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**APOPHATIC DISCOURSE AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF
LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF DERRIDEAN TOPOLOGY**1**

Abstract: This study examines the complex link between deconstruction and negative theology, concentrating on Derridean interpretation of the apophatic tradition. Deconstruction and negative theology are sometimes seen as similar, but this research shows their key contrasts, notably in how they approach the unsayable and the *Other*. The research examines Derrida's 1980s and 1990s works to show how language might be a deconstructive topology of speech that remains unsaturated and open to otherness. This approach challenges metaphysical systems and proposes a logic of denial that transcends constative and predicative speech by presenting God as ultimate otherness. This method critiques Heidegger's ontotheology post-structurally and addresses philosophical and literary theory problems about language, silence, and negation in divine representation. This paper seeks to show how a Derridean deconstruction of negative theology might enhance current discourses on language, otherness, and the ineffable by adopting a discourse that speaks via silence and defers meaning in *différance*.

Key words: deconstruction, negative theology, apophatic discourse, otherness, *différance*.

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Introduction

Deconstruction and negative theology have taken courses that have frequently sought to be perceived as similar, even common, despite being as evasive and cryptic as they are incisive and piercing. Many critics have identified Derrida as an heir to the ancient apophatic tradition of Dionysius, Eckhart, or Silesius because of his deft use of rhetoric that emphasizes negation and avoidance as the primary qualities of both, whether to avoid the treachery of defining God or to allude, in either case, to that X called trace, writing, or *différance*. Derrida distinguished between the discursivity of negative theology and the process of deconstruction in an early work like *La différence*², but the conflict and misunderstanding between the two endeavors was still apparent. From that implication alone, there was already a need to communicate, to clarify the difference and comprehend the space that divides the two. To put it succinctly, it was imperative to discuss the art of non-speaking, or the avoidance of communication that is exclusive to speech and that, when interpreted in a certain manner, is essentially the sister of deconstruction and negative theology. Some of Derrida's writings from the 1980s and 1990s, including *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie* (1983), *Sauf le nom* (1993d), and *Khôra* (1993c), as well as a few other lectures and essays included in *Psyché*, were occupied by this responsibility, this call. (Derrida, 2003).³ Maybe it's the Jerusalem lecture *Comment ne pas parler?* from 1986. The passage that best expresses the question that will be our focus in this work is *Dénégations* (Derrida, 2003: 145–200). “How to speak of the other, how to represent otherness without inventing it or losing it?” (Derrida, 2003: 170). What is the best way to represent the ultimate other in words without becoming a self-transcription or a presence that would manifest itself yet be unable to articulate itself?⁴ Put succinctly, how can one talk without speaking or

² Text from 1968 collected in *Marges de la philosophie* (Derrida, 1972:1-31). Quoted in: Derrida, 2003:149.

³ The conception of God as alterity, absolute difference, and meaning in retreat is characteristic of Derrida's later work and is highly compatible with deconstruction. This is in contrast to the Derridean understanding of God as an onto-theological principle, representing ultimate presence and meaning towards which all discourse is directed, as described in *De la grammatologie* (1970). Derrida's alignment with the ideas of Lévinas and Jean-Luc Marion (1991) is evident in this transition, despite notable variations in their linguistic implications. In the interview *Epoché and Faith* (Sherwood and Hart, 2005: 27–50, notably on pages 36–37), Derrida acknowledges this. In this context, the succinct comments of Rosàs Tosas (2012: 319 ff.) are instructive.

⁴ Existing in the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein, 2003: §§ 6.522 and 7), Derrida also dissociates himself (2003, 153), at least in terms of his typical readings of it.

saying, without using an onto-theological order or the correct grammatical anthropomorphism schema? How can one properly discuss God?

