

**International Conference/ Mednarodna konferenca**

# **Philosophy's Religions: Challenging Continental Philosophy of Religion**

## **Religija v filozofiji in izzivi sodobnosti**

**5th – 7th September 2018**



International Conference/ Mednarodna konferenca

# Philosophy's Religions: Challenging Continental Philosophy of Religion

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5th – 7th September 2018

Organisation / Organizacija

Univerza v Ljubljani  
*Teološka* fakulteta



Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana

Teološka fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani

In colaboration with / V sodelovanju z



Science and Research Centre, Koper  
(Znanstveno-Raziskovalno središče Koper)



University of Vienna  
(Universität Wien)

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# Acknowledgements / Zahvale

## Program Committee / Programski odbor

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Ta mednarodna konferenca je del slovensko-avstrijskega bilateralnega raziskovalnega projekta (ARRS J6-7325; FWF I 2785) Vračanje religioznega v posmoderni misli kot izziv za teologijo.



**arrs**

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# Programme / Program

## Wednesday, 5th September

**16.30 – 16.45**

Opening Address

(Lecture room 1)

**16.50 – 18.10**

### **Section A** (Chair: **Jason W. Alvis**)

(Lecture room 4)

**16.50 – 17.30 Michael Staudigl** (Austria), *On Making Transcendence Together: Reconceiving Phenomenology of Religion*

**17.30 – 18.10 Max Schaefer** (Ireland), *Michel Henry's Radical Critique of Religion: Praxis and its Economies of Devotion*

### **Section B** (Chair: **Bojan Žalec**)

(Lecture room 3)

**16.50 – 17.30 Janez Vodičar** (Slovenia), *The Influence of Ricœur's Biblical Hermeneutics on the Returning to God – Atheism*

**17.30 – 18.10 Anna Jani** (Hungary), *Guilt, Confession, and Forgiveness. From Methodology to Religious Experiencing in Paul Ricœur's Phenomenology*

**18.30 – 20.00**

Keynote Address and Public Lecture (lecture room 1)

**Jean-Luc Marion** (France)

*L'ouverture phénoménale de la révélation*

## Thursday, 6th September

**9.00 – 10.00**

Plenary lecture (lecture room 1)

**Emmanuel Falque** (France)

*Which Hermeneutics for Today? Philosophy and Theology: New Frontiers*

## 10.10 – 12.30

### Section A (Chair: Michael Staudigl)

**10.10 – 10.50 Branko Klun** (Slovenia), *Givenness and Recognition. A Phenomenological Turn and Its Relevance for Theology*

### Section B (Chair: Lenart Škof)

**10.10 – 10.50 Nikolaas Deketelaere** (Great Britain), *Revelation and Nothingness: Towards an Existential Phenomenology of Religion*

~ coffee & tea break ~

**11.10 – 11.50 Christian Rößner** (Austria), *Mysticism Instead of Metaphysics: Marion's Phenomenology of Revelation*

**11.10 – 11.50 Luka Trebežnik** (Slovenia), *On Waiting, Awaiting and the Hyperbolic Nature of Language*

**11.50 – 12.30 Sofia Emilia Holopainen** (Finland), *How love can be a way of knowing, if it is incommensurable with all other kinds of knowing? Jean-Luc Marion and the third order of charity*

**11.50 – 12.30 Jason W. Alvis** (Austria), *The Counter-spectacularity of Religion: Or, a Case for Inconspicuousness*

~ Lunch break ~

## 14.30 – 15.30

Plenary lecture (lecture room 1)

**Reinhold Esterbauer** (Austria)

*The Flesh of Creation. Notes on M. Merleau-Ponty*

## 15.40 – 18.00

### Section A (Chair: Jason W. Alvis)

**15.40 – 16.20 Kristóf Oltvai** (USA), *Exegesis as Experience: Christology, authority, and the return of sola scriptura in Henry and Marion*

**16.20 – 17.00 Stephanie Rumpza** (France), *Exposing the Wrong Questions: Philosophy and Theology according Jean-Yves Lacoste and Jean-Luc Marion*

### Section B (Chair: Luka Trebežnik)

**15.40 – 16.20 Petri Berndtson** (Finland), *Philosophy's Possible Respiratory Religion: A Merleau-Pontian Ontological Interpretation of Paul Claudel's Adoration of the Principle of Silence the Abyss as a Respiring God*

**16.20 – 17.00 Jeffrey W. Robbins** (USA), *From the Phenomenal to the Material: On Deep Time and the Impersonal*

~ coffee & tea break ~



**17.20 – 18.00 Nadja Furlan Štante**  
(Slovenia), *Phenomenology of Givenness as a  
Challenge for Christian Feminist Hermeneutics*

