Of Phenomenology: A Recollection of Truth, Religion and Art in the Work of John Caputo

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With so many issues deserving of scrutiny in the work of John Caputo, both in his essay "There are no truths only texts" which directly occasioned this response and most certainly in his rich corpus as a whole, it is difficult to know where to begin. And this task is made even more difficult when one finds oneself in basic agreement with so much of Caputo's thought, for example, his claim that Derrida's works can and ought to be defended against the charges of "relativism, scepticism, irrationalism and nihilism" (Caputo 2003, 2). As a hermeneutic clue to investigate Caputo's work, I have chosen a theme that may seem quite distant from the topics of religion and ethics that have dominated his most recent texts: namely, phenomenology. Indeed, it may seem an even more unlikely way to approach the writings of Jack Caputo, because one reading of his philosophical corpus does detect a marked and increasing "marginalization" of phenomenology in his work. But if Derrida has taught us anything—it is that "marginalization" is itself a most fascinating phenomenon—that what is marginal is never exactly what it first appears to be; and that it is the margins themselves that form the conditions of possibility for what we take to be "central" in the work of an author. And so I want to play in this marginal space of phenomenology. I wish to speak "of phenomenology," which in its Husserlian variety provides the entrance into phi-

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losophy for Derrida, and which in its Heideggerian form is the point of departure for Caputo himself, and I want to highlight its ambiguous place in their thought. On the one hand, phenomenology seems something to be "gone beyond," "de-constructed," "transgressed," and "resisted." On the other hand, there is a constant return to the very principle of phenomenology—a willingness and a determination to "allow" things to appear, indeed to be open to the "opening" that is the condition of possibility for things, possibilities, and even impossibilities to appear in the first place.

I will be attentive to this tension in Caputo's (and Derrida's) thought in the following manner. First, I will suggest some ways in which phenomenology itself deals with the complex of "truth/textuality/religion" in a manner which both resists appropriation and points to its own "impossible limit conditions" in a way which strikes me as extremely Derridean. Second, I will consider how crucial the question of "art" is for phenomenology, and how it tends to be overlooked in Caputo's thought. Finally, I will suggest that a recollection of the question of art from a phenomenological perspective is a necessary element for the type of ethical/prophetic stance that so marks Caputo's latest work. Without what I will have defined as "art," there would never be anything for prophets to be prophetic about. Moreover, art itself has its own prophetic element. Art opens up the imagination to a future, and due to its very nature does not "close off" but precisely calls one out of a closed system into an open infinity that is at the same time immediate and concrete. By drawing a parallel between a phenomenological understanding of the truth of art and the experience of "religion" with its ethical dimensions, I hope to propose a somewhat different view of existing religious structures than Caputo's important work may suggest.

Towards a Phenomenology that Resists (Re)appropriation

That phenomenology occupies a "worrisome" presence in the texts of Derrida and Caputo is a truism, and as with all truisms more interesting than might appear to be the case at a superficial glance. For sure, we can point to numerous locations where Caputo speaks of an "anti-

phenomenology" (Caputo 1993, 194, 203), of philosophizing "without the bright lights of phenomenology" (Caputo 1993, 209), of the need to avoid the violence that phenomenology does, in its own name, to the "things themselves." And we know well enough that from his early work on Husserl, Derrida is often taken to be the most vociferous internal critic of phenomenology, of the idea/ideology of phenomenological reduction (Derrida 1973). And yet we also know that phenomenology must be doing something quite interesting to deserve this special status, to cause such worry on the part of the two Jacks. Caputo sometimes even sounds vendetta-like in his phraseology, speaking of a "settling of accounts" with Heideggerian phenomenology, as though phenomenology were a member of the Family in whom he had placed complete trust, and had ultimately let him down. For Derrida too, phenomenology is no ordinary interlocutor: as the following citation of Caputo quoting Derrida shows. Caputo writes: "the critique of logocentrism; the deconstruction of metaphysics, as well as the affirmation of the impossible: all these are advanced in 'the name of the real, of the irreducible reality of the real, not of the real as the objective, present, perceptible or intelligible thing (res), but of the real as the coming or event of the other, where it resists all reappropriation, EVEN an ana-onto-phenomenological appropriation'" (Caputo 2003, 3). My question is really about this "even": why does phenomenology make Derrida/Caputo so nervous, as though it is some sort of fifth columnist which should not be mistaken for a genuine ally. This question can be asked out of genuine curiosity about Caputo's intellectual development (his early work on Heidegger does seem phenomenological to the core), but more importantly this question is asked out of a desire to become clearer about the "phenomena" which so concern Caputo: texts, religion, ethics and the question of truth which always accompanies them. My thesis is that phenomenology deals with "truth/textuality/religion" in a manner that both resists appropriation and points to its own "impossible limit conditions" in a way that strikes me as extremely Derridean.

