RAHNER AND DUNNE: A NEW VISION OF GOD

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A new way of speaking about God is emerging in Roman Catholic theology. In some quarters the traditional or "classical" Catholic notion of God is being revised. Advocates of the revision argue that the classical notion of God is too abstract. The notion is based primarily upon ancient Greek philosophy and medieval Thomism, not so much upon stories of God in the Old and New Testaments and not upon contemporary religious experience. The new way of speaking about God is more concerned than the classical notion to be consistent with the experiences suggested in Christian scriptures and with personal experience of today.

Good theologies, revisionist as well as classical and ancient, all admit the impenetrable Mystery of God. Classical theologies affirm this Mystery by describing God with a list of theoretical absolutes like all-good, all-knowing, omnipresent, eternal, unchanging, etc. Such philosophical abstracts do emphasize the holy Mystery of God. But they exclude God not only from human understanding but also from human experience and imagination.

Much contemporary theology, such as that found in widely distributed Catholic catechisms, retains this classical mode of speaking about God. *The Catholic Catechism* (1975) lists the same fifteen "internal attributes" of God as those enumerated by Vatican I.[1] It attempts to combat atheism on "the modern scene" by elaborating upon such classical attributes of God as "almighty, eternal, beyond measure, incomprehensible, and infinite in intellect, will and in every perfection. . . one unique spiritual substance, entirely simple and unchangeable, essentially distinct from the world, perfectly happy in himself, and inexpressibly exalted over all things." Such attributes succeed in affirming the Mystery of God. But they make the Mystery something that is set over against human life and quite foreign to common human concerns.

Such exclusion from experience is quite different from Old Testament themes which speak of God as Deliverer, Rock, and always-present Shepherd to his flock. And such exclusion from imagination

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[1]John Hardon, S.J., *The Catholic Catechism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1975). pp. 55-58.

is quite foreign from Jesus' example and instruction that God be addressed as Father.

Contemporary experience does not include an "all-powerful and perfectly happy" "spiritual substance" who stands over against the human person as lawgiver and judge. As Jesuit Fr. Karl Rahner has written, in today's culture the silence and distance of such a God is more painfully apparent than ever before.[2] Part of the problem, he has proposed, is that men of today no longer know the meaning of "God" and have forgotten where he is to be found.[3] Perhaps if a new notion of God is formulated he may be rediscovered in experience: not as an abstract object outside and over against the self but as an all-encompassing framework or horizon which supports and borders life's experiences. God may be discerned as the interior source of surprising human capabilities. God may be the self-enabling call for an individual to become more human and, through such development, to be in harmony and union with the Mystery called God. Such is the vision of God presented by two prominent Catholic theologians, Karl Rahner, S.J., of the University of Muenster, and John Dunne, C.S.C., of the University of Notre Dame.

Even though both are Roman Catholic priests, Rahner and Dunne are anything but theologians from the same mold. Rahner, of course, is much better known, has been uniquely influential upon the contemporary Church, and is universally acclaimed for his genius in systematic theology. His theological method is speculative in the grammar of a metaphysics, a method termed "transcendental Thomism." Dunne, a younger man, has more a national fame, though he spent the autumn of 1976 writing and lecturing at Cambridge. His popularity at the University of Notre Dame is almost legendary, where his lectures are famous for touching the experience of his students and for clarifying their questions. Dunne's method is the more experiential, seeking out the theological lessons of every life story.

Rahner has a kind of "conservatism" which keeps him in con-

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[2]"Atheism and Implicit Christianity," in *Theological Investigations* (hereafter: TI), IX (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 158-60.

[3]"The Experience of God Today," TI XI (1974) pp. 149-65.

[4]Rahner's bibliography grew to book length by 1969, with over two thousand entries. See *Bibliographie Karl Rahner 1924-1969*, ed. by Roman Bleistein and Elmar Klinger (Freiburg: Herder, 1969). Many of Rahner's works have been collected and published by Benziger of Einsiedeln as *Schriften zur Theologie*, then published in English as *Theological Investigations*, first by Helicon of Baltimore (I-VIV), then by Herder and Herder of New York (VII-).

