

The Impact of Deconstruction on Islamic Thought: A Critical Analysis of Mohammed Arkoun's Work

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Abstract

Ideologies are directly albeit not always perceptibly related to methodological and epistemological themes. Social psychology also reveals that knowledge depends upon the policy of rejection or incorporation of various philosophies. In the journey of human thought dawned the age of reason with the Era of Enlightenment. Gradually universal values and scientific method gained supremacy. And then all the grand narratives stood redundant and rejected giving rise to the need to re-search, re-analyze, and re-think every work done thus far with the aim to de-construct the now-discarded. This research studies the greatly admired post structural theory of deconstruction and its proponents in both the Western and Muslim civilizations to have a better understanding of it as well as evaluating its impact on the contemporary Muslim thought. The rationale of the study is a critical appraisal of the theoretical concepts in the Muslim world in response or reaction to the current epistemological influences from the West. This exploration led to the conclusion that the scholars of the Islamic world missed the point by going a bit too far as the Holy Quran and collections of authentic Ahadith explicitly state what Muslims should reject or incorporate. The remedy comprises updating the conventional way of thinking and interpreting things, acquiring the ability to think the unthinkable and the previously unthought, honest hard word, incessant striving for excellence, as well as discarding getting overwhelmed by whatever gains 'currency' in the largely impulsive Western thought.

Dedication

Dedicated to all my family and friends; teachers and gurus; colleagues and companions; students and wherewithal; and everyone else who prayed for me!

May all of them be always blessed with the very best of everything in this world and the hereafter! Ameen!

Acknowledgements

Alhamdulillah! Finally! I am done! Allah be praised for making it possible for me!

What appeared to be a piece of cake from the time when my inspiration Dr. Amjad Waheed agreed to be my supervisor, to the finalization of the topic of this research project, to the approval of the proposal turned out to be a delusion in the end as the reality of a terribly terrifying trial, a nightmarish experience followed in its wake!

Delays --- both deliberate and unintentional --- took their toll. To start with I took it lightly as everyone kept saying 'it's no big deal for you!' A couple of bouts of severe ill health and an unusually longer time to recuperate added to my misery. Later my Hadith course got extended by a few months! After that, my adorable laptop started playing games with me.

At long last when things got fixed after much toil, a million prayers, (un)tiring efforts, and shedding many a tear, our UPS refused to cooperate and the electricity department almost succeeded in doing its bit to defeat me in my race against time! I must admit now that on more than a couple of times I was on the verge of calling it quits!

Nevertheless, the purchase of a new note-book, my astutely shrewd husband's solid support all along the long and winding lane, and persistent prayers of my mother and sisters kept me motivated to move on despite all the odds! My inspiring supervisor, Dr. Amjad's patience plus his unrelenting pep talks, supplemented by my friends and family's indefatigable insistence made it possible for me to carry it on till its completion, albeit delayed! My profound gratitude just can't be expressed in words! Overwhelmingly obliged is the way I feel! Thank you all; for making it happen!

Jzakahum khairun kaseera! Ameen!

Abida Khan

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Introduction

Challenging the traditional knowledge and thinking of the day has always been a major pursuit of philosophy since its early development with Socrates. Great philosophers over the centuries, like Locke, Hume, and Kant, abiding by this practice, developed an unusually new notion of philosophy to analyse the previous knowledge. Illustrating the critique that exposed the limits of man's knowing powers as well as revealing the essential conditions to put those powers into action was Kant's novel epistemological feat. Contemporary French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–84), however, put forward the idea of the necessity to put an end to this Kantian practice. Focusing on the modern biological, psychological and social sciences, Foucault challenged the belief that these human sciences offered “universal scientific truths about human nature”¹.

He established the truth that they were simply terms of moral and political obligations of a particular culture. By the declaration of Foucault's “critical philosophy” that the so called universal/scientific truths were actually just the outcome of dependent

¹ <http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-70239-3/cosmopolitans-and-heretics>.

Discipline and Punishment is indicated through Foucault's shift to "genealogical" period from the earlier "archaeological" time. In 1969 the practical discussion, Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* offered, created the implicit historical approach ("archaeology")² he had applied in his previous works, e.g. *The History of Madness*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of Things*.

The concept of a close link of a discourse of philosophy defining reality according to different theories of power and state is mainly taken from Michel Foucault's work. Discourse derived from the Latin word *discursus* means "to run to and from".³ It indicates "communication through speech or in black and white".

Every philosophical discourse affects our views on all things.

"For example, two strikingly divergent discourses can be used about various guerrilla movements describing them either as "freedom fighters" or "terrorists". The discourse chosen provides the vocabulary, expressions and the style needed to communicate. These discourses are rooted in different rhetorical genres and meta-genres that constraint and enable them."⁴

A discourse can also be experienced in multimedia types of communication e.g. using the speech, writing and sign languages in circumstances ranging from verbal accounts to instantaneous communications, and from chattings to course books.

As a body of text or communiqué, no discourse is locally isolated but has internal as well as external relations to other discourses. These interdiscourses and interdiscursivity

² Michel [Foucault](#), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* trans. [A. M. Sheridan Smith](#), 2002. (London and New York: Routledge, 1969), 78.

³ It is a generalization of the concept of conversation to all modalities and contexts. The totality of codified linguistic usages attached to a given type of social practice; e.g. legal discourse, medical discourse, religious discourse etc.

⁴ <http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-70239-3/cosmopolitans-and-heretics>. accessed: 5/9/2010.

also act together to create a new discourse. In humanities and at times in social sciences as well, 'discourse' is an official approach made obvious by means of language.

Being a common margin it defines a particular theme, or a possible truth, or according to Judith Butler, "the limits of acceptable speech".⁵ In Foucault's archaeological method the structures of thinking and information, "epistemes⁶ or discursive formations in Foucault's words,"⁷ are ruled by principles of syntax and reason as well as by rules running beneath the awareness of individual subjects. The limitations of thought in a given domain and period are determined by this system of multiple conceptual possibilities. Foucault introduced the expression *épistème* in his most prominent work, *The Order of Things* (1966). He used structuralist methods to disapprove of the scientific self-importance of the disciplines of natural history, linguistics, and political economy (called "human sciences" in France).

It means that the historical pre requisites that ground knowledge and its discourses are only applicable for a particular time and place. In his later works, Foucault explained that quite a lot of epistemes as a range of components of a variety of power-knowledge schemes can be present together and interrelate with one another simultaneously. As man understood the reality differently from time to time therefore he discussed it differently too which is called a discourse by Foucault. Foucault split episteme into three chronological times; "classical centuries, middle ages, and modern time"⁸.

According to Michel Foucault, a certain episteme or zeitgeist fills every civilization or age. This episteme comprises the content matter and the nature as well as limits of the

⁵ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative* (New York & London: Routledge, 1997), 63.

⁶ the way to view and understand reality

⁷ Gary Gutting, Michel Foucault, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* ed. Edward N. Zalta, (Stanford University Press, 2012), 21.

⁸ http://journal.ui.ac.id/upload/artikel/04_Siti%20Rohmah%20-%20Revisi.pdf. Accessed: 3/9/2010.

knowledge of that particular age going beyond which was impossible for any theory of knowledge or ideological activity of that time. An episteme is thus the successful discovery of certain permanent paradigms of observing the same object or it is the invention of some effective principle to accept those eternal patterns in their entirety and complete range. While the episteme of one age may become a referral point for another, nevertheless it certainly cannot be a justification for that age, e.g. Foucault's work *The History of Madness* is an intellectual attempt of scrupulously different discursive formations to express the thoughts about madness from 17th to 19th centuries. And the episteme of our age, yet indeterminate, comprising of certain unclear limitations can be best expressed as Post Modernity or Post Structuralism.

Thomas Kuhn's notion of a paradigm shift is also somewhat similar to Foucault's use of the term episteme though the former remained confined to science only because of being a result of a chain of cognizant judgments of scientists to follow certain ignored deposits of queries. However, Foucault's episteme as the

“epistemological unconscious of an era, i.e. the blueprint of knowledge in a particular episteme is based on a set of fundamental assumptions”⁹

present there but for the most part invisible to people operating within that particular episteme. This led Foucault to conclude that contrasting premises and subjects can be together in a discipline. In his attempt to reveal the comprising restrictions of a discourse and the principles allowing their efficiency, he upheld that no philosophy needs to seep into and form science. The French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard's concept of an "epistemological rupture"¹⁰ influenced the thinking of both Kuhn and Foucault. More recently, Judith Butler examined the employing of speech-act theory for political reasons in her book *Excitable Speech* using the concept of episteme.

⁹ Michel [Foucault](#), *The Order of Things*, 21.

¹⁰ Gaston Bachelard, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind: A Contribution to a Psychoanalysis of Objective Knowledge* (MA: Beacon Press, 1986), 59.

Michel Foucault as well as the social philosophers stimulated by him believed that:

"an entity of sequences of signs as enouncements/ statements (enoncés)"¹¹

is an intangible substance that facilitates signs to give particular recurring connections to "objects, subjects and other enouncements"¹² to make up a discourse. Foucault used the concept of discursive formation or the regularities that produce such discourses, in his study of large pieces of information on political financial system and natural history.

Certain profound structural principles or organizations construct reality and depending on the level of experiences of life as well as operating and interpreting those principles it may also be constructed differently. Consequently, our knowledge consists of merely the signs which have gained a particular meaning because of being distinct from other signs which leads us to the conclusion that

"there is no knowledge of reality, but only of symbolized, constructed experience. Thus our knowing of our experience itself is only a mediated knowing, which is the only thing knowing can be."¹³

As we exist in our own particular set of laws and our own classifications of signs, we are in no position to translate any of our experiences into some symbolic form and as such we cannot 'know' it in a useful way. All texts are intervened in their construction, communication, and function because of being just a course of action of intervention.

And by the structure of ideas and practices therefore an author's ideas cannot be transferred to the readers through his text alone. Another prominent French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, arriving at the scene when the Western thought was at

¹¹ Michel [Foucault](#), *The Order of Things*, 29.

¹² <http://www.djoser.sex-treffit.info/p-Discourse>. accessed: 5/1/12).

¹³ Charles Sanders Peirce, "Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic: Further Consequences of Four Incapacities", *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 1869. V. II, N. 4, 191.

this point of development, focused the “unmasking of the devaluation of writing and the way in which it has sedimented in the culture”¹⁴ over time.

His idea of devaluation was used to deconstruct philosophical classics, socio-historical civilization, linguistics, anthropology, psychoanalysis and of the so called contemporary scientific texts.

Working with these Western concepts and theories, French-Algerian researcher and philosopher of Berber origin, Professor Mohammed Arkoun (1928--2010), a very significant secular scholar in Islamic studies, supplements modern rational Islamic restructuring. For some 30 years, he remained a reviewer of the concerns about Islam and Islamology, supporting Islamic modernism, as well as promoting secularism, and humanism. Arkoun was often on TV channels and magazines, discussing major hot issues in French, English, Berber, and Arabic. He has authored several books in French, English and Arabic. His numerous articles appeared regularly in various academic journals and his work has been rendered into numerous languages.

Arkoun critically assesses different belief-systems, traditions of exegesis, theology and jurisprudence to liberate reason from dogmatic constructs. Considering Islam as both a religion and a time-honoured tradition of thought, Arkoun attempts to surmount the restrictions of a purely descriptive and chronological handling of history by advocating a critical analysis of the entire Muslim thought, from the Quranic world view to the variety of contemporary discourses.

Arkoun explores the epistemological options underlying different discourses, development of facts, events, ideas, beliefs, performances, institutions, works of art and individual biographies based on reliable archives. He argues that writing history, without taking into account each word, concept, and attitude used by the social

¹⁴ Hugh J. Silverman, ed., *Continental Philosophy II, Derrida and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 41.

protagonists, misleads those who incorporate these historic depictions as the unquestionable truth about the past.

'The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World portrays Arkoun as a very significant contemporary Islamic scholar'.¹⁵ Dr. Carool Kersten an explorer of the contemporary Muslim thought and the history of Islam in Southeast Asia in his book *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam* evaluates the works and teachings of Arkoun, his role to understandings of Islam in the global age and the controversy as well as accusations of dissent, his work has produced.

Carool Kersten outlines the curve of influence shooting from this group of new Muslim scholars, whose work is still not so well recognized, however whose impact is increasing gradually. Kersten displays an insightful grip of present scholarly history in examining the contributions of three cutting edge Muslim scholars engaged productively with the most important currents of twentieth century thinking. These thinkers' "efforts to break out of the old paradigms and devise a novel and humanistic understanding of Islam, often at the risk of severe censure." The ideas of these Muslim thinkers are neither traditionalist, nor modernist nor reformist/revivalist but a new breed who emphasize revisiting the turath / the heritage with important implications for the present and the future of the post-Islamist Muslim world.

A German Islamic scholar Ursula Günther wrote a dissertation on the thoughts of Arkoun, published as 'Mohammed Arkoun - Ein moderner Kritiker der islamischen Vernunft (Mohammed Arkoun - a Modern Critic of Islamic Reason)'.¹⁶ Ursula Günther declares that the most unique feature of Arkoun is his applying of the 'findings and

¹⁵ John L. Esposito, Ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (Oxford University Press: 2009), on line version; 2012. 353.

¹⁶ http://www.arabphilosophers.com/English/philosophers/contemporary/contemporary-names/Muhammad_Arakoun/English_Material/A_Modern_Critic_of_Islamic_Reason_English.pdf. accessed: 6/8/12

methods of modern social sciences and humanities for analysing Islam and to build up his own premise of Islam and Islamic reason.

Günther feels that Arkoun's association with the New Sorbonne University, Paris and his permanent residence in France also paved the way to bridge the space between the Orient and the Occident. Arkoun's acquaintance 'with the West's Middle Eastern and Islamic studies' as well as with the latest 'Islamic research and the Islamic view of the West enable him not only to view critically both sides but also to avoid the biased standpoints frequently governing both Western and Islamic research and study.

Siti Rohmah Soekarba of University of Indonesia has also critically analysed Mohammed Arkoun's work in an article entitled; The Critique of Arab Thought: Mohammed Arkoun's Deconstruction Method. Siti feels that Arkoun's Islamic thought has been influenced by the modern philosophical concepts of the West. He states that Arkoun wanted to reconstruct a new Islamic discourse after its 'deconstruction'. However his reconstruction is limited, rigid and a move away from the past. The scholar concludes that Arkoun, detached from the scholarship in the Islamic world, is way off the mark from his stated objective.

Through a textual analysis of Arkoun's writings, Dr Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu an Assistant Professor at the Department of General studies, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, shows that Arkoun's major concern was the methodology of interpretation and that he studied the Quran for the sake of methodology. That is why his presentation which read more like mathematics has been largely neglected. Drawing on postmodern discursive models, he believes that Arkoun is determined to work out an interpretative mechanism to unravel the historicity of the Quran.

Malki Ahmad Nasir of International Islamic University Malaysia has studied the Indonesian scholars' reception of Arkoun's thought in his A Case of His Method of Interpreting the Qur'anic Text, in May 2004. His study concludes that Arkoun's works

have given others an opportunity to see Islam in the context of their own experience and Western influence. He feels that according to Arkoun, the Quran needs to be read in a critical spirit omitting some parts of it. He also promotes the idea of religious pluralism by claiming that other religions and cultures also share Islamic sharia and certain other concepts of the Quran.

