

Deconstruction J. Derrida and Hermeneutics

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Received: 13-04-2026

Revised: 26-05-2026

Accepted: 06-06-2026

KEYWORDS

Deconstruction;
Jacques Derrida;
Hermeneutics;
Epistemology.

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the relationship between Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory and hermeneutics in the context of modern epistemology. Both approaches seek to reject the traditional view of meaning as singular, fixed, and objective. Derrida, through his deconstruction, reveals that meaning is always relative, contextual, and constantly changing, while hermeneutics emphasizes the importance of the dialogical interpretation process between the text, the reader, and the socio-cultural context. The integration of deconstruction and hermeneutics produces a more open, critical, and reflective epistemological paradigm. This approach asserts that knowledge is not a definitive end result, but a dynamic process that can always be reinterpreted according to context and human experience. Thus, deconstruction and hermeneutics play an important role in expanding the horizon of scientific understanding and enriching cross-disciplinary interpretive methods. In addition, the application of Derrida's thought and hermeneutics has great relevance in Islamic studies and the humanities. Both encourage reinterpretation of religious and social texts in a more critical and contextual manner, thereby opening space for the emergence of a more inclusive, progressive, and adaptive scientific understanding in response to the times.

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Introduction

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that discusses the origin, nature, and limits of human knowledge. Within it, the concepts of meaning and interpretation become very fundamental in shaping our understanding of reality and science. In the context of the integration of knowledge, interpretation of concepts and texts becomes key so that interdisciplinary fields can enrich each other and build more holistic knowledge. Jacques Derrida, with his theory of deconstruction, and hermeneutics as the art of interpretation, are two important approaches that can make significant contributions to modern epistemological studies.

Derrida critiques the traditional view that considers meaning as something certain and stable. According to him, meaning is never absolute but always experiences shifts and delays in the context of its use. This approach is called deconstruction, which seeks to open up and shake the structure of meaning that has long been considered fixed. Derrida's canon of thought opposes the belief in absolute truth that is logocentric and is marked by the revelation of layered binary oppositions in language and concepts. (Gunawan, 2024).

Meanwhile, hermeneutics as a discipline of philosophy was born from the need to understand and interpret messages or texts in depth. The name hermeneutics comes from the Greek word "hermeneuein," which means to give understanding, translation, or interpretation. This concept is rooted in Hermes, the god in Greek mythology who was tasked with conveying the messages of the gods to humans. Therefore, hermeneutics becomes the process of transforming ignorance into understanding through systematic and reflective text analysis.

The development of modern hermeneutics was influenced by figures such as Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey, who expanded the meaning of interpretation from merely understanding texts to a comprehensive process that considers historical and cultural contexts. This shift made hermeneutics not only a philosophical tool but also an important methodological approach in various disciplines. Hermeneutics places meaning as something dynamic and always open to new interpretations. (Wikipedia, 2025)

In the realm of contemporary epistemology, Derrida's deconstruction and hermeneutics have an interesting connection. Deconstruction can be seen as radical hermeneutics because it proposes the dismantling of stable meaning structures and uncovers hidden contradictions in conventional interpretations. With this approach, understanding of science becomes more complex and open to diverse meanings, thus enriching the integration of science that is always evolving. (Hakim, 2022)

Furthermore, Derrida's deconstruction offers a new paradigm in epistemology that rejects traditional epistemological views that seek fixed and objective truths. Derrida places texts and language as fields of conflict of meaning that are never complete, where interpretations are always changing. This approach makes it clear that meaning is never singular and final, but is continuously in a state of "deferred" (*différance*) and depends on the context of reading. Thus, deconstruction opens up space for the plurality of knowledge and openness to complexity in the process of understanding reality and science. (Florianus, 2019)

