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THINKING THE ABSOLUTE EDGE BETWEEN ALTIZER AND LEAHY

Altizer and Leahy have provoked Copernican transformations in contemporary theological consciousness whose significance and magnitude cannot yet be fully gauged. Altizer, a mercurial spirit spurred by wild visions, essentially anarchist and heretical, iconoclast, debunker of all idols and gods of the tribe, heresiarch of the death of God, embodies the exceptional individual of the Kierkegaardian aesthetic. Wrathful, fiery, frenetic, and insomniac like Augustine, this apocalyptic revolutionary par excellence, the most God-obsessed theologian (per Mark C. Taylor), knows himself a sinner, remains tormented by the death of God and his own damnation. A *coincidentia oppositorum* in himself, he embodies what he refers to as the Western self-consciousness, subjectivity, the unique interior center and identity first introduced by Paul and Augustine as the reversal of Jesus's eschatological proclamation, and one that must be apocalyptically sacrificed for the sake of a new universal humanity and objective (if anonymous) consciousness. A theologian of Good Friday, of negation or *via negativa*, he lived out his own theology, lived out the death of God and the death of individual subjectivity passionately and intensely, without remainder. Much as an Old Testament prophet of apocalypse calls all — and himself first of all — into judgment, and has a glimpse of the new heaven and the new earth, Altizer simultaneously dreads the new dawning that heralds the death of our unique individual selves and welcomes the ecstatic joy of that loss, the absolute freedom of total presence.

With Leahy a new attunement of the spirit pertains: an amplitude of philosophical vistas reminiscent of Dante's Saturnine sphere of calm and silent contemplation, with the background horizon of the fixed stars. The experiential dissolution of individual subjectivity enacted by Altizer is completely absent: its work is done. This *is* the new heaven and the new earth envisioned and prophesized by Altizer, the transparent world of objectivity beyond the dialectics of being and nothingness, beyond the dualisms of modern self-consciousness and subjectivity, the pristine new world of an ecstatic consciousness. A newness of mind absolutely beyond Cartesian dualism is acceded, reminding one of Plato's highest *nous*, of the same nature as the ideas that uniquely it can contemplate and know. But this absolute new transparency of being and thinking is existence at the disposal of another. Alone, by itself, Platonic disincarnate contemplation is inapplicable to the *novitas mentis* and *novitas mundi* that constitute the apocalyptic actualization of Eucharistic sacrifice — Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection — effecting the transfiguration and transubstantiation of the entire creation. The world has become the divine body, spirit is matter the body itself. If Altizer is the thinker of *theologia negativa*, Leahy's thinking develops according to a *theologia*

superlativa: manifesting this transparent existence and objective consciousness at the disposal of another, infinitely creative and free, beyond dualities, beyond sovereignty.

The creative edge between Altizer and Leahy was forged during a complex and long-term process of immersion in one another's thinking as well as through ongoing conversation carried on in personal encounters. Leahy devoted to Altizer's work major and extensive portions of *Foundation: Matter The Body Itself* (1996), his magnum opus, and also *Faith and Philosophy* (2003), and Altizer responded in writing to Leahy's thinking in the most powerful terms.¹ The ontological-existential edge that conjoins and distinguishes them in complex ways brings Altizer's apocalyptic theology and Leahy's thinking now occurring into a paradoxical atonement as a continuous, unitary structure. Here I consider three aspects of this edge: total presence, eucharist, and death of God.

TOTAL PRESENCE: IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

"Nothing is more distinctive of the biblical tradition or traditions than the centrality therein of Word or speech. . . . Here God is not simply the object of speech, but the subject of speech as well, a subject which the Christian identifies as Word of revelation."² With this declaration Altizer begins *Total Presence*, a quintessence of his theology, a less cryptic if also less poetic work than his magnum arcanum *The Self-Embodiment of God*, commencing the descent into speech and history and revealing the terms of a covenant regarding his speaking of, to, for God, his *theo-logia*.³ He listens and hears voice speaking itself from genesis to apocalypse, a paradoxical and radicalized "logocentric" theology emerging out of the myriad biblical and

¹ For Leahy's commentary on Altizer, see D. G. Leahy, *Foundation: Matter the Body Itself* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), especially the chapters "Revolutionary Metanoesis: Foundation of Society Itself," "American Thought and the New World Order," "America after Death: The Universality of God's Body," and "The New Beginning: Beyond the Post-Modern Nothingness"; "Nietzsche, Levinas, and the Death of God" in *Faith and Philosophy: The Historical Impact* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003); and "The Diachrony of the Infinite in Altizer and Levinas: Vanishing without a Trace and the Trace without Vanishing," in *Thinking Through the Death of God: A Critical Companion to Thomas J. J. Altizer*, ed. Lissa McCullough and Brian Schroeder (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 121-22. For Altizer's commentary on Leahy, see Thomas J. J. Altizer, "D. G. Leahy," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*, ed. Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winquist (New York: Routledge, 2001), 214-15; *Living the Death of God: A Theological Memoir*, foreword by Mark C. Taylor (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 5, 50-52, 151-52, 165, 171, 174-75; "Appendix: D. G. Leahy and the Triple Nothingness of the Godhead," in his *The Apocalyptic Trinity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 151-70; "Introduction" and "Adieu," in his *The Call to Radical Theology*, ed. and with an introduction by Lissa McCullough, foreword by David E. Klemm (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), xxix, xxxiin6, 134.

² Thomas J. J. Altizer, *Total Presence: The Language of Jesus and the Language of Today*, 2nd. ed., foreword by Lissa McCullough (Aurora, CO: Noesis, 2016), 1-2. In this section of my essay, in which I offer a close reading of *Total Presence*, the in-text pagination refers to this book.

³ Altizer, *Total Presence*, 1; *The Self-Embodiment of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

church traditions, alternatively orthodox and heretical, that have shaken up and recast consciousness and world in the fires of revolution.⁴ This God is “not only a revealed God, but also a revealing God, a speaking God” (2). A speaking God is Word or speech as the negation and antithesis of silence, thus speaking eschatologically the perishing of the silent God with a Word that irreversibly becomes flesh: total presence. Altizer engages in a *sui generis* phenomenology of silence, speech, and hearing as an epic unfolding of a dialectical-dialogical encounter between God and humanity. Arguably, the question whether Christianity can come to know a God who is ultimately silent without reversing its original ground, without betraying its essence, will guide Altizer’s entire theological project. Having forged his vision in conversation with German idealism, which brought the nothing into philosophical attention—in particular Hegel’s dialectics of being and nothing—Altizer’s is a dialectical God, a God actualized as becoming by way of self-negation and self-emptying. The death of God is the moment of completion of this actualization, the kenosis of original silence into Word and flesh.