The present study consisting of three chapters examines the current trends in the Western thought and evaluates its impact on the thought of the contemporary Muslim scholars with a special reference to the most significant and prominent one among them i.e. Mohammed Arkoun. The first chapter explicates the theories of the Western thought e.g. structuralism, post structuralism and deconstruction. The second chapter looks at the impact of these current developments in the Western thought on the works of Mohammed Arkoun and other Muslim intellectuals. And the third chapter critically analyses the theory of deconstruction, the concepts related with it, as well as the work of the Muslim deconstructors and provides an in-depth appraisal of Arkoun's ideas and thought. This critique leading to its logical conclusion based on the findings of the whole discussion winds up this study.

Deconstruction

a. Structuralism

Structuralism first came into prominence as a specific discourse with the work of a Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure. As an expansive philosophical intellectual movement structuralism grew primarily in France and generally in the entire European continent till the mid-20th century. It was first and foremost a response to French Existentialism as well as an illustration of High-Modernism. Studying the primary structures in educational goods such as transcripts using logical conceptions from linguistics, psychology, anthropology and other spheres to understand them, structuralism laid emphasis on the rational and systematic character of its outcome. It stated that human customs can be known through a formation called a "third order"¹⁷, different equally from the associations of realism as well as the institutes of thoughts and visions modeled on language, i.e. structural linguistics.

Structuralists put a special emphasis on language as a system of rules and conventions or "langue" rather than on "parole" i.e. language used to express a concept. Structuralism analyzes the placement and usage of words and symbols, instead of what the words and symbols actually represent. However, while a plot may be a concept rather than a symbol, structuralism also compares and contrasts these to find patterns among works of literature to enable both the reading of texts as well as that of cultures.

¹⁷ Post-Structuralist Narrative Theory. http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Post-structuralist_narrative_theory, http://medlibrary.org/medwiki/Post-structuralist_narrative_theory.

In particular, the French Structuralists knowingly concentrated on the emerging Relativism and Constructionism without disconnecting their reductionist inclinations.

The central notion of the teachings of the “father” of structuralism, Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure is that

“language may be analyzed as a formal system of differential elements. E.g. the notion of the linguistic sign, the signifier, the signified, and the referent.”¹⁸

Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss derived structuralism from a school of linguistics focusing not just on the meanings of the words, but also the patterns they form. Jonathan Culler a 1966 graduate of Harvard, an English professor at Cornell and the author of *Structuralist Poetics* is the voice of structuralism in America. A. J. Greimas, a Lithuanian linguist also contributed to the theory of semiotics; “study of sign processes or signification and communication, signs and symbols”¹⁹ besides the study of how meaning is constructed and understood.

On the whole structuralism appears to be an extension of Formalism because matters of literature, i.e. both study structure instead of social or historical substance and both intend to put the study of literature in the realm of science, to evaluate it logically and objectively. Besides they are both closely related to semiotics. Structuralism is in fact a search for deep structures universal to all cultures. Once the underlying characteristics of a text are discovered they can be opened up to discover the meaning of the text and determine how it produces meaning. Structuralism analyzes pieces of work as ‘textual’, i.e. composed of signs, governed by conventions of meanings, and ordered according to

¹⁸ Rudi Keller, *Expression and Meaning. A Theory of Linguistic Signs*, trans. Kimberley Duenwald. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 87-95. <http://www.reference.com/browse/ferdinand+de+saussure>

¹⁹ Marvin Katilius-Boydston, “*The Semiotics of A. J. Greimas: An Introduction*”, in *Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, Volume 36, No.3 (LITUANUS Foundation, Inc. 1990), 5.

a pattern of relationships etc. to concentrate on patterns, both inside a work and among multiple works.

Russian Formalists and some structuralists suggest that all written accounts can be considered variants on universal descriptive models therefore any new story is simply a twist on an already existing/older one. For example, the concept of Shakespeare's Capulets and Montagues; the cliché of two quarrelling families with children who fall in love, has been used numerous times with slight variations. In media texts, structuralists claim to work out the use of deep structures. E.g. In a film genre structuralists work out the deep structures that give meaning to the text of which neither the film maker nor the audience necessarily be aware.

Structuralists investigate narratives using versions of binary oppositions as proposed by Strauss. They suggest all story telling has deep structures; e.g. good/evil, culture/nature, man/woman etc. A structuralist analysis of a media text looks at how tensions between these oppositions are introduced and resolved. Soap operas also have stock characters like the gossip, the 'bad' boy, the loveable rogue etc. while genre texts can be categorised according to characteristics they have in common. The idea is that the surface structure of a drama has a deeper underlying resonance which helps give the audience reinforcement of the rules and expectations of a culture.

b. Post-structuralism

Post structuralism is not a single cohesive movement with a set of shared sayings or methodologies.

“It emphasizes the ways different aspects of a cultural categorization, from its most ordinary material details to its most abstract theoretical models, decide one another.”²⁰

Like Structuralism, it pays special attention to determine the identities, values and economies. However,

“Post-structuralists, tackle the separation between relation and component without reducing the subjects of their study to an essential set of relations represented with abstract, functional schemes or mathematical symbols as in Claude Lévi-Strauss's algebraic formulation of mythological transformation”²¹.

Three most prominent post-structuralists Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault were first counted among the so-called "Gang of Four" of structuralism par excellence. The works of Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler and Julia Kristeva are also major examples of post-structuralism. In addition to them Umberto Eco, Kathy Acker, John Fiske, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean Baudrillard, Félix Guattari René Girard, Sarah Kofman, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray are some other leading post-structuralist research-scholars.

Post-structuralists combine observations and references from several, extensively different fields

“into a synthetic vision of knowledge and its relationship to experience, the body, society and economy”.²²

Unlike Structuralists, Post-structuralists, consider the

“notion of “the relation” or of systemization itself as an indispensable part of any stated conclusion rather than a sign of truth as an independent, self-contained state or object.”²³

²⁰ [Michel Foucault](#), *The Order of Things*, 33.

²¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Structural Study of Myth, in *The Journal of American Folklore* , Vol. 68, No. 270, Myth: A Symposium (Oct. - Dec., 1955), 428-444 [American Folklore Society](#) URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/536768>.

²² [Michel Foucault](#), *The Order of Things*, 27.

Nonetheless, initially European structuralism did not go well in the United States. However in the later half of the twentieth century it gained ground in the USA too because of the poststructuralist theorists like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida. Besides the growing criticism of structuralism also made John Hopkins University, USA hold a conference on post structuralism in 1966. Derrida's lecture at the conference, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Human Sciences," proposing theoretical limitations to structuralism and asking for new theories on non structuralist terms is now considered a manifesto against structuralism. Derrida was particularly seen in the United States to be leading a movement which believed in the impossibility of a general science of meaning, beyond structuralism to "post structuralism".

Likewise structuralists moving away from the extremely austere understanding and applications of "structure" also came to be known as "Post-structuralists" in the United States as they themselves rejected being called Postmodernists. Nevertheless many so-called "post-structuralist" writers rejected these labels as mere images of convenience. Nonetheless a large amount of American intellectual literature in the Humanities strongly links Post-structuralism with the broader and vaguer movement of Postmodernism²⁴.

Thus "post-structuralism" was a product of the continental philosophers who rejected the methods and assumptions of analytical philosophy of structuralism. Forming groups in the British and American universities they planned to get rid of the theories claiming to have discovered absolute truths about the world like the metaphysical, meta-narratives of historical progress, or dialectical materialism. That is why many commentators have criticized this relativist and nihilist movement. For instance, several critics consider Michel Foucault as a promoter of a type of "postmodern" critique for his

²³ [Michel Foucault](#), *The Order of Things*, 19.

²⁴ Postmodernism holds that realities are plural and relative, and dependent on the people involved as well as their interests. Attempting to problematise modernist overconfidence it endorses that there is no absolute truth and that people's perception of the world is subjective.

breaking free from the utopian and transcendental nature of "modern" critique by challenging the universal norms of Enlightenment.

Roland Barthes, an important name of post-structuralist theory, floated the concept of the "meta-language" as a systematized way of talking about concepts like meaning and grammar beyond the constraints of a traditional language in his work, *Elements of Semiology* (1967). He asserts that symbols replace words and phrases in a meta-language and these meta-languages may actually replace first-order languages. Barthes exposed the regressive structuralist system in which orders of a language depended upon a meta-language.

Post structuralists neither accept the idea of deep structures nor do they find any point in searching for meaning. They point out that the existence of meaning can never be certain consequently they emphasize the interpretation of a text more than its production. They believe that as meaning in a text is uncertain and unreliable therefore texts should be analysed by looking at what is missing or has been omitted. Therefore post structuralists claim that without an audience a text just does not have any meaning.

Because of its common reservations about analytical objectivity and equally constrained oppositions in logic, Post-structuralism emphasizes on the social structure of knowledge and its paradigms, as well as on its representation of the indefinite inter-determination of material culture, values, physical practices and socio-economic life. Like structuralism and antihumanism, post-structuralism also dismissed the Enlightenment subject. Existential phenomenology also had such a major influence on post-structuralists that they can aptly be called "post-phenomenologists as well."²⁵

Thus summarizing the post-structuralist movement is quite difficult. Nevertheless by and large it can be taken to consist of

²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodern_Movement. accessed: 10/12/11.

“a body of different responses to Structuralism or the heterogeneous works of prominent mid-20th-century continental intellectuals, philosophers and theorists.”²⁶

France became the place of origin of Post-structuralism during the 1960s as an antinomian movement criticizing structuralism. J. G. Merquior stated that many leading French thinkers of the 1960s developed a love-hate relationship with structuralism.

“For the last fifteen years, the immense and proliferating criticizability of things, institutions, practices, and discourses; a sort of general feeling that the ground was crumbling beneath our feet, especially in places where it seemed most familiar, most solid, and closest to us, to our bodies, to our everyday gestures.”²⁷

Starting his career as a structuralist Roland Barthes gradually drifted towards the post-structuralist thought. In 1967, Barthes described

“a metaphorical event in his “The Death of the Author” as a reliable source of meaning for a given text. Barthes argued that a literary text has multiple meanings, with the author being not the prime source of the content. The "Death of the Author," Barthes maintained, was the "Birth of the Reader," as the source of the propagation of meanings of the text.”²⁸

Barthes gained a special significance in post-structuralist theory by giving the concept of a "meta-language" in his work, *Elements of Semiology* (1967).

“As a systematized way of talking about concepts of meaning and of grammar, breaking the restriction of a traditional (first-order) language symbols replace words and phrases in a meta-language. Thus several meta-languages are required for numerous explanations of first-order language. Consequently meta-

²⁶ "poststructuralism." Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Accessed; 25 Oct. 2011. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/472274/poststructuralism>.

²⁷ J. G. Merquior, *From Prague to Paris: A Critique of Structuralist and Post-Structuralist Thought* (The University of California: Verso, 1987), 193.

²⁸ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author.” *Art and Interpretation: An Anthology of Readings in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Ed. Eric Dayton. (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 1998), 383-386.

languages may replace first-order languages. Many of them also re-evaluate the philosophical ideas associated with Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud."²⁹

In a 1976 lecture series, Foucault summarized the general thrust of the post-structuralist movement:

"each post-structuralist philosopher responded to the traditions of phenomenology and structuralism. Both movements rejected that knowledge could be centred on the human knower to seek a securer foundation for knowledge".³⁰

Post-structuralists distrusting the freedom of theoretical principles from combined prejudice and the manipulation by authority turned down the concept of a "pure" or "scientific" methodology in social analysis, semiotics or philosophical speculation. They asserted that no theory dealing with human society or psychology could condense phenomena to elemental systems or abstract patterns, nor could abstract systems be dismissed as less important offshoots of an original character. Thus systemization, phenomena and values all were part of one another.

Events like general political anxiety, May 1968 revolts by students and workers against the French Government, French Communist Party's (FCP) support for the unfair policies of the USSR, as well as the disillusion with the orthodox Marxism increased the interest in alternative radical philosophies including feminism, Western Marxism, anarchism, phenomenology, nihilism etc.. All these contrasting perspectives, labeled "subjugated knowledges," by Michel Foucault opposed the dominant Western philosophy and culture. Post-structuralism offered a means of justifying these criticisms, by exposing the primary assumptions of many Western norms.

Jacques Derrida one of the most significant philosophers of the early post-structuralist movement presented a thesis on a perceptible split in the intellectual life. He interpreted it as a "decentering" of the former intellectual space in a 1966 lecture "Structure, Sign

²⁹ Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 71.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Trans. David Macey, eds. Bertani, Mauro & Fontana, Alessandro. (New York: Picador, 1976), 21.

and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science". Instead of progress or deviation from an identified centre, Derrida described this "event" as a kind of "play."³¹

Post-Structuralists remove creation of "essential relations" in ancient cultures, languages or representations of psychological events and trends. They also discard the restrained types of Aristotelianism, Rationalism or Idealism. In addition to that they criticize the absolutist, quasi-scientific arguments of Structuralist theorists as more reflective of the mechanistic partiality inspired by bureaucratization and industrialization than of the inner-workings of actual primitive cultures, languages or psyches. In addition to that, Post-structuralists emphasize the inter-determination and possibility of social and historical phenomena with each other and with the cultural values and bigotry of perception. Instead of cutting apart such realities they hold that they must be understood as both causes and effects of each other. Most Post-structuralists with a broader outlook state that on a closer analysis all formal assertions on phenomena, reality or truth, depend on some structure or circular reasoning and frequently contradictory self-referential logic. Therefore uncovering the obscured patterns of circularity self-reference and paradox within a given set of statements was crucial for authorization or approval of new perspectives and new practices. In this respect, Post-structuralists expanded Martin Heidegger's philosophical project, who considered himself an extension of the implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's work.

The Open Work by Umberto Eco (1962) with its multifarious influences is post-structuralist as working closely with Barthes, Eco explicitly states his post-structuralist position and the assonance with his friend's stance in the second Preface to the book

³¹ Jacques Derrida, *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* Alan Bass, tr. Writing and Difference. (New York: Routledge, 1966), 278-95.

(1967). The entire book is an appraisal of "structure" and "form," giving the reader a strong power for understanding the text.³²

Drawing upon the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, the anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, and the deconstructionist theories of Jacques Derrida, poststructuralists hold that language is not a transparent medium connecting one directly with a "truth" or "reality" outside it but rather a structure or code, whose parts get their meaning from their dissimilarity with one another and not from any connection with an outside world.

Generally post-structuralists work on the following basic assumptions:

1. The perception of "self" as some odd thing, detached and rational, is not real. Man consists of apprehensions linking differing information statements (e.g. gender, race, class, profession, etc.). For that reason, a reader may be able to read a text correctly by grasping the connection of the text with his/her own self-perception because it has a vital function in one's comprehension of the text. Whereas researchers' points of view on the self (or the subject) differ, they all consist of discourse(s). For instance, Lacan's description has a psychoanalytic aspect, whereas Derrida emphasizes the component of the effects of power of post-modernist theory.

