

THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE – A PHILOSOPHICAL REASSESSMENT

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Where can I find a man who has forgotten words? I want to talk to him.
(Chuang Tzu)

ABSTRACT

After a cursory introduction to religious language as a philosophical problem the author offers a new error theory to argue that many of the current philosophical conceptual dilemmas ultimately derive from ancient Yahwism's eclectic diachronic transmutations of polytheistic conceptual categories in the formation of monotheistic conceptual metaphors. Thereafter follows a discussion on the metaphorical turn in Biblical Theology suggesting that the prevalent views might not be adequate to the task of philosophically classifying ancient Israelite religious language and happen to be based on a number of anachronistic metaphysical dichotomies. A descriptive reconstruction of some evaluative metaphysical binary oppositions in the metatheistic assumptions of ancient Yahwism precedes the concluding question of whether many philosophical paradoxes regarding the deity-reality relation might not be functionally modelled on the format of an oneirological analogy.

INTRODUCTION

The term “religious language” (henceforth RL) does not occur in the Hebrew Bible (henceforth HB). In philosophy of religion the concept refers to statements or claims made about divine beings and in that sense the RL of the HB denotes the god-talk of ancient Israelite religion. When asking what the nature of RL in the HB happens to be, however, no universal response can be expected given the counter-question that inevitably arises, i.e., “for whom?” Here the familiar (if controversial and problematic) distinction needs to be drawn between *what it meant* (requiring a descriptive assessment) and *what it means* (requiring an evaluative assessment) (Barr 1999:189-208; but see already Stendahl 1965:196-209). In this regard, most approaches in contemporary philosophy of religion tend to be evaluative, either trying to make biblical god-talk seem philosophically credible or attempting to prove it nonsensical. Few philosophical inquiries are actually interested in the provisioning of a purely descriptive analysis of the RL of the HB for its own sake. This paper, however,

will be doing just that and will attempt to justify the following claims:

- a) Popular notions regarding the nature of divinity in classical theism are anachronistic in the context of ancient Israelite religion where exactly the inverse appears to have been taken for granted in the metatheistic assumptions (presuppositions about what makes a god divine) of the biblical authors.
- b) What ultimately gave rise to the philosophical problem of RL in Judaeo-Christian philosophy of religion are not so much medieval Aristotelian-based notions of divine simplicity but instead ancient Yahwism's eclectic diachronic transmutations of polytheistic conceptual categories in the formation of monotheistic conceptual metaphors.
- c) The popular view in Biblical Theology according to which god-talk in the HB is essentially metaphorical is philosophically inadequate as a means of classifying what we are dealing with in the texts.
- d) Many of the present obsessions with viewing RL as metaphorical happen to proceed from a number of anachronistic assumptions involving false metaphysical dichotomies with regard to the supposed deity-reality relation in the HB.
- e) Philosophy of religion proper has not yet become sufficiently aware of the deep-seated hidden assumptions in the discipline regarding taken-for-granted evaluative binary oppositions in the metatheistic assumptions of biblical god-talk.
- f) The complex and paradoxical nature of biblical representations of divinity can be adequately modelled on an oneirological analogy (i.e., referring to surreality or the dreamworld) which seems best able to make sense of many age-old philosophical-theological conceptual paradoxes.

The paper commences, however, with an introduction to what philosophers of religion proper have been saying about the nature of religious language.

PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES ON THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

In analytical philosophy of religion many theories are attested with reference to the supposed nature of god-talk in the Judaeo-Christian religious traditions.

Discussions of the different views tend to present the research in two different formats – and sometimes confusingly so, especially given the overlapping of conceptual categories:

