



The Relationship between Understanding, Language, and Metaphor in Gadamer's Thought

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Abstract

In his ontological exposition of understanding, Gadamer, by raising the issue of dialogue between the interpreter and the text, paved the way for discussing challenging topics such as relativism in knowledge. In his view, the fusion of the temporal-linguistic horizons of the interpreter and the text explains the possibility of multiplicity of meaning and the endlessness of understanding. In this article, we attempt to examine the possibility of the metaphorical nature of understanding from a different perspective, namely by focusing on the discussion of "metaphor," due to its importance in providing reasons for the possibility of diversity and invention of meaning in language. Although the theory of metaphor is a core discussion in Ricoeur's philosophy, and Gadamer has not extensively addressed the topic of metaphor except for some allusions in

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explaining language; nevertheless, some commentators have re-examined understanding and the fusion of horizons by resorting to this theory. Therefore, while analyzing these interpretations using a descriptive-analytical method, and based on the relationship between unity and tension between identity and difference in the structure of metaphor, we substantiate the metaphorical characteristic of understanding, language, and the fusion of horizons, and its hermeneutic consequences.

Keywords

Gadamer, Understanding, Language, Identity and Difference, Metaphor.



Introduction

In his ontological analysis of understanding, which forms the goal of his philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer considers dialogue to be the very nature of the event of understanding, which he refers to as the "fusion of horizons." Essentially, a fusion occurs between the historical horizon of our consciousness as interpreters and the historical horizon of the text or the subject of interpretation—both of which reside and manifest through language. The outcome of this fusion is interpretation and understanding. When the interpreter expands their own horizon to encompass that of the text, the text's ambiguities become apparent to the interpreter. This fusion of the present and the past within the context of language results in a form of self-knowledge and self-awareness for the interpreter. The dialogue between the two sides and their openness to both accepting and critiquing one another causes the mental horizons of both parties to broaden, expanding the range of meanings they are dealing with. Therefore, understanding, which is the result of this fusion, will always be endless and pluralistic.

However, this does not signify absolute relativism. The text does not accept every interpretation, nor does it confirm all the interpreter's presuppositions that inevitably intervene in their reading. Interpretation is always methodologically structured in some way, with rules, laws, and criteria playing a decisive role. The task of this article will be to explain the why and how of the possibility of multiplicity of meaning and the endlessness of understanding while simultaneously maintaining its rule-bound nature, by substantiating the metaphorical nature of understanding, language, and the fusion of horizons in Gadamer's thought. Joel Weinsheimer and George Taylor are among the commentators who have, in differing ways, explored the possibility of the metaphor concept in understanding and the

fusion of horizons in Gadamer's thought, drawing upon Ricoeur's theory of metaphor.

In the numerous Persian studies published so far concerning Gadamer, the discussion of metaphor in his thought has not been addressed independently. In the present work, we attempt to critique and analyze the implications of a metaphorical conception of understanding in Gadamer's thought from various perspectives, by taking as a premise and emphasizing the relationship between unity and tension between identity and difference within the metaphorical structure.

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In this context, we will first elaborate on the nature of understanding as the fusion of horizons; then, we will discuss the foundation of the linguisticity of understanding and consequently the fusion of languages in Gadamer's thought; subsequently, in light of the analysis of the relationship between language and metaphor under the pervasive discussion of identity and difference, we aim to answer these questions: 1- Can the linguistically mediated understanding in Gadamer's view be considered to have a metaphorical nature? 2- How can the existing tension between otherness and identity in metaphor be linked to the linguistic and temporal tension and distance in the understanding of a text? 3- What perspective does considering the ontological nature of understanding as metaphorical open up for answering certain issues in the field of hermeneutics?

Finally, while examining, critiquing, and analyzing theories that relate the identity and difference in the metaphorical act (which is a prominent and thought-provoking idea in Ricoeur's hermeneutical thought) to understanding and the fusion of horizons in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, we will defend the metaphorical nature of understanding, language, and the fusion of horizons in Gadamer's

thought and demonstrate the hermeneutical consequences of considering these horizons as metaphorical.

1. understanding as the fusion of horizons

The English equivalent of the Persian word *fahm* is understanding. In German, however, there are two distinct words that express this concept. The first is *Verstehen*, which is the term Gadamer uses to denote understanding, and is closely related to Heidegger's conception of understanding. The second is *Verstand*, which refers to ordinary or common understanding; these two must not be confused. Gadamer does not consider understanding to be a methodical act performed by a knowing subject. For him, understanding is rather an event or occurrence—an outcome of the interplay between the subject and the object of understanding, as well as of experience itself. Understanding, in Gadamer's view, is of the same nature as the Greek dialectic, that is, dialogue.

