The end of the twentieth century has brought both blessings and curses. Obvious among the latter are ethnic disputes, sectarian violence, inhuman standards of living. Environmentally and economically all this is our disastrous legacy for the new millennium. And among the former we can discern the faint emergence of a yearning for mutual understanding. In spite of the prevalence of darkness on a world scale, the feeble flame of dialogue is becoming stronger and increasingly brighter. Dialogue is 'in', especially in the form of interdisciplinary studies. Happily religions too are beginning to see the need for dialogue and the phrase 'interreligious dialogue' does not any more strike an esoteric note.

What is being explored in the following pages is the possible meaning of both interreligious and dialogue, and the significance of interreligious dialogue for our world, especially for the future of our world. The exploration is intended to be at the level of their presuppositions. Our presuppositions are always positions but they are hidden and underground as it were but all the same they are operative in our thinking and loving, in whatever we do and decide, and in all that we experience and express.

Hopefully the approach taken will become clear in the course of our discussion. At his stage a brief statement of intent should suffice. Because human beings are not just individuals but are essentially connected with the world of matter and mystery, religion and dialogue have to take cognizance of this. This may sound banal but surprisingly even today religion and dialogue are more often than not understood 'individualistically' and 'anthropically' (that is, centred around the human alone). This is evident not only in attitudes like 'religion is a private affair of the individual'; but also in approaches that reduce dialogue to discussion. The
result is that interreligious dialogue turns out to be partial and one-sided. Accordingly we cannot any more view religion and dialogue in a way that overlooks the organic interconnectedness of religion and reality and that a fresh and more comprehensive understanding has to be sought.

The tenor of what follows is intended to be more phenomenological than theological and its mood more methodological than metaphysical. For, as H-G. Gadamer has shown convincingly, it is our prejudgments in the sense of presuppositions rather than our judgments that reveal our grasp of and our attitude to reality. Because of this our investigation has to do with what our view of religion and dialogue presupposes. The substance of the critique is that our view of reality is fragmentary and that this ineluctably has grave consequences for the way we look at human beings, our world and perhaps even God. The other way round the repercussions of a holistic approach to reality would be salutary; it would lead us to re-vision our understanding of religion and dialogue.

A. Religion and Dialogue

In the last analysis every religion has to do with the Ultimate, in the sense of ultimate reality or ultimate meaning or significance, parama-artha. Whether articulated or not, it is this Ultimate that is the aim of our life and the motive-force that inspires us to strain ourselves towards this goal. Every religion 'conceives' of its goal and the means that lead to it in its own specific manner. Thus, one religion focuses on our existential blindness vis à vis the Ultimate, a blindness that results in a false sense of values and therefore it puts forward specific ways and means of overcoming such blindness; another concentrates on the one who reveals the Ultimate by proposing his life and death as a model or goal for all; a third stresses the absolute ineffability of the Ultimate to such an extent that it considers it to be no-thing because of the very real danger of absolutizing what is relative; and a fourth centres on the absolute Word of the Ultimate, a Word which is a guide both for history and salvation.

In such a context dialogue can be perceived in a variety of ways that are of a piece with the main thrust of the respective religions. However it might be a safe bet to state that
for most believers of a tradition dialogue is an embarrassment since most of them would consider their own religion either as really the true religion or the most tolerant, and the other religions as somehow not coming to the mark because they do not 'possess' or proclaim the full truth. Thus, though for a very few people dialogue is the search of the harmony of [the truths of] the respective religions, for most [of those who think that dialogue is necessary] dialogue is the road to understanding the similarities with other religions, a road that clears misunderstandings and promotes appreciation of dissimilarities, and in this manner promotes tolerance or even peaceful coexistence.

Paradoxically the history of religions has rarely been free of conflict and confrontation. In a sense it has supplied the gunpowder to unscrupulous politicians and business barons to shoot down socio-economic and political opponents. Though religion has been seen as revealing Truth, the Ultimate Truth, the Truth that frees, it is the absolutizing tendency of religious traditions that seems to fertilize the seed of fanaticism and fundamentalism. The reason is that alleged there can be no compromise when it comes to the Truth. Historically speaking, in the explicit truths of every religion is in-built, albeit non-thematically, the implicit untruth of the neighbour's religion. Moreover in all that concerns religion and religious truth the tendency has been to interpret it literally; and when contradictions are encountered in the process, they are taken as part of 'faith' where reason has no say.