The primal event of total presence occurs in the synoptic gospels’ eschatological proclamation of the Kingdom of God, called forth by Jesus’s parabolic language as a speaking event, a “conjunction or coinherence of action or plot and logia or saying . . . praxis and voice” (4-5). It is an auditory not visual event that commands total attention in the here and now, a kairoic now that breaks into linear time.⁵ The eschatological now erases “any beyond which is only beyond” (6-7). Here “speech is an incarnation of world in the pure immediacy of voice,” while all distance vanishes; such speech calls its hearer out of a world which is silent and apart and into a world which is embodied in the full actuality of voice (7).

The parables do not speak about the Kingdom of God, rather they *enact* the Kingdom of God in the full paradoxicality of a time and space that is already/not yet. The immediate actuality of the parables calls for total attention, rendering all intentionality and identity incarnate here and now (10). The reversal of the entire given world of meaning and identity provokes an explosion in the hearer that Altizer associates with an eschatological judgment, both subjective-existential and cosmic or objective. As silence passes into speech, all horizons and meanings outside this immediacy of speech-hearing are negated and reversed. In this hearing, the hearer is

⁴ Altizer’s use of the word as a self-emptying center is certainly paradoxical. There is no association of Altizer’s thought to early patristic logocentric theology, nor to what Derrida labeled “logocentrism.” For Altizer the kenotic Word speaks, thus breaking up the primordial silence or transcendent God. This “center” is an absolutely kenotic center. Logocentric here refers to the centrality of word or speaking as self-emptying of original silence and transcendence.

⁵ The primordially of speech and the auditory over vision should not be interpreted as Altizer’s denial of or giving secondary role to vision broadly construed. In fact once spoken into world and flesh, the Word, the auditory becomes visual. Thus, Altizer’s apocalyptic theology is emphatically and obsessively visionary theology, centered on visual imagination expressed in epic and art as his *History as Apocalypse* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985) and *The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake*, 2nd ed. (Aurora, CO: Davies Group, 2003) abundantly certify.

radically changed since hearing is both self-negating and self-realizing. The Kingdom of God is not distant and apart, it speaks in the actuality of voice. Thus voice is the originating center of the New Testament, and actually speaks an immediate and total presence, it is the total negation of silent identity, and of all individual meaning and self-enclosed identity that is only itself, and invokes totality here and now. This speech, a rupturing of silence, is all in all: it ends all identity that does not or cannot speak (11-13).

Prophetically, Altizer recognizes total presence in a contemporary all-pervading anonymity—a living impenetrable presence among us and also deeply within us, a new totality pervading our modes of speech and silence unlike any previous images of totality previously encountered in Dante, Bosch, or Shakespeare. What is different now has to do with a radical change in our sense of self (19-20). This insight becomes a premonition of Leahy's thinking now occurring, one marked absolutely by the vanishing of self. Altizer identifies the historical birth of self-consciousness in Christianity with Paul and Augustine. This self-consciousness continued in Western mysticism and developed in Protestantism with Luther, Calvin, Milton, Rembrandt, as an increasingly unique and autonomous selfhood, which is recognized by Hegel as the ground of Western and Christian consciousness and of modernity.⁶ While Hegel both brought self-consciousness into full philosophical expression and conceptually realized its end, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche recreated this end subjectively. Self-consciousness in the modern world emerged as a dynamic and self-realizing totality, transforming and dissolving its original identity (21).

If with Paul and Augustine self-consciousness emerged as a divided, wounded consciousness, a consciousness of guilt or bad conscience under judgment or self-judgment, self-consciousness ended with Beckett under self-judgment (24). Altizer reads the major articulations of Western philosophical, epic, and artistic traditions as undeniable evidence of his thesis; he follows the dialectical movement of self-consciousness that has continually advanced through self-negation in a series of revolutionary apocalyptic negations and reversals of previous forms and identities.

Given this genesis and history of self-consciousness, he questions the meaning of late modern anonymity that affects both the human and the divine subject, and finds expression in an all-comprehensive iconoclasm present in literary and artistic works. Van Gogh's late paintings are icons of our world and constitute themselves as complete antitheses of traditional icons. Here, neither the human nor God is visible, at least not in any traditionally recognizable form. Although darkness and chaos are absent from Monet's late paintings, these are no less empty of either God or human centers or identities. Altizer argues, however, that these visions are visions of an immanent totality or total presence that may still be identified as visions of God. The absent God is clearly not the "sovereign transcendent and personal Lord" but an anonymous center of divinity that we recognize in our intense

⁶ The genesis of self-consciousness with Paul and Augustine as a torn, self-lacerating consciousness is one of Altizer's principal claims that he had previously developed in "Paul and the Birth of Self-Consciousness" and "Augustine and the Foundation of Western Christendom," in *History as Apocalypse*, 63-78, 79-96.

response to it (33–34). Since our own identity has been grounded in God, a mysterious, unknowable, anonymous God will be the ground of an anonymous human center and identity.

The way in which anonymity calls to anonymity updates Psalm 42:7: “The deep [abyss] calls to the deep [abyss].” Altizer proposes that the totality of vision and the presence of a cosmic and universal vision is essentially grounded in the anonymity of both God and the human being, thus presupposing the vanishing of a vision centered in an interior and individual identity (30). He emphatically maintains that our anonymity does name God if only because it embodies a total presence that we can see and to which we respond by embodying a pure immediacy, one that we know was a response to the I of God:

Just as a purely anonymous vision is impossible apart from the loss or dissolution of an interior and immanent center, so likewise is it impossible apart from the loss or reversal of a transcendent ground or center. Both of these losses or dissolutions or reversals are present in the depths of our anonymity, and we know them to be present when we embody a pure immediacy in response to a totally anonymous presence. And we know or remember that this is an immediacy which once was a response to the I of God. (35)

What does Altizer mean by total presence? One of the main articulations of his visionary theology – biblical and systematic in its comprehensiveness – is the historical reversal and negation of Jesus’s eschatological proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The reversal and negation, initiated by Paul, were made definitive with Augustine’s transformation of the original ground into a radical dualism, a dualism that continued to affect Western thinking for 1,500 years, until the rediscovery of the eschatological identity of Jesus and the reversal of the reversal in modernity (43).