In the realm of Islamic studies and social sciences, Derrida's hermeneutic thought also receives significant attention. His critical and radical approach to classical texts offers the potential to open new dimensions in interpretation and scholarly thought that have long been considered rigid and normative. For example, in the study of hadith and religious texts, the deconstructive method allows for the revelation of layers of meaning that have been hidden and provides a broader critical dialogue space among perspectives. This approach demands a dynamic and open interpretive method while challenging the fundamental assumptions that have long been regarded as absolute in the study of Islamic sciences and the humanities. (Shobri et al., 2025)

Thus, an in-depth discussion of deconstruction and hermeneutics is not only relevant within the framework of epistemology but is also crucial for understanding how knowledge can continue to develop in a critical and reflective manner. This article will comprehensively review both to show how the integration of deconstruction theory and hermeneutics can provide a new perspective in the formation of knowledge.

Method

This article uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a library research method. This method is chosen because the discussion focuses on conceptual analysis of philosophical theories, particularly Jacques Derrida's thoughts on deconstruction and the concept of hermeneutics in the context of modern epistemology. This research does not involve field data, but relies on the exploration of relevant scientific sources, such as books, journals, scientific articles, and academic works that discuss Derrida's thought as well as figures in hermeneutics such as Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Gadamer.

Is carried out through three main steps. First, data collection from various credible and up-to-date library sources, both from classical philosophical literature and contemporary references. Second, content analysis is used to examine the meaning and relationship between the concepts of deconstruction and hermeneutics within the framework of epistemology. Third, philosophical

synthesis and interpretation are conducted to draw conceptual conclusions that illustrate the interconnection and relevance of both approaches to the development of modern science. This qualitative approach allows researchers to interpret Derrida's ideas and the hermeneutic tradition as two complementary streams of thought. With this method, the research results are not only descriptive but also reflective and critical of the structure of meaning, assumptions, and paradigms of truth constructed in science. Therefore, this method is relevant to uncover the dialectical relationship between deconstruction and hermeneutics in forming an epistemological foundation that is open, dynamic, and pluralistic.

Result

1. Basic Concept of Deconstruction by Jacques Derrida

Deconstruction as introduced by Jacques Derrida rejects the traditional view of stable meaning and singular truth. According to Derrida, meaning in a text can never be definitively fixed because it is always dependent on context and remains open to unlimited interpretation. Deconstruction opens the possibility of uncovering multiple layers of meaning and contradictions within texts that have long been concealed beneath conventional forms of understanding. This process is not merely a matter of dismantling texts but also of producing new meanings that are not simply repetitions or imitations of the thoughts of either the author or previous readers (Hakim, 2022).

Derrida argues that texts always “speak more” than what their authors intend. In his view, language is a system of signs that continuously defers the presence of meaning—a concept known as *différance*—so that reading a text is never a finished process. He rejects the idea that meaning can be fully determined through the author or original intention; instead, meaning emerges through ongoing acts of reading that constantly shift according to the reader's social and cultural contexts. Thus, deconstruction does not seek a single, final meaning but aims to reveal the tensions, gaps, and new possibilities that are embedded within the structure of the text.

Furthermore, deconstruction challenges hierarchical thinking in Western intellectual traditions that privilege one pole of binary oppositions over the other, such as rational–irrational, center–margin, or male–female. Derrida seeks to destabilize these structures of domination by demonstrating that each opposition is inevitably dependent upon its counterpart. Consequently, meaning does not originate from a single center of truth but is formed through relations of difference and interdependence among opposing elements. This approach emphasizes that understanding texts or reality cannot be separated from an awareness of bias and power relations embedded within language itself (Florianus, 2019). The concept of deconstruction also underscores the importance of continual re-reading in order to uncover meanings that have been obscured by linguistic structures.

Derrida maintains that every text contains layers of meaning that conflict with one another and even possess the potential to undermine themselves. Therefore, the task of the reader is not to discover an ultimate meaning but to trace how the text simultaneously constructs and deconstructs itself through the play of language. In this sense, deconstruction becomes a mode of thought that promotes openness, interpretive plurality, and critical attitudes toward any form of established meaning that tends to suppress difference.

