



Other-Oriented Teaching Philosophy in the Lens of Derridean Deconstruction

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue that Derridean deconstruction can be established as an affirmative critical philosophy of teaching. This paper will lay down the important foundational concepts of Derrida's deconstruction significant in building an Other-oriented teaching philosophy. In presenting my arguments, I will highlight deconstruction's implications to teaching and learning in general, a deconstructive critique of student-centered learning, as well as the concept of othering in education vis-a-vis what Derrida calls "friendship informed by *différance*." This paper shall deal with how Derridean deconstruction may be justifiable as a sufficient and relevant critical teaching philosophy through affirming, and at the same time, deconstructing student-centered learning, addressing problems of violence, power relations, and othering. Examples from the practices of student-centered learning shall be discussed with a critical perspective, leading to recommendations for future critical discourse in education.

Keywords: deconstruction, education, othering, power-relations, student-centered learning, teaching

Introduction

One of the aims of teaching is to provide learners with an understanding and appreciation of their cognitive and affective development vis-à-vis their cultural, ideological, and historical milieus, among many,¹ characterized by their vicarious experiences with each other. With the challenges that education is facing in the 21st century, such as disinformation, discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender, environmental problems, injustice in/and democracy; and the like, teaching plays a huge role in addressing these gaps by providing both timely and timeless critical perspectives. Teaching critically plays a huge role in guiding one to multiple possibilities of interpretation and analysis of these realities, making them relevant to one's context, albeit deconstruction as a philosophy of teaching, I believe, provides one with a critical lens of multiple realities.

To set the direction of this paper's framework, I will provide a brief background on Derrida and discuss the significance of his work on deconstruction as a critical strategy.

Jacques Derrida and Deconstruction: An Overview

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) was a French philosopher and literary critic who is widely regarded as one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century. Derrida's work is known for its complex and challenging nature, and his ideas have had a profound impact on fields ranging from literature and philosophy to anthropology and political theory.

Front and center of Derrida's philosophy is his concept of deconstruction, which he developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Deconstruction is a critical strategy that seeks to expose the ways in which language, culture, and other forms of representation are inherently unstable and cannot be relied upon to provide objective meanings. His idea of *différance* in deconstruction, or "the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means

¹ See: Ben Kotzee, "Applied Epistemology of Education," *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Epistemology*, edited by David Coady and James Chase, 211. New York: Routledge (2020).

of which elements are related to each other,"² establishes that meaning is always deferred or postponed and can never be fully present or immediate. Deconstruction also involves a critique of binary oppositions, which are often taken for granted in Western thought. According to Derrida, binary oppositions such as male/female, presence/absence, and speech/writing are not fixed or absolute, but are instead the result of historical and cultural processes that have privileged one term over the other. Deconstruction seeks to expose the ways in which these binary oppositions are not stable or fixed but are instead contested and always subject to change.

To further establish the affirmative nature of Derrida's deconstruction, I will present Derridean deconstruction's significance in education, particularly in critical pedagogy. As already established, Derrida's view of language is inherently unstable, and meaning is always subject to interpretation. This means that any text, including educational materials, can be deconstructed to reveal the underlying assumptions and power structures that shape its meaning.³

Implications of Deconstruction in Teaching and Learning

At the heart of Derrida's deconstruction is its radical questioning of structures and methods while also being critical of its own. Derrida's criticism of the structure of education, just like his criticism of the structure of language, directly questions the entire system of education as a defender, if not an enabler, of a certain type of Western way of thinking.⁴ Tracing the development of education from the influences of Western tradition, we may claim that our framework of thinking is informed by a system where basic courses are predominantly patterned on Euro-centric and Anglo-American influences; where the canon of "great writers" are mostly white; where standardized exams are benchmarks of major white education institutions; where research references, textbooks and other instructional materials, even standard of traditional accreditation of

² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1976): 62.