Dunne has published a number of interesting articles, but his four books, which all deal with human perspectives upon God, are of primary interest here. The titles are: (1) *The City of the Gods* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); (2) *A Search for God in Time and Memory* (the same, 1967); (3) *The Way of All the Earth* (the same, 1972); (4) *Time and Myth* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1973).

tant dialogue with the history of the Church's faith and doctrines. His familiarity with this history allows him to express even his most surprising assertions as the "retrieval" of themes earlier voiced but since forgotten in the Church's faith and wide tradition.[5] Dunne, on the other hand, draws his references from the whole panorama of human experience, from ancient myths, from other religious traditions, and from literary classics (especially autobiographies) in the Western cultural tradition.[6]

The differences in method between the theologies of Rahner and of Dunne are substantial. Yet there are similarities to be illuminated by comparing the two. The task here is to examine and evaluate the kind of talk about God found in the writings of these two noted Roman Catholic theologians.

Self-Understanding as God's Vehicle of Relevation

Is God intimate or foreign to human experience? Is he involved in daily human existence or is he an outside power who only intervened rarely, in the biblical past, in marvelous mighty deeds? Rahner and Dunne both suggest in their writings that the Mystery of the transcendent God is found not just beyond daily existence but also within the human person. They propose that attempting to understand one's self—one's experience of life—can constitute an effective openness to God's continuing revelation.

Rahner uses more traditional language than does Dunne. But he also uses the technical vocabulary of transcendental philosophy and his own kind of transcendental Thomism. He does assert more directly than does Dunne that the same gracious self-revelation of God that is found in the New Testament is available also to the self-understanding of every human person.[7] But his technical vocabulary makes this assertion difficult to understand.

Rahner claims that every human person, with or without knowledge of the name of Jesus, has received implicitly the gracious revelation of God.[8] Through the "supernatural grace" of God, every person

[5]This is a theme of Rahner's former student, Johannes B. Metz, in his "Foreword" to Rahner's *Spirit of the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), pp. xiii-xviii. See the author's Yale Ph.D. dissertation, *Rahner and Revelation* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1974).

[6]See the author's "Story Theology: A New Grammar for the Mystery of God," in the 1976 *Proceedings* of the American Academy of Religion.

[7]The point emerges repeatedly in Rahner's writings. See for instance his "Observations on the Concept of Revelation," in his (with Joseph Ratzinger) *Revelation and Tradition,* vol. 17 in the *Questiones Disputatae* series (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), pp. 9-25.

[8]See "What is Transcendental Revelation?" in the author's 1974 Yale dissertation, *Rahner and Revelation,* pp. 56-73 .

has within the "structure of his existence" a "supernatural existential" which is divine life itself, God's self-communication. "Supernatural existential" is the key term for this discussion. It means a source of experiences and capabilities for life which are not inherent to human nature.[9]

What are these experiences and capabilities? What results from the gracious communication of divine life to the structure of human existence? Rahner does not offer a comprehensive answer. But he does say that this supernatural existential results in such things as:

> the experience of infinite longing, of radical optimism, of unquenchable discontent, of the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, of the radical protest against death, the experience of being confronted with an absolute love precisely where it is lethally incomprehensible and seems to be silent and aloof, the experience of a radical guilt and a still abiding hope.[10]

All these experiences of frustration and deliverance, of anxiety and hope, Rahner claims, are dim revelations of God's plan for more complete union with finite human life. In the midst of the greatest human boredom and despair there is an underlying experience of God's loving presence, a confidence that death is not terminal, a hope that the meaning and value of life transcends the experience of dying.

