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‘Undecidability’ or ‘Anticipatory Resoluteness’

Caputo in Conversation with Heidegger

Sylvie Avakian

Abstract

In this article I will consider John D. Caputo’s hermeneutics of deconstruction or what he calls ‘radical hermeneutics’, with ‘undecidability’ as its major theme, in conversation with Martin Heidegger’s notion of ‘resolute existence’. Through an examination of the different positions of Caputo, Heidegger, and also Kierkegaard, Derrida and Meister Eckhart on the possibility of repetition, the hermeneutical circle and the mystical way of prayer and faith, I am arguing that deconstruction is not the end of hermeneutics, it is not the final destination of an interpretative task, and thus deconstructive hermeneutics has to concede a reconstructive process. Further, I am arguing that Caputo’s ‘radical hermeneutics’ is too reductionist to keep any meaning for the hermeneutic enterprise to aspire to. I am contending, rather, that it is resolute existence that theology aspires to as it is a move beyond ‘undecidability’.

Keywords: Radical hermeneutics · Undecidability · Resolute existence · Martin Heidegger · Christian theology

Introduction

In this article I will consider John D. Caputo’s hermeneutics of deconstruction or what he calls ‘radical hermeneutics’, having ‘undecidability’ as its major theme, as it bespeaks most of what Caputo means by ‘radical hermeneutics’. Since John D. Caputo has been a commentator on Martin Heidegger, who I believe had significant influence on his works, I will bring Caputo’s notions of ‘radical hermeneutics’ and ‘undecidability’ into conversation with Heidegger’s notion of ‘anticipatory resoluteness’. My purpose behind bringing the thought of Heidegger into contact with Caputo’s contribution and also my purpose throughout this article is to answer two main questions. First, is it possible for deconstructive hermeneutics to concede a reconstructive process, or should it be satisfied with the emancipative effects of deconstruction? That is to ask: should one, at maximum, aim at deconstruction as a final

destination or a new understanding—which is characterized by disclosedness as the essential constituent of the human being—is possible to obtain, after exposing all speculative theories to critical examination? Second, if a reconstructive process, subsequent to deconstruction, is perceptible, how could such a process remain faithful to the claims of hermeneutics of suspicion, evade absolutism and metaphysics of presence and overthrow all speculative otherworldly justifications with their critiques?

Through this essay, and in an attempt to answer the above questions, I argue that Heidegger's 'anticipatory resoluteness', namely the resoluteness of the human being in anticipation of his/her death, which is an existential stance, moves beyond the mere critiques of 'radical hermeneutics' and makes the understanding—of God and—of one's ultimate potentiality for being—or meaning—possible. Through 'anticipatory resoluteness' an authentic selfhood and *authentic existence* emerge.¹ Further, this authentic selfhood evolves through a reconstructive process, which carries within its scope the overtones of deconstruction, the experience of repetition and authenticity and also the implications of *Gelassenheit*, as maintained by Heidegger in his later works. By this I am arguing that though Caputo's 'radical hermeneutics', characterized by 'undecidability', is an essential step toward authenticity, however it is not sufficient in order to attain a better understanding, namely, to bring the hermeneutical process into completion. Finally, I am arguing that Caputo's 'radical hermeneutics' is problematic and even erroneous when it comes to criticize Heidegger's thought portraying it as being founded on 'the myth of the early Greeks as a great beginning, an epoch of radiant gods and gleaming temples, and on the story of the second coming.'²

Let me first, however, and before entering a more detailed discussion of Caputo's position in contrast to Heidegger's 'anticipatory resoluteness', present concisely Caputo's notion of 'radical hermeneutics' or 'undecidability'.

¹ See Heidegger, (1962), 307-308, 354.

² Caputo, (1987), 187.

I. Caputo's 'Radical Hermeneutics' and the Notion of 'Undecidability'

In contrast to the history of metaphysics Caputo suggests 'a hermeneutics of facticity', as a 'process of radicalization', which should maintain the difficulty of life rather than trusting the certitude of all metaphysical claims. The hermeneutics, suggested by Caputo, is about radical rethinking 'from below' of the human reality and condition without presupposing certain claims and postulations. In this sense hermeneutics has more to do with φύσις (nature) than with meta-physics. Caputo's claimed hermeneutics resists philosophy's desire for presence, and he explains that such hermeneutics is founded on both existential and phenomenological bases, namely on Kierkegaard's undertaking of existential repetition and the genesis of the self, and Husserl's phenomenological method and the genesis of the sense. Caputo maintains that such hermeneutics is behind Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and thus the most important element in all Heidegger's works was 'to keep Being as presence in question.'³ Existential and phenomenological philosophies implement authenticity and enable the phenomena to show themselves as they are regardless of the ceaseless flow and the shaking of the whole surrounding, as Caputo would say, and both converge in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Hence, the challenge of hermeneutics is to keep the major questions open, rather than attempt at answering them. Describing his 'radical hermeneutics' Caputo writes:

Deconstruction does not mean to set itself up as the latest metaphysics for us to settle into. On the contrary, it means to throw us out into the cold, to divest us of the comforts of philosophy, to let the whole tremble, to restore the difficulty of things. We relinquish any claim to finding a competing metaphysics, or anti-metaphysics, in Derrida. We give up the need to land on our feet after a go-around with *différance*.⁴

The element of deconstruction—as previously described—is essential to Caputo's thought and it appears in most of his writings. In his *Radical Hermeneutics* Caputo claims that deconstructive hermeneutics brings the person to 'undecidability' which, according to him, is the way to keep

³ Caputo, (1987), 2. In many of his works Caputo refers to Kierkegaard, Husserl, Nietzsche, Meister Eckhart, Heidegger and Derrida as radical thinkers who, according to him, have moved beyond philosophical consolations.

