MARIANNE MOYAERT

Reassessing Ricœur's Contribution to Inter-religious Dialogue amidst Contemporary Critiques of Religion

doi.org/10.30664/ar.146453

Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

VERTAISARVIOITU
KOLLEGIALT GRANSKAD
PEER-REVIEWED
www.tsv.fi/tunnus

This article critically examines Paul Ricœur's philosophical contributions to inter-religious dialogue, focusing on his treatment of religion as a presumed universal category. Ricœur's insights into religious violence and post-religious faith have influenced scholars advocating non-violent interfaith interactions. However, this article argues that Ricœur's framework, rooted in a modern Western understanding of religion, neglects critical perspectives from scholars in critical religion studies. These perspectives reveal how the category of religion is historically contingent, Eurocentric, and intertwined with processes of power and exclusion. By uncritically adopting this concept, Ricœur's approach risks perpetuating hierarchical structures that marginalize non-Western religious traditions and obscure histories of violence against religious minorities.

Introduction

Since the early twenty-first century, the importance of dialogue to deal with religious differences has been increasingly recognized by policy-makers at local, national, and international levels. In their book, John Fahy and Jan-Jonathan Bock argue that the interfaith movement, whose actual beginnings date back to the nineteenth century, "is beginning to receive mainstream attention, with governments, religious leaders, and activists around the world increasingly turning to interfaith dialogue and collective action to address the challenges and explore the opportunities presented by religious diversity in a globalizing world" (Fahy, Bock, and Hargreaves 2018). Research into inter-religious dialogue has also been proliferating in the human and social sciences (Halafoff 2013; Lamine 2004; Cornille 2013; Cheetham, Pratt, and Thomas 2013). Many inter-religious scholars have turned to Paul Ricœur, who has been called the philosopher of all dialogues, to theorize the scope and nature of inter-religious dialogue (Ford 1999; Casey 2019; Vendra 2016; Chua 2013).[1] Especially Ricoœur's concept of post-religious faith is echoed in the field of inter-religious dialogue. In my own efforts to create a non-violent and transformative space for inter-religious dialogue, I have also found Ricœur's ideas particularly valuable (Moyaert 2008, 2010, 2014).

---

[1] Other philosophers of specific interest to inter-religious scholars are Martin Buber (Meir 2022), Hans-Georg Gadamer (Hedges 2016), and Emmanuel Levinas (Barnes 2002). This article does not go into discussion of how these different philosophers of dialogue relate to one another.

This article, however, takes a more critical approach to Ricœur's contribution to inter-religious dialogue. Its focal point is Ricœur's "taken-for-granted" understanding of the category of religion in terms of a human universal. Scholars in the fields of critical religion have convincingly shown that "this entity that gets called 'religion'" is bound up closely with a particular history (Nye 2019)—a history, which is moreover permeated by violence *vis-à-vis* religious others (Moyaert 2024). This article will argue that Ricœur's failure (and this is also true of those inter-religious scholars who develop a Ricœurian approach to dialogue) to reckon with this history, and with how "religion" functions as a "category of power" implicated in processes of classification and hierarchization, hinders inter-religious dialogue in its capacity to address, dismantle, and transform mechanisms of exclusion.

To build my argument, I first summarize some of the aspects of Ricœur's philosophy of religion relevant to this discussion. In particular, I focus on his philosophy of religion, his analysis of religious violence as "a monopolizing appropriation of the originary source of givenness", and his understanding of post-religious faith (Staudigl 2016, 745). Next, I briefly elaborate on the appeal that radiates from Ricœur's philosophy for scholars of inter-religious dialogue, who envision a space of non-violent inter-religious hospitality. Significantly, Ricœur's philosophy of religion assumes a typical modern concept of religion. Many scholars have criticized this modern concept as Eurocentric, originating from a Western scholarly perspective that often imposes Western concepts on non-Western religious traditions. In addition, this modern concept is linked to colonial histories in which European powers categorized and controlled colonized peoples in part through the lens of religion (Chidester 2014; Masuzawa 2005). In the third part of this article, I build on this growing body of scholarship in critical religion to deconstruct the modern concept of religion. Finally, I return to Ricœur and explore the implications of this critique for his contribution to inter-religious dialogue. This section explores how acknowledging historical and critical perspectives on the concept of religion can enhance the effectiveness of inter-religious dialogue by addressing and transforming mechanisms of exclusion.

Ricœur's philosophy of religion

Ricœur was deeply concerned about the resurgence of religiously inspired violence and the persistent reality of people killing "in the name of God". Long before 9/11, which some see as symbolizing the "return of religion" (Fitzgerald 2011a), Ricœur warned against downplaying the reality of religious violence. He argued that it is crucial to acknowledge and address the close relationship between religion and violence. For him, religious violence arises from the human tendency to contain the uncontainable, grasp the ungraspable, and seize the unseizable. Michael Staudigl, inspired by Ricœur, speaks about the "seizing of the Source" as the root cause of violence (Staudigl 2016).

Central to Ricœur's philosophical reflections on religious diversity is the dialectical play between the infinite and the finite: "Every religion claims to give a human answer to a questioning that comes from above, from a higher level than the human" (Changeux and Ricœur 2002, 269). Inspired by Friedrich von Schelling (1755–1854), Ricœur calls this transcendence the groundless ground, the *Grund* that is *Abgrund*, the foundation without foundation, or the originary source of givenness. This conceptualization emphasizes that no one can fully grasp or encompass this groundless ground. This groundless ground, however, encounters a finite human capacity for reception, adaptation, and appropriation, resulting in a disproportion. "Confronted with an overflow from above, as it were, [the capable man] tries to accommodate this excess by closing up the sides—laterally, horizontally. This amounts to trying to contain—in both senses of the word—what exceeds all containing. The lateral closure offsets the vertical opening" (Changeux and Ricœur 2002, 269). Because of the inherent human tension between finitude and infinitude, religion can never exist in the singular; for Ricœur, it is and always will be plural: the infinite source of life fragments according to its receptors.