A modern critic such as Freud would argue that such hope is only an infantile projection, a desire to retain an infant's security by projecting the paternal figure into the cosmos.[11] Rahner makes at least an indirect response to this criticism in his proposal that the supernatural existential results not simply in warm experiences but also in extraordinary human capabilities. Rahner refers especially—though only briefly—to such things as the human capability for self-giving love, for absolute honesty, for unconditional loyalty, respect for duty, and unselfish commitment to the good of others.[12] Such adult actions could not be discounted as infantile projections, though one might challenge the claim that they are so beyond "natural"

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[9]The notion of something being universally present to human nature and yet not being inherent to it seems self-contradictory. Rahner has sponsored this convolution in thought in order, on the one hand, to be consistent with the official Roman Catholic opposition to any "natural possibility" of salvation (*Humani Generis,* 1950) while, on the other hand, himself affirming that the grace of Christ necessary to salvation is given to all humanity. See his "Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace," TI I (1961) pp. 297-317.

[10]"Nature and Grace." in TI IV (1966), pp. 183-4.

[11]See Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion,* ed. by James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1975).

[12]"Observations on the Doctrine of God in Catholic Dogmatics," in TI IX, *op. cit.,* pp. 127-44.

human ability as to be sensibly explained only as a result of God's gift of himself to human existence.

The basic question, however, is not what particular experiences and actions result from this "supernatural existential." The question rather is how any such experiences and actions can be as revelatory as the New Testament.

Rahner claims that the decisive message of the New Testament is that in his grace God has called humanity to intimiate communion with himself.[13] In the New Testament it is most explicitly ("categorically") revealed that humanity is called to the kind of death-transcending union with God given historical objectification in the "true man," Jesus of Nazareth. This same call is substantially ("transcendentally") revealed in the depths of every individual's structure of existence, in each person's interior call to—and resultant capability for—greater humanness.

The call to greater humanness, experienced within oneself, is seen to be God's call to union with himself. Experiencing oneself, one's experiences of and capabilities for life, is comparable to experiencing God, his revelation, his self-communication.[14] And hence a "correlation" can be found between the explicit revelation of the New Testament (that God intends loving union with man) and the implications found through reflection upon one's hopes and capabilities.

Although Dunne's writings have made no reference to Rahner's idea of a supernatural existential within a person, Dunne does suggest an idea similar to Rahner's, the idea that God is present within human existence. God's revelation is available to reflection upon one's own experience, one's own life story. Dunne calls the commitment to such reflection a journey in quest of continuing "insight."[15]

Dunne compares the life of an ordinary person to the life of a founder of a great religious tradition, the life of a person like Mohammed.[16] The factor in Mohammed's life which offhand seems most remote from one's own life is the experience of revelation. But what was the nature of Mohammed's experience of revelation? Mohammed, in Mecca, was seeking in prayer to learn the will of God. He found the answer to his prayer over the twenty-two years that he composed the Koran. The revelation he received was not given all at once, but over a long period, perhaps all according to the model of seeking and finding.

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[13]"*Theos* in the New Testament," in TI I, op. cit., pp. 117-8.

[14]"Selbsterfahrung und Gotteserfahrung," *Schriften zur Theologie* X (1972) pp. 133-44.

[15]"The Journey with God," in *The Way of All the Earth, op. cit.*, pp. 219-33.

[16]*Ibid., pp.* 110-19.

Perhaps the ordinary person does not find God's revelation because he does not seek it. Always a person is changing, going from childhood to youth to adulthood and to old-age. In such changes new insights or revelations may be available. But perhaps during and between these stages a person is opposing the possibility of change, is not open to new understandings of things and of himself. Perhaps he expects things simply to conform to what he already understands. This would be very unlike the seeking of Mohammed. And it suggests that only those who are open to new understandings can experience the findings comparable to Mohammed's experience of revelation.

Jesus also sought and found revelation in his life.[17] Dunne proposes that everyone should be open to a relation to God in life similar to Jesus' relation to God as "Abba." In such a relationship of trust one actually seeks to find and establish in one's own life the rule of God. Such advice for following in the example of Jesus at first seems quite common to many Christian manuals of instruction. Exceptional to Dunne's theology, however, is the notion that the will of God can be discovered through seeking insights into oneself, one's ordinary experiences and behavior.