Beyond functioning as a method of textual criticism, deconstruction has broad implications for how human beings understand knowledge and reality. By questioning the foundations of absolute truth, Derrida directs philosophical inquiry toward an awareness that all forms of knowledge are provisional and contingent upon interpretive contexts. In this regard, deconstruction is not merely a tool for linguistic analysis but also a philosophical framework that cultivates critical reflection on how knowledge itself is constructed. This perspective renders deconstruction highly relevant across a wide range of disciplines, including social, cultural, and religious studies that continue to seek meaning within the complexity of human realities.

2. Derrida's Critique of Logocentrism

Derrida critiques what he calls "logocentrism," which is the belief in a single and absolute center of truth. He shows that there is no first concept that is always true and that binary oppositions such as between speech and writing, body and soul, or masculine and feminine always contain hegemony that discredits one side. Through deconstruction, Derrida places the marginalized pole into focus, then shakes the opposition to show that meaning is never stable and must always be questioned. (Florianus, 2019)

3. The Nature of Hermeneutics as the Art of Interpretation

Etymologically, the term hermeneutics comes from the Greek word *hermeneuein* which means "to interpret," "to translate," or "to provide understanding." This word is rooted in the name Hermes, a god in Greek mythology who is tasked with conveying the messages of the gods to humans. From this root, hermeneutics is understood as the art and theory of understanding messages, symbols, or texts that contain hidden meanings. In the context of modern philosophy, hermeneutics is not merely a technique for reading texts, but also a way of thinking to uncover the meanings hidden behind language, experience, and human culture. Therefore, hermeneutics plays an important role in connecting the text and the reader through a profound dialogical process.

Hermeneutics, rooted in the tradition of interpretive philosophy, has developed as a method for understanding the meaning of texts in historical and social contexts. Classical hermeneutics seeks to reconstruct the original meaning of a text or create new meanings that are relevant. Figures such as Schleiermacher and Dilthey emphasize the reconstruction of historical meaning, while Gadamer highlights the consumption of new meanings that emerge in the interaction between the text and the reader. Hermeneutics views meaning as a process that involves a dialogue between the subject and the object of interpretation. (UGMONLINE, n.d.)

Derrida offers a more radical version of hermeneutics, which is then called radical hermeneutics. In this view, meaning cannot be decided definitively because there is always the possibility of new interpretations that can invalidate it.

Previous Interpretations. This radical hermeneutics rejects a single foundation in interpretation and asserts that interpretation is a process without a certain and time-limited basis. Thus, any effort to stabilize meaning is considered a power that must be criticized and dismantled. (Abdullah, 2022)

Deconstruction as radical hermeneutics demands a continuous shift in perspective when interpreting texts. When one meaning emerges, another new meaning is ready to negate it, so the process of interpretation is dynamic and endless. This approach differs from traditional hermeneutics, which attempts to formulate a single, stable meaning that can be comprehensively understood by the reader. In this context, deconstruction brings epistemology towards uncertainty and a profound plurality of meanings. (Hakim, 2022)

One important implication of deconstruction is the rejection of claims to absolute truth in science. Science, which has been built on the basis of a single and objective truth, is considered by Derrida as a form of domination that ignores the plurality of meanings and social contexts. With deconstruction, science becomes an open space that accepts various interpretations and conflicting yet coexisting knowledge, allowing for the integration of science to be conducted in a more inclusive and critical manner. (Florianus, 2019)

Furthermore, deconstruction provides space for uncovering the boundaries of science that have long been considered taboo or inappropriate to discuss in the academic realm. For example, the role of power, ideology, and social practices underlying the structure of science can be analyzed and critically dismantled. Thus, deconstruction is not only a method of reading texts but also a reflective tool for dismantling the structure of science and epistemology in general.

Hermeneutics in the context of deconstruction is not merely a method of text interpretation but also a cognitive process of suspending meaning. This means that the process of understanding a text is never complete and is always in a state of suspension due to the endless

possibilities of other meanings. This opens up the possibility for dialogue between the text and the reader to occur continuously without the necessity of seeking a definitive meaning.

