

## Interlibrary Services at IUPUI University Library

### Thank You for using ILLiad, the Interlibrary Loan Management System in use at University Library.

- If this article is missing pages or has another quality control problem, please let us know as soon as possible. We will request a re-send from the lending library. PLEASE do not re-request this article.  
To contact us, please email us at [ulill@iupui.edu](mailto:ulill@iupui.edu) or phone 274-0500. Please include the transaction number, and indicate what the problem is (e.g. page 25 is missing, margin cut off on page 234, etc.). If you need to leave a phone message, please speak clearly and spell your name.
- Sometimes you may notice dollar amounts or payment due amounts on the cover sheets accompanying this transmission. Please disregard. *This copy is provided at no cost to you and any fees are paid by University Library.*

#### WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTION:

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, U.S. Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction.

One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

FURTHER DUPLICATION OR DISSEMINATION OF THIS MATERIAL MAY BE IN VIOLATION OF COPYRIGHT LAW. For more information about copyright, please contact the IUPUI Copyright Management Center at <http://www.copyright.iupui.edu/> E-mail: [copyinfo@iupui.edu](mailto:copyinfo@iupui.edu)



## Chapter 5

Mary Daly

# Glory to God the Verb

As a result of the [publication] of *The Church of the Second Sex* . . . I "lectured" to academic audiences and women's groups across the country about the sexism of the Christian tradition. Often in the late sixties I encountered hostility in women, not toward the patriarch whose misogynism I exposed, but toward me for exposing them.

By about 1970 this phenomenon of misplaced anger had almost disappeared. More and more people had caught up with the [Mary] Daly [who had written that book], and the lines that formerly had elicited hostility brought forth cheers. But the "I" who was then standing before the friendly audiences and tossing out the familiar phrases was already disconnected from the words, already moving through a new time/space. I often heard the old words as though a stranger were speaking them—some personage visiting from the past. My concern was no longer limited to "equality" in the church or anywhere else. I did not really care about unimaginative reform but instead began dreaming new dreams of women's revolution. This was becoming a credible dream, because a community of sisterhood was coming into being, into be-ing. In the hearing/healing presence of my sisters I had grown ready to try writing/speaking New Words.

The breakthrough to New Words found expression in *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, which is excerpted here. In the Introduction to that book I explained:

To exist humanly is to name the self, the world, and God. The evolving spiritual consciousness of women is nothing less than this beginning to speak humanly—a reclaiming of the right to name. The liberation of language is rooted in the liberation of ourselves.

It would be a mistake to imagine that the new speech of women can be equated simply with women speaking men's words. What is happening is that women are really *hearing ourselves* and each other, and out of this supportive hearing emerge *new words*.

The biblical and popular image of God as a great patriarch in heaven, rewarding and punishing according to his mysterious and seemingly arbitrary will, has dominated the imagination of millions over thousands of years. The symbol of the Father God,

---

First published in *Ms.*, 3 (December 1974), pp. 58-62. Used by permission

spawned in the human  
rendered service to thi  
women appear right a  
then it is in the "natu  
universe that society t  
takes place: the husba

As the Women's M  
transforming it from p  
situation that is radica  
religions of the world,  
and values that have he  
This revolution may  
consciousness on this p

### THE CHALLENGE

There are some who  
that new characters w  
essentially in structures  
observation that the ver  
men do. This kind of re  
the fact that tokenism  
preserve them, since it  
women in the United S  
business executives, doc  
and designed by men, ar  
rules. There are no alter

What is to the point  
before taken place. It is  
Women's Movement to a  
acceptance of structures  
been given priority by a s  
catalyst for radical chan  
system is a potent influ  
power and indeed *are th*  
things as they are.

The roles and structur  
ance with an artificial  
stereotypes. The image  
"his" role has correspon  
tionality (in reality, frequ  
ity, the possession of do  
environment, and the te  
identified with the self)  
represented by this stere  
the eternal feminine. Thi  
on.

By becoming whole pe  
the leader, challenging th  
identification. There is n

spawned in the human imagination and sustained as plausible by patriarchy, has in turn rendered service to this type of society by making its mechanism for the oppression of women appear right and fitting. If God in "his" heaven is a father ruling "his" people, then it is in the "nature" of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated. Within this context a mystification of roles takes place: the husband dominating his wife represents God "himself."

