Introduction

During the interwar period of the former century, thoughts were developed which seem to have had a lasting impact on Western philosophy. The aim of this book is to integrate some of these thoughts in a renewed understanding of religion. The particular endeavor is led by two interrelated theses: First, I claim that crucial, but generally overlooked, relations between religion, philosophy, and science come to light when we take a closer look at our human inclination *to construe the world as a home and make it true by way of naming it*. Secondly, I claim that philosophy unfolds within frames of thinking which are, on the one hand, constituted by historical limitations and, on the other, by unalterable conditions of human existence. Taken together these claims imply both that historically different forms of truth, naming, and habitation, nevertheless *share* a profound similarity when it comes down to being world-relations and also that only the tension between a diachronic and a synchronic view can bring about this perspective.

The kind of world-relation that most fundamentally sets human beings apart from other animals is language. In terms of consciousness, the realization of mortality is also essentially human. Religion in all forms is perhaps the most obvious expression of this. A religious consciousness, however, can be many things. At the root, I think it eludes a philosophical conceptualization. In order to access religion as a human phenomenon which is neither too close nor too far away, I argue that we will have to comprehend it from a premise we already share with it, namely, the premise of being a world-relation. Accordingly, my endeavor to gain a philosophical perspective on religion will focus on the kind of language which is charged with responses by intellectual beings to the condition of mortality. However, it is crucial to keep the historical differences of these responses in mind. What I hope to lay out in the present work is, in other words, variable, yet interrelated concerns with being-in-the-world as symbolically reflected in the human form of life. Within this frame of orientation, the present work is, first of all, a philosophical attempt at rethinking religion.

That being said, the book does not present a program and has not dropped its anchor in an immediate objectification of religion as one phenomenon among others. Fundamentally, I would say that such an investigation doesn't need philosophy in the first place, but are actually better off with *theories* of various kinds. Instead of regarding religion as something that can be investigated, either from inside as theological self-reflection, or from the outside as a disowned form of life, I intend to investigate it in the borderland between 'inside' and 'outside', or being and non-being, which is a place where philosophy generally feels at home, I guess. Thus, it is my ambition throughout this study to proceed in ways in which religion, philosophy and science can each change their appearance between objectified phenomena and assumed points of view depending on the argument.

It is my contention that philosophy cannot think religion without thinking about itself as thinking, and therefore arguments concerning the critical limits of a philo-

sophical investigation will take up quite some space in the present work. In brief, I regard philosophy as a conceptual investigation the instrument of which is already conceptual. It is, therefore, bound by a certain circularity which it should not expect to transcend but rather reflect upon. This is what makes it philosophy in the first place. I recognize, of course, a self-transcending tendency of language, not only in the paradoxical sense that what it refers to by its own means is something different from itself, but also in the fantasizing sense of pointing towards 'essences' or some 'ineffable reality' beyond the sensible world. The kind of philosophical reflection subscribed to in this book makes a point of speaking from *within* a linguistic immanence, even though this immanence cannot conceive of its own givenness. Far from denying that it is, therefore, *in a sense* returned to a sense of transcendence, the point is to acknowledge – and stay away from – the conceptual void, or transcendence, of this condition. However, the very consciousness of the boundary of conceptuality invites us to at least imagine the *possibility* of excess, and thus calls for an interaction with myth and religion, where 'beginnings' and 'essences' take up the names of divine beings, inhabiting an invisible world. However, if human reflection is, by definition, turned against its own limitation (reflecting '*on* the limit', to borrow an expression from Foucault), the conceptuality of this reflection may actually be the very point of interest (not to say intersection) between religion and philosophy. The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy articulates a similar thought by stating that "what touches me out of an elsewhere that I can consider indifferently as 'in' me or 'outside' me, as within this world or outside it, because I am touching the limit" (2013, 75).[1] Yet, on philosophy's part it means: being conscious of not overstepping constraints of conceptuality, to reflect on "the linguistic being of things" (*Das spracliche Wesen der Dinge*), as Walter Benjamin has expressed it (GA II.1, 143),[2] and this should not be seen as a self-imposed directive as much as a precaution to secure a defensible conception of meaning.

