Being to beings, but rather the reduction of God to Being itself. God signifies "the other of being, the bursting and subversion of being"; God is not reducible to the Same, he remains Difference with which an ethical and responsible relationship between Man and God becomes possible (Lévinas 2000: 121ff.).

While his work was contemporaneous to the rise of death-of-god theologies, Lévinas is seen as having surpassed their scope in so far as his work stimulated what is now widely regarded as a theological revival in post-modernism. Derrida is perhaps the most influential thinker who left his previous secularist background and became an important representative of theologically inclined post-modern philosophers with a special commitment to a revised understanding of Judaism. This return to religion is indeed the most interesting development after the death-of-God movement, a development indicating two things: First, that the notion of the Death of God does not block the way to a renewal of a faith in a God, and second, that some of the new, theologically-inclined theories may still remain under the spell of the "nihilism" Nietzsche wrote about, a nihilism of a lifeless

exteriority of a distant godhead or the nihilism of a meaningless, an inessential, God of an unstructured multiplicity of interpretations (Derrida & Vattimo 1998; Caputo 1997).

c) Given these developments, the emergence of theologically and religiously interested post-secular discussions during the 1990s was less than surprising. We must take into consideration the tremendous political changes around that time, and especially the renewed presence of Central- and Eastern-European thinkers in the changing culture of the West. Thinkers such as Leszek Kolakowski, Slavoj Žižek or John Paul II supported the new development of a more complex and more critical view of the notion of the Death of God. A “return of religion” became apparent; and thinkers like Derrida, Vattimo or Caputo joined the trend. The effect of their work has been labelled as “the death of the death of God”, expressing thereby the unexpected turn in postmodern deconstruction, a turn echoed by various post-secular tendencies in the ex-Soviet countries as well (Tischner 1984; Žižek 2000; Mezei 2004). Postmodern became post-secular, and deconstruction proved to be the right means of deconstructing deconstruction and abolishing any organizing pattern in contemporary philosophy. As a result, the traditional patterns of thought, such as religious thinking, philosophy of religion, theology and God-talk have emerged again as focuses of legitimate interest. The two most influential contemporary figures instrumental to this change are Vattimo and Caputo. For both thinkers, our age displays what can be termed “desecularization”. For Vattimo “desecularization” is merely a partial reaction to overambitious theories of secularization. For Caputo, however, there is a real process of a “theological turn”, a return to and of God (Caputo & Vattimo 2007: 66). As Caputo writes,

To propose a postmodern theology of the Cross, to meditate the event that transpires in the death of Jesus, is to try to think a certain death of God, the death of the ens supremum et deus omnipotens, the death of the God of power, in order to release the event of the unconditional claim lacking worldly sovereignty that issues from the Cross” (ibid.: 66).

Thereby the notion of the Death of God re-emerges as an aspect of the fullness of the divine, a fullness imbued by the fragmentation of the post-secular age. Vattimo too attempts to reconcile his affection for secularization with his modest conjecture of the importance of such authors as Heidegger and Nietzsche; he describes the postmodern age as the inevitable fate of a wasted West, an age of a “weak thought” thinking a “weak God” under the climate of “the weakening of Being” (Vattimo 2002).

d) We need briefly to mention other reactions to the Death of God in contemporary philosophy. As William Lane Craig declared in 2008, “God is not yet

Dead.” The related article explains the various developments in Anglo-American philosophical theology, developments which expounded sophisticated and, too many, convincing logical arguments – both ontological and cosmological – for the existence of God. As a result of the thought of Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne, various schools emerged that now pursue the serious work of a scientifically and logically minded philosophical theology, a theology (Craig 2008 a; Craig 2008 b; Swinburne 2008; Meister 2009; Plantinga 2011). As an important development, Taliaferro’s “integrative theism” defends classical theism and emphasizes God’s active presence in the world (Taliaferro 2005: 297ff.). In the European context, the “theological turn of phenomenology” must be mentioned, which appeared partly as a reaction to death-of-god theologies, and partly as the result of the influence of the thought of Lévinas. Michel Henry, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion and Miklos Vetö are excellent representatives of serious post-death-of-god philosophy, which continues the valuable traditions of phenomenology and enlarges them into a new metaphysics (Vetö 2012) or a negative theology of the supersensational divine (Marion *et al.*, 2000). In Central and Eastern Europe, a new theological-philosophical thinking is being born out of the rich sources of cultural traditions and the direct experience of the Holocaust as historic evil (Mezei 2013: 6).

