



## Research article

# A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF JACQUES DERRIDA IN THE CONTEXT OF MARXISM

Sonika Lamichhane

PhD Student, Drexel University, Philadelphia, USA

### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords:

Deconstruction  
Marxism  
Socialist ideas  
Binary opposition

#### Article History:

Received: 05-01-2024  
Accepted: 10-02-2024  
Published: 14-02-2024

Deconstruction has challenged conventional notions of dichotomies, literary interpretations, and Marxist ideological hierarchy in support of a broader focus on justice and ethical behavior. This research aims to ascertain the areas of overlap and difference between deconstruction and Marxism, as well as Derrida's understanding of Marxism. The utilization of qualitative textual and secondary source analysis in this study has resulted in a thorough understanding of the philosopher's perspectives within their relevant context. The study's findings elucidate Derrida's viewpoints on Marxism in the context of current concerns and provide optimism for reassessing socialist ideas. This research aims to elucidate Derrida's perspectives on Marxism and the process of deconstruction.

#### Cite this article:

Lamichhane, S. (2024). A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF JACQUES DERRIDA IN THE CONTEXT OF MARXISM. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 35–39. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v3i2.243>

## 1. Introduction

Deconstruction is a critical theory that was introduced by Jacques Derrida in the 1960s. Deconstruction has impacts on various fields like literary, linguistic, and cultural studies (Simon, 2011). Deconstruction has challenged the traditional thinking of binary oppositions and the fixed meaning of the text. Derrida believes that language is unstable, and meaning is always deferred. (Leledakis, 2000). Whereas Marxism was developed by Karl Marx, who was an economist in the 19th century. Marxism is concerned about capitalism and the modes of production. It also talked about the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Sayers, 2021).

Deconstruction has talked about binary oppositions, iterability, difference, being. Iterability means the repeated of signs creates new meanings and challenged that the notion of meaning remains always the same (Mambrol, 2017). Traditional metaphysical assumptions regarding the nature of existence, being, and reality are brought into question by deconstruction. Derrida challenges these notions, arguing that cognition and language are primarily defined as an exchange of disparities rather than by fixed essences.

Foucault and Heidegger were the philosophers who supported the deconstruction theory. Foucault focused on the power operation in society, how it works, and how it affects people and society. Foucault and Derrida both provide critical tools for uncovering and analyzing the complexities of language, power, and societal norms. Whereas describes truth as concealing rather than concealing, emphasizing the simplicity of this concept. His perspective on philosophy explains the relationship between text and meaning (Tiisala, 2018). Whereas Marxism

talks about the disparity created in society because of the class struggle and has criticized the practice of Proletariat and Bourgeoisie. Marxist believes that all the modes of production is controlled by the Capitalism. Marxism talks about the historical materialism, dialectical materialism, and the labor theory where the labor shows their power to earn money and expect that they don't have anything (Stalin, 1938).

The founder of the Deconstruction is taken as Rene Descartes and Fredrick Nietzsche. They were questioning the truth of language. Some say Derrida is the father of Deconstruction. Derrida was influenced by Sigmund Freud Fredrick Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl and Claude Levi Strauss (Vaghani, 2021). To understand the philosophy of the Deconstruction first we need to understand about the rules of languages made by Ferdinand de Saussure. He has talked about the signs; they are signifier and signified. Signifier is a sound image whereas Signified is a concept (Dole, 1991). For instance: Cat is an animal signifier defines it as a cat, whereas signified define it as the animal with fur so that is the concept of ours. Derrida talked about speech, difference, and writing. And Derrida supports that language structures are based on Differences.

According to Derrida, writing and speech are two distinct forms of communication, with writing being viewed as secondary and speaking as main. Meaning, in his opinion, matters more in a speech. According to Derrida, even seemingly spoken modes of communication always contain some element of writing or textuality. He has written works that question established concepts of presence, representation, and fixed meanings by examining the distinctions between speech and writing as well as

#### \*Corresponding Author:

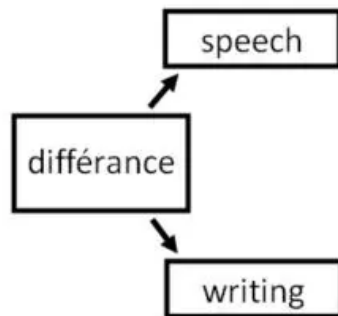
Email: [lamichhane.soneeca@gmail.com](mailto:lamichhane.soneeca@gmail.com) (S. Lamichhane)

<https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v3i2.243>

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their connection (Hendricks, 2016) Through challenging essentialist notions of identity, hierarchical structures, and binary oppositions, Derrida's philosophy sought to upend conventional ways of thinking and provide new avenues for interpretation and understanding.



