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RECONCILIATION, INCARNATION, AND HEADLESS HEGELIANISM

Dennis Vanden Auweele

A number of contemporary authors (e.g., Catherine Malabou, Slavoj Žižek, and John Caputo) claim that Hegel's *Religionsphilosophie* provides important insights for contemporary philosophy of religion. John Caputo argues that Hegel's notion of incarnation as radical kenosis is a powerful tool for postmodern Radical Theology. In this essay, I scrutinize this claim by balancing Hegel's notion of incarnation with his notion of recognition—the latter of which Caputo removes from a “headless Hegelianism.” I argue that a non-Hegelian, non-dialectic sense of recognition ought to be introduced in contemporary philosophy of religion to remove the confrontation with the Other from the realm of radical trauma.

Modern philosophers have had a tendency either to lock reason and faith in radical antagonism (to the benefit of either faith or reason) or to make faith subservient to reason. In the latter instance, religion becomes a vehicle for propositional truth, or part of the onto-theological systematics of philosophy, or even an ersatz for philosophical thought. So-called postsecular philosophers and theologians are intent upon rethinking religion in a non-modern way. Jurgen Habermas famously suggested such an approach to religion, i.e., to outline a new co-existence of faith and reason in which any potential tyrannical dominance from either side is barred.¹ One way this is being pursued these days is in a post-Heideggerian, Derridean radical theology wherein religion has to do with the encounter with the radical Other that upsets and bewilders rational thought.² Faith, in this framework, is not to be reduced to, informed by, or associated with reason or historical dialectics: any speculative metaphysics or rational/natural theology is out of the question. It is this debate, and the question of recognition, that is assessed in this essay. It will be argued that the unconditional hospitality favored in some postsecular approaches to religion could benefit from a non-dialectical sense of recognition.

¹Habermas, “Secularism’s Crisis of Faith,” 17–29.

²Most importantly, see Marion, *God without Being*; Caputo, *The Weakness of God*.

One interesting recent evolution here is how some of these Continental postsecularists take recourse in Hegel's philosophy of religion.³ Despite that some Hegel scholars deem Hegel's dialectical philosophy principally unfit for the purposes of an exploration of religion and transcendence,⁴ a number of interesting contemporary works argue for the relevance of Hegel's thought for their own radically divergent views of religion.⁵ While these authors provide interesting perspectives with regard to the nature of religion, their approach to Hegel tends to be only half-hearted, which is something they recognize themselves. For instance, John Caputo calls his sense of Hegelian postmodern philosophy of religion "headless" and Slavoj Žižek calls his appropriation of Hegel a "deflated image."⁶

This postsecular appropriation of Hegel's philosophy will be the subject of scrutiny of this essay; more specifically, we will discuss how two pillars of Hegel's philosophy of religion, namely "reconciliation" and "incarnation," are being somewhat awkwardly balanced against another. As such, if one focuses on "incarnation," Hegel can be read as an apologist for postsecular theology; but, if one focusses on "reconciliation" (through recognition), Hegel can be read as a typical example of a secularist reading of religion.⁷ To understand, then, Caputo's turn to Hegel's philosophy, a proper grasp of Caputo's reading of Hegel's notion of incarnation is central. After first developing the general project of Hegel's philosophy of religion as trying to overcome the modern dualistic frame of the relationship between the finite and infinite, I will further argue that a "headless Hegelianism" leads somewhere that Hegel did not intend to lead. In dialogue with Caputo, I will confront his analysis of *incarnation* with the Hegelian notion of *recognition*. Caputo eschews this aspect of Hegel's philosophy because it leads, in his view, to secularism and ontotheology. I will argue to the contrary that a non-Hegelian, non-dialectical interpretation of recognition can be a valuable asset for contemporary philosophy of religion.

³For the purposes of this paper, I will confine myself for the most part to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Obviously, I cannot deal with all details of Hegel's *LPR*, let alone Hegel's philosophy of religion! For a more in-depth and charitable discussion of Hegel's *LPR*, see Peter Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*.

⁴For a compelling account of this claim: Desmond, *Hegel's God*. See also O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* and Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 147–176.

⁵For instance: Caputo, *The Insistence of God*; Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*; Žižek and Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ*. These authors mine Hegel's philosophy of religion for their postmodern potential but others are keen to validate Hegel's philosophy of religion more or less unabridged (Shanks, *A Neo-Hegelian Theology*).

⁶Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 92; Žižek and Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ*, 26.

⁷This opposition reminds of the nineteenth-century conflict between the "right" (Göschel, Gabler) and the "left" Hegelians (Bauer, Marx). The former (also called Old Hegelians) were conservative and saw in Hegel's philosophy a reconciliation of Christianity and philosophy where each of these is allotted its specific locale. The latter (also called Young Hegelians) were convinced that religion and religious life were ultimately sublated into the state and philosophy in Hegel's philosophy: the progress of human society necessarily implied the overcoming of religion.

1. The Objectives of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion

Hegel delivered the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* (LPR) on four separate occasions (1821, 1824, 1827, and 1831). Throughout the evolving "Introduction" to each of these series, Hegel progressively comes to clarity with regard to his main concerns in developing his *Religionsphilosophie*: (1) to argue against an approach to religion/God that builds solely upon the concept of God, (2) to argue against an approach to religion/God that builds solely upon immediate consciousness of God, (3) to argue against an approach to religion/God that builds solely upon the historical manifestations of religion, and (4) to argue for the necessary, dialectical interconnections of these three previous elements for a proper approach to religion/God.⁸ In a nutshell, this means that a proper understanding of God cannot do without an understanding of historical religion *and* the abstract concept of God. The reconciliation of God as abstract thought with God as spirit must pass through the monstrosity (*Ungeheure*) of the individualization of God in historical incarnation, and cannot proceed directly from abstract consciousness.

