CHAPTER VI

A DIALECTICAL, HERMENEUTICAL AND RHETORICAL READING OF PANIKKAR’S DIALOGICAL PROJECT

Any attempt to formulate a synthesis and provide an overall assessment of Panikkar’s multidisciplinary, cross-cultural and interreligious writings that stretch across fifty years of scholarship is indeed a formidable task. Moreover, it will be necessary to focus on specific lines of enquiry and, in that sense, to forego all pretensions to be comprehensive. Our own enquiry is dialectical, hermeneutical and rhetorical. Hence, we see our task as threefold: to outline the major differences and conflicts of interpretation that arise with respect to Panikkar’s evolving hermeneutics of religious pluralism (dialectics); to investigate his hermeneutical procedures as dialogical strategies for dealing with otherness (hermeneutics); and to provide a rhetorical reading of his hermeneutics in order to show the structural tropes that govern his use of language (rhetoric).

By proceeding in this fashion, we aim to: situate the predominant ‘shifts’ within Panikkar’s own exposition of religious pluralism; indicate the major claims and counter-claims that are directed towards his dialogical project; reveal the hermeneutical foundations of this work according to the hermeneutics of otherness, testimony and trust; illustrate the dynamic interplay of ‘self’ and ‘other’ and the dialogical unfolding of language within his narrative-praxis of interreligious encounter; and provide grounds for assessment and critique that emanate from his own realms of religious discourse.
Philosophical and theological issues are not sidelined. They are incorporated within the larger horizon of our dialectical, hermeneutical and rhetorical enquiry. Indeed, our approach seems to be validated by the "linguistic turn" of postmodern philosophy and theology.\footnote{See Richard Rorty, ed., The Linguistic Turn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). For application to theological thinking, see Michael Scanlon, "Language and Praxis: Recent Theological Trends," Proceedings of The Forty-Third Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America in Toronto 15-18 June 1988, ed. George Kilcourse (Luisville & Chicago: Bellarmine College & Loyola University, 1988), 80-89.}

**DIALECTICS**

In choosing the term "dialectics" as our initial path of investigation, we intend to focus on the area of conflicting, or at least differing, interpretations.\footnote{See Lonergan, Method in Theology, 128-130, 235-266. Among the tasks that Lonergan ascribes to dialectics is that of distinguishing between real and apparent conflicts. Only fundamental conflicts and contradictory viewpoints stemming from "gross differences of horizon" (p. 246) are said to be truly dialectical. For Lonergan, this is where the need for intellectual, moral and religious conversion is required. Moreover, such conversion is associated with the four realms of consciousness: common sense, theory, interiority and transcendence.}

Some of these conflicts and differences are internal to Panikkar's own exposition. These are, if you like, the "internal dialectics" associated with the distinct narrative-phases of his writings. However, there are also conflicts of

\footnote{Without entering into further commentary on Lonergan's theory of dialectics, it is sufficient to acknowledge that: Panikkar's shift of horizons is intimately associated with his own ongoing conversion process; and that, while some of his horizon-shifts exhibit conflictual dimensions, most are a matter of non-conflictual horizon-expansion. The most significant conflicts of interpretation are those of external critique, that is, operative in Panikkar's critics rather than within Panikkar himself.}
interpretation--the "external dialectics"--that arise from various outside critiques of his work. We deal with these in order, beginning with Panikkar's own chronological shifts of interpretation and then moving on to discuss the major claims and counterclaims that are directed towards his cosmotheandric project. This will provide the ground for our subsequent hermeneutical and rhetorical reading of his writings on religious pluralism.

**Internal Dialectics**

While our study of these writings has attempted to show an underlying consistency of principles, themes and methods, we have also indicated important changes of direction, opening of horizons, and even the 'overturning' of earlier positions in favour of more comprehensive and radical viewpoints. Our intention, here, is only to provide a brief review of the major shifts and to explain these in terms of his narrative-phases of interreligious dialogue. Although we see most of these changes as developmental rather than conflictual, we also recognize--in line with Panikkar's own understanding of the "law of growth"--the radical nature of some of his interpretative moves.3

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3As Stephen Happel suggests, with reference to Lonergan's use of dialectics, "some differences of interpretation occur because of fundamental differences in human horizon. . . . (which) are not all reconcilable by complementarity." Moreover, he states that "the comprehensive viewpoint toward which dialectic tends does not end in an idea, but in a person." “Religious Rhetoric and the Language of Theological Foundations” in Timothy Fallon and Philip Riley, eds., *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), 195. Panikkar's own "fundamental differences of human horizon" are recognizable according to his respective encounters with modernity, hinduism, buddhism and secular humanism.
The major methodological `shift' in Panikkar's exposition occurs between the late 1960s and early 1970s when he moves from a more objective and essentialist understanding of religion to a more subjective, existentialist and symbolic appropriation of religious meaning. We outlined the central features of this shift in earlier chapters. These included a deepening appropriation of eastern and classical-western notions of truth, a change of emphasis from the western philosophical principle of non-contradiction to the eastern principle of identity, a new theological interpretation of Christ as the cosmotheandric symbol, a trinitarian reading of the world's major religious and spiritual traditions, the `de-ontologization' of the notion of God, and the further reinterpretation of religion as existential freedom.

Evidently, these changes of approach emanate from his own interreligious encounters with the religious world of vedantic hinduism, the non-theistic experiences and expressions of buddhism, and the secular-humanistic `spiritual' attitudes of modern western culture. All such moves represent a radical overturning of some prior philosophical and theological thought-categories. Notably, he abandons his notions of the eventual historical unity of religions and a "fulfillment theology" that had assumed the a priori superiority of historical christianity over other religious traditions.

4As should now be clear from our discussion, Panikkar does not see objectivity and subjectivity in conflictual terms. His position is well aligned with Lonergan who states that "in the world mediated by meaning, objectivity is simply the consequence of authentic subjectivity, of genuine attention, genuine intelligence, genuine reasonableness, genuine responsibility"; or, "genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity." Method in Theology, 265 & 292.
Nonetheless, as our investigation has shown, the seeds of later changes were already present in Panikkar's initial hermeneutics of christian belief. This is evident, for example, with regard to his christian-buddhist and christian-secularist accounts of the `apophatic' dimension of human-religious `faith' which had already been predicated in his initial hermeneutic of the `hiddenness' of God. However, that initial hermeneutic did not question the possibility of a de-ontologized God or a non-theistic religion. In this sense, Panikkar's narrative-praxis `method' is both `dialectical' and `dialogical'. The former speaks of discontinuity; the latter of continuity.

Following his dialogue with secular humanism, Panikkar further radicalizes his notion of `religion' which he now expresses in terms of a fundamental `religiousness'. This `religiousness' relies upon his prior concept of `faith' understood as a "universal human invariant" or a "constitutive human dimension." As developed over the past two decades, and outlined in the previous chapter, Panikkar's radicalized hermeneutics of religious pluralism amounts to the dialectics of `demythicization' and `remythicization'. On the one hand, his `religious' expressions are no longer tied to the traditional language of specific religious traditions (demythicization). On the other hand, he provokes the emergence of a new myth of `pluralism', new symbols that envision the `cosmotheandric' whole, and new linguistic expressions that emerge from the encounter with `otherness' (remythicization). There is also the radical call to "abandon all theisms" (demythicization) in order to rethink the emerging religious consciousness of postmodern humanity (remythicization).
Nonetheless, Panikkar's radicalized hermeneutic of religious pluralism is not as totally new or discontinuous with his previous writings as may at first appear. His foundational insights remain those of the Christian Trinity, Hindu *advaita*, and Buddhist *pratītsatyamūtpāda* now appropriated according to the secular insight into the 'ultimate' significance of the historical and the temporal. In this way, his cosmotheandric symbol is recognizably continuous with the four major traditions of his interreligious and cross-cultural journey. Moreover, even his emphases on the final opaqueness of Being and the ultimate unknowability of things (as well as God) are explicit, if undeveloped, themes in his earliest cosmological, anthropological and theological writings.

What is most new and discontinuous in Panikkar's radicalized notion of ultimacy is that it is radically non-transparent *even to itself*. Since we will return to a consideration of this notion, we need not delay here except to suggest that the silence in the Godhead `grows' out of the respective silences of the Christian *Father*, Hindu *Brahman* and Buddhist *sunyāta*. These are all traditional religious expressions for the Ultimate. Consequently, even in this most contentious element of Panikkar's latest writings, there remains the dialectics of continuity and discontinuity with traditional religious interpretations of the ultimate mystery.

As well, there is an evident fourth connection with the religious atheism of the west. In this sense, Panikkar's hope is that his cosmotheandric project will not so much 'abandon' theisms as 'transcend' them. His dialogical `method' always reaches for a "higher synthesis." Since dialectics alone cannot resolve
the issue, we need the further interpretative skills of hermeneutics and rhetoric. However, before moving on to a hermeneutical and rhetorical reading of Panikkar’s dialogical project, we need first examine some of the outside critiques or "external dialectics" of his work.

External Dialectics

Without exhausting all the kinds of critiques that may be addressed to Panikkar’s cosmotheandric project, we attempt to identify the major questions, objections and issues. We begin on a theological note and then move to methodological considerations. Although we do not pretend to resolve all conflicts, we intend to situate the various critiques in a coherent manner, clarify Panikkar's reasoned positions, and present our own response. The focus of this study is the critique of Panikkar's most recent hermeneutics of religion.5

Theological Issues

Since Panikkar's foundational religious tradition is the christian--and, specifically, the Roman Catholic--faith, we begin with theological critiques that


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have been raised in the context of that tradition. The major issue here seems to be Panikkar's christology. The problem is articulated in a recent work by Jacques Dupuis who says that "Panikkar's thought does not appear to preserve the indissoluble link between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history." In fact, Dupuis goes further in stating that Panikkar "betrays this link, weakening it and threatening it, . . . to reduce the Christian message to a kind of gnosis." This critique can be more universally applied to Panikkar's theology insofar as the alleged `relativization' of Christ would flow on to a `relativist' theology. Panikkar is not unaware of this kind of theological critique which he addresses in some of his latest writings.

Recently, Panikkar has called his own approach a mystical or transhistorical mode of theologizing. In so doing, he wishes to distinguish his theology from both the exclusivism of the conservative-ahistorical type and the relativism of the critical-cultural type. Effectively, he is arguing for a symbol-based theology in which "all true religions are linked together through a kind of perichoresis."  

6Jacques Dupuis, Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions, trans. R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 187. This critique is focussed primarily on Panikkar's revised The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. For a less strident critique of Panikkar's christology, see Robert Smet, Essai sur la pensée de Raimundo Panikkar: Une contribution indienne à la théologie des religions et à la christologie (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre d'histoire des religions, 1981); idem, Le problème d'une théologie hindoue-chrétienne selon Raymond Panikkar (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre d'histoire des religions, 1983).

7"Neither Hindu nor Christian," 480f. Here, Panikkar aligns himself with John Cobb, David Tracy and Thomas Berry. He further identifies Hans Urs von Balthasar as a representative of the conservative-ahistorical approach, and Hans Küng as representing the critical-cultural or `relativist' position.

8Ibid., 481.
This symbolic theology is based on the insight that every religion is limited not just historically and culturally, but also linguistically. This raises the issue of whether or not it is possible to ascribe a non-discriminate, `absolute' identification of the `universal' Christ with a `particular' Jesus. In Panikkar's view, as we have seen, the relationship is one of both identity and non-identity. This requires a symbolic understanding of all religions including their doctrinal-linguistic belief-statements.