Therefore, the goal of this research is to provide a view of language as a topology of speech in which discourse is always unsaturated, incomplete, and open to otherness through a Derridean reading in a deconstructive key of writers of negative theology. This will be made possible by the idea of God as complete otherness, immoderation, or meaning continuously postponed. This will establish in language a logic of denial that goes beyond constative and predicative discourse structures and is anchored in the fundamental ideas of apophatic discourse – prayer and promise. A deconstruction of negative theology would be useful for current discussions in philosophical and literary theory because it can, on the one hand, provide a post-structuralist response to Heidegger's problem of ontotheology and the forgetting of being, and, on the other, comprehend or approach a dilation of the language of negation and this topology of speech, comprehend or approach a long and diverse nihilistic drift in contemporary literature and in the discourses of otherness, which, in an attempt to be silent, to be silenced, could only avoid annihilation through profusion, through the practice of writing until exhaustion: "Apophatic discourse, once analysed in terms of its logico-grammatical type, perhaps gives us a way of thinking about the theological becoming of all discourse" (Derrida, 2003: 148)⁵.

Derrida's Deconstruction of Apophatic Theology

First, let's discuss Derridean rejection of discourse-based negative theology. Derrida has often emphasized his disapproval of the apophatic tradition in this rejection of discursivity. Firstly, it is important to avoid viewing apophatics as a discourse that, like negative theology, would systematize negation and reduce it to a mere metaphysical gesture, maybe based on overturning a logic with the intention of reforming it in another way. Instead, apophatics would be a discourse of negation grounded in an oppositional logic and a classical metaphysical dual structure (Coward & Foshay, 1994: 7). In order to respect the great essence of God by correcting the limitations of anthropomorphic concepts, negative theology should not be understood as a predicative or constative discourse in any of its forms (Derrida, 2003: 150). Instead, it should be understood as a proposal for a terminological reform that may be more muted but still adheres to the same linguistic pattern. Rejecting this discursivity also means rejecting the second rejection, which is to understand God as a hyper-essentiality, as a sublime essence that bursts and overflows linguistic wineskins, but which is ultimately an ineffable presence and guarantor of meaning, an exultant presence or meaning that comes before the word languishes, before any

⁵ « Le discours apophatique, une fois analysé dans son type logico-grammatical, nous donne peut-être à penser le devenir-théologique de tout discours » (Derrida, 2003 : 148).

signifier is sufficient, a saturated phenomenon. This interpretation of God would reveal his own recognition as (being) beyond words or existence. It would mean, in a sense, breaking off apophatic logic at a point when it would contradict itself, putting in place a firm boundary that would, as it were, denote the domain of language and, beyond its bounds, that which it is incapable of. Thus, one of the mystical outcomes of this scheme is to understand God as a great ineffable presence: the purported elevation or rarefaction of apophatic discourse, which would commence with the negation of all theological discourses and end with the total suppression of language, at which point, as the first Wittgenstein would point out, there would be a mute union with the inexpressible, with the pure presence that can only be seen or shown. This would regard silence as the antithesis of speech and provide it the same complete potential for unity or contact with God as prayer does. Negative theology is therefore reduced to a cheap gesture, to a hollow convoluted rhetoric, whether interpreted as speech or assumption of super-essentiality (Derrida, 2003: 152). To a challenging variant of the cataphatic theology that would refute it using the same reasoning and reiterate it in a different way.

This means that the challenge of conceptualizing God as a being beyond being must be solved by his perception of God as the completely other and different⁶: “Explain to me what separates me from God? Essentially, it is nothing more than otherness” (Silesius, 2005: 201). Since binary dialectics and predicative logic are components of a language that defines identity and selfhood, this otherness is placed outside of these frameworks. God is the *hyper*, the *more*, the excess, the excessiveness; he is the beyond. The *plus d’être* is God, existing but also existing at the same time. Deconstructing grammatical anthropomorphism, God is the *without* (sans) that signifies transcending and abandonment: “God is good without goodness, wise without wisdom” (Derrida, 2003: 151).⁷

Its position is distinct from that of language; its meaning is consistently and completely delayed. Therefore, God dis-denies binarism by surpassing it; he rejects negativity. That is, God would live within every negation of language, every emptying of language of itself, and every destruction of language, but he would live inside it in the negative sense – that is, there would be no God in the emptying of language, which is language. He transcends. God is language’s negation, to which

⁶ Taylor incisively notes that Johannes Climacus, one of Kierkegaard’s other voices, already had this idea of God as the ultimate other. See: Taylor, 1994: 600. Therefore, God might be characterized as *the absolutely different, an infinite and qualitative difference, or qualitative heterogeneity*, often known as infinite, absolute difference, is a more extreme distinction that defies comprehension under dialectical or binary frameworks. It is not the antithesis of identity or sameness.

