

DECONSTRUCTION AND RELIGION: EXPLORING DERRIDA'S VIEW ON RELIGION

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Abstract: In today's postmodern world, the idea of having absolute theories or absolute truth is rejected. This has also created a problem of how to explain religion, which is an important part of human nature. Most postmodern philosophers think there is an element of spiritual desire in each human being which is seeking the Wholly Other for its fulfilment. Hence in their own way, they have tried to explain this mystical desire in humans. Derrida has been seen as a major contributor towards the philosophy of religion in recent times. Through his project of deconstruction, he has tried to show how deconstruction is deeply religious. Deconstruction of religion is not the destruction of religion but its reinvention. The method of deconstructionism tends to teach us to move beyond the boundaries of philosophical concepts. It creates an attitude of openness towards the Wholly Other that may come or not come but we need to live as if the Other has come. Derrida's religion portrays well the postmodernist faith. Based on his Jewish background, he finds religion to be like deconstruction, which is waiting for the Really Real or the absolute Truth. He has brought out the mystical aspect of religion through deconstruction.

Keywords: deconstruction, Derrida, postmodernism, postmodern Faith, religion

Abstrak: Di era postmodern, gagasan mengenai teori yang bersifat mutlak atau ide tentang kebenaran absolut tidak bisa diterima lagi. Hal ini menimbulkan persoalan: bagaimana menjelaskan agama yang memiliki perang penting dalam hidup manusia. Sebagian besar pemikir postmodern sebetulnya percaya bahwa ada kerinduan spiritual dalam tiap manusia yang mencari pemenuhannya dalam Diri Yang Sepenuhnya Lain (*Wholly Other*). Dengan cara mereka yang khas, mereka

berusaha menjelaskan kerinduan mistik ini. Derrida merupakan salah satu pemikir postmodern yang berkontribusi pada Filsafat Ketuhanan kontemporer. Sejatinya proyek dekonstruksi yang dikembangkannya bersifat religius. Dekonstruksi agama bukanlah destruksi agama, melainkan penemuan kembali agama. Dekonstruksi adalah suatu metode untuk melampaui batas-batas konsep-konsep filosofis. Metode ini membuat manusia bersikap terbuka pada Diri Yang Sepenuhnya Lain, hal mana mungkin hadir atau tidak hadir namun memaksa kita menghayatinya seolah-olah telah hadir. Agama yang digambarkan Derrida ini merupakan potret iman postmodern. Bertolak dari latar belakang Yahudi, Derrida mengalami agama sebagai sebuah dekonstruksi, yang masih menunggu Apa Yang Sepenuhnya Nyata atau Kebenaran Absolut. Melalui dekonstruksi ia menyingkapkan aspek mistik agama.

Kata-kata Kunci: dekonstruksi, Derrida, postmodernisme, iman postmodern, agama

INTRODUCTION

The term "postmodernism" seems to have been first used in 1917 by the German philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz to describe the nihilism of the 20th century¹. Although the term "postmodern" has been in currency since 1870, it has only been since the 1960's that "postmodernism" came into common usage as the description of a certain style of art, thought, and culture, and it was only with the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's 1979 *Postmodern Condition* that postmodernism really became synonymous with a certain crisis in the legitimation of knowledge.

Postmodernism invites us to make a radical shift in our thinking pattern. By drawing our attention to the multiplicity, diversity, contingency etc., of reality, postmodernism has achieved a paradigm shift, which has influenced all dimensions of our existence². Postmodern thought has had a profound impact on religious thought in general and Christian theology

1 Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, "Transition to Postmodernism: Nietzsche and Heidegger," *Vijnanadipti* 3, p. 97.

2 R.P. Singh, "Modern and Postmodern Philosophical Quest: A Methodological Analysis," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (2001), p. 317.

in particular. The postmodern “problem of God”, the role of Christian community in a postmodern world and the implication of the traditional claim of Christian uniqueness in the face of postmodernism’s attention to otherness are some of the important challenges that have come up in the theological arena. This paper would like to present Derrida’s deconstruction as a process towards living religion beyond the boundaries of institutional religion.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE POSTMODERN WORLD

Modernism as a philosophy was characterised by the secular philosophy of Marx and Freud, which reached its climax with Nietzsche announcing the death of God. Today, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud are all dead, but God is just doing fine. In the wake of Nietzsche and many others—Wittgenstein and Heidegger foremost among them—philosophers today, including Derrida, have largely rejected the idea that there is some proud overarching thing called “Reason” or “Absolute Truth” and they have settled instead for the humbler idea of “good reasons” or “multi-layered truths”, in the plural and in lower case. They do not think that there are rigorous borders between faith and reason, public and private, subject and object, politics and science or religion, but that these things have are tied together and it is difficult to separate them too stringently.

