

The Deconstructive Project and Its Philosophical Reference Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida

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Abstract:

We may not be exaggerating if we state that deconstruction is a philosophy more than anything else, and this is perhaps due to the philosophical character associated with it. To deconstruct this conception, we will pause at the most prominent milestones of the deconstructive project in Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, by questioning it and engaging in dialogue with some of its views and issues. We will also examine its referential and philosophical question, which raises various problems and complex issues witnessed in the philosophical and critical field during the postmodern period.

Keywords: the deconstructive project; the philosophical and critical field; reference; postmodernity.

INTRODUCTION:

Twentieth-century philosophers devoted themselves to analyzing the systems of the edifice built by their predecessors among the ancient philosophers, and they also set about dismantling all the laws of the major intellectual structures that operate around the universe, God, being, and the human being. They likewise examined the methodologies established by thinkers before them. For this reason, that century has been regarded as a decisive epistemic transformation, or a sharp intellectual and philosophical turning point in the trajectory of modern philosophical thought. It is the century of analysis and doubt within the horizons of thought and philosophy. What emerged from within this intellectual climate, and stepped out from its shadow, was the project of deconstruction, or what is known as the philosophy of deconstruction.

The deconstructive project established a firm yet highly complex relationship with all manifestations of origins and with the various forms of reference points. It is based, fundamentally, on demolishing all the otherworldly or metaphysical foundations of Western thought, whether religious or theological, or material. It also rests on the principle of difference as it unfolds through becoming and deferral, on the grounds that any intellectual or philosophical practice built upon a fixed background or stable reference leads to a single meaning and, likewise, to the concealment of truth.

Deconstruction armed itself with tools of demolition and analytic dissection in order to expose official discourses and unmask dominant ideologies by using a language of difference and contradiction. It was also characterized by an attitude, or principle, of doubting all certain forms of knowledge, on the argument that truth in itself requires reconsideration—that is, that there is a hidden truth within truth itself. It also undertook the dissection of all discourses connected to, or concerned with, authority, power, and will.

1. Postmodern Philosophy and the Project of Deconstruction:

Postmodern discourses seek to anatomize, demolish, and refute Western assumptions, and to curb their centrality as well. This is what Derrida pointed to in the theory of deconstruction. These discourses, as their advocates claim, undertake an essential task: liberating the culture of the periphery—represented by the cultures of peoples in Asia, Africa, and the Americas—from the dominance, authority, and culture of the civilization of the center, represented in the cultures of Britain, America, France, and the West in general. In doing so, they seek to chart the course of influence and mutual influence between periphery and center, and to proceed from different concepts with a distinct intellectual, cultural, and social substance... so that the culture of the periphery may be effective and equivalent to the culture of the center¹.

Accordingly, the margin must emerge at the expense of the center, and no culture or authority should stand above another. In other words, opportunities should be equal in both presence and absence. Perhaps the alarm has been sounded—opening up the space against the drums of singleness—calling for plurality and deferral. From another angle, deconstruction attempts to destroy that centrality as an infinite presence, and calls for the necessity of thinking in terms of the absence of any center, where the exalted central signification dissolves. The text then opens onto the horizon of the future through the system of difference; the force of presence is transformed into a fertilization of potential meaning. In this way, Derrida plants explosive charges within presence from the inside and digs into its depth².

From this standpoint, postmodern discourses attempt to undermine and dismantle Western, single-minded centrality, especially in its claims about the absoluteness of concepts, the transcendence of rationality, and the universality of truth—from the perspective of Western modernism and its validity for modernizing all the peoples of the earth, regardless of differences in their languages and cultures³.

It is self-evident that the main stations (thresholds) of epistemic inquiry into any concept require defining the framework or theoretical enclosure that draws the geographical boundaries, historical roots, and cultural space in which that concept arose, as well as its operating mechanisms. Deconstruction, like other propositions or theories, was produced by overlapping phases in politics, society, and culture. It was imposed by circumstances that

1- Amer Abd Zaid al-Waeli; Talib Muhaibas al-Waeli, *Encyclopedia of Orientalism: Re-examining the Critique of Western Centrism and Uncovering Transformations in Postcolonial Discourse*, Ibn al-Nadim Publishing, Algeria, 1st ed., 2015, p. 595.

