Raimon Panikkar:
Cosmic Confidence and Global Peace

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Abstract:

The paper explores Raimon Panikkar’s notion of cosmic confidence in reality as the foundation for his hermeneutics of peace. This entails explanations of his nine sutras on peace, “cosmotheandric harmony” as peace, the religious dimension of political peace, “cultural disarmament” as the requirement of peace, and the intercultural hermeneutics of testimony and trust. In particular, are their hermeneutical warrants for Panikkar’s human cosmic trust in reality? Finally, it is not just what Panikkar says about otherness and relativity, peace and dialogue, politics and religion, freedom and justice that are significant; it is also how Panikkar communicates his message on global peace. Consequently, his rhetoric of cosmic confidence is discussed in relation to the four master tropes of discourse: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. A brief review of Panikkar’s contribution to the hermeneutics of peace is provided.

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Introduction

In recent times, universities—at least in the West—have been offering a variety of courses, programs and even full degrees in “Peace Studies”. Raimon Panikkar’s own work, Cultural Disarmament: The Way to Peace, can sometimes be found amidst the bibliographies and recommended readings. Given that many students doing these courses come with academic backgrounds in the political and social sciences, there may be initial resistance to the claim that peace is a “myth” with profoundly religious as well as political connotations. Those who proceed beyond such misgivings are introduced to an original approach to the challenge of global peace which emanates from Panikkar’s intercultural and interfaith hermeneutics.

My intention is to provide an overview of Panikkar’s *philosophia pacis* in dialogue with underlying hermeneutical and rhetorical principles. If “peace is cosmotheandric harmony” requiring a fundamental human trust in reality, how is such a hermeneutics of testimony and trust (as I will call it) validated and expressed? This is the question which will guide our study. What makes Panikkar’s hermeneutics of peace so unique is the distinctive methodology he employs. Robert Vachon states that Panikkar’s “philosophy of peace is marked by the non-duality of philosophy, theology, mysticism and science”.

**Hermeneutics of Peace**

The contours of Panikkar’s *philosophia pacis* are presented in nine sutras on peace which clearly demonstrate a multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary approach. While each sutra contains its own innate logic and claim to truth, Panikkar stresses their dynamic interrelationship so that only together do they constitute the so-called “gift of peace”. There is, of course, such a thing as political peace; but genuine peace is something altogether different to the mere absence of war and conflict. Moreover, in the situation in which we find ourselves at the beginning of the third millennium, merely political answers are grossly insufficient. Political peace itself requires religious transformation. This is not a matter of confounding politics with religion as has occurred too often in the course of human history as in our own time. The two need to be thought through together.

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2 See many contributions relating to this theme in Miquel Siguen (ed.), *Philosophia Pacis: Homenaje a Raimon Panikkar* (Madrid: Simbolo Editorial, 1989). [Hereafter PP].
3 CD, 41.
5 CD, 15-23.
6 CD, 15, 8-10.
7 CD, 43-60.
in context of intercultural and interfaith dialogue. This is a central tenet of Panikkar’s hermeneutics of peace enshrined in the nine sutras:
1. Peace is participation in the harmony of the rhythm of being.
2. It is difficult to live without outer peace; it is impossible to live without inner peace. Their relationship is nondualistic (advaita).
3. Peace is neither conquered for oneself nor imposed on others. Peace is received, as well as discovered, and created. It is a gift (of the Spirit).
4. Victory never leaves to peace.
5. Military disarmament requires cultural disarmament.
6. In isolation, no culture, religion, or tradition can resolve the problems of the world.
7. Peace pertains essentially to the order of mythos, not to that of logos.
8. Religion is a way to peace.
9. Only forgiveness, reconciliation, and ongoing dialogue lead to peace and shatter the law of karma.

For Panikkar, the possibility of global peace depends on an understanding and praxis of peace which is dynamic, transcendent, mythic, relational, advaitic or what he calls cosmotheandric. Importantly, he does not see this being achieved through some new rational theory (logos) of peace, since it “pertains essentially to the order of mythos”. Here, experience is as important as thought, and the relationship between theory and praxis must be that of a “vital circle”. For Panikkar, the power of myth is precisely in its ability to appeal across ideological, cultural and religious systems. He even goes so far as to suggest that in today’s world

8 CD, 78.
“peace is the most universal unifying symbol possible”.10 It entails what he calls a “human cosmic trust” recognizing that cosmic harmony depends on “the inner harmony of every being”.11 The insight is more mystical than political. It does not however deny the place and importance of politics. Spirit and Word are both required since: “Word without the Spirit is certainly powerful but barren, and the Spirit without the Word is certainly insightful but impotent”.12

