

K

IDEA OF THE NAME

“**W**hen it is believed that the nature of a thing is comprehended in its name, then on the one hand emphasis is laid on the idea that knowledge of the name mediates a direct relationship with the nature, and on the other the name is regarded as such an extent an expression of the individual character of its owner that it can, in fact, stand for him, become a concept interchangeable with him.”¹ This statement from Walter Eichrodt supports what Jacques Derrida asserts about the human ability to know and understand the signs of a transcendent Being, about whom nothing can be affirmed that might hold, “Save his name . . . Save the name that names nothing that might hold, not even a divinity, nothing whose withdrawal does not carry away every phrase that tries to measure itself against him.”² But in the pages of the Old Testament we find references to the fact that the Name of the transcendent Being appears as an angelomorphic figure: “Behold, I send an angel in front of you, my Name is in him” (Exod., 23.20). In other terms, the unsayable “is not that which is in no way attested to in language, but that which, in language, can only be named.”³ In this way, the name is the source of the ecstasy of communication in that it encases the fleeting and mercurial joy whose description defies the slow pace of human thought.