EVIL

The notion of the Death of God has been intrinsically combined with the notion of evil. Evil is indeed the force that brings about the death of gods, Osiris, Christ, or God himself. Evil as an ultimate destructive power is still constitutive in all the documents we find about the history of the Death of God. Again, the meaning of “evil” has radically changed throughout the centuries. The general tendency points to an ever more articulate, isolated and categorical conception of evil as opposed to an inarticulate, naturally conceived power, which is called to be reconciled with its victim in a final unity. A natural notion of evil has gradually been superseded by the abstract, well-defined notion of evil, radical evil and diabolical evil (Kant 2009:17ff; 47), and even by historic evil (Mezei 2013: 6), which cannot be domesticated metaphysically, politically, or morally. The notion of the Death of God in Hegel and Nietzsche still bears the feature of the openness to a kind of reconciliation – the final synthesis of the Spirit or the will to power of the overman. It is only in Heidegger’s thought that we meet for the first time a different conception of the general context of the Death of God, nihilism: Nihilism is the default of Being, Being’s self-withdrawal, which displays an inner tragedy of Being, a tragedy we cannot fathom. The ultimate form of evil, in this approach, is irreconcilable; and it is exactly this irreconcilable feature of evil which is understood by Heidegger as

presenting to us the genuine possibility of newness we are not yet properly aware of (Heidegger 1961 and 1999).

Heidegger's insight must be understood in its historical context; while his understanding clearly refers to the catastrophes of the twentieth century, especially the German tragedy, the Holocaust is still to be seen as the most important expression, even the central metaphor, of contemporary evil. This centrality of tragedy, as represented by the great occurrences of history, points beyond itself and opens the possibility of a radical newness. The ultimate conceivability of evil is given in this openness; for an absolutely closed, apocalyptic evil would not even be conceivable in any sense. Evil's positivity, however, is not fully grasped in a number of philosophical and theological reflections on the notion of the Death of God. For understanding this notion as analogous to the physical death of an individual presupposes a narrowly empiricist epistemology, which does not properly belong to the notion itself. Theories emphasizing the simple "end" of all God-narratives fall into the trap of presupposing the validity of a non-necessary, even peripheral epistemology. Other theories, which offer a version of a traditional theological pattern, are in a better position; however, one must be cautious not to revive pre-death-of-god theologies without an appropriate revision of their metaphysical basis. It is possible to answer the challenge of the notion of the Death of God in more or less traditional ways, however such answers may prove to be implausible in our present historical situation. Similarly, radical theories of the Death of God may be misled by the expression's metaphorical nature and propose outlandish conclusions, which weaken the explosive power of the notion. In theology properly so called, the notion of the Death of God cannot be avoided: it must be central. Not only because theology is in need of a purification of some of its unexamined presuppositions, traditions, methodologies and vocabularies, but rather because serious theological work on this notion leads to fruitful insights and new possibilities. This notion is not just a secondary idea of a mentally ill philosopher living at the end of the nineteenth century; rather, the notion of the Death of God displays a fundamental process in the core of reality, a process urging individual human persons as well as contemporary humanity itself to redefine their understanding of themselves and the world.

In this perspective, the evolution of the notion of evil in Western history parallels the evolution of the notion of the Death of God and, ultimately, the divine itself. The more elaborate the notion of evil we possess in a philosophical and theological context, the more distinctive our notion of God becomes; and the more non-synthesizable is the experience of evil, the more chance we are given to reach a new conception of the divine. It is a lesson of history that the experience of great catastrophes, such as the Holocaust in recent times, instigated processes which led to historic changes in our notion of the divine. Drawing an ever changing pattern

of mystery, the experience of evil points indeed to a power, “which always wills the Bad, and always works the Good” (Goethe 2005: 47). Here we find the importance of the history of the notion of the Death of God, a history with no end in sight.