As the Women's Movement begins to have its effect upon the fabric of society, transforming it from patriarchy into something that never existed before, into a diarchal situation that is radically new, it can become the greatest single challenge to the major religions of the world, Western and Eastern—all of which are essentially sexist. Beliefs and values that have held sway for thousands of years will be questioned as never before. This revolution may well be also the greatest single hope for survival of spiritual consciousness on this planet.

**THE CHALLENGE: EMERGENCE OF WHOLE HUMAN BEINGS**

There are some who persist in claiming that the liberation of women will only mean that new characters will assume the same old roles, and that nothing will change essentially in structures, ideologies, and values. This supposition is often based on the observation that the very few women in "masculine" occupations often behave much as men do. This kind of reasoning is not at all to the point, for it fails to take into account the fact that tokenism does not change stereotypes or social systems but works to preserve them, since it dulls the revolutionary impulse. The minute proportion of women in the United States who occupy such roles (such as congresswomen, judges, business executives, doctors, and so on) have been trained by men in institutions defined and designed by men, and they have been pressured subtly to operate according to male rules. There are no alternate models.

What is to the point is an emergence of woman-consciousness such as has never before taken place. It is unimaginative and out of touch with what is happening in the Women's Movement to assume that the becoming of women will simply mean uncritical acceptance of structures, beliefs, symbols, norms, and patterns of behavior that have been given priority by a society under male domination. Rather, this becoming will act as catalyst for radical change in our culture . . . .What *can* effect basic alteration in the system is a potent influence from *without*. Women who reject patriarchy have this power and indeed *are* this power of transformation that is ultimately threatening to things as they are.

The roles and structures of patriarchy have been developed and sustained in accordance with an artificial polarization of human qualities into the traditional sexual stereotypes. The image of the person in authority and the accepted understanding of "his" role has corresponded to the eternal masculine stereotype, which implies hyperrationality (in reality, frequently reducible to pseudorationality), "objectivity," aggressivity, the possession of dominating and manipulative attitudes toward persons and the environment, and the tendency to construct boundaries between the self (and those identified with the self) and "the Other." The caricature of human being which is represented by this stereotype depends for its existence upon the opposite caricature—the eternal feminine. This implies hyperemotionalism, passivity, self-abnegation, and so on.

By becoming whole persons women can generate a counterforce to the stereotype of the leader, challenging the artificial polarization of human characteristics into sex-role identification. There is no reason to assume that women who have the support of each

other to criticize not only the feminine stereotype but the masculine stereotype as well will simply adopt the latter as a model for ourselves. On the contrary, what is happening is that women are developing a wider range of qualities and skills. This is beginning to encourage and in fact demand a comparably liberating process in men—a phenomenon which has begun in men's liberation groups and which is taking place every day within the context of personal relationships. The becoming of androgynous human persons implies a radical change in the fabric of human consciousness and in styles of human behavior.

This change is already threatening the credibility of the religious symbols of our culture. Since many of these have been used to justify oppression, such a challenge should be seen as redemptive. Religious symbols fade and die when the cultural situation that gave rise to them and supported them ceases to give them plausibility. Such an event generates anxiety, but it is part of the risk involved in a faith which accepts the relativity of all symbols and recognizes that clinging to these as fixed and ultimate is self-destructive and idolatrous.

### BEYOND THE INADEQUATE GOD

The various theologies that in one way or another objectify "God" as *a being*, thereby attempt in a self-contradictory way to envisage transcendent reality as finite. "God" then functions to legitimate the existing social, economic, and political status quo, in which women and other victimized groups are subordinate.

"God" can be used oppressively against women in a number of ways. First, it occurs in an overt manner when theologians proclaim women's subordination to be God's will. Second, even in the absence of such explicitly oppressive justification, the phenomenon is present when one-sex symbolism for God and for the human relationship is used. The following passage from Gregory Baum's *Man Becoming* illustrates the point:

To believe that God is Father is to become aware of oneself not as a stranger, not as an outsider or an alienated person, but as a son who belongs or a person appointed to a marvelous destiny, which he shares with the whole community. To believe that God is Father means to be able to say "we" in regard to all men.

