The Subject of Religion

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1. Introduction
What is religion, and can the concept itself be re-thought, perhaps by being invited, like Nicodemus in the Fourth Gospel, to the mother’s womb of its gestation, with the hope of a rebirth, in collusion with a spirit, or Spirit, ripe for our times? I want in this paper to pose the

1) John 3, 1-5: “Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the
question of religion as a "subject", in relation to an account of religion - religion in the singular, as contrasted with religion in its multiple particular instantiations - put forward about fifteen years ago by the late Jacques Derrida. In opening to scrutiny the question of religion, and of its distinguishing features, Derrida does not explicitly characterise religion as a subject, any more than he characterises religious adherents as "subjects". Presumably this is because he sees no need to revert to the metaphysical frameworks which "subject" terminology invokes, and which would necessitate an accompanying demurral recalling how poststructuralist insights relativise the metaphysical, the subjective, and all essences. While I am in perfect sympathy with that perspective, I would nevertheless like to track his discussion with a view to eliciting its implications for the subject of religion, because I think his account offers hidden possibilities for bridging metaphysically (read also, transcendentally) and post-metaphysically framed positions on religion. This occurs through what appears to me to be a particular conjunction.

On the one hand, his exploration cannot in some respects be distinguished from one which plumbs the "idea" or "essence" of religion, while, on the other, his insights can be extruded in the direction of proposing a new post-metaphysical account of the subject of religion, one within which religion, as also any adherent of religion, presents as what I will call a "subject-in-loss". To put it simply: in treating of religion, Derrida touches implicitly on the "subject of religion", as this term has meaning in common and metaphysically-implicated parlance; in doing so he offers resources for redescribing this subject. Again, by "subject" I here mean subject in both senses of the word: the topic of religion and the person who practises it.

I proceed as follows. I wish to show how within Derrida's description might be found, for religion as a general subject, certain hesitations in identity. These hesitations effect a deconstruction of this general subject; this effect plays itself into a corresponding impossibility for a particular instantiation of religion to provide for the "fullness of vocation" to which religion in general (rightly, if too ambitiously) aspires. Each particular religion then, presenting initially as a subject offering full truth, is manifest instead as a subject-in-loss, the "loss" concerned exhibiting elements of correspondence to the self-loss by which all personal experience is had, in opening a self to a genuine incursion by an other. Then, for each particular religion, and each religious adherent, in a way previous theorization has not been able to open up, others' religions exhibit truth in the same way as "my own", at least in the dimension in which both theirs and mine are both subjects-in-loss. That is, they share a common space in which each is marked as religious but also, simultaneously as "in loss" in relation to the incursion of a "true religion" other to itself. Under this reading, what is constitutive of religion as such, and, by extension, of the religious self, is self-identicality, but, simultaneously, the ineluctable giving over to an other that is both the reinforcement and productive ruination - the sacrificial ruination - of this self-identicality.

kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.'" Christian New Testament, Revised Standard Version (USA: Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989).
2. First Hesitation in Self-identicality

The first hesitation affecting the self-identicality of religion is indicated in the very title of the work by Derrida with which my own work here converses: his “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of Religion’ at the limits of Reason Alone”. This piece was published in 1998, in English translation from the French version, itself originating from a conference on religion held on the isle of Capri in 1994, the proceedings published in 1996 as a monograph, *La Religion: Séminaire de Capri sous la direction de Jacques Derrida et Gianni Vattimo* (Éditions du Seuil, 1996). In “Faith and Knowledge”, Derrida is typically non-linear in his exploration of the theme of the conference. That theme, the “return of religion”, was chosen no doubt in the light of the conflicts in Iraq and Rwanda, and with an eye to recognising the “religious return”, in both evident and hidden ways, in conflicts of this ilk. Derrida is, as ever, keen to probe ambiguities. One of these is the way in which knowledge, especially in its modern variant as tele-technoscience, is found both in support of religion and in enmity to it. Another, ultimately related, is the way in which, when seeking a philosophical ground for religion, one can draw upon the tradition, in order to turn it against itself. For instance, Derrida chooses Kant’s prescription of “reason within the limits of reason alone” as the declared framework of his own investigation, only to show in that in more than one way the framework fails to sustain itself as such.

