Raimon Panikkar: Apostle of Interfaith Dialogue
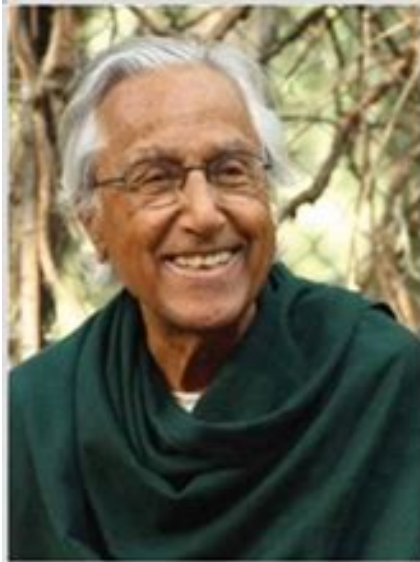
Gerard Hall SM

ABSTRACT

The article discusses Raimon Panikkar's understanding of dialogue among cultures and religions. While the approach has an unquestionably mystical dimension, it also relies on diverse modes of discourse: *mythos* (proclamative discourse), *logos* (argumentative discourse) and *symbol* (disclosive discourse). Attention is devoted to his methodological foundations for interreligious dialogue under the rubrics of diatopical hermeneutics, dialogical dialogue and the imparative method. The importance Panikkar gives to interreligious dialogue as a truly 'religious' act, his seminal distinction between 'faith' and 'belief', and his understanding of and approach to truth/pluralism are seminal for understanding his vision and method. Critiques of Panikkar are considered with a view to assessing his contribution to interreligious dialogue and the theology of religions.

KEY WORDS: Raimon Panikkar; Interreligious/Interfaith Dialogue; Cosmotheandric Experience; Ecological Conversion; Mysticism; Pope Francis

Raimon Panikkar and Depth-Dialogue Among Traditions

In the visionary thought of intercultural and interreligious scholar, Raimon Panikkar, the call for depth-dialogue among traditions has become the existential imperative of our times.[1] Panikkar (1918-2010), a Catholic priest of Catalan and Indian descent, is known as an apostle and pioneer of interreligious dialogue especially among Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists. Equally, he is concerned with intercultural dialogue between East and West including Secular Humanism. In later life, he became increasingly convinced of the urgency of dialogue with Indigenous traditions.[2] The goal of such dialogue is the creation of a "new innocence," "new myth," "new praxis" and/or a "new mystical way" of thinking, acting and being which

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[1] Panikkar states for example: "No single human or religious tradition is today self-sufficient and capable of rescuing humanity from its present predicament." Raimon Panikkar, *Invisible Harmony: Essays on Contemplation and Responsibility* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 175.

[2] For this purpose, Panikkar organised a series of seminars over a three year period (2006 – 2009) which included the presence of Aboriginal Australian Elder, Aunty Joan Hendriks. Proceedings published by M. Carrara *et al.* (eds.), *Spirit of Religion: A Program for Meeting and Dialogue directed by Raimon Panikkar* (Milano, Italy: Servitium, 2011).

celebrates one's identity in relationship with, rather than in opposition to, other traditions.[3] While always being aware of the dangers of relativism, Panikkar is nonetheless adamant that only in-depth "intra-religious dialogue"[4] among people and traditions will enable us to confront the moral, spiritual, social and political quagmire of our times.

In relation to our Australian situation, Panikkar made the following remarks to a gathering of Indigenous peoples and interreligious scholars at the 2010 Brisbane "Indigenous Theology Symposium":[5]
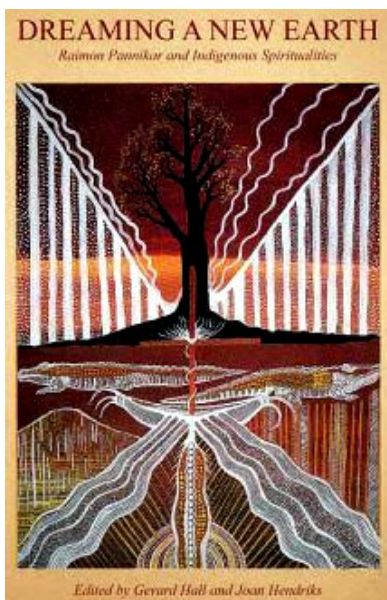
I am deeply convinced that the situation of the inhabitants of Australia today, after two centuries of suffering and tension, can now give birth to a new culture and civilization as it happened some four thousand years ago when the Arians met with the ancient Indigenous population in India and the Vedic experience arose. But in order to have a fruitful fecundation, love is essential: only through love can I know my neighbour and be enriched.

In Australia the Western approach to reality, which is more masculine and based on the intellect power, meets with a more feminine approach to life open to the voice of the Spirit

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[3] This is what Panikkar calls "The Catholic Moment." Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 46-53.

[4] Raimon Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, rev. ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).