If religion has been a major source of conflict in human history, it has been due in no small measure to our inability to discern the chaff of economic interests from the wheat of genuine faith. On the other hand there is the ubiquitous tendency to objectify reality and to reduce it to the informative and pragmatic realm. Not surprisingly then religious truth comes to be interpreted literally. In a situation like this dialogue is bound to be an embarrassment. But in an atmosphere where one is able to face conflict and its causes in a detached manner a genuine desire for dialogue should be welcome. What now follows is intended to be a contribution towards creating such an atmosphere.
B. The Cosmotheandric Nature Of Reality

We have entered an age where we are gradually becoming conscious of the need for wholeness in our lives and in our world; the hunger for harmony is greater than ever and our longing for integration has become acute. This is because we are somehow realizing gradually that our approach to reality is becoming increasingly fragmentary. The price of technocracy is the fragmentation of life.

The Fragmentation of Reality

Apparently our planning is economic; our campaigns are political; our programmes are cultural; our services are religious; our relationships are personal; our concerns are for an ecological balance; our movements are for peace, for human rights, for women's liberation, for refugees, etc. etc. We can now explode the (myth of the) atom and analyze the cell, plumb the depths of the ocean and make a trip to Mars. We can now cure the blind, make the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk and in general heal the sick. We can even move mountains. In no time we know and can witness what is happening in the most distant corners of the world. Libraries, books, videotapes and C.D.s offering a wealth of information about practically everything, are easily accessible.

True, we are no more rooted to one place but in the process we have become uprooted, and unable to be at home anywhere. Yes, we can feed and heal the body but in the process of providing for the sophisticated wants of the body, we have become insensitive to the hunger and thirst of our spirit, if not to its very existence. Indeed, we can reach the planets but we are unable to enter into our personhood. Our Self, instead of being our home, has now become the very home of loneliness and alienation. Yes, we have penetrated the deepest forests but we are no more able to see the trees for the wood! Yes, we have transformed the world into a global village, but the village is such that we are not aware of our neighbours and couldn't care less for their needs.
The real state of our 'progress' is accurately mirrored by the world of advertisements. A smile can now be produced by a toothpaste and health guaranteed by vitamins; personal identity is established by the quality of one's clothes; the make of the car testifies to one's self-worth; the cigarette-brand transforms the smokers into special people who have entered into a special world; today shoes give stability not just to our feet but to our personality as well; there are special soaps that bring brightness into our lives; we have shaving-sets that enable a healthy outlook to life; and youthful looks can be maintained eternally by herbal products and the mega-brain computer can not only plan our future and put together our past but also it will be in a position sooner or later to solve all our problems. Briefly, if we take the word of the advertisements for it, we find ourselves at the threshold of a golden age.

In this process, alas, humans have not been left untainted. Living in such an all-pervading consumeristic atmosphere and breathing in deeply its air, humans have been severely affected by the exaggerated stress on the material component of the human and the consequent neglect of the specifically human component, awareness or consciousness. Modern 'progress', like Pinocchio's nose, has turned out to be askew. Which means that this fragmentation has made deep inroads in the very soul of humans. Not surprisingly then they have become soul-less as it were, and empty inside; to survive they have to flee from themselves as fast as possible; in this they get generous help and support from an artificial world of film, fashion and fantasy.

All this has left deep scars on the face of religion. The modern world has become skeptical about religion and God; at best the Divine is now popular more in the Avatara of an insurance agent than the source of definitive hope; and at worst as it is some sort of super-being who is reluctantly brought in as responsible for the ultimate explanation? In sum, the state of caricature that religion and the Divine have fallen into is symptomatic of the exaggerated importance we accord to the material aspect of reality. The Re-Vision of Reality
If we wish to regain our sanity we have to re-think the direction in which we are moving. The extent of the alienation that is at work in our attitudes, is to be judged by its effects in our soul and our soil. We stand in need of a thorough revision, a re-vision, that is, a new vision of reality, and of our approaches and attitudes to the Divine, human and the world. We need to undergo a *metanoia* (from *meta-noein*, hence re-vision?). As we said, it is our preunderstanding which operates at the level of the presuppositions that needs to be challenged and questioned. As the basis of our understanding of reality and religion the preunderstanding is at the source of our being, speaking and knowing.