**17.20 – 18.00 Lenart Škof** (Slovenia),  
*The Sister of Being: On Preeminence of Love in  
Heidegger*

**18.10 – 19.10**

Plenary lecture (lecture room 1)

**Noëlle Vahanian** (USA)

*Towards an Ethics for a Secular Theology of Language:  
Historical Event, Genocide Continuum, and Denialism*

**Friday, 7th September**

**9.00 – 10.00**

Plenary lecture (lecture room 1)

**James Mensch** (Czech Republic)

*Non-Useless Suffering*

**10.10 – 11.30**

**Section A** (Chair: **Nadja Furlan Štante**)

**10.10 – 10.50 Bojan Žalec** (Slovenia),  
*Kierkegaard and Levinas on suffering*

**10.50- 11.30 Edvard Kovač** (Slovenia/  
France), *Individuality and Chosenness*

**Section B** (Chair: **Luka Trebežnik**)

**10.10 – 10.50 Kadir Filiz** (Netherlands),  
*Claude Romano's Possible Contribution to the  
Continental Philosophy of Religion*

**10.50- 11.30 Tadej Rifel** (Slovenia),  
*"Apophatic philosophy": Going beyond  
phenomenology?*

**11.40 – 12.40**

Plenary lecture (lecture room 1)

**Erwin Dirscherl** (Germany)

*The Ethical Significance of the Infinity and Otherness of God and the Understanding of Man as  
"Inspired Subject". Emmanuel Levinas as a Challenge for Christian Theology*

**12.40 – 13.00**

Concluding words

~ Lunch ~

# Introduction / Predstavitev

Continental philosophy of religion (CPOR) has succeeded in many ways to question modern divides between philosophy and theology, thus opening up new, postmodern possibilities for encounter and dialogue. However, this process also has been perceived with suspicion from both sides. On the one hand, some philosophers accuse CPOR of a crypto-theology that colonizes philosophy; on the other hand, theologians often regard it as a Trojan horse designed to further weaken the fundamentals of religion. This conference wishes to examine the complex relationship between contemporary philosophy and religion/theology by turning its attention to the vast field of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Its major tasks are to unveil the variety of religious topoi implicit within these disciplines and to further assess their potential for dialogue with theology.

Recent French phenomenology has expanded upon the notions of phenomenality, rationality, and the overcoming of metaphysics. Thinkers such as Levinas, Marion, or Henry have altered the very notion of transcendence and thus became valuable interlocutors for theology. Levinas' work has been appropriated within theology, even within Catholic dogmatics, to the point of provoking some opponents to mock of his becoming a new Church father. In general, there is increasing awareness among theologians that theology cannot immunize itself from the ongoing weakening of traditional metaphysics and its assumed overcoming. Marion's phenomenological thought has perhaps the highest, yet vastly unexplored potential for theology to respond to this challenge. What is required, on the one hand, concerns a thorough consideration of Marion's theoretical presuppositions without too quickly domesticating his terminology (e.g., saturation, revelation, gift, etc.) within a theological discourse. From the side of philosophy, on the other hand, Marion's phenomenology rightly demands an attitude of bracketing the recurrent prejudices concerning a hidden theological agenda. Given this, the critical reception of this work allows and even necessitates the pursuit of general questions (as does every phenomenology of religion) in our search for a fragile equilibrium that neither hides behind a "methodological atheism" nor drifts into an unavowed theology. But tracing the line of demarcation also is an issue for theologians: are those philosophical topoi bearing a strong religious affinity (e.g., the call-response structure, topologies of the gift, love, gratuity, etc.) that we find at work in contemporary French phenomenology of religion (including thinkers like Chrétien, Lacoste and Falque) compatible with concrete religion(s) and their theology(ies)? And if so, to what degree? Do re-appropriations of Christianity (such as in the case of Henry's phenomenology

or Vattimo's hermeneutics) deepen and enhance religious discourse, or do they rather run the risk of violently distorting the original self-understanding of a concrete religion?

Unlike phenomenology, hermeneutics always has maintained strong ties with theology, especially within a Judeo-Christian context, since this tradition was one of the birthplaces of hermeneutics. The kerygmatic character of the Christian message and its inherent historicity still forms a natural affinity to philosophical hermeneutics, which, since Heidegger, has extended its ambitions to promote an all-encompassing role of understanding, overshadowing and replacing the role of ontology. But this development of hermeneutics has led, simultaneously, both to proximity with and distance from theology. The constant weakening of ontology (disqualified as a strong and violent metaphysics of presence) has put in jeopardy the concept of transcendence, which traditionally has been at the core of religious self-understanding. This deconstructive (Caputo) and "nihilistic" tendency of hermeneutics (Vattimo) has not been accepted without contradiction. Indeed, it recently has been countered by its "metaphysical" opponents (to use Grondin's terminology), who advocate for a "constructive" ideal of Gadamer's method and for the reconciliatory character of Ricoeur's hermeneutics. In Greisch' hermeneutical anthropology, to mention just one example, still remains the "function meta" after the decline of traditional metaphysics. Finally, a truly unprecedented challenge for religion/theology is raised by the recent turn of hermeneutics towards sensibility and corporeality. This twist is recognizable not only in "carnal hermeneutics" (Kearney), but also in inquiries into the cosmic dimension (cosmopoetics in Caputo) or the "sensible transcendental" (Irigaray). All these lead to new, explicitly "material" understandings of religiosity.