Postmodern philosophers have largely rejected the idea that there is some overarching meta-narrative, some vast “story” of what is going on in “Western” history. The postmodernist outrightly rejects institutional religion that claims to possess Absolute Truth. Instead, they see religion as a mystical experience, a longing for the coming of the Really Real, the Other, the Wholly Other, etc. Due to the rejection of absolute theories, there is a confusion created in distinguishing what is real and what is false, what is good and what is bad or what is right and what is wrong. This has also created a problem of how to explain religion, which is an important part of human nature. Most of the postmodern philosophers think that there is an element of spiritual desire in each human being that seeks for the Wholly Other for its fulfilment. Hence in their own way

they have tried to explain the mystical desire in humans that make them religious, than being part of a religious organization with fixed belief systems about God. The lack of meta-narratives is not a curse but an opportunity to become humble and to open oneself to multi-layered meaning occurring in a text/context relationship.

Nowadays we even find an important "secular" philosopher such as Jacques Derrida writing about his Messianic (not Messianism) Jewish religion. To the great astonishment of learned despisers of religion everywhere, who have been predicting the death of God from the middle of the nineteenth century right up to the 21st century, religion in all of its manifold varieties has returned. According to Caputo, "religion has returned even among avant-grade intellectuals who have given it a new legitimacy by discrediting its discreditors, suspecting its suspects, doubting its doubters, unmasking its unmaskers. The flower of religion is one of the blossoms in our postmodern anthology"³.

DERRIDA'S PLACE IN THE POSTMODERN RELIGIOUS WORLD

Derrida has been recognized for his movement of deconstruction in philosophy and literature. The process of deconstruction highlights the impossibility of arriving at the absolute meaning in a text or event. Deconstructionism highlights the tension experienced in literature and philosophy given the preferences for absolute meaning even at the expense of suppressing its binary opposite common in Western metaphysics and totalitarian philosophies. Derrida's deconstructionism embraces an attitude of hope for the arrival of absolute meaning which may or may not arrive. The movement of deconstruction is a recurring activity, which one must continue faithfully, with an attitude of openness towards the coming of the Wholly Other or the Impossible. Religion too exhibits similar aspirations of hope for the Wholly Other. Derrida tries in his recent works to show that the call of religion is the call of the Other which is beyond one's expectation. There is no way of knowing what the Other could come

3 John D. Caputo, *On Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 66.

as but one needs to be ready and prepared. There is, moreover, the undeniable fact that the study of religion has already benefited greatly from Derrida's extensive contribution and there is a growing recognition that, clearly, Derrida has spoken and written on religion.

DERRIDA'S DECONSTRUCTION AND RELIGION

Although Jacques Derrida may be justly described as a philosopher, his brainchild, deconstruction, might best be defined as a stance, a challenge to philosophy. We shall have a brief introduction to deconstruction and shall consider its implications for religion.

DECONSTRUCTION

Derrida takes issue with the way in which much of metaphysical thought is founded on dynamic oppositions of good and evil, interior and exterior, essence and appearance, true and false, life and death. According to Wolfreys, "whatever it may or may not be, deconstruction is always immanent in the conceptual languages of Western metaphysics"⁴. Derrida views Western culture as being pervaded, perhaps inescapably, by metaphysics, by searches for truth whose point of origin is singular and lies outside the realm of the empirically knowable. Derrida insists that one cannot find true meaning of a word in a language. The word always consists of signs and what it signifies or refers. It is usually assumed that the sign and the reference correspond in the mind of the person speaking or writing the language. Derrida shows through deconstruction that sign and the reference cannot correspond as they are arbitrarily used. Signs and references are connected to other words with signs and references. There could be endless connections between signs and various references; hence it is impossible to arrive at actual meaning of a word. According to Stocker, "we should see [the] sign as arbitrary, that is, its referent, is accidental. Because the sign is arbitrary its linguistic value is dependent not on the concept of referent, but on a system of differences with the other signs. That is words can only be defined through their relation with other

4 Julian Wolfreys, *Derrida: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 22.

signs, which means differences between signs that determine when and how individual signs are used”⁵.

