

Introduction to D. G. Leahy

A Quick Start Guide for the Vexed and Perplexed

LISSA MCCULLOUGH

The philosophical writings of D. G. Leahy are exceedingly demanding. They are highly technical, hard to read, recondite, often bewildering, even crazy sounding—especially at first when a reader comes to them cold. For the moment this is new territory and there are very few interpretive footsteps to walk in. In view of the exceptional difficulty faced by the novice, this “quick start guide” offers orientations to and prehensions of Leahy’s thinking to serve as heuristic footholds where the learning curve is steepest: it is for first-time readers and anyone debating whether or how to begin the effort, as well as intermediate readers seeking to progress further. This guide is especially intended for those who are intrigued but frustrated from the get-go, already finding themselves vexed and perplexed. This guide, supplemented with the “Glossary of Key Terms” in the back of the volume, invites the patient reader to enter in and begin the process of acclimation, reading and rereading (see “Reading Strategies that Work,” below) for the sake of the extraordinary benefits that are to be won by thinking this thinking along with Leahy. The twelve essays of the volume provide a diverse array of expository and critical approaches that readers will find differentially helpful from one time to another.

Quick Start Q&A

Q1: *Why read Leahy if it's so difficult? Why bother?*

A1: Certain thinkers are so original in their purpose that the critical question is not so much whether the reader stands in *accord* with the thinking, but whether she or he has genuinely encountered, absorbed, and been transformed by the intellectual and existential challenge that the thinking incites. One need not be wholly convinced or converted to receive the untold benefit of the thinking proposed. Anyone seriously reading the work of Leahy will be provoked out of habituated categories and projected into a “live” new realm of thinking/existing—an achievement most beneficial in our present globalizing era in the new millennium in which fresh, novel, uncanned thinking is more needful than ever. One might be resistant to Leahy’s fundamental outlook and balk at accepting it, but one cannot seriously engage his thinking without being jarred alert, shaken out of intellectual complacency, and provoked to contend with the most fundamental matters on which it is possible to think and act today. Indeed, the deepest project of Leahy’s essentially new logic and ethics is to provoke readers to think/act anew every moment precisely because every moment is a new creation, and because not to think/act absolutely anew is unethical. There exists an ethical imperative to undertake this thinking in positive terms—as an *X* in which one has no choice but to participate—rather than mainly in terms of what it brings to an end, displaces, and renders a thinking of the past. A reader who does not (seek to) begin with the positive *X* will not get there—because it is categorically transformative of all earlier ontological and ethical thinking. That is what makes the challenge overwhelming. We embody the metanoia. The metanoia embodies us.

Q2: *First, how about a simple overview?*

A2: Yes, a functioning intuitive handle is indispensable. The “new world order” delineated in Leahy’s works is characterized as an *absolute creativity* in which the creating is “live,” a happening occurring *now*, a now that is an infinitely supersaturated polyontological actuality in which *creation begins*. The world is indeed created—but only *beginning now*. The universe is not precreated; its identity is not fixed but essentially new. To begin this thinking, apply your mind to think an absolute exteriority—an otherness than which none more

all-inclusive and thoroughgoing can be thought—one so thorough that the very idea of subjectivity or “self” is canceled, driven out, forefended. Think this thought fully, along with all the reasons for which we can suppose that we have in fact arrived at this perception of the actually existing universe. Demonstrably, existence exists. We are *in fact* in this creative abyss of existence that is neither transcendent nor immanent but a unity beyond both, an absolutely actual unicity. The claim is, moreover, that this is not a matter of knowledge per se but of immediate *perception*. Certainly this involves comprehension and intelligibility, but in a manner “otherwise than knowledge,” the beginning of the absolute transcendence of knowledge (FP 153). So then, Leahy implies, “don’t blame Leahy.” He is thinking something that is in fact happening for thinking, not his doing. The thinking now occurring is not Leahy’s “own” thinking for the simple reason that (perception of) existence is gift, and it is for us to *receive* this gift via creative-receptive perception, but not to appropriate it as our own. In colloquial terms, the argument is saying, more or less: apply the powers of the mind until you naturally find that this thinking becomes a transparent intelligibility, even a freely acknowledged inevitability; using your mind expansively it becomes, in the colloquial sense, a “no brainer.” The fully open mind’s eye sees this absolute actuality, not something else. This actuality now manifest is essentially created by the logic (creative perception) that delineates it.

