Old Testament Theology and Philosophy of Religion: A Brief History of Interdisciplinary Relations

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ABSTRACT

Overviews of the history of biblical interpretation sometimes include references to major philosophical trends, ideas and sub-disciplines that have influenced readers of the Old Testament (OT). Curiously, no overview exclusively devoted to describing relations to philosophy of religion has ever been written. In this paper, the first such account is provided by way of a purely descriptive introduction to how OT theologians have remarked on and utilised philosophical approaches to the study of religion.

A   INTRODUCTION

Histories of Old Testament (hereafter OT) interpretation often refer to biblical scholars' relations with influential philosophical trends of the day.[1] Conspicuously absent from the discussions is a historical account exclusively devoted to tracing the references to *philosophy of religion* in scholarly writings.[2] In view of this gap in the research, the present article has the objective of offering a purely introductory historical overview of the data available for further critical

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[1]   Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology. Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (3rd. ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); John Hayes & Frederick Prussner, *Old Testament Theology — Its History and Development* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985); Ben C. Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology. Flowering and Future* (2nd ed., Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004). Magne Saebø, ed., *Beginnings to the Middle Ages* (vol. 1 of *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Magne Saebø, ed., *Middle Ages to the Reformation* (vol. 2 of *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Magne Saebø, ed., *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (vol. 3 of *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); John Sandys-Wunsch, *What Have They Done to The Bible?* (New York: Liturgical Press, 2005).
[2]   For some references, see Robert C. Dentan, *Preface to Old Testament Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1963), 16-20; Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 25; James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology. An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 3, 146; Ollenburger, *Old Testament theology*, 22; Christoph Bultmann, "Early Rationalism and Biblical Criticism on The Continent," in *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (vol. 3 of *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation*; ed. M. Saebø, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 896.

assessment in the future. Given that both disciplines are products of the modern world, the complexities in writing a unitary history and limitation of space, the discussion will be limited to evidence from the last two centuries. The overview is provided from the perspective of biblical theology.[3]

B   RELATIONS SINCE GABLER

1   Initial Positive Varieties of Interaction

The first OT theologies all adopted a philosophical framework.[4] Mediations of Kantian and Hegelian philosophies of religion played an influential role[5] as did Enlightenment epistemology's turn to history in the flight from allegory.

When Johann Phillip Gabler bid biblical scholars to take leave of dogmatics in biblical theology at his inaugural lecture in 1787, it could have meant taking leave of philosophical reflection on Israelite religion as well. After all, philosophy was considered the handmaid of dogmatic theology and putting aside the one might well have involved doing so with the other. While many biblical scholars would argue precisely along this line of *non-sequitur* reasoning (as many still do), things were not so simple. Gabler himself was a professor in philosophy before his appointment in theology and not surprisingly his entire project of separating biblical and dogmatic theology was itself motivated by philosophical criteria:

> But let those things that have been said up to now be worth this much: that we distinguish carefully the divine from the human, that we establish some distinction between biblical and dogmatic theology, and after we have separated those things which in the sacred books refer most immediately to their own times and to the men of their own times from those pure notions which the divine wished to be characteristic of all times and places, *let us then construct the foundation of our philosophy upon religion* and let us designate with some care the objectives of human and divine wisdom (emphasis

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3   The subject of the history of the OT in philosophy of religion is discussed in another paper, see Jaco Gericke, "The Hebrew Bible in Recent Philosophy of Religion," *VE* (forthcoming 2010).

4   Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, 5.

5   In discussing Hegelian and Kantian influence, biblical theologians have often done so focusing only on metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and philosophy of history without specific attention to either's philosophy of religion with reference to ancient Israelite religion. For more on that subject, see David Kolb, *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Suny Press, 1992); Raymond K. Williamson, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Suny Press, 1984), especially 49-51, 322, 341; Philip Rossi, "Kant's Philosophy of Religion," *SEP* (Winter 2009 Edition), n.p. [cited 10 Jan. 2010], (ed. Edward N. Zalta). Online: http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/kant-religion/ and also the supplementary file dealing with the influence of Kant's philosophy of religion.

mine).[6]

For Gabler, in other words, the ultimate aim of a historical biblical theology was to provide a more sure foundation for a normative philosophy of religion. Gabler adopted his agenda from the ideas of Samuel F. N. Morus, a classical philologist and philosopher.[7] The philosophical context for the earliest biblical theology is quite explicit in some of Morus' publications which compare the process of eliciting universal truths of scripture with the process of eliciting universal truths from the particulars in philosophy.[8] For Gabler, the task of biblical theology was not finished after literary criticism and historical criticism had done their work – that only gives us "true biblical theology." What is further required is arriving at a "pure biblical theology," something only made possible by "philosophical criticism."[9] By this Gabler meant a rationalist sorting process of reconstructing universal elements from the history of Israelite religion with the particularist nuances of socio-cultural contingencies removed. The result of such "purification" was seen as a preliminary step on the way to a Christian philosophy of religion proper.

Johann Gottfried Eichhorn was another ex-philosophy professor who "converted" to OT studies. Though interested in philosophical reflection on ancient Israelite religion, Eichhorn was a severe critic of Kantian moral exegesis popular at the time. Eichhorn characterised Kant's program as a relapse into an antiquated allegorical method that originated in early philosophical interpretations of Homeric mythology and entered OT interpretation through what Eichhorn called "early Jewish Alexandrian philosophy of religion."[10]

In 1796, Georg Lorenz Bauer produced the first OT theology and adamantly distanced himself from the philosophical eisegesis of those he referred to as "church fathers, allegorists and mystics." Severely opposed to the ways in which "every philosopher found his system enshrined" in the religious ideas of ancient Israel,[11] Bauer wanted to read the text only by way of grammatical and historical considerations. Yet Bauer himself could not avoid himself having recourse to concepts and categories popular in philosophy of religion and anachronistically referred to ancient Israelite god-talk as being concerned with the "eternity and immutability of God."[12] He even wrote of YHWH as "the most

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[6]   Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology. Flowering and Future*, 502.