**Peace and Cosmotheandric Harmony**

Panikkar’s hermeneutics of peace emanates from his cosmotheandric insight into the divine, human and earthly interrelatedness of all that is, the “intuition of the threefold structure of all reality, the triadic oneness existing on all levels of consciousness and reality”.13 In the formulation of this insight, Panikkar relies especially on the Christian Trinity (radical trinity within destroying unity) *Advaita Vedānta* (radical unity without monism or dualism) and the Buddhist *Pratītyasamutpāda* (radical relativity or interrelatedness). Nonetheless, he claims that the central aspects of the cosmotheandric insight are integral to almost every human tradition.14 Such a vision is also enshrined in mystical traditions across religions and

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10 CD, 63. Here Panikkar suggests the symbols “God”, “democracy” and “welfare” do not exercise this unifying power any more. He quotes Augustine: “*Nemo est qui pacem habere nolit*”.
11 IH, 175; CD, 59.
14 “It seems 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.” CF/CE, 55.
cultures. For Panikkar, such a vision or myth is required for an authentic world peace.

The *cosmotheandric* principle could be stated by saying that the divine, the human and the earthly--however we may prefer to call them--are the three irreducible dimensions which constitute the real, i.e., any reality inasmuch as it is real... What this intuition emphasizes is that the three dimensions of reality are neither three modes of a monolithic undifferentiated reality, nor are they three elements of a pluralistic system. There is rather one, though intrinsically threefold, relation which expresses the ultimate constitution of reality. 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 *Pratītyasamutpāda* of the Buddhist tradition. I am also stressing that this relationship is not only constitutive of the whole, but that it flashes forth, ever new and vital, in every spark of the real.15

Three assumptions lay behind Panikkar's insight into cosmotheandric harmony. The first is that reality is ultimately harmonious. It is neither a monolithic unity nor sheer diversity and multiplicity. Second, reality is radically relational and interdependent: "every being is nothing but relatedness."16 There is, if you like, organic unity and dynamic process where every 'part' of the whole 'participates' in or 'mirrors' the whole. This corresponds to the ancient notion that every reality is a microcosm of the macro-universe. A contemporary version would be the *Gaia* principle. Third, reality is symbolic, both pointing to and participating in something beyond itself. We do not have a God separate from the world, a world that is purely material, nor humans that are reducible to their own thought-processes or cultural expressions.

15 CF/CE, 74.
As a first move, cosmotheandric harmony operates as a hermeneutic of critique directed primarily at dominant Western cultures whose values, in context of emerging globalism, infiltrate most other cultures as well. As we know, Coca-Cola and McDonald’s operate as universal symbols of global capitalism. Consequently, Panikkar’s call for “cultural disarmament” is specifically directed at Western cultural dominance with its dualisms of mind and body, sacred and profane, religion and politics, culture and nature, heaven and earth. The crises facing humanity call for the dismantling of modernity’s conception of a mechanistic universe devoid of the cosmic rhythms that served humanity well over some six to eight thousand years. 17 Specifically, Panikkar highlights the degenerative roles of the military, technocratic civilization and evolutionistic cosmology as primary agents in this “mutation in human history”. 18 He calls this a “fourth world” severed of all meaningful relationship to earthly, human or divine reality. It produces what theologian Johan Baptist Metz calls a people without memory or hope.

As a second step, cosmotheandric harmony represents the call for a “new innocence”, “a new revelatory experience”, “new forms of human consciousness”—or nothing less than “a radical metanoia, a complete turning of mind, heart and spirit”. 19 It is important to recognize that the cosmotheandric insight is anything but a call to turn back the clock to a past life. Panikkar is concerned with a more profound vision that is genuinely dialogical across traditions and cultures. He understands the current “crisis of history” as the “end of historical consciousness” and an invitation to a “new moment of trans-historical awareness”. 20 Such

17 CD, 79-92.
18 CD, 10. “Evolutionistic cosmology” refers to the worldview that denies transcendence. CD, 89ff.
20 Panikkar, “The End of History” in CE, 100-133.
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awareness needs to reconnect humanity with the rhythms of nature but also with “the divine (which) is not just a third opposition, but precisely the mysterium coniunctionis”.21