⁴ Ibid., 187.

‘questions in questions’, and to safeguard the movement of thought. Hence, undecidability ‘produces not a definite effect but one which keeps shifting, ambiguous, impossible to decipher, unyielding to a *hermeneuein* which wants to fix its essence’.⁵ In one statement ‘undecidability’ is about ‘the truth that there is no truth.’⁶ Also in his *More Radical Hermeneutics* Caputo writes:

But my idea of hermeneutics is to tell it like it *is*, to make it unmistakably plain that there are no pure facts, only better or worse interpretations, and that interpretations are guided in advance by what Hans-Georg Gadamar does not shrink from calling “prejudices,” albeit productive prejudices.⁷

The importance of ‘undecidability’ to the whole notion of ‘radical hermeneutics’ is clarified here again:

There is nothing called experience, or perception, or the things themselves, outside the textuality of language and history. So the radical hermeneutic situation leaves us without firm footing.⁸

‘The whole idea behind the more radical hermeneutic style I am pursuing here is that we ought to adhere rigorously to the element of undecidability, that we not break off too quickly and reach a resolution of the hermeneutic conflict.’⁹

II. Repetition, Authenticity and the Move Forward

The notion of repletion and the move forward raises the question whether existential movement is possible and whether deconstruction can contribute to such a movement? This question has been addressed by Caputo, who referring to the importance of movement asks about the possibility of the human subject to live in time and experience progress without, on the one hand, losing one’s true identity in the flux or, on the other hand, secluding the self and getting it immersed into speculative thought?¹⁰ Following Heidegger in this, Caputo maintains that metaphysics, philosophy and even

⁵ Ibid., 188.

⁶ Ibid., 189.

⁷ Caputo, (2009), 221.

⁸ Ibid, 237.

⁹ Ibid., 241.

¹⁰ Caputo, (1987), 16.

ethics have always subverted ‘becoming’, ‘movement’ and genuine innovation indicating ‘being’ and law-controlled change instead, and this has been done through absurd logicism. Platonism has perceived time, movement and change as incompatible with philosophical thought and as the features of imperfection and of the fallen state of the primordial Being. Thus, metaphysics has hindered the emergence of anything new, rather it has maintained that motion is in need of recovery and recollection, namely of a movement backward to the original state. According to the Platonic perspective the real being is one in whom there is no movement; and knowledge is a return backward rather than a new discovery. Hence, through recollection, the human being, who owns the principles and the rudiments of all knowledge, remembers, or recollects whatever he/she already has had. The Platonic concept of *ἀνάμνησις* (*anamnesis*) maintained that there is no point in gaining knowledge since one needs only to recover that which has been previously obtained.¹¹ Aristotle, on the other hand, vindicated motion, opposing the teachings of the Eleatic school (a pre-Socratic school of philosophy which had influenced Platonism). Aristotle perceived motion as *το τι εν ειναι* (that which a thing was to be). It was through the Aristotelian understanding of dynamics of concrete existence and the sense of freedom, i.e., the movement from potentiality to actuality, that Søren Kierkegaard made room for existential change and progress. Kierkegaard argued against the Eleatic teaching on the permanent oneness of everything, which denies plurality and movement in the universe. He contended that philosophy in general discredits movement, since it lacks the courage to face the flux and to aspire to gain eternity in the present, and thus philosophy is scandalized by movement. Kierkegaard maintained that the Greeks had minimized the role of time and lacked the notion of temporality. ‘Greek culture did not understand the moment’. It ‘did not define it with a forward direction but with a backward direction.’¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 13-14, 18. Kierkegaard, (1901- 1906), III, 173-175.

¹² Kierkegaard, (1901- 1906), IV, 358. See also: Kierkegaard, (1980), 88.

In contrast to the Platonic notion of recollection, Kierkegaard maintained that it is through repetition that the human subject is capable of reaching at his/her true being.¹³ Repetition, in this sense, is not merely about remaining in the past; rather it is a movement forward, which receives its revelation from the future. The movement however is not toward an unknown novelty, one that is discontinuous with one's past; rather it is the possibility of one's becoming what one truly is. Kierkegaard writes: 'It is repetition in this pregnant sense as a task for freedom and as freedom.'¹⁴ Repetition here is perceived as freedom itself. '[F]reedom's supreme interest is precisely to bring about repetition.'¹⁵ Hence, repetition is a return to the self or a circling back on the being or the reality which the person has been all along and through repetition the notion is maintained that actuality must be produced again and again.¹⁶ As one chooses one's own self one returns to one's innermost reality and resolution, and hence comes to be the person whom he/she has been all along. 'He becomes himself, quite the same self he was before, down to the last significant peculiarity, and yet he becomes another, for the choice permeates everything and transforms it.'¹⁷

