

FAITH, MORTALITY, CREATIVITY: TOWARD THE ART OF BELIEVING

JOSEPH M. POWERS, S.J.

Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley

THE PURPOSE of this exploratory essay corresponds to the enterprise which theologians describe as “foundations” or “fundamental theology.” In *Method in Theology*, Bernard Lonergan describes what he calls “foundations” as that functional specialty in theology which presents “not doctrines, but the horizon within which the meaning of doctrines can be apprehended.”¹ The task of one who is involved in foundations is analogous to that in religious living itself:

Just as in religious living “a man who is unspiritual refuses what belongs to the Spirit of God; it is folly to him; he cannot grasp it” (1 Cor. 2, 14), so in theological reflection on religious living there have to be distinguished the horizons within which religious doctrines can or cannot be apprehended; and this distinction is foundational.²

David Tracy parallels this description by describing the task of fundamental theology as “philosophical reflection upon a common human experience and upon the Christian fact.”³ Heinrich Fries includes these elements in his understanding of the task and situation of fundamental theology today, but enlarges the emphasis of Lonergan and Tracy by insisting that it is a dialogue which must be carried on not only with philosophy but with a host of other disciplines, political, psychological, linguistic, hermeneutical, natural and other sciences.⁴

What is at issue in this enterprise can be called a “symbol critique.” The critique in question is not primarily negative, seeking to point out the irrelevance or uselessness of the symbolic articulations of the Christian community. Rather, it is an attempt to discover the experience which gave rise to these articulations and remain faithful to that experience by bringing that experience to expression in terms which are effective for the handing on of that experience in varying historical and cultural settings. Underlying this enterprise is the conviction that the symbols (in the widest sense: social structure, cultic action, etc.) which integrate and articulate the grounding experience are true, not false, and that the tradition which they present is a living tradition, not a dead one. Thus,

¹ *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 131.

² *Ibid.*

³ “The Task of Fundamental Theology,” *Journal of Religion* 54 (1974) 13.

⁴ “Zur Stand der Fundamentaltheologie heute,” *Trierer theologische Zeitschrift* 84 (1975) 351–63.

Karl Rahner's critique of the Doctrinal Congregation's *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Office of Priest* points out that even negative critique is essential, because "This kind of progress in knowledge is absolutely essential for the effectiveness of the Church's preaching."⁵ And H.-G. Gadamer insists repeatedly that the texts and traditions which bear human meanings must be confronted creatively again and again if these traditions are to be living traditions.⁶ The basis for this kind of ongoing critique is the fact that these symbolic realities, structures, and actions live in history and that the changing settings and perspectives of history do not guarantee that a structure, activity, or set of credal texts which serve to integrate and articulate the experiences that give meaning and direction to the lives of individuals or communities in one age of history will be able to function in this way in a changed cultural setting.

The essays in this collection have as their common theme the question of the meaning and possibility of faith. The perspectives from which they speak engage theology in dialogue with different philosophical, biblical, and hermeneutical sciences. It is the concern of this essay to engage the theological tradition which has articulated the meaning of faith in a dialogue with some of the insights of the psychological treatments of creativity, in the hope that this dialogue will point out emphases and concerns which can lead to a more fruitful contemporary understanding of the process of believing. In this the essay joins dialogues with other disciplines which have already taken place.⁷

Thus the essay will be developed in three stages: (1) it will present the teachings of the biblical and doctrinal tradition which constitute the historical understanding of faith in the Christian community; (2) it will trace the development of the secular "mood" in theology and the development of the "intermediary" theological approach to the understanding of faith through the life story, a context in which the creativity of faith takes on particular significance; (3) it will discuss the writings of Jungian and post-Freudian psychiatrists, especially Erich Neumann and Otto Rank, on the importance of creativity for the life process, pointing out the congruence of their thinking with some of the discussions of the creativity of faith in contemporary theology. Like many essays in foundational thought, this essay is exploratory (even, I hope, creative) and its conclusions are more suggestive than rigorously systematic. But such reflections may contribute to further thought and discussion on an important element for the credibility of belief today.

⁵ "Priestertum der Frauen," *Stimmen der Zeit* 195 (1977) 291-301.

⁶ *Wahrheit und Methode* (4th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1975).

⁷ E.g., I. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966); J. Haughey, ed., *The Faith That Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change* (New York: Paulist, 1977).

"FAITH" IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Biblical Tradition

One perspective from which the contents of the religious tradition which speaks of faith can be approached is the understanding of faith as *assent*. This understanding would seem to underlie the constellations of meaning which gather around the OT use of the root *amn*.⁸ Broadly speaking, the various forms of the word refer to the conditions, the actuality, and the consequences of the Amen which God says to Israel in the choice made in the covenant and the Amen which Israel returns to her God, a mutual yes in which God binds Himself to His people with a faithfulness which has no condition or limit and in which Israel is called to return that faithfulness in the whole pattern of her existence. The yes from God to His people is revealed concretely in the whole course of Israel's history, manifesting the "firmness," the "solidity," the "trustworthiness" of her God. On the basis of this absolutely true yes of God to Israel, she can be indeed summoned to respond with her own yes, secure and confident in that yes because of the unfailing love of her God. In the actual living out of this mutual yes, God becomes in concrete and historical terms Israel's God and she becomes His people. True, Israel's response is not always easy. In the darkness of the exile, the existential question "Is God with us?" rises from the dashed hopes of Israel.⁹ The prophetic response points to the mighty deeds of God in the past, to the fidelity of the yes of God's great historical servants, and the apocalyptic imagination runs riot with images of the faithfulness of the mighty God for the future, calling Israel back to the grounding of her faith in her God, calling her back to her yes in faithfulness to Him.

It is into this pattern and practice of faith that Jesus is born. The "kingdom" which he experiences dawning and present in his own life is a final and comprehensive yes by Israel's God to every nation and a call to the whole world to return that yes.¹⁰ The constellation of meanings which surround the NT expressions *pistis*, *pistos*, *pisteuein* conveys the same gestalt as is found in the faith of Israel: the acceptance of God's word, obedience and faithfulness to Him, trust and hope grounded in the faithfulness of God.¹¹ Of course, the focus for this believing love is the person, the preaching, and the claim of Jesus. The yes to God takes the shape of a yes to Jesus: "because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9). And Paul uses Joel's call to faith in the Lord

⁸ A. Weiser, "*Pisteuō*," *TDNT* 6 (1968) 182-96.

