ON THEODICY AND VEIJOLA'S LINKAGE OF GENESIS 22 TO THE BOOK OF JOB[1]

Christo Lombaard

Christian Spirituality, University of South Africa

Abstract: In this brief *Ideengeschichte*, the cultural construct of Western(ised) questions on theodicy, namely Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's 1710 *Essais de Théodicée*, the Hebrew Bible Book of Job and the understanding of Timo Veijola on Genesis 22 as a precursor to the Book of Job, are brought into discussion with one another. The impossibility of extracting ourselves from our matrices of understanding makes it difficult to understand matters of holiness as anything other than as matters of theodicy.

Keywords: Theodicy, Leibniz, Job, Veijola, Akedah

The present contribution offers a culturally-reflective overview on understanding theodicy. First, it is indicated below how we are to a substantial extent ensnared within our present cultural questions and cognitions. This state of hermeneutical affairs means that we have difficulty dealing with the Book of Job on its terms rather than on ours. The relationship that Timo Veijola proposed between Genesis 22 and the Book of Job is reviewed as an approach for understanding these texts' philosophical problematics as theodicy. If these texts had been analysed as examples of holiness texts, that is, as texts illustrating the piety of dependence on God, that argument would have gone further; however, only to some extent.

Not meant as a study in intertextuality, this contribution could rather be understood as an *Ideengeschichte*, a method that seeks to crystallise conceptions (as intellectual constellations—cf. Gostman 2019: 51–59)

---

old and new as they play out with or against one another (cf. in brief Breckman 2007: 106–113, and extensively Dorschel 2010) and as we make sense of the world around us in more refined and less convoluted ways. In this manner, now entangled ideas that have been inherited from different sources are again distinguished from one another in order to make sense on a metatheoretical level what it is we are asking when we put to question our subject matter (in this case, theodicy as it relates to the Hebrew Bible Book of Job; cf. broadly, Whybray 1996). Such clarification would then serve to aid more lucid interaction with the text or texts at hand, since the arsenal of concepts we draw on become more plainly identifiable.

Naturally, given the limitations here, we cannot present a historically thorough and interculturally wide-ranging *Ideengeschichte*. Instead, only the main points related to the links between the concept of theodicy and the Book of Job as related to Genesis 22 will be outlined below.

THEODICY CONSIDERED AS A CURRENT CULTURAL CONSTRUCT

In cultures such as ours, this broad Judeo-Christian/ised Hellenistic-Western/ised stream of civilisation, one can hardly escape its underlying questions. Its implicit problems and answers present themselves as one grows up within this culture or grows into it from another culture. This is true also on the matter of human suffering, a universal human experience (along with e.g. birth, care and so forth) which is however treated in culturally specific ways. In our broad Judeo-Christian/ised Hellenistic-Western/ised stream of civilisation, when one encounters questions on the meaning of suffering, at least three matters can be distinguished, which however usually coalesce in the popular mind. When its significance is teased out, suffering is namely related to a) the meaning of life, b) the significance of death and c) the conception of a good God.

The moment one or more of these related questions present themselves within this dominant cultural matrix, one becomes trapped in an existential spider's web. Why a spider's web? Because once one is touched by the threads of this Judeo-Christian/ised Hellenistic-Western/ised conundrum, one cannot escape from its inherent network of logic. The issue always lingers in one's mind and being, coming to the fore especially

during crisis times. Moreover, any movement—that is, any attempt at an answer—simply leads one to become ever more tightly entangled in this web, both in the threads of these questions and then by implication in the cultural stream which had spun them.

This kind of philosophical entrapment is not the same across cultures (cf. e.g. Tosam, Takov 2016); nor has it always been the same in the broad religio-cultural stream in which we find ourselves—as each generation does—at its present tail-end. In our time, this spider's web of questions on the meaning of suffering is coloured in a very specific way, namely religiously. As Murray and Greenberg (2016) point out in a highly entertaining encyclopaedia article on what could otherwise be a macabre topic:

> the problem of evil in contemporary philosophy is standardly regarded as an argument for atheism. The atheist contends that God and evil are incompatible, and given that evil clearly exists, God cannot exist… [which is] the "atheistic problem".

