

From Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics to Derrida's Deconstruction

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Abstract

In many studies, the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer has been contrasted with Derrida's deconstruction so as to emphasize their differences and oppositions. Pointing out the conceptual congruence between these two important contemporary interpretative currents, the present study, while acknowledging the differences in the works and writings of Gadamer and Derrida, empathetically attempts to reflect on the similarity and convergence of the singularities of their thought. Therefore, this paper discusses and explores Gadamer's and Derrida's views on concepts such as language and sign, truth and meaning, interpretation, and method, and attempts to show that the two thinkers come together in terms of intellectual relations, as illustrated by principles such as: Being is divisive and different in itself, the rejection of the transcendental signified, the emergence of the most self-sufficient language in writing, the risk of the creation of ambiguity and deception by speech and writing, the disbelief in a unified interpretation and truth, the concrete, and fluid nature of understanding, the creation of meaning, and the rejection of method. Thus, this study attempts to rectify some of the common theoretical misconceptions about philosophical hermeneutics and deconstruction.

Keywords: Gadamer, Derrida, Philosophical Hermeneutics, Deconstruction, Differences, Similarities

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Philosophical hermeneutics mainly deals with descriptions of understanding. Derrida's deconstruction is predominantly aimed at the critique of self-consciousness in the tradition of Western philosophy. In the presence/absence binary opposition, Derrida pays more attention to absence and draws upon deconstruction to investigate presence and absence in the process of reading a text. Most studies on the philosophical hermeneutics and deconstruction focus

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on the differences between these two traditions. However, the present study examines the similarities between them based on the assumption that their critical views on metaphysical concepts concerning truth, meaning and method, complete each other.

2. Theoretical Framework

The present paper examines the differences and similarities between the ideas of Derrida and Gadamer on important concepts such as language and sign, truth and meaning, and interpretation and method in order to offer a more comprehensive understanding of these concepts.

3. Methodology

The present article utilizes the descriptive-analytical approach to study and compare the ideas of Gadamer and Derrida on interpretation.

4. Discussion and Analysis

Derrida analyzed language as system of signs and disconnected signifiers and considers the signifier and the signified separate. However, Gadamer believes that language is more than a system of signs, and the signifier and the signified are inseparable. About the concepts of truth and meaning, Gadamer and Derrida both believe in the creation of meaning rather than figuring it out. Derrida believes that there is no single truth, and meanings develop in endless interactions between signifiers, resulting in the cycle of meaning being constantly active. Gadamer holds that the text is diachronic and a complete, absolute meaning can never be identified for it because the understanding of a text is a historical event. Gadamer is mainly concerned with describing what happens in the act of understanding rather than offering a method for understanding. Likewise, Derrida avoids offering a method for understanding and questions the application of deconstruction as a literary approach.

5. Conclusion

Despite differences, Gadamer and Derrida have considerable similarities regarding language and text. The findings of the present study show that deconstruction is in many ways in line with hermeneutics rather than against it. The analysis of the ideas of Gadamer and Derrida on concepts such as truth, meaning and interpretation shows that the Derridean deconstruction does not aim to negate truth, meaning and interpretation but is rather in some respects close to the ideas of Gadamer.

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