

# Deconstructing Deconstruction

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As the title indicates, this project aims to perform a critique of Deconstruction, a school of literary criticism and philosophy that thrived in the late twentieth century. My research primarily targets the work of Jacques Derrida, the founding father of Deconstruction. Derrida's work takes issue with the logic in traditional metaphysics. Philosophers of traditional metaphysics typically ground their philosophies on a center-periphery hierarchy, such as Descartes's mind-body dualism, Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities, and the prioritization of expression from pure intuition over linguistic indication in Husserl's phenomenology. This center, importantly, runs into the conceptual premise of philosophers in this tradition, as even before they write, they already believe in the existence of this center, and they find different elements to fit into the place of this center. Therefore, the logic behind this center lies in the unconscious of traditional metaphysicians, creating a confirmation bias that subsumes their philosophies under this structure. This structure is a silent yet repressive force.

Derrida's philosophy takes a vastly different position to show the problem in this structure. His philosophy shows that what is conceived as the center is always already not a center, hence exposing the ill-foundedness of our previous firm belief in this center. Therefore, Derrida speaks about the logic of non-center, and he wishes to liberate our thinking from the traditional conceptual structure that a center governs. However, in my work, I point out that while Derrida moves away from the center in traditional metaphysics, his philosophy imposes another center, making his philosophy again conditioned by this logic. This is my work's central argument, and by showing the traces of traditional metaphysics in Derrida's philosophy, I hope my work is not simply a critique of Derrida's philosophy to work out a new logic that no longer relies on the thinking of the center through criticizing Derrida. I hope this logic can eventually be applied in numerous fields of study, such as thinking beyond the opposition between authoritarianism and democracy in politics, the idea of self in psychology, and the distinction between objective history and historical fiction in history.

Given the overall goal of my project, I divide it into one preface and four chapters. The preface explains my writing style and why I discuss Derrida and other related thinkers. Chapter one explains Derrida's departure from traditional metaphysics, structured like a brief intellectual genealogy of Deconstruction. Chapter two contains my explication of Derrida's philosophy, putting his philosophy into my words. Chapter three is my critique of Derrida, pointing out the inner inconsistency in Derrida's philosophy of non-center. Chapter four is my radicalization of Derrida's philosophy.

During the research, which took place from June 6th-August 14th, 2022, I worked closely with Professor Paul Franco from the Government department and Professor Aaron Kitch from the English department to brainstorm my ideas and review my drafts. After months of work, I finished a rough draft of chapters one to three (around 30 pages, single space in length). I will continue working on it in my spare time throughout the fall semester and my winter break if necessary. It is an ongoing project.

**Faculty Mentor: Professor Paul Franco, Professor Aaron Kitch**

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