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1 "This step beyond", as Nancy writes, "is the doing of *sense* – or *language* – which is, in all of its forms, a referring to the outside", op.cit. 78. Language wouldn't be language if it did not have an outside, an externality to which it refers. Yet, the outside wouldn't be an outside if it wasn't for the inside of language through which it becomes what it is *as an outside*. Yet, the very "step beyond" (*pas au-delà*), as Nancy calls it, is exactly the movement by which language (as such) and religion *touch* each other, as it were.

2 It is important to notice, however, the reservation with which Benjamin takes pain to avoid the reification likely to follow from this linguistic turn. "The view that the mental essence (*Geistige Wesen*) of a thing consists precisely in its language – this view, taken as a hypothesis, is the great abyss into which all linguistic theory threatens to fall, and to survive suspended precisely over this abyss is its task" (SW, I, 63, cf. GA, II.1, 141). I find it misconstrued to translate '*Geistige*' with 'mental' in this context, pervaded as it is with Biblical language, but the main point, Benjamin makes, as I see it, is that to stay suspended over the abyss of sheer '*Sprachlichkeit*' is, at the same time, to acknowledge its gravitational power, without giving in to exchanging one essence with another.

The emergence of these constraints of conceptuality, their creative origin – or perhaps we should say: the outer side of their world-encompassing network – can neither be conceived by religion nor by philosophy or science. How should the latter, for instance, be able to grasp the opening up of human cognition other than through the means of language preconceived in it? That it may indeed be possible to point out pre-linguistic forms of cognition does not change the fact that this empirically certified knowledge is only thinkable *through* the medium of language.[3] And it would be a profound mistake to take such knowledge to imply that we have actually transgressed the boundaries of what language allows us to think. The same constriction, philosophically speaking, applies to religion, or what is thought, claimed or done from a religious point of view. The coming-to-be of language remains in the dark, and confronting this darkness thoughts may unfold that brings modern philosophy back into the neighborhood of religion. Whereas science, crudely speaking, tends to trivialize the constrictions of language (insofar as science chastises itself by holding an instrumental conception of language), philosophy is in general (from a pragmatic to an analytic approach) inclined to view the very givenness of language as significant and charging. Looking beyond – or farther back than – the shared conceptuality of theology and philosophy, one may say that myth, in a way, incorporates the very emergence of language, yet without demonstrating any conception of this. Inasmuch as religion is understood in the sense of a developing, yet inchoate, estrangement from myth (an understanding which, at least, flourish in academic literature), we may associate 'the religious' with a dawning awareness *of language* as an insufficient means of reaching out for the holy (including, from a modern point of view, its own origin). In this sense, religion is born from a rupture that stems from recognizing a rift in being (as, for instance, in the proclamation of the disparity between the creator and his creation). The ultimate reality withdraws from language resulting in a perception of religious acts, gestures, and utterances, as being merely symbolic. Religion and philosophy therefore come across each other at the brink of an abyss, the darkness of transcendence, engaged with the attempt to conceive of that which cannot be fathomed. As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it: "Myth and the abyss are the postulations or figurations inscribed by philosophy, from the very beginning, as its own limits" (1997, 50). Yet, in religion this transcendence is kept and guarded as being otherworldly or invisibly present, whereas in philosophy, at least within the confines of secularized disenchantment, transcendence is acknowledged according to the immanent limits of language alone and, therefore, approached, not as transcendence, but as a *concept* of transcendence.

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3 This view may be criticized for submitting itself to an exhausted transcendentalism, but it is, in fact, rather a way of critically recognizing self-generating implications of a totalizing view, whenever such is adopted, for instance, in science.

Let me phrase this line of thought by citing, once more, Jean-Luc Nancy, who asks the unanswerable question: "Where does [language] come from?" In lieu of an answer, as it were, he writes:

> From the nonplace that opens in the midst of world and beginning with which things open, shift, and happen, things constantly replay this coming, this approach, and this shifting, this trembling in which everything comes about: the world, life, sense, the thing, all of them fortuitous, uncertain, vibrating, unsteady. (2013, 67)

