INTERCULTURE

Interculture intends to contribute to the discovery and emergence of viable alternative approaches to the fundamental problems of contemporary Man, in both theory and practice. Its approach is meant to be integral, which means:

◆ **Intercultural**: undertaken in light of the diverse cultural traditions of contemporary Man, and not solely in the terms of modern culture;

◆ **Inter and trans-disciplinary**: calling on many 'scientific' disciplines, but also on other traditions of knowledge and wisdom (ethno-sciences) as well as on vernacular and popular knowledge;

◆ **Dia-logical**: based on the non-duality between *mythos* and *logos*, *theoria* and *praxis*, science and wisdom, wisdom and love. "Wisdom emerges when the love of knowledge and the knowledge of love coalesce" (Raimon Panikkar.)

INTERCULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MONTREAL

The Intercultural Institute of Montreal (formerly Monchanin Cross-Cultural Centre) is an institute for intercultural education, training, and research, dedicated to the promotion of cultural pluralism and to a new social harmony. Its fundamental research focuses on social critique and exploration of viable alternative approaches to the contemporary crisis. Its activities, which draw inspiration and sustenance from this research, aim at a cultural and social mutation – radical change – through gradual education and training. Its research and action have, from the very start, been undertaken in light of diverse contemporary cultures. It attempts to meet the challenges of our times by promoting cultural identities, their inter-action in creative tension and thus their eventual emancipation from the final and most subtle colonialism: hegemony by the mind. The Institute's cross-cultural research and action is carried out through its programs in the four following sectors: public education, training of professionals, services and research.

FOUNDERS-DIRECTORS

Jacques Langlais (1963-70), Robert Vachon (1970-79)
Kalpana Das (currently President and Executive Director)

INTER culture

Issue No. 135

SPECIAL ISSUE

35th anniversary of the INTERCULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MONTREAL (IIM) and
30th of its Journal INTERCULTURE

IIM AND ITS JOURNAL

AN INTERCULTURAL ALTERNATIVE

AND

AN ALTERNATIVE INTERCULTURALISM

INTERCULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MONTREAL

INTERCULTURE's goals are:
❖ to inform on contemporary cultures from their own standpoints as living realities
❖ to explore the issues that are raised at the frontiers of knowledge by the plurality of cultures and their interaction, both at the world level and that of specific societies
❖ to identify and facilitate communication among institutionally-affiliated and independent scholars, from all disciplines and cultures, who explore alternatives to the contemporary social crisis.

Editor's Note

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE introduces, in three parts, what in our eyes has constituted the radical originality of the Intercultural Institute of Montreal and its journal's intercultural philosophy for the last 35 and 30 years of existence, respectively.

The Intercultural Institute of Montreal (IIM) and its journal Interculture are presented here as a radical intercultural alternative, based on a radically alternative interculturalism.

In Part I, I sketch a synthesis of the major lines that make for the originality of this intercultural philosophy since its inception. I do so through a selection of illustrations drawn mainly from the daily life of the IIM and from the publications of its journal.

In Parts II and III, respectively, we call upon two contributions that complement the first, in order to have a deeper outlook into IIM and its journal's philosophy. Both contributions come from Raimon Panikkar; the first is what Krieger calls Panikkar's interreligious (and hence intercultural) methodology; the second, from Panikkar himself, deals with the issue of intercultural philosophy, where he approaches interculturality from the standpoint of the interconnexion of three constitutive elements of human reality: religion, philosophy, culture.

A table of contents of the three Parts is provided in order to sustain the reader's meditative reading.

Robert Vachon

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Part I

IIM AND ITS JOURNAL:
AN INTERCULTURAL ALTERNATIVE AND
AN ALTERNATIVE INTERCULTURALISM

ROBERT VACHON

Introduction

T HE JOURNAL *INTERCULTURE* was born in January 1968.[1] It has always sought to be an organ and reflection of the IIM (its activities, its vision, its intercultural philosophy), in keeping with R. Panikkar's[2] initial recommendation.

The journal enlightens us on the nature of IIM, just as IIM helps us to understand the nature of the journal. The two go together.

To speak of the 30th anniversary of the journal, is to already take an historical and linear perspective. But it is impossible to give an account of the journal from that perspective alone, since besides being a historical fact, it is also and mainly a transhistorical and mythico-symbolic event, which belongs to a deeper stratum which could be called, holistic, tempiternal and mystical.

The following text is a testimony by its director. I am trying to narrate, explicitate (not explain) the myth of the journal Interculture, as well as IIM's tradition, as it has been since 1968 and remains today, thereby hoping to awaken one to the *thematically new* character of what the IIM and its journal place under the words Interculture and Intercultural, since its inception.

I am saying *thematically new*, because IIM and its journal believe that Interculturality and religio/cultural pluralism are of the very nature of Reality itself, and have thus preceded and transcend by far all that IIM and its journal have been able to say about it in the past, and will ever say about it in the future.

It remains that IIM and its journal will have been, in our times, a pioneer of the Interculturality and Pluralism of truth and of reality—as a thematic— and this at an unusual level of depth, which could very well have been a

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1. It was founded, at Linda Parsons' suggestion, by Robert Vachon who has been its Director ever since. At first it was called *Monchanin Information* or simply *Monchanin* (1968–1977), then *Revue Monchanin Journal* (1977–1980) and finally *Interculture* (since 1981). It has always been bilingual, local, national and international in scope (like the IIM). Since 1974, it is thematic, since 1984 it is published in 2 editions (with the same content): French and English. A Quarterly from 1981 to 1997. Biannual since 1997. It presently reaches 30 countries throughout the world.

2. An internationally known intercultural and interreligious philosopher and mystic.

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precursor of the epochal[3] mutation which seems to be gripping the whole world and to constitute the challenge of the next millennium..

That is why most of the articles of *Interculture* do not seem to us to be mere things of the past, but references which have a deep tempiternal relevance for our times, as is the case for every authentic, true and real tradition, on condition that one approaches it in contemplative listening, in a holistic way, with one's whole being and not only with one's head and reason.

So here is a synthetic sketch of a contemplative insight into some of the elements which, in our view, constitutes the deeply original and radically new[4] character of IIM's and Interculture's tradition, and of its notion of Interculturalism. I shall try to describe them through concrete illustrations and references mainly to the published issues of the journal and sometimes to our daily practise.

Chapter 1

At the heart of IIM and its Journal

The heart, soul and spirit of IIM and its journal come from the live team-experience of its three successive visionaries-founders-directors, namely Jacques Langlais, Robert Vachon and Kalpana Das, whose faithfulness to themselves and to their respective traditions has opened them up to persons and communities of their own traditions, but also to the radically different persons/traditions of the great cultural/spiritual galaxies (phyla, eras) of the whole world: Native, Asian, Western, African, and their respective sub-cultures.[5] But the heart, soul and spirit of the IIM and of its journal also

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3. Not only are we in an era of change but in a change of era.

4. "Radically" does not mean revolutionary in the conventional sense of rejection and substitution through violence but in the etymological sense of "*radix*," root, which refers not so much to the historical, linear origin, thought or imagined, as to the origin in the sense of the source which gives meaning without being the meaning i.e. in the sense of primordial myth. Likewise, "new" is not "the latest model," nor what is chronologically superior, like summer coming after winter, nor what is spatially distinct, like an exotic product on the market! The "new" is not "the latest model," nor a variation of the old. It is rather the symbol of the creativity of being, of the vitality of Reality. It is the apparition of the unthought because held as unthinkable. It is the liberation of being with regard to thinking. It is the attribute of freedom (*Interculture*, issue 125, p. 46). One need not therefore become "modern" or "evolve" in order to be new, nor simply repeat tradition to be true to tradition. Reality is radical newness and not a mere conclusion of the past.