As this short description has demonstrated, it is difficult to assess whether it is within the philosophical or the theological landscape that the variety of contemporary re-conceptualizations of the religious incites greater controversy: to start this inquiry, explore the related controversies, and assess their potentials for both fields, is the major intent of this conference. Thus viewed, it seeks to provide a place of encounter for different approaches to religion within the broader context of phenomenology and hermeneutics. It also welcomes contributions from other relevant disciplines – in particularly theology, with its own internal diversifications and confessional differences – that might help highlight the afore-mentioned tensions, and enrich the dialogue between philosophy and theology today.

# Abstracts / Povzetki

## Jason W. Alvis

University of Vienna

### **The Counter-spectacularity of Religion: Or, a Case for Inconspicuousness**

It often is understood that Modern Philosophy--the means of developing logical distinctions and arguments in a clear way--often runs counter to Religious experiences -- the enchanting, shocking, and “eventful” nature of revelation beyond epistemological conditions. Yet in many ways, these two tendencies share more similarities than we often imagine, as both focus upon, and seek to unfurl, what shines with apparent brilliance and what shocks with an eventful spectacularity. From Tillich’s *Erlebnis* to Badiou’s “Event”, it today goes presumed that Revelation is or would be surprising as a spectacle. As Guy Debord once critiqued, western societies are obsessed with spectacles, and this goes hand in hand with certain theological and philosophical presuppositions and conditions.

This presentation locates and describes particular aspects of the emphases upon a “spectacular phenomenality”, then develops a “phenomenology of the inconspicuous” in response to it. It in fact is possible to define the word “inconspicuous” (or that which is non-apparent, *Unscheinbar*), according to its etymological basis as “counter-spectacular” (*spek*). After (1) locating a particularly paradigmatic debate that reflects these tensions within the pejoratively named “Theological turn in French Phenomenology” and the work of Dominique Janicaud), I then (2) introduce Heidegger’s notion of a “phenomenology of the inconspicuous” in order to demonstrate three reasons why “inconspicuousness” may be used to overcome this particular, aforementioned problem of both (a) the philosophical focus upon clarity/appearance and (b) the emphasis upon “religious experience” and Revelation as a spectacle.

# Petri Berndtson

University of Jyväskylä

## **Philosophy's Possible Respiratory Religion: A Merleau-Pontian Ontological Interpretation of Paul Claudel's Adoration of the Principle of Silence the Abyss as a Respiring God**

Late Merleau-Ponty hints that Paul Claudel's adoration of the principle of "Silence the Abyss" as a form of negative theology could be understood as an ontological return to the beginning as the source of everything. In my presentation I will try to interpret what this Merleau-Ponty's suggested intertwining of phenomenologico-ontological method as negative philosophy and Claudel's adoration of Silence the Abyss could mean. Neither Merleau-Ponty himself nor the Merleau-Pontian scholarly community have given any kind of explicit or systematic interpretation concerning this matter. For Claudel, this principle of Silence the Abyss is synonymous with "a respiring God" or with "a God who breathes". I will ponder how to interpret in a Merleau-Pontian manner this Claudel's respiring God as the source/beginning of everything. Claudel's Silence the Abyss as God is ontologically interpreted by Merleau-Ponty as universal Being. This means that Claudel's negative theology of respiring God could be translated into Merleau-Pontian ontological language of negative philosophy as respiring Being. This ontologization of respiring God as beginning/source into respiring Being would give philosophers as perpetual beginners, in my opinion, a chance to begin philosophy anew as a respiratory philosophy in the name of "respiration within Being" (Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind").

# Nikolaas Deketelaere

University of Oxford

## **Revelation and Nothingness: Towards an Existential Phenomenology of Religion**

In this paper, I propose a reading of Jean-Luc Nancy, who is generally not associated with the theological turn in French phenomenology, as nevertheless productively engaging with it by articulating an unorthodox existential phenomenology of religion. If Marion suggests that revelation is characterised by excessive givenness, Nancy objects that it is rather absolute nothingness. Revelation reveals nothing, which has deep ontological meaning for Nancy: nothing exceptional, nothing otherworldly; instead, it throws us back unto ourselves who give meaning to the world by engaging with it; as such, nothingness is exactly what is revealed. God then only appears in and as (not to) a particular being-in-the-world, namely one characterised by faith. The experience of God is the experience of the self (outside of itself). Hence, Nancy speaks of a phenomenology that is theological but not theophanic, where God becomes phenomenal not through an experience that saturates, but in and as (not to) a consciousness that is saturated, and as such experiences nothing but reveals everything. This would be a possible response to the charge that theological phenomenology flaunts the very essence of the reduction, as here the phenomenon of God does not require ontological transcendence.

