

**POST STRUCTURALISM****Dr. Roomiya Manzoor and Mr. Sameer Ahmad Dar****DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.1043685****Keywords:** post-structuralism, structuralism, language, post modernism**Abstract**

Post structuralism is associated with the works of a series of mid 20 th - century French and continental philosophers and critical theorists who came to international prominence in the 1960's and 1970's. The term is defined by its relationship to its predecessor, structuralism, an intellectual movement developed in Europe from the early to mid 20 th century which urges that human culture may be understood by means of a structure that differs from concrete reality and from abstract ideas- a third order that mediates between the two. Post structuralist authors all present different critiques of structuralism, but common themes include the rejection of the self-sufficiency of the structures that structuralism posits and an interrogation of the binary opposition that constitute those structures, although many theorists who have been called "post- structuralist" rejected the label.

**Introduction**

In 1990 Charles Lemert traces the beginning of Post-structuralism to a 1966 speech by Jacques Derrida, one of the acknowledged leaders of the approach in which he proclaimed the dawning of a new post structural age. In contrast people to the structuralists, especially those who followed the linguistic turn and who saw people as being constrained by the structure of language. Derrida reduced language to "writing" that does not constrain its subjects. Furthermore, Derrida also saw social institutions as nothing but writing and therefore as unable to constrain people. In contemporary terms, Derrida deconstructed language and social institutions and when he had finished, all he found there was writing. While there is still a focus here on language, writing is not a structure that constrains people. Furthermore, while the structuralists saw order and stability in the language system. Derrida sees language as disorderly and unstable. Different contexts give words different meanings as a result the language system can not have the constraining power over people that the structuralists think it does. Furthermore, it is impossible for scientists to search for the underlying laws of language. Thus, Derrida offer what is ultimately a subversive, deconstructive perspective. As we will see, subversion and deconstruction become even more important with the emergence of postmodernism, and it is post-structuralism that laid the ground work for postmodernism.

The object of Derrida's hostility is the logocentrism (the search for a universal system of thought that reveals what is true, right, beautiful and so on) that has dominated western social thought. This approach has contributed to what Derrida describes as the "historical repression and suppression of writing since Plato." (1978:196) Logocentrism has led to the closure not only for philosophy, but also to that of the human sciences. Derrida is interested in deconstructing or "dismantling." The source of this closure-this repression-thereby freeing writing from the things that enslave it, and apt phrase to describe Derrida's focus in "the deconstruction of logocentrism." (1978:230) More generally deconstruction involves the decomposition of unities in order to uncover hidden differences (D.N. Smith, 1996:208).

A good concrete example of Derrida's thinking is his discussion of what he calls the "Theatre of cruelty." He contrasts this concept with the traditional theatre, which he sees as dominated by the system of thought that he calls representational logic (a similar logic has dominated social theory that is, what takes place on the stage "represents" what takes place in "real life" as well as the expectations of writers, directors and so on. This "representationalism" is the theatre's god, and it renders the traditional theatre theological. A theological theatre is a controlled, enslaved theatre.

"The stage is theological for as long as its structure, following the entirety of tradition, comports. The following elements: an author-creator who absent and from a far is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time for the meaning of representation..... He lets representation represent him throw

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representatives, directors or actors, enslaved interpreters..... who ..... More or less directly represent the thought of the “creator.” Interpretive slaves who faithfully execute the providential designs of the “master”..... Finally, the theological stage comports a passive, seated public, a public of spectators, of consumers, of enjoyers (Derrida, 1978:235; Italics added).

Derrida envisions an alternative stage (an alternative society) in which “speech will cease to govern the stage.” (1978:239) that is, the stages no longer will be governed by for example, authors and text. The actors will no longer take dictation; the writers will no longer be the dictators of what transpires on the stage. However, this does not mean that the stage will become anarchic. While Derrida is not crystal clear on his alternative stage. We get a hint when he discusses the “construction of a stage that clamor has not yet being pacified into words.” (1978-240) or “The Theatre of Cruelty would be the art of difference and expenditure without economy, without reserve, without return, without history.”(Derrida 1978:247)

It is clear that Derrida is calling for a radical deconstruction of the traditional theatre. More generally, he is implying a critique of society in general, which is in the thrall of logocentrism just as he wants to free the theatre from the dictatorship of the writer, he wants to see society free of the ideas of all the intellectual authorities who have created the dominant discourse. In other words, Derrida wants to see us all be free to be writers.

Implied here is another well-known concern of the post structuralists (and post modernists) decentering. In a sense, Derrida wants that theatre to move away from its traditional “center,” its focus on writers (the authorities) and their expectations, to give actors more free play. This point too, can be generalized to society as a whole. Derrida associates the center with the answer and therefore ultimately with death. This center is linked with the absence of that which is essential to Derrida’s “play and difference” (1978:297). Theatre or society without play and difference-that is static theatre or society-can be seen as being dead. In contrast, a theatre or a world without a center would be infinitely open, ongoing and self-reflexive. Derrida concludes that the future “is neither to be awaited nor to be refund” (1978:300) His point is that we are not going to find the future in the past nor should we passively await our fate. Rather, the future is to be found, is being made, is being written, in what we are doing.

Having debunked western logocentrism and intellectual authority in the end Derrida leaves us without answer; infact, there is no single answer (Cadieux 1995). The search for the answer, the search for logos, has been destructive and enslaving. All we are left with is the process of writing, of acting with play and with difference..

**References**

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