⁹ J. C. Murray, *The Problem of God* (New Haven: Yale University, 1964) 17.

¹⁰ See the article of Michael Cook in this issue.

¹¹ R. Bultmann, "*Pisteuō*," *TDNT* 6 (1968) 203-28.

God to express the unity of Jesus with God in the salvation of the world: "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord (Jesus) will be saved" (v. 13 = Joel 2:32).

Once again, the shape of the yes, the assent which is faith, is not simply a once-and-for-all intellectual acceptance of the "truth" of Christian belief statements. The gestalt of the assent includes the acceptance of the kerygma and creed of the Christian community, to be sure; but it is lived in a shape which involves the concrete day-to-day relationship to the Christian community, engagement in its worship, and a life lived characteristically according to the "moral" imperatives which flow from incorporation into the spirit of the community. The spirit takes flesh in a specific tonality which Christian life manifests as the day-to-day shape of the assent of faith. Paul describes this gestalt in terms of concrete "works" or "fruits" of the community's spirit: love, joy, patience, forgiveness, understanding, faithfulness to God, Jesus, and one another—a sustaining climate for the emergence and growth of the Christian spirit (Gal 5:22–23; 2 Cor 6:6; Col 3:12–15; Eph 4:2).

Pistis, then, is a lived assent, an assent which includes all these dimensions of experience, day-to-day life in relation to people in community in the Spirit, bearing the fruits of that Spirit in their lives, celebrating and articulating that Spirit and its fruits in the life of the community in its worship, preaching, creed and in the structure of law and authority which emerge from this experience and facilitate its continuance. The complex can be called "the faith," the concrete historical assent to the faithfulness of God revealed in the resurrection of Jesus. It is out of this total grounding experience that the confession "Jesus is the Lord" arises with a truth which is experienced in the whole pattern of Christian living: the historical visibility and basic sacramental reality of God's yes to the world in Jesus and the world's yes to God in the pattern of life and historical Christian experience.

Doctrinal Tradition

This complex of experience, worship, preaching, and community structure, then, forms a "symbolic system" in the sense that it serves to integrate, articulate, and promote the Christian experience and present that experience to future generations, constituting a tradition whose function is to bear and enlarge that experience within history. In its integrating function it gathers together experience and understanding into a meaningful whole which forms the ground for continuing assent, continuing commitment to the community which articulates itself in the total symbol system.¹² This symbol system, "the faith" in its widest sense,

¹² R. May, *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* (New York: Norton, 1972) 65–77.

is the "interest"¹³ which underlies the doctrine and discipline of the Christian community throughout its history. The great Christological debates and doctrinal pronouncements of the first five centuries could seem to be a series of endless and insignificant verbal, theoretical, or political squabbles, were it not for this religious concern at the base of it all. If Jesus is not one with God in God's faithfulness to His world, the response of the community gathered in Jesus' name is devoid of true content: "your faith is empty and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15:17); the whole gestalt of experience, worship, preaching, authority, law, creed, and structure is a sham.¹⁴

The Councils of Carthage and Orange, along with the *Indiculus* of Celestine I, bring the issue of faith into focus in the dogmatic tradition with an explicitness that is only matched previously in Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians.¹⁵ The human optimism on whose basis Pelagius and Celestius and later Cassian and Faustus of Riez based their ascetical views of Christian faith and life was countered, first by Augustine and then by his followers, with a firm insistence on the Christian fact of the absolute initiative of God's gift even for the *initium bonae voluntatis* (Cassian) or the *initium fidei* (Faustus). Granted the obscurities and inconsistencies of the Pelagian and "Semi-Pelagian" (or anti-Augustinian) positions and the exaggerations of the Augustinian reactions, the councils and theologians recall Paul's emphasis on the fact that we have what we have been given (1 Cor 4:7) and we are what we are by God's favor (15:10).¹⁶ Every posture toward God (*credere, velle, desiderare, conari, laborare*, etc.) is basically a gift and not a natural human achievement. The councils point to the uninterrupted practice of infant baptism as "proof" of the fact that this has been the Christian conviction from the beginning of the Christian community.

The Council of Trent found it incumbent on its work to reiterate the teachings of Orange and Carthage in the face of dangers for the integrity of the faith which it saw arising from the humanistic movements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁷ Its larger work, of course, was the confrontation of what it saw as an exaggerated "Paulism" and an Augustinian pessimism concerning the human condition. The *Decretum de justificatione* echoes the Pauline language of the Reformation founders

¹³ The word is used in the sense employed by J. Habermas in *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968) 235-62 (ET: *Knowledge and Human Interest* [Boston: Beacon, 1971] 191-214).

¹⁴ P. Smulders, *The Fathers on Christology* (DePere, Wis.: St. Norbert Abbey, 1968) 4-6.

¹⁵ DS 222-30 (Carthage), 238-49 (*Indiculus*), 370-97 (Orange II).

¹⁶ DS 376.

¹⁷ DS 1510-16, 1551-53.

in its description of the process and the gestalt of "justification."¹⁸ It treats faith as the eventual assent of the believer to the truth of what has been divinely revealed and promised, but, in the light of the pessimistic Reformation view of human "works," it insists that faith must flower in the works of hope, love, and obedience if it is to unite the believer to Christ.¹⁹ And, of course, its teaching on the sacraments and other aspects of Catholic tradition is a further elaboration of the lived pattern of Catholic faith as the community has experienced it historically.²⁰ Thus Trent rejects the separation of the surrender or assent of faith from the larger gestalt of worship, structure, and moral life which constitute the lived pattern of the human response in assent to God's love in the believing community.