He is arguing that différance is the origin of speech and writing alike. But NOT as something that comes before them, not as a new privileged term.

Pic 1: (Watkin, 2017)

## 2. Objectives of the study

1. To study the opinions and criticism of Derrida towards Marxism
2. To find out the similarities and differences between Deconstruction and Marxism

## 3. Literature Review

Difference is a term coined by Derrida to describe the dual nature of meaning in language, involving both the difference of meaning and the deferral of meaning. Earlier, it was thought that languages, texts, and meanings were stable, but Derrida challenged that languages and texts are not unstable, whereas they are changeable. But Derrida believes that meaning is not fixed and stable but is constantly deferred through contradictions (Watkin, 2017). Derrida suggests that meaning is not static or complete but is constructed through the interplay of differences and the deferral of complete understanding. Derrida has acknowledged that while "difference" itself can be seen as a metaphysical concept, it goes beyond metaphysics (Willette, 2014). It refers to something that cannot be fully captured or categorized within traditional metaphysical frameworks.

For instance: While defining the word "tree," there is a connection between signifier and signified, in which signifier defined it as the word "tree," whereas signified defined it as the concept of a tree. And this only defines the stable meaning of the word "tree." But if we see the meaning of the word "tree" from the concept of Derrida, then it's different. Derrida would contend that the way the word "tree" differs from other words in the language shapes its meaning. Like we can say trees as "bushes" and "flowers." So, words can have a different interpretation and a different meaning. And Derrida has focused on the meaning of the text, and the word changes with time.

According to Derrida's deconstruction, binary oppositions are conceptual pairs that are conventionally seen as opposites, with one term in the pair being preferred over the other. (Ibsch, 2010). Derrida has focused on binary oppositions such as good/bad/evil, male/female, and nature/culture. He has said that these binary oppositions are not stable, but they are constructed through meaning and interpretation. For example, in the traditional way, men are defined as powerful and strong, but Derrida has challenged the idea that one gender is higher than another.

Derrida believes that interplay between text, language and signs creates meaning. According to Derrida, textuality is closely related to context. Derrida has highlighted that the text and meaning of the word can have an impact on different cultures and environments. And it differs depending on the context. In one context, the meaning of the word can be different, and in another context, it can be different. Iterability as understood by Derrida refers to the capacity of linguistic elements to be repeated and recontextualized in new contexts, giving rise to new meanings and interpretations. Derrida's concept of Iterability is a central idea in his philosophy of deconstruction (Hartman et al., 2015). Iterability refers to the repetition of signs and texts but with a difference. Derrida has given importance to speech and writing. He said meaning is always created through writing and writing is an integral part of communication.

### 3.1 History of Marxism

The 19th-century social, political, and economic ideology known as Marxism was founded by Karl Marx. Marxism looks at the problems with capitalism and suggests communism as a substitute. Marxism looks at how capitalism has historically affected labor, productivity, and economic growth and argues that a working-class revolution must take place to bring about in a communist society in instead of capitalism (Ormerod, 2008). Marxism criticizes that in the capitalist economy, the workers only do work, and they don't get sufficient money according to their work effort (Harvey, 2010). And the means of production are controlled by the company owners and capitalists, and they don't even give sufficient wages to the workers. Marxism says that there is a class struggle between capital and labor.

Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx were good friends, and they worked together from the middle of the 1840s until Marx's death in 1883. Together, they gave rise to the Marxist ideology and the social class conflict. Marx and Engels worked closely together, doing research, and sharing philosophical ideas before publishing "The Communist Manifesto" in 1848 (Singer, 2000). Engels finished the manuscript they were writing, which remained incomplete when Marx passed away, and continued to further Marxism. Marxism gained popularity in the 20th century, especially in socialist and revolutionary organizations (Jeffries, 2012). Under Vladimir Lenin's leadership, the Soviet Union adopted and modified Marxist ideas, resulting in Leninism, which combined revolutionary tactics with Marxist theory.

### 3.2 Key concepts in Marxism

In Marxism the people's class is categorized according to the wealth they possess. They are given the tag of Proletariat and Bourgeoisie. Those people who have more wealth are considered Bourgeoisie. monopolizes control over industries, factories, and other means and modes of production. Similarly, those people who do not have money and who do not have means of production, but they must sell their labor considered as the Proletariat. Marxism believes that the relationship between proletariat and bourgeoisie is characterized by exploitation (Hoveman, 2018). According to the Marxism The proletariat and bourgeoisie are the two main classes that participate in the capitalist mode of production in capitalist society.