This latter conclusion occurs, as Murray and Greenberg (2016) indicate, almost as if by itself, in our modern/ist Western-democratic culture in which atheism or non-theism are reflexively offered as a "pole position" in all debates in which religion is concerned (cf. Lombaard, Benson and Otto 2019). This "pole position" is also therefore the background against which the peculiar weighing scales between the concepts of a good God (on the one side) and the triarchy of evil-pain-death (as the other side of the scale) are considered, from a theological-philosophical perspective. However, accepting that "on a simple head count of civilisations across ages and places, modern Western(ised) society is the only one that allows substantially for a primarily religion-less or even anti-religious existential stance" (Lombaard 2018: 4), more possibilities than just ours exist. Some of these alternatives lie in our religio-cultural heritage across aeons. Different takes on these issues from such sources could help us to reconsider this delicate faith-fate balance presented by the metaphorical scale above.

Even if we step backwards in time, but still within our own cultural stream, to just before the modern/ist period, we already find the God *versus* the evil-pain-death triarchy differently construed. Before modernity the problem was understood as "that of explaining the compatibility of

the existence of evil with divine moral purity or holiness ... [which is] the *'holiness problem'* (Murray and Greenberg 2016; italics added). This is precisely what we see in the pre-modern Book of Job too, even though perceiving this rightly may well be difficult given the cultural framework from within which *we* look at the text.

This can be seen often enough in popular publications (cf. e.g. Acocella 2013, Kushner 1987) as much as in exegetical work: as Schwienhorst-Schönberger (2016: 427; cf. pp. 428–430; again, italics added) for instance summarises in one of the most influential Old Testament Introductions the theology of the Book of Job: "...im Buch gehe es 1. um die Frage nach dem rechten Verhalten des Menschen im *Leid* und 2. um die Frage nach Ursache und Zweck des *Leids*..." Earlier, Müller (1992: 249–279) cast the whole of the Book of Job under the same category, as the title of his article shows: "Theodizee? Anschlußerörterungen zum Buch Hiob." This constitutes the general approach to Job. It is not that the terminology and topic of piety or holiness is fully absent from the academic literature (as seen in e.g. Schmid 2010), but rather that it is largely undeveloped and mostly relegated to adjectives or the very briefest of remarks. The closest the academic literature comes to a holiness orientation is Schwienhorst-Schönberger's chapter (2008) titled "Vom Glauben zum Schauen. Der Weg Ijobs," in which he adopts what has become the most usual strategy amongst exegetes who enter into so-called spiritual readings (meant here in a fully academic sense) of the Bible texts. This entails employing the seeing-unseeing metaphor, a common metaphor amongst Spirituality scholars. In his case, Schwienhorst-Schönberger draws productively on Thomas Aquinas (on intertextuality as it relates to matters of Bible and spirituality, cf. Waaijman 2010; on this essentially Catholic manner of writing on Biblical Spirituality, cf. Welzen 2017). Apart from rare instances, still introductory in nature (cf. Maas, Maas, and Spronk 2004), the impression left when evaluated from a distance is that much of the engagement with the Book of Job focuses on coming to terms with our modern philosophical riddles on placing a good God in relation to the bad (i.e. evil-pain-death). These are modern theodicy issues. Reading the Book of Job on its terms, as a text on holiness or at the very least as *also* a holiness text, seems however to fall by the wayside, to a large extent.

The experience of suffering in the Book of Job is not related to the

idea that God cannot endure as a viable concept or entity for the reason that evil-pain-death exists, which is the modern implicit reflex position behind questions of theodicy. Such a deduction is not possible, neither in nor from the Book of Job itself. Job remains a pre-modern holiness book.

In no culture—certainly none we encounter in the Old Testament and none that has historical prominence alongside our cultural stream—other than ancient Greece does such a possibility spring forth. What has in the wake of that influence become fully unpalatable (cf. Müller 1992: 255–272), ironically, both within the church and within broader Western/ised society, is that evil-pain-death is in any way compatible with a (by implication: good) God.

Yet this standard of reasoning within broader Western/ised society is reflexively assumed to apply too in the world of the Old Testament. We however see the opposite in for instance the much quoted (at for instance funerals) words of Job in Job 1:21b–c: יְהוָה נָתַן וַיהוָה לָקָח יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ (ESV: "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD"). Wherever the cause of Job's woes is sought, whichever solution is proposed, this does not occur *sine Deo*.

