

ON THE DECONSTRUCTION OF PREJUDICES IN COMPREHENSION

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Due to program and therefore polemical, declarative and provocative character of this article it should be treated as a positive manifesto rather than piece of a scientific research. That allows it to restore for a while the concord on the level of language within the complicated mutual relations between philosophy and literature again. This situation also mediates the explicit absence of authoritative sources one should refer to, except for some explicative judgments of the acknowledged guru in the deconstruction business. What is yet an application area of the latter in a case of hermeneutical thinking? What can deconstruction of prejudices of comprehension as total hermeneutic care represent? What is left to do, when ritual has occupied the place of faith, and sacral words spoken thousand times threaten to interpret all properly and canonically if one does not doubt their magic power? It is just the crucial time for deconstruction, which one should see in the horizon of its three-dimensionality.

Keywords: deconstruction, comprehension, hermeneutics, critical theory, prejudices.

To undertake a venture that has its essence and ultimate power supply in being its own crash from the very outset is undoubtedly faithless step what our Eleian brains keep reminding of. We inherited from Hellenes in surprisingly pure form the opinion that any matter should have a corresponding *telos*, which is both a goal and a border, and a finish, and a result. The thing is in finding such a discourse that does not lead us to be weighed on the pan but to weigh on our own.

There was a great temptation to begin this article with the epigraph from Kant, but it is

not a good idea so unduly to expose myself as far as playing classics means carrying out in life a body of its rules (though a quotation is always a very serious thing as it were a play). Thus, ever since we start doing that what we could have never done based on our personal will: we defend one's permanent works and prop up the thirsting for the collapse walls with own shoulders. We are free to reject this unobtrusive order with the gesture of will demonstration, but we have to remind ourselves constantly of existence of other orders – grammatical, stylistic, composite ones – which pro-

pose themselves with such a modest obstinacy that if one's friend is sense, one should know that it is just the thing one has to sacrifice. What a degree of freedom might we have to balance further on the border of that what was the order of speech from the very outset?

We feel our dependence on words, language, speech (one could continue this pedigree more – on culture, ways of life, nation, and other of the kind) perhaps from the first days, so far as we are used to get into relation even with ourselves under their observation and interest. The relevant answer could not be at all the world revolt in language realm for the sake of establishing of the *acritic* speech dictatorship against the *encratic* one, what suggests to Roland Barthes his ironical pithiness, as far as one should have not only language unengaged in power but also the “freed” free choice to solve the problem. The only way that remains to us is essentially different both from consistent fatalism and its abovementioned progressist alternative, and may be it is the way of deconstruction.

The struggle is not for words, and this venture undertaken with the help of two prefixes results in such a tempered will, which is necessary for making or not making a free choice there where it does not exist at all, or it is the only thing that exists. That deconstruction is not mere destruction (in sense of annihilation) because as M. Heidegger maintains, even if he had mentioned the word with much more destructive sound than this one, *it has no desire to bury the past in insignificance and has its positive purpose since its negative function remains nonspecial and indirect*. Certainly one could try to define it apophatically, i.e. what deconstruction *is not*, but this docta ignorantia leaves so many open questions to consider that we approach something significant. Though

it is vital to keep in mind that deconstruction is neither concrete theory nor a method of philosophical reflection. Nevertheless deconstruction commonly agrees to function theoretically and methodically and demands then to act according to some ritual where there are own prayers, spectators and victims. Primarily in this role J. Derrida sees deconstruction on a preparatory stage and at the time of conspiratorial spying.

Another opportunity is given to us with the safe way of comparison that does not pretend to at all because of being approximate per se. That is why one could trace some similarity if not a generic then a genetic one between deconstruction, genealogy as the latter was grounded by its “discourse father” M. Foucault, and diverse range of etymological practices, even those of them, which blaze fake trails and make pseudo history like Heidegger's adventures in words. To expose the trash and mud that were hidden for the sake of common decency is an honored but scarcely the main work of deconstruction. It seems like that the most important trails are left on the surface. In short, it is crucial to notice the next problem before making any try to define positively the project of deconstruction. And never mind that we will speak in a roundabout way.

