

RESPONSE TO PROFESSOR SCANLON—II

As I understand Professor Scanlon's paper, it is concerned with establishing the case for a certain convergence of Protestant and Roman Catholic theology in the fundamental issue of anthropology and the possibility of man's coming to a knowledge of God. From the Protestant side, Professor Scanlon bases his observations to a great extent on the work of Pannenberg and Pannenberg's evaluation of the prior work of Barth, Bultmann, and Tillich. In my opinion, his reading of the Pannenberg material has been accurate on the basic issues at hand. From the Roman Catholic side, Professor Scanlon sketches the movement from an earlier extrinsicist position to Blondel's philosophy of immanence and on to the transcendental approach represented in Rahner and Lonergan. Again, his reading is accurate.

The Protestant movement from Barth onward appears as a series of variations on the "question-answer" schema which focus on the questionable character of human existence. Man is the question because—for Barth, Bultmann, and Tillich—he has been called into question by God. Thus, this position emphasizes the priority of God's answer. The divine answer—which is found with clarity in Christian revelation—is the prior condition for the question. Though there is a correlation between question and answer, yet the answer cannot be drawn from out of the question, but only from revelation.

In Pannenberg's evaluation, the formula of the "questionableness of existence" remains suitable as an expression of our contemporary knowledge about man. However, the weakness of the earlier "question-answer" formulations—according to Pannenberg—lies in their inability to show any intrinsic connection between the question and the answer. The problem, as Pannenberg formulates it, is this: "Is the questionableness of existence disclosed only in the light of the revelatory answer, or is it universally accessible?"

It is perhaps here that we find the closest point of convergence between a Protestant theologian and Roman Catholic theology; and had he developed this further, Professor Scanlon might well have provided an even stronger argument for his position. Moving from the phenome-

non of inquiry, Pannenberg argues that while inquiry is directed to the unknown, yet the primary form of inquiry always expects an answer, and every projection is an anticipation of an answer to the question that underlies it. This phenomenon of inquiry Pannenberg sees as an excellent example for clarifying the structure of human existence as such. In his openness to the world, man is thrown back on a ground supporting both himself and the world, and not to be identified with anything that shows up in the world. Can this be described as a question of God? One is unavoidably struck by the parallels between Pannenberg and Rahner at this point. The question does have reference to something, for "in every question there is always an anticipatory projection of a possible answer." Thus, in the experience of the question man is in some way associated with the mystery of God. For the "question is always framed in association with the reality in question."

From Barth's initial distrust of philosophy and natural theology we move to Pannenberg's emphasis on the need for a philosophical anthropology as the prolegomenon to theology.

On the Catholic side, the movement sketched by Professor Scanlon is limited to the development of transcendental philosophy and theology as exemplified in Rahner and Lonergan, and this prefaced by a consideration of the Blondelian philosophy of immanence, in which Professor Scanlon sees a striking anticipation of many of the characteristic concerns of Rahner. In Blondel, the focus is on the dynamism of the will and the restlessness of the heart of man which is a response to the prevenient grace of God. Rahner focuses more on the dynamism of the intellect, moving from man the questioner, to the performance of the question, to the conditions for the possibility of the performance. Like Pannenberg, Rahner sees the fact of the question to imply some contact with the answer, for one cannot ask about that which is totally unknown. This contact is not a knowledge in the everyday sense of the word; and that which is finally called conceptual knowledge of God is not the discovery of a new object but rather the thematization of the *a priori* condition for the possibility of the performance of the question. Lonergan also represents a philosophy of human subjectivity; indeed in a form that may be more congenial to an American mentality. Here the question of God emerges as the question of questioning.

Hence, I would be in basic agreement with Professor Scanlon's

contention that there seems to be a growing convergence between Protestant and Roman Catholic theology at least in the case of Pannenberg on the one hand and transcendental theology on the other. The convergence centers around the experience of the questionableness of existence as a point of contact between man and God. At least for the present, this may be seen as a *formal* point of convergence and may well be the result of the post-Kantian turn to the subject. To what degree we can speak of a substantial material convergence remains to be determined. Since, as I see it, Pannenberg is the primary Protestant dialogue partner, we must wait for further development of his notion of man's "experience of/or association with God" before we can judge how substantial the convergence might be.

I would like to close these comments with a number of questions:

1) From the Protestant side, the movement of convergence focuses on Pannenberg. To what extent may he be seen as representative of Protestant thought today? Does his position stand in continuity with that of Barth, etc., or does it have more the character of a counter-position?

2) To the major divisions of the paper, viz. the question is *ignorance*; the question is *knowledge*: To what degree can we call transcendental theology's "thematization of the non-thematic condition for the possibility of the performance of the question" a knowledge about God? Or is it more properly seen as the correct and full articulation of the question? Both Rahner and Lonergan are committed to the position that the questioning is a meaningful procedure. It must be pointed out, however, that this is not self-evident. Finally we are brought to an irreducible. Here one can only choose pro or con. And the entire analysis of the process of questioning may be seen as the elaboration of that choice. In what sense, then, do we arrive at a "knowledge" of God except as the *a priori* condition for the meaningful character of the questioning? In other words, is transcendental philosophy finally an explication of the question only; or does it give a genuine answer to the question? Despite its avowed intention, does transcendental philosophy really succeed in getting beyond the position of Bultmann—shared by Pannenberg—that the so-called proofs for God's existence do not so much prove the existence of God as the finitude of man and the world, and man's need to question beyond the world if he is to find a ground

capable of supporting being and meaning? They do not provide an answer to the question.

3) At the end of his essay on the "Question of God," Pannenberg places the question in the broader context of his theory of universal history. At the same time, here and in his essay "Toward a Theology of the History of Religions," he reflects his difficulties with Rahner's understanding of history. Thus, in reference to Rahner, he writes: "Missing once again is the process character of this history as a sequence of appearances of that being for which man is open. No entity can persist in an empty openness, but lives instead from the appearance of that for which it is open." In footnote 51 of the same essay, he characterizes Rahner's view of revelation as a point-like revelation without continuity with the process of history. Is it possible that we have here a significant difference between Pannenberg and Rahner concerning the very nature of the experience referred to as a divine self-disclosure?

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my basic agreement with Professor Scanlon that there seems to be a convergence between Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians on the anthropological issue. But as yet, it remains unclear to me whether this convergence is merely a formal one of words and formulae, or whether it is a substantial one. My questions are intended only to point to areas which need further study if we are to come to a clearer answer.

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