The aim of the present book is to approach religion while embracing this unsteadiness at the heart of the conditions of signification. Religion may, consequently, slip in and out of the picture, inasmuch as it represents a similar opening up of things. This is, at least, how Nancy views Christianity, namely as a proclaimed utopia (nonplace) opening in the midst of the world.[4] Thus, in a sense, to approach religion is to approach the limits of language. The philosophical routes opened up by this recognition, especially during the interwar period of the former century, shall determine the direction of the present attempt to find new orientations within a philosophy of religion. It is hardly disputable to claim that contemporary philosophy still unfolds in the aftermath of innovations from this period – following, or reflecting, the fall of traditional metaphysics. What I want to focus on in this respect is how it changed the way of thinking about religion. I will not let the intervening appearance of post-secular conditions defer me from assimilating insights which may be still be intrinsically, not to say historically, valid. Innovations in philosophy take time to mature, and even if they may never reach beyond a certain historical horizon, I am not sure that the horizon within which Heidegger, Benjamin, and Wittgenstein were thinking, has come to an end just because we live in a time when the social phenomenon of religion, stretching from faith to fanaticism, seems to be waxing rather than waning on a world-wide scale. The cost of alienation, the struggle for power and identity, in a globalized society is not, by itself, an argument for regarding religion in a completely new light, though it goes without saying that as political proclamations, religious traditions are deeply involved in these trends. However, as a discipline, philosophy is obliged to know better than to let mere appearance decide the agenda for reflection. I am not so sure, for that matter, that we have finished absorbing the revolutions of late modernity and the kind of thinking that evolved along with it, despite the perplexing speed of perceptible changes in today's world. It is thus my contention that

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4 One might also refer to Foucault's journalistic question concerning the Islamic revolution of 1978 as being "a movement through which blows the breath of a religion that speaks less of the hereafter than of the transfiguration of this world?" (cf. Afray & Anderson 2005, 223). Foucault's obvious miscalculations aside, we should not be fooled by the 'religious' rhetoric, and although Islam surely has not undergone the same process of Enlightenment as European Christianity (especially Protestantism), the socio-psychological aspect of re-opening the world may also apply to Islam.

important aspects of religion, not least in regard of its current state, may still be seen in light of thoughts that developed at the beginning of the former century.

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'Philosophy of religion' is traditionally concerned with criteria of rational validity – or propositional justification – of religious belief, and the discipline is therefore often associated with a theological discourse (in an 'analytic' as well as in a 'continental' context). Yet, in our world of multifarious candidates to truth, other tasks are queuing up for a philosophical reflection on religion. For one thing, the general study of religion, which does not commit itself to any confession but that of interpretative science, is just as much in need of philosophy as theology is. Although we do not normally associate philosophy of religion (PhR) with comparative studies of religion, there is no argument for not doing so in the future.[5] If the expected implications of theological philosophy stand in the way, one might respond that, strictly speaking, a philosophy of religion which deserves that name is a philosophy of *religion*, not a philosophy of truth-conditions *internal* to religion.[6]

But of course, much depends on our definition of religion, and even the smallest hint at this matter will quickly draw us into a most heated debate. I shall not avoid the issue, but merely postpone it as a question to be dealt with in due course and at a proper length. Let it suffice to say, as an introductory remark, that I ineluctably find myself surrounded, as it were, by a worldview in which 'religion' appears as a comparative phenomenon. As a compartment within this cultural 'building' or 'enclosure', which is my worldview, as it were, there is also theology, even as an academic discipline (although in some in situational contexts more committed to the critical standards of science than in others). It goes without saying that theologians share the same cultural worldview as the rest of society; their beliefs and interests are as varied as everybody else's. As a discipline, however, theology takes a certain non-comparative interest in assessing the truth and value of its own tradition. In other

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5 For a similar view, Bryan Rennie, 2011, 1–9; Timothy David Knepper, 2013, 75 ff; Kevin Schilbrack, 2014, 3–25.

6 Though I concur with Knepper that PhR should leave its shelter within Christian ethnocentrism and start to philosophize "about that which religious studies studies", I find his view of philosophy too old-fashioned, and restrictive, inasmuch as he urges PhR to "take account of religious reason-giving in as many places and times as possible", 2013, 22. Why should *reason-giving*, the all-pervading focus of Knepper's book, be given so much attention? In fact, he even states himself that "the philosopher of religion needs to be mindful that reason-giving is merely one facet of the religious activities of humans, and at that, one that that is not that prevalent or important in some religious traditions", op.cit. 102. It goes without saying that philosophy needs to present reasoned arguments as much as any other academic discipline, but why should it only deal with religion as far as reason-giving goes? Furthermore, I find the exhortation to look in as many directions as possible to naïvely suggest that one escapes ethnocentrism by simply committing oneself to a quantitative measure of comparison.

words, one might say that theology is *tradition conceived in thought*. For the general study of religion no such agenda seems pertinent.