Vatican I presents its teachings on faith in a different context, that of the challenges to faith by "reason" as understood in the wake of the scientific and intellectual enlightenment of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. In that context faith is almost exclusively considered as intellectual consent to the truth revealed by God in Scripture and the history of Christian tradition.²¹ Faith is present as a kind of knowledge which is distinct from that gained by the reasoning process,²² but a knowledge which can be deepened by natural human reason when this applies itself to deeper penetration into the mysteries of faith.²³

Vatican II speaks of faith in several contexts. In the context of its teaching on the liturgy, the Council situates the significance of worship in the whole framework of God's action for His people and the Christian response of faith and conversion.²⁴ In this, the liturgy is seen as the self-articulation of the faith of the Church as Jesus associates the Church with himself in his worship of the Father.²⁵ But this cultic activity is only one dimension of the "faith" of the Church, for that "faith" also comprises the continuing assent to the gracious initiative which God has taken and continues to take historically in and through Jesus and the life of conversion which that assent implies. *Lumen gentium* once again presents the significance and structure of the Church in the light of the *magnalia Dei* in which God gathers the Church to Himself as His people. The history of God's assent to His people is presented as the basis on which the community of faith is gathered and lives.²⁶ *Dei verbum*, the Consti-

¹⁸ DS 1525-31.

¹⁹ DS 1531.

²⁰ DS 1600-1835.

²¹ DS 3008-12.

²² DS 3015.

²³ DS 3019.

²⁴ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, nos. 5-12.

²⁵ Ibid. 7.

²⁶ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, nos. 1-15.

tution on Divine Revelation, once again rehearses this same sacred history as the basic content of the faith which is contained and transmitted in the Church's tradition.²⁷ *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in Today's World, once again presents this same complex of teaching and belief as the basis for the Church's attitude toward the world, especially in the light of contemporary atheistic postures.²⁸

These few paragraphs hardly constitute a theological or doctrinal history of the understanding of faith in the Christian tradition. Their purpose is merely to show the different contexts out of which and to which theology and magisterium find it necessary to articulate the meaning of faith. In different contexts different aspects of the total gestalt of faith need re-emphasis. Hence the difference in stress: faith as grace and gift, faith as the basis for "works" of love and obedience, faith as consonant with reason. Doctrinal theology as a functional specialty within the field of theological effort reflects on the origins and structure of these statements in order to reach the fullest possible understanding. Fundamental or foundational theology looks rather to the larger world in which the Church lives and tries to determine some of the broader human "interests" in terms of which these doctrines can be understood and to which they can be addressed. One of the tasks of such a foundational reflection is to do a "pretheological" phenomenological reflection on a contemporary human experience, discerning there "religious interests" to which the faith of Christianity could address itself not so much by the proclamation of gospel or doctrine as by a recognition of the common ground of human experience with which believer and nonbeliever both deal as human beings.

Secular Mood and Life Story

The last decade or so has seen a number of studies which take seriously the secular "mood" of contemporary culture and its impact on the character and possibilities of Christian faith and its expression in a culture where the word "God" has become problematical. At one end of the spectrum, the death-of-God movement attempted to formulate the possibilities of faith while admitting that "God" is a meaningless, "dead" word and reality.²⁹ At the other end, the *Festungstheologie* of (neo-) orthodoxy insisted on the continued proclamation of the word of God in the face of a godless culture, or presented "secular" theologies in which the symbol "God" functions in a very living way as the transcendent

²⁷ Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, nos. 1-10.

²⁸ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, no. 22.

²⁹ Cf. D. Jenkins, *Guide to the Debate about God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966); B. Murchland, ed., *The Meaning of the Death of God* (New York: Random House, 1967).

factor which gives meaning and direction to history.³⁰ Attempting to find a middle ground between these two positions, other thinkers presented studies on the meaning of the "religious" and transcendent which take seriously the secularity of human experience in contemporary culture—a secularity which challenges the traditional religious "canopy" that gives the sheltering cover of meaning and coherence to human experience—and point at the same time to a "rumor" or "disclosure" of the concern expressed by the transcendent and the religious *within* the very world- and time-bound complex of contemporary experience and interpretation.³¹

The phenomenological analyses of Gilkey and Berger are well known to readers of this journal. Gilkey points with precision to the place in human experience where an "ultimate" concern arises which does not find a response in any particularity of human experience and concern because every aspect of human existence is placed in question. Since this is a human experience and a common one, it is meaningful to talk about this kind of concern. "Religious" language, in other words, is meaningful. Whether or not one agrees with Gilkey's "turn" in his contention that this concern *implies an unconditioned ground* for this awareness and concern,³² it must be admitted that he does point to the place where the concern of faith in God is located. Berger attacks the trivialization of life by the "modern" mood and argues toward the relevance of the metaphysical and the supernatural from the human experiences of joy, hope, humor, and the human enterprise of ordering.³³

Whether or not a phenomenological study can ground belief in a transcendent principle that gives meaning and coherence to human life and history is, of course, the problem of "natural theology." Given the option of living with meaninglessness or triviality in the face of the ultimate questions raised within human experience by "ultimate concern" or of believing in the transcendent ground of human existence and history, these studies opt for faith precisely as a posture which liberates the best and most creative human efforts.

These studies are, even in their rather existential cast, basically philosophical in scope. But the past decade has also seen the emergence of an

³⁰ Cf. L. Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969) 25–29.

³¹ *Ibid.* 247–99.

³² *Ibid.* 313–15.

³³ P. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970). Similar treatment may be found in E. Schillebeeckx, "Epilogue: The New Image of God, Secularization and Man's Future on Earth," in *God the Future of Man* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968) 167–207; H. Mühlen, *Die abendländische Seinsfrage als der Tod Gottes und der Aufgang einer neuen Gotteserfahrung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1968).

"intermediary"³⁴ theological approach to faith in the exploration of life stories as parables of the meaning of God and faith.³⁵ This theological effort is "intermediary" in the sense that it stands between two different types of theological approach: on the one hand, that of the more traditional *Dogmengeschichte* and systematic analysis of conventional academic theology; on the other, the more imaginative and concrete delineation of faith themes characteristic of the study of theological themes in the various literary arts. The precision of its analytical and discursive thought is brought to bear not simply on abstract ideas and statements but on constellations of experience and the images and metaphors which come into being in that experience. This effort is thus an exercise in "parable" in the sense that the life story itself is the medium for the communication of truth. The recognition of the truth of the life story arises not merely from the consistency of the ideas which govern the life but from the resonance which the life as a whole has for the life of the reader. For the parable does not convey a truth which is "objective" in the sense that it is the object of a neutral analysis. The parable immediately turns the eye of the reader back upon the self and the self's story, to ask the question of the place of the values contained in the parable in the life of the reader. It calls on the reader to engage in the kind of careful analysis of experience which traces the life story with honesty, and it invites the reader to embark on the same kind of search for meaning and integrity which emerge from the life story. For, since life stories are human stories, they are stories of a truth not yet in complete possession, but a truth to be found in fidelity to the search for the meaning of one's life in the face of the death which confronts every human.