Panikkar also speaks of a triadic “sign of peace” which identifies freedom, justice and harmony as “equal essential elements”.22 Their relationship is ontonomic or interdependent rather than hierarchical. Freedom, justice and harmony also pertain more to the realm of mythos than logos: harmony expresses “the ultimate structure of the universe”; freedom, before being an individual right, is “a character of reality”; justice is “constitutive of the human person and all reality”.23 For Panikkar, peace, harmony, freedom and justice are first and foremost symbols of the cosmotheandric reality itself in its various relationships (cosmic, human and divine) prior to being human projects. Global peace cannot be imposed by the human will or fabricated by the human mind but will arise as a gift of the Spirit when we learn from history that peace is not the result of victory, and when we commit ourselves to ongoing processes of reconciliation and dialogue.24

**Peace and Cosmic Confidence**

Panikkar stresses the basis for peace succinctly: “Reality can—must—be trusted”.25 We recall, he is not putting forward a new theory, but calling for a new innocence. Moreover, he insists on the need for “dialogical dialogue”26 across all the traditions since, as he states, “no single human

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21 CF/CE, 60.
22 CD, 63-78.
23 CD, 65, 69, 70f.
24 “Pathways to Peace” in CD, 93-103.
25 IH, 176.
26 Panikkar distinguishes between “dialogical dialogue”—the meeting of hearts—and the “dialectical dialogue”—the meeting of minds. *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 244. [Hereafter MFH]
tradition is today self-sufficient and capable of rescuing humanity from its present predicament”. The decisive factor is life itself or lived experience rather than theory and experiment. Moreover, Panikkar contests the assumption of western metaphysics that reality is reducible to Being and consciousness: there is also Non-Being, the abyss, silence, mystery, matter and spirit. Sometimes called his “ontological thesis”, Panikkar states:

Reality does not need to be totally intelligible in itself. Reality is not reducible to one single principle. The single principle could only be an intelligible principle. But reality is not mind alone, or cit, or consciousness, or spirit. Reality is also sat and ananda, also matter and freedom, joy and being. Reality is not transparent to itself. It does not allow for a perfect reflection. Reality is also spontaneity, an ever new creation, an expanding energy. Being or reality transcends thinking. It can expand, jump, surprise itself. Freedom is the divine aspect of being. Being speaks to us; this is a fundamental religious experience consecrated by many a tradition. And to hear `being' is more than to think it. The ultimate religious intuitions are jumps in the being of `being'. Deductive thinking is of no avail here. We are dealing with spontaneity, with a `being' that is still being and has not simply been.

We could restate all this in terms of there being mystery at the heart of the universe which Panikkar associates with the dynamic interplay of divine freedom, human consciousness and cosmic matter, with space, time and energy, with the structure of language (I-Thou-It/Self) or with integral human experience (sense-intellect-mysticism). The ground for such perceptions is not theory, but experience. As Panikkar expresses this, “the ultimate ground for this cosmic confidence lies in the almost universal

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27 IH, 175.
conviction that Reality is ordered—in other words, is good, beautiful and true”.29

Some may call this a naïve confidence in a disintegrating reality marked by increasingly out-of-control political, economic and ecological disasters spiced by interracial hatred, ethnic violence, state warfare, military spending gone beserk, capitalist excess, global warming, the advance of terrorism and other forms of ideological and religious fanaticism. However, Panikkar wishes to emphasise that it is precisely these challenging experiences that call all traditions to a radical re-thinking on the possibility of peace, harmony and concord. As we know, the earth itself is in travail and so many voices cry from the depths of human tragedy and despair. What is most needed is this deeper “trust that sustains a common struggle for an ever better shaping of Reality”.30 Recognizing genuine diversity, Panikkar also states that humanity is not held together through sharing common opinions, language, religion or other ideologies, “but for the same reason the entire universe is held together”.31 We are co-responsible for the earth and for one another in consort with the Gods or the Spirit who alone bring(s) peace. If theory can assist the praxis of peace, well and good; it is nonetheless reality itself, not some theory of reality, that is at stake.

Hermeneutics of Testimony and Trust

If peace pertains to the mythos rather than logos, if it is “neither purely subjective nor exclusively objective”,32 if it relies on the testimony of others and a personal act of faith or trust, can it stand up to the rigours of

29 IH, 176.
30 IH, 175.
31 IH, 181.
32 CD, 78.
intellectual discourse? This is an important question in view of the tendency of the academy to dismiss the legitimacy of religious, poetic and mystical perceptions of truth. Methodologically, is there a dwelling place for wisdom? Does all thinking need to be dialectical, or is there a legitimate place for "dialogical dialogue"? In fact, there are warrants for Panikkar’s hermeneutics of testimony and trust in modern hermeneutical writings.