The eschatological parabolic language of Jesus embodies and calls forth total presence: this total presence is the fullness of God, here and now, the Kingdom of God. The God of the Kingdom is the present God, God of the incarnation, thus the absolute antithesis of the transcendent pre-incarnational God: the God that Jesus calls *Abba* (49). In opposition to pre-exilic and post-exilic prophetic voices, embodying negative power, Jesus’s voice is an anonymous voice:

A naked and faceless voice, freed of every spatial source and horizon, its presence negates horizon as such, embodying a presence that is totally present here and now. Here then voice as voice is present and immediately present in its most total form and identity. This is a total presence of voice which can realize itself only by dissolving every other form of presence. Its very identity as a totality of voice brings an end to all identity which is not present in voice. (42)

This anonymous voice is the voice of the *parousia* or final and total presence and is the center of the original language of Christianity, the ground of modern art and literature (44). Total presence enacts a “shattering [of] every individual center of identity” and it was only the reversal of this total

presence and shattering that construed the Western identity of God as pure transcendence (45). The eschatological proclamation announces the Kingdom of God as the actual total presence of God. This actuality and totality is simultaneously affirmation and negation, salvation and judgment, redemption of the world and end of the world. The total presence of God calls forth the negation of all other presence and identity of God (47–48). Since the pre-eschatological, preincarnate identity of God does not name the fullness of God's presence, it becomes a partial, dark and demonic identity, misleading and idolatrous, other than total and ultimate. In this light a preincarnate, above and before, beyond, wholly other, transcendent God – as Blake, Hegel, Melville realized – can only be identified as Satan. Eschatological presence and faith opposed both classical vision and biblical transcendence, the God of total presence is opposed to both the Homeric gods and the Old Testament God. Negated and lost in the early reversal of Christianity, total presence was only regained with the end of Christendom and the dawn of modernity (51–53).

Altizer identifies a revolutionary historical forward-movement sourced in apocalypticism that caused the transformation of European consciousness, manifest in all domains of life. Arguably this revolutionary and apocalyptic energy accomplishes a progressive incarnation of God the wholly other, an immanentization of transcendence, thus, a reversal of the reversal. He explains that this movement of historical proportions is a consequence of the impact of the biblical revelation upon the fullness of history, the full actuality of society and consciousness, and is not just limited to the history of the church (62). Through Dante, Michelangelo, Mozart, one can witness as many attempts at *coincidentia oppositorum* of transcendence and immanence, Christ and Satan, God and humanity, achieving the immediacy of total presence, whether in the humanization of the face of God in poetic or plastic vision (as in Dante, Michelangelo), or in the absence of alien transcendence and numinous awe resulting in the harmony of apocalyptic coincidence in which opposites disappear (as in Mozart) (64–67).

Altizer presses further into the dialectical movement of apocalyptic imagination and its historical actualization in the political and social world. He envisages the death of old established forms of consciousness and existence, a death necessary to the birth of the new – which will be negated, transcended, and reversed in its turn. This dialectical advance is made possible through a series of all-comprehensive revolutions that begin in consciousness, particularly in creative individual consciousness. Revolution begins as a movement of the spirit, expressed in the language of prophecy, poetry, painting, sculpture, music, philosophy: in all of them we hear the transformative voice. Once initiated in consciousness, the fury of revolution will extend to all domains of our world. Modern historical revolution – a retake of ancient apocalyptic voice and literature – begins with Hegel, is actualized and objectified in Marx, and is brought to consummation in Nietzsche (73–74). With Marx's apocalypticism, the subjective ground of events becomes ideological, false and illusory, a ground that will necessarily be brought to an end with the consummation of history in a universal consciousness of a universal humanity. The evil ground of subjective consciousness becomes visible: unique individual identity realizes itself by dehumanizing the other, a process establishing the unique individual identity

against the common, social, human world. (76). With Nietzsche the realization that consciousness itself is a consequence of bad conscience, the pure negativity of no-saying is emphatically affirmed, while the reversal of consciousness, a positive Yes-saying, is celebrated as an ecstatic event. This reversal of its own negative ground as the embodiment of consciousness becomes manifest is the realization of the death of God, that is, total presence, immanentization of transcendence or *coincidentia oppositorum* (78–79).

Initially manifest in poetry and art, the apocalyptic foundations of modernity precede their political actualization in the twentieth century. From Baudelaire to Joyce and Rilke, poets witness to a new reality and create a new language, one in which subjectivity and objectivity of consciousness pass into each other, generating a new identity, while the I of Romanticism is transcended and replaced with that of another – that of a total presence, negating previous individual identity. In Rilke and Joyce, moreover, the dissolution of the uniquely interior identity and consciousness occasions exaltation.

Gradually, this revolutionary spirit extended to the entire domain of consciousness and experience (83). Actualizing the apocalyptic revolutions of the nineteenth-century prophetic voices in the political and social transformations of the twentieth century, demonic totalitarianism, manifested in the death camps and democides of Stalin, Hitler, and Mao, broke apart all pre-modern moral categories and judgment grounded in individual subjectivity. The erosion of individual identity was deepened by a technological and mass society. Concomitantly with the loss of the unique I, this dissolution and erosion of the West witnesses the revolutionary advent of the masses, the great majority of humanity, a new and greater humanity, a world civilization (85). Arguably, he affirms, “the negation and transcendence of an individual and interior self-consciousness goes hand in hand with the realization of a universal humanity, a humanity that can neither be named nor apprehended by an interior and individual voice.” It is precisely the individual identity consciousness that are the deepest obstacles to the realization of a universal humanity, a humanity that can be born only by a negation and transcendence of every previous historical configuration and voice of consciousness (86).

