In chapter two, we followed Panikkar's initial attempt to bring classical Christian theology into dialogue with twentieth century science and philosophy. This was essentially an intra-western discourse into the religious significance and possibilities associated with the changing consciousness of modernity. He tries to show that Christianity not only can, but must, change, grow and adapt to evolving cultural realities if it is to be true to itself.

Subsequently, in chapter three, we followed Panikkar's movement to the more global discourse among the classical religious traditions of Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. His belief in the possibility of genuine religious encounter—not only in theory but especially in practice—shows that his hermeneutic of religion is not a fixed, classical understanding but an open and dynamic one that is capable of bridging diverse theological, philosophical and cultural expressions.

His third move is partly a movement back to western concerns, but the global perspective remains. Here Panikkar reflects on the phenomenon of secularization as a cultural product of the west that is nonetheless not without influence on world cultures and religions. His approach is neither to attack nor defend secularization as such, but to seek to understand its impact on human consciousness, its effect on religious experience, and its significance for the future of religion in the overall context of religious pluralism.

We note at the start of this discussion that Panikkar's `method' continues to be narratively-based and integrative. In some senses, this chapter represents
Panikkar's mid-life *conversion* to secular humanism; and, as with his previous `conversions' to hinduism and buddhism, there is no sense of abandoning his primary christian stance. He expresses this well in his Introduction to the revised version of the *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* when he writes: "Thus I am at the confluence (sangam) of the four rivers: The Hindu, Christian, Buddhist and Secular traditions."¹ In other words, his study of secularization is faithful to his principle of reflecting on religions and cultures from the `inside'.

The major themes that Panikkar explores in his secularization discourse can be discussed under the following headings: technology and time; secularization and the sacred; ritual and transcendence; freedom and religion. Technology, as symbol and catalyst of secularization, is presented as a powerful tool of change on human consciousness. In particular, technology signals a new experience of time with inbuilt eschatological and religious meaning.

This leads to his reflections on the dialectical relationship between secularization and the sacred: while secularization destroys certain notions of sacred reality, notably those associated with traditional religious expressions, it provides new insight into the possibilities of reclaiming the sacred dimension within the temporal world. Here, Panikkar provides a hermeneutic of religious pluralism that incorporates a `secular' approach to `sacred' reality.

His reflections on ritual behaviour and transcendence rely on a broad interpretation of traditional notions of worship and sacrifice. He argues that

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¹Panikkar, *Unknown Christ*, 2d. rev. ed., x; the Introduction was written at Santa Barbara, Easter, 1979 (see p. xii).
authentic secular rituals are both possible and necessary for the "new spirituality" of secularized humanity. From this vantage point, secularization is seen in terms of the purification of religion and religious experience.

Finally, we turn our attention to Panikkar's hermeneutic of religious freedom that further highlights the profound shift in secular consciousness with implications for the changing face of religion and the new demands of religious pluralism. Here, we also outline Panikkar's new understanding of religion as a human transcendental or symbol of the human being's orientation towards ultimacy.

TECHNOLOGY AND TIME

Panikkar is interested to explore the mutuality of relationship between technology and the human subject; and, following this, to investigate the religious significance of the event of technology. As our exposition demonstrates, Panikkar's study of technology is in many ways a study of the impact of technology on the human experience of time.

His argument is that science and technology are unthinkable without certain anthropological assumptions: the primacy of logical thought; the reality of time; and the positive value of matter. In particular, *homo technicus* perceives time as a linear procession of irreversible moments uniting past, present and future,

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and providing humanity with belief in its ability to transform reality. In other words, technological consciousness operates on the assumption of an intimate relationship between being and time: "time is ontologically real; being is crystallized time."³ Or, to paraphrase Panikkar, that which is most real is the temporal.

Conversely, he argues that there is no such thing as "neutral technology" that could be put to good or bad use without impacting on the human subject. Rather, the human being must adapt itself to the machine and, in a certain sense, enter into its "interior rhythm," its temporal structure.⁴ In this way, the world of nature and the human subject are both transformed through the event of technology:

Science and technique are not just two objects; there are no objects without subjects. They are not `objective' realities which we can manipulate at will; above all they entail a structure of the mind--a forma mentis--and they correspond to a certain and particular degree of human consciousness.⁵

This particular degree of consciousness, that has arisen historically within the Christian west,⁶ has important ramifications for understanding religious

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³Ibid., 7. While Panikkar’s references to the works of Martin Heidegger are sparse, there is little doubt that his hermeneutics of secularization is influenced by Heidegger. For example, the understanding of the intimate relationship between being and time is the subject of Heidegger’s major philosophical study, Being and Time, trans. J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, [1927] 1962). Other references to Heidegger will be indicated throughout the course of this study.


⁵"European University Tradition," 5.

⁶Panikkar states unequivocally that "science and technology were brought into
experience. As Panikkar shows elsewhere, the eastern experience of time is circular; and even for the christian, "time is spiral rather than a straight line." Consequently, he recognizes that science and technology represent a challenge and dislocation to traditional religious conceptions of reality. This leads him to investigate chronos time, "the temporal rhythm peculiar to technology," insofar as it impacts on human time-consciousness and religious experience.

Technological culture, according to Panikkar, is dominated by the time of the machine. Effectively, this represents a rupture in the human experience of time, a mortal wounding of the human synchronic rhythm, and a splitting asunder of the harmony which existed between the human and natural worlds.


Panikkar introduces the notion of technochrony which he defines as the "philosophical--or even theological--reflection on the temporal rhythm peculiar to technology." "Technology and Time: Technochrony," Pax Romana Journal (Fribourg) special issue (1967): 3; see also Técnica y tiempo, 9.


See Técnica y Tiempo, 11-13, 28-34. In a manner reminiscent of Heidegger,
Instead of the hoped-for liberation, machines impose their own *diachronic* rhythm on the *technopolis*, diminishing human freedom. So, although purporting to `save' time, machines also turn the citizens of the secular city into the `slaves' of time.\(^{12}\)

However, Panikkar recognizes that there are also other dimensions to the technological experience of time. He argues, for instance, that since technology modifies and, in fact, `accelerates' time, it must contain hidden, eschatological elements:

Technology accelerates the progress of creation towards its end; it `opens a breach' in a being's plenitude, which makes it reach its term more quickly; it has a directly eschatological influence since it makes time run out more quickly and therefore shortens the being's life and hastens its end.\(^{13}\)

Technology, in this view, is intimately related to the destiny of the universe.

Now, Panikkar recognizes that this *telos* of technology contains an inner-

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\(^{13}\) *Técnica y tiempo*, 37; English translation in "Technology and Time," 3.
paradox and a double possibility. The first is negative. Through increasing the speed and opening up the 'breach' of time, the opportunity for a being's life and growth might be lost; pure speed or velocity, which is so often the ideal of technological society, is no guarantee of fulfillment, destiny or salvation. To the contrary, time is simply 'emptied' and being is 'wasted'. Panikkar stresses that "the great danger of technology is precisely this wastage of being." In this scenario, technology symbolizes "unformed being" and "non-redeemed time."

There is a second possibility. The technological acceleration of time contains the hope of bringing a being to its proper fulfillment. While the temporality of being comes to an end with the end of time, "time runs out because things are already full of existence." In this scenario, technology plays a positive role in the "redemption of time" and contributes to the "creative fulfillment of the universe." Panikkar seems to suggest that, if the human being can recover from the technological shock that alters human time-consciousness and brings time (and being) to a more abrupt conclusion, then technology can be of positive service to eschatology. It can help shape the future and fulfill the destiny of the universe by reconciling humanity with nature (reducing the 'distance' between them) and in 'humanizing' the cosmos.14

This potentially positive outcome of technology requires a new awareness of the relationship between humanity and technology that is described in terms

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14See the appropriate sections entitled "La entrada del hombre en la naturaleza" and "La entrada de la naturaleza en el hombre" in Técnica y tiempo, 40-49. In this context, Panikkar refers the reader to the works of Teilhard de Chardin and, specifically, to de Chardin's notion of the 'hominization' of nature. See "Technology and Time," 4.
of true partnership or ontonomy. However, this relationship will not develop until there is recognition that technology has ultimate, eschatological significance insofar as it has genuinely and irretrievably transformed the world, including the `world' of human time-consciousness.

Given this eschatological perspective, Panikkar can state that "technology also has its place in the economy of salvation." Specifically, it performs a redemptive role by confronting the human being with the inadequacies of both naive idealism and rampant materialism. In so doing, technology exercises a "triple cathartic function."