Caputo maintains that Kierkegaard's notion of repetition involves true motion in the sense of a movement forward, which perceives eternity as a possibility to be attained rather than recollecting the lost beginning or escaping time. Repetition involves true motion since it gives the chance for that which is repeated to become anew. Repetition in this sense is to mould one's identity and to possess it when confronted with the loss of the self in the chaos of the crowd. It is the freedom to produce one's personality and to move from a state to another, which is expressed in religious terms as the movement from sin to salvation. It is a moment of transformation toward more transcendent reality.¹⁸ Kierkegaard's project of repetition appears in what Heidegger calls retrieval (*Wiederholung*). For Heidegger, the human subject is equipped with an understanding which extends outward in order to

¹³ Kierkegaard, (1901-1906), III, 173-175. Kierkegaard, (1983), 131-133.

¹⁴ Kierkegaard, (1909-1948), IV: B, 117, 293; Kierkegaard, (1983), 312-313.

¹⁵ Kierkegaard, (1901-1906), IV: B, 117, 281-282.

¹⁶ Caputo, (1987), 12. See: Kierkegaard, (1909-1948), IV: A, 156; Kierkegaard, (1983), 326.

¹⁷ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, (1959), 227. See: Caputo, (1987), 29-30.

¹⁸ Kierkegaard, (1901-1906), III, 189; Kierkegaard, (1980), 149. See: Caputo, (1987), 19-21.

perceive the original being—or meaning—of an entity. This is what meant by Heidegger's claim that the being of the human subject is ahead-of-itself. Thus, hermeneutics carries on the flux and attempts to go ahead of it by expecting its movement and therefore by delineating its horizon or pre-structuring the flux.¹⁹

Incorporating Kierkegaard's notions of *kinesis* and repetition Heidegger described the human subject as a circular being in whom movement takes the form of an existential occurrence. Accordingly, the human subject is in circular movement as it attempts the retrieval of the being that one has all along been and has all along carried within oneself as potential. Thus the movement is both forward and one of retrieval, and it is a movement that can bring about the uttermost possibility for the being of the human subject since it circulates between the futurity of the human subject (*Zukünftigkeit*) and his/her being as it has always been (*Gewesenheit*).²⁰ In this sense the hermeneutic circle has in Heidegger an ontological dimension since understanding and meaning are closely related to being and existence. Hermeneutics is not possible when it is separated from ontology.²¹

Furthermore, authenticity is about *vor-laufen*,²² namely running forth or keeping the self on the run, it is the continuous attempt to keep oneself in motion despite the pressure from outside to surpass one's existential movement and force the human subject to come to a halt. In Heidegger's words this is what being-toward-death is. Death is never about a thing that took place in the past; nor is the movement towards death experienced in one's everyday reality necessarily as 'demise'. Rather death is something ahead of the human being and the anticipation of death, in Heidegger's thought, is 'one's ownmost possibility,'²³ since death is the end of the human being and the final goal *toward* which one's whole life and reality are directed. For Heidegger death—or the end—is 'conclusive [*abschliessende*] and determinative for Being-a-whole'. Hence, though, in this everyday movement,

¹⁹ Caputo, (1987), 52-53, 56,

²⁰ Martin Heidegger, (1962), 363.

²¹ Caputo, (1987), 60-62. Cf. Heidegger, (1962), 299-304.

²² This is taken from the German original for 'anticipatory resoluteness': *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*.

²³ Martin Heidegger, (1962), 302.

the human being is resolutely dying ‘factically’ in the world, yet one comes to be one’s true self. Hence, any attempt to evade death would contribute to inauthenticity.²⁴ The uttermost possibility of the being of the human subject occurs through giving one’s self up. This process itself is a cultivation of the self in the sense that one comes to accept one’s own movement toward death, namely toward becoming a whole. Authenticity means to take turmoil, trouble and unrest upon oneself resisting all claims of stability and security. Such movement is in no sense lacking love and hope. The role of resoluteness is clear here, ‘[b]ecause Dasein exists, it determines its own character as the kind of entity it is, and it does so in every case in terms of a possibility which it itself *is* and which it understands.’²⁵ Can the human subject ‘understand authentically’ death as his/her uttermost end? In one’s everyday reality whenever the human being comes to grips with his/her own death, namely with a movement toward that which is ‘not-yet’ or toward ‘the possibility of an existent Being-a-whole’,²⁶ a self-cultivating strive for authenticity and truth occurs, which is a constructive process, however advancing exactly in the reversed direction of all self-affirming, knowledge-based, absolutist statements of metaphysics and philosophy, and in this sense it is simultaneously a deconstructive strive. I contend that such a return to the self has its profound theological connotations beside the philosophical ones. Hence, in this sense, Heidegger is not merely a philosopher, but a more-than-a-philosopher, namely a theologian.²⁷

III. The Two Principles of Hermeneutics in Heidegger and Caputo

Since the human being is usually drawn to adopt the dominating traditional assumptions and to become the victim of metaphysics of presence Heidegger contends that the ontological setting-free of the human subject’s primordial being precedes the ‘hermeneutic circle’. Only through the first move the

²⁴ Ibid., 333. See: Caputo, (1987), 199-201.