Ricœur emphasizes that, in principle, there is no direct access to the groundless ground; it manifests itself only through mediation in a particular religious language that structures, moulds, and constitutes the meaning of religious experience, which would otherwise remain void (or meaningless). Even though the call of the illimited can be heard only through a concrete tradition, Ricœur argues that no tradition can ever fully absorb the illimited or deplete its meaning. The illimited is super-abundant and excessive, marked by a surplus of meaning that transcends historical and culturally determined mediations. It demonstrates epistemic humility to "understand that my access to religion, fundamental though it may be, is a partial access, and that others have access to this [Fond] by other routes" (Ricœur 1998, 273). For Ricœur, religious people, no matter what their tradition, have to recognize that there is something unsaid in their particular traditions, some kind of mystical core that is beyond expression. This means that they have to accept that there is something profoundly religious in the other so-called world religions, like Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc. Could it not even be, Ricœur ponders, that the plurality of religious traditions testifies precisely to the greatness of the illimited? Thus, he quotes the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (540–480 BC): "A God has many names; God is day and night; winter and summer; war and peace; satiety and hunger; but he changes like a fire when it is mixed with spices: he is named according to the perfume of each" (Ricœur and Blattchen 1999, 21). In his book *Anatheism*, Richard Kearney draws attention to this mystical core and points out just how important it is for religious people to bear this unsaid in mind. If religious people and the tradition they adhere to recognize, affirm, and reaffirm the source of overflow, generosity, and super-abundance that lies at the origin of their tradition and beyond its control, they not only become capable of self-renunciation and motivated to engage in acts of super-abundant love but are also opened up to listen to others and the way they relate to this groundless ground in their tradition and community (Kearney and Taylor 2011, 80). This humility is, however, difficult; it implies a work of mourning—"a coming to terms with the finite limits of one's own religious perspective" (Taylor 2011, 20).

According to Ricœur, the possibility of violence takes root precisely in the confrontation between the excess of the groundless ground and the finite capacity of the "I can" of the capable man. There is, to begin with, something undeniably violent in the reception of the groundless ground. He uses the metaphor of a spring overflowing (groundless ground) and a vase trying to contain it, both receiving and constraining the water. The violence arises from the human attempt to force the spring to fit within the vase's limits. This attempt is a form of self-protection against the threat of overflow and excess. As a believer, one might try to strengthen internal structures to cope with this excess, creating boundaries to prevent destabilization. When a religious person cannot accept the uncontrollable reality underlying their commitment, they may resort to violence, attempting to control what is beyond mastery (Ricœur 1999, 4). In Ricœur's view, this groundless ground, which cannot be grasped and is present in every religion as the "unsaid", may also become the object of mimetic rivalry between religious traditions and their adherents. It is desired not because of its intrinsic value but because it is desired by others. All want to capture the source; none can live with the fact that there is something that eludes them, something they cannot control. The exclusion of others is the flip side of the domestication of the groundless ground: those who are unable to deal with the "otherness" of the source of life—its excess, mystery, and transcendence—will, likely, be unable to deal with the otherness of religious others.

To counter the potential for religious violence, one must allow for the unmasking and critique of any traditional discourse that serves to maintain a conservative status quo at the expense of change and unfamiliarity. Critiquing ideology is integral to preserving a living tradition that remains relevant today. Ricœur emphasizes the need for what he terms the Word of *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment): "The great fortune of Christianity is to have been confronted with what I have coined as the conflict between conviction and critique right from the beginning, thanks notably to Greece and to its heritage of rationalism" (Ricœur and Küng 1996, 226–27). He argues that this internal conflict within conviction, coupled with external critique, including from atheists, is essential for believers to understand themselves and others with differing beliefs. Accepting critical readings from outside, even those that deconstruct religious discourse entirely, is necessary for to move towards a more mature, critical post-religious faith. Speaking from his own Christian perspective, he describes this post-religious faith as follows:

> It would be a faith that moves forward through the shadows, in a new "night of the soul"—to adopt the language of the mystics—before a God who has not the attributes of "Providence", a God who would not protect me but would surrender me to the dangers of a life worthy of being called human. (Ricœur 1974, 460)

In his hermeneutics of religion, Ricœur gives significant emphasis to what he terms the "masters of suspicion": Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche. They teach us to examine our traditions critically and uncover the deeper, often unconscious and problematic dynamics motivating our cultural attachments. Their atheism provides a critical tool for demystification, revealing the problematic nature of the ontotheological god and offering the potential for a liberated, post-religious faith. Like Christianity, other traditions too should accept this critical gaze from outside; they too should accept the critique of the Enlightenment.

Ricœur, however, also suggests that other religious traditions can play a crucial role in this critique. In his words: "We need other religions and […] we need their critical eye on our own religion, we need to overcome ourselves from the inside out by accepting the reading others make of us" (Ricœur and Küng 1996, 277). The confrontation with the religious other and their tradition can be unsettling, yet it may reveal blind spots and problematic aspects of one's own tradition. Ricœur advocates an "interconfessional, interreligious hospitality", where believers recognize and affirm the source of overflow, generosity, and super-abundance beyond their own tradition (Ricœur 1974, 447).

The appeal of Ricœur's philosophy of religion

Without using this terminology, Ricœur distinguishes between bad religion, which seeks control and attempts to grasp the ungraspable source, and good religion, which is expressed in post-religious faith.[2] This faith tolerates the fragility of the tension between the finite and the infinite and accepts what is beyond human control, which lies at the root of all traditions. This more reflective faith integrates critical insights while still appreciating the symbolic and narrative dimensions of religious traditions. Post-religious faith is vulnerable, in that it relinquishes the all-too-human desire for control and certainty, but it offers a path beyond religious violence and opens space for deep learning across traditions. Accepting that one cannot contain the illimited creates space to welcome the other and learn from their religious perspectives.

Ricœur's philosophy of religion deeply resonates with how many scholars of inter-religious dialogue seek to make sense of religious diversity. His understanding that religion embodies both unity and multiplicity, his analysis of the human inclination to control the uncontrollable, and his ideal of post-religious faith—all strike a chord. Indeed, Ricœur's philosophy of religion combines a sense of interconnectedness (all religions respond to "a call" from the originary source), humility (no religion can contain this source) and openness for particularity (there is no direct access to this source). These are key conditions of inter-religious dialogue (Cornille 2008). Take for example James Taylor, who writes that in as far as inter-religious hospitality is concerned,

> [C]oming to terms with the finite limits of one's own religious perspective, it will inevitably result in the death of a certain God, i.e., a God understood and experience through that limited religious lens. But insofar as through the transformation of that perspective one comes to recognize the richness and significance of other religious perspectives, the death of a certain (now limited) God is followed by the birth of a much larger, much more capacious and generous God,

---

[2] For an elaboration on the two faces of religion see (Fitzgerald 2011a).