The vision and promise of this universal presence embodied in the new universal humanity and opening up a new world, already manifest during the so-called Axial Age – in Amos, Paul, Socrates, Confucius – are now being fulfilled (86). This is a time for celebration although the new is the outcome of a passage through death, a death that is our own, the death of every unique interior, and the death of our world. Altizer asks a challenging question, whether we can truly celebrate the sacrifice of our own selfhood for the sake of actualizing a universal humanity: “Is it possible for us to affirm, and passionately to affirm, our own interior and individual dissolution as the way to the realization of our own full and universal humanity?” The answer is affirmative, for the death of our subjectivity, painful as it may be, is the only price that makes possible the realization of our full and universal humanity, an infinitely receding horizon of consciousness. A question’s coda is “whether or not that [universal] humanity is our own”: “Perhaps only nothingness or a void can lie beyond such celebration but apocalypticism has always known that the advent of the new world brings an end to the old, and we at least

have been given glimpses of a new world in the very advent of a new and universal humanity. Our only question can be whether or not that humanity is our own" (88).

This dialectical movement of history as world and consciousness enacts the quintessential ritual, present in all religions, and the fundamental core of Christianity, witnessed to by apocalyptic thinkers and celebrated in poetry, theater, music, art: death as a way to life, the "passage through death as the way to an actual realization of life," "the collapse of our past as the way to an apocalyptic or eschatological future" (90). He speculates on the destiny of America as a historical enactment of this quintessential ritual. America became the "victor of a war [the Second World War] which brought our history to an end," and thus "made possible a passage of death into American society and culture," a death that was followed by total modernization with its erosion of all sanctions for social institutions and the birth of a new world civilization, thus generating a post-historical, post-apocalyptic America and world (91-92). The erosion of social and political authority and legitimacy resulted in the separation of public from private life and a total objectification (à la Kierkegaard's public realm) dominating all spheres of life. With the dissolution of individual subjectivity, objective consciousness emerges. An anonymous and alien presence, this objectivity cannot be named or envisioned: it is inaudible, invisible, vacuous and atonal (93-94). This is the apocalyptic end, "a universal total humanity is dawning, negating and transcending every interior historical identity" (94), the world of *Here Comes Everybody*.

In the eschatological proclamation of Jesus, Altizer already recognized this total, final presence, a presence which for an individual form of consciousness is pure negation, thus total judgment. Self-judgment and a liberating grace are the two faces of kenotic negation that annihilate subjective consciousness and thereby allow for the objectivization or externalization of consciousness and the appearance of a universal humanity. No longer manifested in individual interiority, "pure total grace is now everywhere by being nowhere in an individual or interior consciousness" (97). The end of history and the beginning of post-history means, for Altizer, the end of *our* history, the history that we have known until now, the end of individual consciousness or subjective identity and the advent of a concrete universality, an embodied universal consciousness.

As Kafka confessed, in absolute solitude it is possible to move beyond the dissolution of our interior and let what lies deeper appear. What lies deeper than our interior? Altizer recalls visions of world-historical significance attested to in the Upanishads, modern abstract painting, and modern poetry: universal cosmic Atman, totality, pure immediacy, lie beyond individual consciousness (100). In moments of absolute solitude, often enabled by music, when pure ego and self-consciousness have vanished, we can find common universal humanity – not the artificial and unreal humanity, visible, audible and at hand in mass culture, but one completely invisible and inaudible. The absence of self-consciousness lets appear the actual presence of another, with no relation to our own I, "not a self or person, neither male nor female, old or young, black or white" (102). The call to a solitary journey within, beyond one's own unique individual ego, has been present in spiritual meditation

East and West. Altizer distinguishes between this old solitude beyond the ego that let appear a total presence of the holy, and ours today: a radical solitude opening to us a comprehensive vision and a new universal humanity that we cannot conceive, define, or envision (103). In solitude, when we go beyond our interior we reach “a depth wherein everything is not our own.” The loss of our interior is accompanied by the immediacy of total presence—total and immediate presence—the “advent of a wholly new totally immediate world” (104). Paradoxically, our attunement to this dramatic apocalyptic moment is joy, the joy of solitude and of loss, “for the only true joy is the joy of loss, of having been wholly lost and thereby wholly found again” (105).

Is this ending of our self-consciousness and this beginning of an anonymous objective total presence to be celebrated or mourned? Difficult question on the edge separating and uniting life and death. Both Altizer’s and Leahy’s works address this question.

Altizer’s *Total Presence* constitutes a *figura* of Leahy’s thinking now occurring. Centered on the contemporary world consciousness and world now dawning as a final *nec plus ultra* fulfillment of the promise at the foundation of the Western world—as mediated through ancient prophets and especially Jesus’s eschatological proclamation—it touches Leahy’s thinking now occurring in essential ways. Altizer views Western history as a progressive enactment of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God by a series of apocalyptic revolutions and negations that constitute a reversal of the reversal. Initial reversal of the proclamation meant the original sin, the birth coeval with the tearing apart of self-consciousness, wounded by the proclamation received as judgment itself as it called forth the denial, the annihilation, of individual identity and subjectivity, its sacrifice and death, for the sake of a total presence and total objectivity of consciousness. Leahy’s *novitas mundi* and *novitas mentis* enact precisely this total objectivity of consciousness, of consciousness at the disposal of an other, of transparent I the body itself. This, however, is beyond presence and absence. And yet. At the end of *Total Presence*, while still grounded in the old world, Altizer shares glimpses of a new world perceived through a glass darkly; in absolute solitude, listening to American jazz (specifically to the saxophone solos of Ornette Coleman), he experienced an uncanny joy as he witnessed the perishing of ego and subjectivity, and with it the perishing of the given established human world and the dawning of a new world and consciousness. Joy, exaltation, ecstasy—but only at the price of total dissolution. From the perspective of a unique individual subjectivity, total presence means ritual death.

Apparently, even as Altizer acknowledges his deep resonance with the Western Christian tradition marked by unique individual centers or identities, human and divine, he can recognize and celebrate their progressive demise, culminating in the death of God and the death of the human subject grounded in God, the emergence of anonymous alien being lying beyond our individual consciousness perceived in deep solitude as “the actual presence of another with no relation to our own self,” immediate and total presence, uncanny, invisible, inaudible, undefinable.

