THE EXISTANCE OF GOD: ON THE VERY IDEA OF RADICAL THEOLOGY

A Symposium with and on John D. Caputo

Speaker: John D. Caputo (philosopher/theologian)
Date: Friday October 27, 2017
Time: 13.30-17.45 hrs
Venue: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Main Building, PthU Filmzaal

This symposium is the fourteenth in a series of seminars as part of the project Metamorphoses of Christianity. John D. Caputo is the Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion Emeritus (Syracuse University), where he taught from 2004-11, and the David R. Cook Professor of Philosophy Emeritus (Villanova University), where he taught from 1968-2004. He is a hybrid philosopher/theologian who works in the area of radical theology and has spearheaded a notion he calls “weak theology,” by which he means a “poetics” of the “event” that is harbored in the name (of) God, or that “insists” in the name (of) “God,” a notion that depends on a theological reworking of the notion of event in Derrida. In his major works he has argued that interpretation goes all the way down (Radical Hermeneutics, 1987), that Derrida is a thinker to be reckoned with by theology (The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida, 1997), and that theology is best served by getting over its love affair with power and authority and embracing what Caputo calls, taking a phrase from St. Paul, The Weakness of God. A Theology of the Event (2006). In The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps (2013), he argues that God does not exist, God insists, and that God’s existence depends upon us. His recent work includes Hoping Against Hope: Confessions of a Postmodern Pilgrim (2015), a personal and intellectual autobiography of which the Dutch translation will be launched at the symposium. Caputo will briefly introduce his most recent work, followed by short critical responses by scholars who have published on his work.

The symposium is sponsored jointly by CLUE+ and the Stichting Stimulering Vrijzinnig Gedachtegoed.

Attendance is free of charge, but seats are limited to about 70.

Enquiries can be directed to Marius van Hoogstraten
marius.hoogstraten@uni-hamburg.de with the subject line, “Caputo symposium”
METAMORPHOSES...

- is an initiative of Willie van der Merwe (chair: philosophy of religion, VU Amsterdam) and Laurens ten Kate (endowed chair: liberal religion and humanism, UvH, Utrecht)
- creates an interdisciplinary context voor research by philosophers, theologians, art historians and theoreticians, and literary scholars, amongst others
- stimulate dialogue with contemporary writers and artists about the transformations of religion and secularity in the 21st century
- by providing a platform for exploration and innovation
- through a series of seminars, debates, lectures and performances

PROGRAM

13:30 - 13:45: Welcome and introduction by Willie van der Merwe and Laurens ten Kate

13:45 - 14:30: On the Very Idea of Radical Theology, lecture by John D. Caputo

14:30 - 15:15: Interview with John D. Caputo by Manuela Kalsky

15:15 - 15:40: Interval

15:40 - 16:00: Response by James Olthuys

16:00 - 16:20: Response by Rik Benjamins

16:20 - 16:40: Response by André van der Braak

16:40 - 16:50: Presentation of the Dutch translation of Caputo’s Hoping against Hope by Jan de Vlieger of Skandalon Publishers

16:50 - 17:45: Panel discussion between speakers and between speakers and audience

17:45: Drinks

Prof. James H. Olthuys is Emeritus Professor of Philosophical Theology at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Canada and psychotherapist at Christian Counseling Services, Toronto. He is the author of The Beautiful Risk: a new psychology of loving and being loved, editor of Religion With/Out Religion: The Prayers and Tears of John D. Caputo and of Knowing Other-wise: philosophy at the threshold of spirituality.

Prof.dr. Rik Benjamins is associate professor in dogmatics at the PThU in Amsterdam and holds a special chair in liberal theology. His main interest is in modern questions in postmodern contexts.

Prof.dr. André van der Braak holds the chair for Buddhist philosophy in dialogue with other philosophical traditions in the theology faculty of VU Amsterdam and has published recently on the question of truth and religious diversity.

Prof.dr. Manuela Kalsky holds the Edward Schillebeeckx Chair for Theology and Society in the theology faculty of VU Amsterdam and is the director of the Dominican Study Centre for Theology and Society (DSTS).