In some ways, I am simply offering an alternative reading of Derrida than is often encountered. I have always *greatly* appreciated Derrida's own reading of Husserl, because he seems to be motivated by the

same basic questions—which are the basic questions of phenomenology: "How and to whom do the phenomena appear?" These questions about the conditions of possibility of the appearance of things—that is, the conditions of possibility of there being "meaning"; and the question of a "subject" for whom or to whom meanings appear seem to me to link Derrida and Husserl as phenomenologists. Derrida's deconstructive readings of Husserl have cleared excellent pathways for re-reading Husserl, for thinking about meaning in a non-essentialist or non-eidetic manner, and for reflecting on the "subject" who experiences "meaning" in a "non-subjectivistic" fashion. This is all to say that Derrida's approach to themes such as absence, exteriority, "alterity," heteronomy, facticity, "spacing," iterability, "impossibility," etc., while functioning clearly in view of a critique of what is called the "metaphysical" concept of the subject and how that subject might have "truth," has nevertheless never lead Derrida to announce the "death" of this subject and the impossibility of meaningful experience. His deconstructive critique of the metaphysics of presence also yields no occasion for such a pronouncement, insofar as it shows that the metaphysical subject has never existed in the pure form suggested by Hegel, Kant, and Husserl—that these thinkers never did succeed in "delivering" the metaphysical subject. In their analyses they often reach at the most unexpected moments the borders of self-consciousness and self-determination. That is, they themselves actually point simultaneously both to "conditions of possibility" but also how those conditions "expose" their own project as containing a certain "impossibility." It is for this reason that there is so much to be learned from the thinkers of the philosophical tradition. These thinkers are not "wrong"—but are opportunities for thinking about the things themselves, and how thinking about the things themselves is *inevitably* and *necessarily* exposed to certain risks.

I take Derrida's deconstructive critique of the history of philosophy in an extremely "positive" vein (Caputo speaks frequently in his work of the affirmation of deconstruction). With Derrida's de-constructive hermeneutic at work, one begins to read a thinker such as Husserl in a far different manner: The "I" is not some sort of dominating point of absolute presence—but is precisely an "I" that is unthinkable without

the "Not I"; it is an "I" which contains a foundational layer of passivity (*Urhylé*) that cannot be re-appropriated; an "I" penetrated through and through from the beginning by some sort of "alterity"; an "I" for whom the "splitting" mentioned in so many manuscripts is the paradoxical condition of its own appearance; and hence an "I" for whom the crisis of division can just as easily be considered a *gift* rather than a loss (Bernet 1994). While the notion of this divided, tenuous, suffering, subject is evident in Husserl, it is in the subsequent phenomenological tradition that it has been more clearly articulated (Bernet 1992). Various thinkers who are in many respects remarkably diverse—Heidegger, Sartre, Lacan, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida—seem to hold in common the view that whatever the "crisis" of the subject might be, it is not the *loss* of the primordial unity or identity which authenticity is traditionally thought to be. To the contrary, self-identity is rooted in a fundamental *division* of the subject. A sense of self emerges not out of an experience of unity, but out of the "dividedness" we encounter at various levels of our being (e.g. temporal, linguistic, social). For these thinkers, much of human activity consists of various ways of fleeing the vulnerable and fragmented beings we *are*, and seeking a stable, fixed and unified self. To do so is to flee the gift of one's own humanity.