Thus an author's proposed meaning is less important than the one the reader perceives. Post-structuralism claims that a literary text does not have a single purpose. The notion that each reader constructs his/her own meaning of a certain transcript can be generalized to every state wherever a subject distinguishes a mark. The terms like "the signified 'slides' under the signifier",

32 [Umberto Eco](#), *The Open Work* (first published 1962). Trans. [Anna Cancogni](#), [David Robey](#). (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989), 113-170.

and the “primacy of the signifier” emphasize that an individual constructs sense (or the signified in Saussure's scheme) from a signifier.³³

2. Rejecting the concept of the worth of the prevailing connection in the sequence order, post-structuralism opts to describe these links and the reliance of the prevailing word on its seemingly passive complement.
3. Post-structuralism not only offers a study of the creation of knowledge but also a critique of structuralist principles. It argues that the revision of basic constitutions is biased and full of misinterpretations because history and culture had conditioned them. Thus to know something e.g. one of the various connotations of a writing, both the thing itself as well as the systems of knowledge that produced that particular object need to be studied. Post-structuralists commonly term post-structuralism chronological, and categorize structuralism as explanatory following Ferdinand de Saussure's division involving the historical (diachronic) views and graphic (synchronic) comprehension. Thus post-structuralist investigations focus history to study eloquent perceptions.

By learning about the changes occurring in the cultural concepts in due course of time, post-structuralists try to comprehend the way the readers appreciate those conceptions at a given time. Simultaneously structuralists also try to grasp the historical explanation of the civilizing thoughts so as to understand the way the author understood them in his own time. For instance, Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* is a history as well as an assessment of enlightening feelings about insanity. The topic of history in current European contemplation is connected to the impact of “George Wilhelm, Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* and Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*”.³⁴

³³ <http://www.enotes.com/topic/Post-structuralism>. accessed: 3/9/2010.

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1927. trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962),39.

4. A post-structuralist critic uses diverse viewpoints and diverging interpretations to generate a comprehensive understanding of a write up and to examine the shifting senses of a text with regard to particular variables. In the post-structuralist approach to textual analysis, the primary subject of inquiry is the reader not the author. This dislocation is called 'the destabilizing or decentering of the author'³⁵. Without an essential obsession about the author, post-structuralists look for the alternative inconsistent and unauthoritative bases for meaning '(e.g., readers, cultural norms, other literature, etc.)'.

In his article "Signification and Sense," Emmanuel Lévinas commented on this innovative sphere of semantic investigation:

"...language refers to the position of the listener and the speaker. To seize by inventory all the contexts of language and all possible positions of interlocutors is a senseless task. Every verbal signification lies at the confluence of countless semantic rivers. [Words] signify from the "world" and from the position of one who is looking".³⁶

A prominent member of the British Socialist Workers Party, and a Marxist critique Alex Callinicos, argued against

"the idealist irrationalism of poststructuralism, the existence of any radical break from modernism to postmodernism, and the socio-economic developments of the late 80s and early 90s representing any fundamental shift from orthodox prototypes of capital increase. The modernist era might be conceived as the continuous blurring of an either/or. Either modernism is a historical era that perpetuates late Romantic and Victorian ideals [...], or modernism is merely an ideological appellation for a set of shared stylistic, cultural, and philosophical concepts and practices. Either modernism is what postmodernism has reacted to [...], or modernism is the prototype from which postmodernism has not only evolved but also has continued to perpetuate."³⁷

³⁵ <http://www.enotes.com/topic/Post-structuralism>. accessed: 3/9/2010.

³⁶ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Signification and Sense* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 57.

³⁷ V. E. Taylor, C. E. Winqvist, ed. *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 251.

c. Deconstruction

The analytical technique post structuralists use to analyse a text is called deconstruction.

'Deconstruction can perhaps best be described as a theory of reading which aims to undermine the logic of opposition within texts.'³⁸

While deconstruction does not intend to discover the real meaning of a text it does involve two things, which are;

1. a consideration of what is missing from the text and
2. foregrounding in the text, the absent or the missing

The term 'deconstruction', means to see the way the essential message of the text is betrayed or destabilized by the 'accidental' attributes of a text. As a philosophy of meanings deconstruction deals with the ways writers, texts, and / or readers construct meaning.

"In linguistics, philosophy, and literary theory, it means exposing and undermining metaphysical assumptions involved in systematic attempts to ground knowledge, especially in academic disciplines."³⁹

Deconstruction, a major theory associated with structuralism proposes that human logic has given some speculative and abstract opposites, set in an order in a transcript. For example, "the binary pairs of Enlightenment/Romantic, male/female, speech/writing, rational/emotional"⁴⁰, signifier/signified, symbolic/imaginary etc.

³⁸ David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 121.

³⁹ Hugh J. Silverman, Ed. *Continental Philosophy II; Derrida and Deconstruction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1989), 57.

⁴⁰ J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 59.

As a well established but still controversial philosophical theory, deconstruction is aimed at the (re)reading of all theoretical works. In accepted practice, deconstruction depicts analytical taking apart of conventions and conventional approaches of thinking. Deconstruction considers every written work as “a complex, historical and cultural process rooted in texts’ relations to one another as well as in the institutions and conventions of writing”.⁴¹

Broadly speaking deconstruction is a sequence of strategies and a deposit of theoretical statements about words, their connotations, and reading texts. The verb "to deconstruct" is frequently employed as a synonym to criticize or show the discrepancy of a point in a text.

“As a school of philosophy Deconstruction made an enormous impact on Anglo-American criticism of literature, psychology and philosophy. It overturns the Western metaphysical tradition and represents a complex response to a variety of theoretical and philosophical movements of the 20th century, e.g. Husserlian phenomenology, Saussurean and French structuralism, and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis.”⁴²

Jacques Derrida coined the term deconstruction in 1960s by building up on Ferdinand de Saussure’s claim of ‘arbitrariness of verbal signs’⁴³. In his book *Of Grammatology* (1967) he applied “Martin Heidegger's concept of *Destruktion* or *Abbau*, to textual reading”⁴⁴ referring to “a process of exploring the categories and concepts that tradition has imposed on a word, and the history behind them”.⁴⁵

Deconstructive arguments and techniques are also related with other theories like pragmatism, feminism or critical theory. Being an offshoot of post structuralism,

⁴¹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (London: Routledge, 1994), 49.

⁴² *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 329.

⁴³ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/155306/deconstruction>. accessed: 5/3/2012.

⁴⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983), 1.

⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time, Introduction, Part II*. 5.

deconstruction is not only a metalanguage itself but also an exposé of all languages and discourses. The only way to correctly understand meanings requires deconstructing the hypotheses and systems of information which create the misapprehension of an odd meaning. This deconstructive operation can turn a male into a female, change speech to writing, and convert rational into emotional.

Deconstruction investigates the basics of Western thought but neither to eliminate their inconsistencies and paradoxes nor to break away from the demands of the traditional nor to set up its own system.

Derrida described deconstruction as

"an unclosed, unenclosable, not wholly formalizable ensemble of rules for reading, interpretation and writing."⁴⁶

Criticism of the Enlightenment, of literature and of metaphysics, especially the original writings of Plato, Rousseau, and Husserl is the central concern of deconstruction without making any of these works pointless. To a certain extent deconstruction shows these classics to be teeming with manifold and at times incompatible connotations. Furthermore, deconstruction does not assert that conceptions are limitless; it simply states that concepts can be interpreted in diverse ways by putting them into innovative perspectives. Deconstructive analyses confirm that certain peculiarities and disagreements do not have any normative consistency opening conceptual oppositions to reinterpretation in which the two terms have at the same time "conceptual dependence or similarity as well as conceptual difference or distinction".⁴⁷

Deconstructive argument explores the ways 'this similarity or difference' is concealed or disregarded, and lays emphasis on the significance of the situation in pronouncing a decision besides studying the ideological effects of the use of conceptual oppositions. It

⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 40.
http://lrd.yahooapis.com/_=11geg11gv/http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Seferin

⁴⁷ [Jack M. Balkin, "Deconstruction", *A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory*, ed. Dennis Patterson 2nd. Ed. \(UK: Wiley- Blackwell, 2010\), 117.](#)

sees whether their disguised or suppressed instability lends unnecessary plausibility to legal, philosophical, religious and literary arguments and doctrines.

"Rarely has a critical theory attracted the sort of dread and hysteria that deconstruction has incited since its inception in 1967."⁴⁸

As a special type of exercise in reading, a technique of analysis and a form of critical investigation, Barbara Johnson explains the term in her book, *The Critical Difference* (1981): "Deconstruction is not synonymous with 'destruction', however. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means 'to undo' -- a virtual synonym for 'to de-construct.'"

"If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. It is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself."⁴⁹

Deconstruction as incorporated without meaning into everyday language, associated with "grunge" is explained beautifully in the following passages;

"...We think we speak the English, or French, of today but our language of today is of yesterday and elsewhere. The miracle is that language has not been cut from its archaic roots -- even if we do not remember, our language remembers, and what we say began to be said three thousand years ago. Inversely language has incorporated our own times, before even we know, the most recent elements, linguistic and semantic particles blown by the present winds. Here is an example, which I find magnificent and comic, magnificently comic and comically magnificent, that I have taken from an American magazine destined for the public dated April 1993. It is the beginning of an illustrated fashion article:

Deconstruction may be the darling of Europe but in the U.S. it's a love-hate thing. Creases are ironed out, raw edges refined, grunge given a touch of polish. In New York, memories are not only short, they are entirely selective. Grunge -- the so-called fashion revolution which has launched a thousand headlines in the past six months -- seemed, at the American collections last week, never to have happened. Here, in these few lines, treasures snatched from the most noble, the most elaborate, the most complex thoughts and discourses of our century and the sixteenth century imperceptibly touch and are exchanged.

⁴⁸ David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 464.

⁴⁹ Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference* (USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 121.

Here, "deconstruction" has become a term that adds a "commercial" mark, a surplus value of "modernism" to domains totally unforeseen by the author of deconstruction. Here is a word derived from the philosophical thinking of Derrida, which no longer resides in philosophy, but "launches fashion products, bathroom items, sports equipment, political attitudes. In brief a word which, having left its native shore henceforth circulates in the world's blood".

And so this magical word made banal meets (does it know?) another formula equally magical and rendered banal, this on centuries ago, that reverberates under a made-up form in the phrase quoted: The revolution which has launched a thousand headlines. What makes a comeback here in fashionable dress is Marlowe's beautiful Helen..."⁵⁰

Derrida's philosophy criticizes structuralism also. Therefore Derrida states that

"the motif of deconstruction has been associated with poststructuralism although it was a word unknown in France until its "return" from the United States."⁵¹

In fact Derrida is in favor of the corruption of the unpolluted "origins by the structures of language and temporality. Manfred Frank has even referred to Derrida's work as Neostructuralism"⁵² which contained his initial apprehensions about the structure of the texts. Indeed deconstruction is tied up with both structuralism and antistructuralism something which Derrida terms "structural problematic." He considers his first use of the word deconstruction during the peak of "structuralism an "antistructuralist gesture" because "Structures were to be undone, decomposed, desedimented." He thinks that both Genesis and Structure are necessary forms of explanation and the difficulty to reconcile the two is the tension of the structural problematic. Therefore

⁵⁰ Hélène Cixous, *The Hélène Cixous Reader* trans. Susan Sollers. (London: Routledge, 1994), Preface, xx-xxi.

⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation With Jacques Derrida* Ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 3.

⁵² M. Frank, *What is Neostructuralism?* trans. S. Wilke & R. Gray. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 211.

“some objects need to be described in terms of structure while others in genesis,”⁵³ structural problematic is that “beneath the serene use of these concepts [genesis and structure] is to be found a debate that...makes new reductions and explications indefinitely necessary.”⁵⁴

In the Western philosophical tradition, deconstruction identifies and targets a

“metaphysics of presence”, logocentrism or phallogocentrism which holds that speech-thought (the logos) is a privileged, ideal, and self-present entity, through which all discourse and meaning are derived.”⁵⁵

Martin Heidegger on philosophy as the mission of destroying ontological conceptions including commonplace implications of terms like time, history, being, theory, death, mind, body, matter, logic etc.:

“When tradition becomes master it 'transmits' is made so inaccessible, proximally and for the most part, that it rather becomes concealed. Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial 'sources' from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand”.⁵⁶

Heidegger believes that custom can become calcified:

“If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about dissolved. We understand this task as one in which by taking the question of Being as our clue we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved

⁵³ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 19.

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 53.

⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 57.

⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 43.

our first ways of determining the nature of Being—the ways which have guided us ever since”.⁵⁷

In Europe deconstruction being a reaction to structuralism is considered a poststructuralist philosophy. Deemphasizing the subjects’ autonomy in determining cultural meanings, structuralists claimed that linguistic structures shaped personal thinking thus breaking up the subject matter into the superior powers of civilization. Deconstruction hits at the so called unwavering, universal, or ahistorical assumptions about structures of meaning. Like other communal philosophies which try to diminish individual contemplation and achievement to enrich constructs, deconstruction is also thought to be an antihumanist theory especially in the United States where its thoroughly subjectivist assertion makes transcripts signify anything an individual desires them to represent.

Most of the texts written to define deconstruction or to demonstrate the misconceived notion of any attempts at delimiting it are quite difficult to read, comprehend and summarize. Whereas writers of varying levels of open compassion or opposition to deconstruction are also plentiful. Arguments put forward range from the statements that deconstruction is a kind of philosophical Velvet Revolution to liberate the entire Western thought and custom, methodically shifting unfair privileges given to ‘white males’ and additional dominating powers to the detriment of others, or to the declarations that it is actually a risky ‘nihilism’ aspiring to completely demolish the Western scientific and moral ideals.

While the political right of every possible shade mocks deconstruction; the left’s reception also varies from antagonism to co-operation. The major French deconstructists have been “leftist” in their political affiliations. Furthermore while the authors writing passionately about deconstruction continue the practice of exercising an “idiosyncratic” manner of intricate Western philosophy, using numerous

⁵⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 44.

neologisms and allusions, with playfulness and irony, its adversaries consider the deconstructive discourse to be unnecessarily hair-splitter.

Because deconstruction attacks the continuation of presumptions and theoretical classifications, it is very hard to consign a clear and simple definition to it. Derrida and other deconstructionists resisted its valid descriptions and elucidations on purpose. As an alternative however they chose its alinear presentations supported by wide-ranging word play and witticism. While in 1970s the term deconstruction was strictly applied to the works of Derrida, Hillis Miller, Paul de Man and Barbara Johnson, by 1980s it began to incorporate a range of sweeping theoretical projects, techniques and ideas being applied in various fields of philosophy, literature etc.. In the United States, deconstruction was introduced through literary criticism thus it has always been confused with the other novel strategies of interpreting literary texts and reader-response theories.

Martin Heidegger was probably the earliest thinker using the expression *Destruktion* or *Abbau* contradicting Nietzschean annihilation. Barthes' works also contributed greatly to deconstructive theories about texts. Among its other numerous explorers are Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Paul de Man, Jonathan Culler, Barbara Johnson, J. Hillis Miller, Jean-François Lyotard, and Geoffrey Bennington; most of whom vigorously opposed requests to define the term in clear words.