⁷ « Dieu est bon sans bonté, sage sans sagesse » (Derrida, 2003 : 151).

language negates itself, yet God is already beyond language by virtue of language's allusion to it:

The name of God would be appropriate for anything that can only be approached or designated indirectly and negatively. Any negative sentence would already be haunted by God or by the name of God, the distinction between God and the name of God opening up the very space of this enigma. If there is a work of negativity in discourse and in preaching, it would produce divinity. [God would be the truth of all negativity. God would be the truth of all negativity [...] 'God' would name that without which no negativity could be accounted for. (Derrida, 2003: 148)⁸ Therefore, the question is not how to abolish language but rather how to understand it as something that God inhabits and produces: as that overbearing signifier that seeks or calls – we will come back to this call – an alterity that always goes beyond the call, a promise made before language, a responsibility to speak before language that cannot help but be recorded, be language. A language of negation is established when one calls upon God, prays, or invokes him; it confirms negativity and states that there is no speech at all. "Denegation [...] is a negation that denies itself and, by so doing, repeats the negation it apparently negates. To denegate is to unnegate, but unnegation is itself a form of negation. More precisely, denegation is an unnegation that affirms rather than negates negation." (Taylor, 1994: 596). How to speak of the other, how to represent otherness without inventing it or losing it?

It expands upon this *must not* by stating that silence is a fold of words and that there is nothing to say. Thus, the title of Derrida's work, *comment ne pas parler?* (which translates to *how to avoid speaking?*), has a double meaning. Negative theology tries to teach us how to stay silent, how to refrain from discussing God if we want to have communion with him, and how to empty our minds of all thought and emotion and go toward emptiness, the desert, in order to approach God. How it is improper to refer to God as a being or as something: "Where do I live? when neither you nor I am present. Where is the ultimate goal that I have to strive for? where there is no end in sight. Where do I need to go? To the desert, beyond God" (Silesius, 2005: 7).⁹

It is a movement toward otherness that promotes language and identity disintegration in order to avoid betraying God, blaspheming, and being inaccurate, while avoiding

⁸ « Le nom de Dieu conviendrait à tout ce qui ne se laisse aborder, approcher, désigner que de façon indirecte et négative. Toute phrase négative serait déjà hantée par Dieu ou par le nom de Dieu, la distinction entre Dieu et le nom de Dieu ouvrant l'espace même de cette énigme. S'il y a un travail de la négativité dans le discours et dans la prédication, il produirait de la divinité. [...] Dieu serait la vérité de toute négativité. [...] "Dieu" nommerait ce sans quoi l'on ne saurait rendre compte d'aucune négativité. » (Derrida, 2003: 148)

⁹Derrida defines the desert motif as « une figure paradoxale de l'aporie », making it a classic feature in mystical literature and negative theology (1993d, 52).

creating it and projecting itself into it. Discourse, predicative language, and the following are avoided:

Derrida cites Eckhart's *Quasi stella matutina*: "If I were to refer to God as a being, it would be as deceptive as saying that the sun is dark or pale. God is not one thing or the other. A instructor goes on to state that someone who believes they have known God and will know something else is not going to know God. However, by asserting that God was not a being and that he was above all other beings, I have not denied God's existence; rather, I have given him the status of a superior being." Derrida (2011 : 16–17).¹⁰

Negative theology exhorts us to remain silent, to pray instead of praising, and to cry out to God without providing an explanation (Silesius, 2005: 162). However, this silence is also etched into the trace's structural design; it is a quiet inside language, a language that silences an ingrained logic that it is unable to separate from. The rejection of language occurs inside language; it is a rejection. The sentence occurs in language even if it is not predicative. The location is language. God's promise would not be possible without it, and to fully repudiate it would be to regard prayer as an instantaneous, direct communication with God:

If there was a purely pure experience of fear, did we need religion and theologies, affirmative or negative? Would we need a supplement to fear? But if there was no supplement, if the quotation did not plunge the prayer, if the prayer did not plunge, did not plunge into writing, would a theology be possible? Would a theology be possible?¹¹ (Derrida, 2003: 200)

The second meaning of the title is a protest that is similar to *but how!* or *how not!*: speaking is impossible, and everything is linguistified, anchored in writing and the trace (Suciu, 2012: 53). In other words, how can one avoid speaking? How can one cease doing that? It is difficult to cease using language, to cease inhabiting it. According to Derrida (1999: 109), the language of refusal, which is a language of or towards God, expresses the necessity of silence. Saying the non-manifestation is necessary. As stated in the headline, speaking is necessary in order to remain silent.

¹⁰ « Si me referiera a Dios como un ser, sería tan engañoso como decir que el sol es oscuro o pálido. Dios no es ni una cosa ni la otra. Un instructor prosigue afirmando que quien cree haber conocido a Dios y va a conocer otra cosa no va a conocer a Dios. Sin embargo, al afirmar que Dios no era un ser y que estaba por encima de todos los demás seres, no he negado la existencia de Dios, sino que le he dado la categoría de ser superior ». (Derrida, 2011 : 16-17).

¹¹ « S'il existait une expérience purement pure de la peur, aurions-nous besoin de religion et de théologies, affirmatives ou négatives ? Aurions-nous besoin d'un supplément à la peur ? Mais s'il n'y avait pas de supplément, si la citation ne plongeait pas la prière, si la prière ne plongeait pas, ne plongeait pas dans l'écriture, une théologie serait-elle possible ? Une théologie serait-elle possible ? ». (Derrida, 2003 : 200)

Before us, in us, and without us, language originated. It is this that theology calls God, and it is necessary, it would have to be said. This *must* is simultaneously the remnant of a historical injustice and an indisputable necessity – a different way of expressing that we can only refuse it. Constantly in the past, but not in the present tense. As Derrida (2003) notes, « il a fallu que parler » to ask the question « comment ne pas parler » ?

Language does not vanish, but rather empties itself in the face of God's unceasing retreat and his utter otherness as meaning in perpetual delaying. Instead of heading towards rarefaction, discourse multiplies, talks about more, and extends itself as signifier in the face of a signified that perpetually says *not yet* (*pas encore*) (Derrida, 1985a: 113–14). This signified never truly happens or vanishes; instead, it is constantly called upon by a signifier that operates in its stead as its promise – a promise that is never kept or withdrawn, but rather one that is always expressed as a postponement. Despite this assurance, language continues to be a call.¹² Silesius writes as follows: “Naked I cannot appear before God. Undressed, however, I shall enter the kingdom of heaven, because no stranger is allowed in it.” (2005: 297)

Language Beyond Boundaries

With his concept of this total alterity, Derrida presents a unique relationship between signifier and signified. The text reduces to style, to a signifier that is set to operate even in the absence of the signified, in its replacement (Derrida, 1972: 10), and in its waiting. It does not depend on the signified to function. It acts as though it were present, yet it never shows up. In contrast to a deferred signified, which constantly appears as a replacement for another signifier that is always delayed and only manifests as guarded, as guarded by a guardian, it is an excessive signifier.

¹² The commentary Derrida provided on Kafka's short story *Before the Law* (*Vor dem Gesetz*) (Derrida, 1985a) is particularly instructive in this instance. It highlights the title's topological quality as well as the idea that the law is something that is guarded or guarded, made manifest only by this guardianship and never appearing (or appearing not-yet). This is known as the non-manifestation. Similarly, this piece and the discussion of literature as a religion are linked to Derridean views on the denial of secret in the 1986 conference (which we merely highlight due to space constraints). (Derrida, 1999: 173 ff.) (refer to the first section of Caputo, 1997, *The Apophatic*) as well as the forgiving aporia. Regarding the confidentiality issue, we consult Michaud (2006). In light of all of this, Taylor correctly notes that “a theology is driven beyond the precincts of theology “proper” to the province of literature and literary criticism in an effort to indicate a difference that can be comprehended neither by Hegel's both/and nor by Kierkegaard's either/or.” (Taylor, 1994: 604). It speaks to language that has no domain, that flees from itself and finds no boundaries, that talks only for the purpose of speaking. Here, Derrida proposes a connection between writing and exile (1993d, 114).