[7]   Rolf P. Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1995), 531.

[8]   John Sandys-Wunsch & Laurence J. P. Eldredge. "Gabler and The Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology – Translation, Commentary and Discussion of His Originality," *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1980): 133-158.

[9]   See Hasel, *Old Testament Theology,* 17.

[10]   Reventlow, "Towards the End of the Century of Enlightenment," 838.

[11]   Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology. Flowering and Future*, 5.

[12]   Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology. Flowering and Future*, 5.

rational (*vernünfstige*), highest, wise, self-subsistent cause of the world."[13] In this manner, Bauer's attempted purely historical OT theology was still dependent on an anachronistic "perfect being theology."

For Christoph Friedrich von Ammon (as for Bauer) the task of OT theology was indeed to produce a foundation for a more purely philosophical theology. This would be done by way of citing proof-texts and testing them according to criterion of rationality understood in a Kantian moral sense. Still, Von Ammon's use of Kant was often cautious and he regarded interpretation on the basis of pure practical reason as a philosophical *midrash* and as a "species of allegory."[14]

Another philosophical theology of the OT is found in the writings of Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette who also wrote under the influence of Kant as mediated through the anthropology of Jakob F. Fries. The latter revised Kant's idealism in the context of philosophy of religion and De Wette aimed to translate ancient Israelite religious concepts into more contemporary philosophical terms based on their inner nature and not on their outer form.[15] In this way, philosophy in the form of Kantian idealism was believed to provide a means of merging historical and philosophical readings on the way to constructing a philosophy of religion proper.

The next character is Gottlieb Phillipp Christian Kaiser who sought to provide a more Hegelian framework for OT theology by subsuming the Hebrew Bible under the universal history of religion and then ultimately under the universal religion.[16] This was definitely more Hegelian than Kantian in terms of philosophical dependence in that the diachronic development of ancient Israelite religion now came to be viewed as part of the general historical dialectic.

Another Hegelian was Johann Karl Wilhelm Vatke. Hegel's philosophy of religion provided Vatke's with what he considered to be a hermeneutical foundation for understanding Israelite religion and he wanted to relieve the methodological tension between history and philosophy via unity on a higher level.[17] Vatke (1835) wrote an extended philosophical preface in his treatment of OT theology and showed that philosophical and historical concerns are not necessarily incommensurable. Vatke was also distinguished by the fact that he himself wrote a fully-fledged *Religionsphilosophie*.[18]

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[13]   Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology. Flowering and Future*, 5.
[14]   Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology. Flowering and Future*, 5.
[15]   Hasel, *Old Testament Theology. Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 18.
[16]   Hasel, *Old Testament Theology. Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 19.
[17]   Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology. Flowering and Future*, 8.
[18]   Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology. Flowering and Future*, 8.

Bruno Bauer, a student of Vatke more remembered as a radical New Testament (hereafter NT) scholar wrote a historical philosophy of Israelite religion along Hegelian lines in 1838 entitled, *Das Religion des Alten Testaments in der geschichtlichen Entwicklung ihrer Principien*. In this work, we find a critique of Hegel's history of revelation and an attempt to discredit Hegel's subordination of the Hebrew faith to the philosophical religions of Greece and Rome.[19]

An interesting development during this time concerns the trend to conceive of ancient Israelite wisdom literature analogous to Europe's "*Geistesgeschichte*" (a trend that culminated a century later in Von Rad's idea of a Solomonic "Enlightenment").[20] Already in Eichhorn do we encounter the classification of ancient Israelite proverbial wisdom as "philosophical poetry" while de Wette opted for "practical philosophy" (contrasting it with speculative philosophy).[21] Also Heinrich Ewald would identify ancient Israelite with philosophy and by the end of the nineteenth century we come across discussions of biblical wisdom literature under headings such as "The religious and moral philosophy of the Hebrews" (for example, in Eduard Reuss's translation of the Hebrew Bible). Even as late as 1914, Karl Kautsch could still entitle a small book *Die Philosophie des Alten Testaments*, with the focus being on moral philosophy and philosophical anthropology. Also for Johann. F. Bruch the key word for Israelite wisdom was neither humanism nor secularism (as became popular in the twentieth century) but "philosophy."[22]

However, alongside to the above-mentioned philosophical approaches were others hoping to proceed more purely historically. One example was Daniel Georg Conrad von Cölln's work published in 1836 in which he attempted to argue against De Wette's alleged introduction of philosophy into biblical theology. In addition, during the mid-nineteenth century, the anti-philosophical tirades began to multiply, particularly within conservative reactions against rationalist perspectives on ancient Israelite religion.[23] This prepared the way for the anti-philosophical sentiment to come in the twentieth century.

2   The Rise of Anti-Philosophical Sentiment

The situation was still promising for interdisciplinary interaction in the early days of the twentieth century as interest in OT theology returned after a period

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[19]   Hayes & Prussner, *Old Testament Theology — Its History and Development*, 105.

[20]   Rudolph Smend, "The Interpretation of Wisdom in Nineteenth-Century Scholarship," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel* (ed. John Day, Robert. P. Gordon & Hugh R. Williamson, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 265-267.

[21]   Smend, "The Interpretation of Wisdom in Nineteenth-Century Scholarship," 266.

[22]   See Smend, "The Interpretation of Wisdom in Nineteenth-Century Scholarship," 257-286 for a detailed discussion.