This has led Panikkar to suggest that christology is, in fact, a "western product" and, as such, is not and does not need to be catholic or universal. Consequently, he reintroduces his notion of christophany now defined as "a christian self-reflection to be worked out in the third millennium." Without claiming to be universal, such a christophany neither ignores the christological tradition nor excludes from its reflection the self-understanding of other religious traditions. In brief, by focussing on the Christ-symbol, Panikkar seeks to maintain his fidelity to the full historical reality of Jesus (Jesus is the Christ) as well as a commitment to a truly cosmological vision of the universe (Christ is not only Jesus).

These statements are logically defensible even from within a purely christian framework. However, the christian affirmation--"Jesus is Lord"--is not, nor was ever meant to be, a purely rational statement of `belief'. It needs to embrace the

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9 Ibid., 484.

dimension of religious--and, in today’s context, interreligious--experience (the realm of ‘faith’). In other words, we are dealing with symbolic affirmation, keeping in mind that the symbol is the carrier of truth and meaning between the mythos of experience (or faith) and the logos of rationality (or belief). According to Panikkar, this means that Christ is neither a mere historical figure nor (as Dupuis says of Panikkar's christology) some kind of gnostic figure that is removed from history.\(^\text{11}\)

In Panikkar’s view, the major problem for christian theology is not the separation of Christ and Jesus, but the separation of Christ and the Trinity.\(^\text{12}\) This issue is not in itself contentious and, in any case, we have dealt with it at some length in Chapter Three. In that context, we saw that Panikkar’s hermeneutic of the Trinity relied on warrants from the minor, often ‘forgotten’, and predominantly eastern strands of the christian tradition. The most contentious issue revolved around his notion of the silence of the Father. However, with

\(^{11}\) In his latest ‘cosmotheandric’ formulation, Panikkar says that "Jesus Christ is the living symbol of divinity, of humanity and of the cosmos (the material universe)." Moreover, he sees this formulation as transcending the "more or less dialectical coincidentia oppositorum, Jesus Christ" who tends to be over-identified as either the Jesus of history or the cosmic Christ. Ibid., 21.

\(^{12}\) Again, we often see Panikkar reformulating his understanding of the Christ-symbol in a manner that identifies its irreducibility to and inseparability from the Trinity: "If we separate Christ from the Trinity his figure loses all credibility. He is just a new Socrates or any other great prophet. If we sever Christ from his humanity, he becomes a platonic ideal of perfection and often an instrument of dominion and exploitation of others. He becomes another God. If we break his humanity from his historical walking on earth and his historical roots, we convert him into a mere gnostic figure who does not share our concrete and limited human condition." He adds that "the conjugation of the three is the task of a christophany of our times." Ibid.
reference to the eastern tradition, this did not appear to be an insurmountable difficulty. We may note that his later ‘theology' makes substantial use of the ‘Non-Being' of the Godhead which he uses to draw links with the non-theism, and even a-theism, of other traditions and ‘religious' movements. For some, this may represent the ultimate ‘negation' of theism and the ‘de-christianization' of faith. For example, many theologians belonging to the abrahamic religions will want to take Panikkar to task for suggesting that we need to rid ourselves of the "monotheistic paradigm". Therefore, we need to address the question of Panikkar's final fidelity to the notion of the one, true God.

Our response to this issue is that Panikkar is not so much espousing a theological position as he is orienting us to experience the ‘otherness' of christian faith. For example, he is not proposing a "death of God" theology nor, strictly speaking, a "negative theology". The ‘other' dimension of the "fullness of God" is everywhere too prominent in his exposition. Our argument throughout this study has been that Panikkar never wavers from grounding his understanding of religious pluralism in his ongoing experience of Christ and the Trinity in whom both the ‘fullness' and the ‘void' are eminently, although always symbolically and paradoxically, present.\footnote{Although written in 1979, I would argue that the judgment of Ewert Cousins remains valid today: “The silence of the Father is balanced by the fullness of the Logos, the transcendence of the Father by the immanence of the Spirit. Christ is the center of creation and the ground of pluralism, but at the same time he is the one who empties himself completely in his incarnation, death, and resurrection. Thus through the central Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Christ, Panikkar awakens the coincidence of opposites that forms the matrix of the new multi-dimensional consciousness.” “Raimundo Panikkar and The Christian Systematic Theology of the Future,” Cross Currents 29:2 (Summer, 1979): 152.}

Equally, there is paradox in Panikkar's
notions of the `unity' and `dynamism' of God expressed, in his latest writings, as evolution of the divine.\textsuperscript{14}

Panikkar's `piercing' of the theological logos reveals underlying, if often unacknowledged, tensions within the christian doctrine of God. Moreover, such tensions are not resolvable at a purely theoretical level but need to be appropriated at the level of spiritual-mystical experience.\textsuperscript{15} God is a symbol of ultimacy rather than a concept: as such, God remains "open, supple, and amenable to new turns, shifts and transpositions."\textsuperscript{16} By situating the God-symbol in the mythic fabric of contemporary pluralism, Panikkar negates certain conceptions of God in order to retrieve the forgotten `otherness' of the divine. As indicated, our hermeneutical and rhetorical enquiry will further address these areas of theological quandary.

\textsuperscript{14}This also represents a `breakthrough' or `development' from Panikkar's earlier notion of evolution in human `consciousness' of the divine. Nonetheless, he is not adopting a "process model" of theologizing. God is `beyond' both change and immutability. We address this issue below by distinguishing Panikkar's hermeneutics from "process philosophy."

\textsuperscript{15}In this context, Walter Capps has argued that Panikkar's theology relies on the \textit{metaphysically-minded} mystics and spiritual teachers (Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Bonaventure, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross) and, in particular, to the \textit{women-mystics} of late medieval times (Catherine of Genoa, Catherine of Sienna, Angela of Folino and, again, Teresa of Avila). "Toward a Christian Theology of the World's Religions," \textit{Cross Currents} 29:2 (Summer 1979): 167f.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 166. Capps uses this phraseology to describe Panikkar's `method' as an "ongoing process of integration." However, I take responsibility for applying this phraseology to Panikkar's "God-symbol."
Methodological Remarks

David Krieger believes that Panikkar's diatopical hermeneutics provides the "foundations for a global theology."\(^{17}\) Panikkar himself claims to be opposed to "universal methods" and all global theories, theologies or philosophies of religion which, in his view, are the nemeses of western `universalist' desires.\(^{18}\) This raises the issue of the fundamental nature of Panikkar's diatopical hermeneutics. On the one hand, if he is propelling a foundational `theory' of the pluralistic nature of reality and religions, this would conflict with his own understanding of what he is doing and suggest a fundamental inconsistency in his work. On the other hand, if he is doing something `else', can this be rationally articulated?

Emanating from these kinds of questions, there are essentially two types of critique that are directed towards Panikkar's methodology. The first accuses him of being a crypto-universalist, falling victim to the very "western syndrome" that he claims to oppose. Bibhuti Yadav, for example, asks how Panikkar's categories differ from those of a "universal theory and theology of religions?" More pointedly, he claims that Panikkar "reduces the cosmos to a teleological anthropomorphism of the West."\(^{19}\) In less strident fashion, Beverly Lanzetta asks


\(^{18}\)Note our discussion of Panikkar's "Myth of Pluralism" in the previous chapter.

\(^{19}\)Yadav accuses Panikkar of granting "the plurality of non-Christian revelations, but not of salvation" since there is no salvation without the "teleological and salvific movement of the Holy Spirit." He also accuses Panikkar of "linguistic" and "spiritual anthropomorphism." As well, there is the suggestion that Panikkar's methodology follows the western dualist path producing, in effect, a "bipolar theology" that shifts
"on what grounds does (Panikkar) distinguish his notion of cosmotheandrism from attempts by other scholars at constructing a universal theology?"20 In these views, Panikkar's methodology is judged to be reductionist and/or inconsistent.

The second mode of critique suggests that Panikkar is so eclectic, so much the dilettante, and so willing to affirm the essential goodness of all cultures and religions, that he does not provide a sufficiently critical and rational methodology for discerning truth and falsity, goodness and evil. Yadav is also spokesperson for this critique when he states: "Panikkar's theology ignores the complexities of history; it cannot wait for the eschatological happy day when interreligious antinomies will be resolved."21 Here, Panikkar is said to suffer from "mystical impatience" as well as lacking the critical apparatus for intellectual judgment. Are all religions, cultures, ideologies and viewpoints welcome and equal partners at the conversation-table? If `absolute' truth is non-attainable and even non-existent, does Panikkar provide sufficient warrants, categories or criteria for judging the "relative adequacy" of particular human and religious values?22

"from being to nothingness, from samsara to nirvana, from historicism to cosmicism, from the thought to the `unthought'." Finally, he states that Panikkar's language games "propose some sort of ecumenical Esperanto that in effect does the same thing he accuses universal theories and unified field theories of doing."

"Anthropomorphism and Cosmic Confidence," 176-183.

20Lanzetta, 154.

21Yadav, 183.

22Although without direct reference to Panikkar, David Tracy expresses the problem as follows: "The great pluralists of religion are those who so affirm plurality that they fundamentally trust it, yet do not shirk their responsibility to develop criteria of assessment for each judgment of relative adequacy." Plurality and

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Our interpretation of Panikkar’s work goes *some way* towards addressing these issues at the dialectical level. We saw in the previous chapter that his hermeneutics of religious pluralism is reliant on three distinct and interrelated modes of discourse: proclamation (*mythos*); argumentation (*logos*) and disclosure (*symbol*). On the basis of these categories, we are able to provide counter-claims to the critiques of reductionism, inconsistency, eclecticism and irrationality. If Panikkar is positing a universal ‘theory’ of religions, the two former critiques would stand. However, according to our presentation, Panikkar’s “cosmotheandric vision” works primarily as a `symbol' of disclosure. He is consistent in maintaining the symbol’s irreducibility to the *logos* such that it foregoes its claim to universality. In similar fashion, *mythos* is also irreducible to *logos* so that “the myth of pluralism” cannot be validly turned into an intellectual theory or a rational hypothesis. Confidence in truth and trust in reality are fundamentally non-rational categories and are consistently displayed as such throughout Panikkar’s writings on religious pluralism. Moreover, we have explored "diatopical hermeneutics" as a regional and finite activity whose foundation and goal is *praxis* rather than theory. Consequently, Panikkar's attempts to remythologize and resymbolize reality are wrongly interpreted when they are seen as universal theories or models of rationality. Their power to speak or convince is most primordially related to their ability to grab hold of the imagination.23

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23Our rhetorical reading of Panikkar will yield further insight into his notions
With regard to the critiques of eclecticism and irrationality, Panikkar has to be able to show that his emphases on myth and symbol do not contravene the demands of the *logos* or reason. On this score, one critique of Panikkar is that he is insufficiently sensitive to the dialogical nature of the *logos* and its ability to be open to `otherness'. Our own reading is that Panikkar attempts to walk a fine line between critiquing western notions of an all-embracing universal *logos* and the opening up of the *logos* to the `other' of reason *through* myth and symbol. At least, a `defence' of this position can be mounted on epistemological, anthropological and ontological lines.