[5] Proceedings published by G. Hall & J. Hendriks (eds.), *Dreaming a New Earth: Raimon Panikkar and Indigenous Spiritualities* (Preston, VIC: Mosaic Press, 2012).

who inspires dreams and sacred stories and makes humans recognize the sacredness of nature. Humankind's life on earth is at a serious risk: the survival of humanity is possible only through a real fecundation of these two approaches and Australia has this important opportunity.[6]
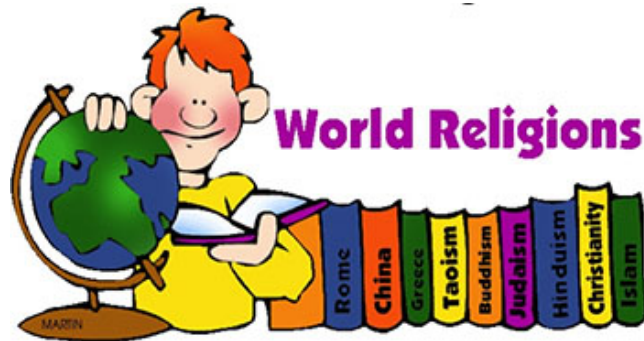
How, though, do we envisage such dialogue proceeding? According to Panikkar, the grounds and possibilities for intercultural and interreligious dialogue do not require a theoretical foundation, which may forever elude us given the "mutually irreconcilable worldviews or ultimate systems of thought"[7] among cultures and religions. Rather, he speaks of the need for an integral vision of reality, an existential and spiritual awakening, or what he believes to be an already emerging global myth.[8] However, all this presumes the possibility of dialogue across vastly diverse traditions. So, we begin by examining the foundations upon which he holds such dialogue possible.[9]

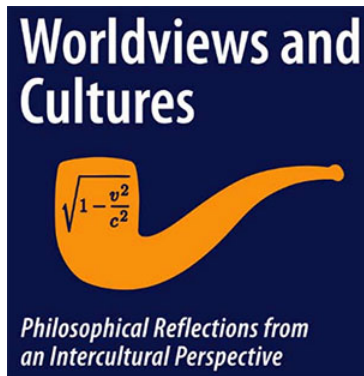[6] Panikkar, cited in *Dreaming a New Earth*, iii.

[7] *Invisible Harmony, 153.*

[8] Panikkar explicitly states: "I would like to fathom the underlying myth, as it were, and be able to provide elements of what may be the emerging myth for human life in its post-historical venture." Raimon Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), xxvi.

[9] For a more extensive version of Panikkar's foundations and methodological procedures for dialogue see Gerard Hall, "Raimon Panikkar's Intercultural and Interreligious Hermeneutics," CIRPIT Review [Centro Interculturale dedicato a Raimon Panikkar], No. 1 (March 2010): 45-59. www.cirpit.raimonpanikkar.it

Readers unfamiliar with Panikkar will find his penchant for the creation of a new vision of reality is matched by his tendency towards neologisms—the creation of ever new words and phrases! Every attempt is made to explain his specific terminology.

Diatopical Hermeneutics & The Imparative Method

Worldviews and Cultures

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Philosophical Reflections from an Intercultural Perspective

Panikkar speaks specifically of the need for *diatopical hermeneutics* which he defines as the art of coming to understanding "across places" (*dia-topoi*) or traditions which do not share common patterns of understanding and intelligiblity. [10] This type of hermeneutics is distinguished from "morphological" and "diachronical" hermeneutics: the first operates within a single tradition, epitomized in the transmission of a culture's meanings and values (*morphe* = forms) to the young; the second also operates within a single historical tradition in which, however, the gap between interpreter and interpreted has widened "across time" (*dia-chronis*). In the case of diatopical hermeneutics, the difference to be overcome for understanding to emerge is not the generational or temporal distance within a shared tradition, but the radically different understandings and self-understandings of traditions which do not share common assumptions or basic worldviews born of common historical experience. In fact, diatopical hermeneutics begins with the recognition of the pain of estrangement and radical difference separating cultures and religions.

Readers familiar with the 'hermeneutic circle' – the notion that

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[10] Panikkar, "Cross-Cultural Studies: The Need for a New Science of Interpretation," *Monchanin* 8:3-5 (1975): 12-15.

some degree of shared meaning already exists in human encounters – should note Panikkar's insistence that diatopical hermeneutics arises in response to the challenge of interpreting across cultural and religious boundaries where the hermeneutic circle has yet to be created.[11] In this sense, diatopical hermeneutics is thoroughly postmodern in its refusal to colonize the 'other' with one's own set of religious or cultural presuppositions. However, in contradistinction to some postmodern literature, Panikkar does assume that communication among radically different worldviews is possible – indeed, indispensable.

For this to occur, he introduces the *imparative method*, "the effort at learning from the other and the attitude of allowing our own convictions to be fecundated by the insights of the other."[12] As distinct from the *comparative method*, which privileges dialectics and argumentative discourse, the imparative method of diatopical hermeneutics focuses on the praxis of dialogue in the existential encounter. **Panikkar** is explicit on this point: "it is only in doing, the praxis, that diatopical hermeneutics functions."[13] Importantly, the praxis of human encounter is never based on pure rationality (what he calls the *logos*), but also depends on *mythos* and *symbol* as we now explore.