5. Jacques Langlais (1922–) was the first founder and director (1963–1970) of the IIM. He has since continued his intercultural research and work, in part outside IIM, all the while being intimately linked to the latter: he is our elder. He is seen as the man of intercultural encounter (*rencontre*) and friendship. Robert Vachon (1930–) was the second founder-director: involved in interculturalism since 1963, he learnt about IIM in 1966, became co-director from 1967 to 1969 and its director (1970–1979), after which, he continued to work at the Institute full-time to this very day. He is seen as our philosopher and prophet of interculturalism. Kalpana Das (1947–) a Bengali Hindu, is the third founder-director of IIM. She began frequenting the Institute in

come from the experience and writings of a visionary and invisible founder: Raimon Panikkar.[6]

They have all taken special and continuous steps towards meeting these persons and traditions. One of the most important tasks of our times seemed to them that of incorporating the radically different experiences of persons and peoples, into a pluralistic consciousness of the human condition and of reality, a consciousness embedded in an intercultural philosophy as a life-style. They were not bent on "civilizing the primitives," on "developing the underdeveloped," on "christianizing the pagans," on "islamizing the Kafirs," on "hinduizing the Mlecchas," nor even on enriching their own positions with the contributions of others, but on deepening together the mystery of life with the eyes of the heart of the great respective traditions and experiences of mankind as they were daily being lived. It was not a question of seeking unity "in spite of" differences, but of seeking harmony "in and because" of our differences, of celebrating and living the creative symbiosis of life, i.e. the emerging myth of the pluralism and Interculturality of Truth and of Reality. In their eyes, no religion, culture or cosmovision should command and subject others to its paradigms. They even refused to transform intercultural philosophy—which is a new genus—into an ideology, a system, a new global theory, another species of philosophy, a new absolute, a project or collection of projects. In their hearts, interculturalism and interreligiousness was a matter of survival, an art and a life-style.

The three of them have always tried to constitute the Institute on the basis of collaboration from these great religio-cultural galaxies who shared or wanted to share this vision, on the one hand of loyalty to themselves and to their respective myths, on the other hand of open commitment (hence both critical and loving) with regard to wisdoms of love, radically different from their own.

Sometimes these collaborators would be working daily at the Institute as animators/researchers, others worked elsewhere in the country or in different countries of the world, but all of them formed a big intercultural/interreligious family or network, helping the IIM and its journal according to various degrees of intensity and, under different forms.[7] It is important to remember that the three founders have always tried to give equal room to the cosmovisions, paradigms, epistemologies, wisdoms and know-how, lifestyles of persons from irreducibly different traditions, and this,

1968, became its co-director (1971–1978), then its director (from 1979 to this day). She is seen as our intercultural pedagogue and organizer, our shakti (the one who holds everything together). See Appendix I for their writings on IIM.

6. R. Panikkar (1918–) Especially through his writings, he has nurtured the IIM since 1966. A complete collection of his writings is available at IIM.

7. It would be too long to list these collaborators, at the level of animators, researchers, the Board of Directors and the General Assembly, resource persons, employees, members of INCA(D) (International Network for Cultural Alternatives to Development). Let it suffice here to mention those who have contributed articles to Interculture during the last 30 years (see Appendix II).

even within the Institute and its journal, so that the latter not be identified exclusively to any one culture, religion, ideology or nation-state.

> ## What it is not

Chapter 2

Not an academic institute/journal
(but a kind of free university—without walls—with an interpersonal approach through dialogical dialogue)

The Institute and its journal has a long tradition which consists in refusing to reduce Reality to the official discourse, whether ecclesiastical, civil, scientific, professional, i.e. to concepts, categories, frames, theories, or to a system, a model, an ideology, a project or rationale... It is convinced that the fundamental life issues—and hence intercultural and interreligious problems—cannot be reduced to mere conceptual, objective questions. It therefore refuses to reduce the notions of person, culture, religion, nature, community, politics, science, economy and law, to mere concepts or definitions. This does not mean that it is anti-scientific and opposed to concepts, theories, frameworks, models, definitions, etc.

Hence the IIM and the journal do not fit into the official and scientific categories, either of academic disciplines (even interdisciplinary ones), or of governments, or of the institutional world, clerical or professional, generally.

Very early, we found it necessary to remove persons, communities, their cultures, their religions, their knowledge and practises, from the status of being mere objects of scientific investigation, in order to recognize their status as partners—equal in rights and value—of an exchange of testimonies and lived experiences, within a mode of research that we would later call that of dialogical dialogue (and not merely dialectical dialogue).

Right from the start, the approach has been to gather—within what we have often call "contemplative listening"—each one's personal testimonies with regard to their respective cultures/religions, and this in all of the latter's dimensions.

For example, every Friday evening during 18 years, we invited persons from the various cultural galaxies, to express themselves to us, not as scientific experts or professionals, but as persons. This approach did not accentuate what people and communities from various cultures and religions must officially and normally think and believe. It did not try primarily to objectify them according to a scientific approach, from the viewpoint of experts, theoreticians, professionals, etc. The emphasis was on the being of the real integral person rather than on the isolated individual (ultimate principle and purpose of his existence), the ego, the singular, the private, thus avoiding the merely psychologizing, a-cultural, a-religious approach of some group dynamics' movements, or of those who reduce the whole being

of a person to his reflexive consciousness, to his options, decisions, projects.

It seemed to us that the more personal a culture or religion, the less individualistic it is; the more deeply does it draw from the source of tradition, the more it influences others and the more it is influenced by others. The person for us is relational, a knot in the net of human, cosmic, divine, relationships: what some traditions do not name person but no-self, non-ego, or community in the sense of non-duality and constitutive relatedness. In short, we would invite our guests to witness to what they personally believed and considered in their daily lives to be important in their tradition, their culture, their religion. Our approach was therefore one of non-duality and radical relativity between person and culture, person and religion, person and community.

This means that IIM, in its nucleus and heart, was not primarily an organization, an association of individuals, a federation of ethnic associations, nor a social club or discussion group, but an interpersonal and community organism and a kind of free university, one without walls. It refused to reduce intercultural philosophy to an ideology, an orthodoxy, a particular model, or to a project or collection of projects on which we could have control or over which we could have power.

This is also why the IIM (and its journal) had a "dialogical dialogue approach" distinct from the "dialectical approach" of the modern scientific world (even when interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary), without however being antagonistic to the latter, except when the latter would present itself as being or claiming to be the only and superior approach. In the beginning, IIM's approach would present itself as complementary to the scientific approach, but without subordination to the latter, As time went on, it opposed more and more the colonialism of the dominating knowledge, and tried to deconstruct the stratification model of Western and scientific knowledge, itself based on a superiority-inferiority relationship with regard to grassroots knowledge (the knowledge of the commons) and to the cultural knowledge other than Western. Our approach sought a genuine partnership, i.e. on an equal footing, on the one hand between scientific and grassroots knowledge, and on the other hand between Western knowledge and the knowledge of other cultures throughout the world, but also between so called modern and so-called traditional knowledge. Our approach sought not so much a "synthesis" (a formal unity) as a "symbiosis" of these knowledges.

The journal *Interculture* reflected all this: it did not define itself as scientific, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary in the sense of meta-theory or supra-disciplinary, but as transdisciplinary, in the sense of a consciousness that Reality cannot be digested by thought. While modern science has a tendency to believe that one can have true knowledge without love. IIM and its journal believed that only knowledge which includes love unveils the uniqueness of each and everything. Of course, modern science (knowledge without love) can reveal to us the singularity of things and hence their plurality, but only knowledge with love allows us to reach either the person, the culture, the community, or the pluralism of truth and of reality.

In the course of time, the formulation of all this took on different forms. In the beginning the word we used was "person," according to the lapidary statement of its first founder, J. Langlais: "Interculture and interreligion takes place through the person." We have always spoken and still do of our interpersonal approach.

However, as time went on, we discovered that the notions of person and interpersonal, were Western notions, and that other cultures/religions did not use these notions, but spoke rather in terms of no-self, *Atman*, *Anatman, Purusha, family lineage, kinship*, ancestors, *jati, totemic clans*, etc. We therefore took an intercultural and interreligious approach to the notion of person.

Now all of the latter are a matter of direct experience, of something existential, and not of sociological concepts and objects of science *(logos)*. Hence the Panikkar expression of *dialogical dialogue (dia*: through, *logos*: thought), i.e. which goes beyond the *logos*. We distinguish the latter from the dialogue of concepts, of scientific objects, of logical ideas, i.e. from dialectical dialogue. Panikkar speaks about approaching the other, not merely as an object, but as a subject. Not as an objectifiable subject, but as a source of intelligibility, that is not as other, but as self or as a constitutive dimension of our very self. That is why we speak of intracultural and intrareligious dialogue (see further).