Derrida's work focused on language. He contends that the traditional or metaphysical way of reading makes a number of false assumptions about the nature of texts. A traditional reader believes that language is capable of expressing ideas without changing them, that, in the hierarchy of language, writing is secondary to speech, and that the author of a text is the source of its meaning. Derrida's deconstructive style of reading subverts these assumptions and challenges the idea that a text has an unchanging, unified meaning. Derrida emphasized that the traditional metaphysical languages tend to prioritize the binary view of language. The binary employs terms such as speech and writing, being and non-being, centre and periphery, good and bad, and one term of each pair gets glorified at the cost of the other. For example, the centre has always been preferred at the cost of the periphery. Deconstruction highlights that it is precisely because of the periphery that the centre can be explained. Hence, both the centre and the periphery are simultaneously dependent on each other. In the traditional metaphysics of logocentric thinking the centre is given more importance than the periphery. Deconstructionism as a process highlights the oppressive elements of western metaphysical language. Deconstructionism helps in the process of deconstructing the binary concepts of meaning and the binary thought processes prevalent in language and culture. Deconstructionism highlights that there are no absolute truths. Reality is a network of multiple layers of meaning working simultaneously within a language or thought. Much of metaphysical thought was founded on dynamic oppositions of, for example, good and evil, interior and exterior, essence and appearance, true and false, life and death. The task of deconstruction is to dismantle the illusion of finding an Absolute Truth. According to Stocker, “Metaphysics itself includes a tendency to assume what is present as completely present and [to] exclude absence as illusion, difference, and non-Being. However, for Der-

5 Barry Stocker, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Derrida on Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 24.

rida, Being itself can only be absent, and we are never confronted with Being itself. Absence is necessary for there to be difference”⁶. Derrida uses the word ‘differance’ instead of ‘difference’ to highlight the differing meaning of a word both spatially/temporally and also the word could have different meanings every time it is translated. McCance in his book *Derrida on Religion*, quotes Derrida stating, “Differance always suggests movement, both the movement ‘that consists in deferring my means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving,’ and the movement ‘which produces different things, that which differentiates”⁷. According to Stoker, “Meaning is always contextual in various ways, and that includes the way in which language as a system can only exist as a system of differences. The meaning of the word depends on what it does and mean, because other words in the system have already excluded the meaning by possessing it”⁸. Deconstructionism destroys all the presumptions of the absolute truth accepted in language and allows for the reconstruction of reality based on multiplicities of meaning. It propels the readers to go beyond fixed boundaries of meaning and concepts in language and philosophy.

Deconstructionism as a project also reminds us that the search for ultimate meaning and Truth is a never-ending search. Hence, deconstructionism tends to break the myth of finding absolute truth and meaning in the works of an author or in any text or culture. Deconstruction is an attitude of openness towards and readiness for the arrival of the (O)ther, alterity or Truth that cannot be grasped by the binary tension of language and symbols. Although Derrida’s thoughts are sometimes portrayed by critics as destructive of philosophy, deconstruction can be better understood as showing the unavoidable tensions between the ideals of clarity and coherence that govern philosophy and the inevitable shortcomings that accompany their production.

6 Stoker, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook*, p. 34.

7 Dawne McCance, *Derrida on Religion: Thinker of Differance. Key Thinkers in the Study of Religion* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 27.

8 Stoker, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook*, p. 34.

Applied to literature, theology and politics, Derrida's method is a magnet for controversy. Many assume that, by so thoroughly attacking and shaking culture's philosophical foundations, there is a tendency of destroying them. Derrida has often been accused of epistemological and moral relativist. If knowledge is not always certain, so goes the conventional wisdom, how can one engage in deconstruction yet continue to function as a moral and ethical being?