²⁵ Heidegger, (1962), 304.

²⁶ Ibid., 303.

²⁷ My reading of Heidegger in this article is purely a theological-philosophical one. This is to say that I do not hold in mind any of the implications of his claimed entanglement with Nazi fascism. It is my contention that in order to address that particular domain of Heidegger’s thought or work one has to get engaged in a different research than the one I am engaged in here. Based on a theological-philosophical reading, it is possible to say that Heidegger’s notions of death and a return to the self are comparable to the Christian notions of death and resurrection.

second is made possible. This is where phenomenology is strictly bound to ontology. In the act of setting the primordial being of the human subject free violence is involved, since it requires the resistance and destruction of all prevailing understandings.²⁸ In this sense hermeneutics includes always the two principles of destruction (or critical deconstruction, as Heidegger calls it) and recovery, not only to understand the being of the human subject but Being as such and its temporality.²⁹ Hence, deconstruction which does not aim at retrieval and recovery is meaningless, while no recovery is possible without destruction.

Caputo claims that these are the two principles that run *Being and Time* and also his own work concerning 'radical hermeneutics'. Contrary to this, I contend that Caputo's notion of 'undecidability' and of 'radical hermeneutics' accomplishes successfully the first step of setting oneself free of all prevailing beliefs and demolishing all claimed 'pure facts', however without completing the hermeneutical circle, namely without reaching at a resolute decision or a recovery. Caputo rather stops at deconstruction, or destruction of all claims. He comes to criticize the 'hermeneutic projection' of Heidegger in *Being and Time* which, according to him, leads the person to realize oneself in the 'finished account' of human existence, based on which 'everything depends upon the preunderstanding which we possess.'³⁰ He goes on to criticize Heidegger's hermeneutics and its 'strategy of recovery' and 'knowing again' the possibility of 'a new philosophy of recollection' rather than a true repetition.³¹ Referring to Derrida's critique of Heidegger that he 'is implicated in metaphysics and its dream of the master name' and that 'Heidegger is caught within the hermeneutic frame, still a victim of the nostalgia for a truth,'³² Caputo continues: 'Heidegger has undertaken the closure (*Ende*) of the tradition, but he joins to this moment of active forgetting a work of return, retrieval (*Wiederholung*), and memorialization (*Andenken*).'³³

²⁸ Heidegger, (1962), 359. See: Caputo, (1987), 62-63.

²⁹ Heidegger, (1962), 22-23.

³⁰ Caputo, (1987), 80.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

³² *Ibid.*, 118.

³³ *Ibid.*, 119.

Contrary to Caputo's interpretation, I read Heidegger's resoluteness as openness to the vulnerabilities and the changes of an everchanging surrounding. Heidegger's 'anticipatory resoluteness' keeps the human being in an existential state where he/she encounters the possibility of death as outstanding and in facing such a possibility the human subject is exposed to change and mutability rather than experiencing a 'closure' or a 'memorialization' of the past. Caputo, failing to grant this, interprets resoluteness as something like a 'dream' or a 'master name'. It would be helpful to note here that as Jacques Derrida first made use of the notion of 'undecidability' he wanted by it the principle that troubles both polarities of a dichotomy, without conforming to any of the two possibilities. This principle breaks with any unwavering meaning of a text, regardless of whether it has been imposed by an author or by an interpreter. Further, 'undecidability' is to be involved in all ethico-political decisions, in order to preclude all sorts of totalization and plenitude. However, for Derrida, it is not possible to remain in 'undecidability', rather 'undecidability' 'calls for decision'.³⁴ Though movement and change assume 'undecidability', however, undecidability, whenever understood in the sense of 'there is no imposing truth' leads rather to authentic resoluteness, which is not the outcome of any constraining power. I am arguing here that hermeneutics of suspicion, whenever applied, strives to 'reach a resolution of the hermeneutic conflict' through a reconstructive endeavor. In this sense the two moves or principles are complementary rather than antagonistic. Human search for truth or meaning and any true experience of repetition would not be fulfilled merely by the destruction of all human means and channels, as Caputo solemnly and solely suggests, and understanding would not be attained without circling back on the being which one has originally borne.

IV. The Hermeneutic Circle, Meaning and Understanding

As maintained earlier, for Heidegger the hermeneutic circle is simultaneously about existential ontology, since meaning and understanding are basic to the being of the human subject. And thus the

³⁴ Derrida, (1988), 116

circle of understanding indicates the circular reality of the human being.³⁵ The human subject is in constant search for meaning. This is to say that lack of meaning necessarily endangers human life and existence. This has been the central thesis of Heidegger's whole thought, namely the bond between the human being and being, or meaning, and the role of the human subject to open oneself in resoluteness to being or meaning. In his early works, Heidegger is interested about describing the structure in which the human being exists. In *Being and Time* he had clearly criticized all traditional ways of perceiving Being as a universal (generic) object. His prior concern there was the meaning of Being and the meaning of the being of the human subject. Through projecting a certain horizon, things come to have meaning. Thus, meaning is supplied by the human being since only the human subject perceives it and apart from human reality there is no meaning, or at the least there is no search for it. However, Heidegger explains that such meaning or understanding is possible only through phenomenology, namely through letting "that which shows itself be seen from itself,"³⁶ hence, understanding never concedes to "free-floating constructions and accidental findings; it is opposed to talking over any conceptions which only seem to have been demonstrated".³⁷ Such understanding is always open for critical examination of the claimed truth, and is to remain vigilant to all attacks of popular conceptions and metaphysical speculations. Heidegger had made it clear that understanding assumes presuppositions and that understanding occurs when one finds the correct presupposition in relation to any matter.³⁸ Nevertheless, it is important to meet the correct presuppositions, or 'fore-structures', which do not violate the true being of the thing in concern. 'Fore-structures' or fore-conceptions need not be affected by the popular views and understanding, rather they have to have scientific grounds drawn from the thing, the subject of interpretation, itself.