The proclamation of the Kingdom invokes the total presence of *parousia*, shattering individual centers of identity, the end of the evil ground of

subjective consciousness and of No-saying, passing beyond all dichotomies ultimately grounded in being and nothingness: affirmation and negation, salvation and judgment, redemption and end. From the other side—the side that Leahy inhabits—total presence is a purely objective consciousness whose being/thinking is joy. There is a nostalgia for the end that sounds through Altizer’s voice in exquisite moments that finds no parallel in Leahy. While Altizer can at once welcome and be ravished by the *tremendum* of apocalypse, Leahy comes after the drama of ending and calmly thinks/lives/creates the new world now arrived. From this place the entirety of modernity comes under absolute and final judgment: it is brought to a final end by the new beginning.

THE EUCHARIST: FROM MISSA SOLEMNIS TO MISSA JUBILAEA

Not restricted to a historical timeframe, modernity for Altizer refers to manifestations of revolutions in our sense of self and world, leading to a dissolution of a uniquely interior identity or consciousness. Initially a movement of the spirit and consciousness, this has been enacted in philosophy (Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard), poetry from Baudelaire to Joyce and Rilke, drama (Beckett), painting (Van Gogh, Monet), music (Mozart) and also in political movements of the twentieth century and in technological and mass society. What Leahy understands by modernity is all Western thinking and historical unfolding ending with the American death of God theology and the watershed year 1989—the fall of the wall of separation. Both Leahy and Altizer engage in a Hegelian or Heideggerian philosophical consideration of history in search of an obscured or hidden meaning that has continued to fulfill its work unseen behind the scenes, taking diverse forms, often opposite or paradoxical to their genuine significance in the totality of vision.

For Altizer’s radical apocalyptic theology, the momentous kairotic thinking now occurring is arguably the fulfillment without remainder of the apocalyptic destiny, one proleptically articulated by Jesus’s eschatological call and prepared by the entire Western intellectual tradition. According to Altizer, Leahy embodies a “deep Catholic radicalism” unknown in the secular imaginative and intellectual worlds, thus a “deep transformation of the American Catholic mind.”⁷ Altizer identifies radical thinking as revolutionary and thus ultimately apocalyptic thinking. In this context he greets Leahy’s thinking as “the most revolutionary thinking in history,” and, as such, “a genuine apocalyptic thinking, the fullest and purest apocalyptic thinking.”⁸ For Altizer, Leahy’s thinking now occurring for the first time emerges as simultaneously kairotic, eschatological, and apocalyptic. Altizer’s apocalyptic expectation has been both sanctioned and answered by the one who has “unthought selfhood itself and . . . not only called forth but actually thought an absolutely new world.”⁹ Leahy’s radical Catholic thinking enacts a reversal of Neoplatonism and emerges as “a pure and total thinking of the body itself,” the Body of the Eucharist, the apocalyptic body of an absolutely new universe, and one that is pure thinking itself.¹⁰ In this thinking Altizer

⁷ Altizer, *Living the Death of God*, 50.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

recognizes and celebrates the revolutionary ground of original Catholicism of universality, centering on body and world, thus the dawning of real hope.¹¹ Leahy's thinking is, for Altizer, the actualization and fulfillment of the kerygmatic proclamation of the good news, the evangelion, the total presence of the immanentization of Spirit, annulment of subjective selfhood, and the advent of a full and universal humanity.

One of Altizer's most deeply theological and personal unveilings is articulated in the chapter on prayer in his theological memoir, a quintessential reflection on language, liturgy, the eucharistic anamnesis (*Gr. Eukharistia*, thanksgiving), the joy of yes-saying, and apocalypse.¹² As such this meditation on prayer is also a definitive justification of Leahy's unique place in Altizer's own apocalyptic theology as well as the key to understanding the role of total or real presence as ultimate ground and telos for both Altizer and Leahy. Altizer's "Apocalyptic Creed," a prayer of his own creation, reads:

I believe in the triumph of the Kingdom of God, in that Kingdom which is the final life of the spirit, a life incarnate in Jesus, and consummated in his death. That death is the self-embodiment of the Kingdom of God, and a death which is the resurrection of incarnate body, a body which is a glorified body, but glorified only in its crucifixion, which is the death of all heavenly spirit, and the life of a joy which is grace incarnate. That joy and grace are all in all, offered everywhere and to everyone, and invisible and unreal only to these who refuse them, a refusal which is everyone's but a refusal which is annulled in the death of the incarnate and crucified God, and transfigured in that resurrection, a resurrection which is the actual and present glory of the Kingdom of God. Amen.¹³

Apocalyptic language must necessarily be a language of apocalyptic prayer, an apocalyptic anamnesis of the crucifixion—which in modernity, due to the series of historical betrayals and reversals of the original faith, may well be an enactment of atheism. In the Eucharist, the apocalyptic anamnesis of the crucifixion has been the occasion of absolute Yes-saying, of the deepest liturgical prayer and celebration. Paradoxically, therefore, the anamnesis of the death of God implies an apocalyptic transformation of the *missa solemnis* into the *missa jubilaea*. Altizer emphatically declares Leahy to be "the only thinker . . . who has actually and fully attempted to think the Eucharist" entailing this apocalyptic transformation. He can celebrate Leahy's thinking of the Eucharist as "the advent of a genuinely liturgical theology, a purely apocalyptic theology enacting the cosmic total Yes of the *missa jubilaea*." Altizer accepts Leahy's characterization in *Foundation* of his own death of God theology as a Black Mass, "an inversion and reversal of the Eucharistic substance to the form of the dark identity of the immediate actuality of

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Thomas J. J. Altizer, "Prayer," chap. 11 of *Living the Death of God*, 143–53, esp. 147.