1. A *thematic-relational* presentation locates particular perspectives within one of the three classical (actually medieval) categories, e.g., *univocal-equivocal-analogical*. The three categories may be understood as follows: a) *RL is univocal* (i.e., words that refer to the deity and to humanity have exactly the same meaning); b) *RL is equivocal* (i.e., human language cannot properly refer to divinity and the same concepts mean something else in religious contexts than they do in ordinary usage); c) *RL is analogical* (i.e., one can postulate that there is some sort of relational similarity between what a word means when it applies to humanity and when it applies to God) (see Weed 2005:1).
2. The *historical-genetic* type of presentation names and discusses the views of the pioneering individuals who have had something noteworthy to say on the subject. A typical discussion in this format might include references to Philo who believed most of RL is actually allegorical; Thomas Aquinas who argued that RL is analogical; Immanuel Kant who thought that we should understand RL as being primarily morally-regulative (as opposed to being metaphysically-informative); Paul Tillich who thought of RL as symbolical; Alfred Ayer who suggested that RL is utterly meaningless; Ludwig Wittgenstein (and his followers) who implied that RL should be understood as being non-cognitive; Rudolph Bultmann (and D.F. Strauss before him) who thought of RL as being mythological; Sallie McFague who suggested that all god-talk be seen as metaphorical; William Alston who made a case for understanding RL in a literal sense, etc. (This is the format of presentation, give or take a few names and ideas, in, e.g., Harris 2002:28-76; cf. Long 2000).

Of course, the above-mentioned types are simply convenient generalisations and many discussions also focus on epistemic issues related to RL. For example, many would involve meta-level assessments such as R.M. Hare's theory of "Bliks", I.T. Ramsey's notion of "Models and Quantifiers", T. McPerson's idea of "Holy Silence", etc. (see Harris 2002:28-76). In the end, however, the important fact from the perspective of anyone interested in a philosophical

analysis of the RL of the HB is that all of the above philosophical theories of the nature of RL were constructed with reference to the propositions found in Jewish and Christian philosophical theology. As such they are not the result of historical and descriptive biblical exegesis – a fact nowhere as evident as in the habit of philosophers of religion to mention the HB only for its place as part of the historical backdrop for the real problems. As Weed (2005:1) notes:

The problem of religious language is generated by the traditional doctrine of God in the Abrahamic traditions. Since God is thought to be incorporeal, infinite, and timeless, the predicates we apply to corporeal, finite, temporal creatures would not apply to God.

Surveying the philosophical research with some bearing on the biblical discourse, however, reveals that by “traditional doctrine” is actually meant the concept of God in “classical theism” and not the conceptions of Yhwh as reconstructed in the history of Israelite religion. This is readily apparent when Weed (2005:1) further informs us that

The problem of religious language is also generated by the medieval doctrine of divine simplicity, which claims that God does not have any intrinsic accidental properties.

In other words, many philosophers of religion conceive of the “biblical God” as basically a pre-philosophical form of the God of the philosophers. This is evident from the errant belief that the so-called “doctrine of divine simplicity” represents an adequate reflection of the profile of Yhwh in the HB. There appears to have been operative a distinct lack of historical consciousness in the thought of Thomas Aquinas when, in his *Summa Theologiae*, he attempted to provide the following philosophical account of the nature of the biblical deity (from Pyysiäinen 2005:7; cf. Vallicella 2008:1):

1. God does not have a body (*Deum non esse corpus*).
2. God is not a composition of matter (*materiam*) and form (*forma*).
3. God is one with his essence (*essentia*) and nature (*natura*).
4. God is not only his essence but also his existence.
5. God is not in any genus as a species (*Deus non est in genere sicut species*) or as a cause (*sicut principium*).
6. There can be no “accidents” (*accidens*) in God.

7. God is totally one (*Deum omnino esse simplicem*).
8. God cannot be combined with anything.

The above-listed philosophical descriptions are seriously anachronistic in as much as the history of Israelite religion knows of many instances in which exactly the opposite profile of divinity was taken for granted in many of the (particularly pre-exilic) traditions of biblical Yahwism (cf. Ward 1998:58-82; van der Toorn 1999:911-919; Gericke 2009). A philosophical account of the (pre-philosophical) metatheistic assumptions about the nature of divinity as represented in the RL of ancient Israelite religion during the Iron Age therefore actually suggests an inversion of the axioms of Aquinas:

1. An לֵא was assumed to have a body.
2. An לֵא was assumed to be composed of matter and form.
3. An לֵא 's properties were not assumed to be identical with the divine essence/nature (absolute לֵא -hood $\leq$ the extension of generic לֵא -hood).
4. An לֵא 's essence was not assumed to be identical to its existence (generic לֵא -hood $\geq$ absolute לֵא -hood).
5. An לֵא was assumed to be in a genus as a species (generic אֱלֹהִים = a natural kind or folk-taxonomic type).
6. An לֵא was assumed to exhibit accidental properties (presupposed in modalities within typologies of divinity).
7. An לֵא was not assumed to be wholly one (אֱלֹהִים was manifested in mereological parts, e.g., spirit, glory, name, word, etc.).
8. An לֵא was assumed as able to combine with something (cf. spirit possession/superlative states).

