

**Chapter 1 : Klages on Derrida's "Structure . . ."**

*In the conclusion of his essay, Derrida observes that there are two ways to interpret structure, sign, and play. One seeks to decipher a truth or an origin, and avoids play. The other affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism.*

According to Derrida and taking inspiration from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure , [14] language as a system of signs and words only has meaning because of the contrast between these signs. Derrida refers to the "in this view, mistaken belief that there is a self-sufficient, non-deferred meaning as metaphysics of presence. One of the two terms governs the other axiologically, logically, etc. The first task of deconstruction would be to find and overturn these oppositions inside a text or a corpus of texts; but the final objective of deconstruction is not to surpass all oppositions, because it is assumed they are structurally necessary to produce sense. The oppositions simply cannot be suspended once and for all. The hierarchy of dual oppositions always reestablishes itself. Deconstruction only points to the necessity of an unending analysis that can make explicit the decisions and arbitrary violence intrinsic to all texts. This explains why Derrida always proposes new terms in his deconstruction, not as a free play but as a pure necessity of analysis, to better mark the intervals. Derrida called undecidables "that is, unities of simulacrum" "false" verbal properties nominal or semantic that can no longer be included within philosophical binary opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical oppositions "resisting and organizing it" without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of Hegelian dialectics e. However, Derrida resisted attempts to label his work as " post-structuralist ". This foil to Platonic light was deliberately and self-consciously lauded in Daybreak, when Nietzsche announces, albeit retrospectively, "In this work you will discover a subterranean man at work", and then goes on to map the project of unreason: Does not almost every precise history of an origination impress our feelings as paradoxical and wantonly offensive? Does the good historian not, at bottom, constantly contradict? Reason, logic, philosophy and science are no longer solely sufficient as the royal roads to truth. And so Nietzsche decides to throw it in our faces, and uncover the truth of Plato, that he "unlike Orpheus" just happened to discover his true love in the light instead of in the dark. This being merely one historical event amongst many, Nietzsche proposes that we revisualize the history of the West as the history of a series of political moves, that is, a manifestation of the will to power, that at bottom have no greater or lesser claim to truth in any noumenal absolute sense. By calling our attention to the fact that he has assumed the role of Orpheus, the man underground, in dialectical opposition to Plato, Nietzsche hopes to sensitize us to the political and cultural context, and the political influences that impact authorship. For example, the political influences that led one author to choose philosophy over poetry or at least portray himself as having made such a choice , and another to make a different choice. The problem with Nietzsche, as Derrida sees it, is that he did not go far enough. That he missed the fact that this will to power is itself but a manifestation of the operation of writing. This is so because identity is viewed in non-essentialist terms as a construct, and because constructs only produce meaning through the interplay of difference inside a "system of distinct signs". This approach to text is influenced by the semiology of Ferdinand de Saussure. In language there are only differences. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it. Nevertheless, in the end, as Derrida pointed out, Saussure made linguistics "the regulatory model", and "for essential, and essentially metaphysical, reasons had to privilege speech, and everything that links the sign to phone". A desire to contribute to the re-evaluation of all Western values, a re-evaluation built on the 18th-century Kantian critique of pure reason, and carried forward to the 19th century, in its more radical implications, by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. An assertion that texts outlive their authors, and become part of a set of cultural habits equal to, if not surpassing, the importance of authorial intent. A re-valuation of certain classic western dialectics: To this end, Derrida follows a long line of modern philosophers, who look backwards to Plato and his influence on the Western metaphysical tradition. However, like Nietzsche, Derrida is not satisfied merely with such a political interpretation of Plato, because of the

particular dilemma modern humans find themselves in. His Platonic reflections are inseparably part of his critique of modernity, hence the attempt to be something beyond the modern, because of this Nietzschean sense that the modern has lost its way and become mired in nihilism. Understanding language, according to Derrida, requires an understanding of both viewpoints of linguistic analysis. The focus on diachrony has led to accusations against Derrida of engaging in the etymological fallacy. The mistranslation is often used to suggest Derrida believes that nothing exists but words. Form of Content, that Louis Hjelmslev distinguished from Form of Expression than how the word "house" may be tied to a certain image of a traditional house i. The same can be said about verbs, in all the languages in the world: The same happens, of course, with adjectives: Thus, complete meaning is always "differential" and postponed in language; there is never a moment when meaning is complete and total. Such a process would never end. Metaphysics of presence[ edit ] Main article: Metaphysics of presence Derrida describes the task of deconstruction as the identification of metaphysics of presence, or logocentrism in western philosophy. Metaphysics of presence is the desire for immediate access to meaning, the privileging of presence over absence. This means that there is an assumed bias in certain binary oppositions where one side is placed in a position over another, such as good over bad, speech over the written word, male over female. Derrida writes, "Without a doubt, Aristotle thinks of time on the basis of ousia as parousia, on the basis of the now, the point, etc. This argument is largely based on the earlier work of Heidegger, who, in *Being and Time* , claimed that the theoretical attitude of pure presence is parasitical upon a more originary involvement with the world in concepts such as ready-to-hand and being-with. Difficulty of definition[ edit ] There have been problems defining deconstruction. Derrida claimed that all of his essays were attempts to define what deconstruction is, [26]: In these negative descriptions of deconstruction, Derrida is seeking to "multiply the cautionary indicators and put aside all the traditional philosophical concepts". If Derrida were to positively define deconstructionâ€”as, for example, a critiqueâ€”then this would make the concept of critique immune to itself being deconstructed. Some new philosophy beyond deconstruction would then be required in order to encompass the notion of critique. Not a method[ edit ] Derrida states that "Deconstruction is not a method, and cannot be transformed into one". A thinker with a method has already decided how to proceed, is unable to give him or herself up to the matter of thought in hand, is a functionary of the criteria which structure his or her conceptual gestures. This would be an irresponsible act of reading, because it becomes a prejudicial procedure that only finds what it sets out to find. Not a critique[ edit ] Derrida states that deconstruction is not a critique in the Kantian sense. For Derrida, it is not possible to escape the dogmatic baggage of the language we use in order to perform a pure critique in the Kantian sense. Language is dogmatic because it is inescapably metaphysical. Derrida argues that language is inescapably metaphysical because it is made up of signifiers that only refer to that which transcends themâ€”the signified. For Derrida the concept of neutrality is suspect and dogmatism is therefore involved in everything to a certain degree. Deconstruction can challenge a particular dogmatism and hence desediment dogmatism in general, but it cannot escape all dogmatism all at once. Not an analysis[ edit ] Derrida states that deconstruction is not an analysis in the traditional sense. Derrida argues that there are no self-sufficient units of meaning in a text, because individual words or sentences in a text can only be properly understood in terms of how they fit into the larger structure of the text and language itself. Derrida states that deconstruction is an "antistructuralist gesture" because "[s]tructures were to be undone, decomposed, desedimented". At the same time, deconstruction is also a "structuralist gesture" because it is concerned with the structure of texts. So, deconstruction involves "a certain attention to structures" [26]: An example of structure would be a binary opposition such as good and evil where the meaning of each element is established, at least partly, through its relationship to the other element. It is for this reason that Derrida distances his use of the term deconstruction from post-structuralism , a term that would suggest that philosophy could simply go beyond structuralism. Paul de Man was a member of the Yale School and a prominent practitioner of deconstruction as he understood it. Caputo attempts to explain deconstruction in a nutshell by stating: 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. Have we not run up against a paradox and an aporia [something contradictory] Allison is an early translator of Derrida and states, in the introduction