¹³ Thomas J. J. Altizer, "Epilogue: Apocalyptic Creed" in *The Genesis of God: A Theological Genealogy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 185; quoted in full in *Living the Death of God*, 147.

experience," an abysmal theology of a "non-Eucharistic Eucharistic externality."¹⁴

Altizer confesses to having experienced something of what Leahy understands as the *missa jubilaea* while publicly reading from *Finnegans Wake*: a "truly cosmic mass which is an apocalyptic mass" in which deep prayer is inseparable from celebration and ecstatic joy.¹⁵ Real and total presence is an apocalyptic presence, one not confined to the *missa solemnis* but universally present in a *missa jubilaea*. It is in the total and real presence of the *missa jubilaea* that Altizer and Leahy meet and become for the space of a moment indistinguishable. Both envision and awaken to an ecstatic celebration of life and body, a universal and apocalyptic body. To hear the joy of Yes-saying is to hear this body not in heaven but on earth in the deepest immediacy of life itself. Apocalyptic prayer – enacted by Paul, Augustine, Anselm, Hegel, Nietzsche's madman, Joyce, Altizer, Leahy – is the prayer of Eucharistic Yes-saying to the death of God and to joy itself. Altizer has heard that prayer only in others, in truly hearing others, when silence ends and full and actual Yes as apocalyptic prayer is universally enacted. With Leahy, apocalyptic prayer is being fulfilled now for the first time, all in all in the *novitas mundi*.

THE AMERICAN DEATH OF GOD

The third major aspect of edge uniquely significant for both is constituted by America and the American death of God. For Altizer, the revelation in our depths of the radical solitude of a new universal humanity, a depth wherein everything is not our own, calls for the joy, exaltation, and ecstasy of solitude and loss. Altizer's death of God as a condition of total presence must be understood in relation to the apocalyptic revolutions of consciousness and the death of individual subjectivity: this is the edge of Altizer's thought shared with the edge of Leahy's thinking now occurring. The edge between eschatological dawning and fulfillment of the Kingdom of God is the most radical revolution, the ultimate good news: just as resurrection is unreal in the absence of crucifixion, so the life of God, life itself, is unreal in the absence of the kenotic self-emptying of God, a self-emptying that began with Genesis and must end with the death of God as the full actualization of Apocalypse. Leahy agrees: The American death of God was the final apocalyptic event ending modernity and making possible the new thinking and the new world.¹⁶

In *Foundation* Leahy identifies 1989 as the "Year of the Beginning" – symbolically, the fall of the wall of opposition and separation – and Altizer's theology of the death of God as the ultimate threshold and absolute edge between the old and the new: between self-consciousness and world-consciousness, between opacity and transparency (ix).¹⁷ He welcomes Altizer's death of God kerygma as the culminating final act of modernity

¹⁴ Altizer, *Living the Death of God*, 151–52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁶ See Lissa McCullough, "Leahy vis-à-vis Altizer," the third section of "D. G. Leahy," in *Palgrave Handbook of Radical Theology*, ed. Christopher D. Rodkey and Jordan E. Miller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 273–74.

¹⁷ In the analysis of this section, all quotations of Leahy are from *Foundation* unless otherwise indicated.

made possible by American pragmatism, whose “infinite postponement of subjectivity” placed it in tense relation to modernity; this is the sine qua non condition for the possibility of total ending and thus of absolutely new beginning. American consciousness – both in its puritanism and pragmatism, culminating with the death of God – constitutes the great wedge between modern consciousness and the new consciousness of the world now dawning. European modernity and American thinking of the past are apocalyptically fulfilled and come to an end in Altizer’s death of God theology.

Leahy argues that in European consciousness, in Hegel and Nietzsche, the death of God is not truly thought through, that this occurs for the first time only in American consciousness with Altizer’s theology. This theology is grounded in the “infinite postponement of self-consciousness,” which defines the essence of American thought as rooted in pragmatism, in positivity and piety – Edwards and Emerson, Peirce, James, and Dewey. According to Leahy, it is precisely the “postponement of self-consciousness in American consciousness [that] makes possible the death of the Godhead” (596). He explains Altizer’s *coincidentia oppositorum* of being and nothing, transcendence and immanence, Christ and Satan, as an expression of the American pragmatic consciousness. Peirce, for whom being is “a matter of more or less so as to merge insensibly into nothing,” cannot conceive pure unproductive nothing and invests even the nothing of the beginning with possibility and future. In the same way, for Altizer, the light in its occlusion is visible in and as absolute darkness.¹⁸

Leahy advances the idea that besides being the expression of American consciousness, Altizer’s death of God is the final and culminating thought of modernity generally, and of Christianity essentially. European consciousness could not think the death of God through, Aquinas conceived the death of God as *divinitatis instrumentum*, the humanity of Christ, Hegel conceived the death of God as *divinitatis principalis*, the divinity of Christ. Altizer goes beyond both Aquinas and Hegel in conceiving the death of both the humanity and the divinity of Christ, *instrumentum et principalis*, death of the Godhead itself – the new nothing of the beginning of God as well as the selfless I that will constitute the new thinking creating the world (559). The absolute nihil of the abyss of Godhead is the beginning of a universal nothingness in the depths of consciousness, the silence of the beginning and the experience of

¹⁸ Thus, for Altizer, Leahy writes: “Absolute darkness [is] not absolutely devoid of light since the absolute darkness is the light’s very own doing: the light in its self-extinction is . . . itself in a measure visible in and as the absolute darkness. The absolute future form of the actual nothingness of existence in Altizer, the absolute possibility form of the absolute nullity of the beginning in the American death of God theology, the absolute & final contra-Nietzschean refusal to put meaning into things is the reflection in its finally negative form of the profound positivity & piety of American consciousness, which denies from Edwards to Emerson that nothingness can do any work and which in the approach to the opacity at the bottom of things in American pragmatism, will not allow ever actually arriving at nothing, but in the approach to nothing, insists as a matter of principle upon having only almost arrived at nothing, or, in the event of the death of God, insists upon having arrived at a nothing which is yet absolute possibility or absolute future: absolute darkness not absolutely devoid of light since the absolute darkness is the light’s very own doing” (Leahy, *Faith and Philosophy*, 120–21).

nothing itself (600). Altizer's death of God is the realization in thought of the crucifixion, and thus the revelation of the divine passion of Christianity. This theology actualizes both American pragmatism and pietism by reaching into the abyss of God, beyond the Trinity, into the nothing of the beginning, William James's "logically opaque bottom of being" (610), Jonathan Edwards's "being in general" (607). Prior to Altizer, American consciousness, puritan or pragmatist, could not conceive the absolute nothing, the "dark transparency of consciousness" was infinitely postponed. It was only Altizer who conceived "the state of utter nility" previously inconceivable to American consciousness; that is, for the first time he conceived the nothing that is the *a priori* other, the *transparent* darkness, the "relatively opaque logical bottom of being" in the form of the death of God.¹⁹ "This is the beginning of the nothing" (624–25).