³ Christopher Norris, *Minding the Gap: Epistemology and Philosophy of Science, Two Traditions*. Oxford University Press (2002): 56.

⁴ Steven Burik, "Opening philosophy to the world: Derrida and education in philosophy." *Educational Theory* 59 (3) (2009): 297-312.

education programs are all influenced by what Derrida argues as influences of Western metaphysics.

Deconstruction unlocks a door that opens other doors as it exposes a structural stronghold that limits education to a tradition that is binding and oppressive:⁵ doors like decolonizing education, mother-tongue instruction, local and national curriculum integration, and the teaching of critical theories, among others. Deconstruction promises to liberate education from a systemic cycle that limits it to Western thought, through a strategic mindset of radical questioning and opening to different possibilities. As Burik contends:

Deconstruction is a challenge to and a critique of certain structures and the way that they impose themselves on our thinking, but at the same time, deconstruction is an affirmation of the necessity of thinking and of exposing these structures.⁶

On a different note, we understand critique as a form of questioning by which one can look at that thing being questioned from an outside perspective, that is, from a vantage point different from the subject being critiqued, where there is an assumed belief the one criticizing subscribes to and uses to do critical analysis. Coming from a tradition where to criticize is to judge or evaluate based on a certain framework, Biesta⁷ differentiates Derrida's strategy from a mere (traditional) critique, inasmuch as deconstruction is not just an act of one-way critiquing but also an openness to be critiqued. Deconstruction is a strategy that "can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner."⁸ Further, "all deconstruction is 'auto-

⁵ Paulo Freire, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" 30th Anniversary Edition, Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc. (1970).

⁶ Steven Burik, "Opening philosophy to the world: Derrida and education in philosophy," *Educational Theory* 59 (3) (2009): 6.

⁷ Gert Biesta, "Witnessing deconstruction in education. Why quasi-transcendentalism matters," *Social Theory and Educational Research*, edited by M. Murphy, 65-78. London: SAGE (2013): 1.

⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Deconstruction and the Other: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, edited by R. Kearney, 105-126. Manchester: Manchester University Press (1984): 108.

deconstruction’.”⁹ Similarly, this two-fold “relationship” of deconstruction to the subject [education] and deconstruction to its own critique of the subject, I argue, is the main significance of Derridean deconstruction for education: a radical questioning of the system that governs education for prolonged periods, at the same time, opening deconstruction to its own critique of education. While the first component (deconstruction as a critique) has already been established, the latter is significant in education, particularly in teaching.

In teaching, deconstruction can be used to challenge dominant narratives and power structures often taken for granted. This approach can be used to examine the ways in which educational materials and practices reinforce certain cultural norms and values while marginalizing others. For instance, Critical Race Theory examines how race and racism intersect with other forms of social identity and oppression, and how these intersections contribute to the marginalization of certain groups. Derrida's deconstruction can be used to complement Critical Race Theory by revealing the ways in which language and discourse construct these intersections and contribute to the marginalization of certain groups¹⁰. Deconstruction can be used, for example, to examine the assumptions and biases that are embedded in curricula, textbooks, and teaching methods, as well as to examine the power relations that exist within educational institutions. This includes analyzing the ways in which power is distributed among various stakeholders, such as teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members. A deconstructive analysis of power relations may reveal how certain groups are marginalized or excluded from decision-making processes, or how certain practices reinforce existing power structures. By exposing these power dynamics, deconstruction can help to create more equitable and inclusive educational environments. Hence, I argue that Derridean deconstruction is an affirmative critical strategy in teaching.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida, in J.D. Caputo (ed.), *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, New York, Fordham University Press, (1997): 9.

¹⁰ Daniel Solorzano and Tara Yosso, "Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 8 (1) (2002): 23.

