



Remarks on *Melancholy and the Otherness of God*

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Abstract: The history of the hermeneutics of melancholy is the history of deepening and maturing of self-consciousness. Indeed, how would consciousness become visible to itself, or gage its own process of maturing if not in the mode of relating to its dark side and suffering? Becoming aware of its fragility and vulnerability while acknowledging the indelible mystery of existence and the demise of all the supports of literally understood mythological systems and metaphors that have been our props until Hegel's patripassionism and Nietzsche's declaration fulfilled by Altizer and the death of God theology has called forth a new moment in the evolution of consciousness. Global consciousness, or as Leahy calls it, thinking now occurring, the consciousness necessary for the creation of a new world, is the last moment of that destiny, the new moment of the *totaliter aliter*, apocalyptic consciousness. The present book is the recapitulation of this destiny before a new chapter begins.

Keywords: Melancholy; depression; acedia; profound boredom; ennui; black humor; Saturn; mortal sin; subjectivity; time; apocalypse; nonbeing; otherness of God (or God's Other); patripassionism; death of God theology.

Opening Remarks

The conception of this study began fortuitously with my discovery of an obscure figure, Maine de Biran, known as the French Jacob Boehme. Biran whose works are not yet translated in English, was a French thinker who lived before and through the French revolution. What I found interesting about him was his repeated attempt at finding a philosophical cure for his condition of depression. He uses his thinking as a therapeutic experiment whose validity he tests by living it out. The first experimental scenario is a metaphysical and anthropological monism, according to which the individual is determined by the organic and the depressed melancholic is the victim of the condition. Such is a Kierkegaardian aesthetic stage of Mozartian Don Giovannism. The second scenario refers to the genesis of will: being is willing oneself

to be in spite of the temptation to nothingness. Biran here becomes a voluntarist and *avant la lettre* Hegelian. His third scenario is one of faith, renouncing oneself again, this time in grace. These Biranian existential experimental scenarios provoked disquieting questions regarding the relation between pathetic existence and philosophical constructions, between consciousness and symbolic hermeneutics.

My principal intention in writing *Melancholy and the Otherness of God*¹ has been to understand what it means to be human by offering an investigation into the history of the interpretation of what we know today as depression. This investigation has been initially prompted by my suspicion that depression

¹ Alina N. Feld, *Melancholy and the Otherness of God: A Study of the Hermeneutics of Depression*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011. [Henceforth cited as MOG]

may be more than just an unfortunate psychological condition, but rather a privileged locus of significant metaphysical, existential, and anthropological unveilings; and that interpreting depression as a perdurable condition of the human spirit rather than simply as a contingent malady may contribute to a revision of the modern anthropological conceptions and a deeper understanding of the profound meaning and complexity of being human, especially necessary in our times when the notion of human possibility is being radically transformed. My conclusion is that melancholy—or as it is known by its various other historical names, including, *acedia*, *tedium vitae*, *ennui*, boredom, depression, or existential anxiety—represents more than just a condition that affects certain people or that marks the mood of certain ages. Rather melancholy—symbolized by Perseus vanquishing Medusa—is constitutive of subjectivity as such and the effort to confront and transform its destructive energies into creative ones is the necessary labor of maturing self-consciousness. This contention finds expression in the theological claim that melancholy forms an integral part of God's nature. The book is thus intended as a philosophical reflection on a perennial question about the relation between being and nonbeing, evil, freedom, and God, time and the self, as well as a practical manual for self-knowing and self-transcending, a philosophical "guide for the depressed."

As the present study does not venture into the territory of the medically pathological, the vast literature that has been generated on the basis of medical expertise will not be engaged, and competence in this area is disclaimed; this study nevertheless intends to sound a warning against all reductionist approaches, whether theoretical or clinical.

The term "depression," used in both medical and folk idioms to refer to a condition of psychic suffering, is a recent phenomenon. Prior to it, the condition had been known by a constellation of terms, among which *acedia* and melancholy had dominated thanks to a venerable tradition. The term "*acedia*" signifies a lack of care or self-forgetfulness, while "melancholy" translates as black humor (Gk *melanos*, black, and *khole*, bile) which was considered the cause of the condition. Whereas at the beginning of its history *acedia* would be present side by side with melancholy as the distinctive humors of phlegm and black bile, respectively, or as the mortal sins of *acedia* and *tristitia*, at a certain moment, perhaps due to their phenomenological concurrence and similarity, *acedia* and melancholy were fused and

used alternatively along with numerous other terms. In order to preserve both the tradition of interpretation and the distinctive aspects of the condition, I have used the classical terms melancholy and *acedia*, adequately qualified.