A woman whose consciousness has been aroused can say that such language makes her aware of herself as a stranger, as an outsider, as an alienated person, not as a daughter who belongs or who is appointed to a marvelous destiny. She cannot belong to *this* without assenting to her own lobotomy.

Third, even when the basic assumptions of God-language appear to be nonsexist, and when language is somewhat purified of fixation upon maleness, it is damaging and implicitly compatible with sexism if it encourages detachment from the reality of the human struggle against oppression in its concrete manifestations.

The new insight of women is bringing us to a point beyond such direct and indirect theological oppressiveness that traditionally has centered around discussions of "God." It is becoming clear that if God-language is even implicitly compatible with oppressiveness, failing to make clear the relation between intellection and liberation, then it will either have to be developed in such a way that it becomes explicitly relevant to the problem of sexism or else dismissed. In my thinking, the specific criterion which implies a mandate to reject certain forms of God-talk is expressed in the question: Does this language hinder human becoming by reinforcing sex-role socialization? Expressed

positively, the quest  
and social fulfillment

### WOMEN

Many questions t  
occurred in the past  
do theology. Other c  
stupid, irrelevant, or  
"update" or to refor  
likely to get very far.

Moreover, within t  
scholars to be aware  
writings of religious  
Luther, to Knox, to B  
more imponderable  
misogynism of these  
those who have disag  
trivial. By contrast, in  
be perceived in its full  
"authorities" have see  
Hence the present aw  
creative imagination t  
boundaries cherished i

The driving revelat  
hear each other speak  
that attend the liberati  
blocking the dynam  
alienation—that is, o  
emergence of a new rel  
in its initial stages. The  
which secular human  
something—that is, a n

This becoming who  
ence of nothingness. A  
that at this point in hi  
existential courage in sc

People attempt to ov  
of this is ironic: that  
contradictory bind of s  
self-actualization in spi  
people, women in part  
actualization have been  
attempts to create securi  
receive a kind of securi  
identities. The woman  
example, may to some ex  
participation in being, w  
Submerged in such a role

reotype but the masculine stereotype as well as ourselves. On the contrary, what is happening is a new set of qualities and skills. This is beginning to be a liberating process in men—a phenomenon which is taking place every day within the becoming of androgynous human persons and in styles of human consciousness and in styles of human

### DEQUATE GOD

Other objectify "God" as *a being*, thereby making transcendent reality as finite. "God" is economic, and political status quo, in subordinate. Men in a number of ways. First, it occurs in women's subordination to be God's will. Oppressive justification, the phenomenon and for the human relationship is used. *Becoming* illustrates the point:

are of oneself not as a stranger, not as a son who belongs or a person who shares with the whole community. To say "we" in regard to all men. I can say that such language makes me, as an alienated person, not as a marvelous destiny. She cannot belong to

language appear to be nonsexist, and upon maleness, it is damaging and detachment from the reality of the manifestations. Point beyond such direct and indirect entered around discussions of "God." Implicitly compatible with oppressive liberation, then it will becomes explicitly relevant to the specific criterion which implies expressed in the question: Does this sex-role socialization? Expressed

positively, the question is: Does it *encourage* human becoming toward psychological and social fulfillment, toward an androgynous mode of living, toward transcendence?

### WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND REVELATORY COURAGE

Many questions that are of burning importance to women now simply have not occurred in the past (and to a large extent in the present) to those with "credentials" to do theology. Other questions may have been voiced timidly but quickly squelched as stupid, irrelevant, or naive. Therefore, attempts by women theologians now merely to "update" or to reform theology within acceptable patterns of question-asking are not likely to get very far.

Moreover, within the context of the prevailing social climate it has been possible for scholars to be aware of the most crudely dehumanizing texts concerning women in the writings of religious "authorities" and theologians—from Augustine to Aquinas, to Luther, to Knox, to Barth—and at the same time to treat their unverified opinions on far more imponderable matters with utmost reverence and respect. That is, the blatant misogyny of these men has not been the occasion of a serious credibility gap even for those who have disagreed on this "point." It has simply been ignored or dismissed as trivial. By contrast, in the emerging consciousness of women this context is beginning to be perceived in its full significance and as deeply relevant to the world view in which such "authorities" have seen other seemingly unrelated subjects, such as the problem of God. Hence the present awakening of the hitherto powerless sex demands an explosion of creative imagination that can withstand the disapproval of orthodoxy and overreach the boundaries cherished by conventional minds.