In response to requests for a definition of deconstruction, Derrida said,

"I have no simple and formalizable response to this question. All my essays are attempts to have it out with this formidable question."⁵⁸

According to Derrida,

⁵⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Signeponge-Signsponge* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1985), 4.

“Deconstruction is a school of thought, a method of reading, or a textual event”⁵⁹ but not an analysis ... [it is not] “a critique, or a method, or an act, or an operation”.⁶⁰

Derrida states that,

“Deconstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness to the other”⁶¹,

and a challenge

“to discover the non-place or non-lieu which would be [that] 'other' of philosophy”⁶².

Defining deconstruction is also difficult because describing it in the language of Western metaphysics means accepting the very thoughts that are the themes of deconstruction. Nevertheless, some researchers tried to define it roughly.

An English translator of Derrida, David B. Allison gave details of the term "deconstruction" in the following words in the introduction:

“It signifies a project of critical thought whose task is to locate and "take apart" those concepts which serve as the axioms or rules for a period of thought, those concepts which command the unfolding of an entire epoch of metaphysics. It is somewhat less negative than the Heideggerian or Nietzschean terms "destruction" or "reversal"; it suggests that certain foundational concepts of metaphysics will never be entirely eliminated...There is no simple "overcoming" of metaphysics or the language of metaphysics.”⁶³

Another account of deconstruction is given by a well-known deconstructionist, Paul de Man of the Yale School as;

⁵⁹ J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, third ed. (London: Blackwell, 1991), 93.

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Signsponge*, 3.

⁶¹ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 124.

⁶² Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 112.

⁶³ Jacques Derrida, *Introduction to Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (New York: Northwestern University Press, 1989), xxxii. n.

"It's possible, within text, to frame a question or to undo assertions made in the text, by means of elements which are in the text, which frequently would be precisely structures that play off the rhetorical against grammatical elements." ⁶⁴

Richard Rorty, a famous analyst of Derridian philosophy defines deconstruction as

"the term 'deconstruction' refers in the first instance to the way in which the 'accidental' features of a text can be seen as betraying, subverting, its purportedly 'essential' message."⁶⁵

John D. Caputo explains deconstruction by stating that:

"Whenever deconstruction finds a nutshell—a secure axiom or a pithy maxim—the very idea is to crack it open and disturb this tranquility. Indeed, that is a good rule of thumb in deconstruction. That is what deconstruction is all about, its very meaning and mission, if it has any. One might even say that cracking nutshells is what deconstruction is. In a nutshell ...Have we not run up against a paradox and an aporia [something contradictory]...the paralysis and impossibility of an aporia is just what impels deconstruction, what rouses it out of bed in the morning..." ⁶⁶

Niall Lucy pointing out the impracticality of giving a definition of the term comments that:

"While in a sense it is impossibly difficult to define, the impossibility has less to do with the adoption of a position or the assertion of a choice on deconstruction's part than with the impossibility of every 'is' as such. Deconstruction begins, as it were, from a refusal of the authority or determining power of every 'is', or simply from a refusal of authority in general. While such refusal may indeed count as a position, it is not the case that deconstruction holds this as a sort of 'preference'".⁶⁷

Paul Ricoeur, another important follower and analyst of Derrida's thought, describes deconstruction as "a way of uncovering the questions behind the answers of a text or tradition". Some secondary works like *Deconstruction for Beginners*⁶⁸ and

⁶⁴ Robert Moynihan, *A Recent Imagining* (New York: Archon Books, 1986), 156.

⁶⁵ Richard Rorty, *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 117.

⁶⁶ John D. Caputo, *After Jacques Derrida Comes the Future* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 32.

⁶⁷ Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 339.

⁶⁸ James Powell, Joe Lee, *Deconstruction for Beginners* (London: Writers & Readers Publishing, 2005), 39.

Deconstructions: A User's Guide⁶⁹ while explaining deconstruction disapprove of the straying away from the real texts and Derrida's genuine location.

Derrida himself always reluctant to define deconstruction once when asked 'what is Deconstruction' scornfully retorted;

"What deconstruction is not? Everything, of course. What is deconstruction? Nothing, of course".⁷⁰

However more obliging with negative analyses of the school of thought he founded, Derrida says,

"Deconstruction is a word whose fortunes have disagreeably surprised me. I little thought it would be credited with such a central role—it has been of service in a certain situation, but it's never appeared satisfactory to me. It is not a good word, and not elegant!"

In addition he observes,

"There is not – one deconstruction and deconstruction is not a single theory or a single method."⁷¹

In 1988, commenting on the reaction to his legendary declaration that "There is nothing outside the text," Derrida described deconstruction as:

"One of the definitions of what is called deconstruction would be the effort to take this limitless context into account, to pay the sharpest and broadest attention possible to context, and thus to an incessant movement of recontextualization".⁷²

The toughest hindrance preventing a summary of Derrida's thinking is his below mentioned disclaimers;

⁶⁹ Nicholas Royle, *Deconstructions: A User's Guide* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 112.

⁷⁰ Wood & Bernasconi, ed. *Derrida and Differance*, (Warwick: Parousia Press 1985), 1-5. "Letter to a Japanese Friend". 10 July 1983.

⁷¹ Wood & Bernasconi, ed. *Derrida and Differance*, 7.

⁷² <http://lrd.yahooapis.com/ylc=X> <http://www.answers.com/topic/deconstruction>. Accessed: 6/2/11.

“Deconstruction is neither an analytical nor a critical tool; neither a method nor an operation; nor an act of a subject on some text i.e. it is a term that defies both definition and translation.”⁷³

At another place he states that

“Deconstruction is not an analysis, a critique, a method, an act, or an operation.”⁷⁴

While Derrida was the original user of the term in this theoretical and linguistic meaning, he frankly admits that,

"I little thought it would be credited with such a central role in the discourse that interested me at the time."⁷⁵

Derrida declares that the “logocentrism” of the West is expressed through the continuous conflict of speech and writing; the common hypothesis being that the sphere of “truth” has a pre-existence. Thus the letters of an alphabet or of words are considered different from and unimportant to the observable facts they signify. As such the logocentric Western concept of truth and reality cannot exist inside the language therefore it has been deeply entrenched as a prejudice in the Western thought. Derrida calls this bias “metaphysics of presence” or the predisposition to regard the basic theoretical notions of truth, reality, and being as “presence, essence, identity, and origin” without taking any notice of the essential parts of absence and difference.

Derrida’s well known statement "there is nothing outside the text" means that all references used to deduce meanings from a text are themselves texts. Therefore an actually objective, non-textual reference to begin an interpretation just does not exist.

⁷³ http://ignatiusinsight.com/features/colson_derrida_nov04.asp. Accessed: 6/2/11.

⁷⁴ Andreas Rasche, "Deconstruction and the '(N)either/(N)or'", *The Paradoxical Foundation of Strategic Management*. (Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 2008), 127-177.

⁷⁵ Jacques Derrida, "A Letter to a Japanese Friend," *Derrida and Difference*, ed. David Wood & Robert Bernasconi. (Warwick: Parousia Press, 1985), 1.

Thus deconstruction can be defined as “an effort to understand a text through its relationships to various contexts”.⁷⁶

When Toshihiko Izutsu asked Derrida to define his theory so as to ensure the accuracy of Toshi’s task of translation of "deconstruction" into Japanese, Derrida replied that his query is “equal to "what deconstruction is not, or rather ought not to be.”⁷⁷

Cautioning against regarding deconstruction as a mechanical operation Derrida claims that

“Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one” and that “It is true that in certain circles (university or cultural, especially in the United States) the technical and methodological “metaphor” that seems necessarily attached to the very word “deconstruction” has been able to seduce or lead astray.”⁷⁸

The first time Derrida mentions deconstruction in *Of Grammatology* (1967) he also calls it "de-sedimentation”:

“The "rationality" [...] which governs a writing thus enlarged and radicalized, [defining writing as all that gives rise to an inscription in general, including pictorial, musical, sculptural "writing"] no longer issues from a logos. Further, it inaugurates the destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the deconstruction, of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos. Particularly the signification of truth. All the metaphysical determinations of truth, and even the one beyond metaphysical onto-theology that Heidegger reminds us of, are more or less immediately inseparable from the instance of the logos, or of a reason thought within the lineage of the logos, in whatever sense it is understood: in the pre-Socratic or the philosophical sense, in the sense of God's infinite understanding or in the anthropological sense, in the pre-Hegelian or the post-Hegelian sense.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deconstruction>. Accessed: 12/1/11.

⁷⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 11.

⁷⁸ [http://lrd.yahooapis.com/_ylc= http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Seferin](http://lrd.yahooapis.com/_ylc=http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Seferin). Accessed: 9/23/10.

⁷⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 39.

In 1972 discussing the historical features of deconstruction Derrida commented:

“To "deconstruct" philosophy [...] would be to think – in the most faithful, interior way – the structured genealogy of philosophy's concepts, but at the same time to determine – from a certain exterior [...] – what this history has been able to dissimulate or forbid [...] By means of this simultaneously faithful and violent circulation between the inside and the outside of philosophy [...a] putting into question the meaning of Being as presence” .⁸⁰

In 1980 Derrida defined deconstruction as an "ensemble of rules for reading, interpretation and writing:"

“From about 1963 to 1968, I tried to work out - in particular in the three works published in 1967 - what was in no way meant to be a system but rather a sort of strategic device, opening its own abyss, an unclosed, unenclosable, not wholly formalizable ensemble of rules for reading, interpretation and writing.”⁸¹

Beardsworth explains that applying deconstruction to an object only as a method of rules disregarding the empirical facts of the transcript itself, would be an irresponsible act of reducing deconstruction to merely a reader's thesis made to fit the text in addition to becoming a very subjective process only to find what it sets out to find. Thus each deconstruction while having something common with other examples of deconstruction must also be essentially different. Derrida affirms the fact that “Deconstruction takes place; it is an event.”⁸²

Ruling out any breaking away from the dogmas of language to carry out a pure critique in Kantian manner, Derrida argues that language consists of signifiers. Thus using a language without emphasizing the being and metaphysics is impossible. As a consequence, because of the text's getting in the way, the Western metaphysics cannot find the meaning despite its being somewhere "out there". Suspecting the notion of neutrality Derrida believes that dogmatism is implicated in everything including

⁸⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 59.

⁸¹ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass. (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 39.

⁸² Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 4.

deconstruction to a certain extent; however deconstruction simultaneously de-sediments and challenges dogmatism. Derrida says,

"the more it is written, the more it shakes up its own limits or lets them be thought."⁸³

Deconstruction has made an intense impact on the reading of all literature that claims human knowledge to be either uncontrollable or as rational as Western thought wants us to believe or that language functions in restrained yet incongruous styles to make firmness always elude.

In 1988, talking about the public response to his well-known declaration; "There is nothing outside the text," Derrida described deconstruction as:

"One of the definitions of what is called deconstruction would be the effort to take this limitless context into account, to pay the sharpest and broadest attention possible to context, and thus to an incessant movement of recontextualization".⁸⁴

On the impracticality of an indisputably accurate deconstruction Derrida said;

"It is an opening that is structural, or the structurality of an opening. Yet each of these concepts excludes the other. It is thus as little a structure as it is an opening; it is as little static as it is genetic, as little structural as it is historical. It can be understood neither from a genetic nor from a structuralist and taxonomic point of view, nor from a combination of both points of view."⁸⁵

Deconstruction works wholly inside the text to depict and challenge the standpoint, theories, and dogmatic foundations of the transcript.

Maintaining the critical spirit of the Enlightenment thought deconstruction questions the extra rigid or self-righteous practices of faith mostly by directly reading theoretical and supplementary texts as well as by focusing on the instances of 'aporia' '(the

⁸³ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, 41.

⁸⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 91.

⁸⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Invention of the Other* (New York: Routledge, 1984), 129.

unresolved tension or conflict)⁸⁶ usually overlooked by conventional research scholars. Yet deconstruction is not a license to textualist 'freeplay' to dispose of every standard of interpretive conformity, rigour or truth.

Martin Heidegger in his course entitled *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, stated that phenomenology as a method of doing philosophy includes reciprocally related three steps—reduction, construction, and destruction. Derrida affirms that construction necessarily involves destruction, and destruction is identified with deconstruction. Calling deconstruction an '-ism' is however, like harnessing it to some familiar, stable, logocentric ideas of conventional thinking. Hence Derrida refused to accept the term deconstructionism for his theory so that it would not become just a means of 'analysis or a critique; or a method or a project'.

Works like "J. Culler's *On Deconstruction* (1982); R. Gasche's *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (1986) and P. Kamuf's *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* (1991)"⁸⁷ demonstrate the gradual loss of the intellectual significance of the theory from the common reception and reputation of multiple subjects' erudition from 1980s to 90s. John D. Caputo described Derrida's work of 1970's, a Nietzschean free play of signifiers and that of the 1990s as a "religion without religion."⁸⁸

Condemning the practice of the Western mindset to look for the primary constitution of knowledge and reality Derrida confronted the philosophical confines placed on individual thinking. On logocentrism, he postulated that every text is founded on

⁸⁶ Andreas Rasche, "Deconstruction and the '(N)either/(N)or'", *The Paradoxical Foundation of Strategic Management*, 129.

⁸⁷ <http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Deconstruction>. Accessed; 10/4/2011.

⁸⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the cultural logic of late capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 81.

“hierarchical dualisms e.g., being/nonbeing, reality/appearance, male/female, where the first element is always regarded stronger and thus essentially true. He also explained that all systems of thought have an assumed center, or based on some Archimedean point”⁸⁹.

In a deconstructionist analysis, first the implicit basic point in a twofold formation is discovered and then it is analyzed critically. Thus the so called constant and rational is exposed as unscientific and inconsistent, and understanding is exposed to be a misinterpretation. Deconstructive investigations directly analyse the figural and allegorical characteristics of texts to observe their interaction with the given points of view. A deconstructor is in a continuous search of the unpredicted connections in various pieces of a text, or

“loose threads that at first glance appear peripheral yet often turn out to undermine or confuse the main argument. A deconstructor considers the multiple meanings of key words in a text, etymological relationships between words, and even puns to show the speaking of a text with different and often conflicting voices. Behind these techniques are a more general probing and questioning of familiar oppositions between philosophy (reason) and rhetoric, or between the literal and the figural. Although the figural and rhetorical elements of a text are taken as merely supplementary and peripheral to the underlying logic of its argument, a closer analysis often reveals that metaphor, figure, and rhetoric play an important role in legal and political reasoning. Often the figural and metaphorical elements of legal texts powerfully support or undermine their reasoning.”⁹⁰

This strike of deconstruction at the foundations of the text to upset everything and to broaden the vision puts off a lot of authors who attempt to normalize, regulate or appropriate it by turning deconstruction into a convenient way of rigid rules consistently applicable to an assortment of texts. Deconstruction does not undertake to explain texts in the conventional understanding as a built-in substance or topic. The elements which deconstruction uncovers can be continuously divided into smaller

⁸⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 59.

⁹⁰ J. M. Balkin, "Deconstruction", *A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory*, ed. Dennis Patterson 2nd. Ed. (UK: Wiley- Blackwell, 2010), 197.

constituents. Thus deconstruction is unending because a complete disentanglement of obscure, multiple, and complex elements is simply impossible. That is why deconstruction holds heterogeneity, ambiguity, plurality, complexity, and multivocality in the highest regard.

