

THEORY OF DECONSTRUCTION

A Comparative Study of the Views of Western and Muslim Theorists and Philosophers

Ghulam Sarwar Butt*; **Ihsan ur Rahman Ghauri****

*Govt Graduate College, Pakistan, **University of the Punjab,
Pakistan

email: ghulamsarwarbutt1977@gmail.com

Abstract

This research paper deals with the theory of deconstruction, as enunciated by French abstruse theorist and philosopher Jacques Derrida. This notable theory is considered to be one of the most significant theories of Postmodernism, a literary and philosophical trend that is famous for its distrust of ideologies and theories whatsoever and stresses the importance of conventions. This literary and philosophical theory challenges our perceived notions regarding text and their meanings by emphasizing the fact that language is nothing but a chain of signifiers. In other words, it means that meanings of a text—worldly or transcendental—are not stable ones; they are unstable and transient. Though this theory has gained much power and prestige in the realm of literature and philosophy; however, this theory has been castigated both by Muslim and Western philosophers and theorists, too. This paper is a humble effort to analyze the views of some well-known and veteran Muslim and Western theorists and philosophers.

[Artikel ini bersepakat dengan teori dekonstruksi yang dikenalkan oleh filosof Prancis Jacques Derrida. Sebagai salah satu teori yang penting dalam teori-teori posmodern, kepopulerannya dalam sastra dan filsafat menggoyahkan ideologi dan teori lain serta menekankan pentingnya konvensi umum. Teori sastra dan filsafatnya menantang apa yang sudah kita yakini tentang teks dan makna dengan menekankan fakta bahwa bahasa bukan apa apa selain

rangkain pertanda. Dengan kata lain, makna sebuah teks, imanen atau transenden, adalah tidak tetap, mereka labil dan sementara. Walaupun teori ini mendapat posisi kuat dan prestisius dalam sastra dan filsafat, namun disangsikan oleh beberapa pemikir muslim dan barat. Artikel ini merupakan usaba menganalisa pandangan mereka mengenai teori dekonstruksi, baik dari pemikir muslim dan barat.]

Keywords: Jacques Derrida, Deconstruction, Muslim, Western, Text, Meaning, Signifier.

A. Introduction

Every intellectual development in the realm of knowledge has always been open to criticism and ‘theory of deconstruction’ is no exception to this common canon. Jacques Derrida, the main proponent of this revolutionary literary and philosophical theory and a prominent figure of ‘Continental Philosophy’, has not found himself in a safe haven to hide; rather, he has been a victim of utter criticism particularly by some central figures of ‘Analytical Philosophy’. Jacques Derrida’s theory of deconstruction has been criticized not only by many Western thinkers and philosophers but also by a number of Muslim theorists and philosophers across the globe.

It is pertinent to note that Western philosophy is divided into two main branches: Analytical and Continental. To be brief, ‘Analytical philosophy’ focuses on the analysis of things bit by bit that is it makes an effort to launch a sustainable philosophical enquiry into a particular subject matter¹; it handles smaller problems philosophically that, then, leads to answer the bigger issues.² This philosophy is also characterized by its emphasis on clear and rigorous argumentation by using logic and mathematics and to lesser extent the natural sciences.³ Also, analytic philosophy contains such virtues as clarity, exactness, accuracy, the possibilities of meticulous discussions and cooperation among different

¹ Hans-Johann Glock, *What is Analytic Philosophy?* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 154.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 164–5.

³ Colin McGinn, *The Making of a Philosopher: My Journey Through Twentieth-Century Philosophy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), p. xi.

people.⁴

On the other hand, ‘Continental philosophy’ includes phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism, post-structuralism and deconstruction etc. Continental philosophy is the name for a two hundred years period in the history of Western philosophy which commences with the publication of Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy in the 1780s.⁵ Michael E. Rosen⁶ has narrated the following peculiar features of continental philosophy that differ it from the ‘Analytical philosophy’: (1) Continental philosophy as contrast to analytical philosophy refutes the very idea that natural sciences are the single way of finding the truth or to perceive the natural phenomena; (2) Continental philosophy values “historicism” that is it takes into consideration the very notions of time, space, context, history and culture etc.; that is why, this philosophy is of the view that philosophical argument cannot be divorced from the textual and contextual conditions of its historical emergence.⁷ Whereas, Analytical philosophy usually does not care for the historical origins; and (3) Another important characteristic of ‘Continental philosophy’ is its stress upon ‘Metaphilosophy’-a study of the nature of philosophy. On account of the progress and success of the natural sciences, continental philosophers have, time and again, made an effort to redefine the nature and modus operandi of philosophy.⁸

In this part of the paper, we shall discuss the views and ideas of a number of Western and Muslim Philosophers and theorists who do not see eyeball to eyeball with Jacques Derrida so far as theory of deconstruction is concerned. Let’s commence with famous philosopher John Searle.

⁴ Bernard Williams, *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 202.

⁵ Critchley, *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 12.

⁶ Michael Eric Rosen, “Continental Philosophy from Hegel”, in *Philosophy 2: Further through the Subject*, ed. by A.C. Grayling (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 663–704.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁸ Brian Leiter and Michael Rosen (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 4.

B. Western Philosophers' Views

1. *John Searle*

After having a brief look on the main concepts of both shades of Western philosophy, we now endeavor to know about those western philosophers who are famous for their criticism of Jacques Derrida with particular emphasis upon his theory of deconstruction. Among them, John Searle occupies a pivotal position for his severe criticism of Derrida. He is among those philosophers who have often expressed doubt and bewilderment in regard to Derrida's real status *vis-à-vis* philosophy of language.⁹ His antagonistic and rancorous attitude towards Derrida is known to every student of Western philosophy.

John Searle categorically regards 'deconstructionist' approach of Derrida as an 'illegitimate and futile philosophy' and he even does not ready to pay any heed to the 'theory of deconstruction' in order to legitimize it; he, in fact, utterly denies to accord any respectable place to this theory in the realm of philosophy. He once remarked that deconstruction is an 'inferior and small-time' philosophical line of reasoning, the planned and intentional obscurantism of the prose, the wildly exaggerated assertions, and the persistent endeavoring to give the impression of thoughtfulness and intellectual acuity by making claims which look paradoxical, but under scrutiny often turn out to be absurd, inane and trivial.

It is narrated that in the 1970s, John Searle had a momentary exchange with Derrida regarding J. L. Austin's speech act theory, further developed more systematically by John Searle himself afterward. This bitter encounter resulted in mutual hostility and antagonism. And this inimical attitude, according to many critics, of both the philosophers is termed as a remarkable instance of strife between "analytical and continental philosophy."

A 'speech act' is a sort of utterance that not only provides some information but also performs an action. 'Speech acts' include acts such as questioning, answering, apologizing, congratulating, accepting, refuting, inviting, and complaining. J. L. Austin, a famous British philosopher who

⁹ Joshua Kates, *Fielding Derrida: Philosophy, Literary Criticism, History, and the Work of Deconstruction* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 52.

has got fame because of his philosophical work regarding language, put forward three levels of speech act namely 'Locutionary act', 'Illocutionary act', and 'Perlocutionary act'. A Locutionary act denotes the actual saying or performance of an utterance¹⁰; an Illocutionary act shows the implicit meanings of a Locutionary act¹¹; whereas, a Perlocutionary act represents the intended or unintentional effects or consequences of an act.¹²

In 1972, Derrida¹³ examined the Illocutionary act as presented by J. L. Austin and hence a debate commenced between Searle and Derrida. Derrida, in particular, showed his doubts and concerns regarding the structure of 'normativity' as expounded by J. L. Austin. He asserted, through his deconstructive strategy, that any speech occurrence is shaped by a 'structure of absence' and by 'iterability'. He also maintained that the stress on intentionality by speech act theory was unsound and confined to something that is hitherto confirmed as a plausible intention. He denounced Austin's act of commenting the fictional study as parasitic speech.