A die-hard metaphysical implication in the study of religion is to regard religious phenomena of whatever kind (from the most familiar to the most exotic) as formed by cultural conditions to which the scientific outlook itself belongs in a more critically enlightened stage. In light of this general humanist stance one might wonder why philosophy of religion is not primarily occupied with religion as a second order phenomenon rather than with a first order set of beliefs in a transcendent reality, as is predominantly the case. It goes without saying that it has to do with the discipline's theological tradition, but inasmuch as philosophy is not committed to tradition over and against its commitment to critical thinking, including a contestation of that which is unthinkingly repeated, I shall, in the present work, advocate for a philosophy of religion that places religion on the phenomenological side of things, not because there is no need for a theological philosophy (or a hermeneutics of religious utterances), but because in today's world such an agenda cannot, or should not, stand alone. In this respect, I refer to 'religion' as a comparative concept comprising a set of largely identifiable phenomena (second order), and 'theories of religion' (third order) as explicatory engagements with these phenomena. I surrender to this 'objectifcation' for practical reasons only, claiming no philosophical insight to go along with it, let alone follow from it. I rather regard the phenomenological specification as a conceptual maneuver the necessity of which is purely formal, yet at a deeper level already part of the complex about to be reconsidered. Hence, if 'religion', in this book, is pushed away from the confines of theological reflection, it is also lured away from the general study of religion, inasmuch as it returns as a kind of bedfellow, strange and familiar at the same time, to the philosophical investigation. For the same reason, it should be obvious that I do not want to repudiate the merits of a more traditional PhR (and the orders of classification developed on these premises); my aim is merely to lend thought to a general tendency in recent years, namely the attempt, from various quarters, to integrate philosophy in the general study of religion.[7] More specifically, I opt for a communication between philosophy and the study of religion, where 'religion' is, at any rate, a label for something that has lost its holistic meaning in a Western society. My point here is that the historical development of 'religion' as a term has brought with it a conceptual divergence, a distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena, which does not necessarily apply to former historical stages. It does seem mandatory, however, to work from a concept that conveys *something* universally identifiable, at least in a preliminary sense. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to speak meaningfully about religion in a global as well as historical perspective. In other words, we cannot avoid the need for a universal taxonomy. We may

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7 One may mention, at random, Thomas D. Caroll, Steven Engler, Gavin Flood, Nancy Frankenberry, Mark Q. Gardiner, Terry F. Godlove, Jeppe S. Jensen, Tim D. Knepper, Bryan Rennie, Kevin Schilbrack.

bear in mind, however, that this is only valid for operational reasons, and we should not overlook the possibility, therefore, that, below the surface, as it were, this 'something' which appears neat and definable in one context may change its meaning – or turn into something else – in another. I am not referring to implicit essences behind varying appearances, but I claim that a certain configuration of attitudes, acts and thoughts, may be recognizable in different contexts beyond the exact terms of their expression. What we may be inclined to call 'religion' in one social setting may rather be identified as 'politics', 'science', or 'philosophy' in another. What the thing called 'religion' was earlier, and what it is now, in a society – or reality – that it no longer comprises, may be two different things,[8] and then again, may also have something in common which, all else being equal, still deserves the common (non-essential) predicate (of 'religion').