Deconstructors had never been

“interested in providing a single, definitive interpretation of a text; rather they remained concerned with breaking down traditional structures of language to allow the free play of its elements. They seek to open up texts to limitless interpretations by freeing the texts from the traditional structures of language.”⁹¹

Moreover, a methodological and complete description of a deconstruction strategy is impossible and against the real spirit of deconstruction. Nevertheless, a certain consistency exists in

“Derrida’s texts and (non) concepts. Ideas such as ‘trace’, ‘dissemination’, and ‘différance’ stand in a definite relation to each other and encompass a communality that make a different perspective on texts possible. Derrida confesses that deconstruction generates some systematic consequences and some general rules may be determined from it to employ in real situations”⁹²

so as to make it a recurring strategy acknowledged in various fields. Pursuing the meaning of a Continental philosophical or literary text, deconstruction approach exposes the supposed contradictions and internal oppositions in its creation to show the irreducibility, complexity, instability, or impossibility of those foundations. Deconstruction demonstrates that a transcript is not a distinct piece but includes a number of conflicting and clashing connotations; where every word can be interpreted in a number of ways inextricably linked to the text; and that the irreducible incompatibility of these interpretations prevents them from going beyond a certain

⁹¹ deconstruction." Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Accessed; 18 Oct. 2011. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/155306/deconstruction>.

⁹² <http://nml.cult.bg/data/music%20research/deconstruction%20in%20music/08-introductiontodeconstruction.pdf>. Accessed; 8/18/03.

point referred "as an aporia in the transcript making a deconstructive reading aporetic."⁹³

Various methods and techniques are applied to deconstruct a text to lay bare its multiple possible readings as well as their consequential inner inconsistencies, and to stave off the 'binary oppositions (e.g. masculine/feminine, old/new)' present in it. Deconstruction is used in a lot of dissimilar spheres of postmodernist thinking, e.g. postcolonialism, as done by Gayatri Spivak.

Derrida's deconstructive readings of Western philosophers offer an examination of a text that comes across the variation amid composition of the text and its Western metaphysical character. Deconstructionists have a propensity to contemplate on understandings of exacting transcripts, "paying attention to the way they point out to other writings because of which many scholars severely criticize it too."⁹⁴ Deconstructive evaluations explain the way texts cannot plainly be comprehended as someone's writing meaning something discrete but as a substitute it ought to be studied as places of disagreements contained by a certain culture or view point. A deconstructed text reveals a large number of usually conflicting opinions at the same time. Comparing deconstructive readings of a text with a long-established one shows numerous suppressed or ignored viewpoints.

A deconstructive analysis looks at binary oppositions within a text for instance, male and female, or white and black to show the impossibility of completely separating the two contrasting expressions.

"A deconstructor looks for the ways in which one term in the opposition has been "privileged" over the other in a certain text, argument, historical tradition or social practice for being considered the general, normal, central case as compared to the other taken as special, exceptional, secondary or derivative. Or something

⁹³ http://lrd.yahooapis.com/_ylchttp://www.answers.com/topic/deconstruction. Accessed; 6/2/11.

⁹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Invention of the Other*, 331.

may be privileged because of its being more true, more valuable, more important, or more universal compared to its opposite."⁹⁵

In addition, the possibility of numerous opposites makes many different types of privileging happen at the same time. A privileging can be deconstructed in many ways. For example,

"The reasons for privileging A over B which are also applicable to B can be explored, or how the reasons for B's secondary status apply to A. One may also consider how A depends upon B, or is actually a special case of B. All these exercises try to get a new understanding of the relationship between A and B, which is always subject to further deconstruction".⁹⁶

Deconstruction is historical as it perceives temporality inherent in the meaning, which can only be structured against that which was before it, which in turn was based on what was before that. Thus a particular meaning is not only

"a shifting field of relations in which there is no stable point, but also in which dynamic opposing meanings may be present simultaneously. Meaning is textually modulated in an interweaving play of texts and it circulates. It is always meaning by difference, or by being the other. The meaning-through-difference draws on historical 'traces' or 'filiations'."⁹⁷

Its etymological functioning turns to the metaphorical root - meanings of words to understand their function within the web of differentiation. According to Derrida, the strongest and encompassing conflict considers writing as derived from or less important than the spoken word / speech.

"This opposition makes speech a more authentic form of language because the ideas and intentions of the speaker are immediately "present" (spoken words, in this idealized picture, directly express what the speaker "has in mind"), from the speaker or the author and thus more liable to misunderstanding. However Derrida argues that the spoken words function as linguistic signs only to the

⁹⁵ J. M. Balkin, "Deconstruction", *A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory*, [109](#).

⁹⁶ J. M. Balkin, "Deconstruction", *A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory*, [211](#).

⁹⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/155306/deconstruction>. Accessed; 4/7/09.

extent that they can be repeated in different contexts, in the absence of the speaker who originally uttered them.”⁹⁸

Thus speech may be called a language, only because it has features usually reserved for writing, such as “absence,” “difference”. Derrida feels that images of verbal communication in the Western beliefs depend on “examples and metaphors” associated with writing describing speech as a form of writing. However, the deconstructive analysis neither wants to reverse the speech / writing opposition nor does it claim no dissimilarities involving words and writing. However to a certain extent, it only wants to relocate the conflict to prove that none of the expressions is more important. Both spoken and written words are types of a more sweeping “arche-writing” (archi-écriture) that encompass all the natural languages as well as systems of illustration.

Extending the insight of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, Derrida concludes that “privileging” of spoken word over written is founded on an indistinct image of implications in normal speech that recognizes connotations of words with definite thoughts or purpose in the narrator or writer’s mind. Saussure believed that the meanings we relate with alphabetic letters are randomly linked to reality. Linguistic meaning is fixed by a “limitless,” “infinite,” and “indefinite” “play” of differences between words and not by a thought or intention existing before and beyond a language. To describe the manner ‘a meaning is formed by the play of differences linking words’⁹⁹, Derrida invented the term *différance*, implying both dissimilarity as well as an act of delay.

“As the meaning of a word is always a work of contrasts with the meanings of other words, and because the meanings of those words in turn depend on contrasts with the meanings of still other words and so on, it means that the meaning of a word is not entirely there for us; it is eternally deferred in a

⁹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 89.

⁹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 93.

considerably long chain of meanings, each of which contains the "traces" of the meanings on which it depends."¹⁰⁰

That is why deconstructionists believe that meaning of a text also take account of the left out of the transcript or disregarded or hushed up by it. Derrida believes that language converted into its written form implies that the logos or thought of the reader is not the originator of the meaning of the writing. In its place the individual language consumers draw on an outside written down sign-system existing as a separate entity. Thus the connotations of words are not created in an individual's logos/thought but by the external and fixed structure of the language being used as a medium of conveying the message. Thus every user has to function inside this external structure of meaning without having much control over anything. Therefore neither an author's intention is the final authority in determining the meaning of a write up nor can a reader restructure it without at least some difficulty. The need to interpret, discuss, or translate words to one extent or another makes deconstruction an essential requisite for the dynamic construal of the meaning of a text.

Derrida claims that traditionally speaking or spoken language has always been taken as the most important means of communication whereas written text has been considered speech's lesser offshoot. He argues that language "effaces itself" by considering speech as thinking. Linguistic signifiers or the spoken sounds (phonemes) of a language are hard to remember because of the quick and easy grasp of the signified implication of speech i.e. the signifiers or written symbols (graphemes) that make up a language.

Derrida states that usually a writer is absent or dead while the speaker is always there before the listener. That is why the reader cannot get clarifications if he faces some difficulty with the understanding of the text. The translated language consumers usually resort to can be understood completely only if the readers are able to think above and beyond their familiar understanding of the usage of language. The most

¹⁰⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 111.

noticeable feature of the written 'language i.e. being a system of signs', guides Derrida to state that

"everything [...] gathered under the name of language is beginning to let itself be transferred to [...] the name of writing."¹⁰¹

It indicates that spoken word was the only form considered as a language and the previously held theory of meaning and disregard of the signifier is immature.

Derrida applied his idea of the 'devaluation of writing', to the philosophical classics, to the "socio-historical totality" as well as for deconstructing a wide range of recent scientific works. Discovery of devaluation of writing all over these texts, was "insistent, repetitive, even vaguely wide compulsive," and "the sign of a whole set of long-standing constrictions".¹⁰²

Derrida affirms that deconstruction depicts historical limitations of the entire philosophical history full of inconsistencies, denunciations, and doctrines. Deconstruction unmasks them all in a given text. Derrida stresses to undertake this task of unmasking and deconstructing texts to make them envisage new impartial words and their meanings, even though it is impossible to finish cleansing of all the historical philosophical, literary and scientific works. Later this project of deconstruction needs to build up neutral concepts without favouring either term of these oppositions. In a French interview in 1967 Derrida said:

"...[I]t has been necessary to analyze, to set to work, within the text of the history of philosophy, as well as within the so-called literary text,..., certain marks, shall we say,... that by analogy (I underline) I have called undecidables, that is, unities of simulacrum, "false" verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, resisting and disorganizing

¹⁰¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 111.

¹⁰² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 99.

it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics.”¹⁰³

Major Assumptions of Deconstruction

- Deconstruction rejects all the universal structural principles of language supposed to have existed even 'before' the occurrence of language. Deconstruction's links with existentialism is revealed through its emphasis on the tangible, traditional and conditional. The historical, transitory and dependent structures operate through differentiation and displacement.
- Deconstruction agrees with the existence of a free, physical world but it also asserts exterior to the text nothing exists. Everything we know as human/acquired knowledge is text and made up of signs not of concrete existence.
- Every text is made up of its difference from as well as its similarity with other texts. And every text consists of all that it rules out.
- Opposites are opposites only because of being united. Opposites the alternating imprint of one another cannot be a unity and be themselves. Nihilism without a logocentrism and logocentrism without nihilism is just not possible. Nor can there be any presence without absence, or absence without a presence.
- Both difference and deferral are inbuilt in a language.
- The competition between grammar and rhetoric is also innate in language. The two kinds of meanings are never identical nor have one a priority of 'meaning' over the other.
- Deconstruction is extremely historical for its belief that meanings can be constructed only in opposition to that which was prior to it, which in turn is structured against that what was before that. Therefore meaning differs as well as defers.

¹⁰³ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, Trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 42-43.

- Deconstruction claims that meaning is an everchanging sphere of relationships without any stable point but containing several dynamic and divergent meanings simultaneously. This interlinked play of texts creates textually adaptable meaning which go on circulating, always being meanings by difference or by being the other creating or drawing on 'traces' or 'filiations.
- The function of deconstruction is etymological i.e. resorting to the root. Deconstruction is basically and deeply human and humane. It works through metaphorical meanings to understand the way words operate in the web of differentiation so as to cover the gap of the non-human. Although it appears to be disagreeing it affirms rich diversity, paradoxes, and vitality of life for deconstruction knows that affirmation exists only in the existence of and because of negation.
- Deconstruction counters Humanism to explain the shakiness of the concept which substitutes the concept of 'man' for that of 'God'(or 'order', 'nature', 'Truth', 'logos', etc.) and place 'man' at the center of the purpose of human life.
- As a theory of reading analysis, deconstruction can be applied to any text although Derrida mostly deconstructed philosophical texts, exposing their metaphysical inconsistencies and the historicity of the so called absolute works.
- Deconstructive reading is more powerful if the text is more 'metaphysical' or universal and 'meaningful'. Likewise literature is considered to possess an immense probability for a thorough counter-reading of deconstruction.

Development of Deconstruction Todate

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) declared that analogous conflicts in reasoning point out one another. Emphasizing the construction of concepts on historicity and culture, Heidegger explains the dynamic procedure of description by the "Hermeneutic Circle". He is of the opinion that the current day philosophy must improve the basic inquiry of Dasein/ Being or Being-in-the-World of the Pre Socratic thinkers which has been regulated, neutralized and normalized from the time of Plato. Besides documentation

must be outlined of Dasein's transcendence action or absentmindedness in the philosophical history through a new search for the grounding both within ourselves as well as in the world. Instead of being a historical engagement of the expression "being" in philosophy, an innovative and continuous commitment with an assortment of thoughts, approaches or observations must be adopted which permits all sorts of feasible occurrences, probable reality of beings as well as all the dissimilarities that subsequently emerge and develop.

Getting away from his professor Husserl's Phenomenology, Heidegger made an archaic come back to the never-asked questions of Ontology, that of acknowledging a built-in distinction between things in themselves and as they appear to be. In this respect, Heidegger resembles another major predecessor of Post-structuralist and Postmodernist thought, the late Romantic philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche. He negated the thought that facts subsist externally or unconnectedly of the thought process and vocalization of ideas. He admitted that only a practice based on experience and history can express the construction of conceptions as they cannot be simply derived externally through apriori circumstances free from historical mind and changing experiences. Heidegger's Instrumentalist and Negativist views of Being and reality convert them to deeds, processes, trends, opportunities and inquiries.

Thomas Samuel Kuhn (1922–1996) held the short-term agreement among scientists responsible for the swift transformation of the foundation of scientific knowledge. He made up the expression "paradigm shift" in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and made contributions to the discussions on the supposed impartiality and detachment of empirical method in the Natural Sciences from authoritarian partiality.

Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) identified a crisis underlying Modernism in the 'discourses of the Human Sciences' propelled since the beginning of the "computerized" or "telematic" age. He believes that it concerns the motivations as well as justification measures to make claims of investigation. It claims that implicit givens or values

corroborating the crucial hard work of scholastic studies ever since the end of the 18th Century may not be applicable any longer especially in the investigations of Social Sciences & Humanities. With the real problems getting too much connected to automatic computation, storing and recovering information, knowledge is becoming progressively more "exteriorised".

This materialized knowledge thus turned into a product is bought and sold both by the producers and consumers. Being neither an unrealistic end-in-itself nor a contrivance able to produce autonomy or any collective advantage such knowledge loses its humanistic and spiritual links. Having no relation with instruction, teaching, learning or personal improvement it becomes only a "data" ever-present, continuous, materialistic, and with neither any contexts nor pre-requisites.¹⁰⁴

Lyotard believes that quasi-mythological thinking about the purpose, reason and progress of man perpetuate the value-premises academic research. He terms these huge, background constructs "Meta narratives". These Meta narratives though diluted by quick informatization and commercialization still remain in Western society. Lyotard points out that the transfer of power from the attendance and insight of the learners, from the sincerity of Reason in quest of a variety of knowledge for the collective advantage of man to the mechanized record and market controls sorting out the ideas of 'justification' and the rationale for research particularly in the fields concerning life, humanity and meaning.

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) gave the concept of 'discursive regime'. He re-invoked the previous philosophies of 'episteme' and 'genealogy' to elucidate the links involving meaning, power, and social behavior contained by social orders in his famous works like *The Order of Things*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, *Discipline and Punish* and

¹⁰⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, "Chapter 1, The Field: Knowledge in Computerised Societies". In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi, (London: Manchester University Press, 1984), 37.