The latter is theoretically speaking not an entirely unavailable option in the Hebrew Bible, given the absence of God in the books of Esther and Song of Songs, where divine reference, if at all, occurs by inference (Song of Songs 8:6). Yet, the Book of Job shows none of the reserve that the modern church and Western/ised society paradoxically share. The "atheistic problem" is our modern one, as we try—based on "the modern implicit reflex position behind questions of theodicy" mentioned above—respectively to shield God from the evil-pain-death triarchy (the apologetic route; cf. Müller 1992: 255–272) or kill God off based on the evil-pain-death triarchy (the route taken by the French existentialist philosophers; cf. the Camus quote in the closing section to this essay).

Both these orientations are equal in their hubris, either by affording primacy to or by falling prey to the current cultural matrix of dominant conceptualisations (cf. Lombaard 2020: 1). The shared platform on which both these orientations stand is that of cultural or public atheism (Lombaard, Benson, and Otto 2019: 2–3), for as long as there is the unpalatable possibility of a non-good God at work. Further in the background to this function the traditional attributes of God, as found in certain kinds of

traditional dogmatological formulations based on ancient Greek criteria for divinity (here, the language of Gericke 2017).

Our implicit broadly-cultural preference, it seems, is for an ancient Greek God. Our cultural determinedness, which translates as intercultural insensitivity (ethnocentrism) in reading the Semitic part of the Bible, cannot stomach that it is—note the italicisation here—יְהוָה נָתַן וַיהוָה לָקָח.

As far as popular pieties (both religious and a-/anti-religious faith; cf. Lombaard, Benson, and Otto 2019: 10–11) are concerned, in an academic mode, from traditional Western philosophical perspectives but usually applied directly to the Hebrew Bible, the following question can hence be asked: in the Hebrew Bible (Gericke 2017), "What is a God?"

THE ROLE OF LEIBNIZ AS A THOUGHT HINGE TO THE MODERN

In Job, as has been stated above, evil-pain-death and God are not mutually exclusive (ontological—if that is a germane term when related to the Hebrew Bible) possibilities. That had still been the case when the term *theodicy* was coined to describe the "God *and* the evil-pain-death triarchy" riddle by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716; cf. Jolley 1995). In his *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal* (Leibniz 1710), he argues that God, being good, created the most perfect world possible. A better balance between good and bad can henceforth not be created and the world is as fully good as it can be while still allowing for free will. In essence, Leibniz thus offered a theological apology based on, what one senses in reading his essays in our time is a rather contrived logic.[2]

In the cultural diversion from the God and evil-pain-death problematics from a matter of holiness to a matter of ontology (i.e. whether God exists), we see the influential understanding of Leibniz's "holiness problem" at work, as characterised by Murray and Greenberg (2016). The conundrum however remains, and the difficulty does not disappear.

---

[2] Also noticeable are some echoes from Persian Zoroastrianism that had evidently influenced later Hebrew Bible writings—cf. Barr (1985)—on the relationship between good and bad, which in hindsight seem to parallel Leibniz's thoughts in this regard, unintended on his part.

Ironically, for currently dominant conceptions and important too for understanding Leibniz, neither does God. Namely, when Leibniz coins the term theodicy, he does so from within an active religiosity. Many theodicies were published already before Leibniz, but without employing this influential nomenclature. However, in the wake of Leinbiz's 1710 volume and ever increasingly against the implicit background of a-, non- or anti-theism, we ought to remain careful to read Job also—though not necessarily exclusively—outside of the "atheistic problem," as the first reflex is in our time.

The point insinuated above by stating "not necessarily exclusively," is that the "atheistic problem" (the philosophically determined theodicy-reflexes of our time) is not to be regarded in some manner as non-valid. The intended implication is however that this frame of reference should not be such a dominant interpretative framework that it rents all others asunder. Rather, it remains essential that when the term theodicy is used in relation to Job, we do not blindly carry our (post-Leibnizian) associations of this term into the ancient text.

In the following section we trace a proposal that saw in the Akedah, the in/famous Genesis 22:1–19 passage in which God instructs Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the inspiration for the particular framing texts of the Book of Job precisely in such post-Leibnizian terms.

VEIJOLA'S CONTRIBUTION ON GENESIS 22 AND THE BOOK OF JOB

The chapter in which Veijola's understanding of Genesis 22 and the Book of Job is presented has been published twice, the second time in a volume of collected studies commemorating his life:

- Veijola, T. 2007b. "Abraham und Hiob. Das literarische und theologische Verhältnis von Gen 22 und der Hiob-Novelle". *Offenbarung und Anfechtung. Hemeneutisch-theologische Studien zum Alten Testaments*, edd. W. Dietrich and M. Marttila: 134–167. Biblisch-Theologische Studien, 89. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Veijola, T. 2002. "Abraham und Hiob. Das literarische und theologische Verhältnis von Gen 22 und der Hiob-Novelle". *Vergegenwärtigung des Alten Testaments. Beiträge zur biblische*

Hermeneutik. Festschrift für Rudolf Smend zum 70. Geburtstag, edd. C. Bultmann, W. Dietrich and C. Levin: 127–144. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

It is to the latter, the first published, that I will refer below as my main source.