First, it shatters the dreams of elitism and differentiation and so destroys the fiction of the ego-centered individual and all classical notions of `humanist' perfection. In this respect, Panikkar perceives the Cross as the "anthropological symbol par excellence" insofar as the horizontal axis symbolizes the forces of history, and the vertical axis the human person's transcendence in time. In the wake of the technological revolution and its aftermath, neither idealized notions

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15 Panikkar's notion of ontonomy is re-employed here with respect to the ideal relationship of mutual dependence between humanity and technology. He states, for example, that "la relación entre el hombre y la técnica es tan íntima y profunda como la que se da entre la técnica . . . y la naturaleza. . . . Esta relación no es . . . ni de creación ni de `ejecición', sino de generación." Técnica y tiempo, "La ontonomía de la técnica," 28-34; citations, 33.

16 The full quotation reads: "Technochrony strikes me as being a phenomenological pointer to the resurrection of the body: a silent prophet of the new heavens and the new earth. Technological time, like any authentic time, has a necessarily eschatological dimension. From this point of view technology has its place in the economy of salvation--and thus enters fully into the theology of history." "Technology and Time," 5; Técnica y tiempo, 50.
of transcendence (which ignore history) nor materialist notions of history (which deny transcendence) are applicable.  

Second, since "technology destroys the world and exhausts time," it also destroys the idol of building on earth the everlasting city. By confronting humanity with the abyss of the end-time, technology heightens an awareness of salvation which is neither totally identified with, nor for that matter totally separated from, temporal existence.  

Third, Panikkar focuses on the technical world’s movement and rapidity which, he says, force us to "become nomads once more, and not only in space but also in time and within ourselves." Effectively, then, technology signals "our progress towards death" the acceptance of which, he recalls, is central to all religious traditions. Consequently, these cathartic functions of technology, insofar as they provoke a `turning round’ or reassessment of ourselves and our universe, point to the paradox of life-`through’-death that is not `above’ history and time (idealism) nor merely `in’ history and time (materialism). The path towards transcendence is an historical and human path that must be trod on this earth while leading to another shore:

If salvation is to be found, it cannot be on the horizontal line of history, but it should be a real resurrection to a higher existence where time will no longer exist. . . . Salvation can only come after catastrophe--either personal or collective: one has to pass through death.  

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17"Technology and Time," 5f.

18Ibid., 6.

19Ibid.
Of course, this is the *via negativa* of traditional spirituality or, in specifically Christian language, the Passover of the Resurrection. Technology is therefore an agent of spirituality and redemption because it forces us to take this historical world fully seriously while simultaneously revealing its fundamental impermanence. Consequently, technology, although provoking catastrophe, contains within itself the genuine possibility of transformed human consciousness and the final fulfillment of the universe.

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These reflections on technology represent a type of *cosmological testament* that refuses to allow any ultimate separation between the cosmic, human and divine dimensions of reality.\(^{20}\) This is why the impact of technology on the physical processes of the world (the field of science) is intimately related to philosophical and theological meanings for technologically-altered consciousness. In his earlier study, Panikkar had already indicated the false assumption behind a purely physico-mathematical concept of time.\(^{21}\) Here he goes a step further by

\(^{20}\)See our discussion of Panikkar's "Cosmological Testament" in Chapter Two. This is also the basis of his *cosmotheandric* or *theanthropocosmic* intuition which he describes here as that "vision of reality which sees the divine, the human and cosmic as the three ultimate factors present in whatever there is." "Time and Sacrifice," 722. The movement from *theandric* to *cosmotheandric* vision, which occurs in the early 1970s, is one of gradual progression associated with his increasing attention to the concerns of technology and secularization. Panikkar, "La visione cosmotheandrica: il senso religioso emergente del terzo millennio" in R. Caporale, ed., *Vecchi e nuovi dei: Second International Symposium on Belief* (Torino: Valentino, 1976), 521-544.

\(^{21}\)See our discussion of "Entropy, Matter, Time" in Chapter Two.
revealing how technology’s impact on physical time, expressed as the acceleration of the creative process, is mutually related to--and unthinkable without--an equally profound alteration of human time-consciousness and spiritual meaning.

The negative impact of the machine on human life is, of course, not difficult to gauge. Panikkar tries to see beyond, or rather through, this negativity in order to focus on the redemptive potential of technology. He finds this in the relationship between technology and time or, more specifically, in technology’s eschatological dimensions and cathartic functions. Perhaps his most telling symbol is the Cross which points to a double paradox: first, technology turns our attention to the earth and our temporal-historical existence (the horizontal axis); second, technology has profound implications for the end of time and the destiny of the universe (the vertical axis).

The second paradoxical feature of technology is that it can provoke an experience of the "dark night of the soul" and so actually destroys the rationalist, humanist and merely scientific assumptions upon which the technological revolution was built. This does not destroy technology or enable humanity to retreat to a time of pre-technological naiveté which, even if desirable, is no longer possible. However, it does indicate that the technological adventure is equally a spiritual and religious journey capable of connecting human beings and their `world' to the ultimate mystery of existence.
From this ‘spiritual’ or ‘religious’ reflection on technology, it is a small step to the consideration of Panikkar’s discourse on the relationship between ‘secular’ experience and ‘sacred’ reality.

**SECULARIZATION AND THE SACRED**

While technology is associated with a new attitude towards temporal reality and religious experience, the concept of secularization would seem to negate the very existence of sacred reality itself. However, Panikkar’s effort is directed precisely at the retrieval of a sense of sacred transcendence that is compatible with secular consciousness.

Although representing secularization as "the progression from the sacred to the secular," Panikkar suggests a further distinction between secularism that may "still be tolerant of the sacred and its rights" and secularity that is equated with "the intolerant destruction of any sacred order." Consequently, secularization as such is perceived as a new experience of space and time, or a new mode of being in the world, through which fundamental human and religious symbols are not annihilated, but transformed.

In this reading, secular consciousness does not necessarily deny the reality of the sacred. However, it no longer allows the sacred (in the sense of the non-secular) to assume prior rights over the secular ‘reality’ of the world. In fact, "secularization is the process of the penetration of ‘reality’ into the world, the

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process of making the world real.”23 In a somewhat different formulation, we may say that Panikkar perceives secularization as the process in which the world, matter, space and time become definitive and, in a sense, sacred (that is, ultimate) realities. Evidently, he is eager to explore the notion of secularization as an event within human subjectivity that alters the religious sense of the world and the sacred without necessarily being anti-religious or anti-sacred.24

The close link between technology and secularization is evident in the way that Panikkar proposes secularization to be the expression of human consciousness that discovers the positive and real character of temporal reality. Secular consciousness takes over the technological assumption of the intimate relationship between being and time: the saeculum is the aiôn, the life-span, the temporal reality by which beings exist in the world (of time).25 Consequently,

23Ibid., 13.

24Panikkar states explicitly that "the secular man does not need to be anti-religious or anti-sacred, for he stands for the positive and, in a way, sacred value of time and temporal reality." Ibid., 11. Elsewhere he states:

Modern Man is a secular Man, which does not mean that he is not religious or that he has lost the sense of the sacred. The statement means only that his religiousness and even any sense of sacredness he may possess are both tinged with a secular attitude. 'Secular attitude’ means a particular temporal awareness that invests time with a positive and real character. The Vedic Experience (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), 18.


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time is not something to be negated or transcended in the interest of some other atemporal existence.\textsuperscript{26}

Panikkar perceives that the temporal factor is central to the transformed interiority of secular consciousness:

The event of secularization leads us to the secularization of hermeneutics. This consists in the introduction of the time factor to the interior of the hermeneutical process; this then reveals the most profound character of secularization which consists in the presence of the \textit{saeculum}, understood as incarnated temporality, at the very heart of being and therefore of all reality.\textsuperscript{27}

This is no unilateral reaction to the sacred or the religious perception of reality. Rather, in taking the temporal dimension as constitutive of Being, it refuses to admit of anything, including the sacred and divine dimensions of reality, that are untouched by temporality.\textsuperscript{28} However, this does not imply that reality is reducible to temporality.\textsuperscript{29} Specifically, it does not necessarily deny the mystery of immanence nor a certain apophatic transcendence at the heart of reality.

\textsuperscript{26}Panikkar describes different theologies of time according to the following schema: unreal and negative (Hinduism); unreal and positive (Buddhism); real and negative (Semitic religions); real and positive (Secular attitude). \textit{Worship and Secular Man}, 12.

\textsuperscript{27}“L’événement de la sécularisation nous a amenés jusqu’à la sécularisation de l’herméneutique. Elle consiste dans l’introduction du facteur temps à l’intérieur du processus herméneutique; ce dernier nous révèle alors le caractère le plus profond de la sécularisation qui consiste dans la présence du \textit{saeculum}, entendu comme temporalité incarnée, au cœur même de l’être et donc de toute la réalité.” “La sécularisation de l’herméneutique,” 214; English translations of the text are mine.

\textsuperscript{28}J’entends par herméneutique séculière celle qui présuppose que la \textit{dimension temporelle est constitutive} de l’être; dimension, donc, en un certain sens irremplaçable et \textit{définitive}. Le phénomène de la sécularisation relève, à mon avis, d’une couche beaucoup plus profonde que celle d’une simple réaction dirigée contre une certaine conception \textit{religieuse} de la réalité.” Ibid., 225.