The first major concern of Hegel is to argue against rational and natural theology, both of which exhaustively understand God and religion from the abstract notion of God. Hegel envisions Wolffian philosophy as a proponent of this line of thought:

Theologia naturalis was an object of the Wolffian philosophy, which introduces the nature of God into the content of philosophy. However, Wolff's treatment stays within the bounds of the metaphysics of the understanding then current, and is to be viewed rather as a science of the understanding than as one of rational thinking.⁹

Hegel objects to this line of thought because it remains within the bounds of the "understanding" (*Verstand*) which aims to set apart concepts as defined (limited) against another. As such, the philosophy of *Verstand* misses the dialectical interplay not only between concepts, but also between the concept and its empirical, social, and historical instantiation. John Caputo phrases Hegel's opposition to the metaphysics of understanding (*Verstand*) as follows:

Verstand is all about entities, propositions, and proofs and it misses the living organic matrix by which genuine theological thinking is nourished. . . . Everything that is truly interesting about religion, everything substantive

⁸Peter Hodgson notes a total of six previous and concurrent theologies to which Hegel objects. The first and second, metaphysical and rational theology, can be identified with natural theology since both build upon rational, a priori argumentation to arrive at an abstract concept of God. The third, historical theology, I identify with an approach that builds solely upon the historical manifestations of religions. The fourth and fifth, ethicotheology (religion constructed from morality) and the theology of feeling, are both forms of the theology of immediate consciousness. The final, somewhat implicit, position that Hegel advances against is atheism/pantheism. I will not extensively deal with this last one (Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, 52–68).

⁹Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1824, 33.

and enlivening, Hegel said, is being left out—all the warm blood and vitality, all the “spirit,” all the “revelatory force,” all the *Sache* of Christianity.¹⁰

Hegel argues against natural theology by pointing out how natural theology is concerned with one aspect of religion only, namely of “God as the essence of understanding.”¹¹ Hegel has ambitions for a more comprehensive survey of religion, one that is not restricted “to the sterile result of an abstract sense of the understanding.”¹² To put it in more familiar terms, Hegel is concerned with God as “spirit,” not as “essence of understanding.” Any approach solely focusing on the abstract notion of God would neglect the historical manifestation of that notion.

Hegel’s objection to this line of thought does not immediately make recourse to Kant’s destruction of the tradition of rational theology, but rather to the consideration that rational theology leads to an understanding of God “as the sort of abstraction that does not in principle correspond to our representation of God.”¹³ The problem signaled by Kant about natural theology was that the abstract notion of God does not correspond to any determinate experience; in fact, it lies beyond possible experience and is therefore not an object of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) since the categories of the understanding cannot be legitimately applied to it. Kant and Hegel are indeed in agreement that the categories of the understanding cannot do justice to the notion of God and that those who still pursue rational theology are remiss in neglecting Kant’s innovation in this respect:

These categories are employed entirely uncritically, in a wholly artless fashion, just as if Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* were nonexistent, a book that put them to the test and arrived in its own way at the result that they can serve only for the cognition of phenomena and not of the truth.¹⁴

This is, however, also where Kant and Hegel part ways, since this conclusion led Kant to the position that there is only practical, and not speculative, knowledge of God. So, according to Kant, any determination of God, either via morality (moral law) or historical religion (practical faith), cannot take its cues from determinate experience, since God is by definition beyond experience. In the Preface to the Second Edition of his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant emphasizes that a purely rational account of religion as an extension of morality must first and foremost develop “from mere principles *a priori* [and] abstract from all experience.”¹⁵ Kant rejected a speculative account of God and religion

¹⁰Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 89.

¹¹Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1824, 33.

¹²Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1824, 33.

¹³Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1824, 34.

¹⁴Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1827, 80.

¹⁵Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 64 [6:12]. By this assertion, Kant does not exclude that he can test whether a certain historical conception of religion conforms to pure rational religion. This is what he calls his second experiment, namely “to start from some alleged revelation [and] to hold fragments of this revelation, as a historical system, up

from a priori principles, but allows from a *practical* rebuilding of theology through moral faith. In Hegel's view, by contrast, this basically means that Kant's account of God (theoretical and practical) leads to the view that "we can know nothing of God" and that He can merely be felt.¹⁶ (Whether this is really Kant's position is doubtful, but this is surely how he was read in the early nineteenth century). Hegel rejects this position and instead emphasizes that we can become familiar with the abstract concept of God through its historical and social instantiation. Hegel emphasizes that the historical manifestation of God in determinate religion is informed by and consequently also informs us of the abstract concept of God.

The second major concern of Hegel's philosophy of religion is to argue against the "theology of feeling" or the "theology of immediate consciousness," which resulted from Kant's philosophy. Ironically, Kant wrote a public letter in 1798, called *On a Recently Prominent Tone of Superiority in Philosophy*, in which he laments the then recent tendency of philosophers to assign greater value to "feeling" over "concepts":

Away with ratiocination [*Vernünftelei*] from concepts, which attempts the task only by the roundabout [*Umschweif*] method of general attributes, and which, before it yet has a matter which it can grasp immediately, first demands specific forms to which it may subject this matter! And given also that reason can offer no further explanation whatever about the legitimacy of the outcome of these its high insights, there remains nevertheless a fact: "Philosophy has its secrets that can be felt."¹⁷

Despite Kant's best efforts, numerous philosophers and theologians, such as Fichte, Jacobi, and Schopenhauer, took Kant's destruction of speculative metaphysics to mean that the only route to the transcendent lay with immediate consciousness since rational deduction was out of the question.¹⁸ Hegel joins Kant in his opposition to this trend, but did so, once again, on different grounds. Hegel emphatically counters any dualism between "religious consciousness" and "the rest of consciousness" since both are to him part of the self-development of *Geist*. In Hegel's view, consciousness first took shape as "the religion of the pious person" with an "unreflective, uncontested faith in God."¹⁹ Here, religious consciousness is the overarching frame of mind which "breathes its influence over all of one's sensibilities and actions."²⁰ Gradually, a different sense of consciousness, one not interested in transcendence, became the hallmark way of understanding immanence. Hegel calls this rational consciousness which

to moral concepts, and see whether it does not lead back to the same pure rational system of religion" (64 [6:13])

¹⁶Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1821, 6.

¹⁷Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, 436 [8:395].

¹⁸Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*; Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*; Jacobi, *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus*.

¹⁹Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1821, 12.