The driving revelatory force that is making it possible for women to speak—and to *hear* each other speak—more authentically about God is courage in the face of the risks that attend the liberation process. Since the projections of patriarchal religion have been blocking the dynamics of existential courage by offering the false security of alienation—that is, of self-reduction in sex roles—there is reason to hope for the emergence of a new religious consciousness in the confrontation with sexism that is now in its initial stages. The becoming of women may be not only the doorway to deliverance which secular humanism has passionately fought for, but also a doorway *to* something—that is, a new phase in the human spirit's quest for God.

This becoming who we really are requires existential courage to confront the experience of nothingness. All human beings are threatened by non-being. I am suggesting that at this point in history women are in a unique sense called to be the bearers of existential courage in society.

People attempt to overcome the threat of nonbeing by denying the self. The outcome of this is ironic: that which is dreaded triumphs, for we are caught in the self-contradictory bind of shrinking our being to avoid non-being. The only alternative is self-actualization in spite of the ever-present nothingness. Part of the problem is that people, women in particular, who are seemingly incapable of a high degree of self-actualization have been made such by societal structures that are products of human attempts to create security. Those who are alienated from their own deepest identity do receive a kind of security in return for accepting very limited and undifferentiated identities. The woman who single-mindedly accepts the role of "housewife," for example, may to some extent avoid the experience of nothingness but also avoids a fuller participation in being, which would be her only real security and source of community. Submerged in such a role, she cannot achieve a breakthrough to creativity. Many strong

women are worn out in the struggle to break out of these limits before reaching the higher levels of intellectual discovery or of creativity.

The beginning of breakthrough means a realization that there is an existential conflict between the self and structures that have given such crippling security. This requires confronting the shock of non-being with the courage to be. It means facing the nameless anxieties of fate, which become concretized in loss of jobs, friends, social approval, health, and even life itself. Also involved is anxiety of guilt over refusing to do what society demands, a guilt which can hold one in its grip long after it has been recognized as false. Finally, there is the anxiety of meaninglessness, which can be overwhelming at times when the old simple meanings, role definitions, and life expectations have been rooted out and rejected openly and one emerges into a world without models.

This confrontation with the anxiety of non-being is revelatory, making possible the relativization of structures that are seen as human products, and therefore not absolute and ultimate. It drives consciousness beyond fixation upon "things as they are." Courage to be is the key to the revelatory power of the feminist revolution.

With the rise of feminism, women have come to see the necessity of conflict, of letting rage surface, and of calling forth a will to liberation. Yet, partially because there is such an essential contrast between feminism and patriarchal religion's destructive symbols and values, and partially because women's lives are intricately bound up with those men—biologically, emotionally, socially, and professionally—it is clear that Women's Liberation is essentially linked with full human liberation.

Women generally can see very well that the Movement will self-destruct if we settle for vengeance. The more imminent danger, then, is that some women will seek premature reconciliation, not allowing themselves to see the depth and implications of feminism's essential opposition to sexist society. It can be easy to leap on the bandwagon of "human liberation" without paying the price in terms of polarization, tensions, risk, and pain that the ultimate objective of real human liberation demands.

#### WHY SPEAK ABOUT "GOD"?

It might seem that the women's revolution should just go about its business of generating a new consciousness, without worrying about God. I suggest that the fallacy involved in this would be an overlooking of a basic question that is implied in human existence and that the pitfall in such an oversight is cutting off the radical potential of the Movement itself.

It is reasonable to take the position that sustained effort toward self-transcendence requires keeping alive in one's consciousness the question of ultimate transcendence—that is, of God. It implies recognition of the fact that we have no power *over* the ultimately real, and that whatever authentic power we have is derived from *participation* in ultimate reality. This awareness, always hard to sustain, makes it possible to be free of idolatry even in regard to one's own cause, since it tells us that all presently envisaged goals, lifestyles, symbols, and societal structures may be transitory. This is the meaning that the question of God should have for liberation, sustaining a concern that is really open to the future—in other words, that is really ultimate. Such concern will not become fixated upon limited objectives.