2- Muhammad Salim Saadallah, *The Philosophical Foundations for Critiquing Post-Structuralism*, Dar al-Hiwar, Amman, 1st ed., 2006, p. 164.

3- Al-Mabruk al-Shaybani al-Mansouri, *Manufacturing the Muslim Other in Contemporary Western Thought: From Orientalism to Islamophobia*, Nama Center for Research and Studies, Beirut, 1st ed., 2014, p. 12.

prevailed in the world at a certain period, along with the emergence of discourses opposed to reason and to the Western center, and by the dismantling of various cultural and material structures or systems that modern thought attempted to establish.

If we seek the philosophical roots of deconstruction, we must return to Derrida's acknowledgments and statements. When we read Derrida's writings, we find that the term deconstruction goes back to Heidegger, especially when Derrida tried to translate the Heideggerian terms *Destruktion* and *Abbau* into French. He found that both words indicate an operation performed on the structure or traditional architecture of the founding concepts of Western ontology or metaphysics. However, in French, *Destruktion* very clearly signifies demolition as a negative liquidation and reduction—perhaps closer to Nietzsche's notion of demolition—which led to the Heideggerian interpretation and the mode of reading I was proposing, so I set it aside⁴.

Deconstructive thought was built upon several philosophies and took shape in their midst. It drew on the philosophies of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas, Freud, Husserl, and Foucault. This reliance on such philosophies helped expose the illusions of Western civilization about itself, and revealed the ways Western reason centers itself on language, voice, and rationality. At the same time, Derrida acknowledges his debt to these philosophies in shaping his philosophical views on deconstruction. Husserl's theses in this field illustrate that, especially through their direct influence on Derrida's conceptions. Husserl's philosophy attempted to dislodge the old order from its position and to reconfigure it by excavating roots or first beginnings—above all in things, not in words—that is, the call to direct the course of philosophical inquiry so that it begins from the roots, from things rather than representations, from givens rather than theories. Husserl seeks to teach us that the things themselves, not our conceptions of them, will tell us everything; therefore we should listen attentively to them and to what they tell us⁵.

There is no escaping recognition of the strength of the deconstructionists' argument and their ability to impose their visions and conceptions upon earlier philosophies: Deconstructive practice is structural and anti-structural at one and the same time. We deconstruct a construction in order to bring out its structures—its ribs and skeleton. Yet at the same time we deconstruct the structure that explains nothing: it is neither a center nor a principle of events⁶.

The deconstructionists broke the horizon of the specter of consciousness, reason, the center, and the fixed—those notions tied to the source of knowledge. Among them, Michel Foucault considered truth a prior human given, far removed from any authority or domination by any transcendent source, such that the discourse of truth, accordingly, becomes in itself a means of control: it is not enough to speak the truth; one must be within the truth⁷.

4- Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Kazem Jihad, Dar Toubkal, Morocco, (n.ed.), (n.d.), p. 58.

5- See: Saeed Tawfiq, *On the Nature of Language and the Philosophy of Interpretation*, University Foundation for Studies and Publishing, Lebanon, 1st ed., 2002, pp. 22–24.

6- Muhammad Salim Saadallah, *The Philosophical Foundations for Critiquing Post-Structuralism*, p. 164.

7- Raman Selden, *Contemporary Literary Theory*, trans. Saeed al-Ghanmi, Dar al-Farabi, Amman, 1st ed., 1996, p. 148.

Foucault searches for truth in everything that has been obscured and left unsaid—that is, in every hidden and intended discourse. He also rejects all the interpretations and major concepts on which the old certainties were built, and he tried to establish the possibility of a new interpretation to uncover a closed world of indications, and to dismantle the ideal conceptual apparatus that is erected upon reason and truth. His philosophy remained committed to this until he contributed significantly to the birth of a new science he called archaeology, in which archaeological readings refer to grasping the unsaid within what is said, and to searching for margins or unknown supports in the course of knowledge⁸.

The deconstructive project was founded on a philosophy of doubt, on revolt against rationalism, and against Western thought centered upon itself. The major wars and crises experienced by European society were likely a motive for the spread of deconstruction. Amid this comprehensive doubt and this dangerous epistemic upheaval in the consciousness of Western society, deconstruction emerged—something that cannot be studied historically in isolation from this doubt⁹. Thus, in its philosophical orientation, deconstruction is an undermining of Western centrality; it stands against structuralist thought and the closure of structure. It is therefore a paradigmatic application and a philosophical practice of postmodernity.

2. Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Deconstruction

Speaking about the philosophy of deconstruction in Nietzsche and Heidegger cannot be confined to a single study. Rather, it requires specialized and expanded research, and it also demands familiarity with the details of their visions and ideas. These pages cannot do them justice by gathering or fully assembling their conceptions; instead, they offer only a brief glimpse of some of their scattered views here and there.

2.1 Nietzsche and the Philosophy of Demolition:

Nietzsche declared war on Western metaphysics after noticing the contradictions and paradoxes within it, especially insofar as it is founded on the unity of reason, meaning, and truth. He was thus able to demolish this conception. Heidegger followed him, dismantling everything connected to metaphysical thought, until Derrida was inspired by this philosophy—deconstruction—and, on the basis of what preceded him, he too announced his project. What must be clarified, however, is the gap or distance between the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger and Derrida's thought regarding the question of difference among them.

Nietzsche's attack on modernity, on the dominance and centrality of Western reason, and on belief in metaphysics generated doubts and ambiguities for him. Accordingly, he developed a philosophy of undermining that reason and sought to demolish modernity and its project in strong opposition to this mode of thought. Abd al-Razzaq Belaqrour says: The hammers of Nietzschean critique were directed at the Western cultural values upon which the entire

8- Muhammad Salim Saadallah, *The Philosophical Foundations for Critiquing Post-Structuralism*, p. 282.

9- Ali Sadiqi, *An Introduction to the Study of Deconstruction in Derrida*, *Dafaf Journal*, issue 06, 01 May 2004, p. 38.

philosophical heritage was built, such as trust in reason, the slogans of progress, modernity, science, the optimism of the Enlightenment, and others¹⁰.

Nietzsche worked seriously and persistently to expose the philosophy of what lies beyond nature, the dominance of power, and the centrality of reason. All of this resulted in a philosophy of doubt rather than certainty, especially regarding truth: he saw it as an illusion and as relative. This led him to propose the notion of interpretation in place of explanation and critique. He has the merit—according to Derrida’s assessment—of contributing concepts such as interpretation and difference, among others. Nietzsche sought to free the signifier from its dependence or its subordinate status in relation to the logos or the concept linked to it—the concept of truth or the first signified—whatever meaning we may grant it¹¹.

Nietzsche penetrated deeply into the philosophy of Western culture centered on reason and sought to unsettle it, focusing in that effort on the opposing side—absence. This is the opposite of what rational philosophy called for, since it carries within it a metaphysics of presence. Relying on the binary of signifier and signified, he treated Western reason as a sign: its signifier is the body, and its signified is the enchantment of life. Thus, it is necessary to demolish this signified that sees itself as transcendent. To restore the radiance of that enchantment, it must be deconstructed through the word, or by plunging into the semantic worlds of the text, in order to expose the metaphysics concealed within the text, and to search for the authority at work in it. All of this is done so as to draw back the curtain on truth—truth that, as Nietzsche says, is a coquettish woman—truth embodied in the form of a woman who made a pact with Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer to be faithful to her and loyal to her, and they in turn tamed her; yet, on the opposite side, she was in fact with Nietzsche in a diabolical position, passionately desired—he trembles and pants in her twists and turns, tense, never ceasing to love the questioning of her¹².

Thus, for Nietzsche, truth is a playful woman whom everyone tries to pursue, and whom the genealogical self seeks to love and remain faithful to. But what matters in Nietzsche’s stance is not the seductive aspect of that truth; rather, the truth of truth appears in the other, absent side of this truth—this playful woman—through which the essence and inner reality of things is disclosed.

From the idea of the genealogical self, Nietzsche proposes the term genealogical critique as a strategy for questioning values and morals. It is a method that deepens the question of the formative origin of things, and of reason and its categories as well. What are the forces of reason and perception? What will hides within reason and behind the categories? This is the way that achieves real critique: it is the genealogical method¹³.

The genealogical method works by investigating the truth of things, especially what is hidden within them—that is, it searches for the absent side. In its approach, it returns to the origin of

10- bd Al-Razzaq Belaqrrouz, Transformations of Contemporary Philosophical Thought: Questions of Concept, Meaning, and Communication, Al-Ikhtilaf Publications / Dafaf Publications, Algeria–Lebanon, 1st ed., 2015, p. 102.

11- Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 120.

12- Hassan Bourqia, The Ninetieth Anniversary of Nietzsche’s Death: Nietzsche and the Anxiety of Writing, The Arabs and World Thought, National Development Center, Lebanon, issue 11, 1990, p. 125.

13- Abd Al-Razzaq Belaqrrouz, Transformations of Contemporary Philosophical Thought, p. 111.

the thing and reveals the concealed metaphysics. Discourse, without doubt, includes the binary of presence and absence. Nietzsche's interpretive technique then takes on the role of uncovering the masks of discourse, exposing its ideology and its self-centeredness, and excavating everything that is absent or different in order to show the truth of truth that it seeks. In this way, Nietzsche's philosophy favored absence over presence, body over spirit, and proclaimed a new god: the overman.

This Nietzschean proclamation—rebellious against metaphysics and the logos—is, for Heidegger and Derrida, a metaphysics in its own right. Nietzsche's claim to fight metaphysics is itself metaphysical. Yet what must be acknowledged is that Nietzsche paved the way for the philosophy of deconstruction. This is evident in Derrida's admissions and writings, such as his treatment of the centration and authority of Western reason, his emphasis on becoming rather than fixity, and his focus on the rhetorical dimension. Derrida says: There are two interpretations of interpreting structure, the sign, and play. The first seeks to interpret and dreams of deciphering the truth or the origin that escapes play and the system of signs, and it experiences the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The second no longer turns toward the origin; rather, it works to affirm play and strives to pass beyond man and humanism, beyond the name of man insofar as it is the name of that being which—throughout the history of metaphysics, or the history of onto-theology—has, in other words throughout all of history, dreamed of full presence, of the origin, and of the end of play. This second interpretation of interpretation is the one for which Nietzsche prepared the way¹⁴.

2.2 Heidegger and the Concept of Destruction:

Heidegger dismantled everything related to traditional Western ontology, which had confined being to presence while forgetting absence, or the other that is different. In his approach to this philosophy, he focused on the phenomenon of being and its truth, ultimately offering a conceptual view along the following lines: If, for the question of being itself, the transparency that belongs to its own history is to be attained, this requires loosening up the tradition that has become covered over, and dismantling the layers of concealment that have accumulated over time because of it. We understand this task as deconstruction¹⁵.

Heidegger returns to ancient philosophy, where ontology inherited concepts that must be reconsidered—and destroyed or demolished—in order to produce new readings and to stimulate the meaning of being to appear and come to the fore. To do this, he undertook the demolition of Western metaphysics, holding that its end had come with Nietzsche, and thus calling for a going-beyond. Accordingly, it becomes necessary to open a dialogue with it, since Western modernity links being with presence—precisely the same position that ancient Greek ontology adopted. It is also necessary to examine the issue of modernity, which claims a break with the past and with time, forgetting that this issue has its own past and history that must be remembered.

14- Jacques Derrida, *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, in *In Critique of Deconstruction*, trans. Abd Al-MunimAjab Al-Fayya, p. 119.

15- Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Fathi Al-Meskini, United New Book House, Lebanon, 1st ed., 2012, p. 173.

Heidegger sought to disperse and destroy that Western modernity by starting from the question of the meaning of being in its relation to time. He did so by thinking through the Greek legacy, dismantling ancient ontology, and demolishing the philosophy of the subject, which modern philosophy treated as a transcendent subject—sanctified and untouchable, indeed as truth itself—and as the bearer of modernity’s metaphysics. Ismail Mhenna says: Modernity derives all its epistemic, ethical, and aesthetic guarantees from the concept of the transcendent subject, as Descartes discovered it and presented it in the *Metaphysical Meditations*. This text represents the foundational reference for almost all subsequent philosophical discourse¹⁶.

Heidegger developed his thought and philosophy from the question of what the human being is toward thinking about the truth of human existence and its relation to time, striving in this direction while calling for openness to the other and care for it. He was not satisfied, in his deconstructive philosophy, with treating being as presence; rather, he moved to examining being in its relation to time. Heidegger never ceased questioning; instead, he deepened his reflection on the relationship between being and language. Through this, he concluded by bringing the philosophical discourse of modernity to an end and by going beyond metaphysics. In doing so, he demolished many concepts connected to the philosophy of the subject, such as consciousness, the self, essence, and identity.

