# Epistemological Analyses in the Theory of Deconstruction

## Mr. Mudasir Rahman Najar*

Research Scholar

*Abstract – In this paper, there are many issues like the origin of discourse, formation of knowledge and the theological dialectics are explored. Primarily, a study is undertaken to discover the origin of any ideology or any contruction evaluated objectively. Then under the critical study of discourse, the emergence of deconstructive theory is analysed. The various strategies of this theory create a sort of semantic resonance within the literary texts in order to challenge the western logic that dominates the fields of humanities and other social sciences. With this, the system of language vis a vis the structurality of meanings are found very vulnerable before the poststructuralist notion of reality. Besides, the notion of the sign-signifier relationship in terms of material and unseen world, that has the obvious theological background. Derrida presents the revolutionary outlook to inspire a change amongst the contemporary minds for the intellectual maturity. This method of interrogating the source of knowledge under this theory across the field humanities and social science is a revolutionary phenomenon. This paves the path for the future intellectuals to observe, understand and discover the new ways of thinking in the various fields of knowledge and numerous walks of life.*

*Keywords: Language, Knowledge, Religion, Discourse*

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## THEORY OF DECONSTRUCTION

### Deconstruction

The theory of deconstruction propounded by Jacques Derrida is a unique reading strategy with linguistic study and philosophic tendency to analyse art, literature, and other social science. In its study, the theory studies the past literarture with keen focus on the indeterminacy of logocentric construction of western foundation. Before going deep into the structures of western literary tradition, we need to study the theory of **discourse** that is immediately related to the theory of deconstruction. Since Deconstruction in general, is a mode of studying art, culture and other human sciences with the style to expose the unquestionable metaphysical assumptions and internal contradictions in philosophical conception and literary construction in language. It is a form of textual practice originated from Derrida, which aims to focus on the inherent insatability in the sphere of language and reality.

It is generally said that the term 'discourse' as a verb means to say or to write something with assertion, vehemence and determination. We have to locate the bases of any sort of discourse along with its self-motivated strategies. The origin is also to studied in terms of its consolidation of the discourse across the temporal scale. Regarding this idea, Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language,* translated from the French by A. M. Sheridan Smith in chapter 1 under the caption, "**The Unities of Discourse"** writes,

They must not be rejected defenitively of course, but the tranquillity with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized: we must define in what conditions and in view of which analyses certain of them are legitimate; and we must indicate which of them can never be accepted in any circumstances. (Foucault, 23-26)

This means that there is a proper way to study the origin of any ideology or any contruction that need to be studied for its sources of construction whether just or unjust; delibrate or mechanical. The strategies to study these discourses and ideologies must be indispensably above the negatively subjective approach. Besides, there is need to rise above the mundane mentality and to observe and understand the reality beneath the social and political discourses.

In addition, under another captioin, '**The Formation of Concepts',** there is proper

mechanism under which the statements under study are scrutinised and observed how the statement justifies its semantic appeal and counters any other intervention from the outside. The emergence of the concepts with the manipulation of the ideas in its favour and to manage the integration and the continuity of these very ideas. The concepts have to be diffused in to the various social arena. That means, 'The preconceptual field allows the emergence of the discursive regularities and constraints that have made possible the heterogeneous multiplicity of concepts, and, beyond these the profusion of the themes, beliefs, and representations with which one usually deals when one is writing the history of ideas' (Foucault, 63). He further elucidates that to sudy the discursive formation we must not relate them to a particular subject and psychological context at ay individual basis, but to evaluate the ideas with their hidden ideologies behind their formation. Besides, we must not relate the statements under study to the horizon of ideality and to the empirical progress of ideas.

In the caption, '**Archeology and the History of Ideas'**. Focoult higlights the genealogy of idea that got originated from numerous sources across the different fields of knowledge and the various walks of life. But the important concern regarding the development of these idea is the way they got originated and under which circumstances and background. The birth of any new ideas are most of the times at the cost of some other ideas that proves as antithises. That is why various transitions in the fields of knowledge are either ambivalent or interpreted in ambiguous terminology. This obscurantism gives a greater scope to the chances of change in the various epistemological domains. The textual indicatioin to the emergence of ideas is mentioned in the below mentioned long passage as follows:

But it can also, by that very fact, describe, from one domain to another, the hole interplay of exchanges and intermediaries: it shows how scientific knowledge is diffused, gives rise to philosophical concepts, and takes form perhaps in literary works; it shows how problems, notions, themes may emigrate from the philosophical field where they were formulated to scientific or political discourses; it relates work with institutions, social customs or behaviour, techniques, and unrecorded needs and practices; it tries to revive the most elaborate forms of discourse in the concrete landscape, in the midst of the growth and development that witnessed their birth. It becomes therefore the discipline of interferences, the description of the concentric circles that surround works, underline them, relate them to one another, and insert them into whatever they are not. … (Foucault, 135-140).