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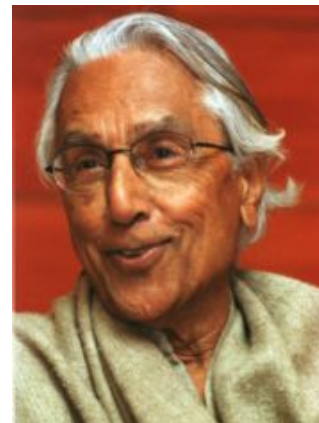
[11] "We do not assume here any hermeneutic circle. We create that circle through the existential encounter." "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" 132.

[12] Panikkar develops this notion of *imparative method*, elsewhere called *dialogical philosophy*, in "Aporias in the Contemporary Philosophy of Religion," in *Man and World* 13:3-4 (1980), 370ff.; and "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" 127ff.
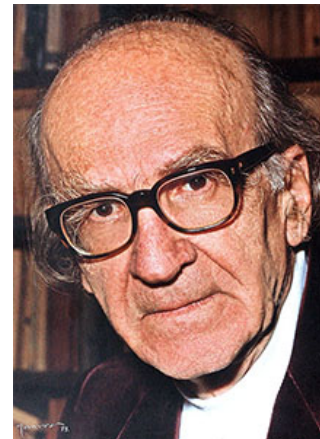
[13] "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" 132-134.

Diverse Modes of Discourse – Mythos, Logos & Symbol

For Panikkar, human communication is elaborated with reference to these three distinct but interrelated modes of discourse: *mythos*, *logos* and *symbol*.[14] Although distinct, they operate as three interrelated means of intersubjective communication which may be described as *boundary* (or proclamative) discourse, *argumentative* (or logical) discourse and *disclosive* (or symbolic) discourse.[15] They are not divisions within consciousness, but distinctive ways in which consciousness understands or engages with the phenomenal world. Panikkar explains this with reference to his distinction between *mythos* and its interpretation (*logos*): "A living myth does not allow for interpretation because it needs no intermediary." [16]

The most important mythical stories are those that tell of a particular tradition's origins. **Mircea Eliade** viewed cosmogonic myths—stories of tribal origins—as the most significant feature in the identity-formation of primal cultures.[17] They are no less important for cultures and religions, ancient and modern, today. What Panikkar adds to this is the view that the very power of myth is founded in its unquestionableness. How then is the myth communicated? The myth may be narrated in story or parable, or otherwise transmitted through symbol and ritual, but the moment we

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[14] Panikkar provides a succinct account of his notions of *mythos*, *logos* and *symbol* in his introduction to *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 2-16..

[15] See David Kreiger, *The New Universalism: Foundations for a Global Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 62-68.

[16] *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 4.

[17] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York & London: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959).

begin to explain or interpret the myth we have already converted it into an object of thought (*logos*). Mythic discourse precedes this subject-object dichotomy and, in so doing, highlights the primacy of experience over interpretation.[18] The pervasive power of myth is in its ability to capture the heart rather than the mind which it does by revealing itself from the transcendent horizon of mystery. Every culture and religion has a mythic foundation, a set of taken-for granted truths about reality, which constitutes that tradition's horizon or lifeworld. The meeting of religions and cultures is often an unsatisfactory experience precisely because there is a clash of myths, each with its own universalist claims.[19]

Panikkar speaks of pluralism as "a myth in the most rigorous sense: an ever-elusive horizon in which we situate things in order to be conscious of them without ever converting the horizon into an object."[20] He is the first to agree that pluralism cannot be logically deduced from pure reasoning since, in the meeting of religions and cultures, we often find ourselves confronted with "mutually exclusive and respectively contradictory ultimate systems."[21] Because we are

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[18] See "The Supreme Experience: The Ways of East and West," in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 291-317.

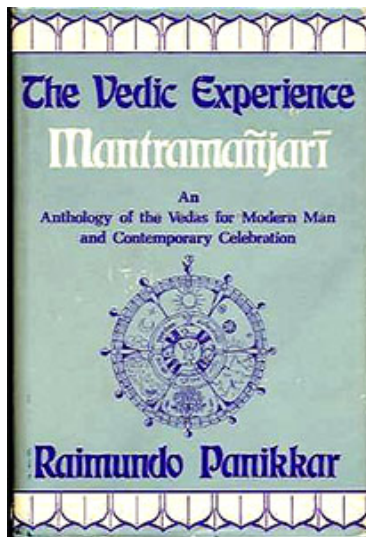[19] Universalist claims are especially true of western cultures and the monotheistic religious traditions.

[20] Panikkar, "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel—A Meditation on Non-Violence," *Cross-Currents* 29:2 (Summer 1979), 203; originally presented as a public lecture for the "Panikkar Symposium" at the University of Santa Barbara in 1977. Elsewhere, Panikkar states that "pluralism does not stem from the *logos* but from the *mythos*." *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 102.