If we ask ourselves a question which reflection patterns exert their most influence on our philosophical views, we recall unintentionally the well-known alliance of K. Marx, F. Nietzsche and S. Freud who were christened appropriately by K. Jaspers as “the philosophers of suspicion”. However, why is suspicion ascribed with the surprising permanence namely to this company as if there were no other thinkers who cast doubt on much of that what has sense for us? So, at least there must

be a certain essential difference between suspicion and doubt, uncertainty, etc. Suspicion is always directed at something and unlike bulky and vague doubt usually knows against whom it holds an investigation and why. Mere doubt like uncertainty has no presumption of propriety of its own requests and that is why it has to imply in the parentheses a hypothetical status of postulated “doubtfulness” as though it says: something is wrong but I can be mistaking. Suspicion breaks these parentheses and calls to account on the basis of its assertion that something is not right. Then, it claims: please, provide an appropriate explanation of these circumstances, and... better right now!

In other words suspicion is a masked form of mature critic that has its own postulates and answers to deduced questions within itself. As a result of this the venture of such critic turns into conscious inquisition of every problem that by definition is thrown before somebody (προ-βλημα) as something that must be met face-to-face. From here arises the necessity as claims in *An oblique offering J. Derrida to handle a problem directly, frontally and thoroughly as something what stays in front of one's eyes, mouth, hands (but not behind) as closed and proposed object, as called into question and therefore in the same grade as proposed, or in other words presented subject, since the object of proposal is always situated at the front*. Where the problem at issue it is also appropriate to speak about *pre-sujet* (subject-predicate / object-subject), about *project* that is put forward as it were a hook or a promontory, armor or mail, totally exploiting the etymology of this word.

Finally this problem is to be considered in the light of metonymy and thus to find out who is exploited as a screen and takes responsibility, or who poses as somebody else, speaks

on behalf of somebody behind whom he hides. All this is necessary to escape the cheap trickery of masks and dummies. And here arises the question: what is better – an oblique way or a direct one? Is a choice without involvement of null-grade of structure possible at all?

However suspicion is characterized not only by the mentioned above direct way to solve the problems it is interested in, but also by another important feature, and namely by the absence of self-reflexivity, introspection, or auto-reference. It is a false belief that these both qualities exist separately, so one could easily see on what grounds is based their successful symbiosis. Though every advanced critic presupposes among others also itself as an object, nevertheless it seems that the scorpion's complex is alien to all developed theories. Marxism historicizes everything but falls silent there where the question is its own relativity and historicity of its theses. And psychoanalysis loses rapidly in spite of postulated universality of its concern (for everything is a subject of psychoanalysis, even what evidently denies it) its voice when meets the fact that the very conception can be easily interpreted through the phobias and ways of its author's sublimation. Also Nietzsche was ready rather to kill Zaratushra than allow him to insult the new order and world of Übermensch. These are scarcely the only examples of such kind.

This situation is not one more sign of weakness of mature theories but a certain and firm order of things knitted together by time, fate and involuntary choice. There is no mystique, evil, malevolence and ergo sophistry that a formerly chosen position forces its defenders to protect their proper “parish” against impudent raids of enemy words and things. What remains unnoticed here is the fact that we are

namely those who have chosen consciously once the parish or bricked its temple mostly with our own hands. The lack of certainty in own bases hardly favors the conducting of enduring maneuvers, trench warfare and parleys. Then the only expedient way out seems to be a war on the enemy territory where the problem is not worn out with the guerilla war at the margins of semantic fields but it is conquered and eliminated with the bloody head-on collision. Excessive certainty, especially groundless one, on the one hand leads to the same finale while one who believes that the truth is on his side is the first who seeks a decisive battle. Self-reflexivity on the other hand guarantees nothing but unfounded confidence that there is no foundation at all.

So, little by little, lunging and recoiling, moving like dancing, we approach the chance to propose the first mask and positive definition of deconstruction, and it is mainly architectural, or somehow esthetical, or even economical one. For first of all deconstruction must be defined as a *certain taste for style economy* what surely needs to be clarified.

We shall start with questioning how the machinery of constructing philosophical theories functions. We come across classical examples of Cartesian or Kantian efforts to build the theoretical system from nothing, which have scared away for a long time those who wish to say like Stirner: *Nothing – that is the ground of my concern*. The reason for this is following: as soon as after the titanic work a transparent foundation comes gradually in sight on a bombed-out ground, the “new palace of knowledge” architect behaves as if he forgot everything and works later how ever comes to mind. It means without special care for the material needed for the next floors, without questioning whether that providing

compositional unity detail is not rubbish, which was the rest of former theoretical decoration. Here mostly snaps into action a peculiar to human nature idiosyncrasy to precise control of all details and own activities.