> capable of expressing himself in different ways, through a variety of sacred narratives, historical epiphanies and personal experiences. On the other side of interreligious [hospitality], and beyond the death of a monocultural god, is an experience of a multilingual, trans-religious God that exceeds our expectations and continues to surprise us with new invitations, solicitations and visitations, welcoming us again and again into his many homes and asking to be welcomed into ours. (J. Taylor 2011, 20)

Interestingly, Ricœur's understanding envisions a path towards growth and thus includes a "pedagogical aspiration to remodel" how religious people relate to the Illimited and, consequently, to each other (Amir-Moazami 2022, 34). To some scholars, certainly those tasked with educating young people for tolerance, post-religious faith emerges as an ideal expression of religion in our secularizing and pluralizing context, having undergone the critique of the Enlightenment. The idea is that if people were to adopt a post-religious faith—often described as mature faith by scholars influenced by Ricœur—and acknowledge the impossibility of controlling the infinite, religious conflicts might diminish. This perspective not only encourages an acceptance of diversity and the limits of human understanding but also might potentially foster a more harmonious coexistence among different religious communities. This explains why so many policy bodies—national and international—have been promoting some form of teaching for diversity in schools. It also explains why inter-religious scholars are particularly interested in inter-religious dialogue in schools and are drawn to this idea of post-religious faith (Pollefeyt 2020b). Indeed, concerned about the problems of intolerance, fundamentalism, and religious violence—all expressions of bad or immature religion—scholars have begun to promote dialogue, especially among young people, through education (Weisse et al. 2014; Pollefeyt 2023; Wielzen and Avest 2017). In a context of increasing religious plurality, the challenge is to develop a mature faith that acknowledges the other not as a threat but as a companion—someone who also faces the challenge of refraining from the all-too-human effort to contain what cannot be contained (Morgan and Sandage 2016; Streib and Keller 2018; Streib 2001). In the words of Didier Pollefeyt, one needs

> [a] shift from a 'first naïveté' to a 'second naïveté' in dealing with one's own faith (Ricœur 1971). This form of belief is transformed into a faith that has gone through criticism, through the confrontation with the other, and which is aware of its own complexities, vulnerabilities, and ambiguities (Burggraeve 1991). Nonetheless, in such faith, one can ('despite' and 'beyond' the 'first naïveté') commit oneself again to the mystery that believing is deeper, more authentic, and more human than they previously perceived. […] It is the way that every human being has to go to come to a mature belief. (Pollefeyt 2020a)

Indeed, a recent literature review (Visser et al. 2021) has found that most scholars of inter-religious dialogue assume an approach (Pollefeyt 2020b; Hedges

2016) that emphasizes meaning-making, self-reflexivity, and relationality, and personal faith maturation. Dialogical activities are aimed at fostering relationality and often advocating for hermeneutical flexibility, humility, and self-reflexivity. The transformative power of inter-religious dialogue in terms of co-formation paves the way for youngsters to learn how to avoid the trap of absolutism and grow towards post-religious faith.

Revisiting Ricœur's philosophy of religion from a critical perspective

While Ricœur's philosophy of religion and his ideal of post-religious faith resonate with many scholars of inter-religious dialogue, it is not without its problems. My main concern lies in Ricœur's use of the category of religion as a "common sense" concept that can be applied trans-culturally, trans-historically, and trans-religiously. According to Ricœur, religion is a universal human phenomenon, a part of the "natural" human experience, consistent across cultures and throughout history. He designates the "capable man" as a representative of religion. However, this understanding of religion has been subject to increasing critique. In the decades following Wilfred Cantwell Smith's groundbreaking publication *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1963), a growing number of religious scholars committed to the study of religion have argued that religion is a socially constructed category, like gender, ethnicity, and race. Religion, therefore, is not a "cultural universal". What religion is, has been defined specifically in social locations and political contexts. Furthermore, most critical scholars of religion agree that, historically speaking, Christians have had the power to define what religion is. Put differently, the concept of religion has a history, and that history coincides largely with the history of Christian Europe and its colonies. Consequently, Christian normative assumptions underpin the way religion is understood. According to some, when we speak about religion today, we are essentially talking about Christianity. As Catherine Bell has argued, Christianity functions as the prototype of religion (Bell 2006, 3). The history of religion has also been implicated in violence *vis-à-vis* non-Christians, by presenting this category as if it has no history, that violence is obscured.[3]

Before proceeding with my analysis, it is essential to clarify an important point. My critique of the category of religion does not deny its pervasive and lasting influence within both academic discourse and the self-understanding of various traditions. I do not advocate discarding or replacing this category, as it is deeply embedded in our language and the intellectual traditions of religious studies. Many religious traditions have also embraced the term as part of their identity. However, this acknowledgment does not diminish the central argument of this article: that the category of religion has a complex history, often intertwined with violence, particularly in the contexts of colonialism and the marginalization of non-Christian traditions. Despite efforts to broaden the understanding of religion beyond Christianity, it remains situated within a framework that privileges Christian norms.

---

[3] For an extensive discussion of this violent history see Marianne Moyaert, *Christian Imaginations of the Religious Other: A History of Religionization* (Wiley-Blackwell 2024).

On this point, I find myself in agreement with Paul Hedges (Hedges 2021), who critically examines the category of religion, emphasizing its complex history and the challenges it poses for scholars and practitioners alike. He argues that while the category of religion is problematic—often reflecting Western biases and historical power dynamics—it is also indispensable for understanding human experience and social phenomena. Hedges acknowledges that all concepts, including religion, are shaped by historical contexts and social constructs. He posits that despite critiques, the category remains a vital framework for navigating the complexities of religious identities and interactions. Rather than discarding the term "religion", he suggests that scholars should engage with it critically, recognizing its limitations while also understanding its utility in scholarly discourse and social contexts.

A critical engagement with Ricœur's work is particularly necessary, given his prominence in the field of inter-religious hermeneutics. While his contributions are significant, his treatment of religion as a universal category warrants scrutiny to avoid reinforcing historical power imbalances, especially when this concept is employed as a foundational element in interfaith exchanges. Without such critical engagement, a space intended for inclusion becomes exclusionary.