In the context of western philosophy, Heidegger seeks to transcend the subject-object approach to truth (correspondence of mind and thing; truth as measurable objective and verifiable) with reference to *Dasein* (truth as authentic coming-to-be in time and history). For Heidegger, any human event of genuine understanding occurs as the ontological disclosure of Being prior to the separation of knowing subject and known object. The scientific or dialectical method of knowledge is of no avail here. Heidegger reflects on the classical approach to truth (Greek *alétheia*) as the “unveiling” of primordial Being whose mystery remains, evident in truth’s coming to expression in works of art. In similar vein, Paul Ricoeur distinguishes between "truths of faith" and "truths of reason". For the former, "truth no longer means verification, but manifestation, that is, letting what shows itself be." Ricoeur calls this a poetic or *areligious* sense of revelation that is not opposed to the world of ordinary experience, but projects a new mode of being onto that world.

33 For a different account of this process, see Panikkar, *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom* (Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993).
34 This is a project of Martin Heidegger’s most famous philosophical work, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).
35 This approach is prevalent in the works of the "later Heidegger" such as *Poetry, Language, Thought* (London: Harper & Row, 1971).
37 BI, 102.
Panikkar identifies this kind of truth as the “manifestation or epiphany of being” which can only be known through “participative knowledge”.38 The scientific or dialectical method of knowledge is of no avail here: one must experience in order to understand. What is required is a “new concept of truth as manifestation”39 (Ricoeur), the practice of meditative thinking (Heidegger), a contemplative spirit and even a feminine attitude (Panikkar).40 Primordial truth is something we “stand under” in order to “understand”.41 To this, Heidegger provides the notion of “facticity” resembling Panikkar’s idea of “relativity”: truth is always relational, that is, related to where we stand in time and history. It is precisely the urgency of the current historical moment which invites a “new disclosure of Being” (Heidgger), a “new manifestation of truth” (Ricoeur) or “new revelatory experience” (Panikkar) in response to the global mutation of our times.

Gadamer proposes a “conversation model” (using the “question-answer”/“I-Thou” dialogical structure) for arriving at what he calls “effective historical consciousness”.42 There is affinity here with Panikkar’s “dialogical dialogue” as a means for arriving at “transhistorical consciousness”. Both seek to rehabilitate prejudice, authority and tradition within a "circularity of meaning" and a dynamic notion of interpretation which is always open to ongoing questioning, further insight and more authentic praxis. In Panikkar’s case, the process consciously employs the interpretations, insights and practices of multiple traditions. In contrast to

39 BI, 98-104.
40 The contemplative and mystical basis of Panikkar’s approach is nowhere better illustrated than in his conception of “The Monk as Universal Archetype” which is the subtitle of his work, *Blessed Simplicity* (New York: Seabury Press, 1982).
Heidegger’s more individualist pursuit of truth, Panikkar and Gadamer require a community of interpreters working together in dialogical interaction. Both emphasise the importance of experience and praxis (Panikkar) or application (Gadamer) in the hermeneutical process.

Gadamer’s notion of “fusion of horizons” as the forward projection of meaning toward a “higher universality” is especially pertinent. Fusion of horizons does not imply a “naive assimilation” of another’s worldview, but the creation of a new horizon, worldview (Gadamer), myth or vision (Panikkar) for the ongoing movement of history, humanity and the cosmos. Indeed, both share an optimism or faith in the “universal connectedness of history” (Gadamer) or the “mutual interrelatedness of all things” (Panikkar). Gadamer exhibits a fundamental trust in the hermeneutical process to arrive at truth, in the power of language to communicate and in the ability of traditions to be self-correcting. Clearly, these are hermeneutical warrants in support of Panikkar’s dialogical dialogue built on human cosmic trust as the way to peace.

To speak of trusting in truth as manifestation invites reflection on the relationship between self-consciousness and historical testimony. Insofar as we belong to a tradition, we are absolutely dependant on founding events—and “the witness of the ancestors, elders, scholars, wise Men and saints”—whose meaning we testify to in the act of self-understanding. Yet, the relationship between historical testimony and self-consciousness, according to Paul Ricoeur, is “non-heteronomous” since it occurs outside the subject-object dualism of purely rational discourse. The appropriation of the truth of testimony depends on the openness of the imagination to recognise “the expression of the freedom we desire to

43 MFH, 359.
45 MFH, 241.
It is through the exercise of the imagination we encounter revelation as “non-violent appeal” that expands rather than destroys human freedom. Since the emphasis is on the imagination, the path to self-awareness requires the mediation of symbols whose truth-power creates worlds of possibilities relating to human transcendental hope for peace, freedom and salvation.