1. Veijola's contribution on Genesis 22 and the Book of Job described

In this contribution (to which [Schmid 2010: 11] notes as antecedent Auerbach [1971: 5–27]), the scholarly part of Veijola's argument presents us with an excellent case study of the development of scholarship, as one insight builds forth on the other. As a start, Veijola himself published the following article on the Akedah roughly a decade and a half earlier:

- Veijola, Timo. 1988. "Das Opfer des Abraham—Paradigma des Glaubens aus dem nachexilischen Zeitalter". *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 85: 129–164.[3]

In both these publications Veijola shows himself as not only an exegete, but also as a theologian, drawing on rabbinic literature and on church fathers as he prepares the thematics for his analysis of the Genesis 22 text, as well as the usual secondary literature drawn on to build an academic argument. Many of the arguments employed in the 2002 chapter had already begun to be explored in his 1988 article, as Veijola offers a verse by verse commentary on the Genesis 22 text, describes its peculiarities, and enters into debate with e.g. Kant, Luther and Kierkegaard on their interpretations of this text. In 1988, Veijola still has to deal with the earlier idea of the Akedah as an Elohistic text (a connection that has since been laid to rest in Pentateuch scholarship), yet he already notes in quite some detail parallels with the frame texts of the Book of Job. The 5th century BCE thus seems for Veijola a viable date for Genesis 22, with a strong link to Gunkel's influential hypothesis that the chapter reacts against the idea of child sacrifice, particularly within earlier phases of that Genesis 22 text which are no longer construable in this regard. The central idea is Abraham's obedience, with reference to the Genesis 22:15–18 addition.

---

[3]   This article had also been included in the same volume of collected studies (Veijola 2007a).

Two additional articles that Veijola relies on directly in his 2002 chapter are:

- Japhet, Sara. 1994. "The trail of Abraham and the test of Job. How do they differ?" *Henoch*, 16: 153–171.
- Strauss, Hans. 2000. "Zu Gen 22 und dem erzählenden Rahmen des Hiobbuches (Hiob 1,1–2,10 und 42,7–17)". *Verbindungslinien. Festschrift für Werner H. Schmidt zum 65. Geburtstag*, edd. Axel Graupner et al.: 377–383. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

While picking up important threads from both these publications, Veijola points out that neither of them go far enough. Japhet's focus is on the difference between the Job and Abraham figures, so that she merely indicates that the test set them by God is not the same. Strauss on his part looks for similarities between the two figures, indicating that in both cases God is their creator and sustainer, as God is of everyone who is just but suffers. Neither of these two exegetes see the importance of the literary dependence of these two Hebrew Bible texts, Veijola (2002: 129) asserts. Veijola, on his part, is quite clear about what he wants to demonstrate: "dass die Hiob-Novelle *literarisch* von Gen 22 abhängig ist," because only with this realisation would the full meaning of the Job novella become clear (Veijola 2002: 128).

Apart from this literary relationship, Veijola (2002: 129–130) points out that the Job author drew on Ezekiel 14:12–23, where a figure called Job features alongside Noah and Daniel. This Ezekiel 14—Job relationship is indicated by means of key words and themes, a strategy which Veijola then expands upon (also drawing on some work already done in his 1988 article) to show the parallels between Abraham and Job. Leaving aside here the specific textual references and the finer details of the argument by Veijola (2002: 131), his main points are:

1. Both Abraham and Job hail from outside Canaan;
2. Both are rich: through God's blessing they become "great," with similar animals and many children;
3. Job's three friends evoke Abraham's kinsmen, Mamre, Eshcol and Aner;
4. Both Abraham and Job led exemplary lives of faith and intercession, so that both are called "My servant";
5. Both die in a ripe old age.