Teaching took effect in the learning process of the students because of their capacity to interpret and make sense of what they were taught.¹¹ This student-oriented claim presupposes that the effectiveness of teaching is not measured by the ability to communicate to students but by the students making sense of what was communicated. This reversal of hierarchy in the teacher-student binary, where traditionally the teacher is the more privileged entity over the student, is characterized by what is regarded as more *non-violent* or less violent relations.¹² “*Violent relations*” is a Derridean phrase that means epistemologically reducing the Other to the I as the “same” (or “same as the I,” in this case, the teacher), which creates power-relations that continue to other the Other.¹³

These less violent relations are an indicator of the “living thought of the tension between sameness and otherness.”¹⁴ Parallel to the binary structure of I-Other is the binary between teacher-student, sameness-otherness, singularity-plurality, and homogeneity-alterity. The tension between each binary can only be approached through “Friendship informed by *différance*,” derived from Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship* (1988).¹⁵ In this context, *différance* is described through the metaphor of human friendship, in which “friendship does not indicate in the other’s sameness to me, but rather, indicates that in so far as we are exposed to others through our bodies and discourse, we are fundamentally open to and bound to each other.”¹⁶

Sinha also argues that friendship indicates the teacher as “already exposed and vulnerable” to the call and need of the other.¹⁷ Translated into teaching, this means that the teacher embraces a disposition of being open to the student’s insights, answers, and even

¹¹ Gert Biesta, “Why ‘What Works’ Still Won’t Work: From Evidence-Based Education to Value-Based Education,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 27 (5) (2007): 8.

¹² Gert Biesta, “Good Education in an Age of Measurement, Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability,” 21 (2009): 1.

¹³ see Derrida, Jacques. *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.

¹⁴ Sameness refers to the I’s instinct to look at the other as the same as it; whereas otherness refers to understanding that the other is not the same as the I (Sinha 2012, 2).

¹⁵ Shilpi Sinha, “Derrida, Friendship and Responsible Teaching in Contrast to Effective Teaching,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 5 (2012): 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

ambiguity as such are coming from a certain piece of reality that reflects the authenticity of the student's thought processes, contexts, and point of view. It compels teachers to deal with the discomforts of hearing ambiguities from students' responses that are not expected based on what the teacher wants to hear (that is, based on the teacher's own understanding of the lesson). It forces teachers to be open to wrestling and struggling with their own cognitive and affective expectations as a friend is open to the alterity of his/her friend. It points the teacher towards a deep sense of obligation to the students.¹⁸

An implication of Derridean deconstruction to the development of an Other-oriented philosophy of teaching is the creation of equal voices between the I and the Other.¹⁹ Derrida's idea of justice can combat othering in education through friendship informed by *différance*. As such, student-centered learning as a paradigm of education, I argue, is a mat an application of Derridean concepts of deconstruction. *Différance*, friendship, and non-violence in teaching and learning.

Deconstruction and Student-Centered Learning

Student-centered learning, as a paradigm of education, shifts the focus of education from instruction to learning. Barr and Tagg refer to it as the "learning paradigm" as opposed to the "instruction paradigm."²⁰ It advocates for the primacy of learning more than instruction, arguing that learning happens not in the mere delivery of instruction but in the learner's ability to process and apply knowledge.²¹ As such, methods may vary because, in this paradigm, the mission of education is to produce learning; hence, the method and the product are separate. Despite that, there are problems and challenges in practicing student-centered learning that I believe an

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, "The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida," in J.D. Caputo (ed.), *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, New York, Fordham University Press (1997).

²⁰ Robert Barr and John Tagg, "From teaching to learning—A new paradigm for undergraduate education," *Change* 27 (1995): 15.

²¹ Maryellen Weimer, "Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice," San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. (2002): 25-26.

Other-oriented philosophy based on Derridean deconstruction may aid.