to his translation of *Speech and Phenomena*: Particularly problematic are the attempts to give neat introductions to deconstruction by people trained in literary criticism who sometimes have little or no expertise in the relevant areas of philosophy that Derrida is working in. These secondary works e.

**Chapter 2 : "Structure, Sign and Play" and "The Man of the Crowd"**

*Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences (French: La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines)* was a lecture presented at Johns Hopkins University on 21 October by philosopher Jacques Derrida.

Lacan was one of the few French attendees to lecture in English; Lacan makes a point of this gesture at the beginning of the lecture, titled "Of Structure as the Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever". The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man. Derrida is dealing with structuralism, a type of analysis which understands individual elements of language and culture as embedded in larger structures. The archetypal examples of structuralism come from Ferdinand de Saussure, who showed how phonemes and words gain meaning only through relations with each other. Derrida dealt directly with Saussure in a related book titled *Of Grammatology*. In particular, he accuses structuralist discourses of holding on to a "center": Whether this center is "God", "being", "presence", or "man" as it was at the colloquium, its function is the same, and the history of structures is a history of substitutions, one center after another, for this constant position. Derrida suggests that this model of structure will end "is ending" and that a newer and freer though still unknown thinking about structures will emerge. The "center" is that element of a structure which appears given or fixed, thereby anchoring the rest of the structure and allowing it to play. In the history of metaphysics specifically, this function is fulfilled by different terms which Derrida says are always associated with presence: This central term ironically escapes structurality, the key feature of structuralism according to which all meaning is defined relationally, through other terms in the structure. From this perspective, the center is the most alien or estranged element in a structure: Derrida locates the beginning of this process in the writings of earlier philosophers, who continued to use the pattern of metaphysics even as they denounced it in others. Reciprocal destroyers [edit] Derrida depicts Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, three of his greatest influences, as ultimately trapped within a destructive spiral of denunciation. Derrida argues that these theoretical moves share a common form: But all these destructive discourses and all their analogues are trapped in a sort of circle. This circle is unique. It describes the form of the relationship between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics. It is these differences which explain the multiplicity of destructive discourses and the disagreement between those who make them. It was within concepts inherited from metaphysics that Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger worked, for example. Since these concepts are not elements or atoms and since they are taken from a syntax and a system, every particular borrowing drags along with it the whole of metaphysics. This is what allows these destroyers to destroy each other reciprocally "for example, Heidegger, considering Nietzsche, with as much lucidity and rigor as bad faith and misconstruction, as the last metaphysician, the last "Platonist. And today no exercise is more widespread. All we can do is refuse to allow either pole in a system to become the center and guarantor of presence. There exists no veritable end or term to mythical analysis, no secret unity which could be grasped at the end of the work in decomposition. The themes duplicate themselves to infinity. When we think we have disentangled them from each other and can hold them separate, it is only to realize that they are joining together again, in response to the attraction of unforeseen affinities. Freeplay is the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain. Freeplay is always an interplay of absence and presence, but if it is to be radically conceived, freeplay must be conceived before the alternative of presence and absence; being must be conceived of as presence or absence beginning with the possibility of freeplay and not the other way around. It is more and more often said that the Johns Hopkins colloquium "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" was in, more than twenty years ago, an event in which many things changed it is on purpose that I leave these formulations somewhat vague on the American scene "which is always more than the American scene. What is now called "theory" in this country may even have an essential link with what is said to have happened there in

**Chapter 3 : English Literature: Structure, Sign, and Play: Derrida**

*Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"<sup>1</sup> () Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an.*