**The Cosmotheandric Intuition**

Raimon Panikkar who has coined the neologisms 'cosmotheandric' and 'theanthropocosmic' has proposed on the backdrop of his radical approach to understanding and its pre-sub-positions (as he calls them) that we need a new innocence, a second naiveté; we need to go through a critical examination of the ontology of our knowing in order to enter into a new innocence. For this we have to move through the stage of analytic science to the stage of holistic wisdom.

**Mythos and Logos**

As everybody knows by now, human awareness cannot be reduced to an activity that merely observes and studies objects in a detached manner. Involvement is of the essence of all understanding. Accordingly human understanding could be compared to a lighted background in whose glow the foreground is lighted. These two aspects are, according to Panikkar, the two modes of human awareness (*mythos* and *logos*), modes which are irreducible one to the other, but equally inseparable. Whereas Mythos serves as the background of our being-and-knowing, Logos functions like the foreground. The lighted background is the universe of meaning and its glow lights up whatever we experience and whatever we focus on. What is understood enters the universe of meaning (Mythos) and forms part of it. Once this happens the universe of meaning lights up our experience in a new way. There is thus a constant flow from the background to the foreground and from the
foreground to the background. Dialogue that shares and listens to the other's sharing, (not dialogue that discusses and argues!) functions because both Logos and Mythos collaborate in the emergence of a common space in the respective universes of meaning of the dialogue partners.

More specifically Logos is the realm of the intelligible. It also refers to reason, reasoning, reasoning out; hence it includes knowledge that is explicit, thematic, articulated. In its extreme and reductionistic form it is knowledge about reality. In such a case it is objectified knowledge which acts as the final cause in the process of putting up our homes and building our bombs, of producing life-saving or deathbringing drugs and dams, of our engineering feats and our pioneering flights, of our supercomputers and our saving accounts. Panikkar has repeatedly stated that our age, the age of modernity (we should really say, the myth of modernity), is to a large extent characterized by the exaggerated importance accorded to the Logos and by the neglect of the Mythos. The role that Logos-consciousness plays in our times (and consequently in our lives) has become excessively predominant. The values that we stress and the values that we neglect are the effect of this predominance.

Mythos, on the other hand, circumscribes the boundaries of our being and our understanding; it is the preunderstanding of persons and cultures viewed dynamically. It is that which determines what is to be known from the panorama of reality and how to understand what is already known. Mythos is the known unknown which makes all knowing possible; we know it without knowing that we know it. It is not a passive background but one which determines what is highlighted and what is neglected when a picture is projected on it. What we can know and the way we know it, what we can tolerate, how far our tolerance can go, what fits into our scheme of things and what does not - all this is determined by the Mythos.

Mythos then is not that which we know but that through which we know what we know. It is not only the filter which selects what is to be known from the panorama of reality but the solution as well which develops the negative of the picture. Mythos is that primordial
conscioussness in which and through which we experience, understand and judge reality. Our concepts, our ideas and our ideals are all shaped and formed by our Mythos.

However it is important to remember that we cannot manipulate the Mythos; it is not amenable to human decisions. We cannot just by the force of our will-power change the direction of our Mythos. The change in and of a Mythos is the work of the Spirit. The winds of change spring from the Spirit; but we know not whence she comes and whither she blows. What we can and must do is twofold: to discern in and articulate from the symptoms the direction in which our values and ideals operate; and then examine whether it is the direction in which we would like our Mythos to take us. The fact that we can become aware in and through our ideas and ideals of the direction in which we are moved by our Mythos and then accept or reject the direction, shows that indirectly we can influence the Mythos. But this presupposes the prior ability to discern in the signs of our life and our times, the direction in which our being and understanding are moved.

It is here that the role of Panikka's cosmotheandric intuition, which he calls the emerging myth of our times, is to be located. One of the important symptoms is the thirst for dialogue, harmony and integration that is becoming increasingly more acute.