The life story can be told in different ways; the two most obvious are the biography and the autobiography. When told from the perspective of the quest for meaning, for truth, for the concrete meaning of "God" and "faith" in terms of the concrete events of the life story, these stories take on a "religious" character in a broad sense, inviting the reader to reflect on the kind of story in which he or she lives. For it is in terms of that story that God, faith, and truth achieve a concrete gestalt experienced in the events, relationships, successes, and failures of the life experience itself. This is a kind of meaning and truth which cannot be communicated in any other way—as "incomplete truth" to be sought and discovered in the pattern of every human life.

From this perspective the meaning of "faith" emerges against the background of the actual experiences of believing or believing in things,

³⁴ S. TeSelle, *Speaking in Parables* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 3; "An 'Intermediary Theology': In Service of the Hearing of God's Word," *Christian Century* 92 (1975) 625-29.

³⁵ Cf. J. S. Dunne, *A Search for God in Time and Memory* (New York: Macmillan, 1970); *Time and Myth* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1973).

people, relationships, and so on. It can be seen to be an assent, but an assent which may or may not be actually and clearly articulated in a person's life. For the assent is not simply a matter of the intellect, the mind. The assent takes place in the actual investment of a person's intellectual, emotional, and physical energies in the people, the things, and the relationships of his or her life. The assent is a yes to these realities in life, in their entrance into a person's life and even in their leaving of it. The yes may be a spoken assent or a silent assent which is enfleshed in the actual relation one establishes with the self, with others, and with all the events and relationships that characterize the personal and corporate journey through life. In all this, the assent is an assent to one's own humanity as one perceives it.

This broad phenomenological description of faith would encompass all kinds of life commitments. Paradoxically, one's real investment of emotional and other energies could be involved in destructive and denying efforts at avoiding life and humanity. Faith could be the investment of energies which is born out of terror of life. From this perspective the story of life would really be a story of the avoidance of life in the attempt to protect one's self from life's pain and difficulty. This would be a neurotic kind of faith, a kind of living which seeks the sort of protection and security which are a constant denial of the human project. Obviously, this is not the meaning or intent of what the Christian tradition calls "faith." In terms of the life story, a genuine faith would be seen rather as assent to life and humanity in their existential concreteness, i.e., an assent to the realities of the world, human relationships, events, decisions, even death, as these realities enter and leave human life—this is a constant and living quest for the emerging meaning which both grounds and continues to liberate a concrete individual life.

John Dunne describes the origin and progress of this assent in terms of the stages of the life story:

A Yes is required of one, it seems, at each stage of life. There is a task at each stage which begins with a consciousness and ends with a consent. The world emerges into consciousness, then sexuality, then mortality, then spirit. At each stage, one's task is accomplished when one makes one's way through to consent. If one does not reach that point, the task remains unfinished and carries into the next stage of life. If one does succeed in consenting, then the thing that has emerged into consciousness becomes something human. It loses its divine and uncanny quality and becomes part of one's humanity. When that happens, one comes up against God. It is as though the Yes were a Yes to someone and not merely a Yes to something, a Yes to God and not merely a Yes to the world, to sexuality, to mortality and to spirit. God becomes God when man becomes man.³⁶

³⁶ Dunne, *Time and Myth* 81.

From his profoundly religious concern, Dunne is pointing here to the historical shape which the meaning of "God" assumes in the journey toward humanity and understanding which the life story is. Like Gilkey and Berger, he locates the concern of faith in the more or less "ordinary" events of human life. It is this series of experiences which constitutes the lens through which interest in faith and God is focused and through which their concrete meaning can be seen. Dunne sees the yes of faith emerging in the stages of life as one consents to the events and forces which make up the fabric of human existence. Ultimately, he sees the whole of life brought to life as the human "spirit" (the relation which one has established with the "things" of life) becomes consciously and willingly human, when an all-embracing yes becomes possible in which the whole of the life story is illumined and enlivened.

The whole man of whom we have been speaking proves to be alive when his spirit becomes human. When his spirit loses its inhuman aura, when it becomes consciously and willingly human, when it becomes for him simply the relationship with the things of his life, then the child in him, the youth, the man and the old man all come alive.³⁷

By means of this process of humanization-through-assent, the whole of a person's life history becomes alive and illuminated, because it is precisely in and through this series of assents that the grounding and meaning of the whole are encountered and affirmed. Dunne calls that ground "the unknown," referring to the mysterious and changing ("protean") form which God assumes in this process. For as one struggles in the movement from consciousness of the "things of life" to a consent to them, one is struggling with God as God simultaneously struggles to bring what is human into being. In this struggle both God and the person are constantly changing shape, but in and through the struggle "man becomes man and God becomes God."³⁸

Put in other terms, Dunne is speaking of the life story as a story of transcendence, in which "transcendence" is understood in its root sense (*trans-scendere*) of going "up and over" the limits of a given life situation and experience. This process is the process which engages the human effort at believing, for the concrete shape of the stage of life into which one is called to enter is not "there" out in front of one in a clear, finished form. What the shape of each stage of a life will be is up to the individual. It can be embraced creatively in a yes or it can be fought against in a resolute (though ultimately ineffective) no. The truly human life is a life which develops with a series of assents to the "things" of life, the world, sexuality, death, and spirit. But these realities are not simply *the* world,

³⁷ Ibid. 128.

³⁸ Ibid.

a sexuality, a death, or a spirit. Their historical reality is the fact that they are *my*, *your*, and *our* world, sexuality, death, and spirit, living relationships based on the creative and destructive assents and refusals which we make as these realities enter our consciousness and invite us to establish creative relationships with them. Ultimately, the assent is the assent to the lifelong process of transcendence and *in the process* an implicit but all-penetrating assent to the Transcendent, the Unknown. And, it is important to note, this assent does not remove one from the ordinary and not-so-ordinary events and realities of the human life process, but summons one to deep and creative engagement with those events, realities, and relationships. It is this creative engagement which makes the future *my*, *your*, or *our* future rather than *the* future, personalizing it, humanizing it, in a historical particularity.