First, there is a problem when student-centered learning is reduced to a method instead of a paradigm that needs to be contextualized to different educational settings. As Barr and Tagg lay down, the learning paradigm is not a method, but it supports methods that aim at fostering student learning.²² Methods may vary depending on the needs of students and the educational contexts they demand. However, when student-centered learning is reduced to a mere method itself, it will undermine both the individual differences of students and the authenticity of a specific classroom context. Student-centered learning reduced to a method is vulnerable to othering, as it limits a paradigm to a mere cookie-cutter method that is assumed to apply to everyone. It also undermines students' reception and readiness for such a method.

Some critics argue that student-centered approaches may benefit students who are already privileged while disadvantaging students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, students who come from homes with educated parents and a wealth of resources may be more likely to thrive in a self-directed learning environment, while students who come from homes with limited resources or less parental involvement may struggle to succeed.²³ This may be avoided by infusing Derrida's Other-oriented views into teaching and learning. It refocuses a teacher's learning strategy from doing a method to contextualizing learning based on his or her assessment of the students, informed by their alterity.

Second, and in connection to the first point, there is a problem when the implementation of student-centered learning becomes dogmatic that its practice is continued only based on past successes and not on present conditions and contexts. A lot of the movements we know started with a very meaningful pursuit of a cause or a reaction against problematic approaches in the past. In education, for example, critical theory started as a well-meaning social and cultural

²² Robert Barr and John Tagg, "From teaching to learning—A new paradigm for undergraduate education." *Change* 27 (1995): 17.

²³ Peggy Ertmer and Anne Ottenbreit-Leftwich, "Removing Obstacles to the Pedagogical Changes Required by Jonassen's Vision of Authentic Technology-Enabled Learning." *Computers & Education*, 64 (2013): 175-182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2012.10.008>.

analysis, emerging from the Frankfurt School in France in the 1930s.²⁴ Its promising aim of unearthing the underlying power relations and structures of oppression in several fields, education included, has become a critical way of teaching, research, and intellectual engagements. However, in time, the risk of being reduced to mere dogmatism, particularly in the 21st century, has shown a lot of challenges. Cases like Hirsch's criticism of critical theory and how it leaves students unprepared to participate in civic and economic life.²⁵ Another one is the case of Dana Dusbiber in 2015, who proposed the banning of Western literary classics due to their assumed racial discrepancy in instruction. These are all examples of how critical theory becomes problematic when it is reduced to a dogmatic methodology. In the same way, student-centered learning may also fall into the same trap of being dogmatic about its practical application. Derrida pointed out how deconstruction is a deconstruction of dogmatism.²⁶ When the Other is set aside in the pursuit of being student-centered in one's method, othering continues. Hence, this Other-oriented philosophy may well be a safeguard in the application of a student-centered approach.

Third, there is a problem in student-centered learning concerning the misunderstanding of power-relations in the classroom. When student-centered learning is interpreted as a transfer of power instead of a balance of power, hospitality and negotiation become problematic. In Other-oriented Derridean teaching philosophy, there is an acknowledgment of the equal voice of the I and the Other, which is also the intention of student-centered learning. However, the binary opposition of teacher and student challenges the contemporary interpretation of student-centered learning, as the traditional approach focuses on the power of the teacher. Hence, the wrong assumption is that when there is a paradigm shift, there is also a shift in power and control from the teacher to the students. This may well be balanced when Derridean deconstruction is infused into the practice of student-centered learning. It will posit the co-constructing

²⁴ Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory". In Paul Connerton (ed.). *Critical Sociology: Selected Readings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin (1976): 1.

²⁵ Eric Donald Hirsch, "The Making of Americans: Democracy and Our Schools" (2010): 114-118.

