



Truth has a history. Modern historical research laid bare the contingency and particularity of what once was thought of as absolute universal truth. On the one hand, this led to the awareness that truth is inextricably embodied in concrete contexts. On the other hand, contemporary philosophy in the wake of Nietzsche radically historicised their view of truth (and of historiography itself) up to the extent that every truth seems to be unmasked as a construct, or even as fiction. Given both challenges, we will propose performance as a fruitful theological-epistemological perspective. It is self-evident that the notion performance allows affirming the importance of embodiment. Moreover, as a term that stems from the world of theatre, performance raises the question whether the production of truth is not fatally bound up with acting 'as if'. This is the issue of truth and fictionality – which haunts our contemporary 'theatricalised' context so much. First, we will introduce our central notion through a somewhat technical analysis of Jean-Luc Marion's understanding of the performance character of theological discourse, which avoids fictionality, but risks downplaying historical embodiment. Second, a suggestion by Joseph Ratzinger will raise the critical question whether the performance epistemology that underpins the work of philosophers like Slavoj Žižek and Jacques Derrida, but also discourses like Radical Orthodoxy or contemporary theological hermeneutics does not end up in a 'theology of the 'as if''. Finally, we will propose from Giorgio Agamben's interpretation of Saint Paul an epistemological alternative for both Marion's tendency towards disembodiment and contemporary theological fictionalism.

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# Truth as Performance? History, Transcendence and the 'as if'

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