Derrida and Foucault share a common heritage of the Big Name German thinkers. What differentiates them is their primary reaction to coming to think there is no truth. Foucault comes to believe there is no truth, only power, and that therefore one should become engaged politically. Derrida comes to believe there is no truth, only the flow of language, and that therefore one should play creatively with language. Derrida is most famous for carrying on and systematizing the method of deconstruction. As an illustration of deconstructive style, Derrida never directly discusses the mad but rather nests that topic of discussion within as many other discussions as possible. Deconstruction is a consequence of an extreme skepticism. The skepticism is a consequence of a historical series of retreats from any sort of objective and stable foundation for the contents of our minds. Beginning in the early modern period, the loss of God or any such super-natural grounding undermined the whole medieval structure. But that was fine, the early moderns thought, because nature provided an external grounding and science could thereby replace religion. But then, by the time of Hume, we had lost an external, causal nature as a grounding. But then, by the time of Nietzsche and Freud, we had lost any sense of a coherent, rational self that could ground anything stable or objective. Okay, said the Structuralists, but then we can at least analyze language and find in it universal and necessary structural features. Derrida takes it for granted that all of those notions have been discredited by the middle of the 20th century. The history of failure provides the context for the more specific objections deconstructionists level against the centered approach to language. From these objections it follows that the positive standard driving the objections is that of unconstrained egalitarian play. The Method of Deconstruction. The nature of the deconstructive method is to find in any text equally legitimate readings that have been marginalized. As the usual analysis goes for those perceptual cases, there is no reality out there forcing a visual reading upon us; rather the reading is changeable and a matter of will. In analyzing perception, those who hold the diaphanous model will point out that our percepts take forms that have features that are different than the reality they are of--for example, an experience of a red object has features that are different than those of the red object. The features of the experience depend in part on the nature of the subject having the experience. And so, advocates of the diaphanous model conclude, our experiences cannot be directly of external objects; at best they can be subjective representations of objects. The same analysis holds for conceptual thinking. Conceptual thinking takes a particular form: Since that language has features that are different than the reality it is supposed to refer to, it is neither a diaphanous medium through which we grasp external reality nor a mirror of an external reality. Instead its different features are a product of our subjective nature, in this case our subjective choices--for example, we choose arbitrarily the symbols we use in language. And so, deconstructionists conclude, we can just as arbitrarily choose other symbols or use pre-existing symbols for new purposes. Nothing constrains us but the extent of our subjective creativity. One can arrive at deconstruction thus via the history of metaphysics and epistemology, but much of the use of deconstruction is political and psychological. Deconstruction implies a radical egalitarianism of textual interpretations. This feature is attractive to those who dislike being told that they are mistaken or who dislike having to tell others that they are mistaken. The idea that everyone is equally right and that all opinions are equally worthy is psychologically and socially soothing to many. For those who are primarily politically motivated and at the same time alienated in their social context, deconstruction is a way to dismiss or set aside unwelcome texts that they otherwise would have a difficult time arguing against. In the American context, deconstruction has been used mostly in legal circles against the Constitution and the body of precedent, and in literary circles against the canon of great books. This political feature explains why deconstructionists are mostly far left wing in their politics and located in America. Derrida is not esteemed in France or the rest of Europe nearly as much as he is esteemed in America. Given that America has the strongest non-left traditions of any nation, it makes sense that its left-wing intellectuals would be most alienated and most likely to need the most desperate weapons to attack it. The idea

that everyone is equally right and all opinions are equally worthy is soothing to many. Deconstruction is also attractive to those drawn to the marginal and the bizarre. Deconstruction holds that all texts center one reading and marginalize the rest, and so makes it an imperative to seek out the marginal readings. This gives to those who like the bizarre a legitimation and a built-in defense against criticism. If their so-called bizarre readings are criticized as being just too out there--e. On the one hand, he was a left-wing activist in his student days and supported left-wing ideas all his life, but for most of his career he never made any explicit connection between his academic work on deconstruction and his personal political views. For much of his career, Derrida was criticized not only by his political opponents but also by fellow left-wingers for the pure negativity of deconstruction. His candidate is the left-wing version of justice. In order to make justice invincible to deconstructive reduction, he seems to speak of it as an infinite, indestructible idea that arrives from who knows where and which we find uncannily compelling. In other words, late in his life Derrida seems to be adopting the language of religious mysticism as an escape from the bleakness and sterility of deconstruction. Loosing deconstruction on the world, Derrida notes, is going to be ugly. Turning and turning in the widening gyre The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; the center cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere The ceremony of innocence is drowned; The best lack all conviction, while the worst Are full of passionate intensity. Surely some revelation is at hand; Surely the Second Coming is at hand. Hardly are those words out When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi Troubles my sight: The darkness drops again; but now I know That twenty centuries of stony sleep Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle, And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

**Chapter 4 : Derrida and Deconstruction**

*Jacques Derrida first read his paper "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences ()" at the John Hopkins International Colloquium on "The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" in October articulating for the first time a post structuralist theoretical paradigm.*

The sentences appear to become increasingly entangled, to lead nowhere, and ultimately to add up to nothing. My own comments are presented as questions or are in parenthesis. Derrida sets up the scene for this text right away in the quote from Montaigne: His focus is directed inward, at the workings of our minds, away from the objects our minds are supposed to interpret. The quote already prepares the reader for a self-conscious, tortuously abstract reading. Why is this a problem? Because the function of thinking about structure is to reduce the notion of events. Why is it so? Because thinking about structure must be abstract and exclude concretes such as events. Still, Derrida wants to report on something that happened, which is relevant to the concept of structure, so he allows the event to be admitted into the discussion, provided it is enclosed in quotation marks, as a word and not an actual event. The reader will not find out until the end of the essay: Then this is what has recently happened in the history of the concept of structure: The reader, however, is still in the beginning of the essay and has no clue what the rupture is about. Back in the beginning of the essay, Derrida proceeds to talk about the center of a structure, which controls the structure by orienting and organizing it. Derrida admits that an unorganized structure is unconceivable and that a structure without a center is unthinkable, but he contends that the center delimits and diminishes the possible play within the structure. Play, then, is whatever goes against the organization and coherence of the structure. Derrida now points out the paradox that the center of the structure must be both inside and outside the structure. It must be a part of the structure, but also independent of it, in order to control it. Derrida appears to delight in refuting the Law of Identity. Nevertheless, he continues to write about the center, confident that it can exist and function while not being itself. Next Derrida surveys the entire history of the concept of structure, up to the recent, still-mysterious, rupture, as a series of substituting one center for another. Never was there a structure without a center, full of nothing but play. What types of centers were there so far? Derrida names a few: The structure, then, is not just any structure, but a structure of concepts, that is, philosophy, with one central concept that controls it. According to Derrida, the event of the rupture occurred when there was a disruption in the series of substituting one center for another. In plain English, there was a disruption in the process of changing the central concept of the prevalent philosophy. Somebody, probably a philosopher, was rethinking the very notion of the center and then there was no new center to substitute the old one. However, according to Derrida, a center cannot substitute itself, it cannot be repeated. The old center could not stay and there was no new one. In the absence of a center, play finally had its chance. What does play consist of? Derrida describes how, once there was no center, language invaded the scene and everything became discourse. Instead of a structure of concepts, philosophy, there was only a collection of signs, language. Derrida stops short of embracing Nihilism. In a half-hearted admission of historical events, Derrida points out several individuals who contributed to the historical elimination of the center who must have been the ones to rethink the notion of the center. Still, Derrida stops short of embracing Nihilism. He admits that it is impossible to destroy a concept without using it. It is impossible to pronounce a proposition without using the form, the logic, and the postulations of what it attempts to contest. He points out that signs must signify something. Once the signified is eliminated, the very notion of signs must be rejected as well. The endless, boundless play is over. Why is Derrida concerned about saving the distinction between the sign and what it signifies? Like Prometheus, who was not allowed to die so that the eagle could keep eating his liver, the sign has to be kept in existence in order to keep being critiqued. The ugly face of Deconstruction finally shows itself. Derrida is characteristically blunt about the paradox that the metaphysical reduction of the sign needs what it is reducing. He goes further to say that Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger could destroy each other only because they worked within an inherited system of metaphysics. They inherited enough of what to destroy. Derrida brings up ethnology as the human science that can benefit from his discussion in part one. He draws out a parallel between the history of