According to Marxism, the mode of production means the goods and products being produced. Marxism has identified various modes of production, such as primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and communism (Shimp, 2009). This is the primitive age of human society, where there were limited modes of production. People were not that rich in technology and tools, and for them, production was only for the fulfillment of their basic needs. And at that time, there was no social or class division in society. All people used to belong in one community with no division. In "The Communist

Manifesto," Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels have talked about the feudal societies of that time. There was a hierarchical structure of classes. Rich and land-owning lords or nobility occupied the highest rank, followed by church-affiliated clergy. Peasants and serfs who worked the land made up most of the population (Marx et al., 1998).

Modern industrialized societies use this mode of production. The characteristics of capitalism include wage labor, private ownership of the means of production, and profit-driven production (Knox & Kumar, 2023). The working class, or proletariat, sells their labor for wages to the capitalist class, or bourgeoisie, which owns and controls the means of production. There was control over the means of production, such as tools and technology, which were owned by the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat had to sell their labor to earn money (Ruyle, 1975). Proletariat people at that time had to sell their labor power to earn money and sustain their lives. Due to this means of production, class struggle started in society. In Marxism, socialism means the process of capitalism and communism. Karl Marx says that socialism is a socio-economic system where the means of production are owned and controlled by the working class, enabling the equitable distribution of wealth (Fromm, 1961).

#### 4. Research Method

This research has used a qualitative study that involves a comprehensive analysis of primary texts, especially the works of Jacques Derrida and Karl Marx. Secondary sources, such as academic journals, articles, and books, have been systematically studied to provide a contextual understanding and interpretation of philosophical ideas. The approach emphasizes a critical analysis of the concepts presented by these philosophers, aiming to interpret their relevance, implications, and interconnectedness.

#### 5. Results/Discussion

**Derrida has criticized and commented on Marxism in Derridean philosophy.** Additionally, he has taken concern with Marx's writing's hierarchical structures and binary oppositions (MCCALLUM, 2007). Marxism, class conflict, and materialism have all been criticized by Derrida. The binary oppositions of class struggle vs the bourgeoisie proletariat versus capitalists, and historical materialism versus idealism have all been analyzed and criticized by him. According to Derrida, these ideas are changeable rather than fixed (Ryan, 2019). It was unbelievable at the time to see Derrida defend Marx since not many intellectuals were defending a system that appeared to have fallen under its own fundamental defects (Derrida, 1993). The significance of Derrida's support for Marx was further enhanced by his time as a victim of communist oppression in Czechoslovakia (Derrida, 1993). A comprehensive study of the historical background and risks that are associated with misunderstanding the collapse of Communism as the victory of western liberalism characterized Derrida's scenario, rather than a simple celebration of Marxism.

The specters of Marx book by Derrida is the written speech of the Jacques Derrida in Plenary address named "Whither Marxism" at the University of California, Riverside in 1993 (Migheli, 2022). The conference was held to find the answer that the downfall of communism and Marxism will bring Marxism to an end. Derrida discussed the idea of "specters," or "ghosts of Marx," and how they persist in the modern world after the fall of communism and the Berlin Wall during the conference (Salmon et al., 2021). Violence, economic injustice, and inequality are just a few of the concerns that Derrida draws attention to that still plague humanity in the current day. Some of the themes presented in the book Specters of Marx are as follows:

Derrida's defense of Marx and the origins of hauntology analyze his involvement with Karl Marx's ideas in his work and later his creation of the concept of hauntology (Fisher, 2012). The acknowledgment of lost or empty futures and their haunting influence on the present might be viewed as the origin of the idea of hauntology, which developed from Derrida's work. Hauntology recognizes these spirits' effect and how they have shaped present-day actions (Forsyth, 2023). Derrida believes that the past is haunting us today, as there are so many economic problems seen throughout the world.

Derrida has talked about the downfall of Marxism and Communism and the collapse of Soviet Union in Eastern Europe is concerned as the mourning. It also involves recognizing the loss (Derrida et al., 2003). According to Derrida, nation-states have the power to restrain the violence of some forces; conflict for the new international is a result of ideas rather than a celebration of the end of history or ideology (Derrida, 1993). Derrida says that we need the New International In terms of Joint, an alliance within the rule of the proletariat. Derrida has talked about the 10 plagues and 2 interpretations of the capital and the global systems. They are Unemployment, Homeless citizens, Economic war, Reality of free market, foreign debt, Arms, industry and trade, spread of nuclear weapons, inter – ethnic wars, growing and world power and present state of international law.