Leahy maintains that Altizer's theology of the death of God thinks through the end of Christianity and indeed of the entire tradition of thinking that originated with the Presocratics. Altizer seems to answer in the affirmative Hegel's question whether Christianity can transcend the end of Christendom. Leahy answers Hegel's question by arguing that Christianity transcends the end of Christendom in the beginning now of a universal faith already glimpsed by Altizer (603). He envisions the pure beginning in America of universal nothingness in the depths of consciousness, an experience of the silence of the nothing of a purely new world, the infinite expanse of universal consciousness of infinite possibility, universal faith, the absolute elimination of nothingness, absolute exteriority, and objectivity, consciousness as reunification of the ideal and the actual displacing self-consciousness (601, 604–608, 610–611). Thus, "for the first time God is really and actually dead. . . . Modernity's last chance . . . to think nothing in essence in face of the reality of the beginning of a new universe . . . the beginning of a new form of thinking and a new universe, the swerve and swivel into Nothing of consciousness itself" (601).

The radical iconoclasm of the American death of God, Altizer's conceiving the transparent darkness of the Nothing, is the condition for the possibility of the post-apocalyptic new heaven and new earth, the *novitas mentis* and *novitas mundi* now occurring for the first time in history since the creation of the world.

In the appendix to his book *The Apocalyptic Trinity*, Altizer reviews Leahy's analysis and confirms his position: "Now existence itself is for the first time purely Nothing, Being itself for the first time the 'Nothingless Nothing.' This is a crucifixion of philosophical conceptualization uniquely possible in America, for in America there is the pure beginning of a universal nothingness in the depths of consciousness."²⁰ This Nothingless Nothing and the "crucifixion of philosophical conceptualization" only possible in America is the condition for the possibility of an apocalyptic new beginning: "Leahy

¹⁹ I explore this theme more extensively in "The Transparency of the Good," chapter 8 of *D. G. Leahy and the Thinking Now Occurring*, ed. Lissa McCullough and Elliot R. Wolfson (forthcoming in 2021).

²⁰ Thomas J. J. Altizer, "Appendix: D. G. Leahy and the Triple Nothingness of the Godhead," in his *The Apocalyptic Trinity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 161.

can understand America as the deepest site of the death of God, an America which is the furthest extension of modernity, and the complete actualization of the death of God occurs for the first time in history in American consciousness. Yet this is a death of God prior to that absolute apocalypse which is the identity of the essentially new world now beginning."²¹

The retrieval of an original and essential Christianity represents the paradoxical threshold, the absolute edge, uniting Leahy's apocalyptic thinking with Altizer's and simultaneously separating them from one another. One may be tempted to understand it as a contention between Protestant and Catholic thinking, a contention between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, between death and resurrection. That would also explain the differential apocalyptic modes in approaching the Eucharist – which for Leahy becomes the universal actualization of the transubstantiation of matter, the body itself, resurrected, whereas for Altizer it is an enactment of death/crucifixion, the *sine qua non* dialectical negation and nothingness, final stage of descent in God's self-emptying, the irreversible demise of the vacuous transcendent God whose absence has become increasingly present to late modern consciousness. Leahy proclaims *missa jubilaea* as a new consciousness that comprehends being as the infinite meekness of God in the form of man, the body itself, essentially, the resurrected Christ. *Missa jubilaea* celebrates the identification of man with God, of the world with the body of Christ's being at the disposal of another, the beginning of the world in the form of man.

[Before now] the world itself in essence, in a variety of ways, experienced thought's essential incapacity to perceive the body in the form of man, to comprehend being beheld in essence, the infinite meekness of God in the form of man, the body itself. What now occurs in thought for the first time in history (transcending in fact the end of the world in essence) is *the perception itself of the body* – God in God in essence – the Temple of the New Jerusalem – effected now in essence inclusively in the *missa jubilaea*, the center of an essentially new consciousness.²²

Leahy joins Altizer in celebrating *missa solemnis* as *missa jubilaea*, a celebration of the joy of total presence repeated in the words of the Eucharist, actualized in the mass: world and thought reconstructed in the image of God, the "unreservedly pathetic form of an absolutely passionate essence," the essence of existence suffering itself. For both Altizer and Leahy the ontological and cosmological ubiquity of the Eucharist, *missa jubilaea*, opens up the mass

²¹ Altizer, "Appendix," 168.

²² D. G. Leahy, *Novitas Mundi: Perception of the History of Being* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1980), 347–48: "In the *missa jubilaea* the intelligibility of appearance is predicated of the elements on the table inclusively, they are transformed in essence to the resurrected Christ. The distribution of the existence of man is predicated of the world in the form of the elements on the table. The world itself in essence is the body, the identification in essence of man with God in essence. The world in essence itself is where God is with man. The world itself in essence is the body itself, is the living flesh of Jesus the Nazarene transformed into being here at the disposal of another in essence. The end of the world in essence in existence is the beginning of the world in the form of man."

“catholicologically” to everybody. The Eucharistic body is the transformation of the world into the body of God, the exaltation of matter, of being itself, since matter and being, appearance and essence are atoned.²³

POINTS OF CONTENTION

A few published letters written to Leahy show Altizer unveiling key points of contention—of convergence and divergence—between the two thinkers side-by-side with his own relentless self-questioning.²⁴ For Altizer, as for Schelling, evil is real, the most real being; Leahy’s complete abolition of evil from the *novitas mundi* is problematic, unjustified. Although Altizer accepts Leahy’s identification of evil with absolute nothingness, as well as with the self-other dichotomy that is confined to the past, he finds incomprehensible Leahy’s apparent blindness to the reality of evil itself and to the mystery of evil in the Godhead.