To fulfill this ambitious project, I have assumed three major intertwined tasks: genealogical, hermeneutical, and therapeutic. Exploring the principal historical hermeneutical paradigms of the condition fulfills the genealogical task. The original paradigmatic interpretations are identified as the medico-metaphysical, the theological, and the mythical. On this foundation, interpretations further proliferated and developed in multiple directions: alchemical, anthropological, ontological, metaphysical, phenomenological, existential, and postmodern. The second task is hermeneutical. As the life of melancholy gradually arises out of the symbolic roots of humor, sin, and Saturnine nature, two distinctive complexes emerge as its two principal destinies: the depressive (*acedic*) complex of sloth-boredom-emptiness, and the melancholic complex of sublime-tragic-nonbeing. The dialectical relation between them will be utilized as an organizing principle, for each complex helps to articulate the condition by absorbing similar hypostases and affirming or questioning the relevance of various theoretical attitudes. Different as they are, both complexes reveal the nothing; but their respective relations to the nothing are not identical since they represent two different modes of confronting it. The third task is to decipher the range and significance of therapeutics and reflect on therapeutic recommendations traditionally associated with the condition as well as the paradoxical reversals that indicate a new understanding of ourselves.

The main hermeneutical paradigms articulating the history of interpretation of melancholy have been selected from theological and philosophical texts that contain direct or indirect reflections on the condition. They provide the mode of both historic and thematic organization. Thus, the ancient medical paradigm emerges with Hippocrates' theory of the humors. Here we witness the genesis of *acedia* and melancholy out of the excess of phlegm and black choler. While Plato's *chora* is a cipher of melancholy and the otherness of God, Aristotle's question, "Why are all remarkable men melancholic?" articulates the breaking up of cosmic harmony and initiates the long journey of individual consciousness toward maturity and integration. In this first irruption out of the harmony of the all, extra-

ordinary individuality and melancholy emerge as coeval: all subsequent developments in the life of the concept can be interpreted as hypothetical answers to Aristotle's question and reflections on Plato's *chora*.

The Medieval theological paradigm is represented by the concept of *acedia* (boredom) and melancholy as sins with Evagrius Ponticus and John Cassian. Thomas Aquinas will later fuse these two sins into the single sin of spiritual apathy. According to Ricoeur's analysis of sin and its conditions of possibility inscribed in human fallibility, melancholy emerges as the condition of sinfulness par excellence.

A Renaissance mythological paradigm becomes visible in Dante and Marsilio Ficino. With Ficino the phlegmatic (*acedic* or depressive) and melancholic hypostases are distinguished from each other and amply discussed. Ficino serves as guide through the labyrinth of melancholic dispositions because their genealogical origins are still uniquely visible in his *Three Books on Life*.² The myth of Saturn, the planetary divinity and patron of melancholy, deepens the symbolic connection between melancholy and God's own otherness—as Saturn, the malign demiurge, becomes by homologation the devil himself.

The early modern anthropological paradigm is encountered in Robert Burton and Pascal. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*³ is a pivotal reference in the career of the concept that offers a Rabelaisian vision of a cosmically projected melancholy. He elects as the most potent cause of this universal condition the dialectics of two hypostases of melancholy: idleness and boredom. His theory confirms the intuition of classical interpretations, according to which doing nothing literally reverses creation by generating the nothing. Pascal offers a theological counterpart to Burton's vision, in that the nothing defines the human condition without God. Thus the *acedic* complex of sloth, boredom, and the nothing emerges.

The Romantic paradigm appears with Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Although Kant hesitates between the phlegmatic and melancholic to establish the most propitious temperamental ground for philosophical task, his interpretation of melancholy as

a temperamental attunement to the natural and moral sublime prompts him to conceive the Romantic theory of genius.