Neither Ricoeur nor Panikkar is challenging the importance of reason nor the place of the logos in the search for truth. To the contrary, it is a matter of extending rationality (Ricoeur) and deepening consciousness (Panikkar) through the realisation that truth itself bids us to transcend the intellect and reconnect logos with mythos, reason with faith, knowledge with wisdom. There is always room to critique false witnesses and distorted symbols on the basis of mutually agreed criteria. However, without the revelatory experience, the manifestation of truth, the testimony of the ancestors and the mediation of symbols, reality would be unchanging, forever caught in its own shadow, unable to project new possibilities for God, humanity and the cosmos.

**The Rhetoric of Cosmic Confidence**

Panikkar’s rhetoric of cosmic confidence and global peace is worthy of a study in its own right. This focus on rhetoric includes consideration of the images, metaphors, gestures and partial logics which unite speaker and audience in mutual critique and common search for authentic values, saving truth and transforming social praxis. Scholars of rhetoric emphasise four major tropes of discourse: metaphor, metonymy,
synecdoche, and irony. These will provide windows through which to see something of Panikkar’s communicative competencies in an age when traditions and languages are challenged to communicate truth and meaning in the postmodern world.

Metaphors arise in response to new experiences for which there is no established language. As a first-order apprehension, the metaphor mediates between pre-conceptual thought and imagination. In the hands of poets and creative thinkers, metaphors describe an emerging reality before it has yet taken shape. Metaphors may also describe the fundamental experience or mythic background underlying the cultural or religious experience of a people at a particular historical moment. In this second sense, we can say the “question of the other” has become the overriding concern and foundational metaphor for post-modern consciousness. David Klemm suggests that the post-modern challenge for understanding is precisely "to uncover what is questionable and what is genuine in self and other, while opening self to other and allowing other to remain other." Panikkar states that the anthropological question today is: "Who are you?" He adds that, in a situation of pluralism, "we cannot bypass the you of any human being." Moreover, as he often states, “the other is an equal source of understanding”. The human, cultural and religious “other” is certainly the primary metaphor informing Panikkar's intercultural and interfaith hermeneutics. It informs his hermeneutics of peace in a particular way by refusing to provide mono-cultural solutions to

49David Klemm maintains that the overriding metaphor for modernity is the "crisis of history"; this is being replaced in postmodern thought by a new metaphor, namely, the "challenge of otherness." See his "Toward a Rhetoric of Postmodern Theology" in Journal of the American Academy of Religion 55:3 (1987): 456f.
51IH, 181.
such a fundamental human challenge which needs the voices of all traditions. The “other” person, culture or religion is a revelation waiting to occur, to unsettle, to call into new ways of being and acting. The “other” is not only the primary metaphor but the authentic catalyst for peace.

Metonymy expresses the metaphor in more concrete ways by moving from the universal to the particular. According to Klemm, the metonymic elements of the postmodern metaphor of otherness are dispersed according to “self, other, the encompassing world and time”.52 Panikkar deals with otherness in relation to self by insisting on the need for persons in dialogue to depth their own traditions. Such understanding requires both personal fidelity and critical engagement using all possible methods not excluding the importance of prayer and contemplation. He raises the importance of the other to a new level of hermeneutical and rhetorical pertinence by insisting on the necessity of interfaith and intercultural dialogue for the emergence of the new consciousness upon which the future of global peace depends. The profound sense of the encompassing world is captured in sensibility to the divine, human and cosmic interrelatedness of all dimensions of reality. In terms of peace, there is also the destructive, encompassing world of “technocratic civilization”. This leads Panikkar to address diverse notions of time in terms of technology (time accelerated), work (time sacrificed), machines (diachronic rhythm), nature (synchronic rhythm), secularity (temporal time), tempiternity (eternity in the midst of time).53

Synecdoche is likened to a "second metaphor". It represents a return from the many to the one, from dispersal to reintegration. Synecdoche appears as the inbreaking of new consciousness, a new revelatory experience, an epiphany or manifestation of truth. Evidently, the