The most common experiences of life can be most revelatory.[18] The changes in ways of understanding and relating to others and to the world—changes demanded by growing older—these changes may be very important even though they are commonly overlooked as "ordinary." Insight into such experiences Dunne sees as the illumining of one's mind by God.

Insight into such experiences at first seems so common as to be secular. Dunne proposes such insights can be sacred. A quest for insight involves discovering a new standpoint upon one's feelings and behavior, a new standpoint which provides the possibility of revising one's ways of thinking and acting. Commitment to insight is not just intellectual, then, but also constitutes an existential commitment to what might be seen as "the creative power of God, "drawing man out of nothingness," into full humanity.[19]

The quest for insight constitutes an openness to the creative Unknown at work in the history of individuals and of the human race. It is this unknown which through creative evolution brought the inanimate to life, life to the capability for self-understanding, and self-understanding to the choice of harmony or discord with the process

[17] *A Search for God in Time and Memory, op. cit.*, pp. 8-14.
[18] *The Way of All the Earth, op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

of becoming fully human.[20] This Unknown is faced by the child in the world around him, by the youth in sexuality, and by the adult in the prospect of death.[21] All these times of change offer new perspectives to the one who seeks them. The changes are brought by an Unknown, but an Unknown that Dunne sees as the creative and guiding power of God. Openness to insight allows a place for God to speak and allows a person consciously to cooperate with the influence of God in life.

Both Rahner and Dunne, then, find God to be present in one's experience of oneself. God's revelation need not be the announcement of a foreign sort of world. It may be more the unveiling of what is already present within.

Self-Transcendence as God's Way of Salvation

Is the value of an individual's human life determined by his or her conformity to "natural laws," laws best inscribed in a single cultural tradition? Is God basically an outsider judge who evaluates every individual's conformity to such laws in determining salvation or damnation? Such images of God and judgement are at least as old as the Persian religion of Zoroastrianism and these images did enter into the development of Judaeo-Christian thought in the fifth century B.C.[22] But such an image of God seems inconsistent with a consistent and coherent theology of incarnation. The Zoroastrian images today seem closer to magic than to an appreciation of the Mystery of God in human experience.

Self-transcendence is part of the Mystery of human existence. It is a capability peculiar to the human species. Only the human system of systems is known to try to step outside itself, look at itself, and try better to understand why it feels or acts in certain ways in certain situations.[23] This looking at and explaining of oneself is part of what Rahner and Dunne see as self-transcendence and the quest for insight.

Self-transcendence is more than the intellectual feat of stepping outside of oneself. This feat is significant enough in itself. It involves bringing to higher awareness the numerous semi-conscious feelings

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[20]*Ibid.*, p. 213.

[21]*Time and Myth, op. cit.*, pp. 49-81.

[22]See Bernhard W. Anderson's *Understanding the Old Testament*, third ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 564 and Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, 2d ed., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), pp. 267-68.

[23]The peculiarity of human self-consciousness is well described by cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker. See his *The Denial of Death* (New York: Macmillan Free Press, 1973), which presents Otto Rank's idea of the importance of one's self-image in the face of death.

and motives which have influenced one's response to a given situation. But self-transcendence also involves a moment of decision. The old self behaved or felt in a certain way because of semi-conscious feelings and motives. A certain man, for example, may flirt excessively with women because in childhood he needed and always received his mother's praise. A lawyer may be never satisfied with the legal briefs she prepares because she never feels that she lives up to the goodness and power of her lawyer-father. When the bases for such feelings and behavior are brought to reflective awareness, it becomes possible for a person to decide whether such feelings and behavior are necessary and desired. New responses to the same situation can be chosen. A new self can be constructed. The person can be liberated from an earlier self, an earlier way of responding to situations. The human person can participate in creating his own future in a kind of "self-creation."[24]

Such an emphasis on personal growth and self-reconstruction puts considerable emphasis upon human responsibility. It is quite foreign from the sort of dependency upon a forgiving God that can lead to a sinful kind of human sloth.[25] But God is certainly far from excluded from this process of human growth and becoming in the theologies of Rahner and Dunne. As already suggested in terms of God's presence to human existence, it is God's enabling call which makes the interior request and gives the capability for human self-transcendence.