From this perspective faith can be seen as an assent, but it is assent in different senses. It is the actual yes which is directed toward the process, events, and relationships which make up the life story. But this yes can be seen to be the actualizing and articulation of a deeper underlying and developing *confidence* in the process of the life story as a whole. One can assent to the events and relationships of a life out of a desperate kind of optimism which asserts dogmatically that things will get better, no matter what evidence there is to the contrary. Likewise, one can adopt the equally dogmatic pessimism of the quasi-cosmic no, a kind of churlish refusal that sometimes goes by the name of "existentialism" or "negative enlightenment." But this kind of dogmatic position is hardly a ground for action. Without the resources of the past, one is reduced to an infantile helplessness; without some kind of image of the future, one is paralyzed in catatonia. The grounding confidence out of which an assent emerges must have a historical base, if it is to be at all realistic. Hence the importance of personal and common history (tradition) out of which at least some intellectual or affective possibility for the future can be imaged. As a grounding confidence, then, faith needs a basis in experience, and the experience which grounds that confidence seems to be, above all, the creative emergence of new possibilities in our personal or corporate past. Without this experiential base, confidence is merely dogmatism.

It is this experiential history, then, which serves as the grounding for the actual assent to the varied "things" of life, as well as for the underlying confidence in life which is actualized in that assent. However, history does not simply produce the future. A future which is simply the endless repetition of the past is no future at all. That would simply be the perpetuation of the endless task of Sisyphus, meaningless and destructive, the reduction of the human to the status of robot. To be human, engagement with the future must be imaginative and creative. The assent of faith and the confidence of faith must be creative, if the assent and the

confidence are to engage one in the journey in which what we mean by "God" takes on a concrete historical shape and identity.

From the perspective of the life story, then, faith is seen both as the grounding confidence which trusts in the meaningfulness and value of the processes of transcendence which constitute truly human life, as well as the actualization of that confidence in the act of assenting to past, present, and future, an assent which actually engages one in the creative living of one's life. Faith in God is developed and articulated concretely through this focus of the human life project. It is against this background that the themes of faith, mortality, and creativity form a suggestive framework for an understanding of the dynamics and implications of faith today.

"CREATIVITY" IN PSYCHOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

The study of the psychological analyses of creativity involves one in the vicissitudes and developments of the clinical and philosophical understandings of the human condition which mark the history of the development of psychology over the past hundred years. Freud's principles of libidinal (Oedipal) conflict and repressed sexuality color his understanding of the creative process and its motivation.³⁹ He maintains that the curiosity which characterizes the creative type is basically sexual and is sublimated in education, religion, various compulsive defenses, and, in rare and optimal cases, in the inquisitive attitude which leads to creativity. The repulsion at the stirrings of the id is compensated for by their transformation into a "higher," more formal aesthetic pleasure, a bribe to the artist's and society's superego. As has been pointed out repeatedly, Freud's treatment of the unconscious has validity for some understanding of human motivation, but the restriction of the motivation to sexual frustration and neurotic compensations does not seem to fit the facts in every case of the creative personality.

Jung sees creativity grounded in a more "ontological" structure of the self.⁴⁰ The creative impulse is a "capricious and willful" force of nature which operates quite independently as an "autonomous complex," a "slit-off portion of the psyche which leads a life of its own outside the hierarchy of consciousness."⁴¹ As such, its roots are not in the personal unconscious of the artistic person but in the collective unconscious, that common human heritage consisting of vague memories or simply the anatomical structure of the brain which articulates itself in primordial images whose existence Jung extrapolates from their historical recurrence in the history

³⁹ S. Arieti, *Creativity: The Magic Synthesis* (New York: Basic Books, 1976) 22-24.

⁴⁰ "On the Relation of Analytic Psychology to Poetry," in *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* (Collected Works 15; Princeton: Princeton University, 1966) 65-83.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 75.

of culture, religion, and mythology. This view certainly gives a more positive interpretation to the grounding of creativity, but its rooting in the collective unconscious gives the impression that there is "nothing new under the sun," that what appears as new is, in reality, the animation of a principle and images which are as old as, or older than, humanity itself.

The views of Freud and Jung, and to a large extent those of their orthodox followers, have a common element within their variations. This is their restriction of the creative process and the creative impulse to "artists" who fashion images from wood, stone, words, or paint. Erich Neumann and Otto Rank enlarge the consideration of creativity to a framework which has a more direct bearing for the understanding of the creativity of faith; for they no longer situate the creative principle or the creative urge in the poet, sculptor, or painter, but in the life of Everyman.

The creative principle . . . has almost ceased to live in dedicated holy places, in sites or times dedicated to it or in men consecrated to it, but may live everywhere, anywhere, in any way and any time. . . . Because in our time the creative principle always hides in anonymity that discloses its origin by no divine sign . . . we have entered upon the spiritual poverty suggested by the Jewish legend about the Messiah in the guise of a beggar sitting and waiting at the gates of Rome. What is he waiting for? He is waiting for you. This means that creative redemption . . . is disguised as an Everyman . . . his poverty and helplessness make him dependent on the devotion that every man accords to this Everyman. This is our situation. We stand before the creative principle. Wherever we find the creative principle, in the Great Individual and in the child, in the sick man or in simple everyday life, we venerate it as the hidden treasure that in humble form conceals a fragment of the godhead.⁴²

Neumann's consideration of creativity is thus framed in broader human terms, and although much of his consideration has to do with works of art and the process of their production, he analyzes this effort in terms which are applicable to the human situation as a whole. From his frankly Jungian perspective, he sees the creative process as a fruit of the tension between conscious and unconscious. It is from this tension (not from the subordination of one to the other) that a third term can be born "which 'transcends' or surpasses the opposites and so combines parts of both positions into an unknown new creation."⁴³

Otto Rank explicitly enlarges this perspective to include the whole process of life within the framework of the creative process. For Rank, the very experience of human individuality is creative; it is the experience

⁴² E. Neumann, "Creative Man and Transformation," in *Art and the Creative Unconscious* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1959) 168.