²⁰Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1821, 12.

does not “transcend, or even desire to transcend, the finite sphere.”²¹ According to Hegel, Kant’s philosophy is the apotheosis of this evolution since for Kant rational consciousness becomes the only justified form of consciousness. Religious consciousness then becomes the other to rational consciousness which holds the notion of the absolute or the transcendent, but this is “without any cognition according to this concept of it.”²² The resulting position is that no rational cognition can accord to the transcendent and “religion, therefore, shrivels up into simple feeling, into a contentless elevation of spirit unto the eternal, etc., of which, however, it knows nothing and has nothing to say, since any cognizing would be a dragging down of the eternal into this sphere of finite connections.”²³

In opposition to this trend, Hegel believes that he must reconcile philosophy and religion: “Philosophy of religion demonstrates this equation—the infinite in the finite and the finite in the infinite, the reconciliation of the heart with religious cognition of the absolutely substantial feeling with intelligence.”²⁴ He does not do this by means of the methodology of “rational religion,” associated with Kant, but also with John Locke, Samuel Clarke, John Toland,²⁵ according to which religion is to be rationalized and put into the service of immanent affairs. Hegel objects to this that “Christ is dragged down to the level of human affairs, not to the level of the commonplace but still to that of the human, into the sphere of a mode of action of which pagans such as Socrates have also been capable.”²⁶ Hegel’s philosophy of religion aims, on the one hand, to retain the transcendent elements of (Christian) religion and, on the other hand, to inquire rationally into religious consciousness. His objection to the theology of immediate consciousness focuses on how this view fails to take this latter aspect into consideration since it holds that religious consciousness is the absolute other of rational consciousness. In Hegel’s view, the separation of immanent consciousness from transcendence leads to a stale, non-dialectical understanding of the nature of reality. All consciousness, religious and otherwise, is informed by self-transcending rationality.

The third major concern of Hegel is to argue against what can be called, for lack of a better word, “historical theology,” i.e., the study of the historical evolution of religion’s central concepts, symbols and practices in ways disconnected from the philosophical relevance of these. As such, historical theology is not interested in theology as a quest for truth, only in theology’s historical evolution. One of Hegel’s most memorable slights throughout *LPR* is his comparison of such historical theologians to “countinghouse

²¹Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1821, 21.

²²Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1821, 21.

²³Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1821, 22.

²⁴Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1821, 22.

²⁵Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*; Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*; Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious*.

²⁶Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1827, 67.

clerks, who keep the ledgers and accounts of other people's wealth, a wealth that passes through their hands without their retaining any of it, clerks who act only for others without acquiring assets of their own."²⁷ By no longer recognizing the spirit of religious doctrines and disconnecting these from a sense of enabling and justifying transcendence, these become a *fait divers*, something of a quaint curiosity over which one can have academic discussions that have no real relevance for human existence.

Hegel's rejection of historical theology can seem peculiar given the fact that Hegel is, as no other, sensitive to the historical development of religions. But central to Hegel's argument is the point that the historical development of religious consciousness is a dialectical process that, if overseen as a whole, constitutes the truth of *Geist*. God's self-revelation does not happen violently or traumatically—as a sudden revelation to an individual prophet—but by what he calls in his *Science of Logic* the "cunning of reason" (*List der Vernunft*). The project of the philosophical researcher of religion is then to oversee the whole of the historical development of religion and recognize in this the spirit's self-revelation.²⁸ Hegel cannot thus simply reject the historical approach due to its devaluation of the unique nature of individual religious doctrines, because Hegel himself has shown that many particular doctrines have been inspired by similar rational truths. What Hegel does find objectionable to historical theology is that it dislodges the historical development from its rich conceptual and referential significance. For instance, Hegel would be very interested in learning about the historical development of the concept of Trinity over the different ecumenical councils (Nicaea, Chalcedon, etc.) because the developmental narrative of these councils demonstrates the spirit's coming to consciousness of itself. He does, however, refuse to stop short at such a merely archivist attitude that simply takes this development at face value. Instead, he aims to show how the progressive development of humanity's understanding of the notion of Trinity moves us closer to a full understanding of *Geist*. So not only is the concept of the Trinity informed by rational insight, so too is its historically-developing content part and parcel of reason's self-development. As with the theology of feeling, what the proponents of historical theology miss is that there is (developmental) rationality in religious doctrines.

All of this combined brings us to the fourth major concern of Hegel, that is, to emphasize the dialectical interconnectedness of the concept, content, and history of religion. As such, Hegel does not object to any system of thought for what it affirms, but rather for what it denies. What is denied by these aforementioned views is the productive interplay between nature and concepts, or, between system and reason. History is informed by reason/spirit, and history informs us of reason/spirit. Hegel becomes rather combative when his contemporaries dislodge these aspects from

²⁷Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1824, 44.

²⁸Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 746

one another: "In view of this plague the more explicit need that arises is that of regaining, for the true, essentially through philosophy, a fullness, a content, and an import."²⁹ To accomplish this, Hegel aims to balance two aspects of his understanding of religion, namely "reconciliation through recognition" and "incarnation." By "incarnation" Hegel means that the abstract notion of God becomes manifest in the historical progression of religions; by "reconciliation" Hegel means that this historical progression of religions is reconciled with the abstract notion of God through dialectical philosophy, or, that the progression of history as a whole is recognized as God. In accomplishing this balancing feat, Hegel must necessarily employ a novel understanding of "transcendence," which is no longer the spurious transcendent of rational philosophy (absolutely transcendent as in having no connection to the immanent), but the so-called "true infinite" of dialectical philosophy. This means that the infinite (or God, or transcendence), for Hegel, is in-the-finite; or better, the historical self-developmental process of spirit is the infinite.³⁰ While some believe that such a view blends nicely with Christianity, many others have serious doubts whether Hegel reconciles faith with reason in a way unbiased towards faith.³¹

2. Headless Hegelianism

John Caputo argues in *The Insistence of God* that his sense of philosophy of religion is decidedly more Hegelian than Kantian. Anyone with a comprehensive understanding of Hegel's and Caputo's philosophy would be understandably baffled by this claim and even Caputo himself realizes that any univocal allegiance to Hegel's philosophy would sit uneasy with his rather vocal adherence to postmodern radical theology:

Kierkegaard introduced the first postmodernism when his Johannes Climacus quipped that according to the metaphysics of absolute knowledge God came into this world in order to schedule a consult with German metaphysicians about the makeup of the divine nature. There is thus a considerable *Gnosis* still clinging to Hegel, an unmistakably Gnostic insistence on knowing, on *Wissen* and *Begriff*. That is why . . . what I am calling a theology of the insistence of the event is a heretical version of Hegel, a variant postmodern Hegelianism, a kind of hybrid or even headless Hegelianism without the Concept according to the strange logic of the *sans*.³²

²⁹Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* 1824, 44–45.

