

**An Analysis of the Postmodern Subject  
A Comparative Review of Contemporary Philosophical and Literary  
Theories**

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**Abstract**

Even though the connection between philosophy and literature has a long prehistory within the humanities, a one-to-one comparison of the theories of these two disciplines has been neglected and is thus dealt with in the present paper. From among contemporary philosophical and literary theories, empiricism in philosophy and poststructuralism in literature have been taken as the points of departure for analysis. Then, moving from idealism and the different branches of phenomenology and postmodern philosophy to literary modernism, poststructuralism and, eventually, literary postmodernism have been studied. In order to explicate particular human situations in each of the disciplines of literature and philosophy, the 'subject' as the alternative for humankind – in his intellectual dimension – has been at the centre of the present author's attention. The method used in this paper is library-based. According to the results of this study, looking at literary schools and approaches through a particular philosophical lens can reflect new dimensions of mankind in literary texts, which is a phase beyond characterization traits. In this paper, these traits are focused on with due emphasis on the "postmodern subject."

**Keywords:** Subject, Postmodern Subject, Literary Theories, Philosophical Theories, Character Traits.

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## **Extended abstract**

### **1. Introduction**

Interdisciplinary studies are gradually gaining their appropriate place in academic researches. Literature and philosophy are two of the most important disciplines in the humanities which have always retained their relatedness. The most important work of literary theory in antiquity is Aristotle's *Poetics*. Since literary theories have been mainly based on rhetorical sciences, there has always existed a gap between philosophy and literature in theoretical studies. In the last five decades, during which postmodern philosophy and postmodern literature have taken shape, philosophical theories have played a great role in strengthening and directing literature and literary theories. As a result, the analysis of concepts such as time, subject, consciousness and representation has replaced the study of figurative language in rhetoric.

There are sporadic comparisons of literary and philosophical theories in the overall researches of both branches of knowledge. In most of the existing interdisciplinary studies, too, it is the philosophy of literature which has been focused on. Against this backdrop, the need for a comparative study is all the more obvious so as to reach a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts.

### **2. Theoretical Framework**

Even though the connection between philosophy and literature has a long prehistory within the humanities, a one-to-one comparison of the theories of these two disciplines has been neglected and is thus dealt with in the present paper. From among contemporary philosophical and literary theories, empiricism in philosophy and poststructuralism in literature have been taken as the points of departure for analysis. Then, moving from idealism and the different branches of phenomenology and postmodern philosophy to literary modernism, poststructuralism and, eventually, literary postmodernism have been studied. In order to explicate particular human situations in each of the disciplines of literature and philosophy, the 'subject' as the alternative for humankind – in his intellectual dimension – has been at the centre of the present

author's attention. The method used in this paper is library-based. According to the results of this study, looking at literary schools and approaches through a particular philosophical lens can reflect new dimensions of mankind in literary texts, which is a phase beyond characterization traits. In this paper, these traits are focused on with an emphasis on the "postmodern subject."

### **3. Methodology**

The diversity of contemporary philosophical schools, coupled with the concentration of contemporary literary theories in the two movements of structuralism and poststructuralism has necessitated a brief review of these trends at the outset. Postmodernism is a cultural situation in which literary and philosophical theories have arrived at a common ground, and allows for a more detailed analysis of the topic of the present paper, i.e., the subject. After discussing the common points as well as the reciprocal influence of postmodern philosophy and literature, the postmodern subject and its characteristics in literary texts will be analyzed.

### **4. Findings and Discussion**

Even though literary theories cannot be regarded as the direct outcome of philosophical ideas, there is, nonetheless, a considerable amount of similarity in how humanity has been considered by philosophers and writers. This is especially true of postmodern philosophy and literature and many of the literary and philosophical theories have been mixed in this period. In the same way that the "subject" has replaced "mankind" in contemporary philosophy, it can also be a good alternative in literary theories for "character." In modern literature – and similarly in modern philosophy – character has moved towards "I"; likewise, in postmodern literature – and similarly in postmodern philosophy – it has moved towards the "self". But what is eventually left of humanity in postmodernism is neither "I" nor the "self."

### **5. Conclusion**

The philosophical subject and the postmodern fictional character live in a gap formed between I and the self. This is also a gap between

consciousness and self-consciousness. The movement of character in postmodern literature is towards self-consciousness and the movement of humankind in postmodern philosophy is towards subjectivization. But eventually, none of these movements arrives at a final point. This is contrary to what we witness in modern and pre-modern philosophy and literature.

**Keywords:** Subject, Postmodern Subject, Literary Theories, Philosophical Theories, Character Traits.

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