⁴³ Ibid. 192.

of the capacity for self-expression in the world.⁴⁴ This self-expression, the act of will, is the very experience of one's connection with life; apart from it one experiences the extinction of the self: death. The history of art, culture, and society is, at its depth, the history of the human will to assert itself, the history of man's creation of the world and the self through will. But this process takes place against the background of the threat to the extinction of will in death. Thus Rank sees the human life story as a story of unions and separations in which the self-assertion is both grounded and threatened by the surrender of will to community, but is still experienced as a need of one's deepest nature. Thus Rank saw both movements, the movement toward community and the movement to self-assertion through will, as traumatic, laden with anxiety and guilt. The movement toward self-assertion is guilt- and anxiety-laden because it involves the breaking of the communion in which one's self-worth is experienced and nourished. And the movement toward communion is guilt- and fear-laden because one sees in communion the extinction of the self-assertion which is the deepest experience of being alive. Hence Rank speaks of two anxieties: the fear of life (self-assertion which could leave one completely cut off from human community) and the fear of death (the absorption of the self-asserting self in communion).⁴⁵

Rank traces this process of separation and union through the life process. The fear which accompanies separation from the womb, the deepest human union, is assuaged by the nursing union of the child with the mother. The birth of will in the infant is both nourished and negated by the support and control of the family structure and ideal. The birth of personal identity is attended by anxiety for the self and the family as one separates one's self from the family to take a place in the world beyond the family communion. The "birth of the hero" is marked by the same kind of ambiguity. The movement toward self-assertion in the larger world in which one finds one's life-calling involves both communion with the ideological values of society (philosophy, culture, religion) and at the same time a critical stance toward those values (implying the possibility of either appropriation or rejection of those values) which self-assertion demands. In the "birth of the artist" public accomplishment is no longer the issue. In touch with and stirred by the deepest human values, the "artist" is capable of incorporating and articulating these deep human realities in a way which makes the artist a prototype of the creative will in everyone. He articulates what is deep (and usually suppressed) in

⁴⁴ I. Proffoff, "Otto Rank's Two Steps beyond Psychology," in *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956) 188-253.

⁴⁵ See A. Schmitt, "Otto Rank," in *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry* 2 (2nd ed.; Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1975) 637-41; O. Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (New York: Robert Brunner, 1952).

every human being, so that others can experience their own latent creativity through him. Finally, out of a deep communion with the ideological (philosophical, religious, cultural) values, one can enter into the "spiritual" birth. Here there is no need to create anything else. "The self is its own art form."⁴⁶ In this last "birth" Rank sees the deepest human faith commitment and also a union with the transcendent which gathers together and illumines the whole of the life process. Beyond that, he sees the ultimate birth, the consciously willed act of dying to find the ultimate union in eternal life.

The whole of life, for Rank, is a creative process, a self-affirmation which takes place against the background of "death" (the cessation of the affirmation of the self through the act of will). But the creativity of life is meant to eventually reach a point where the self becomes its own art-form, and the very reality of death itself becomes a creative affirmation of the self into a life which is only known in a religious surrender. Thus, although in *Art and Artist* he sees the art of the primitive as an achievement of immortality in the production of the art work,⁴⁷ his mature thought in *Beyond Psychology* envisions the life of every human being as a creative process in which one freely engages in both life and death, the acceptance of one's mortality. The life story thus becomes both the final art-form for mankind and the substance of the spiritual journey which leads to life through and beyond death. Rank uses Paul's creative transformation of the Jewish law and the preaching of the Resurrection as the locus for the truest emergence of what it means to be a human person. For in that message Rank sees death consciously incorporated into life.

By participating in Christ's resurrection, man is thus actually "twice-born" in life instead of re-born after death. In this philosophy of self-succession I see the basic element of our psychological personality concept. . . . Christianity spiritualized it (the problem of succession and self-succession), thus bringing the original magical conception of immortality back to an individual plane.⁴⁸

In his analysis of Rilke, Neumann speaks in the same terms. He insists on the incorporation of death into the creative process:

"For we to what disturbs us, makes afraid,
owe from the first such boundless obligation.

⁴⁶ Schmitt (n. 45 above) points out that these stages, especially the "birth of the artist" and "spiritual birth," seem to reflect Rank's own experience of separation from Freud and the emergence of his own work in France and the United States.

⁴⁷ O. Rank, *Art and Artist* (New York: Knopf, 1932; reprinted, New York: Agathon, 1968) 11-16.

⁴⁸ O. Rank, *Beyond Psychology* (New York: Dover, 1958) 158-63.

Death always took a part in its creation:
that's how the so unheard-of song was made."

Here "death" means the terrible and the perilous as well as the barriers of human weakness. It is everything that strikes the ego as suffering and ruin. In praising death as the prerequisite of every transformation that merges life and death, the poet allies himself with the creative God Himself, the God of transformation who bestows and *is* life and death.⁴⁹

Like Rank, Neumann also goes beyond the natural and supranatural for his grounding of the confidence which serves as the basis for one's engagement with the creativity of life. He points out that the process of the formation of the self is long and arduous, the process of a lifetime. But in the last analysis, he insists that the discovery of one's depth (and, conversely, the event of being discovered by that same depth) is neither human achievement nor magic but an event which takes place by the grace of God.⁵⁰

The process of transcendence, the movement of a life through the limits of each of its stages, is presented here in terms which cannot avoid recalling the convictions of dogma and theology that the gift of faith as a grounding confidence and assent to this process is a grace which permits one to move from consciousness to consent even in the face of the negativity of human limitation (death above all). Behind this, as E. Becker remarks, one can hear the voices of Tillich and Augustine (to whose voices we can add those of Karl Rahner and Walter Kasper).

Tillich's consideration of concupiscence as existential estrangement from man's essential nature specifically alludes to Freud as one whose analyses, granted their limitations, theologians would do well to follow.