# Erwin Dirscherl

University of Regensburg

## **The Ethical Significance of the Infinity and Otherness of God and the Understanding of Man as “Inspired Subject”. Emmanuel Levinas as a Challenge for Christian theology**

The thinking of E. Levinas deeply influences the actual debates in Christian systematic theology. In catholic thinking, we know the norm of the Lateran Council in 1215: You cannot discern a similarity between God and man without discerning a greater dissimilarity between them. Do we take this norm seriously in our metaphysical ontology and theology? The otherness and goodness of God is the main problem in Levinas's philosophy and with regard to the catastrophes of the two world wars and the Shoa in the twentieth century he asks, what the significance of the talking about God in present times could be. Ethics has to become the “prima philosophia” because all our thinking and acting has an ethical significance and thus we may not forget this. Therefore, infinity and otherness receive an ethical meaning and constitute our responsibility as “inspired subjects” for the whole world. In the tradition of Jewish thinking, Levinas combines the unicity of each man and the universality of human responsibility for all people. In the face of the other, who is suffering, we are confronted with the face of God himself. What can we learn from Levinas today?

# Reinhold Esterbauer

University of Graz

## The Flesh of Creation. Notes on M. Merleau-Ponty

Unlike Emmanuel Levinas, who rewrites the concept of creation in general and in his sense transfers it from ontology to ethics, Maurice Merleau-Ponty does not deal with this central Christian concept in detail. But it seems to be possible to gain important impulses for the further development of the theological idea of creation from his philosophy as well. If one conceives his concept of the flesh, which he develops in late philosophy, as the concept of an ontology that goes beyond traditional metaphysics, conclusions, which redefine the Christian concept of creation, can be drawn from his book “The Visible and the Invisible” as well as from his lectures on natural philosophy.

**Key words:** Merleau-Ponty, creation, flesh, ontology



# Emmanuel Falque

Catholic University of Paris

## **Which Hermeneutics For Today? Philosophy and Theology: New Frontiers**

The separation between heremeneutics and phenomenology can probably no longer apply in the same way today. Does this mean that we have to content ourselves with a »grafting« of hermeneutics onto phenomenology? By assessing also the »confessional« weight of every hermeneutics, I will show how a »hermeneutics of the body and the voice« can succeed a hermeneutics of »the body of the letter« and of »the meaning of the texte«. This new perspective will allow us to assess the possible »reverse shock« coming from theology in the direction of philosophy.

## **Claude Romano's Possible Contribution to the Continental Philosophy of Religion**

In this paper, I would like to focus on how the Continental Philosophy of Religion can benefit from the works of Claude Romano. As an important figure of recent French Phenomenology, Claude Romano comes after the generation who constituted something called the Continental Philosophy of Religion. However, in his works, one cannot find a direct reference to any religious concept or theme. Despite his indifference to any topic of religion in his corpus, I argue that his project opens a broadened way to discuss religion and religious themes. Rather than determining phenomenality with a religious idea (even if in a phenomenological way), such as in Jean-Luc Marion, the works of Romano make possible to rethink religion and religious themes without any theological gesture. His hermeneutical phenomenology and the elaboration of a new image of reason succeed to modify the very notions of phenomenology; phenomenality, rationality, subjectivity, experience, world, time and so on. By these modifications, finding an open space for religion and religious themes in phenomenology can become much more possible and fertile than some approaches of the Continental Philosophy of Religion. In this context, I will highlight the hermeneutical phenomenology and the new image of reason of Romano in respect to the understanding of phenomenality in Jean-Luc Marion.

# Nadja Furlan Štante

Science and Research Centre Koper

## Phenomenology of Givenness as a Challenge for Christian Feminist Hermeneutics

What emerges as key for postmodernity is the emphasis on the other, both the other we encounter in our daily lives and the wholly Other who invites us into fullness of life. The emphasis on the Other is a significant move in theology. The paper seeks to place the theological work of Jean-Luc Marion, on the otherness of God in terms of Givenness and our human inability to grasp this otherness, in the context of christian feminist theology and its centrality of relationality and embodiment. Furtheron, an analysis of possible compatibility of the phenomenology of givenness and Marion's hermeneutics with the hermeneutics of christian feminist theology will be investigated.