In response to this stance of Derrida, John Searle¹⁴ wrote that Derrida's criticism was unjustifiable as it presumed that the speech act theory endeavoured to give a detailed account of language and signification when its objective was quite narrower. John Searle also defended Austin's exclusion of parasitic discourse forms on the grounds of their narrow scope. He also reiterated that Derrida misconstrued Austin's concepts of 'Type-Token Distinction, the difference between naming a class of objects (Type) and naming the individual examples (Token) of that Type, and Performativity, a concept which functions as a sort of social action and has a consequence of change. Searle also castigated Derrida's famous claim 'there is nothing outside of the text' made in 'Of Grammatology' by declaring that Derrida presents an

¹⁰ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: Second Edition*, ed. by J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 94.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context", in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁴ John R. Searle, "Reiterating the Differences: a Reply to Derrida", *Glyph*, vol. 1 (1977), pp. 198–208

arrangement of feeble and fictitious claims for a conclusion that seems utterly absurd.¹⁵

Derrida's view of the separation or detachment of statement from the primary intentionality of its speaker/author, a basic stance of Postmodernists and Deconstructionists, was also criticized by John Searle by saying that if one reads a statement or a text without even having any knowledge of its speaker/writer, it would be impossible to get away with the question of 'intentionality' because a meaningful sentence has a permanent possibility of the intentional speech act.¹⁶ In other words, intentionality, according to Searle, is *sine qua non* for attributing any meanings to a text, a stance that cuts the very root of theory of deconstruction and related postmodern concepts particularly the idea of declaring the 'death of the author' as propounded by Roland Barthes, a prominent postmodern French theorist. That is why; the 'concept of intentionality' has a significant place in the philosophy of John Searle and this has been defined as purely a mental activity and it represents things, properties and set of circumstances in the outside world.¹⁷

Lastly, John Searle by referring to Foucault writes about Derrida's writing style which is even difficult to be translated by its translators. It reads:

Micheal Foucault once delineated Derrida's genre to me 'obscurantisme terroriste'. Derridean prose style is so abstruse that you cannot exactly understand what the thesis is (hence obscurantisme) and when one impugns it, the writer says, 'you did not understand; you are a fool' (hence terroriste).¹⁸

2. *Jurgen Habermas*

Jurgen Habermas, a famous German Philosopher and sociologist, is well-known for his bold criticism of postmodernism and describing

¹⁵ John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1997), p. 159.

¹⁶ John R. Searle, "Reiterating The Differences: A Reply To Derrida", p. 202.

¹⁷ John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 111.

¹⁸ Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 9.

it a 'liar's paradox'. First, as an instance, Habermas is of the view that postmodernists including Derrida are ambiguous and indeterminate regarding the seriousness of their own theory/literature. Secondly, Habermas says, the postmodernists are lively with normative beliefs but the very nature of these ideas remains hidden from the readers. Thirdly, the totalizing stance fails to make a difference between 'phenomena and practices' that happen in modern society.¹⁹ Fourthly, Habermas also criticizes postmodernists' utterly careless outlook regarding daily life and its myriads of manifestations and practices, an issue that accords pivotal position in the philosophy of Habermas. Further, Habermas thinks postmodernism's wariness of reason (or even utter hostility) and its destroying the very attributes of 'truth', 'beauty' and even of 'morality' as a horrendous backward step.²⁰ Habermas says that postmodernism is anti-theory but postmodernists apply hypothetical principles to justify it.²¹

In 1984, at the University of Frankfurt, Derrida and Habermas, for the first time, came into contact with each other. In fact, Habermas had invited Derrida to lecture at this university. In his groundbreaking text²², Habermas criticized Derrida much and went to the extent of commenting that Derrida's theory of deconstruction is not worth to provide a basis for social critique. This is the very book that is considered instrumental in defending modernism against postmodernism. Habermas also criticized the Derridean way of criticizing metaphysics, which falls under philosophical criticism, by way of literary criticism. In this way, Habermas says 'literature comes by the status of philosophy', Habermas further opines that Derrida also remained unsuccessful in differentiating between how language has the power to make this world understandable and how it can be utilized in solving different problems. So, Derrida in his common notion of 'text' makes an effort to merge all the sciences, including philosophy, art, literature, and criticism under the list of literature. Habermas claims that, on the one hand, everyday life

¹⁹ George Ritzer, *Sociological Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), pp. 567–8.

²⁰ Adam Roberts, *Fredric Jameson* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 117.

²¹ Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Ben-Habib, "Modernity versus Postmodernity", *New German Critique*, no. 22 (1981), pp. 3–14.

²² Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. by Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 1990).

of communication based in various validity claims, while on the other, various specific forms of inquiry which are geared at solving particular problems. Philosophy and literature lie between the two.

Habermas further says that Derrida's deconstruction project has three interrelated assumptions: literary criticism is not originally a scientific project; Philosophical text, in their necessary context, can be approached through literary criticism; and the supremacy of rhetoric over logic means the all-embracing responsibility for the general qualities of all-inclusive context of text, within which all differences of genre are done away with in the end.

All these assumptions obviously imply that the philosophical text should stand under the umbrella of literature and literary criticism should be the appropriate method of examining texts. This fact has been described by Christopher Norris as: 'Derrida's writings seem more akin to literary criticism than philosophy'.²³ By the same token, Habermas asserts, Derrida endeavors to abolish any difference between philosophy and literature and makes an effort to bring logic and argumentative reason under a general analysis of text and literature by way of deconstruction.

3. *Fredric Jameson*

Another downright critic of postmodernists including Derrida is Fredric Jameson, an American philosopher and literary critic. He has a wider range of analysis that includes science fiction, architecture, literature and philosophy as well. His work on postmodernism has been the most influential critique of that cultural phenomenon.²⁴ He is a great critic of Jacques Derrida, too. Fredric Jameson describes that Derrida's use of language in his intellectual detour does not occupy a due position in the realm of language itself. 'He (Derrida) adds into the picture the very language used by the Utopianist to arouse a state by definition lacking in language itself. In his writing, conceptual confusion or philosophical errors have been dislodged by the fatalities of the sentence structures.'²⁵

²³ Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 19.

²⁴ Roberts, *Fredric Jameson*, p. 1.

²⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 337.

Fredric Jameson also criticizes Derrida's concept of 'differance' and 'trace' in the following words:

The form that 'differance' adopts in language is called by Derrida the 'trace'. By using this concept of trace that Derrida nullifies the erroneous problems of 'words vs. meanings'. Because to go back behind the words which already exist, behind the signified that has already taken verbal form, is to submit to the prestige of a 'myth of origins' and to make an effort to replace ourselves artificially in a past in which that living unity had not yet taken place, in which there still was such a thing as pure sound (signifier) on the one hand, and pure meaning or concept (signified) on the other, as in some lumber room before the creation of the world.²⁶

He further asserts:

To say that all language is a trace is to underline the paradox of signification: Viz. that in order to be aware of it at all, it must already have taken place; it is an event that is always in the past, even though in an immediate one.²⁷

4. *Richard Tarnas*

Yet another well-known American scholar Richard Tarnas, his book famous for severe²⁸ criticism on the major postmodern concepts like 'the notion of meta-narratives', 'the theory of deconstruction' and 'relativism', testifies that postmodernists' skeptical attitude towards all ideologies and metaphysical realities has put their own stance into question.