\textsuperscript{29}This notion of \textit{temporality} is close to Heidegger’s. John Macquarrie
Panikkar admits that the secular mentality retreats from a notion of God who is deemed to exist so far beyond time and history as to be a mere abstract, atemporal, albeit Supreme, Being. Rather, to be real for secular consciousness, the divine itself must be secularized, that is, touched by time and history. In this sense, secular consciousness can admit to the possibility of a "divine center" or a "tempiternal reality" that is, however, more a matter of quasi-mystical intuition than intellectual apprehension.\(^{30}\) In summary, Panikkar believes that secularization, rather than being a simple negation of the sacred or transcendence, represents a new opportunity for the appreciation of the sacred dimension within time and history.

With this background, Panikkar proposes a secular interpretation of Christ that focuses on his historico-temporal function in the world today.\(^{31}\) The accent comments: "The central place which Heidegger gives to temporality in his analysis implies that his philosophy is a secular one, in the strict meaning of the word 'secular'. Yet although the existent is constituted by temporality, . . . he is not simply 'in time'. In so far as he transcends the 'now' and attains to genuine selfhood, he is realizing a kind of 'eternal life' in the midst of time." \textit{Martin Heidegger} (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), 35.

\(^{30}\)According to Panikkar, there is a particular type of secular mysticism which, as well as insisting on the importance of the historical and temporal dimensions of reality, is not necessarily opposed to that which "is not." In this latter respect, secularism finds a meeting point with Buddhism:

La mentalité séculière . . . ne peut pas s'opposer à l'intuition mystique d'un royaume intérieur, d'un samsâra qui est nirvâna. . . . Elle nous dit que l'être est tout ce qui est, mais elle ne peut rien dire sur ce qui n'est pas. Il y a ici un lien profond avec la mystique. Il n'y a pas seulement une mystique du séculier; il y a aussi une mystique séculière. "La sécularisation de l'herméneutique," 227.

\(^{31}\)"L'interprétation séculière du Christ nous amène à voir la réalité, et donc l'intelligibilité, du Christ en fonction de sa situation historico-temporelle." Ibid., 227.
is on the 'subjective' appropriation of Christ as the life-center of earthly, human existence. This secular hermeneutic is little interested in immutable essences or the medieval metaphysics of divine filiation that attempt to establish an 'objective' divine-human unity in the person of the Son.\textsuperscript{32} In contrast with the traditional hermeneutic, the secular mentality emphasizes Christ's unity with humanity and, more particularly, his identity with the poor and suffering in the world.

Consequently, Jesus' relationship to the Father is interpreted less in theistic than apophatic terms that express a "certain knowledge of (Christ's) unity with the central mystery of life."\textsuperscript{33} Panikkar concedes that such a secular hermeneutic of Christ cannot be explained as the mere translation or extension of traditional christian hermeneutics. Rather, it represents a new vision of Christ that is irreducible to older categories.\textsuperscript{34} Herein is the focal point of the problematic.

\textsuperscript{32}{"De nos jours, le problème de l’unité du Christ reste encore central, mais son unité n’est pas tellement cherchée d’une façon objective comme l’union entre Dieu et l’Homme, que d’une façon subjective comme l’union du Christ avec les hommes. . . . La fraternité humaine ne serait pas fondée ici sur une filiation divine commune, mais sur le Christ frère universel." Ibid., 220.}

\textsuperscript{33}{"(Jesus’) relation avec le Père ne serait pas exprimée en termes de théisme, mais de façon plus apophatique, comme une certaine conscience de son unité avec le mystère central de la vie ou de l’existence, ou plutôt encore, en termes de son unité avec l’humanité souffrante et non libérée." Ibid., 242.}

\textsuperscript{34}{Panikkar surveys three possible ways in which diverse hermeneutics may be considered compatible. They are the ways of \textit{translation}, \textit{complementarity} and \textit{equivalence}. However, he does not consider these to be adequate categories for accounting for the "conflict of hermeneutics" such as exists between the classical and secular hermeneutics of Christ. He turns, instead, to his \textit{method of transcendental critique} since "l’interprétation séculière ne se laissant pas réduire à des catégories anciennes peut nous offrir un panorama sur le sens du Christ." Ibid., 230-244; quotation, 242.}
From the perspective of traditional or sacred hermeneutics, the new vision appears to destroy the divinity of Christ. However, from the secular perspective, the intention is not to destroy but to `save' the reality of Christ in his historical function and contemporary effectiveness.35

The conflict of interpretations between traditional and secular hermeneutics of Christ is nonetheless apparent and does not admit to an easy resolution. Panikkar maintains that the fundamental issue is not doctrinal but hermeneutical. Consequently, his aim is to establish a hermeneutical basis that provides for the possibility of a pluralism of interpretations to the redemptive mystery of Christ. Such a pluralism will be inclusive of a `secular' approach to the `sacred' reality of Christ.

Drawing from the insights of modern hermeneutical theory--or what he calls *transcendental hermeneutics*, Panikkar proposes that there is no such thing as a totally objectifiable interpretation.36 He points, first of all, to the non-

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35"L’interprétation séculière du Christ nous amène à voir la réalité, et donc l’intelligibilité, du Christ en fonction de sa situation historico-temporelle. . . . Envisagée dans la perspective de l’herméneutique traditionnelle, l’interprétation séculière semble vouloir détruire le Christ. Vue de l’intérieur, ce n’est pas le cas." Ibid., 227; see also, 219-222.

36This has been Panikkar’s consistent position which he presented originally in "The Existential Phenomenology of Truth."

In "La sécularisation de l’herméneutique" he states that "la vérité est toujours cachée dans l’interprétation." The two major hermeneutical theorists that he cites in support of his position regarding *transcendental hermeneutics* are Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer. See his discussion of "L’Herméneutique d’une herméneutique" in "La sécularisation de l’herméneutique," 228-244 (including appropriate footnotes). We return to this discussion of the hermeneutical correspondence among Panikkar, Gadamer and Ricoeur in the Chapter Six.
questionable dimension within every hermeneutic. Second, he indicates that every interpretation is so dependent on its own time and context that the criteria of judgment are themselves temporal and finite. Third, he suggests that a transcendental critique--consisting of the constant questioning of all hermeneutical assumptions, presuppositions and judgments--is required if one is to establish the 'validity' and 'relativity' of an interpretation.37

This focus on the 'subjective' dimension of the hermeneutical process--"the givens of human consciousness"--enables the hermeneutic to establish its proper boundaries and limits that are integral to the interpretation. Within this framework, the 'objective' reality of Christ is recognized as transcending all our human interpretations. Its disclosure is affirmed according to the "dynamic relationship between subject and object" in a finite and temporal process. Therefore, according to Panikkar, the secular interpretation of Christ is precisely the interpretation that arises, and can only arise, within secular consciousness.38 It expresses how the Christ-symbol continues to take hold of the imagination of

37"C'est cette conscience de la validité, et en même temps de la relativité de l'herméneutique, que nous avons nommée transcendantale. . . . La voie de la critique transcendantale cherche à établir le coefficient de validité qui accompagne chaque interprétation. . . . Une herméneutique transcendantale serait celle qui se questionne constamment et sur les données de l'interprétation (qu'on ne considère jamais comme définies), et sur les présupposés de l'interprète (qu'on ne considère jamais comme fixés), et, en troisième lieu sur les résultats de l'interprétation même (qu'on ne considère jamais comme absolument définitifs)." Ibid., 239-241.

38"Le critère d'interprétation ne considère pas uniquement le sujet et l'objet de l'interprétation, mais aussi la relation dynamique constante d'entre les deux. . . . L'herméneutique est consciente d'être herméneutique, et donc de n'être jamais absolument identique à la réalité qu'elle interprète. Cela revient à dire que la réalité n'est jamais donnée une fois pour toutes. Pour cette raison, une herméneutique transcendantale ne pourrait surgir d'une conscience sécularisée." Ibid., 241.
people in a different world or community of discourse to that of classical hermeneutics. Nonetheless, Panikkar insists that there is continuity between these two worlds of discourse in the *invariant symbol* of Christ:

Secularization has practically changed or even destroyed most of the traditional affirmations of Christ, but it has not succeeded in eliminating Jesus. Interpretations change, content is modified, the word is transformed, but the container is conserved, the symbol preserved. Secularization has altered the world and transformed hermeneutics, but it still belongs to the same christian myth of the West for whom Jesus is the foundation stone, the living symbol.  

