

GOD, THE FUTURE, AND THE *FUNDAMENTUM* OF HISTORY IN WOLFHART PANNENBERG

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The aim of this article is to examine the relationship between Wolfhart Pannenberg's idea of God and his conception of history, with the intention of determining the precise nature of the link that, in his view, connects both philosophical and the theological reflection on the meaning of history.

We shall first analyze Pannenberg's response to the traditional criticism of Christianity as an anthropomorphic projection of the human being. Then we shall pay attention to the features of any possible *fundamentum* of history. We will show that, according to Pannenberg, a transition from a philosophical into a theological consideration of history is needed in order to provide a rationally acceptable foundation for both the unity and the meaning of universal history.

1. GOD AND THE RATIONAL CRITIQUE OF RELIGION

The history of Western philosophy seems to point to the inevitability of atheism, to the inexorable advent of a godless *Zeitgeist*, capable of assuming the best of the theistic proposal, while at the same time depriving it of its 'content,' of its expression in terms of a divinized entity that is transcendent to mankind: the human being is the true infinite, as Feuerbach envisioned in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), and what used to be predicated of God must now be attributed to humanity as a whole (to its generic essence) in its openness towards a future which it is able to master.¹

The criticism of Christianity by Feuerbach has found a courageous response in the work of the German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928).² Pannenberg has tried to show, on the one hand, that the idea of God may not have been the result of an anthropomorphic projection (as a contestation of the genetic critique of religion) and, on the other, that it is possible to conceive of God in such a way that it does not become one entity in coexistence with others. In order to achieve this goal, Pannenberg uses the category of 'futurity.' According to him, theology and metaphysics are largely responsible for the emergence of the genetic criticism of religion, because both of them, at least in their classical expressions, have considered God as 'one substance among others [*als eines vorhandenen Seienden*]', despite being endowed with eminent characteristics (infinite, omniscience, omnipotence . . .). God has become 'finitized.' This reflection seems rather similar to Heidegger's denunciation of the oblivion of being in Western philosophy, replaced by the focus on 'entity:' God, instead of being treated as 'Being,' has been considered the most perfect entity. In addition to this, Pannenberg thinks that idealism has also contributed to the genetic criticism of religion, because it has underlined the primacy of self-consciousness as the foundation and truth of any form of awareness of an object, planting

the seed so that any possible idea of the absolute should be regarded as a projection of self-consciousness.³

Nevertheless, the criticism of the idea of God cannot be artificially separated from the broader process defined by the suspicion about religion and the reaction against the *guerres de religion* that devastated Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. The crisis of religion is not therefore solely the result of an intellectual dynamic, but also of the historical and social changes that put under scrutiny those political structures with which the Christian religion had been traditionally associated.⁴ That religion was discredited made it necessary to find a new formulation for the bases of the unity of society and state, which now was going to be discovered in human nature. Religion was to be relegated to the private sphere of the individual and, in contrast to most ancient cultures, in modernity religion is no longer a fundamental reality. The human being can actually live without religion,⁵ even if it is at the expense of what Peter Berger has called ‘the loss of meaning [*Sinnleere*].’⁶

A provisional answer to the challenge of Feuerbach’s critique can consist of defending the idea that his judgement only affects the alienating representations or images of God, not its very notion. Theologians like Paul Tillich have tried to maintain some sort of conceptual core which goes beyond its historical representations. Tillich identifies this ‘core’ with the foundation and the power of everything that exists.⁷ However, and as Pannenberg points out, it is superfluous still to preserve the idea of God as the power of being, because this ‘potency’ could be attributed to nature as totality instead of a reality that is hypothetically transcendent to the cosmos. God as the ‘power of being’ in a romantic song to the fathomless abyss of all that exists, is subject to the same criticism that atheism launches against the representations of God as a personal being. The anthropological critique of theology is so compelling that there seems to be little room for the idea of God.

According to Pannenberg, the solution lies in the Bible, although not in a non-critical return to the sacred books of Judaism and Christianity as a sclerotic deposit of supernatural revealed truths, in a sentimental search for security and protection against the merciless attacks of modern rationality. Rather, what is needed is to interpret the Bible in light of the present reality. Pannenberg believes that the idea of God that is expressed by the Bible is inextricably linked to the Kingdom: God is the God of the Kingdom, a God of the future who leads history towards its eschatological consummation.