To support my argument, I now revisit the commonsense approach to religion from the perspective of critical religion "a name that signals [a] shift away from the pre-critical assumption that religion names entities in the world and to a focus on who invented the concept, the shifting contrast terms it has had, and the uses to which it has been put" (Schilbrack 2012). Scholars have convincingly argued that the idea of religion as a common-sense category that can be applied trans-culturally, trans-religiously, and trans-historically is flawed and a social construction. This means that it is not "a cultural universal but rather [it] emerged under particular historical and political conditions" (Schilbrack 2012, 97). Religion has a history, and this history is not innocent: it is permeated by modern Eurocentric, Christian, and colonial legacies. Consequently, this taken-for-granted category of religion is underwritten by distinct normative assumptions which hide behind the claim that we are dealing with a universally applicable category. This is a form of epistemic violence because it imposes a particular understanding of "religion onto diverse cultures and societies that may not share this understanding".[4] When scholars take this category for granted and even make it the pivot of dialogical projects, suggesting post-religious faith as a paedogogogical ideal, they risk perpetuating this violence.

To emphasize this and to destabilize the claim that religion is a commonsense category, scholars speak about the "modern concept of religion" (Cavanaugh 2010). According to Timothy Fitzgerald, this modern concept of religion assumes:

> That there is one ultimate reality, God or the Transcendent, and a multiplicity of ways or paths and manifestations of this One. […] They all lead the indi-

---

[4] This term refers to the harm done to individuals or groups through the imposition of dominant knowledge systems that invalidate or marginalize their ways of knowing and understanding the world.

> vidual, living within the limiting confines of his or her own traditions, to the same One Transcendental Reality, an invisible world lying behind the phenomenal world and giving it an ultimate meaning. These approaches to God, or responses to the divine, have been culturally mediated and therefore have taken different institutional shapes". (Fitzgerald 1997, 108)

Typically, this modern concept of religion assumes a distinction between the singular—religion—and the plural—religions. The fundamental idea is that there are multiple "religions" understood as variations or species of a single genus, the category called "religion". Moreover, religion, in a generic sense, is seen as "geared to a transcendental 'beyond' that [is] 'immaterial'" (Houtman and Meyer 2012, 3). To be religious, therefore, is primarily a matter of being oriented (albeit mediated via particular traditions) towards that beyond, towards what cannot be captured. This orientation is often depicted in terms of "faith", which tends to be distinguished from and prioritized over the external world of religious traditions. The inner takes precedence over the outer. This reasoning is frequently complemented by the claim that religion is a human universal, an innate impulse, or implicit desire. Essentially, all human beings are fundamentally religious, directed towards a transcendent reality (Fitzgerald 2000, 5).

The counterpart of religion as "universal" are the "particular" world religions, namely Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, sometimes extended to include Jainism, Sikhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Shintoism. Religion as *one* fragments into many religions.

> This model conceptualises religious ideas and practice as being configured by a series of major religious systems that can be clearly identified as having discrete characteristics. These systems are seen as existing alongside each other in a common space in the global fields of cultural, social and political life. They apparently compete, have dialogue with each other, regenerate themselves or degenerate within this space; a series of systems, then, with their own historical agency. (Suthren Hirst and Zavos, 2005: 5 quoted in Owen 2011, 254)

Finally, the modern concept of religion projects religion as *sui generis*, i.e., a stand-alone category (Fitzgerald 2011b, 1). Thus, religion is (implicitly or explicitly) differentiated from other secular realms such as economics, science, or politics (Fitzgerald 2011b, 5). It is assumed that those "beliefs and activities" that are "bounded by a common notion 'religion'" are "set apart from the 'non-religious' or secular domains of human existence" (Harrison 2015, 3).

Within the scope of this article, I focus on the three aspects of the modern concept of religion: 1. the notion that religion is a human universal; 2. the emphasis on the inner dimensions of religion over its outward expressions; and 3. the concern regarding religious violence.[5] By elaborating on these aspects, I aim to demonstrate not only how Christianity has influenced the development of this modern concept of religion but also to elucidate why religion functions as a category of power; how it is implicated in the processes of defining, categorizing, ordering, and disciplining people within society (Chidester 1996; Amir-Moazami 2022).[6]

---

[5] Elsewhere I have also criticized the idea of "world religions" and how it relates to a hierarchization of people. Other scholars have done the same (Moyaert 2024; Thatamanil 2015; Owen 2011).

Some scholars trace the notion that religion is a human universal back to the Renaissance, when thinkers such as Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) expounded how *religio* is an inherent human impulse (Nongbri 2013; W. T. Cavanaugh 2009; Harrison 2015). According to him, "homo est animal rationale religionis capax" ("the human being is a rational animal capable of religion"). Genuine worship, which is directed towards God, is universal. (Cavanaugh 2009, 71). Ficino distinguishes this innate impulse from the different worship rituals (*ritus adorationis*). The essence of religion—this innate impulse—is one, stable, and unchangeable, but its expressions may be manifold depending on time and place. To trace the idea of religion as a *human universal*, we can look at early Christian apologists. In their effort to convince non-Christian gentiles of the Christian *way*, they argued that the Christian way of worship was not really new but the most ancient of all worship (in Late antiquity, the older the *religio* the more standing it had). After all, *religio* is a universal gift that God bestowed on all people, even the gentiles. Here we may recall Tertullian's notion of "testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae" ("the witness of the soul as in its nature Christian"). For him, to be human is to be religious, and even false worship such as idolatry is a sign that people have a natural desire for God, which needs to be cultivated (Moyaert 2024). The connection with the modern concept of religion becomes clear when we turn to Max Müller, one of the founding fathers of comparative religion, who calls this innate impulse for God the *Urdatum* of all religions. All religions find their origin in this trans-cultural and trans-historical human intuition for the Infinite (Müller 1857, 6).