He asserts that understanding is neither creation nor construction; it is not the action of a subject upon an object. Essentially, it is not something that interpreters **do** in any sense (Weinsheimer, 2002, p. 57). Rather, understanding is a form of passivity—it is an event that happens **to** the subject. Understanding is not an act but an undergoing; it is immersion in the flow of events (ibid., p. 62). Hence, Gadamer conceives of understanding as a kind of play governed by rules independent of the players' self-consciousness. Furthermore, he emphasizes the applicative nature of understanding. Gadamer's notion of the applicability of understanding means that it is grounded in the concrete, temporally and historically situated condition of the interpreter.

The practical or applicative dimension of understanding implies that the claims or meanings of a text or work of art are grasped

anew—in distinct ways—at every moment and in every context. Consequently, Gadamer defines hermeneutical understanding in relation to practice, practical wisdom, or phronesis. Like phronesis, understanding involves grasping the universal or general rule (the meaning of the text) in relation to the particular and concrete situation (the interpreter's temporal and linguistic condition).

Another point is that Gadamer believes that understanding is affected by history. Therefore, in his view, understanding is an event of transmission between the past and the present, and it constantly mediates between the two. Historicity refers to the influence of past time on the present time. At the same time, he considers historical distance to be a necessary condition for the possibility of understanding tradition and history, because it is only through the passage of time that the historical significance of the text emerges.

We stated that understanding is constantly influenced by the interpreter's semantic horizon and hermeneutical conditions. Since the semantic horizon is influenced by history, understanding will always be historical (Grondin, 1994, pp. 38-40). Therefore, understanding is always influenced by prejudices that are the result of tradition and history, which exist in our consciousness or subconscious as interpreters through language and play a role in understanding.

In summary, it can be said that understanding is an event of the nature of a dialogue between the semantic horizon of the text and the semantic horizon of the interpreter, which carries their prejudices. Each of these horizons is formed within a linguistic and temporal context. This dialogue follows rules that ensure that, despite the relativity of understanding and the plurality of meanings, we do not face a kind of chaos in interpretation.

Therefore, in his ontological analysis of understanding, which

is the goal of his philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer considers the dialogue between the interpreter and the text to be the very nature of the event of understanding. Gadamer refers to this dialogue as the "fusion of horizons". According to Jean Grondin, the concept of the fusion of horizons is the epitome of Gadamer's thought, even if this concept is not always precisely understood (Grondin, 1994, p. 401).

Gadamer first encountered the concept of horizon in the works of Husserl, specifically in *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*, where it was presented as the background of sensory perception that contained meaning. The concept of the horizon, as the context within which realities emerge, is intertwined with temporality and language. Gadamer's use of the term *horizon* in philosophical hermeneutics is essentially an attempt to describe the context-bound nature of interpretation to a specific situation and condition.

In his view, understanding the meaning of a text, a work of art, or a historical event is only possible in connection with our own situation and by attending to our interests and expectations. For this reason, it must be accepted that understanding a text is, in fact, a form of participation in its meaning. In confronting the text, the interpreter is not merely a passive, unaffected recipient; rather, they play an active and effective role in the process of uncovering meaning. Consequently, the interpreter's contribution to receiving meaning—or more precisely, to meaning-making—is comparable to that of the author. Gadamer termed this participation and shared involvement the "fusion of horizons" (Warnke, 1994, pp. 63-69). In Gadamer's opinion, the theory of the horizon is a fundamental component of hermeneutical understanding (Warnke, 1994, p. 89).

By introducing the theory of the fusion of horizons, Gadamer moves beyond the epistemological approach based on the subject-object relationship in Romantic hermeneutics and directs his attention

to the prior-to-existence-in-the-world status of *Dasein*. Humans are *thrown* into a specific temporal and spatial situation and amid particular possibilities and relationships, and all these play a role in their understanding of things, people, and the world. Therefore, it can be said that when understanding a text (or any act of understanding), the interpreter is situated within a specific temporal and linguistic horizon—in other words, a specific historical and semantic horizon. The text or subject matter being understood also has its own distinct historical and semantic horizon.

Thus, each of us is individually situated within horizons that have their own specific status and perspective. Our current horizon is mingled and fused with horizons from the past. We are a continuation through our past and tradition, and our understanding of the past is influenced by our current horizon. Therefore, our position within any horizon is not closed off; rather, it is constantly extended and modified through confrontation and fusion with the horizon of the past, tradition, the text, or the other (Taylor, 2011, p. 105).

Based on this, it can be stated that the fusion of horizons, which constitutes the nature of understanding, is a context in which the meanings revealed through interpretation are constantly undergoing change and proliferation in the encounter with the otherness of the foreign element, while simultaneously remaining, to some extent, bound and limited by a common ground and foundation. We will examine this topic further in the next section under the title of Identity and Difference in the Fusion of Horizons.