These similarities, Veijola concludes, show that the Job author employed the Abraham narratives as inspirational source material. Looking more specifically at Genesis 22, Veijola (2002: 132–142) builds his main arguments as follows:

1. Both the Akedah and the Job novella attest to the highest literary quality, both in structure and narrative elements, including expansion on an older kernel;
2. In both stories the test of a pious figure is planned from on high, with the reader offered both the earthly and the heavenly sides of the tale;
3. Many linguistic parallels occur, such as the rare inverted verbal sentence as the opening statement;
4. There is a certain confluence of personal and place names;
5. The godliness of both Abraham and Job are highlighted;
6. All three divine epithets יְהוָה, אֱלֹהִים and הָאֱלֹהִים occur in both texts, with the seemingly unpatterned use of these epithets in Job 1–2 simply reflecting what is also the case in Genesis 22;
7. Both leading men are tested by heavenly figures (Abraham directly by God, and Job indirectly by God's state official Satan);
8. Terminological correspondences occur: the syntactically parallel way in which commands are given and some idiomatic expressions;
9. The importance of blessing in both accounts.

These considerations lead Veijola to the conclusion that the Job novella drew directly on the Akedah account, an influence which becomes especially clear in the cumulative effect of these shared matters.

With Genesis 22 certainly (for Veijola) dating from the Persian time, the dating of the Job story to the 4th or 3rd centuries BCE seems probable to Veijola (2002: 142), with the Akedah stemming from Jerusalem and Job from the eastern diaspora. In the latter context, the more specific tale of Genesis 22 is in Veijola's view now universalised, making the idea of a believing individual being tested applicable to all nations (Veijola 2002: 142), and thus the characterisation of the Book of Job as wisdom literature. In both cases, the person and God are protected from the worst possible outcome. However, the Job story expands its kernel, Genesis 22, both in volume and in applicability.

2. Veijola's contribution on Genesis 22 and the Book of Job evaluated

It is certainly clear that there are manifest parallels between the Job and Genesis 22 texts. Moreover, given the more extensive and more ancient nature of the patriarchal narratives, the directionality of textual influence would more likely flow from the patriarchs to Job than *vice versa*. However, this influence is not as dramatic as it would seem at first glance; that is, if pre-exilic patriarchal narratives are regarded as source for a much later Job composition. Whereas Isaac traditions find textual expression before the exile, both Jacob/Israel/Ephraim and Abraham do so only after the exile, if the extra-Pentateuchal occurrences of the patriarchs are taken as triangulation points with which to date these texts (Lombaard 2014, drawing on Bos 2013 and Nissinen 1991). With (extra-Pentateuchal) Abraham occurring only late, in Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 29:22), the historical breach between literary Abraham and literary Job has been diminished by quite a few centuries. A reduced difference in time of narration does not rule out literary dependency or directionality as far as the Abraham—Job linkage is concerned. It does, however, do so with regard to Genesis 22.

With Genesis 22 dated to "the first half of the 3rd century BCE" (Lombaard 2016: 3, drawing on Lombaard 2008: 915–917), and with the end of the major redactional work on the Book of Job in roughly the same era, a trickle-down kind of model of literary dependence from Genesis 22 to Job becomes difficult to sustain. As coterminous texts, the possibility of the Job text taking over the nine traits listed above from the Genesis 22 text becomes difficult to maintain.

COULD A DIFFERENT KIND OF MODEL OF A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GENESIS 22 AND JOB TEXTS BE POSSIBLE?

Veijola does not reconstruct a possible historical situation for the coming into being of either Genesis 22 or the Job framing texts; even if done tentatively (which is all one usually can do, given the difficulties of tracing the impulses that cause textual developments), a somewhat more considered proposal would go some way to explain why, culturally (certainly

including theological and/or philosophical developments[4]), these two texts would be produced at more or less the same time.

To this end, the Book of Job is clearly the product of a highly intellectual scribal group which had been dealing with a difficult theological question over some time and had done so intertextually. By intertextual I mean that the Book of Job was produced in discussion with other texts that seemed useful, with the term "texts" that may well be understood here, as post-modernists had come to understand them, not only as written documents but as any meaningful utterances or events or objects. This scribal group thus did not work in isolation, as we know from the intertextual character of the Book of Job (Fuchs 1993). The nature of this group becomes somewhat clearer if we compare aspects of the theology of the editors of the younger frame texts (which is different to the older Job dialogues; cf. Nõmmik 2010) with the theology we find in other relatable texts.