Obviously, in ancient societies, even in Roman times, from whence we have adopted the term, the thing called 'religion' had not yet become 'religion' in the comprehensive sense of the modern predicate (which is, however, no problem as long as we take care to distinguish between phenomenon and concept). What we may have recognized since the dawn of modernity as various semantic and pragmatic characteristics of religion – the thing – are properties we have come to define owing to the advent of alternative ways of thinking. I would not want to deny, though, that it is always possible for the human spirit to depart individually from the dominant ways of thinking and acting in a given period, and consequently the possibility of making distinctions (as between commitment and non-commitment, faith and non-faith) have, in principle, always been optional. Yet, in the broad historical perspective, the concept of 'religion' is a recent invention which betrays an enlightened strategy of demarcation. Let it be said at once, however, that I find it wrong-headed to take this condition to imply that the term denotes nothing but artificial boundaries around an empty core. There may be no 'thing' *independent* of our categorizations, but there may be no 'nothing' either. We have to stand guard against a radical nominalism that invites us down the unfortunate path of *ontological* constructionism (not to be confused with epistemic constructionism). Actually, it seems to be a frequent mistake to think that if concepts are coined and developed in the impure matrix of strategic formation, they must stand in an arbitrary relation to what they are supposed to designate. This is a logical mistake inasmuch as the conclusion implies the opposite as its premise. We can only claim that words and things don't match if we have an epistemic access to the relation between them, and if this 'access' is given up as a matter of principle, it is like throwing the baby out with the bathwater. In point of fact, the objective is a different one.

In order to take the strategic formation of concepts seriously into account, we need criteria for assessing in what ways they may *relatively* misconstrue the objects

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8 See especially Berger 1990.

they represent. Even if there is no one-to-one criterion for an adequate representation, inasmuch as any representation will always be aspectual, there may still be representations which can be criticized for representing their own *representing* activity rather than the *represented* phenomena. I sincerely believe we should harvest the best of insights from Bachelard, Foucault, Kuhn, and constructionist theories in general, without buying into the relativism that lurks in their wake. Religion is a human construct (whatever kind of reality it may *concern*), doubly constructed by being dubbed 'religion', and triply constructed by whatever definition our theories may entitle us to use for it. The name of the game *is* construction; our social reality is a *constructed reality*. Money and tax and debt are what we make them out to be, but they are *real* nonetheless.[9] In the case of these 'entities', however, the constituents are intrinsically well defined, and I venture to say that it makes them significantly different from religion (the thing). If, at any rate, it is possible to speak of similar constituents of religion, they belong to a reverse order; their reality is *post factum*. Where the specific means of economic transactions in society are instigated by strict rules, religion does not depend on such measurements and regulations (as neither does art, partying, bodily exercise, etc.).

Rigid rules of confession may, of course, be regarded as compulsory, as in the development of new movements and departures from a parent tradition, but if we should speak of a religious community only when all the rules were followed all the time, then we would speak of none. In fact, a religious community thrives as much from its sinners as from its saints. To be a member of a religious community is not necessarily 'to play it right' but rather to have the parameters set already for 'playing' as well as for 'violating the game'. Importantly, not all of these parameters might be explicit. Some social facts are constituted by explicit rules, others are not. And we might not want to narrow our view down by counting religion only among the former. Adopting John Searle's concepts (1969) of *constitutive* and *regulative* rules, I am inclined to say that whereas social and linguistic phenomena such as bills, promises, claims, etc., are made up by the former, a phenomenon such as religion is rather characteristic of the latter (as is eating, mating, dancing, etc.). I grant that the operational use of a strict taxonomy, designed to verbalize these rules, *may* work regardless of their open-ended character, as long as we keep in mind that they inform our *concept* of 'religion'. Yet, a stipulative definition also carries the risk of confusing 'a model of' with 'a model for', as Geertz has shown (1993, 93). However crucial it is not to mistake regulative rules for constitutive ones, a sliding from the one to the other may often go

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9 John Searle has worked out this line of thought, cf. below 4.2. One may also refer to a more Durkheimian version of a similar perspective in Clifford Geertz, who thus regards 'systems of symbols' and 'cultural patterns' as ontologically analogous to material realities, writing that "Cultural acts, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms, are social events like any other; they are as public as marriage and as observable as agriculture", 1993, 91.

unnoticed. It is worth pointing out, at any rate, that it is only in the unlikely event of coming up with criteria for defining religion which are *both* necessary *and* sufficient, that we are, in fact, entitled to explain the actual phenomenon as a conglomerate of constitutive rules. Such conceptual venture is unproblematic when we refer to chess and other institutionalized games and sports, and though, of course, spiritual movements *could*, in principle, be formed in much the same way, the life of long-standing traditions seems to follow a deeper track and attain a much vaguer character. Thus, a compartmentalization of religion as an isolable, exhaustively defined set of beliefs and practices *flies in the face of what we observe*. I shall return to this matter, which indeed cries out for further differentiations, and stay content for now with a preliminary appeal to concerning ourselves with religion as a human construct with layers upon layers of dynamic social interaction.