The above quote throws light on the issues of emergence as well as the discovery of knowledge in the various fields of life even beyond it.

In *The Enlightenment Gone Mad (I) The Dismal Discourse of Postmodernism's Grand Narratives* that starts with the quote ("Postmodernism is the enlightenment gone mad" —Stanley Rosen), the shifting and re-shifting of ethical, intellectual and other human values are keenly evaluated. In this regard, as per pragmatic notions of Lyotard, human consciousness has taken its flights to the level of being self-conscious with intellectual determinism. This transition on the mental level has given the boost to the social development and cultural cum ethical changes in the world. The morale the human mind has achieved has naturally changed the attitude of humanity in general. This change has also hailed as the power to dissent amongst the contemporary intellectuals, as it is said that,

The mother of all postmodern performative self-refutations, their archetype as it were, is found in deconstruction's totalizing critique of logocentric reason. Jacques Derrida himself gives it its most pronounced expression:The unsurpassable, unique, and imperial grandeur of the order of reason . . . is that one cannot speak out against it except by being for it, that one can protest it only from within it; and within its domain, Reason leaves us only the recourse to stratagems and strategies. The revolution against reason . . . can be made only within it. (Rainer Friedrick 27)

The above text indicates to the notion that Deconstructive tendency creates a sort of semantic resonance within the literary texts that occurs across the disruption and interruption, definite and indefinite attributes among the various binary oppositions.

Deconstruction as an approach to study art and literature in terms of binary oppositions that in a certain process of causation whereby the exchange of linguistic signification takes place to generate the meaning. This in turn enforces the context to discover the exchange of inside/outside relations – of any metaphysical ideaDeconstruction would affirm that any deconstructive gestures can also take a posture of metaphysical 'closure' – 'the double refusal of both remaining within the limits of (linguistic) tradition and of the possibility of transgressing that very limit'.

## DECONSTRUCTION AND KNOWLEDGE

Stoker in one of the chapters 'Language: Sense and Meaning' under the caption, '**Fictions, Context and Contradiction',** talks about the context of any word or any sentence that linguistically determine the validity of meaning. So, the sense has also directly been influenced by the nature of context. While discussing Russel in consonance with Derrida, he tries to assert on the determination of context in the projection of

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semantic validity. The quote in this regard is mentioned below:

….There is something interesting about Russell's logically proper names from a Derridean point of view, which is that they are an example of a kind of radical contextuality.There just is no limit to what 'I','that' and 'this' could refer to, given the appropriate context; and there just is nothing to be said about their reference outside a context. Derrida thinks of language in that way, as what works through total contextuality in every aspect. However, language cannot just work through contextuality without the proper aspect, the aspect of what gives language a relation to things, including any individual user of language. One aspect of context that is fundamental for Derrida is the possibility that any name, or any sentence, or any item of language might be fictional, (Stocker 58-59)

The quote referred above is highly explatory in view of language, meaning, imagination and reality. The power of context can put the words into numerous semantic formats.

At another instance, Stocker quotes Derrida in the analyses of sentence and its semantic relation with the characteristic of contextuality. This also indicates to the indeterminate state of language and relaion nature of linguistic sign. The following quote in this regard in quite relevant:

…**Deconstruction in large part means facing the contradiction rather than trying to eliminate it. All concepts are contradictory for Derrida. If sentences in language are indeterminate, and therefore contradictory, then the concept of the sentence is contradictory, since the sentence must both be what conveys meaning and what cannot convey meaning**. (Stocker, 67-70)

This is an obvious indication to the ambiguous nature of words and sentences in terms of their semantic representation. Because, the transitory nature of meaings cannot be denied with regard to the relation of meanings with their contexts.