We have seen that Panikkar's notion of truth-as-manifestation accords primacy to the participatory form of knowledge that emerges in the "dialogical dialogue". However, this *advaitic* or non-dualistic approach to knowledge does not by-pass the *logos* of rationality. On the one hand, it provides reason or rationality with the "veto-power", but only on the understanding that there is no higher-viewpoint or single type of rationality (such as western reason) that can claim universal authority. Moreover, Panikkar does not allow reason to embody the whole of the *logos*: "reason embodies the logos, but is not identical with it." Without being illogical or irrational, there is a place for the a-logical and the non-

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24 Dean, 170-172; and Lanzetta, 154. 
25 For a critique of Panikkar on the basis of these three categories, see Dean, 162-174. 
rational. As "revelation" and the "symbol of Being", *logos* allows for—and is, in fact, dependent upon—mythic and symbolic ways of knowing. None of this forecloses the need for interpretation and critique of the more primordial "event of understanding". In other words, diatopical hermeneutics may privilege the "event of understanding", but it also admits the need for the "moment of interpretation".27

Similarly, Panikkar's anthropological thesis highlights the significance of the non-rational or, what he calls, (initially) theandric or (subsequently) cosmotheandric dimensions of human existence. The attitude of confidence or trust is not a purely reasoned—nor, in some instances, reasonable—response to the 'other'. Yet, he maintains, neither is such a response irrational. In difficult human circumstances, only the presence of the Spirit is able to interrupt, challenge and transcend imperialist and violent attitudes that threaten intersubjective communication and human cooperative existence. This does not presuppose or demand intellectual agreement—welcome as it is when it happens—, but recognizes the 'other' of reason that is able to contain contradictory worldviews and incompatible human attitudes. Panikkar still allows for the right of—and need for—human judgment of the other's viewpoint

which may be considered wrong or even outrageously evil. However, neither the other’s position nor one’s own is absolutized.

Human judgments are always considered finite and contingent because they arise out of a specific, temporal, historical, cultural and religious situation. Where conflict looms on the horizon, Panikkar advocates a stepping-back to a contemplative silence or a moment of prayer that, as it were, goes behind the back of an all-too-often aggressive--and reductive--logos. Again, such moves do not replace the need for method and explanation or intelligence and theory in the complex process of human understanding. However, since the human being is ‘more’ than rationality and intelligence, Panikkar focusses on the more primordial need for ‘conversion’ of mind, heart and spirit if there is to be mutual understanding and peaceful, human co-existence.

Most intriguing is Panikkar’s so-called ontological thesis that dissolves the ‘absolute’ connection between thought and Being. If Ultimate Reality is non-self-transparent, this means that there is no ‘absolute’--whether this be called Being, Consciousness or Truth--that can be exhausted by even an infinite mind or a divine logos. Herein lies Panikkar’s most radical critique of western rationality that so privileges the mind that it forgets there is always matter and spirit, opaqueness and silence, freedom and love, myth and symbol that permeate all and every reality. Otherness, in this view, is not only a feature of finitude; it is equally a dimension of the infinite.\(^{28}\)

\(^{28}\)This sense of the radicality of ‘otherness’ is imaged in the later Heidegger's conception of Being that draws into concealment even as it discloses itself. See, for example, his essays on "the Origin of the Work of Art" and "Being, Thinking Dwelling" in Poetry, Language, Thought, 17-81 & 145-161. Note also David Tracy’s
Such a view of the Ultimate does not need to rely on a "process theory" of reality such as advocated by John Cobb and Thomas Dean.\textsuperscript{29} Dean, for example, thinks that Panikkar operates out of this model, if only implicitly.\textsuperscript{30} However, Panikkar's notion of the final opaqueness of Being does not concede to the \textit{a priori} validity of any specific `theory', `model' or `paradigm', processive or otherwise. This is where the eastern emphasis on non-rational Non-Being emerges as an important corrective to over-enthusiasm for theorizing a rational basis for every dimension of reality. In this sense, Panikkar is not so much proposing an "ontological thesis" as he is intent on grounding a non-ontological `foundation' within reality that points to the `ultimate' limits of all ontologies.

None of this means that Panikkar fails to provide warrants for discerning the "relative adequacy" of human judgments and religious values. Given his emphasis on praxis over theory, the most significant warrant is one's willingness to be involved in intersubjective communication. Panikkar has always maintained that we need the `other' if we are to be made aware of our own underlying presuppositions and prejudices. The praxis of human community and dialogical dialogue is therefore the foundational criteria for comparison of Heidegger and Gadamer on this point in \textit{Plurality and Ambiguity}, note 1, 120f.

\textsuperscript{29}For John B. Cobb, see his "Toward a Christocentric Catholic Theology" in \textit{Toward a Universal Theology of Religions}, 86-100; and Thomas Dean, 171.

\textsuperscript{30}Dean states (p. 172) that he sees "Panikkar suggesting a radically different ontological basis for interreligious dialogue and global theology, one that brings him close to John Cobb and the Whiteheadian tradition, or perhaps to Wittgenstein or Heidegger." In this way, Dean also intends to categorize Panikkar's diatopical hermeneutics according to western, theory-based method.
judging the truth of one's values and the goodness of one's life. Diatopical hermeneutics is the manner or 'method' by which we forge such community and communication. This involves not just the meeting of minds, but of hearts and spirits as well. Apart from this, we have also seen that Panikkar subscribes to other modes of interpretation, judgment and mutual critique that flow from the genuine encounter of 'self' and 'other'. If he does not concentrate on developing such criteria, this is because his primary concern is to heighten human consciousness of the need for what has been called a "hermeneutics of empathy".31

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Our limited dialectical reading of Panikkar's writings on religious pluralism indicates a fundamental coherence and consistency in his dialogical project despite the internal shifts within his own exposition and the kind of misgivings that have been voiced by others. His theological, philosophical and methodological procedures will no doubt cause ongoing debate. Our intention has not been to provide an ultimate defense of his positions (themselves unfolding), but to show that those positions are arguable and, given a certain intellectual attitude, defensible. Certainly, Panikkar's 'doctrines', such as his belief in the ultimate and eschatological interrelatedness of all dimensions of


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reality, are not entirely self-evident nor beyond critique. However, finally, Panikkar is not as concerned with defending his doctrines or theories via argumentative discourse as he is intent on exploring the limits to thought and consciousness via proclamative and disclosive modes of discourse that emanate from communicative praxis. In that context, he is reliant on hermeneutical procedures and rhetorical tropes that are capable of carrying the burden of the envisaged and "new revelatory experience."

**HERMENEUTICS**

Panikkar's own definition of hermeneutics is "that art and science of interpretation, of bringing forth significance, of conveying meaning, of restoring symbols to life and eventually letting new symbols emerge."\(^{32}\) The very definition reveals the kind of optimism that is contained within his notion of cosmotheandric confidence in reality. Since reality is already envisaged according to a fundamental interconnectedness, the conversation or dialogue becomes the sacred place in which that mutual relatedness is brought to new expression. We have seen that the goal of Panikkar's hermeneutical conversation is not intellectual agreement, but communication--and eventually communion--among dialogic partners. In this manner, the hermeneutical process becomes a fully human act involving not just the expansion of the mind, but of the heart and soul as well. In the case of interreligious dialogue, it is also

\(^{32}\)Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 8.
a genuinely religious act insofar as it is grounded in the transcendental realities of naked faith, pure hope and divine love.33

Our intention is to explore Panikkar’s dialogical project according to the hermeneutics of otherness, testimony and trust. The approach is itself trinitarian or cosmotheandric: ‘otherness’ is represented by the apophatic silence of the Father (mythos); ‘testimony’ via the incarnate word of the Son (logos); and ‘trust’ as the advaitic revelation of the Spirit (pneuma). Consequently, our aim is to allow Panikkar’s own dialogical strategies to emerge with reference to other hermeneutical theories and approaches.

Hermeneutics of Otherness

In a sense, every hermeneutical theory and procedure is concerned with the problem of knowing the ‘other’ given the context of the finitude of being and the historical situatedness of one’s specific horizon of understanding. Hermeneutics is, therefore, closely related to the issue of human communication whether this be within a particular culture (parents, teachers or elders to their children), across an historico-temporal bridge within a specific tradition (the interpretation of the Bible or the Koran by successive generations of believers) or among different cultures and traditions (hindu-christian or buddhist-marxist dialogues).34 In every hermeneutical situation, there is this same challenge of


34In nominating these three moments of hermeneutics as morphological, diachronical and diatopical, Panikkar seeks to demonstrate that while the "hermeneutic problem" is essentially the same, the degree of ‘distance’ separating ‘text’ and ‘reader’—or ‘communicator’ and ‘communicatee’—can be radically

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overcoming the gap between the `self' and the `other', of allowing the hiddenness to manifest itself, of interpreting, deciphering or communicating some previously unknown `truth'. Given the close relationship between hermeneutical theory and human communication, we provide a brief account of the hermeneutical theory of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer as a way of situating our interpretation of Panikkar's hermeneutics of otherness.

**Hermeneutical Theory**

Evidently, Panikkar's search for a non-dualistic methodology has significant parallels with Heidegger's attempt to transcend the subject-object schema (truth as the correspondence between mind and thing) with reference to the *Dasein* of human existence (truth as authentic coming-to-be in time and history).\(^{35}\) The knowing subject and the known object of human knowledge are primordially grounded in the temporality of *Dasein* prior to their epistemological separation. For Heidegger, this primordial `otherness' is disclosed in the human event of understanding as the ontological disclosure of Being. Truth and Being are primarily events in which `otherness' takes on historical and temporal reality (or what Heidegger terms `facticity').

Heidegger's recovery of the Greek *alétheia* theory of truth enables him to provide a more mystical account of the same hermeneutical process:\(^{36}\) truth different. *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 8f.

\(^{35}\)Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

\(^{36}\)This approach is prevalent in the works of the "later Heidegger," such as the
comes to expression primordially through works of art and poetic language; its disclosure depends on the ability of humans to listen and respond to such primordial `otherness'; even in its `unconcealment', truth's `self-concealment' remains as the voice or presence of mystery. On a more practical note, Heidegger's hermeneutics provides for the possibility of retrieving ignored or forgotten aspects of the tradition. In this light, `otherness' emerges from unconcealment through the reappropriation of a founding or significant historical event.

Gadamer is also concerned with the retrieval of tradition and the possibility of genuine encounter with the `other'. Building on Heidegger's fundamental ontology and linguistic insights, it is Gadamer who proposes the conversation-model of hermeneutics in which past understandings, present meanings and future expectations are interwoven into a "question-answer" and "I-Thou" dialogic structure. Gadamer's principle of "effective historical consciousness" seeks to rehabilitate prejudice, authority and tradition within a "circularity of meaning" and a dynamic notion of interpretation. Such interpretation is constantly open to further questioning, mutual correcting and ongoing expansion of presuppositions. This hermeneutical process requires a community of interpreters working together in dialogic interaction toward agreement.

Also pertinent to Panikkar's hermeneutics are Gadamer's dual notions of "application" and "fusion of horizons". By application, he asserts that truth is only discovered in reference to praxis. Moreover, application, along with understanding and interpretation, is conceived as integral to the hermeneutical process. By fusion of horizons, Gadamer does not mean that a person shares a certain empathy or a fixed set of opinions with another. The fusion of horizons entails a forward projection of meaning and so "always involves the attainment of a higher universality that overcomes, not only our own particularity, but also that of the other." \footnote{Ibid., 272.} In turn, this suggests an eschatological openness to the future implied in his notion of the `universal' as belief in the interconnectedness of history.

Finally, Gadamer shares with Heidegger (and Panikkar) the critique of the scientific-instrumentalist devaluation of language.\footnote{Ibid., "The Ontological Shift of Hermeneutics guided by Language," 345-447.} However, Gadamer goes further than his mentor in providing a fundamental ontology of language based on the linguisticality of human understanding: "Being that can be understood is language."\footnote{Ibid., 432.} This means that, even though language is essentially speculative (words are not `things' and cannot be `fixed'), it is (only) through language that one can come to `know' the `other'. Consequently, in comparison with Heidegger, Gadamer's theory of the linguisticality of understanding provokes a more active involvement on the part of interpreters and dialogic partners.
Diatopical Hermeneutics

Although Panikkar does not provide us with a systematic account of the hermeneutical process, his writings indicate a full awareness of the hermeneutical tradition and a close affinity with the hermeneutical approaches of Heidegger and Gadamer. However, our purpose here is not to provide a strictly comparative account of Panikkar's hermeneutics with that of Heidegger and/or Gadamer. Rather, on the basis of their hermeneutical theories, we intend to interpret Panikkar's "dialogical dialogue" or "diatopic hermeneutics" as strategies for dealing with otherness. Their theories provide a certain if indirect validation of Panikkar's `method' and procedures.41 We also show that Panikkar's notion of radical otherness is complemented by the idea of radical relativity: together they form the foundational principles of his cosmotheandric proposal.

