## RESPONSE TO PROFESSOR SCANLON–I

Professor Scanlon has summarized very well some of the leading Protestant and Catholic positions on that question which is today, and I believe has always been, both the key one and at the same time the most perplexing one for theology: the problem of simultaneous divine immanence and transcendence. To be what he is supposed to be God must be totally-Other, fully beyond human comprehension. As St. Augustine said: "If you think that you have conceived God, you can be certain that you have not!" This persuasion is epitomized exquisitely in the Protestant principle which warns against making idolatrous images of the totally-Other. But it is even more fully embraced in authentic Buddhism which avers that the only true awareness of the Absolute is no awareness, warns that any thought about God must be considered blasphemy, and holds the supreme act of religion to be the elimination of the name of God from human language.

On the other hand, Catholic theology, relying since the days of St. Thomas on the principle of the analogy of being, traditionally has existed in propositional form, predicating of God through the *via negationis* terrestrial realities purged of all limitation (like omnipotence), and human perfections in proper proportionality through the *via analogiae* (our heavenly Father). But in recent times Catholic theology has sought out other philosophical matrices than the traditional Aristotelico-Thomistic one. So as Professor Scanlon has pointed out, there has been a narrowing of the gap between Protestant and Catholic positions, for current philosophical systems do not acknowledge the possibility of an analogy of being. Catholic theologians have had to find new explanations for the rootedness of God-talk in creation. Most are still unwilling, as many of their Protestant counterparts have done, to dismiss entirely the possibility of having any kind of natural theology with a resultant concentration on faith as adherence to the radically unknowable Absolute and exploration of the Scriptures as the word that alone grounds such faith. They tend still to take quite literally the response of Jesus to Philip's demand: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

In my opinion the philosophical presuppositions of Rahner and

Lonergan still keep them at quite a distance from the Protestant camp. In their systems knowledge can be ratified only by knowledge or ways of knowing. Blondel's theory of action approaches more closely. But the one who stands at the very perimeter, without apparently completely relinquishing the Catholic position, Gregory Baum, is not considered at all in Professor Scanlon's paper. I find this strange. Nor does Professor Scanlon treat of that innovative Protestant theologian of our time whose theory of God-talk seems to have broken open the rings of Liberalism, neo-Orthodoxy and Bultmann's paradoxical brand of existentialism as well, Langdon Gilkey of the University of Chicago. In these areas the convergence might well be greater than Professor Scanlon's paper has indicated.

I do not, however, wish to react as much against Professor Scanlon's treatment of the issue (for, as I have said, within the limits he set for himself he has presented a fine summary of the question) as against what might be implied in his historical approach to the subject. The matrix in which the Catholic authors he studies have developed their theories is definitely philosophical. So despite some evidence of convergence the shibboleth of distinction between current Protestant and Catholic theological anthropology lies ultimately in some kind of knowledge or lack of knowledge about God. I personally believe that for the future the matrix in which the issue will take a more definite and promising ecumenical form will be science. Philosophical theories tend to divide; empirical scientific data can unite. The question eventually, I believe, will have to be probed in the very concrete arena of human experience for, I daresay, not only did Christianity begin as a unique and memorable human experience, but it continues to exist in the lives of the faithful of both camps as such. And modern psychological science has demonstrated that experience is at times not only prior to conceptualization, and indeed, any kind of knowledge, but also, on occasion, to consciousness itself.

Any college textbook of psychology will inform us that our consciousness results from a very limited contact through the senses with the vast reality that surrounds us. It is quite evident that the consciousness, let us say, of a Martian, served chiefly not by an eye such as ours which reacts to photons only in the narrow spectrum of 4 to 7.2 Å units, but perhaps by a hitherto unknown organ sensitive to gamma

rays, would be totally different from ours and constitute a totally diverse dimensional system from that which governs the lives of earthlings. But as Reich, Roszak and others have surmised, even human consciousness can differ significantly from era to era. Though limited, though basically quadridimensional because of the nature of the radiation, material emanations and sensations that affect it, human consciousness is open indefinitely to transcendence. But experience is not, in the mind of today's scientist, wholly coterminous with consciousness. To be in a coma, to sleep, to be blind is to have an experience that is truly human. Yet it is to experience the limitedness, the negative rather than the positive side, of consciousness. In the case of post-hypnotic suggestion even human behavior can be affected by an experience that is totally unconscious. Since the days of Freud the unconscious has been a significant factor in behaviorial science, though of course nowadays psychologists do not deem it to be as fully significant as Freud did.

The data collected by scientists indicate that some people at times do experience what lies beyond the terminator of their consciousness. Such an experience, if memorable enough to the subject and strong enough to influence his *Weltanschauung* or alter his behavior patterns, has been termed by researchers, in the phraseology of Abraham Maslow, "peak experience." The conscious perceptions which result from it are generally characterized by logical anomalies. Often opposites are united: one may feel at one and the same time both powerful and weak in regard to the same object. The subject-object dichotomy characteristic of our normal consciousness is broken down. In the Western world at least the subject feels that he has not produced the experience; he has been acted upon by a power seemingly greater than himself. The experience is often radically ambivalent: it is open to a number of interpretations: am I becoming neurotic? did it happen because I ate the whole thing last night? are supernatural forces at play in my life? The subject tends eventually to thematize the event around ultimate issues: life or death; self or non-self; meaningfulness or meaninglessness.