The very notion of person is thus not rejected, but transformed, and moves from that of autonomous individual to a more ontonomic "net of relations of which the I, the Thou, the We and the individual are constitutive dimensions," and to that of a unique (I am not saying singular) crystallization or microcosm of the whole cosmotheandric universe (see further). The notion of community is likewise transformed.

Chapter 3

Not a Church organ, nor a Christian center/journal

Even if the journal *Interculture* and IIM went for a long time by the name Monchanin[8] and its first two founders-directors were Catholic priests, neither the Institute, nor its journal—and that from the start—saw themselves as a Church organ, or even as exclusively or primarily Christian. We could prove that with many concrete examples. Here are only two of them.

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8. Monchanin was the name of a Catholic priest, who, having founded, in 1939, in Southern India, a hermitage *(ashram)* in order to encounter the contemplative heart of Hinduism, seemed to us an eloquent symbol of committed and serious openness to a culture and spirituality other than that of Christianity, even to the point of allowing himself to be gradually transformed by it. This name did not cause any problem in the beginning. It is only later that first the journal and the Institute gradually decided to adopt a name less identifiable with the clerical, Christian and missionary world, and closer to its true nature, namely: Interculture and the Intercultural Institute of Montreal.

Example I: before its 1968 civil incorporation

From 1963 to 1967, the IIM had its office in the College Saint-Laurent house of philosophy, which was then the property of the Holy Cross Fathers who were directing the College. When they sold the College to the Quebec government in 1967, IIM found itself without any headquarters, and had temporarily moved its documents and furniture in a garage. At that moment, the Diocesan Ecumenical Center of the Archdiocese of Montreal offered that we become the "dialogue with Non-Christians" sector of the diocesan center, and proposed that we set up our headquarters offices, etc., in the diocesan center, thus even receiving our funding from the Archdiocese.

We declined the offer, even if at that time, we had no headquarters, no source of funding. We did not want to be defined as a Church organ, nor as a Christian center, and this, for many reasons: among them, because our (week-long or week-end) seminars outside of Quebec and the City, gathered together young people from all kinds of religious backgrounds: Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, anti-clericals, atheists, etc., and it seemed to us that this would affect unfavourably the atmosphere of openness, religious freedom, dialogue and friendship that was so appreciated then by the youth; but also and especially because we did not personally share the belief, at that time quite widespread among Christians, of the superiority of the Christian religion over all other religions, nor its attitude of seeing these religions merely as steppingstones for the message of Christ and his Church. For us, the era of mission had come to a close. The era of dialogue and of the pluralism of truth had become a fundamental imperative.[9] Moreover, to define other religions or traditions as "Non-Christian" seemed to us unjust, egocentric and pretentious, as if Christians had the monopoly on the Christian mystery.

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9. One priest, external to the Center, fearing the contamination and loss of faith of young Christians engaging in dialogue with youth from other religions or from atheistic background, advocated that they be given in-depth training sessions prior to their involvement in our kind of interreligious dialogue. But our experience, at the time, had revealed to us the beneficial side for all of our dialogue. The way of loyalty and of deepening seemed to us rather one of dialogue between very different personal religious convictions, on condition that there be on the part of each one a respect for the conscience and religious freedom of these persons.

Example II: after its civil incorporation[10]

From 1967 to 1972, there were two sectors at the Center: student and public. The *public sector* focused not only on information with respect to other religions, but on "total immersion" seminars and experiences in Tibetan and Zen and other types of Buddhism, in Hinduism, Judaism, Islam; on the experience of a Hindu-Christian cell of dialogue where certain interreligious rituals were practised. Moreover there were interreligious "flying teams" which went into Quebec schools, giving together testimony to their respective personal religious experiences. We took the initiative of organizing public interreligious prayer with people from different faiths, on the occasion of various congresses.

The *student sector* on the other hand, continued holding its weekend interpersonal seminars between youth from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Now the young Christians who were a majority, used to celebrate the Christian Eucharist on Sunday. Most of the young Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Atheists, would participate and take communion in fellowship. Suddenly, the founders made them understand that they were unconsciously in the process of imposing a predominantly Christian character to the Center, which was not Christian. The seminars did not celebrate the Jewish Sabbath, nor the Muslim Friday. This lacked sensitivity towards other faiths. So the founder directors at that time refused to celebrate a collective seminar Mass. All agreed to replace the Mass by a celebration where all faiths (atheistic included) could express themselves, leaving the Christians free, if they so desired, to go to the local parish on Sunday (which was done for a while). Finally, all these practices were discontinued. The total immersion seminars gradually took over and the separate student sector disappeared in 1972.

Outside reactions to all of these public and student sector activities were sometimes negative,[11] sometimes positive.[12]

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10. On August 27th 1968, the Monchanin center was officially constituted into a civil, non-profit corporation in the Province of Quebec. Its aims:

    1) establish a place of human encounter between "men" of different cultures and religions;
    2) provoke among students and adults, autochtonous and immigrant, an awareness of their responsibilities with regard to a world that has become pluralistic from the cultural and religious viewpoint;
    3) establish a research and information center on cultures and religion, in their relation to the major problems of "man" today.

    On September 4th, 1968, it occupied its new functional headquarters at 4917 St. Urbain, space that the Holy Cross Fathers provided at the cost of $1 a year (until 1976). Its motto: "The hour has come for the feast of nations."

11. For a negative reaction, see the correspondence between F. DeLubac s.j. and Jacques Langlais c.s.c. in Monchanin, issue 33, Jan.-Feb. 1972 (pp. 2–10, in French) which covers the period 1969 to 1971. De Lubac thought that his friend F. Monchanin would not have condoned such aberrations and that we should not have mixed the Monchanin name with such practices.

12. In India, however, his companion Dom LeSaux, expressed orally to Robert Vachon in 1970, all his admiration for the advanced character of the interreligious nature of the dialogue at Monchanin Center, saying that it surely went further than

From 1971 onwards, the team of founders-animators was no longer composed of two priests and two Sisters, but of one Catholic priest, one Hindu woman and a black African; the Administrative Board was always composed of persons coming from the great African, Asian, Western, Native Indian culturo-religious galaxies. It must be said that the presence of Kalpana Das, a Hindu, first as co-director (1971–1979) then as Executive Director of the Institute (1979–1998) and the change of name of the journal and Institute to Interculture and Intercultural Institute of Montreal, helped greatly to dispel the false notion that it was a Church organ or a Christian center.

One day, many years ago, the Superior General of the Holy Cross Fathers, acting on a suggestion by Fr. DeLubac, wanted the Provincial Head of the Holy Cross in Quebec, to inquire into the "doubtful" Christian character of what he thought was the Monchanin Catholic Center. He was reminded by the Holy Cross Provincial that it was no business of his Community, since it wasn't a Catholic nor Christian center.

Chapter 4

Neither a Quebecois nor a Canadian Institute

Even if the Institute owes its legal and "civil" existence to a civil incorporation in the Province of Quebec (1968), and hence within Canadian law, it has never considered, at that moment, nor since then, that it was constituted and defined—in its life—primarily by this incorporation, nor by the rules the Institute had written in order to meet the requirements of State law. First, not only has its existence preceded this incorporation by 5 years, it was far from owing its deeper existence to the latter.

It has never taken its mandate primarily from any Nation-State, and has always refused to be defined exclusively or even primarily by the policies of State governments (Quebecois, Canadian or other). Its interculturalism and community pluralism doesn't follow any institutional decree, policy, or party-line; it has even preceded institutional interculturalism by many years, and is radically different from the latter.

That is why the Institute never presented itself primarily as a Quebecois or Canadian Institute, but as interpersonal and intercultural. And this, out of respect for and loyalty to the *"de jure"* pluralism of Reality. For a person can never be reduced to being a mere citizen; a person's culture need not be defined primarily by, nor reduced to, the monoculture of modern citizenship in a Nation-State, all the more so since the Institute is situated in a Country of Native Indian cultures who continue to refuse, by and large, to define the latter as being primarily Quebec and Canada, and who have always had a

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Monchanin's position so that the name Monchanin might not be appropriate to express the Institute. He however invited R. Vachon to return to India in order to give lectures on the dialogical experience of the Center, because he thought "that it would help Christians in India to open up to Hinduism."

right to do so. This is an imperative of the Pluralism of Truth and of Reality, and not some ideological concoction.