Derrida's positive analysis produces some crucial insights. Most important among these—especially for the topic of truth, text and religion is his *theory of signs* and its "differential" structure. Derrida shows that there is no transcendental signified as the basis of meaning or "truth," but that something can only be perceived as meaningful *in* the differential *tension* of reference, in the *Nachträglickeit* of spatio-temporal distance from an origin that is always supplemental to the signs which call us towards it. An origin which is, indeed, "impossible."

This "impossible origin" for which we long but can never reach, does, it seems to me, "*show itself*"—but of course only in its traces, or perhaps, in its withdrawal and reticence, or perhaps even better, in the co-constitutive nature of presence and absence, in the *inter-"play"* of possibility/impossibility. It is this co-constitutive nature of presence and absence which Derrida helps us to see in Husserl's work, and

which becomes the mark of truth in Heidegger—*aletheia*—truth as the interplay of revealing and concealing, truth as "unconcealment" which structurally *always* contains concealment. In this vein, Husserl, Heidegger and other phenomenologists are close allies of Derrida in a critique of presence and of truth as adequation or correctness. They are just as much "phenomenologists" of absence as they are of "presence"—the two cannot be thought apart. The "thing itself" (*die Sache selbst*) of phenomenology is always at bottom to come to understand precisely what Caputo points out so frequently in his work: that "the things themselves will always already elude us," and this recognition is indeed not a "fruitless scepticism" but, I dare say, is to recognize something about the "truth" of our finite existence as human beings.

So my claim here is that a phenomenological understanding of truth does NOT close off the "wholly other," or attempt to make the wholly other "present," or to systematize the "wholly other," or to control it. In my view, a phenomenological understanding of truth contains both that openness to the future and the passion for the impossible that Caputo sees as essential to understanding Derrida, and indeed, grasping Derrida as a "religious" thinker. But I want to say something more than simply that Heidegger's notion of truth, properly understood, is Derridean; or that Derrida, properly understood, is Heideggerian. Rather, there is something *concrete* about the phenomenological understanding of truth, an understanding clearly marked by ambiguity and paradox that helps us understand something about the essential ambiguity of concrete religious experience itself. In other words, to have a "truthful" religious experience is precisely to recognize an essential impossibility *within* "religion" itself. And here, perhaps, the difference between Caputo and myself becomes somewhat greater, not just a debate about the role of Heidegger in Derrida's thought, but about the necessary role of concrete, historical religious traditions as the place, the locus, *within* which the recognition of the impossible, of its own impossibility, takes place.

In his thought-provoking book *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*, Caputo seems to suggest that concrete, historical religions are always impediments to (dare I say "authentic"?) "religion," that is, religion understood as hope, as passion

for the impossible, as "messianic." Authentic religion cannot be found *within* a "present" religious framework precisely because authentic religion has to do with something always "yet to come," always open, always deferred. In this book, Caputo is extremely critical of Christianity as being representative of an attempt to "make God present." The reader of this book might be more than a little concerned by Jack the Prophet's reduction of the tradition of Christianity to what he calls "Greco/European Christianity" (at times being even more specific: Greco/German, occasionally Greco/French, and even once I recall in that book Greco/Irish!—these particular forms, the French, the German, the Irish being the most evident examples of the onto-theological impulse and all its violence with which European Christianity is said to be infused). This is not only an oddly "Eurocentric" characterization of Christianity, but it is strange to find Caputo characterizing the Christian tradition in a way that Derrida never treated the history of philosophy. Put otherwise, it struck me as strange that while such effort is taken to bring out the prophetic quality in Derrida, little is made to bring out de-constructively the same element in the Christian tradition. This becomes most evident in the approach to Incarnation, where *apriori*—Incarnation is taken as something that closes off the "wholly other," that attempts to make present, to concretize and to systematize the "wholly other," to control it, and hence to close off both the future and the passion for the impossible that for you see as essential to authentic religion. In short, Jack Caputo seems to be saying that Incarnation makes "religion" (understood as hope, as passion for the impossible—the first use of the word "religion" in the subtitle) into concrete "religion" (understood as the present order—which by its nature is unjust; this is the "religion" in the second part of the subtitle).