If these axioms hold (from a historical and descriptive perspective) it means that the problem of RL in the HB is not generated by a belief in divine simplicity as the problem of RL in contemporary Christian philosophy of religion may be. As a result, the question now facing us concerns the ultimate reason for why the need arose to invert the dictums of biblical god-talk and move from univocal to equivocal and analogical understandings of its RL in the first place.

A HISTORICAL ETIOLOGY OF PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTUAL DILEMMAS

While many philosophers of religion (and biblical theologians) may consider ancient polytheism conceptually crude and hail monotheism as the most elegant conception of reality, the fact is that ancient Israelite religion's selective transmutation of polytheistic concepts has generated as many conceptual dilemmas as it is supposed to have solved in the first place. In other words, one possible reason why it was necessary to reinterpret the concept of deity in the history of biblical theism may be the eclectic retention of polytheistic conceptual metaphors on the one hand and the discarding of necessary conditions for their univocal meaningfulness within the conceptual background on the other.

This process can be diachronically described via the so-called *Logic of Belief Revision* in that it concerned the process of changing beliefs (or references of concepts) to accommodate new beliefs (or senses of concepts) that might have been inconsistent with the old ones (Hansson 2009:1). In the assumption that the new beliefs are correct, some of the old ones had to be retracted (or reinterpreted) in order to maintain consistency. This retraction and reinterpretation in response to the additions of new beliefs within different trajectories in ancient Israelite religion on a number of occasions in the history of the biblical traditions assured a non-monotonic conceptual logic along diachronic lines. A generalizing and simplistic summary of the relevant belief-revisions include the following selection of motifs in a stereotyped ancient Near Eastern polytheism vis-à-vis related notions in their transformation within both Israelite religion and subsequently in philosophy of religion. I use [x] to denote the concept of generic divinity.

Belief set	Contraction	Expansion	Philosophical problem
Theogony	[x] had no beginning	Divine order	Onto-theology
Theogenesis	[x] is not secondary	Chaos material	Divinity and time
Theomachy	[x] is not conflicted	Metaphysical evil	Problem of evil
Finitism	[x] is not limited	Profane sphere	Imperfection
Physicality	[x] is not physical	Divine organs	Divine "existence" (life)
Corporeality	[x] is not corporeal	Divine body	Mereological

Elementalism	[x] is not material	Divine senses	distinctions
Variation	[x] is not mutable	Divine repentance	Deity as spirit
Cogniscience	[x] is not ignorant	Divine foreknowledge	Accidental properties
Localising	[x] is not spatial	Divine form/movement	Divine/Human free will
Human	[x] is not human	Divine image	Divine (omni)presence
Sexuality	[x] is asexual	Deity as parent	Deity as person(al)
Insufficiency	[x] is not dependent	Divine kingship	Divine gender
Provincial	[x] is not local	National god	Relations of deity
Plurality	[x] is not multiple	Typology of divinity	Religious pluralism
Insufficiency	[x] is self-sufficient	Service to deity	Deity as genus
Need	[x] is complete	Divine emotions	Temple cult
			Anthropopathic projection

As is clearly evident, the logic of belief revision in the history of Israelite religion exhibits the elements of a) contraction (removal of a belief) and b) expansion (addition of a belief without checking for consistency) (cf. Hansson 2009:1). The element of c) consolidation (restoring consistency to a set of beliefs) began within the HB itself but only became paramount in subsequent philosophical reflection on the texts. To be sure, the HB is not itself philosophy and the biblical authors were hardly aware of the conceptual dilemmas their selective transformations and adaptations of polytheistic conceptual metaphors would generate for later philosophical approaches to the study of biblical god-talk (see Carroll 1991:45). Yet it should be clear that monotheistic reconfigurations necessitated the change from univocal to equivocal understanding of the nature of the RL and that these conceptual adaptations are ultimately responsible for many of the conceptual problems attested within the loci on the agenda in philosophy of religion (cf. Cupitt 1996:72).