*The Cosmic, the Human and the Divine*

The fact of the fragmentation operative in the very depths of our heart and of our times is behind the urge to strive for integration and harmony not only between our being and our becoming, between our knowing, willing and acting, but most especially between the major areas which constitute the meaning of our lives, namely, God, world and human beings.

The first layer of our existence that is identifiable is the material or cosmic dimension. Our knowing, and still more simply and more accurately our being in the world has an objectifiable component. There is always a 'what' that we can locate and objectify. Whatever
be the state we find ourselves in, it is and has to be objectifiable. Indeed without this objectifiable element there is no knowing and no being in the world possible. We can communicate with one another only in and through this objectifiable element. This, according to Panikkar, is the cosmic dimension which (phenomenologically speaking) is constitutive of reality but which is specifically the house of reality.\footnote{ We locate reality primarily in and through its objectifiable dimension. However we must distinguish the Cosmic from the cosmos; whereas the latter is the universe in which we live, move and have our being, the former is a constitutive dimension of all reality, including the cosmos.}

Corresponding to the \textit{objectifiable} dimension there is the \textit{objectifying} dimension which identifies the objectifiable element in our being and our knowing. It is radically different from the objectifiable dimension. It is the dimension which we usually call consciousness and through which we locate the objectifiable aspect of reality. The consciousness element is the specifically human dimension, namely that constitutive dimension of reality which alone can identify the objectifiable aspect of reality. But again, the Human, as a constitutive dimension of all reality, is not to be identified with the human being. Human beings like the cosmos are tridimensional.

Finally both the objectifying and the objectifiable dimensions can function because of a certain endlessness about them. The objectifiable can be objectified without any limit. Similarly the ability to objectify has no limit either. There is in reality an aspect which allows no limit to be set to the process of objectification, i.e. any thing can be objectified indefinitely \textit{in the same way} that the human can go on objectifying indefinitely. This is the depth-dimension of reality which Panikkar also calls the Divine (though he expressly states that it could be called by any other name). But the Divine is not the same as God, rather it is that constitutive dimension of reality which bestows a certain infinity both on the objectifying and on the objectifiable dimensions. Indeed it is the Divine that is the interface between the Human and the Cosmic and the bond that ultimately holds them together.
There are a number of points which need to be spotlighted in this approach to reality. In the cosmotheandric Trinity its constituents are not such that the Human is equal to the Cosmic is equal to the Divine. On the contrary, each of these dimensions is irreducible to the others because each is radically different from the others in that the dynamics of each of the three is unique. However they are such that they complement each other because none of them is self-sufficient since each is dependent on the others and all three together constitute reality. Though each is indispensable the threefold dynamics are interdependent. When therefore we speak of reality we are referring implicitly to these three invariants, this threefold dynamics which constitute reality.

Reality, for Panikkar, is a network of relationships, a network which is basically constituted by the Cosmic, the Human and the Divine. In other words, we cannot in effect search for the Divine except through the Human in the Cosmic, because it is only the Human that can make this discovery. We cannot work for the Human except in the Cosmic through the Divine, because real welfare of the Human is possible only in this manner; and we cannot encounter the Cosmic except through the Human in the Divine, because the Cosmic cannot be the Cosmic without the Human and the Divine.

The consequence of such a vision is that every being is cosmotheandric (cosmos+theos+aner), that is, constituted by the Divine, the Human and the Cosmic but in different degrees and in diverse ways. In some things the Divine may be more prominent (like in the wonder of creation), in others the Human may shine forth more brightly (like in a Gandhi) and in still others, the Cosmic may appear more striking (like in the stability and solidity of some things). Nothing is a mere object, though everything does have an object-aspect (= the Cosmic); nor is a human being as a mere Human though the aspect of the Human may be dominant. In this view then we cannot meaningfully speak of God and of world and of human beings. This would be to fall back on the old paradigm where world and human beings are separate entities in God. However there is a certain legitimacy to speak in such a manner; pragmatic purpose requires that we sometimes stress this aspect and
sometimes another aspect. This however may not be taken as a description of reality. In the new paradigm to speak of God is to imply the Cosmic and the Human; and to speak of things is simultaneously to refer to the Divine and the Human, just as to speak of human beings is to simultaneously imply the Divine and the Cosmic.