Q3: *What is important about this thinking?*

A3: The thinking now occurring commences an essentially newborn, universal, fully “digitized” actuality that is nothing but newness, novelty, which inherently also implies *nothing but change*. It is absolute change that powers all “seeming to stay the same.” The claim of an essentially new reality may sound grandiose—even impossible or absurd—until one understands the logical basis of the claim to *essential* novelty. At issue is not any form of ideality but rather the full pragmatic fact of actuality, materiality, factuality as now fully thinkable in a way that was not heretofore conceivable—not, that is, before various forerunning breakthroughs in and realizations of ontological thought prepared the way. Thought hitherto has been wedded to conventionality, a system of categorizations and presuppositions, a tracing of fixations, a fixing of traces, because language has been conventional, logic has been conventional; logic is a social construct and a communal good. Anyone who feels attached to a

rational/intellectual/scientific status quo, its conventional logics and categories, will be disinclined to welcome or embrace this deep dive into an anticonventional “change of mind” (*metanoia*) at work. By contrast, any who believe that humanity could do with a quantum leap beyond the thrall of modern and postmodern fixations should attempt to hear and understand this thinking for which the stases of conventionality are eliminated wholesale; a thinking that refuses to be conditioned by paradigms, categories, species, genera, walls, bridges, boundaries, and abstractions; a thinking that thinks (creates) novelty itself. For such new-thinking, the world is new.

Q4: *What is “thinking” for this thinking?*

A4: This is not a “thinking” that only philosophers do. All actual forms of mindfulness or consciousness are comprised under the catchall term *thinking*: thinking, seeing, imagining, perceiving, smelling, tasting, reminiscing, dreaming, daydreaming, ratiocinating, being absentminded. The thinking now occurring could just as well be called the *perceiving* now occurring or the *creating of the world* now occurring.

Q5: *Why the obsession with “beginning” in this thinking?*

A5: Only beginning anew permits creativity to function as an *absolute* (re)sourcefulness. Absolute creativity cannot work freely if it begins with something fixed or predetermined. To be absolute, creativity must always begin at the beginning. The beginning is now: now we begin. Even what we call the past—past beginnings memorialized—begin in the present and have sway only *now*. This is a philosophy of *absolute creativity* that is fully and only *actual*. “Past” and “future” are figurative features of actuality, of a thinking *now*.

Q6: *Why is the word “absolute” ubiquitous in this thinking?*

A6: Only *absolute*, and no other word, captures the understanding that nothing is left untouched by the sea-change of universal *metanoia*, the shift to thinking absolute creativity. Just as in Spinoza everything is understood *sub specie aeternitatis* because of the way everything springs directly from the nature of God, so in the thinking now occurring everything is understood as absolute beginning, a creative emergence *ex abysso*. Figuratively speaking, to touch any point of this absolutely new order is to touch the whole. It is a *unicity*: an absolute whole

that is absolutely “digitized.” The categories of thought are burst by this unicity. There are no a priori categories, no preordained species: there is only a singular absolute existence itself absolutely particular.

Q7: *Why is the word “essential” ubiquitous in this thinking?*

A7: There is no such thing as precreated, canned essence. Thinking *now* creates essence ex nihilo. Thinking is the universe abiding. The abiding of the universe is thinking. The world subsists qua existence ready to be created essentially (free to be created qua essence, essentially free). When we *think*, we create essence—like it or not. This is not to say that we create material existence by fiat; rather, we create the *essential* content of an existing substrate (substance). Substance is a given—the Body exists absolutely—but its identity emerges through our acts of productive receptivity. Everything that thinking does is *essential*. There is no inessential thinking. Therefore, think well; you are responsible for the universe. Bad thinking, botched universe.

Q8: *Why is the word “objectivity” ubiquitous in this thinking?*

A8: Imagine a thinking that thinks absolutely beyond (without, apart from, excluding) subjectivity, beyond every last vestige of every conceivable notion of “self.” What would that thinking look like? Heuristically, it might call itself absolute objectivity. Absolute objectivity is beyond every trace of *intentionality* or *purpose*, prescinding from every origin or source (for an exemplary specification of this, see *beyond beyond x* in the glossary of key terms). When “I” think, this is not the work of a self. It is simply thinking that is occurring, specific and specifying, located in the now. It is the “apocalyptic I” that thinks, not myself—my presumed and presumptive “self.” Who am I to grab and claim possession of this thinking as though it were *mine*? As though it *belonged* to me? As the actuality of the universe (identically universal consciousness) is received as gift, “manna from heaven,” appropriation is inappropriate. This absolute gift is actually given in the receiving; this means that *how* it is received decides its essential nature.

Q9: *Why is the word “transcendental” ubiquitous in this thinking?*

A9: The term *transcendental* is absolutely essential, at the heart of the difficulty. The Incarnation means that God transcends into absolute

pleromatic existence. The term *transcendental* characterizes an essentially creative order in which the fiat of live creation in the now is the advent of essence or identity: it is *essence-in-the-making*, or the active creating of identity. The primacy of the transcendental in the form of essentially new existence can be contrasted with modernity's formally transcendental mode of thinking, which presupposes essence in the form of metaphysical abstractions. Now an essentially transcendental synthetic "seeing" and "abiding" constitutes a world absolutely new, a *pleroma-now-in-creation*. Cognizant of being plunged in the deep end of the pool, thinking realizes its essential vocation as the active perception of a universal, unscripted actuality of absolute change, with the capacity to intervene in infinite ways.