For example, the notion of the deity as father makes literal sense in polytheism in that there is a mother goddess and divine offspring; the fatherhood of Yhwh was retained in the development of monotheism but the belief in the goddess and divine progeny was discarded (though not on the level of popular religion; cf. Gen 6:1-4). In the HB therefore the notion of the deity as parent thus survives primarily on the level of a reinterpreted metaphor. A synchronic (as opposed to diachronic) approach to make sense of this kind of

conceptual problematic would, however, require something more than belief-revision theory in order to be able to accommodate contradictory elements of metaphorical representation (A and not-A) (cf. McFague 1982:21). Since belief-revision theory is more functional in relatively coherent linear conceptual development a synchronic approach faced with a lack of concept-structure coherency would need to make use of paraconsistent logic in formal philosophical descriptions of the HB's presentation of ancient Israelite metatheistic assumptions. The reason for this is the fact that paraconsistent logic deals with contradictions in a discriminating way (see Priest & Tanaka 2009:1).

Biblical theologians who dismiss philosophical or "Greek" logic in the claim that for the HB (and "Hebraic" logic) both A and not-A are possible should therefore take note that while elementary Aristotelian syllogistic logics might not be able to deal with the contrariety of metaphorical representation in biblical god-talk, paraconsistent logic has no such problems and therefore may be considered a viable philosophical tool in the clarification of biblical thought (cf. also the critique of the concept of "Hebraic" thought in Barr 1999:146-171). In other words, there is no need for those interested in philosophical inquiries to allow the combination of ignorance about philosophical logic and anti-philosophical sentiment among many biblical theologians to get in the way of descriptive philosophical analysis.

THE METAPHORICAL TURN IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

In Biblical Theology practitioners of the discipline have attempted to come to terms with the collapse of univocal understanding in biblical god-talk by classifying its nature with the aid of the concept of metaphor. Thus it has become fashionable since the early 1980s to concur with ideas such as that of Fretheim (1984:5-13) who claimed that all biblical god-talk (except perhaps the word "god") is metaphorical. Another example is Soskice (1985) who argues that images of God in the HB have been chosen in recognition that no single metaphor is sufficient to describe the God of Being (Yhwh). Carroll (1997:37) opines that whereas theology operates with abstract philosophical notions much of the language of the Bible is highly metaphorical. Brueggemann (1997:70) insists that metaphor is a central element in the articulation of Yhwh.

Confusingly, Mills (1998:146) even imagines “God” to be a metaphor for a hidden deity/the divine (*sic*).

The examples could be repeated *ad infinitum* but the popular consensus should be readily apparent (see Hecke 2005:1 for a survey of the literature). While it is common knowledge that ideas of biblical god-talk as involving equivocal and analogical representation of divinity are attested throughout the history of interpretation, a specifically “metaphorical turn” in Biblical Theology has therefore been underway for some time now. The influential precursors lie scattered from Aristotle and Philo, through Maimonides and Aquinas, but ultimately and more immediately are to be found in the more recent past in the ideas of linguists, philosophers and theologians such as Max Black (1962), Paul Ricoeur (1977) Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Sallie McFague (1982).

Curiously, the pan-metaphor approach, at least in the context of Biblical Theology (as opposed to cognitive linguistics), can be considered – I daresay – very “twentieth century” (to use an American idiom). For from a descriptive philosophical perspective a number of serious problems plague the theory notwithstanding its popularity. It is not that it is wrong – it is just that claiming that biblical god-talk is pervasively metaphorical is actually philosophically *non-informative*. This is readily apparent when one realizes that on the level of metaphor as linguistic phenomenon *all* language is essentially riddled with metaphors so that classifying RL as such represents a form of non-essential predication. Even on the level of metaphor as literary phenomenon the god-talk of the HB is no more metaphorical than any other kind of talk about any other kind of entity and the same metaphors applied to the deity are also applied to humans in other social contexts (e.g. the king was also called a lord, father, shepherd, judge, and warrior who hid his face and whose hand symbolized his power). More alarmingly, the theory seems applicable mostly to poetic descriptions as many biblical prose texts contain many elements in the depiction of Yhwh that were not understood metaphorically (e.g., the face, hand and back of Yhwh in Exodus 33). This means that anyone claiming that it is all metaphorical commits the fallacy of hasty generalization (see Gericke 2006:677).