[23]   Hayes & Prussner, *Old Testament Theology — Its History and Development*, 105.

of decline following the dominance of the history of religion.[24] Because philosophy of religion became more prominent in the academic world during this time, part of the new methodological debate in biblical scholarship actually included discussions explicitly concerned with the relationship between OT theology and a philosophical approach to religion. An early example of this trend is to be found in the writings of Rudolph Kittel who argued that the history of religion must be expanded into OT theology by way of a philosophy of religion in order to arrive at some higher essence or truth.[25]

In 1923, Willy Staerk raised the question of the relation between the history and philosophy of religion and biblical theology.[26] Staerk granted the history of religion its due but called for philosophical reflection on the historical data from a phenomenological point of view so that OT theology might come to its fulfilment as a component of systematic theology.[27] Staerk also proposed a philosophical starting point, defining religion in terms of a transcendental unity of apperception in the experience of the unconditioned personal as a synthetic *a priori*.[28] Here we find a continuation of a Hegelian philosophy of ancient Israelite religion in the sense of it being an attempt to locate OT theology within the context of the historical development of religious consciousness.

A few years later Carl Steuernagel[29] begged to differ from the views of Staerk and proposed the systematic presentation of OT theology in concepts drawn from purely historical analysis, without borrowing these categories from philosophy (in 1922 König had made a similar suggestion). The idea became influential especially after being expounded in the work of Walter Eichrodt. Eichrodt reasserted the idea of König regarding the need for intra-textual categories rather than systematic theological ordering principles.[30] Though phenomenology could be selectively applied, the presence of descriptive philosophical concerns would be seen in a negative light and as theologically insufficient.[31] During this time it became fashionable to point out differences between "biblical" (Hebrew) and "philosophical" (Greek) thinking in religion. According to Eichrodt:

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[24] Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology. Flowering and Future*, 22.
[25] Rudolph Kittel, "Die Zukunft der altestamentlichen Wissenschaft," ZAW 39 (1921): 96.
[26] Willy Staerk, *Religionsgeschichte und Religionsphilosphie und ihrer Bedeutung für die biblische Theologie des AT* in *Zeitschrift fur Theologie und Kirche* 4 (1923): 289-300.
[27] Staerk, *Religionsgeschichte und Religionsphilosphie*, 290.
[28] Staerk, *Religionsgeschichte und Religionsphilosphie*, 292.
[29] Carl Steuernagel, "Altestamentliche Theologie und altestamentliche Religionsgeschichte," in *Vom Alten Testament*, *Festschrift für K. Marti* (ed. K. Budde, BZAW 41, Giessen: Töpelmann, 1925), 266-273.
[30] Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 29-32.
[31] See James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 31.

> In *striking contrast to the religious philosophy of Greece* we are dealing not with a timeless idea, a new state of the soul, an interpretation of the world which is independent of history but with a once and for all decisive event…[32]

Commenting later on Gerhard von Rad's problematic distinction between the history of Israelite religion and biblical history, Eichrodt would criticise the idea by way of concluding that:

> One cannot avoid characterizing it as a *religious philosophy.*[33]

Eichrodt also found it necessary to inform his readers that anyone trained in philosophical thinking will be "constantly scandalized" by the biblical authors' anthropomorphic conceptions of God.[34] He also felt that like ideas of "the heathen," "philosophical theories" of creation *ipso facto* "carry within them the seed of pessimism"[35] as it is only "heathen and philosophical thought that speak of the world as having no beginning."[36] Ancient Israelite conceptions of the world was therefore to be sharply distinguished from the "philosophical manipulation of the world as a rational institution[sic]"[37] Eichrodt also warned that:

> The living movement of God's dealing with men disappears when philosophical abstraction dictates the language to be employed.[38]

Given the bracketing of philosophy of religion along with a more cautious use of the history of religion, it is understandable that references to that subject in OT theologies would remain far and few in-between. Notable instances include, for example, a sentence in Gerhard von Rad who, in his discussion of monotheistic tendencies in Deutero-Isaiah, had some or other axe to grind when he felt the need to point out the following otherwise trivial bit of data:

> But with him [i.e.Deutero-Isaiah] there is no truth based on *philosophy of religion*; he believes rather than only those who confess Jahweh are able to make his solity as the lord of history credible

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[32] Emphasis mine, Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (vol. 1, trans. John A. Baker, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1961), 505.

[33] Emphasis mine, Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* 1, 514.

[34] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* 1, 104

[35] Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (vol. 2, trans. John A. Baker, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1967), 108.

[36] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* 2, 104.

[37] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* 2, 111-112

[38] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* 2, 216.

(emphasis mine).[39]

Interestingly, von Rad had no problem thinking of the prophet as expounding a "philosophy of *history*."[40] The inconsistencies in biblical theologies relations with philosophy of religion begin to proliferate. One example of a remark that is not negative yet implies the context as anomalous is an admission by Ludwig Köhler who, in a discussion of the concept of spirit in the OT (a topic in which the dichotomy with Greek thought has tended to reach fever pitch), felt the need to inform his readers that:

> When the Old Testament speaks of spirit its language approximates more than anywhere else to the language of the *philosophy of religion* and spirit becomes something in terms of which God almost ceases to exist (emphasis mine).[41]

Notwithstanding such ambivalent dispositions, by mid-century relations between OT theology and philosophy of religion really did take a turn for the worst. Many OT theologians, unaware of their own philosophical assumptions (usually semi-existentialist and personalist)[42] came to think of philosophical readings of the OT as a-priori hermeneutically illegitimate. The dismissal of the involvement of philosophy in attempts to understand ancient Israelite religion would soon be very aggressively promoted by adherents of the so-called *Biblical Theology Movement* which saw itself as being overtly anti-philosophical in its orientation to ancient Israelite religion.[43]

> The biblical theology movement constantly opposed the influence of modern philosophy and its constructs as modes to understand biblical thought. It also tended strongly to reject an understanding of the Bible on the basis of Greek thought and its categories. In its rejection of the domineering effect of modern philosophy it shared once again a concern of neo-orthodoxy. The attempt was to understand the Bible outside certain modern or ancient philosophical norms and patterns of thought. It was argued that the Bible must be understood "in its own categories" (James Muilenburg) and the scholar must put himself "within the world of the Bible" (B W Anderson). The contrast between Greek and Hebrew thought (T Boman and others) became rather important. Although the NT was written in Greek, the Hebrew mentality was common to both testaments. The idea of the

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[39]   Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology. The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 212.