God is, for Pannenberg, the future to which all reality is opened. God does not become exhausted by the present, because the experience of God in history is never final: the definitive idea of God will only arrive once history has been consummated, once history has reached its true end. The atheistic critique of religion is therefore offering a priceless service: that of obliging theology to clarify its idea of God.⁸ The traditional proofs of the existence of God do not demonstrate the reality of God but the finiteness of the world and the human being.⁹ From the structure of human subjectivity it is not possible to reach God, but only to realize the ‘problematic character [*Fraglichkeit*]’ of the human being as an open question.¹⁰ Here Pannenberg agrees with Hegel, for whom the proofs of the existence of God constitute a formal expression of the religious ‘elevation [*Erhebung*]’ of the human being from finiteness to infiniteness.¹¹

The association of God with the future in Pannenberg is connected with his attempt at elaborating an ontology of history which takes futurity as its basis. According to him, the problem of Bloch, who has also highlighted the centrality of the future, is that his *futurum* lacks an ontological autonomy: it is a psychological future founded upon the human wish. It is not a real *novum*. In Pannenberg the future is self-subsistent, and it possesses an ontological consistency that enables it to become the hermeneutical clue to the world, history, and humanity. God

will be: we cannot say, for the moment, that God is, since we would be representing the divinity as an existent entity in the present. The future is a power over the present, which keeps the present permanently open and undetermined. The future prevents the present from becoming enclosed by itself, from becoming 'finitized.' God is for Pannenberg 'the power of the future,' and because the future offers freedom, God can be regarded as the 'origin [*Ursprung*] of freedom.'¹² There has always been a future, and in this sense God is eternal, because the future has always existed. The opposition between time and eternity is overcome by the *eskhaton*, by the ultimate future, which is not to be replaced by a further future. Rather, it is a self-present, eternal, and free future.

The importance of eschatology resides in the possibility that it offers to 'postpone' meaning about the individual and the collective life to the end of all of human history, as opposed to the existentialist perspective, in which, according to Pannenberg, any form of meaning is restricted to the realm of the individual experience of history as 'historicity [*Geschichtlichkeit*].'¹³ The object of religion is for Pannenberg the 'totality of meaning of life [*Sinntotalität des Lebens*].' This idea seems to be closely related to Schleiermacher's depiction of religion as the sentiment of dependence upon an infinite, absolute reality, based on the acceptance that every individual being is part of a larger whole, while at the same time such a whole, which is infinite, is present in every individual being. However Pannenberg thinks that this totality cannot be understood as the totality of cosmic meaning, but as the 'unity of a divine reality [*Einheit einer göttlichen Wirklichkeit*].' The originality of Schleiermacher lies in his interpretation of religion through the lens of the experience of meaning, although Pannenberg believes that this hermeneutical approach is too individualistic, and it does not take into account the relevance of the historical process as such.¹⁴ Pannenberg considers that Schleiermacher's analysis needs to be complemented by the examination of the historical nature of the human experience of meaning, as highlighted by Dilthey, in such a way that what is anticipated in every experience is the total meaning of reality, whose definitive form will only be decided in the ultimate future.¹⁵

Theology for Pannenberg has to leave behind hypnotic fascination with primeval time, with the protological moment of creation, in order courageously to open itself to the eschatological future.¹⁶ The fear of this new paradigm might be justified, since the past is susceptible to control, whereas the future belongs to the sphere of all that remains unknown and is unpredictable. Religious discourse would lose its 'doctrinal' force. Nevertheless, Pannenberg thinks that the future to which Christianity refers is luminous, for it has been anticipated as a present reality in the Incarnation of Christ. Hope, not angst, is to prevail. It is the world, not the future which is illuminated by Christian hope, that is obscure.¹⁷ The future renders the human being free from the social structures that mankind has generated. The future allows for a rupture with the present and the inauguration of a new scenario.