Evidently, Panikkar establishes the basis of true pluralism in the unifying power of the symbol rather than in its diverse, even incompatible, interpretations. He suggests that this is not a matter of surrendering to the "anarchy of relativism" but of recognizing that a hermeneutic is never absolutely identified with the reality that it interprets. In turn, this recognition is available only to secular

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39"La sécularisation a pratiquement changé ou même détruit la plupart des affirmations traditionnelles sur le Christ, mais elle n’a pas réussi à éliminer Jésus. On a changé les interprétations, on a modifié le contenu, le logos s’est transformé, mais on a conservé le contenant, on a préservé le symbole. La sécularisation a bouleversé le monde et transformé l’herméneutique, mais elle appartient encore au même mythe chrétien de l’Occident dont Jésus demeure la pierre angulaire, le symbole vivant." Ibid. 248.

40Ibid., "La permanence du symbole," 244-248.

41Panikkar speaks of "la relativité (qui n’est pas le relativisme) de la vérité" and "la relativité radicale de toute interprétation" which he holds to be a kind of *via media* between "l'absolutisme de la pensée" and "l'anarchie de l'agnosticisme et du relativisme." Ibid., 238, 241, 244. In *Worship and Secular Man* (p. 21), Panikkar refers to the *symbolic difference* to explain the "identity-in-difference" between the symbol and the reality.

Since our object here is *not* to explain or defend Panikkar’s secular interpretation of Christ *per se*, but to show that such interpretation is related to the "invariant symbol of Christ," we do not enter into discussion on the question of the "relative adequacy" of this interpretation. His own intention is *not* to deny that there

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consciousness. Nonetheless, from its own perspective, it can succeed in validating a real if transformed hermeneutic of the sacredness of Christ that discloses itself to the world of contemporary, secular and predominantly western experience.

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Naturally, Panikkar is well aware that secularization challenges, and even destroys, certain notions of the sacred that belong to classical consciousness. However, he does not believe that this implies the inevitable destruction of the sacred itself. Rather, he suggests that the sacred is capable of reinterpretation that means, for secular consciousness, its incarnation into history and time.

This means that the realities of God and Christ can, in a certain way, be `secularized' without thereby being `desacralized'. This is evident insofar as God and Christ retain their credibility, their power and, most importantly, their accessibility as symbols of ultimate reality. Recognizing that secular interpretations represent a rupture in comparison to the claims of traditional hermeneutics, Panikkar uses modern hermeneutical theory to indicate the intrinsic limits of all interpretations and the validity of a genuine pluralism of approaches to transcendent reality.

are "heterodox interpretations of Christ" (for both traditional and secular hermeneutics), but to indicate the transformation in human consciousness that necessitates an approach to Christ that is more sensitive to his unity with humanity than his unity with God. Evidently, as he acknowledges, any "orthodox interpretation" needs to provide for both. See "La sécularisation de l'herméneutique," 218-22.
In Panikkar's view, pluralism and the "radical relativity of all interpretation" do not negate the permanence of the symbol. In a similar vein, he explores the phenomenon of ritual behaviour which expresses human orientation towards transcendence and persists into the secular age despite significant changes of form. Such an approach to the hermeneutics of ritual and transcendence also affords Panikkar the opportunity to critique certain reductive tendencies that are associated with the secularization process.

**RITUAL AND TRANSCENDENCE**

Panikkar holds that ritual behaviour is symbolic activity that is oriented towards a sense of ultimacy. In this view, all ritual includes a transcendent dimension. As well, according to Panikkar, the human being's constitutive orientation towards transcendence is inevitably expressed through diverse forms of ritual behavior. Consequently, ritual activity is portrayed as integral to human life, variable according to time and culture, and in some way related to a reality that transcends the human being.

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42"Any authentic ritual always finally expresses the ultimate urge of Man's total being . . . ; it refers to the ultimate mystery of existence without excluding or despising the intermediary steps of penultimate things." "Man as a Ritual Being," *Chicago Studies* 15:1 (1977), 13f. In this article, Panikkar explores the notion of ritual from the respective viewpoints of phenomenology, philosophy and theology.

43"Ritual, because it is a human existential, varies with the human process." Ibid., 20.

44Panikkar implies that sacred consciousness emphasizes "vertical transcendence" whereas secular consciousness stresses "horizontal transcendence." Ibid.
Applying these ideas to the realm of secular activity, Panikkar portrays the making of the modern city as "a sacred and ritual act (since) it is a new creation, a real foundation of something not pre-existent." This means that secular activity is considered to be sacred action insofar as it fulfills the criteria of ritual behaviour.

Nonetheless, Panikkar is well aware that the secularized, western world is confronted with an "acute crisis of rituals" resulting from the rationalist inflation of the mind and reason. Consequently, he seeks to discover the deeper roots of ritual, especially their classical expressions in worship and sacrifice, to see whether their underlying insights are still valid today. In this manner, he hopes to find a way of transforming the modern predicament. He also demonstrates that contemporary humanity needs appropriately-transformed rituals if it is to survive the shock of technology and secularization.

From the perspective of the history of religions and the evolution of human consciousness, Panikkar argues that there are three fundamental human attitudes or kairological moments that represent distinct approaches to ritual

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45"The People of God and the Cities of Man," 195.

46Panikkar says that he is "not affirming that any secular activity is already a ritual" but that "the secular is not opposed to the sacred (as is the profane)." "Man as a Ritual Being," 20.

47Ibid., 6-8. This has been Panikkar's constant critique of modernity. See our discussion in Chapter Two.

48Panikkar's major studies in this regard are Worship and Secular Man and "Time and Sacrifice."
behavior.49 The heteronomic moment50 conceives cultic activity and ritual sacrifice as the most profound human activity through which humanity collaborates with the divine in order to sustain and recreate the universe. Such ritual acts of worship are also "ontological acts of adoration" through which believers transcend this inferior space of earthly existence and are transported into the realm of the sacred. For this cosmology, the 'sacred' realm is understood as separate from the world and independent of time.51 It is the classical attitude of traditional or sacred consciousness.

The autonomous phase52 is no longer theocosmic but anthropocosmic. Panikkar characterizes this as a movement towards human interiority and independence. In line with the secular insight into the ultimacy of time and history, Panikkar says that the most important ritual actions are those associated with secular activity and human work. In fact, "work is worship." It is also "heir

49He represents these three moments as kai rological rather than chronological in order to stress that their dynamism is in accordance with the movement of consciousness rather than historical or cultural periods. Worship and Secular Man, 29.

50Ibid., "Sacred Heteronomy," 30-34. Among the purest examples of this type of consciousness, according to Panikkar, are certain styles of Hindu Vedanta and Christian Scholasticism. See his "Common Patterns of Eastern and Western Scholasticism," Diogènes (Paris), no. 83 (July-Sept. 1973): 103-113.

51For a similar sense of "primal religious consciousness," see the many studies of Mircea Eliade, such as The Sacred and the Profane, trans. W. Trask (London: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959).

52See "Profane Autonomy," Worship and Secular Man, 34-41. Panikkar suggests that this movement towards interiority is already recognizable in the Upanishads and the Jewish prophets, and is further radicalized in Buddhism and early Christianity.
to the traditional sacrifice" since work transforms temporal actions through meaningful participation in the world's destiny.53

The third or ontonomic attitude54 is `cosmotheandric'. For Panikkar, this consists in the integration of the former moments into a higher synthesis. It is also the celebration of the dynamic interrelatedness of every dimension of reality--divine, human and cosmic.55 Here, rituals of worship stress "participation in the whole of reality" without relegating the sacred to another world (heteronomy) or idolizing this one (autonomy).56 The sacrificial element consists in the overturning of traditional attitudes in order to enter a "new degree of

53Panikkar suggests that the transition from sacred to secular consciousness does not destroy but transmythicizes sacrificial ritual: "Modern work claims to liberate Man from the strictures of time and to allow him both to rescue his life from the chains of a time-bound existence and to justify his life by allowing him to collaborate in the `salvation' of the World. All the traditional motives of sacrifice have been preserved in the process of being transplanted into another horizon. We have here a typical example of transmythicization." "Time and Sacrifice," 706f.

54Worship and Secular Man, "Theandric Ontonomy," 41-49. It is suggested that this theandric or cosmotheandric consciousness is only beginning to emerge as humanity, for the first time, faces global awareness and experiences the current mutation of consciousness. Panikkar offers this more as a possible vision of the future than as a description of an existing, well-defined religious attitude.

55This requires sacramental awareness or symbolic consciousness where "the symbol is neither a substitute for the `thing' nor the `thing in itself', but the thing as it appears, as it expresses itself." Again, "there `is' no reality independent of its proper symbol. There is no symbol if it is not the symbol of a reality. But the reality does not lie `behind' or `beyond', but discloses itself only as symbol." Ibid., 20f. For a similar notion of symbol as primordial manifestation, see Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. A. Hofstadter (London: Harper & Row, 1971).

56Panikkar further comments on this notion of "participation" by describing worship as "a sacramental act in which matter and spirit, the divine and the human, the body and the mind, the angelic and the demonic, all collaborate in letting reality be by symbolizing itself in the symbol which reality is." Worship and Secular Man, 48.