But all this has not prevented the Institute and its journal from composing with the laws and regulations of its civil incorporation and with the cultural policies of Nation-States, nor from trying to institute a more or less critical intercultural dialogue with the culture of modernity, and this, at the very heart of the Institute's internal structure, thereby constituting an interesting intercultural alternative, whose long history should be written, a history of conflictual tension which the institute has tried to transform into a creative tension.

This is where we should be talking about the Institute's continued effort to marry the external institutional culture with the internal communitarian one, v.g. how we have distinguished, since our civil incorporation, between the "animation" and the legal administration of IIM, between on the one hand the intercultural founders/animators, and on the other, the external legal/moral support: the A.B. G.A., Executive Committee and the employees; how the three founders have always been *"de jure"* members of the A.B.; how what is called the executive committee, (for a long time called the co-ordinating team) has been fundamentally made up of the founders who would constantly consult the animators and occasionally associate one or more members of the A.B.; how for a long time now, we have taken decisions by *consensus* (a Native Indian-inspired-practice) instead of by absolute majority, and how we introduced it even in our by-laws. We would have to talk here of our alternative socio-economic, organizational and political practices, inspired by Native Indian practices, such as the traditional Iroquois practice of leader-for-life-who-takes-no-salary, etc.

We should also tell the story of the journal Interculture as an intercultural alternative in both its content and organization. We shall not do it here.

Chapter 5

Not a conventional intercultural and interreligious center (even an alternative one), nor a new ideology or societal project (which one could call intercultural and/or interreligious).

5.1 Not a conventional intercultural and interreligious center

At first, the Center always presented itself as one which did not identify exclusively with any one religion, culture, ideology. But the human mind being what it is and the IIM presenting itself as an Intercultural/Interreligious center, it was sometimes interpreted as being some new alternative conventional center. Which is not the case.

So we have been obliged to explain, for many years, that IIM was not a conventional intercultural and interreligious center (not even an alternative one). For example:

a) It is not a Center for Immigrants/Refugees/Ethnic Minorities, and for their settlement, adaptation, "integration," or for their access to the so called

universal and supracultural values of "civilization," nor to the dominant culture which orders and commands, (all the while tolerating folklore and secondary differences which do not disturb the status quo and which can thus give the image of an "open and pluralistic" society).

b) It is not a cultural compliance center, i.e. one which sensitizes Quebecois and Canadians to "ethnics," "nationalities" and their cultures, in view of "normalizing" them (i.e. eventually assimilating them to the Quebecois or Canadian culture/ideology.

c) It is not a Center which fights against prejudice and discrimination (racial, religious, cultural, ethnic) and for equal opportunity *within the standardizing framework of the Western/modern ideology* (culture, philosophy, religion) and *its supposedly universal, transcultural, transreligious values.*

d) It is not a center for the "metissage," hybridization of cultures and religions in the name of some new ideology of fusion and creolisation of the planet.

e) It is not an alliance of religion and/or cultures in order to realize the ideology/religion/culture/of development and of the modernization of the world, nor to bring about some civil peace (defined by "civilized" Man) or some religious peace (defined by God or by the great world religions).

5.2 It is not advocating an intercultural or interreligious system or societal project. Its interculturalism and interreligiousness is not an ideology, a dialectical alternative to the present system and its ideologies.

Generally, whenever someone speaks today of an alternative to the present system, the question arises; what alternative societal system or project are you proposing? One expects a dialectical alternative, an objective statement, a new theory, model, conceptual framework, ideology, in the sense of a system of intrinsically temporal ideas which govern our social life, particularly at the level of the "*res publica*." Everyone puts one forward, whether it be a "common public culture," a society with geometrical variables, integration to citizenship, a multicultural society, a "metissage" of cultures, integration to the majority, a pluralistic (i.e. plural) society, etc.

It is as if one could not think and live without a system, without a framework, a theory, a planned societal project, as if one could not live without defining who one is and where one is going. One presupposes the total intelligibility of reality.

Now, we believe at the Institute, that this is a gratuitous presupposition, one which is not necessary for our mind to function and for us to live. This means that for us, the alternative to the present system is something more than a dialectical alternative, more than an objective statement about the universe, something more than a rational and willed project, because Man, we believe, is something more than reason and his will. Reality is irreducible to what ever conceptualization, objectification or plan. Furthermore, not only is human consciousness not reducible to reason and will, but Reality itself is not reducible to consciousness, even if the latter always accompanies it and is a constitutive element of it.

The alternative that the Institute is talking about is the challenge thrown at us by the pluralism of Truth, by the interculturality and interreligiousness of Reality. The latter offer the strictest challenge to the monarchy of reason, to anthropocentrism, and ultimately to monotheism and even to theocentrism.

The alternative, for us, is therefore not an ideology, whether it be intercultural, interreligious, transcultural and transreligious. It is rather a fundamental human attitude. It is not a system, a life project, a dialectical alternative, a pluralistic theory, or even a metaphysical vision or a fundamental pluralistic intuition; it is not an objective statement about the world or against idealism, against a monistic vision or in favour of a pluralistic universe. It is an attitude which accepts the irreducibility of *praxis* to theory, which teaches us to cope with a lack of total security and certainty, and how to live with our vulnerability. It is an attitude where we take our stance and risk our life in the process by declaring that *logos* is not the whole of Man and of Reality. Our alternative is not therefore *the* alternative, a supersystem, a universal metatheory, an intellectual panacea. An intercultural and interreligious system is, for us, a contradiction in terms.

It is rather an attitude which elicits a peculiar method: *dialogical dialogue,* i.e. a dialogue which does not exclude dialectical dialogue, life-projects, common reason, but which is not reducible to the latter, for, as we shall explicitate, it gives much importance to the *non-intelligible,* i.e. to *myth,* and to what we shall call the emerging myth of pluralism, of interculturality and of the pluralistic attitude.[13]

By interculturalism we therefore understand something much more fundamental than what people understand when they speak today of pluralist or intercultural society, of a societal intercultural project, of a particular conceptual construction of contemporary society.

> "Unless we take a pluralistic attitude as we intellectually analyze the political problems of the world, we face the danger of becoming either more lackeys of the present system or angry contestants of the *status quo* without any possible dialogue except radical contestation tamed only by sheer impotence of effecting any change."[14]

Everything we shall say, in this issue, wants to be an expression of this attitude.

Our Institute aims at being an Intercultural and Interreligious Center which is radically alternative with regard to conventional interculturalism and interreligiousness.[15] We have said what it is not. We shall now try, gradually in the following chapters, to explicitate what it is since 1963.[16]

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13. We do not need so much "common reasons" to live together, but a common "non-intelligible," i.e. a common myth which allows us to do so.

14. For this whole section, see R. Panikkar, A self-critical dialogue, in Prabhu (ed) *The Intercultural Challenge of R. Panikkar* (Orbis, N.Y. 1996) pp. 227–293.

15. This pluralistic approach constitutes not a mere reform but a mutation.

16. It is evident to us, that we ourselves, cannot and will never be able to say it completely, even from our experience, because we are both more and less than what we

Chapter 6

A radical alternative
to modernity and to Western culture

One of the dimensions of the radically alternative interculturalism of the IIM and its journal, and possibly one that is the least perceived, understood and accepted by the followers of evolutionistic thinking and of modern culture (whatever their ethnic background) is that the IIM *has always refused to take its orientations—even "intercultural" ones—exclusively or primarily (i.e. in an absolute way) on the one hand from the culture/religion/ideology/cosmovision/ of modernity and of its so-called universal/universalizable constitutive norms,*[17] *and on the other hand, from Western culture.*[18] *And this at the international and local levels.*

It is practically impossible to do the synthesis and history of our theoretical and practical stand on these two issues. I shall hence limit myself to a few illustrations, referring mainly to our publications in *Interculture*.