³⁰For a more comprehensive survey of Hegel's innovations in understanding transcendence against the "Kantian frame," see Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition and the Death of God*, 161–183.

³¹Desmond's *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double* is at the forefront of making the claim that Hegel's philosophy of religion is not revamping the notion of infinity, but actually misunderstands religious transcendence. Andrew Shanks's *A Neo-Hegelian Theology* makes the opposite claim.

³²Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 92.

For a considerable amount of time, Hegel was perceived as a foremost opponent, perhaps even antithesis, to postmodernity. Generally, postmodern philosophy tends to assign additional importance to individual perspectives and feelings over rationality while for Hegel reason is the *summum* of reality; postmodern philosophy eschews teleology while for Hegel history is a purposive process of the self-development of freedom and rationality; postmodern philosophy acknowledges deep a(anti)-rational layers to reality while for Hegel all of reality is (implicitly) spirit. As such, there does then not seem to be a whole lot that can be recycled from Hegel for the purposes of postmodern radical theology.³³

Nevertheless, Caputo finds an unlikely ally in Hegel's analysis of religion for two related reasons. First, Caputo and Hegel emphatically object to rational theology which erects a theology from concepts alone; second, the rejection of a purely conceptual theology leads to the utter necessity of the confrontation with a moment of radical incarnation of the transcendent into immanence rendering that immanence pregnant with "spirit" or, as Caputo would put it, "eventful." These aspects of Hegel's philosophy of religion blend smoothly with Caputo's postmodern philosophy of religion that deprives religion of any strong ontological or metaphysical background, and instead holds that religion is to be reformed to a spiritual, non-theological confrontation with the event of God. In his view, the event of God is harbored in a worldly becoming that contains something "that cannot contain what it contains."³⁴ Accordingly, Caputo totally dislodges "the name of God" (event) from God as such (transcendence) or, in other words, does not back up his "weak theology of the event" with a "strong theology." Caputo recognizes something similar happening in Hegel's philosophy, namely that Hegel radically projects God's self-alienation in the moment of kenosis through objectification. Put differently, Hegel sees God as becoming incarnated in history to such an extent that He abandons any radical transcendence as such.

What makes Caputo's appropriation of Hegel "headless" is that he dislodges the Hegelian interpretation of incarnation from reconciliation and recognition, i.e., Caputo denies the dialectical interplay between concept, content and history central to Hegel's *Religionsphilosophie*. Hegel does not just confront God in the finite, but also recognizes the infinite in the finite and as such reconciles God as concept to God as incarnation in God as spirit. Such reconciliation is achieved by philosophy proper, which is itself the sublation of the opposition between the Enlightenment and Pietism³⁵:

³³Caputo at one point felt that Hegel was not a proper resource for postmodern philosophy. In a conversation with Richard Kearney, Caputo distances himself from the hermeneutics of Ricoeur and Gadamer because of "a lingering residual presence of a certain Hegel" (Caputo and Kearney, "Anatheism and Radical Hermeneutics," 196). In fact, Caputo worries that Kearney's anatheism, at that time, revolved around a sense of "closet Hegelianism" (195–197)! This makes Caputo's turn to Hegel all the more awkward.

³⁴Caputo, "On the Power of the Powerless," 50.

³⁵Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, 267–270.

the former eschews the content of religion and the latter denies the reconciliation with the concept. In Hegel's words,

Two positions are opposed to philosophy. First there is the vanity of the understanding, which is displeased by the fact that philosophy still exhibits the truth in religion and demonstrates that reason resides within it. This Enlightenment wants to have nothing further to do with the content, and therefore is highly displeased that philosophy, as conscious, methodical thinking, curbs the fancies, the caprice, and the contingency of thinking. In the second place, ingenuous religiosity is opposed to philosophy.³⁶

From a Hegelian view, Caputo would then remain trapped in what some have called the "Kantian frame" of the opposition between reason and feeling. Some post-Kantians understood Kant to be saying that no rational thought applies to the objects of religion and therefore irrational feeling was the only window to God. Caputo has radically developed this point of view by emphasizing that rational thought is utterly impotent to provide understanding of the "event of God" but adding that there is no absolute transcendent God.

Taking the above into consideration, it seems that Caputo's sense of postmodern theology is more Kantian than Hegelian.³⁷ Both of the latter objected to rational theology, but they did so on different grounds, and Caputo's grounds seem more Kantian than Hegelian. For Kant, the inability of rational thought to pierce the transcendent is central; for Hegel, rational theology forgets how history is saturated with the self-realization of spirit.

Caputo in fact frames his sense of headless Hegelianism against a Kantian backdrop and purports to side with a Hegelian version of postmodernity. In Caputo's view, a postmodern philosophy of religion that has its roots in Kant would prescribe epistemological humility about certain metaphysical pretensions, but always allows for an unknown absolute to exist. This would result from Kant's famous admission that his purpose in the *first Critique* is to deny (*aufheben*) reason so as to make room for faith, which leads Caputo to claim that, for Kant, while human beings might have no access to absolute truth, there would still be an absolute, objective truth. This absolute truth is then not the object of "knowing," but of "feeling" or "faith." Thus Christian theology might very well be true in the end. Caputo seems here to be invoking the work of Merold Westphal, who argues that deconstruction, and postmodernity generally, is mainly to be interpreted epistemologically, and not metaphysically. Westphal argues,

³⁶Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, 270.