[21] Panikkar, "The Invisible Harmony: A Universal Theory of Religion of a Cosmic Confidence in Reality?" *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, ed. L. Swidler (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 125.

dealing with such radically different horizons, languages and worldviews, ordinary interpretative procedures of historical hermeneutics and dialectics are not equal to the task. In this situation, diatopical hermeneutics turns to the symbol as it primary category for truth, meaning and communication. Unlike the *mythos*, which stands behind a community's beliefs in an unquestioning manner, or the *logos*, which subjects its beliefs to narrow rules of argumentative discourse, the symbol moves between these two worlds of meaning linking subject to object, *mythos* to *logos*, darkness to light, understanding to interpretation, and faith to belief.[22]

In his own definition of hermeneutics, Panikkar focuses on the communicative and redemptive power of symbols. The task of hermeneutics is one of "restoring symbols to life and eventually of letting new symbols emerge."[23] Symbols run the risk of becoming mere signs and, thereby, losing their *ontomythical* power. This occurs when, for example, a religion is reduced to a set of doctrinal beliefs; or when a language becomes a 'dead language' without a living relationship with a community of speakers. It can also occur when the power of the word is reduced to a mathematical formula or a technical term which is precise in meaning but unable to express a more primordial truth. The poetic word is, for Panikkar, an example of the symbol: it is rooted in the lifeworld of a

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[22] Panikkar states: "What expresses belief, what carries the dynamism of belief—that conscious passage from *mythos* to *logos*—is not the concept but the symbol." *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 6.

[23] *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 8.

particular people, place and culture while also being open to transformative, even transcendent, meaning. [24] In this sense, the symbol always has more to tell us yet.[25] Symbols are both bounded and open. Symbol systems are also at very heart or living cultures and religions.

It is only in the praxis that diatopical hermeneutics functions. This is because diatopical hermeneutics is primarily concerned with symbols, and symbols do not exist in the abstract realm of ideas severed from the hearts and minds of those who experience their power for truth and meaning. However, unlike myths which refuse critique—since to critique the myth is to destroy it—symbols are able to take on new and extended meanings in the context of communicative praxis and even ideological challenge. When this occurs, we have what the philosopher **Susanne Langer** calls a "symbolic transformation of experiences" which, she adds, "may illumine questions of life and consciousness, instead of obscuring them as traditional 'scientific methods' have done."[26] Symbolic discourse moves between what the mind thinks (*logos*) and the heart believes (*mythos*) without being the prisoner of either.

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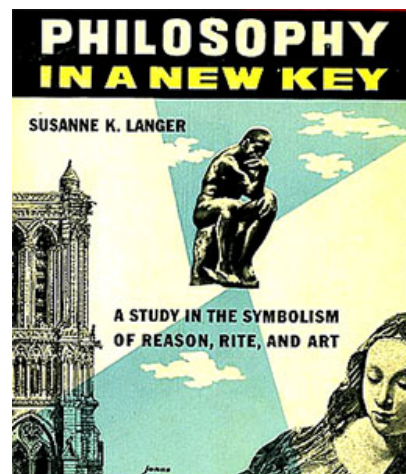
[24] See, for example, Panikkar's monumental work, *The Vedic Experience: Mantramanjari* (Pondicherry: All India Book, 1977).

[25] On symbol, see Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas University Press, 1976), 45-69.

[26] Susanne Langer also states: "Symbolization is the essential act of mind; and mind takes in more than what is commonly called thought. . . . Symbolization is pre-rationative, but not pre-rational. It is the starting point of all intellection in the human sense." *Philosophy in a New Key*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1957), 44, 25, 41f.

Faith & Belief

In this context, Panikkar makes a seminal distinction between faith and belief. He has long maintained that faith is a "constitutive human dimension" coterminous with all people, cultures and religions.[27] One does not have faith in doctrines, concepts or other 'things', but in "the ever inexhaustible mystery, beyond the reach of objective knowledge."[28] Faith is that human dimension that corresponds to myth. In other words, faith is not the privilege of the few but the "primal anthropological act that every person performs in one way or another."[29] Not that there is such a thing as 'pure faith' since faith is always mediated through symbolic expressions and specific beliefs which embody faith in a particular tradition.[30] However, authentic, human belief is not represented by the *logos* but by the symbol, that "vehicle by which human consciousness passes from *mythos* to *logos*."[31] At a third level, belief is mediated through doctrines, ideologies, rituals and practices. There can be no effective discourse at this third level unless there is a shared symbol system, a commonly held set of beliefs and values that unite believers within a tradition—or across traditions. It is this latter challenge which diatopical hermeneutics squarely faces through its

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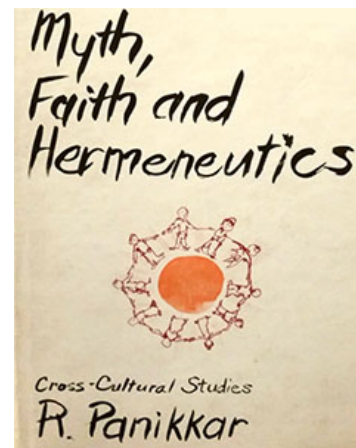
[27] *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, 41-59.
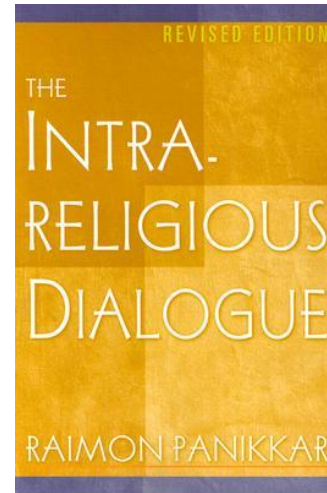
[28] *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 6.