Q10: *Does this thinking think transcendence or immanence?*

A10: This thinking thinks transcendence beyond the dichotomy immanence/transcendence. Thinking, qua creative reception, is the infinite transcendence of immanence. Creation that is essentially and categorically transcendent eliminates immanence in a transcendental intimacy. In an inversion of Gilles Deleuze, this is not the collapse of transcendence into a plane of immanence but the collapse of immanence into infinite planes of transcendence.¹

Q11: *If everything is actual, is everything permissible?*

A11: No, an ethical imperative is implied in the absolute asymmetry of existence and nothing (F 265, 383), and the absolute asymmetry of truth and falsehood, once the truth of falsehood is identified (F 287). This ethical imperative is worked out in *Beyond Sovereignty: A New Global Ethics and Morality* (2010) as the unconditional imperative to create the world, which precludes destructive activity (BS 6).

Q12: *Does this thinking require me to be religious, Christian, or Catholic?*

A12: No. If it did it would not be genuinely catholic, nor would it be free. Everything capable of being thought in the domains of science, politics, religion and irreligion, art, comedy, nonsense, and so on has a place qua thinking. The phenomenality of logic is everywhere at work including in the deepest darkness. Yet certain forms of thinking are more fully consistent with beauty, truth, goodness—in short—the creative freedom that is on offer. Other forms of thinking deserve

to be outmoded, superseded—judged, but not condemned—as they manifest their limitations. Let them receive their due. A default of creation is resolved with more creation.

Q13: *Does this thinking require me not to be religious, Christian, Catholic, or atheist?*

A13: Yes, if your existing religiosity or atheism blocks receptivity to this new form of thinking. Outdated forms of thinking act as constraints upon this essentially free new form of thinking.

Q14: *Is this just another totalizing thinking, like Hegel's, with the associated dangers?*

A14: No, because existence qua absolute polyontological in-finitude is miraculous birth. The limit of miracle is no limit. Hegel's Godhead is itself a limit: a container. The thinking now occurring is an absolute exteriority that cannot be limited or contained. It is that than which nothing greater or more unlimited can exist, which is to say: an absolute freedom. Leahy's preferred term for this freedom is *created omnipotence*.

Q15: *What do I need to understand about the trinary logic?*

A15: The trinary logic is a formal thinking that supplants and eliminates the uncreative binarity of one (1) and nothing (0). There is no nothing; nothing is unthinkable. Because nothing *is not* for this thinking, a logic is needed in which zero is not nothing. Creating begins from zero, but that zero is not nothing. All binaries, dichotomies, and oppositional dialectics (Being/nothing, good/evil, truth/falsehood, and so on) are eliminated by trinary thinking. The only dialectic that remains is an essential dialectic: "*in the essential dialectic of matter itself, nothing is thought for the first time in history but existence itself . . . matter itself is the integral perception of change itself existing in essence: motion itself: matter itself essentially dialectical*" (F 52–53). For more, see "trinary logic" in the glossary.

Q16: *Why is there so much mathematics in this thinking (i.e., in Foundation)?*

A16: The claim is that this new universal consciousness/actuality can be demonstrated ad infinitum. The trinary logic and the mathematics are instantiations offered by Leahy to exemplify this claim to infinite

demonstrability. The gematria employed extensively in *Foundation* is also a domain of this exemplary demonstration. For further exemplification, see chapter 11 in the present volume: Sarah Lilly Eaton, "To Think the Beginning: The Apocalyptic 'I.'"

Q17: *Which of Leahy's texts are most approachable?*

A17: Although clearly there is value in tracing the course of a thinker's ideas in their sequential development from the earliest works to the latest, this is perhaps not the best way to begin reading Leahy—except for the truly undaunted. The movement from first announcement to further elaboration in Leahy is assuredly not a progression from simple to complex (they are all complex) or from "juvenile" to mature (they are all mature). The first two books in particular, *Novitas Mundi* and *Foundation*, can be an ordeal to attempt to read without critical assistance. The last two books, *Faith and Philosophy* and *Beyond Sovereignty*, are his most accessible and least intractable. But this is not to say they are easy. Many may find helpful the series of video interviews of Leahy conducted in March 2014, several months before his death, by his student and friend Todd Carter, links to which are available on Leahy's website and on the "D. G. Leahy" Wikipedia entry.

Capsule Synopses of the Four Major Works

Novitas Mundi (1980) first announces the thinking now occurring. Densely written and oracular, it declares that ontological thinking has arrived at an absolute historic watershed, and it proceeds to work through the history of thought that grounds this claim, engaging figures from Aristotle, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas to Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Husserl, and Heidegger. The three appendixes are particularly important for understanding the thinking now occurring in its first appearance, and above all the third appendix (*gamma*): "*Missa Jubilaea: The Celebration of the Infinite Passover.*"

Foundation (1996) is Leahy's most difficult book. It is also the most polythematic, comprising a congeries of topics and tempos. As his readership grows, it will be established as Leahy's magnum opus in view of the fact that all the core arguments are here: those addressing the death of God, the new world order, the body as foundation, the trinary logic, the geometry, the gematria, and the absolute edge on

which creation occurs. In addition to the major modern continental philosophers who reappear (with Derrida a new addition), a focused engagement with American thought, including pragmatism, is special to this work: Peirce, James, Dewey, Altizer, McDermott.