[40]   William A. Dryness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (New York: Intervarsity Press, 1979) 219, 222.

[41]   Ludwig Köhler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. Andrew. S. Todd, London: James Clarke & Co, 1957), 112.

[42]   According to James Barr, *The Concept of Old Testament Theology*, 168.

[43]   James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 8-20.

> Hebrew mentality led to significant studies of words in both testaments. The outlines of the Hebraic thought patterns were reflected in the words of the Hebrew language, and this Hebraic thought content was also communicated through the vehicle of language (Greek) of the NT.[44]

Examples of literature trying to divorce the biblical traditions from any and all relations with the philosophical are many. In 1949 Frankfort & Frankfort published their *Before Philosophy* which distinguished the Hebrew Bible both from philosophy and myth, even as it utilised insights of the philosophy of mythology developed by Ernst Cassirer.[45] There is also George E. Wright's book *The Old Testament against Its Environment* (1950) in which the author went to great lengths to distance biblical culture from, amongst other things, philosophical reflection. Wright considered it his solemn duty to share the breaking news that:

> …Israelite monotheism was not derived from philosophical speculation...[46]

The ruling assumption of the time includes the misconception that there happened to be such a thing as "Hebrew thought" or a Semitic mindset (and "biblical" logic) which stood over and against Greek/Hellenistic thought (or "philosophical" and Aristotelian logic).[47] It was now quite popular to deny that Western logic and Aristotelian metaphysics were applicable to ancient Israelite religious epistemology. The idea of "Hebrew thought" led to the stereotyping of philosophical reflection on religion as a-priori abstract, static, theoretic and systematic that was alleged to be out of place in the context of biblical revelation which itself was constructed to look concrete, dynamic, practical, and historical.[48]

Interactive relations with philosophy of religion soon became virtually non-existent. Very few OT theologies written during the greater part of the second half of the twentieth century would contain any reference to that discipline at all. One example is found in the writings of Robert Dentan whose OT theol-

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[44]   Gerhard F. Hasel, "Biblical Theology Movement," n.p. [cited 12 Jan. 2010]. Online: http://mb-soft.com/believe/txn/bibtheol.htm.

[45]   Henry Frankfort & Henriette A. Frankfort, *Before Philosophy. The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (London: Penguin, 1949).

[46]   George E. Wright, *The Old Testament Against its Environment* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co, 1950), 39.

[47]   James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation. A Study of the Two Testaments* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 42.

[48]   Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation*, 42. For the classic and most familiar and influential studies here are Johannes Pederson, *Israel. Its Life and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926-1940); and Thorleif Borman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (3rd rev. ed., New York: W. W. Norton, 1970).

ogy contains a very short section of no more than four pages which he entitled: "The influence of the philosophy of religion."[49] No possibility of auxiliary involvement of philosophical approaches to the study of Israelite religion is even imagined. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that we find in other writings during this time many sustained attempts to discredit philosophical reflection on theological grounds. Thus as Avery-Dulls wrote:

> Any number of supposedly biblical theologies in our own day are so heavily infected with contemporary personalist, existential or historical thinking as to render their biblical basis highly suspect.[50]

This is no marginal point of view. To this day many biblical scholars rage either against the Enlightenment or post-modernism. Additional swear-words in the biblical theologian's vocabulary are "rationalism," "idealism," "historicism," "positivism," "relativism," "nihilism," etcetera – all of which, we should know, are taboo.[51] OT theologies after mid-century began to make a point of emphasising that the Hebrew Bible is not philosophical in its concerns and that one looks in vain for neat philosophical definitions or systems in the Hebrew Bible. It was also endlessly insinuated that philosophical questions, being anachronistic, were hermeneutically illegitimate and that philosophical reflection on ancient Israelite religion had no place in OT theology. Thus it could soon be noted that:

> Much has been said about the imposition of the categories of Greek philosophy on the Bible, and the consequent distortion of the Bible.[52]

Of course, all of this was quite inconsistent and few biblical theologians even bothered to note that a sub-discipline such as OT ethics was a philosophical concern. Also the god-talk of biblical theology remained enslaved to that of Christian philosophical theology. Yet admissions to the philosophical background of theology as such were only made reluctantly and with a sense of smug superiority, as in Van Imschoot:

> It is the honour[sic] of Greek philosophy to give us our technical

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[49]   Robert C. Dentan, *Preface to Old Testament Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1963), 16-20.

[50] Avery Dulls, Response to Krister Stendahl's 'Method in the Study of Biblical. Theology," in The Bible in Modern Scholarship (ed. J. Philip Hyatt; *Papers Read at The 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 28-30, 1964*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1965).

[51]   Walter Kaiser, Jr. *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 4.

[52]   John L. McKenzie, *A Theology of The Old Testament* (Pennsylvania State University: Image Books, 1976), 25.

vocabulary.[53]

This is something that not many biblical theologians would like to be reminded of, namely, that biblical theology itself is a concern derived from ancient Greek philosophy of religion.