Heidegger’s deconstructive approach was built on analyzing oppositional binaries, despite his struggle against them. He believes that Western thought is based on hostile oppositional dualities, and that it is founded upon them and exists only through them—such as the duality of reason and emotion, reason and body, self and other, speech and writing, man and woman, and so on—and that this thought always grants privilege and superiority to the first term while assigning inferiority and secondary status to the second¹⁷.

Heidegger works by searching for the truth of being and for a pure origin, whereas Derrida considers this a search for metaphysics. Undermining does not believe in a pure origin or a transcendent truth. Derrida uses the term chain, saying: Deconstruction is a chain of engagements with philosophy, not an accumulation of a philosophical system; its aim is to show that philosophical systematicity is a strategic matter that pretends to be built upon a set of axioms that are transcendent or self-evident¹⁸.

Heidegger remained strongly attached to the metaphysics of the West despite his revolt against it. He also remained captive to the philosophy of the subject. Moreover, his return to origins and to the concept of being remained, for him, something sanctified. This is what led Derrida to doubt and to place it under question.

16- Ismail Mhenna, *Being and Modernity: Heidegger in a Debate with Modern Reason*, Arab Scientific Publishers (Beirut), Dar Al-Aman (Rabat), Al-Ikhtilaf Publications (Algeria), 1st ed., 2012, p. 79.

17- Saad Al-Bazghi; Mijan Al-Ruwaili, *A Guide for the Literary Critic*, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca (Morocco), Beirut (Lebanon), 3rd ed., no date stated, p. 108.

18- Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*, trans. Sabri Muhammad Hassan, Dar Al-Mareekh Publishing, no edition stated, 1989, p. 143.

3. Derrida's Deconstructive Project:

Deconstructive thought did not take shape except after unsettling the dominant Western philosophies that preceded it, such as structuralism, empiricism, and materialism. It called for a new order and a new philosophy suited to what it aspires to. It therefore began by demolishing structuralist thought, which believes in centrality and fixity, and in not referring things to anything outside themselves. In this regard Derrida says: If deconstruction is truly destructive, let it destroy whatever it wishes of the old, deformed structures, so that we may rebuild anew¹⁹.

Deconstructive thought rejected the structuralist tendency for its servitude to the metaphysics of presence and the center. It turned instead to the principle, or philosophy, of doubt, overturning the balance of many concepts and assumptions that prevailed before deconstruction emerged. Thus, in their writings, we find that they proceed in founding deconstruction from Nietzsche's philosophy in his confrontation with the concept of truth in Western metaphysics, and from Heidegger's studies that tend toward doubting all philosophical discourses through his hermeneutic philosophy, through which he tried to open the door to a plurality of readings and to the infinity of interpretation²⁰.

Derrida acknowledges Heidegger's deconstructive philosophy, and he also recognizes the credit due to him in recovering the truth of being, after it had been viewed from the angle of presence within the modern project. He says: My debt to Heidegger is so great that it would be difficult to inventory it here and speak of it in evaluative or quantitative terms. I will summarize the matter by saying that he is the one who sounded the lanterns of the end of metaphysics, and taught us to adopt a strategic conduct toward it: to position ourselves within the phenomenon and to direct successive blows at it from the inside. That is, to travel some distance with metaphysics, and to put to it questions that cause it, of its own accord, to reveal its inability to answer and to disclose its inner contradiction²¹.

What must be discussed here is the extent to which Derrida's deconstruction aligns with Heidegger's deconstruction: did Derrida follow Heidegger's path in everything related to the metaphysical conception and the centered, fixed subject that grounds every certainty, or did he develop some of the issues and questions from which he set out in Heidegger's philosophy?

Derrida answers this question in the negative. For him, the philosophy of deconstruction differs from, and is distinguished from, Heidegger's philosophy. If that is so, then in what does this distinction and difference consist?

Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction has clear features and does not submit to any realm beyond or to a metaphysics to which one must return. By this he does not mean an absolute disagreement with Heidegger; rather, there is agreement and openness to Heidegger's deconstruction and to Nietzsche's demolition. Yet his own deconstruction reveals infinite

19- Muhammad Abd Al-Rahim Tahhan, *The Deconstructive Methodology in Analyzing Quranic Discourse: An Analytical Critical Study*, Master's thesis in Quranic Exegesis and Quranic Sciences, supervised by Prof. Yusuf Muhammad Al-Siddiqi, College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, Qatar University, 2017, p. 71.