Further reading

- ALTIZER, T. J. J., *Godhead and the Nothing*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2003.
- CAPUTO, J. D. – VATTIMO, G., *After The Death of God*, With an Afterword by Gabriel Vahanian, New York, Columbia University Press, 2007.
- CRAIG, W. L., God Is Not Dead Yet: How current philosophers argue for his existence, 2008b, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/july/13.22.html>, accessed July 2013.
- DERRIDA, J. – Vattimo G. (ed.), *Religion*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998.
- HEIDEGGER, M., Nietzsche’s Word: “God is dead.”, in J. Young – K. Haynes (ed. trans.), *Off the Beaten Track*, Cambridge, CUP, 2002.
- JONAS, H., *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, Stuttgart, Suhrkamp, 1987.
- LÉVINAS, E., *God, Death and Time*, trans. B. Bergo, Stanford, SUP, 2000.
- MARION, J-L. et al., *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”: The French Debate*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2000.
- NIETZSCHE, F., *The Gay Science*, trans. J. Nauckhoff, Cambridge, CUP, 2001.
- NIETZSCHE, F., *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. A. Del Caro, Cambridge, CUP, 2006.
- O’REGAN, C., *The Gnostic Return in Modernity*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2001.
- RUBENSTEIN, R., *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966.
- VAHANIAN, G., *The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era*, New York, George Braziller, 1961, [1957].

Bibliography

- À KEMPIS, T., *The Imitation of Christ*, New York, Macmillan, 1959.
- ALTIZER, T. J. J., *The New Gospel of Christian Atheism*, Aurora, CO., The Davies Group, 2002.
- ALTIZER, T. J. J., *Godhead and the Nothing*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2003.
- ANDERSON, D. S., *Hegel’s Speculative Good Friday: The Death of God in Philosophical Perspective*, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1996.
- AQUINAS, T., *Summa theologica*, Salzburg, A. Pustet, 1933.
- CALABI, F., *God’s Acting, Man’s Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria*, Leiden, Brill, 2008.
- CAPUTO, J. D., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, Fordham, FUP, 1997.
- CAPUTO, J. D. – VATTIMO, G., *After The Death of God*, With an Afterword by Gabriel Vahanian, New York, Columbia University Press, 2007.
- CHANTEPIE DE LA SAUSSAYE, P. D., *Manual of the Science of Religion*, trans. B. S. Colyer-Fergusson, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1891.
- CHRYSOSTOM, Saint J., *Sermo catecheticus in pascha*, in J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 59, 1862.

- CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, Stromata, in C. Cleveland (ed.), *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.
- COOPER, J. M. (ed.), Phaedo, in *Plato: The Complete Works*, Indianapolis and Cambridge, Hackett, 1997.
- CRAIG, W. L. – W. Sinnott-Armstrong, *God? A Debate between a Christian and an Atheist*, Oxford, OUP, 2008a.
- CRAIG, W. L., *God Is Not Dead Yet: How current philosophers argue for his existence*, 2008b, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/july/13.22.html>, accessed July 2013.
- DERRIDA, J. – VATTIMO, G. (ed.), *Religion*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998.
- DUPUIS, C-F., *L'origine de tous les cultes, ou la religion universelle*, Douze volumes, Paris, Chez H. Agasse, 3 rue des Poitevins, L'an III de la République, Une et Indivisible, 1795.
- EDWARDS, D. L. (ed.), *The "Honest To God" Debate: Some Reactions to the Book "Honest to God"*, London, SCM Press, 1963.
- ELIADE, M., *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, New York, Harper, 1959a.
- ELIADE, M., *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc, 1959b.
- ELIADE, M., *The Portugal Journal*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2010.
- EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Preparation for the Gospel*, trans. E. H. Gifford, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1903.
- FEUERBACH, L., *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. G. Eliot, Mt. San Antonio College, Walnut, MSAC Philosophy Group, 2008.
- FRAZER, J. G., *The Dying God, The Golden Bough*, part III., London, Macmillan, 1911.
- GOETHE, J. W., *Faust*, trans. B. Taylor, A Penn State Electronic Classics Series Publication, The Pennsylvania State University, 2005.
- HAAS, A. M., *Mystik als Aussage: Erfahrungs-, Denk- und Redeformen christlicher Mystik*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 1996.
- HEGEL, G. W. F. – Schelling, F. W. J., *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*, vols 1 and 2, Tubingen, Cotta, 1802–1803.
- HEGEL, G. W. F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford, OUP., 752, 1977.
- HEIDEGGER, M., *Nietzsche I-II*, Pfullingen, Neske, 1961.
- HEIDEGGER, M., *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. P. Emad – K. Maly, Indiana, IUP, 1999.
- HEIDEGGER, M., Nietzsche's Word: "God is dead.", in J. Young – K. Haynes (ed., trans.), *Off the Beaten Track*, Cambridge, CUP, 2002.
- JONAS, H., *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- JONAS, H., *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, Stuttgart, Suhrkamp, 1987.
- KANT, I., *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, trans. W. S. Pluhar, Indianapolis – Cambridge, Hackett, 2009.
- JUNG, C. G., *Man and his Symbols*, New York, Anchor Press, 1964.
- LÉVINAS, E., *God, Death and Time*, trans. B. Bergo, Stanford, SUP, 2000.
- MARION, J-L. et al., *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2000.
- MEISTER, C., *Introducing Philosophy of Religion*, London – New York, Routledge, 2009.
- METZ, J. B., *Memoria passionis: Ein provozierendes Gedächtnis in pluralistischer Gesellschaft*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien, Herder, 2006.

- MEZEI, B. M., *Vallásbölcsélet [Philosophy of Religion]*, Vols., I–II, Budapest, Attractor, 2004.
- MEZEI, B.M., *Religion and Revelation after Auschwitz*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2013.
- MOLTMANN, J., *The Crucified God, The Cross of Christ as the Foundation*, 1993.
- MURPHY, F. A., Aristotle and the Saviour, in *Theological Theology: Essays in Honor of John B. Webster*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015.
- NIETZSCHE, F., *The Gay Science*, trans. J. Nauckhoff, Cambridge, CUP, 2001.
- NIETZSCHE, F., *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. A. Del Caro, Cambridge, CUP, 2006.
- O'REGAN, C., *The Gnostic Return in Modernity*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2001.
- PLANTINGA, A., *Where the Conflict really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*, Oxford, OUP, 2011.
- PLUTARCH, *The Obsolescence of Oracles*, in *Moralia*, trans. F. C. Babbitt, vol. V, London, England – Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1999.
- RIST, J., *Klätliches Grab-Lied*, 1641, www.lyrik-und-lied.de/ll.pl?kat=typ.show.song.eb&&ds=1780&id=1921&add=&start=0, accessed July 2013.
- RUBENSTEIN, R., *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966.
- SPENCER, H., *The Principles of Sociology*, 3 vols., New York and London, Appleton, 1921.
- SWINBURNE, R., *Was Jesus God?* Oxford, OUP, 2008.
- TALIAFERRO, C., *Consciousness and the Mind of God*, Cambridge, CUP, 2005.
- TISCHNER, J., *The Spirit of Solidarity*, trans. M. B. Zaleski – B. Fiore, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1984.
- VAHANIAN, G., *The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era*, New York, George Braziller, 1961, [1957].
- VAN BUREN, P. M., *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel: Based on an Analysis of Its Language*, New York, Macmillan, 1963.
- VAN DER LEEUW, G. *Einführung in die Phänomenologie der Religion*, München, Ernst Reinhardt, 1925.
- VATTIMO, G., *After Christianity*, trans. L. D'Isanto, New York, Columbia University Press, 2002.
- VETÖ, M., *L'élargissement de la métaphysique*, Paris, Hermann, 2012.
- VON BALTHASAR, H. U., *Myterium Pascale*, trans. A. Nichols, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1990.
- WOODARD, R. D., *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology*, Cambridge, CUP, 2007.
- ŽIŽEK, S., *The Fragile Absolute*, London, Verso, 2000.