3   A Philosophical Turn?

The final quarter of the twentieth century would see the slow and haphazard return of openness to philosophy in some quarters as a result of developments both in sub-disciplines. Now we find a growing number of often unintentional brief excursions to loci in philosophy of religion which began to appear in the writings of many prominent biblical scholars. Earlier anomalies and forerunners are attested like, *inter alia*, the discussion of Wheeler-Robinson (1938) on the "philosophy of revelation" in the OT.[54] Another example is the subsection on predicting the future as a philosophical problem in Robert Carroll's *When Prophecy Failed* who, despite his interests in philosophy, later dismissed the value of philosophical theology due to the distortive influences it has had on the reading of the OT.[55]

One early instance of philosophical reflection on ancient Israelite religion include an exception in Arthur Gibson's (1981) extensive study on biblical semantic logic[56] and the nature of religious language. Almost thirty years has gone by and the book has not been given its due. It sought to show that the study of biblical and ancient Near Eastern languages and literatures can be established on a logical basis. In a recent new prologue for the second edition,[57] Gibson also demonstrated how the central areas of biblical usage (names, predicates expressions of quantity, idioms) can be mapped employing some contemporary philosophy, logic and linguistics.

Another notable if indirect contribution to interdisciplinary dialogue in the early 80's was Dale Patrick's *The Rendering of God in the Old Testament*. Though primarily concerned with hermeneutics and rhetoric, Part III does touch on the question of realism and the discussion of YHWH in the Hebrew Bible is related to arguments for the existence of God in philosophy of reli-

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[53]   Paul van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Desclée, 1965), x.
[54]   Henry Wheeler-Robinson, *The Philosophy of Revelation* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1938).
[55]   Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed. Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 29-33. The more negative assessment is found in his *Wolf in the Sheepfold: The Bible as Problem for Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1991)
[56]   Arthur Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic. A Preliminary Analysis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).
[57]   Arthur Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic. A Preliminary Analysis* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001).

gion.[58] In a later study on *The Rhetoric of Revelation in the Hebrew Bible*, Patrick looked to the analytic philosophy of language of John L. Austin and applied it to biblical discourse, something which in itself borders on a philosophical approach of sorts to biblical god-talk.[59]

Another relevant publication that was almost philosophical in flavour is Terence Fretheim's *The Suffering of God*.[60] The study overcomes to some extent the anachronism of perfect-being theology in the context of the Hebrew Bible and comes as close as has hitherto been possible for a study that aims at a non-distortive quasi-philosophical theology of the biblical traditions. The philosophical assumptions of this study include the metaphysics of certain versions of process theism in general and open theism in particular. Typically, philosophical (metaphysical) jargon pop up all over the place and the concerns implicit in headings align very much with that of philosophy of religion, even if Fretheim did not intend to produce a philosophical theology. Even so, Fretheim did not manage to stay on the level of pure description and failed to incorporate the dark side of YHWH in his discussion.

Aside from the aforementioned scholars, there are a number of OT theologians who, despite the anti-philosophical sentiments of their peers, actually concerned themselves more extensively (albeit still not exclusively and wholly independently) with philosophical perspectives on aspects of ancient Israelite religion as represented in the OT. I mention only three personalities in this regard.

The first example of such a more extensive albeit still somewhat reserved interest in the kinds of questions one encounters in philosophy of religion can be found in the writings of James Crenshaw whose entire career was characterised by a fascinating obsession with biblical perspectives on the problem of evil.[61] His contributions to discussions on theodicy are even included in annotated bibliographies of philosophy of religion proper.[62] Besides the aforementioned interest, Crenshaw's prominence in research on biblical wisdom literature also reveals an affinity for things philosophical (in the original sense). In a recent paper he offered what might even be considered an example of an attempt at comparative philosophy of religion in that ancient Near

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[58]   See Dale Patrick, *The Rendering of God in the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1981), 117.
[59]   Dale Patrick, *The Rhetoric of Revelation* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1999).
[60]   Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God. An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984).
[61]   As noted in James L. Crenshaw, *Defending God. Biblical Responses to The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[62]   See the section on "Biblical Perspectives" in William Wainright, *Philosophy of Religion. An Annotated Bibliography of Twentieth-Century Writings in English* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978).

Eastern wisdom traditions are scanned for parallels with concerns in Greek philosophy.[63] Yet despite decades of willingness to engage in philosophically relevant issues, in the end Crenshaw's philosophical interests seems to have been curbed by the anti-philosophical sentiment of his generation.

A second instance of more extensive engagement with philosophical issues in the context of OT theology is encountered in the writings of Otto Kaiser. Kaiser's interests in philosophy in the context of OT theology culminated in 2003 with his *Zwischen Athen und Jerusalem: Studien zur griechischen und biblischen Theologie, ihrer Eigenart und ihren Verhältnis*. The willingness of this publication to compare ancient Israelite religion and Greek philosophy with reference to commonalities is indeed a major advancement on what is traditional in OT theology.[64] As in Crenshaw, it represents the first step towards a comparative philosophy of religion, even if it is not itself considered by its author as a *Religionsphilosophie*. Given the nature of philosophy of religion in the Continental tradition in which Kaiser operates, this is understandable and Kaiser views OT theology as the study of the human reflection of the experience of the Divine. His three-volume theology of the OT shows the influence of Hegel and Heidegger and Kaiser was one of the few OT theologians to have been an expert on both ancient (Plato, Aristotle) and modern (Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche) philosophy.[65] Thus we may concur with both Hans Peter Muller and James Barr in their claim that Kaiser played a major role in braving the anti-philosophical sentiment of his generation.[66]

A third classic example is encountered most impressively in the writings of James Barr. In his earlier work, Barr discussed the nature of religious language in the OT and also the distinction between propositionalist and personalist approaches to the concept of revelation.[67] Barr also wrote on natural theology in the OT[68] and admitted to having been influenced by the ideas of William J.

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[63]   James L. Crenshaw "Sipping from the Cup of Wisdom," in *Jesus and Philosophy. New Essays* (ed. Paul K. Moser, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 41-62.

[64]   Otto Kaiser, *Zwischen Athen und Jerusalem. Studien zur griechischen und biblischen Theologie, ihrer Eigenart und ihren Verhältnis* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003).