An idealist metaphysical paradigm can be detected in G.F.W. Hegel and Friedrich Schelling. Gradually, the core that defines my investigation in its entirety takes the symbolic form of the relation between melancholy and God or rather God's otherness. I adopted this symbolic theological language because, as I will explain later in my response to Professors Raposa and Altizer, this language has represented our subjective horizon and has given dimensions to our interiority. Hegel interprets melancholy as a *sine qua non* stage in the evolution of the Idea: the soul emerges out of the immediacy of nature into the realm of mind and freedom; the unhappy consciousness, infinite grief, and God's pathos are the principal moments of the nought that must be overcome. With Schelling the metaphysical ground of melancholy becomes visible from a different perspective. Faithful to the Aristotelian theory, Schelling interprets melancholy as a trace of God's primordial dark nature of nonbeing. His theory of melancholy offers fundamental metaphysical insight into the life of this condition of the soul, paralleling and complementing Hegel's theory. If, as according to Schelling, melancholy is a reflection of the otherness within God, or as according to Hegel, an inevitable negative stage in the dialectical evolution of the Idea—theologically expressed, the moment of the death of God in the history of God's revelation—then it could never be annulled, nor should it be. Schelling insists, as did Aristotle earlier, that the life of reason itself, its creativity, is a constant overcoming of melancholic madness; while, Hegel argues that the movement from nature and necessity toward freedom and creativity traverses all the forms of depression and melancholy. Thus Schelling and Hegel posit a correlation between the melancholy of human subjectivity and the suffering God: specifically, our melancholic suffering is a trace of a metaphysical principle of negation, of God's otherness as the ground of God's darkness and death. The hermeneutics of melancholy as the stigmata in subjectivity of divine nonbeing and pathos irrupts subsequently in Thomas J. J. Altizer's death of God theology, first proclaimed in the 1960s. Since then, after a period of relative eclipse, the theme of God's otherness has resurfaced more recently in the thinking of Jean-Luc Marion, Gianni Vattimo, Slavoj Žižek, John Caputo, Richard Kearney, Ray L. Hart, and D. G. Leahy. It is significant that this rethinking emphasizes God's

² Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, intr. and notes Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark, Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies in conjunction with the Renaissance Society of America, 1998.

³ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, intr. Holbrook Jackson, New York: E.P. Dutton, 1932.

otherness in relation to human fragility and pathos.

The existential ontological paradigm becomes visible in Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and Michel Henry. Heidegger, Levinas, and Henry contribute to a shift of interpretation toward temporality and subjectivity and think melancholy further. Heidegger's fundamental ontological attunement to boredom proposes an apocalyptic role for boredom and a new understanding of Being itself. Profound boredom is the mood in which the nothing transpires as the ground of Dasein itself. With Levinas, the familiar experience of fatigue and paresse reveals the articulation of the existent to existence as the "horror of impersonal existence." Henry discovers that subjectivity itself is coeval with melancholic pathos. With Heidegger, Levinas, and Henry melancholy is accepted by the individual self as its own intrinsic condition: its incarnation in consciousness has been completed.

The phenomenological paradigm is proposed by Ludwig Binswanger and Karl Jaspers. Binswanger bases his theory of melancholy as a *sui generis* creative self-therapeutic on Husserl's phenomenology of the triadic self. Jaspers interprets the condition as a boundary situation that provides access to abysmal territories of the psyche, thus deepening self-consciousness. Both Binswanger and Jaspers emphasize the creative dimension of the melancholic self.

The postmodern apocalyptic paradigm is introduced by Thomas Altizer. His recent theological reflections refer to this final act of the death of God and a corresponding depression of late modernity.⁴ He continues and radicalizes the theology of the death of god initiated by Hegel and Nietzsche. In his *theogony en abime*, a *coincidentia oppositorum* of God and God's Other operates as the dialectical law presiding over genesis cum apocalypse. Altizer's questions regarding contemporary depression are particularly disturbing. He asks whether the absence of melancholy and the emergence of depression as total indifference and amnesia indicate a loss of subjectivity, thus marking the end of our western consciousness, the end of the world, as we knew it. Are we undergoing apocalypse without even being aware of it? As Lars von Trier's film *Melancholia* (2011) made clear, melancholy in its hypostasis of depression is not simply present at the

end of our world but rather precipitates the apocalypse.