The History of Sexuality. Contrary to the typical modernist standpoint on epistemology, Foucault asserted that balanced opinion, collective living and 'biopower' are indissoluble and co-determinant of an epistemology.

Foucault rejected the concepts of independence, liberty, autonomy and human nature derived from the Enlightenment Movement. He was intensely concerned with many evolutionary political causes and had intimate attachments with members of the far-Left, and with a wide range of Marxist theories, supporters of Left libertarianism e.g. Noam Chomsky as well as Humanism e.g. Jürgen Habermas. He considered both the institutionalized psychiatry and Freud's theory of suppression not only detrimental but misplaced also. Foucault is also very well known for his controversial axioms. For instance, he said, "language is oppression", meaning that language works in a manner that makes ridiculous, fake or unspoken inclinations threatening the allotments of power that support the traditions of a society even while they argue to observe liberty and freedom of expression or give importance to groups and viewpoints held by a minority. His works significantly influenced postmodern academic literature.

Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007) in *Simulacra and Simulation* floated the idea that in our media and digital technologies dominated age the interchangeability of signs of communication and semantic operations short circuit the standard of the "real". Baudrillard suggests that detached subjects are neither affected by political, literary, artistic, or personal proceedings nor do they have any particular perspective. Isolated subjects thus produce general apathy, impassiveness and meekness in mechanized, industrialized peoples. He claimed that the lack of any significance for the viewers / readers ultimately results in creating an outward show with the real object becoming all mixed up. He believes that it makes the mankind "disappear" in a virtual or holographic shape, consisting of appearances only.

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) reviewed the essentials of writing and their effects on philosophy. Through deconstruction he challenged the language of 'presence' or

metaphysics in an analytical technique. He built up his theory on Heidegger's concept of *Destruktion*. Like Heidegger, Derrida also employed allusions to Greek philosophical ideas to express his concept of implied roundedness involving hypotheses and conclusions, reality and appearances, in an approach similar to Gilles Deleuze. He systematically re-read the great Greek philosophers Plato, Aristotle and Descartes to demonstrate their information of "destabilizing" ideas.

Richard Rorty (1931–2007) argues in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* that current diagnostic thinking wrongly tries to duplicate scientific methods. He condemns the time-honored epistemological points of view of Representationalism and Correspondence theory that make the knowers and observers free of all phenomena and the natural phenomena passive to perception. Remaining inside a Pragmatist framework he advocated anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism. With his loyalty to Social Liberalism he contested a great deal of postmodern thinking.

Fredric Jameson (1934-1999) is recognized for his series of lectures at the Whitney Museum later expanded as *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). He called Postmodernism a historical age, a scholarly movement and a social experience. Using an eclectic method, Jameson conducted an unrelenting investigation of the Periodization's role in founding the theory of analytical strategies in Humanities. He earnestly endeavored to elucidate the significance of the perceptions of Utopianism which motivate the cultural and intellectual movements of Modernity, in addition to demarcating the political and existential reservations resulting from the decline or deferment of this tendency in the speculated postmodern circumstances. Like Susan Sontag, Jameson also initiated a large number of American readers to the major scholars of the Left Wing of the 20th Century Europe, especially the ones connected to the Frankfurt School, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism. Hence, he not only translates others' thoughts to the common expressions of a lot of subjects in the Anglo-American scholastic compound but also his own critical commitment with them. The first issue of *Boundary 2*, with the subtitle "Journal of Postmodern Literature and Culture", officially

inaugurated literary postmodernism in the United States in 1972. It is still a leading journal in postmodernist circles.

The specific character of the modification or analysis of structuralism vary from one post-structuralist writer to another, although general topics comprise the denunciation of the independence of the constructions that structuralism suggests as well as questioning the binary oppositions forming those structures.

d. Jacques Derrida: the Father of Deconstruction

Jacques Derrida, (1930-2004) born in Algeria when it was a French colony, one of the most contentious thinkers of the 20th century, is believed to be either an impostor masquerading as a complex and incomprehensible philosopher or deemed enormously significant thinker or a scholarly intellectual of the West. Undeniably, Derrida created a gigantic impact on current thinking. Derrida's thought has been applied to a variety of matters ranging from literary disparagement and beliefs to political presumptions and architecture and it seems that his affects are going to last for a long time.

The Vichy government's anti Jewish laws got Derrida debarred from school at the age of 12 and this feeling of being an outcast troubled him throughout his life. Derrida flunked a number of exams before going to the École Normal Supérieure, France's chief institution of advanced scholarship. He eventually defended his doctoral dissertation in 1980 at the age of fifty.

During the 1960s Derrida penned scores of 'articles on language, philosophy and literature' and developed the idea of "deconstruction" - an infamously hard to describe expression. In the 1970s, he achieved eminence as an obstinate and insightful critic of literary and philosophical texts and a symbol of postmodernism because of his radical anti-realism as well as for reaffirming the structuralist declaration that symbols do not match up anything out of the language. Initially he was quite bashful and reserved.

Nonetheless his lectures attracted huge multitudes of academics as well as “non-academics in France and the U.S.”

Deconstruction materialized from the impact of a number of scholars on Derrida. Emerging from a clearly described philosophical context deconstruction has important links with a great deal of the West’s beliefs.

“Derrida's earliest work, including the texts that introduced the term "deconstruction," dealt with the phenomenology of Husserl.”¹⁰⁵

Derrida's writing itself contains deconstructive transcripts about the write ups of a good number of main academics.

“German philosopher Edmund Husserl was the greatest focus of Derrida's early work. From Derrida’s dissertation (ultimately published as *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*), his book-long "Introduction" to Husserl's "Essay on the Origin of Geometry," his first published paper, "Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" (in *Writing and Difference*), and to his important early work, *Speech and Phenomena*.”¹⁰⁶

Derrida was greatly impressed by Heidegger’s "Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from Being and Time" (in *Margins of Philosophy*), *Of Spirit*, and a series of papers entitled "Geschlecht."

“A student and prior interpreter of Husserl, Martin Heidegger, was the second most significant influences on Derrida's thought. Derrida's *Of Spirit* deals directly with Heidegger, but Heidegger's influence on deconstruction is much broader than that one volume.”¹⁰⁷

Martin Heidegger developed his thought from Edmund Husserl's, and Derrida's phrase deconstruction is connected to his perception of

¹⁰⁵ J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ <http://lrd.yahooapis.com/ylc=X3o> <http://www.answers.com/topic/deconstruction>. accessed: 6/2/11.

¹⁰⁷ <http://en.mcfly.org/deconstruction>. Accessed: 10/23/06.

“Heidegger’s understanding of the problems of structural description”.¹⁰⁸

Rodolphe Gasché stated that Derrida carried out systematic, vigilant, perceptive, and yet transforming readings of philosophical and literary texts, pointing out in those texts anything contradicting their seemingly systematicity or structural unison or intended sense (authorial genesis).

“The work of Friedrich Nietzsche is a forerunner of deconstruction in form and substance, as Derrida admits in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. The Post Card, important essays in *Writing and Difference*, *Archive Fever*, and many other deconstructive works deal primarily with Freud. The structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure, and other forms of post-structuralism that evolved contemporaneously with deconstruction such as the work of Maurice Blanchot, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan, etc., were the immediate intellectual climate for the formation of deconstruction. In many cases, these authors were close friends, colleagues, or correspondents of Derrida's.”¹⁰⁹

The considerably subtle ways this originary complexity works its structuring and destructuring effects in all forms and varieties, and their multiple consequences in many fields are made obvious by Derrida. He follows Friedrich Nietzsche’s line of thinking in much of his work. Nietzsche’s thought also runs through Martin Heidegger as well. It is illustrated by systematically purifying the philosophical peculiarities of Platonism inherited by the dominant European thought in the West. In *The Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche gives an account of the steady end of the thought of the other-world common among Plato, Christianity and Kant. The expressions representing the other-worldliness, and the challenge of escaping from time and history into infinity, are

“the traditional binary oppositions e.g. true--false, original--derivative, unified--diverse, objective--subjective, and so on. Heidegger’s 'Platonism' or 'metaphysics'

¹⁰⁸ Xin Li, "*The Analysis of Translators from the Perspective of Deconstruction*", *Asian Social Science*, Vol 7, No 5 (2011). Copyright © Canadian Center of Science and Education.

¹⁰⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deconstructionism>. accessed: 4/27/12.

or 'onto-theology' as 'the metaphysics of presence' or 'logocentrism', or, 'phallogocentrism'"¹¹⁰

as described by Derrida. He repeats Heidegger's assertion of the popularity of logocentrism in the Western culture. Derrida and Heidegger both notice the effects of the long-established binary oppositions encompassing every area of Western way of living embracing culture, philosophy, literature and its criticism. As a result in agreement with Heidegger, Derrida feels that a thinker must free himself from these binary oppositions, as well as of the types of rational and artistic beliefs and experiences constructed by these binary oppositions. However, Derrida is of the opinion that Heidegger was not able to gain this freedom of thought and form when he says:

'What I have attempted to do would not have been possible without the opening of Heidegger's questions ... But despite this debt to Heidegger's thought, or rather because of it, I attempt to locate in Heidegger's text ... the signs of belonging to metaphysics, or to what he calls onto-theology'.¹¹¹

Heidegger had been different from Derrida in his use of words to convey respect for the indefinable, the hushed, and the stable. Derrida turning around Plato and Heidegger's preferential treatment of the spoken word expressed his warm appreciation of the flourishing, the indescribable, the insinuating, and the enduringly recontextualizing. Derrida remained away from Heidegger's pastoralism and nationalism because they had led him to Nazism.

Initially, Derrida neither liked nor considered suitable to call his thought 'Deconstructionism' just like the way Heidegger did not like labelling his theories of Being and Time as 'existentialism'. However, as in the English-speaking countries literary critics in search of new ways of reading texts made Derrida famous, this label got stuck to Derrida's school of thought.

¹¹⁰ <http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/derrida/rorty.html>. accessed: 4/27/12.

¹¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, 9-10.

Commenting on Heidegger, Derrida states that someone who claims to turn his back on what he is renouncing is obliged to say so in the same vocabulary used by everyone else. Thus he concluded that while trying for something similar to what Heidegger attempted, one must try something quite dissimilar. About the logocentric philosophers hoping for this immediacy, Derrida says:

'Univocity is the essence, or better, the telos of language. No philosophy has ever renounced this Aristotelian ideal. This ideal is philosophy.'¹¹²

And at another place he said;

"To be free of the logocentric tradition would require one to write, and to read, forsaking this ideal. And to destroy the tradition would be to see all the texts of that tradition as self-delusive, using language to do what it is unable to do. Language itself cannot be relied upon to betray any attempt to transcend it."¹¹³

Derrida says that to weaken the heritage all the indispensable concepts have been mobilized;

"The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhibiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhibits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms."¹¹⁴

Derrida's public career as an author, professor and speaker began when the French academics were going through the greatest split amid "phenomenological" and "structural" ways of appreciating personal and communal living. The goal of the phenomenological intellectuals was to experience communication; written or otherwise, through its comprehension as well as progression from some basis/occurrence. For

¹¹² Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 247.

¹¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 278-281.

¹¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 91.

structuralists, only structures themselves non experimental can affect the depth and uniqueness of this problematic and deceptive type of examination.

Derrida emphasized that history impacts all structural or "synchronic" happenings which can only be understood by considering its beginning. However this genesis has to be an intricate articulation to let a diachronic procedure emerge from it. It is somewhat like an evasion of origin.

“It is an opening that is structural, or the structurality of an opening. Yet each of these concepts excludes the other. It is thus as little a structure as it is an opening; it is as little static as it is genetic, as little structural as it is historical. It can be understood neither from a genetic nor from a structuralist and taxonomic point of view, nor from a combination of both points of view.”¹¹⁵

A very important example of deconstruction is Derrida's first book *Speech and Phenomena* published in 1967. It was a result of his critical engagement with Husserl's phenomenology. Derrida himself disclosed that “*Speech and Phenomena* is the essay I value the most”¹¹⁶ Derrida believes that Husserl's philosophy based on awareness experience is the definitive source of legitimacy for every kind of thinking and science.

Derrida's *Writing and Difference*, a compilation of articles came out in 1967. In each of these essays, he significantly negotiates philosophical or literary texts. Some of these essays were later acknowledged as deconstructions although the very first use of the expression deconstruction was in *Of Grammatology* in 1967. Talking about the inferences of considering language not as speech he introduced deconstruction to illustrate the way that understanding language as “writing” generally makes a simple semantic premise improbable. Derrida states that:

“[w]riting thus enlarged and radicalized, no longer issues from a logos. Further, it inaugurates the destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the

¹¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. D. B. Allison. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 5.

¹¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, 13.

de-construction, of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos.”¹¹⁷

Thus Derrida explains that whenever language is taken as something written deconstruction is bound to come to pass to its meaning. *Of Grammatology* became an epic work for Derrida. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak translated the complete text of French *De la Grammatologie* into English and published it in 1976 as *Of Grammatology*. Derrida calls this work a two-part essay. While she translated the work very efficiently, her exhaustive ‘translator’s preface’ demonstrates Derrida’s collaboration in the project.

Derrida chose Rousseau, a philosopher marginalized by historians of philosophy as the representative of the chronological stretch of time that includes Kant, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. The techniques used in the book are dominated by a historical approach of writing that either ignores or rejects to observe the past “in every respect as a text.”¹¹⁸

The project *Of Grammatology* (or deconstruction) is claimed to be anti-historical and apolitical. Derrida’s point of view convincingly proclaimed the period before his own, which had been left unread by overruling historians. It assesses the connection of speech with writing, as well as inquiring the way speech and writing grew as two varieties of a language. Derrida states that various philosophic and scientific inquiries on the starting point of language reveal that

“speech is closer to truth or logos of meaning and representation. A language evolves through an interplay of speech and writing therefore neither speech nor writing may be considered more important to the development of language.”¹¹⁹

the science of Arche writing *Of Grammatology* is the purest achievable form of contrast or difference. It makes the play of differences achievable.

¹¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 83.

¹¹⁸ <http://newderrida.wordpress.com/2007/11/19/of-grammatology>. Accessed: 4/30/12.

¹¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 115.

“Arche writing is neither a concept, nor a definable word. It is neither merely writing on a page, graphic marks or sounds nor is it the Roman alphabet. It is not some form of “making” made with the voice, with pictures, with hieroglyphies, with cuneiforms, with Chinese characters, with choreography, with musical notations, with the forms of sculptures in space, which can be marked with an awl on oak, with pen on paper, with fingers on sand, with hands on clay, or by the contrast of lights and shadows on film.”¹²⁰

Derrida suggests to deconstruct all binary oppositions because like all signs systems our arbitrated knowledge works not by classification, but by disparities and sets of laws. Deconstruction, similar to the rest of the poststructural theories, rejects the structuralists’ supposition that structural main beliefs are the real meanings or that common structural beliefs of language existed even 'before' language’s occurrence. Every text is not only made up of its dissimilarity from the rest of the texts but also includes everything it excludes. Thus being the irregular impression of one another neither can be opposites if they are not united nor can they be a unity, and be themselves. Therefore there is no nihilism without logocentrism, no presence without absence and vice versa.