52 Klemm, 457.
53 Panikkar, Técnica y tiempo (Buenos Aires: Columba, 1967).
cosmotheandric vision is Panikkar’s synecdoche for expressing the mystery of reality in a new and engaging way: everything that is encapsulates the divine (freedom), human (consciousness) and cosmic (matter, space, time, energy). As indicated, these are not three different aspects of universal reality, but an expression of the intrinsic, threefold relationship constituting everything that is. Whether we are speaking of God, the world or ourselves, to exist is to exist in relationship. The cosmotheandric synecdoche enables Panikkar to speak of “sacred secularity”, that is, secular humanism’s insight into the ultimacy of the world, time and history. Nothing is excluded from the cosmotheandric mystery. To quote William Blake, “every living thing is holy” which includes the earth itself. Peace depends on such a holistic view of the interconnection and sacredness of all that is. Poets, scientists, mystics, saints and peace-makers express the same reality in their own language, culture and according to their own insights. Panikkar himself attempts to express the same reality in other language such as the “Radical Trinity” and “Rhythm of Being”. The power of synecdoche is precisely in its ability to use traditional words in a manner that stretches the imagination. It provides assurance in relation to past images (divine, human, cosmic, trinity, being) and encourages creative interpretation through the reconfiguration of such images. Panikkar’s ability to create words such as “cosmotheandric”, “technocracy” and “tempiternity”—to name but a few—makes him very effective in the use of synecdoche.

The final trope is irony. Revelation itself is ironic insofar as the divine mystery is mediated "through what is not itself but is other than itself".54 Revelation is always mediated through symbols that both are and are not the (divine) reality they symbolize. Fundamentalists, whether religious or secular, are judged inappropriate from a rhetorical perspective

54 Klemm, 463.
on account of their absence of perceived irony and their failure to distinguish between symbol and reality. They want to limit reality to the confines of human thought processes. The cosmotheandric symbol is ironic in relation to its foundational intuitions: Advaita (neither one nor two), Trinity (both three and one) and “radical relativity” (dynamism without anarchy). His notion of “ontonomy” meaning non-hierarchical relationship is ironic within a certain classical view of relationships. Panikkar’s irony is most evident in his intellectual articulation of the myth of cosmic confidence that does not—and at the deepest level cannot—be put into words. Nor does it need to be. It needs to be lived.

Panikkar’s cosmotheandric rhetoric may not appeal to everyone but it will have achieved its purpose if it brings Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and Secular Humanist (to name the major influences on Panikkar’s life and project) into interfaith and intercultural dialogue. For Panikkar, authentic dialogical dialogue is cause, effect and symbol of global peace.

**Panikkar’s Contribution to the Hermeneutics of Peace**

Panikkar’s hermeneutics of peace is mystical, creative, poetic and, in the true sense of the word, radical. It challenges all our assumptions about reality, invites us to change our thinking, calls for personal, cultural and religious transformation, and invites all traditions and peoples to play a role in establishing a new way of being and acting in the world. Even then, we are told, peace is a gift of the Spirit and cannot be artificially induced. Methodologically, Panikkar’s non-dualistic approach to peace studies is nothing if not comprehensive ranging across scholarship on politics and religion, peace and war, justice and freedom, theology and philosophy, anthropology and culture studies, dialogue and reconciliation.
The burden of this paper has been to highlight the importance of cosmic confidence—or a fundamental human trust in reality—as the foundational mythos for Panikkar’s hermeneutics of peace. Moreover, we found warrants for Panikkar’s approach in the hermeneutical tradition with its interest in the more primordial experience of truth as the ontological disclosure of Being within the human event of understanding. This kind of “participative knowledge” which occurs prior to the separation of subject and object emphasises truth as manifestation rather than verification. But the two are not opposed. In Panikkar’s terms, the process allows a certain priority to be given to testimony and trust in context of the experience of “dialogical dialogue” and in the formation of new horizons of meaning and ensuing social praxis. The “cosmotheandric experience” is one important way in which the emerging mythos is expressed. This gave rise to a rhetorical study focusing on the four major tropes of discourse establishing Panikkar’s credentials as an effective communicator precisely because he insists that all traditions have co-responsibility for reimagining the symbol of peace for our time. It is difficult to think of a more urgent or timely challenge. Panikkar’s cosmotheandric confidence provides us with an authentically human and academically credible way forward.

Note: This is an edited version of a chapter by the same title in Kala Acharya & Milena Carrara Pavan (eds.), Raimon Panikkar: His Legacy and Vision (Mumbai & New Delhi: Somaiya Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2008), 307-329.