Related to the concept of binary, the binary of speech and writing can only be made understandable by a logical contradiction: an aporia. This aporetic moment can be shown only by seeing the speech and writing as opposites and takes the form of something that cannot be explained through standard syllogistic logic. Hence, there are situation in the literary world where a particular sentence cannot convey a meaning beyond the set context in a paragraph, or in any concept. This state of contradiction is further discussed by Focault under the same caption 'Contradiction', and talks about the basis of contradictions across the fields of knowledge. He says that there are two levels of contradiction- one is that underwhich discourse is a definite thought and is not arbitrary in its emergence;

and at the second is that in which contradictions may emerge but are to be put to obscurity in order to avoid them with out any epistemological breach. The existence of contradiction and its neutralisation is elaborated as in the below mentioned quote:

Discourse is the path from one contradiction to another: if it gives rise to those that can be seen, it is because it obeys that which it hides. To analyse discourse is to hide and reveal contradictions; it is to show the play that they set up within it; it is to manifest how it can express them, embody them, or give them a temporary appearance. (Focault, 151)

Therefore, the system of language vis a vis the structurality of meanings are very vulnerable to the state of contradictions across the various modes of communication.

Stoker under the caption, **'Consciousness: Intentionality and Perception,'** explores the receptacles of mind in terms of its unconscious state. He is while referring to Freud, Derrida and others, analyses the structural aspect of mind and its scope of thought processes. The conscious part of mind can recollect the memories of any occasion or an event but cannot control the rush of thoughts processed in the unconscious part of mind. Further, he discuses the perceptual aspect of mind that means it is our subjective mode of comprehension of outside with our self-motivated intensions. The inter-relational bargaining of meanings across the structures of language system is asserted in the following quote: The whole Freudian model of the after work in the mind can be conceived as 'writing' in Derrida's sense of those necessary aspects of language in which intention and meaning are always a repetition of an absent original intention or meaning (Stocker, 81). So, it is exposed that the absent part of any concept or meaning is at the back of the projection of meanings in the various contexts.

Maxiumo Doyor in ***Conditions of Possibility as Conditions of Impossibility,*** wants to refer to the liminal conditions of the perceptions and anticipations of any possibility both in mundane life and in the intellectual cum linguistic fields of knowledge. Within this context, Doyor indicates to the terms like 'ultra' and 'quasi transcendental'; and Derida prefers more to use the second one in his discussions. The nature of meanings along with their ethical standards are directly or indirectly determined with the set of human perceptions and subjectivities. This notion is also hlighlighted through the projection and manipulation of mass opinion. This how it is textually explained:

Conditions of possibility as conditions of impossibility – this is the axiomatic statement of deconstruction's transcendental claim: I have been regularly lead [sic] back over the past thirty years, and in relation to quite different problems, to the

necessity of defining the transcendental condition of possibility as also being a condition of impossibility. This is something I am not able to annul. Clearly, to define a function of possibility as function of impossibility, that is, to define a possibility as its impossibility, is highly unorthodox from a traditional transcendental perspective, and yet, this is what reappears all the time, when I come back to the question of the fatality of aporia. (DP, 82 ) ( companion to Derrida MaxiumoDoyor, 135-136)

This shows that there are the chances of ambivalence and events in any socio-political and intellectual arena are at the stake in terms of authenticity. The public opinion is often managed to carry the characteristic of hidden discursive elements that dominate the domains of knowledge across the social and intellectual processes.

Stocker further talks about the **THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BREAK** in the context of basis of knowledge. He refers to the two ideas of knowledge- Foundationalism and Coherentism; as in the first, knowledge is derived from foudational contents of consciousness; and in the second, knowledge is derived from the ideas that emerge from the influnces of consciousness. Both these facets of knowledge are likened to Pragmatism that indicates to the knowledges related to ideas. He further indicated to the term 'epistemological break' was made popular by Louis Althusser (the doctoral student of Bachelard and teacher of Derrida) who has been representative of Marxist philosophy. The quote mentioned below forcefully assert the ideas in this regard:

It was Bachelard who coined the phrase 'epistemological break' in his discussion of science since Einstein, which he suggested broke with the old distinction between the materialist and the idealist, since contemporary physics refers to the point of view of the observer ('Idealism') in its description of physical objects ('Materialism') and is less mechanically deterministic than previous science. He later went on to discuss the Phenomenology of objects in a particularly subjective and aesthetic way, which tries to exclude any transcendental or metaphysical ideas, or any claim to have pure ideas independent of subjective experience. Derrida refers to this aspect of Bachelard in IOG, briefly to the 'epistemological breach' in 'Of grammatology as a positive science' (OG I 3), and to the 'epistemological break' in 'The linguistic circle of Geneva' (in MP). (103-104)

The abover quote indicates that there is a semantic deviation from the trancendental approach to the subjective approach.