The relation between religion and technoscience he probes by identifying the capacity for abstraction upon which technoscience thrives. Such abstraction is found at once in support of religion, and as a challenge to it - support in terms of the aim of religion to spread salvation universally, but hostility in terms of its attraction of critique to the particular, inevitably culturally bound expressions in which faith issues.

He develops this reflective train by asking whether religion, as a concept, can be separated, firstly from the question of salvation, and secondly, from the question of abstraction. By this latter he means the radical abstraction, found as “deracination” (displacement from original nature) occurring at sites associated with “the machine, technics, technoscience and above all the transcendence of tele-technology”). He finds religion to be both (as faith) salvation from abstraction, and simultaneously (as knowledge) complicit with abstraction, as the site where the “act of faith” and knowledge as technoscience are both joined and distinguished. These two are “bound together by the band of their opposition”, in an antagonism in which, ultimately, religion “reaffirmatively outbidding itself” yields a definitional impasse: “Whence the apora - a certain absence of way, path, issue, salvation - and the two sources.” Here, I think, the phrase “reaffirmatively outbidding itself” can be productively unpacked thus: religion, making a bid to be defined as faith, purveys itself through tele-technology.

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4) Ibid.
Here on the one hand there is emphasised, in both content and mode, the distinctness of religion from abstraction (by the offering of salvific doctrine to each in the particularized intimacy of his or her lounge chair or computer workstation). On the other hand, however, religion thus disseminated partakes of the radical abstraction that is knowledge propounded tele-technologically: as a “one size fits all” epiphany of truth, presentable and presented for cultures from Mumbai to Manhattan. Each of the two prospective foci, then - faith and knowledge (or faith and knowledge as abstraction) subsumes, and is subsumed in turn, by its alternative. Consequently, religion can find definitional self-assurance in neither, leaving Derrida to suggest that the aporia itself is where, profoundly, religion comes to rest: “the entire question of religion comes down, perhaps, to this lack of assurance.”

Derrida indeed detects, behind the admission of “reason” and “knowledge” as constitutive components of religion, a more radical destining of religious faith to pure abstraction - to an object of belief that is empty of historically conditioned, and thereby limited, content. Is such an object philosophically coherent? He is not inhibited by the truism that “revelation” is a defining element of religion, and that revelation ostensibly implies a specified, revealed content. From the outset, he frames the project at Capri in the most ambitious terms.

The project would avoid the temptations of, on the one hand, providing religion as ontotheology (or “theology”) which divinizes being, and, on the other hand, providing a theology of the holy or the

saved (heilig), accessible, beyond ontotheology-theology, through prayer and sacrifice, as revealability (Offenbarkeit) prior to revelation (Offenbarung). There would be abstraction here, framed, however, by the equation of religion with “revealability”:

In its most abstract form, then, the aporia within which we are struggling would perhaps be the following; is revealability (Offenbarkeit) more originary than revelation (Offenbarung), and hence independent of all religion? 6

The above possibilities correspond for Derrida to religion sought as “Promised Land” (within the hope for an account of religion that encompasses both “the history of historicity” and “religion within the limits of reason alone.”) 7 There is available, however, a further, more severely abstract figure of religion to be pursued: that of “desert”. This figure is prior to, and holds itself back from, conceptions of religion as either religio (scruple), or re-legere (repetition, reaffirmation). Within it, there might be retained religion as

‘fiduciary link’ which would precede all determinate community, all positive religion, every onto-anthropo-theological-horizon. It would link pure singularities prior to any social or political determination, prior to all intersubjectivity, prior even to the opposition between the sacred (or the holy) and the profane. This can therefore resemble a desertification, the risk of which remains undeniable but it can - on the contrary - also render possible precisely what it appears to threaten.”