Turning to an ideology criticism of the reader it would seem that in some cases pan-metaphorism with reference to the classification of biblical god-talk

almost appears to be motivated by apologetic concerns not dissimilar to what once drove philosophically-inclined readers to resort to allegorical interpretation, i.e., to salvage realism and relevancy for what would otherwise seem absurd, crude or all-too-human representations of the divine. In this case the supposedly historical-critical decrying of philosophical interpretations is a farce since the same biblical theologians who reject Aristotle's *Categories* have simply exchanged them for his *Rhetoric* (which is still essentially philosophical in that metaphors are linked with the concepts of genus and species (see Rapp 2008:1). So while reinterpreting everything as metaphor may be fine and well for the purposes of a contemporary evaluative philosophical-theological reassessment of biblical concepts, the pan-metaphorism so prevalent in Biblical Theology is out of place in any purely descriptive historical analysis.

ANACHRONISTIC METAPHYSICAL DICHOTOMIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Another problem with the pan-metaphor approach is that on numerous occasions the theological descriptions took for granted a number of anachronistic philosophical-theological metaphysical distinctions (cf. Gericke 2006:677-699):

1. *Religious vs. secular* – It is well-known that in ancient Israelite religion the religious sphere was not something over and against the secular realm. To be sure, sacred and profane dimensions were distinguished but the fact remains that the HB does not distinguish religious from secular language absolutely.
2. *Infinite vs. finite* – The concept of divinity in the HB had little in common with the theological notion of infinity and Yhwh was not assumed to be absolutely “other” or “ineffable” so that the texts betray no indication that the use of finite-human terms for the divine was in any way considered as being seriously inadequate.
3. *Transcendent vs. immanent* – The text does not assume the existence of a transcendent realm in the technical sense. According to the ancient Israelite cosmography everything, including the divine realm, is actually immanent within the cosmos, notwithstanding spatial separation and structural

distinctions.

4. *Supernatural vs. natural* – The text does not assume that divinity is supernatural in the modern sense as something vis-à-vis what is “merely natural”. In ancient Near Eastern folk-taxonomy the gods are a natural kind and divinity is a secondary substance. Our philosophical-ecological concept of “Nature” is not attested in the HB and shares many overlapping domains in the semantic field of what many texts in the HB assume with reference to the concept “Yhwh”.
5. *Spiritual vs. physical* – The text does not assume a spiritual-physical dichotomy in the metaphysical sense (only in a comparative monistic sense). While the concept of רִיחַ did denote insubstantiality it was still assumed to refer to something as elemental and “empirical” as wind or breath.
6. *Reality vs. appearance* – Many biblical theologians like to speak as if Yhwh was depicted as having only appeared in human form with some ineffable divine reality lying behind all such “accommodation.” Yet a less dogmatic (and Platonic) reading reveals that the human form Yhwh appears in was believed to be his true form (even in visionary contexts otherwise filled with symbolism). The immensely popular notion of “anthropomorphism” is therefore essentially anachronistic and from a descriptive historical perspective represents an inversion of what the texts take to be “theomorphism” in humans.

However, it is not only Biblical Theology that happens to be uncritical.

EVALUATIVE BINARY OPPOSITIONS IN ANCIENT ISRAELITE METATHEISTIC ASSUMPTIONS

The uncritical mindset in which biblical theologians superimpose anachronistic philosophical dichotomies on the RL in the HB is alternately expressed in philosophy of religion where practitioners appear to be unaware of taking for granted a number of deep-seated value-added metatheistic assumptions in ancient Israelite RL regarding the nature of stereotypical prototypical divinity (cf. Cupitt 1996:27):

- The real is better than the imaginary

- Singleness is preferable to plurality
- Maleness is more apt than femininity
- Anthropomorphism is more appropriate than theriomorphism
- Power is superior to weakness
- Knowledge is superior to ignorance
- Spiritual substance is better than fleshly substance
- Immortality is superior to being mortal
- Independence is better than dependence
- Seriousness is more fitting than a sense of humour
- Height is a more appropriate than depth
- Mystery is more proper than intelligibility
- Obscurity is more worthy than transparency
- Extraordinariness is preferable to ordinariness
- Glory is more apt than dullness
- Light is more suitable than darkness
- Ambition is better than resignation
- Creativeness is better than non-constructiveness
- Self-assertion is better than self-negation
- Narcissism is more fitting than self-denial
- Prescriptiveness is more apt than permissiveness
- Action is superior to passivity