Further in the context of knowledge, Stocker under the caption **Internal and External Knowledge,** talks about the two more facets of the production of knowledge interms of internal source and exernal source. This is further explained in the following quote:

Internalism is where the mind constructs knowledge from its inner ideas, while Externalism is where the mind constructs knowledge from the contents of our experience of the external world. …Though Derrida suggests the indissoluble unity of the internal and the external, he does so from the point of view of Externalism, since he emphasizes that Deconstruction belongs to a philosophical tradition of challenging the transcendental from the point of view of the empirical(OG I 1) (Stocker, 112).

That means the integration and assimilation of external knowledge and internal knowledge the sole way for the epistemological development.

Focault in the field of knowledge, discusses the various characteristics of knowledge as he under the caption SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE writes: This group of elements, formed in a regular manner by a discursive practice, and which are indispensable to the constitution of a science, although they are not necessarily destined to give rise to one, can be called knowledge. Knowledge is that of which one can speak in a discursive practice, …(Focault, 182). And further go on counting the characteristics of knowledge interms of its scope of 'psychiatric discourse', 'clinical medicine' in terms of their observation and diffusion. He also says that, knowledge is also the field of coordination and subordination of statements in which concepts appear, (182).

There are bodies of knowledge that are independent of the sciences (which are neither their historical prototypes, nor their practical by-products), but there is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice; and any discursive practice may be defined by the knowledge that it forms. **(Foucault, 183)**

In another topic **KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT A CENTRE,** Stocker indicates to the notion of presence vis a vis meaning. He further gives emphases on the presence of centre and the nature of centre in showing its precense as well as its origin. The concept of 'centre' is to be analysed on the basis of its ends. Because, when we try to comprehend the emergence and consolidation of 'centre' based on western notion of metaphysics, we see that the paradoxical representation of 'centre' in dicates to the dual role of centre underwhich it both beomes the structure itself and is, at the same time, outside the structure. This debate is very crucial in the world of contemporary philosophers and social scientists. The below mentioned quote in this regard is relevant:

The centre cannot be a centre unless it is distinguished from the centre, in which case there

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must be equivocation about whether the centre is part of the system it orientates. This means that the centre can only be completely present in the system in a limit situation, which Derrida describes as eschatological, and as a full presence beyond play. Eschatology is the end of time, history and days. It refers to a religious conception of the end in which there is a rupture with previous temporal experience. That sense of eschatology is closely related with full presence. Within religious conceptions, the eschatological occurs when God, God's law and God's word become fully present on earth. That is why there is an end of previous time and experience, because time and experience rest on the absence of the presence of pure Being. (Stocker, 114).

The quote emphasised that the centre cannot fully dominate the structure if it is even possible that may be at the cost of religious apocalypse.

Focault in the discussion of knowledge indicates to the term episteme as the energy to determine relations across the various discursive practices. He, in the topic Science and Knowledge, further explains the term in the following quote as:

The episteme is not a form of knowledge (connaissance) or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities. (Focault, 191.

The above quote is determined to evaluate the various sciences in terms of discourses across the subject experiences and the paramenters of rationality.

## DECONSTRUCTION AND RELIGION

Martin Hägglund in a caption 'Derrida's Radical Atheism', talks about the issue of religion vis a vis the ethic sense of the world. Since, world is broadly divided into two groups i.e. theists and atheists. He refers to the term 'radical atheism' as the term that has deconstructive inclinations and studies some concepts of religion in such a rhetorical cum philosophic tones that the very arguments in these concepts falls apart. This weakens the structutred thought that 'Radical atheism thus provides a new framework for understanding Derrida's engagement with religious concepts and challenges the numerous theological accounts of deconstruction.'

In order to understand the deconstructive approach to religion, we need to go for the Derridean definition of religion in the following quote: The common denominator for religions is thus that they promote a notion of the unscathed, regardless of whether the unscathed is posited as transcendent or immanent

and regardless of whether it is called God or something else.' ????This means that there is an agency of power that carries the potential to dominate the socio-cultural and intellectual phenomenon.