2. The Unity of Identity and Difference in the Fusion of Horizons

The question now arises: Is the possibility of the fusion of horizons predicated on the existence of a common ground that already exists

between the interpreter's and the text's horizons? Or is such a common ground created subsequent to the fusion? And does this presupposed or subsequently created commonality represent the unity and difference in a way that the gap and distance are preserved within it?

On the one hand, Gadamer asserts that a shared history, tradition, and language are the prerequisites for understanding. On the other hand, he states that the dialogue itself can bring such commonality into being (Taylor, 2011, p. 108). It seems that for Gadamer, the existence of a common ground between the horizon of the understander and the horizon of the subject matter makes understanding possible, because if the two were completely unrelated and in absolute otherness, dialogue and fusion would be impossible. However, the horizons are also separate from one another, and this distance itself is the necessary condition for understanding.

Initially, horizons are often separate from one another. They separate us, but they are not immutable; they can change and be extended (Taylor, 2002, p. 288). The change and dynamism of the horizons and their mutual influence on each other cause them to draw closer. However, what drives this change and dynamism is the very existence of otherness and difference between them.

Therefore, the concept of the horizon in Gadamer's thought possesses an internal complexity that is essential to it. On the one hand, horizons can be identified and distinguished. It is through such distinctions that we can discern what causes misunderstanding and disrupts communication. But on the other hand, horizons interweave and change. There is no such thing as a fixed horizon. The horizon is something we move into, and it moves along with us. For an individual who is in motion, horizons change. A horizon with unmoving boundaries is an abstraction. Horizons define the limits of the world of the agents who act within them, are recognized with

them, and undergo change alongside them. Therefore, it is possible for the horizon of Person A and the horizon of Person B at time to be distinct from one another, and their mutual understanding to be incomplete. Yet, through living with one another, Person A and B can come to share a single common horizon in the combined time and (Taylor, 2002, p. 290).

Thus, despite the temporal and historical distance between the interpreter and the text, the possibility of creating a single, common horizon exists. According to Gadamer:

When our historical consciousness places itself within historical horizons, this does not require moving into alien worlds that are somehow unrelated to our own world; instead, they together create a great horizon that moves within and, beyond the boundaries of the present time, encompasses the historical depths of our self-consciousness. Everything that falls within historical consciousness is in fact encompassed by a single historical horizon (Gadamer, 1989, p. 304).

Gadamer seeks to avoid both the naïveté of historicism (the belief that historians must detach themselves from their own era to understand a foreign past) and the naïveté of pre-historicism (the belief that no foreign past exists, but only a pure, uninterrupted continuation). Therefore, he maintains that the interpreter and the subject of interpretation must be simultaneously differentiated and connected.

Based on this, he emphasizes the creation of a common horizon during the event of understanding, despite the undeniable existence of difference and distance. This common horizon encompasses all differences and, through them, is constantly changing, dynamic, and in motion. Identity and otherness, similarity and

difference are present and play their roles simultaneously within this unified context.

This means that the tension between the historical text and the present time continues. The past and the present project different horizons, and part of the work of hermeneutics is to uncover this tension, not to engage in artificial assimilation. The need to expand horizons—for the purpose of fusion—is dependent on the difference between the horizons. During the fusion, the merged horizons influence and undergo change from one another (Taylor, 2011, p. 108). Therefore, tension, difference, and change will always remain and will never be completely eliminated.

Ricoeur notes that Gadamer's hermeneutics seeks to avoid both extremes: both Hegel's absolute knowledge (which ultimately encompasses all horizons) and the assertion of isolated and unshareable horizons. Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons demonstrates this avoidance. In this view, horizons remain plural, yet they are internally dependent and connected to one another. The distance between horizons is not impassable (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 220). However, this does not mean that the horizons dissolve into one another and that the basis of otherness and difference is dismantled.

Thus, as Ricoeur states, Gadamer on one hand avoids the extreme pluralism of Nietzsche, where horizons remain disconnected and isolated from one another. On the other hand, he also steers clear of the opposite pole, namely Hegelian absolute knowledge, where the fusion of horizons itself is encompassed and absorbed (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 75). In this particular view, Ricoeur does not fully evaluate the positive aspect of Gadamer's approach.

We have demonstrated how, despite the presence of otherness, distance, and a gap between the horizons of the interpreter and the text

in terms of time and history, connection, unity, and commonality are established during the process of understanding. The unity and difference, while preserving the tension between them, is what occurs in the fusion of horizons. In the following two sections, we will analyze this issue with attention to the relationship between understanding and language.

3. The Linguisticity of Understanding and the Fusion of Languages

We stated that in the event of understanding, a fusion occurs between the horizons of the interpreter and the text. Every horizon is dependent on a specific temporal and linguistic situation, such that the temporal aspect of the horizons—that is, the historical context—also emerges and continues *through* language. Given this, can the fusion of horizons in understanding be considered, in a way, a fusion of languages? What is the meaning of language in Gadamer's view, and what is its relationship to understanding?

