



IS DECONSTRUCTION DISMANTLING THE TEXT?

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ABSTRACT



Twentieth century criticism experienced a paradigm shift in dealing with a text. Humanistic criticism in which text is held as unquestionable authority in creating the meaning was held as the order of the day. The developments in science and technology, gruesome wars, economic depressions question the very authoritative tone of idealistic frame work of critical evaluation of the text. Ferdinand de Saussure envisaged a new method which unfurled the diachronic study of the language which has become a breakthrough in linguistics came to be known as structuralism.. Every object, every concept, every conceived or so far un conceived idea becomes a part of its own structure. The universe exists in structures. By understanding the underlying structure one can understand individual entities. Signifier, signified, signification, sign constitute our world in a manner of continuous unbroken paradigmatic chain. The Post Structuralism which followed structuralism initially came with some skepticism questioning the inherent nature of relation between the signifier and signified.

My paper would discuss the deconstructive nature of the post structuralism as an answer to the idiomatic concepts which hold say in religious and political arena.

Keywords: *Synchronic Study, Diachronic Study, Structuralism, Deconstruction, Destruction, Dismantle, Signifier, Signified, Sign, Signification.*



Structuralism is to be understood in a detailed manner in order to evaluate the claims of the post structuralism which is also called deconstruction. The origins of structuralism can be traced in Ferdinand de Saussure's works on linguistics which were compiled and published posthumously by his students in 1917 under the title 'A General Course in Linguistics'. The crux of his academic work is revealed when he said 'in language, there are only difference without positive terms'. According to Saussure sign is composed of signified and signifier. Signifier is a perceived sound or image and signified is an abstract idea or concept.

Sign = Signifier + Signified (Signifier is sound/image, signified is idea/concept)

It is further to say that different language systems use different sound images to represent the same signified. Both signifiers and the signified are purely psychological. They are just abstract forms rather than substances. Louis Trolle Hjelmslev in his work 'Theory of Language' extended the term signifier to sound, image, the thing which can be smelt, touched and felt. On the other hand signified is just a mental concept or idea. In the working mechanism of language there is no inherent logical connection between signifier and signified. It works only depending on arbitrary relation. Arbitrariness is the quality of the chosen relation between signifier and signified.

According to structuralism language constitutes the world. There exists nothing beyond the language. Whatever human faculties can understand, everything lies within the realms of language. And the same language works within the purview of arbitrariness. To understand the concept in a better manner we need to evaluate the idea of langue and parole. Parole is an individual utterance. The individual utterance in its isolated state does not bear any meaning or significance. In order to be productive as an utterance in terms of meaning creation parole shall be placed in its structure that is 'langue'. Langue is a set of arbitrary structures in which individual parole generates significance. In order to understand parole one needs to understand the structural mechanism of its langue, otherwise however the individual utterance is meaningless. Langue may be working via a set of inherent

grammatical rules, yet parole shall accept those rules. Associative relation, according to Ferdinand de Saussure and 'Paradigmatic relation' which was introduced by Louis Hjelmslev declares that units of a set must have commonalities and contrasts among them, otherwise mind can't understand them. If the sameness and contrast are not present among the units of a set whole units would collapse into a single unit (Ex : cat, bat, hat, mat or furrow, hut, house, bungalow, palace, mansion).

Another important relative chain is syntagmatic chain. A syntagmatic chain relationship denotes a sequence or parallel that is operative in creating the meaning. The sequential nature of language means that linguistic signs have syntagmatic relationships. Syntagmatic relationship is governed by rules, spelling, grammar, fashion or social meaning. In paradigmatic relationship individual sign is replaced by another sign but in syntagmatic relationship rules will be governing against such replacement. But the important factor is whether it paradigmatic relationship or syntagmatic relationship, the individual units have no separate inherent meaning; they can only create value system in relation to other units in their own sets.

Going beyond is 'Post Structuralism'. It is largely a philosophical movement. Its main focus is mainly on language as system in constant change. Jacques Lacan says 'In other words, the man who is born into existence deals first with language, this is given system. He is even caught in it before his birth. The language is the authority or patriarchal rule. Another important concept in structuralism is Binary opposition which is also called nebular opposition which sees distinction as fundamental to all language and thought, i.e., one concept is recognized by its opposite which is found in another thing, ex: light and darkness, up and down, off and on, night and day.. Language, according to structuralism, works with the principles of binary opposition. Moreover culturally our thought process is conditioned to privilege one concept against its binary opposition like life is privileged over death; authority or power is privileged over servitude. The privileging attitudes take shelter in power. Executer of the power is privileged over the powerless, so the power game



has become vital in social and political discourse.

Post structuralism critiques structuralist propositions.

Post structuralism or deconstruction concentrates on the ownership of the meaning in a philosophical way.

Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault were the prominent figures who try to construct the nature of knowledge and meaning creation. Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida preferred writing over speech as writing is iterable. The function of writing is abstract and it focuses on absence not presence. Another prominent feature of post structuralism is the concept that in order to understand a text reader must understand the circumstances/context in which writer is writing the text, and that is highly impossible as the context is irretrievable. Structuralism argues for the order and unity in the creation of meaning but deconstruction argues that text deconstructs itself because meaning is the process of communication which is prone to slippage and spillage. Words are the container and the meaning is the liquid, when the liquid is carried in the container of words from the speaker/writer to the listener/reader the slippage and spillage remains an ultimate possibility. So the breaks in communication take place, the entire process of communication becomes unreliable. The system of sign, signifier, signified dismantles itself. Whatever philosophy, ethics, religion, logic, moral sciences that were built, according to deconstruction, is prone to be dismantling themselves. Therefore one's experience of physicality or metaphysical can't be propagated through the medium of language and it remains as the experience of that one' only. So the text dismantles itself in the process of deciphering it.

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