In the hermeneutical tradition, otherness is real without being total. In Heidegger's ontological terms, there is both radical difference and close affinity between Being and beings.42 In epistemological terms, subject and object are grounded in a more primordial relationship. Moreover, human understanding does not imply the `overcoming' of otherness, but its `manifesting' or

41As current literature indicates, the influence of Heidegger and Gadamer on the postmodern hermeneutical debate has been profound. Among other excellent coverages, see Gianni Vattimo, The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture, trans. Jon Snyder (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991).

`presencing' of itself in a new light. Heidegger's emphasis on meditative thinking is designed so that humans may hear the mystery of Otherness (or Being) and appropriate their own possibilities for authentic being-in-the-world. Panikkar's intrareligious dialogue is such a moment of meditative thought. Retreating `inwards' to the personal call of one's tradition is an experience of radical difference—in religious terms, the experience of humility and awe in the face of the Ineffable One—as well as the experience of close affinity with this ground of Being, this Other, this Divine Mystery. Here, one listens and responds to the divine urge and in so doing is open to the appropriation of the often-forgotten `otherness' of one's religious or cultural tradition.

However, in order to understand oneself and one's tradition, there is the need to transcend Heidegger's individualist pursuit of truth. Gadamer's emphasis on the retrieval of truth in communication and solidarity with others is expressed in Panikkar's notion of "cosmotheandric solidarity" and his praxis of multidisciplinary, interreligious and cross-cultural hermeneutics. The question-answer and I-Thou dialogic structures of the hermeneutical conversation provoke the possibility of growth in understanding, ongoing interpretation and more authentic praxis. By incorporating religious experience into his notion of interreligious dialogue, Panikkar highlights the moment of application as an integral dimension of the hermeneutical process.

Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons is especially pertinent to Panikkar's idea of dialogical dialogue. Without the forward projection of meaning--"the wide superior vision that the person who is seeking to understand
must have"--,\textsuperscript{43} initial conflicting prejudices remain barriers to communication and hermeneutical understanding. This does not imply the "naive assimilation" of the other's worldview, but the creation of a new horizon (Gadamer) or myth (Panikkar) in which real and radical differences can be consciously brought to the surface and explored. Gadamer's dynamic notion of constantly changing horizons is also helpful for explaining Panikkar's understanding of the mutual and ongoing influences of religions and cultures on one another.

Panikkar's emphasis on the sacredness of the word is reflected in Heidegger's respect for the poetic word and Gadamer's insistence on the speculative nature of language. Panikkar shares with Heidegger the more mystical appreciation of the power of the word to reveal (divine) \textquoteleft otherness\textquoteright. Panikkar expresses this in terms of the intimate relationship between the word and silence: "The word is the very silence in word, made word. It is the symbol of silence."\textsuperscript{44} This is the place for contemplation in which the word may yield its truth-power. However, Panikkar also shares Gadamer's confidence in the linguisticality of human understanding. Dialogical dialogue is an active and involved process in which the participants interrogate the truth-meaning of their own and each other's language-horizons.

The radicality of otherness and the possibility of communication are the foundational principles of Panikkar's cosmotheandric vision in its attempt to steer a middle path between eastern monism and western dualism. Radical

\textsuperscript{43}Gadamer, \textit{Truth and Method}, 272.

\textsuperscript{44}Panikkar, "The Silence of the Word," 154.
otherness and radical relativity coexist. Together, they define the non-duality between the Ultimate and the finite, Being and beings, God and the world, as well as the interrelationship of religious and cultural traditions. Although for Panikkar "God is not Other", there is an otherness within/of God that saves the cosmotheandric principle from being an expression of pantheism: "God is neither being nor non-being; . . . neither one with the World or Man, nor different and other." This radical non-dualism is also a feature of every `other' dimension of reality. Consequently, in Panikkar's universe, the cosmos is not without human and divine dimensions. Nor are religions and cultures without their own, often hidden, expressions of the `whole' cosmotheandric mystery.

Equally clear is Panikkar's insistence on the radicality of otherness `within' the human being. He expresses this in terms of the buddhist doctrines of anatman (no-self) or anatmavada (no-self-way). Hence, his rejection of western over-emphasis on self-consciousness and individuality. Personal truth is understood in terms of transcendence--or, in Heidegger's terms, authenticity--rather than purely rational knowledge. In much the same way that Gadamer speaks of human experience as fundamentally `open' to new experience, Panikkar's category of human faith is at once the source of existential openness to the `other' and the ground of possibility for communicating with those from radically different traditions.

Although Heidegger and Gadamer do not apply their hermeneutical theories to the field of interreligious and cross-cultural studies, our remarks

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45 Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 359.
should be sufficient to indicate that such theories are substantially embodied in Panikkar’s hermeneutical assumptions and procedures. What we have termed the "hermeneutics of otherness" is equally the "hermeneutics of relativity". Communication with the divine, human and cosmic `other' becomes possible on account of the "mutual interrelatedness of all things". Otherness is, then, another name for pluralism. As such, it is not tamed or overcome so much as it brought into new light engendering new events of truth and understanding. Nor is this pluralism merely provisional (as Panikkar’s earlier work suggests). As a feature of Ultimate reality, symbolized in the christian conception of the Trinity, pluralism will continue to exist--even in the eschatological kingdom.

Panikkar’s optimistic stance regarding the possibility of communication and relationship with the `other' is open to the kind of critique that is directed towards Heidegger, Gadamer and all "hermeneutics of retrieval". Our purpose here is not to provide this critique, but simply to indicate that a "hermeneutics of suspicion" would bring into question many of Panikkar’s eschatological, transcendental, linguistic, hermeneutical and non-rational themes and emphases. Critical theory,46 for example, emphasizes the need to unravel systemic distortion within all traditions, including their mythic, symbolic and linguistic expressions; it also focuses on the critique of intersubjective religious communication on the basis of radicalized and purely-rational praxis in the present (without privileging tradition or searching for future revelations). A

46Among other texts, see Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse on Modernity, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).
deconstructive critique\textsuperscript{47} would further `deconstruct' Panikkar's notions of `silence', `non-rationality', `non-being' and `non-self' by `deferring' their significance for a cosmotheandric or any other type of trust in the `ultimate' power of the communicative word.

In brief, critics of Panikkar's diatopical hermeneutics express suspicion of his emphasis on the communicative power of language and his fundamental trust in reality. What are the foundations on which he bases this cosmotheandric confidence in the communicative Word and the revelatory Spirit? Such questioning invites us to examine his dialogical project in the light of the hermeneutics of testimony and trust.

\textbf{Hermeneutics of Testimony and Trust}

Essentially, our questions are the following. On what ground or foundation does Panikkar place his `ultimate' trust in reality? On what testimony does he rely to ascertain the constructiveness of "dialogical dialogue"? Or, is his "cosmotheandric confidence" finally a naive and irrational response to a much more complex interaction of religions and cultures, goodness and evil, unity and chaos, positivity and negativity in the drama and tragedy of human history? As indicated, our response to these questions is made in the light of hermeneutical reflection on testimony and trust--in this case, we draw primarily on the insights of Paul Ricoeur. While making appropriate distinctions between Word

(testimony) and Spirit (trust), we deal with these together in view of Panikkar's own aporia that "the Word without the Spirit is certainly powerful but barren, and that the Spirit without the Word is certainly insightful but impotent."\(^{48}\)

**Hermeneutical Theory**

Any hermeneutics of testimony and trust needs to confront the question of the relationship between what Ricoeur calls the "truths of faith" and the "truths of reason".\(^{49}\) For Ricoeur, faith and reason stand in a relationship that is dialectical but, not for that, contradictory. Although dealing specifically with aspects of Judao-Christian revelation, the response of his "hermeneutic philosophy" is nonetheless pertinent to the issue of religious pluralism which is, after all, concerned with discourse about, and relationship between, the "revelatory consciousness" of multiple religious traditions. Moreover, since Ricoeur turns toward "structures of interpretation of human experience" and what he calls an `areligious' notion of revelation, there is no need to limit his insights to particular religions.\(^{50}\) By dealing with testimony and trust in the context of revelation and the dialectics of faith and reason, there will also be ample room for application to Panikkar's notion of a "new revelatory experience" in the context of contemporary religious pluralism.


\(^{50}\)Ibid., 97ff.
Ricoeur’s study directly confronts the twofold claim of philosophy to transparent objectivity and subjective autonomy. To the first claim, based on the concept of measurable, verifiable, ‘objective’ truth, Ricoeur provides a “new concept of truth as manifestation.” Poetic discourse belongs to this second level of truth insofar as it is not directly concerned with our knowledge of things but with new awareness of our participation-in and belonging-to an order of things prior to the epistemological separation of subject and objects. For Ricoeur, this poetic or areligious sense of revelation is not opposed to the world of ordinary experience, but projects a new mode of being onto that world. Here, “truth no longer means verification, but manifestation, that is, letting what shows itself be.”

Corresponding to this philosophical category of truth as manifestation, Ricoeur posits the category of reflection as testimony. He is concerned to unmask the pretensions of consciousness, in particular, the illusion of self-transparency. He begins with the question of whether we have the right to invest a moment of history with an absolute character? If so, this represents a movement of consciousness that renounces its claim to autonomy. Ricoeur postulates that our existence is “absolutely dependent” on certain founding events to whose meaning we testify in the act of self-understanding. Second, such testimony requires critical examination--or interpretation--that takes the

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51Ibid., 98-104.
52Ibid., 102.
53Ibid., 105-117; 142-153.
"form of a trial" in which ahistorical "predicates of the divine" and historical "acts of witness" are enclosed within a "fine hermeneutic circle" as the "law of self-understanding". Third, since finite acts of witness cannot encapsulate the infinite to which they attest, there is a certain dependence of conscious reflection on historical and external testimony.

Nonetheless, according to Ricoeur, this priority of historical testimony over self-consciousness is "non-heteronomous". In the first place, we need to recall that we are not dealing with knowledge of things that can be verified according to empirical laws. In this sense, the hermeneutics of testimony is said to be absolute-relative: absolute as original affirmation in search of a sign and as manifestation in the sign; relative as criteriology of the divine for philosophic consciousness and as the trial of idols for historical consciousness. In the second place, what is required is not the obedience of the will, but the opening of the imagination so as to be able to recognize in historical testimony the "expression of the freedom that we desire to be". Only through the exercise of the imagination are we able to encounter revelation as a truly "non-violent appeal" that expands rather than destroys human freedom.

Consequently, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of testimony reinstates a "non-violent appeal" to faith alongside the requirements of reason. In so doing, it

54Ibid., 117.

55Ibid., 151.

56Ibid.

57Ibid., 95, 117.
admits that there is a dimension of trust operative within the hermeneutics of testimony. Admittedly, this dimension of trust is more evident in Heidegger and Gadamer who exhibit an explicit faith in the creative power of tradition. To this, Gadamer adds an optimism with regard to undistorted intersubjective communication. By contrast, Ricoeur is more sensitive to the perverse nature of evil that can so easily pollute the tradition. He also assumes the priority of misunderstanding over understanding in linguistic discourse.58

However, it is also true that a central category of Ricoeur’s hermeneutic philosophy is hope.59 Since transparent self-knowledge and metaphysical certainty are categories alien to his hermeneutics of the subject, the meaningfulness of human existence is related to its most basic characteristic: narrative or action. And it is precisely the nature of human narrative or action that it commits itself to meaning and purpose. In this way, human existence is hopeful—and trusting.