Although it does not mean that one who adopts somebody else’s theoretical constructions will necessarily build chic and inviolable apartments for own possession or for his faithful disciples. What makes a problem here is a destiny of such buildings. Somebody’s especially fruitful thought or conceptual construction could be attractive at most for us and for its sake we are ready to accept without demur the whole system of relations logically derived from it. Moreover we are ready to enchase this thought (without knowing possible consequences) with the own mode of thinking cherishing the unconscious hope that it will fit and work well. Further everything is quite predictable: either one defends with might and main the favorite motive, paying no heed to any loud refutation and low advices to renounce, or easily forgets it in favor of a new trend, or starts to slave his mode of thinking to enchased artifact and vice versa in order to avoid obvious contradictions. In any case we feel *the lack of something like a theoretical taste* that prevents us from heap- ing our thinking with manifold ideas of such kind. And it refers not only to ideas of other people.

Here is problematic not the very possibility of generating any new thoughts or the ability of their appropriating but rather the grade of awareness of the made choice. In reality the price for a wrong choice is often higher than we can pay. One starts in order to prevent the beginning of erosion feverishly to mortar unsteady building of the momentary judgments and inherited prejudices what certainly adds

fanciful and tasteless and chaotic character but further it seems to be absurd and pitiful. Here we come across the phenomenon of prejudices. They are such *presuppositions* and *forejudgments*, which are supplied from subconscious as well as prerational sources, and which are based, for example, on “common sense”, “truth of yore” or blind belief. The absence of ill axiology differs prejudices from superstitions from the very beginning. H.-G. Gadamer was surely right when he asserted that it is a natural state of mankind to have prejudices and furthermore any comprehension could scarcely happen without them.

There is a significant difference in the mode of their usage: one thing to use prejudices as evident and a priori truths, another thing to suppose their presence as starting point for sailing away with no regret and getting up all dreams of *fata morgana* of pseudo-evident. The latter project is well known due to F. Bacon’s “Hastings battle” against scholastic semblances, *idola tribus*, *specus*, *theatri et fori*, worshipped by masses as well as due to enlighteners’ elucidative work. Though the prejudice inherited to both lies in the assurance that the consciousness comes out from its shell of mistakes and becomes pure and clear for itself. However, how far have we strayed from the subject of deconstruction?

Actually, not so far... For the second mask and another definition of deconstruction has namely this catharsic and illuminative character / guise: *deconstruction as elucidation and purification of the prejudices that form the basis of our thinking*. Its historical dimension is the notorious struggle against logo-, phono-, fallo-, ethno-, theo-, teleocentrism and all others one could proclaim the center and thereby establish a structure as far as the center comes together with a periphery, outskirts, that is to

say something binary is created. As Derrida maintains, *the movement of deconstruction does not destroy structures from outsides. Since acting necessarily from within, borrowing the whole strategic and economic resources to overthrow it from the old structure itself, making the latter structurally, what means not being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the venture of deconstruction always becomes in a certain way a prey to own work*. However such a struggle should not be characterized as vicious obstinacy and turn into the ritual formula of crusades.

This definition demonstrates outright extra-methodical distinctiveness of the deconstructive program. It seems like that there is no method in such a struggle, at least on the level of global strategy of warfare, since to obtain unambiguity here would be of equal worth with taking one of the sides, choosing of discredited pair element, what means to deal with a future dictator, betray the null grade. J. Derrida once has cautioned namely against such a choice. A breach in structure does not lead automatically to the replacement of their orders with the orders of simulacra, as J. Baudrillard, who discoursed in terms of meta-structures, considered but even if one obtains this null grade it does not mean at all that he will find thereby panacea or philosophical stone. The straight way as well as the oblique one is equally unacceptable here. That is why Derrida opposed against obtrusion of the oblique way upon his reflection as vicious geometry with its certainties of a plan, line, angle and diagonals. *Obliqueness belongs to an undeveloped for the moment strategy forced to solve the most urgent questions, geometrically clearing how deviate as far as possible both from the frontal approach and from the straight line which is perhaps the shortest distance between two points.*

As to the last mask and the most obscure definition / dimension of deconstruction, apparently it has an ethical character. So far as deconstruction above all is a *free venture, into what persuade neither maxims of theoretical reason nor demands of practical mind*. First of all, has vanished and dissolved in proper nonidentity every obligatory truth and its obligation as well. Those rare orders of things and words, which are still trying to preserve separate isles of virginal solidity (what is more solid than eternity? What is more eternal than truth?), oppose heavy wave of relativity of a kind that threatens to swallow even itself (without atomic weapon of skepticism, sic!). There is nobody before whom one can demonstrate the privilege status of the venture; there are no arguments for persuasion, no words for speaking. Secondly, *pragma* has also vanished as a possibility of utilitarian usage of the chosen procedure to achieve some practical results even in the noumenal world. Deconstruction is hardly useful as critical blade or shield, offensive or defensive weapon, for critic of other theories in the name of proper one or for protection of own good beaded syllogisms. The last and hardest question thereby arises, what is a reason for the need in the project unless just one more quest for Grail of Truth or pursuing one's intermediate aims and tasks of time?