Analyzing the therapeutics of melancholy, I realized that in all the diverse hypostases of the condition, the therapeutic for depression entails forms of labor. Remedial labor was meant to reawaken and redress the slumbering, forgetful, and diseased melancholic. Accordingly, it ranged from manual work, to societal work, to working on the self through various activities: passionate engagement in life, self-remembering by reflection and understanding, redirecting the will and imagination by cultivating Stoic apatheia, the theological virtues of courage and hope, or jovial and solar qualities. Work is implied even in the experience of the sublime; indeed, with the exception of grace, the traditional remedies pertaining to the strictly religious sphere, conversion and self-transcendence, are also forms of labor. Thus the history of therapeutics from Hippocrates and Evagrius to Hegel and Schelling to Heidegger and Henry makes visible the gradual maturing of self-consciousness that parallels the metaphysical acceptance of nonbeing and the negative that increasingly displaces the ontology of God as Being as well as the progressive integration of the nought within consciousness: from exorcizing the demon of acedia to letting profound boredom be. Ultimately, the fundamental therapeutic throughout all these metamorphoses and interpretations is the labor of the self in confrontation with the other—with otherness itself—through self-transcendence, self-acceptance, and grace.

Response to Critics: Professor Tom Rockmore's Critique

Professor Rockmore's hermeneutics of suspicion in the tradition of Nietzsche, Marx, or Foucault, has several articulations addressing pertinent concerns: (1) Remembering past theories or visions of melancholy while important for the contemporary debate should resist the temptation of re-enchantment or reinvestment in religious solutions; (2) Melancholy genus or unhappiness species cannot be considered in isolation from finitude and its dialectic other, happiness. From antiquity to the present there have been several patterns of melancholy. Since our claims about ourselves are always historically bound, our secularizing world is in the process to recover pre-Christian and pre-religious patterns, central among which is the Aristotelian eudaimonic vision of social flourishing in a social context that explains melancholy in non-religious social terms. (3) In late modernity our finitude has neither increased nor decreased but only become more evident

⁴ Thomas J.J. Altizer, *The Call to Radical Theology*, ed. and intr. Lissa McCullough, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012.

in "an ongoing journey with ever fewer illusions, hence fewer handrails," thus leaving as the only alternatives for overcoming melancholy Beckett's struggling on or Camus' meaning-giving action. (4) Last but not least Professor Rockmore notes that the central concern of the present author is less to theorize than to describe a dark continent lodged in the human soul, the dark night of the soul linked to the human condition while the title, choices, and description of various theories suggest a special attention to the theological dimension of melancholy.

Professor Rockmore's Weberian concern regarding "re-enchantment or reinvestment in religious solutions" demands a justification for the endeavor of re-remembering melancholy. I endorse here and expand upon Thomas Altizer's position in this regard. According to Altizer, Western consciousness has been generated by our "evolving relationship to the biblical God" in such a way that our "deepest identity and actual becoming" have been indelibly marked by the destiny of our thinking of God, and thus can only be understood through an investigation of its theological ground.⁵ To understand and create ourselves requires a labor of imagination that maps out territories of the psyche otherwise unknowable, thus actualizing our potential for being and thinking. The symbolic, theological, and poetic visions in particular have proposed modes of being (feeling, thinking, interpreting) ourselves that deepened and complexified—to use Teilhard de Chardin's term—self-consciousness. As Paul Ricoeur maintained, symbols give rise to thought. To ignore or forget the theological and poetic metamorphoses of melancholy means to forget and reduce ourselves. Happiness itself in the absence of the deep complexity of the psyche that has been trained through these spiritual exercises of imagination would be shallow. How can one reach or know oneself except through the imaginative askesis (spiritual exercises) such as that to which young Kierkegaard was submitted by his father, that of taking a tour of the infinite enclosed in one's room, thus opening up unknown spaces or actualizing unknown potentialities? In this labor of self-creation or self-actualization, melancholy represents a powerful ferment, in the absence of which the work with the self cannot begin. Plato, Giordano Bruno, Dante,

Ficino, Michel de Montaigne, Schelling, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, as well as Thomas Altizer—among others—appeal to our imaginative past and the art of memory, while Richard Kearney's possible God, God that may be, is a theological strategy through which we are called to actualize God—as a symbol of ultimate concern and ideal horizon of being—that without this labor would remain merely a possibility.