This is a weighty manner, for Incarnation is self-evidently the distinguishing feature of Christianity; but in fact it seems that Caputo's concern could be extended to any historically existing, concrete, factical, religious tradition. He is rather consistent in his concern about this feature; and this constant concern reveals itself in the rather notable absence of "art" in *Prayers and Tears*. There seems little space in his prophetic "religion without religion" for art (though, paradoxically

enough, the cover piece of *Prayers and Tears* is admirable). This absence of art makes sense in Caputo's text—for art is clearly related to Incarnation. Caputo's worries about art/Incarnation become most striking with his rather minimalist plans for the Jewish Sistine Chapel mentioned in his conclusion (Caputo 1997, 339).

One can argue however, that emphasizing the centrality of art and ritual and symbolic orders radically shifts the picture one has of the concrete religion called Christianity. Moreover, Derrida provides us with excellent tools for understanding art (broadly construed) as constitutive of religion. So I would like to reflect for a bit on a phenomenology of art as "sign" of the sacred as a means of responding to Caputo's concerns both with it (art) and phenomenology.

Art: The Risk of a Sensuous Life.

My claim is that the phenomenological understanding of truth as simultaneously revealing/concealing can lead to the view that concrete, historical, incarnate religious traditions are precisely an ambiguous necessity for religious life. Put otherwise, I am claiming that aesthetic experience is structurally similar to religious experience. Or rather, the experience of truth in religious life is analogous, perhaps even inextricably linked, with the truth experienced and revealed in a work of art. These claims are clearly functioning within a Heideggerian context. In the *Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger deepens his own understanding of truth by showing how the work of art is a strife-filled tension between earth and world, where "earth" is precisely that unnameable, unable to be appropriated, unspeakable withdrawing that nonetheless is hinted at in the very work of art. A truthful artwork is precisely one that reveals its own truth: that is, it reveals that it *both* reveals and conceals, that in its presentation something is always, necessarily, absent. Artworks reveal precisely the impossibility of total revelation.

Heidegger's questioning of the work of art is hence linked with his ever deepening questioning of "phenomenological reduction"; of that which quite literally "leads" us back to the phenomena—that which awakens us from the forgetfulness of everyday life, from the blind submission to theoretical frameworks which actually mask the phe-

nomena, from the "mere" functioning of technical life. In *Being and Time*, phenomenological reduction takes place at moments of *breakdown*: when tools break we suddenly realize our embeddedness in a complex world of projects; when words fail us we suddenly become aware of the way in which language carries meaning; and ultimately for Heidegger—when we face that ultimate breakdown, our own "death"—we finally begin to question the basis and aims of our busy, nicely functioning, technical life. We become transparent to ourselves only in those moments where the apparent self-evidence of everyday life dissipates; and we become transparent to ourselves precisely as beings who in our concrete historical existence, in our finitude can never be fully transparent to ourselves.

Just as the "earth" "shows itself" in its withdrawal, in its necessary absence *within* the concrete work of art, so too the sacred shows itself or appears to us as an inexpressible absence in the trace of images, rituals, prayer, dance, songs and feasting. This "showing" of the divine is clearly not some sort of transcendent being brought closer via the mediation of signs; no, following Derrida we must say that a meaningful relation to the divine is in fact an EFFECT of the symbolic order; it is in the tension of the concrete symbolic order that our relation to the sacred is constituted. Images, rituals, religious narratives—in general what might be called the "textuality" of religion—are not the expression of a previous relationship to God, but instaurate this relationship.