³⁷A side-issue that cannot be sufficiently developed here is whether Hegel does not simply overstep Kant's critical limitation of rational inquiry to possible experience. Traditionally, Hegel has often been read as doing so, but more recently several "revisionist" strategies (Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin) are arguing that Hegel stays within the critical limitations of transcendental philosophy. See in particular Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860*, 300–304. For an extended discussion of the relevance of this topic for Hegel's philosophy of religion, see Buterin, "Hegel, Recognition, and Religion," 789–821.

in other words, for the *inaccessibility*, and not the *absence*, of truth: "Metaphysics is the not terribly subtle desire to be God: and Deconstruction is the continuous reminder that we are not God. In fact, it claims, we cannot even peek over God's shoulder."³⁸ From such a postmodern Kantian perspective, there would remain the possibility for religious believers to hold on to determinate religious beliefs insofar as these maintain the correct sense of epistemological humility.³⁹ In a way then, historical religion is being safeguarded from rational criticism, or faith is being sheltered from reason.⁴⁰

By contrast, Caputo believes that deconstruction and postmodernity offer a more profound challenge to philosophy of religion. To him, postmodernity means that there is no ultimate truth, there is only the event. This precludes any "strong" theology from being truthful in the end since there is no Truth. As such, there is no point in "sheltering" partisan faith from rational critique and the only appropriate stance is then to embrace the radical absence of truth: "I think they [i.e., the Kantian postmoderns] are trying to build an umbrella for when the postmodern rains come, whereas for me postmodernism means singing in the rain."⁴¹ For this reason, Caputo claims to be more "on board" with Hegel and explains that "on my Hegelian model, you cannot get away [with a privileged access to truth], because whatever religious beliefs one holds are saturated by one's historical condition."⁴² Instead of letting either one's historical condition or rational theology be the judge of one's religious convictions, deconstruction warns that both are suspect in their claims to absolute truth. Postmodern philosophy of religion should instead take recourse in the absolute a-historical, an-archival moment of divine incarnation. Caputo believes that Hegel has laid the foundation for this: "Hegel has invented radical theology. This is because he has, at one and the same time, effectively moved beyond rationalism and made the "revealed" theological content the subject matter while also cutting off the Gnostic (two-worlds) drift of classical theology."⁴³

We have thus come to the central reason why Caputo appropriates a headless or postmodern version of Hegelian philosophy. Hegel advances a fairly radical interpretation of what divine incarnation could mean philosophically, namely the radical self-emptying of God as "spurious

³⁸Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-theology*, 189

³⁹For an extended development of this claim, see Simmons and Minister, *Reexamining Deconstruction and Determinate Religion*.

⁴⁰This interpretation seems to misunderstand Kant's central pre-occupations with religion. Kant did not quest to shelter irrationalist fideism from rational critique, but limited empirical thought to one possible mode of inquiry so that a different kind of rationality (practical reason) could postulate—without theoretical pretensions—a practical theology. Practical reason is not irrational fideism but a different form of reason.

⁴¹Caputo, "On Not Settling for an Abridged Edition of Postmodernism," 272.

⁴²Caputo, "On Not Settling for an Abridged Edition of Postmodernism," 272.

⁴³Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 91.

transcendent" and identifying with the historical process of spirit's self-development. In a word, there is no absolutely transcendent God, only the immanent event of God. This immanent event of God is, in Hegel's philosophy, reconciled with *Logik* and *Begriff* as the highpoint of his philosophy. On this last point, Caputo would most likely object to Hegel's project in *LPR*: "If my religion comes without religion, my Hegel comes without the *Begriff*."⁴⁴ If the confrontation with the event would somehow be reconciled with rational thought, then we would not have remained faithful to the enigmatic and excessive nature of the event. All concepts and all metaphysics are, according to Caputo, barren to provide understanding of the excessive nature of religion.

3. Incarnation as Radical Kenosis

Cyril O'Regan points out that "a major, if not the major, reason accounting for Hegel's attractiveness in contemporary theological circles is Hegel's recovery of the symbol of the Trinity."⁴⁵ For postmodern radical theology, this becomes more specifically the doctrine of incarnation. Traditionally, the incarnation refers to God revealing Himself in the flesh as a human being, His son. Hegel abstracts from this Christian doctrine its rational essence, namely that God manifests Himself throughout history. In Christianity, this is represented in a single individual, Jesus Christ, who serves to undo the break that has taken effect between humanity and God by reestablishing a covenant between God and mankind. To accomplish this reconciliation, God must first self-differentiate: "The act of differentiation is only a movement, a play of love with itself, which does not arrive at the seriousness of other-being, of separation and rupture."⁴⁶ God manifests himself as his "Son," not so as to create a radical other, but to manifest Himself in history in order to inaugurate the historical process of reconciliation. Such reconciliation is necessary because humanity in its natural state, though implicitly good, is at a distance from spirit, and so evil. Insofar as humanity elevates its own private particularity over universality, it is actually evil—which, for Hegel, resonates with the Christian notion of the Fall.⁴⁷ The reconciliation in the Son of God is then a religious representation of the recognition of the self-development of spirit throughout history. In Hegel's words, "this is the history of the appearance of God. This history is a divine history."⁴⁸ Hegel's interpretation then of incarnation is predominantly symbolic as the allegorical representation of the relationship between humanity and the divine.⁴⁹

⁴⁴Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 92.

⁴⁵O'Regan, *The Anatomy of Misremembering*, 205.

⁴⁶Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, 216.

⁴⁷Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, 224–233.

⁴⁸Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, 250–251.

