

The Backlash

A Column for the Politically Incorrect

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Deconstructing Deconstructionists

“Jacques Derrida is] the kind of philosopher who gives bullshit a bad name.” --Michel Foucault

Deconstruction, as a method of critical analysis of written works, grew out of the theories of Martin Heidegger in the writings of French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Its primary exponent in North America, and friend of Derrida, was Yale professor Paul de Man. These individuals played a key role in exposing deconstruction for what it really is, but first we will look at what the proponents of deconstruction claim it to be.

According to those who extol the virtues of deconstruction, it is a “performance” or a “practise” by which a new form of logic is used to “unmask,” “subvert,” “dismantle,” “expose,” and “challenge” the meaning of literary texts. The great discovery of Derrida et al was that there was no obvious meaning to literary text: the original/originary meaning is not a controlling factor in textual meanings, all interpretations are misinterpretations, and so on.

For the original French deconstructionists, who openly referred to themselves as Marxists, this meant that they believed they had discovered the means by which the bourgeoisie--in the most sinister and hideous of manners--had concocted of a tool in which to oppress the proletariat. The bourgeoisie used language itself as a means of social control. The ruling classes have pretended that language was an objective, fixed mirroring of reality when in fact language is created in such a manner to enforce existing hierarchies and inequalities. As such, deconstruction has become a favourite tool among the politically correct.

Now don't pass judgement on deconstruction too quickly and immediately say it's silly, upon further examination it almost makes sense. The way that words are strung together, the actual letters that are used, were decided upon by someone. Even the letters we use can come under this scrutiny, why was “i” chosen to symbolise “i”? There must have been some reason. Come to think about it, all this stuff

was probably done by men. And guess who they oppressed?

Some radical feminists have used deconstruction to uncover the oppression of women; for example, the word “woman.” Let's take a closer look at the alphabet, however, and see what some letters may have been created for. “i” is a rather masculine and phallic letter, fairly long and erect and it appears as if it is about to burst. “y”, on the other hand, has quite a spread to it. As such, these letters can act as perfect channels to direct women into heterosexuality. This brings up the question why nobody has deconstructed the words “wimmin” or “womyn”.

As well, according to Derrida, the spoken word comes from the written word. Thus anything that is said can be deconstructed as well . . . except deconstruction.

Obviously the uninitiated will ask “How can this be?” The answer is “deconstruction cannot be defined.” It is not a “theory”, it is a “performance”, a new form of logic. It cannot be defined or stated as the “old” form of logic is because to define and state it is to use the old logic. Don't you get it?

John Ellis, in his book Against Deconstruction (1989), found this explanation wanting as “[to] allow the claim that a different kind of logic could not be characterized in any way . . . would be to exceed the possibilities of all possible logics. If it is claimed that there is a new kind of logic that cannot be shown to operate in a way that is identifiable as its own, we should have no reason to know of its existence.” But considering that some people are quite aware of the existence of deconstruction, then it exists and can be deconstructed. But alternatively, one could then deconstruct the deconstruction of deconstruction. But it's also true that we could then deconstruct the deconstruction of the deconstruction of deconstruction. So, as it works out, take the number of times the string “deconstruct” appears, divide this by two, and if you get an integer then you have a politically incorrect analysis. In reality deconstruction falls into a Russell's paradox and is quite useless as a tool of analysis.

But you can't get deconstructionists to admit to this. Or can you? A recent scandal surrounding some of deconstruction's own has led the practitioners of this “performance” to some fairly embarrassing admissions.