Unavoidably, our meaningful experience of the sacred runs a risk by contact with this necessary materiality. The image remains inevitably a material inscription and hence remains inevitably linked to the possibility of all sorts of abuses: dogmatic reductionism, political-ideological claims, and in the end reduction to frightful triviality: scholastic debate, religious songs becoming pop songs, sacred actions being reproduced by anybody and in any place, parodied, mocked, ridiculed. Moreover, a frightful proliferation is possible: religious symbols can appear everywhere and everything can become or lay claim to being a religious symbol. This is, however, part of the play of signs or the strife-filled tension between earth and world: no symbol can claim to be the only original and true symbol of God. Each symbol can be replaced and translated by other symbols, and with each translation the

potential for the loss of meaning is there. There is never a *guarantee* that we will experience new symbols as meaningful; but this is part of the nature of symbolic life in general. Put more precisely, the issue is the paradoxical relation between the signifiers and the sacred that is signified. On the one hand, the relationship is intrinsic and necessary: without the signs there would be no experience of the sacred and this is why we are filled with indignation when something disgraceful happens to them. On the other hand, the relation is extrinsic and rather arbitrary and contingent because we can give no intrinsic or rational foundation to the fact that some symbols have a certain efficacy and others leave us indifferent. Or, that at different *times*, something meaningful, has become meaningless—the fervent prayer now empty, the beautiful ritual now a farce, the heart-lifting music now a drone. Derrida has taught us that no philosophical theory can protect us from this threat; and even deconstruction is powerless to prevent the painful loss and suffering that is endured in the ebbing of meaning from a previously venerated religious tradition. On this point, I believe Caputo would agree; and indeed it strikes me as one of the driving themes and great riches of his work from beginning to end: whatever religious experience is, there is no "technique" that can guarantee its coming, no economic calculation that can necessarily maintain it once it does arise, no "payment" that can buy-off and forestall its inevitable moments of doubt, and no risk-management plan that can contain the "uncertainty" of religious experience—for this uncertainty belongs to its very essence. My only quibble with Caputo is that all of this does "show itself," in a structural analysis that is phenomenological through and through.

Deep religious feeling is indeed necessarily linked with the risk of profanation; any truthful experience of revelation is necessarily linked to concealment. As soon as we speak of God, or produce a Pieta that itself can move *us* to tears, there is the risk of profanation and the eventual loss of meaning. But unless we are willing to surrender ourselves, without any economical calculation, to the risk of that profanation, it means that the supplement (the name God, the Pieta) has already lost its meaning effect; it is simply already *no longer* a sign of the divine. My understanding of the paradoxical nature of a symbolic or

artistic order within the context of the divine is merely this: both *because of* and *in spite of* the concrete, incarnate signifier—faith occurs.

Some Concluding Remarks on the "Ethics" of Aesthetic/Religious Life

To be certain, highlighting the artistic, symbolic, and ritualistic component of religion, and emphasizing the concrete "textuality" of religion and its inherent tension and strife, is to give precedence to an aesthetic rather than the ethical/political understanding of religion Caputo puts forward. Perhaps so. But if so, I would at the very least want to argue for some sort of co-constitution: without the artistic, and without what I am taking the artistic to be exemplary of, namely the concreteness of meaningful religious experience with all its inevitable risks, there would never be anything for prophets to speak about. And perhaps I am saying more: does not art have its own prophetic/ethical element? Does it not open up the imagination to a future, and does it not by its very nature not close off but precisely call one out of a closed system into an open infinity that is nonetheless immediate and concrete? Are we not potentially as touched by the wholly other in art as in the deconstructive voice of the prophet? Are we not, in aesthetic experience, at one and the same time, placed in contact with something that proves to be an ever-receding impossibility, which nevertheless calls out to us? I believe that there are affirmative responses to these queries, and hence that art is able to be linked to Jack Caputo's definition of religion as open, as passion for the impossible. But the link I draw aims at the possibility of "religion with*in* religion." Not, of course, that art functions as some sort of "essential core" of religious life, but that it instaurates that ever ebbing and flowing passion for the wholly other that exists because of and in spite of its own necessary conditions in concrete, sensuous religion. And this analysis is not without its ethical elements. Let me briefly consider one of these elements.