[65]   Otto Kaiser, *Grundlegung* (vol. 1 of *Der Gott des Alten Testaments. Theologie des AT* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

[66]   Hans P. Muller "Altestamentliche Theologie und Religionswissenschaft," in *Wer ist wie du, Herr, unten den Göttern? FS O. Kaiser* (eds. Ingo Kottsieper, et al., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994b); see Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 455.

[67]   James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (London: Trinity Press International, 1973).

[68]   James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3.

Abraham, an analytic philosopher of religion working on the concept of revelation. Indeed Barr spent much of his career trying to repair the damaged relations with philosophy that Barthian neo-orthodoxy caused within OT theology. In his *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, Barr included a chapter on the relation between biblical theology and philosophy.[69] However, Barr's noting of the absence of philosophy of religion is marginal and his focus is more on hermeneutics, philosophy of science and trends in the general history of philosophy. At one point though, he even notes that:

> It would be difficult to exaggerate the degree of alienation that the average biblical scholar has felt in relation to the work of disciplines like philosophical theology or philosophy of religion. Their modes of discussion and decision seem to him or her remote and unreal. The questions they discuss and the criteria they apply seem to be contrived and artificial, and the world of discourse in which they move seems to be quite a different world from the world of the Bible, to which the biblical scholar feels he has a sort of direct and empirical access.[70]

In a later disclaimer Barr does note that philosophical approaches to Israelite religion have been present, although this tended to involved social philosophy, hermeneutical critique and post-modern philosophy of literature.[71] Up until the end of the 90's, however, this awareness of the rising pervasive influence of certain philosophical trends seems to have been hard to come by. A year or two earlier even David Clines, himself not unfamiliar with post-modern philosophy, could still lament the absence of post-structuralism in methodological reflection at international conferences:

> It is a matter for regret that the principal speakers at congresses of the IOSOT have given the impression that they care nothing for these movements of thought, as was all too evident at the Paris meeting, for example, when the four great Parisian names of our time, Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva and Lacan, were never mentioned (I believe).[72]

The general situation soon changed with influences from the philosophy of language (cognitive linguistics), philosophy of literature (deconstruction, etc.) and social philosophy (critical theory). For the most part, however, these

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[69]   Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology. An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 146-171.

[70]   Emphasis mine; James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology,* 146.

[71]   Emphasis mine; James Barr, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament. Biblical Studies At The End of a Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 27.

[72]   David J. A. Clines, From Copenhagen to Oslo What Has (And Has Not) Happened at Congresses of the IOSOT, David J. A. Clines, ed., *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967-1998* (vol. 1, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 194-223.

were all incidental brief excursions to philosophy on the way to more pressing concerns, i.e. application and exegesis. In stark contrast we find one OT theologian who not only recognised the *non-sequitur* reasoning inherent in the evasion of a descriptive philosophical approach but actually did the unthinkable and suggested the need for a "biblical philosophy," namely, Rolf P. Knierim.

Curiously, James Barr left out the contribution of Knierim in his discussion of relations between biblical theology and philosophy. Yet in my view Rolf Knierim was perhaps the first and most capable scholar who first envisaged a fully-fledged philosophical approach in a hermeneutically justified manner. Knierim extended the rediscovery of metaphysical and epistemological assumptions in the text beyond the wisdom literature and following Barr suggested that we rethink the concept of "Hebrew thought." Knierim went even further in recognising that all ordinary language (even non-philosophical biblical Hebrew) contains metaphysical and epistemological assumptions and that religious reasoning is always implicit in Hebrew Bible polemics.[73] He therefore suggested that it might be worth our while to ask for the meaning the concept "God" had in ancient Israel and this in the context of philosophical concerns (something rather unheard-of for an OT theologian to suggest). The parallels with conceptual analysis in analytic philosophy of religion are readily apparent and Knierim shrewdly anticipated the expected critique against his ideas in the following manner:

> Someone may ask whether the reach into this dimension of the questions does not amount to a biblical philosophy or a philosophy of the biblical truth. Indeed! And what would be wrong with that? Would it not, while focusing on the Bible, be in contact with *philosophy of religion* and with philosophy in principle, as biblical philosophy's contribution to those fields? Would it not, together with these fields, be concerned with the questions of reality, world, facts, meanings, language and truth, including the Bible's own foci and position on these matters in each of the testaments?[74]

Curiously, though, Knierim never himself actually wrote even a historical philosophical theology of the Hebrew Bible or came up with a descriptive philosophy of ancient Israelite religion outside of biblical theology. Ultimately, even he saw philosophy as but a handmaid to theology, not something worth pursuing for its own sake.[75] Yet Knierim's positive assessment of philosophical reflection was a sign of the times and will be remembered as having been a

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[73] Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology*, 221.

[74] Emphasis mine; Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology*, 492.

[75] See the discussion of Knierim's ideas by Keith L. Eades in Wonil Kim, Deborah Ellens, Michael Floyd & Marvin A. Sweeney, *Exegetical and Theological Studies* (vol. 2 of *Reading the Hebrew Bible for a New Millennium. Form, Concept, and Theological perspective*; London: Continuum International Publishing, 2000), 103. In my view, Knierim's work is not given its due.

much-needed attempt at providing a corrective to the popular misconception that all philosophy is by nature distortive of the biblical conceptual background. But few would listen and Knierim, perhaps more than most, had to discover over years of endless debates and responses to peers how difficult it is to convince the establishment that philosophy is not the enemy.

