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Comment on Taylor

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Informative, clear, and well researched, "Gadamer's Language: Meaning, Word, Event: A Critique of Caputo's Critique" is a model of accessible scholarship. My purpose here is to point out two structural weaknesses that hindered my understanding of this work. First, the thesis shifts throughout the paper. In the beginning the paper revolves around proving that Gadamer did not use metaphysical premises to support his claims regarding language and meaning, which Caputo claims he does as a form of compromise or mediation. In the latter half, the thesis shifts to proving that Gadamer's concept of the language event is pre-metaphysical or beyond reason. These are two different paths, the former showing how Gadamer does not rely on traditional metaphysics to form the backbone of his argument, while the latter shows that the conclusion to Gadamer's argument is not a metaphysical claim in itself. It seems the two theses are related, but you do not make this connection explicitly. Instead, you say that because Gadamer's conclusion is pre-metaphysical, any claim Caputo makes regarding a metaphysical slant associated with Gadamer is invalid.

Are Gadamer's premises based on metaphysics? The brand of metaphysics Caputo is associating with Gadamer is delimited only as "traditional," so I will use the term "metaphysics" in the general sense "pertaining to questions concerning reality that lie beyond the confines of the physical world or scientific method.

The author's refutation of Caputo states that Gadamer's understanding of language is beyond metaphysics, similar to the Trinity being beyond reason. There is a mystery involved in the structure of language that cannot be understood using metaphysical categories. However, isn't the concept of the Trinity an example of an entity that brings into question a reality that lies beyond or behind traditional understandings of the world? I think what the author wants to assert is that the language event cannot be interpreted past its premises: meaning and words. We can understand these two components as an event, but we cannot fathom how or why meaning and words interplay inextricably.

Does this escape "metaphysical categorization" or is it an addition to what we formerly understood as metaphysics? And even if the language event could not be characterized by any traditional category of metaphysics, does this mean that Gadamer does not employ any metaphysical claims in his assumptions concerning language? The very fact that this event is just beyond our grasp is reminiscent of Plato's Forms, which we understand through the particulars, while never touching the ungraspable universals.

Second, the closing remarks of the author's critique of Caputo stated that the relationship between word and meaning is: "is its own reason, beyond reason. It is an originary event or happening beyond the scope of reflection and beyond the powers of metaphysical analysis" (p. 12). This passage weakened the argument for two reasons:

Firstly, linguistic structures are not beyond the power of reflection, namely in light of the paper's progress towards understanding the relationship between word and meaning as this mysterious event that has been understood in the analogies of the trinity, incarnation, and the mirror image. And, how is this event beyond what you call "metaphysical analysis" when it seems to be a metaphysical question? Are you assuming that this event cannot be applied to metaphysical categories like causality? Also, the event of language does not seem "beyond reason," but possibly beyond the rigor of the scientific method, that is, beyond-physics/meta-physics. Secondly, naming the linguistic event as "originary" reeks of metaphysical connotations. If you defined what was meant by traditional metaphysics, one could specifically identify what premises do or do not apply here.

Overall, it seems as if Gadamer is comfortable remaining imbued within traditional metaphysics, namely that of Plato and Aristotle, as part of a conversation in constant flux. Gadamer has his own input to philosophy's dialogue. Likewise, Caputo's critique is in light of his own explicit anti-metaphysical stance. Caputo critiques Gadamer not for failing at his own philosophical endeavor/hermeneutics in dialogue with the history of philosophy, but critiques Gadamer's project for not being "radical" enough according to Caputo's own standard.

Caputo is continuing the conversation with Gadamer, positioning him as a prominent figure in philosophy. Caputo's presuppositions are clearly provided. We know how and why he critiques Gadamer, but the question is, does he do justice to Gadamer's own philosophical dialogue within the history of philosophy? Does Caputo respond to Gadamer in proper Platonic dialectical fashion, or does he disregard Gadamer's work as tirelessly old-fashioned and useless in the postmodern milieu?

After all, isn't Caputo himself "challenging traditional presuppositions regarding the possibility of

absolute knowledge? a la philosophical hermeneutics? This could be disputed, but it seems a fruitful question in the context of my interpretation of the author's interpretation?both of us employing written and spoken words? that, according to Gadamer, are bound in the mysterious event of meaning and expression, content and form (p. 2).

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