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consciousness." Such an ontonomic or cosmotheandric consciousness is alive to the transcendent truth and the immanent mystery at the heart of every reality and in the very midst of time.57

In a generic sense, worship and sacrifice are described as symbolic acts, arising from particular beliefs, and oriented towards human transcendence.58 As such, they are invariant human rituals that are operable within all three degrees of human consciousness. However, their ability to transform human experience is variable according to the intrinsic limits of the type of consciousness from which they derive. This also accounts for different responses to the event of secularization. Panikkar understands these responses in the following manner.

The heteronomic attitude59 perceives secularization as a shock to its fundamental belief-structures and as the enemy of transcendence. This springs from an understanding of sacrifice and ritual that emphasizes the `cosmological' virtues of humility, obedience and submission. The sacrificial re-enactment of the primordial act of creation is transformational at the ultimate level of the cosmos.60 However, such cosmological `transformation' is seen as having little to do with the concerns of the `secular' world.

57See the section entitled "The Sacrifice of the Secular" in "Time and Sacrifice," 711-714.

58For Panikkar's description of worship, see Worship and Secular Man, 6-9; for his understanding of sacrifice, see "Time and Sacrifice," esp. 692-695.

59Worship and Secular Man, 30-34, 49f.

60This is also consistent with Eliade's emphasis on the centrality of cosmogonic rituals that are re-enactments of the primordial act of Creation in illo tempore. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 77ff.
Conversely, the autonomous attitude\textsuperscript{61} welcomes secularization and technology as the true ‘saviours’ of this real, temporal world. It rejects traditional notions of sacrificial worship as at best irrelevant to the central concerns of human life, and at worst as inhuman and demeaning. Sacrificial rituals of work and service are ‘performed’ for a more human world and a more just society. Technical scientific knowledge becomes the new gnosis; Reason, Science, Society become the new names for Religion.

For Panikkar, the autonomous attitude does not necessarily imply an agnostic or atheistic stance. God may be allowed to exist and is even eminently respected. However, for autonomous consciousness, the divine is not about to meddle in the significant affairs and appropriate rites associated with the building of the earthly city. As Panikkar recognizes, autonomy runs the risk of degenerating into a ‘profane’ attitude that all too readily destroys an authentic sense of transcendence. The result is that secularization is rendered impotent in its self-proclaimed task of transforming the world on account of its ultimately one-dimensional and inadequate notion of ‘transformation’.

Still, Panikkar does not perceive secularization and transcendence as necessarily conflictual. For him, the cosmotheandric or ontonomic attitude\textsuperscript{62} is marked by its ability to integrate the essential insights of both traditional religious rites and modern secular rituals. Theandric ontonomy, he says, forges a new relationship between the heavenly kingdom and the earthly city creating

\textsuperscript{61}Worship and Secular Man, 34-41 & 50-52.

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., 41-49 & 52-55.
therein "a possibility of regeneration without alienation." This transformation of secular consciousness perceives in the `temporal' flux of life a `sacred' dimension. As indicated above, the secular insight into the reality and ultimate significance of time does not thereby preclude the human need to transcend temporality. In fact, the technological acceleration of time is intimately related to the attempt to overcome the strictures of time if human liberation and transformation are to be achieved.

In Panikkar's judgment, autonomous rituals have largely failed the liberative-transformative test: modern secular sacrifice (work) makes people the slaves of time and unliberated cogs of the machine (technology). Consequently, secularization is confronted with the need to devise new rituals in order to overcome this machine-driven, inauthentic, repetitious dictatorship.

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63"Time and Sacrifice," 710. At other times, Panikkar emphasizes the `rupture' between tradition and modernity or sacred and secular consciousness. Other times, as here, he is at pains to show that there is also a sense of "society's radical continuity with tradition." From the perspective of theandric ontonomy, there remains a healthy tension. This is in contrast to the attitude of profane autonomy which is a unilateral rebellion against tradition.

64In The Four Quartets, T. S. Eliot explores this same possibility of finding authentic secular rituals that `redeem' "the waste sad time / Stretching before and after." Eliot, too, recognized that "A people without history / Is not redeemed from time" and saw that "History may be freedom" when it becomes "renewed, transfigured, in another pattern . . . of timeless moments." See "Burn Norton V"; "Little Gidding, IV & V." Collected Poems: 1909-1962 (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), 189-223.

65Note the approach to time alluded to in the above discussion on "Secularization and the Sacred."

66"Time and Sacrifice," 707ff. See also Panikkar's other works on technology mentioned in the above discussion on "Technology and Time."
of time. Traditional religious rituals are inoperative for secular consciousness precisely because they perceive salvation in terms of some supra-temporal state (`escaping' time). This does not mean that the secular mentality is necessarily opposed to a notion of time that includes an atemporal or trans-temporal dimension—*provided* that this dimension is understood as existing `in' time, perhaps as "the very soul of time," but not `beyond', `above' or in some contradictory `after'-time. In this, Panikkar suggests, the secular mentality "comes closer to the genuine religious insight."68

The challenge, then, according to Panikkar, is to devise authentic rituals that enable secularized consciousness to realize or discover the "tempiternal core of reality" that is inseparable from time but not confused with it.69 In this regard, he does not find the western notion of linear time--time as the succession of repeatable moments--particularly helpful since it leads only to preoccupation, even obsession, with the future.70 By way of contrast, the tempiternal experience

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67 "Time and Sacrifice," 711-713. Panikkar’s earlier physico-mathematical and philosophical reflections on the paradoxical nature of time had indicated his understanding of time as neither purely objective nor totally subjective. See Ch. 2. Here he says (p. 684) that "time is at the crossing point between consciousness and matter"; moreover, he provides a philosophical reflection (pp. 698-701) in which he argues that there is an 'intemporal' moment within the 'temporal' act of consciousness.

68 Ibid., 698.

69 Panikkar acknowledges the secular insight into the intimate relationship between time and Being, but under the heading of "The Sacrifice of the Secular" suggests that Being is, nonetheless, not exhausted by time. Ibid., 711.

70 Panikkar argues that this "western obsession with the future" is not only represented in the material utopia of humanist-marxist ideologies, but also in the spiritualized (and contradictory) 'after-time' of Judao-Christian belief. With regard to the latter, he critiques Karl Rahner’s notion of God of the "absolute future" for
focuses on the "irreducibility of the present" that, in a certain manner, contains time-past and time-future in the present, non-repeatable and therefore saving moment. He explains:

The fundamental intuition of tempiternity flows from the experience of the present in all its depth, discovering in it not only the past in potency and the future in hope but also what the objectified projection of mankind has called eternity and the subjectified human sensibility has called time (or temporality in our terms). The experience of the present, in fact, pierces as it were the crust of the provisional and the flowing, not to fall into a static, intemporal bed, not to deny time, but to relish its kernel. . . . Any profound human experience occurs in time and yet is not bound to or by time.

Although this notion of tempiternity may appear to express a mystical apprehension of reality, it is still accessible to secular consciousness. In fact, Panikkar perceives the "transtemporal experience" or "tempiternal existence" as the ultimate if unconscious goal of secular consciousness: secular or temporal values only attain their true meaning when they are linked to their transcendent

uncritically assuming that the linear conception of time is the most acceptable understanding for the Christian notion of God: "On pourrait lui (Rahner) demander aussi pourquoi ce favoritisme en faveur du futur, puisque le temps est toujours passé-présent-futur." "Le temps circulaire: Temporisation et temporalité," 232.

71 Ibid., 232ff. Panikkar himself footnotes T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*: "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past. / If all time is eternally present, / All time is unredeemable. / . . . / But to apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time is an occupation for the saint."

72 *Worship and Secular Man*, 45.

73 Again, the notion is similar to Heidegger's understanding of authentic (and secular) existence in which the three dimensions of temporality (past, present and future) converge, showing "the unity of a future which makes present in the process of having being." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 374.

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or transtemporal foundation. It is the role of ontonomic rituals to provide this link.

Panikkar's delineation of ontonomic rituals of transcendence, appropriate to secular society and a pluralistic world, do not pretend to be anything more than foundational principles. First, such rituals must be rooted in the soil of human life including public festivals and secular events; they are not `artificial' creations, but spontaneous and concrete expressions of people's ordinary lives (as distinct from overly-formalized and acultural rituals). This is what he calls the ritual sense of particularity.

Second, there needs to be a more primordial dimension to the ritual act that links human beings to the whole of creation. Moreover, today, he says that such rituals need to express the fundamental unity of all people (as distinct from sectarian rituals). This is what is called the ritual sense of universality.

Third, ritual activity is oriented towards a "rupture of planes" and the renewal--indeed redemption--of the cosmos. It emphasizes orthopraxis (liturgy is not ideology or even theology); its heart is truthfulness (rather than mere knowledge or orthodoxy)); its goal is the integration of all dimensions of reality--that is, the `cosmotheandric' or `tempiternal' experience.