Faith and Philosophy (2003) is Leahy's most accessible book for those who are trained in Western philosophy. It traces out the advent of Incarnation in the history of Western philosophical thought from Aristotle through Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Jefferson, Emerson, Nietzsche, and Levinas to an arrival "beyond modernity." The appendix, "Thinking in the Third Millennium: Looking Without the Looking Glass," is especially important for grasping the thinking now occurring, and may prove a fairly accessible and helpful entryway for many readers.

Beyond Sovereignty (2010) offers an ethics of the thinking now occurring. Beyond modernity, a new ethics is needful that does not refer to self or have any qualifications related to the binaries and dualities that typify modern thought. Leahy specifies this as a *physical ethics* because it is an ethics of the existing body, not an ideality or projection of the mind. This is also the text in which he engages contemporary continental philosophers Alain Badiou and Giorgio Agamben.

A Heuristic Entryway

Leahy's work is exceptionally original and maximally coherent in laying out a philosophical and religious thinking that goes beyond the "radical" in a rather literal sense; that is, rather than looking for roots (from the Latin *radix*) to reclaim, retrieve, renew, this thinking conceives an absolutely new departure: an essentially new form of thinking. It is beyond radical, an apocalyptic thinking in which absolute beginning and absolute ending coincide in a current actuality that is absolutely new. Everywhere we turn we face the unprecedentedly new. Whither the new beginning for *thinking* that would be adequate to the emerging global reality on which we are already actually embarked and in which we are profoundly engaged? What thinking is equal to this new reality? How does thinking come to terms with this infinitely multiplicitous yet singular world in which thinking witnesses itself to be existing? Recognizing the new reality brought on by the full logical implications of the death of God in modernity, Leahy's epochal works call for a categorically or essentially new thinking that would

be congruent with the “new world order” that is actually taking shape globally. Here it must be carefully understood that Leahy employs the term “new world order” in an entirely original sense, referring to a philosophical order enacted by a new consciousness of the present historical state of affairs. To quote Leahy:

It is the writer’s understanding that the new beginning [of the new world order, which is the end of modernity] is categorical, and that the categories and, indeed, the very structures of modern philosophical, theological, and scientific self-consciousness are essentially inadequate to the new beginning, and, further, that the most fundamental structure, the very notion of *self*—in any but a purely formal sense—is completely and essentially dysfunctional in the light of the beginning of this new world. . . . For the first time the new reality of the world—world unity—is not a mere ideal. . . . The consciousness adequate to the beginning of real world consciousness is a universally new consciousness, in fact, a perfect other-consciousness, a consciousness categorically and essentially beyond the other-self relation. . . . It is possible to understand the beginning of absolute other-consciousness now actually occurring as finally the Incarnation assaulting thinking. . . . The mind-assaulting novelty of existence is of the essence of the thinking. (F, ix, xiii)

As indicated here, a signature feature of this new departure is that thinking is weaned of all attachment to modern subjectivity—an attachment that begins decisively with Descartes, passes to Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, begins to perish with Nietzsche, and is brought to an apocalyptic end in Thomas J. J. Altizer. In the context of this trajectory, Leahy demonstrates not only what is ending (as Altizer does), but what is beginning (as Altizer does not). What is beginning for thought is an apocalyptic newness corresponding to that ending, an absolute novelty that is at once the newness of the world (*novitas mundi*) and the newness of mind (*novitas mentis*). Indeed, the full coincidence of these—new world, new mind—is imperative to be cognized. Leahy’s work evinces a new thinking that embodies “absolute objectivity,” categorically eliminating subjectivity and self along with all its derivatives (Descartes’s *ego sum*, Hegel’s self-consciousness,

Nietzsche's cosmic ego-body, Levinas's self in the accusative, Altizer's death of self-consciousness, and so on). The author's core claim concerns the "absolutely revelatory structure of existence itself" (BS, 49). Revelation occurs not in this or that selective event or moment; rather, the history of thinking reveals in due time that existence itself is universally and essentially revelatory. Matter, the Body itself—this absolutely particular, absolutely differentiated, infinitely finite polyontological existence—is holiness itself.

As this new thinking constitutes "a perfect other-consciousness," eliminating the very notion of self, it is indifferent to who begins thinking this way and where such thinking begins to occur. What matters is that this new thinking, adequate to the new world order, does indeed begin to occur as "the thinking now occurring." The thinking belongs to no one, yet it is the vocation of everyone. It is an objective thinking that occurs, but is not possessed. It thinks existence, an existence that is sheer gift, absolute gift. What gift wants to be possessed? Where it begins occurring, how and when it begins to occur more widely, are a matter of fortuitous circumstance; perhaps we might credit the cunning of the *zeitgeist*. But it is no accident that Leahy's books consistently speak of "the thinking now occurring," rather than "the thinker" or "the author" or "I." The sole term of self-reference occasionally employed is "the writer" (as exemplified in the quote above), as though the writer were a scribe for a thinking that is the true content, leaving the writer saturated with content yet perfectly empty of self-consciousness. Leahy's thinking is but one manifestation of the thinking now occurring; the thinking now occurring is not by any means limited to Leahy's thinking.