He opines somewhere in the above stated book that is a fine and readable survey from pre-Socratic to Post-modern thought in the following words:

"The paradox of Postmodernism lies in the reality that by placing all principles under the scrutiny of its skepticism, it must realize that its own dogmas are not beyond questioning. Postmodernism, of which deconstruction is an integral part, cannot on its own principles ultimately justify itself anymore. Richard Tarnas in the above cited book further

²⁶ Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 174–5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

²⁸ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993).

comments about the conceptualism of postmodern trend and illustrates it in terms of ‘applying a systematic skepticism to every possible meaning’.²⁹

Regarding the meaning of a text, Richard Tarnas opines that if there are no secure meanings in texts of any kind then ‘deconstructionist’ text may also be both infirm and insecure, or by the same token the whole academic text. “There is no postmodern world view, nor the possibility of one; the postmodern paradigm is inherently subversive of all paradigms.”³⁰

5. *Umberto Eco*

Prominent Italian literary critic, novelist and philosopher, Umberto Eco, also expresses his acute reservations regarding Derrida’s theory of deconstruction when he makes an onslaught by saying that Deconstruction exploits the concept of ‘unlimited semiosis’.³¹ Umberto while narrating the history of interpretation in his famous book ‘interpretation and over-interpretation’ writes about ‘Hermes’, a deity in ancient Greek Mythology and father of all arts, and his influence upon the science and philosophy. And ‘the idea of differance’, the postponement of meaning of Derrida, in particular, has special influence of Hermetic thought. Thus, Umberto Eco narrates:

In the myth of Hermes we find the negation of the principle of identity, of non-contradiction and the causal chains wind back on themselves in spirals: the ‘after’ precedes the ‘before’.... It is impossible to avoid ‘Hermetic’ thought whether it is field of science or philosophy.... And a number of post-modern trends of criticism, particularly theory of deconstruction of Derrida, obviously show the idea of uninterrupted slippage of meaning.³²

The last sentence of the above cited reference clearly shows that postmodern philosophers particularly Derrida are the staunch supporter of the postponement of the meaning of text whatsoever. In this way, they make a rebuttal of the concept which intends to be the claimant of

²⁹ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View*, p. 399.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

³¹ Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 13.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 29–34.

a transient, fixed and stable meaning of a text.

Umberto Eco by citing an excerpt from Gilbert Durand's famous book 'Science de l'homme et tradition' writes that Gilbert Durand sees the whole body of present-day thought, in clash to the positivist mechanistic paradigm, run through enlivening and revitalizing breath of Hermes, and the list of relationships he identifies invites reflection: Nietzsche, Dilthey, Roland Barthes, Husserl, Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida etc.³³

This clearly manifests that most of the postmodern philosophers including Jacques Derrida are under the spell of Hermetic thought which, in fact, says that the 'order of the universe described by the Greek rationalism could be subverted and that it was quite possible to discover novel connections and fresh relationships in the universe as such would have permitted Man to act on nature and change its course.'³⁴ It means Derrida and his like minded philosophers are trying to fill the final colours in the 'Hermetic model'.

6. *Richard Rorty*

American philosopher Richard Rorty, famous for his deep interest in history of philosophy and present-day analytical philosophy, criticizes Derrida's way of handling philosophy. Rorty has shown deep doubt and perplexity regarding the true position of Jacques Derrida in the philosophy of language.³⁵ In one of his long essays, Richard Rorty states that Derrida never takes philosophy as seriously as Paul De Man does, nor does he divide language into the kind called 'literary' or some other kind as Paul De Man does.³⁶

Richard Rorty in his seminal work *Essays on Heidegger and Others* minutely discusses Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, two famous continental philosophers. He says that these 'post-Nietzscheans' come very close to the 'American Pragmatists' when they make a relentless critique of Metaphysics; however, Richard Rorty takes Derrida not

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34

³⁵ Kates, *Fielding Derrida*, p. 53.

³⁶ Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 101.

as a serious but a comical and humorous type of philosopher³⁷ who struggles to circumvent philosophical tradition of the West, nor does Rorty conceive him an inventor of any philosophical or literary method. That is why; commenting on his method as dreams, Richard Rorty writes:

The Derridean contrasts between rebuilding the edifice and shifting the terrain, between inferential connections and non-inferential associations, cannot be made sharp enough to serve Derrida's purposes. Once one comes from dreams and ideal types to narratives which trace the history of genres, all these distinctions blur.³⁸

Invidious dichotomies, the hallmark of the Western philosophical tradition, receives special attention of Derrida and he attacks them ruthlessly considering them the very basis of ills of Western philosophy. However, Richard Rorty, by taking this stance of deconstructionists such as Derrida *vis-à-vis* unpleasant binary oppositions by iron hands and says that the knee-jerk suspicion of binary oppositions among deconstructionists is baffling. The reality that the two opposing terms get their meanings by means of reciprocal definability does not cast an iota of doubt on their utility.³⁹ Richard Rorty also launch a scathing attack on the concepts like 'différance', 'archi-writing', and 'trace' which are the part and parcel of the theory of deconstruction. Rorty writes:

I am perplexed by Norris's conjuring the idea of 'Transcendental Argument' as an elucidation of what Derrida is up to. A transcendental argument is such type of reasoning which describes that something is a condition of the possibility of something else. To the extent that Derrida remains true to the 'Nominalism', the doctrine that universals or general ideas are mere name without any corresponding realities, he shares with Strawson, a transcendental argument will hamper him to coin such quasi terms as 'différance', 'archi-writing', and 'trace'. If he does not remain loyal to it, he is just one more metaphysician. A philosopher cannot, as Derrida does, vigorously resist totalization, demands forcefully that the likelihoods of recontextualization are immense, and nevertheless offer transcendental arguments.⁴⁰

³⁷ Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 113.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Richard Rorty has given a full account of Derrida in the above cited book. That is why; he touches almost every shade of Derridean thought. About his writing style, Rorty passes very funny remarks in the following words:

But, at his best, Derrida offers not a way of reading but a way of writing, funny writing that does not presume ‘the discourse of philosophy’ as anything more than a butt.⁴¹

7. *Charles Upton*

Charles Upton, an American poet and metaphysician, in his notable book⁴² defines postmodernism in a different angle. He opines:

Human life *vis-à-vis* eternity is not thought to be of any worth just because it is the creation of God; nor it is so easy to give some value to human venture owing to Man’s collective attainments or historical impetus that gave rise to them. As in the absence of a scale of standards ingrained in eternity, achievement is impossible to appraise, and without a sempiternal aim towards which time is inevitably marching, history is the road leading nowhere. The name we have given to this set of circumstances is Postmodernism.⁴³ By giving the name of New Age Spirituality to the central concepts of postmodernism, he further writes that if postmodernism is the eventual philosophical negation of metaphysics, then a scrutiny of the erroneous metaphysics of the New Age is one line by which postmodernism can be criticized.⁴⁴

Criticizing the notion about text as extended by Derrida—who holds that having a belief that a text has an intrinsic structure or pattern of perception is repressive, Upton narrates that the natural outcome of this Derridean notion is that any one claiming that he/she has grasped the meaning of a text is deluded other than Derrida and deconstructionists.⁴⁵

Charles Upton further asserts that the project of the postmodernism

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁴² Charles Upton, *The System of Antichrist: Truth & Falsehood in Postmodernism & the New Age* (Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

is destined to deconstruct such notions as the Truth, the Reality or any attempt aimed at presenting a concise and comprehensive world view in order to honour diversity and safeguard 'the rights of marginalized minority constructions of reality' (which being the constructions must also be deconstructed). Thus, postmodernism ends in deconstructionism and deconstructionism ends (or hopefully will) in the deconstruction of the deconstructionism.⁴⁶ Deconstructionists including Derrida should not be taken seriously because if we take them seriously, we will have come to an end that to exist in any way is to oppress and be oppressed? That naturally follows that the end of oppression must be the end of the existence? That the ultimate aim of postmodern nihilism is and should be obliteration? Possibly the term 'postmodernism' in truth does refer to the termination of history, the end of time. Evidently, it is a dwelling founded upon sand.⁴⁷ So, accepting the theory of deconstruction will lead to the annihilation of the entire intellectual heritage of humanity which is impossibility, in fact.