7) Ibid., 7.
For Derrida, this desertification is a withdrawal corresponding to recognition of a duplicity - to do with the “messianic”, but simultaneously with chora - at the origin of “religion”. Derrida’s account is complex here, but, as I read him, his suggestion is that a retreat undertaken in expectation of a messiah, is already a retreat from the abstraction that is a pure abstraction, that is, from (if such can be named) a pure waiting, devoid of all expectation. Thus he says:

Whence the ambiguity or duplicity of the religious trait or retreat, of its abstraction or its subtraction. This deserted retreat thus makes way for the repetition of that which will have given way precisely for that in whose name one would protest against it, against that which only resembles the void and the indeterminacy of mere abstraction."

The question here is whether there can be a version of pure messianism, which (as it were, and, again, in my terminology), cooperates with, rather than traduces, religion as desertification (that is, religion as abstraction). Derrida says,

Messianism here is that which “exposes itself to absolute surprise,” as a “general structure of experience” which “belongs properly to no Abrahamic religion.”

In terms I am developing here, the aporia that obtains, for religion, between the requirements for pure abstraction (pure withdrawal of expectation) and pure messianism (pure expectation), becomes part of the hesitation in self-identicality through which the subject of religion becomes a subject-in-loss. The foregoing discussion also clearly has touchpoints with the second of the ambiguities already mentioned - the disjuncture between religion as “religion within the limits of reason alone” and religion as (any) particular religion. I will return to this ambiguity - which relates to the disjuncture between the universality attributable to knowledge and the particularity attributable to faith - in what follows, after dealing immediately below with the question of the self-sacrificial in religion, with which it also links.

3. Second Hesitation in Self-identicality

From a different perspective, Derrida’s exploration elicits what I argue becomes a second hesitation in self-identicality within the subject of religion. In this case, the aporia arises in terms of the object of religious faith, namely, the holy. What is aporetic is the commitment of faith to preserve “life” (under a generalized description) at the cost of the sacrifice of particular lives, this expenditure being an essential rather than accidental component of the religious. I pursue his investigation as follows.

Derrida proposes, as definitive of religion, the twin foci of faith, on the one hand, and a concern with the holy, on the other. He then moves steadily, if sinuously, towards stripping these concepts of their formally religious overlays. Where are they found, and overlooked, in their nearness? The answer: in the basic act of trust that precedes and enables every relationship to an other and every institution: as regards faith, the implicit “I am telling you the truth, believe me”, and, as
regards the holy, that which is approached with reserve, respect, modesty, as unscathed or intact.

Thus described, faith (again, in its most originary sense, as the fiduciary, the structure of trust that makes communication possible) and the unscathed (that which is approached, allowed to be, protected as holy and intact) are, Derrida says, present as axioms: starting points, taken for granted. In fact, if there are any axioms of relationship at all, any “givens” that precede and enable relationship, then these constitute values, involving in turn what is valued, and the way in which it is valued. Here then, incipiently, the element of religion: faith in the holy. Derrida says:

An axiom always affirms, as its name indicates, a value, a price, it confirms or promises an evaluation that should remain intact and entail, like every value, an act of faith.  

What then, of the return of religion, which so often occurs by way of its resisting, sometimes violently, the influences which bid to displace and delocalise its own expressions, in generalised forms (military interventions, peace-keeping forces)? This reaction of religion against itself, Derrida labels as auto-immunity: it arises in the way the self-protective mechanism in an organism turns against part of the organism itself, deeming it hostile.

The auto-immunitory - particularly as an offensive that religion mounts in reaction to its own occurrence as abstraction (religion as justice, as universal love, and in Kantian terms, as application of the moral law) - Derrida identifies as much more than incidental to religion. On the contrary, self-consumption is intrinsic to that which, mysteriously enough, no religion is without, viz, sacrifice. Sacrifice becomes the gesture par excellence whereby faith in the holy - in the unscathed - is expressed. What is sacrifice? Most properly, the gesture whereby life - that which is most worth keeping intact - is affirmed as having this value only in the name of something other than itself. Derrida says:

This mechanical principle is apparently very simple: life has absolute value only if it is worth more than life. The price of human life, which is to say, of anthropo-theological life, the price of what ought to remain safe (heilig, sacred, safe and sound, unscathed, immune), as the absolute price, the price of what ought to inspire respect, modesty, reticence, this price is priceless. It corresponds to what Kant calls the dignity(Würdigkeit) of the end in itself, of the rational finite being, of absolute value beyond all market price(Marktpreis). This dignity of life can only subsist beyond the present living being. Whence transcendence, fetishism and spectrality; whence the religiosity of religion.  