Recall that for Heidegger the revelation of ourselves to ourselves, which occurs in the radical encounter with our own finitude, has a very particular "active-passive" dynamic throughout his thought. On the

one hand, no "action" on the part of *Dasein* will ever be sufficient of itself to yield authenticity, to disclose *Dasein* to itself. On the other hand, Heidegger clearly believes that one must struggle for this disclosure of the self to the self, that one must constantly resolve to stay open for the authentic possibilities which, in the end, are given to *Dasein* by *Dasein* itself. It is important to note that whatever voluntaristic tendency (i.e. whatever role the "will" plays in authentic life), it is a very special sense of "will." One of the critical features of "The Origin of the Work of Art" is that Heidegger actually clarifies his view of "resolute authenticity" in his early work:

> The resoluteness intended in *Being and Time* is not the deliberate action of a subject, but the opening up of *Dasein*, out of its captivity in that which is, to the openness of Being...Neither in the previously mentioned creation <of a work> nor in the willing mentioned now, do we think of the performance or act of a subject striving towards himself as his self-goal. (Heidegger 1971, 67)

This text is illuminating for a number of reasons. First, it introduces this concrete example of a "style" of authenticity: artistic life. Second, it reveals an essential active-passive interplay in the act of authentic creativity. In this artistic act, much seems to be passively given: the talent, the inspiration, the tools, the training. And yet, the truly creative artist is the one who does not merely "repeat" what has been handed down, but forges it into something new, opens a space for a new revelation of Being, *struggles* with the materials at hand, seeks "to say" something, though not for the sake of herself or himself, but for the sake of that which is to be said.

Artistic productivity properly understood reveals something fundamental about human life that cannot be grasped through instrumental, calculative planning and thought. Moreover, it reveals precisely the self-concealing nature of technological thinking. Artistic creativity, which is useless when considered instrumentally, at the same time shows itself as a potent form of phenomenological reduction: it lets the phenomenon of the global domination of technology show itself in *both* its revealing and concealing qualities. It shows us something about technology that technology cannot show about itself—and in

that sense it is a deeper understanding of truth.

Art leads us back to the phenomena themselves and their essentially elusive nature—and in this sense it can be just as disruptive as the call of the prophet; or better, can be said to have its own prophetic voice. Art poses questions, and it poses questions to philosophy about *itself* and its limits: it is this troubling, destabilizing component of art that is one of the major features of 20th century continental philosophy's approach to artistic activity.

There is a certain type of "responsibility" at work here, and with this term we return to the question of phenomenology. Certainly, no word is more Husserlian than "responsibility"—the dominance of calculative thought is ultimately for Husserl the result of lapsed responsibility, of not being *willing* to "answer" both to myself and to others for what I believe and what I do. With Heidegger, it appears in the context of his own discourse on the destitution of spirit. What is this responsibility in an age of destitution? What could it mean in the context of a thinking that sees the domination of calculation and technology in the modern age not as primarily rooted in the "irresponsibility" of the scientist and the philosopher, but as belonging to the "fate" (*Geschick*) of our times?