Intention of repairing and reconditioning of metaphysics, their movement would not have acquired the name 'the deconstruction of metaphysics'. At bottom, they are 'demolitionists and revolutionaries' instead of 'reformers'. Their opinion is inflexible and there are two parts thereof: Metaphysics is no longer possible, and the motives that engender it are not to be relied on.⁴⁸ In this way, deconstruction denies any claim that is in favor of metaphysics.

8. Terry Eagleton

Terry Eagleton, a well-known British literary theorist and critic, have the reputation of castigating postmodernism and theories thereof. His two books namely *The Illusions of Postmodernism* and *After Theory: An Introduction* contain his brilliant critical remarks regarding postmodernism and the theory of deconstruction given by Derrida. Terry Eagleton sees the development of postmodernism as great shift in the culture of the West whose major characteristics are consumerism, culture industry and

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38..

⁴⁸ Huston Smith, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind: The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization*, Third edition (Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 2003), p. 26.

localized and momentary world of technology. He opines:

Postmodernism is a form of culture that shows this epoch-making change, in depthless, decentered, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between high and popular culture.⁴⁹

So far as the political effects of postmodernism are concerned, Terry, too, see them in practice with full force when he writes that postmodernism's creed, politically speaking, is that we should commemorate difference, diversity, the variegated and mottled character of our cultures.⁵⁰

While discussing the postmodernism's stance regarding 'history', Terry says that it looks like a meta-narrative to whom postmodernism renounces itself. ... it is necessarily a metaphysical model; it cannot have any history as such. History, for such a theory, looks like a limitless repetition of the same errors, which to caricature the case slightly were eventually put victoriously to rights when 'Jacques Derrida' arrived lately on the scene to make an end to a set of metaphysical gaffes which go back as far as Plato, and quite probably to Adam. As Peter Osborne has pinpointed, "the narrative of the death of grand-narrative is itself grander than most of the narratives it would consign to oblivion."⁵¹

Derrida is of the view that the meanings of a text are not absolute but rather they are historical that is they are relative to time and place. Terry Eagleton, by giving the reference of a major work of E. D. Hirsch⁵², writes that E. D. Hirsch differentiates between the 'meaning' of a text and its 'significance'. To Hirsch, 'meanings' are unchangeable but 'significance' alters with the passage of time. "Significances vary throughout history, whereas meanings remain constant; authors put in meanings, whereas readers assign significance."⁵³

⁴⁹ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd edition (Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. vii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵² E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

⁵³ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 58.

9. *Edward Said*

Edward Said, a Palestinian American literary figure, famous for his groundbreaking work 'Orientalism', is also a critic of the Derrida's way of evaluating text which, in fact, denies the historical significance of text; hence, demolishing the very foundation of the edifice of text. During the seventies, Said is of the view that, American literary theory got entangled into the maze of 'textuality' dragging along with it the most neoteric proponents of European revolutionary textuality, Jacques Derrida, Micheal Foucault, whose trans-Atlantic canonization and domestication they themselves seemed sadly enough to be encouraging. Textuality is rather an occult and sanitized theme of literary theory. Textuality, as a matter of fact, has become the exact inverse and replacement of what may be called history.⁵⁴ Textuality, it is believed, befalls, yes, but in the same way it does not happen to be nowhere or anytime in particular. It is created, but by no one and at no time. It is likely to be read or interpreted but reading and interpreting is routinely considered to be occurred in the form of misreading and misinterpreting.⁵⁵

Edward Said further asserts that as a result of that, Derrida denies to the texts their historical density, specificity and weight.⁵⁶ As against the stance of the Postmodernists including Derrida that a word has not perpetual meaning rather it's meaning are restricted by the limitations of time and space, Edward Said opines:

A word has a strict meaning understood as an imperative, with that meaning there also goes a strictly ordained series of resemblances to other words and meanings, which, strictly speaking, play around the first word.⁵⁷

10. *Christopher Norris*

Christopher Norris, a British critic and Philosopher, is famous for his scholarly work on postmodern philosophy particularly the Derridean

⁵⁴ Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 3–4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Philosophy. He, in his famous book⁵⁸, criticizes Postmodernism and its main proponents including Jacques Derrida for effacing all sense of the difference between truth and falsehood, reality and illusion, and serious and non-serious discourse.⁵⁹

Norris also expresses his reservations regarding the texts of Derrida and writes that Derrida's writings have a close relation with literary criticism than philosophy. The underlying principle is that rhetorical analysis is sine qua non for any sort of discourse and philosophy is no exception to this general rule.⁶⁰

11. *Noam Chomsky*

Noam Chomsky, an American linguist, philosopher and social critic and father of modern linguistic, is among those philosophers who severely criticize Derrida. He is considered to be a prominent figure in analytic philosophy. Chomsky is highly suspicious of Derrida's ideas and notions. That is why Christopher Wise writes:

For Chomsky, Derridean views are incomprehensible gibberish; he concludes that Derrida's concepts and ideas make no sense whatever, that his texts are moonshine, piffle, and fraud.⁶¹

12. *Christopher Butler*

Christopher Butler, a globally renowned English theologian and scripture scholar, in his book⁶² writes that Derrida and his disciples believe that throughout the history of Western philosophy, it was falsely supposed that relation between language and the world was well-grounded and reliable. This fallacious belief in language as a mirror of nature is the very illusion according to which the meaning of word is centered in a structure of a truth itself and thus makes the reality regarding that structure directly present to the mind. All this equates with an erroneous

⁵⁸ Christopher Norris, *What's Wrong with Postmodernism?: Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Norris, *Deconstruction*, p. 19.

⁶¹ C. Wise, *Chomsky and Deconstruction: The Politics of Unconscious Knowledge* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 5.

⁶² Butler, *Postmodernism*.

‘metaphysics of presence’. It is Derrida’s own ‘meta-narrative’ a stance which the postmodernists utterly reject. The scepticism of Derrida had a substantial political appeal. It permitted adherents of Derrida to castigate those philosophers who believed that philosophy has a power to describe the world or that a historical narrative can be on the mark.⁶³

This was a brief account of those Western thinkers, writers and philosophers who have shown their utter disregard to postmodernism, deconstructionists and deconstruction of Derrida. This shows that there are a number of Western scholars who do not see eye ball to eye ball with Derrida so far as his theory of deconstruction is concerned. Now, let us have a brief look at the ideas of Muslim Theorists and Philosophers regarding Derrida’s theory of deconstruction.