There is here implied a mechanically (re)generated autoimmunity or death drive, that provides self-sacrificiality. It is typical of religion not only to require sacrifice of life, but to celebrate it, most obviously as martyrdom, construed as testimony. We have here, life-sacrifice affirming - preserving as holy - the value of life, in the name of, not itself, but the holy and wholly Other who gives life.


Religious sacrifice, then, is seen as a conjunction of two preservations in these terms: preservation of the life of self through, paradoxically, the sacrifice of this life, in service of the leaving uncleath of the other (or, in different readings, of the Other as such, seen as others).

4. Considering the Subject of Religion

I have sought to show how Derrida’s investigation locates two particular hesitations in the self-identity of religion — in that by virtue of which religion is present as itself, and not as other than itself. It is possible now to reflect on how these hesitations affect the subject of religion, “subject” understood here as an individual entity, definable and investigable as such. Thus religion in general is a subject, but so also is each particular religion. By extension, also, these reflections will have implication for the “subject of religion” understood as the “one who practices religion”, or, more precisely, the one who has identity in virtue of adherence to religion in a general sense, or to a particular religion.

It is impossible here to rehearse the philosophical history of the concept of the subject, and the transition from subjectivity understood as substantial to subjectivity understood as transcendental, and, finally, understood (within the Heideggerian and then post-structuralist “takes” on subjectivity) as “lost”. It is also impossible to trace the way in which, as another axis of the above transition, the subject comes to the understood in terms of selfhood. However, it is possible to return more simply to a particular distinction which Aristotle makes in defining substance as the ultimate subject, and which recasts itself in all subsequent categorisations of subjectivity and/or its loss. I refer to the distinction between substance (and thus subject) as “primary”, that is, as identifying an individual entity, and substance (and therefore subject) as “secondary”, identifying the form (genus or species) to which the entity belongs. Aristotle says:

A substance, that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all — is that which is neither said of a subject or in a subject, e.g., the individual man or the individual horse. The species in which the things primarily called substances are, are called secondary substances, as also are the genera of these species. For example, the individual man belongs in a species, man, and animal is a genus of the species; so these - both man and animal - are called secondary substances. 13

Simply put, Aristotle’s point distinguishes the particular instantiation of an entity from its universal form, recognizing that both have claims to be called “substantial”, and to be designated as “subjects”, albeit in primary and secondary senses. In general, the existence of a primary, or particular, subject, ought not to militate against the possibility of a secondary, or universal, version of this subject; neither, indeed, ought it to militate against the possibility there existing of another primary instantiation of the universal. Thus, for example, that a particular chair exists does not prevent the possibility of the true existence of other chairs, nor of the existence of “chairness” (or an “ideal chair”), as a true type. And such is also the case with, say, particular economic

theories as compared with other economic theories, and with the “ideal type” of an economic theory, that is, economic theory as a general subject. Admittedly there are better and worse chairs, and better and worse economic theories, as determined in relation to what might be ascertained as the ideal chair, or the ideal economic theory.

It would appear, however that the case of religion, taken as a “subject”, is significantly different to this, at least from the point of view of adherents. One who adheres to a particular religion might consider himself/herself bound to regard other versions of religion as, in fact, invalid as regards their constituting “true” instantiations of religion, since they fail to address the true God, or fail to understand the true God as that God has spoken in human history, or fail in some other way, related to these, truly to identify the object of worship proper to religion. Some debate might be had on this point - it might be argued that a Christian and a Buddhist, for example, do each recognize the other’s religion as a valid religion, but each does not recognize it as being as true as his or her own. The coherence of this position I will not investigate here, except to point out that the position might not be compatible with other claims which the same adherents might make, in relation to explaining the motivation for advertisement or proselytism (formal or informal) particular to either faith, and which would surely emerge in terms of that faith being claimed as “the one true religion”.