ethnology and the history of the concept of structure. Ethnology emerged as a science when European culture lost its ethnocentric notion of itself--when the central idea in Western culture, ethnocentrism, lost its control over Western culture. The critique of European ethnocentrism coincided with the destruction of the inherited metaphysics by Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger. Ethnology is caught up in a similar paradox as the metaphysics of deconstruction. It depends on that which it seeks to destroy. It originated in Europe and uses European concepts, but it attempts to destroy the notion of European ethnocentrism. There is no escaping the paradox: This deterministic conclusion should be sufficient to invalidate ethnology as a science, but Derrida defies this paradox and continues to write about ethnology. At this point Derrida brings up the opposition between nature and culture, which is an ancient philosophical issue. He uses the ethnological writings of Claude Levi-Strauss as an example of the study of this opposition. The taboo on incest, as Levi-Strauss observed, was both natural and cultural: It was a universal taboo, not particular to a specific culture, but still a part of each culture. This is an example of deconstruction, which must continue to use what it is deconstructing. Derrida proceeds to claim that once the opposition between nature and culture is questioned, there is no way to separate nature and culture, and they become indistinguishable. Another successful deconstruction has taken place. At this point, Derrida proceeds to search for the origin, or originator, of language. However, Derrida admitted before that signs could not exist independently of what they signify. The logical conclusion would be that language did not come into existence out of nothing, but was preceded by the concepts it was about to name. In Objectivist terms, man developed a conceptual capacity before he developed language. He describes mythology as a structure with no center, that is, no origin or cause. Similarly, the musical works of the archaic societies studied by Levi-Strauss have no known composers, so music qualifies as a center-less structure as well. It is in the conductor, the performers, and the audience, everywhere and nowhere. The reader may think that mythology and music still have an overruling concept, they have a meaning, but once they are defined as center-less, their meaning is doomed to be deconstructed as well: Derrida wants to save philosophy for the same purpose he wanted to save the sign: After stating that the mythological discourse has no center, Derrida leaps to the conclusion that the philosophical or epistemological requirements of a center appear as no more than a historical illusion. Philosophy never had a real center, only an illusory one, because it depends on language, which depends on mythology, which never had a center. Again, Derrida recoils from the inevitable Nihilism of this conclusion. He prefers to leave open the question of the relationship between philosophy and mythology, so that philosophy may still have a center. He acknowledges that the possibility that philosophy never had a center is a problem that cannot be dismissed, because it may become a fault within the philosophical realm. Such a fault, however, is a species of Empiricism, a doctrine that Derrida obviously holds in great disregard. Derrida is concerned that Empiricism is a menace to the discourse he attempts to formulate here. He stresses that it is impossible to actually turn the page on philosophy. There is nothing to be studied beyond philosophy. And there will be nothing left to study once philosophy is completely deconstructed. Derrida proceeds to deconstruct Empiricism, the one philosophy he will not miss. Levi-Strauss was criticized for not conducting an exhaustive inventory of South American myths before proceeding to write about South American mythology. He defended himself by claiming that a linguist can decipher a grammar from only a few sentences and does not need to collect all the sentences of a language. Derrida obviously agrees with him. However, grammar and mythology are not analogous. Each myth is unique and can add more to the study of mythology, whereas all the sentences in a language use the same grammar, so only a sample of sentences is needed for the study of grammar. However, this is empirical evidence, which Derrida disregards. It is useless and impossible to encompass the totality of language in order to study its grammar. The Event of the Rupture Finally, after some more linguistic musings, the event of rupture which was introduced in the beginning of the essay is defined: The nascent structure must be independent of the event of rupture that brought it about. The new structure, i. Events must be set aside too, but Derrida would have had no reason to write his essay if there never was an event of rupture in the history of the concept of structure. In the conclusion of his essay, Derrida observes that there are two ways to interpret structure, sign, and play. One seeks to decipher a truth or an origin, and avoids play. The other affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism. The first way was dominant throughout human history.