The core breakthrough of the thinking now occurring is that it grasps the essence of existence as transcendental, and existence itself (matter, the Body) as historically revealed fact. We face the enormous difficulty of trying to understand what this means, and in coming to understand this, we understand as well how this breakthrough transforms the task of thinking from the point of view of thinking itself. It means that all thinking is the beginning of essence, and essence begins in all thinking; hence all thinking is *essentially* creating the world, though *essential* creation does not imply material creation. Historically, thinking has discovered *matter* to be a matter of fact, whereas thinking has discovered *essence* to be a matter of continually new active creation. *Materially* there is one Body, infinitely polyontological, but *essentially* that Body is created *ex nihilo*, and we in our

thinking are the creators. Because thinking is infinitely pluriform, the thinking now occurring inaugurates the “incipient existence of the absolute upbuilding of infinite totalities” (FP, 122). Where is God in this picture? God is the logical foundation of this essential imperative to create. God is dead, we are all co-creators now.

The Death of God: Segue to Absolute Newness

In Thomas J. J. Altizer’s theology the divine self-sacrifice is the foundational primordial sacrifice that makes possible the actual enactment in time of the self-embodiment or incarnation of God. The Good Friday of kenotic dissolution of God at the end of modernity ushers in an apocalyptic midnight in which no daylight or “noon” of Zarathustra is envisionable: this absolute apocalypse is the final revelation of God in the form of our universal chaos or chaosmos. Altizer witnesses to the “dead Body of God” that remains with us as a consequence of the self-negation or self-annihilation of God, an event that has erupted in the universal apotheosis of Nothingness in our historical world. Being has progressively passed into Nothingness or absolute Abyss, its dialectical opposite.² While this passing is recognized by Altizer as the absolute passion or self-sacrifice of God, it entails as well the passing or passion of subjective consciousness, modern self-consciousness, the perspectival cogito of the successive Cartesian-Kantian-Hegelian-Nietzschean subject—which has progressively subsumed and deconstructed “God” as its object. Here “I” am, the voided shadow of my former cogitative self, pervaded by the Nothing, engulfed in the infinite abyss of ratio—to the glory of the self-emptying God. As Leahy characterizes this moment, “Life perishes in the contradiction of its own subjectivity. Indeed, absolutely so, in the event of the Nothing” (NM, 299).

Leahy’s fundamental critique of Altizer is comprised within a much broader critique of what he calls the “dialectic of the exhausted self” in modernity; indeed, the thinking now occurring prosecutes “a radical critique of modern thought’s essence” (NM, 1). Examining the trajectory of modern thinking from Descartes and Kant through Hegel and Kierkegaard, culminating in Levinas and Altizer, Leahy ventures that “in no event is consciousness anywhere in modernity near being beyond subjectivity and the nothing” (F, xi); rather, modern consciousness reconstitutes itself in endless variation, novel repetitions of the same old song, bound within the essentially uncreative binary

oppositions of Being/Nothing, subject/object, transcendent/immanent, noumena/phenomena, sameness/difference.

Pressing for liberation from the entombing solipsism of modern subjectivity, Altizer extends subjectivity to an extreme limit in a quest for its reduction beyond zero, where subjectivity would finally burst out of subjective solipsism into otherness. While Altizer's thought celebrates the death of God as the absolute opportunity for redemptive freedom and grace to abound, per Leahy's analysis his witness remains engulfed in the abyssal solitude and darkness of absolute Nothingness, unrelievedly, even stubbornly, like the proverbial Jewish grandmother who prefers to sit in the dark.³ Here, Leahy sees in Altizer a "refusal to put meaning into things . . . a final *refusal* to re-establish essence in the wake of the disappearance of the divine substantiality of the world" (FP, 120). The apotheosis of Nothing in Altizer "is the perfect barrier of absolute inaction, the perfect elimination of every obstacle to the creation of a new world without in fact creating that order" (F, 577). Altizer heralds the *possibility* of a new faith (F, 603), which, by persisting as unrealized possibility, staves off the actuality of a new faith. It is as though Altizer's obsessive focus on bringing Nietzsche's death-of-God annunciation home to roost with utter finality, and his pure and relentless witness to the apocalyptic *end* (of God, of subjectivity, of modernity, of an ordered cosmos), forestalls the actual enactment of apocalyptic *beginning*, or the undertaking of the present task of incarnation, which is the task of new creation, a refusal that Leahy considers contra-Nietzschean (FP, 120, 102).⁴