**Keywords:** phenomenology of givenness, transcendence, relationality, embodiment, identity.

# Sofia Emilia Holopainen

University of Helsinki

## **How Love Can Be a Way of Knowing, if It Is Incommensurable With All Other Kinds of Knowing? Jean-Luc Marion and the Third Order of Charity**

Jean-Luc Marion claims God is love. He states love and assurance form a different kind of knowing compared to those of visible world of materiality and invisible world of rationality. In this paper, I evaluate if an understanding of love as an act of will could explain love as different kind of knowing.

First, I describe shortly Marion's notion of the third order of charity and how it is based on Pascal's philosophy. Second, I present Marion's notion of love as an act of will, which means to open oneself to the other. I investigate if there is a contradiction between Marion's two claims: 1. To love the other is to love a particular other and 2. To love one's neighbour is an ideal and loving is more important than being. Does the latter claim include a denial of corporeality, and can it be reconciled with the first claim that to love the other means always to love a particular other? Third, I explicate how Marion's view of love can on the one hand be understood through Christian concept of charity as kenotic self-giving and on the other hand as a dimension of value and meaning. The method of the study is analysis of the presuppositions, relations and meanings of Marion's concepts, sentences, and arguments.

## **Guilt, Confession, and Forgiveness. From Methodology to Religious Experiencing in Paul Ricœur's Phenomenology**

My approach to the religious experience in Paul Ricœur's phenomenology of religion consists in the primordial hypothesis that the basic question of the phenomenology can be formulated by virtue of the reality of the experienced thing. The aim of my presentation is to show the way Ricœur connected the phenomenological and hermeneutical problematics of Being to the fundamental ethical dimension of the phenomenological ontology, i.e., the way the fundamental ontology of the phenomenology essentially belongs to the individual religious questioning. Based on the two poles of the investigation, I will focus on the questions (1) how religious experiences reflect on reality, and (2) how the methodology of phenomenology leads to the wider ontology of theology. According to my hypothesis, the two divergent approaches to religious experiences find their source in the phenomenological reflection on reality, and this reality, in view of the substantially non-real experience of religiosity, urges the creation of a new ontology.

**Keywords:** confession, forgiveness, religiosity, reality, freedom

## **Givenness and Recognition. A Phenomenological Turn and Its Relevance for Theology**

Marion gives a new interpretation to the phenomenological notion of givenness (of a phenomenon) by attributing to this phenomenon a “self” which is, in a certain sense, independent from and prior to its reception by the subject (as “the gifted one”, *adonné*). In this way, Marion pleads for a phenomenological turn which can also be described in terms of counter-intentionality and counter-method. However, this turn is not a logical necessity, but a (rationally grounded) decision which the subject, or *adonné* has to make. In this paper I would like to interrelate this decision to the notion of recognition. The *adonné*, by recognising the priority of givenness over its own receiving capacities, adopts the attitude of humility in every relation to reality (not understood ontologically, but in its “saturated” phenomenality). This attitude is of fundamental importance with regard to (the possibility of) the phenomenon of revelation.

# Edvard Kovač

Catholic Institute of Toulouse

## Individuality and Chosenness

According to Emmanuel Levinas, the genius of the Greeks was to create the universal concept. Without that, universal human rights could not be defined. But there remains the issue of the uniqueness of the human person, or, even better, of the „face“, which cannot be incorporated into the universal concept. Levinas finds a solution for this in the Biblical idea of chosenness. The idea itself comes near the Scotist concept of „hecceitas“, which Jean-Luc Marion understands as „tel quel“. Ontologically, chosenness does not add anything to the human hypostasis, but bestows on it a unique ethical mission.

# Jean-Luc Marion

de l'Académie française

## The Phenomenological Openness of Revelation

“How does Revelation make itself manifest by contradicting, as it must, the a priori conditions of experience? By what paradoxes is this counter-experience accomplished? These theological questions cannot be confronted without mastering the possibility of a phenomenality of saturated phenomena. And we must not claim to resolve them too quickly, by mobilizing, under the cover of theological categories, concepts and formulas that are derived directly from philosophy in its metaphysical state. Therefore we must try to describe the counter-experience of Revelation as a paradigmatic saturated phenomenon.”



# James Mensch

Charles University, Prague

## Non-Useless Suffering

What does it mean to suffer? How are we to understand the sufferings we undergo? Etymologically, to suffer signifies to undergo and endure. Is there a sense, a purpose to our sufferings or does the very passivity, which they etymologically imply, robs them of all inherent meaning? In this paper, I shall argue against this Levinasian interpretation. My claim will be that suffering, exhibits a meaning beyond meaning, one embodied in the unique singularity of our flesh. This uniqueness is, in fact, an interruption. It signifies the suspension of all systems of exchange, all attempts to render good for good and evil for evil. It is in terms of such suspension that suffering—particularly as found in selfless sacrifice—finds its “use.” This “use” involves the possibility of forgiveness.