**Chapter 5 : Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science**

*"Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan calendrierdelascience.com: Routledge, pp Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an "event," if this loaded word did not entail a meaning which it is precisely the function of structural-or structuralist-thought to reduce or.*

Literary Terms Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science The present essay can be regarded as the manifesto of post modernism, deconstruction and post structuralism. No philosopher has recently such great influence on critical theory as Derrida, with whom the concept of deconstruction is primarily associated. Deconstruction attacks all notions of center, origin and totality. Logo centism is the tendency for seeking centre and presence. Another figure to challenge the logocentrism is Freud, who questions the authority of consciousness and claims that we are guided by unconscious. Heidegger also challenges the notion of metaphysics of presence. Derrida, therefore, primarily attacks structuralism. He views that the concept of centre does work but it is not essential; hence center is under eraser. Center is needed to form a structure but immediately it escapes from the so- called centrality. Derrida, in fact, is not suggesting on the abandonment of the idea of center, but rather he acknowledges that it is illusory and constructed. He talks about the binaries of structuralism which are in hierarchical order, in which the first term is privilege over the other. These binaries are not true representations of external reality, rather are simply constructions. Any signified is not fixed. Signified also seeks meaning. When it seeks meaning it becomes signifier. So, there is chain of signifiers, there is no constant existence of signified. It means, there is no centre, no margin, and no totality. As a result, meaning is not determined in the text. In fact, meaning is like jellyfish and knowledge is a matter of perpetual shifting. There is no single stable meaning. Since signifiers do not refer to thing but to themselves, text does not give any fixed meaning. In such situation, multi- meanings are possible. So, sign is only chain of signifiers. Saussure views that signifier and signified are inseparable but Derrida attacks Saussure that he himself separated the signifier and signified. Saussure says that meaning comes in terms of difference. But Derrida says that such hierarchy is constructed and the idea to understand one in reference to other is purely haphazard, inhuman and unnecessary. One signifier has no completeness and, therefore, we need other signifiers to understand it. It is endless process and there is only chain of signifiers other than signified. Derrida says that center and margin are equally important for one depends on another. So, there is no center and no margin. Structuralists believe that from much binary opposition, single meaning comes but Derrida says each pair of binary oppositions produces separate meanings. So, in a text, there are multi- meanings. Since the center lacks locus, center is not the center. Therefore, the idea of decentering for Derrida is erasing the voice and, therefore, avoiding the possibility of logocentrism. Structuralists believe that speech is primary and superior to writing but Derrida opposes and says that the vagueness of speech is clarified by the writing. Since, the writing has the pictorial quality of the speech, both are equally important, there is no hierarchy. Derrida himself coins this very word. Meaning is a matter of difference. It is a continuous postponement. It is moving from one signifier to another and it endlessly continues. Since meaning is infinite, we never get absolute meaning of any word. Similarly, Derrida subverts the concept of hierarchy of binary opposition created by Levi- Strauss. For him, speech is natural and writing is culture. So Speech is superior to writing. But Derrida breaks this hierarchy bringing the example of incest prohibition. Therefore, it belongs to culture. So, incest prohibition can belong both to natural and culture. Similarly, Levi- Strauss has made the hierarchy between artist and critic. He claims artist is originator but critic comes later. Likewise artist uses first hand raw materials as engineer does but critics use second hand raw materials. In contrary to him Derrida argues that neither artists nor critic works on first hand materials, rather both of them use the materials that were already existed and used. In this sense, there is no hierarchy between them. In short, Derrida means to say that meaning is just like peeling the onion and never getting a kernel. Likewise, the binary opposition between literary and non-literary language is an illusion. But the prime objective of deconstruction is not to destroy the meaning of text but is to show how the text deconstructs itself.

**Chapter 6 : Deconstruction - Wikipedia**

*A Guide to Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" John W P Phillips Revised 17/03/09 Play is the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain.*

The event which the essay documents is that of a definitive epistemological break with structuralist thought, of the ushering in of post-structuralism as a movement critically engaging with structuralism and also with traditional humanism and empiricism. Derrida starts this essay by putting into question the basic metaphysical assumptions of Western philosophy since Plato which has always principally positioned itself with a fixed immutable centre, a static presence. The notion of structure, even in structuralist theory has always presupposed a centre of meaning of sorts. A structure assumes a centre which orders the structure and gives meanings to its components, and the permissible interactions between them, i. Derrida in his critique looks at structures diachronically, i. Synchronically, the centre cannot be substituted: But historically, one centre gets substituted for another to form an epistemological shift: The history of human sciences has thereby been a process of substitution, replacement and transformation of this centre through which all meaning is to be sought " God, the Idea, the World Spirit, the Renaissance Man, the Self, substance, matter, Family, Democracy, Independence, Authority and so on. Since each of these concepts is to found our whole system of thought and language, it must itself be beyond that system, untainted by its play of linguistic differences. It cannot be implicated in the very languages and system it attempts to order and anchor: The problem of centers for Derrida was thereby that they attempt to exclude. In doing so, they ignore, repress or marginalize others which become the Other. This longing for centers spawns binary opposites, with one term of the opposition central and the other marginal. Terry Eagleton calls these binary opposition with which classical structuralism tends to function as a way of seeing typical of ideologies, which thereby becomes exclusionary. For instance, the First World War destroyed the illusion of steady material progress; the Holocaust destroyed the notion of Europe as the source and centre of human civilization. Scientific discoveries " such as the way the notion of relativity destroyed the ideas of time and space as fixed and central absolutes. Then there were intellectual and artistic movements like modernism in the arts which in the first thirty years of the century rejected such central absolutes as harmony in music, chronological sequence in narrative, and the representation of the visual world in art. Structuralism, which in his day was taken as a profound questioning of traditional Western thought, is taken by Derrida to be in support of just those ways of thought. This is true, according to deconstructive thought, for almost all critique of Western thought that arises from within western thought: Semiotics stresses the fundamental connection of language to speech in a way that it undermines its insistence on the inherently arbitrary nature of sign. Phenomenology rejects metaphysical truths in the favor of phenomena and appearance, only to insist for truth to be discovered in human consciousness and lived experience. It is a question of putting expressly and systematically the problem of a discourse which borrows from a heritage the resources necessary of that heritage itself. All we can do is refuse to allow either pole in a system to become the center and guarantor of presence. This would imply that the meaning of a sign is present to the speaker when he uses in, in defiance of the fact that meaning is constituted by a system of differences. That is also why Saussure insists on the primacy of speaking. As soon as language is written down, a distance between the subject and his words is created, causing meaning to become unanchored. Sign has no innate or transcendental truth. Thus, the signified never has any immediate self-present meaning. It is itself only a sign that derives its meaning from other signs. Hence a signified can be a signifier and vice versa. Such a viewpoint entails that sign thus be stripped off its signified component. Meaning is never present at face-value; we cannot escape the process of interpretation. While Saussure still sees language as a closed system where every word has its place and consequently its meaning, Derrida wants to argue for language as an open system. In denying the metaphysics of presence the distances between inside and outside are also problematized. There is no place outside of language from where meaning can be generated. In his work, *Elementary Structures*, Strauss starts with the working definition of nature as the universal and spontaneous, not belonging to any other culture or