It is responsibility for nothing else than *questioning*. It is not a responsibility that is to be conceived in terms of the answers sought by calculative thought. Nor must we view responsibility in terms of a moral lapse, a mistake (Heidegger 1977, 9). The point of departure for Heidegger's philosophy is a forgetfulness of the question of Being, but this is a forgetfulness which belongs to the nature of the question and the presencing and withdrawal of Being itself; it is a necessary forgetfulness, which ought not to be seen as a moral lapse. Heideggerian responsibility is thus a great distance from a traditional interpretation of responsibility that has much to do with control and with calculative thinking. What is usually intended when someone is said to be responsible for their actions is that one is responsible for the *results* of one's actions. A responsible person is therefore the person who takes into account these possible results, who estimates and predicts the effects a particular action will have. The debate around the limits of such responsibility centres on the limits of estimation and prediction,

and the absolution of responsibility usually occurs at the point where it is admitted that nobody could have possibly predicted such and such an outcome, that certain results were "unforeseen." Those who do not wish to see any diminishing of responsibility are forced to an argumentation which claims that one *should* have foreseen these consequences, that what is claimed to be "unforeseen" was able to be seen, and that indeed, it probably remained unseen not due to a lack of ability but due to a lack of *willing* to see. The defence of a traditional notion of responsibility is inevitably connected to the desire and attempt to *see* all; an impossibility revealed to us in the work of art.

This traditional sense of responsibility means to be in control of that which comes *from* us, and the efforts to extend this sense of responsibility lead to extended notions of what comes from the subject. To the contrary, the sense of responsibility found in Heidegger's thought does not mean to control or to manage, but rather to respond to what comes from afar and to assume the care for that which we can never master. The far-reaching consequences of our actions, how people react and how these actions return to affect us are certainly beyond our control. It is implausible to assume that we could ever know the full consequences of our actions; and yet, it would seem an inhuman life if we were to deny responsibility for our actions and their results. Could it not be said that authentic responsibility is precisely this: to assume responsibility for those people or things that are *given* to us? To claim responsibility only for that which we can predict with certainty or control with ease, or to abdicate responsibility on the basis that we cannot predict or simply cannot control, these seem less than human ways of behaviour.

Oddly enough, to remain within the active, dominating, wilful type of calculative thinking, which belongs to technology can actually be taken as a refusal to be "responsible" in this deeper sense, and as "sinful" or the way of the "world." To be sure, such calculative thinking is often closely allied with talk about responsibility, but this is a pseudo-responsibility, a responsibility for that which I can control, but not for that which might place me under its spell. The notion of responsibility in Heidegger's works and especially his writings on art thus places an emphasis very much on the "response" to that which comes from

beyond. In the realm of authentic responsibility for our actions, such a response has little to do with the retroactive justification of certain actions based on calculations made at the time of decision. Far more suitable responses might be *gratitude*, or *remorse*—resulting in a longing for forgiveness. Without doubt, the great difficulty which many philosophers have with Heidegger's own involvement with National Socialism is not merely the naive involvement itself, but Heidegger's subsequent quasi-calculative defence that nobody could foresee the course that National Socialism was going to take. Perhaps he genuinely could not. But this in no way lessens responsibility and the obligation of a correct response, which in this case could only be humility and remorse. Such a response was never forthcoming.

The notion of responsibility that can be developed out of a phenomenological analysis of aesthetic experience is full of a sense of acceptance and places emphasis on the ability to *respond* to that which comes unexpectedly from beyond. Such responsibility does not attempt to control that which is uncontrollable, and it does not maintain that the recognition of limits of what can be controlled puts an end to responsibility. In being open to that which is beyond us, responsibility forms a critique of that thinking which seeks to control. The recognition of this receptivity does not spell the end of calculative thought and its fulfilment in technology, but it leaves open a space for non-technological ways of comportment towards the world and one another. Artists—and that means perhaps all of us—have an essential role in the exercising of this responsibility; for we are constantly standing in the strife between "earth" and "world," in the tension between usefulness and uselessness. This responsibility may even extend to concrete, historical religious traditions within which we find ourselves. Responding to the concrete religious traditions in which we find ourselves does not mean calculatively trying to make them "better," but to be willing to endure the risk associated with a submission to a symbolic order and maintaining an openness to that which precisely we cannot control. Whether Jack Caputo agrees with this concluding statement, I have my doubts. But it can be said with some certainty that in his energetic engagement with the question of religion, Jack Caputo displays a "responsibility" which is truly exemplary.

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