Regarding the another issue that is of the origin of evil, deconstruction tries to interrogate whether evil has the divine source or not. Besides, evil acts as an antiforce against the essence of good, virtue and truth. The term, 'radical evil' is used in the context of deconstruction of the conception of 'good' and 'evil'. In this view, the following passage clarifies to some extent as:

If God created evil, he is not absolutely good, but if he did not create evil, he is not almighty. Augustine formulated the most influential solution to the problem by arguing that evil does not belong to being as such. Only the good has being and evil is nothing but the privation of goodness; a corruption that supervenes from the outside and does not affect the supreme good of being in itself. Thus, God can be the creator of everything that is (since all that has being is good) without being responsible for evil. The source of evil rather resides in the free will of human beings, which makes them liable to turn away from the good … (companion to Derrida Hägglund, 167-168)

Hagglund at another instance under the caption, Radical Evil and the Messianic, talks about indecisive future and is also related to religious and political faith. In this regard, Haggard while quoting Derrida, writes a relevant text as follows:

Consequently, Derrida emphasizes that what he calls the messianic is without messianism and without religion. Rather, Derrida seeks to unearth an "atheological heritage of the messianic," as he puts it in *Specters of Marx* (SM, 168). The messianic is here linked to the promise of justice, which is directed both toward the past (as a promise to remember victims of injustice) and toward the future (as a promise to bring about justice). (companion to Derrida Hägglund, 174-177).

Dastur under title **Conclusion: Play and Messianicity,** refers to the series of signifiers that runs to reach to a particular signified in terms of substitution. He in this respect further elucidates the play in these words:

**In this conception of play, nothing forbids or prohibits the permutation of all terms. The movement of signification is then what Derrida calls a movement of supplementarity: … Play is thus always the interplay of presence and absence, because it is what allows the substitution of one term by another one, the**

**supplement of one term through another one. …..… (Companion to Derrida Dastur, 179-193).**

This proves that there is a continuous shifting and re-shifting of presence and absence. This paves the way for the exchange of meanings in the social discourses.

Under the caption Christian Theology, Derrida refers to the integration of Christian theology and Greek metaphics that consolidates this process to the centuries ahead. This means that the sign signifier relationship in terms of matrial and unseen world has the obvious theological background. Bradley in this connection, has quoted Derrida in the context of Christianity and the assertion of sign and signified relations to prove the supposed presence of the absence of centre:

Yet, Derrida goes on to identify a more profound way in which the concept of the sign remains theological, even in its apparently most modern and scientific forms. For Derrida, the sign is always taken to be the sign of a pure or immediate presence that lies behind it and this metaphysics of presence finds its most systematic expression in Christianity: what characterises the God of medieval scholastic theology, he argues, is that it is a first cause (Causa sui), an unmoved mover, in short, an absolutely present being who guarantees all meaning (p. 71/104). If Saussure and other modern linguists obviously dispense with any belief in a creator god lying behind the sign, Derrida has little difficulty in showing that they still retain a residually theological investment in what he calls a 'transcendental signified' – an ultimate presence – which anchors all meaning in itself: the presence of God is merely replaced by the presence of the speaker, of his or her thoughts and feelings, and so on. In this sense, Derrida argues that the age of the sign is essentially theological: 'the sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth' (p. 14/25). (Bradly, Of Grammatology)

With this, the above quote explores the theological origin of 'sign' in terms of Christianity. The concept of God is considered the first cause that leads to the concept of transcendental signified.

Thus, that there is a way to study the origin of any ideology or any contruction that need to be studied for its sources of construction of ideas and related concepts. Deconstructive strategies create a sort of semantic resonance within the literary texts across the disruption and interruption of the unjust state of binaries. Deconstruction plays a vital role in the mental horizons of contemporary minds. Besides, the notion of the sign-signifier relationship in terms of material and unseen world, that has the obvious theological background. The explosion of knowledge under this theory in view of evaluation in the field humanities and social science. Derrida points to the paradoxical notion of an 'epistemological break',

across the structures of language that has enforced a de-naturalise certain ideas to institute a break with nature. Derrida presents the revolutionary outlook to inspire a change amongst the contemporary minds for the intellectual maturity. Therefore, the system of language vis a vis the structurality of meanings are very vulnerable to the state of contradictions; and directs to the epistemological ambivalence across the social and intellectuals domains.

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**Corresponding Author**

**Mr. Mudasir Rahman Najar***

Research Scholar

**mudasirmail92@gmail.com**

**Mr. Mudasir Rahman Najar***