Ricoeur’s wager for meaningfulness is therefore an act of fundamental faith, hope and trust. The teleological thrust of Ricoeur's hermeneutics is evident in his notion of human subjects who are essentially what they can become, their being `other' and `more' than what they know themselves to be.60 The function

58Ricoeur states, for example, that "it is always necessary to rise by means of a corrective critique from misunderstanding to understanding." The Conflict of Interpretations, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1966), 18.

59See, for example, Ricoeur’s essay on “Freedom in the Light of Hope,” The Conflict of Interpretations, 402-424.

60This interpretation of Ricoeur is well developed by G. B. Madison in his essay on "Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of the Subject" in The Hermeneutics of...
of poetic and religious discourse is precisely to breakthrough the monotony of the mundane and the pathology of evil that destroy the human capacity to be scandalized by the imaginative vision of a radically different future. This is why Ricoeur gives priority to symbolic and metaphoric language over the conceptual. His `ultimate' trust is finally a very dialectical affair that is mediated between the finitude and guilt of human existence and the eschatological hope of freedom and salvation. The tools of that mediation are, for him, the originary expressions of biblical revelation that are appropriated according to his hermeneutics of testimony.

**Cosmotheandric Confidence**

Panikkar provides his own critique of the double-pretension of consciousness to transparent objectivity and subjective autonomy through his analysis of faith as a constitutive human dimension and his category of myth as the ultimate horizon of human understanding. His early philosophical study resembles Ricoeur's "hermeneutic philosophy" inasmuch as it attempted to reinstate the role of sentiment or faith in human epistemology without abdicating the centrality of intellect or reason.61 His hermeneutic project was enhanced through his cross-cultural dialogue between eastern and western philosophy. Through this dialogue, Panikkar uncovers the classical formulation

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61See our discussion in Chapter Two where we discuss Panikkar's attempt to overturn the dualism which he perceived to be inherent in the respective epistemologies of Kant and Jacobi.
of truth as the "manifestation or epiphany of being." Such truth can only be known by "participative knowledge"--or what he also calls "theandric awareness"--resembling Ricoeur's own stated approach to "second order truth." Panikkar's entire dialogical project can be read in terms of the priority that he gives to this "new concept of truth as manifestation."

The distinction between "dialectical dialogue" and "dialogical dialogue" correlates with the distinction between mythos and logos (Panikkar) or with first and second orders of truth (Ricoeur). As with Ricoeur, Panikkar situates testimony outside the subject-object dualism of purely logical or argumentative discourse: "Testimony belongs to the order of myth, not of logos." For Panikkar, too, human self-understanding is reliant on the `givens' of a tradition, culture, language or religion that give identity, meaning, direction and hope to human existence:

Without the witness of the ancestors, elders, scholars, wise Men and saints, human life would remain banal. It is through authentic martyrs--through witnesses--in every field that humanity does not wander aimlessly but journeys toward a positive eschatology. The master testifies to the invisible in the hope that eventually his testimony will become superfluous, that one day we shall see face to face.

Panikkar stresses the relational dimension that unites `witness' and `audience' in a common horizon or mythic communion. This does not imply the

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63Ibid., 237.

64Ibid., 241.
absence of the need for critical judgment and interpretation "since there is no testimony without a hermeneutic of that testimony by an audience." However, Panikkar also recognizes the importance of Ricoeur's "fine hermeneutic circle" when he states:

Testimony appears only at the level of the audience's communion of myth with the witness; the latter testifies only to something we ourselves can accept as attestable. . . . We accept as authentic the witnessing of the early Christians insofar as we believe in what they testified to and this belief is provided by the horizon we still hold in common with them.

For those who live within the `mythic' horizon (Panikkar), a moment of history is invested with an `absolute' character (Ricoeur). These different emphases are, in reality, saying much the same thing: the historical and the trans-historical, the absolute and the relative, the "predicates of the divine" and the finite "acts of witness" are co-implicated in any human act of self-understanding.

This is why, for both Panikkar and Ricoeur, the path to self-awareness requires the mediation of symbols—whether religious, cultural or linguistic. There is not and cannot be direct, unmediated self-knowledge nor, in that sense, "pure self-consciousness." Both recognize the implications of this insight in the call of consciousness to renounce its claim to autonomy. Moreover, the symbol possesses an existence that is prior to its "event of appropriation". Accordingly, consciousness is actually dependent on symbolic revelation—or, in the context

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65Ibid., 248.

66Ibid., 247.

67Ricoeur states that "there is no self-understanding that is not mediated by signs, symbols and texts." Cited by Madison, 92.

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of this discussion, the witnessing-event, the testimonial word. The relationship, however, is "non-heteronomous" (Ricoeur) or "ontonomic" (Panikkar). Revelation is offered as "non-violent appeal", opening up imaginative possibilities for letting go of one's `self' and transforming one's `world'.

For Panikkar, the distinction between `areligious' and `religious' revelation is not finally operative insofar as our symbols of the Ultimate are revealed in accordance with one's particular mythos or horizon. This is where Panikkar's "cosmotheandric confidence" shows a pronounced difference to Ricoeur's `ultimate' trust that seems to be reserved for the originary expressions of biblical revelation. By contrast, Panikkar expresses an `ultimate' confidence in reality itself, its multiple revelations, its manifold traditions. Certainly, he always interprets such revelation according to christian sources, but he is not as `suspicious' as Ricoeur with regard to the truth-power of the unfolding tradition(s).

Whereas Ricoeur posits an "invincible break" between "reason and faith" as also between "philosophy and religion", Panikkar stresses their mutual relatedness, their `essential' continuity. This also accounts for Ricoeur's emphasis on the sheer paradoxical nature of religious language that `scandalizes' and `overturns' ordinary human experience. Panikkar is less distrustful of human experience. His religious language, while often paradoxical,

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is already contained within ordinary human discourse; and the revelatory moment is contained within--although not confined to--the experience of the ordinary.

Consequently, in comparison with Ricoeur, Panikkar's hermeneutics of testimony and trust takes on a more incarnational and social dimension. Whereas Ricoeur focusses on the critical act of personal appropriation through confrontation with originary religious expressions, Panikkar is concerned to introduce the "new sort of dialogue" in which personal testimonies are mutually integrated "within a larger horizon, a new myth." 70 The dialogue itself becomes the "religious act par excellence because it recognizes my religatio to another." 71 Such dialogue has a critical function: it enables me to know my own myth, discover my prejudices and recognize my presuppositions. However, its primary function is revelatory: it enables me to `transcend' myself in order to `save' myself; and by allowing the witness of the other's experience to enter the dialogue, it seeks a new experience of mutual relatedness and awaits a new manifestation of truth. 72

Panikkar says that "dialectics is the optimism of reason; dialogue is the optimism of the heart." 73 Evidently, he shares Ricoeur's eschatological hope for freedom and salvation but, for Panikkar, that hope is less weighed down by

70 Panikkar, "Witness and Dialogue," 244.
71 Ibid., 243.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
distorted intersubjective communication, the fragility of human experience, or the pathology of evil. In this sense, Panikkar’s trust and hope are more incarnational and less proleptic categories. To Ricoeur’s emphasis on the saving-truth of the Word, Panikkar shows equal confidence in the mediational-power of the Spirit whose `word' is unbounded.

The fact that Panikkar shows a more universally `trusting' attitude than Ricoeur is shown, to some degree, by comparing the natures of their respective discourses. Ricoeur is engaged in the philosophical exploration of religion. He explicates the possibilities or conditions for faith and revelation that arise out of the homology of human experience. Panikkar’s investigations are primarily theological. He is less concerned with providing a critical study on the nature of human experience than with interpreting that experience in the light of various cultural and religious traditions. His starting point is the reality of faith and revelation rather than their questionableness. For example, although both Ricoeur and Panikkar define the human being in terms of "existential openness", only Panikkar takes as a `given' that such openness is "towards transcendence".74 This is what enables him to define secular-humanist and marxist attitudes in terms of `religiousness'.

As a specifically `religious' narrative, Panikkar is most sensitive to the collapse of traditional religious myths--or what is, for others, the loss of religious faith. While he is as convinced as Ricoeur in the still revelatory power of originary religious language, and almost (but not quite) as suspicious as Ricoeur

74Panikkar, "Faith as a Constitutive Human Dimension," 207.
with regard to the conceptualization of God-talk, Panikkar invokes the emergence of new religious symbols and metaphors that emanate from dialogue between the traditions and contemporary human experience. This is what we have termed Panikkar's incarnational thrust. If 'trust' is the "heart of religion," and if the human being is ultimately one and reality itself non-dualistic, then Panikkar is justified in seeking to open the heart of contemporary experience to new expressions of the divine. Ricoeur's hermeneutics is also directed towards a "new manifestation of truth" or a "new revelatory experience". His more sober approach to these possibilities is a corrective to over-optimism but, for all that, complements rather than opposes Panikkar's "cosmotheandric confidence".

In particular, Ricoeur's attempt to mediate between the existential-phenomenological hermeneutics of Gadamer and the critical hermeneutics of Habermas has direct relevance to Panikkar's lacunae--his insufficient attention to critique and method. Fundamental trust in the 'other' needs to be complemented by the ongoing critique of what distorts communication, rationality and freedom.76 Ricoeur shows that hermeneutic philosophy provides

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a space for truly critical appropriation in which preconceptions, illusions and prejudices are brought to the surface and tested. Moreover, he shows that critical hermeneutics arises out of the specific tradition of the Enlightenment and, as such, is one (albeit important) voice in the ongoing dialogue among the traditions. Panikkar himself admits to the distinction between ‘desire’ and ‘aspiration’: the former admits to the flawed nature of concrete human existence and communication (and therefore must be critiqued); the latter refers to the trust, hope, faith or wager for meaningfulness in which humans in fact choose to live (the voice of practically any human tradition).77

To this we may add that Habermas’ hope of creating a universal pragmatics for ideal speech communication is itself an expression of trust in the emancipative power of rationality. Certainly, as we have indicated, Panikkar’s cosmotheandric confidence is not based in the rational order as such; but neither is it opposed to any insight or method that can improve the task of human communication. If, for Panikkar, we neglect the religious traditions at our own peril, we also need the truth-power of contemporary secular traditions in order to create a truly pluralistic myth in which we are to live together in peace, harmony and concord. Whether we call this a "new revelation" or an "extension of rationality" is finally unimportant. What is important is that we communicate from the vantage point of our need for mutual transformation. Panikkar’s hermeneutics of attachment, or mutual relatedness, or trust in reality, provides

77Panikkar, "The Invisible Harmony," 143.
a mythic horizon in which—for those who 'believe'—this communication and transformation can take place.

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Panikkar's hermeneutical assumptions and procedures show a marked degree of correlation with existential-phenomenological hermeneutics. Our analysis has indicated that Panikkar is most closely aligned with the "hermeneutics of retrieval" epitomized in the approaches of Heidegger and Gadamer. With them he shares a fundamental belief in the self-correcting power of tradition to reclaim its forgotten otherness, an appreciation of the pertinence of prejudice or presupposition for coming-to-understanding as a meaning-event, and an understanding of the speculative (even sacred) nature of language.