⁴⁹This becomes abundantly clear when it is realized that Hegel refers to creation and incarnation both as "the Son." Interpreting incarnation in such a way seems hard to reconcile

Slavoj Žižek interprets this movement of historical reconciliation through recognition in a rather radical sense: for God to become man implies that God abandons His position of pure transcendence in that moment of historical manifestation. By then emphasizing that moment of incarnation, Žižek and Caputo argue that Hegel's God remains somehow trapped within immanence. Hegel would then effectively become "the last of the idealist metaphysicians and the first of the postmetaphysical historicists."⁵⁰ This explains how the idea of history became so paramount for any religious (self-)understanding after Hegel: for Žižek, only the sum total of history provides complete knowledge of God. Reconciliation then ultimately can only mean that God finds a permanent home in immanence and not that He would return to pure transcendence. Hegel paved the way for this view by arguing that there is no direct descent from God as abstract consciousness to God as spirit, but the reconciliation of religious consciousness to itself must necessarily happen via the historical body of religion.⁵¹ For Žižek, this is ultimately where the history of religion and social action meet: Christianity is to become a vehicle for a this-worldly sacredness that supports Marxist egalitarianism. The historical development of Christianity itself led to socialist Marxism since a Hegelian reading of Christianity itself radically abandons transcendence: "There is a direct lineage from Christianity to Marxism; yes, Christianity and Marxism *should* fight on the same side of the barricade against the onslaught of the new spiritualisms."⁵²

There is little doubt that Caputo is influenced by Žižek's (but also Catherine Malabou's⁵³) radical interpretation of Hegelian incarnation. First, Caputo similarly emphasizes that the truth of the event is to be found in history and the world, not in a beyond to be reached by scriptural literalism or rational inquiry. Second, incarnation implies that the transcendent is to be found in history or that the invisible is in-the-visible. This way, Caputo does not focus on God *per se*, but on the "name of God" which is the event of radical otherness. Third, radical incarnation renders immanence "spirited" or "eventful," which means that the confrontation with radical otherness is not appropriately accounted for in any reductionist materialism. Caputo remains obviously uneasy with the historical character of such incarnation coming to fruition in Hegel's philosophy and

with the Christian tradition which allots unique, singular importance to the person of Jesus Christ. Obviously, such a-historical, rationalized readings of Christology were in tune with the trends of modern philosophy, but later severely criticized by Karl Barth, Hans Urs Von Balthasar and others. For discussion of this, see O'Regan, *The Anatomy of Misremembering*, pp. 185–204.

⁵⁰Žižek and Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ*, 26.

⁵¹Žižek and Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ*, 74.

⁵²Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute*, xxix (emphasis in original).

⁵³For instance: "Hegel indicates that the act whereby the Son, 'having come into the world,' acquiring his determination as 'Other'—an act brought to its fulfillment by his death—, is understood as the work of *Entäusserung*. The Incarnation is the 'alienation of the divine'" (Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 91).

ultimately finding reconciliation anew in the concept of God. In Hegel's philosophy, the moment of radical incarnation is balanced by a philosophical moment of recognition where the infinite content "takes refuge in the concept [*in den Begriff flüchtet*]." ⁵⁴ Caputo's philosophy can better be described as taking "flight for the concept" (*Flucht vor dem Begriff*): dialectical reconciliation is at all times to be avoided. Caputo eschews any talk of recognition (speculative or dialectical) because this would in his view strip the radical Other of its otherness. Deconstruction is a warning label against any predication of human-all-too-human concepts and categories upon that which transcends all understanding. The encounter with God thus happens not, as in Hegel, via the *List der Vernunft*, but must always be traumatic since it transcends any and all understanding. There is no mediation between the transcendence of the event and the human being: not rationality (*Verstand*), not reason (*Vernunft*), not nature, there is nothing to gently mitigate the piercing trauma of the encounter with the Other. With this, Caputo does not give sufficient attention to the possibility of a different sense of metaphysical recognition which allows the radical Other to retain its sense of otherness, but at the same time mitigates the incomprehensible trauma of the Other's otherness. In the hospitable reception of the Other, there can arise a self-revelatory self-release of the Other that reveals itself to be God, not just the Other.

4. Recognition as the Moment of Metaphysical Hospitality

Did Caputo perhaps miss the quintessentially Hegelian lesson that rationality itself is infused with a self-transcending potency that ought not to be restricted to immanent rationality? Or has Caputo ascertained something that escaped Hegel's gaze? Caputo's objection to metaphysics and recognition stems not from the epistemological impotence of metaphysical concepts (which is a line of postmodernity that he calls "Kantian"), but from the alleged dearth of any final explanation: "My own idea is that religion is a *Vorstellung* of which there is no concept, a figure that does not admit of metaphysical elucidation. My *Vorstellung* is headed for decapitation not recapitulation, having nowhere to turn for a Final explanation of itself." ⁵⁵ Caputo's "religion without religion" lacks a strong metaphysics because of the radical absence of the objects of metaphysics (e.g., God): "I think what is going on in religion is not the *Begriff* but the event." ⁵⁶ Caputo deserves praise for emphasizing that religion is essentially not a philosophical knowledge but rather is a confrontation with the hyperbolic. His emphatic rigor, however, on reducing all metaphysical knowing to a leveling dialectics is lacking in finesse. There are different forms of knowing, some more intimation than propositional assertion, which can serve to

⁵⁴Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, 267.

⁵⁵Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 92.

⁵⁶Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 92.

reconcile religion to reason in a non-dialectical fashion: not all knowledge of what is absolute is absolute knowledge.

In Caputo's⁵⁷ (and many others) view, metaphysics is the misguided attempt to use conceptual thought to determine that which is absolute. But more charitably, one could read metaphysics as the attempt to remain truthful and hospitable to the hyperbolic nature of reality without being refused access to the potential transcendent dimensions of reality. Plato uses in his *Euthydemus* a wonderful image to describe metaphysical thinking, namely the clumsy play of children running after birds.⁵⁸ This image calls to mind a very serious sense of playfulness in attempting to grasp what is elusive. Metaphysics, in this perspective at least, could be defined as the inspired attempt to render comprehensible what perennially eludes. This is not the textbook caricature of metaphysics as the systematic and totalizing mode of thought that uses apodictically rigorous first and final principles. Metaphysics could be the attempt to inquire reasonably into the transcendent nature of eventful reality without thereby reducing the poetics of transcendence to immanent logic. Caputo at one time even grants this possibility in a paragraph in which he is likely contemplating the metaxological philosophy of William Desmond⁵⁹:

Of course, if one dials down the word "metaphysics" a notch or two and takes it to mean an account of the deep structures of our *experience*, the work of going beyond a description of what is happening in order to reach an interpretation of what is going on *in* what happens, then a poetics might by quite a stretch be called a certain "metaphysics." But this would be of so radically muted and experiential a kind that it would be far better described as "phenomenological ontology," and then it would need to be muted one more time as a quasi-transcendental post-phenomenological ontology-cum-hauntology.⁶⁰

I would suggest that there is a more productive interrelationship between faith and reason that can avoid two pitfalls: either faith is superior to reason or reason is superior to faith. In a manner of speaking, the pitfalls are respectively the poverty or hubris of philosophy: one expecting everything (about the transcendent) from faith and the other expecting everything from philosophy, but there are ways beyond this. While there are numerous contemporary authors from which this claim could be illustrated (John Milbank, William Desmond, Jacques Maritain), I think the issue at hand can be most helpfully illustrated by turning to Richard Kearney's hermeneutical philosophy of religion because here the issue of

⁵⁷Caputo voices this critique primarily in *Radical Hermeneutics*.