20- Abd Al-Ghani Barah, *The Problem of Grounding Modernity in Contemporary Arab Critical Discourse*, General Egyptian Book Organization, Egypt, no edition stated, 2005, p. 108.

21- Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 47.

significations—those unruly meanings that are absent, unspoken, and marginalized. Accordingly, one can say: Derrida follows in the footsteps of both Nietzsche and Heidegger, but he went beyond what they called for whenever he found that it was not different from what Western metaphysics had asserted throughout its history²².

In this way Derrida built his deconstruction, rejecting the classical reading and the authority of the center, and calling for a reading that tracks the operation of difference—so that the reader observes the points at which content overflows the centrality of discourse, distinguishes what is controlled from what is uncontrolled, and works to discover paradoxes and contradictions so as to make the very thought it built destroy it. What drives the reader to all of this is the exploration of the centrality of the Western word and the destruction of the metaphysics of presence, since it rejects all meanings that do not conform to its logic²³.

Thus, one can say: Derrida's philosophical project is an attempt to demolish Western ontology in its entirety, built as it is upon binaries such as form and content, the human being and nature, the absolute and the relative, the fixed and the changing. These binaries rest on a fixed, transcendent signified. Instead, Derrida tries to bring down, or to undermine, the fixity of the transcendent signified (or the logos, the absolutes, and the constants), whether in a religious or a material sense, by demonstrating its contradiction and showing that it is itself part of material becoming. In this way, he can abolish the boundaries between the binaries that arise from the existence of the transcendent signified, arriving at a world of complete becoming with no foundation and no divine origin—indeed, with no origin at all—where all things are leveled and absolute relativity prevails, a world of signifiers entirely detached from the signified (or entirely fused with it). Therefore, there is no language—and if there is, it is the immediate sensory language of the body, since the body embodies meaning, so the signifier does not separate from the signified, which makes the signified grammatically irrelevant and unnecessary²⁴.

The origin of the emergence of the term deconstruction goes back to the paper Derrida presented titled *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, delivered at an academic symposium in the United States on the topic of critical languages and the sciences of man. This paper is regarded as an announcement of the birth of deconstruction—that is, a demolition and critique of the structuralism dominant at the time. His trilogy published in 1967—*Speech and Phenomena*, *Of Grammatology*, and *Writing and Difference*—are considered the foundational discourses of deconstruction through which he laid the pillars of his deconstructive project.

The establishment of the deconstructive project is attributed to the philosopher Jacques Derrida. From a philosophical perspective, it is an extension of the works of Nietzsche and Heidegger, as well as the psychologists Freud and Lacan. Derrida consistently criticized the privileging of voice and speech over writing, on the grounds that speech is regarded as the

22- Saad Al-Bazghi; Mijan Al-Ruwaili, *A Guide for the Literary Critic*, p. 108.

23- Nabil Ayyoub, *The Different Reader's Text and the Semiotics of Critical Discourse*, Maktabat Lebanon Publishers, 1st ed., 2011, p. 145.

24- Ahmad Abd Al-Halim Atiyya, *Jacques Derrida and Deconstruction*, Dar Al-Farabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 2010, p. 150.

origin and the fixed point. Derrida, however, sees the opposite and insists that this conception must be unsettled: the margin may become a center, and what is absent may become present. The evidence offered by proponents of this view is that the spoken word grants presence to interlocutors and gives it a special quality of immediacy: meaning arrives complete, because in the spoken word we know what we mean and what we say; we mean what we mean. This is completed in dialogue, in direct presence, and in transparent intention—whereas the speaker is absent in writing²⁵.

From what has preceded, we may pause at al-Bazghi's conception of deconstruction, when he argued that deconstructive reading is a double reading that seeks first to study the text (whatever it may be) in a traditional way in order to establish its explicit meanings. It then seeks to undermine the results it reaches through a contrary reading that relies on the meanings within the text that contradict what it openly declares. Through this second reading, deconstructive reading aims to create a fissure between what the text declares and what it conceals (between what the text says explicitly and what it says without explicit statement). In this reading project, deconstruction overturns everything that was dominant in metaphysical philosophy, whether that is fixed meaning, stable truth, science, knowledge, identity, consciousness, or the unified subject—in short, all the foundations upon which Western philosophical discourse is built²⁶.