A warning

One should not mistake our position as one of opposition towards everything that comes under the name either of modernity and its constituents[19] or

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think and believe we are. As Panikkar puts it "the only thing worth saying is that which cannot be said, and precisely because it cannot be said, it is all the more worthwhile to try and say it" (*Interculture*, Issue 50, 1975, p. 12).

Moreover, the IIM is not a mere object, a "what it is." It is a personal reality and not a "thing in itself." And we need the whole world to say it. It is therefore up to each one to complete the sketch that we are offering here, and to pursue the continuous creation, the art of interculturality.

17. i.e. development, evolutionistic thinking or unidirectional evolutionism, private and collective individuality, rationality, science, Nation-State, citizenship, bureaucratic planning system, pan-economism, monetization of life, consumerism, globalization, technology, schooling, professionalism, modern democracy, "universal human nature," etc.

18. IIM refuses to reduce Western culture/tradition to modern culture/tradition, even if it considers and defines the latter as an historical offshoot of the former. The IIM (and its journal) does not identify itself as being exclusively or primarily Western in its texture, even if, outwardly, it may seem Western, by force of circumstance.

19. For example, we consider that modernity can also mean at times contemporaneity, authenticity, the person, sacred secularity, freedom as a way of salvation, etc., without necessarily falling into the error of reducing a) modernity to the watch and to acceleration, b) authenticity and the person to the individual and the ego, c) secularity to secularism, or freedom to the autonomy of the individual as ultimate principle or purpose of its existence. Likewise, development can also mean removing "what cov-

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of Western culture. It is rather one of recognizing that: a) there are, throughout the world, and even in what one calls the West, cultures/religion/cosmovision/knowledge and know-how that are as valid as that of modernity and of what is called the West; b) that they have a right and duty to live according to their own cultural matrices and languages; c) and that their dynamism, as such, need not go the way of modernity to be dynamic.[20] It is therefore a matter here of relativizing the myths of modernity (its constituents) and of the West in their deeper sense, and not only in their abuses.

Nor is it a matter of denying the unavoidable historical fact that the system of modernity—and with it a certain West—has imposed and is imposing itself increasingly, daily, upon the life of the whole world, not only by seduction but also by force. We cannot abstract from this fact. We must compose with it. In that sense, it constitutes a necessity which pushes insidiousness to the point of imposing itself on all of us by force, then declaring itself necessary and indispensable for us in order to survive and to live. But, to us, this is not an absolute necessity. Obviously, we cannot live outside the system. We are in it. But we believe that we need not be *of* the system. Our approach therefore is *that of knowing how to live in and with the system without belonging to it.* In that sense, we speak of demonetizing culture, of emancipating from technology, of alternatives to modernity and to development, of abandoning evolutionism as a mind-set, of going beyond democracy. We speak of an interculturalism which is radically alternative with regard to the conventional interculturalism of the monoculture of modernity and of a certain West. But we ever remain in dialogue with the latter.

1) A radical relativization of the myth of modernity (radical alternatives to modernity) (Interculture, *issues 77, 130, 131*)

Our society has relativised everything: religions, cultures, traditions, except the myth of modernity. Now, modernity is an encompassing myth, i.e. a culture, a "religion," a "belief." In fact, it believes in reason, in *logos*, in the intelligibility of reality; that is its myth (i.e. "that in which it believes without believing that it believes in it." That is its own faith, its belief). Its myth is that myth doesn't exist, is not real; it believes that that only is real which is intelligible. Hence it reduces reality to thought, when it is not to concepts and definitions. For us however, to submit the myth of modernity to a radical critique (i.e. relativization) does not mean merely criticizing its abuses (and hence seeking its reform); it does not mean criticizing everything that comes under that notion, but submitting it to an intellectual demythologization, followed by a remytholigization. We believe that there ex-

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ers," and thus unveiling what is there, invisible or latent. The notion of citizen can refer to notions of civil, social, *polis*, distinct from power and from the Nation-State: democracy can refer to the importance of the human aspect by contrast to theocracy, without erroneously reducing either the human or the divine to absolute principles, as is often the case (presently and in the past). Science can also have a noble meaning: the intelligence of the heart, wisdom, and knowledge that comes from love, etc.

20. See R. Vachon "La dynamique de la tradition" in *Interculture*, issue 86.

ist other paradigms and horizons as valid as that of modernity to formulate the dignity, the well-being of peoples. "Quality of life" (happiness) does not necessarily have to take the road of modernity and of its constituents. The notions of happiness differ. No culture has, nor can have, the monopoly on the notion of what constitutes happiness. Hence, let us not confuse the dynamism of a person, a community, a people, a culture, with its modernization, as is too often the case throughout the dominant culture of the Modern West.

We have applied ourselves, from the very start, not only to discover these other paradigms and horizons but to see that they be recognized and respected locally and internationally, so that they may freely express themselves and live. We have always tried to present modernity (and its constituents) as an historical fact among others, as a new religion/culture, one among many that are also valid and legitimate. But modernity refuses. In its own view, it is not a mere historical fact, but intrinsically a natural universal cosmovision, which is beyond time and space, and beyond all religion and cultures, not to say beyond nature. It sees itself as necessarily replacing all religions and cultures of the world, and as having to control all of nature. Its myth is that of evolutionist thought (and not only of the scientific theory of the evolution of species). Hence its fatalism.

It believes that history necessarily moves from the inferior to the superior, from the primitive to the civilized, to *homo technologicus*, in an universal linear, unidirectional evolution. It sees itself as perfectible and dwells in a future on earth which is the myth replacing paradise in another world. It is a secularized version of the Judeo-Christian eschatology. The future is now in the new god which is Man, ultimate principle and purpose of his own destiny and of that of the universe. He is potentially omnipotent and has no need of gods, nature, the divine, except, sometimes, as associates for his "project." He is the absolute creator. It is a cosmovision which is not only anthropocentric but anthropocentristic. Whoever does not subscribe to this ideology, cosmovision, belief, etc., as normatively primordial in his life, can only be seen then as "non-evolved," "primitive," "backward," "behind the times," "not yet in the 21st century," "fundamentalist," "under-developed," "slave to a religion, to a culture, to an ethnic group, to nature." He is seen as stagnant, fixated, irresponsible, civically unrealistic, a dreamer, an idealist, living elsewhere than in the "real world" (of modernity), against progress, irrational, when not anarchistic, feudal, a ghettoiser, an apartheidist, a cultural relativist, a unity breaker, etc. Whatever be the case, this evolution towards modernity (and its constituents) is seen as unavoidable. "There is nothing one can do about it, anyway." One could speak here of the intrinsic fatalism of modernity as a cosmovision.

2) We do not subscribe to the fatalism of modernity. We seek to abandon evolutionism as a thought-form, i.e. the future as a sovereign referent.[21]

We do not believe that everything is nothing but a means to reach something superior. All this, as experience shows, leads to war, to a situation where there are a few victors and where others are vanquished; victory to the most powerful! whether it be Superman, (or God), the Lord, the King of the universe, situated only at the end of history. We believe that the adventure of being is not merely a linear progress towards an Omega point (nor only a regression to an original, undifferentiated Alpha point). Man is more than a historical being, the universe more than an historical reality. Reality is not only what evolves. There exists another cosmovision, held by sages and mystics who do not see living beings as means for something else.

We believe that evolutionism as thought form, may be the greatest obstacle to a radical relativization of the culture / religion / cosmovision / ideology / of modernity and of its constituent norms. Hence our constant effort to abandon this fatalism of modernity which is not without a link to the fatalism of a certain religious traditionalism that modernity itself criticizes. To substitute the absolute referent of the past by that of the future solves nothing with regard to the present.

If the relativization of the myth of modernity takes place through the relativization of the myth of evolutionism as a form of thinking, it also takes place, for us, through the relativization of development and of modern science as notions.

3) A radical relativization of the myth of development (alternatives to development)

From the start[22] we have affirmed the existence of other paradigms, radically different and as valid as that of development, to formulate the dignity of man, the well-being of peoples and the social order. Hence, the problem today is not necessarily or foremost a better distribution of consumer goods, but the very notion itself of what is good and what defines happiness. No person nor culture has, nor can have, *the* definition of *the* quality of life. Development (paneconomism) is therefore not a universal requisite to be happy, nor for a good social order. Nor is technology; *homo technologicus* is not the only specimen, either of the human race, nor of human cultures. Let us even go further! The fundamental needs of Man cannot be reduced to what Man can scientifically and rationally define, nor to what is monetizable. Moreover, the ultimate questions of peoples are not always the same. Even our modern world is itself beginning to ask itself serious questions about the universality of its own myth and to perceive it more and more as a

21. R. Panikkar. *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace.* (Louisville, Kentucky, 1995) pp. 35 and 89. See also *Interculture* issue 89 on "Cultural Disarmament and Peace."