However, and as an objection to the unquestionably suggestive approach of Pannenberg, it is hard to deny that his interpretation of God as 'futura' could be regarded as a strategy of self-immunization that tries to save, *in extremis*, the idea of God by alienating it from history as a not-yet that is nonetheless present in terms of the future of each time, something that inevitably flees from any possible thematization. This proposition resembles an attempt at finding some sort of permanent refuge for the idea of God, capable of exonerating it from any 'relationship' to the present, by situating it in a future which, by its own nature, is ineluctably elusive for human thought. Is theology so intensely besieged by rational criticism that it is compelled to displace God to the future? Pannenberg is aware of this difficulty and he knows that his whole project could eventually fall into the same degree of uncertainty as classical theologies. The connection of God with the future makes it problematic to speak of the deity in terms of a personal being (what would be the role of prayer, for example?¹⁸). But, on the

contrary, to retain a representation of God as a personal being is equally susceptible to criticism, as Feuerbach clearly showed.

Pannenberg thinks that it is still possible to attribute a personal nature to God, even if it is understood as identical with the power of the future. Conceiving of God as a personal being is justified, because our author considers that the idea of ‘personality’ is not the result of a projection from the human realm to the numinous sphere. Rather, the procedure occurred inversely: human beings acquired conscience of their personality through assimilation of the divine as rooted in religious experience, so that the profane self-understanding of mankind is a ‘late product [*Spätprodukt*]’ of the history of humanity. According to Pannenberg, human beings are religious by nature. This topic has been treated *in extenso* by the German theologian in his most recent writings, such as *Systematic Theology*¹⁹ and the second volume of *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*. Pannenberg is critical of authors who, like Émile Durkheim, defend the thesis that religion is a transitory phenomenon in human evolution, which will finally be overcome by the power of society²⁰. He is also reluctant to believe that religion is the expression of a fundamental structure whose ‘language’ would be totally secular. Religion is not an epiphany of human nature, and we are not secular beings on whom the religious element is eventually added on the basis of psychological or social circumstances. Rather, we are naturally religious. Pannenberg bases his considerations on data provided by paleontology, ethnology, and history of culture, disciplines which show that humanity has been religious since the beginning of its rationality.²¹ In any case, the constitutive priority of religion in human nature does not prove the existence of God, although Pannenberg thinks that it helps us realize, against the views of Feuerbach, that we are not secular beings who project their essence on a divine *alter ego* that possesses all the perfections that we lack.²²

For Pannenberg there are at least two possible interpretative hypotheses about the kind of reality that establishes the religious nature of man: it might be an inevitable illusion or the seal of its divine ‘source [*Herkunft*]’: The latter is the Christian explanation: we have the idea of God because we are creatures of God; otherwise, his revelation would be an entirely ‘alien message [*fremde Botschaft*]’ for us.²³

Religion does not only refer to the separation between the sacred and the secular,²⁴ but also to the *fundamentum* [*Grund*] of this world, to its ‘setting [*Ordnung*]’ in the divine reality and its ‘reconciliation [*Versöhnung*]’ with God: religion therefore points to the past, the present, and the future of the world in relation to God.²⁵ In any case, the religious element becomes expressed in different religions. As a Christian theologian Pannenberg does not deny the fact that Christianity is one religion among others. Unlike Karl Barth in his dialectical theology and his radical contrasting of religion and revelation,²⁶ Pannenberg thinks that Christianity is indeed a religion, because it speaks about God, and the discourse about the divine constitutes the content of the religious conscience.²⁷ Also, Christianity admits the ‘provisional character [*Vorläufigkeit*]’ of its knowledge about the eschatological revelation of God in Jesus Christ until the end of time has taken place.

However, Pannenberg believes that Christianity, even as a religion among others, has the obligation to proclaim the universal truth of the God revealed in Jesus Christ. In any case, Christianity possesses no privileged status over other religions or philosophies. Supernatural, divine revelation cannot be opposed to any ‘human religion’: against dialectical theology, Pannenberg inserts Christianity within the horizon of the religions of the world, and he also renounces offering a series of *a priori* conditions which, in a transcendental way, would enable the human subject to receive an eventual divine revelation, without paying attention to the phenomenological and historical constitution of different religions.²⁸ As Ignace Berten has noticed, Christianity for Pannenberg has to be comprehended in relation to the other religions

of the world, the key problem being whether or not the God proclaimed by Christianity is capable of answering the question which is represented by what it is to be human.²⁹

2. A THEOLOGICAL *FUNDAMENTUM* OF HISTORY?

In works such as 'Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte' (1959) and *Offenbarung als Geschichte* (1961), Pannenberg insists on the substantial nature of history, which cannot be reduced to a mere addition of individual historical experiences: *Geschichte* necessarily prevails over *Geschichtlichkeit*. This consideration marks a clear distance from the more existential perspective found in authors such as Heidegger and Bultmann.³⁰ This approach has two clear consequences: history can be properly regarded only as a universal history (here, Pannenberg is very close to Hegel), and history cannot be secularized in the long term. The acceptance of a transcendental *fundamentum* of history is for Pannenberg the only possible way to defend the unity of the historical process.³¹ The lens of a unitary history is, moreover, imperative if one wants to pose the question concerning the meaning of particular events.