Can self-transcendence lead to salvation, to becoming fully one with God? This is what Rahner and Dunne propose. Dunne uses a metaphor of something floating on the water at a seashore. If the object is only on the surface of things it bobs up and down with the waves and will eventually be thrown against the shore by the breaking surf. But perhaps it would be possible for it to sink down into the water, seek (despite the possible fears accompanying the task) an undertow, be caught in it, and be drawn out into the surrounding Mystery of the deep. Such going beneath the surface of things might be like seeking to understand oneself, discovering and joining the creative power of God in life.[26]

The vision of God sponsored by Rahner and Dunne is reminiscent of the one presented by Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Evolution,

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[24]See Rahner's "The Experiment with Man," TI IX, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-24.

[25]Harvey Cox has written: "...apathy is the key form of sin in today's world... man's most debilitating proclivity is *not* his pride. It is *not* his attempt to be more than man...it is his sloth, his unwillingness to be everything man was intended to be." *On Not Leaving it to the Snake* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), pp. xviii and xi.

[26]*Time and Myth, op. cit.*, pp. 5-7.

Teilhard wrote, is a divinely intended process which leads to the reunion of creator and creature in love. In the human person this evolution is no longer restricted to the level of genes. In humanity evolution has also become a matter of personal decision, of choosing how one will live, what kind of person one will be. Such a person can live more in conformity with the doings of God.[27]

Some aspects of Teilhard's views have been challenged by other anthropologists, archeologists, and theologians. But it would be most difficult to challenge the Gospel character of his emphasis upon the importance of human decision-making. A theme of Jesus most consistently reported in the New Testament was his call to repent: a call to take stock of one's life and reevaluate the feelings and motives on which it was being lived. The call of Jesus was historically a call to conversion (*metanoia*), a call to transcend one's former self and live with greater trust in the God of the Jewish prophetic tradition, the God available to whomever knocked, the God fully responsible even to the lily.[28]

Neither Rahner nor Dunne chooses to define the limits of self-transcendence. The New Testament proclaims that in the context of God's love there is no limit short of total transformation and union with God. The notion of self-transcendence, then, when linked to the gracious presence of God in human becoming, offers an alternative model for the way of salvation. It suggests that becoming one with God is not a sudden and magical kind of happening originating at the end of life. Union with God is a process that begins here and now. God is not restricted to a foreign heaven. He undergirds and orients as well as fulfills human life.

Rahner and Dunne propose that human life is never really separate from the Mystery of God. Their conclusion is not foreign from that of tradition. The adventure of life is the journey which takes one nearer to or further from full harmony and union with the encircling Mystery of God. But their image of God puts revelation within and sees salvation as fidelity to self.

Critical Comments

In criticizing the new way of speaking about God found in the theologies of revelation and salvation of Karl Rahner and John

[27]"From man onwards and in man, evolution has taken reflective consciousness to itself. Henceforth it can to some degree recognize its position in the world, choose its direction. . .These new conditions open on the earth the immense question of duty and its modalities." *Human Energy,* tr. by J. M. Cohen (London: William Collins Sons and Co., 1964), p. 29.

[28]For a survey of this conclusion in the recent quest for the historical Jesus, see *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 41:64-70.

Dunne, some apology must be made that a view of God—one's own or that of another—is more symbolic than simply conceptual and is impossible fully to contain in words.[29] Neither Rahner's view of God nor Dunne's has been fully elaborated.

Yet what they have written opens up considerable possibilities for change and such change demands critical discussion.