The answer, for Derrida, is built into the question. Deconstruction resists the tyranny of the easy answer. According to McCance, "As a response to the multiplicity, the alterity, that metaphysics, in establishing its same/different, either/or oppositions, has forbidden or repressed, attempted to close off, as such *response-ability*, deconstruction is anything but destructive, and it is certainly not the strategy of nihilism that some have declared it to be"⁹. Deconstruction challenges one to live within the tension of a system containing no absolute meanings. The search for absolute meaning is a search for the elusive. Deconstruction encourages one to take responsibility for one's own decision in the face of multi-layered meanings. One is all the more ethical and moral responsibility because one is in charge of making a decision and of being accountable for that decision. No truth may lie outside one's system for truth making, but that doesn't mean that one can't make moral and ethical decisions. One must take responsibility for his/her decisions and not believe them to be preordained or given by a higher power. As such, deconstruction resists tyranny. Therein arise its moral value, its relevance to the century from which we've just emerged, and its usefulness for the one that is now emerging.

DECONSTRUCTION AND RELIGION

Derrida has been recognized as an important contributor towards philosophy of religion in recent times. In presenting his project of deconstruction he has tried to show how deconstruction is deeply religious. According to Caputo, "Deconstructing is not the destruction of religion,

9 McCance, *Derrida on Religion*, p. 23.

but its reinvention"¹⁰. Deconstruction is structured like a religion, like a prayer and like tears shed while awaiting the coming of the Wholly Other, while yearning for something impossible. It is like a faith in the coming of something we cannot quite make out, a blind faith where knowledge fails and where faith is the only thing which we have with us to go on. Deconstruction is structured like religion without religion. Deconstructing delimits the dogmatism, authoritarianism, fundamentalism, and violence of what Derrida calls the concrete "messianism," found in the so-called religions of the Book (such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism).

In Derrida we encounter the total surrender of faith, of a groping blindness of not knowing what is to come. It is like a blind man feeling his way with a stick. The mistake would be to treat this blindness, as do the critics of deconstruction, as so much nihilism and despair, instead of seeing there exactly the opposite, a work of faith, of hope, and of desire for the future to come. For Derrida, it is a matter of the advent of the impossible, the coming of something wholly other, whose coming or incoming we cannot see, foresee, or conceive.

THE FAITH OF A POSTMODERN

Deconstructionism teaches us that we may never know the Really Real completely. Everything in deconstruction is organised round the idea that we have no access to the essential nature of things and that the work of interpretation may never be left off, for we will never finally have made contact with the essential nature of things (the Really Real). We are left in a situation of undecidability.

But undecidability does not mean indeterminacy; it does not mean that we are lost in a haze of confusion, under-determination, and "anything goes" relativism. That is something that Derrida comes back to in the Dublin interview:

10 John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington (IN): Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 159.

[U]ndecidability is not indeterminacy. Undecidability is the competition between two determined possibilities or options, two determined duties... Now, because there are contexts and singularities, there are movements, processes, and transformations, and for transformation to occur something has to be determined, something is determinable... There is, however, the future, what is to come, and I would say there is indeterminacy of the coming of the future. But that is not a relativity of meaning.¹¹

Undecidability means that we are caught between a number of well-determined possibilities and that we have to resolve the conflict, but that we have no algorithm to invoke to resolve the undecidability. It means that, in order to get by we must proceed by a mix of faith, insight, instinct, and good luck, a mix of past experience and our anticipation of the future. We do not have a decision procedure that will nail down the right result. Instead, we must take responsibility, deliberate and choose, and then hope for the best.

THE MESSIANIC STRUCTURE OF DECONSTRUCTION

Deconstructing of Derrida shows some resemblance to the Jewish mystical path of the coming of the messiah. Derrida calls it "messianic" or "messianicity" and not "messianism". He did not want to confuse deconstructionism with religious messianism. Derrida states "This messianic dimension does not depend upon any messianism, it follows not determinate revelation, it belongs properly to no Abrahamic religion"¹². Messianicity is an attitude of being open towards the coming of Wholly Other. The passion of this promise is at the very heart of deconstruction, provoking the prayers and tears of Jacques Derrida's religion; this is the religious aspiration of deconstruction.

Derrida nowadays no longer hesitates to refer to a "messianic" coming. Just as it is true that what deconstruction loves is not here but over

11 Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility," in *Questioning Ethics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark J. Doorley (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 79.