There is closer affinity to Heidegger with regard to the need for meditative or contemplative thought and for an appreciation of the dialectic of Being and Non-Being. Alternatively, the importance which Panikkar attaches to the possibility of intersubjective communication and the need for "cosmotheandric solidarity" shows closer resemblance to Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" and his insistence on the need for a community of discourse. As well, Gadamer's optimistic notion of the 'universal' connectedness of history correlates with Panikkar's notion of "radical relativity". Accordingly, Panikkar's diatopical hermeneutics is well founded with respect to the hermeneutical approaches of Heidegger and Gadamer.
With regard to the hermeneutics of testimony, we found a significant degree of correlation between Panikkar and Ricoeur. Both critique the fallacy of transparent objectivity and subjective autonomy. They recognize a second order "truth-as-manifestation" that requires the dual operations of faith and reason. They also emphasize that self-understanding and meaning require the mediation of symbols. In this context, revelation is understood in terms of a "non-violent appeal" that enhances rather than destroys human freedom. As well, Panikkar's trust in reality finds a degree of correlation in Ricoeur's eschatological hope.

Nonetheless, we indicated significant areas of contrast: Panikkar's hermeneutics is more universally trusting of tradition(s) and more open to the possibility of revelation(s); Ricoeur (and Habermas) are more `suspicious' of distorted communication, the irrationality of human existence and the pathology of evil. Accordingly, their greater emphasis on method, explanation and critique represents an implicit critique of Panikkar's cosmotheandric confidence. From Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective, this suggests that Panikkar needs to develop a methodologically-grounded "hermeneutics of suspicion" in order to be more discriminating in his judgments of truth and value.

Be this as it may, Panikkar does not assume that dialogue with the radically different other is an automatic or uncomplicated affair. Like Gadamer, his trust in language to be self-correcting in dialogue is always tied to a concrete situation; its applications are likewise specific and concrete. This is what allows diatopical hermeneutics to be ongoing in its search for transformative and new
meanings. Consequently, Panikkar's hermeneutical procedures invite us to investigate the structural or rhetorical tropes that govern his discourse. In turn, this provides us with our final critical framework for assessing the nature of Panikkar's hermeneutics of religious pluralism.

**RHETORIC**

The reappearance of rhetoric as a postmodern device for investigating discourse may appear to some readers as the ultimate abandonment of serious intellectual thought. In order to offset this kind of critique, we need to appreciate that the contemporary understanding of rhetoric is eminently hermeneutical. Unlike post-Enlightenment classicist rhetoric which assumed that truth was some kind of objective entity independent of--and prior to--language, contemporary rhetoric emphasizes the linguisticality of truth and the metaphorical character of language. Consequently, "authentic rhetoric is not a study of ornamental communicative devices" but an analysis of "the images, gestures and partial logics through which truth is attained in our common religious world." In particular, rhetoric is described as "discourse on the

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78The contemporary call to resituate rhetoric as a central subject of intellectual enquiry needs to be understood in terms of the history of rhetoric in the western tradition. Among other useful works which deal with the place of rhetoric in western thought, see Renato Barillo, *Rhetoric*, trans. Giuliana Menozzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

79Happel, "Religious Rhetoric and the Language of Theological Foundations," 194. His lengthier description (p. 195) states:

A new rhetoric provides both the practice of, and a reflection upon, our experience of ordinary language. It focuses the intersubjective character of speech, describes the logic of that interactive encounter, and articulates the
margins of thought and action." Its concern is neither with the author nor with the subject-matter alone, but with their "space of mutuality" in which the subject-matter is brought to language.

Our intention here is not to enter into debate about rhetoric, but to use certain rhetorical categories to illuminate the manner and purpose of Panikkar's linguistic and communicative procedures. In this sense, any piece of writing, including that of philosophy or theology, is open to rhetorical investigation. For example, whatever else theology may be, David Klemm is correct in stating that it is "eminently rhetorical--and in need of new rhetoric." Moreover, the place of rhetorical enquiry is especially pertinent to the production of meaning in mythic and symbolic modes of discourse that defy `merely' rational or logical analysis. This means that Panikkar's theology invites a rhetorical reading on its own terms and in accordance with criteria that are internal to his distinctive use of theological language.

goals and values embodied in the metaphoric and conceptual processes which characterize its operation. . . . A new rhetoric will redescribe the interaction of speaker and audience as mutual, rather than as the conviction of the masses by a single orator. It will note the transformative character of language for the establishment of the grounds, values, and bases of community. Rather than focusing simply upon the eloquent tropes of style, it will recognize the intrinsic relationship between truth-claims and metaphors, between the authenticity of the speaker and the values preached. It will offer a critique of the biases of speaker and audience so that a transforming social praxis might be appropriated.


81Ibid., 444.
Throughout this enquiry, we are assuming that whatever else Panikkar may be doing, he is preeminently engaged in theological discourse. His foundational religious tradition is christianity and his primary religious symbol is the christian Jesus. In particular, Panikkar believes that the Christ-symbol is capable of producing truth and meaning within an ongoing and coherent tradition that springs from christian sources. Nonetheless, such truth and meaning are not restricted to that particular historical tradition. They expand to include radically divergent religions and cultures. Our rhetorical enquiry investigates how Panikkar uses language to enable such diverse worldviews to enter into intersubjective communication.

Our central argument is that Panikkar's rhetoric deliberately engages with his non-christian 'audience' not through the distance of dialectics but through the intimacy of dialogue in which the 'other' becomes part of the ongoing 'testimony'. Thus, the voice of the audience becomes an equal partner in the proclamation of--and argument for--theological truth. According to our analysis, Panikkar's religious rhetoric amounts to a "paradigm shift" in the way that theology is done.\footnote{The notion of a "paradigm change" in theology is the subject of the various essays in Hans Küng and David Tracy, eds., \textit{Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future} (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1989).} It provides strategies for a radically pluralistic theology.
The Rhetoric of Dialogue: The Performance

Our rhetorical enquiry assumes that Panikkar's theological hermeneutics can be legitimately read as a rhetoric of dialogue. This is not to belittle his use of argumentative discourse and rigorous thinking. Still, such arguments are themselves rhetorical insofar as they assume a theological coherence even where such coherence defies purely logical thought-processes. This inner-coherence can be traced through his use of the four master tropes of discourse: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. These tropes can be understood as mediating conceptual thought and pre-reflective experience. Accordingly, they complement the hermeneutical quest for truth as a human event of understanding.

The pattern of our investigation, according to the four master tropes, can be summarized as follows: identifying Panikkar's metaphorical categorization of religious experience; analyzing the various elements of that experience according to metonymic deconstruction; situating the interrelationship of the elements via synecdochic representation; and portraying perceived contraries within an ironic discernment of the whole. This is not to suggest that other...

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84White summarizes the four master tropes as follows: "The archetypal plot of discursive formations appears to require that the narrative `I' of the discourse move from an original metaphorical characterization of a domain of experience, through metonymic deconstruction of its elements, to synecdochic representations of the relations between its superficial attributes and its presumed essence, to, finally, a representation of whatever contrasts or oppositions can legitimately be discerned in the totalities identified in the third phase of discursive representation." Tropics of...
tropes may not be equally present in Panikkar's work. One advantage in restricting our discussion to the four master tropes is that these have been used as a foundation for identifying the rhetorical marks of a genuine, postmodern, hermeneutical theology.85

Metaphor

In following Ricoeur’s semantic approach to metaphor,86 we do not confine our meaning to the resemblance or substitution theory in which metaphor is a mere ornament of discourse. By contrast, the tension theory of metaphor places the signification at the level of the sentence rather than the word; and, by extension, it can be understood as applying to the totality of an author’s work(s).

85See Klemm’s analysis of three possible theological responses to the postmodern situation in "Toward a Rhetoric of Postmodern Theology." He claims that the confessional position (pp. 457-459) lacks the irony and reflexivity that recognizes the "symbol of God as just that--a symbol of God that manifests God but strictly speaking is not God." The deconstructive position (pp. 459-462) "denies the divine manifestation in symbol" because it "turns the Heideggerian 'primordiality of absence' into the 'absence of primordiality.'" "Deconstruction," he further maintains, "does not enter into conversation with the other." By way of contrast, the hermeneutical response (pp. 462-466) recognizes both 'identity' and 'difference' between self and other. "Hermeneutics," he argues, "plays the mercurial role of mediating between presence and absence in the synecdoche of God." This approach best serves the theological task since "it preserves the openness of the symbol to the other and the other's symbols." In this same article, Klemm describes the hermeneutical mode of theologizing according to the "four master tropes." Another helpful exposition of Klemm’s understanding of hermeneutical theology is his "The Rhetoric of Theological Argument" in John Nelson and others, eds., The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 276-297.

86Ricoeur, Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning, 45-69.

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Such metaphors create new meaning that is never purely translatable. Moreover, the metaphorical meaning is both `behind' the author's interpretation of a domain of experience and in `front' of the audience that is invited to share in the meaning, to make the metaphor its own. As the initial trope of discourse, the emphasis is on first order apprehension of experience rather than the third moment (synecdoche) when the tensions inherent in a given situation are refigured according to a new insight or a revelatory moment.

Accordingly, the suggestion has been made that modern discourse, epitomized in the early Barth (theology) and the early Heidegger (philosophy), is founded on the "crisis metaphor". Europe between wars was living in a situation of historical crisis whether this was interpreted according to sinfulness (Barth) or inauthenticity (Heidegger). Alternately, postmodern discourse is said to be challenged by a more fundamental problem than crisis. The postmodern situation is described in terms of being confronted by otherness:

The challenge for understanding is no longer to reconstruct historical meanings or to address the crisis of history but to uncover what is questionable and what is genuine in self and other, while opening self to other and allowing other to remain other.

Regardless of the correctness of Klemm's categorization of postmodern discourse, it is more than evident that Panikkar's leading metaphor is this human situation as otherness rather than the metaphor of historical crisis. Panikkar states that the anthropological question today is the simple question: "Who are

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87Klemm, "Toward a Rhetoric of Postmodern Theology," 447.
88Ibid., 456.
you?” He adds that, in a situation of pluralism, “we cannot bypass the you of any human being.” The human other is certainly the overriding concern, the primary metaphor, of Panikkar’s theologizing. It is this challenge that marks his understanding of the third kairological moment of human consciousness.

We have already addressed the manner in which Panikkar’s “hermeneutics of otherness” is in tension with its underside, what we termed the "hermeneutics of relativity". The tension is never neatly resolved. In other words, the metaphor of human otherness has to be appropriated through the process of dialogical dialogue in which one's own prejudices become ‘other’ and new convictions become one’s `own'. Even after dialogue, one continues to live with the tension within oneself. For example, the christian and the hindu in some way appropriate the meaning of the other within themselves, but their new christian-hindu or hindu-christian identity remains a source of internal questioning. Alternately, the christian embraces secular humanism and continues to question whether this `otherness' has in fact diluted something of one's primary identity as a christian. For Panikkar, the otherness metaphor is not restricted to the encounter with the human other of another tradition. There is also the recognition that otherness is most deeply real within oneself--and, indeed, in every dimension of the cosmic-human-divine reality. Moreover, there is a sense in which this `otherness' cannot ever be tamed or overcome. The prevailing presence of mystery, or the unconcealment within every manifestation of reality, remains as an abiding source of self-questioning.

One of the marks of the reflexive turn from crisis to otherness is the abandonment of an historical teleology in which the diverse histories of different peoples are united in a single, grand narrative. In postmodern hermeneutics there are no *grandes histoires*, only little stories. This enables us to locate Panikkar’s "noetic turn" in the mid-1960s when he overturns his prior notion of the "historical convergence" of religions. In the language of the cosmotheandric vision, the emphasis is increasingly on the legitimate diversity of all religions, cultures and peoples, a diversity which refuses to be undervalued by an "eschatological consolation". We have shown that Panikkar's telo-theological vision of the universe remains, but that such a vision no longer implies historical unity or convergence. The notion of the interconnectedness of history and reality is not won at the expense of the radical otherness, opaqueness and freedom within the present reality and forward movement of human history.