C. Muslim Theorists’ Viewpoint

1. *Akbar Salahuddin Ahmad*

To begin with Akbar Salahuddin Ahmad, an eminent Muslim playwright, poet and former diplomat, worked at various key positions in and for Pakistan. Presently, he holds the Ibn-e-Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at the American University at Washington D.C., USA. In the preface of his famous book, namely, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*, he comments on messy and muddling method of Postmodernists, including that of Derrida who is perhaps the most complex and ambiguous writer of the postmodern intellectual realm, they use in order to baffle the conventional reader, in particular, in the following words:

The jumble of ideas and names, mingling and intermingling, the images piling upon images, the vast scopes and dissolution of cultural boundaries suggest postmodernist methodology.⁶⁴

With its stressing the ideas of reality of local traditions and cultures, raising the slogan of ‘relativism’ of universal truths, skepticism regarding the conventional orthodoxies, rejecting the notion of a world view as universal totality, deriving notions from a wide range of sources and

⁶³ Butler, *Postmodernism*, p. 17.

⁶⁴ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), p. ix.

use of irony and contrast in their writings, Postmodernism, particularly Derridean deconstruction, causes cultural conflict in the world. He opines:

The eclecticism, syncretism, irony and juxtaposition which cause, and will cause, cultural friction in our world are central to an understanding of postmodernism.⁶⁵ Akbar S. Ahmad regards media as the main cause of friction between Islam and Postmodernism. Media subverts realities by oversimplifying issues.⁶⁶

Haste and hurry has been regarded as Devil's job by the Holy Prophet; whereas, Postmodern age is based on speed. In particular, media move with an inebriated speed.⁶⁷

2. *Ziauddin Sardar*

Ziauddin Sardar, a renowned Muslim figure born in Pakistan, have the reputation as a strong critic of postmodernism, takes postmodernism as an extension of modernism and the new form of Western colonialism. Derrida through his theory of deconstruction denies the existence of fixed meanings of a text by introducing his well-known term Differance which stresses the postponement of meaning of a text resulting in a play of signifiers which never have specific signified, hence refusing a set principle that supports to a defined meaning of a text. That is why; Ziauddin Sardar in his seminal work *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of the Western Culture* opines:

While cultures, history and tradition find a reasonable place in the *Other*; these characteristics are considered to be a prime source of meaning and identity. Postmodernism considers history just a play of imagination; it deals with the present, the immediate, and repudiates all sense of historical continuity.⁶⁸

It is obvious that if we accept the viewpoint of deconstructionists

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

⁶⁶ Muhammad Hammad Lakhvi, "The Challenge for Muslim Intellectuals: Unraveling the Postmodernism Enigma", *Al Qalam*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2016), p. 19.

⁶⁷ Ahmad Nadeem, *Postmodernism and Islam Teaching* (Lahore: Kitab Mahal Publisher, 2016), p. 38.

⁶⁸ Ziauddin Sardar, *Postmodernism and The Other: New Imperialism of Western Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), pp. 130–8.

like Derrida and relinquish the idea of the continuity of history, all intellectual achievements of our predecessors will be ruined and vanished in a blink of an eye leading to an academic and intellectual devastation. This loss is intolerable for the humanity at large. Only an insane and deranged person can deny the historical continuity.

3. *Isa Nuruddin Ahmad*

Isa Nuruddin Ahmad, former Frithjof Schuon of Swiss origin, is a prominent philosopher and scholar of comparative studies who though does not write a specific book regarding postmodernism but in some of his books one can find such comments as are the reflection of the true face of Western mind including Derrida. The West's way of weighing things is wrong and hence destructive. Their mistaken and delusory view of world is very dangerous for the mankind. That is why; in his notable book viz *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, Isa Nuruddin makes a very fine comparison of the East and West that depicts the real cause of their intellectual decadence covering postmodern age particularly. He opines:

All civilizations have declined, though their way of decay was different; the decay of the East is passive and that of the West is active. The fault of the East in decay is that it no longer thinks; the West in decay thinks too much and thinks wrongly. The East is sleeping over truths; the West lives in errors.⁶⁹

The last line of this quotation remarkably illustrates the wrong ways of thinking of the Western philosophers and scholars in general. Thus the errors are, in fact, the wrong philosophies which have guided the humanity at large towards the wrong path, the path of spiritual degradation, the amelioration of which is the Heart of the Quranic Revelation.⁷⁰ It is the special trait of the works of Isa Nuruddin that they represent such truths as are of universal concern to the mankind, truth that can accord meaning to human existence.⁷¹ Postmodernism in general and theory of deconstruction in particular denies any link between God and Man

⁶⁹ Frithjof Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts: A New Translation with Selected Letters*, trans. by Macleod Matheson (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 22.

⁷⁰ Frithjof Schuon, *Dimensions of Islam*, trans. by P.N. Townsend (London: George Allen Unwin, 1970), p. 7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

but Isa Nuruddin stresses that Islam is the meeting between God and Man⁷², a stance that defines the interrelationship of the Divinity and the mortal ones. And this emphasizes the necessity of guidance from Him through their Messengers to the Mankind a reality which the torchbearers of deconstruction deny at all.

Such type of intellectual developments as postmodernism and theory of deconstruction are, in reality, the abuse of intelligence.⁷³ Similarly, Jacques Derrida is a staunch opponent of the concept of 'Logos' a concept that necessitates the existence of God in relation to man and the universe. Whereas, Isa Nuruddin asserts that on the one hand man is alone in front of God; on the other hand, he addresses himself to a heavenly interlocutor: the Logos, which is an instrument in combining the Divine with the Human.⁷⁴ At page 147 of the book *Understanding Islam*, Shuon further clarifies the concept of Logos in the following words:

The Holy Quran is the non-existent prototype of the gift of speech; that man and God meet in revealed speech, in the 'Logos' which has taken on the differentiated form of the human language so that, through this language, man may find again the undifferentiated and saving word of the 'Eternal'.⁷⁵

In his significant text namely *Form and Substance in the Religions*, Isa Nuruddin narrates that Islam completes the mission of the previous Prophets; that is why, Prophet Muhammad is called 'Seal of Prophecy'. So, this not only means that in Islam, Muhammad is identified with the Logos as such but also that erstwhile prophets work as a function within the body of Islam itself, a function of instance and, at times, of esoteric inspiration.⁷⁶

Most of the Western Philosophers, through their harmful and

⁷² Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam* (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom Books Inc, 1998), p. 1.

⁷³ Frithjof Schuon, *Roots of the Human Condition* (Indiana: World Wisdom, Inc, 2002), p. 13.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁷⁵ Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, p. 147.

⁷⁶ Frithjof Schuon, *Form and Substance in the Religions* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2003), p. 87.

pernicious philosophies, want to expel God from the life of Man. Thus, it is of great import to note that Philosophies of destruction (as that of Nietzsche) or deconstruction (as that of Derrida) accord absolute importance to the concept of relativism, a postmodern idea claiming that there is no absolute truth whatsoever, and this stance of them aims at to eliminate the transcendental element essential to Man for his spiritual uplift, in particular.⁷⁷

Isa Nuruddin splendidly describes the angles of seeing things which are poles apart and do not have any thing in common. He says that before the loss of harmony with the Eden, primeval man saw things from within, in their corporality, and in the Divine Unity; after the fall he no longer saw them except outwardly and in their accidentality, thus outside God.⁷⁸ This is a fine statement of the different ways of seeing things and manifests the method most of the Western philosophers like Derrida has chosen to take up, the method in which there is no room for God and His revelation. Thus, such types of philosophies portray anti-Islamic ideas and notions hardly to be accepted.