This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential fore-structure of Dasein itself. *It is not to be reduced to the level of vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely*

³⁵ Heidegger, (1962), 363; Cf. Caputo, 1987), 79-80.

³⁶ Heidegger, (1962), 58.

³⁷ Ibid., 50.

³⁸ Ibid., 192, 195.

tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves. Because understanding, in accordance with its existential meaning, is Dasein's own potentiality-for-being.³⁹ [Emphasis added]

It is through the right presuppositions that the thing itself is elucidated, disclosed and set free from all misconceptions, and this is the reason why the whole process is a process of phenomenological hermeneutics. This is existential analytic, which brings the person to penetrate the true being of the human subject and of Being as such.⁴⁰ Heidegger is clear about the essential need for the authentic resolution of the human being in order to find out the different existential possibilities. He further had maintained that it is only through anticipating death that the human being comes to a resolution in which incidental and provisional possibilities are driven out.⁴¹

Only an entity which in its Being is essentially **futural** so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factual 'there' by shattering itself against death—that is to say, only an entity which, as futural, as equiprimordially in the process of **having-been**—can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be **in the moment of vision** for 'its time'. Only authentic temporality, which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate—that is to say, authentic historicity.⁴² [Emphasis original]

Thus, and Heidegger had warned about this, there is always the peril of turning the right presupposition and the genuine projection into an assertion or a proposition; then the danger arises of the abolition of authenticity through the threat of fallenness in the world.⁴³ By turning an authentic

³⁹ Ibid., 193. See also: 50, 195.

⁴⁰ Caputo, (1987), 72.

⁴¹ Heidegger, (1962), 435.

⁴² Ibid., 437.

⁴³ Ibid., 210, Cf. Caputo, (1987), 73.

projection into an objective assertion there is the threat that authentic meaning and experience fade away and thus one is left only with the empty shell of a proposition. It is in this sense that Heidegger, in his later works, is more concerned about the spiritual health of the modern human being. Hence, there he described the open 'region' itself, rather than the 'region' which allows the subject to comprehend an object from his/her standpoint, and he used *Gegnet* or 'that-which-regions' to refer to it. Thus, the *Gegnet* is that which cannot be thought 'fore', and which thinking cannot go beyond, while the *Gegend* is the 'region' of openness and any projection of a horizon is nothing else other than shrinking this open 'region' in order to befit human subjective purposes.⁴⁴ Further, Heidegger advocates meditative thinking and ridding oneself from the contentment of being surrounded with 'the metaphysics of presence' and conceptual argumentation. Such meditative thinking is in close contiguity to poetry and mysticism. In those works, Heidegger emphasized the openness of the human subject. The human being is in direct relationship with Being, he/she belongs to Being already and always. This indicates again the bond between the human being and meaning. The human being is naturally given meaning and understanding and also the possibility to give meaning. Any metaphysical version of the openness of the human subject and his/her primordial relationship to being—or meaning—would result in a violation of this relation. It would entail an objectification of the primordial unity. The human being belongs originally to the open 'region', which itself makes thinking, in the sense of letting be, possible so that the human subject may open him/herself to that in which he/she already is. The fallen humanity signifies humanity in its fallen state in the world, namely its attachment to the world. Hence, fallen humanity is 'not-being-its-self'; it is alienated and hidden from its own reality.

Caputo, on the other hand, comes to criticize what he calls the hermeneutic 'fore-structures' and the 'prethematic interpretation of the world' by the human subject and the whole hermeneutic circle through which the move from interpretation to understanding occurs. He claims that Heidegger's

⁴⁴ Heidegger, (1966), 64-66, 73, 83.

‘authenticity’ is carrying within itself ‘monuments to presence’,⁴⁵ maintaining that the later Heidegger became critical and suspicious of his earlier notion of transcendental-horizonal projection as initiated by the human subject to understand the beings and to reveal their true Being. Caputo contends that Heidegger, in his *Discourse on Thinking* and *A Letter on Humanism*, brings in the notion of thinking, namely a spontaneous thinking, which is not bound to any ‘fore-structures’ or projections, maintaining that Heidegger aims in those works at tracing the essence of the human being beyond his/her subjective reality and willingness, delimiting both transcendental and existential subjectivism. Hence, according to Caputo, thinking should be freed from constructions of the human subject and released from their obscuring effects, namely freed from all desires to set things out in accordance to one’s own making and planning.⁴⁶ However even in his later works, as his *On the Way to Language* (1959), and though—according to Caputo—Heidegger suggests a deconstructive, dismantling retrieval of the word ‘hermeneutics’, nevertheless, Caputo perceives in Heidegger’s hermeneut the one who can read and interpret a message, who bears him/herself the message of Being, the message that carries out the difference between Being and beings in any given era. Hence again the role of hermeneutics is perceived, by Caputo, as providing a horizonal projection concerning the Being of beings. Caputo contends that somehow here too the hermeneutic circle does not disappear; rather it is transformed into the circulation between the human subject and Being or the messenger and the message itself.⁴⁷ Caputo writes:

‘Even to think the ‘history of metaphysics’ as a ‘destiny of Being’ (*Seinsgeschichte*), to enclose it thus within the unified and undivided essence of ‘metaphysics,’ is to remain within the project of metaphysics and to arrest the play, to tame the flux. It is to organize it into a history and to center that history on a destiny—when all there is (*il y a*) is the plurality and plurivocity of dispatches flying in every different direction.’⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Caputo, (1987), 4, 70.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 99-100.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 104-105.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 170.

Hence, for Caputo Heidegger remains within the boundaries of metaphysics even in his later works and the notion of the ‘history of metaphysics’ serves nothing else than metaphysics itself and remains ‘within the project of metaphysics’ and of arresting the play or taming the flux. By this Caputo maintains that Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics and his later claims of truth as correspondence and *ἀλήθεια* are not sufficient since Heidegger has replaced Husserlian transcendental-horizonal meaning with the meaning of Being. Hence, Caputo maintains that Heidegger’s hermeneutics has failed to apply deconstruction since it attempted to determine the meaning or the truth of Being specially as Heidegger refers back to a primordial epoch—the early Greeks—where the message of Being has been most ‘sincerely’ given and ‘the myth of the early Greeks’ is perceived as ‘a great beginning’.⁴⁹ Caputo continues that even ‘Being’, ‘truth’ and ‘meaning’ are to be exposed to dispersion and that there is no such original state or a primordial beginning. One has mainly to be skeptic since there is no such thing called truth. There is no single truth, rather there are many truths. The human subject creates truths according to the need; he/she forms the truths and reforms them always. Thus, one must be liberated of the illusion of having one truth.⁵⁰

Caputo writes that Heidegger’s ‘whole project of ‘eschatology,’ so well encapsulated in the introductory paragraphs of the *Anaximander* essay, belongs to the project of onto-hermeneutics and privileges a certain epoch.’⁵¹ Deploying Heidegger’s own deconstructive critique, Caputo attempts at criticizing Heidegger’s thought claiming the need to go ‘beyond the Greeks’ and ‘beyond the eschatological Heidegger’, and maintaining that there is ‘no privileged native land or native language.’⁵² Referring to Heidegger’s words ‘today we must learn to ponder the former dawn on its

⁴⁹ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁰ Caputo here refers many times to the critique of Jacques Derrida. See: Derrida, (1978), 57, 95; Derrida, (1982), 62, 65, 123; See also Derrida’s “Sending: On Representation”, 322-323. However, it should be noted here that in his *Positions* Derrida says: ‘What I have attempted to do would not have been possible without the opening of Heidegger’s questions. And first ... would not have been possible without the attention to what Heidegger calls the difference between Being and beings, the ontico-ontological difference such as, in a way, it remains unthought by philosophy. But despite this debt to Heidegger’s thought, or rather because of it, I attempt to locate in Heidegger’s text ... the signs of a belonging to metaphysics, or to what he calls onto-theology.’ Derrida, (1981), 9-10.

⁵¹ Caputo, (1987), 182.

⁵² Ibid., 183-184.

own terms,'⁵³ Caputo contends that Heidegger's hermeneutic circle is nothing other than an 'eschatological circle'. According to this circle the message of the early Greeks, and of Anaximander, is about hearing the call of *eschaton*, namely the call for opening up for that which is coming, so that the end becomes a transition to a new beginning. In this sense all the history of Being will come to an end, or to the *eschaton*, through which a beginning will emerge. Hence, 'Being is inherently eschatological',⁵⁴ concludes Caputo. The circular hermeneutics and the rule of repetition appear—in Heidegger—in one's retrieval of the early Greek message of eschatology. Eschatology itself is about the return to the origin so that what comes forward is nothing other than the return to the primordial authenticity.

Now all this might hold as critique of Heidegger's hermeneutic circle and the notion of understanding if it were really his position. I don't believe it is. First, I contend that a deconstructive liberative hermeneutics, as it is maintained by Caputo, belongs to the essence of Heidegger's thought. Heidegger's legacy is the source of most—not only philosophical but also theological—ensuing claims of eradication of traditional thought and categories of metaphysics. Defending his own 'radical hermeneutics' Caputo says that his 'radical ethics, or an ethics of dissemination and of *Gelassenheit*', finds its ground in Socratic ignorance. And he continues: 'by an ethics of dissemination, I mean an ethics bent on dispersing power clusters, constellations of power which grind us all under.'⁵⁵ 'Its model is the Socratic work of showing up the contingency of every scheme.'⁵⁶ However, how is this different from Heidegger's hermeneutics? Though Caputo warns from identifying his 'radical hermeneutics' with the later Heidegger,⁵⁷ I maintain that most of what Caputo claims about the need for liberative-deconstructive hermeneutics, which sticks 'with the original difficulty of life', overcoming

⁵³ Ibid., 164, Cf. Heidegger, (1975), 18.