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74This seems to be Panikkar's central thesis in "Time and Sacrifice" and "Le temps circulaire." In the latter, he states (p. 242): "La qualité de la vie humaine requiert une intégration harmonique entre les valeurs temporelles et leur fondement transtemporel; c'est ce que nous avons appelé l'existence tempiternelle."


76Panikkar's cosmotheandric or tempiternal experience has evident similarity...
Fourth, the context of contemporary ritual is no longer agricultural life, but neither can it be merely technological existence. In this context, Panikkar introduces his notion of techniculture that includes: an intimate relationship between humans and the earth (symbolized by the new sense of ecological consciousness); and an appreciation of how technology has fundamentally changed human consciousness (there can be no return to the lost innocence of the pre-technological ‘world’). The ontonomic solution appreciates both the secular mutation in human consciousness and its continuity with past religious practice. Accordingly, cosmotheandric ritual acts blend both traditional and contemporary practices.

Beyond the statement of principles, Panikkar indicates that ontonomic rituals correspond to the "new spirituality." In his reckoning, this spirituality idolizes neither the heavens nor the earth, but is "really incarnated into flesh, into matter, into a city which is also the likeness, image and being of the divine." He recognizes that the integrity of such ritual actions may emanate from either theistic or non-theistic foundations provided they express the "inner and constitutive urge towards something which remains forever beyond." In the context of theandric ontonomy, secularization becomes a catalyst for a

with Bernard Lonergan’s third stage of meaning that moves beyond common sense and theory to take its stand on interiority. See Lonergan, Method in Theology, 93-96.

77"The People of God and the Cities of Man," 194. The article is a positive statement of the ability of the Church to mediate new, ontonomic rituals of transcendence in secular, urban life.

78Worship and Secular Man, 92.
transformed consciousness of transcendence that is not opposed to, but radically manifest in, the temporal world:

Secularization represents the regaining of the sacramental structure of existence, the new awareness that the real full human life is worship, because it is the very expression of the mystery of existence.\(^{79}\)

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Naturally, Panikkar is well aware that secularization--or at least secularized consciousness--might well refrain from taking the "cosmotheandric turn." In this case, the result is not the absence of ritual, but ineffective or autonomous ritual. Likewise, `non-redeemed' secularization--in Panikkar's terms, `secularity' as distinct from `secularism'--might `think' itself to have rebelled against every idea and practice associated with transcendent reality. However, for Panikkar, even this represents the impoverishment rather than the annihilation of those unconscious human depths that acknowledge, in one way or another, the reality of mystery and transcendence.

In this respect, we need to recall Panikkar's notion of faith as a constitutive human invariant.\(^{80}\) Such faith is foundationally directed towards transcendence-even if this is not consciously acknowledged or pursued. The kairolological moments of human time-consciousness, represented by the heteronomic, autonomous and ontonomic attitudes, alter the ritual expressions of faith and the human experience of transcendence. However, for Panikkar, ritual and

\(^{79}\)Ibid., 92.

\(^{80}\)See our discussion in the Introduction to the previous chapter.
transcendence remain as surely as faith does—even if, in the autonomous phase, the link between ritual, transcendence and the reality of faith are less evident or even unrecognized.

In a different formulation, Panikkar wants to ‘save’ secularization from reductionist tendencies that banalize human experience, history and time. For this, he perceives that authentic ontonomic rituals are the only means available for secular humanity to grow towards a more integral sense of transcendence—in his terms, the tempiternal experience or cosmotheandric life. In turn, this leads him to consider the ‘secular’ value of freedom and its relationship with transcendence and religious experience.

**FREEDOM AND RELIGION**

We investigate Panikkar’s understanding of the role of freedom with respect to classical and secular modes of consciousness. At one level, freedom is seen as a new value that actually ‘replaces’ religion in terms of ‘ultimate’ human self-understanding. Nonetheless, he argues that the relationship between freedom and religion is not one of total opposition. On the one hand, freedom has always been held to be fundamental for any truly religious act. On the other hand, the secular ‘transmythicization’ of freedom is, in many ways, equivalent to the traditional notion of religion. This leads Panikkar to ‘redefine’ the word religion as a symbol that ‘embraces’ the secular insight into freedom. The result is an understanding of religion that is at once continuous and discontinuous with the
traditional notion of religion. This also paves the way for the cosmotheandric religiousness of the future.

Panikkar begins with the acknowledgement that one of the important effects of secularization is the heightened sense of freedom and human subjectivity.\textsuperscript{81} This is evident in such secular myths as tolerance, pluralism, democracy and justice which recognize freedom to be "a supreme and inalienable right of the human person."\textsuperscript{82} He recognizes that this revaluation of freedom as a fundamental human category appears to be opposed to traditional religious values:

Religion usually indicates a duty, a dependence, an obedience, an acknowledgement of our contingency, and it is this same set of ideas concerning dependence and obligation that seems so opposed to any notion centering on autonomy and freedom.\textsuperscript{83}

The opposition between traditional religion and contemporary freedom as `ultimate' human values is evident in the comparison between classical and secular hermeneutics. For traditional religious hermeneutics, freedom is seen as a `duty' which is subordinated to the superior `truth-claims' of religion. Alternatively, according to modern secular hermeneutics, freedom takes


\textsuperscript{82}Ibid., 425.

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., 423.
precedence over other values and truth-claims, including religious ones.\textsuperscript{84} The shift in the valuation of freedom corresponds to the movement from essential, substantive thinking to existential, subjective thinking.\textsuperscript{85} Classical consciousness could never agree with secular hermeneutics that "the freedom of the person is an ontological freedom, superior to `objective truth', even to objective religion."\textsuperscript{86} Consequently, either religion and freedom represent fundamentally contradictory attitudes to reality or the notion of religion itself needs to change so as to embrace this new emphasis on human subjectivity.\textsuperscript{87}

The key to the problematic, according to Panikkar, is contained within the concept of human dignity.\textsuperscript{88} For traditional consciousness, dignity is related to one's final destiny. In this view, freedom--like time--is considered as nothing more than a conditional reality, an `accidental' feature of `substantial' being. Here, dignity is perceived almost as the inverse or curtailment of freedom since unabated freedom leads to the avoidance of the superior calling of one's true dignity and divine destiny. Consequently, within traditional religious reflection,

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., 421-431.

\textsuperscript{85}“There is clearly a shift of emphasis from the objective to the subjective, from objective truth to subjective truth, from the category of essences to that of existences.” Ibid., 426. The distinction between substantive and functional thinking is critically applied throughout Panikkar's writings. See, for example, \textit{Ontonomía}, 101-107; \textit{Religión y Religiones}, 38-41.

\textsuperscript{86}“Hermeneutic of Religious Freedom," 429.

\textsuperscript{87}Panikkar claims that Vatican Council II’s \textit{Declaration on Religious Freedom} represents this extended understanding of religion that specifically includes the secular emphasis on subjectivity and freedom. Ibid., 430f.

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., 428ff.
the positive value of freedom tends to be ignored--except insofar as its abuse is an explanation for sin and evil. By contrast, for modern secular consciousness, dignity and freedom have undergone processes of transmythicization. Far from being antagonistic categories, they are experienced and understood in mutuality. Human dignity and authenticity require freedom as their foundation. In fact, the most authentic, dignified and fully human act is the act which is truly free.89

Despite this real shift in human consciousness with respect to the valuation of human freedom, Panikkar suggests that there are deeper roots of commonality. He points to the fact that religion has always claimed to 'liberate' human beings, even if its notion of liberation or salvation has tended to focus on 'otherworldly' existence. Moreover, he maintains that traditional distinctions between religion and magic, or worship and ritualism, were made in view of an at least implicit recognition that the religious act is a fully 'human' and truly 'free' act.90 Consequently, he asserts that "the essence of the religious act, that which we find in the heart of what we call religion, is precisely freedom."91 In this primordial sense, freedom is not opposed to religion but is, in fact, the sine qua non of authentic religion, even in its traditional modes.

89"Any religious act tends ultimately to let Man acquire his dignity, his salvation or liberation. Hence, if an act is not free it cannot be religious." Ibid., 431.

90Ibid., "Religion as the Free Act of Liberation," 438ff.