Now everything is interrelated and interconnected, indeed everything is constituted by such interrelationship and interconnection. The diversity in the threefold dynamics, centripetal centrifugal and orbital, corresponds to the Cosmic, the Human and the Divine. The movement of human consciousness is centripetal; consciousness of something always contains an implicit "I know that", "I am aware that". Thus when I know something, I am aware that I know something. But the dynamics of the cosmic dimension is centrifugal, away from the centre of our consciousness, towards the object "there". Together the centrifugal and the centripetal are constitutive of the orbital movement of all reality. All reality is ultimately the Trinity of the Cosmic, the Human and the Divine.

Perhaps we could paraphrase Panikkar's point thus: because our pre-conception of reality is monochromatic we are unable to see the organic unity in reality's multiplicity. This inability makes us mistake uniformity for unity and in the process makes us reduce everything to the level of objects. Humans get separated from the world and God becomes that super-being who controls humans and the world. The three then come to be considered as three realities: God, world and human beings, connected not intrinsically but only from the outside, as it were.

C. Religious Dialogue

On the background of the cosmotheandric understanding of reality religion could be looked at in a simplified way, as the search for a cosmotheandric integration of reality, or as the integration of the Divine, the Human and the Cosmic.
The question that faces us now is this: with such an understanding of reality and religion can we do justice to the self-understanding of the traditional religions? To answer this we have first to clarify the purpose of the cosmotheandric discussion. The cosmotheandric suggestion was made precisely because it was felt that traditional religions are not doing justice to their message. The reason is that our approach to all reality and consequently to religion is fragmentary and therefore faulty. The eye of our being is as it were defective and the treatment for defective eyes has to be along cosmotheandric lines. Once we are cured (to some extent at least) we shall be in a better position to understand, appreciate and realize the message of our respective religions. The last thing that the cosmotheandric suggestion would like to see happen is the destruction or levelling of the specific contribution of the diverse religious traditions.

*Dialogue: Intrareligious and Interreligious*

Religion as the integration of the Human with the Divine in the Cosmic is essentially a dialogue with reality. This dialogue has to take place on two fronts: It is here that I see the role for the religious dialogue of the future. It is a twofold role: within one's own tradition (= intrareligious dialogue), and with other traditions (= interreligious dialogue). Both are so interdependent and interrelated that none is first and none is second. Like in the Christian understanding of the Trinity there is a kind of perichoresis so that intrareligious dialogue enters into and affects interreligious dialogue and vice versa.

*Intrareligious Dialogue*

In the intrareligious dialogue, as I see it, the exchange is primarily between the message of the religion and the cosmotheandric perspective. The message, say, of the Vaishnavite tradition that the universe is the body of Ishvara does not change; what changes is the way we perceive it today on the cosmotheandric background. That is to say, the message which the Vaishnavite tradition has been proclaiming for centuries is now seen in the light of the cosmotheandric vision. Analogously the Christ preached by the Christians could now be understood and experienced as the cosmotheandric Christ.
This approach is meant to bring out the cosmotheandric significance of the message. It could be that in the course of its history the message has been interpreted unidimensionally and so has become ‘other-worldly’. In the process perhaps both the Human and the Cosmic have been neglected. It could be too that the same monochromatic treatment has been meted out to the understanding of 'grace', 'salvation', 'faith', 'prayer', 'suffering', 'death', 'sacraments', 'ritual', 'justice', 'love', etc., etc. In this case a wash in the cosmotheandric solution could develop our picture of reality in such a way that it would bring out different nuances which otherwise would remain undetected, nuances that love of God is intimately and inextricably connected with love of neighbour and of the world; that prayer is not only lifting up of our hearts to God but also and equally validly reaching out to the heart of the helpless and the hope-less; and that service to the lowly and the lost is at the same time service of the Divine and the Cosmic.\(^\text{17}\)

The aim of intrareligious dialogue then is to integrate our approach to the three dimensions of reality. Accordingly we first have to become aware of our need for integrating the Human with the Divine in the Cosmic. Every religious tradition has of course its own specific kind of revelation or inspiration at its source and so there is a difference in the attitudes of traditions to reality and in their stress on values and attitudes. This does not imply that such approaches are invalid but it does mean that they are one-sided. It is here that interreligious dialogue comes in to correct, complement and qualify the results of the intrareligious dialogue.