In any case, it is this latter claim that I find of interest, in terms of its ostensible effect in challenging the possibility of religion as a “general subject”, by substituting a claim that, in the end, only a particular instantiation of religion might constitute a “subject of religion”, that is, “religion as a true subject”. (The implication carries through to an implication for the “subject of religion” understood in a different sense, viz., as the subject who practises religion. Plausibly, the identity, and correspondingly, the validity of subjectal identity for this adherent, is a reflection of the validity, as subject, of the religion he or she practises). And it is this particular claim that I find implicitly but effectively subverted in Derrida’s exploration above, if the two hesitations in self-identicality of the subject of religion which I have attempted to elicit are agreed to have force.

The hesitations, as Derrida has indicated them, and as I have sought to additionally characterise them, occur conceptually within religion as a general subject, which because of its large ambition - perhaps, uniquely large ambition - provides requirements for the integration of elements intrinsically opposed: knowledge revealed in the particularity of a given culture or era, yet requiring abstraction to every culture and era; ultimate desertification, as a pure waiting, eschewing an object of desire, yet accompanied by pure messianism, as expectation demanding an object; faith seeking the Holy, in terms of life preserved unscathed, yet required to surrender life in this quest. What seems clear is that, if these contradictions within the general subject of religion hold, then their existence effects the impossibility of pure religion as actually instantiable, or as instantiated in any particular religion. In the classic manner which Derrida has propounded elsewhere, religion as such (and hence, in my terms, as a subject) undergoes deconstruction in these terms: the conditions of its possibility become simultaneously the conditions of its
impossibility. Specifically for religion, any instantiation that bids to provide one of the two opposing components of each pair listed above, will, to the extent that it does this successfully, manifest a lack of provision of the companion component, i.e. will provide - at least as each provision becomes open to further evaluation against the general subject - particularity to the detriment of abstraction, desetification to the detriment of messianic expectation, sacrifice of life at the expense of provision of life. Or it will provide the opposites of these, at correspondingly opposite expense.

In other words, no religion, in any particular instantiation (as characterised by particularities of time, place and expression), can remain untouched by the exigencies of a “general religion” and of the challenge to sacrifice itself in the light of those exigencies, to become more properly a subject worthy of the name religion. Given this, “sacrifice” itself, and the surrender of “life”, or life’s essence - by one, to and for the other - becomes an encompassing descriptor of the several modes of transfer between sets of opposing exigencies which have emerged above as characteristic of religion. Then any particular religion becomes itself “sacrificial” in a dimension additional to the sacrificiality of public religious practice. The subject of religion, in both senses of the phrase, becomes susceptible to surrender of some element of its subjunctive essence, in service of offering the Holy Other a religious response that is pure. Such surrender becomes a mark of religion as a subject structurally always incomplete.

I pursue this point in the final sections below. I think that it is possible to propose religion, seen as sacrifice, as, in an originary sense, an openness - to letting the other remain intact - which requires subjunctual loss. Under this description, the religious signifies a vocation of the self manifest more primitively than in formal prayer and worship. For, the requirement of self-loss is one intrinsic to all experience which can be had as such, if by “self-loss” is meant that surrender of self to the incursion of the other, including through death, that renders each self, in terms I have used elsewhere, as a self-in-loss. The self finds preservation as a self-in-loss. Derrida says this in other words, and in relation specifically to the religious, when he speaks about a principle of sacrificial self-protection ruining the principle of self-protection (that of maintaining its self-integrity intact), and this in view of some spectral sur-vival. This self-contesting attestation keeps the auto-immune community alive, which is to say, open to something other and more than itself: the other, the future, death, freedom, the coming of the love of the other, the space and time of a messianicity beyond all messianism.

5. Originary Religion

Religion, as such, in the singular, becomes this gesture of self-sacrificial

14) Thus, in treating of hospitality, Derrida argues that the conditions for possibility of offering hospitality to the stranger are also the conditions for its impossibility: “Hospitality is due the foreigner, certainly, but remains like the law, conditional, and thus conditioned in its dependence on the unconditionality that is the basis of the law.” Jacques Derrida, Of Hospitality: Jacques Derrida invites Anne Dufourmantelle to Respond, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000), 73.

16) Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”, 51,
opening to the holy other, as such, in a place where the other is unassimilated to the same. Derrida points out that latinIZATION has given us religion as religio (scruple), from either re-leger (to gather, harvest) or religare (from ligare, to bind), both coming together in the notion of “bond.” He, however, focuses on the sense of “re-” as implying a resistance to the alterity of the other. Repetition, seen as re-doing, succumbs to the ruse of duplication, as if a religious ritual, merely by scrupulous re-enactment, can repeat a promise of faith made to the other: it cannot, except by making the promise again for the first time, in which case there is no repetition. But re-making the promise entirely anew each time, without duplication, is what is needed, so that the other is not addressed as a past version of itself. That is precisely why, in religion, exactly as with the expression “I love you” or, “I have faith in you” there can never be too many returns, and also why religious ritual is both necessary and inadequate, in reasserting the promise to, the faith in, the other. This is also why Derrida asks “and what if religio remained untranslatable?” Such a suggestion corresponds to another: that the place to which religion as such, religion in the singular, looks, in its quest to let the holy remain holy, might be the Chora. This I have had reason to mention already, as the empty desert place named by Plato in the Timeaus, as found beyond, or between, being and non-being, in which the forms are inchoate.

Chora is the place of bifurcation between two approaches to the desert: “place beyond being” (epkeina tes ousias) of Greek tradition and the Christian via negativa. Derrida suggests that his quest for a

religion prior to religion will find its locus here. Chora will remain absolutely exterior, and thus most interior to religion, absolutely impassible and heterogeneous to all the processes of historical revelation or of anthropo-theological experience, which at the very least suppose its abstraction.... It will never have entered religion and.... will always resist [Being, the Good, God, Man and History].

Chora is a desert within the “formal” deserts (figures of revelation, retreats, kenosis, transcendence, etc). It is nothing, but not the nothing which opens to the question of Being. Allied to this, is the notion within Chora of an originary tolerance,

in accord with the experience of the ‘desert in the desert’, it would respect the distance of infinite alterity as singularity. And this respect would still be religio, religio as scruple or reticence, distance, dissociation, disjunction, coming from the threshold of all religion in the link of repetition to itself, the threshold of every social or communitarian link.

One is put in mind of the reference in the Fourth Gospel to Jesus’ assurance, given to one at odds with Jewish worship, of the coming day when worship will be neither here nor in Jerusalem, but in Spirit and Truth.

20) Ibid., 21 (paraphrase).
21) Ibid., 22.
Thus one obtains religion in the singular, prior to religions: religion as it is constituted by faith and protects the holy, prior to any instantiations of these elements in actual religions, and, indeed, prior to and constitutive of every spoken sentence, relation and institution. In these, trust, and the intactness of what trust supports, are always already implicit, as *sine qua non*.

Might this religion - albeit impossible of refusal - be counted as *originary* religion, and if so, how might it relate to the particular religions, or even religions as non-religions, to which many of us belong? Derrida sees it as constituting the *possibility* of religion, or of something like a religion, which is to say, an instituted apparatus consisting of dogmas or of articles of faith that are both determinate and inseparable from a given historical *societ* (Church, clergy, socially legitimated authority, people, shared idiom, community of the faithful committed to the same faith and sanctioning the same history).

In one sense, this “originary” is a universal originary - again, as possibility - standing in relation to particular originary events claimed by religions, as versions of this *pure* possibility. These versions might occur as universals, as, Derrida says, “faith or trustworthiness, ‘good faith’ as the condition of testimony, of the social bond and even of the most radical questioning” or as particular events (revelatory events, say, in Judaism or Christianity), as that in the name of which the determinate, particular religion occurred. In any case their occurrence does not gainsay the *originary possibility* as such, because, according to what Derrida calls the logic of denial (<*denegation*>), it cannot, as possibility, be denied - by this he means that to deny it as possibility is to already to admit that there is something to deny.