The idea of a God who tests, as I have proposed elsewhere (Lombaard 2016), is found in the theologically interpretative editorial additions to the Genesis 22 texts (primarily Gen 22:15–18) and also in the Book of Daniel in the two relatively independent chapters of Daniel 3 and 6. These texts can, according to current scholarship (which is of course unfair towards Veijola), with relative assurance be dated to the 3rd century BCE; *ditto*, the framing texts of Job. The scribes of the latter texts could quite conceivably have at the very least been conversant with the bearers of this kind of testing theology. Could one also be so daring as to propose that the hands working on these texts had perhaps been, in some respects, from or directly related to such a broader group? Though this may seem a somewhat speculative suggestion, given that no further hard evidence can be advanced, the coterminous insertion into texts of the idea of religious testing has to be accounted for somehow. The insertion of this idea did not come from nowhere and it is certainly not by any means a prominent *traditionsgeschichtliche* element within earlier Israel / Judah / Yehud. An idea whose time has come within the *Religionsgeschichte* of 3rd century BCE Israel, shared amongst a relatively small group of scribes / editors at work during that time, would offer a viable explanation for this development.[5]

---

[4]   The term "development" is not in this instance meant in any of its modern senses that would imply advance, improvement, greater advantage or betterment.

[5]   See footnote 4 above.

This, as far as a possible broad historical reconstruction is concerned, places into question Veijola's idea of textual influence between these two texts of Genesis 22 and Job.

On an additional methodological note, some cautionary words are in order on the argumentation followed by Veijola (2002: 127–144), particularly on intertextuality which constitutes the core of his approach. Namely, what precisely can be classified as intertextuality:

- Cultural resonances?
- Allusions?
- Reinterpretations (direct or indirect)?
- Quotations?

For reviews on intertextuality, as it relates to the Bible in general, cf. Moyise (2002); in relation to the Old Testament, cf. Loader (2008). In most cases, however, the specifics of instances of intertextuality are such that they often fit only tentatively within such generalised descriptions. Always, each case can best be characterised on its own.

The matter of indicated intertextuality is however also complicated by the relatively limited Hebrew vocabulary that the scribes had to draw on. Moreover, set expressions occur in every culture and in such a relatively closely-knit circle of scribes as was proposed above, this would be even more naturally the case. Here, as always in similar cases, parallels and influences should not be too easily conflated. A shared constellation of concepts and terminologies can mistakenly be taken to indicate literary influence. Moreover, as Lohfink (2003) had shown with regard to Ecclesiastes, intertextuality can be difficult to characterise, even when allusions and quotations have been identified with relative certainty. Had such referencing been intended to be with approval, or in critique?

Perhaps more fruitful would be to point out if unexpectedly shared rare ideas occur, such as the idea of religious testing indicated above. In addition, if the aspects of piety based on such instances are more clearly indicated as evidencing holiness rather than theodicy, because that is more fitting with pre-modern texts such as these, further productive ways become possible of understanding these texts, their intents and their possible interrelationships.

All of these questions and possibilities take us further steps along the road that Veijola has introduced to us, as we try to discern the texts of

ancient Israel, how they were in dialogue, and what questions had vexed their authors.

C'EST LA VIE

To return to the opening section of this contribution: is it at all possible for us, within our broad religio-cultural matrix, to solve the problems of theodicy—understood as it is in our time (i.e. theodicy within the ambience of atheism)? Or must we at best be satisfied with our "competence in compensating for incompetence" (Marquard 1989; cf. De Mesel 2018), as we simply reformulate the ideas involved, explicate the components of the conundrum, and weigh answers proposed in the past? Do we remain entrapped in our inherited cultural matrix? Or can we perhaps learn from outside our cultural confines? Neither here nor in my earlier work do I propose answers to this problem, but rather argue that we try to understand Old Testament texts on their terms as much as we do so on ours. The inherent difficulty should however be continuously realised.

The value of engaging also with the Hebrew Bible on matters such as these, is not—as certain strands of Theology, past and present, would have it—that Holy Scripture shall provide the answer (cf. Lombaard 2020: 1). First, because the internal theological debate within and between the documents of the Bible, as we have seen again above, preclude any such thing as *the* answer or often even firm answers (plural); second, because the most palatable role to be assigned the Bible as (part of) a library in our lives—for different people in different ways and of different weights—is that of a discussion partner (Deist 1986).