This approach has relevance in the study of contemporary science which increasingly emphasizes dialogue between disciplines and the plurality of perspectives. Deconstruction facilitates a rejection of rigid and hierarchical structures of knowledge by placing various viewpoints that have long been ignored into the focus of study. This enriches the integration of knowledge while also expanding the horizons of epistemology itself. Both deconstruction and radical hermeneutics invite researchers and academics to be critical and open to meanings and knowledge that are contingent. They reject dogmatism and open space for new ways of thinking, especially in the world of science and philosophy. The integration of this concept can renew epistemological and methodological approaches in scientific research as well as the development of knowledge in general. (Hakim, 2022)

Derrida's deconstruction shows that the precision of meaning is not something certain, but is always in a condition of constructive uncertainty. Derrida argues that belief in absolute truth actually limits the space of understanding and closes the possibility of new and different perspectives emerging. Thus, deconstruction not only becomes a strategy for reading texts, but also a critical way of thinking that is skeptical of established norms, while simultaneously opening up the possibility of hidden richness of meaning within every social structure and language. (Mangihut Siregar, 2019)

This approach carries important implications in the study of social sciences and humanities, where deconstruction functions to break down social constructions that have long been considered stable and true. For example, in social deconstruction, concepts such as identity, power, and norms can be reanalyzed to open dimensions that have long been marginalized or forgotten. Through this process, deconstruction allows for a reconceptualization of social reality that is more inclusive and plural. (Fadilah, 2023)

Hermeneutics, especially in the context of deconstruction, is not just about understanding texts and meanings, but also about radical criticism of the assumptions and systems that shape that understanding. Deconstructive hermeneutics emphasizes that meaning is always in a process of shifting and is never complete, so interpretation must suspend claims of totality. This demands academics to always open space for reflection and revisionism in every scientific study, especially in the integration of diverse disciplines. (Tamam, 2023)

In the framework of epistemology, the integration of deconstruction and hermeneutics provides a foundation for knowledge that is dynamic and adaptive. This approach encourages the development of research methods that are not only oriented towards validity and objectivity but also towards criticism, dialogue, and reflection on the contingencies of knowledge. Thus, modern epistemology that adopts deconstruction and hermeneutics perspectives becomes more responsive to social complexities and the interconnections of knowledge across disciplines. (Ferry Simanjuntak, 2021)

Thus, deconstruction and hermeneutics as two complementary philosophical approaches can be integrated into contemporary epistemology to create a more dynamic, open, and critical paradigm of science. Both encourage a reflective approach that pays attention to context, ambiguity, and the richness of meaning that allows knowledge to develop inclusively and adaptively to changes of era.

Conclusion

Deconstruction introduced by Jacques Derrida and the concept of hermeneutics in modern philosophy both strive to dismantle traditional views of meaning that are considered singular and fixed. Derrida, through his deconstructive approach, rejects the idea of absolute truth and asserts that meaning is always changing according to context and is never final. Meanwhile, hermeneutics focuses on the process of understanding and interpreting the meaning of texts through dialogue

between the reader and the socio-cultural context surrounding it. Both place interpretation as a dynamic process that is open to various possible meanings.

The integration of deconstruction and hermeneutics results in a new approach in modern epistemology that is more reflective and critical. By combining the two, science is no longer viewed as a rigid and hierarchical system, but rather as an open space for dialogue between perspectives and disciplines. This approach helps researchers and academics understand that knowledge is never value-free and is always influenced by historical, ideological, and power contexts surrounding it. Thus, a plural, inclusive, and adaptive paradigm of science emerges in response to changes of era.

In the context of Islamic studies and the humanities, the deconstructive-hermeneutic approach has important relevance. It opens opportunities to reread classical texts critically without losing its spiritual and moral values. This approach fosters awareness that religious, social, and cultural understanding must always be open to new interpretations that are in line with contemporary challenges. With this critical and reflective spirit, deconstruction and hermeneutics can become the foundation for the development of more contextual, humane, and progressive knowledge.

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