> As there is a faculty of speech, independent of all the historic all forms of language, so there is a faculty of faith in man, independent of all historical religions. […] Without that faculty, no religion, not even the lowest worship of idols and fetishes, would be possible; and if we will but listen attentively, we can hear in all religions […] a struggle to conceive the inconceivable, to utter the unutterable, a longing after the Infinite, a love of God. (Müller 1873, 17)

To further elaborate on this universal human faculty, which he considers akin to natural religion or the *consensus gentium*, Müller refers to Augustine:

> What is now called the Christian religion has existed among the ancients,

---

[6] Importantly, when, building on the scholarship of critical religion, I trace the Eurocentric, Christian and colonial legacies of the modern concept of religion, I do not seek to suggest some kind of linear or undisrupted continuity between the past and the present; I do want to bring to the surface some of the particular historical legacies of the modern concept of religion, which tend to remain hidden when the category of religion is used as a common-sense category (Amir-Moazami 2022, 31).

> and was not absent from the beginning of the human race, until Christ came in the flesh: from which time the true religion, which existed already, began to be called Christian. (Müller 2008, 70)

Here, one can observe how the Christian religion became synonymous with the concept of religion, with Christianity becoming "the prototype of religion" (Bell 2006).

While the idea of religion as a human universal sounds inclusive and therefore benign, it had violent consequences in the context of Europe's colonial expansion. Indeed, if being religious was considered a sign of humanity, then not being religious cast serious doubt on one's human status and, especially, on one's rational capacity and potential autonomy (Maldonado-Torres 2014). When European colonizers encountered Native Americans, this question arose: do they worship God; do they have this innate religious impulse? A negative answer meant that they were considered less than human, which in turn was used to legitimize their mistreatment.[7] Nelson Maldonado-Torres explains:

> To refer to the indigenous as subjects without religion removes them from the category of the human. Religion is universal among humans, but the alleged lack of it among natives is not initially taken to indicate the falseness of this statement, but rather the opposite: that there exist subjects in the world who are not fully human. (Maldonado-Torres 2014, 658)

Secondly, there is the inner–outer binary. The modern concept of religion often prioritizes the inner impulse over its outer expressions, with a concern that those who focus too much on the outer aspects of religion are misguided. Scholars of critical religion have identified this as the internal-external binary, tracing it back to the long Reformation. Protestant Reformers criticized certain Catholic traditions, particularly those related to the cult of saints, as misdirected worship, superstition, or even idolatry (Cavanaugh 2009, 72).

Although the Reformation was a diverse movement, it initiated a process of "excarnation", which refers to the gradual disembodying of spiritual life, emphasizing internal faith over embodied, ritualistic practices (Taylor 2007, 771). This suspicion of the material and ritual dimensions of Christian worship was coupled with a call for more inward and personal devotion. A de-ritualizing tendency emerged, emphasizing faith as an internal quality over external religious acts (Bellah 1991, 42). This shift created a dichotomy between form and meaning, ritual and spirituality, outer and inner, and mind and body. The emphasis was placed on internal sincerity, belief, and the inner motives of religious individuals. Without faith, rituals were seen as meaningless or even idolatrous; they were effective only if accompanied by genuine belief.

Significantly, in their efforts to discredit and delegitimize Catholic worship traditions, Protestant theologians and polemicists utilized long-standing anti-Jewish rhetoric, which characterized Judaism as a legalistic, material, ritualistic, and carnal religion in contrast to Christian spirituality. The dichotomies of inner versus outer, spirit versus flesh, *religio* versus *superstitio*, mystery versus things, mind versus body, and matter versus word (Scripture) were projected onto the binary of Christian versus Jew. The original spiritual religion of Christ was contrasted with the external religion of the Jews, and Catholics were accused of reverting to "Jewish" practices. The "Jew" was reduced to a hermeneutical figure in the conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, the inner–outer binary, and the idea that the inner should take priority over the outer, were also employed by nineteenth-century comparative religious scholars when they created new taxonomies of the world's religions. These scholars often ranked religions on a developmental scale, with those emphasizing internal spirituality deemed more advanced than those focused on external rituals (Houtman and Meyer 2012). This hierarchical classification mirrored the Protestant bias against ritualistic practices and influenced how religions were understood and valued in academic discourse. Traditions that were more belief-oriented and textualized were considered world religions, whereas those deemed "too" attached to material and ritual practices and transmitted orally were classified as primitive or tribal, referring to earlier stages of human development (Moyaert 2016).

---

[7] This dehumanization occurred in the Americas; it also occurred in Africa, where indigenous people were considered to be *incapable of religion* (Chidester 1996). Such "religious judgement" resulted in their being labelled *subhumans*. This helped legitimize their being treated as less than human.

The third aspect that deserves our attention is the concern about religious violence that always looms in the background of modern discourses on religion. William Cavanaugh and Talal Asad have argued that this fixation on the problem of religious violence is a key part of what they call the creation myth of European modernity (Cavanaugh 2010; Asad 2003). This myth holds that religion is uniquely predisposed to violence. The so-called religious wars that ravaged Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are supposedly emblematic of religion's violent predisposition. According to this modern creation myth, the state's decision to separate religion from politics was necessary to end this senseless violence. In line with this creation myth, Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Voltaire challenged traditional religious authorities and their claims to power and promoted the idea that the political and religious spheres should be separated. This led to the claim that only Enlightened religion had a place in modern society.

Scholars of critical religion, however, argue that this creation myth of European modernity is just that—a myth. On closer inspection, there is more at stake than a mere separation of religion and politics; rather, we see the political gaining dominance over religion, including the power to define what religion is and should be. The state gains power by marginalizing religion and redefining religious life and sensibilities to fit the presuppositions and ongoing demands of liberal governance (Agrama 2012, 24). As Leora Batnizsky says,

> It is apparent here how the modern concepts of religion and the sovereign state were born together. While it may first appear that the notion of religion as a distinct and private sphere

> of experience is a fundamentally apolitical idea, it is actually predicated on a conception of state sovereignty. (Batnitzky 2011, 26)

Legitimized by the memory of violent religious wars, the modern state has become the arbiter of religion, claiming the power to create acceptable forms and expressions of religion that align with the modern nation-state. This also means it claims the power to control and discipline religious expressions deemed out of sync with the modern state. Importantly, the concern for religious violence—and the very idea that religion is particularly prone to violence—supports the state's role in governing religion and policing the boundaries between good and bad religion. Historically, Cavanaugh argues that this understanding of religion is precisely a myth (Cavanaugh 2009).