When he speaks of the "death instinct" (*Todestrieb*, better translated as the "drive for death"), he describes the desire to escape the pain of the never satisfied libido. Like every higher being, man desires to return to the lower level of life out of which he has arisen. The pain inflicted by the higher level drives toward the lower. It is the never satisfied libido in man . . . which produces in him the desire to get rid of himself as man. In these observations concerning man's "discontent" with his creativity Freud looks deeper into the human condition than many of his followers and critics. Up to this point, a theological interpreter of man's estrangement is well advised to follow Freud's analyses.⁵¹

Tillich enlarges this existential framework in his broader and somewhat parallel discussion of being and faith in *The Courage to Be* and *The*

⁴⁹ Neumann, "Creative Man" 196-97.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 195.

⁵¹ *Systematic Theology* 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1957) 54.

Dynamics of Faith.⁵² The characterization of being as the "courage to be" stems from the fact that human being is experienced against the background of nonbeing, which constantly resists and threatens being. Thus human existence is a matter of a courageous self-affirmation of being, a self-affirmation which is the power of being.⁵³ But this power of being does not eliminate nonbeing from its experience, as Parmenides would have it; rather, the courage to be "embraces" nonbeing, overcoming it by "admitting" it into the experience of being in an experience of a finitude which lives in time and thus is opened to constant self-transcendence.

In this sense, being always has nonbeing within it in human life. But Tillich also sees this as true of the divine life. The divine life is continually overcoming the nonbeing eternally present within it. Thus it is not a dead or static reality but a living creativity. Its creativity lies in the fact that it is continually affirming itself, continually conquering its own nonbeing. In all of this, the embracing and overcoming of nonbeing, the living creativity, the divine life is the pattern of the creative self-affirmation of all finite being and the source of finite being's courage to be.⁵⁴

The paradigm for the threat of nonbeing and the basic anxiety which forms the background for human creative self-affirmation is, of course, the threat and the fear of death. It is a fear of the loss of everything and the suffering which terminates life. But it is also a permanent anxiety which afflicts the human condition and makes being and living into a courageous and creative act of the courage to be.⁵⁵

Tillich's description of faith parallels this understanding of human existence. Like being, faith is transcendent "ultimate concern." Like being, faith is not a dimension of life along with others "but the central in man's personal life, manifest and hidden at the same time. It is religious and transcends religion, it is universal and concrete, it is infinitely variable and always the same."⁵⁶ Like being, faith overcomes the inherent doubt which coexists with true faith at its center, overcomes it by courage, by risk.⁵⁷ Once again, this courage does not eliminate the doubt that threatens it, but "embraces it" at the risk of faith.⁵⁸ At the basis of this description of faith is Tillich's situation of faith as a human process resisting a temptation to a fixed and static "divinity" in the embracing of one's humanity and finitude. It is in this process that one finds the

⁵² *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University, 1952); *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

⁵³ *The Courage to Be* 32-36.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 34.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 85-86.

⁵⁶ *Dynamics of Faith* 126.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 101.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 103.

immediate certainty of faith. "There is only one point which is not a matter of risk but of immediate certainty and herein lies the greatness and pain of being human: namely, one's standing between one's finitude and one's potential infinity."⁵⁹

Karl Rahner develops an understanding of the experience of faith which is less "symbolic" than Tillich's treatment of Christian symbols of "grace" and "cross," but which parallels Tillich's thought in its relating of Christian convictions to the experience of the life process.

Christian faith, fulfilled and successful in Jesus, granted us by God, provides what a Christian, indeed everyone, hopes for himself if he accepts his own life in hope, even when confronted by God's incomprehensibility and his own death. In spite of the very necessary theoretical distinctions drawn between the ultimate courage for life and the systematic faith in Jesus Christ, these two are ultimately one and the same thing for the Christian.⁶⁰

Rahner points out the mutual relationship between the concern for one's life out of which the death and resurrection of Jesus are credible and the historical faith of the Christian community which gives one the courage to confess the hope that rises in and through the processes of life.⁶¹ "Because he believes in the *God-man*, he has the courage and hope to believe in himself and in the highest possibility, being with God."⁶²

Developing his Christology in reaction to the "flattening out" of human possibilities which results from the universal rationalization of history in the intellectual Enlightenment and the universal rationalization of experience in technological and industrial enlightenment, Walter Kasper sees Easter faith as basically creative in its proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Easter faith has confidence in a potential far beyond existing reality, far beyond death, and dares to bet on a God "with whom all things are possible" in life and in death. Hence the faith of Easter is an attack on that enclosed view of the world which sets itself absolute limits and leaves no room for the non-deducible creative potentialities of God.⁶³

Indeed, what is perhaps the central and governing concern of his view of Christology is precisely the possibility of creative human freedom as the predisposition for an authentic Christology. The Enlightenment criticized religion in the name of the "liberation of freedom." Kasper sees the Enlightenment, however, as the basis for the erosion of freedom in the

⁵⁹ Ibid. 18.

⁶⁰ "Faith as Courage," in *Meditations on Freedom and the Spirit* (New York: Seabury, 1978) 27.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *Jesus the Christ* (New York: Paulist, 1976) 145.

name of Absolute History and asks for a new enlightenment of the Enlightenment itself.

Freedom denies the primacy of the universal over the particular. . . . To conceive reality under the rule of freedom means that reality is to be seen not as enclosed but as a basically open system with room for the unique, new and original. We are right to ask whether a second enlightenment (an enlightenment of the Enlightenment about itself) cannot, though in a new way, reassert belief in God as deciding the very possibility of freedom.⁶⁴

CONCLUSIONS

The psychiatrists and theologians whose ideas have been presented in this "dialogue" have not been in a formal dialogue with one another. However, as one juxtaposes the psychiatrists' concern for human wholeness with the theologians' concern for a contemporary understanding of faith, common strands of interest do emerge. As far as theology is concerned, the secular mood of so much of contemporary culture has challenged theology to return to its roots in human experience and to articulate its understanding of faith in terms of human life processes. John Dunne and Sallie TeSelle, among others, have responded to this challenge in their efforts to articulate a theology of faith in which the creative assent to human life processes becomes the locus for the emergence of the meaning of the mystery of God. As far as psychiatry and psychology are concerned, the movement away from Freudian dogmatism has developed an understanding of the human life processes which is open to a religious dimension seen as inherent in the human ideal itself. From both perspectives the importance of creativity for human assent becomes central to the understanding of faith, whether this means the fundamental confidence which makes human growth possible or the assent to the meaning of the mystery of God concretely revealed in the movement of those same human life processes.