If religion can be regarded as an open-ended social 'game' the roots of which run deeper than what can be ascribed to acknowledged commitments of belief and behavior, it also means that there is no necessary coincidence between what religion means in the self-interpretation of the adherents and what it means – and entails – in the horizon of a historical, philosophical and scientific approach. I regard William Cantwell Smith's assertion that "No statement about Islamic faith is true that Muslims cannot accept" (1981, 97) as profoundly mistaken. As crucial as it is that we do not sever the bond between the extrinsic and the intrinsic level of meaning,[10] we *should not* conflate the two. It is a matter of balance – and dialectics – between a hermeneutical and analytic approach, and much of what I have to say in this book pertains to this issue.

Yet, a short comment of the concept of *sui generis* as pertaining to the study of religion might be in place already at this point. It was used, for instance, by William James in his famous *Varieties of Religious Experience*. The passage runs:

> [A]ny object that is infinitely important to us and awakens our devotion feels to us also as if it must be sui generis and unique. Probably a crab would be filled with a sense of personal outrage if it could hear us class it without ado or apology as a crustacean, and thus dispose of it. "I am no such thing," it would say; I am MYSELF, MYSELF alone. (1960, 32)

The crab's protest is understandable, since from the perspective of the individual it is not *just* a crustacean, though from a general point of view *it is*. In accordance with a constructed table of characteristics, this is what a crab can be said to be. But tables are tables, and crabs are crabs, each and every one of which is unique in existence and not merely an example of crustacean properties. Religions are both unique and

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10 I fully endorse the view of Mark Q, Gardiner and Steven Engler (2012) that we should avoid any strong kind of 'insiderism'. However, their specific view is informed by the semantic holism of Davidson and Brandom (cf. Gardiner & Engler, 2010; 2012), to which I only partly agree (see below chapter 4).

categorically common (i.e., as an instance of 'religion') in the same sense, though different from crabs by being a cultural phenomenon with all the interactive complexity that goes with it. If the concept of religion *sui generis* (literally: of its own kind) is taken to imply that religion (the thing) transcends any kind of classification and has to be lived to be understood, no science or philosophy will be able to take hold of it. If it rather means that regardless of whatever aspect of religion we reduce to other, more fundamental elements, we are still left with a center or a composite, we can justifiably call 'religion', I see no reason why *sui generis* should not be used as a concept for this, and I do not take James' point, which I fully endorse, to speak against it. What it does speak against, however, is the opinion that what belongs to the core of someone's self-image is nothing but what that someone accepts it to be. That we may allow for constituents in our interpretation of ourselves, which are not immediately accessible to self-consciousness, forms a premise for the following inquiry.

Thus, in the following chapter, I shall aim to work out operational concepts for dealing with points of contact between philosophy, religion, and the general study *of religion*, aiming for a philosophical platform which remains self-consciously in charge, but hopefully without being too reductive.

Proceeding from this premise, I set out in chapter 3 to sketch a picture of religion-as-a-social-phenomenon, which steals itself to a position behind the back of a religious self-understanding while acknowledging, at the same time, that such position is already itself socially embedded. However, rather than asserting an unconditional truth about religion, I shall use the socio-philosophical approach to point to certain *aspects* of religious discourse in the attempt to clarify how and why such type of discourse works effectively in various contexts. Though I do, in this respect, draw heavily on Searle's concepts of 'institutional facts' and 'social ontology', I make every effort, at the same time, to drive out the ghost of a self-conserved consciousness, summoned in his philosophy of mind and still indirectly haunting his view of social construction.

Turning to questions of 'truth' and 'reference' in chapter 4, I argue against what I find to be unwarranted ascriptions of truth-conditions to the language and practice of religion. My main point is that we should take care not to put too much weight on a concept of truth that is formed within a secular horizon of empirical meaning-criteria. This leads me from an over-burdened focus on referentiality in Wolterstorff's and Soskice's philosophy of religion to the more sophisticated theory of truth in Davidson's semantic holism. Yet, I try to balance important points in his semantic view of meaning with the pragmatic notion of truth as espoused, for instance, by Habermas, Rorty, Brandom and Wittgenstein, albeit with crucially different implications. In light of my own settling with the pragmatic stance of the later Wittgenstein, I proceed to consider how the concept of truth has been used in various philosophical ventures, including those of Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger.