[29] *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, 57.

[30] "Faith cannot be equated with belief, but faith always needs a belief to be faith. Belief is not faith, but it must convey faith. A disembodied faith is not faith." *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, 55.

[31] *Myth, Faith & Hermeneutics*, 5.

focus on the necessity of symbolic discourse—or what Panikkar also calls "dialogical dialogue."

What needs to be clear at this point is that diatopical hermeneutics, through its focus on the symbolic transformation of experiences, is the very antipathy of the kind of value-free neutrality that is the ideal of scientific and phenomenological methods of understanding associated with dialectical discourse.[32] Nor can diatopical hermeneutics be based on prior rules of interpretation since this would be to assume an already-existing hermeneutic circle with its agreed criteria as to what constitutes truth, value and right judgment. Clearly, in cases of intercultural and interreligious understanding, no such hermeneutic circle can be presumed. In this sense, diatopical hermeneutics cannot be universal; its interpretative procedures and rules of engagement must emerge from the dialogue itself.[33] How then, and on what basis, does the dialogical dialogue proceed?

Dialogical Dialogue

Dialogical dialogue begins with the assumption that the other is also an original source of human understanding and that, at some level, persons who enter the dialogue have a capacity to communicate their unique experiences and understandings to each other. In Panikkar's terms, "radical otherness" does not eradicate what he terms

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[32] Panikkar argues that when it comes to interreligious and intercultural understanding, the phenomenological *epoché* procedure is "psychologically impractical, phenomenologically inappropriate, philosophically defective, theologically weak and religiously barren." *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, 73ff.

[33] "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" 133.

"radical relativity" or the primordial interconnection of all human traditions.[34] Dialogical dialogue can only proceed on the basis of a certain trust in the "other *qua* other"--and even a kind of "cosmic confidence" in the unfolding of reality itself.[35] But it should not--indeed cannot--assume a single vantage point or higher view outside the traditions themselves. The ground for understanding needs to be created in the space between the traditions through the praxis of dialogue.[36]
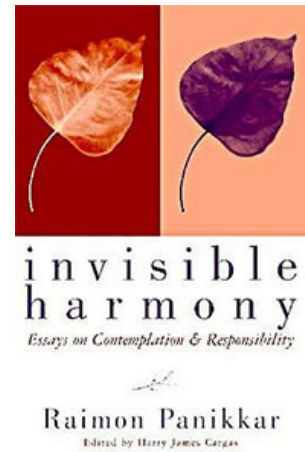
> *Dialogue seeks truth by trusting the other, just as dialectics pursues truth by trusting the order of things, the value of reason and weighty arguments. Dialectics is the optimism of reason; dialogue is the optimism of the heart. Dialectics believes it can approach truth by relying on the objective consistency of ideas. Dialogue believes it can advance along the way to truth by relying on the subjective consistency of the dialogical partners. Dialogue does not seek primarily to be duo-logue, a duet of two logoi, which would still be dialectical; but a dia-*

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[34] In recent decades, Panikkar had developed the "radical relativity" and interconnection of all religions and cultures with reference to the "cosmotheandric principle" which states: "the divine, the human and the earthly—however we may prefer to call them—are the three irreducible dimensions which constitute the real." *The Cosmotheandric Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 60.
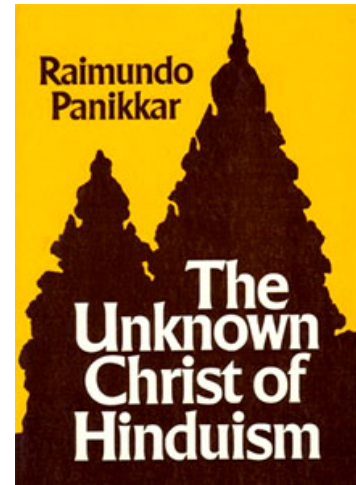
[35] Panikkar now refers to this as "human cosmic trust" or "cosmotheandric confidence." See his *Invisible Harmony*, 174ff.

[36] Expanding this notion, Panikkar states: "Dialogical dialogue, which differs from the dialectical one, stands on the assumption that nobody has access to the universal horizon of human experience, and that only by not postulating the rules of the encounter from a single side can Man proceed towards a deeper and more universal understanding of himself and thus come closer to his own realization." *IRD*, 91.

logos, a piercing of the logos to attain a truth that transcends it. [37]

Evidently, there are certain indispensable prerequisites for dialogical dialogue. These include a deep human honesty, intellectual openness and a willingness to forego prejudice in the search for truth while maintaining "profound loyalty towards one's own tradition." [38] This is why the starting point for dialogical dialogue is the *intra*-personal dialogue by which one consciously and critically appropriates one's own tradition. Without this deep understanding of and commitment to one's own tradition, there are simply no grounds for the dialogical dialogue to proceed. Second, one needs a deep commitment and desire to understand another tradition which means being open to a new experience of truth since "one cannot really understand the views of another if one does not share them." [39] This is not to assume an uncritical approach to the other tradition so much as a willingness to set aside premature judgments which arise from prejudice and ignorance, the twin enemies of truth and understanding.