In Altizer's witness to "the solitude of the end" we observe the pure ipseity of the self-annihilating subject, persisting ironically as the spit and image of the self-annihilated God, now expanding to fill the infinite expanse of God's own godless universal chaosmos or dead Body. Thus Altizer articulates "the beginning of the loss of God's own subjectivity in the very form of the self-consciousness of the Godhead of God in man" (F, 603). The dark night of the death of God provides passage to a new beginning beyond modernity. As Altizer's thinking brings us to the extremity of that ending (death of God realized as final apocalypse), Leahy's thinking brings us to the ending of that ending in beginning, the beginning of a new world (*novitas mundi*) in and for a new consciousness (*novitas mentis*). The apocalyptic imperative issuing from the midnight madness of the death of God is the imperative to create, to articulate novel essence in freedom. The question, "How can I create the world?" becomes,

rather, “How can I not create the world?” inasmuch as “I” am no subject but *in medias res* a world objectively and pragmatically creating itself. Not “I,” then, but a particular world creating itself; the creating body, matter, forming itself specifically in thinking; body itself bodying itself, thinking itself essentially. By virtue of existing, we cannot *not* create the world, effectively, pragmatically, whether in a mentality of denial, disinclination, fear and trembling, or faith. The world is absolute objectivity, gift, matter itself existing, impeding on us as such, and all acts of consciousness (thinking) supply the formal logic of its creation.

Beyond Beyond Modernity

For decades, modes of thinking have been purveyed as “postmodern” that concur in their recognition that modern envisionments of God, self, humanity, and world have grown moribund and unproductive. The postmodern imperative has been to get beyond the limiting and inhibiting constrictions of modern categories and problems, their abiding thrall. But to strive to overcome is not to overcome. On the contrary, as long as one is striving to overcome, one has not overcome. There is need not merely to get beyond modernity but, as Leahy puts it in *Beyond Sovereignty*, to get *beyond* beyond modernity. But how does one actually get beyond without falling into the vicious circle of striving to get beyond? How would one recognize when the moribund limitations and constrictions of modern categories and modes of thought have in actuality been overcome? One would necessarily see the world changed by a logical *metanoia*, a new spirit of beginning, a launching of creative act rather than a remaining beleaguered, entrapped, exhausted. Yet this is what has largely evaded postmodern thinking—the ability to open up a categorically new world. Every residual hint of striving to “get beyond” is the rub of not getting beyond in which postmodern reflection languishes, therein demonstrating that it is a late-late modern thinking in inherent relationship with the modern rather than a genuinely *post*-modern thinking.

Late modern thinkers—including Levinas, Badiou, Altizer, Agamben—have recognized the perspectival trap of post-Cartesian subjectivity and have sought a thinking that is emancipated from its limits. The thinking proposed by Leahy makes a clean break with this “curse” of modernity and eliminates wholesale the constrictions of the

Cartesian legacy of the cogito. This thinking does so by grasping the modern legacy in its essential history and identifying its fatal error as viewed from a genuinely post-Cartesian, post-modern point of view. It does not just aspire to think otherwise than the modern, it actively commences to think otherwise than the modern, which makes this thinking difficult to come to terms with not only intellectually but morally and existentially. One must reorder one's mind, one's epochal habits of thinking, one's ethical orientation, and in effect become a visionary to understand it. Pervasive categories of mind and language are overturned and a new (perception of) reality emerges. This thinking provides a new paradigmless paradigm (see the "non-paradigmatic," BS, 254) that eliminates paradigm-thinking in principle.

Thinking Is Creating: The Logic of Newness

In the new beginning, *newness* itself is a qualitative transformation in how consciousness understands what it is doing when it thinks, and the impact or import of doing it. This is clear in Leahy's answer to the question: What would be a categorically new logic? Hearing the question, we must understand that the term *categorically new* means *originating discretely novel and unique categories* in a way that eliminates paradigm-thinking in principle. "The category of a categorically new logic would be *being for the first time*. The logical category would be *being beginning*. Nothing other than being for the first time would be thought. Thought would be nothing other than being beginning. To think essentially would be to create" (F, 115).

How can we take stock of Leahy's claim that *to think essentially would be to create*? What does it mean to assert this? Heretofore, in pre-Enlightenment Western philosophical thinking—before the advent of Voltairean deism ceded to full-blown Nietzschean deicide—the world was created by God. If we now accept that "God is dead" and that traditional understandings of creation by God are defunct, who is creating the world? Or better expressed: How is *world-creating* happening? When God dies, essence evaporates. Is the world now uncreated? If so, is it now eternal à la Aristotle? Is it uncreated as one of the infinite aspects of God à la Spinoza? Is it essentially illusion à la Hindu cosmology? Or is it chaos? Is it created by the big bang? All these *prima facie* answers have in common that an existing other-consciousness, a phenomenological content, is actual even if qua illusion

or chaos. Wherefrom does it exist in the form that it constitutes? Rather than asking who is creating the world, more neutrally we may ask by what power or agency is *world-creating* happening, that is, letting being or the appearance of being be? The answer is: thinking. In the phenomenological functioning of existing consciousness, things appear in this form and that. How? Wherefrom?