However, neither negative theology nor deconstruction are just empty words that divert attention from meaningful conversation. They do talk, even if it's about nothing at all; they make a commitment. The promise of meaning, which is fulfilled through a process of *différance* and consists in its own postponement, is given by God as otherness, as meaning in retreat (Nault, 1999: 395).

This is how a language of rejection manifests itself, stripped of its oppositional logic and constative nature, or at least having emptied itself to the greatest extent possible, as a prayer and a promise. It behaves as though the promise may come true. It reveals a possibility of the word before any predication or constancy when it stops being constative, when it abandons its pretenses to signify or comprehend a reference or a sense as presence that would ground it. This signifier acts as a promise of meaning, but as such, it is independent of any sense or meaning; it does not claim presence; rather, it only promises it and continuously delays it by substitution, supplementing it with another signifier, so that it is encoded in the total absence of these. Meaning cannot be presence; it can only be expressed via language; we have access to its news, messenger, and provided word.

The promise of meaning is not fulfilled by the presence of meaning; rather, it is the other way around: any discourse on presence is made possible by the signifier's perpetually postponed promise, which acts in the signifier's complete absence.

There is necessarily commitment or promise even before speech, or at any rate before a discursive event as such. The latter presupposes the open space of the promise. [...] This commitment, this word given, already belongs to the time of the word through which, as in French, *je tiens la parole* (Derrida, 2003: 154–156)¹³.

We communicate in a universal language that is a universal representation of a singularity that cannot be represented, that dissolves into itself in its singularity, but that yet leaves its mark in that universal language (Suciu, 2012: 57). However, if one believes they have followed that path and arrived at meaning, they are only adding to the same, serving as another signifier, protector, figure of existence, or anthropomorphizing God. The emphasis on the *beyond* and the *hyper* is therefore justified, but it does so without providing context or a higher, more idealized essence – that is, *without* once more: negativity and hyper-affirmation. The promise was inherent in the apophatic language, this non-constative writing that aimed to talk only for the sake of speaking, to speak about nothing at all in order to address someone. As a result, it is simultaneously a prayer, an apostrophe, and an appeal. An

¹³« Il y a nécessairement de l'engagement ou de la promesse avant même la parole, en tout cas avant un événement discursif comme tel. Celui-ci suppose l'espace ouvert de la promesse. [...] Cet engagement, cette parole donnée appartient déjà au temps de la parole par laquelle, comme en français, je tiens la parole. » (Derrida, 2003: 154-156).

invocation, a plea for the other to answer and be present. “It constitutes an essential moment, it adjusts the discursive asceticism, the passage through the desert of discourse, the apparent referential vacuity that will only avoid bad delirium and chatter by beginning to address the other, you.”¹⁴ (Derrida, 2003: 178).

Like promise or responsibility, prayer is formed both before and during language use, and it uses the same rhetoric to go past apophatic rhetoric. It is a going, a movement, an advance to claim otherness, the gift of promise, and it motivates and directs language; it does not talk about but rather goes toward these things, with no more resolve than the other’s *parousia* and its response. As a result, the sentence exhibits the same *aporia* as the promise: both are considered to be dependent on and bound to a meaning, fulfillment, or appearance, but their effect is precisely caused by the removal of this meaning; both serve as linguistic devices in the absence of this absolute otherness, as though they were not, without being, beyond being. Language itself has an influence on its prioritization.

This is the reason Derrida called attention to the *theological becoming* of all discourse: communication can be reduced to speaking just for the sake of speaking, to rhetoric that, in acting as a trace or trace, promises something, heralds a coming that is ultimately unnecessary. Therefore, language does not stay mute or ineffable upon the abolition of grammatical anthropomorphism: language, non-manifestation, the obligation to remain silent, the authority to remain silent, and denial all persist. In this way, language has no hard or definitive boundaries; there are no boundaries for the signifier that may lead to the discovery of meaning, truth, or, ultimately, God.