22. See already *Interculture* in 1969 (issues 10-11) in 1971 (issue 28) in 1972 (issue 34). As for later, see especially issues 47, 49, 80-81, 84-85, 93, 95, 109, 111, 119, 130, 131. See also our book in French *Alternatives au développement* (1988 and 1990).

myth, even in the modern sense of the word, i.e. something which is unreal and unrealizable.

a) 1972–1978. Religions and development

It is especially in 1972 during our participation in the early phases of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, that we started to do a radical and sustained relativization of the notion of development.

That Conference held that the urgent issues of Religion and Peace were those of development, military disarmament and human rights. On our part however, having had a recent experience of total immersion in the Hindu World, we found a) that the perspective of that World Conference was too confined to a Western/modern vision and reminded the Conference, that the Hindu vision for example, had other priorities such as 1) *aparigraha*: non-possession and simplicity as an ideal of "civilization"; 2) the "unveiling" or experience of the *Atman*, i.e. of the Universal Being that we already are; 3) *Dharma* or the natural duty of non-duality (*advaita*) between traditions on the one hand, and between Man, Nature and the Divine, on the other, and that one should take these priorities into consideration in a manner equal and complementary to the Western/modern vision.[23]

In 1975, we made an appeal that one cease categorizing the world on the sole basis of a Western/modern paradigm, namely into "civilized/developed" on the one hand, and "primitive/under-developed or developing," on the other.[24]

b) 1979–1991 NGOs and Development

In 1979, we started challenging the NGOs and their development work, first at Montreal.[25] Then, in 1983–1984, through our first international colloquium in Namur, Belgium, where we asked: "is development a universal requirement?" "Are human rights a Western concept?" We spoke of emancipating from technology and invited NGOs to a radical reorientation by moving from endogenous development to intercultural solidarity (issues 79–85). In 1987, we asked: "Should we say no to development?" where an author from India even said squarely: "no to development' (issue 95). In 1988, we published at IIM our 1st edition (in French) of our book "Alternatives au développement," which had a 2nd edition in 1990. See also in 1991: "Global Poverty, a pauperizing myth" (issue 111).

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23. See R. Vachon, "The Urgent Issues of Religion and Peace," in *Monchanin*, issue 36. In 1974, at the World Congress of Religions for Peace at Louvain, we reiterated this plea (see *Monchanin*, issue 47).

24. See R. Vachon "Development and Liberation in an intercultural and cosmic perspective" in *Monchanin*, issue 49, in which we spoke also of the different ways in which other cultures viewed what the West called the problem of overpopulation.

25. During the Lenten campaign of the Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. In 1980, we publish "An Asian Theology of Liberation" (issue 68). In 1982, "Alternatives to Modern Culture and cross-cultural economics" (issue 77).

c) 1992—The end of the development era. Grass-roots' post-modernity.

In 1992 during the International Colloquium that we organized at Orford, Quebec, we proclaimed the beginning of the end of the development era[26] and established an international network for cultural alternatives to development (INCA(D).[27] Since that time, our journal speaks mainly about intercultural alternatives at the grassroots during the post-modern era,[28] (that a 1986 text of the journal had already announced in 1986 under the title "Promotion of Indigenous Resources" (issue 93)), but without forgetting to do a text on the racism inherent to modernity.[29]

4) A radical relativization of the myth of modern science and of technology (Radical Alternatives to modern science: the decolonizing of knowledge, alternative knowledge).

At IIM, we have a tradition of cautioning against the authoritarianism, the totalitarianism and reductionism of modern science, technology and of professionals and their methodologies, and against their pretentious claims to universality, neutrality and supra-culturality.[30]

For modern science and technology are linked to the particular culture that gave birth to them, and which today is not limited to the West or to the white race. Modern science and technology are therefore particular cultural phenomena and not cultural universals nor human invariants.

The specificity of modern science:

In practically all traditions of mankind, science (knowledge) has meant the result of an accumulated knowledge more or less systematized, which in turn meant the appropriate human way of entering into intimate contact with reality. Knowledge was equivalent to assimilation, to becoming everything (a microcosm), to awakening, to enlightenment, to realization. It was a knowledge that was inseparable from love. It referred to the wisdom of life, to the fundamental insights of civilizations.

> "Modern science has borrowed this thousand year old word *'scientia,'* (science) and given it a new twist equivalent to a meaning of calculus, prediction, control. Now, due to its spectacular success in the modern world, the meaning, rather than complementing the traditional meaning, has superseded it.

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26. See our Newsletter *Intercultural Horizons* (1993) for a French synthesis of the Colloquium, and also the Report of the Colloquium "Living with the Earth" (IIM 1993).

27. See the INCA(D) Manifesto at the end of the Colloquium (available at the IIM).

28. See *Interculture* on Endogenous and Vernacular alternatives (issues 119, 120, 122, 124, 126, 131, 133).

29. See Le Collectif Interculturel, Vol. III, No. 1, 1997, pp. 107–115.

30. See *Interculture*, issues 50, 85, 112, 115, 123 127, 129, 130 131, 133. See also R. Panikkar "Modern Science and Technology are neither neutral nor universal" (available at the IIM).

And in this way it has changed the very meaning of those words which expressed the fundamental insights of most civilizations." (Panikkar, *op. cit.*)

We could give as examples, the transformation of words such as time (reduced to history), person (reduced to the individual) *polis* (reduced to Nation-State), life (reduced to biology), myth (reduced to the fictitious, the imaginary), etc.

*Life-knowledge (*wisdom of love*)*

We refuse to reduce knowledge to (modern) science[31] and to the scientific categories/criteria of professionals from official institutions, or to an exclusively written tradition. Hence the importance we give to "life-knowledge," i.e. the wisdoms of life of persons and communities on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the fundamental insights or knowledge/know-how and practices of the different cultures of the world (traditional Western culture included). And without necessarily their having (in order to be important) to go through the criteria and recognition of academic, professional, official (public) institutions, nor uniquely through a written tradition.[32]

Hence probably the refusal on the part of official granting organizations, to fund the journal *Interculture* and the research at IIM, unless the latter abide by the canons and laws established by the academic bunker of professionalism and, in the last analysis, submit to them.

We have never been opposed to modern science. On the contrary, we have sought to enter into partnership with it—but in a true partnership, on an equal footing of mutual learning, of reciprocal complementarity, without subjecting and subordinating one approach to the other, for example, our "methodic" and "dialogical" approach to the methodological and dialectal approach of modern science, or vice-versa.

Thus, we have refused to be reduced by the academic world to "practitioners" while they reserved to themselves the exclusive title of "researchers." We did not wait to receive academic diplomas in interculturalism before doing intercultural research and education, and before acting as intercultural researchers/consultants/mediators, even for official institutions (which requested our "folk" knowledge and services on condition that we dress our "interventions" in the normative language established by academic modern science).

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31. This includes the so-called human sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, "philosophy," etc.

32. We have a long explicit tradition of recognizing the importance—in all equality—of the oral tradition not only of some cultures (Native Indian, Asian, African) but of the Western culture itself, and this within the very practice of the IIM and of its journal. See J. Langlais "Sciences de la religion et cultures orales: pour une approche renouvelée." SR, 12/2, 1983, pp. 145–156. We would need to do the history of the IIM's practice and defence of the oral tradition since its beginning... We cannot do that here.

Is it necessary to say that we have tried, but have suffered from having had to express our "methodic" and dialogical approach (in short our dissident alternative approach) exclusively in the "official" language, ours not being considered worthy by the official establishment. But we maintain that scientific knowledge, by itself, cannot be adequate; for there cannot be one single language, one universal language. The communication between irreducibly different cultures requires linguistic pluralism. Hence our policy of linguistic pluralism at IIM since the beginning.

No true knowledge (wisdom or life-knowledge) without love

Modern science claims to be such an objective description of phenomena that its sociological prestige leads one to believe that one can have true knowledge without love, while it is such a knowledge (which includes love) which unveils to one the uniqueness of each and everything. Example: Man as a universal concept is nothing but a formal notion, emptied of what each one considers as being what is most precious to one, namely one's undefinable value as a person.

Hence the importance we have always given to alternative knowledge (i.e. alternative to the modern professional-official science), either within the Western culture/tradition, or outside of it. And this in all fields: science, politics, economics, law, medicine, social life, education, cosmology, anthropology, theology, philosophy, religion, etc. Here are a few examples; the relativization of modernity, development and science, has been done through:

a) The relativization of the modern/Western culture of education[33]

From the start, with our pilot-project for the intercultural education of children (1972–1974) we made a distinction between "schooling and education." We were preoccupied not so much with ways of schooling "ethnics," but with bringing out that not only are there other ways of life, but also other educational and pedagogical cultures (v.g. Hindu, African, Native Indian, etc.) radically different from the Western/modern educational culture of schooling, and that one should respect the latter and allow them the space to live and to grow in our pluralistic world.[34] Our focus was on an intercultural education, alternative to intercultural "schooling" at the local and international level.

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33. See our 4 issues of *Interculture* on intercultural education: 45 (1974), 51 (1976), 87 (1985), 88 (1985) and also 72 (1981) where we reported on our pilot-experience, introduced to elements of different educational cultures, cautioned against the absolutism of schooling, reflected on ways of living an alternative intercultural education in the school system, conscienticized to the Western monoculturalism/colonialism of the University and of the school system, particularly with regard to the so-called "third world" (that we called 2/3 World) etc.

34. In 1984, *Le Devoir* published on the first page of its special issue on education our text, entitled "Pour une nouvelle politique de l'éducation." We were also involved in sustaining the Mohawk alternative intercultural learning center: Akwesasne Freedom School.

By 1974, we had begun to respond to requests from teachers for such intercultural sensitization, which gradually became sessions of training to intercultural education and finally a 45 hour course (1987–1989). We have been at the heart of the first document on intercultural education in Quebec in 1982, published by the "Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation."[35]

All this, until the Government of Quebec (as did the Canadian multicultural policy) redefined intercultural education as the way to school the immigrants and the ethnics and finally to "integrate" (we say assimilate) them into a culture of "citizenship" claiming to be supra-cultural. It did so under the beautiful name of "rapprochement interculturel," (instead of multiculturalism). From that moment on, requests for intercultural training, on the part of schools diminished: the new pass-word was integration of immigrants/ethnics, to the common culture of citizenship (supposedly a-cultural!).

Since 1993, we have begun to strongly relativize the modern institutional culture of education (i.e. schooling) from the point of view of the educational culture of the grass-roots, the commons[36] and traditional Western culture, inviting all to become aware that the knowledge and wisdom of peoples cannot be reduced to academic and school knowledge, nor can it be confined to what comes from such a milieu, and that this academic and school knowledge is only complementary to another knowledge, more important, the knowledge of life, the wisdom of love,[37] a knowledge that cannot be defined or acquired by power, calculation, prediction, control, (in short by modern science, not even the human and administrative sciences).

b) A radical relativization of the Western/Modern Political Culture

All along our journey, we have tried to emphasize that the statocratic system and the system of democracy are not universal requisites, (cultural universals), but also that there exist and have always existed other "political" cultures and systems, which even if they do not go by the name of "political" in the languages of these peoples, are as valid and still have a right to exist, and that one should encourage a dialogue of mutual fecundation between these radically different "political" cultures.

Concretely, this awareness of *existing* alternatives to the Nation State and to democracy, has first taken place through our contact with traditional Gandhian India, and with traditional American Native peoples, and then with traditional African "political" culture (let us not confuse traditional with the modern notion of that which is past or "passé"!).

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35. See Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation, *L'Éducation interculturelle* (Government of Quebec, 1982), where we distinguished between a hospitality of integration and a hospitality of acceptance of different cultures.

36. See issue 119 (1993) "A new source of hope, the margins"; issue 123 (1994): Interculturalism in Quebec: the philosophies and practices of non-government organizations." See also our seminars on "Pluralism and Society, Pluralism and Identity. Other approaches."

37. We are preparing some issues of *Interculture* on this topic, very neglected in the present system of bureaucratic and scientific planning.

One can find accounts of all this in our following writings (*Interculture* and elsewhere):

On the Native Indian Political Tradition:

1979 "The political self-determination of Native peoples." (Issues 62-65)

R. Vachon. "The political self-determination and traditional Native political culture." (Issue 64)

T. Kubat. "Political circles. native Indian views on Politics and Social Authority." (Issue 65)

1983 R.V. *Nations Autochtones en Amérique du Nord* (Fides, Montreal)

1991 R.V. "The Mohawk Nation and its Communities." (Issue 113)

1992 R.V. "A contrast between Mohawk and Western political cultures." (Issue 114)

1993 R.V. "The Mohawk Dynamics of Peace." (Issue 118)

1995 R.V. "Guswenta or the Intercultural Imperative. Intercultural basis of Peace between the Mohawk Nation and North American States." Issues 127-128-129)

(Others, forthcoming in *Interculture*)

On Indic traditional politics:

1981 "Learning from the juridico-political system of India." (Issue 72)

1983 V. Bhave. "The Way of Sarvodaya." (Issue 80)

1988 A. Nandy. "Culture, the State and the rediscovery of Indian politics." (Issue 99)

On Traditional African Politics:

1979 Nkiwane. "African Law and Politics in the New Quebec." (Issue 65)

E. LeRoy. "Les droits africains traditionnels et la modernité." (Issue 65)

1993 "Learning from Black Africa." (Issue 78)

Other:

1983 Kusano. "Naturalism in the Japanese view of the socio-political order." (Issue 80)

1985 N. Jamieson. "The Traditional Vietnamese Village." (Issue 86)

This radical relativization started in India in 1970 through our contact with Gandhians who (like Gandhi) did not believe in the Nation-State and criticized the notions of sovereignty, representation, majority, wanted national independence but not a nation-State. In 1978 we learned that traditional native peoples considered themselves neither as Canadians, nor as Quebecois, but as members of their respective kinship nations (stateless), living on what they called Turtle Island (the American continent). We have

always defended that position through many very concrete actions.[38] We have done the same with Black Africa[39] and India.[40] In 1983, we held a seminar with Panikkar on the meeting of political cultures.[41]

We have always refused to reduce the "political" either to Nation-State, or to citizenship or to the so-called civilized culture.We consider that it is totalitarianism to give mankind a choice only between totalitarianism and democracy, as if there were no valid bases of social order outside of democracy, the nation-State, the sovereignty of Man over the universe and his own destiny.

It seems to us that a country is free in the measure in which it is not subject to the sovereignty of anyone, (another's, or one's own). One is free in the measure in which one is neither heteronomous, autonomous, but ontonomous. It has been a question for us of discovering the terrifying meaning of freedom, which consists in being free both from exterior coercion and from interior will. It has been a question of disconnecting the "common good," both from its definition (the public good, citizenship) and governance... We have begun to understand that human conviviality is not based in the last analysis, on pure reason, and cannot be the result of a perfect rational plan.

The current notion of politics which limits itself to the problematic established by the modern State and democracy, locks us into a vicious circle. By reducing the field of politics to the latter, politics is reduced to the means for conquering or maintaining sovereign power.[42]

c) A radical relativization of the Western/Modern legal culture of human rights

A particular social order, in order to be valid, can be based on something other than human rights, as is the case for a great part of the traditions of Mankind.[43] We are thinking, for example of *Dharma*[44] for Indic and Buddhist countries, of *Li* for China, of *Kayanerekowa* [45]for the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, etc. Human rights are not a cultural universal, nor a human invariant. There are societies and social orders which are not based on the notion of *Rights*, but on other presuppositions and notions, which are not necessarily totalitarian, even if, like Human Rights, they also have their weaknesses and limits. Throughout our journey, we have tried to acknowledge the existence and legitimacy of these foundations, radically different, and to encourage a dialogue of cross-fertilization between Human Rights and *Dharma*, Human Rights and *Li*, Human Rights and *Kayanerekowa*, etc.