4. *Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Rabi*

Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Rabi was a professor of Islamic Studies at University of Alberta, Canada. He has been a staunch critic of profundity and depth of the ideas regarding the dismissal of the foundation of the meanings of a text, the core issue with the theory of deconstruction of Jacques Derrida. He is of the opinion that postmodernism is the rejection of any type of concept of foundational text or denial of anything constructive or substantive and it claims existence of multiple realities that are inevitably independent of one another.⁷⁹

5. *Abdul Wahab Elmissiri*

Abdul Wahab Elmissiri, an Egyptian Muslim Scholar whose area of interests includes Judaism, Zionism, modernism, literary theory,

⁷⁷ Frithjof Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, trans. by Peter.N. Townsend (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 9.

⁷⁸ Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, p. 186.

⁷⁹ Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, "Beyond the Post-Modern Mind", *American Journal of Islam and Society*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1990), p. 251.

comparative literature and postmodernism, is one of the emerging Muslim scholars who have written methodically about the character and import of post modernity, whether as a period or as a style of thought. He sees postmodernism as an intellectual phase of human history that is based on materialistic irrationalism and anti-theorism and stresses 'a centre-less world'. When seen through this angle, Postmodernism becomes an extension of modernity. Postmodernism in general and Derridean theory of deconstruction in particular intending to demolish the very foundations of the meaning of a text are unable to provide an alternative system to modernity; the main hurdle in this way is the inherent scepticism and nihilism of postmodern thought.⁸⁰

6. *Ahmad Nadeem*

Ahmad Nadeem in his famous book *Postmodernism and Islamic Teaching* criticizes the theory of deconstruction through different angles. He is of the view that theory of deconstruction involves ambiguity, contradiction and obscurity so far as the text and meaning are concerned and this theory intends to undo the meaning whatsoever. So, deconstruction is not a philosophy of criticism; it is a philosophy of nihilism and refutation, in fact.⁸¹ In West, postmodernism, in reality, wants to encompass the totality of life. That is why; the first attack of postmodernism was launched in the form of deconstruction in the last days of sixties.⁸² Any discipline or any idea cannot escape from the ruthless onslaught of deconstruction; even "divine texts" are under its attack, too. Theory of deconstruction is a devastating theory that wants to deconstruct and demolish all sorts of universal truths.⁸³ To support his point of view, Ahmad Nadeem gives a definition of deconstruction from *Hutchinson Dictionary* which is as follows:

Deconstruction is a literary theory which regards text as a decentred play

⁸⁰ Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "The Dance of the Pen, The Play of The Sign: A Study in The Relationship Between Modernity, Immanence, and Deconstruction", *American Journal of Islam and Society*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1997), p. 2.

⁸¹ Nadeem, *Postmodernism and Islam Teaching*, p. 222.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

of structures, lacking any ultimately determinable meaning.⁸⁴

The main focus of deconstruction is that text and meaning are not the same nor are they congruent. One meaning is the rejection of the other meaning and this rejection may entail the probability of another meaning and that may prove to be a repudiation of itself at some uncertain time. The main focus of deconstruction is that it does not guarantee the value of meaning of any text. Hence, the ultimate outcome of this deconstruction is that it put a question mark upon the truthfulness of revealed texts including Quran and Sunnah.⁸⁵ In Islamic point of view, the theory of deconstruction is erroneous and is liable to push the society into chaos and confusion.⁸⁶ Allah Almighty created Adam and taught him not only the knowledge of 'signifier' but also the knowledge of 'signified'. So, theory of deconstruction is nothing more than a pernicious moth that can cause huge damage to the plantation of the soil of knowledge and intellect.⁸⁷

7. *Atefeh Abdolsalami*

Some Muslim critics see Derridean concept of deconstruction as a denial of Divine Reality as is evident from various statements of Atefeh Abdolsalami of Alzahra University, Iran. She criticizes Derrida and regards his philosophical stance as a forceful and authoritative act which impels 'Man' to relinquish faith in 'Transcendental Reality', a fundamental belief in monotheistic religions including Islam. She opines that; Derrida urges human to renounce the idea of transcendental reality and in place of it, he focuses on the context so that the context itself discourses directly with the person.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 237-243.

⁸⁸ Atefeh Abdolsalami and Yasaman Farhangpour, "The Philosophy of Postmodernism, Its Scholars and Its Impact on Art", presented at the International Conference on Research in Art (Singapore, Desember 2016), p. 8.

8. *Ihab Hassan*

Ihab Hassan, an Egyptian born American Literary theorist and writer who first emphatically used the term postmodernism, in one of his books discusses some questions regarding the definition of the conditions or phenomenon prevalent in the Western societies, in general, and in their literature, in particular, under the title “Postface 1982: Towards a Concept of Postmodernism” in order to differentiate it from modernism and then tentatively names this phenomenon ‘postmodernism’. He further asserts that such situation under the rubric of postmodernism exists; it does not mean the importance of the previous ideas and notions have ceased to act upon the present; in fact, postmodernism might be called the ‘a significance revision’ of the twentieth century Western societies.⁸⁹ He yet says that the very concept of postmodernism has some issues that this word constitutes. Criticizing postmodernism, Ihab Hassan writes that the word postmodernism gives the sense of surpassing or suppressing modernism so it is awkward and uncouth in its very nature.

Talking about the theory of deconstruction, he cites a notion of William James which narrates that truth exists; our minds and it are made for one another. So, to relinquishing this faith in truths is not an easy job; the only escape from faith is mental nullity. This is the nullity to which ‘deconstruction’ tends without ever reaching, since it too contains and conceals its own faith.⁹⁰

9. *Muhammad Legenhausen*

Muhammad Legenhausen, an American philosopher who converted to Islam in 1983, in his notable book *Contemporary Topics of Islamic Thought* regards Postmodernism a mere literary movement not a philosophy and, to him, this movement is antagonistic to philosophy, in fact. That is why he writes:

Postmodernism is not a philosophy but an intellectual movement against philosophy as traditionally understood. Traditionally, the term philosophy works as a laudation and eulogy; it is not only descriptive, but has a

⁸⁹ Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 259–60.

⁹⁰ Ihab Hassan, *Rumors of Change: Essays of Five Decades* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995), p. 121.

powerful evaluation sense, too. To insinuate that postmodern thought is not philosophy, but anti-philosophy, is to render loyalty to the traditional ideal of philosophy as love of ‘Sophia’, as a search for the truth that the postmodernists like Derrida find somewhat utterly absurd and contrary to reason.⁹¹

He further asserts that because of dubious and skeptical philosophies of the Western philosophers including Jacques Derrida, the West has suffered a lot and has been pushed towards oblivion and void. That is why he writes: The West has been agonized by the twists and twiddles of modern and postmodern thought that have led it to the brink of nihilism.⁹²

Legenhausen criticized Jacques Derrida along with other postmodernists like Lyotard and Foucault by regarding their general attitude to life as cynical and sardonic and their writing style as disdainful and disparaging resulting in doubt and distrust any Transcendental Truth. He categorically opines:

What Derrida and these philosophers have in common is by and large a cynical outlook; skepticism regarding the transcendental claims which were the hallmarks of the modern European philosophy from Descartes through Kant; the notion that it is impossible to run away from the cultural presumptions which are responsible in shaping our world view; the style that is irreverent and disrespectful.⁹³

10. Ahmad Javed

Ahmad Javed, a notable Pakistani author and philosopher and deputy director of Iqbal Academy, Lahore, is also famous for his acute criticism of Postmodernism and Jacques Derrida’s theory of deconstruction a powerful weapon of postmodernism. Ahmad Javed says:

The theory of deconstruction is the very theory that has helped postmodernism to become a literary theory, in reality. What is deconstruction after all? It means that one should exterminate the preconceived meanings of the words because, to Derrida, a word does not have any meaning or structure whatever. As a matter of fact, Derrida says,