Professor Rockmore notes the theological emphasis throughout the book as an implicit view of melancholy that does not articulate itself into a full-blown theory. The theological emphasis is conditioned upon our theologically-grounded self-understanding for the past over two millennia. Whether believers or skeptics, we have been informed and claimed by our theologies. Once the significance of the art of memory that warrants incursions into past visions established, the question emerges: what is the yield of this furrowing? Tom Rockmore notes the increasing absence of "handrails" in late modernity, our gradual loss of illusions in confronting our finitude—a most pertinent observation that my analysis of melancholy fully endorses. In fact, attention to the history of interpretation of melancholy reveals a process of coming of age and maturing self-consciousness. From demonological theories of melancholy as an alien agency that tempts to self-annihilation to Heidegger's and Michel Henry's understanding of melancholy as the groundless ground of subjectivity and the self, we witness a progressive incarnation of melancholy and increasing self-understanding.

Response to Critics: Professor Michael Raposa's Critique

Professor Raposa begins his critique by addressing two of the questions posed at the end of the Foreword to *Melancholy and the Otherness of God* he graciously accepted to write and for which I remain deeply grateful:

Some of the key questions broached here encourage exploration of the relationship 1. between accounts of depression supplied by clinical psychologists/psychiatrists and those embodied in philosophical and theological treatises; 3. between the dark moods as existential signs, and the impenetrable, mysterious limits of semiosis, the otherness that resists all signification. [MOG xi f.]

In relation to the first question, Professor Raposa generously suggests that in spite of the initial disclaimer, the present "meditation on melancholy has a broader relevance for contemporary psychotherapeutic theory

⁵ Lissa McCullough, *Thinking Through the Death of God: A Critical Companion to Thomas J.J. Altizer*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 2004, pp. 29-32. [Henceforth cited as *TTD*]

and practice than the author herself may suspect." He observes that both the title and the religious ideas woven throughout indicate an interest in theological and psychological justifications for a study of melancholy. He argues that the concluding prescription for a joint medical and theological therapeutic to address the disease of a being whose body is subjective, whose soul is embodied is in fact being facilitated and endorsed by the recent development of cognitive behavioral therapies (CBT). Indeed, in CBT persons are bodies, in other words, semiotic creatures engaged in acts of interpretation which when problematic can lead to depression-anxiety. What is especially significant, Michael Raposa observes, is that Aaron Beck's concept of therapy as semiotic repair, or "cognitive restructuring" is not intended to eliminate anxiety-depression that signals problematic (maladaptive) interpretations or constructions about the self, its environment, and the future that Beck terms the "cognitive triad." Indeed mindfulness based CBT that include "exposure therapy" (with exercises in "imaginal exposure" or graduated imaginal exposure therapy also advocated by Tantric Buddhism) indicate a growing awareness of the therapeutic value of direct confrontation and mindful acceptance of the pathetic emotional states rather than avoidance. The goal of imaginal exposure is not to change the way one feels but how one interprets such feelings and what one tends to do in response to them. He generously remarks that the CBT restricted information-processing view of semiosis and human interpretative behavior is expanded by the present addition of a theological dimension and a more "capacious philosophical anthropology." In support of the religious dimension, he adduces Ignatius of Loyola and William James, both pointing to melancholy as a religiously significant sign. Thus, Raposa endorses the present work from a Peircean perspective, and views melancholy as both an existential/psychological condition (which is an interpretative response to some perceived state of affairs) and a symbol that requires hermeneutical attention.

In addressing the second question, Professor Raposa notes that profound melancholy is not a reaction to/interpretation of anything in particular and thus does not signify, or signifies no-thing, a nothing that cannot be conceptualized or imagined. He refers here to his own semiotic analysis of profound boredom as a sign of nothing in *Boredom and the Religious Imagination*.⁶ He remarks that the theological dimension emerges in

the interpretation of the nothing as the dark aspect of divinity present in Schelling and emphasized by the present author. Attention to melancholy thus induces heightened awareness of determinate things (as darkness sharpens all non-visual forms of sense perception) and, in the absence of such, reduces the self to the eloquent silence of a love stronger than death. Raposa pertinently observes that this insight, at the center of the present work, is grounded in Schelling's metaphysical portrayal of love's perpetual wrestling with darkness at the heart of God's being/nonbeing.