91Ibid., 440.
However, the secular insight into freedom goes a step further by identifying the "act of freedom" as the "primordial human act." For Panikkar, this means that the human religious dimension is on its way to finding its most authentic expression precisely through the realization of freedom. In comparison with classical religious consciousness, this 'saving' free act is not necessarily connected with established religious forms which, too often, are seen as curtailing rather than enhancing human freedom and authenticity. Panikkar explains this with reference to the secular reclaiming of the temporal sphere and what he calls the "crisis of the intermediary." He says:

People want the now and have no patience to wait for a future in which they no longer hope. Equally, for our generation, either a vertical paradise in an 'other' world, or a horizontal 'utopian' future, seems almost laughable in face of our double disappointment—by a promised heaven that does not prevent Man's inhumanity to Man, and by a perfect or classless society that never comes.93

The revaluation of freedom amounts to the reversal of the classical proposition which stated that the religious act must be a free act. The new myth of freedom emphasizes that "the free act is the religious act par excellence." Panikkar recognizes that the canonization of freedom as "the

92Commenting on the primordiality of freedom, Panikkar says: "Its roots should be sought in the subsoil of Man himself, who more or less suddenly and deeply finds himself the maker of his own destiny, his own architect; in a word, free—with the terrifying awareness that freedom is no longer a sort of refuge or protection, but a freedom that leaves us totally exposed, a freedom that is itself free, so to speak, not tied to an established or preestablished order." Ibid., 443.

93Ibid.

94Ibid., 437, 444.
fundamental religious category" represents "a radical *metanoia* of religion itself, or rather, a *metanoia* of human religiousness." Nonetheless, this *metanoia* of human religiousness does not destroy the fundamental continuity between traditional religions and modern secular movements *provided that* religion is understood as a symbol rather than a concept.

Panikkar favors the symbolic over the conceptual understanding of the word religion because the symbol does not suffer from the transcultural inadequacy of the concept. Unlike concepts, which claim objectivity and universality, symbols are multivalent and include the belief of the believer within their understanding. Consequently, for Panikkar, the word religion is a symbol that designates: first of all a human transcendental; and secondly a sociological category. Broadly speaking, religion is "the dimension of ultimacy of the human being." More concretely, religion is that which people believe will enable them to transcend—or achieve meaning within—their human predicament, whether this is understood as liberation, salvation, the perfect society, justice, heaven, *soteria, moksha, nirvana* or some other categorization of the ideal goal of human existence. Panikkar surmises that this functional approach to the

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95Ibid., 433.


97Ibid., 15.

98Ibid., 14f. This is essentially the definition of religion that Panikkar worked out in *Religión y Religiones*, chap. 3. Elsewhere he states that "religions claim to be the
understanding of `religion' does not exclude even the most extreme monistic or nihilistic human attitudes.

Evidently, this raises the question of whether or not Panikkar has `devalued' the understanding of religion and minimized the radical differences between classical religious traditions and modern secular movements. In his defence, he maintains that traditional concepts of religion are already in crisis and systematically fail in their claims to be objective and universal. He points to the radically different cosmologies, metaphysics and theologies that underlie the "religious traditions" such that no single concept of religion adequately accounts for the uniqueness and diversity of those traditions. And although religions are not reducible to their doctrines or beliefs, neither are they understandable without them.

The problem is compounded when one attempts to apply a concept of religion to contemporary movements and ideologies that nonetheless exercise an equivalent function to what traditional religions set out to attain. Moreover, in a pluralist society, the traditional concept of religion, which entailed a `total' way of life, is necessarily inoperative in the face of the all-powerful State: religion is reduced to being either a private reality (the `liberal' solution) or a religion of the State (the `totalitarian' solution). In either case, the State becomes the final

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100Ibid., 6.
arbiter, "the true and superior religion which determines the ultimate ends of human life." For Panikkar, only a `meta-religious' solution which neither canonizes any specific religious form nor negates religion per se is capable of bringing the human traditions together so as to constructively confront the religious and cultural crisis of our times. For him, this entails understanding religion as a symbol of the human desire for freedom or self-transcendence.

Consequently, for Panikkar, the secular experience of freedom as the fundamental religious category is not an attack on traditional religions any more than it is an excuse for self-indulgence. He applies a hermeneutic of suspicion and retrieval to his notion of secular religiousness. His suspicion is directed toward reductionist notions of immanence that relegate the secular to the level of the profane and that, at least in practical terms, deny the reality of the sacred. However, he also believes there is a "genuine experience of divine immanence" which recovers the sacred from its transcendent, other-worldly perch and locates it in the midst of the temporal world. Divine transcendence is not denied--it is the very, albeit silent, ground of divine immanence--, but the nature of the religious problematic has changed. The divine is no longer perceived as a refuge from the temporal flux of earthly reality, but as the cosmotheandric mystery which permeates all reality and radicalizes human

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101Ibid., 8f.

102Panikkar complains that "all too often the general concept of divine immanence was a sort of inverse transcendence and not a true immanence in things." "Hermeneutic of Religious Freedom," 451.

103Ibid., 451-453.
responsibility for the salvation, liberation and (re)creation of the universe. He states:

The spirituality of the immanent divinity makes modern Man fling himself into the arms of the world as into an absolute, as the immanent God he has discovered. Human salvation is seen as a liberation not of Man alone, but of the whole cosmos, . . . Human religiousness cannot henceforth dissociate itself from the earth . . . and every effort towards salvation now calls for a genuine integration with all the universe.¹⁰⁴

In later writings, Panikkar articulates this in terms of a fundamental "human cosmic trust" or a "cosmotheandric confidence" in reality. Interestingly, too, the notion of freedom becomes increasingly associated with the divine dimension of reality and, accordingly, is canonized in its relationship to `ultimacy'.

For Panikkar, this integrative spirituality may be expressed in theistic or non-theistic terms since it is first and foremost an existential attitude, a personal religiousness, irreducible to specific belief-structures, particular religions or predetermined ideologies. After all, as he reminds us, it is personal faith rather than objective religion which ultimately saves; and faith belongs to the realm of myth.¹⁰⁵ Here, too, in the "new liberating myth" is the basis for true pluralism since it "extends the margins of . . . freedom to the very level of the person."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 453.

¹⁰⁵As applied to a Christian hermeneutic, Panikkar says: "It is not Christianity as a religion but Christ as symbol that becomes central. . . . To carry out this free and saving act, there is no strict need of any `religion', let alone Christianity. Only the faith of the human person is required. We have here the foundation of true pluralism. What matters is freedom." Ibid., 453f.

Nonetheless, there is no myth, including that of secular religiousness, which exists in a vacuum outside the specificity of time and space. Precisely because it is personal it needs to be expressed in particular doctrines, symbols, rituals, customs, traditions. From Panikkar's perspective, these may well include, even extend and purify, traditional religious belief and praxis. For him, this is the real challenge of the secular myth: to change the face of religion by redefining the religious act in the name of freedom, but to do so in a way that does not totally break continuity with the religiousness--nor the religions--of the past.

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Panikkar's thesis is founded on the revaluation or transmythicization of freedom as the primordial human act and the fundamental religious category. This involves an overturning of the classical notion that envisaged religion as a duty. Nonetheless, there has always been an implicit recognition that the religious act is essentially an act of freedom. Current secular understandings of human dignity and authenticity radicalize and invert this equation so that the free act is the religious act par excellence--insofar as it relates us to the Ultimate, however ultimacy is interpreted.

This thesis challenges traditional notions of religion. For Panikkar, the challenge needs to be taken seriously. He suggests that we need to replace the

\[107\] Panikkar states specifically that the secular myth of freedom "does not make established traditional religions obsolete. On the contrary, the call to freedom is a refreshing and purifying injunction . . . but it does not deny the need of religious structure." "Hermeneutic of Religious Freedom," 453.

© Gerard Hall. Raimon Panikkar's Hermeneutics of Religious Pluralism. Ch. 4 “Panikkar’s Hermeneutics of Secularization”
content or substantive notion of religion with a symbolic or functional understanding that recognizes religion first and foremost as a human transcendental. This leaves the way open for overcoming the cultural and religious crises that are evident in pluralist societies by providing a ground for dialogue among traditional and contemporary `religious' movements.

Panikkar is not thereby canonizing secular movements in an indiscriminate way. Rather, he is searching for a new integration of the traditional and the new in which the transcendent and the human are reunited with their material base in what he calls a personal or cosmotheandric religiousness. Such religiousness does not demand conceptual agreement so much as commitment to the `other' in our common earthly, human and divine destiny. This also involves the "radical metanoia" of religion itself.

Summary of Chapter Four

The major theme of Panikkar's study is evidently not the phenomenon of secularization as a sociological event, but the impact of secularization on human consciousness. In his own terminology, he is less concerned with the "hermeneutics of secularization" than with the "secularization of hermeneutics." This consists in the discovery, revelation or new awareness of the temporal factor at the heart of reality.

In this vein, secularization represents a transformation of human time-consciousness with important ramifications for the human mode of interaction with the `secular' world. In particular, Panikkar focusses on the religious
implications of this transformed consciousness. His central thesis is that secularization *per se* does not destroy but changes, and in some instances purifies, religious experience. Not that he is uncritical of certain aspects of the secularization process *de facto*. However, rather than perceive secularization as an attack on religious values, he seeks to discover genuine human and *religious* values within secular consciousness, and then to integrate these with a *cosmotheandric* spirituality. The result is the *metanoia* of religion itself. At this point, it will be helpful to reiterate the main features of his argument.