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[37] *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 243.

[38] Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, 2nd rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 35.

[39] Panikkar, "Verstehen als Überzeugstein," in *Neue Anthropologie*, H. G. Gadamer and P. Vogler, eds., *Philosophische Anthropologie*, Vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Thieme, 1975), 137. The practical application of this principle is explained elsewhere by Panikkar with reference to Hindu and Christian understandings of each other: "A Christian will never fully understand Hinduism if he is not, in one way or another converted to Hinduism. Nor will a Hind ever fully understand Christianity unless he, in one way or another, becomes a Christian." *Unknown Christ of Hinduism,* 43.

The *inter*-personal dialogue focuses on the mutual testimonies of those involved in the dialogue keeping in mind that "what the other bears is not a critique of my ideas but witness to his own experience, which then enters our dialogue, flows with it and awaits a new fecundation."[40] These notions of testimony and witness highlight the fact that dialogical dialogue is primarily the meeting of persons; the aim is "convergence of hearts, not just coalescence of minds."[41] Consequently, it is the experience of religious dialogue itself which is all important. In the encounter, each participant attempts to think in and with the symbols of both traditions so that there is a symbolic transformation of experiences. Both partners are encouraged to "cross over" to the other tradition and then "cross back again" to their own. In so doing, they mutually integrate their testimonies "within a larger horizon, a new myth."[42] Not only does each begin to understand the other according to the other's self-understanding, but there is growth and dynamism in the manner that each tradition understands itself.[43] Dialogical dialogue challenges once and for all the notion that religions are closed and unchanging systems.

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[40] *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 244.

[41] *Invisible Harmony*, 173f.. Panikkar adds that "there is always place for diversity of opinions and multiplicity of mental schemes of intelligibility."
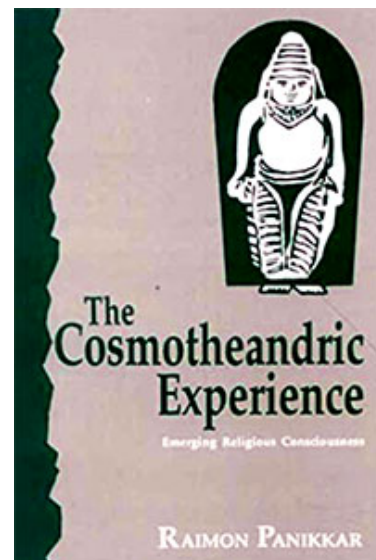
[42] *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 244.

[43] Growth is a primary category for Panikkar's understanding of religions, cultures and reality itself: "The physical theory of an expanding universe may furnish a fair image of what happens in the ontological realm as well." This translates into the *cosmotheandric* vision: "In a word, there is real growth in Man, in the World and, I would also add, in God, at least inasmuch as neither immutability nor change are categories of the divine." "Growth in Comparative Religion," in *IRD*, 70f.

Dialogical dialogue assumes then that one is able to enter into and experience the symbolic world of the other and, on the basis of such experience, integrate it into one's own tradition. One learns to think and understand on the basis of the symbol systems of more than one tradition. Symbols are both bounded and open. Their interpretation is never exhausted. And yet they are concrete, always tied to a particular worldview. The question to be asked is how a person is able to think different symbols together. Panikkar's notion of "homeomorphic equivalence" is designed to respond to this challenge.

The Emerging Global Myth: Cosmotheandric Experience

As noted, when Panikkar speaks of myth or *mythos*, he is speaking of the ever-elusive horizon of understanding that precedes its articulation in rational thought or *logos*.[44] This is not to decry the use of reason, but to insist on the need for a fundamental trust in 'reality' itself. Now, for Panikkar—and for human traditions generally—reality is cosmic (*cosmos*), divine (*theos*) and human *(andros)*, hence his word *cosmo-the-andric*.[45] So one

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[44] For example, Panikkar states that "pluralism does not stem from the *logos*, but from the *mythos.*" Raimon Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 102; see also his "The Myth of Pluralism," in Raimon Panikkar, *Invisible Harmony*, 52-91.

[45] Panikkar states that "envisioning all of reality in terms of three worlds is an invariant of human culture, whether this vision is expressed, spatially, temporally, cosmologically or metaphysically." A full description of the "cosmotheandric principle" states that "the divine, the human and the earthly … are the three irreducible dimensions which constitute the real…. Everything that exists, any real being, presents this triune constitution expressed in three dimensions. I am not *only* saying that everything is directly or indirectly related to everything else: the radical relativity or *pratityasamutpada* of the Buddhist tradition. I am also stressing that this relationship is not only constitutive of the whole, but that it

does not trust in oneself alone, even less in one's ideas, but *in reality*. Consequently, such human cosmic trust does not proceed on the basis of an agreed set of propositions, a universal theory, or any other set of doctrines or beliefs; it is an act of faith that Panikkar also calls "cosmotheandric confidence" and may be expressed in vastly diverse belief systems.[46] Importantly, this cosmic trust is first and foremost expressed through *symbol* rather than thought, since symbols are carriers of meaning linking subject to object, *mythos* to *logos*, darkness to light, understanding to interpretation, and faith to belief. Neither symbol nor myth can be artificially conceived, but must be allowed to emerge from the life-world of human experience.