12 Jacques Derrida, *On Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 56.

there, on the other shore, it is also true that it is not now but always coming. Whatever is here and now is deconstructible, but deconstruction is madly in love with what is not deconstructible. The coming of the Really Real is like the messianic structure. Derrida tells us about this Messianic structure in the interview at the Villanova Roundtable:

Let me tell you a story, something I reread recently, and which I quote in the book on friendship. Maurice Blanchot tells this story. When the messiah in a sort of soiled robe was not recognized, was at the gates of Rome. He was poorly, poorly dressed and so on and so on... and a young man recognized him, recognized that he was the messiah and came to him and addressed him and asked the question, "When will you come?" I think it's a very profound reading which means that something, some inadequation between "the now" and now that he is coming now... the messianic doesn't wait for... It's a way of waiting for the future, but right now; and the responsibilities which are assigned to us by this messianic structure are responsibilities for here and now. So the messiah is not some future present, it's imminent. It's this imminence that I am describing when I talk in the name of this messianic structure. Now there is another possibility I imagine also in this book... that the messiah is not simply the one, the other that I am waiting for constantly – there would be no experience without the waiting of the coming of the other, the coming of the event and justice – the messiah might also be the one I expect while I don't want it, him, to come. There is this possibility that my relation to the messiah is that I won't like it to come. I hope that he will come, that the other will come as other; that will be justice, peace, and revolution because in the concept of messianicity there is revolution – not revelation, but revolution – but at the same time I'm scared. I don't want what I want and I would like the coming of the messiah to be infinitely postponed. And the reason, this desire... that's why the man who addresses the messiah said, "When will you come?" It's a way to say that, well, as long as I speak to you, as I ask you the question "When will you come?" at least you're not coming, and that's the condition for me to go on asking questions and living and so on and so forth. So that is this ambiguity in the messianic structure. We wait for something we wouldn't like to wait for. That is another name for death¹³.

13 Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears*, pp. 24–25.

Derrida distinguishes between something whose coming we could plan for, imagine, and foresee, and the incoming or encounter with what we did not plan for and, indeed, whose coming we cannot imagine or foresee, the coming of "the absolute surprise," the unprogrammable Really Real. Kearney in his article "Derrida and Messianic Atheism" explains as follows:

Derrida's deconstructive ascesis of traditional religions ultimately calls for a 'religion without religion,' a faith without faith that can scarce give a name to God at all. More precisely, he embraces a notion of 'messianicity' beyond the concrete, historical 'messianism' of Abrahamic (and other) traditions. Such messianicity serves less as a sacred, incarnate presence in the world than as a quasi-transcendental structure for the condition of possibility (impossibility) of religion in general. This messianicity involves an endless waiting with no sense of what kind of Other might arrive. It is an unconditional 'yes' to what is always still to come¹⁴.

Deconstruction is the desire for the impossible as impossible, that is, for what is beyond all our intentional horizons of possibility. Desire beyond desire is a desire for a Godless God – a God still to be invented. Deconstruction is like waiting for Godot – not just in two acts but forever. Deconstructive faith is a leap into the dark. According to Bennington, "the Really Real is never given because what is given is never enough, never real enough. What shows up in the present, does not meet our expectations, does not saturate the horizon of possibilities, which includes first and foremost the possibility of the impossible. For what we long for and desire is the coming of what we cannot foresee¹⁵. For Derrida, the impossible is the stuff of faith or a desire with which we begin, which sets us in motion. The impossible is like a Messiah whose very structure is never to appear in the present and who, by thus deferring his appearance, keeps the future open, a Messiah whose condition of possibility is the very im-

14 Richard Kearney, "Derrida and Messianic Atheism" in *The Trace of God: Derrida and Religion*, ed. Edward Baring and Peter E. Gordon (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), pp. 199–212.

15 Geoffery Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida and Circumfession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.116.

possibility of his ever showing up, who does not have to be because he must not be.

Where will Derrida's desire for God stand? Derrida says in the interview in an article by Kearney titles "Desire for God" as follows:

The desire of my desire is not mine... if my desire for the *tout autre*, were simply my desire, I would be enclosed in my desire. If my desire is so powerful in myself, it is because it is not mine. That does not mean that I'm simply passively registering or welcoming another's desire. It simply means that I experience my own desire as the other's desire. Of course, God, what may be called God's desire, is part of this scenario. When I say in French *tout autre est tout autre*, which is difficult to translate, this does not mean, as you say inclusiveness. It means simply that every other, without and before any determination, any specification, man or woman, man or God, man or animal, any other whatever is infinitely other, is absolutely other. That is the only condition for experience of otherness. Every other is infinitely other. That is not a logic of inclusion but, on the contrary, a logic of alterity¹⁶.