Michael Raposa's *Boredom and the Religious Imagination*, his reflections articulated in the *Forward to Melancholy and the Otherness of God* as well as his present critical response have played a most significant role in my own thinking of melancholy. His semiotic analysis of boredom has been for me a source of insightful revelations and clarification, infusing light and structure into the enormous mass of data; while his opening up the domain of investigation to include non-Western interpretations as well as medical therapeutics is a most timely and seminal contribution to and extension of the ongoing debate on the condition. I have thus addressed briefly his critique which confronts the two principal claims of the book: (a) that melancholy must not be ignored but directly confronted, assumed, and undergone; and (b) that profound melancholy reveals the nothing (our finitude and death) that can be overcome in silence by love. Raposa remarks that a theological addition to the otherwise CBT more restricted information processing view of semiosis is welcome and observes significant parallels between a theology of melancholy and the graduated imaginal exposure therapies whether of contemporary CBT or traditional forms of Tantric Buddhism. Indeed, as I suggested earlier, the progressive maturing of consciousness is indicated by a progressive assumption of or identification with melancholy. As Pierre Hadot emphasizes, medieval spiritual exercises were a sui generis therapeutics as the practice of mindfulness and acceptance rather than avoidance. The labor of the self begins here as a labor of cognitive restructuring, modifying maladaptive interpretations. Profound melancholy revealing the nothing (our finitude and death) known to Pascal, Schelling, Heidegger ends semiosis and is the beginning of silent being with oneself as well as the other.

⁶ Michael L. Raposa, *Boredom and the Religious Imagination*, Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia 1999, pp. 143 f.

Response to Critics: Professor Thomas J. J. Altizer's Critique

I am truly stimulated by Professor Altizer's high praise of my work, while at the same time being deeply humbled by it: indeed, his most generous comments enact a genuine transfiguration of my modest study and set up an ultimate horizon for my future theological task. Thomas Altizer considers that *Melancholy and the Otherness of God* is an in-depth theological investigation of melancholy and views its theological analysis with a strong philosophical foundation its greatest strength and originality. He focuses his response on the investigation of postmodern depression as apocalypse itself, an apocalypse made possible by interior voyages into the depths of melancholy, depths that are essential for genuine redemption. He clarifies that a body of absolute death/otherness is released and actualized through the depths of melancholy, which give us a taste of God's Other as the center of our own being. What Altizer finds most significant for this work is an exposition of the darkness of God, the No of God or God's Other on the one hand and of the absolute necessity of melancholy for redemption on the other since redemption is impossible apart from damnation. Altizer's theological critique is circumscribed by Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and his own writings. He understands the study of the hermeneutics of melancholy theologically as an enactment of the Hegelian *theologia crucis* and patripassionism that he discusses in his own theology of the death of God and which Cyril O'Regan analyzes in his study of Hegel.⁷ His insight into the paradox of damnation cum redemption is rooted in his apocalyptic theology of *coincidentia oppositorum* of Yes and No, God and God's Other, eschatology and *novitas mundi*. The final act of the progressive kenosis of God is apocalypse as the revelation of an absolute end, an apocalypse that can be experienced and known only in the depths of melancholy that make manifest the death of God.

⁷ Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994

Altizer notes that the present work of philosophical theology of deep melancholy is at once an enactment of damnation and redemption, of God's No and Yes.

Thomas Altizer's disquieting questions both challenge and call forth a theological interpretation of contemporary depression. He asks whether postmodern depression can be understood as apocalypse itself; whether depression is a disguised melancholy or an opening to a new melancholy made possible by the advent of a new world; whether God's Other would be manifest in such melancholy, as God, an expression of God, a new Body of God, a universal Body of God, so universal that is no longer namable as God. Altizer distinguishes between classical melancholy as a condition marked principally by a sense of guilt, and contemporary depression from which guilt is totally absent. He interprets the guiltless depression as a sign of the end of Western self-consciousness that has been generated and shaped by its relation to the biblical God. To forget God as the horizon of theological history means to forget ourselves since "what has happened in our actual history is the comprehensive ground for everything that we are, the matrix of what we are becoming" (*TTD* 31). What is the ground and meaning of the postmodern mood? It appears as if, in response to God's death or eclipse, consciousness either withdraws from its relation to the Judeo-Christian God into a Schellingian primordial absolute indifference, thus regaining its freedom for a totally new beginning, or it lives through the Hegelian infinite grief of the death of God by having failed to live according to the Concept and developed a pathological condition. In both scenarios, what can save humanity from itself? The labor of self-remembering can precipitate a *metanoia* for which the entire history of consciousness has been a preparation, as D. G. Leahy argues in *Novitas Mundi*.⁸

⁸ David G. Leahy, *Novitas Mundi*, New York: New York University Press, 1980.