It would seem that a fruitful and appropriate focus for the religious and theological understanding of faith today would be a renewed emphasis on the character of faith as *gift*. Centuries of culture and tradition have served to support the Christian believer by furnishing a sociocultural matrix within which the believer felt at home. The large realities and even many of the details of life were experienced in a context of belief which made sense out of them. Now the rationalizations of human existence in the name of industry, politics, and science no longer support the interpretations of life and history which were borne by the "ages of faith." But while promising to make greater sense of human existence, the rationalizing systems have all too often served to raise questions of

⁶⁴ Ibid. 48.

the meaning and value of human existence on a profound level. Philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and even social scientists have pointed out that "a man is more than his dossier," reflecting a concern for the meaning and quality of life which gathers around the "*abendländische Seinsfrage*." In the context of this question the available cultural-religious answers to the human questions about life have, to a large extent, lost the day, either because of a growing suspicion of any institutional traditions or because of the apparent failure of political or economic institutions to respond effectively to a vast array of profound human needs. Faith, simple human faith in the possibilities of life, seems less and less effective, and the "God" offered by religious tradition has seemed dead and unresponsive. As H. Mühlen has written, "in the light of the 'death' of the 'deistic' God, the cry is raised for a living *experience* of the living God."⁶⁵

It is in this context that the life story can emerge as the "horizon within which the meaning of doctrines can be apprehended." It is in terms of the experience of the life story that the concrete meaning of God and faith can emerge as the material for religious and theological reflection. Through the focus of the life story one's faith emerges as assent, but an assent which must be addressed to the specifics of each life story, one's world, one's sexuality, one's death, and the spirit which arises in the concrete relationship one establishes with these unavoidable "things" of life. One's faith also emerges in the larger sense of being a *confidence* which emerges in a life, confidence that *this life* is worth living with all of its weeping and laughing, its mourning and dancing, its love and hate, its war and peace (Qoh 3:4,8). In more traditional language, faith is both *actus* and *habitus*: an actual yes to the particularities of one's life, and the way of being which emerges as the courage and confidence out of which one lives the life story.

But what seems more important to note is that the assent of faith is meant to be a creative assent. The yes to the things of life is not mere submission to the inevitable but an active engagement of the whole of one's human energy to bring a life into being as one's deepest and most pervasive creative activity. For it is precisely in this creative engagement, in its history, its successes, and even its failures, that faith itself becomes credible. The engagement with the specifics of the life story and with the whole of life can only be grounded in the process of the assent. Apart from this, one's grounding can only consist in a dogmatic optimism (or pessimism) destructive of both faith and identity. This is an important aspect of the understanding of faith as a gift. For faith is not the product

⁶⁵ "Das Christusereignis als Tat des Heiligen Geistes," in *Mysterium salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik* 3/2: *Das Christusereignis* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1969) 515.

of dogmatic stances toward the movement and possibilities of the life story. Trusting assent and grounding confidence only emerge when personal freedom and courage are committed in the face of the events, relationships, and other dimensions of one's life process. What becomes clear in this process is that there is no grand plan, no secret teaching, which can humanize the elements of one's life. Amid all the ambiguities of human freedom, one experiences a growing capacity to assent to the life processes as they take place, as well as growth in the deeper grounding confidence which both grows out of one's past history of assent and makes assent to one's future possible. But in both senses faith is experienced as a gift, a gift from one's life and history, a gift from those who have the patience to share this process, and, in all this, a gift from the One who is discovered in the depths and at the limits of one's life.

Faith can be seen, then, not so much as a set of "answers" to the "problems of life" but rather as a growing confidence and courage to live with the mysteries of life. But this living is not passive and submissive. Rather, it is both active and receptive: active in the engagement of freedom and courage, receptive in the capacity to open one's self to the ambiguities and challenges with which the mysteries of life confront us. For example, one can treat sexuality or death as "problems" for which one seeks "solutions" which try to tame or escape these powerful realities of one's life. But one can also open one's self to these realities and actively engage their power to give them a concrete meaning and shape for one's self. One can strip them of their divine or demonic aura and give them a human shape by actively living with them and letting them be active realities in the process of one's life. The meaning and power which they have will not be merely a fixed, static intellectual sureness but a moving and changing history in which they can become the very particular sexuality or mortality of a living person. In this way they take on a human face.

The language of "courage," "creativity," and "confidence" can have a rather promethean ring to it. This is why it is important to keep before one's eyes the shadow of death. For the creativity of the assent and confidence of faith is not absolute. It is limited, and it is within human limits that human creativity comes into being. The life span is limited and everything within it is limited: intelligence, foresight, courage, freedom. The creativity of faith is limited and comes into being precisely in the acknowledgment of and assent to human limits. For it is precisely in the assent to the limited unfinished self with its incomplete truth that one is invited to the life of creative faith. The achievements of this creative faith can seem modest indeed, but in terms of the life story it is hardly insignificant that one learns to free one's self from the stale solutions and cheap graces offered by so much of available culture and

even some available religion. In the face of human limitation, especially the final limit of death, the inhumanity of these solutions and graces can be unmasked and a more genuine human search for wholeness and understanding in life can begin.

It is in this complex of freedom, ambiguity, struggle, accomplishment, and failure that one comes to recognize the reality and meaning of God. It may well be the protean image of which Dunne speaks, the image of a God alive in the child, the youth, the adult, and old age, and of a child, the adult, the youth, and the old alive in God. But this kind of protean identity and meaning of God seems fruitful for human life and faith because the meaning of God and one's relationship with God are closely tied to the life processes themselves, taking place within the struggle to live one's life in a more and more human way. This kind of faith does not alienate one from the human process, the struggle for freedom, creativity, and understanding. Rather, it engages one more seriously in the processes and concrete reality of one's creatureliness.

Finally, creative faith is not a retreat into a privatized religion. It arouses a concern and passion for the human which seems more profound and concrete than any philosophical or political dogma. In the concern for the creative self, one is engaged in the struggle to humanize one's own life, and it is from this base that one can have a genuinely human concern for the humanness of humanity—and the divineness of God.