Gadamer considers language to be much broader than mere propositional language. In his view, language is not an objective, limited, or abstract entity derived from a specific context. While language and meaning are determined by words, they constantly transcend them.

Gadamer explains the relationship between meaning and word in a way that is unusual in philosophy: through the theological concept of the Incarnation of God in Christ. He is well aware of the unusual nature of this explanation, but this example specifically illuminates Gadamer's concept of language, both historically and thematically (Dostal, 2002, pp. 113-114).

In the Incarnation, although God is embodied in humanity,

God does not cease to be God; God remains God. Gadamer uses this example to explain that when speaking and creating sound in the form of words, it is not the case that something non-linguistic and internal has been transformed into something external and linguistic. Speaking is not something that results from translating an inner matter and then translating it into a medium, namely language. In this process, there is no transformation; the process is without alteration (Dostal, 2002, pp. 114-115).

In Gadamer's view, every utterance carries the totality of meaning with it and brings it into the arena of the "game", but it cannot express it completely. Therefore, every utterance means more than it openly states. Gadamer points on one hand to the infinite nature of meaning and on the other to the limitation of the meaning-event and the nature of interpretation, and convincingly reconciling these two is not easy.

Furthermore, only the word can have meaning, not mere sound or voice. Something is understandable only when it has been put into the form of a word. Therefore, no understanding is possible without language. Even when only immediate understanding occurs and no explicit interpretation is employed, the understanding has still occurred linguistically, because linguistic interpretation exists potentially within the process of understanding (Gadamer, 1977, p. 474).

Here, the objection might be raised that not everything I understand can necessarily be presented in the form of words. For example, I understand a sign, a piece of art or music, or I encounter something unspeakable that cannot be put into words. In response, Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, cites the example of a painter or musician who might claim that linguistic explanation is merely a secondary and incidental matter. However, Gadamer states that the artist can only set aside such a linguistic interpretation in favor of

another interpretation that is more relevant to the subject matter of that art. But even this chosen interpretation, as the reception of meaning, is still linked to a linguistic possibility. Gadamer's main point here is that the listener is drawn and questioned by what they want to understand, and they respond to this question, interpret it, and search for words in response to it, and it is through this process that they can understand it (Dostal, 2002, p. 42). In other words, in his view, when listening to a piece of music or viewing a painting, the individual, as the understander or interpreter of that artwork, is somehow exposed to a process of question-and-answer and dialogue between themselves and the work, and this is a linguistic event. For Gadamer, the entity that can be brought into understanding is language.

In Gadamer's turn toward language, it is not language itself, but language's ability to "bring into expression" that becomes the focus of hermeneutics. Gadamer emphasizes this distinction and says that for the hermeneutical approach, comprehending what is said is the only subject of importance (Novakovic, 2004, p. 16). Hence, language is always of the nature of saying and dialogue. Therefore, language can never be a completely personal or private matter.

Anyone who speaks a language that no one else understands has not truly spoken, because speaking means to speak with someone. Therefore, dialogue is not confined to the sphere of "I" but is raised in the sphere of "we" (Gadamer, 1977, p. 69). Thus, the reality of speech is dialogue. When a person dialogues with another, they are guided by the dialogue; in this state, it is no longer the person's will that imposes itself on the dialogue, but the dialogue is like a game in which the rule of the subject matter under discussion is dominant (Gadamer, 1977, p. 69).

In Gadamer's view, understanding expands and progresses through dialogue. The presence and participation of one person in the

dialogue causes the other person's semantic horizon to advance, provided that each individual is open and ready to listen and learn from the other. In the course of dialogue, we must listen to the other person so that our prejudices about the subject are called into question. If the opposing viewpoints make greater claims to truth than ours, we must even allow our prejudices to change.

Therefore, dialogue and mutual understanding are of the nature of a question-and-answer exchange between the interpreter and the subject of interpretation, and it is the receipt of answers to questions that makes it possible to transcend the current mental horizon. A question is an idea that occurs to a person at a certain moment. Thus, the question is a passion (passivity) before it is an action (activity). The "question" imposes itself upon us (Dostal, 2002, p. 109).

Consequently, interpretation, as the fusion of horizons, is a process through which an individual's "linguistic" horizon mingles with the linguistic horizon of another and is thereby expanded. In conversation, a common language forms that makes understanding possible (Weinsheimer, 2002, p. 35). Therefore, for Gadamer, our horizon or state of understanding is always linguistic, and language is never a closed horizon. Rather, it is a horizon that always preserves the possibility of renewal and change for itself (Novakovic, 2004, p. 16). Hence, the fusion of the interpreter's and the text's horizons in the process of understanding can be said to be always a linguistic fusion.