## **Exegesis as Experience: Christology, Authority, and the Return of Sola Scriptura in Henry and Marion**

Though Martin Luther claimed sola scriptura merely returned to Christian scriptures' "original meaning," his method bypassed Scholastic orthodoxies by proposing that the biblical text mediates a first-person encounter with Jesus Christ. This encounter's theological prestige successfully weaponized Luther's personal ("religious") experience against an ossified philosophical establishment incommensurate with his milieu's spiritual and intellectual needs. Here, I argue that the formally theological works of Michel Henry and Jean-Luc Marion repeat this hermeneutic maneuver, using novel scriptural exegeses to assert an immediate "evangelical" authority they then wield against their premier philosophical foes. From *God without Being* to *Givenness and Revelation*, I first trace how Marion uses the canonical Gospels' Christological statements to authorize his signature phenomenological breakthrough, the saturated phenomenon. The "God of metaphysics" not only contradicts the believer's lived experience, but blasphemes against the Christic icon scripture reveals. I then analyze how Henry uses the evangelists' Christology in *I am the Truth* to crown the absolute self-immanence of "Life." The encounter with Jesus within the biblical text – "transcendent" by definition – is what nonetheless certifies autoaffection's phenomenological primacy. Far from being peripheral to their intellectual projects, then, Marion and Henry use Christian scripture as the ultimate proving ground for philosophical ideas that, they would claim, just thematize commonsense experience. This conflation of exegesis and experience, I claim, reveals French phenomenology's indebtedness to the Protestant Reformation's theological method while suggesting new philosophical perspectives on the Reformers themselves.

# Tadej Rifel

Independent Researcher, St. Stanislav's Institution (Ljubljana)

## **“Apophatic Philosophy”: Going Beyond Phenomenology?**

An expression apophatic philosophy can be understood as an appropriate synonym for a more traditional expression apophatic theology. Traditional philosophical views on the mystery of God created besides its mere rational reflection also thought which is over-rational but definitely not antirational. It can be found in texts in the field of mysticism, both religious and philosophical. Classical Greek culture joined with Christian faith. Therefore, we cannot talk about it as an individual entity being separated by these two worlds. Athens can be recognized in Jerusalem – to use expression of Leo Shestov. A symbol joins the mind. Can anybody still follow its directness?

Slovenian philosophical field has developed specific understanding for Christian mystical tradition in its high theoretical expression. Most credit can be given to the thought of Gorazd Kocijančič (born 1964), a philosopher, poet, translator and publisher since it confirms axiomatics of the reality of a spiritual world, which does not correspond to any other reality. Radical denial or negation (apo-fásko) as a modus vivendi of philosophy represents at the same time a relationship of a radical openness between mysteries of God and human being.

This contribution will mostly focus on Kocijančič's synthesis from his philosophical trilogy and mainly on his relationship towards phenomenological thinking. As he stresses in his preface to his translation of Levinas' *Le temps et l'autre*, apophatics goes beyond the phenomenology.

# Jeffrey W. Robbins

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## From the Phenomenal to the Material: On Deep Time and the Impersonal

This paper will trace and conjoin three important developments in recent philosophical and theological thought. The first concerns the theological turn in phenomenology, specifically what the phenomenon of pure givenness suggests about the nature and structure of time with special attention paid to Jean-Luc Marion's conception of the "saturated phenomenon." The second concerns an expansionary view of "deep time" drawn from evolutionary thought that provides an important reorientation from human consciousness and the human subject to the earth as subject with the environmental crisis and massive extinction in mind. Here the recent speculative work on "evolutionary religion" by the philosopher of religion J. L. Schellenberg will be the primary point of reference. The third considers the impersonal philosophy of Roberto Esposito to demonstrate how a distinctly non-anthropological form of thought is both necessary to the development of a new materialism and viable as the alternative political theology we need.

**Keywords:** Jean-Luc Marion, Roberto Esposito, J. L. Schellenberg, Impersonal Philosophy, New Materialism, Deep Time

## **Mysticism Instead of Metaphysics: Marion's Phenomenology of Revelation**

In a dense and important text that is currently appearing in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie*, Jean-Luc Marion treats the topic of the complex relationship between phenomenology and theology by inquiring into the philosophical status of mysticism. Whereas the concept and meaning of the mystical commonly have become problematic and suspicious, Christian faith remains based on the „revelation of the mustêrion“ (Romans 16, 25). If, in this sense, theology is always already a mystical one, it has to take into account the specific phenomenality of such a manifestation of the mystery the Bible is talking about. By learning from phenomenology to better see what there is being given, theology can help phenomenology to become wide-eyed and be no longer blinkered by transcendental restrictions of classical apriori-metaphysics.