An approach may be made through the essential failure of phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty, in the wake of Husserl's heroic struggles, characterizes the aims of Husserlian phenomenology. He writes that "the real is to be described, and neither constructed nor constituted."⁵ Twentieth-century phenomenological practice wants to abstain from abstraction, analysis, and interpretation to capture unmediated experience of lived environment, "the world as directly experienced," as the wellsprings of phenomenological analysis. What is not recognized here, what is glossed over without stringent examination, is the presupposition that to *describe* is not to construct or constitute. The thinking now occurring eliminates the distinction between conception and perception because it maintains that perception is, per se, patently a constructing and a forming; just as in geometry we "describe" a circle or a line, so thinking creates the world—not materially but formally, or rather *essentially*.

However deliberately or stubbornly phenomenological thinking may strive to pull back into a subtending experience that is "pure perception," prevenient to abstracting conception, that quixotic quest is no less a work of construction, or better, of constitution, of creation. Perception per se is a forming and a constituting. There is no possibility for thought to recuse itself to an experience of existing that is prelogical, if here logic is understood in its broadest sense as consciousness at work. It is just as valid to insist that thinking is perceiving and describing as it is to assert that perceiving and describing are thinking. Merleau-Ponty proceeds to write in the same passage: "The world is not an object whose law of constitution I have in my possession; it is the natural milieu and the field of all my thoughts and of all my explicit perceptions."⁶ But why this distance, this untenable distinction between world-constitution and world-perception? This persistent problem of the thing-in-itself must be—fully and finally—thought through to arrive at the thinking now occurring.

Jean-Paul Sartre's thought offers a correlative segue: if after the death of God existence precedes essence, then the decisive gift of the death of God is the apostolic responsibility of all actual thinking to

create the world. Although, to be more accurate than Sartre, it is not possible for existence to “precede” essence; existence is an absolute content *in medias res* of creating its essence. With respect to worlding, it’s *logic* all the way down. The eclipse of God as creator entails the eclipse of all notions of precreated, intrinsic, or “canned” essence. These are eclipsed precisely by the infinite particularity of existence itself, what Leahy calls the Body itself, the thoroughgoing materiality of the world, a body unified by its absolute differentiation (down to its sub-nanoparticles), now *in essence* available for new creation. In this sense, the death of God confers an absolute freedom in which the world is *essentially* uncreated until it is actually created *de novo* by existence (matter) thinking. Thinking this implication of the death of God, *Novitas Mundi* reads: “Now God himself suffers change itself in essence . . . begins in essence to exist absolutely in the form of *existere ipsum*, the body itself” (NM, 383).

This new beginning can only be effected through a new logic, one that is essentially a *logic of newness*. The category of a categorically new logic would be *being for the first time*. But how are we to understand the category of *being for the first time*? A close parallel to this language is the ecstatic speech of Zarathustra’s animals to the convalescent Zarathustra: “In every Now, being begins.”⁷ But to explicate this logic of beginning Leahy turns not to Nietzsche but to Kierkegaard, who articulated the essential notion of Christianity that the eternal has come into time. “For Kierkegaard the beginning of existence essentially excludes thought, excludes sense perception & immediate cognition. [Whereas] in the form of the thinking now occurring for the first time, this Kierkegaardian *beginning* is thought categorically. . . . Thought is now thinking the beginning of being otherwise than thinking the beginning of thought” (FP, 115–16). Thought is never empty when it thinks; it thinks matter, an infinitely particular and universal matter, the Body. Does matter matter? Yes, absolutely. But matter is real and consequential *as matter* for thinking, for logic. There is no prelogical matter. It is *for thinking* that matter matters—as it absolutely does. We can shorten this logical path and cross this divide by saying: matter (qua existing) thinks itself materially mattering.

A deeply synthetic-syncretic co-engagement of philosophy and theology declares itself in this thinking. Since Kant, most philosophical/ethical thinking is sundered into two basic methodological camps: on the one hand, the “secular” makes its claims on the basis of naturalistic and/or cultural grounds (in the image of natural science

argumentation), appealing to rational, empirical, or cultural factors rather than to faith, sacred scripture, or supernatural revelation for validity; on the other hand, the “religious” makes claims on overtly religious, often sectarian grounds. An essential claim of Leahy’s thinking is that the postcritical distinction between philosophy and faith is outmoded and no longer pertains. Readers will likely have qualms with this stance until or unless they commence this new thinking themselves, but it bears noting that in order to begin essentially anew, thinking has to break absolutely with the categorial logic of the modern and *begin* beyond it, and this includes the faith-versus-reason diremption of modern thought. Thinking from this new locus (which is not a place but a logic, a newness of mind), the past is rendered past. It abides and informs as past but it has no hold on the task of thinking *now*. The essentially new thinking that Leahy articulates is an authentically *post*-modern thinking in that it actually *ends modernity*, leaves it in the past, declaring a categorial RIP and opening a *novitas mentis* beyond the modern.