⁹¹ Muhammad Legenhausen, *Contemporary Topics of Islamic Thought* (Tehran: Alhoda, 2000), p. 53.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

the meanings of a word are far more than the meanings which a reader has in his mind, so owing to their abundance they do not come under the control of human mind. Hence meanings of a text are postponed. Thus, Derrida regards his theory or philosophy as the “theory/philosophy of the postponement of meanings.”⁹⁴

He further asserts:

The meanings one takes of words are not the complete meanings but rather a sort of reflection of the ‘meaningfulness’. In this way, Derrida differentiates between ‘meaning’ and ‘meaningfulness’ by showing that the meaning is a part of a whole the meaningfulness. Derrida is of the view that our mind cannot grasp the entire meanings of a word so the meanings we are familiar with are those which our consciousness associates to things or objects. Derrida also asserts that ‘meaningfulness’ is not a collective/social phenomenon but an individual one. So, a universal meaning of a word cannot be accepted. To Derrida, things, for their expression, do not fix meanings but rather keep on postponing them. However, Derrida’s not differentiating between ‘meaning’ and ‘reality’ impels him to reach such results that it is impossible to harmonize with. To believe this philosophy, a new Adam would have to be created which is impossible.⁹⁵

By discussing in detail the theory of deconstruction, Ahmad Javed stresses that this theory, the only theory of postmodernism that she can really boast of, by giving stress on the postponement of meanings is actually ‘anti-Islamic theory’. The meanings of the Holy Text of Islam are defined, stable and permanent and these meanings are/have been revered from the time of the Prophet till today. So, the question of the postponement of meanings is itself out of question.

That is why; Ahmad Javed opines that the Postmodern West, with its best minds and sharpest intellect, is all set to pose another great challenge to Islam in the form the theory of deconstruction and through its repudiation of metaphysical claims.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Ahmad Javed, *Post Modernism - Some Aspects (2) Ahmad Javed* (2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xG7vcufmAkk>, accessed 9 Apr 2020.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Lakhvi, “The Challenge for Muslim Intellectuals: Unraveling the Postmodernism Enigma”, p. 29.

11. *Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, an eminent Muslim Iranian polymath and a professor emeritus of Islamic Studies at George Washington University, USA has the reputation of a profound critic of Modernism and Post-modernism. He has written about fifty books and five hundred articles on various topics. In his book⁹⁷, he not only discusses the plight and predicament of the modern man but also regards postmodernism a bigger threat than modernism. He looks this intellectual development in the context of the deterioration of the Humanities vis-à-vis modern sciences. Derrida's theory of deconstruction, to him, is the prominent player in declining the status of Humanities. That is why he opines:

This decadence has become even more accentuated in recent years with the rise of post-modernism and (the theory of) deconstruction which predominates the fields of humanities in America and much of Europe. Postmodernism and deconstruction, as a revolt against modernism, has caused an irreparable damage to humanities (it includes the study of religion among other disciplines) by pushing it to a lowly position.⁹⁸

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the West is in the clutches of highly anti-metaphysical and anti-religious philosophy which have created a spiritual crisis in the West.⁹⁹ At this historical juncture, humanity is in search of spiritual guidance.¹⁰⁰ He is of the view that modern Western philosophies including the theory of deconstruction are the outcome of the individual philosophers, who seek, by using reason and empirical data, to create an all encompassing system which is then soon faced with the criticism by another philosopher who destroys the older mental construct to replace it with another.¹⁰¹ The same is true for the deconstructionist strategies of postmodern philosophers including Derrida. That is why, older text are now under attack by nihilism and deconstructionism.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, Inc., 2001).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, Inc., 1994), p. 178.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 228.

In his book¹⁰³, Nasr Hossein emphasizes that in Islamic point of view philosophy is a knowledge that leads to *tawḥīd* that is towards the oneness of Allah Almighty. As a matter of fact, in Islam, philosophy originates from the ‘lamp of Prophecy’ which itself regards the *tawḥīd* as the sole criterion for the Islamicity of a particular teaching. He considers most of the modern and postmodern philosophies as an act of rebellion against God. These philosophies including the philosophy of Derrida are based on doubt and scepticism, so they must be removed from the minds of students because all these philosophies lead to revolt against Allah Almighty, an action totally against the spirit of Islam. Before reading Western philosophy, it is incumbent that a student should go through the whole of Islamic Intellectual tradition, first.¹⁰⁴

Syyed Hossein Nasr considers the theory of deconstruction and all the famous ‘isms’ put forward by the Western philosophers and scholars as a means towards paving the way for spiritual degradation and downfall of the people in general and Western people in particular. This alarming situation demands an instant remedy for this acute ailment of theirs. So, according to Nasr Hossein, it is the need of the hour to purge the ground from all errors such as secular humanism, rationalism, empiricism, ‘postmodernism and deconstructionism, and so forth, which have cluttered the mind of so many men and women today. Only then one can present to them the Truth leading to their emancipation from such fatal philosophies.¹⁰⁵

He quotes Mulla Sadra, an Iranian Sufi, Theologian and philosopher, regarding the philosophy’s significance of having an eye to see the light of the Quranic light. So, instead of having an antagonistic attitude, philosophy and revelation reinforces each other. However, under the spell of current cultural climate in the West and the philosophical works of those quarters of the globe influenced by ‘modernism’, ‘postmodernism’, and ‘deconstructionism’, philosophy and prophecy (the Prophethood with revelation being an essential part thereof) are seen by many two

¹⁰³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam In The Modern World* (London; New York: Kegan Paul International, 1990).

¹⁰⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam In The Modern World*, pp. 206–7.

¹⁰⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam’s Mystical Tradition* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), p. 34.

different but antithetical methods to the comprehension of the nature of the Ultimate Reality.¹⁰⁶

Hossein Nasr is of the view that deconstructionism has been a vital obstacle in the way of religious world view to flourish. Religious and classical literature has been the special target of deconstruction as against the science. Deconstruction has caused an irretrievable damage to the very fabric of religion. That is why; Hossein Nasr, in one of his famous books namely *Religion and the Order of the Nature*, narrates that some scientists like 'Andre Mercier' has announced the limitations of science and many of them have shown much interest in theology; however, the positivism a philosophical system recognizing only that which can be scientifically proved and the scientism flowing from the West still dominate the mental landscape and the consciousness of most of the masses in the world and leave no room for any other world view of nature to take roots and be regarded as a serious knowledge. Postmodernists' deconstructionism has been much more successful in destroying what remained of the traditional understanding of the Holy Scriptures and classical works of Western literature than deconstructing the assertive categories of modern science.¹⁰⁷

12. *Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas*

Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, a Malaysian Muslim Philosopher and the pioneer of the idea of the Islamization of Knowledge in 1978, is also critical of the Western philosophy as it leads to Atheism and Agnosticism. By Islamization of the knowledge, he does not mean adding to Western science and philosophy some Islamic decorations but a profound and vigorous reworking.¹⁰⁸ His philosophy intends to the Islamization of the body, mind, and soul and its influences upon personal and collective life of the Muslims and the others. He further asserts that whole of the human intellectual activity should be in the way of finding

¹⁰⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature: Doing Good and Avoiding Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 152.