CONCLUSION: GUIDE TO LIVE BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

Hence, we see that deconstruction has a certain messianic structure. This messianic structure, or messianicity has everything to do with faith. For Derrida this messianicity is an impossible, indeterminate structure of experience. For him, the non-presence of the Messiah or the Wholly Other is the very stuff of promise. This coming of the Really Real or the Wholly Other or the Messiah is not a historical or determinate appearance, as the Semitic religions claim, but is indeterminate, and we do not clearly know what is this going to be. The holy longing for Justice, Democracy, Hospitality, and Peace are contained in the coming of the Messiah. This Messiah can also be the one I expect even while I do not want him to come. There is a possibility that my relation to the Messiah is that I would like him to come, that I hope that he comes, that I desire that the Other will come

16 Richard Kearney, "Desire for God" in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington (IN): Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 134.

as Other, for that would be justice, peace, and revolution—because in the concept of messianicity there is a revolution—and, at the same time, I am scared. I do not want what I want and I would like the coming of the Messiah to be infinitely postponed.

Deconstruction helps to bring about the play. In deconstruction the negative and the positive arrange themselves constantly. This arranging forms a tension in which a religious person is pulled in both directions at the same time. Deconstruction demands of the religious person to attend to both the impossible and the possible at the same time. Deconstruction tries to make the most of this situation in which it has inserted itself. The movement of deconstruction is propelled towards the Really Real, the coming of the impossible. The method of deconstructionism tends to teach us to move beyond the boundaries of philosophical concepts. It creates an attitude of openness towards the wholly Other that may come or not come, but, either way, we need to live as if the Other/Really Real has come.

The messianic structure of the deconstruction invites an attitude of being responsible for one's choices. The postmodern faithful person is called to take responsibility and prepare for the coming of the Democracy, Justice, Hospitality or Peace. The postmodern religious person understands that the Wholly Other may come or may not come but that he/she must act *as if* every day and every moment is preparation for the arrival of the Really Real. The postmodern religious person lives in the present by taking up responsibility for his/her choices in preparing for the arrival of Justice, Democracy, Hospitality, or Peace. Derrida states that Wholly Other may or may not arrive, but that the postmodern religious continues to live his/her religious life by preparing for its arrival. The faith of the postmodern religious does not seek find shelter in absolute dogmas and theologies. The faith of the postmodern is a holy longing and a preparation for the arrival of the signs of the Wholly Other, i.e., Justice, Democracy, Hospitality, or Peace. Deconstruction invites the postmodern religious person to be faithful to their daily religious activities of charity and justice.

There have also been some criticisms of Derrida's view on religion. Some say it is based on uncertainty and undecidability. Some point out that religion should have a firm grounding in truth, but Derrida's religion is waiting for the Wholly Other of which one is not sure and which is supposed to come but does not come. Others have argued that, in order to wait for the Wholly Other, one must at least have a little taste of this Wholly Other. Derrida specified that this Wholly Other cannot be clearly determined and put into the categories of the same. Derrida's religion is criticized in that it gives a feeling that humans are trying their best to reach the Really Real but that they only have their own strength and will power to rely on. Derrida's religion is like desert situation where one is left alone without any experience of a personified God. It seems to be more Gnostic in nature.

Despite these criticisms Derrida's religion portrays well the post-modernist faith. Based on his Jewish background, he finds religion to be like deconstruction, which is a waiting for the Really Real or the absolute Truth. He has brought out the mystical aspect of religion through deconstruction. Religion for him is open ended, without any dogmas or ritual. It is a holy longing for the coming of the wholly other, the Really Real, Justice or Hospitality. Hence, Derrida's religion is a messianic waiting and desire. This implies taking responsibility for one's action and acting *as if* the Really Real has arrived. The prayer of his religion is *viens* (come), *oui, oui* (yes, yes). It is a hoping in hope, hoping against hope. We need to live religion *as if* the Really Real has come, but in reality, it may never come. Every day is an act of preparing for the coming of Justice, Hospitality, Democracy, or Wholly Real.

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