*Interreligious Dialogue*

This objective is realized not so much through a discussion of the respective beliefs of the different traditions as primarily through a dialogue-process about the way each of them strives for the integration of reality. The dialogue focuses on the integration of reality. This implies that the dialogue partners have first to identify those problems that are responsible for the reification of reality, for the fragmentation of the human and for the meaninglessness of the divine today. The path of interreligious dialogue that leads to the integration of the whole
of reality is that of common action for the welfare of all. This is the starting-point of all meaningful interreligious dialogue.

Once religious traditions show their credibility through common initiatives for the well-being of all they will be called upon to give testimony to the source of their inspiration and commitment. By witnessing to (and not by merely speaking about) their experience, religious traditions start sharing in each other's riches.\(^{18}\)

This process is the expression of a real meeting of traditions. It is this which underlines the importance of the contribution of each tradition; at the same time it helps correct its one-sidedness. Such an encounter of traditions initiates a movement towards universalizing the truth of a tradition. At this stage dawn the realization that no truth is the exclusive monopoly of one tradition only. It has to be a truth for all. For this reason the truth of a tradition has to be made intelligible to the other traditions so that its truth is assimilated by the others. Thus, though the importance of awareness-exercizes may be part of the Hindu-Buddhist traditions, there is no reason why the other traditions should not assimilate them. Such *communicaio in sacris* however will be possible through interreligious dialogue alone.

The *perichoresis*, the mutual in-dwelling of interreligious and intrareligious dialogue is not an once and for all event; it is an on-going process of interpenetration (*circumincessio*). Every intrareligious change brings about a change in interreligious attitudes and action; similarly every transformation in interreligious dialogue affects in the intrareligious dynamics. There is here a sort of on-going spiral movement from one to the other.

Whereas the contribution of intrareligious dialogue is to specify the unique contribution of a tradition, that of interreligious dialogue is to complement and correct such specific contributions so that the harmony among religions becomes ever more apparent. However, these contributions are to be sought not in particular doctrines but in their specific approach to reality.
If religion is the search for the integration of the Human with the Divine in the Cosmic, then in future the dialogue between religions will have to concentrate primarily on the relationship between humans and their world, and secondarily about their different understandings of the Divine. This remark is meant not so much to underestimate the importance of the Divine as to stress the manner of approaching the Divine. For the Divine is the depth-perspective that emerges from a synchronization of the two eyes of the Human and the Cosmic. The Divine is the integrating dimension.

That is why beliefs about the Divine are in effect beliefs about the integral nature of reality and therefore are expressive of holistic values and attitudes. They project a concrete way of being in the world. Accordingly the world of religion has to concern itself with the quest for an authentic mode of being in the world. However, the different approaches need to be corrected, complemented and qualified so that one-sidedness is obviated and openness to other approaches is fostered.

Conclusion

If a tradition wishes to follow the orbital path of the Divine as experienced by it, it will have to open itself to the centripetal force of intrareligious dialogue which ensures cosmotheandric fidelity to its own specific inspiration, on the one hand and to the centrifugal force of interreligious dialogue which aims at bringing out the symphony of religions by correcting and complementing the individual traditions, on the other. The merit of the trinitarian intuition consists in the fact that it changes the agenda of interreligious dialogue from stress on religious doctrines to commitment to the wholeness of reality. Since authentic religion has to do with the integration of reality religion will henceforth have to play the following roles: like a lamp it will have to enlighten human beings about the complex but organic nature of reality; like a relaying station it will have to transmit its message in a way that reaches the radio of the human heart; and like a dynamo it will have to produce and supply the current of commitment so that human begin to work for the welfare of all beings.
Integration both as process and as product is what the Indian tradition has been calling Yoga. In the Yoga-way of perceiving things this will mean the following: the Yoga that gives an insight into the wholeness of reality by leading us near to the light of the Divine is Jnana-Yoga; the Yoga that leads us humans to fullness by attuning us to the wavelength of love for fellow-humans through participation in divine love is Bhakti-Yoga; and the Yoga that expresses cosmic commitment (which flows from the practice of Jnana-Yoga and Bhakti-Yoga) and motivates to work for the welfare of all beings is Karma-Yoga. Integration will not be possible through one or another but through all these three Yoga-aspects.