Leahy’s Works Read as a Trajectory

The major works of Leahy trace out a progressively unfolding development of ideas, explicating a new synthesis after modernity, a modernity that in itself was created by the disintegration of the synthesis attempted by Thomas Aquinas between Aristotelian philosophy and *sacra doctrina* (revealed truth). *Novitas Mundi* (1980) traces the development of “the perception of the history of being” in the essential history of thought from Aristotle and Aquinas through Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Husserl, and Heidegger. It diagnoses the essential passivity of modern self-consciousness, which began with Descartes’s mistake (NM, 188–98). Modern consciousness is a paranoia (= madness, to think amiss, to misconceive, to misunderstand): a progressive displacement of reality itself (noumena) by appearances (phenomena), so that reason perceives itself beside itself, perceives beside things intelligible in themselves of which it knows nothing (noumena) appearances (phenomena) of which alone it has (purely subjective) knowledge. Pure reason is beside itself in a structural schism by which it is objectively divided from itself by that infinite indifference to particularity, qua particularity, that constitutes its transcendental unity (for more, see “paranoia” in the glossary).

Pure reason's passive root is its inability to maintain itself face to face with its object's otherness, the mistake of madness being everywhere a substitution of appearance for reality. Modern science, accordingly, dissociates knowledge from reality itself. So then, within pure reason itself is reflected that external distinction between noumena and phenomena by which, through its particular "mistake," modern science dissociates knowledge from reality itself. *Novitas Mundi* recounts the story of what modern reason hath wrought, and where this history delivers us and our understanding of the task of reason now. The "backstage" but really "frontline" story is the Incarnation's historical occurrence having made its way *surreptitiously* into thought. The Incarnation's absolute objectivity ends the paranoia: "Absolutely nothing is thought except it be the existence of the absolute itself—the existence of existence" (F, 9).

Foundation: Matter the Body Itself (1996) is Leahy's magnum opus and also his most difficult book. It presents Leahy's most decisive expression of the thinking now occurring: the actuality of the Incarnation assaulting thinking (F, xiii). Making an important new innovation, it introduces the trinary logic that is the conceptual foundation of the thinking now occurring breaking absolutely with all modern dialectics, dualisms, and binarities. (See "trinary logic" in the glossary, and "The Law of Absolute Unity," F, 255–98.) *Foundation* celebrates matter, the Body itself, creating itself essentially in an absolutely free and objective thinking grounded in this trinary structure. This new consciousness embodies the pragmatic identity of conception and perception, of acting and thinking, of imagining and accomplishing (FP, 153). The advent of this absolutely objective consciousness obliterates the modern notion of subjectivity or self-consciousness, for "there is no subject–object distinction actually relevant to understanding the I now speaking and there is properly speaking no I now as subject" (FP, 144; see "apocalyptic I" in the glossary). Matter, qua absolute particularity, embodies an absolute pluralism of essence. Everything is body bodying itself at once materially, formally, and essentially, one absolutely complex-and-simple pluralistic body "existing" itself, articulating itself, specifying itself: "an absolute identification of the substance of thought and extension" (F, 521n94).

Faith and Philosophy (2003) provides a point of access to the more forbidding works of Leahy. Chapter 7 and the Appendix are the most original and constructive contributions. Leahy's own express agendum in this book is to examine, at the level of fundamental thinking, "the

particular question as to just how Christian faith has impacted the notion of *nous* or divine mind in Western thought up to and including the present" (PF, ix) and this historical inquiry leads Leahy to undertake close textual analyses of the pertinent loci in Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Jefferson, Emerson, Nietzsche, Peirce, Levinas, Altizer, and Leahy's own published work. These careful technical researches compose the bulk of the book (chapters 1–6), standing forth on their own critical-hermeneutical merit, quite independent of Leahy's constructive position. The essential clarifications wrought in these analyses alone make the book deeply valuable for anyone interested in fundamental philosophy in the West and its historical development.

Beyond Sovereignty (2010) might be compared with Spinoza's *Ethics* or Kant's *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals*; it stands alone as they stand alone, not continuous with or depending on any ethical thinking that came before. The utter elimination of subjectivity in the thinking now occurring is an innovation of such immense consequence that an entirely new approach to ethics becomes imperative: there is need for an ethics absolutely without self, entirely beyond the notion of self-consciousness, entirely beyond the "logic of Same & Other" (BS, 76). Manifesting this ethic is the purpose of *Beyond Sovereignty*. The "sovereignty" to be transcended is the sovereignty of modern selfhood/self-identity, the realm of political/ethical autonomy presupposed by identity (Same/Other) politics, which has been formulated in the history of Western thought in the image of the sovereignty and autonomy of God, and justified thereby. All notions of this kind, grounded in the reign of a divine plan/natural law/autonomy theory, are ended in the new thinking proposed: "For the first time the 'natural law' is to create nature" (BS, 19); "beginning is the *absolute* undoing of the eternal support of the actual" (BS, 34); "the universe itself is essentially the beginning of the universe" (BS, 40). This means that every now of existence is a new creation *ex nihilo*, absolutely ungrounded in eternal Being, yet existing absolutely (imperishably) *qua* now beginning created omnipotence.

What the text does is articulate an absolutely new beginning for ethics, what might be characterized as a realized eschatology (see, for example, "the imperative to be in heaven," BS, 293). The ethical commission of this beginning is traced out in the "ethic of simplicity" (BS, 108ff.), which is detailed more specifically in the "morality of the new beginning" (BS, 279–99). The ethic of simplicity is formally parallel