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism," *Deconstruction* (1996): 87.

learning relationship between the teacher and the student in what is called “friendship informed by *différance*.”²⁷

In the Philippine setting, for example, student-centered learning is characterized by a focus on active learning, collaborative learning, and project-based learning. These approaches are intended to give students more control over their learning and to encourage them to take ownership of their own learning process. The 2010 K-12 Basic Education Curriculum was a key driver of the shift towards student-centered learning in the Philippines. It emphasized the importance of developing 21st-century skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. However, student-centered learning is arguably a relatively new concept in the Philippines, and many educators are still learning how to implement these approaches effectively. Hence, a misinterpretation of the transfer of power, instead of the balance of power, is seen in the early stages of student-centered learning in the Philippines.

Lastly, on the issue of confining Student-centered learning to certain disciplines only. One of the proposed remedies for educational institutions is the implementation of student-centered learning in the humanities and social science disciplines, while retaining traditional lecture-based methods in the sciences, as the fear of not being able to learn objective knowledge and information arises. My position on the application of student-centered learning as a discipline-based approach to teaching is still firm. Student-centered learning should be across disciplines. To limit it to only the humanities and social sciences is to limit it to a method and not a paradigm. Other-oriented philosophy may help in reminding teachers that we teach according to how students learn. What if the way students learn in a science class is through a lecture? Does that mean it is not student-centered learning anymore? We ask questions like these because our understanding of a paradigm is still a method. If students learn effectively in a science lecture, then the teacher may do so because, again, the end goal is student learning. The power of an environment or approach is judged in terms of its impact on learning. If learning occurs, then the environment has power.²⁸ Student-centered learning calls for a variety

²⁷ Shilpi Sinha, "Derrida, Friendship and Responsible Teaching in Contrast to Effective Teaching," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 5 (2012): 4.

²⁸ Robert Barr and John Tagg, "From teaching to learning—A new paradigm for undergraduate education," *Change* 27 (1995): 17.

of methods and techniques, regardless of whether it is old or new, and what works in sciences or engineering courses is measured by students' learning, not by the process of instruction. Therefore, the Other-oriented view of Derrida can help teachers evaluate if a method is student-centered or not, by looking at how it focuses on students' learning, not by the application of a method alone.

Deconstruction as an Other-Oriented Philosophy of Teaching

Deconstruction establishes an affirmative critical teaching philosophy because it is Other-oriented and not I-centered. Since the goal of this study is to propose the possibility of Derridean deconstruction as a philosophy of teaching, I have listed some of its applications and implications for teaching, leading to the destabilization of othering:

First, deconstruction challenges the teacher-centered paradigm of education. Derrida's philosophy has implications for the way we think about authority and expertise in education. The teacher-centered paradigm of education relies on an authoritative figure who imparts knowledge to receptive students. In contrast, deconstruction implies that the learner is equally important as the teacher. It contends that the learner is an active co-creator of learning in the entire educative process, and the exchange of ideas should be a dialogue rather than a one-way download of information. In this way, education can be a collaborative and democratic process, where both teachers and learners can learn from and about each other.

Teachers should always strive to be reflexive and self-critical, questioning their own assumptions and prejudices, and empowering students to be the same. This requires a willingness to listen to and learn from the Other, to create an atmosphere of trust and openness based on mutual respect and empathy, in keeping with Derrida's notions of hospitality and friendship informed by *différance*. Derrida's philosophy encourages teachers to be creative and open in their teaching practices. Teachers should recognize that each learner has his or her own unique perspective, experiences, and needs, and their teaching approach, assessments, instructional materials, and activities should reflect this. Teachers should be creative in their pedagogy, encouraging learners to think critically and creatively, to engage in dialogue and debate, and to challenge dominant narratives and

assumptions. Teachers should establish their classrooms deliberately in a culture of equality and the elimination of a dominant voice. This is one important way to balance power relations in the classroom and to veer away from academic othering.

Also, and in connection to the first one, deconstruction empowers the learners as the main agents of their own learning. Today, where education focuses on measurement, evaluation, accreditations, and other means of quality assurance, there is a greater tendency to focus on numerical standards, neglecting what Biesta calls the “subjectification” of education.²⁹ Education is not just about the transmission of knowledge and skills but also about the formation of the self. Biesta argues that education is a process of subjectification, where individuals develop their own unique identity and sense of purpose. This process cannot be reduced to measurable outcomes, as it is deeply personal and subjective. Hence, an Other-oriented philosophy of teaching is necessary.