Altizer considers one of Leahy’s most precarious and vulnerable points to be the unwarranted identification of the absolutely new language of thinking now occurring with the language of “I am” and the language of Jesus.²⁵ According to Altizer, the language of “I am” and of Jesus is taken up in the apocalyptic language of revolution and total presence. Altizer concurs with Leahy’s affirmation of the language of Jesus as absolutely common and new, but in Altizer’s view the absolute gap posited by Leahy between modernity and the new world does not warrant this coincidence. This inconsistency is deepened by Leahy’s refusal of mystical language that might preserve the continuity between the past and the absolute now. What Altizer identifies in Leahy’s declaration of the new language is a primordial language, like that of Buddhism, or a mystical or Eastern Christianity. It is only in these forms of primordial language—from which Altizer completely distances himself—that Alpha and Omega are indistinguishable.

An immediately related problem that Leahy has not properly addressed, according to Altizer, is the origin or beginning of subject/selfhood, a subject/selfhood that has now ended.²⁶ As a corrective, Altizer recommends Nietzsche and Hegel. Nietzsche’s conjoining of the ending of subject or *ressentiment* with an understanding of the beginning; only the origin of bad conscience makes possible an understanding of its ending. Hegel too understands the divine incarnation as the final moment of the full actualization of self-consciousness as absolute spirit and kenotic consciousness. Only a consciousness undergoing self-negation and death can fully inherit both its origin and fulfillment or consummation.

Altizer acknowledges Leahy’s division of Christian history into three millennia—marked by Augustine, Aquinas, and the thinking now occurring—one of progressive evolution of the mind from the materially and

²³ *Ibid.*, 351, 356.

²⁴ Thomas J. J. Altizer, selected letters to D. G. Leahy, in *This Silence Must Now Speak: Letters of Thomas J. J. Altizer, 1995–2015*, ed. Mike Grimshaw (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

²⁵ Altizer, Letter 3 to D. G. Leahy (January 17, 1997), in *This Silence Must Now Speak*, 15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

informally apocalyptic, to the formally apocalyptic, to the purely apocalyptic. The problematic aspect is again Leahy's misreading of Hegel: namely Hegel's notion of becoming as a consequence of negation of an original identity of being and nothing, as well as the crucial role of the nothing in Hegel.²⁷ Due to Leahy's overlooking the nothing in Hegel – thus also in Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Derrida – the nothing is “most ambiguous and elusive” in Leahy's thinking and this explains Leahy's appeal to Levinas's notion of a subjectivity prior to consciousness.²⁸ Leahy achieves what Levinas could only attempt: “a consciousness otherwise than knowledge but not otherwise than being, a consciousness otherwise than the beginning of being but not other than ‘being and nothing,’ a consciousness of the beginning not becoming . . . [a] beginning of consciousness as complete objectivity.” Here he welcomes Leahy's identification of the American death of God as turning the Godhead “inside out,” thus achieving a clarification of the project.²⁹

Arguably, a consciousness as complete objectivity is the mark of total presence and constitutes the common ground and telos of Altizer and Leahy. Altizer is concerned, however, about the significance of total presence in Leahy's thinking now occurring, this significance depending on its constitutive moments. He fears that Leahy's thinking now occurring may be too close to the primordial – mysticism, whether Buddhist or Christian – thus lacking the firm ground of the Hegelian dialectic present in German idealism, involving real nothingness or evil, and mediation. Altizer adamantly insists that in the absence of dialectical nothingness the Spirit is “lifeless and alone, as Spirit finally is in every non-Christian apprehension of the Godhead.”³⁰ That makes the absolutely primordial “our deepest threat or danger, one that can be identified as the truly pagan, and one that has erupted more fully in our century than in any previous century of the Christian era.”³¹ In no ambiguous terms he declares the actuality of the death of God as a consequence of the actuality of the nothing.

“Through Christ's death, God renounces his transcendent separation, and unseparates himself through filiation, and shares in a constitutive dimension of the divided subject, thereby becoming what [Alain] Badiou calls the site of the event.”³² The event brings about affirmation of life against the reign of death or the negative. Although Badiou refuses Hegelian dialectic and thus crucifixion, he still understands the cross in Hegelian terms as “the immantization of Spirit” through which we cease to be separated from God.³³

Altizer fully declares the absolute necessity of the dialectical form of his apocalyptic theology in accord with Hegel's radically new understanding of nothingness: as an actual nothingness rather than a privative nothingness, “an actual nothingness already realized or actualized in the original self-negation

²⁷ Altizer, Letter 9 to D. G. Leahy (April 4, 2000), in *This Silence Must Now Speak*, 44.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

³² Altizer, Letter 15 to D. G. Leahy (December 29, 2005), in *This Silence Must Now Speak*, 66.

³³ *Ibid.*

of Absolute Spirit or Godhead itself."³⁴ Indeed, Altizer's hearing and rejoicing in Leahy's discourse depends on the latter's evocation of the nothing exemplified in Leahy's thought experiment concerning the ontological donut, as "the hole in the donut" – be it ambivalent, elusive, truly beyond language and beyond our understanding – is "that very offense that most engages us, or most calls forth our genuine hearing."³⁵ Thus it is the rupture of totality, the absolute explosion of exteriority, that is apocalypse itself and a beginning that is the absolute judgment.³⁶

This letter of Altizer, paraphrasing Leahy's notion of the ontological donut, becomes an enthusiastic celebration of the thinking now occurring's absolutely objective and completely free I that I now am, devastated of being and nothing, the now existing I who is the foundation of a society that is beginning a new world.³⁷ This is total presence, the hinge singularly and essentially uniting Altizer and Leahy on the threshold of the third millennium, the apocalyptic era that is heaven incarnate on earth, the paradise that previous visionaries could only dimly perceive, uniting and separating ending and beginning, simultaneously the last and the first. The shattering *ecstasis* of the voice, the Word, *missa sollemnis* become *missa jubilaea*: "the infinitely transparent I, the surface identifying body and world absolutely."³⁸ Total presence. Yes! Joy.³⁹

³⁴ Altizer, Letter 9 to D. G. Leahy, in *This Silence Must Now Speak*, 45.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, paraphrasing Leahy, *Faith and Philosophy* (n. 1 above), 159.

³⁸ Leahy, *Faith and Philosophy*, 159.

³⁹ I would like to acknowledge Lissa McCullough's seminal role in our conversations on the significance of Altizer vis-à-vis Leahy. My thanks are also due to Michael James Dise for his close reading and profound insight, as well as his prodding questioning, which helped me to clarify complex points of argument in this paper with respect to Leahy in particular.