# Stephanie Rumpza

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## **Exposing the Wrong Questions: Philosophy and Theology according Jean-Yves Lacoste and Jean-Luc Marion**

We often use the terms “philosophy” and “theology” as if this marked a clear distinction: reason against faith, natural against supernatural, logic against Scripture, and so on. But is it really so evident that such a clear division exists, or ought to? Might it be that this very question in fact is too often poorly posed, that it concedes too much before we even begin? As soon as we question the question, we can begin to understand why, despite concerns that contemporary French philosophy has taken a “theological turn”, many of the leading French philosophers seem to not care. Jean-Yves Lacoste calls the philosophy-theology divide “almost uninteresting.” And where Jean-Luc Marion has drawn the line in recent work, it is often according to a configuration that seems to go against its traditional model. In this paper, I will draw from both of these thinkers to place this question of division between fields in a broader context, historically, pragmatically, and conceptually, and thus to clear the ground for us to be asking the right questions, and for the right reasons.

# Max Schaefer

University of Limerick

## **Michel Henry's Radical Critique of Religion: Praxis and its Economies of Devotion**

This paper addresses Michel Henry's study of Christianity. I argue that Henry's engagement with Christianity performs an immanent critique of the essence of religion, and that this critique reveals the latter to consist in the practice of relations of non-reciprocity (gratuitous self-giving, acts of love), which makes possible the natural reciprocity between living subjects. While Henry thereby lays out the essential formal structure and content of religious experience, I maintain that this experience is not exclusively or primarily Christian, but necessarily unfolds as a polytheism and animism, as pluralistic societies and as a cosmos.

I show that the immanent self-givenness of embodied affectivity (life) in which the subject passively receives itself is a movement of self-growth. I maintain that such growth reveals life to be a singular-plurality — a movement of pluralisation. By way of extension, I maintain that this account of religious experience does not altogether discount religion as a matter of belief, representation, or as an objectifying economy of ritual and devotion. If such practices arise from the immanent, gratuitous movement of life, then they can remind the subject of its dependence on life and thereby indirectly serve the self-growth of life.

# Michael Staudigl

University of Vienna

## On Making Transcendence Together: Reconceiving Phenomenology of Religion

This presentation proposes the hypothesis that we may productively conceptualize religion in terms of „making transcendence together,“ i.e., in terms that avoid the traditional pitfalls of both autonomy and heterology, as well as any attempt at their dialectical sublation. The chosen syntagma entails a variety of experiential patterns that together figure the specific phenomenality of religious experience. While I will not be able to deal with the full set of related patterns in this talk, I will discuss four of them and explore their interrelations as well as overall implications: the first pattern relates to the poietic nature of transcendence, the fact that it is being made up in concrete liturgies; the second concerns its performative character, i.e., the fact that it embodies an attitude but does not figure an ontological entity; the third feature relates to the fact that this making is responsive in nature but does not relate to or re-present anything pre-given; the fourth feature, finally, concerns its deep social structure, that is, its inherently inter-affective constitution. I argue that these patterns, taken together in their interplay, can help us to rethink religion in a post-foundational and non-essentialist way to open new pathways for the kind of post-secular philosophy of religion that is required today.



## **“The Sister of Being: On Preeminence of Love in Heidegger”**

This paper deals with a new possibility of interpreting the problem of love in Heidegger. We know that in Heidegger's *Being and Time* the concept of love does not play any significant role. It is only mentioned in one footnote related to Augustine. It is in this context that Caputo argues that there is no compassion and there are no tears in the world of *Dasein*. Based on Irigaray's recent *To Be Born* (2016) it will first be argued that any future ontology of love has to be related to the idea of the child, which also was neglected by Heidegger in his works, even after the *Kehre*. In a step towards reinterpreting Heidegger's philosophy in this way we will read his *Contributions to Philosophy*, *History of Being*, and *Mindfulness* in a feminist key. Heidegger's thoughts on the mildness of Being (*die Milde des Seyns*), and related dispositifs of peace and nonviolence in Heidegger's ontology will be put into a closest proximity with by himself neglected feminist features in ancient Greek thought (Aphrodite/Love, Demeter/Kore, ancient maternal genealogies – such as *chóra* in Plato, or related genealogies of the feminine in Empedocles). Finally, the aim of this paper will be to rethink Heidegger's late philosophy in this feminist key and to offer an original ontological teaching – i.e. of Love as the Sister of Being.