6. Conclusion

Whatever of the possibly contestable logic of this last claim, I think Derrida has made a sufficient case for originary religion, to allow prompting of the question of its relation to particular religions. And here I want to propose two points, which I close. First, the *transcendental* nature of the universal originary religion - its existence as the condition of the possibility of particular religions, may all particular relationships - means that it will emerge, again as possibility, in dynamic relationship to each particular religion. In a technical sense, as condition of possibility of any particular religion, which also becomes the condition of the impossibility of that religion, it will, as I have mentioned, perform a deconstructive function. More to the point, as I have argued, originary religion might be seen as that to which any of us cannot not subscribe, and in relation to which the particular religions to which we belong are newly seen as, not integral subjects, but subjects-in-loss. As such, we are subjects *interrupted* by an insistence on trust and the unscathed which is always prior, always more original than the current expression of a religion, or even its originary event, and always shared with other particular religions, which it also relativises.

24) Ibid., 58-59.
Any religion becomes, in this light, also a repression of religion, and equally a condition for a "return of the religious" in, as Derrida's says, an auto-immunitary, self-consumptive way. To that extent, each religion can look to its vocation of sacrifice - not only the sacrifice which it ritualistically promotes, but also its self-sacrifice, as religion, by which it is kept intact by way of sacrificial openness to what is other to itself. Derrida hints at but does not pursue the point that this very logic operates when Kant, recognizing religion as such as religion "within the limits of reason alone" allows its sacrifice "in the service of most proper" to a religion: the Christian religion, as the most moral religion.  

It might equally be incumbent on each of us who call ourselves Christian, or Hindu, or Moslem, or something else, to accede to a converse credo, at once constituted by and constituting a singular religion - prior to each of ours, but also yet to come - which keeps at last the first promise to the Holy, wholly other.

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중교의 주제/주체

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중교가 어떤 의미에서 단일한 주체라는 것은 의미적이며 윤리적인 종교 체계들로서의 여러 특정 종교들의 다양성을 포괄하는 그 용어의 사용에 의하여 입증된다. 그러나 그것은 각각의 개별 종교가 자신이 "창원 종교"를 구성한다고 하거나 혹은 "종교에 있어서의 전리"를 제공한다고 하는 주장은 결국에는 거부하며, 이는 모든 특정 종교의 구조적 필요조건 것처럼 보인다. 자크 드리다의 논의에 따르면, 그것은 모든 종교가 종교인 한에서 주장해야만 하는 전리에 대한 소명이 (선상당하지 않은 제 유지한 생애로 이해된) 거룩한 것에 대한 신앙이 가는 소명의 일부가 되므로 볼 수 있다. 그런데 드리다의 종교의 개념 안에서 뭔가 유보적인 요소들을 발견한다. 하지만 그것은 일반적인 주체로서의 종교와 특정한 종교들 안에서 만나는 그것의 구체적인 예시들 사이의 구분을 위해서 이용될 수 있다. 이는 서로 상충하는 요정들의 확대 불가능성 때문에 해체되고 거룩한 타자의 충만한 희생적인 임업을 해용하는 데에 구조적으로 방향 차이가, 그리고에 아직 앞으로 올 종교 안에서 - 예배자이며 또한 '항복 안의 주제'로서의 - 각각의 필연적으로 특정한 종교를 입증하는 것이 된다.

주제어: 드리다, 종교, 종교 간의 대화, 주제, 주제성, 자아, 신앙, 거룩함, 해체,

애해

The Subject of Religion

John Martis, S.J.

That religion is in one sense a single subject, is attested by the use of the term to encompass a diversity of particular religions, as cultic and moral religious systems. Yet it appears as a structural requirement of every particular religion that, in the end, it disqualifies the claim of each other religion to constituting “true religion” or to providing “truth in religion.” In terms broached by Jacques Derrida, it can be seen that the vocation to truth which every religion as such must claim, is part of a vocation to faith in the holy, understood as life preserved unscathed. However, Derrida identifies several hesitations within the concept of religion. These can be harnessed to a distinction, between religion as a general subject and the instantiations of that subject met in particular religions, to demonstrate each necessarily particular religion, as also each worshipper, as a subject-in-loss, deconstructed in view of the irreconcilability of opposing exigencies, and structurally oriented to allowing the holy other’s full sacrificial incursion, in a religion yet to come.

Key Words: Derrida, religion, interreligious dialogue, subject, subjectivity, self, faith, the Holy, deconstruction, worship

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