Pannenberg's rejection of any attempt at offering a purely secular understanding of history places him in opposition to Hans Blumenberg.³² If Romano Guardini has characterized modernity as the result of a process of secularization of Christianity³³ and Friedrich Gogarten has interpreted secularization as the effect of the Christian faith itself,³⁴ because the biblical conception of God deprives the world of its sacredness (an idea which seems to be closely related to Max Weber's 'disenchantment of the world'³⁵), Blumenberg wants to break with the stigma of illegitimacy that has been thrown over modernity through the category of 'secularization'. He prefers to speak in terms of a 'self-affirmation of reason [*Selbstbehauptung der Vernunft*]: modernity would be a 'counter-proposal [*Gegenposition*]' to the theological absolutism of Christianity.³⁶

According to Blumenberg, the notion of progress became an alternative to the failure of classical theodicy. Responsibility, in the discourse of modernity, is entirely human, with no attempt to explain how divine omnipotence and divine *omnibenevolentia* may coexist. Pannenberg on the contrary believes that theodicy never acquired the central role in Christianity as Blumenberg attributes to it, because theology has never exonerated God from the persistence of evil in the world. Rather, this religion hopes for a final 'reconciliation [*Versöhnung*]' that will bring justice.³⁷ For Pannenberg the Christian reflection on the human freedom to choose between good and evil contributed to the emancipation of reason. Modernity, rather than reacting to the Christian idea of divine grace, rebelled against the positive, institutional structures of the ecclesiastical system, which had been denounced in the later Middle Ages by Meister Eckhart, Tauler, Bradwarine, and others, a criticism that became prominent and crucial with the advent of the Reformation.³⁸

Pannenberg finds some positive aspects in the idea of secularization, especially those concerning human emancipation from tradition and authority, but he thinks that if history is totally secularized it loses its *fundamentum*. He also wants to preserve the contingency of history, however, instead of submitting it to the fulfilment of a pre-established plan. He believes that there is *novum* in time and an ineluctable openness to the future. In any case, the future to which Pannenberg refers is an eschatological, consummated one; however, if there is a *telos* that governs the historical process, where is contingency? The allusion to the category of anticipation of an eschatological future as a strategy to safeguard the openness of history in the present, while at the same time defending the fact that it is not left to randomness, does not begin to solve the question, because history is still under the guidance of a higher rationality and is not actually susceptible to a real *novum*.

The latter problem is hardly answerable by philosophy. Pannenberg depends on authors like Hegel and Dilthey, but he is first of all a Christian theologian, and he affirms that God is the *fundamentum* that grants unity and meaning to history. His philosophy of history is therefore compelled to take up theological considerations. In this endeavour he finds an important ally: Karl Löwith, who in *Meaning in History (Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen)*, of 1949,³⁹ endorses the thesis that the modern philosophy of history is intrinsically bound to a series of 'theological presuppositions [*theologische Voraussetzung*],'⁴⁰ which he discovers in authors like Voltaire (who wanted to study history not as a theologian looking for imprints of divine providence, but '*comme historien et philosophe*'),⁴¹ Burckhardt, Marx,⁴² and Hegel.⁴³ The Enlightenment retained the interpretation of history as a process oriented towards an end and, even though the subject of history was no longer the divine will but rather human nature, *Les Lumières* inherited an outlook of providentialism with patent Judeo-Christian roots, for they still conceived of the past as 'preparation [*Vorbereitung*]' and the future as 'fulfilment [*Erfüllung*].' This has been a common intellectual dynamic, at least until the emergence of a post-modern conscience that denies the existence of a final stage of history.⁴⁴ Modernity, according to Löwith, turns the category of salvation into an 'impersonal teleology [*unpersönliche Teleologie*]' through the idea of progressive development,⁴⁵ in which each present period fulfils a previous historical preparation.