Furthermore, the modern concept of religion as privatized, spiritualized, and interiorized understanding bears striking similarities to a (liberal) Protestant understanding of religion. Consequently, it has been criticized for being ethnocentric, masking the fact that it is a product of crypto-Christianity. Additionally, its claim to universalism—a false universalism in the eyes of its critics—has justified the exclusion or marginalization of Jews and Muslims, who were considered out of sync with the (modern) ideal of properly understood religion. Several Enlightenment philosophers questioned whether these traditions could be reconciled with the values of modern Europe. They became problematic because it was doubted whether they could ever become modern, fitting the mould of "modern religion", which is private, personal, apolitical, spiritualized, and deritualized. While some believed that emancipation was possible for Jews if Judaism became a religion properly understood, few thought this possible for Islam. Ernest Renan summed up the problem of Islam in the harshest terms:

> At the present time, the essential condition for the spread of European civilization is the destruction of the Semitic par excellence, the destruction of the theocratic power of Islamism, [and] consequently the destruction of Islamism; because Islamism can only exist as an official religion: when it is reduced to the state of a free and individual religion, it will perish. The future, Gentlemen, therefore, belongs to Europe and to Europe alone. Europe will conquer the world and spread its religion there, which is law, freedom, respect for men, this belief that there is something divine within humanity. (Renan 1862, 26, my translation)

Especially, at the height of Europe's colonialism, there were also voices to be heard who believed in a civilizing mission guided by the paedagogical aim of turning Islam into a religion; i.e., a tradition, which after the model of secularized Christianity accepted the division between religion and politics (Amir-Moazami 2022). Becoming a "religion" in this context of oppression also entails domestication or the taming of indigenous traditions. Depoliticizing religion in the context of colonialism was a political act which adds to marginalization of the colonized.

Returning to Ricœur and inter-religious dialogue

On the basis of the above analysis, Ricœur's understanding of religion can be seen as typically modern; it is permeated by normative Protestant assumptions and reinforces Christian and secular hegemony. Scholars who build on Ricœur's work take this "common-sense" understanding of religion as a starting point for inter-religious dialogue, and willingly or not import the normative assumptions that underpin it, which includes "assumptions about the relative progress of the [different religions] under consideration on a trajectory of progress toward human flourishing" (Vial 2016, 223). When scholars project Ricœur's post-religious faith as an "ideal" for all religious people, they risk perpetuating the violent history of religion: a particular understanding of religion (which takes Christianity as its prototype) is projected as the norm for all traditions. In the final section of this article, I further unpack this critique while simultaneously exploring what a more critical approach to inter-religious dialogue might look like.

In line with continental philosophy, Ricœur treats religion as a taken-for-granted category. He does not critically reflect on the history of the concept and how this concept *universalizes* certain Christian assumptions about what religion is and should be nor does he consider the ideological scope of this concept and how it has been used to delegitimize and oppress people while bolstering a sense of Christian European superiority. This is remarkable given that Ricœur was very conscious of the fact that all human knowledge is prejudiced, that is marked by "the context from which we speak": there is no such thing as "neutrality" and "objectivity". Ricœur also emphasized the importance of critical reflection, of taking responsibility for the knowledge we produce and the concepts that underpin our understanding. He was also quite conscious of the problem of ideology and power abuse. Important to mention in this regard are Ricœur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (Paul Ricœur and Taylor 1986), in which he explains how ideology can become oppressive and is used not only as a means to build an imaginary community (Anderson 2006), but also to legitimize violence (symbolic or otherwise) against those who do not fit into that community (Moyaert 2011). Ideology helps to create a sense of belonging but often at the cost of those who are projected as outsiders.

Because Ricœur is highly sensitive to the dangers of prejudice and the abuse of power by ideology, his hermeneutics moves between conviction and critique, commitment and distanciation, naïveté and criticism, in an ongoing circle or spiral (Ricœur 1981). However, while he is quite aware of the ideological potential of religion—calling for ideology critique and seeking the help of the so-called masters of suspicion—he does not consider that the category of religion itself might be an ideological construct, serving (secularized) Christian interests and implicated in a history of violence.

Perhaps in an attempt to exonerate Ricœur, one might argue that the field of critical religion scholarship is relatively recent, and that Ricœur may not have had access to this particular body of knowledge.[8] However, I find it more pertinent to underscore that Ricœur's oversight of the specific history of the category of religion probably stems from his position as a French philosopher, white and Christian, situated within the European centre. Postcolonial scholars would argue that Ricœur's disregard for "religion" as an ideological construct reflects the power dynamics of colonial Europe, which imposed its own knowledge systems and epistemologies onto the rest of the world, often silencing or erasing indigenous knowledge systems and ways of understanding (Maldonado-Torres 2020). Taking Christianity as the prototype of religion, the study of religion, whether philosophical, theological or comparative, still assumes and privileges Christian vocabularies (Joshi 2020; Hill Fletcher 2017; Moyaert 2016). Ricœur's complicity in the institutionalization of Christian privilege is intrinsic to the tradition of continental philosophy. Counter-narratives, absent from the canon of philosophy of religion that Ricœur consults, are marginalized, thereby perpetuating a normalized perception of religion as a universal concept (Schilbrack 2014). This oversight enables philosophers of religion to ignore the historical violence associated with the imposition of Western-centric knowledge systems while bolstering their own authoritative scholarly status. This is a structural (rather than a personal) problem philosophers of religion and inter-religious scholars have to reckon with.

---

[8] I wish to point out that Ricœur was a contemporary of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, one

The aim of this critical examination of Ricœur's philosophy of religion is not to put Ricœur himself on trial or to make this about him personally. Rather, the focus is on structural and political issues. This discussion is crucial for two main reasons. First, Ricœur's use of the category of religion exemplifies a broader problem within the philosophy of religion. Second, and even more importantly, Ricœur has significantly influenced the study of inter-religious dialogue. His notion of a post-religious faith—a faith that has accepted the critique of the Enlightenment—is now often presented as a paedagogical objective. However, considering the historical context where the category of (Enlightened) religion has been employed to delegitimize non-European and non-Christian cultures and to justify colonialism as a civilizing mission, there is a concern that promoting post-religious faith may perpetuate Europe's civilizing agenda. This could potentially marginalize those whose religious practices are deemed uncritical, outdated, or non-European.