To be sure, exceptions to these notions are found time and again but they prove the rule. The question now pertains to the sufficient reason for preferring these evaluations in the conception of divinity since *prima facie* the binary oppositions seem to have been derived mainly from a combination of reflection on ideal states of being, sociomorphisms and *a posteriori* knowledge of the fragility of human existence in this world. For this reason the divinity-humanity relation was conceived of in metaphors of hierarchies of power and domination as opposed to, say, humans beings created solely for the purpose of being pampered. Philosophically the divine thus becomes a reification of the personification of a combination of the “Will to life” (cf. Schopenhauer 1966), the “Will to power” (cf. Nietzsche 1968) and the aesthetic sublime (cf. Kant 1951).

What poses a problem, at least for philosophy of religion proper, is the fact

that there is no logical necessity as to why the deity-humanity relation in all possible worlds must be expressed like this. These evaluative binary oppositions are not analytical *a priori* truths. To be sure, traditionally and *theologically* it may seem more appropriate to conceive of the divine in this fashion. Yet looking at these assumptions from the perspective of possible-world modality metaphysics should make any open-minded philosopher of religion aware of the objective conceptual oddity of such a scheme of things. Yet for biblical scholars it is an awareness of this that makes it possible to recognise and to clarify what Yahwistic metatheistic assumptions took for granted in terms of metaphysical presuppositions, thus enabling a better understanding within descriptive analysis of why the particular metaphors were chosen to begin with.

DEITY-REALITY RELATIONS: AN ONEIROLOGICAL ANALOGY

But that is enough critique – it's time for something completely different. From the depths of the chaos left in the wake of the foregoing ideas must come creative new possibilities. The need now is for a positive contribution to the conceptual history in the form of a new theory able to accommodate the peculiar paraconsistent logic evident in the HB's expressions of the deity-language-reality relation. In this regard I would like to propose that we a) classify the RL of the HB as oneirological in nature and b) classify this theory itself as analogical.

I intend to transcend the realist-non-realist ontological impasse by opting for a quasi-surrealist form of modelling. In other words, I use the concept of a dream (and the relation between the sleeping self, the dream persona and the dream world) in the sense of an analogy for what we have in ancient Israelite god-talk's representation of how divinity vis-à-vis reality was (and could be) (re)configured. I shall justify this classification by teasing out some interesting parallels between a surrealist ontology and representation of divinity in the HB as a whole. Moreover, the value of the analogy will become readily apparent when observing the ways in which many age-old philosophical-theological paradoxes generated by the transition from polytheistic to monotheistic conceptions are unexpectedly clarified, and this in a way that allows for a more

nuanced and less distortive-anachronistic reintroduction of the metaphysical dichotomies mentioned earlier.

Remember, however, that what follows is an *analogy*. The presentation is, moreover, not purely descriptive but also philosophically-theologically creative in that I am trying to bridge the gap between a purely descriptive biblical-philosophical account and an evaluative and constructive perspective in a biblically-based philosophy of religion.

- a. *The noumenon-phenomenon relation* – An לֵא was believed to be the thing-in-itself analogous to the way in which a dreamer is the body of the one dreaming. An לֵא was the thing-as-perceived analogous to the way in which the entity seen by others in the dream world is not the dreamer as he really is but only the projection of the self within the dream world. An לֵא as *noumenon* can never been seen without fatal consequences analogous to the way in which entities in dreams can never see the real dreamer as they cannot exist outside the dream world to look upon the dreaming subject. An לֵא as *phenomenon* can be seen being analogous to the way in which entities in the dream world see the dreaming persona of the self without being thereby instantly destroyed. In biblical idiom, they are seeing the backside, and cannot see the face. This allows for a more appropriate retaining of the reality-appearance distinction.
- b. *לֵא -hood and ontological dependence* – An לֵא is the source of and sustainer of all life and reality analogous to the way in which the dreamer is the source and sustainer of the dream world. Creatures are thus completely ontologically dependent on an לֵא analogous to the way in which entities in a dream world cannot exist without the dreamer. In this sense the notion of divine aseity may also be understood.
- c. *לֵא -hood and substance* – An לֵא is of a different substance than everything else altogether analogous to the way in which the person dreaming is not of the same substance as the entities within dream world. An לֵא is of the same substance as the rest of reality analogous to the way in which the dreaming persona is part of the dream world and the dream world itself is substantially and inextricably a part of the dreamer. In short, an לֵא and reality is the same analogous to the way in which the dream is part of the dreamer. An לֵא and reality is distinct in the way in which the dreamer