Hence whichever religious tradition one may belong to, the practitioner of the interreligious dialogue of the future will have also to be a practitioner of Yoga, the Yoga that integrates at the personal, the cosmic and the divine levels. In this sense, if interreligious dialogue is to be effective such a Yoga will have to proclaim and practise interreligious commitment to integrating the Cosmic, the Divine and the Human.

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1 This paper was presented at the New Ecumenical Research Association Conference, in New Delhi, 1993. The writer is grateful to the New ERA for permission to publish it here.


3 See P. DAVIES, *The Mind of God. The Scientific Basis for a Rational World*. New York, etc.: Simon & Schuster: 1992, esp. p. 229f: "In our quest for ultimate answers it is hard not to be drawn, in one way or another, to the infinite. Whether it is an infinite tower of turtles, an infinity of parallel worlds, an infinite set of mathematical propositions, or an infinite Creator, physical existence surely cannot be rooted in anything finite."

For an insightful suggestion in this regard see R. SCHARLEMANN'S brilliant "Being Open and Thinking Theologically", in *Hermeneutical Inquiry*. Vol. II: The Interpretation of Existence. D. E. KLEMM (Ed.), Atlanta/Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986, p.265: "Theology is a metanoein, an afterthinking of the thinking of being that occurs in the ontic and ontological realm."


PANIKKAR mentions interesting examples of this, ibid. p. 256.


PANIKKAR, "The Philosophical Tradition", ibid.. 344ff.

In contradistinction to this is language which is the home of reality.
PANIKKAR, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Towards an Ecumenical Christophany*. Revised and Enlarged Edition. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1982, p. 20: "A Christ who could not be present in Hinduism, or a Christ who was not with every least sufferer, a Christ who did not have tabernacle in the sun, a Christ who did not represent the cosmotheandric reality with one Spirit seeing and recreating all hearts and renewing the face of the earth, surely would not be my Christ, nor, I suspect, would he be the Christ of the Christians." Or again p.27: "Any Christ who is less than a Cosmic, Human and Divine Manifestation will not do."

There is an obvious danger here in expressing things the way we have been doing. Take the last sentence: service to the lowly and the lost is at the same time service of the Divine and the Cosmic. This might create the impression that this is an automatic process. This is not so at all. Service of the needy does not automatically get transformed into service of the Divine and the Cosmic. Only when the one serving the needy discovers the Divine in the cosmic dimension does the service become transformed, that is, it takes on a new form. Such a discovery is really an entry into the dynamics of cosmotheandric awareness. This needs further clarification.

The expression of a need is at the level of the Cosmic. But here the cosmic dimension is actually the real symbol of the divine dimension. A symbol is not an external representation of what it symbolizes. A real symbol is the expression of the symbolized realized without being identical with it. Thus, for instance, a smile is a real symbol of the joy that is symbolized by it. Joy cannot express itself except through a smile along with actions and gestures that are connected with it. In the context of this discussion 'symbolized' refers to the unique activity of *making present*; primarily it is not an epistemological but an ontological process and in that sense a *representing*. A smile makes present the 'inner' joy.
Similarly the cosmic dimension is the symbol-dimension since it symbolizes the divine dimension. But it is the human dimension that is the symbolizer dimension, the dimension that discovers, not invents, the symbolic dimension of reality. Discovering the symbolic dimension is again not an epistemological activity. The leap from notional knowledge to real knowledge is an enormous one and is taken only by the one who is engaged in the spiritual exercise of awareness. The cosmotheandric suggestion can be transformed into a cosmotheandric vision only through spiritual exercise - the only authentic way of appropriation the cosmotheandric reality integrally.

18 Panikkar calls this "dialogical dialogue" because it pierces through the word (dialogon) and takes us to the realm of the Mythos, which is the universe of meaning that cannot be fully objectified. See his "A Self-Critical Dialogue", p. 242.