Feminists in the past have in a way been idolatrous about such objectives as the right to vote. Indeed, this right is due to women in justice and it is entirely understandable that feminists' energies were drained by the efforts needed to achieve even such a modicum of justice. But from the experience of such struggles we are in a position now to distrust token victories within a societal structural framework that renders them almost mean-

ingless. The new wave cosmic and ultimately toward the God beyond

The idea that human implications could have that human beings have evolve beyond the potential itself in human archaic God-projective. This involves iconoclasm through the activity of iconoclasm is smashing idols. Idol-breaking will be a plane of exorcising the breed them.

One of the false deities is the iconoclasm stopgap for the iconoclasm "him." This serves social references as the suffering. So also are socially pre-emptive which easily encourage commitment to the task. Logical roots of suffering are in a situation to see inadequacy, ignorance, this deity from its revelation.

Another idol is the Christ. The Christ has been that of the after death. As Simon of this religious production female sex "in this life consumers of this image by living full lives here "secularization" theology courage essential to life awareness that the presented to consciousness eternal life.

A third idol, intimate of "sin," who confirm maintaining false consciousness both mentally and physically: birth control and abortion to husbands, that we all the leadership role but also verbally a servative religions, the Protestantism and Judaism self-respect will deal the gods.

ingless. The new wave of feminism desperately needs to be not only many-faceted but cosmic and ultimately religious in its visions. This means reaching outward and inward toward the God beyond and beneath the gods who have stolen our identity.

The idea that human beings are "to the image of God" is an intuition whose implications could hardly be worked through under patriarchal conditions. If it is true that human beings have projected "God" in their own image, it is also true that we can evolve beyond the projections of earlier stages of consciousness. It is the creative potential itself in human beings that is the image of God. As the essential victims of the archaic God-projection, women can bring this process of creativity into a new phase. This involves iconoclasm—the breaking of idols. Even—and perhaps especially—through the activity of its most militantly atheistic and areligious members, the Movement is smashing images that obstruct the becoming of the image of God. The basic idol-breaking will be done on the level of internalized images of male superiority, on the plane of exorcising them from consciousness and from the cultural institutions that breed them.

One of the false deities to be dethroned is the God of explanation, or "God as a stopgap for the incompleteness of our knowledge," as Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "him." This serves sometimes as the legitimation of such anomic (purposeless) occurrences as the suffering of a child. Such phenomena are "explained" as being God's will. So also are socially prevailing inequalities of power and privilege, by justifying a process which easily encourages masochistic attitudes. Clearly, this deity does not encourage commitment to the task of analyzing and eradicating the social, economic, and psychological roots of suffering. As marginal beings who are coming into awareness, women are in a situation to see that "God's plan" is often a front for men's plans and a cover for inadequacy, ignorance, and evil. Our vantage point offers opportunities for dislodging this deity from its revered position on the scale of human delusions.

Another idol is the God of otherworldliness. The most obvious face of this deity in the past has been that of the Judge whose chief activity consists in rewarding and punishing after death. As Simone de Beauvoir indicated, women have been the major consumers of this religious product. Since there has been so little self-realization possible by the female sex "in this life," it was natural to focus attention on the next. As mass consumers of this image, women have the power to remove it from the market, mainly by living full lives here and now. I do not mean to advocate a mere reutterance of the "secularization" theology that was so popular in the sixties. If women can sustain the courage essential to liberation, this can give rise to a deeper "otherworldliness"—an awareness that the process of creating a counterworld to the counterfeit "this world" presented to consciousness by the societal structures that oppress us is participation in eternal life.

A third idol, intimately related to those described above, is the God who is the Judge of "sin," who confirms the rightness of the rules and roles of the reigning system, maintaining false consciences and self-destructive guilt feelings. Women have suffered both mentally and physically from this deity, in whose name we have been informed that birth control and abortion are unequivocally wrong, that we should be subordinate to husbands, that we must be present at rituals and services in which men have all the leadership roles and in which we are degraded not only by enforced passivity but also verbally and symbolically. Although this is most blatant in the archconservative religions, the God who imposes false guilt is hardly absent from liberal Protestantism and Judaism, where "his" presence is more subtle. Women's growth in self-respect will deal the death blow to this as well as to the other demons dressed as gods.