The whole range of issued questions is up in the air and has no proper answer once and for all but some demonstrations that in the matter of fact demonstrate nothing and give no answers. What does, for instance, deconstruction of prejudices of comprehension as total hermeneutic care, as a gaze outwards at proper prejudices and firm truths from the depth unlit by curious look represent? What can one, who has received communion of the likely most critical theory of today that illuminates the

comprehension process with more and more paranoiac persuasion that it was trapped by a vulgar ethnocentrism masked into the garments of universality, reply to the question? What is left to do, when ritual has occupied the place of faith, and thousand times spoken sacral words threaten to interpret all properly and canonically if one does not doubt their magic power? It is just the crucial time for deconstruction, when there comes a point to analyze (in the sense of dismantling) the discourse of this venture in order to watch then pile of odd details and admire their state of useless utility.

Hermeneutics, to be precise, has gained its name not thanks to the Olympian god immediately but rather due to the verb that both reveals its sense and hides its origins. The track is lost in the incredible way: what disappears here that is one who can leave a trace. It may be he does not disappear at all but only dresses up in clothes of that what seems to be hardly confused with an original – a trail. Truth to say it is not possible to be certain using the etymology whether the god favors the specific practice, which people aspire to master, with his name, or quite the contrary namely to this function carefully provided by him the god owes his name. However in spite of these hermetic origins (by the way, this cunning god is good in interpreting to mortals the will of supreme powers as well as in hiding and covering his traces up: to uncover and cover) hermeneutics remains valid and in preferred position. It can ask its questions of every kind it wishes and whom it likes and but very rarely hermeneutics permits someone to ask a question to it *preventively* asking the latter itself. The grand mastery of putting questions consists in knowing *what* and *when* one could and should ask, get thereby an answer and hide something.

What could any critical analysis carry out

in these terms if it applies to the traditional realm of criticism? And from what perspective should it start? The minimal as well as maximal task could be in this case the next one: to practice *deconstruction of the very prejudices* of hermeneutical reflection and from *its proper* perspective.

Thus, all the foregoing masks-definitions of deconstruction don't give direct answer to issued questions about sense and functions of the designated venture, but that is quite a dif-

ferent task. The postulated voluntariness of the project does not supply with certain corresponding grounds of it, since it develops from the rational choice into the moral and esthetical one, what could be scarcely generalized and should be treated as permanent requirement to guard own freedom. The movement of deconstruction can be infinite but in exactly the same way it can freeze just like Zeno's arrow depending on time, fate and involuntary choice.

К ДЕКОНСТРУКЦИИ ПРЕДРАССУДКОВ ПОНИМАНИЯ

Павел Барковский

Резюме

Данная статья в силу ее программного и в этой связи полемического, декларативного и провокативного характера должна рассматриваться скорее в качестве манифеста, нежели научного изыскания как такового. Это вновь позволяет ей на мгновение на языковом уровне восстановить видимое согласие в рамках сложных взаимоотношений философии и литературы. Данная ситуация также опосредует эксплицитное отсутствие авторитетных источников, на которые бы следовало ссылаться, за исключением некоторых разъяснительных суждений признанного гуру в деле деконструкции. Каково же в таком случае пространство применения последней в случае герменевтического мышления?

Что репрезентирует деконструкция предрассудков понимания как тотальная герменевтическая забота? Что делать, когда ритуал занимает место веры, а тысячекратно изреченные сакральные формулы угрожают истолковать все должным и каноническим образом, коль скоро не возникает сомнений в их магической силе? Как раз это время становится критичным для деконструкции, которую следует рассматривать в горизонте ее трех измерений. Ответ на поставленные вопросы предполагает определенное самообоснование со стороны герменевтики и требует пересмотра ее места в интеллектуальной истории.

Ключевые слова: деконструкция, понимание, герменевтика, социальная теория, предрассудки.