Panikkar presents his cosmotheandric vision or intuition as belonging to the order of myth which, he proposes, is capable of providing an horizon of meaning under which people of diverse cultural and religious systems may effectively communicate. [47] Given that the human person is effectively a "triad of senses, reason, and spirit in correlation with matter, thought, and freedom,"[48] an authentic approach to reality needs to encompass body (cosmic-dimension), mind (consciousness-dimension) and spirit (depth-dimension). Clearly, what Panikkar calls "the Western approach to reality" – and the predominant Christian one – privileges the *logos*, rationality and intellectual

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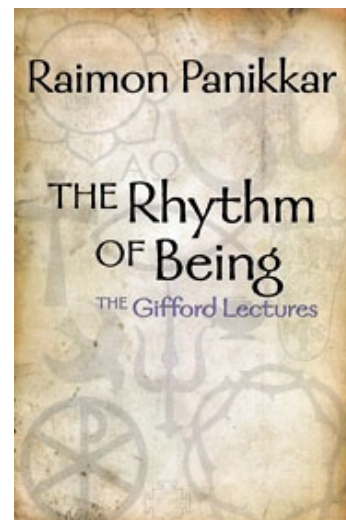
flashes forth, ever new and vital, in every spark of the real." *Cosmotheandric Experience,* 55 & 74.

[46] See Panikkar, "A Universal Theory of Religion or a Cosmic Confidence in Reality?" in *Invisible Harmony*, 145-182.

[47] *Cosmotheandric Experience*, 15.

[48] *Rhythm of Being*, 244.

knowledge. But as he elsewhere reminds us: "Reality is not mind alone, or *cit*, or consciousness, or spirit. Reality is also *sat* and *ananda*, also matter and freedom, joy and being."[49] Moreover, human knowledge is not reducible to the intellect, but needs to include body/sense perception and mystical experience. [50] Integral to this cosmotheandric experience is the need to awaken to "the voice of the Spirit who inspires dreams and sacred stories" and reconnects us to "the sacredness of nature."[51] This has particular relevance to the world's current ecological crisis.

Panikkar, Pope Francis & Ecological Conversion[52]

Panikkar has long insisted that "nothing short of a radical *metanoia,* a complete turning of mind heart and spirit" [53] is required if we are to effectively respond to contemporary challenges including the cries of the earth and the needs of the poor. This call for a fundamental change of attitude and spiritual conversion clearly resonates with Pope Francis' recent encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si,* which

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[49] Panikkar, "Religious Pluralism: The Metaphysical Challenge" in *Religious Pluralism*, collective work (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 112.

[50] See, for example, Panikkar's essay entitled "The Contemplative Mood: A Challenge to Modernity" in *Invisible Harmony*, 1-19; and Panikkar, *The Experience of God: Icons of the Mystery* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006). The insight of course is recognised by the mystics of all traditions.

[51] Panikkar's words cited above, *Dreaming a New Earth*, iii.

[52] This section is elsewhere developed by the author, Gerard Hall, at 2015 Conference of *The Association of Practical Theology in Oceania* and subsequently published as "Are There Really Angels in Oceania: Forging a New Mysticism of Place, Time and History through Dialogue with Oceanic Peoples and Traditions," in Anthony Maher, ed., *Bridging the Divide between Faith, Theology and Life* (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2015), 181-194, esp. 192f.

[53] See, for example, *Cosmotheandric Experience,* 46; and Raimon Panikkar, *Mysticism and Spirituality: Mysticism, Fulness of Life*, Opera Omnia 1/1 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014), 21.

proposes an "ecological conversion."[54] In words that clearly reflect Panikkar's cosmotheandric intuition, Francis challenges us to see that "everything in the world is connected" and that "human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself."[55] Specifically, Francis tells us Indigenous peoples should be our "primary dialogue partners" because, for them, "land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors."[56]
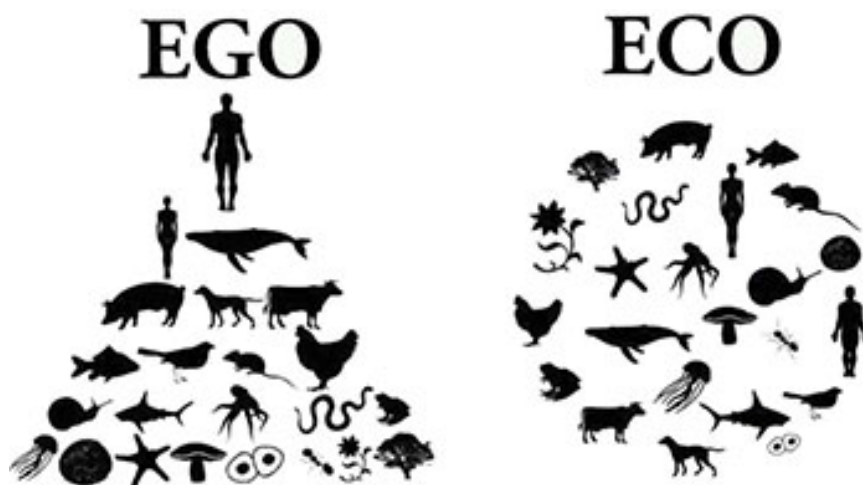
In Panikkar's terminology, the call for an "ecological conversion" represents a change of focus from 'ecology' (the science of the earth) to what he terms 'ecosophy' (the wisdom of the earth).[57] In different language, Francis proposes an "integral ecology" which is respectful of

