



# DERRIDA AND DECONSTRUCTION

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# World War II (1939-1945)

- worldwide military conflict
- deaths of over 70 million people – destruction of numerous cities
- a calamity in human civilization
- A period of loss, insecurity and anxiety



# The Revolution in Science and Technology

- Rapid Technological revolution in the 1950s
- 1951-The first commercial computer was invented
- 1952-First animal cloning
- 1962-Launched the first satellite to carry TV broadcasts
- 1969-The original Internet was born in America
- the dominance of instrumental rationality
- the propensity of scientific and technological capability



# The Biased Modern World – The Holocaust

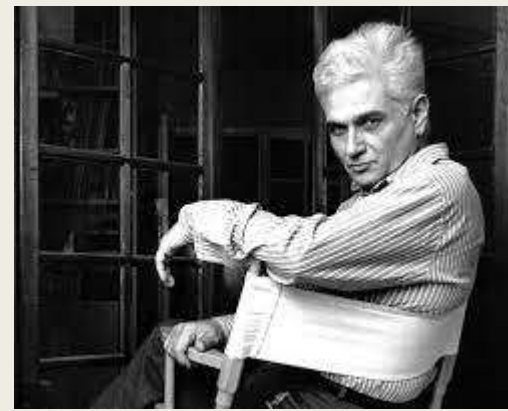


- The Holocaust, was the genocide of European Jews during World War II
- Between 1941 and 1945 Nazi Germany and its collaborators systematically murdered some six million Jews across German-occupied Europe
- around two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population
- The murders were carried out in pogroms and mass shootings
- concentration camps - gas chambers and gas vans in German extermination camps



**POSTMODERNISM**  
was a reaction to  
**MODERNISM**  
and was influenced by  
the disenchantment  
that followed  
**WORLD WAR II.**

# Jacques Derrida(1930-2004)



- The French Philosopher - known as the father of deconstructionism
- a major contributor to postmodernism
- best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as deconstruction
- one of the major figures associated with post-structuralism and postmodern philosophy
- contributed to the understanding of deeply hidden philosophical assumptions and bigotries found in Western culture
- Highlights the accountability of 'western' culture to objectify, dominate and exclude its ethnic and racial 'others' - imperialism, and militarism
- Fed up of the highly efficient technologies of war and genocide -atomic bombs, holocaust
- Against rationalism and claims of reason as that had resulted in totalitarian arrogance

# Derrida's Deconstruction



- Deconstruction was originated by the philosopher Jacques Derrida – a literary analysis in his work *Of Grammatology*
- A philosophical theory of textual criticism
- An approach to understand the relationship between the text and its meaning(s)
- emphasizes the dominance of one particular way of thinking over others
- denies the idea of fixed meaning,
- exposes the existence of the binary - destabilizing previously fixed categories of understanding
- Deconstruction is defined as a way of analyzing literature that assumes that text cannot have a fixed meaning – exists within a system of differences
- This phenomenon of *Différance*, as Derrida puts it, is the basis of deconstruction
- Différance – meaning cannot be regarded as static or fixed

# A Difficult writer?!

- Derrida is a difficult writer - for many his writings are incomprehensible
- Some people may blame themselves for not understanding him
- Others blame Derrida himself!





# Against Traditional Assumptions

- Deconstruction questions certainty, identity and truth
- Asserts that text cannot have a fixed, privileged, single meaning
- Every text has a different meaning each time
- Calls for contradictory viewpoints and analysis



# How do you Deconstruct a Text?

- read a novel twice - 20 years apart
- see how it has a different meaning each time
- First reading can never help you!
- Read again to dig out new meanings



# Anything Conventional? Do Check it out!

- What is conventional? – generally accepted principle, methods and behavior
- Resist any kind of fixed conventional meaning of a text
- See if any minority perspective of a text is left untouched – expose them
- Imagine the difference if the text is narrated by a character who bears a minority identity
- See if any tradition is openly scorned at



# Any Ideology Discriminated? Do Check it out!

- Is any ideology supported in the text?
- Is any other ideology mocked or discriminated in the text?
- Does the text take its stand on of Western Imperialism?
- Or is it trying to reinforce its Imperialist position?
- Does the text hints anything hierarchic?



# Misreading? Don't Worry!!

- Your own reading, misreading and the ideas gained are meaningful just like the author's interpretation of his own work
- Do not give way to authoritative explanation
- Hold on to ambiguity and playfulness
- Your interpretation can be strange, funny, disturbing and paradoxical

Every reading is a misreading.

Phyllis Kline - QUOTESTATS.COM

# Stop Linear Reading

- You can skim the text backward
- You can even skip
- You can read particular phrases or sentences
- Deconstruction repels the idea of a conventional forward formula
- Instead promotes a non-linear fashion of reading



# No to Western Cultural Binaries

- Western culture plays power politics through a resilient structure of cultural binaries
- This creates challenging hierarchies – dominant concept excludes the Other
- Deconstruction strictly blocks Western cultural binaries
- By deconstructing a text, we can highlight certain hidden cultural binaries within the text



# What are Binary Opposites?

## Examples of Binary Opposites

- Good vs Evil,
- Black vs White,
- Boy vs Girl,
- Peace vs War,
- Civilised vs Savage,
- Democracy vs Dictatorship,
- First world vs Third world,
- Domestic vs foreign/alien,
- Articulate vs inarticulate ,
- Young vs Old,
- Man vs Nature,
- Protagonist vs antagonist,
- Action vs inaction,
- Motivator vs observer,
- Empowered vs victim ,
- Man vs Woman,
- Good looking vs Ugly,
- Strong vs weak,
- Decisive vs indecisive,
- East vs West,
- Humanity vs technology,
- Ignorance vs wisdom





# Absorb Different Meanings!

- Change your perspective
- Decode different meanings
- Do not depend on a single, fixed perspective!
- You can even deconstruct movies, advertisements, political speeches
- Deconstructed text or art can be confusing, ambiguous, paradoxical and disordered, but with multiple meanings.



“Deconstruction  
is not  
destruction.”

**Jacques Derrida**

A stack of colorful sticky notes is shown against a dark, textured background. The top note is yellow and has a black border. It is pinned to the top left corner with a purple pushpin. The text on the note is arranged in four lines: 'THANK' and 'YOU' in black, 'SEE YOU' in white with a black outline, and 'AGAIN' in red. Below the yellow note, several other sticky notes in shades of blue and green are visible, also with black borders.

**THANK  
YOU  
SEE YOU  
AGAIN**