From the basic notion of 'truth' as a concept whose meaning is delineated by its use, including a translatable religious concept of 'truth', I set out in chapter 5 to widen the perspective by unfolding Benjamin's concept of 'pure language', the magical qual-

ities of which relate human beings to the world through *names*, most conspicuously the name of God. This exposition is packed with a discussion about the difference between the linguistic perspective in Benjamin, on the one hand, and the transcendental concepts of spontaneity of symbolic expression in Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of myth, on the other. Striving to avoid unfortunate speculations about some mental reality, I conclude that religion is, fundamentally, a matter of name-giving, and that concept of truth attains its primary *religious* meaning from being associated with the expressive (or creative) power of the name rather than with general statements about reality. In the wider scope of things, I try to show how this suggestion is in line with a conception of a human form of life that dawns, variably but comparably, in the developing philosophies of Benjamin and Wittgenstein as a reaction to a spiritual occultism of subjective consciousness.

In chapter 6 I engage in a short discussion about differences and similarities between 'myth' and 'religion' as a stepping stone for locating both in the attempt by humans, at all times, to make a *home* in the world, or to make *the world* a home, an endeavor that characteristically takes places in light of the beyond. Drawing on the previous chapters, I claim that the role of 'naming' and 'truth' are of pivotal importance in this respect. Additionally, I venture into early as well as late phases of Heidegger's thinking in order to relate the ways in which it opens 'Being' (from 'factic life-experience' through '*Dasein*' to '*Sein*') to the ways in which religion 'opens the world in the midst of the world itself' (borrowing the wordings from Jean-Luc Nancy). However, following Heidegger's style of thinking, I find it increasingly difficult to distinguish the kind of *opening*, he comes to conceive through language (*Sprache*), from the kind of *opening* that is created by religion. Far from claiming that Heidegger succumbs to a religious form of thinking, I retreat from the abyss of 'being thought' so as to regain a foothold, along with Wittgenstein and Benjamin, in the social and historical conditions of 'thinking and speaking about'. Yet, I acknowledge that my own subsequent attempt at characterizing a religious home-making is substantially inspired by the later Heidegger, and that the present investigation is already building a new abode for itself, as it were, not least by considering the religious home-making replaced by the disorientation of modern life. Clearly, the kind of thinking that engages me is a way of being within 'the *outside*' and outside of 'the *within*' at one and the same time. We all think and write from the height of our own being. Yet, philosophy would not be able to breathe if it did not believe itself able to make a conceptual difference. The power of philosophy, as Gilles Deleuze once said, "is measured by the concepts it creates, or whose meaning it alters" (2005, 321). In this sense, a philosophical investigation may be said to participate in something (philosophy itself included) which is, at the same time, kept at a distance. Therefore, a philosophy of religion necessarily keeps religion at bay, however familiar a religious way of thinking and acting may seem in the process.

Thus in the final chapter 7, I go along with Jean-Luc Nancy in order to think religion from the 'inside', as it were, which means, to think both with and against it.

Apart from the general force of Nancy's main argument, namely, that Christianity has from the very beginning entered a process of self-deconstruction, I find it intriguing that his thinking also seems to capture the crucial elements of religion as a truth-making, name-giving, and world-habituating human practice. While he is painstakingly aware of the living present, the current situation of being part of secularized Christianity, it is in large parts philosophical perspectives from the interwar period that seems to reemerge in his thinking. Speaking with Heidegger, the predicament of *Dasein* is that Nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*) lies at the heart Being, and Nancy's contention that religion 'fills in the Nothing' follows up on this thought by way of *thinking* religion. In a way, this short statement by Nancy says it all. However, in order to let it be heard as anything but a kind of Sartrean reference to emptiness or redundancy, a certain journey through religious ways of life has to be made.

Having outlined the field of investigation this journey is now at hand. However, setting out to cross various religious and philosophical territories requires that we first take a closer look on how 'philosophy' and 'the study of religion' have interacted as yet.