#### 5.1 Comparative analysis of Marxism and Deconstruction

Deconstruction studies how texts and languages are interpreted and analyzed. Whereas Marxism is about class and economy. Some of the differences of Deconstruction and Marxism are as follows:

Deconstruction focuses on the language and interpretations of the text. It believes that the interplay between language and text creates meaning (Culler, 1982). And that meaning is not absolute; it changes with time, culture, and environment. It has given the example of a "CAT", We have given the name to that animal as a cat, but the name of the cat is not stable; some can say it is different, so the meaning is not stable; it is changeable. Marxism studies capitalism, the economy, social class, and power struggles. It is concerned with the means and mode of productivity. And he has talked about the disparity between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and how that has created inequality in society (Wolff & Leopold, 2020). Similarly, it has been discussed how the bourgeoisie used to rule society and how the proletariat used to sell their power.

The scope of deconstruction is within the text and its meanings. It focuses on the words and sentences. Deconstruction can be used. Marxism has a broader scope because it studies power, economy, and class. And power, economy, and class relate to politics, sociology, and economics (Eagleton, 1981). It studies the whole world—where people live and where social class is created. Marxism studies the capitalist market of society. Deconstruction does not have a political perspective because it is concerned with the fixed meanings and power relations within these texts. Marxism has a political view because it studies the capitalism aspect as well. Marxism believes in a classless society with no bourgeoisie and no proletariat, where everyone is treated equally with no disparity. Philosophers: Deconstruction is related to the philosophers like Jacques Derrida and Foucault whereas Marxism is related to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Deconstruction focuses on the binary oppositions of the text and its meanings, whereas Marxism focuses on the economy and the class.

#### 5.2 Similarities in Marxism and Deconstruction

Marxism and deconstruction are two different theoretical studies which have various aspects of study in culture and society.

Marxism and deconstruction have a similar view on power structures, which is one of their main points of convergence. Marxism looks at the power dynamics that exist between the various economic classes in society, with a particular emphasis on how the Bourgeoisie exploits the Proletariat.

In summary, there are several significant parallels between deconstruction and Marxism. They both question established hierarchies of power, stress the need for social change, examine historical data, question dichotomous oppositions, and draw attention to how ideologies influence society. Marxism concentrates on social classes and economic relationships, whereas deconstruction concentrates on language and texts. Nonetheless, in their critical examination of society and culture, these frameworks are complementary to one another (Bottomore, 2006). Gaining a deeper understanding of power dynamics, social transformation, and the construction of meaning in society can result from recognizing and valuing the parallels between deconstruction and Marxism.

### 5.3 Conflicts in Marxism and Deconstruction

Deconstruction argues that language is a complicated system of signs that is essentially ambiguous and open to various interpretations, rather than a clear medium to convey meaning. The meanings in the deconstruction theory can be interpreted in many ways, and there is no end to the interpretation as this is a continuous process. Whereas in Marxism, the focus is on power, which creates inequality in society and through which struggles can be seen with the people to survive, and it also destroys the peace of the community and the country.

Marxism has focused on the class struggle and critics were worried that this class struggle will make authoritarian and totalitarianism in society. With the downfall of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall, there was concern for the downfall of Marxist theory as well. And after that, people were questioned about believing the Marxist theory. Deconstruction is very difficult to understand because Derrida believes that meanings can be generated through the interplay between texts and languages, so there is no absolute meaning of the words. Every meaning has ambiguity, so this makes it difficult to understand the text. Likewise, in Marxism, it has only focused on the hierarchy seen in society, which creates bias and hindrance to understanding.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study shows the relationship between Marxist ideology and Derrida's theories. Despite not being a Marxist, Derrida worked with Marxist ideas and themes, especially on his book "Specters of Marx." He delivered a speech on Marxism during the plenary session, and the book was later inspired by his address. Derrida's research exposes the continuation of violence, injustice, and economic subjugation in the post-communist era, challenging the triumphalist narratives of Western liberalism and capitalism. Derrida's interaction with Marx goes beyond a simple affirmation or negation of Marxist ideology.

Derrida's deconstructionist approach criticizes the tenets of dominant discourses, such as capitalism and Marxism, and challenges binary opposition. Deconstruction focuses on the interplay between languages and texts and their meaning. The comparative study shows that, while accepting the continuing importance of Marx's criticism of capitalism, Derrida's views provide novel ideas on politics, ethics, and social justice. Derrida's writings make standard readings of Marxism more difficult and provide opportunities for rethinking socialist ideas considering present-day problems. This study will be helpful to know what deconstruction is and what are the components of Deconstruction and Marxism.

## Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Prof. Wesley Shumar (Communication, Culture, and Media Studies, Drexel University) and my friend Essien from Drexel University for the insightful knowledge and support they have provided me to complete this paper.

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