By the end of the millennium it was recognised that philosophical perspectives were never wholly absent in the study of the OT. This is readily apparent in the histories of biblical interpretation written during this time and which now include major foci on relations with philosophy. Here one thinks of both certain contributions to recent large-scale edited works like Magne Saebø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* (1996-2008).[76] An example of a work dedicated to the subject is Peter Adinall, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Nineteenth Century Conflict.*[77] Secondly, also in biblical theology, there is a covert interest to be discerned in various issues and currents in philosophy of religion. Leo Perdue's *The Collapse of History* touches on related matters in a discussion of changes in the field and philosophical influences on biblical scholars.[78] The contributions of Hans-P Muller and Manfred Oeming may also be noted.[79]

A good example of the "return of the repressed" is found in the writings of Walter Brueggemann who may claim to bracket ontology and rage against irrelevant philosophical obsessions, yet no OT theologian before or since has commented more on the ontological status of YHWH along textualist lines. Of course, Brueggemann himself does not trace all his ideas to their philosophical roots. Yet much of his meta-language comes from philosophy of religion and he is explicit about the fact that he leans heavily on theories on the supposed "metaphorical" nature of all religious language as attested in the philosophy of religion of Paul Ricoeur and Sallie McFague. There are also numerous references in his theology to philosophers and their views on religious issues. These include the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur,

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[76] Saebø (ed.), *Beginnings to the Middle Ages*; Saebø (ed.), *Middle Ages to the Reformation*; Saebø (ed.), *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*.

[77] Peter Adinall, *Philosophy and Biblical Interpretation. A Study in Nineteenth Century Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[78] Leo G. Perdue. *Reconstructing Old Testament Theology* (OBT. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1994).

[79] Hans-P Muller, "Bedarf die Alttestamentliche Theologie einer philosophischen Grundlegung" in *Alttestamentlicher Glaube und biblische Theologie. FS Preuss.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994a), 342-351; "Altestamentliche Theologie und Religionswissenschaft." in *Wer ist wie du, Herr, unten den Göttern? FS O. Kaiser.* Edited by Ingo Kottsieper, et al. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994b), 20-31; *Glauben, Denken und Hoffen: alttestamentliche Botschaften in den Auseinandersetzungen unserer Zeit.* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 1998). Manfred Oeming, *Gesamt biblischen Theologien der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1985)

Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida. Other times he fails to mention his indebtedness to analytic philosophers like Gilbert Ryle, from which the notion of "thick description" is borrowed via Clifford Geertz.[80] Elsewhere, Brueggemann also has no problem following others we have encountered in using the concept of a Deuteronomistic "*philosophy* of history."[81] At one point he even speaks of a "complete prophetic philosophy of history"[82] in the Hebrew Bible. In light of this, the handful of dismissals of philosophy in Brueggemann that charges it with being distortive cannot be taken seriously.

A more radical yet interesting if idiosyncratic view around the turn of the millennium can be found in the writings of Thomas L. Thompson who in his infamous work on biblical "history" argued that although the biblical concept of YHWH is essentially to be thought of as post-Platonic, the Hebrew Bible itself is a product of Hellenism.[83] Going against the grain of everything the Biblical Theology Movement held dear, Thompson deconstructs the notion of Greek versus Hebrew (or philosophical vs. biblical) thinking. He does this by tracing the development of philosophy from oriental wisdom literature and finds no great originality in Greek philosophy – Aristotle only collated what is already present in Sumerian and Egyptian texts. However, for Thompson (as for von Rad) the Hebrew Bible is more of a "philosophy of history" than a philosophy of religion. His work on the Bible and history contains many references to philosophy in general and he tries to argue for philosophy rather than history as a paradigm of meaning. On one occasion he also suggests that the Hebrew Bible,

> ...also provides us with avenues of approach to such western con-
> cepts as the personally divine. It also opens us to the critical

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[80]   See Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology. Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1997). See Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology*, 377. For a related discussion, see also Brian D. Ingraffia, *Post-Modern Theory and Biblical Theology. Vanquishing God's Shadow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), which is less informative on biblical theology than the title suggests and actually little more than Christian apologetics against Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida and the relationships between their thought and biblical theology. The author covers their respective attacks on Christianity and then, instead of seeking a synthesis of their thought with biblical theology, he draws on the hostile view of the relation between philosophy and religion found in Paul, Luther, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Barth, Bonhoeffer, & Moltmann to establish a counter position.
[81]   Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament. the Canon and Christian Imagination* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 123.
[82]   Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).
[83]   On this, see Thomas L. Thompson, *The Bible in History. How Writers Create a Past* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999).

development of a *philosophy of religion.*[84]

The Hebrew Bible in a philosophical context is thus seen as a means to an end, a halfway station on the way to contemporary theorizing and not a body of discourse, the philosophical analysis of which can be an exclusive concern. One uses the Hebrew Bible for constructive purposes rather than philosophy of religion for historical inquiry. An example of this would be Seizo Sekine's *Transcendency and Symbols in the Old Testament: A Genealogy of the Hermeneutical Experiences.*[85] This work looks at various encounters with transcendence through an interpretation of OT texts as symbols. As such, it represents an attempted fusion of philosophical hermeneutics and traditional historical-critical exegesis. Ultimately, it is also constructive rather than purely descriptive as it builds upon the views of Paul Tillich, Hans Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur.

More traces of warming to philosophy during the next decade include Robert Gnuse's recourse to Whitehead's process philosophy of religion as foundational for OT theology[86] and Mark Brett's analysis of Childs via an eclectic and critical use of philosophical scholarship.[87] The work of John Barton on Old Testament ethics also includes discussions of the kind that is not all that different from what a comparative philosophy of religion would do in a discussion of religion and morality in ancient Israel. In his earlier work he showed the anachronism of Christian philosophical theological assumptions without thereby deploring philosophical concerns altogether.[88] In Barton's *Understanding Old Testament Ethics* he could point to the fact that while the Old Testament is not philosophy in any sense we are familiar with, its moral assumptions can still be clarified by philosophical concepts, categories and perspectives.[89]

However, in terms of engaging with the text in philosophical terms, we find a new stream of research with its forerunners in earlier studies on ancient Israelite wisdom literature. This involves description and elucidation via philosophical categories rather than philosophical apologetics or critique. One example of a philosophical clarification of the text is Michael Fox's brief dis-

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[84] Emphasis mine, see Thompson, *The Bible in History*, 388.