¹⁰⁸ Muhammad Legenhausen, *Hermeneutical Foundations for Islamic Social Sciences* (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2010), p. 3.

the Ultimate Reality. To him, higher spiritual objective should be the basis of the human philosophical and scientific advancements. Without a real purpose, the pursuit of knowledge becomes the deviation from the truth, and this is what postmodern philosophy including the theory of deconstruction has done, which surely put a question mark upon the validity of such sort of knowledge.¹⁰⁹

D. Concluding Remarks

The discussion stated above substantiates the notion that the transient nature of the meaning of a text does not guarantee the strength that is sine qua non for the stability and coherence of the text whatsoever. When each and every intellectual effort is likely to be deconstructed and the meanings of the words that an author has taken are of no value, how can a text can survive? In this way, every intellectual endeavor will be at the mercy of the merciless hands of theory of deconstruction; hence transforming it into an entity having no meaning at all. What will be the upshot of such a devastating activity? Obviously, all intellectual projects of humanity seem to get at stake. Thus, as a result, the posterity will not be able to avail herself of the great scholarly works of their predecessors; hence making the evolution of knowledge and intellect halted. This is a situation that no reasonable person would like to entangle into. Also, a state of chaos and confusion will take place which will help stop the onward march of civilization, making the mankind wholly disappointed and down cast.

To me, Jacques Derrida, through his theory of deconstruction, wants to destroy all the established intellectual, religious and metaphysical foundations of the past; and, perhaps, makes an effort to negate the very existence of any academic and cognitive accomplishment of the former scholars and philosophers. By doing so, he, probably, intends to make feel his importance as the sole great philosopher of the present age with no parallel in history. Moreover, the stance of Derrida that every text can be deconstructed when applied to his own work puts into question the very credibility and meaningfulness of his texts, too. So, it appears, the theory of deconstruction is a self-annihilation theory because by raising

¹⁰⁹ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: Art Printing Works, 1978), p. 36.

such a grand claim of deconstructing everything, it itself becomes one of the grand-narratives which the post-modernists including Derrida want to destroy.

Last but not the least, it is the need of the hour that we should make stupendous efforts to redefine the very foundations of philosophy and propagate them in such a manner as to nullify the dubious claims and inimical skepticism posited by the atheistic and perverted Western philosophical trends and should assist the current needs for belief and should make it available for the young seekers and investigators so that Islamic Philosophy can once again flourish. And, in this way, Islamic Culture can be fortified against the encroachments of the alien ideas¹¹⁰; from the ideas of Derrida, in particular, who thinks everything utterly obsolete that has any links with the classical emancipatory ideal.¹¹¹ Now, it is the duty of the Muslim scholars the world over to come forward and move heaven and earth in order to protect Man from disastrous effects of the Western Philosophy in general and of the theory of deconstruction in particular. Perhaps, it is the most important job to do in the present age.

¹¹⁰ Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, *Philosophical Instructions: An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy* (Binghampton: Institute of Global Cultural Studies, 1999), p. 112.

¹¹¹ Critchley, *Continental Philosophy*, p. 54.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdolsalami, Atefeh and Yasaman Farhangpour, “The Philosophy of Postmodernism, Its Scholars and Its Impact on Art”, presented at the International Conference on Research in Art, Singapore, Desember 2016.
- Abu-Rabi, Ibrahim M., “Beyond the Post-Modern Mind”, *American Journal of Islam and Society*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1990, pp. 235–55 [<https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v7i2.2793>].
- Ahmad Javed, *Post Modernism-Some Aspects (2) Ahmad Javed*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xG7vcufmAkk>, accessed 9 Apr 2020.
- Ahmed, Akbar S., *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*, London ; New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib, *Islam and Secularism*, Kuala Lumpur: Art Printing Works, 1978.
- Austin, J.L., *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. by J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Butler, Christopher, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Critchley, Simon, *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Derrida, Jacques, “Signature Event Context”, in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass, London: Routledge, 2007.
- Eagleton, Terry, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd edition, Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Eco, Umberto, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Elmessiri, Abdelwahab M., “The Dance of the Pen, The Play of The Sign: A Study in The Relationship Between Modernity, Immanence, and Deconstruction”, *American Journal of Islam and Society*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1997, pp. 1–12 [<https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v14i1.2265>].
- Glock, Hans-Johann, *What is Analytic Philosophy?*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Habermas, Jurgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*,

trans. by Frederick G. Lawrence, Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 1990.

Habermas, Jürgen and Seyla Ben-Habib, “Modernity versus Postmodernity”, *New German Critique*, no. 22, 1981, pp. 3–14 [<https://doi.org/10.2307/487859>].

Hassan, Ihab, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

----, *Rumors of Change: Essays of Five Decades*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995.

Hirsch, E.D., *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

Jameson, Fredric, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975.

----, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992.

Kates, Joshua, *Fielding Derrida: Philosophy, Literary Criticism, History, and the Work of Deconstruction*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.

Lakhvi, Muhammad Hammad, “The Challenge for Muslim Intellectuals: Unraveling the Postmodernism Enigma”, *Al Qalam*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2016.

Legenhausen, Muhammad, *Contemporary Topics of Islamic Thought*, Tehran: Alhoda, 2000.

----, *Hermeneutical Foundations for Islamic Social Sciences*, Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, 2010.

Leiter, Brian and Michael Rosen (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

McGinn, Colin, *The Making of a Philosopher: My Journey Through Twentieth-Century Philosophy*, New York: Harper Perennial, 2003.

Misbah Yazdi, Muhammad Taqi, *Philosophical Instructions: An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy*, Binghamton: Institute of Global Cultural Studies, 1999.

Nadeem, Ahmad, *Postmodernism and Islam Teaching*, Lahore: Kitab Mahal

Publisher, 2016.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Traditional Islam In The Modern World*, London; New York: Kegan Paul International, 1990.

----, *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World*, Chicago: Kazi Publications, Inc., 1994.

----, *Religion and the Order of Nature: Doing Good and Avoiding Evil*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

----, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, Chicago: Kazi Publications, Inc., 2001.

----, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.

----, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*, New York: HarperOne, 2008.

Norris, Christopher, *What's Wrong with Postmodernism?: Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

----, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*, London: Routledge, 2002.

Ritzer, George, *Sociological Theory*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008.

Roberts, Adam, *Fredric Jameson*, London; New York: Routledge, 2000.

Rorty, Richard, *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Rosen, Michael Eric, "Continental Philosophy from Hegel", in *Philosophy 2: Further through the Subject*, ed. by A.C. Grayling, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 663–704.

Said, Edward W., *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Sardar, Ziauddin, *Postmodernism and The Other: New Imperialism of Western Culture*, London: Pluto Press, 1997.

Schuon, Frithjof, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts: A New Translation with Selected Letters*, trans. by Macleod Matheson, London: Faber and Faber, 1954.

----, *Dimensions of Islam*, trans. by P.N. Townsend, London: George Allen Unwin, 1970.

----, *Logic and Transcendence*, trans. by Peter.N. Townsend, New York:

- Harper & Row, 1975.
- , *Understanding Islam*, Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom Books Inc, 1998.
- , *Roots of the Human Condition*, Indiana: World Wisdom, Inc, 2002.
- , *Form and Substance in the Religions*, Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2003.
- Searle, John R., "Reiterating The Differences: A Reply To Derrida", *Glyph*, vol. 1, 1977, pp. 198–208.
- , *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- , *The Construction of Social Reality*, New York: Free Press, 1997.
- Smith, Huston, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind: The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization*, Third edition, Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 2003.
- Tarnas, Richard, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.
- Upton, Charles, *The System of Antichrist: Truth & Falsehood in Postmodernism & the New Age*, Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001.
- Williams, Bernard, *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Wise, C., *Chomsky and Deconstruction: The Politics of Unconscious Knowledge*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.