Derrida's deconstruction of Western philosophy and his dissection of theoretical concepts led him to reread many of its assumptions, such as privileging writing over speech—much as Nietzsche inverted the upper world into a lower world and elevated the latter, and as Heidegger focused on being rather than on beings.

Western philosophy, across its eras, made the voice into a kind of deity: it sanctified it and devoted attention to it²⁷. Voice is taken to be the sum of thought and spirit; it is presence and fullness, connected to the self. Hisham Saleh says: Because when I speak I hear my voice, I feel fullness—the fullness of meaning and complete presence. Writing, for them, is deferral and postponement; it is a dead and rigid knowledge imprisoned in a library... and all of this is alien to living knowledge, as alien as the pharmakon is to medical science²⁸.

In the perspective of Western culture, writing in comparison with speech or voice is a substitute for it, or a sign; it is a supplement or an addition to speech, as Rousseau imagined. It is also likened to masturbation that follows the sexual act—meaning it is subordinate to speech or a part of it. Derrida, however, held a different view. He noticed that what was considered a supplement keeps returning: writing keeps returning, and so does masturbation. Subordinate things return to threaten what is important or fundamental; neglected things accompany important things; the marginal always comes back, and the fundamental things find it impossible to rid themselves of it²⁹.

25- Nabil Ayyoub, *The Different Reader's Text and the Semiotics of Critical Discourse*, p. 144.

26- Saad Al-Bazghi; Mijan Al-Ruwaili, *A Guide for the Literary Critic*, p. 108.

27- Hisham Saleh, *Interpretation/Deconstruction, Contemporary Arab Thought*, issues 54–55, February 1988, p. 101.

28- *Ibid.*

29- Nabil Ayyoub, *The Different Reader's Text and the Semiotics of Critical Discourse*, p. 144.

Thus, it must be acknowledged that deconstruction was founded on a method of doubt—a doubt that must be adopted and practiced, and that inevitably leads us to the core of truth: a truth that has long been concealed or left unspoken. Accordingly, truths cannot be sought in their center or on their surface, but rather in the hidden side carved within them. The same applies to the binary of speech and writing. The first made itself a center in philosophy and in modern thought, and it cannot be unsettled or displaced; the second was considered marginal. Yet with the emergence of postmodern philosophy, or deconstruction, it became possible to undermine, demolish, and question that center, and then to search for the hidden aspects within it. Muhammad Salim says: A deconstructive reading is powerfully skeptical, reflexive, and self-referential. It reveals the cracks, gaps, deficiencies, and agreements that every semantic device conceals. Deconstruction wagers on a reading strategy whose first principle is not to take anything as established, and to reject all forms of domination. Deconstruction confronts all argumentative issues and casts doubt on everything that claims proof, certainty, and affirmation³⁰. In this way, deconstructive philosophy established its foundations on doubt and on excavation beneath everything central and apparent, thereby taking a path toward stability and certainty.

CONCLUSION:

Western philosophy remained closed in on itself for a long period around what is called the centration of reason. This led to the repression of various forms of creativity and imagination, a confinement within a closed crucible, and consequently the production of limited meanings. Accordingly, postmodernity was distinguished by undermining Western metaphysics and by shattering central categories such as language, identity, reason, and voice. It is therefore a philosophy of dispersion, non-system, and plurality of meaning. It calls for enlightenment and liberation from the constraints of the center, for openness to absence, and for refuting presence.

Deconstruction was founded on opposing the fixed center, or what is known as the philosophy of presence, and it replaced it with a philosophy of absence or the different other. It also called for relying on the principle of doubt regarding all truths, and on the infinity of meanings and significations. Consequently, Derrida's deconstructive project is a demolition—or a radical questioning—of the beyond, that is, of Western metaphysics from Plato to Hegel.

One can say, finally, that among the merits of the deconstructive project is that it advocates liberation and rebellion against a world of illusions and myths; it undermines central categories and reconsiders fixed truth through doubt and demolition; and it combats the culture of the elite, authority, the center, and power. From here it acquired a chaotic, nihilistic, and absurd character.

30- Muhammad Salim Saadallah, *The Philosophical Foundations for Critiquing Post-Structuralism*, p. 160.

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