⁵⁴ Caputo, (1987), 160-161. Cf. Heidegger, (1975), 16-18. The quotation is from p. 18.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 259-260.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 260.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 98.

metaphysics, originates in Heidegger's thought disclosed not only in the later works, but also in *Being and Time*.

Second, such liberative deconstructive approach does not prevent a second move toward understanding, which is a basic element in the hermeneutic circle and for the being of the human subject, as Heidegger explains. As it was maintained earlier the two stages are complementary rather than opposing each other. Further the return to the origins, as it is described by Heidegger, does not mean what Caputo makes it out to indicate. Yes, Heidegger maintains that the early pre-Socratic Greeks have experienced truth as the unconcealedness of beings, or the openness of the beings to Being as such,⁵⁸ hence he could trace the original sense of phenomenology back to the Greeks. However, this has no existential connotation. Anticipatory resoluteness, maintained by Heidegger, is a return to the human origins, namely to the true self. Such a return is not in any way a literal return to the beginning of some historical era, as Caputo argues. Such a return to one's origins is an inner determination of truth and meaning which has nothing to do with any outer factor.

Finally, and though Heidegger himself expresses his disappointment and the rejection of several aspects of his early works, nevertheless I argue that Heidegger's standpoint does not change in both his early and later works.⁵⁹ Heidegger's essential concern has been the question of Being and its relation to the human subject, and his/her response through anticipatory resoluteness. This primary concern has been treated by the means of phenomenology, which is implicated in the search for meaning and its source. This is to say that Heidegger, throughout his works, was concerned with that which is meaningful and intelligible to the human subject, rather than any sense of objectivism or realism.

In his *Contributions to Philosophy* (written 1936-38) Heidegger elucidates the relationship between the human being and Being or meaning, which is the core of his whole thought, and which is

⁵⁸ Heidegger, (1994), p. 88. Cf. Heidegger, (1984), § 26.

⁵⁹ This is what Heidegger himself writes in his *Letter on Humanism*, (1993), 231-232.

the prior meaning of *die Kehre*—or the turn—in Heidegger’s thought. It implies “reciprocity” (*Gegenschwung*), namely the reciprocal relationship between being, or meaning, and the human subject, or between the need *for* the human subject to give meaning and his/her dependence *upon* meaning.⁶⁰ Hence, the turn in no way signifies any major shift in Heidegger’s thought during the 1930s, as Caputo maintains. The problem is in the key-terms used by Heidegger—such as ‘being itself’, or ‘the being of the beings’—which are metaphysical terms deriving from pre-phenomenological objective realism. These hinder most of the times the perception of Heidegger’s deeper task, namely to perceive being phenomenologically rather than in its objective sense.⁶¹ Far from their traditional-ontological connotation of what is real Heidegger has reinterpreted these terms into their phenomenological meaning. Accordingly, and for the sake of a better understanding of Heidegger, I suggest—and I follow Thomas Sheehan in this—to drop those metaphysically oriented terms and speak instead of the human being or the human subject in his/her search for meaning and his/her relationship to the source of meaning.⁶² In Heidegger’s later works the region itself is where meaning is possible and that which regions is nothing else than that which makes the reception of meaning possible, namely the “meaning-giving-source”.

As early as 1919, Heidegger explains that “the meaningful is primary and immediately given to me without any mental detours across thing-oriented apprehension.”⁶³ And then, in 1955, Heidegger further writes:

As soon as I thoughtfully say “human nature,” I have already said relatedness to meaning. Likewise, as soon as I thoughtfully say: the meaning of the meaningful, I

⁶⁰ Sheehan, (2010), 82. The Latin *reci-proci-tas* means “back-and-forth-ness” and this is exactly how Heidegger explains the relationship or the “oscillation” (*Erzittern*) between the thrownness of the human being into Being and his/her maintaining it. See: Heidegger, (1999), 177, 184- 185.

⁶¹ Sheehan, (2010), 83.

⁶² In this article I move back and forth between using those pre-phenomenological terms and their reduction to phenomenological senses. For example: *das Seiende* for Heidegger is “the meaningful”, while *das Sein* is that which gives meaning. Woody Allen summarizes the difference clearly when he maintains that “meaning is just another way of spelling being.” Sheehan, (2010), 83. See on this: Ebert, (2005), 852.