When something so basic to theology as the way of speaking about God is at issue, it would be easy to allow one important point of praise or of attack to dominate a criticism. But at this point it would be a mistake (no matter what one's personal feelings) to offer anything other than some exploratory observations, maintaining some balance in presenting the tentative values and dangers of the change. Both values and dangers may well abound for those who attempt to carry further the lead of Rahner and Dunne in speaking of the Mystery of God within oneself rather than beyond human experience and imagination.

First of all, by way of a value, it could be said that both Rahner and Dunne are seeking in their different ways to retrieve something lost in the Roman Catholic tradition. For too many Catholics of today God does seem to be a stranger, something quite foreign to daily existence. In opposition to this foreignness, the new way of speaking about God claims him to support, surround, orient, and fulfill the entirety of life. And even though such a notion of God may be novel to contemporary Catholics, it is common to people of the Old Testament, to the picture of Jesus presented in the New Testament, and—ironically enough—to portions of contemporary Jewish theology.[30]

The foundations of Christianity proposed God to be integral to human life, to the process of becoming happily human. Somewhere is the appropriation of Greek philosophy, it seems, Christianity developed a more dualistic view of reality.[31] A chasm came to separate the world of humankind from the dominion of God. God was sanctified by being set apart from human experience. God, his grace, and his revelation: all were sanctified in inverse proportion to their commonness in human experience.

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[29]The best recent discussion of the symbolic character of all theological assertions is provided by Gregory Baum in his *Religion and Alienation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), pp. 238-65. Baum gives excellent development to some rich themes suggested by Rahner in "The Theology of the Symbol," TI IV (1966), 221-52.

[30]See the as yet unpublished article by S. Daniel Breslauer, "Abraham Joshua Heschel and Charles Hartshorne: Pathos and Morality in the Bible," delivered at the 1976 Rocky Mountain Regional Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.

[31]See the concise account of the Christian appropriation of Hellenistic dualism offered in George Lindbeck's *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 9-25.

By emphasizing the sacredness of understanding oneself and of becoming more human, by suggesting such attempts constitute the way of revelation and salvation, Rahner and Dunne are proposing a retrieved view of God's importance in human life. Theirs is not a God who is some foreign object over against humanity. Theirs is a God of Mystery who cannot be defined or clearly seen, but who is to be experienced through personal reflection and through attempting to become fully oneself.

Such a retrieval is a valuable reaction against the abstract and philosophical God of too many theologians and too many catechisms. Not only can the abstract God lead to agnosticism; it also can lead to an intellectualistic heresy. The retrieved view is a valuable bulwark against the sort of Gnosticism that has often hounded othodox Christianity.[32] Such Gnosticism scorns the whole world of sense and experience in favor of an abstract and pure knowledge, a knowledge of a foreign heaven and a foreign God. This Gnosticism is diametrically opposed to the authentically Christian affirmation of God's creation and of the whole, bodily, human person. Classical Catholic talk of God has sometimes stood too close to such Gnosticism.

The human person of senses, imagination, insight, and responsibility must be respected if theology takes seriously the doctrines of creation, redemption, and incarnation. Respect for these doctrines, that of resurrection, and that of the effective presence of God's Spirit supports a less schizophrenic or dualistic sort of Christianity than what has become too common in modern times. That which is holy is not to be only that which scorns or demeans the human and the world.

What Rahner and Dunne offer is an extension of the Roman Catholic tradition of natural (as well as supernatural) theology. In the past it has consistently been taught that the mystery and beauty of nature is a revelation of God and that a person can come by way of natural knowledge to an awareness of God. Today there has been what is called the "modern turn to the subject," a new appreciation of the mystery and beauty within the human person. This mystery and beauty is popularly explored in such practices as yoga and transcendental meditation. Disciplines such as Gestalt therapy and transactional analysis attempt to discover and live in harmony with this mystery and beauty. According to the positions of Rahner and Dunne, it is neither surprising nor inappropriate for Roman Catholic theology

[32]Still a classic on this point is the work by Francis C. Burkitt, *Church and Gnosis* (Cambridge: University Press, 1932). For the most successful modern attempt to interpret Gnosticism, see Hans Jonas' *The Gnostic Religion,* 2d ed., (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

to discover here, in the mystery of the human person, a legitimate way to appreciate and relate to the Mystery of God.