[85] Seizo Sekine, *Transcendency and Symbols in the Old Testament. A Genealogy of the Hermeneutical Experience* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999).

[86] Robert Gnuse, *The Old Testament and Process Theology* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2000).

[87] Mark Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis? The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Hebrew Bible Studies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[88] John Barton, "The Basis of Ethics in the Hebrew Bible." Pages 11-22 in *Ethics and Politics in the Hebrew Bible*. Edited by Douglas A. Knight. Semeia 66. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995a. and Alttestamentliche Theologie nach Albertz?" *JBT* 10 (1995b): 25-32.

[89] John Barton, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox Press, 2003), 55 and passim.

cussion of Qoheleth's epistemology, using a term like "empiricism" to characterise the way the sage's biblical persona operated.[90] A related type of folk-philosophical description of wisdom ethics and cosmology was also offered by Leo Perdue who did some research on conceptions of reality in ancient Israelite wisdom literature.[91] More recent examples not specifically linked with philosophy of religion but still concerned with philosophy in some sense include, William H. U. Anderson, "Philosophical Considerations in a Genre Analysis of Qoheleth[92] and recent philosophical studies on Job include John T. Wilcox, *The Bitterness of Job: a Philosophical Reading*,[93] and especially the section on "A Philosophical Analysis of Job," an extract in Robert Sutherland's *Putting God on Trial: The Biblical Book of Job*.[94]

Other philosophical perspectives on the OT appear in Leon Kass' *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis*,[95] Martin Sicker, *Reading Genesis Politically: An Introduction to Mosaic Political Philosophy*[96] and Thomas L Pangle, *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham*.[97] There was also recently a work Mary Healy & Robin Parry (eds). *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God* involving contributions on the Hebrew Bible.[98]

On the whole, however, the role of philosophy in the study of ancient Israelite religion today tends to be reserved for meta-commentary. An example of the latter is Megan Bishop Moore's *Philosophy and Practice in the Writing of a*

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[90]   Michael Fox, *Qohelet and his Contradictions* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

[91]   See Leo G. Perdue, "Cosmology and the Social Order in the Wisdom Tradition," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (eds. John G. Gammie & Leo G. Perdue, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990). See also Tomas Frydrych, *Living Under The Sun: Examination of Proverbs and Qoheleth* (Leiden: Brill, 2002.). The study carries out comprehensive comparison of the worldviews represented by Proverbs and Qoheleth, and the worlds that these reflect, looking at the aims and methods of their quest, their epistemologies, theological and cosmological perspectives, and their anthropological and social views.

[92]   William H. U. Anderson, "Philosophical Considerations in a Genre Analysis of Qoheleth," *VT* 48/3 (1998): 289-300.

[93]   John T. Wilcox, *The Bitterness of Job. A Philosophical Reading* (University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[94]   Robert Sutherland, *Putting God on Trial. The Biblical Book of Job* (Trafford, Victoria, 2004), 141-157.

[95]   Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom. Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

[96]   Martin Sicker, *Reading Genesis Politically. An Introduction to Mosaic Political Philosophy* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002).

[97]   Thomas L. Pangle, *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[98]   Robin Parry, ed., *The Bible and Epistemology. Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster Press, 2007).

History of Israel.[99] The context is the debate between so-called minimalists and maximalists and Moore discusses a number of related philosophical and practical concerns. Included in the study are technical philosophical terms, for example empiricism, objectivity, representation and language, subject, explanation, truth, evidence, evaluation, etc. Organized around these concepts, Moore sought to situate the study of ancient Israel and Judah in the broader intellectual context of academic history in general. In the end, however, a meta-commentary like this tends to utilise epistemology and the philosophy of science rather than philosophy of religion.

Last and least we find perhaps the first real attempt to pioneer the establishment of an independent philosophical approach to the study of ancient Israelite religion. In my own unpublished doctoral dissertation,[100] I proposed the utilisation of philosophy of religion as auxiliary discipline in both exegesis and on a larger scale. The methodological intricacies were further developed in a series of articles entitled *The Quest for a Philosophical Yhwh.*[101] Specialising in this type of interdisciplinary research, my interests have changed from critical a-theology and the deconstruction of biblical truth-claims to a more historical and descriptive type of philosophy of religion more focused on a clarification of the folk-philosophical assumptions in the biblical texts themselves.

C   CONCLUSION

The historical relationship between OT theology and philosophy of religion is more complex than can be ascertained from many currently available summations in histories of OT interpretation. Stereotyping is a fallacy and overlapping occurs but in general the following can be concluded. Relations with philosophy of religion have changed over time from an early active involvement when biblical theology was seen by some as having a preparatory task (most of the nineteenth century), to a hostile rejection of philosophical perspectives on Yahwism by many (most of the twentieth century), to a more fruitful if partly reluctant involvement of philosophy for the understanding of the OT and OT scholarship (around the beginning of the twenty-first century). Thus the story so far, where we are going, is anybody's guess.

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[99]   Megan Bishop Moore, *Philosophy and Practice of Writing a History of Israel* (London: Continuum International, 2005).
[100]   Jaco W. Gericke, "Does Yahweh Exist? A Philosophical-Critical Reconstruction of the Case Against Realism in Old Testament Theology." (PhD thesis, University of Pretoria), 2004.
[101]   Jaco W. Gericke, "The Quest for a Philosophical Yhwh (Part 1). Old Testament Studies and Philosophy of Religion," *OTE* 18/3 (2006a): 579-602; Jaco W. Gericke, "The Quest for a Philosophical Yhwh (Part 2): Philosophical Criticism as Exegetical Methodology," *OTE* 19/3 (2006b): 1178-1192; Jaco W. Gericke, "The Quest for a Philosophical Yhwh (Part 3): Towards a Philosophy of Ancient Israelite Religion," *OTE* 20/3 (2007): 669-688.

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