Derrida argues that the Other is a socially constructed concept that works alongside the I. Thus, any approach to education that operates on a fixed and essentialist notion of identity would inevitably exclude and marginalize the Other. This can be seen in how identity markers such as gender, race, and class operate in schools to create certain expectations and prejudices toward certain groups of students. Deconstruction insists that schools must remain open to the Other and must be vigilant to avoid marginalizing certain student groups, which I believe is impossible in a predominantly teacher-centered paradigm of education.

Parallel to Derrida’s “openness towards the other,”³⁰ the lack of subjectification in teaching compromises the voice of students and reduces education to a set of criteria that need to be checked. In the same way that critical dogmatism makes critical thinking into a set of rules rather than an empowering skill for the Other, the lack of subjectification limits teaching to a set of rules that need to be rigorously followed to serve “objective” criteria.

²⁹ Gert Biesta, “Witnessing deconstruction in education. Why quasi-transcendentalism matters,” *Social Theory and Educational Research*, edited by M. Murphy, London: SAGE (2013): 35

³⁰ Jacques Derrida, “Deconstruction and the Other: An Interview with Jacques Derrida”, in R. Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*. Manchester, Manchester University Press (1984): 124.

Derrida's deconstruction emphasizes that education should be a collaborative and democratic process where both learners and teachers engage in a dialogue. Educators should create opportunities for learners to express themselves, to share their ideas, and to participate actively in their own learning experiences. This requires a shift from traditional teaching methods that emphasize lecture and passive learning to methods that cultivate collaboration and active participation. In a teacher-centered paradigm, learning is measured by the expertise and expectations of the teacher, the "glorified" teaching method, the prescribed curriculum, the proposed instructional materials, and the prescribed benchmarking standards of the industry. While these are well-meaning and intended for learning to happen, they neglect making learners authentically critical.

Lastly, deconstruction sets education free from commodification. The emphasis on measurable outcomes, I believe, has led to a view of education as a commodity that can be bought and sold. Quality assurance in a lot of schools is becoming increasingly about industry benchmarks instead of learner-centeredness. This can result in a shift towards a consumerist model of education, where students are seen as customers and schools as service providers. Similarly, I also believe that this kind of phenomenon in education is problematic as it undermines the intrinsic value of education and reduces it to a means to an end. Biesta, in relation to this, argues that education is not a product that can be bought and sold on the market, but a process of human development that is deeply connected to the flourishing of individuals and communities... it is not about producing a particular kind of citizen or worker, but about supporting the development of human beings who are capable of taking responsibility for themselves and their communities.³¹

As a teacher, I believe education should not be solely focused on the needs of the economy. Colleges and universities should not be reduced to a means of producing a workforce that can contribute to economic growth alone. Instead, education should focus on developing

³¹ Gert Biesta, "Witnessing deconstruction in education. Why quasi-transcendentalism matters," *Social Theory and Educational Research*, edited by M. Murphy, London: SAGE (2013): 25.

individuals capable of making their own choices and decisions, and by then, they can contribute to society meaningfully.³²