⁶³ Heidegger, (2000), 61.

have already named its relatedness to human nature. Each of the two members of the relation between human nature and meaning already implies the relation itself.⁶⁴

In 1969 Heidegger summarizes his thought in simple words: ‘The fundamental idea of my thinking is exactly that Being, relative to the manifestation of Being, needs man and, conversely, man is only man in so far as he stands within the manifestation of Being. One cannot pose a question about Being without posing a question about the essence of man.’⁶⁵ This is the central theme of Heidegger’s thought, namely the relationship between the human being and meaning, expressed in both his early and later works. This is to say that “man is by nature hermeneutical.”⁶⁶ Human reality is not possible without meaning, and the other way around is equally legitimate to say. In the light of this explanation, it is possible to perceive how Heidegger’s works move first from the human being to meaning or to world—and this appears in his *Being and Time*—and only later the reverse movement would be possible, namely from meaning, or from the world, to the human being. However, Heidegger could not accomplish the second step with the transcendental–horizontal method of *Being and Time*, according to which the human being is the one to project the horizon for meaning. In the 1930s, he shifted his methodology to a “*seinsgeschichtlich*” approach. Though Caputo has perceived this methodology as nothing other than remaining again with the metaphysical project, however for Heidegger ‘[t]he history of Being is neither the history of man and of humanity, nor the history of the human relation to beings and to Being. The history of Being is Being itself and only Being’.⁶⁷ Hence what is meant by “*seinsgeschichtlich*” is Being itself. In this perspective there would be no need for any projective activity to acquire meaning, rather meaning is *a priori* given with the human subject and the human subject is related naturally to the meaningful. Heidegger refers to the move from transcendental to “*seinsgeschichtlich*” methodology as a “leap”.⁶⁸ This variation, however, does not

⁶⁴ Heidegger, (1968), 79.

⁶⁵ Heidegger, Accessed online on 07.07.2014: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0003/000328/032860eb.pdf>
The Conversation is also available in Heidegger, (1990).

⁶⁶ Sheehan, (2010), 88.

⁶⁷ Heidegger, (2003), 82. Cf. Sheehan, (2010), 89-90.

⁶⁸ Sheehan, (2010), 92-93.

concern the core of Heidegger's thought, as has been maintained earlier; rather it is about the treatment of the bond between human being and Being, or meaning. Hence, the core of Heidegger's thought does not change though his methodology changes from transcendental to "seinsgeschichtlich".⁶⁹ What remains to say here concerns the role of the human being, who either embraces resolutely his/her essential involvement in giving-meaning, or in an act of inauthenticity he/she avoids any active role in relation to the source of meaning which is intrinsically hidden. Through this Heidegger intends to say that any determination of the essence of truth is not possible without the transformation of the human being, which is to say that no objective claim of truth is possible without it being necessarily accompanied with the human acknowledgment and resoluteness in relation to that truth.⁷⁰ Caputo, failing to grant this, confuses between the core of Heidegger's thought and the second sense of a change of Heidegger's methodology.⁷¹ He claims that Heidegger in his later works reconsidered his earlier 'transcendental-horizonal thinking' and viewed it as bearing the marks of Cartesian metaphysics, however, it is far from clear to me that this conveys Heidegger's position. Caputo has taken Heidegger's notions of 'being' or 'meaning' as historical and objective, attributing them to certain historical era, and this was not Heidegger's own intention. Contrary to Caputo's view, I contend that there is substantial continuity between Heidegger's early thought and later philosophy concerning the grounds of phenomenological analysis.

Heidegger's later work *Discourse on Thinking*,⁷² construes the experience of 'nothing' and of the surrender and withdrawal of the human being from the world of beings to the inner world of Being, or meaning, through the notion of *Gelassenheit*—or letting be. Such experience detaches the person from his/her earlier concerns of "what is", allowing the true being of "what is" to emerge. Hence,

⁶⁹ This shift is manifested in the movement from *Being and Time* to *Time and Being*.

⁷⁰ "The determination of the essence of truth is accompanied by the necessary transformation of man. The two are the same." Heidegger, (1984), 181.

⁷¹ As referred earlier the necessity of the first movement is explained in *Contributions to Philosophy* while the methodological change is described in "On the Essence of Truth" and "Letter on Humanism".

⁷² The German origin of *Discourse on Thinking*: Heidegger, (1960).

Gelassenheit is deeply connected in Heidegger's thought to the resolute being-toward-death which is the most profound meaning of authentic existence. As the main axiom of phenomenology is "to the things themselves", i.e. "letting something be seen", the notion of *Gelassenheit* comes to be the depth of any phenomenological perception. In the Christian sense, it is in the light of *Gelassenheit* that the Christian understanding of creation, incarnation, death and resurrection have their most profound meanings. The human subject has to experience nothingness, in the sense of diminishing the self to nothingness, in order that he/she might experience one's true self and God.

Conclusion

I have argued in this article that Heidegger's anticipatory resoluteness, namely one's resolute anticipation of one's own death, reaches far beyond Caputo's notion of 'undecidability' or radical hermeneutics. Anticipatory resoluteness, as it is a movement forward toward the future, is a movement toward the possibility of not remaining in the past rather of arriving at one's original state, namely it is a return to the self. This, however, does not renounce the important role of deconstructive hermeneutics, which sets aside all speculative claims of metaphysics and traditional assumptions, but it reaches beyond deconstruction toward a reconstructive process, which is by nature deconstructive and is open to self-examination and the critiques of hermeneutics of suspicion. I also argued that anticipatory resoluteness would not be possible without the experience of repetition and accomplishing the hermeneutic circle. In the hermeneutic process one is given meaning and understanding of God and of the self and only through such understanding authentic existence would be possible. Such existence carries within its scope the disposition of *Gelassenheit* as it entails giving one's self up or emptying the self from all its inauthentic expressions, so that it can truly run forth toward death. The task of *Gelassenheit* is thus a "task for freedom" and is "freedom".

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