### WOMEN'S LIBERATION AS SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

I have indicated that because the becoming of women involves a radical encounter with nothingness, it bears with it a new surge of ontological (concerning the nature and relations of being) hope. This hope is essentially active. The passive hope that has been so prevalent in the history of religious attitudes corresponds to the objectified God from whom one may anticipate favors. Within that frame of reference, human beings have tried to relate to ultimate reality as an object to be known, cajoled, manipulated. The tables are turned, however, for the objectified "God" has a way of reducing "his" producers to objects who lack capacity for autonomous action. In contrast to this, the God who is power of being acts as a moral power summoning women and men to act out our deepest hope and to become who we can be.

This hope is communal rather than merely individualistic, because it is grounded in the two-edged courage to be. That is, it is hope coming from the experience of individuation *and* participation. It drives beyond the objectified God that is imagined as limited in benevolence, bestowing blessing upon "his" favorites. The power of being is that in which all finite beings participate, but not on a "one-to-one" basis. Since this power is in all, while transcending all, communal hope involves in some manner a profound interrelationship with other finite beings, human and nonhuman. Ontological communal hope, then, is cosmic. Its essential dynamic is directed to the universal community.

Finally, ontological hope is revolutionary. Since the insight in which it is grounded is the double-edged intuition of non-being and of being, it extends beyond the superstitious fixations of technical reason. The latter, when it is cut off from the intuitive knowledge of ontological reason, cannot get beyond superstition. The rising consciousness that women are experiencing of our dehumanized situation has the power to turn attention around from the projections of our culture to the radically threatened human condition. Insofar as women are true to this consciousness, we have to be the most radical revolutionaries, since the superstition revealed to us is omnipresent and plagues even the other major revolutionary movements of our time. Knowing that black or white, Marxist or capitalist, countercultural or bourgeois male chauvinist deity (human or divine) will not differ essentially from "his" opposite, women will be forced in a dramatic way to confront the most haunting of human questions, the question of God. This confrontation may not find its major locus within the theological academy or the institutional churches and it may not always express itself in recognizable theological or philosophical language. However, there is a dynamism in the ontological affirmation of self that reaches out toward the nameless God. In hearing and naming ourselves out of the depths, women are naming toward God, which is what theology always should have been about. Unfortunately, it tended to stop at fixing names *upon* God, which deafened us to our own potential for self-naming.

### THE UNFOLDING OF GOD

It has sometimes been argued that anthropomorphic symbols for "God" are important and even necessary because the fundamental powers of the cosmos otherwise are seen as impersonal. One of the insights characteristic of the rising woman-consciousness is that this kind of dichotomizing between cosmic power and the personal need not be. That is, it is not necessary to anthropomorphize or to reify transcendence in order to relate to this personally. In fact, the process is demonic in some of its consequences. The

dichotomizing-r  
consciousness, mak  
women are now  
processes, the in  
reality into false

Why indeed n  
of all? Hasn't th  
Verb? And isn't  
anthropomorph  
to convey that C  
and the surge o  
the Verb in whic

This Verb—tl  
object that limit  
process of liber  
refusing to be "  
Other." Unlike:  
his world), the  
"man [sic] func  
passion of hum  
hope of which l  
rightly rejects.  
tion in being. I  
commitment to

The unfolding  
in our own rev  
are free to bec  
prefabricated i  
As opposed to  
diffused identi

The new spa  
patriarchal ins  
tics, families. I  
very meaning  
considered cer

The new sp  
therefore inv  
experienced b  
the usual sens  
being. For wa  
initially by ca  
sexist world.  
sisters is an e  
that makes n  
warped half  
emerging wor



## SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

ing of women involves a radical encounter of ontological (concerning the nature and)ly active. The passive hope that has been corresponds to the objectified God from frame of reference, human beings have to be known, cajoled, manipulated. The d "God" has a way of reducing "his" autonomous action. In contrast to this, the r summoning women and men to act out

individualistic, because it is grounded in hope coming from the experience of the objectified God that is imagined as "his" favorites. The power of being is not on a "one-to-one" basis. Since this nal hope involves in some manner a gs, human and nonhuman. Ontologi- l dynamic is directed to the universal

e the insight in which it is grounded is being, it extends beyond the supersti- when it is cut off from the intuitive and superstition. The rising conscious- ized situation has the power to turn re to the radically threatened human consciousness, we have to be the most led to us is omnipresent and plagues f our time. Knowing that black or rgeois male chauvinist deity (human pposite, women will be forced in a an questions, the question of God. thin the theological academy or the itself in recognizable theological or m in the ontological affirmation of earing and naming ourselves out of what theology always should have names upon God, which deafened

## GOD

ic symbols for "God" are impor- wers of the cosmos otherwise are f the rising woman-consciousness ver and the personal need not be. r reify transcendence in order to in some of its consequences. The

dichotomizing-reifying-projecting syndrome has been characteristic of patriarchal consciousness, making "the Other" the repository of the contents of the lost self. Since women are now beginning to recognize in ourselves the victims of such dichotomizing processes, the insight extends to other manifestations of the pathological splitting-off of reality into falsely conceived opposites.

Why indeed must "God" be a noun? Why not a verb—the most active and dynamic of all? Hasn't the naming of "God" as a noun been an act of murdering that dynamic Verb? And isn't the Verb infinitely more personal than a mere static noun? The anthropomorphic symbols for God may be intended to convey personality, but they fail to convey that God is Be-ing. Women now who are experiencing the shock of non-being and the surge of self-affirmation against this are inclined to perceive transcendence as the Verb in which we participate—live, move, and have our being.

This Verb—the Verb of verbs—is intransitive. It need not be conceived as having an object that limits its dynamism. That which it is over against is non-being. Women in the process of liberation are enabled to perceive this because our liberation consists in refusing to be "the Other" and asserting instead "I am"—without making another "the Other." Unlike Sartre's "us versus a third" (the closest approximation to love possible in his world), the new sisterhood is saying "us versus nonbeing." When Sartre wrote that "man [sic] fundamentally is the desire to be God," he was saying that the most radical passion of human life is to be a God who does not and cannot exist. The ontological hope of which I am speaking is neither this self-deification nor the simplistic reified images often lurking behind such terms as "Creator," "Lord," "Judge," that Sartre rightly rejects. It transcends these because its experiential basis is courageous *participation* in being. It enables us to break out of this prison of subjectivity because it implies commitment together.

## NEW SPACE: NEW TIME

The unfolding of God, then, is an event in which women participate as we participate in our own revolution. The process involves the creation of new space, in which women are free to become who we are, in which there are real and significant alternatives to the prefabricated identities provided within the enclosed spaces of patriarchal institutions. As opposed to the foreclosed identity allotted to us within those spaces, there is a diffused identity—an open road to discovery of the self and of each other.

The new space is located always "on the boundary." Its center is on the boundary of patriarchal institutions, such as churches, universities, national and international politics, families. Its center is the lives of women whose experience of becoming changes the very meaning of center for us by putting it on the boundary of all that has been considered central.

The new space, then, has a kind of invisibility to those who have not entered it. It is therefore inviolable. At the same time it communicates power which, paradoxically, is experienced both as power of presence and power of absence. It is not political power in the usual sense but rather a flow of healing energy which is participation in the power of being. For women who are becoming conscious, that participation is made possible initially by casting off the role of "the Other" which is the nothingness imposed by a sexist world. The burst of anger and creativity made possible in the presence of one's sisters is an experience of becoming whole, of overcoming the division within the self that makes nothingness block the dynamism of being. Instead of settling for being a warped half of a person, which is equivalent to a self-destructive nonperson, the emerging woman is casting off role definitions and moving toward androgynous being.

This is not a mere "becoming equal to men in a man's world"—which would mean settling for footing within the patriarchal space. It is, rather, something like God speaking forth, God-self in the new identity of women. While life in the new space may be "dangerous" in that it means living without the securities catered by the patriarchal system for docility to its rules, it offers a deeper security that can absorb the risks that such living demands. This safety is participation in *being*, as opposed to inauthenticity, alienation, non-identity—in a word, nonbeing.

The power of presence that is experienced by those who have begun to live in the new space radiates outward, attracting others. For those who are fixated upon patriarchal space, it apparently is threatening. Indeed this sense of threat is frequently expressed. For those who are thus threatened, the presence of women to each other is experienced as an absence. Such women are no longer empty receptacles to be used as "the Other," and are no longer internalizing the projections that cut off the flow of being. Men who need such projection screens experience the power of absence of such "objects" and are thrown into the situation of perceiving nothingness.

Women's confrontation with the experience of nothingness invites men to confront it also. Many of course respond with hostility. The hostility may be open or, in some cases, partially disguised both from the men who are exercising it and from the women to whom it is directed. When disguised, it often takes seductive forms, such as invitations to "dialogue" under conditions psychologically loaded against the woman, or invitations to quick and easy "reconciliation" without taking seriously the problems raised. Other men react with disguised hostility in the form of being "the feminist's friend," not in the sense of really hearing women but as paternalistic supervisors, analysts, or "spokesmen" for the Movement. Despite many avenues of nonauthentic response to the threat of women's power of absence, some men do accept the invitation to confront the experience of nothingness that offers itself when "the Other" ceases to be "the Other" and stands back to say "I am." In so doing men begin to liberate themselves toward wholeness, toward androgynous being. This new participation in the power of being becomes possible for men when women move into the new space.

Entry into the new space whose center is on the boundary of the institutions of patriarchy also involves entry into new time. To be caught up in these institutions is to be living in time past. By contrast, when women live on the boundary, we are vividly aware of living in time present/future. Participation in the unfolding of God means also this time breakthrough, which is a continuing (but not ritually "repeated") process. The center of the new time is on the boundary of patriarchal time. What it is, in fact, is women's *own* time. It is our *life-time*. It *is* whenever we are living out of our own sense of reality, refusing to be possessed, conquered, and alienated by the linear, measured-out, quantitative time of the patriarchal system. Women, in becoming who we are, are living in a qualitative, organic time that escapes the measurements of the system. For example, women who sit in institutional committee meetings without surrendering to the purposes and goals set forth by the male-dominated structure, are literally working on our own time while perhaps appearing to be working "on company time." The center of our activities is organic, in such a way that events are more significant than clocks. This boundary living is a way of being in and out of "the system." It entails a refusal of false clarity. Essentially it is being alive now, which in its deepest dimension is participation in the unfolding God.

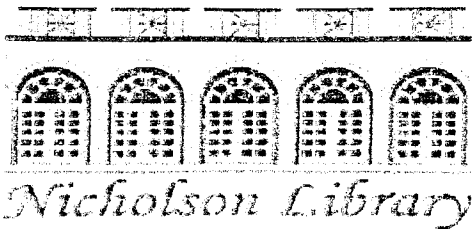
## Medita

Queens in the  
Toward the sprin  
local merchant  
patronize—that  
The Mary-like g  
I think, was to n  
the dresses on f  
have dressed eve  
wear them. We a  
to the prom wi  
underplay as m

In my day, M  
constantly: an e  
seat. With the l  
"Father Knows  
Gospel: her req  
directly for any  
decision. Not st  
again, into the l

For women l  
onto the fragil  
fulfillment. Yet  
denied a potent  
one could, in d  
fresh mouth (I  
enemies? Henn  
reformed her c  
any saint, how  
Mary is that de

First published in



INTERLIBRARY LOAN (INA)  
1100 EAST 5<sup>th</sup> ST.  
ANDERSON, IN 46012-3495

PHONE: 765-641-4287  
FAX: 765-641-3850  
ARIEL: ariel.anderson.edu  
ODYSSEY: gluck.anderson.edu

**PLEASE RETURN THIS SHEET IF THERE ARE ANY TRANSMITTAL  
OR COPY QUALITY PROBLEMS SUCH AS:**

- Pages missing  
Re-send pages: \_\_\_\_\_
- Edges cut off  
Re-send pages: \_\_\_\_\_
- Illegible Copy – Re-send whole article  
Reason:  
 Too light  
 Too dark  
 Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- Wrong article sent
- Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

**OUR GOAL IS TO SERVE YOU BETTER!**

**Warning Concerning Copyright Restrictions**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17 United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than the private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for *copyright infringement*. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve a violation of copyright law.