any determinate norm. Culture, on the other hand, depends on a system of norms regulating society and is therefore capable of varying from one social structure to another. It is natural in the sense that it is almost universally present across most communities and hence is natural. However, it is also a prohibition, which makes it a part of the system of norms and customs and thereby cultural. The field of language is limiting, however, there cannot be a finite discourse limiting that field. Supplementality is thus involves infinite substitutions of the centre which is an absence which leads to the movement of play. This becomes possible because of the lack in the signified. There is always an overabundance of the signifier to the signified. So a supplement would hence be an addition to what the signified means for already. Derrida also introduces the concept of how this meaning is always deferred difference , how signifier and signified are inter-changeable in a complex network of free-play. This concept of free-play Derrida believes also stands in tension with history. Play is disruption of presence. Free play is always interplay of presence and absence. However, Derrida argues that a radical approach would not be the taking of presence or absence as ground for play. Instead the possibility of play should be the premise for presence or absence.

**Chapter 7 : Deconstructing Derrida: Review of "Structure, Sign and Discourse in the Human Sciences"**

*Home* *â€° Uncategorized* *â€° Jacques Derrida's Structure, Sign and Play. Jacques Derrida's Structure, Sign and Play By Nasrullah Mambrol on March 21, 2017 (2). Derrida's Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences, a paper he presented at the John Hopkins University in , launched poststructuralism into literary theory.*

The actual words of a book, or poem, etc. Why does text come to mean the same as book? As if it was the job of the critic to find it again by reading. Does this make the text just a vehicle for delivering meaning or a coat that needed to be taken off? Well this model of the text is as old as our history and our language opposes it systematically to all the things it might represent, like life, the world, the real, anything it refers to, the mind, consciousness, personal or shared experience. The best text would be one that conveyed the most accurate impressions of these things. The trouble with the text is that it might not convey the right impression, the true impression, and it might therefore be misleading. A rhetorical frontier has been drawn between the truth of things and the text. According to this historical prejudice: However, according to the same logic, the truth of things only remains hidden inside because it is essentially outside the text, in some far off yonder. Once again we are bound by the rhetorical distinction between the empirical the text and the transcendental its meaning or truth. This, of course, does not fit the facts. But it does indicate a pervasive and history-bound prejudice, which for centuries has been instrumental in the way people have thought. Deconstruction shakes up a concept like text in a way that provokes questions about the borders, the frontiers, the edges, or the limits that have been drawn to mark out its place in the history of concepts. Meanings take on their identity, they come to mean what they mean, by just such a marking out of frontiers, opposing concepts to each other, defining terms by their differences. What are the limits? And how do they come about? How do they come about? We fail to read a text at all if we jump straight in from out of nowhere proclaiming our opinions and making rash generalisations. The text is woven from the same system as the one we each inhabit, the system of concepts that allows us to think the things we do. So the text, and any given text, demands that we read it first of all in terms of the historical and rhetorical conventions that allow us to understand it, and which, by and large, allow us to agree, more or less, on what it means. The problem of reading Derrida just is the problem of reading. All the questions to which this type of book must habitually presuppose replies, around for instance the practice of quotation, the relationship between commentary and interpretation, the identification and delimitation of a corpus or a work, the respect owed to the singularity or the event of a work in its idiom, its signature, its date and its context, without simply making them into examples or cases Bennington We cannot first solve the problem of how to read Derrida and then read him. The problems of reading and of reading protocols are already the whole problem. Why, then, am I introducing Derrida through the writing of his representative? The answer lies in a certain concept of repetition. A repetition must be more or less the same as what it repeats but it cannot be identical. The following sections are intended to clarify these points by subtly repeating them in slightly differing contexts. Presence and Absence The metaphysical tradition or philosophy can be characterised by two basic desires or trends, admittedly manifested in various different forms. As we have seen in other sections, there is a consistent desire to reconstruct the transcendental realm, which is otherwise radically absent. The lost origin of our finite or fallen state drives us to continuously reconstruct our beginnings. Second, the ideal of presence turns up everywhere. But the ideal of presence always implies more than one moment: Presence, we assume, describes an original state, a state that must have come first. As I gaze out into the world I can say the world is present to my observing eye. If that is the case, then my observing consciousness must be present to my own self-reflection. It thus follows that meaning, in its most pure sense, as conscious thought, must be present to me as I gaze out onto the world. For this reason, a second moment of presence invades consciousness as absence--the disappearance of the world behind the veils of language, consciousness going astray, the reign of death, non-sense. In this way gaps, absences and deficiencies of all imaginable kinds are subordinate to a principle of presence. Is it possible to imagine an absence without reference to the principle of presence? It would be a radical absence, something always and from the beginning absent, missing, lost to experience. If there was such an absence, how could we glimpse it? We