With all of these being a constant deferral, an expectation, and a pledge, language is abundant in its demand. It cannot locate the void of the indescribable to draw boundaries around its domain, as this emptiness is linguistic in nature. Language, therefore, neither limits nor denies itself; rather, it denies itself: a limit is impossible. Then, when does signifier creation end? Since speech never ends and language would only return after the linguistic end, discourse always gives up, ceases, and renounces. The text stops when language stops trying. It takes the shape of *desistance*¹⁵ [*Gelassenheit*]¹⁶. In order to meet God beyond all, Silesius and Eckhart exhort readers to relinquish all identity and every standing. By defining himself as such, the so-

¹⁴ « Elle constitue un moment essentiel, elle ajuste l’ascèse discursive, le passage par le désert du discours, l’apparente vacuité référentielle qui n’évitera le mauvais délire et le bavardage que en commençant par s’adresser à l’autre, à toi. » (Derrida, 2003: 178).

¹⁵ We consult the text *Désistance*, in Derrida 2003: 201–238, for answers to all the issues this neologism raises. Many of these points are relevant to subjectivity, or deconstitution, as discussed in Coward and Foshay, 1992: 10–9.

¹⁶ We briefly address this subject here, although it is covered in greater length in Derrida: 1993d, 100 ff.

called real believer was able to fulfill the promise of having communication with God.¹⁷

The believer was created in his deconstitution, in his giving up on worldly pleasures, in his willingness to represent God, in his desisting from wanting this or that. Language does the same thing, denying its boundaries and (de)constituting itself in the process of emptying, detaching, delaying, and expanding. Denying the boundaries of language entails rejecting the discriminating language used in theses, affirmation-denial, and stances (theses). It entails giving up and accepting that one cannot escape language and that one is constantly outside of it, therefore extending it. It entails realizing that language is now a space rather than a position, a gap created by self-emptying (Foshay, 1994: 147–8; Coward & Foshay, 1992: 10). Furthermore, it is assumed that this space does not resemble a kingdom or a region with boundaries. The wandering of exile is one way that such space is extended (Taylor, 1984).

Derrida's Theology of Language and the Event of Otherness

Silesius labels one of his distichs *Der Ort is dass Wort* (2005: I, 205), or *the place is the word*, using a play on words in German. What is this deconstituted, empty language that has been left behind? What is this language that no longer holds definite viewpoints, that has abandoned dialectics and the interchange of theses, and that has spread by eroding its boundaries because it was inspired by a promise? The space of speech, the experience of a location, and the potential of the other's place are what (dis)create the language of refusal, the language that appeals, as the beginning of a promise to Alterity. Non-positional space, the void or gap in the linguistic supplement, the space or *between* positions, and so on. In this sense, a work of literature or philosophy – if there is such a thing – is no longer understood to be the depiction of something, the defense of a position, the argumentation of a thesis, or a hard posture that is ready to be challenged or disputed. It is now more about setting up a framework that allows the promise to be fulfilled than it is about maintaining. Instead, it is a *taking place* – a venue for discourse.

This always presupposed event, this singular having-taken-place, is also, for any reading, any interpretation, any poetics, any literary criticism, what is commonly called the work: at least the *déjà-là* of a sentence, the trace of a sentence whose

¹⁷ As in Silesius, 2005: 22, even a defection from God itself, as in Silesius, 2005: 92.

singularity should remain irreducible and the indispensable reference in a given idiom. A trace has taken place¹⁸ (Derrida, 2003: 168).

When we think of language as a non-positional space we must see it as an ongoing venue for the appearance, presence, or reaction of that called otherness¹⁹. For the other's incessant arrival. That is to say, there is always a vanishing point in language, an openness to a different understanding or interpretation, and it is neither positional nor semantically saturable. Language is space; it is fluid; it transcends theses and positions. The non-positional nature of language is what makes any thesis or position possible. If not, one viewpoint or one perspective would exhaust it.²⁰ It is a location of transit, an unsuitable site of ongoing appropriation (Derrida, 1993d: 93). Predicative and referential language's ontological discourse is reduced to a location, and ontology is only an exercise in writing that place – an inscription (Nault, 1999: 402).

As a result, having a position in the trace, or language, is now more important than saying or not saying, speaking or being silent (Derrida, 2003: 167) of making room for the unimaginable, the other, and the future. Giving voice to the promise of otherness installs the atrium, throne, or empty temple (Eckhart, 2014: 35–6). The language of refusal takes on an aspect of openness, a space where alterity might occur, a meaning, reading, or interpretation of the text that is different, an inconceivable and unimaginable possibility. A potential of the impossible, an openness that is neither foundation nor being (Derrida, 2003: 197), but which God may occupy or even walk

¹⁸ « Cet événement toujours présupposé, cet avoir-eu lieu singulier, c'est aussi, pour toute lecture, toute interprétation, toute poétique, toute critique littéraire, ce qu'on appelle couramment l'oeuvre : au moins le déjà-là d'une phrase, la trace d'une phrase dont la singularité devrait rester irréductible et la référence indispensable dans un idiome donné. Une trace a eu lieu » (Derrida, 2003: 168).

¹⁹ The *tritos genos* of the *khôra*, that spacing conceived as an impassible singularity that exceeds the visible-invisible, sensible-intelligible, active-passive dichotomies, situating itself beyond them as an ever virgin, ever available receptacle, is a concept of place that Derrida devotes several pages to rescuing and which Heidegger claims Plato himself would have subjugated to his dialectic (Derrida, 2003: 173 ff). The Cartesian *res extensa*, which was eventually pushed by Platonic idealism, would have taken the place of this understanding of space. Refer to Derrida's essay on the topic: Derrida, 1993c, specifically pp. 58 ff, for answers to these questions.

²⁰As Derrida notes in 1993d, 32, this aporia – basically, the aporia of refusal – is quite similar to the aporia of decision, witness, and forgiveness. We see Derrida, 2005, 52 ff. for the aporia of choice.

upon as a trace. “God is not simply his place [...] He is and has place but without being and without place, without being his place.” (Derrida, 2003: 166)²¹

The negative way, as Derrida interprets it, would imply as an intellectual operation, that is, a rejection or reduction of language centered around the noun and its attributions, in favor of a language of space, understood as the taking place of any event, which would be sterile and treacherous in the face of the excess of otherness. The exactitude and precision of language are left with an economy, so to speak, of remoteness and proximity, an address to God, a concern to be at God’s side, God understood as that Word, that Word that cannot be said or filled, if God is always beyond, if he is an *au-delà*, if he operates as a meaning that is fighting in retreat. The concept is to understand language as adverbially, that is, as having the qualities of being both close to and far from that Good without goodness: “Like the adverb *quasi* we are next to the verb which is truth”²² (Derrida, 2003: 184), just as the believer had to try to empty himself and get as close to God as possible in order for God to inhabit him. To stand next to, to come close to, to extend a hand, to pretend. In something like to an ethics of hospitality, this may be the method to call upon the other without creating him, to invoke him without betraying him, and to allow him to arrive: “Leaving the way open for the other, the very other, is hospitality”²³ (Derrida, 1993d: 102).

This would mean that every text would be occupied from the beginning by otherness, by the potential for it to become, by the chance to be different, to be read in a different manner, to be stretched out and expanded. In other words, all texts would already be deconstructed, deconstructing themselves; deconstruction would not be an act, an exercise, or a method; rather, it would be an experience of otherness, or the possibility of this experience, or the fissures and cracks, the additions to a discourse whose discursivity or solidity would always be in doubt, shifting, changing itself: I have to make sure that everything that happened by deconstruction. It is not me who deconstructs, but rather the experience of a world, a culture, and a philosophical tradition that gives rise to what I refer to as *deconstruction*: something gets deconstructed, stops working, moves, gets dislocated, gets disfigured or disagglutinated, and stops taking action; something gets deconstructed and needs to be responded to (Derrida & Ferraris, 1997: 98). *Sauf le nom* also defines deconstruction as an experience of the impossibly difficult:

²¹ « Dieu n’est pas simplement son lieu [...] Il est et a lieu mais sans être et sans lieu, sans être son lieu » (Derrida, 2003 : 166).