Indeed, my genealogically informed study of the concept of religion has shown how it has been used to delegitimize others, and how calls for a more Enlightened religion were implicated in European efforts to discipline colonial subjects. Scholars like Schirin Amir-Moazami (2022) and Levent Tezcan (2012) have convincingly argued that some contemporary expressions of inter-religious dialogue can be seen as a continuation of colonial politics aimed at disciplining Muslims until they conform to a secularized (liberal Protestant) version of Christianity. Others have associated the practice with what they call faith-washing: the framework of dialogue masks the history of violence (Rahman 2021).

---

of the most important scholars in the field of comparative religion and critical of the category of religion. In addition, Ricœur's writings about inter-religious hospitality and translation between religious languages were published when the critique of the modern concept of religion was already widespread.

Does this critique necessarily mean the end of inter-religious dialogue? On the contrary. I do think, however, that scholars who advocate inter-religious dialogue must engage in ideology critique and should embrace what Ricœur calls a hermeneutics of suspicion. Rather than turn to the so-called Master of Suspicion and call for *all religions* to undergo the critique of the *Aufklärung*, I would suggest that they listen to post-colonial and decolonial masters of suspicion and explore the genealogies of current calls for dialogue and how they relate to the violent history of religion. Such a critical approach to dialogue may also open up space for a conversation about who sets the norm of good and bad religion and how such norms affect "religious bodies differently" in the context of Europe and beyond (Moyaert 2022a). Ricœur is right; we must take the question of the relationship between religion and violence seriously and engage in a deep conversation about it. However, this conversation must take a fundamentally different direction from what he envisioned.[9] ■

---

[9] For a more concrete paedogogogical exploration of a more critical approach to inter-religious dialogue see Moyaert (2022b, 2022a).

Marianne Moyaert is Professor of Comparative Theology and the Study of Interreligious Relations at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, where she has been since 2023. Previously, she held the Chair of Comparative Theology and Interreligious Hermeneutics at VU Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Moyaert is the author of several influential works, including *In Response to the Religious Other: Ricœur and the Fragility of Interreligious Encounters* (2014) and *Christian Imaginations of the Religious Other: A History of Religionization* (2024). Her research focuses on the dynamics of inter-religious dialogue and the theological implications of encountering religious diversity.

References

Agrama, Hussein Ali. 2012. *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Amir-Moazami, Schirin. 2022. *Islam of the Global West—Interrogating Muslims: The Liberal-Secular Matrix of Integration*. Bloomsbury.

Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. [with a new afterword]. ed. London [etc.]: Verso.

Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. *Cultural Memory in the Present*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Barnes, Michael. 2002. *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*. 1st ed. *Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine; 8*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Batnitzky, Leora. 2011. *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bell, Catherine. 2006. "Paradigms Behind (and Before) the Modern Concept of Religion".

History and Theory 45 (4): 27–46.

Bellah, Robert N. 1991. *The Good Society. A Borzoi book*. New York: Knopf.

Casey, P. J. 2019. "Ricœur on Truth in Religious Discourse: A Reclamation". *Horizons* 46: 24–52. https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2019.7.

Cavanaugh, William T. 2009. *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Cavanaugh, William T. 2010. "The Myth of Religious Violence". *Theological Studies* 71 (2): 479–80.

Changeux, Jean-Pierre, and Paul Ricœur. 2002. *What Makes us Think? A Neuroscientist and a Philosopher Argue about Ethics, Human Nature, and the Brain*. Princeton: Princeton University.

Cheetham, David, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas. 2013. *Understanding Interreligious Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chidester, David. 1996. *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Studies in Religion and Culture. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Chidester, David. 2014. *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press.

Chua, Jefferson Macariola 2013. "A Sketch for a Ricœurian Hermeneutics of Religious Identity". *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 12 (34): 57–80.

Cornille, Catherine. 2008. *The im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*. New York: Crossroad Pub. Co.

Cornille, Catherine. 2013. *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell.

Fahy, John, Jan-Jonathan Bock, and Julian Hargreaves. 2018. *Beyond dialogue? Interfaith Engagement in Delhi, Doha & London*. Doha: Georgetown University in Qatar. Cambridge: Woolf Institute.

Fitzgerald, Timothy. 1997. "A Critique of 'Religion' as a Cross-cultural Category". *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9 (2): 91–110. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23549638.

Fitzgerald, Timothy. 2000. *The Ideology of Religious Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fitzgerald, Timothy. 2011a. *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth*. New York: Continuum.

Fitzgerald, Timothy. 2011b. *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth*. New York: Continuum.

Ford, David F. 1999. *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed*. *Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Houtman, Dick, and Birgit Meyer. 2012. *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Halafoff, Anna. 2013. *The Multifaith Movement: Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Harrison, Peter. 2015. *The Territories of Science and Religion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Hedges, Paul. 2016. "Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation". *Religions (Basel, Switzerland)* 7 (1): 7. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7010007.

Hedges, Paul. 2021. *Understanding Religion: Theories and Methods for Studying Religiously Diverse Societies*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.

Hill Fletcher, Jeannine. 2017. *The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Joshi, Khyati Y. 2020. *White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America*. New York: New York University Press.

Kearney, Richard, and James Taylor. 2011. *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions*. London: Continuum.

Lamine, Anne-Sophie. 2004. *La cohabitation des dieux: pluralité religieuse et laïcité*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. 2014. "AAR Centennial Roundtable: Religion, Conquest, and Race in the Foundations of the Modern/Colonial World". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82 (3): 636–65.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. 2020. "Religious studies and/in the decolonial turn".

Contending Modernities. https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/decoloniality/religiousstudiesdecolonialturn/ Accessed October 28, 2024.

Masuzawa, Tomoko. 2005. *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Meir, Ephraim. 2022. "The Logic of Dialogue and Dialogical Theology". *Religions* 13 (12): 1221. https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/13/12/1221.

Morgan, Jonathan, and Steven J. Sandage. 2016. "A Developmental Model of Interreligious Competence: A Conceptual Framework". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 38 (2): 129–58. https://doi.org/10.1163/15736121-12341325.

Moyaert, Marianne. 2008. "The (Un-)Translatability of Religions? Ricœur's Linguistic Hospitality as Model for Interreligious Dialogue". *Exchange* 37 (3): 337–64.

Moyaert, Marianne. 2010. "Oneself as Another: The Frailty of Religious Commitments and Its Impact on Interreligious Dialogue". *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 86 (4): 355–77.

Moyaert, Marianne. 2011. "Between Ideology and Utopia: Honneth and Ricœur on Symbolic Violence, Marginalization and Recognition". *Ricœur Studies* 2: 84–109. https://doi.org/10.5195/errs.2011.49.

Moyaert, Marianne. 2014. *In Response to the Religious Other: Ricœur and the Fragility of Interreligious Encounters*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Moyaert, Marianne. 2016. "Christianity as the Measure of Religion? Materializing the Theology of Religions". In *Twenty-First Century Theologies of Religions*, 239–66. Brill.

Moyaert, Marianne. 2022a. "Critical Religious Education and the Deconstruction of Religion". In *Inter-Worldview Competences in Worldview Education*, edited by Didier Pollefeyt, Forthcoming. Leuven: Peeters.

Moyaert, Marianne. 2022b. "Towards a New Program for Interfaith Learning: Reflections from an Interreligious Educator Working in the Netherlands " *Journal of interreligious studies*.

Moyaert, Marianne. 2024. *Christian Imaginations of the Religious Other: A History of Religionization*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Willey-Blackwell.

Müller, F. Max. 1857. *Buddhism and Buddhist Pilgrims: A Review of M. Stanislas Julien's "Voyages des pèlerins boudhistes"*. London: Williams and Norgate.

Müller, F. Max. 1873. *Introduction to the Science of Religion: Four lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution with Two Essays on False Analogies, and the Philosophy of Mythology. Müller, F. Max (Friedrich Max), 1823–1900. Collected works; v. 13*. London: Longmans, Green.

Müller, F. Max. 2008. *Chips From A German Workshop—Volume I Essays on the Science of Religion*. Project Gutenberg.

Nongbri, Brent. 2013. *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Nye, Malory. 2019. "Decolonizing the Study of Religion". *Open Library of Humanities* 5 (1). https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.421.

Owen, Suzanne. 2011. "The World Religions Paradigm Time for a Change". *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 10 (3): 253–68. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022211408038. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1474022211408038.

Pollefeyt, Didier. 2020a. "Hermeneutical Learning in Religious Education". *Journal of Religious Education* 68 (1): 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-020-00090-x. http://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/1442018x/v68i0001/1_hlire.

Pollefeyt, Didier. 2020b. "Religious Education as Opening the Hermeneutical Space". *Journal of Religious Education* 68 (2): 115–24. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-020-00105-7.

Pollefeyt, Didier. 2023. *From Interreligious Learning to Interworldview Education. Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium 332*. Leuven: Peeters.

Rahman, Prema. 2021. "Faithwashing and the Censorship of Palestine Advocacy in Interfaith Engagement". *Medium* (blog). June 10, 2021. https://mpac.medium.com/faithwashing-and-the-censorship-of-palestine-advocacy-in-interfaith-engagement-db730d0eb0cb.

Renan, Ernest. 1862. *De la part des peuples sémitiques dans l'histoire de la civilisation: Discours*. Paris.

Ricœur, P., and E. Blattchen. 1999. *L'unique et le singulier.Noms de Dieux d'Edmond*. Brussels: Alice éditions.

Ricœur, Paul. 1974. "Religion, Atheism and Faith". In *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, edited by Don Ihde, 440–68. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Ricœur, Paul. 1998. *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with F. Azouvi & M. de Launay*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ricœur, Paul. 1999. "Religion and Symbolic Violence". *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 6: 1–11.

Ricœur, Paul, and Hans Küng. 1996. "Les religions, la violence et la paix: Pour une éthique planétaire. [autour du livre de Hans Küng, Manifeste pour une éthique planétaire]". *Sens* 5: 211–30.

Ricœur, Paul, and George H. Taylor. 1986. *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. New York, NY: Columbia university press.

Schilbrack, Kevin. 2012. "The Social Construction of 'Religion' and Its Limits: A Critical Reading of Timothy Fitzgerald". *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 24 (2): 97–117.

Schilbrack, Kevin. 2014. *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: a Manifesto. Wiley Blackwell manifestos*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. 1963. *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind*. New York: Macmillan.

Staudigl, Michael. 2016. "On Seizing the Source: Toward a Phenomenology of Religious Violence". *International Journal of Philosophical Studies: IJPS* 24 (5): 744–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2016.1284785.

Streib, Heinz. 2001. "Faith Development Theory Revisited: The Religious Styles Perspective". *International journal of phytoremediation* 11 (3): 143–58. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327582IJPR1103_02.

Streib. Heinz, and Barbara Keller. 2018. *Manual for the Assessment of Religious Styles in Faith Development Interviews.* Fourth, revised edition of the *Manual for Faith Development Research.* Bielefeld: Universität Bielefeld, Center for Biographical Studies in Contemporary Religion.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Taylor, James. 2011. "Hospitality as Translation". In *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions,*, edited by Richard Kearney and James Taylor, 11–22. New York: Continuum.

Tezcan, Levent. 2012. *Das muslimische Subjekt: verfangen im Dialog der Deutschen Islam Konferenz*. Konstanz: Konstanz University Press.

Thatamanil, John. 2015. "How Not to be a Religion: Genealogy, Identity, Wonder". In *Common Goods: Economy, Ecology, and Political Theology*, edited by Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, Catherine Keller and Elias Ortega-Aponte, 54–72. New York: Fordham University Press.

Vendra, Maria Cristina Clorinda 2016. "Between Fragility and Openness: Cohabitation in the Interreligious Dialogue with Paul Ricœur". *Teoria: Rivista di Filosofia* 36 (1): 115–32.

Vial, Theodore M. 2016. *Modern Religion, Modern Race*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Visser, Hannah J., A. I. Liefbroer, Marianne Moyaert, and Gerdien Bertram-Troost. 2021. "Categorising Interfaith Learning Objectives: a Scoping Review". *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 44(1): 63–80.

Weisse, Wolfram; Katajun Amirpur, Anna Körs, and Dörthe Vieregge. 2014. *Religions and Dialogue: International Approaches*. Religions in dialogue 7. Münster: Waxmann.

Wielzen, Duncan R., and Ina Ter Avest. 2017. *Interfaith Education for All: Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action*. 1st 2017. ed. Rotterdam: SensePublishers.