## On Waiting, Awaiting and the Hyperbolic Nature of Language

One of the most distinguished traits of the religious side of philosophy lies in a developed and clearly recognizable relation towards that which is unapparent, unforeseen and absent – the future. Religions have established themselves with an adjustment and refinement of arrangements of time, most notably by dividing profane and holy, the latter often being a concrete representation of that which is forthcoming. Religious anticipations are usually manifested in the form of a messianic promise or an apocalyptic warning in a vision of impending judgment. The majority of the so-called secular philosophies copy this kind of religious prognosis as well, sometimes resulting in a utopic or dystopic vision of the future and other times in a pure formal scheme that remains endlessly open towards the other, but practically doesn't offer any content at all. The future is often regarded (quasi)religiously since it cannot appear as such and become present. That is why Jacques Derrida methodically distinguishes between two modes of the future – for him, the established future (*le future*), the future of the timetables that could be represented and anticipated, belongs to the present, while the “real” future (*l'avenir*) always remains and must remain in deferral. That is the reason why he almost exclusively describes the relation of expectation towards the absent future in religious terms: promise, covenant and prayer. This paper will contrast his use of a messianic vocabulary with some influential contemporary philosophers, and will take into account a linguistic background of messianic thinking.

# Noëlle Vahanian

Lebanon Valley College, PA

## **Towards an Ethic for a Secular Theology of Language: Historical Event, Genocide Continuum, and Denialism**

To say something so as not to say nothing, at the risk of being misunderstood, and worse, of making enemies, is a difficult burden to assume. To risk such a thinking, without having clear sight and the answers to the difficult questions one raises, is perhaps reckless. To dare to question, like a pupil in a classroom raising her hand, without supreme authority or expertise, those value-laden ideas and thinkers on the apparent good side of history, is likely foolish. But this is where I stand in my search for a thinking that does not disappoint (a theological thinking) in the face of the ‘angel of history,’ the current rise of ethno-nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms, and a continuum of hate, violence, and oppression on this earth into which everyone comes into being.

In particular, for the present, I propose to question the logic of the exceptional event as ethical model, the root-cause of the Levinasian imperative to put ethics before ontology, the most important question of philosophy. Why, as Levinas averred to Dussel, had he never considered that the ‘other’ could signify the non-European oppressed others? Or why, as Butler puzzled too, would he go on to say that the Palestinian has no face? I will look ways in which the phenomenological experience of an event as singular, in this case, the Holocaust, can license a perverse moral high ground, one such through which, for instance, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be interpreted, but also, one through which denialism (the denial of genocide) and revisionist history collude in the maintenance of identity-politics.

**Keywords:** Levinas, Butler, Yakira, Marion, Genocide Continuum

## The Influence of Ricoeur's Biblical Hermeneutics on the Returning to God – Anatheism

Is modern retuning to religion simply a superficial feeling of faith or an actual proclamation of faith? Richard Kearney writes that he chose Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur to guide his thought over Husserl and Heidegger. He claims that his thought is more of a pedagogical narrative than an epistemological and ontological priority. Ricoeur's pedagogic narrative is often found in exegesis of biblical passages. Ricoeur claims to be a reader of the Bible, rather than its interpreter. This claim convinces Kearney that this is the correct means for the modern world to have a fruitful return to God. Through his assumption of the role of the "philosopher" instead of a "preacher," Ricoeur looks for the possibilities of postatheistic faith. Because this philosophy of religion surpasses the focus on trivial details, about what such faith would mean in the context of confession and liturgy, it allows the modern human to return to the core of religion. According to both Ricoeur and Kearney, it is the reading of the Bible that allows for this to happen. The question is, what kind of reading this actually is and how much it can be applied to the real life of the faithful. In fact, Ricoeur continuously admits that any faith implies a concretely defined and executed profession of faith in time and space. Thus, the question arises whether anatheism really introduces a broader philosophy of religion or merely continues the old one and frames it in specific hermeneutics.

**Keywords:** anatheism, philosophy of religion, Bible, P. Ricoeur, R. Kearney, hermeneutic.

## Kierkegaard and Levinas on Suffering

Suffering is one of the central problems of philosophical and theological ethics. The paper deals with Kierkegaard's and Levinas' views on suffering. These views are in many respects opposed and incompatible. The paper concentrates on the opposing parts of their views. In the first part of the paper, Kierkegaard's view is presented, and in the second part, the view of Levinas. In the analysis of Kierkegaard's account, the author concentrates on the following components: the teleological nature of his account (suffering as a means of transformations and purifying, Kierkegaard's theodicy etc.), his distinction between useful and useless suffering, and his conception of active "suffering". In contrast to Kierkegaard's view, according to Levinas suffering is passive, evil and – except in the case of non-useless suffering for the other – useless. In distinction to Kierkegaard, Levinas refuses any theodicy and stresses compassion with the suffering Other. He thinks suffering in the interhuman perspective. In the third, concluding part, the author reflects on the criticism of Kierkegaard's account from the Levinasian perspective, and estimates the power of this criticism.

**Keywords:** suffering, Kierkegaard, Levinas, meaning(lessness) of suffering, interhuman perspective on suffering.