sleeping is not itself the dream world. More specifically, one might conceive of an *לֵא* as having been assumed to be a spirit body analogous to the way in which the dreaming self is the physical body. And an *לֵא* was also assumed to have a spirit analogous to the way in which a body dreaming has a *persona* within the dream world. An *לֵא* was therefore assumed to be of a different substance as creation yet could act within it analogous to the way a dreamer is actually a physical body but as dreaming persona can create and act in the dream world. In other words, a non-material *לֵא* creates material reality of a different order for a reason analogous to the way in which a material-dreamer creates a non-material dream world of a different order.

- d. *לֵא-hood and time* – An *לֵא* existed *before* time (the “beginning”) analogous to the way in which a dreamer exists before dreamtime as a physical body. An *לֵא* exists since and *within* time analogous to the way in which the dreaming persona of the self world exists within dreamtime. An *לֵא* exists *outside* of time analogous to the way in which dream-time and real-time are not identical – a day may be *as* a thousand years and vice versa (to *reinterpret* the biblical reference). As the dreaming subject is actually outside the dream world and simultaneously acts and experiences dream-time’s temporal succession and acts within it, the divine might be seen as both intra- and extra-temporal to dream-time. An *לֵא* is differently related to time analogous to the way in which real-time and dream-time differ (a day like a thousand years). An *לֵא* is the first and the last as the dream persona of the self is in a sense the first and the last – yet eternal in the sense that the dreamer exists beyond the duration of the dream world.
- e. *לֵא-hood and cognition* – An *לֵא* knows all analogous to the way in which a dreamer knows everything happening (and what will happen) in the dream world in its mind determining the actualisation of that world and everything happening therein. An *לֵא* is cognitively limited analogous to the way in which the dreaming persona is often taken by surprise and cannot always predict what will happen next.
- f. *לֵא-hood and space* – An *לֵא* is *transcendent* analogous to the way in which the actual body of a dreamer is outside the dream. Yet an *לֵא* is also *immanent* just as the one dreaming has (and can be distinguished from) the

dreaming persona which is the self present in the dream world. Everything is in an לֵא analogous to the way in which the entire dream world is in the dreamer. An לֵא is in everything analogous to the way in which the dreaming self is inside the entire dream world. In this sense an לֵא was assumed to relate to reality in *panentheistic* ways analogous to the way in which the dreaming self is both in the dream and the dream itself just is (in) the dreamer. An לֵא is omnipresent in the sense that the whole dream world is produced and controlled by the dreamer. An לֵא is spatially limited in the sense of the dreaming self moving within the dream world. An לֵא is immovable on its throne in the otherworld analogous to the way in which the body of a dreamer lies inert on the bed. An לֵא is active and moving about analogous to the way in which the dreaming self is constantly on the go in the dream world.

- g. *לֵא-hood and causality* – An לֵא is a *material cause* of reality analogous to the way in which the dream world is part of the material of the dreamer's mind. An לֵא is the *formal cause* of reality analogous to the way in which a dream is in some sense the will and operates according to the rules of the dreamer's mind. An לֵא is the *efficient cause* of reality analogous to the way in which the dreamer is the agent initiating or ending the dream. An לֵא as the *final cause* of reality is analogous to the way in which the dreamer is that for which the dream world exists. An לֵא is the *necessary and sufficient* cause of everything that happens in the world analogous to the ways in which the dreamer is the cause of everything that occurs in the dream world. No dreamer, no dream world. In this sense the divine is self-caused – the dreaming subject being the cause of the dreaming persona.
- h. *לֵא-hood and the moral order* – An לֵא determines right and wrong analogous to the way the dreaming self plays a creative role in the moral order experienced in the dream world. An לֵא is independent from and subordinate to the moral order in that the dreaming persona is not the creator of but experienced as non-causatively related thereto (i.e., *Euthyphro's Dilemma* becomes a false dichotomy).
- i. *לֵא-hood, goodness and evil* – An לֵא believed to be purely good can be seen as not accountable (to be blamed) for everything (bad) that happens analogous to the way in which the dreaming self is the cause but in some