Gadamer's claim that language brings understanding into manifestation is essentially a Heideggerian position. Language owns us, rather than us owning and possessing language. Correspondingly, since understanding is a linguistic event, understanding encompasses us; therefore, we do not hold understanding as an object in our minds. We participate in the event of understanding, and understanding is prior to our being, just as language and the world are prior to our

existence. Indeed, in Gadamer's view, "Language is the place of belonging where thought and language, subject and object meet, or where they are at home together from the start, before they are split into two by conscious reflection" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 70).

Therefore, our understanding, on the one hand, is formed within a common ground called the linguistic horizon, and on the other hand, due to differences in languages, our horizons of understanding are distinct. In the dialogue and question-and-answer exchange between these different horizons, within the common context of language, fusion occurs. This fusion, as the nature of the event of understanding, is, in a way, the fusion of languages. In the following section, we will demonstrate how the identity and difference, and the tension between them, are situated within the fusion of languages and in relation to language and its metaphorical characteristic.

4. the Unity of Identity and Difference in Language and Metaphor

We have established that understanding in Gadamer's view is linguistic and that the fusion of horizons is a linguistic fusion. We will now analyze the theme of identity and difference, connection and rupture, distance and fusion between horizons, this time from the perspective of language and with a focus on its metaphorical characteristic.

Gadamer views the word as being somewhat similar to an image, which points to reflection. When something is reflected in something else—for instance, a palace in a lake—the lake reflects the palace's image. This image does not possess a being of its own; it is like a manifestation that is not itself, yet it allows the object to be seen through a mirrored image. Just as the image is not the object itself,

words are not the very objects they denote. Nonetheless, the image is *of* the palace and belongs to it. The reflection is the image *of* the palace itself and is inseparable from it, just as words are inseparable from the world. Both are indissoluble and are therefore a unity. They are two things and yet one thing (Weinsheimer, 2002, pp. 179-180).

Therefore, the relationship between words and reality expresses identity in difference. The word is other than the object named by that word, yet the word belongs to that object and no other. The word and the object are simultaneously the same and not-the-same. Language is also like this. Language is a representation, an illustrator, and an expression of reality, but it is not identically that same reality. This very gap and distance is what provokes understanding and interpretation and calls attention to the necessity of hermeneutical knowledge.

The connection between the world and its linguistic description, between the subject and the object, or between the text and its interpretation, cannot be the point of departure for hermeneutics; rather, a rupture, a disruption, or the experience of strangeness initiates the moment of understanding. Although this connection does not exist at the starting point, it becomes possible with the event of understanding. The interpreter must be open to listening to the question from the text in order to uncover their belonging to the text (Novakovic, 2004, p. 28).

Therefore, in understanding, we first encounter distance and strangeness, and then, through the event of understanding, interpretation, and "dialogue" with the text, this gap is overcome, and a bridge is created, to use Ricoeur's term, that reveals the prior belonging of language and world, subject and object. We cannot grasp this close relationship and dependence immediately; rather, it is through the long semantic and interpretative path that we find a way

or a bridge to understand and receive it. Yet, it seems that these gaps, distance, and otherness are always preserved, rather than being completely eliminated in the end, which is the necessary condition of our human knowledge.

Hence, hermeneutics establishes a bridge between the world of familiarity we inhabit and the strange meaning that resists assimilation into the horizon of our world (Gadamer, 1977, p. pxii). Therefore, in the effort to preserve what is one's own, we witness a tension between familiarity and strangeness that reaches its peak, as the hermeneutical experience, in the encounter with the foreign and the effort to understand it, can threaten what is familiar and pre-present (Novakovic, 2004, p. 12).

But how can interpreters understand something other than themselves and their world, and yet understand this other thing in a way that also helps and expands their understanding of themselves and their world? How is it possible to think of difference and identity simultaneously? This is a question that Gadamer's analysis of understanding provokes. What Weinsheimer seeks to demonstrate is that metaphor provides an answer to this question (Weinsheimer, 2002, p. 133).

Paul Ricoeur, the French philosopher whose theory of metaphor has attracted great attention from commentators and theorists, considers the metaphorical characteristic to be the unity of identity and difference—that is, the preservation of unity despite otherness. In his view, in metaphor, "identity and difference do not merge but confront each other" (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 199). The act of metaphor is not merely the establishment of unity and connection between similar meanings or words. More than being a fusion of meanings, metaphor is the conflict between the new meaning and the old meaning. Difference and identity are ineluctably intertwined.

Identity cannot be considered to arise from the mixing of difference and identity. There is also no common language underlying the metaphor or created by it, because the difference is always preserved. There is no third text that guarantees the creation of common ground in the metaphorical relationship (Taylor, 2011, p. 113). As Ricoeur states, "metaphor is the place of the conflict of identity and difference" and stimulates thought (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 196).