glimpse it between repetitions as their repeatability. If the present moment can be repeated i. So memory precedes and exceeds the present moment, which we will have remembered. Memory, as traditional accounts make clear, gets associated with death and the memorialising of the dead, or mourning, in a way that gets us back, always and from the beginning, to the second moment absence. This is what we must try to think with regard to the sign, and with the notion of text: It always refers to something else. Sometimes the something else that a sign refers to is actually itself e. What is primary is the signifying aspect of it. The sign comes before its referent sign in so far as this sign means this sign. And that, of course, is secondary. It also illustrates that signs are necessarily always divided. Their principle is the repeatability that allows them to apparently jump out of themselves to refer back. However, in the repetition the sign is irremediably changed. It is no longer the sign it was. Disconcertingly, this kind of punning cannot be dismissed as a kind of sophistic rhetorical game. Or rather, it can be dismissed. But the principle of your ability to dismiss it your ability to ignore basic rhetorical processes and pass over them in silence is in fact the same principle that allows meaning to arise in the first place, cancelling out the rhetorical dimension, the secondary text vehicle or coat. We never arrive at a meaning independently of some aspect of text, through which we must pass before cancelling it out as unwanted rhetoric vehicle or coat. Therefore there is no beginning. So Derrida begins by drawing attention to the popularity of structuralism in the s as an event in the history of the concept of structure. But the meaning of the word event is something that structuralism would need to contain as an element within a structure or at least exhaustively determined by a structure. In the same way that science must contain all contingencies chances, accidents and secondary causes within the thought of what is necessary, all events should be contained as parts of a comprehensive structure. The reference is to the structuralist model that contrasts La Langue the system or structure to parole the event of speech or the utterance. The logic is as follows: But the concept of structure is itself a classical concept and its meaning belongs to ordinary ways of speaking. Scientific knowledge is necessary knowledge and best characterised by the cool rational certainty of mathematics. Derrida accepts the more elaborate meaning of episteme, which refers to the age of western science and philosophy that extends--in some fits and starts--from the Greeks to the late twentieth century three thousand odd years. The word episteme thus refers to the fact that the concepts we use have a historicity the condition of being historical and belong to a system of thinking that is at least three thousand years old. This is the system that structuralism hopes to overturn. A structure is an organisation like a literary text for instance and takes the form of law or institution. Structures of this kind are always instituted, which means that an establishment through inclusions, exclusions and various means of cancelling out contradictions has been necessary from or at the beginning. Beginnings of this kind, which are not really beginnings at all but modifications, are often conveniently forgotten or shrouded in mystery. All notions of structure have a centre--a point of presence, as Derrida puts it--a place where the structure originates. Thus any organised thing must have a point that can be regarded as its centre, and which limits the play that structures may be subject to. With a text any number of possible readings, based upon the substitutions that the language of literature particularly suggest, can be limited and qualified by the notion of its centre. Typical concepts of centre in literary criticism, for instance, would include the author, the historical context, the reader, the ideology of a political economy, each of which provide a ground outside the text for limiting interpretation. The centre is in each case unique. It is a place where substitutions are no longer possible and in fact it escapes structurality i. So the centre is not in the centre. The centre is outside the structure. This is why the coherence of the concept of structure is contradictory. It rests upon a paradox. Play Derrida here borrows a notion from psychoanalysisâ€”desireâ€”suggesting that the fact of a contradiction indicates a semi-repressed desire. Anxiety is caused by a desire that is unacceptable. An origin or an end beyond the play of a structure has throughout the history of this concept and all other metaphysical concepts been mythologised as a point of full presence beyond play. Play in all its senses, e. My access to the world is an access to traces of a world, in the same way that my access to a text is to the traces that the writer has left for me to decipher. The only way to master the anxiety about this absent outside is to hide the contradiction involved in saying that the centre of a structure is outside the structure. The Ancient Greeks used the word arche for origin and an end was called a telos. From these words we derive archaeology which digs back to the beginnings of man and teleology which

dreams of a final purpose to all this scattered and contingent life. Scientists think that without teleology science would mean nothing. That is, all these facts must add up to something one day--they must have a final purpose that right now we cannot even guess at. However this belief--which a scientist holds as strongly as the pre-Socratic Greeks held to their belief in Zeus--has neither justification nor support in the facts themselves. It is just a dream. No one ever knows what is to come. Philosophy demands that its concepts have single naked positive meanings beyond the play of substitutions metaphors and metonymies that are possible for all concepts, as elements of a structure.

**Chapter 8 : Structure, Sign, Play**

*Derrida writes that there are two ways to interpret "the interpretation" of "structure, sign, and play." "The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which.*

In the area of philosophy and literary criticism alone, Derrida has been cited more than times in Journal articles over the past two decades. He taught philosophy at the Sorbonne from to Derrida discusses with structuralism, a type of analysis which understand individual elements of language and culture as embedded in larger structures. The archetypal example of structuralism is discussed by Ferdinand de Saussure. Derrida also directly dealt with Saussure in a related book title Grammatology. In Grammatology the relationship between elements of cultural systems like mythology is analyzed. Derrida suggests that this model of structure will end-is ending and that a never and freer thinking about structures will emerge. This central term ironically escapes structurality, the main character of structuralism by which all meaning is defined relationally, with the help of other structure. Derrida concludes by reaffirming the existence of a transformation within structuralism, suggesting that it espouses this affirmative view of unlimited free and presenting it as unpredictable yet inevitable. The attention was shifted from the writer to the work of literary text, consequently textual analysis become more important than extra textual information. In this process the important of the reader and his understanding increased, and the Reader Response or Reception Theory came into being. Derrida gives the same process a further and final push according to which what matters is the reading and not the writing of the text. The readers rules the supreme and the validity of his reading cannot be challenged. However the structure of each reading has to be coherent and convincing. He seeks to prove that the structurality of the structure does not indicate a presence above its free play of signs. This presence was earlier supposed to be the centre of the structure which was paradoxically thought to be within, and outside this structure, it was truth and within, it was intangibility. The textuality is the free play of signifiers. There is no signifier that is not itself a signifier. For him there can be no meaning which is not formulated, we cannot reach outside language. Just as time has no origin, so also the origin of language is inconceivable. Provided that these people do not become physically or morally extinct, this totally is never extinct. The absence of centre of a origin is the movement of Supplementarity. The process of Supplementarity has no end. Because positive and concrete definition is impossible for any term, every term necessarily requires a supplement or supplements, something or some things which helps it exist and understood. The truth of the text which in fact only language, and create in our quest another text through our criticism to supplement the lack of the original text. Original text-reading is reactivating the expressivity of the text with help of its indicative signs. There is scant little chance of denying that Derrida himself holds some special place in this development: The essay concludes by saying:

**Chapter 9 : Urvi Bhatt: Discuss Structure, sign and Play elaborating Derrida's view**

*In his essay Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Science, Derrida firstly describes the idea of freeplay, which is a decentering of systems within the systems themselves.*