Pannenberg agrees with Löwith in pointing out that the importance of historical conscience in the West is largely indebted to the religious experience of Israel,⁴⁶ although the German theologian believes that Judeo-Christianity does not propose a *historia salutis* running parallel to secular history: the history of salvation is not a 'supra-history' but, on account of its inherent aspiration to universality, is aimed at encompassing all possible events. An exclusively anthropocentric hermeneutic of history leads to its dissolution in individual history, since the only protagonist is the individual, with the result of 'diminishing' and even destroying historical consciousness.⁴⁷ In any case, and as a form of criticism of Pannenberg's remarks, it is extremely complicated to justify the idea that modernity has stunted historical conscience. The philosophies of Hegel and Marx are powerful evidence of a firm commitment by modernity to highlighting the inexorable centrality of history in all spheres of human life. It is clear in any case that these worries of Pannenberg are related to the existentialist reduction of history to historicity which in his opinion is a manifestation of a common phenomenon: the progressive emancipation of human reason from God.

Pannenberg takes over Dilthey's idea of the priority of the whole over the part (which recalls Hegel as well), and he thinks that only the horizon of universal history enables an valuation of the meaning of each individual event. The isolation of different happenings responds to the need for a delimitation of history's object of study, not to the truth of the intrinsic interconnection of all its episodes. The theory of historical knowledge proposed by the English philosopher Robin George Collingwood (1889–1943) offers, according to Pannenberg, a solid basis for articulating these considerations on the unity of history.⁴⁸ Against historical positivism and its extrapolation of the hypothetical and deductive method of the natural sciences into the realm of historiography, Collingwood rejected the notion that the historian is exclusively centred on individual events. The historian does not study isolated facts, but connections; however, the emphasis on links might compromise a defence of the contingency of particular events. This is the reason why Pannenberg thinks that the interpretation of history as unity has to meet a series of conditions that may harmonize this position with respect for the peculiarity of historical facts.

The former task is not easy, but Pannenberg indicates at least three models which certainly cannot be reconciled with an attempt at safeguarding the contingency and openness of history: historical evolutionism (history as the necessary display of an original core), the thesis that there

are 'structural typologies' (focused on cultures and historical cycles), and the idea of an 'axial time,' as proposed by Karl Jaspers, in which the fundamental categories of both Eastern and Western thought emerged.⁴⁹ Pannenberg thinks that Jaspers' position is a secularization of the Christian doctrine that the Incarnation constitutes the 'focal point' of history, although he believes that a historical period (as the 'axial time') cannot anticipate the eschatological end of history, because, unlike the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, it lacks internal unity.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, it is difficult to explain why a singular historical fact is the only legitimate aspect for anticipating the meaning of the totality of history. The demarcation of both the margins and the scope of a fact and an individual figure is not clear at all, especially from a Pannenberg's perspective which stresses, following Collingwood, the idea that history is a fabric of connections of facts. Moreover, from the approach of the theology of religious pluralism, it is even more complicated to argue that Christ must be the only definitive anticipation of a hypothetical *eskhaton* of history.

Pannenberg is convinced that explanations that leave God aside are incapable of justifying the unity of history; however, there is a legitimate question: does the historian need to commit himself to a theistic depiction? Isn't this attitude dangerous for the ideal of scientific objectivity? Pannenberg does not pretend to subordinate scientific research to an acceptance of God as the foundation of history but, in practise if not in intent, the historian seems to have no alternative but to surrender to the divine reality: either she rejects the unity of history (refusing to acknowledge the deep connection between all events), or she assimilates it without providing a sufficient rational basis for it. Pannenberg's theses may be more compelling for theologians than for historians. In any case he agrees with Löwith in remarking that the question concerning the meaning of history is theologically grounded. For Pannenberg it is necessary to provide history a divine *fundamentum*, and, in spite of the great challenge posed by the presence of evil and suffering in the world, he nonetheless believes that a reference to God allows for an envisioning of meaning for the course of times, since the idea of God represents the answer to the problem of the 'sense [*Sinn*]' of reality as a whole.⁵¹ Only God can bestow on history unity and meaning.⁵² This is a courageous thesis that appears both in his early (like 'Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte') and more recent writings (such as *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*). The central role that Pannenberg attributes to God in the elucidation of the nature of history constitutes a valuable link between philosophy and a theology of history, both of which converge according to him in the necessity of recognizing God as the *fundamentum* of history.