Against a rationalist perception of a "neutral technology," Panikkar shows that there is an intimate connection and a mutual relationship between technology and human consciousness. Technology depends on a particular (linear) conception of time and results in a profound change to the human temporal rhythm. Nor is this without significance for religious experience. In particular, technology is deemed to possess eschatological elements and cathartic functions that impact on the human experience of the 'ultimate'. In directing human energy to focus on the world of temporality and materiality, technology actually draws human consciousness towards the abyss of the end-of-time and the end-of-matter, provoking an experience equivalent to that of the "dark night of the soul." Far from indicating the immutability of the world of nature and beings, technology shows the impermanence and contingency of all temporal and material realities.

However, technological consciousness knows equally well that it cannot escape into a 'spiritual' (atemporal) world devoid of a sense of the ultimacy of
this timely, earthly existence. The deep religious significance of technology is paradoxical: on the one hand, it provides humanity with the ability to influence the forces of history and nature; on the other hand, it signifies that, by themselves, nature and history are unable to bear the burden of the human and corporeal urge towards transcendence. Consequently, technology points to the need for a new integration of the material and the spiritual, the divine and the human, history and transcendence, time and ultimacy. Therefore, technology acts as an inspiration or invitation for contemporary humanity to undergo the 'desert'-experience, to pierce the abyss, to discover the 'end-time' in the very midst of the temporal world.

Another way of refining the problematic is to enquire into the relationship between secularization and transcendence. If secularization does not deny the sacred, it certainly redefines it. Panikkar provides a number of readings in which he admits that traditional approaches to religious symbol (such as God and Christ) and ritual (such as worship and sacrifice) are far removed from, and perhaps finally incompatible with, secular experience. However, his judgment is not on these religious symbols and rituals per se, but on the assumption of the timelessness and immutability of particular interpretations. In fact, it is this insight into the temporality or "radical relativity" of interpretation that is at the very heart of secular consciousness.

This means that theistic and christian conceptions of the universe must be theoretically open to secularized consciousness. Panikkar perceives that the notions of God and Christ need to be appropriated as symbolic representations...
of transcendent reality in which one is consciously aware of the "symbolic difference" between the reality and its interpretation. Similarly, secular rituals of work and service may be genuinely religious by being linked to a *cosmotheandric* celebration of the sacramental structure of existence. This implies transcending the polarized conception of reality according to the 'sacred'/`profane' duality. Therefore, while the progression from sacred to secular consciousness presupposes the reinterpretation or *transmythicization* of symbols and rituals of transcendence, it does not imply the rejection of transcendent reality. In fact, according to Panikkar, there is the dawning of a new realization in which all dimensions of reality, including the divine, need to be reappropriated according to the secular insight into the 'ultimate' or `sacred' significance of matter, space and time.

Although he defends the ability of the sacred to `survive' (in human awareness) the event of secularization, Panikkar is well aware of the risks involved in this enterprise. In essence, this is the risk or adventure of reality itself. No doubt, such risks are more evident at a time of cultural crisis, especially when talk of human freedom is in danger of subjugating all other values. However, even these notions of crisis and freedom are deeply ambivalent when applied to the human experience of transcendence. Therefore, in order to contextualize the religious significance of secularization, Panikkar proposes a three-stage evolution of consciousness.

*Sacred heteronomy* is the classical attitude of religious belief and praxis that not only `sacrifices' human independence and freedom in the name of the
divine but also 'saves' the divine by removing it from the strictures of history and time. Any ultimate reality is perceived as being on the 'other' side--of life, history, death, space and time. As a result, secularization will be decried as the arch-enemy of transcendence. *Profane autonomy*, the initial expression of secularized consciousness, is 'dedicated' to the worldly causes of science, economics, justice, politics. The sacred, if it exists at all, will be relegated to the private sphere and the nuclear family. Religion is now a matter of individual and largely superficial choice. The secular is *all* that is ultimately real or important as humans 'sacrifice' themselves to the time of the machine and for the world's 'salvation'. However, a crack occurs in the historically-laden, time-bound edifice that neither technology nor mere reason can fix. Nonetheless, the rejection of technology and secularization is not a real option.

*Theandric ontonomy* is more than a *via media* that would combine the insights of sacred and secular consciousnesses in a syncretistic way. The ontonomic attitude fully accepts the insight of secular consciousness into the 'ultimacy' of time and history. However, its consciousness of the 'sacred' is such that it refuses to be enslaved by temporal and historical forces. Panikkar's notion of *tempiternal experience* focusses on the 'divine' dimension *within* temporal and historical reality. From this *non-dualistic* perspective, transcendence is present in immanence, the sacred in the secular. The crisis of secularization nurtures belief in the 'whole' of reality towards a destiny that is at once truly cosmic, fully human and genuinely divine. The reality of human freedom is the
sine qua non of this transformed, *cosmotheandric*, but fully secular religiousness.

Mature freedom does not focus on its autonomous rights. Freedom is not an adolescent declaration of independence but a theandric manifestation of interdependence. Ultimately, freedom is the religious expression *par excellence* to the point that only the free act is a religious act and the religious act is such to the extent it is free. While this insight is not as evident to traditional religious consciousness, there is a sense in which religion has always understood itself as the ultimate liberation of the human being. In the light of secular consciousness, human dignity and freedom are recognized as intimately related to the `salvific' meaning of our lives, connecting us to the `ultimate' mystery (differences of interpretation notwithstanding).

The *secularization of hermeneutics* is the process whereby the creative freedom of the human person becomes the fundamental religious category. Henceforth, religion is `freed' from objective, immutable notions of timeless truths that impose themselves on humans: religion as subservience and duty. Moreover, freedom is `saved' from being a merely autonomous reaction to traditional values: freedom as rebellious autonomy. *Secular religiousness* emphasizes the experience of *divine immanence* rather than *sacred transcendence* (about which it will be mainly silent). However, there is no ultimate dichotomy. This shift of focus within religious consciousness towards interiority highlights *personal religiousness* rather than *institutional religion*.
Human freedom is now perceived to be the very foundation of an authentic pluralism of `religious' expressions.

Panikkar’s secular hermeneutic of religion is based upon his *theandric anthropology* that considers faith as a human invariant. The challenge is to perceive how that `faith' is expressed in secular culture. From the perspective of traditional hermeneutics, where faith is always identified with particular truth-claims and specific beliefs, the secular emphasis on temporality, history, immanence and freedom would seem to militate against a religious interpretation. Equally, we may add, many of the most `secular' movements or ideologies such as communism, humanism, socialism or liberalism would not want to identify themselves as religious (let alone as religions). However, once the understanding of religion is liberated from `essentialist' notions and reinterpreted from an `existential' perspective, it is evident that these secular movements claim to perform the same `function' as that of traditional religions: they claim to lead humans to their goal or fulfillment (allowing for vastly different interpretations of the `way' and the `goal').

For Panikkar, the real task does not consist in achieving an intellectual synthesis that somehow manages to `fit' traditional religions into the same category as secular movements. In fact, he rejects any suggestion that there can be a single, objective and universal concept of religion. Consequently, he

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108 See the discussion above in Chapters Two and Three.

suggests that the word religion is best understood as a symbol designating the dimension of ultimacy of the human being. The real task is more daunting: coming to terms with humanity’s crisis of symbols and beliefs. This can be understood in terms of the challenge to purify the various religious and/or cultural forms that account for our human existence on earth.

Panikkar's understanding of the purification of religion involves a three-fold task: to perceive the real continuity between traditional and secular religiousness (for Panikkar, this is the continuity of `faith' that transcends--without denying the importance of--`belief'); to accept the ultimate, indeed sacred, importance of the `secular', temporal, historical world (secular consciousness is here a `given'); and, finally, to recognize that the dignity of human life, the integrity of the cosmos and the reality of the divine are three inseparable dimensions of the one cosmotheandric mystery. In the process, religion and secular consciousness are both transformed in a way that allows for an authentic pluralism of religious expression and praxis.

Evidently, in Panikkar’s view, the connection between secularized hermeneutics and religious pluralism has become fundamental. This is to suggest that his hermeneutics of secularization changes the ground upon which his future hermeneutics of religious pluralism is based. In his initial work, he was content to provide a forum for the encounter among the classical religious traditions. He now realizes that the forum needs to provide a space for all authentic expressions of human religiousness--including secular ideologies and movements who do not describe themselves as `religious'. This means that we
may have to abandon all predetermined concepts of what we think `religion' is since "we are entering a new myth."\textsuperscript{110} 

The following chapter explores Panikkar's mature hermeneutics of religious pluralism on the basis of his radicalized notion of contemporary religiousness.

\textsuperscript{110}For example, "Hermeneutic of Religious Freedom," 426.