To come then to the questions towards the end of the second paragraph above: realising from the Bible that there are alternate culturally-construed ways of treating the "God *versus* the evil-pain-death triarchy," namely as "God *and* the evil-pain-death triarchy," in a way undermines our too certain certainties. The fatality of finality in deliverance unto a single-cultural handling of such foundational issues, finds strong expression in one of the highlights of modern existentialist philosophy, that by Albert Camus. In analysing the famous Sisyphus myth, the realisation sets in that life has no meaning, and "Il n'y a qu'un problème philosophique vraiment sérieux: c'est le suicide" (Camus 1985): "There is

but one philosophical problem that is truly serious: that is suicide." This is the infirmary of firm finales. A hard truth is deathly. It constitutes unholy suffering.

Perhaps this kind of train of thought had more resonance for Timo Veijola than for most of us… Could there also have been an existential part to this innovative interpretation of his?

The above quotation is an ingenious formulation in Camus's first famous work on the absurdity of life, and the word play should not escape us: "c'est le suicide"—"c'est la vie": "that is life"—a not altogether positive exclamation, but with a sardonic tinge, perhaps best rendered in English as "such is life." Nonetheless, the question lingers: do we understand theodicy here in our way, thus reducing these biblical figures to "Sysiphusarbeiter, da sie zur Auflösung eines Rätsels verurteilt sind" (Stockhammer 1970: 164)? Perhaps it is best to distrust ourselves as much as we critically treat all other sources, as we keep wondering amongst ourselves by wandering with great minds and great texts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acocella, Joan. 2013. "Misery. Is There Justice in the Book of Job?" *The New Yorker* 9.12.2013. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/12/16/misery-3

Auerbach, Erich. 1971. *Mimesis. Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*. 5. Auflage. Bern: A. Francke Verlag.

Barr, James. 1985. "The Question of Religious Influence: The Case of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 53: 201–235.

Bos, James M. 2013. *Reconsidering the Date and Provenance of the Book of Hosea: The Case for Persian-Period Yehud*. The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies. London: Bloomsbury.

Breckman, W. 2007. "Konzeption und Geschichte des *Journal of the History of Ideas*". *Zeitschrift für Ideëngeschichte*, 1: 106–113.

Camus, Albert. 1985. *Le mythe de Sisyphe. Essai sur l'absurde*. Folio essais, 11. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.

Deist, Ferdinand. 1986. *Kan ons die Bybel dan nog glo?* Pretoria: Van Schaik Uitgewers.

De Mesel, Benjamin. 2018. "Competence in Compensating for Incompetence: Odo Marquard on Philosophy". *The Pluralist*, 13: 50–71.

Dorschel, Andreas. 2010. *Ideengeschichte*. UTB Philosophie, 3314. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Fuchs, Gisela. 1993. *Mythos und Hiobdichtung. Aufnahme und Umdeutung altorientalischer Vorstellungen*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.

Gericke, Jaco. 2017. *What is a God? Philosophical Perspectives on Divine Essence in the Hebrew Bible*. London: T & T Clark.

Gostman, Peter. 2019. "Die Soziologie des Geistes: Systematik und Praxis". *Soziologie des Geistes. Grundlagen und Fallstudien zur Ideengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edd. Peter Gostmann, Alexandra Ivanova: 9–62. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Japhet, Sara. 1994. "The Trial of Abraham and the Test of Job. How Do They Differ?" *Henoch*, 16, 153–171.

Jolley, Nicholas. 1995. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leibniz, Gottfried W. 1710. *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal*. Amsterdam: Chez François Changuiom.

Kushner, Harold S. 2012. *The Book of Job. When Bad Things Happened to a Good Person*. New York: NextBook.

Loader, James A. 2008. "Intertextuality in Multi-Layered Texts". *Old Testament Essays*, 21: 391–403.

Lohfink, Norbert. 2003. *Qohelet. A Continental Commentary*, transl. Sean McEvenue. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Lombaard, Christo, Iain T. Benson, and Eckart Otto. 2019. "Faith, Society and the Post-Secular. Private and Public Religion in Law and Theology". *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 75: 1–12.

Lombaard, Christo. 2020. "Considering Mystagogy as Method in Biblical Spirituality". *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 76, Special Collection: The Use of the Bible in Theology: 1–8.

Lombaard, Christo. 2018. "Spiritualityd… Spirituality in Our Time—In Conversation with Hartmut Rosa's Theory on Social Acceleration". *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 74: 1–7.

Lombaard, Christo. 2016. "Testing Tales: Genesis 22 and Daniel 3 & 6". *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 97: 1–8.

Lombaard, Christo. 2014. "Dating and Debating: Late Patriarchs and Early Canon". *Scriptura*, 113: 1–10.