Derrida then introduces the idea that some "event" has occurred. This "event" is some sort of "rupture" or break. This break is a moment where the whole way philosophy thought about itself shifted. That shift, or rupture, was when it became possible to think about "the structurality of structure. An analogy might be to paraphrase Plato to think about being in a room--say, your dorm room. At first, you think about how to decorate that room: Anyway, the moment when you start thinking about the roomness of your room is the moment or "event" Derrida is talking about--the moment when philosophers began to see their philosophical systems, not as absolute truth, but as systems, as constructs, as structures. Unlike Saussure, who just looked at structure as linear, Derrida insists that all structures have some sort of center. The center, while it holds the whole structure together, limits the movement of the elements in the structure--this movement is what Derrida calls "play. A central shaft may hold all the wings and floors of a building together, limiting how much the structure as a whole, and any single element, can move--say, in a tornado or hurricane. In a building, this lack of "play" is good. You might also think about a kindergarten classroom. The teacher is the center. When he or she is there, all the kids behave--they act the way the center dictates. When the teacher leaves the room, the kids go crazy--they "play" wildly. Derrida says the center is the crucial part of any structure. In the rest of the structure think of tinker toys you could substitute blue rods for red, or one size of connector for another. At the center, only the unit that is the center can be there; none of the other units of the system can take the place of the center. A less concrete example of a system with a center would be a philosophical or belief system--say, the Puritan mindset. In the Puritan system of belief, GOD was the center of everything--anything that happened in the world i. And nothing in the system was the equivalent of God--nothing could replace God at the center as the cause of all things. The center is thus, paradoxically, both within the structure and outside it. The center is the center but not part of what Derrida calls "the totality," i. So the center is not the center. The concept of the centered structure, according to Derrida, is "contradictorily coherent. The idea of a center is useful because it limits play which Derrida associates with "desire. Derrida says all systems want ultimately to be fixed, to have no play at all, to be stable and become "fully present. Early Christian era to eighteenth century: God kicked out of the center, and human thought rationality posited as the center and cause of all things. Derrida writes "Structure, Sign, and Play" and deconstructs the idea of a center. Structuralism made it possible to see philosophical systems as all insisting on a center, though a different kind of center; the event or rupture Derrida talks about is the moment when it was possible to see for the first time that the center was a construct, rather than something that was simply true or there. The assumption that the center God, rationality is the basis or origin for all things in the system makes the center irreplaceable and special, and gives the center what Derrida calls "central presence" or "full presence," i. Then he names the idea of a center as a "transcendental signified"--in semiotic terms, the ultimate source of meaning, which cannot be represented or substituted by any adequate signifier. Again, the idea of God is probably the best example of a transcendental sfd. Then Derrida starts p. He mentions here Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger as all trying to do this, and failing to some extent because they all posited their own new systems with centers. Ethnology or anthropology began as a way for Western European societies to proclaim themselves as the "centers" of civilization--to compare all other cultures to what Western Europe had accomplished. But then ethnologists started seeing other cultures as autonomous, as existing on their own terms, and not necessarily in relation to Western European culture as the "center. This moment is the equivalent, in ethnology, to the "rupture" Derrida talks about in philosophy. Remember, Levi-Strauss as a structuralist saw the basic structures of myth and hence of all aspects of culture as binary oppositions, pairs of ideas that gave each other value: The prohibition against incest is universal--every culture has one. So how can something be both universal and particular, both nature and culture? As I said in the last lecture, this is the heart of deconstruction. In a nutshell, deconstruction looks for binary pairs of oppositions--things that are supposed to stay neatly on their own side of a slash. These

things are good, according to deconstructionists, because they deconstruct a structure. If the stability of a structure depends on these binary oppositions, if you shake those oppositions and make them unstable, you shake up the whole structure. One is that you can throw out the whole structure as no good. Usually then you try to build another structure with no inconsistencies, no play. Derrida and Levi-Strauss call this latter method "bricolage," and the person that does it a "bricoleur. I think about my playroom at home. My kids have lots of toys: And each set came as a complete set, or system, each in its neat little box. But at the end of the day, the playroom is a wreck; the kids have put the tinkertoys into the playdough, and stacked lego bricks on top of alphabet blocks, and smeared it all with mashed banana and apple juice and who knows what else! They make use of whatever is at hand to do or make whatever it is that catches their attention at the moment. That is bricolage, and the kids are bricoleurs. Freudian psychoanalysis, is valid and "true. Derrida contrasts the bricoleur with the engineer. The engineer designs buildings which have to be stable and have little or no play; the engineer has to create stable systems or nothing at all. He talks about the engineer as the person who sees himself as the center of his own discourse, the origin of his own language. The liberal humanist is usually an engineer in this respect. The idea of bricolage produces a new way to talk about, and think about, systems without falling into trap of building a new system out of the ruins of an old one 88b. It provides a way to think without establishing a new center, a subject, a privileged reference, an origin. It also inspires creativity and originality, making possible new ways of putting elements together. The Puritans thought they had totalizing system--God is at the center, is the source and origin of everything, and reference to God explains everything that happens. Derrida says that totalization is impossible: You might recall the old sci-fi cliché "there are some things man was not meant to know". There are two ways in which totalization is impossible: When a system lacks a center, play becomes infinite; when a system has a center, play is limited or eliminated. All systems fall on a continuum between the two. The next important thing in this essay is the discussion of "play" on Stability--fixity caused by center--is what Derrida calls "presence. Play is the disruption of presence. You can be nostalgic for fixed systems, and long for a return to simple beliefs say, in God , and can mourn the loss of fixity of meaning. Or you can play along, rejoice in multiplicity and affirm the provisional nature of all meaning. Obviously, Derrida thinks enjoying play is better and there are political ideas attached to this; they will come up later on. Many people lament the decline of the humanist model, and the rise of poststructuralism, because poststructuralism throws out ideas of God, truth, self, and meaning and replaces them with relativism, ambiguity, and multiplicity. If only we could return to the old-fashioned values of humanism, and believe in absolute truth, fixed meaning, and permanence, everything would be OK--or at least a lot better than it is now. Whatever your belief on this topic, the important thing is to understand what the poststructuralists are saying, and why they say that. Whether you ultimately want to agree with them or disagree with them is up to you. Suggestions for Further Information: