Horizons and In-Betweens: 
On the Interpretation of Western Philosophy in Japan and its Hermeneutical Situation

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ABSTRACT

In the West, philosophy in Japan is chronically understudied. This is partly understandable, but, in particular for hermeneutical philosophy, unfortunate. This paper argues that a careful inquiry into the hermeneutical situation in which philosophy in modern Japan developed, could enrich our understanding of hermeneutical philosophy as such. It claims that, for an adequate description of this hermeneutical situation, more refined conceptual means are required than current hermeneutics (especially the hermeneutics of effective-history) can provide. In particular, Gadamer’s concepts of horizon and hermeneutical in-between ought to be reconsidered. For this purpose, this paper engages in a dialogue between Gadamer and Watsuji Tetsurô (1889−1960) whose notions of aida (in-between) and aidagara (betweenness) could serve as a remedy for some of the shortcomings inherent in the hermeneutics of effective-history.

Key Words: hermeneutics, in-between, Charles Taylor, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Watsuji Tetsurô, Walter Benjamin