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[54] Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* on "Care for our Common Home," 24 May 2015, esp. nn. 216-221.

[55] *Laudato Si*, nn. 16 & 66.

[56] *Laudato Si*, n. 146. For an example of dialogue with Indigenous Maori peoples, see Charlotte Šunde, "Ecosophy and Indigenous Spiritualities," in *Dreaming a New Earth*, 158-170.

[57] Ecosophy is nowhere better expressed than in the feminine spirit of *dadirri* which is responsive to cosmic life and open to the voice of the Spirit within creation. Note Panikkar's reflections on *Anima Mundi* in *Cosmotheandric Experience,* 137-139.

human, social, cultural and economic concerns as well as environmental ones.[58] Both Panikkar and **Pope Francis** are critical of the "dominant technocratic paradigm" which they hold responsible for the crises besetting humanity and the environment.[59] However, neither is naïvely suggesting a return to a pre-modern worldview; rather they seek an integration of the positive aspects of science and technology with the spiritual, cultural and religious insights of humanity. Both call for a "more integral and integrating vision" capable of responding to "every aspect of the global crisis." [60] In turn, this requires more extensive engagement with Indigenous traditions in order to develop a more mystical-prophetic theology of creation, the environment and the natural world.

Conclusion: Panikkar's Legacy

Panikkar's legacy will be a matter for ongoing debate. There will be those who consider his attempt to outline an emerging global myth in cosmotheandric terms as too visionary, mystical or optimistic. A major critique will be Panikkar's explicit trust in the creative power of human traditions to be self-correcting. It will be argued he gives

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[58] *Laudato Si*, ch. 4.

[59] *Laudato Si*, ch. 3; *Cosmotheandric Experience*, 108-118.

[60] *Laudato Si*, ch. 4; citations nn. 141 & 137 respectively. For Panikkar, this is the "cosmotheandric vision" whose centre is neither the heavens above (theocentrism), nor the earth below (cosmocentrism), nor the human ego (anthropocentrism), but on the whole divine-human-cosmic reality. Panikkar also speaks of "three kairological moments of consciousness": (1) Ecumenic Moment (Man *of* Nature); (2) Economic Moment (Man *above* Nature); (3) Catholic Moment (Man *with* Nature). These can be equated with what he terms prehistorical, historical and transhistorical consciousnesses. See his *Cosmotheandric Experience*, 20-53.

insufficient attention to irrational, pathological and evil forces hidden within people's languages, myths and symbols which will, in turn, distort communication and impact negatively on understanding. It will also be suggested he exhibits an overconfidence in the universal connectedness of history.[61]

Nonetheless, Panikkar's seminal distinction between three modes of discourse—*mythos*, *logos* and *symbol*—does provide a hermeneutical framework in which one's own truth and the truth of the other may be brought together under a mutual horizon of understanding. By privileging the notion of truth as manifestation, he highlights the importance of testimony, participative knowledge, symbolic discourse and the power of tradition on human consciousness and identity. His notion of dialogical dialogue is an important corrective to the usual emphasis on dialectical dialogue. People and human traditions, whether religious or secular, are capable of growth and change—especially through their mutual sharing with, receiving from and critiquing of themselves and the other in dialogue.
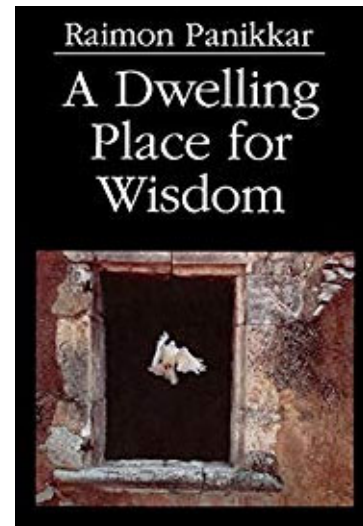
Note: An earlier version of this paper is presented as "Raimon Panikkar's Contribution to Interfaith Dialogue" in *Interfaith Dialogue: Global Perspectives,* ed. Edmund Chia (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 251-264.

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[61] It should be noted that Panikkar's hermeneutical procedures are most closely aligned with the "existential phenomenological hermeneutics" of Heidegger and Gadamer. Also called a "hermeneutics of retrieval," it requires the complementarity of Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion" with its extra attention to method and critique. See Gerard Hall, *Raimon Panikkar's Hermeneutics of Religious Pluralism* (PhD diss.; Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994), 299f.