Moreover, Panikkar's equally radical proposal that to understand the other one must in some way participate in the other's tradition, to `enter' the other's story, raises otherness to a new moment of hermeneutical--and rhetorical--pertinence. The notion that diverse peoples operate out of radically different hermeneutic circles, so that for interreligious and cross-cultural dialogue the hermeneutic circle will often need to be created, suggests that radical relativity does not imply a prior historical connectedness. As we shall see, there is

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90Klemm, "Toward a Rhetoric of Postmodern Theology," 456.

something of irony at play here. Nonetheless, our rhetorical reading of Panikkar shows that the metaphor of otherness is certainly the dominant trope of his first order apprehension of human and religious experience. No doubt, this is because it is also the metaphor that dominates his own `little' story or narrative.

Metonymy

If otherness represents Panikkar’s root metaphor, we need to further identify its more tangible or metonymic elements. If otherness represents Panikkar’s root metaphor, we need to further identify its more tangible or metonymic elements. According to Klemm, the metonymic elements of the metaphor of otherness include the self, the other, the encompassing world, and time. With Panikkar, we need also include the cosmic, human and divine `elements' that constitute his otherness-talk. Our purpose is to show that Panikkar represents the via media hermeneutical mode of theologizing as distinct from both the confessional and deconstructive responses to the postmodern situation of confronting otherness.

Panikkar employs metonymy when he writes of the otherness of religious experience in terms of the unique and foundational event (Grunderfahrung) underlying each religion's symbolic and intellectual expressions. From a

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92 Kenneth Burke explains metonymy as the "reduction of some higher or more complex realm of being to other terms of a lower or less complex realm of being." Grammar of Motives, 506.

93 Klemm, "Toward a Rhetoric of Postmodern Theology," 457.

94 Note our description of Klemm’s three modes of theologizing in a prior footnote.

95 See our discussion in the previous chapter.
rhetorical perspective, this image of basic experience or primordial myth is a metonymic device that `reduces' the more complex notion of otherness to the less complex realm of specific historical revelations or manifestations of truth. In this manner, the `self' is distinguished from the `other', the encompassing `world' is defined according to various historical founding events, as one's temporal experience is directly related to the understanding of time that emanates from each religion's basic experience. Otherness is real and radical on account of the multiplicity of religious--and cultural--founding events that identify and segregate peoples, cultures and traditions.

Once otherness is `dispersed' according to this specificity of individual human and religious experiences, theological discourse is confronted with the dilemma of how to account for its notion of the divine mystery that supposedly includes divergent historical situations. Of course, the question itself is not new. However, the traditional answer, in which only the "chosen few" are called to enter the sacred realms, is no longer found convincing. The modern answer of an anonymous christianity or a fulfillment theology, which offered "salvation to all" at the cost of largely ignoring the historical situatedness of other peoples, loses its appeal in the face of the critique of pseudo-imperialism. Today, the question takes on a new urgency insofar as the reality of the other has pierced reflexive consciousness in search of a postmodern alternative that includes the voice of the other within discourse about the other.

In essence, the confessional response remains a ghetto-theology in which the community of discourse remains closed to authentic encounter with the
other: the voice of the `self' is the final arbiter; the voice of the `other' may be heard but is in no sense an equal partner of the conversation; the `world' outside the community of believers is essentially non-redeemed, chaotic; and `time' is essentially defined in relation to the founding event of that community's existence. By contrast, Panikkar proposes that "the place in between, where we meet, is the basis for fundamental theology." Here, self and other have equal voices in any genuine theological conversation. The cosmotheandric mystery, manifest in the specific religious worlds of individual traditions, is also and no less a feature of the whole universe. Temporal existence is related not only to unique founding events, but also to their present mediation and future projection of shared meaning.

Panikkar's use of the metonymic elements of discourse is also distinguishable from deconstructive discourse. Although deconstruction enters into engagement with the other, its `play' on shifting presence and radical absence appears to deny the possibility of genuine dialogue between `disappearing' selves and `dislocated' others. Moreover, in its more radical forms, the "death of God" is assumed even if scriptures remain as `signs' of a former world that humans can no longer inhabit. Time, in the radical

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98See Klemm's discussion of the "Deconstructive Reponse" in "Toward a Rhetoric of Postmodern Theology," 459-462.

99For an example of such radical deconstructive theology, see Mark C. Taylor, Erring: A Postmodern A/theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). On
deconstructive scenario, is without past or future--there is only the 'shifting' meaning of the Now that immediately deconstructs itself. Panikkar engages in his own 'play' with words: self and other are not what they appear; the human self has its own radical otherness or no-self; and the other is not purely other but a constitutive dimension of oneself. However, in contrast to deconstructive thought, Panikkar shows that it is through dialogical engagement that self and other become more truly themselves, more authentically what they are called to be. This is also the way in which the cosmotheandric mystery manifests itself as world, and time is brought to its fulfillment.

The otherness metaphor is also metonymically dispersed according to Panikkar's cosmotheandric or trinitarian language. Otherness appears in different cloaks such as: cosmic-human-divine; matter-consciousness-freedom; silence-word-spirit; intellect-will-sentiment; beauty-truth-goodness; I-thou-it; nature-order-goal; mystic-noetic-aesthetic; temporality-eternity-tempiternity. Each trilogy recognizes dimensions of the unknown within the known by relating known concepts to their hidden other.

This talk of the cosmotheandric mystery leads us into discussion of Panikkar's use of synecdoche and irony.

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© Gerard Hall. *Raimon Panikkar's Hermeneutics of Religious Pluralism*. Ch. 6 “A Dialectical, Hermeneutical & Rhetorical Reading of Panikkar’s Dialogical Project”
**Synecdoche and Irony**

Klemm tells us that the movement from metonymy to synecdoche is "a return from the many to the one or shift from dispersal to integration within the domain of reality."\(^{100}\) For example, in Barth's theological discourse, the synecdochic figure is the inbreaking of the wholly other God; in Heidegger's philosophical discourse, it is the irruption of being into everyday existence.\(^{101}\) For Panikkar, the synecdochic moment is the new revelatory experience. For hermeneutical understanding, the synecdochic inbreaking of otherness, God, being, revelation or truth, requires symbolic disclosure. In Panikkar's terms again, this means to recognize that the symbol *is* the reality—but *as* symbol. If the danger of confessional theology is in its failure to perceive irony within the symbol-reality identification, the danger of deconstruction is that the ironic perception of reality so overrides every interpretation that the reality (or presencing) of truth or revelation is totally dissolved.\(^{102}\)

Our argument is that Panikkar is attentive to the synecdochic manifestation that unites self, other, world and time, while being equally aware of its ironic presencing. With regard to postmodern hermeneutical theology, Klemm states:

> The synecdoche displays the divine in a symbol of the self’s ability to become itself through what is not itself but is other than itself. Moreover, the hermeneutical type accepts the reflexive trope of irony. . . . The central interest of this type of theology is to open itself to the otherness

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\(^{100}\)Klemm, "Toward a Rhetoric of Postmodern Theology," 452.

\(^{101}\)Ibid.

\(^{102}\)See Klemm’s discussion of irony. Ibid., 454f.
of the tradition in its temporality and to the encounter with the human other through the tradition.\textsuperscript{103}

We have seen that, for Panikkar, the cosmotheandric experience affirms both the radical otherness and the radical interrelatedness of the cosmic, human and divine dimensions of existence. The ironic or deconstructive moment is contained within the cosmotheandric symbol without thereby rejecting its manifestation of the hidden wholeness in the human situation of confronting otherness. In this sense, both presence and absence are mutually affirmed in the cosmotheandric synecdoche of the divine mystery. The hermeneutical response, in highlighting the temporal and finite moment of consciousness, does not thereby deconstruct the tradition in which that consciousness has come to understanding. Rather, it seeks to mediate the tradition into the future through the encounter with the human other.

For the christian, this synecdochic inbreaking of otherness means that it is \textit{only} in encountering the other of history in the figure of Jesus that the divine otherness is disclosed. Moreover, that disclosure is \textit{only} possible through the appropriation of one's faith in the context of the ongoing tradition of the followers of Jesus (the christian church). The ironic moment of this divine presencing is twofold. First, the figure of Jesus is both God and not-God or, as christian language expresses it, both divine and human. This accounts for the radical otherness and the radical relativity of the divine-human (or theandric) mystery. Second, Jesus both is and is-not the \textit{only} figure who manifests the

\textsuperscript{103}\textit{Ibid.}, 463.
divine mystery. This accounts for the reality of other Christophanies, epiphanies or saviour-figures for those whose human situatedness is mediated via different traditions. This irony of wholeness and partiality, or what Panikkar also calls the ambiguity of universality and concreteness, does not deconstruct the Christian tradition but calls for its ongoing mediation through opening itself to encounter the non-Christian other.

Panikkar’s synecdochic instinct ‘finds’ multiple revelations of the cosmotheandric inbreaking of otherness that, far from deconstructing his Christian faith, enhance it. Moreover, his ‘religious’ conversions inevitably lead to ‘intellectual’ conversions that, only occasionally, lead to the dialectical overturning of prior positions. For Panikkar, the process of encountering the other of Christianity in Hinduism, Buddhism and secularism is the process of encountering the hidden otherness of Christian symbolism. As a hermeneutical dialogue, the same authentic cosmotheandric reality appears in different manifestations. Accordingly, religious and cultural symbols are both affirmed and denied—they both reveal and conceal the fulness of the divine signification.

Moreover, no tradition or symbol stands still. For Panikkar, this also signifies that reality, including ‘ultimate’ reality, is dynamic, processive, changing. Consequently, he speaks of a mutation not only within human consciousness, but within reality itself. However, this apprehension is also a symbolic, synecdochic and ironic manifestation of ultimate reality that he

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{104}}\]

appropriates according to religious symbols of the Trinity, *pratityasamutpada*, *advaita* or, indeed, freedom. Each of these symbols of ultimacy is founded in the basic experience of a specific (concrete) tradition and yet, when encountered in dialogue with the other, reveals the cosmotheandric (universal) whole. Hermeneutical consciousness, being ever aware of the dialectics of presence and absence, sameness and difference, reality and symbol, is able to mediate these meanings according to the concreteness and universality of one's foundational tradition.

From a rhetorical perspective, Panikkar exhibits a similar synecdochic and ironic sense when he says that there is 'more' to reality than being, thought or consciousness, and that even ultimate reality is not self-transparent. Theologically, this is expressed by stating that there is mystery and silence in the Godhead. Philosophically, there is Nonbeing as well as Being. Religiously, we need to transcend all theisms and even "to liberate the divine from the burden of being God." In other terms, pluralism is ultimate. These radical overturnings of traditional western and christian 'beliefs' emanate from the encounter with the eastern and non-christian other. In confronting prior interpretations they reveal notional and real differences between reality and its interpretation. For Panikkar, this is an invitation to move 'beyond' the *logos* by preserving the openness of one's experience and symbols to the other and the other's experience and symbols.

Ultimately, dialogical dialogue is the 'method' by which we overcome our tendency to turn our symbols into idols; but it is also the place of the new
The revelatory experience through which reality is resymbolized. Sameness and difference are mutually--and pluralistically--affirmed. From this perspective, Panikkar’s purpose is to reconnect theological rhetoric with religious experience in a non-ghetto and non-deconstructive world. This raises the question of the audience which is co-implicated in Panikkar's rhetoric.