²² « Comme l’adverbe quasi nous sommes à côté du verbe qui est la vérité » (Derrida, 2003 : 184).

²³ « Laisser le passage à l’autre, au tout autre, c’est l’hospitalité » (Derrida, 1993d: 102).

Deconstruction has been defined as the very experience of the (impossible) possibility of the impossible, of the most impossible, without being a methodical technique, a possible or necessary procedure, unfolding the law of a programme and applying rules, that is, deploying possibilities.²⁴ (Derrida, 1993d : 31)

Only the location, the window of opportunity, and the room remain. The endeavor of each work to be a different person every time, a variation that is both impossible and productive. The endeavor or the desire to journey via language in an exodic exile over the desert in search of a promised destination that remains unknown.

Conclusion

Derrida analyzes the problem of apophatic theology – naming otherness without creating it, speaking without betraying – as a linguistic operation that reduces or dissolves ontology, theology, or religion – that is, substantive language – to a speech space. To recover, on the one hand, a language of negation and, on the other, a God understood as the ultimate other, as immoderation or excess, it has been required to purify negative theology of its discursive nature and God of its hyperessential quality. As a result, language is perceived as space, an overbearing signifier that is extended out of a sense of fulfillment for a promise kept in its augmentation and delay, and as speaking only for the sake of speaking. It never says anything, but it always refers to someone with the appellative quality of a phrase and consistently demands an appearance that is consistently shown as delayed, using a different signifier each time. Language, like space, demonstrates its constant openness to otherness, the unconsidered, the impossible, perceived as God, a meaning that is postponed, or the potential for a different reading of the text. Thus, this place is *between*, or a-positional and unsaturable, with an adverbial rather than substantive condition: it is next to or far from a Word that is always beyond, as though it had been fulfilled. It is akin to the deconstruction experience. The next, and arguably the most important, step would be to consider the relationship between literature and this language as a topology of speech. At some point, every conversation will either become literary or religious. It would entail separating oneself from names while keeping in mind that language is unavoidably a space. Conversely, it is traversable and can stray through language.

²⁴ « La déconstruction a été définie comme l'expérience même de la possibilité (impossible) de l'impossible, du plus impossible, sans être une technique méthodique, une procédure possible ou nécessaire, déroulant la loi d'un programme et appliquant des règles, c'est-à-dire déployant des possibilités. » (Derrida, 1993d: 31)

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**APOFATIČKI DISKURS I DEKONSTRUKCIJA JEZIKA: STUDIJA
DERIDEANSKE TOPOLOGIJE**

Sažetak: Ova studija ispituje složenu vezu između dekonstrukcije i negativne teologije, fokusirajući se na Deridinu interpretaciju apofatičke tradicije. Iako se dekonstrukcija i negativna teologija ponekad smatraju sličnim, ovo istraživanje pokazuje njihove ključne razlike, posebno u načinu na koji pristupaju neizrecivom i *Drugom*. Istraživanje analizira Deridina dela iz 1980-ih i 1990-ih kako bi pokazalo kako jezik može biti dekonstruktivna topologija govora koja ostaje nezasićena i otvorena za drugost. Ovaj pristup preispituje metafizičke sisteme i predlaže logiku negacije koja prevazilazi predikativni govor predstavljajući Boga kao krajnju drugost. Ova metoda poststrukturalno kritikuje Hajdegerovu ontoteologiju i bavi se problemima filozofske i književne teorije u vezi sa jezikom, tišinom i negacijom u božanskoj reprezentaciji. Rad nastoji da pokaže kako Deridina dekonstrukcija negativne teologije može unaprediti savremene diskurse o jeziku, drugosti i neizrecivom usvajanjem diskursa koji govori putem tišine i odlaže značenje u *différance*.

Ključne reči: dekonstrukcija, negativna teologija, apofatički diskurs, drugost, *différance*

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