Accompanying these values of the new way of talking about God there are also dangers, especially the danger of excess. The general danger is reflected in the question of whether such a turn to human experience amounts to a rediscovery of the sacred in the secular or to a secularization of the sacred. For in some ways this new attentiveness to experience seems to allow a great leveling down of all experience, an elimination of anything extraordinary in human experience.[33] Such a leveling down would be but a further moment in Catholic theology of the sort of secularization many Protestant theologians already lament in their own tradition.

As an example of such secularization, what happens to any eschatological theme in this new view of God? If God is present everywhere in life, is he still such a one who can be dramatically present anywhere? Particularly, can he be the one who finally intervenes, establishes his rule, and brings peace and justice at the end of earth's time? Or is this sort of new Testament view revised now in favor of more a process God who eventually and through a dipolar relation with humanity brings about world brotherhood. Such a view might be compatible with most of the Old Testament, but it is not so easily compatible with the eschatological expectations of the New. The place for eschatology will have to be carefully considered in the development of a new vision of God.

Similarly, it may seem that revelation becomes secularized in the new vision. This is the danger in speaking of revelation inside every person and within common experience. Even the Second Vatican Council does suggest that all the revelation of the Old and New Testaments, from Exodus to the Resurrection of Jesus, emerged from human reflections upon experience.[34] But it is quite threatening to Catholic faith to suggest much ordinariness in the events that were interpreted and to propose that the same sort of revelation as that in the Old and New Testaments can be gained by reflection upon personal experience today.

One of the dangerous elements is that there would seem to be no decisive norm by which to tell which feelings or insights one has

[33]This is one of the objections made by Avery Dulles in his defense of classical theism against the revisionist theological method presented by David Tracy in his *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury, 1975). See Dulles' "Method in Fundamental Theology," in *Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (June, 1976) 304-316.

[34]See the *Constitution on Revelation, Dei Verbum,* in *The Documents of Vatican II,* ed. by Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: Guild Press, 1966), par. 11-13. For a pertinent commentary, see Michael G. Lawler's "Let's Take a Look—Again—at Experience," *Religious Education,* LXVI, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct.. 1971) 341-347.

are truly revelatory and which are more self-centeredly mistaken or sinful. Certainly some supposed insights could be rationalizations leading toward selfish and destructive acts, rather than creatively human ones. Rahner and Dunne may both have guards against this problem in terms of correlation with the New Testament (Rahner) and of a continuing and self-correcting openness to insight (Dunne). But such safeguards might be readily forgotten in common or future use.

Another way to phrase the problem of secularization is that the new attention to ordinary experience might replace reverence for theology and traditional religious authorities with reverence rather for psychology and personal introspection. A person may use Gestalt therapy, transactional analysis, or some other form of personal discipline to discover the hopes and fears that rule his or her life. The person may have exhilarating experiences of self-discovery and great success in improving feelings, actions, and relationships. And at first the person may see this as an experience of the creative and redemptive presence of God. But is there anything to prevent Occam's razor from eventually eliminating the affirmation of God? Not unless the person's own theology has a foundation and practice with depth and constancy similar to those of Rahner and Dunne.

None of the danger of secularization pertains directly to Rahner's or Dunne's theology, but to what they may have begun. Persons attempting to imitate or extend this trajectory in theology, this post-classical idea of God, will have to be aware of the dangers as well as of the value of speaking of God in such experiential terms.

The most disconcerting implication of the new way of speaking about God is the responsibility it puts upon humanity. This vision of God seems to reaffirm Bonhoeffer's assertion that man today has come of age. God is not necessarily deflated in such a view. But the God of magic, the God through whom people might control the world simply through devotional acts, the God of the philosophers, this God is gone. When this God is gone, as Job discovered, only the Mystery of God remains. Perhaps it is with this scandal, however, that authentic faith begins.