Lombaard, Christo. 2008. "Isaac Multiplex: Genesis 22 in a New Historical Representation". *HTS Theological Studies / Teologiese Studies*, 64: 907–919.

Maas, Frans, Jacques Maas, and Klaas Spronk. edd. 2004. *De Bijbel Spiritueel. Bronnen van geestelijk leven in de bijbelse geschriften*. Utrecht: Meinema/Pelckmans.

Marquard, Odo. 1989. "Competence in Compensating for Incompetence? (On the Competence and Incompetence of Philosophy)". *Farewell to matters of principle: philosophical studies*, ed. Odo Marquard. Transl. Robert M. Wallace: 22–37. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moyise, Steve. 2002. "Intertextuality and Biblical Studies: A Review". *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 23: 418–431.

Müller, Hans-Peter. 1992. "Theodizee? Anschlußerörterungen zum Buch Hiob". *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 89: 249–279.

Murray, Michael J, and Sean Greenberg. 2016. "Leibniz on the Problem of Evil". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta. Winter 2016 Edition, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/leibniz-evil/ (04.08.2018).

Nissinen, Martti. 1991. *Prophetie, Redaktion und Fortschreibung im Hoseabuch. Studien zum Werdegang eines Prophetenbuches im Lichte von Hos 4 und 11*. Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker.

Nõmmik, Urmas. 2010. *Die Freundesreden des ursprünglichen Hiobdialogs. Eine form- und traditionsgeschichtliche Studie*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 410. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Schmid, Konrad. 2010. *Hiob als biblisches und antikes Buch: Historische und intellektuelle Kontexte seiner Theologie*. Stuttgarter Bibelstudien, 219. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk.

Stockhammer, Morris. 1970. "Theorie der Moralprobe". *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, 22: 164–167.

Strauss, Hans. 2000. "Zu Gen 22 und dem erzählenden Rahmen des Hiobbuches (Hiob 1,1–2,10 und 42,7–17)". *Verbindungslinien. Festschrift für Werner H. Schmidt zum 65. Geburtstag,* edd. Axel Graupner et al.: 377–383. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Ludger. 2016. "Das Buch Ijob". *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, ed. Christian Frevel: 417–430. 9. aktualisierte Auflage. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.

Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Ludger. 2008. "Vom Glauben zum Schauen. Der Weg Ijobs". *Mystik – Herausforderung und Inspiration. FS Gotthard Fuchs zum 70. Geburtstag*, edd. Thomas Pröpper, Michael Raske, and Jürgen Werbick: 150–159. Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald Verlag.

Tosam, Mbih J., and Peter Takov. 2016. *Philosophy in Culture: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Oxford: African Books Collective.

Veijola, Timo. 1988. "Das Opfer des Abraham – Paradigma des Glaubens aus dem nachexilischen Zeitalter". *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 85: 129–164.

Veijola, Timo. 2002. "Abraham und Hiob. Das literarische und theologische Verhältnis von Gen 22 und der Hiob-Novelle". *Vergegenwärtigung des Alten Testaments. Beiträge zur biblische Hermeneutik. Festschrift für Rudolf Smend zum 70. Geburtstag*, edd. C. Bultmann, W. Dietrich and C. Levin: 127–144. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Veijola, Timo. 2007a. "Das Opfer des Abraham – Paradigma des Glaubens aus dem nachexilischen Zeitalter". *Offenbarung und Anfechtung. Hermeneutisch-theologische Studien zum Alten Testaments*, edd. Walter Dietrich and Marko Marttila: 88–133. Biblisch-Theologische Studien, 89. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

Veijola, Timo. 2007b. "Abraham und Hiob. Das literarische und theologische Verhältnis von Gen 22 und der Hiob-Novelle". *Offenbarung und Anfechtung. Hermeneutisch-theologische Studien zum Alten Testaments*, edd. Walter Dietrich and Marko Marttila: 134–167. Biblisch-Theologische Studien, 89. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

Waaijman, Kees. 2010. "Intertextuality: On the use of the Bible in mystical texts". *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 66: 1–7.

Welzen, Huub. 2017. *Biblical Spirituality. Contours of a discipline*. Studies in spirituality. Supplement, 30. Leuven: Peeters.

Whybray, Roger N. 1996. "The Immorality of God: Reflections on Some Passages in Genesis, Job, Exodus and Numbers". *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 72: 89–120.