The Dialogue of Rhetoric: The Audience

The ‘audience’ of Panikkar's rhetorical performance is not only the christian other (hindu, buddhist and secularist), but also the christian theological club and the religious academy. He sets out to convince christian theologians that their language need not be exclusivist or imperialist. He also want to show that the Christ-symbol is ever open to reformulation and resymbolization which, far from eradicating the ultimate truth of christian revelation, actually enhances its meaning and moves the tradition forward. Moreover, this indicates that christian theology needs to dialogue with its religious other if it is to `retrieve' its full christian meaning within a pluralistic world.

For hermeneutical consciousness, the symbolic is favored over the literal. This is not to advocate a deconstructive theological position, but to point to the "symbolic difference" between any symbol or formulation of ultimacy and the reality that it nonetheless really symbolizes, manifests, reveals. Without this realization, confessional theology quickly turns into an expression of theological fundamentalism. Such a danger is especially real for the west, as history shows, in its tendency towards rationalism and imperialism.
With regard to the religious academy, Panikkar seeks to persuade its members to recognize that they must live within a religious myth or religious horizon of meaning if they are to understand religion. He also seeks to convince them that the mutation of consciousness within religions and cultures, far from announcing the end of religion, is itself a religious experience of the pluralistic mystery. Panikkar is not suggesting that religious studies should become a cloak for theological research. However, he is stating that the religious ideas of people are inherently associated with, and must be included in, any approach to human issues such as peace, justice, hunger, war, abortion, nationalism, intolerance, ideology or the like. He is also saying that religious beliefs cannot be reduced to their intellectual expressions.

The two dangers of the religious academy with regard to the understanding of human and religious issues are objectivism and deconstructionism. The first overcomes the religious problematic through the phenomenological *epoché*. For Panikkar, this is an illegitimate use of the scientific method; it would `explain' human and religious phenomena without first of all truly `understanding' them. Alternately, the deconstructive approach to understanding so `defers' the possibility of truth and meaning via *any* religious or human symbol of ultimacy, that we are only left with the `traces' and `signs' of what was, in former times, `misread' as religious experience. In espousing the value of secular humanism, Panikkar wants to overturn sceptical or nihilistic attitudes that threaten to `deconstruct' its insight into the ultimate significance of such secular values as freedom and justice.
Finally, it would appear that Panikkar's audience is potentially (if not literally) all people of good will: those who believe in God and those who have other ways of interpreting ultimate reality; those whose commitment is to a single tradition and those who have lost their way in the pluralistic quagmire of contemporary experience; those who are committed to the theological investigation of specific traditions and those who are concerned with the academic study of multiple religions and cultures; those for whom religious experience is primarily mystical and those who interpret the divine mystery through commitment to social transformation. As a radical pluralist, Panikkar excludes no one from the conversation-table since, as he believes, it is only through the experience of knowing the other that we come to know ourselves and experience the cosmotheandric reality that unites us all--in our differences.105

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Our rhetorical investigation into Panikkar's speaking and writing-performance has shown his reliance on the four master tropes. His root metaphor is the postmodern metaphor of otherness that emerges when the

105In this regard, Panikkar’s cosmotheandric theology makes for an interesting comparison with the revisionist theology of David Tracy. Both theologies are radically pluralistic. However, Tracy is more concerned to bring theology into dialogue with the western philosophical tradition. By way of contrast, Panikkar wishes to bring the western philosophical and theological tradition into dialogue with non-western modes of religious experience. Even so, their dialogical approaches reveal a similar "analogical imagination" at work. Panikkar could well learn from Tracy certain "critical strategies" that would aid his cosmotheandric project. See Tracy, The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1981).
problem of the other *qua* other becomes the primary concern with regard to our own and our tradition's identity. This noetic or reflexive turn emerges in Panikkar's own narrative as an attempt to integrate the experiences of west and east, christian and other. The tensions are expressed according to the dialectics of radical otherness and radical relativity.

The metonymic dispersal of otherness according to self, other, world and time reveals a hermeneutical response that is neither narrowly particular (interpreting the elements according to an exclusive set of presuppositions) nor totally deconstructive (in which all interpretations dissolve their significance for final truth and meaning). Panikkar's cosmotheandric symbol represents the synecdochic inbreaking of ultimacy. His notion of symbol as both revealing and concealing the reality it symbolizes accounts for its revelatory power as well as its ironic mode of presencing.

Panikkar's rhetoric of dialogue enables him to `show' that diverse religions and cultures need not retreat into theological ghettos nor, in the context of dialogue, overturn their own truth-claims to be concrete manifestations of ultimacy. In fact, the reverse is the case: it is *only* through encounter with the other and the other's symbols that one's own tradition and symbols are enlivened and mediated into a pluralistic future. He shows that this is the case with reference to the christian tradition and the Christ-symbol. Panikkar's audience is the other of the dialogue in which this other is raised to the level of 'witness'. In particular, he seeks to persuade western scholarship to forsake
fundamentalist, objectivist and deconstructive positions in order to embrace dialogical dialogue with the other of western and christian belief.

**Summary of Chapter Six and Conclusion**

Our dialectical, hermeneutical and rhetorical readings of Panikkar's writings have provided categories for assessment that, while not ignoring outside critique, emanate primarily from his own realms of discourse. From the beginning of our study, we have noted five underlying principles in his writings: their hermeneutical character; the ontonomic principle; their attempt to overturn dualistic thinking via a non-dualistic methodology; an eschatological vision; and the recognition that there is evolution in religious experience.

We have referred to these as Panikkar's `doctrines' insofar as they are constant motifs through which he organizes his understanding of religions and cultures in a changing world. We have suggested that these procedures and beliefs are not beyond critique. Nonetheless, with reference to the postmodern theological world--and certainly one inspired by the christian vision--,, their "relative adequacy," if not their "self-evidency," is hardly contentious. Moreover, these are the methods, themes and principles that enable Panikkar to maintain a fundamental coherence and consistency in his evolving positions.

We have also maintained that Panikkar's hermeneutics of religious pluralism is pre-eminently theological in character. We are not, thereby, disputing his contributions to other areas of research such as philosophy, hermeneutics, or religious and cross-cultural studies under which headings his
writings are often catalogued. However, his concern for theological truth is never far beneath the surface.

This raises the issue of the kinds of theological critique that have been directed towards his cosmotheandric project. Our focus on the two central doctrines of Christian belief, the doctrines of Christ and the Trinity, shows Panikkar’s reliance on Eastern Christian thought to retrieve ‘forgotten’ aspects of the ‘whole’ tradition. His reformulation, whereby Christ becomes the ‘cosmotheandric’ principle and the Father of the Trinity becomes the ‘silence’ within the Godhead, will not satisfy every Christian theologian. Nonetheless, Panikkar does provide warrants for these theological assertions that are not entirely foreign to the tradition. From his own perspective, perhaps these theological understandings require the experience of interreligious dialogue if they are to be accessible.

Other critiques, focusing on Panikkar’s methodology, emerge from the academic arena of interreligious study. In our view, these critiques often fail to recognize the distinct modes of discourse—proclamatory, disclosive and argumentative—that are integral to his methodology. For example, if the cosmotheandric view of reality is taken as a ‘theory’ rather than a ‘symbol’ of ultimacy, Panikkar is open to the charge of imposing a monistic paradigm on all religions and cultures. This would be not only imperialistic but, in view of his own challenging of this approach, fundamentally inconsistent. However, as we argued in the previous chapter, the cosmotheandric vision, intuition or principle, works primarily as a ‘symbol’ of disclosure. It reveals the ‘whole’ without
claiming to be a 'universal' theory. Following this discussion, we have suggested that Panikkar needs greater clarity with regard to his use of mythic, symbolic and logical modes of religious discourse.

The critique of Panikkar's eschatological understanding of reality is perhaps more pointed inasmuch as the teleological notion of history is not necessarily shared by all traditions. The overturning of his prior notion of the historical convergence of religions, while 'softening' the import of this critique, does not eradicate it insofar as the telo-theological vision of the universe remains. Consequently, it is an area of interreligious understanding that raises further questions.

However, as we also indicated, Panikkar's eschatological understanding does not align itself with the vision or model of process theology even though, in his later proposal, the divine mystery is seen as evolving. Panikkar's notion of the symbolic presencing of God in the divine, and his understanding of the Nonbeing of/within Being, call into question the western identification of thought and being, reality and consciousness, that is presumed in process--and most western--conceptions of reality. Of course, how these predominantly eastern notions of reality are to be fully appropriated by christian theology is a task for the future. In this sense, Panikkar's theological and methodological approaches raise issues rather than provide answers. In the context of religious pluralism, they provoke other paths of investigation. We have chosen hermeneutics and rhetoric.
We have shown the value of probing Panikkar's method with reference to the existential-phenomenological hermeneutics of Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur. Panikkar's belief in the self-correcting power of language and tradition to reclaim its suppressed otherness, his notions of cosmotheandric solidarity and the interconnectedness of reality, and the priority that he gives to truth-as-manifestation and participatory knowledge, clearly identify his study according to the "hermeneutics of retrieval." On the basis of our analysis, Panikkar's dialogical dialogue can claim validation with respect to the hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer (even though his `appropriations' are clearly his own).

With specific regard to Panikkar's hermeneutics of testimony, we found that there were many areas of agreement with Ricoeur. Both highlight the importance of a founding historical event and symbolic mediation for self-understanding. In this respect, they agree that transparent subjectivity and subjective autonomy are illusions of consciousness. Consequently, Ricoeur's notion of revelation as "non-violent appeal" is equally applicable to Panikkar's openness to revelatory experience.

Nonetheless, we also demonstrated that Panikkar (in the hermeneutical tradition of Heidegger and Gadamer) is more fundamentally trusting of tradition and language than is Ricoeur who assumes the priority of misunderstanding over understanding. This accounts, in part, for Panikkar's more universal openness for revelatory experience in contrast to Ricoeur's single dependence on the originary sources of the biblical tradition for his narrower understanding of `religious' revelation. As well, Ricoeur's provision for the "hermeneutics of
suspicion" is an implied critique of Panikkar's (and Gadamer's) over-trusting, cosmotheandric attitude. The suggestion was that Panikkar requires more attention to critical methods for discerning judgments of truth and value.

Our rhetorical enquiry analyzed Panikkar's language according to the four master tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. This enabled us to situate his rhetoric of dialogue in terms of the audience who, in his language performance, becomes a fellow witness of revelatory truth. We indicated how Panikkar's root metaphor of otherness identifies his work as postmodern. As a theological rhetoric, our analysis of his metonymic elements showed that he is engaged in hermeneutical theology as distinct from the confessional and deconstructive responses to the postmodern situation.

Our analysis of Panikkar's use of synecdoche and irony provided us with further evidence of the centrality of his symbolic understanding of reality and revelation. Panikkar's sacramental sense of religions and cultures leads him to the something `more' within the ordinary life of people. The inbreaking of the cosmotheandric mystery never seems far from view. However, this synecdochic instinct is counterbalanced with the recognition that every manifestation of the divine mystery is an ironic presencing. This ironic sense is preserved in the symbol that both is and is-not the `whole' signified reality.

In our view, these dialectical, hermeneutical and rhetorical readings demonstrate the basic consistency and fundamental appropriateness of Panikkar's hermeneutics of religious pluralism. Although we have indicated significant areas of dispute, disagreement and challenge that arise from his
dialogical project, and have suggested areas that are in need of further research and clarification, the cosmotheandric approach to the understanding of religions and cultures appears to be one that theologians and religious scholars of all traditions need to explore. Perhaps it is the Christian theologian who has most to gain through dialogue with this cosmotheandric reformulation of the Christian mystery.