sense not really to be charged with wrongdoing when something evil occurs in the dream world (despite the causal connections). In other words, an לֵא is behind whatever happens analogous to the way in which the dreaming person is the source of the dream and yet an לֵא does not will everything that happens analogous to the way in which a dreamer does not will all that happens in the dream world. This may explain the possibility of theodicy despite monistic tendencies.

- j. *לֵא-hood and free will* – Analogous to the way in which the one dreaming is not free to dream what it does yet in a dreaming state experiences what feels like free will within the dream world, so too an לֵא could both be part of a predetermined process in which destiny and fate are fixed yet where the לֵא can also repent and change its mind. The freewill-determinism dichotomy is thus shown to be false and the paradox is resolved (or maintained) by way of the analogy of oneirological *compatibilism*.
- k. *לֵא-hood and relation* – An לֵא exists only *qua* לֵא in relation analogous to the way the dreaming persona exists only if the dream world exists. The entity which engages in לֵא -hood yet also exists independently as *noumenon* without relations analogous to the ways in which the dreaming subject exists without relations to anything in the dream world when it is no dreaming.
- l. *לֵא-hood and transworld identity* – An לֵא is depicted in contradictory and mutually exclusive ways analogous to the way in which the dreaming subject can act, think, will and exist in contradictory ways within the dream world in different parts of a dream. The contradictory depictions can all denote one and the same לֵא analogous to the way in which all the discrepant dream “selves” are actually one and the same subject who is doing the dreaming.

In these ways, an analogical-oneirological modelling returns the sense and meaning to the RL of the HB it had lost when philosophical monotheism had claimed it for its own yet allows us to retain the anachronistic metaphysical dichotomies noted earlier. And least we invoke the dream-reality distinction in depreciation of the analogy, the anachronism involved in this should be readily apparent in as much as biblical ontology for the most part did not presuppose a distinction in the ontological status of Yhwh appearing in theophany vs. the

deity's appearance in the dream world.

Of interdisciplinary interest might be the fact that while all philosophical-theological paradoxes have attracted analogies specifically aimed at clarifying the particular conceptual problematic no other single analogy seems to have been able to deal with so many paradoxical elements in such a comprehensive manner as oneirological modelling. This oneirological analogy is so potent that it can even be of service to Christian systematic theologians wishing to describe the concept of the "Trinity" (or biblical scholars seeking to explain the relation between Yhwh, the angel of Yhwh and the spirit of Yhwh – which is analogous to the dreaming subject, the observing self and the dream persona in contexts within the dream world where one observes oneself engaging in actions – the three is one).

Cognisance should be taken, moreover, that in using the analogy of a dream I am, however, not committing to an analogical theory of the nature of RL in the HB, nor claiming that it is all but a dream in a pejorative sense. Rather, I am asking whether a surrealist-analogy *might* supplement the theory that biblical representations of divinity are metaphorical thus allowing it to be ultimately sufficiently functional in modeling the complexities and oddities of the paraconsistent logic entrenched in the rambling (vis-à-vis discursive) structure of god-talk in ancient Israelite religion.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have seen that even when biblical theologians decry the use of philosophy they have not succeeded in avoiding superimposing anachronistic philosophical concerns onto the text altogether. It was also demonstrated that avoiding philosophical reflection is not in fact necessary and that biblical theologians need not uncritically adopt popular perspectives prevalent in philosophy of religion. Instead they should opt for a historical philosophical approach to ancient Israelite religion and dare to come up with their own creative descriptive philosophical account of the RL of the HB that proceeds from the metatheistic assumptions within the texts themselves. It is hoped that this paper might inspire in other kindred souls an awareness of the problems and prospects that attach themselves both to the current popular consensus regarding

the supposed metaphorical nature of RL in the HB and also to any attempt to provide alternative creative philosophical assessments.

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