Overall, Derrida's deconstruction has significant implications for creating an affirmative Other-oriented philosophy of teaching, challenging the teacher-centered paradigm of education and the traditional notions of identity, authority, and learning. Derrida's deconstruction encourages educators to be reflective and self-critical, to cultivate empathy and a relationship with the Other, and to be open and creative in their teaching practices. Derrida's philosophy is a reminder that education is a collaborative and transformative process, where both learners and teachers, the Other and the I, can learn and grow together. It is through practicing an affirmative, critical, Other-oriented philosophy of teaching that education can be called truly transformative.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although this study is written with the intent of building deconstruction as an affirmative philosophy of teaching, I also want to acknowledge that the line that separates teaching and education is so thin as to render these two areas almost inseparable. Other-oriented philosophy of teaching is created and evaluated through the entire paradigm of education and not just the actual teaching process. Hence, philosophizing about teaching is impossible without, at the same time, philosophizing about education. The almost inseparable areas of teaching and education make this position challenging. Thus, allow me to acknowledge that this study may be viewed as sufficient in terms of a teaching strategy, but limited in terms of an overall philosophy of education, which potentially points to further studies in the philosophy of education.

Deconstruction may well be a critical approach that is often used to question the dominant narratives and power structures that underpin the educational system. However, Biesta argues that deconstructing alone is not enough to create meaningful change in education because it is too focused on destabilization and not enough on reconstruction. One of the key arguments he makes is that education is not just about the transmission of knowledge or the

³² See Gert Biesta, "Good Education in an Age of Measurement, Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability" 21.1 (2009): 33-46.

acquisition of skills. Instead, education is about the formation of human beings.³³ Education is a moral and political practice that is concerned with the formation of individuals who can participate in a democratic society. I believe deconstruction may already position one to embrace an ethical relation with the Other. However, on a macro level, it provides a critical lens for analyzing power structures, thereby complementing the work of feminism, multiculturalism, identity politics, and other critical discourses.

To this, I want to claim that education is not neutral, and the values and beliefs that underpin it have real-world consequences.³⁴ Educational practitioners need to be aware of the political nature of education and work to create an educational system that is more just and equitable. Deconstruction may open our eyes to the politics of education, but we need to continue discussing this alongside other critical theories in curriculum studies, such as the decolonization of education and other socio-political frameworks. We need to challenge teachers and researchers in education to think more deeply about their purpose. By adopting a deconstructive perspective, educators can create a new foundation for education that is based on a more critical and reflective understanding of its purpose. However, this will require educators to be aware of the political nature of education and to work alongside other critical theories to create an educational system that is more just, equitable, Other-oriented, and truly transformative.

Despite some limitations, many educators may still find deconstruction to be a useful teaching strategy, particularly in fostering critical reflection and analysis, evaluating educational materials and practices, and helping students develop a more nuanced understanding of the complex power dynamics at play in the world. Overall, Derrida's deconstruction has had a significant impact on the field of education, particularly in the realm of critical pedagogy. While it has been criticized for its potential to undermine the foundations of knowledge and truth, parallel to the critiques linked to nihilism and relativism, deconstruction may be used as a tool for challenging

³³ Gert Biesta, "Letting Art Teach: Art Education "After" Joseph Beuys," Arnhem, NL: ArtEZ Press (2017): 4.

³⁴ Gert Biesta, "Witnessing deconstruction in education. Why quasi-transcendentalism matters," *Social Theory and Educational Research*, edited by M. Murphy, London: SAGE (2013): 19.

dominant narratives and creating more equitable and inclusive educational environments. It is an affirmative strategy in that it caters to a multiplicity of perspectives instead of the dominant voice of the teacher.

In addition, deconstruction can help both teachers and students develop important critical thinking skills. By analyzing the language and assumptions behind a particular text or concept, teachers and students can learn to identify underlying biases and assumptions. This can help them become more discerning consumers of information and better equipped to navigate complex social, political, and cultural issues. By deconstructing educational materials and practices, for instance, teachers can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which knowledge is constructed and how it can be used to perpetuate or challenge power relations. Teachers can also use deconstruction to examine the assumptions and biases that underlie teaching methods and practices, making them capable of more informed decisions about which methods to use and how to adapt them to meet the needs of all students. Through deconstruction, teachers can also help students develop a more nuanced and critical understanding of the world around them by challenging dominant narratives and perspectives that may perpetuate marginalization and oppression.

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