Truth and Method also relates metaphor to the inclination toward further thought, particularly through "the freedom of language to generate an unlimited number of concepts and to penetrate ever more deeply into what is meant and intended" (Weinsheimer, 2002, p. 109). Therefore, metaphor and language are always intertwined, and this characteristic of language—the freedom to create unlimited concepts and its ability to uncover unlimited unsaid things—stems from the metaphorical nature of language.

Furthermore, as stated at the beginning of this section, the relationship between the image and the object, the word and the object, and subsequently the relationship between language and reality, all display a simultaneous collection of identity and difference, similarity and otherness, familiarity and strangeness. Based on this, Weinsheimer considers these relationships to have a metaphorical characteristic and concludes that language in Gadamer's view is essentially metaphorical.

However, the metaphorical nature of language does not mean the presence of many metaphors in language, but rather that language itself, in general, has a metaphorical quality. Although *Truth and Method* employs prominent metaphors in critical places—especially the fusion of horizons itself—Gadamer does not extensively discuss metaphor. Unlike Derrida, he has no obvious interest in the role of dead or obsolete metaphor in philosophy, and unlike Ricoeur, he does

not much address live metaphor in literature. In the few passages of *Truth and Method* where Gadamer explicitly raises the topic of metaphor, he only makes a brief mention of it—and then only discusses it within the framework of metaphor-as-transference, which has been common since Aristotle.

Nevertheless, when Gadamer is about to address more fundamental issues, he states that the transfer from one domain to another is not merely a logical function but is consistent with the "fundamental metaphoricalness of language" (Weinsheimer, 2002, pp. 103-104).

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By pointing to the fundamental metaphoricalness of language, Gadamer considers language to be the condition for understanding anything of any kind. Furthermore, understanding, in his view, is linguistic, and every act of understanding occurs through language, not through empathy or recreation. Therefore, if language, as Gadamer suggests, is fundamentally metaphorical, this metaphoricalness must also be reflected in understanding. Thus, one of the questions that *Truth and Method* provokes is: What does it mean to claim that understanding itself is fundamentally and essentially metaphorical? (Weinsheimer, 2002, p. 104). We will continue by examining and analyzing the possibility of the metaphorical nature of understanding and the fusion of horizons in Gadamer's thought.

5. The Relationship between Understanding (Fusion of Horizons) and Metaphor (Unity of Identity and Difference)

The model of understanding Gadamer provides is the fusion of horizons. However, according to Weinsheimer, this expression is not very clear and is problematic in at least one respect, because "fusion" seems to imply precisely the suppression of particularity and difference that we see in the concept of "subsumption". Yet, such an

assimilation is absolutely not what Gadamer intends by the fusion of horizons. Instead, he regards understanding as the fusion that occurs in metaphor, a fusion that, although it does not forgo the demand for unity, also respects plurality (Weinsheimer, 2002, p. 103).

The unity of identity and difference while preserving otherness and distance is the defining characteristic of metaphor, which was discussed in Ricoeur's thought regarding the nature of language and imagination, and then expanded into other areas of his philosophy. Commentators and critics have applied Ricoeur's theory of metaphor not only in the domain of epistemology but also in other fields such as ethics, ontology, and so on. Some Gadamerian interpreters, particularly Joel Weinsheimer in his book *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory* and George Taylor, have attributed the metaphorical characteristic to understanding in Gadamer's view as well.

In Ricoeur's view, metaphor reveals the logical structure of the similar. This is because, in a metaphorical expression, the similar is apprehended despite the existence of difference and contrast. Therefore, resemblance is a logical category that corresponds to the predicative function, where approximation (bringing close) encounters the resistance of being distant. In this way, identity and difference are not merely blended but also remain in opposition to each other. Through this particular characteristic, a mystery lives at the heart of the metaphor. In metaphor, "the same" acts "in spite of" the difference (Taylor, 2011, p. 196; Ricoeur, 1977, p. 196).

Joel Weinsheimer argues that for Gadamer, understanding is also fundamentally metaphorical (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 65). He suggests that understanding shares the same irreducible tension between similarity and difference that is found in metaphor (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 78). Therefore, based on Ricoeur's theory of the characteristic of

metaphor, he speaks of the metaphorical nature of understanding and the fusion of horizons in Gadamer's thought.

Metaphor is a statement of non-difference in which difference is at work. This paradox is what Gadamer intends by the fusion of horizons. In this fusion, there is no naive absorption or assimilation, but the "tension" between past and present, interpreter and text, is still preserved. In this sense, the fusion of horizons is a process of self-estrangement and returning anew to the self, which is a logically contradictory process. Understanding distinguishes the interpreters from their subject matter and the horizon of the present from the horizon of the past, and yet, in the very act, it connects them in such a way that they become inseparably unified and one (Weinsheimer, 2002, p. 133).

Taylor also considers the moment of application in understanding, according to Gadamer, to be metaphorical. In his view, the metaphorical characteristic represents the act of application in understanding more accurately and reasonably. Application does not overcome the distance [between the text and the interpreter's situation], but it creates a metaphorical relationship. As Ricoeur states, a new semantic relationship is established between words that are semantically distant from each other. In Taylor's view, metaphoric meaning has the characteristic of resemblance (Taylor, 2011, p. 113). In these statements, Taylor emphasizes the semantic transfer in the process of establishing resemblance within the metaphorical act.

George Taylor accepts and highly values Weinsheimer's interpretation that the nature of understanding and the fusion of horizons in Gadamer's view is metaphorical, and he shares this belief. Like Weinsheimer, he resists a simplistic reading of the concept of fusion [3] in the sense of unification [4] and directs our attention

to the plurality that results from the metaphorical explanation of the activity of understanding. While Weinsheimer believes that fusion does not suppress the claim of unity while preserving plurality, Taylor, based on Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, offers a different analysis of the metaphorical nature of understanding.

Taylor emphasizes the tension between identity and difference in the metaphorical structure, which Ricoeur calls metaphoric resemblance (Taylor, 2011, p. 106), based on Gadamer's language, which considers the foundation of hermeneutics to be the "two poles of familiarity and strangeness". He believes that there are methodological differences between Ricoeur's and Weinsheimer's explanations of metaphor.

Taylor also points to the difference in view between Gadamer and Ricoeur regarding the relationship between understanding and metaphor. He argues that Gadamer mistakenly claims the availability of an underlying common ground concerning the fusion of horizons, whereas Ricoeur correctly emphasizes the theory of understanding as a metaphorical event that creates resemblance within difference. In Taylor's view, we cannot presuppose a common ground. Furthermore, the "tense" relationship between resemblance and difference in metaphor better captures the possibilities related to contemporary dialogue compared to the fusion of horizons. Essentially, Taylor's analysis of Gadamer's view, based on the metaphorical nature of language and understanding, places greater emphasis on the preservation of tension and difference in the metaphorical characteristic compared to Weinsheimer, and, like Ricoeur, he does not accept the existence of an underlying common ground.

Furthermore, in his view, Gadamer sometimes emphasizes the commonality that is the result of the fusion of horizons less than the commonality that constitutes the underlying basis for the possibility of

their fusion. This is evident where Gadamer says: "Every conversation presupposes a common language, or better still, creates a common language" (Gadamer, 1989, pp. 378-388).

It might be assumed that the commonality created in the fusion of horizons is entirely dependent on an underlying commonality of tradition, history, or a horizon shared by the conversational partners. However, the very creation of a common language in the fusion of horizons emphasizes the dynamic, circular relationship between the whole (underlying commonality) and the part (dialogue). This relationship is not merely a [one-sided] dependence of the part on the whole (Taylor, 2011, p. 110). Therefore, according to Taylor, the existence of a presupposed, foundational, and primary common ground is not necessary for the fusion of horizons to occur. This commonality is created after the fusion and, maintaining the tension between part and whole in a circular relationship, can lead to further fusion and continuously proceed.

In his hermeneutical model, Ricoeur speaks of text interpretation instead of dialogue, and defines interpretation as appropriation, meaning "making one's own of what is alien" (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 159). He sometimes describes the concept of appropriation as close to the concept of the fusion of horizons. However, he does not speak of commonality but of convergence or intersection (Taylor, 2011, p. 111).

According to Taylor, Gadamer, with the concept of the "fusion of horizons," and Ricoeur, with the concept of "appropriation", both speak of the "transfer of meaning", which he also maintains and emphasizes. This means we are not trapped within our own interpretative frameworks and can pass from one framework to another. The common element between the views of Gadamer and Ricoeur in the discussion of metaphor appears to be the transfer of

meaning. Furthermore, Ricoeur, like Gadamer, speaks of familiarity and strangeness, not merely identity and difference or similarity and difference.

When Ricoeur speaks of the possibility of transfer, he repeatedly emphasizes the tension that plays a role in the fusion of horizons—a tension between past and present. In Ricoeur's view, the convergence of text and reader in the fusion of horizons does not establish a common element, but rather creates an analogizing relation (Taylor, 2011, p. 111).

A significant difference also exists between Ricoeur's and Gadamer's views on understanding. As previously stated, Gadamer's view of understanding is close to a Heideggerian ontological perspective; whereas Ricoeur discusses understanding not ontologically, but as an epistemological stage based on linguistic categories within the mind. Another difference is that for Ricoeur, translation is a model for the act of understanding. However, for Gadamer, understanding does not occur in translation due to the lack of linguistic commonality.

In Ricoeur's view, unlike Gadamer's, understanding does not result from the existence of a commonality, whether presupposed or conceived as the outcome of dialogue. Rather, understanding is translation (Ricoeur, 2006, pp. 24 & 27–28). Translation is also a form of interpretation. In translation, semantically distant domains are brought closer through the metaphorical process, and meaning is "transferred".

Metaphorical transfer is not reducible to a shared, common concept or universal totality. In the metaphorical relation, difference persists across all components. Distinct horizons need to be fused. This process is not a subsumption under a general rule, whether it be under an underlying common concept or the placement of one horizon under another.

Therefore, it appears that metaphor maintains Gadamer's goal of finding a middle way between absolute knowledge and insurmountable difference. According to Taylor, Gadamer's focus on the concept of metaphor remains resolutely on similarity and common ground. Weinsheimer, too, in his description of Gadamer's fusion of horizons as metaphorical, still emphasizes the priority and dominance of non-difference over the difference that remains in this fusion, rather than the tension between similarity and difference found in metaphor (Taylor, 2011, p. 114). However, Taylor, in contrast to both, emphasizes the tension between similarity and difference in metaphor and in the metaphorical nature of understanding and the fusion of horizons, considering his own analysis to be closer to Ricoeur's view on metaphor.

According to both perspectives on the metaphorical nature of understanding in Gadamer's thought, understanding, as the fusion of horizons, possesses a metaphorical characteristic. Both analyses are based on Ricoeur's view of metaphor and their arguments rest on the linguisticity of understanding, the metaphorical characteristic of language, and its applicative aspect, which is the relationship between understanding and the interpreter's situation. The difference lies in that, when defending the metaphorical nature of understanding in Gadamer's thought, Taylor places greater emphasis on the presence and preservation of tension in the metaphorical act and, unlike Weinsheimer, does not accept the existence of a single, underlying common horizon in the fusion of horizons.

Conclusion

This article has sought to defend the metaphorical nature of understanding in Gadamer's view, based on his assertion of the fundamental metaphoricalness of language, utilizing the discussion of metaphor in Ricoeur's thought. Both Gadamer and Ricoeur regard

understanding as linguistic. Gadamer's view on the linguisticity of understanding leans toward Heidegger, whereas Ricoeur discusses the process of understanding itself (of which imagination is a stage of realization) epistemologically, viewing it as a process where meaning is created under linguistic categories (and not Kantian categories of the understanding). This paper focused on Gadamer's view, as an extended discussion of understanding and the metaphorical nature of language in Ricoeur's thought requires another opportunity.

Joel Weinsheimer and George Taylor, both referencing the concept of metaphor in Ricoeur's view, have sought this characteristic in understanding and the fusion of horizons in Gadamer's thought and have argued for the metaphorical nature of the fusion of horizons in the event of understanding. They do, however, have points of disagreement, with Taylor considering his view on metaphor to be closer to Ricoeur's.

Gadamer explains understanding as the fusion of the horizons of the interpreter and the text—horizons that, despite being different, distant, and foreign to each other, intermingle and connect. The unity of identity and difference while preserving tension and distance is a metaphorical characteristic. Due to our belonging to history (time) and language and the text's belonging to history (time) and language, a common horizon can be said to exist between the interpreter and the text. Furthermore, history and time emerge and persist for us through language; therefore, language ultimately serves as a common, unified, and foundational horizon that makes connection between the interpreter and the text possible. However, temporal and linguistic differences—in other words, different temporal and linguistic horizons—exist within this single underlying horizon, which intermingle in understanding and interpretation. This gap itself is a condition for the possibility of understanding. This tension, distance,

and difference are never completely removed. It can be said that horizons always approach each other, but absolute unity and connection will not be fully realized. This is a special kind of connection: a metaphorical connection in which new meanings are created, expanded, and new possibilities in the semantic realm are generated through understanding. In this scenario, understanding can be considered a type of creation and formation of meaning, rather than the discovery of a meaning hidden within the text.

In the author's view, based on the arguments of both commentators, understanding in Gadamer's thought can be considered to possess a metaphorical characteristic. This generalization and application, carried out based on multiple reasons, helps us to conceive of more dynamic possibilities in Gadamer's fusion of horizons and to apply this concept in a new way to explain contemporary hermeneutical issues. This includes providing an explanation for the plurality of understandings and the impossibility of reaching an absolute and common meaning in mutual understanding between self and other.

Thus, it can be said that in mutual understanding and dialogue between self and other, there will always be an unavoidable tension and difference, even though we constantly strive and attempt to move closer to mutual understanding. Accepting this and embracing the plurality of meanings and the creation of a range of meanings and concepts that emerge from this difference and tension can largely create a healthier and more fruitful context for mutual understanding. However, this does not signify the absolute relativism in understanding that has always been subject to critique, because the text itself does not tolerate just any understanding or interpretation. Furthermore, in understanding and interpretation, as a methodologically based process, there are always determining rules and criteria based on intellectual and philosophical foundations and norms.

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