

What Is Deconstruction?

There have been many answers.

a way of doing philosophy

a way of reading theoretical texts

a positive device for making trouble

not what you think it is

the latest fashion in literary theory

literature's revenge on philosophy

a traumatic response to philosophical certainties

an ancient error of scepticism and irrationalism

resistance to questions which begin "What is...?"

a repetition of dead-end themes in German idealism

a quasi-transcendentalism

a dangerous neo-Heideggerianism

an ethical response to conceptual complacency

a needless and frivolous hermeticism

a sustained assault on the Western philosophical tradition

All of these (and more) have been said of deconstruction. But there's some consensus on one point: its leading exponent has been Jacques Derrida.