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Notes

1 As Ernst Bloch remarked, Christianity itself leads to atheism, which keeps the deepest content of this religion without the 'hypostasis' of God, liberating its utopian message from religious heteronomy. According to his famous aphorism, 'Nur ein Atheist kann ein guter Christ sein, gewiss aber auch: nur ein Christ kann ein guter Atheist sein' (cf. Bloch, *Atheismus im Christentum: zur Religion des Exodus und des Reichs*, 87–98). On the influence of Bloch on the theologian Jürgen Moltmann and his proposal of a 'theology of hope,' cf. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*; Marsch, *Diskussion über die 'Theologie der Hoffnung'*, 11; Mardones, *Teología e Ideología. Confrontación de la Teología Política de la Esperanza de J. Moltmann con la Teoría Crítica de la Escuela de Frankfurt*; Fraijó, *Jesús y los Marginados. Utopía y Esperanza Cristiana*, 201–215. The idea that modern European atheism is actually a form of 'Christian' atheism is also present in Karl Löwith. According to this author, modern atheism is a 'monotheistic' atheism, founded upon the radical separation of creator and creation. In a post-Christian world we have creation without creator. Behold the paradox of modern history: it has a Christian 'origin [*Herkunft*]' but an anti-Christian 'result [*Ergebnis*].' Cf. Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichtsphilosophie*, 184.

2 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Das Heilige in der modernen Kultur,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 12.

3 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Bewusstsein und Subjektivität,' in *Metaphysik und Gottesgedanke*, 35. As Pannenberg writes: 'Die Verbindung von Wissen und Selbstbewusstsein ist allerdings nicht immer schon für den Begriff des Wissens grundlegend gewesen. In den Anfängen griechischen Denkens war das Wissen ein Schauen des in sich selbst Ruhenden' (*op. cit.*, 41).

4 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Das Heilige in der modernen Kultur,' en *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 12.

5 Cf. *op. cit.*, 15.

6 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Gottesbenbildlichkeit und Bildung des Menschen,' in *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie*, vol. II, 209; 'Eschatologie und Sinnerfahrung,' in *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie*, vol. II, 67. See also Pannenberg (ed.), *Die Erfahrung der Abwesenheit Gottes in der modernen Kultur.* On Peter Berger's views on 'secularization' and 'desecularization,' cf. P. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics.*

7 On God as the 'power of being,' cf. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, 235–240.

8 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Reden von Gott angesichts atheistischer Kritik,' in *Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit*, 41.

9 Cf. *op. cit.*, 46. Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, 63–118.

10 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Anthropologie und Gottesfrage,' in *Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit*, 27. Cf., on the analysis of this position, Koch, *Der Gott der Geschichte. Theologie der Geschichte bei Wolfhart Pannenberg als Paradigma einer philosophischen Theologie in ökumenischer Perspektive*, 180–210.

11 Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*; cf. Fraijó, *Das Sprechen von Gott bei W. Pannenberg*, 120–132.

12 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Reden von Gott angesichts atheistischer Kritik,' in *Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit*, 42. On God as future, cf. also Schillebeeckx, *Gott, die Zukunft des Menschen*, 87.

13 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Eschatologie und Sinnerfahrung,' en *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie*, vol. II, 74.

14 In any case, it needs to be noticed that the historical and collective dimensions of religious experience in general and the Christian idea of salvation in particular are not entirely absent from the thought of Schleiermacher, according to whom the Church is '*Gesamtleben der Erlösung*,' and the 'state of plenitude [*Vollendungszustand*]' of the individual must take place together with the state of plenitude of *Gesamtleben* (Weeber, *Schleiermachers Eschatologie*, 99). On the ecclesiology of Schleiermacher, cf. his *Der christliche Glaube*, vol. II, 215–273. 274–40 (for the relationship between the Church and the world) and 408–440 (for the relationship between ecclesiology and eschatology).

15 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Eschatologie und Sinnerfahrung,' en *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie*, vol. II, 76–79. Pannenberg analyzes the philosophical and theological thought of Schleiermacher in *Schleiermachers Schwierigkeiten mit dem Schöpfungsgedanken* and in *Problemgeschichte der neueren evangelischen Theologie in Deutschland: von Schleiermacher bis zu Barth und Tillich*.

16 A similar consideration on the liberating power of the historical perspective can be found in Dilthey, for whom 'Die Geschichte macht uns frei, indem sie über Bedingtheit des aus unieren Lebensverlauf entstandenen Bedeutungsgeschichtspunktes erhebt' (*Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, (in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. VII, 311).

17 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Das Nahen des Lichts und die Finsternis der Welt,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. II, 287.

18 Pannenberg deals with the topic of Christian spirituality in his *Christliche Spiritualität: theologische Aspekte*.

19 Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, 136–151. See also W. Pannenberg (ed.), *Sind wir von Natur aus religiös?*

20 According to Pannenberg, 'der Mensch ist vom Natur aus religiös' ('Religion und menschliche Natur,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. II, 270). For Durkheim, the 'pan-sacredness' of primitive societies is substituted by society itself in the enlightened world, in such a way that religion is no longer necessary (cf. Pannenberg, 'Das Heilige in der modernen Kultur,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 19). On the modern understanding of religion, cf. Pannenberg, 'Macht der Mensch die Religion, oder macht die Religion den Menschen. Ein Rückblick auf die Diskussion des religionstheoretischen Arbeitskreises,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. II, 254–259.

21 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Religion und menschliche Natur,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. II, 261; 'Das Heilige in der modernen Kultur,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 18.

22 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Religion und menschliche Natur,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. II, 270. Religion is therefore a fundamental projection, which cannot be derived from the alienation of the human conscience. This thesis is already present in his writings of the 1970s, such as *Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit*, in which we read that 'the history of human personality appears as a function of the history of religion' (cf. Pannenberg, 'Reden von Gott angesichts atheistischer Kritik,' in *Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit*, 46).

23 Cf. *ibid.* Pannenberg thinks that the explanation of religion in terms of a projection does not solve the problem of the origin of the idea of infinite in the human mind (Pannenberg, 'Das Heilige in der modernen Kultur,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 19). As Descartes noticed in *Metaphysical Meditations*, third meditation, the concept of the finite logically presupposes that of infinitude, but how is it possible that a finite being may conceive of something infinite? This difficulty makes Pannenberg reaffirm that religion must be a constitutive element of the human nature (cf. Pannenberg, 'Das Heilige in der modernen Kultur,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 20). However, this proposal cannot ignore the fact that if this were true, it would be extremely complicated to justify the increasing presence of atheism in modern culture. Also, there is an important difference between regarding men as religious beings and deducing, based on this, their character of "creatures." Many religions do not, in fact, share the Judeo-Christian idea of creation.

24 Pannenberg believes that the distinction between the sacred and the profane is unable to explain why the religious conscience reaches such a duality. According to him, the binomial 'sacred/profane' has to do with the 'temporality of the religious experience [*Temporalität der religiösen Erfahrung*].' In the case of ancient Israel, it is closely associated to worship, which brings it back to some sort of mythical *Urzeit*, actualizing the 'primordial mythical action of the deity [*das mythisch-urzeitliche Handeln der Gottheit*].' However, with the advent of prophetism the holiness of God transcends the realm of worship to be oriented to an eschatological future in which time and eternity will finally converge. Cf. Pannenberg, 'Zeit und Ewigkeit in der religiösen Erfahrung Israels und des Christentums,' in *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie*, vol. II, 188–206.

25 Cf. *op. cit.*, 22.

26 The radical opposition between religion and revelation in Barth can be found in *Church Dogmatics* I.2. For a comparison of Barth's position with the discussions within Hindu theological traditions (such as *Mimamsa*, *Vaisnava Vedanta*, and *Saiva Vedanta*), cf. Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, 129–162.

27 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Das Christentum: eine Religion unter anderen?,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 173.

28 Concerning the relationship of Christianity to the other religions of the world in Pannenberg, cf. *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, 129–136, and his articles 'Religion und Religionen,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 145–154; 'Die Religionen als Thema der Theologie,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 160–172.

29 Cf. Berten, *Histoire, Révélation et Foi: Dialogue avec Wolfhart Pannenberg*, 14.

30 Cf. Fraijó, *El Sentido de la Historia. Introducción al Pensamiento de W. Pannenberg*, 133.

31 Here, Pannenberg's position is close to the perspective of R. Wittram. Cf. Wittram, *Das Interesse an der Geschichte; zwölf Vorlesungen über Fragen des zeitgenössischen Geschichtsverständnisses*, 135.

32 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Die Christliche Legitimität der Neuzeit. Gedanken zu einem Buch von Hans Blumenberg,' in *Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit*, 114–128.

33 Cf. Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit. Ein Versuch zur Orientierung*, of 1950.

34 Cf. Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit: die Säkularisierung als theologisches Problem*. On secularization, cf. Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*; Lübke, *Säkularisierung: Geschichte eines ideenpolitischen Begriffs*. For an examination of the so-called 'theologies of secularization,' cf. Camps, *Los Teólogos de la Muerte de Dios*; Dubach, *Glauben in säkularer Gesellschaft. Zum Thema Glaube und Säkularisierung in der neueren Theologie, besonders bei Friedrich Gogarten*.

35 As Max Weber wrote, 'Jener grosse religionsgeschichtliche Prozess der Entzauberung der Welt, welcher mit der altjüdischen Prophetie einsetzte und, im Verein mit dem hellenischen wissenschaftlichen Denken, alle magische Mittel der Heilssuche als Aberglaube und Frevel verwarf, fand hier [in Calvinist asceticism] seinen Abschluss' (*Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, vol. I, 94). On the disenchantment of the world in Max Weber, cf. W. Schluchter, *Die Entzauberung der Welt: sechs Studien zu Max Weber*.

36 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Die Christliche Legitimität der Neuzeit. Gedanken zu einem Buch von Hans Blumenberg,' in *Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit*, 116.

37 Cf. *op. cit.*, 119.

38 Cf. *op. cit.*, 125.

39 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Christliche Anthropologie und Personalität' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. II, 150–151.

40 Cf. Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichtsphilosophie*, 11–12.

41 Voltaire develops this perspective in *Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations et sur les Principaux Faits de l'Histoire depuis Charlemagnes jusqu'à Louis XIII*. According to Löwith, Vico and Voltaire 'emanzipierten die irdische Geschichte von der himmlischen' (*op. cit.*, 175). In Vico, just as in Voltaire, the history of religion becomes subordinated to the history of civilization.

42 The presence of Judeo-Christian theology in Marx is clear for Löwith: 'Der ganze Geschichtsprozess, wie er im "Kommunistischen Manifest" dargestellt wird, spiegelt das allgemeine Schema der jüdisch-christlichen Interpretation der Geschichte als eines providentiellen Heilsgeschehens auf ein sinnvolles Endziel hin.' (*op. cit.*, 48) In Marx, there is a struggle between Christ (the proletarians) and the anti-Christ (the bourgeoisie) and the proletarians possess, like Christ, a universal mission which has messianic connotations. Marx envisions a 'kingdom of freedom' at the end of history, which is 'ein Reich Gottes, ohne Gott – das Endziel des historischen Messianismus von Marx' (*op. cit.*, 46), so that, according to Löwith, 'der historische Materialismus ist Heilsgeschichte in der Sprache der Nationalökonomie' (*op. cit.*, 48).

43 Löwith thinks that Hegel transforms the Christian theology of history into a speculative system (cf. *op. cit.*, 176). For a comparative study of the philosophies of history of Hegel and Marx, cf. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, 1–27.

44 On postmodernity, cf. Lyotard, *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir*.

45 Cf. Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichtsphilosophie*, 170.

46 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Der Gott der Geschichte. Der trinitarische Gott und die Wahrheit der Geschichte,' in *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie*, vol. II, 118.

47 Cf. *ibid.*

48 Cf. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, of 1946.

49 Cf. Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, of 1949.

50 This idea is detailed in 'Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte,' in *Kerygma und Dogma* 5 (1959) 218–237. 259–288.

51 Cf. Pannenberg, 'Sinnerfahrung, Religion und Gottesgedanke,' in *Beiträge zur systematischen Theologie*, vol. I, 112.

52 On the importance of God as *fundamentum* of the unity of reality (as the encompassing process that integrates both nature and history), cf. Buller, *The Unity of Nature and History's in Pannenberg's Theology*, 63–79.