⁵⁸"We were really quite ridiculous—just like children after crested larks; we kept thinking we were about to catch each one of the knowledges, but they always got away" (Plato, *Euthydemus*, 728 [291 b]).

⁵⁹See in particular Desmond, *Being and the Between*; Desmond, *God and the Between*.

⁶⁰Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 101. I have elsewhere placed Caputo's and Desmond's philosophy of religion into confrontation with one another. See Vanden Auweele, "The Poverty of Philosophy," 411–432.

recognition, or a lighter version of it as “discernment,” assumes central importance.⁶¹

Kearney’s approach has the upshot of determinatively removing God from the sphere of complete indecision and rapturous trauma, by introducing an aspect of divine self-revelation in the moment of religious hospitality. Philosophy of religion has, in Kearney’s view, already accomplished three “reductions”; his own philosophy accomplishing a “fourth reduction” of micro-eschatology. The first reduction is phenomenology’s reduction that brackets common sense experience; the second reduction is existential phenomenology that turns our attention to the ontological difference; the third reduction is the theological turn in phenomenology that focusses our attention on the gift of being. Finally, the fourth reduction focuses us on the “face-to-face encounters of our ordinary universe.”⁶² By this Kearney emphasizes that God is found “in the most quotidian, broken, inconsequential, and minute of events that the divine signals to us” or that “from such instantaneous and recurring incarnation no one and no thing, no single this or that, is excluded.”⁶³ Those events, in which God can be found, Kearney calls “anatheistic wagers,” i.e., “an invitation to revisit what might be termed a primary scene of religion: the encounter with a radical Stranger who we choose, or don’t choose, to call God.”⁶⁴ Anatheism can be likened to theatrical *anagnorisis* which is a dramatic moment where a certain discovery is made that can accomplish a powerful personal transformation. Literary examples are legion: Shakespeare’s Hamlet discovering that his father was murdered, Dostoevsky’s Raskolnikov coming to consciousness of his guilty conscience in Sonya’s reading of the story of Lazarus, or even Luke Skywalker finding out that Darth Vader is his father. *Anagnorisis* is then a moment of unveiling, but in that unveiling it is the other who reveals himself as something recognizable to the spectator. It is, in other words, not the spectator who predetermines the identity of the other, but the other who self-reveals part of him or herself by means of recognizable terms.

The confrontation with God’s events is not unlike such dramatic unveilings and the relevant personal responses to these events co-determine our transformation. Kearney enumerates five essential concurrent characteristics of the response to the anatheist wager, namely imagination, humor, commitment, discernment and hospitality.⁶⁵ Let us focus on the last two: discernment is the prudence to hesitate and be wary of the potential destructiveness of absolute openness: “Reading the face of the other is difficult, often disorienting and puzzling, but it is never completely impossible. If it were, every meeting with the divine would be a blind date.

⁶¹Kearney, *The God Who May Be*; Kearney, *Anatheism*.

⁶²Kearney, “Epiphanies of the Everyday: Toward a Micro-Eschatology,” 6.

⁶³Kearney, “Epiphanies of the Everyday: Toward a Micro-Eschatology,” 3–4.

⁶⁴Kearney, *Anatheism*, 7.

⁶⁵Kearney, *Anatheism*, 40–56.

... Not every stranger is divine. There is the other who kills and the other who brings life";⁶⁶ hospitality is then the profound willingness to accept the Stranger and through that response the Stranger becomes not quite so strange anymore because He could reveal Himself to be God. This hospitality does not reduce the other to the same, or the Stranger to the self, but allows the Stranger to unveil something about himself when we accept to be open to its message.⁶⁷ This element of disclosure in gracious acceptance is a welcome counterweight to some of the rigor of, among others, Levinas and Derrida in their call for unconditional acceptance of Otherness.⁶⁸

While Caputo is probably correct in objecting to a dialectical logic of incarnation and reconciliation (Hegel), his recourse to a "poetics of the event," which is an "evocative [not demonstrative] discourse that articulates the event" or a "divine logic that is outright madness from the point of view of the 'world'" seems excessive.⁶⁹ Caputo has been criticized, rightly I think, for promoting such "madness" since this makes it very hard to distinguish "God" from the "*il y a*" or "*das Man*": "I am troubled with this notion of God that is so 'other' that God might end up being confused with the *il y a*."⁷⁰ The hospitable confrontation with the event can be an occasion to welcome the Other as other but at the same time it can mitigate any absolute incomprehension.⁷¹ Hegel wants to accomplish something similar. The happening of divine disclosure does not, in his view, follow a line of revelatory trauma, but of the necessity of revelation and incarnation: "The necessity that God has appeared in the world in the flesh is an essential characteristic . . . for only in this way can it become a certainty for humanity."⁷² Hegel connects this certainty to the ultimate unity of divine

⁶⁶Kearney, *Anatheism*, 45.

⁶⁷Kearney gives reference to numerous religious stories (not all of them Christian) that show how hospitality transforms the threatening Stranger into an agapeic God: Abraham receiving three strangers into his tent, Mary being willing to listen to the message of the Holy Spirit, etc. (Kearney, *Anatheism*, 17–39).