Since the days of William James' masterful treatment of the subject, scientists have been willing to admit that there exists a particular kind of peak experience that has been properly termed "religious." It is

characterized by: (1) numinosity: otherworldly elements; (2) nebulosity: cloudy, unclear perceptions; (3) mystery: non-categorizable components that engender respect and awe; (4) symbols: figures standing for religious realities; (5) ecstasy: the joyful and happy rape of ordinary feeling; (6) liminal concentration: focus upon the terminator of consciousness and what one *feels* lies beyond; (7) ineffability: basic incommunicability of the experience itself save in analogies which might arouse empathy.

The person who has had such an experience might believe that he has in some way been touched by God. Such a persuasion may result from: (1) what he has experienced itself; and/or (2) the circumstances in which he had the experience; and/or (3) the effect of the experience upon his life. In this last case he may evidence to himself: (a) a deeper faith; (b) an increase in self-respect and confidence; (c) greater humility; (d) an extension of his respect and love for his neighbor; (e) a deep and abiding, but basically inexplicable, joy and happiness; (f) a real desire for recurrence of the experience without being hooked on it.

How then does God appear in such an experience? What is he like? I believe that St. Augustine and the Protestants are right in saying that the real God does not and cannot appear. If he is what he is cracked up to be his reality must lie beyond the terminator of consciousness. The perception of his presence occurs on the terminator. What alone can be brought into consciousness and form the basis for knowledge, eventually conceptualized and communicated is what well might be called the "useful surrogate of God." This useful surrogate of God is a mental representation of him that is conditioned by the culture in which it is found through appropriate symbols and myths. I use the term "myths" in the Bultmannian sense to signify this-worldly realities that can objectify in the here-and-now other-worldly reality. These myths may be mathematical, as those of Cantor and Riemann, who tell us that the universe does not embrace merely four, but n-dimensions; philosophical, like those of St. Thomas who tells us through the *via negationis* that God is in-finite, im-mense, im-material, im-movable; scriptural, like those of Jesus who would have us address God as our Father.

As the Judaeo-Christian tradition has intimated from the beginning, that is, from very ancient times, the very best useful surrogate of God is man himself. Genesis 1:27 states that God created man in the

image of himself; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. History showed that man could not really believe this revelation. Jesus' reassertion of it is God's good news for man: "Philip, whoever has seen me, has seen the Father." Rahner puts it very well. Man is the *Abkürzung*, the code-word for God. He teaches that man can be defined as what arises when the self-communication of God, his Word, decides to appear as love in the void of nothingness outside of God. That Word, appropriately coded, is the Logos made man. The cipher, the code-word for God is man, that is, the Son of Man, and all men who come to exist because of him. I stand with Rahner and other Catholic theologians in asserting that the humanity of Jesus is not, as Luther taught, the mask of his divinity; his divinity is precisely and really revealed in it. Because all men bear in themselves, at least radically in their humanity, a likeness to Christ, St. Augustine can exclaim: "Love your neighbor, and consider in yourself the origin of that love; there to the fullest extent possible in this life you will see God!"

We have been reared in a highly philosophical, humanistic tradition. If the predictions of social scientists like Brzezinski, Feuer, Aron, Bell, Toffler, Bettelheim, Kahn and Keniston come true, and there seems to be every indication that they will (how many Ph.D.'s in history and literature are vainly looking for teaching positions today?), humanism is doomed. We are moving ineluctably into what Brzezinski calls the "technitronic" era. Science and the technology dependent upon it will be the only myth in the future in which men will believe. It alone will stimulate them. The theologian of tomorrow whom we are preparing today will view reality in the light of the Doppler effect according to which matter accelerated to c will experience time stand still and pass into eternity; in the light of Einsteinian principle by which the spatial dimensions of matter can be understood for what they really are: fully relative factors that assume an absolute state only in the consciousness of a definite system, but which can sustain simultaneous contrary or contradictory modes of existence system to system, given different systems; in the light of other such dimensional systems, postulated by Lobachevsky and Riemann, and seemingly now substantiated by the discovery of black holes in the universe. The event horizon of these systems coincides with the terminator of present consciousness. But beyond that horizon and terminator in one of the systems there

could well be constituted realities that confound present conceptualization: metaphotons that exceed c; centripetal rather than centrifugal radiation; anti-matter that defies categorization. Thus reality may indeed fold in upon itself and well up outside of itself in myriad ways to form many dimensional systems quite different from the one of which we are immediately conscious. At times even in this life the reality of such systems may impinge upon the terminator of our consciousness. There well may be more scientific evidence than most of us suspect to bolster the suspicion succinctly voiced by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: "Something is afoot in the universe!" That significant thing might be apprehended as a love that is unlimited and surpasses man's wildest imagining. It may be seen to be pushing, impelling, guiding and directing the scattered elements of the universe so that not only this world but also the next may come into being.

To me the key issue raised by Professor Scanlon's paper on theological anthropology is not the one concerned with natural theology and faith, or even the issue of the rootedness of grace in nature. I take for granted that theology, whether Protestant or Catholic, will have to be based on some kind of anthropology. For men there is no other approach to God. For me the key issue is whether theology for our time, and consequently for the future, will be based on an anthropology characteristic of the passing species *Homo sapiens* or that associated with the emergent *Homo cyberneticus.* I strongly suspect that man the metaphysician is the man of the past; man the technician is the man of the future.

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