To Derrida, writing itself carried a message. He asks to study writing as a detached concept on an ontological level, something beyond the limits of verbal communication, an aspect left untouched by the linguistics because of their self-imposed restrictions and obstructions. Through studies of other cultures a peripheral, outsider view to our concept of writing, language and philosophy is established. Derrida states that the pursuit to find meaning creates the meaning and the origin of origin is that trace itself. This ridiculous metaphysical concept, scarcely representable by lingo, throws light on the limitations of the language and thoughts. He believed that the critical theory should drift away from the logocentric, reductive science to become a positive, productive way of reading. He named this idea deconstruction and while he left it without an exact definition, through practice he demonstrated its use in taking apart and reconstructing essays and ideas.

¹²⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 113.

Derrida explains in *Of Grammatology*, how Rousseau's writing actually destabilizes the nature/culture binary he tries to promote. Rousseau supports the perception of nature theorizes that natural man, free from the corruptive influences of nature, was on the whole a good man. Derrida, with his theory of supplement demonstrates how culture is "always already" intrinsic in nature, as writing is in speech. Derrida pulls apart the relationship of human beings with language--both written and spoken-- to figure out how it works, and to gather some interesting conclusions especially the concept of trace, supplement and the differences between poetry and prose.

In *Of Grammatology* Derrida moves toward the main concepts and prejudices of the modern philosophy. Among those is *logos*.¹²¹ He asserts that a bias exists for the *logos* ("logocentrism") as well as for the metaphysical concept of presence. By exploring and elaborating on the thoughts of Rousseau, Levi-Strauss, Nietzsche, and others, Derrida endeavours to demonstrate that the criticisms leveled against writing as a type of language pertaining to language and thought in general.

A series of terms like *differance*, *supplement*, *trace*, and others are used to point out the inadequacies of metaphysics of presence with an overwhelming effect when applied to a logocentric text, revealing the limits of language and metaphysics, and bringing "closure" to an age of thinking. Derrida proposes to show the intervention of the immediate as all things (the present, the truth, the signified, etc.) are signified to use through mediation, though they are not fully present but ensnared in a system of depiction, e.g. "writing." If taken seriously and applied meticulously this thought is capable of almost immeasurable and disastrous implications. However he did not consider these implications in his work. Together with his peers Foucault, Lacan, and Barthes, Derrida challenged the essential beliefs of an ever-expanding modernism, and created new perceptions of thoughts such as the splitting up of nature and culture, the constitution of self, representation, and truth.

¹²¹ a Latin word implying reason, law, or essence

“Thus deconstruction is neither the critical destruction of logocentrism, nor is it just an attempt to ‘correct’ it. The ‘end of metaphysics’ is merely another metaphysical concept. Deconstruction neither adds profundity to the superficiality of metaphysics, nor a metatheoretical understanding of its missing portions. Its temporary aim is to explore the limits of tolerance of these metaphysical systems, pushing them to a point of cracking.”¹²²

Derrida argues that, in every case of binary oppositions usually the former term is considered novel, real, and better, whereas the latter is regarded less important, unoriginal, or even "parasitic." He asks to deconstruct all these oppositions. He termed such "concepts," just "marks" to tell them apart from accurate philosophical thoughts:

“...[I]t has been necessary to analyze, to set to work, within the text of the history of philosophy, as well as within the so-called literary text,..., certain marks, shall we say,... that by analogy (I underline) I have called undecidables, that is, unities of simulacrum, "false" verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics’.¹²³

Deconstruction of a text is conducted in three stages.

Stage One: expose an asymmetry in the binary opposition and highlight some disguised hierarchy.

Stage Two: overturn the hierarchy.

Stage Three: relocate one of the terms of the opposition into a new and stretched out description.

Deconstruction thus is a study related with decentering or unmasking the problematic presence in every center. According to Derrida, the whole western thinking stands on the notion of a midpoint, a source, a reality, an perfect figure, a spirit, “a Fixed Point, an Immovable Mover, a God, a Presence – which is usually capitalized, and guarantees all

¹²² Elizabeth Gross, *Derrida and the Limits of Philosophy* Thesis Eleven Pty, Ltd., (SAGE Publications, 1986), 14; 26, 27. DOI: 10.1177/072551368601400104. <http://the.sagepub.com>

¹²³ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, 42-43.

meanings".¹²⁴ He states that trying to leave out and ignore, repress or marginalize others or pushed towards the outside is the problem with centers. Therefore desiring for a center generates binary opposites, in which the first expression of the opposition is essential while the second one is marginal. In addition every center covets fixing, or freezing the play of binary opposites.

"Derrida has taken the deconstruction of logocentric metaphysics, as his critical target. His early training in phenomenology led him to suspect, alongwith a tempered respect for, the longing for presence all encompassing in the Western philosophy: a presence of meaning, being, and knowledge."¹²⁵

Apart from icons many other social practices also contribute in freezing the play of opposites, e.g. advertising, social codes, taboos, conventions, categories, rituals, etc. But reality and language are not as simple and singular as icons with a central, exclusive image in the middle. These interesting ambiguous figures appear to have only one possibility that is "central" for a moment. But then, because the play of the system is not stopped, the other view dawns, and the same figure signifies another icon.

But suppose a group called the Face-ists seizing power might draw eyes on the faces in an attempt to freeze or arrest the free play of differences. But the figure, in reality, signifies both faces and a candle. In such a situation, Candle-ists would be marginalized, repressed or even oppressed or persecuted. The image of the faces becomes the privileged member of the other pair and the face, becomes instituted as the Real and the Good.

For instance in the following lines of a Haiku:

'How mournfully the wind of autumn pines upon the mountainside'

¹²⁴ Raymond K. Meyer, *Jacques Derrida and Deconstruction* in Ph.D. dissertation *An Evangelical Analysis of The Critical Realism And Corollary Hermeneutics* at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, (North Carolina: Wake Forest, 2007), 21-35.

¹²⁵ Elizabeth Gross, "*Derrida and the Limits of Philosophy*", DOI: 10.1177/072551368601400104.

suppose that for a long time the only acceptable way of reading the poem is to read “pines” as a verb. But “pines” in the context of the second line, can switch over to become a noun: “Pines upon the mountain side.”

Thus, the second move in deconstructing a piece of literature is to subvert the privileged term by showing how the repressed, marginalized meaning can also be the central one. In this way Derrida claims that deconstruction is a political practice. He believes that this phase of subversion must not be passed over and neutralized hastily as the original hierarchy of the first term needs to be reversed over the second. However, it must be realized that ultimately this hierarchy is just as imbalanced, and it too yields in to the play of the binary opposites in a non-hierarchical manner.

This will be just like a system of triangles in which there is a series of configurations of triangles one after the other. But the so called present configuration of each group of triangles which seem to be momentarily present, has emerged out of a prior configuration, and is already dissolving into a future configuration. And this play goes on endlessly. No vital configuration attempts to fix the play of the marginal, privileged, or the repressed structure. According to Derrida all languages and texts are like this, and so is human thought, which is also made up of language. He says that this free play should be investigated in all our languages and texts to get rid of rigidity, institutionalization, centralization and totalitarianism.

Derrida informs us that for the past three hundred years philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau, Hegel, Husserl and others had preferred speech over writing. They claim that voice is the privileged medium of meaning. This is phonocentrism: with the voice at the centre and writing its derivative. Writing being a symbol of speech represents thinking, independent ideas and realization. Thus Speech lies closest to thought symbolizing logical understanding which in turn is symbolized by written texts. Languages are made to talk with others while writing acts as a mere appendage to the spoken words.

The social history of the rise of writing in the West makes it useless and dangerous. Sometimes, speech is offered a curious privilege, for example, law courts rely on writing, but they privilege vocal testimony, when the person is asked to say "I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." An academic thesis forbidden to cite oral statements as evidence is brought to its final court of the living voice --- the viva voce, as "the argument of my theses is...". Also the minutes of the committee meeting are written, but are ratified at the next meeting in speech when the Boss says, "I call the secretary to read the minutes of the last meeting."

Derrida argues that phonocentricism is 'a history of silence', or a repression of writing which cannot be acknowledged. Moreover, the suppression of writing is not only necessary to Western philosophy and every thought influenced by it but it is also crucial to philosophy's metaphysical presuppositions. Metaphysics investigates the features of reality lying outside the realm of empiricism and scientific methods. Like philosophy metaphysics also asks the reality of

the 'truth, being and knowledge, mind, presence, time and space, causation, free will, belief in god, human immortality, etc.'¹²⁶

Empiricists, positivists, scientific naturalists, and skeptics do not consider them as valid questions. Nevertheless since pre Socratic time Western metaphysics has been in search of the foundations, elementary beliefs, or a concept of the centre to answer all these questions so as to position the truth at a distinct definitive point. Derrida terms this urge logocentricism in which the logos is the exclusive point of origin. Thus the Western logocentric Metaphysics attributes truth and its origin to the lowest level of learning i.e. the logos completely abandoning other elevated and more reliable sources of knowing and experiencing the truth and reality.

¹²⁶ Jim Powell, *Derrida-For-Beginners* (Hyderabad, India: Orient Black Swan, 2000), 91.

Derrida challenged the metaphysics pervading the entire Western thought from its earliest time to date. He undertook to dislocate its foundations, to destabilize its convictions and to upturn its pursuits for an exclusive point of origin, the logos. However this pervasive Metaphysics is also going to inhabit Derrida's own thinking inescapably. That is why he admitted that the best analyses can only make some movements not at all break away from the criticized object. Nevertheless he believes that metaphysical binaries and its hierarchy can be reversed by preferring the second part of the binary oppositions: for instance, to privilege body not mind, choose man not God, by putting the complex before the simple, and emphasizing absence rather than presence and Derrida makes a movement of sollicitation¹²⁷ i.e a shaking at the core, or a tremor through the entire structure.

Adopting Heidegger's formulation, Derrida argues that in Western thinking the meaning of being has been determined by a presence which can be spatial: for example, proximity, nearness or adjacency, or can have immediacy, e.g. having actual or direct contact, lacking mediation, having no intervening material, object or agency. In addition it can be temporal as it evokes the present as the single current minute, the now; an incidence with no postponement, lapse or suspension. As presence organizes metaphysical concepts of being therefore all the "groundly" terms of metaphysics designate a presence. Some examples given by Derrida include:

Present being of the subject.

Co-presence of the self and the other.

Presence is the foundation for many claims, philosophical or not.

That a truth can lie behind (therefore in proximity to) an appearance.

That there is an instant relationship between the "the word of God" and the truth.

That a "spirit of the age" can inform an historical era, and therefore be present within it.

That a photograph can capture the "significant moment", the now.

¹²⁷ French word derived from old Latin 'sollicitare' meaning to shake as a whole.

That an artist's expressed emotion can be present in his work.

That is why he asks, why, then, is the speech/writing opposition so important? Why is the privileging of speech, the inaugurating gesture of the Western philosophy? And if the philosophy as we know it is in writing, why writing is treated as a corruption, an obstacle or an irrelevance? Derrida answers all these questions by admitting that it is so "because it is a necessity of the metaphysics of presence. And from that perspective speech carries full presence. Thus metaphysical concepts of being, in time and space, demand presence while writing depends on absence. As the characteristics of writing oppose presence, therefore metaphysical thinking has to eject it or subordinate it. So speech offers the most direct access to consciousness. The voice can be consciousness itself. Derrida says,

"When I speak, I am conscious of being present for what I think, but also of keeping as close as possible to my thought a signifying substance, a sound carried by my breath. I hear this as soon as I emit it. It seems to depend only on my pure and free spontaneity, requiring the use of no instrument, no accessory, no force taken from the world. This signifying substance, this sound, seems to unite with my thought.....so that the sound seems to erase itself, become transparent.....allowing the concept to present itself as what it is, referring to nothing other than its present."¹²⁸

Derrida argues that speech is a transparent, diaphanous veil through which we view consciousness and nothing comes between speech and thinking. No lapse of time, no surface, no gap. So while presence beguilingly seems to attend the spoken words it does not do the same for writing. On the other hand writing operates on absences; it does not need the presence of a writer, or of the writer's consciousness. In fact writing cannot be writing unless it can function in these two absences.

Derrida's later work shows his worries about revealing the aporias of exact expressions and conceptions, the perception of "undeconstructibility" existing in the intermission of constructions and undeconstructibility e.g. the connection between the law,

¹²⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 37.

deconstruction, and justice. Summarizing this relationship Derrida states that justice is the undeconstructible form which ensures the possibility of deconstruction.

To secure the position of the first post-metaphysical thinker for himself, Derrida introduced some philosophical terminology to counter, ridicule and dislodge Heidegger's similar terms e.g. Ereignis, Lichtung etc..

Deconstruction invents a (non)concept known as *différance* in opposition to the metaphysics of presence. This French neologism means "differing" as well as "deferring". As the resonance and conflict amid these two French homonyms is difficult to put into English words, it is generally not translated.¹²⁹

“In deconstruction the basic structuralist principle of difference is located ontologically as well as semiotically: at the very point of beingness of every thing there is difference -- or *différance* -- because only through *différance* is one thing not another thing instead. *Différance* comes before being; similarly, a trace comes before the presence of a thing (as anything which is itself by virtue of not being something else, by differing, and that which it differs from remains as a trace, that whose absence is necessary for it to be); likewise writing precedes speech -- a system of differences precedes any location of meaning in articulation.”¹³⁰

In simple words, *différance* means not to prefer commonality and simplicity and not to look for some joining rules

“or grand teleological narratives, or overarching concepts, etc.’ Deconstruction emphasizes on difference, complexity, and non-self-identity. A deconstructive reading of a text or a deconstructive interpretation of philosophy”¹³¹

illustrates how an apparently unitary concept holds different or opposing meanings within itself. Deconstruction calls such merging of difference in philosophical concepts

¹²⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 123.

¹³⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 121.

¹³¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 121.

a sort of hostility. An obstinate misdescription or simplification of reality in a theory is violence against the proper complication of the world. This critique rejecting

“the philosophical law of the excluded middle, argues that the simple oppositions of Aristotelian logic compel a fake appearance of simplicity onto a wayward world”.¹³²

Consequently

“the notion of *différance* has two sides, both a deferment of the final, unifying meaning in a unit of text; a word or a book, and a difference of meaning of the text on every re-reading of a work. Repetition and the impossibility of a final contact with a text, of constantly being at the text's "ground zero", are accentuated, leaving a text outside the sphere of the knowable in the typical manner of "mastery" for an indefinite period.”¹³³

A text can be experienced, read, and "understood" discernible by an essential impermanence that never refutes the chance of a rereading. If the text is conventionally considered a series of signs/letters unchanged in the course of time, *différance* shifts the concept towards the awareness, inconceivable to experience outside this exclusive occurrence. The fact that no text can read itself is the *différance*.

Derrida considered the God of negative theology functioning as an ultimate, higher reality as a forerunner to deconstruction's essential conception of *différance*. Nevertheless, it is qualitatively dissimilar from the design of *différance*.

Formerly,

‘all Western conceptual schemes relied on some form of a "transcendental signifier”’¹³⁴

some metaphysical, hierarchical principle that determined the constructions of "natural" or "proper signifiers” e.g.

¹³² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 124.

¹³³ Wood & Bernasconi, *Derrida and Difference*, 19.

¹³⁴ Wood & Bernasconi, *Derrida and Difference*, 21.

“Truth, God, Allah, Reason, Being, and various political ideologies. Différance is an alternative to and escape from the logic of the transcendental signifier. As the idea of différance rules out the possibility of putting forward a transcendental signifier, no historical conception of God can survive a deconstructive framework; even the God of negative theology falls short of différance. John D. Caputo has indicated that différance is not God.”¹³⁵

The idea of différance generates the notion of trace.

“A trace is what a sign differs/defers from. It is the absent part of the sign's presence. In other words, through the act of différance, a sign leaves behind a trace, which is all that is left over after everything present has been explained.”¹³⁶

According to Derrida,

"the trace itself does not exist"¹³⁷

because it is inconspicuous, i.e.

"[i]n presenting itself, it becomes effaced" As all the signifiers taken as present in the Western thought necessarily have traces of other (absent) signifiers, a signifier can neither be completely present nor totally absent.”¹³⁸

The constituent component terms of a metaphorical arrangement like ‘trace,’ ‘arche-writing,’ ‘erasure’ have been drawn from the material process of writing. Derrida claims them to be the way through which words and conceptions obtain their connotation.

In Paul de Man’s words,

“that insight can come out of blindness. If they leave a trail or trace in the text – a footprint to follow for the grammatological detective ---- then following the trail should not be thought of guiding back to the source or forward to its presence.”¹³⁹

¹³⁵ J. M. Thompson, "Post-Modernism," *The Hibbert Journal*. Vol XII, No. 4, July 1914. 733.

¹³⁶ <http://en.mcfly.org/deconstruction>, accessed: 10/23/06.

¹³⁷ Michael A. Peters and Gert Biesta, *Derrida Deconstruction And The Politics Of Pedagogy* (Peter Lang, 2009), 167.

¹³⁸ Wood & Bernasconi, *Derrida and Differance*, 71.

¹³⁹ <http://newderrida.wordpress.com/2007/11/19/application-of-deconstruction/>. Accessed: 10/23/06.

In its place, 'trace' indicates the smallest part of constitution that helps one make some good judgment of distinction. Therefore it can be considered as within as well as without, and before as well as after. As a new entity in the linguistics' lexicon it is similar to

"the sign, the glosseme, the seme, the phoneme, and the grapheme"¹⁴⁰

which explore the knowledge of the atomic elements of the structure of a language.

The concept of trace is buried under those other entities identifying the place in the discourse of Heidegger where

"the meaning of being as presence and the meaning of language as the full continuity of speech starts to weaken itself."¹⁴¹

The trace also points out Derrida's purpose of writing *Of Grammatology*, which he expresses with unusual straightforwardness:

"To make enigmatic what one thinks one understands by the words 'proximity,' 'immediacy,' 'presence' (the proximate [proche], the own [propre], the pre- of presence), is my final intention in this book."¹⁴²

Understanding the term trace clearly helps one have a better comprehension of oppositions. As the smallest constituent of construction which makes differentiation achievable, trace raises the peculiarities of 'primary and secondary, interior and exterior' etc. and "Arche-writing" shifts backward and forward amid these characteristics. Thus writing is concluded to be secondary and exterior to speech making the signifying movements necessary. The starting point of writing i.e. arche-writing can be considered speech itself. However if the spoken word is regarded

¹⁴⁰ J. M. Balkin, "Deconstruction", *A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory*, [90](#).

¹⁴¹ <http://newderrida.wordpress.com/2007/11/19/application-of-deconstruction/>. Accessed: 10/8/12.

¹⁴² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 29.

natural, then one must already have an understanding of the unnatural which in this circumstance is the written word.

This trace of arche-writing is,

“the opening of the first exteriority in general, the enigmatic relationship of the living to its other and of an inside to an outside.”¹⁴³

This non-presence of ‘the other’ and the concurrent likelihood of regarding ‘the other’ as if it is in attendance generate the metaphor. Moreover, the play is caused by presence-absence of the trace which creates metaphorical vagueness because doubt takes the logic of presence for granted, which it goes on to disobey.

Subsequently the graphological strategy of placing words under erasure makes Derrida visualize these traces. Derrida initiates this expression, erasure [sous rature] prior to going on theorizing the trace. Deconstruction emphasizes the abundance of meanings giving

“the concept of the capacity of signs (and texts) to be repeated in new situations and inserted into new contexts i.e. iterability. Derrida's saying "iterability alters" (Derrida 1977) means that the insertion of texts into new contexts continually produces new meanings”¹⁴⁴

to a degree different from and to some extent

“similar to their previous understandings thus creating a nested opposition between them. The term "play" is used to describe the flux resulting in the meaning produced by iterability. While deconstructive arguments”¹⁴⁵

confirm the instability of conceptual oppositions. However

“all such oppositions cannot be abandoned or abolished. The principle of nested opposition suggests that a suppressed conceptual opposition reappears in a new

¹⁴³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 31.

¹⁴³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 71.

¹⁴⁴ J. M. Balkin, "Deconstruction", *A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory*, [91](#).

¹⁴⁵ J. M. Balkin, "Deconstruction", *A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory*, [92](#).

form. Moreover, theoretically speaking all conceptual oppositions are potentially deconstructible, although in practice not all of them are equally incoherent or unhelpful."¹⁴⁶

German philosopher Ludwig Klages invented the term logocentrism in the 1920s. As a custom both science and philosophy of the "West" locate the logos in a better structure, or method. The logos represents an uncondensable imaginative entity hence, our presence in the world is unavoidably interceded. So if Platonic Ideal Form exists then its ideal illustration must also exist and the western logocentrist thought calls it the logos.

Linguistics further analyze the composition of the logos to ascertain both the sound and the

“sense of the word, as the new and perfect setting of metaphysical connotation. Logocentric linguistics suggest that the immediate and privileged unity which founds significance and the acts of language is the articulated unity of sound and sense within the phonic.”¹⁴⁷

The science of language is expanded through this semiotic phonology. Thus the main type of language is speech while writing is consequently derivative, symbolic and notably, external to speech. And thus writing a ‘sign of a sign’,¹⁴⁸ is also essentially phonetic which has an extended history in the Western philosophy.

According to Aristotle,

“Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words”.¹⁴⁹

And for Rousseau,

¹⁴⁶ J. M. Balkin. "Deconstruction", *A Companion to Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory*, [94](#).

¹⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 27–73.

¹⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 29.

¹⁴⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, 23.

“Writing is nothing but the representation of speech; it is bizarre that one gives more care to the determining of the image than to the object”.¹⁵⁰

The term *écriture* translated as writing is used for the structures of graphic communiqué, and all the arrangements *différance* occupies. A correlated phrase, *archi-écriture*, points out the positive aspect of writing, or written word as a vital rule, not derived from *logos* /speech. Thus *logos* of the Western philosophy not only includes writing but also encompasses *archi-écriture*. Therefore speech can either be a kind of writing like written words on the ‘air waves’, or be in the listener’s memory or on some soundtrack mechanism.

Erasure, a tool Derrida took from the scholar Martin Heidegger signifies that “Speech” and “Writing” both are not enough to illustrate the wide-ranging play of differences both share. However to discuss a topic Derrida needs to use them so he puts them under erasure which allows him to apply a word or conception as well as to point out its extreme inadequacy at the same time. Derrida’s phrase *arche-writing* that illustrates both speech and writing as merely the spoken and written kinds of the play of variation, a non-present type of “writing”.

Rousseau the first thinker to use the word supplement defined it as

"an inessential extra added to something complete in itself."¹⁵¹

In this regard Derrida declares that,

“Western thinking is characterized by the "logic of supplementation", which is in fact two seemingly opposing notions. From one viewpoint, a supplement adds to the presence of an already complete and self-sufficient entity. Hence, writing is the supplement of speech and Eve was the supplement of Adam.”¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 27.

¹⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 53.

¹⁵² Arthur Bradley, *Derrida's Of Grammatology: an Edinburg Philosophical Guide* (London: Edinburg University Press, 2008), 123.

At the same time Derrida proclaims that the notion of supplement in the philosophy of the West holds the idea that something having a supplement is really incomplete. Otherwise it would not need any supplement. The piece of information that something can be appendaged to create extra "presence" or make something "whole" entails an opening, a gap or a hole existing there which can be filled in by the supplement. Derrida calls this deficiency an originary lack and the figurative aperture of this "hole" invagination. According to this point of view, instead of adding to the presence of something the supplement draws attention to the nonexistence of something.

Therefore, during supplementation something seemingly full, whole, and self-contained from one perspective makes the supplement fill up an opening inside the center of the original "something".

e. Deconstruction and Religion

Deconstruction does not have any obvious religious distinctiveness of any kind. Derrida grew up in Catholicized Jewish surroundings. With regard to dogmatic theology, Derrida is almost certainly an atheist writing about religious common among the monotheistic religions. Deconstruction understands religion as something common with the 'Abrahamic faiths'. Derrida's work suggests a quasi-religion in the collection of ideas affirming the undeconstructible e.g. the "unconditional without sovereignty," the "weak force" of the undeconstructible, and the "possibility of the impossible."¹⁵³

Supporters of deconstruction-and-religion deem that main current theological explanations contain totalizing and belligerent creeds. Deconstruction responds through interpreting Holy Texts and Divine Revelation following two lines of action;

¹⁵³ Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (New York: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 190.

1. "active reinterpretation of the theological tradition and
2. passive reinterpretation"¹⁵⁴

1. The process of Deconstruction-and-religion is active when it puts forward a new theory beginning from a post-structuralist and post-phenomenological deconstructive agenda. This framework is a way to classify and expose unlawful canons or analysis through monotheistic rituals. Using the methods of 'historical analysis, linguistic critique, and logical scrutiny', deconstruction-and-religion finds out the hidden tensions in the theological discussions simultaneously creating space in theological expression for unforeseen developments.
2. The procedure of Deconstruction-and-religion operates in a passive way when it applies a historical, narrative method of analysis to the sacred texts of traditional theology. When it is passive, deconstruction-and-religion investigates theological traditions to scrutinize written examples of perverted conceptions of theology explaining them in detail simply either to dismiss or notably transform them. An example is of the rise and fall of the Middle Ages' Christian perception of pleasures. Jean-Luc Nancy calls this historical corrosion or metamorphosis of theological concepts, "self-deconstruction" repeating Friedrich Nietzsche's thought that the West itself devalues some of its best values.

And according to John D. Caputo

"The distinctive approach and reinterpetive act to deconstruction-and-religion called "weak theology", resulted in the concept of the "weakness of God". The paradigm of God as an overwhelming physical or metaphysical force is regarded as mistaken and the old God-of-power is displaced with the idea of God as an unconditional claim without force who does not physically or metaphysically intervene in nature. Caputo's idea of God is an alternate name for particular manifestations of undeconstructibility."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ http://www.enotes.com/topic/Deconstruction_and_religion. accessed: 10/10/12.

¹⁵⁵ John D. Caputo, *Philosophy and Theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 2006), 29.

Taking out a gist of the thought process from Martin Buber to Emmanuel Levinas to Jacques Derrida, Caputo puts forward the below mentioned idea:

“On the classical account of strong theology, Jesus was just holding back his divine power in order to let his human nature suffer. He freely chose to check his power because the Father had a plan to redeem the world with his blood. ... That is not the weakness of God that I am here defending. God, the event harbored by the name of God, is present at the crucifixion, as the power of the powerlessness of Jesus, in and as the protest against the injustice that rises up from the cross, in and as the words of forgiveness, not a deferred power that will be visited upon one’s enemies at a later time. God is in attendance as the weak force of the call that cries out from Calvary and calls across the epochs that cry out from every corpse created by every cruel and unjust power. The logos of the cross is a call to renounce violence, not to conceal and defer it and then, in a stunning act that takes the enemy by surprise, to lay them low with real power, which shows the enemy who really has the power. That is just what Nietzsche was criticizing under the name of resentment.”¹⁵⁶

Jean-Luc Nancy following Derrida’s criticism of the ‘metaphysics of presence and logocentrism’ asserts that Christianity was the "religion that provided the exit from religion,"¹⁵⁷ and it is based on actions or deeds focusing all the time on an undeconstructible hopeful perception. She hypothesizes that Parousia; the second coming of Christ is a promised homecoming of someone who is no more in this world.

“Subsequently as a framework of thought Christianity supports the notion that 'traces' of the non-present (i.e. past and future) constitute the present. As a result, the Christian concept of Parousia raises ontological questions about the conditions of possibility of concepts like identity, subjectivity, consciousness, and experience, among many others. The concept of Parousia reveals that we humans are no longer mortals saved by faith in an immortal being. Rather we are beings capable of accepting or rejecting non-self-presence. Nancy considers the acceptance of non-self-presence the heart of Christian 'faith.' [F]aith, in any case, is not about compliance without proof or the leap above proof. It is the act of the faithful person, which is the attestation of an intimate consciousness of the fact that it exposes and allows itself to be exposed to the absence of attestation, to the

¹⁵⁶ John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event*, (USA: Indiana University Press, 2006), 179.

¹⁵⁷ http://www.enotes.com/topic/Deconstruction_and_religion. accessed: 4/6/12.

absence of Parousia. Christian faith is distinguished precisely and absolutely from all belief."¹⁵⁸

French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, following the archaeologist André Leroi-Gourhan, is acquainted with

"a third kind of memory in human beings in addition to the genetic memory recorded in the DNA molecule, and individual nervous system memory. Human beings are also capable of using organized, inorganic matter, that is, tools, technology, writing, and everything that records a human gesture (as Stiegler puts it in these words: "humans die but their histories remain."¹⁵⁹

According to Stiegler this 'tertiary memory' is a probability to espouse something he did not go through himself e.g. an immigrant to a new country may begin to own the heros of that country. In an article, using his theory of tertiary memory Stiegler analyzes Derrida's work and reaches the following conclusion:

"An intelligence of faith – which is impossible, which we can do nothing but promise, – must/fails to account each time for the conditions in which faith yields to the trust that we have or do not have in tertiary memory. No politics of memory or of the archive, of hospitality or of home, no future is, perhaps, promised outside this "must/failure" of life that the dead haunts in life's technicity. The tertiary trace refers to the arche-trace, older than any empirical or meta-empirical trace; it refers always to the absolute past. But the absolute past only constitutes itself "as such" through this referral. It is why logic of the supplement, without ever simply being such a history, must also be a history of the supplement in its epochs that are each time singular and must form the object of a technical history constantly renewed. Faith and tele-technology are for this reason mutually insoluble and mutually inseparable – transductively (re)constituted by each other. It is why, finally, fidelity is always at the limits of deconstruction qua undeconstructible justice. Such would be faith: at the limits of deconstruction."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity. (Perspectives in Continental Philosophy)* Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 2004 (Fordham University Press; 3rd ed. April 1, 2008).

¹⁵⁹ Walter Truett Anderson, *The Fontana Postmodernism Reader* (London: Fontana Press, 1996), 166-67.

¹⁶⁰ Bernard Stiegler, "*Derrida and Technology: Fidelity At The Limits Of Deconstruction And The Prosthesis Of Faith*". *Influences on Postmodern Thought* (St Louis: Paul Lützeler, 2007), 103-119.