⁶⁸This consideration is linked to Kearney's general hermeneutical approach, which aims to counter the emphasis postmodern theology tends to put on the absolute unknowability of the Other. In *The God Who May Be*, Kearney emphasizes that "it is still possible to respect the otherness of the Exodic God without succumbing to the extremes of mystical postmodernism" (Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 34). Also, he is rather hesitant about the "metamorphosis of the messianic other into 'every other . . . no matter what other.' If every other is wholly other, does it still *matter* who or what exactly the other is?" (*The God Who May Be*, 73). Against these lines of thoughts, he emphasizes that "God needs to be *recognized* for us to be able to say that it is indeed God we desire (and not some idol, simulacrum, or false prophet)" (*The God Who May Be*, 75).

⁶⁹Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 103.

⁷⁰Benson, "As Radical as One Needs to Be," 66.

⁷¹At one point, Kearney signals this as a difference between Caputo's and his view of undecidability: "You talk about that space before the dichotomy into theism and atheism. That is where I think anatheism is also initially located. The question of whether there is something after that space, undecidability in terms of deciding between theism and atheism—and I am for such a decision—that may be a difference between us" (Caputo and Kearney, "Anatheism and Radical Hermeneutics," 202).

⁷²Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, 238.

and human nature which is historically first manifested in consummate religion as Christ, the Son of God, but must be recognized historically as the progressive deification of humanity as a whole. Humanity, in other words, must historically and logically come to recognize itself as spirit. This is what George di Giovanni calls the view that "religion has been liberated" at the end-process of history since it no longer requires faith. The spirit has namely released religion from its seclusion from all other rationality.⁷³

Hegel's philosophy allows for the process of history to be recognized as the self-development of a kind of divine self-transcending rationality. The downside of this is that God is not here recognized as the traditional Orthodox God thought as transcendence, but as the historical process of self-transcending spirit. For some, this blends nicely with their own appreciation of (Christian) religion, but for others this is a concession bought at too high a price. As such, they would rather be content with the absolute unknowability of God and the gracious acceptance of the event rather than given in on God's transcendence—even if this transcendence then becomes a "trace" in immanence. In desiring God, for Caputo, we have got not a clue what it is we desire: "The desire awakened by the name of God is inscribed deep in our unconscious, leaping to our lips at times of birth and death, of entreaty and gratitude, of desperation and separation, of surpassing joy and the heart-rending sorrow, of peace and danger."⁷⁴ Caputo turns to the Derridean notion of unconditional hospitality and the impossible desire for the other at some length in *The Insistence of God*. Taking up an example that recurs in Kearney, Caputo points out that "a disturbing visitation in the night is an uncertainty in which all the sting of 'perhaps' is perfectly concentrated, in which the dynamics of 'perhaps' and a theology of insistence is both modelled and put in play."⁷⁵ He then continues by suggesting that hospitality involves "[saying] 'come' in response to what is calling, and that may well be trouble."⁷⁶ Such hospitality can be conditional in the sense that it involves welcoming the same or the known, but also unconditional in welcoming "the other, the *tout autre*, that is, taking a chance on the event, which may be trouble."⁷⁷ Notice the repeated use of the phrase "may be trouble" which calls to mind, on the one hand, a factor of unknowing ("may") and, on the other hand, a factor of danger ("trouble"). Caputo further emphasizes that "the inability to identify the one who is coming, who may perhaps be here to do us harm, and to predict or control this coming is not a passing problem with hospitality. . . . It belongs to the very structure of hospitality."⁷⁸

⁷³di Giovanni, "Faith without Religion, Religion without Faith," 383.

⁷⁴Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 289.

⁷⁵Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 39.

⁷⁶Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 39.

⁷⁷Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 40.

⁷⁸Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 40.

The focus of the unknowability and the unpredictability is, however, not on the other who comes knocking, but on the happening of the event of the knocking at the door. To open the door on an unknown event which is always to come might appear imprudent, but Caputo emphasizes that this is part and parcel of the religious experience. It is a divine folly to be willing to welcome the totally other: "I am not calling for stupidity but for a judgment that is willing to take a risk."⁷⁹ But why not allow when the event is welcomed—or when the event-to-come is patiently awaited—that the very act of hospitality mitigates the "trouble" at the door by symbolic or narrative recognition?⁸⁰ Caputo's perspective neglects a "third way," namely to have rationality informed by the encounter with radical transcendence, and through that encounter enriched in its conceptual potential. In a manner of speaking, the hubris of philosophy can be broken by recognizing its poverty but that poverty can be enriched by the encounter with the Other. Metaphysics does not have to remain trapped in subjective categories but can be thrown beyond itself (literally the meaning of the hyperbolic, *hyper-ballein*) and its self-obsession. A potent illustration of such potential can be found in the Thomistic *analogia entis* where the essential difference between immanent logic and transcendent poetry is recognized, but which at the same time refuses to limit thought to immanence. Instead, there is a passageway for thought, a stairway to Heaven if you will, that leads to higher things.

5. Conclusion

Despite the attractiveness of some aspects of Hegel's philosophy of religion for postmodern philosophers of religion, most contemporary authors distance themselves from Hegel's philosophical emphasis on reconciliation through recognition. Instead, they prefer to decapitate Hegel's philosophy of religion and remain with the radical kenotic moment of divine self-realization. The Heavens might be empty but the immanent realm is pregnant with the "name of God." I have argued that to distance oneself from the Hegelian interpretation of dialectical recognition might have been necessary, but this should not give cause for a complete rejection of all recognition and discernment. The reason for this is that for Hegel the divine other is never really the radical Other of the Christian tradition or postmodern theology. For Hegel, the self-revelation of the other encompasses all; for those who are insightful and privy to the cunning of reason, they will see that the same rational spirit pervades all. A stronger sense of otherness is indeed needed to account for those moments of rapturous divine grace, but not at the expense of all potential recognition. Such a

⁷⁹Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 41.

⁸⁰I would like to express my gratitude to the anonymous reviewer of *Faith and Philosophy* for pressing me on the issue of unconditional hospitality. Indeed, Caputo deals more fully in this in his more recent *The Folly of God*, where he turns to the theology of Tillich to address this issue. A comprehensive discussion of this latest work would, however, take up more space than can be allotted to it here.

thing can be found in the religious hospitality to the Stranger who reveals Himself as God in that moment of generosity. Metaphysics then becomes enabled by religious passion to recognize the Other as other.

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