In 1979, we already were talking about the incomplete justice of the civilized and published our first issue (65) on "Law, Politics and Cultures," with articles on the Inuit, Iroquois and African systems. In 1982, we took a stand before the International Association for Human Rights, inviting it to respect Native peoples' rights on the basis of the latter's traditional legal culture. From 1987 to 1990, we gave 43 seminars on Legal Pluralism (Rights and *Dharma*) to the staff of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and of External Affairs Canada[46] and another to the International Board of Directors of the Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development. In 1991 we organized a colloquium and published its report *White Justice and Native Justice* (IIM 1991). We gave a communication (about relativizing Human Rights) to the 1st Congress on Legal Pluralism in Latin America, held in Mexico City in 1995. We have been collaborating along the same lines, since 1979, with pioneers of Legal Pluralism in France (Norbert Rouland and Étienne LeRoy, Director of Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Juridique de Paris, and recently with Christian Eberhard from the same Laboratory.)[47] More recently, we have organized in

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38. For example, our refusal to identify IIM as primarily a Quebecois or Canadian Institute (see above), our many public stands in White courts of justice, in the media (written and visual), in public talks to the Parti Quebecois and the Governments of Quebec and Canada, in our analysis of Quebec and Canada as pluralistic societies, and in our intimate relations, in particular with the traditional Mohawk Nation and the Six Nations Confederacy. There is a whole history here to be written...

39. We have always preferred to identify the Africans (with whom we entered in contact), not primarily by their nation-State (v.g. Mali, Cameroon, Zaire) but by the sub-cultures to which they more deeply belonged, i.e. their first "political" belongingness, v.g. as Senufo, Miyenka, Bantu, Tetela, etc.

40. We have always understand, that for peoples of India, they do not belong just to the modern Nation-State of India, but to the Mother: *Bharat Varsha*.

41. Which has become a book to be published soon under the title "Le Métapolitique."

42. We are preparing an issue of *Interculture* entitled "For an Intercultural philosophy of politics," which will further illustrate what we are here trying to say.

43. R. Vachon, "The incomplete justice of the civilized" (*Interculture*, issue 65 (1979)).

R. Panikkar, "Are human Rights a Western Concept?" (*Interculture*, issues 82-84 (1984)).

R. Vachon, "L'Étude du pluralisme juridique, une approche diatopique et dialogale" in *Journal of Legal Pluralism* (No. 29, 1996, pp. 163–173).

R. Vachon, "Human Rights and Legal Pluralism," (unpublished, available at IIM).

44. On *Indic Dharma*:

R. Lingat. "The classical law of India" (reviewed in *Interculture*, issue 72 (1972) under the title: "Learning from the juridico-political system of India."

K. Das, "Human Rights, Development and India" *Interculture*, issue 79 (1983).

45. *On the Native Legal Universe, see:*

N. Rouleau, "Le Droit Esquimau face à l'Occident" *Interculture*, issue 65 (1979).

R. Vachon, "Native Law and native Rights II" *Interculture*, issue 75–76 (1982).

R. Vachon, "The Mohawk Dynamics of Peace" *Interculture*, issue 118 (1993)

R. Vachon, "Guswenta" *Interculture*, issue 128 (1995).

46. The text is available at IIM and a video of that seminar is circulating locally and in Francophone and Anglophone Africa. See also our issue 103 (1989) on the "Challenge of Collective Rights of minorities and Native peoples."

47. See *Interculture*, issues 116-117 (1992) on "The Right of Conquest."

October 1998, a local seminar on Human Rights in a pluralistic society where we continue to do their radical relativization.

d) A radical relativization of the modern/Western economic culture (see also No. 3 above)

In 1982 (issue 77) we began through our writings, a radical relativization, particularly of the modern/Western economic culture, by speaking about cross-cultural economics. First, we asked if our question itself, namely that of the economy, was the appropriate question, many peoples not speaking in those terms, v.g. in India: *arthasastra, grihastasastra*, etc. We thus questioned the very notion of economy, not as a conceptual problem, but with regard to the function that it intends to play. The economy would then be that order which governs the human home. It was a question of relativizing the pan-economic ideology of monetization, competition, technocratization of culture, by its demonetization, its decompetitionalization and its detechnocratization, and by recentering it outside of the majority into personal dignity, outside of the global into the regeneration of the local commons.

In 1988 (issue 98 on Economicide) we began to be aware that outside the Western economy of exchange, there is an economy of the gift and of communal reciprocity among the Kanaks of New Caledonia. Soon, we became aware of the existence of this economy of communal reciprocity not only in the ancient Greek world of "*oikonomia*" (the economy of the hearth), but in Latin America (the *Comida*), in India (the *jajmani* system), among the Chinese, the Africans, the Native peoples (one bowl, one ladle), what could be called the kinship economy, the family, clan, tribal, local economy.

In 1989, with Susan Hunt (issue 102, 1989) and De Romaña (issues 104-105, 1989) and Gustavo Esteva, we began to discover this whole universe that some call the alternative economy, others the autonomous, informal, vernacular economy, that others name alternatives to the economy, others the indigenous economy, or the gift economy, and for which different peoples of the world have different names, conceptions, practices. We published a series of issues entitled "Endogenous and vernacular alternatives" (issues 119, 120, 122, 124, 126). All this resulted in the publication of issues 130, 131, 132, 134, respectively entitled "The post-modern era. Some signs and priorities" (1996), Grass-roots post-modernism" (1996), "Ecosophy and Silvilisation" (1997) and "A Life through Art" (1998).

We also have a long tradition at IIM not only of meals prepared according to cultures, but we have sought alternative ways to money in order to insure the life of IIM and our personal survival: the dimension of family sharing, co-operation, permanent and faithful commons. We have relied a lot also on the financial support of persons, communities, foundations who believed in this type of alternative economic commitment, in the importance of "disconnecting justice from development, law from legality," and of emancipating from "*homo economicus* and *technologicus*" in order to improve our quality of life, of disconnecting freedom from all sovereignty, that of others and ours.

Here is a list of the Interculture issues that have tried to introduce to alternative economics (endogenous and vernacular) either outside of the West or in the West:

Outside the West:

India	J. Spellman *et al.*, "Promotion of Indigenous Resources" #93 (1986)
N. Caledonia	D. Temple, "Economicide" #98 (1988)
Mexico	G. Esteva, "A new source of hope: the margins" #119 (1993)
Maghreb	H. Zaoual, "The Economy and symbolic sites of Africa" #122 (1994)
Andes	"The regeneration of Andean Culture" #126 (1995).

In the West:

S. Hunt, "The Movement for Alternative Economics" #102 (1989)

De Romaña, "The Autonomous Economy" I-II, #104-105 (1989)

M. Rahnema, "Global Poverty: a pauperizing myth" #111 (1991)

D. Bedford, S. Pobihushchy "Towards a People's Economy: The Co-op Atlantic Experience" #120 (1993)

A. McIntosh & al., "The Scottish Highlands in Colonial and Psychodynamic Perspective" #124 (1994)

W. Sachs, A. Nandy, R. Panikkar, "The Post-Modern era. Some signs and priorities" #130 (1996)

E. Goldsmith & al., "Ecosophy and Silvilisation" #132 (1997)

E. Wesselow, "A Life through art" #134 (1998)

It was not for us simply a matter of writing and talking about relativizing paneconomism, demonitizing culture, and embracing an informal and vernacular economy, but of living it daily, right at the heart of our Institute, by drawing inspiration from many traditional cultures (Hindu, Native, African, Arabic, Western, etc.), based on simplicity of life, non-possession, the gift economy and communitarian reciprocity, refusing to monetize everything, to judge everything primarily by money standards. This would be a long a complex story to write. Let us limit ourselves here to a few examples. Thus we a) never required a fee to be an active member of the IIM; b) during 18 years, there was no entrance fee to participate in the regular Friday evenings and we never paid the speakers; c) for years, the founders-directors took either no or a very small remuneration, inferior to that of employees; d) all employees have freely accepted to take lower salaries than conventional mainstream ones, in order to be able to hire other people to do IIM's alternative intercultural work; e) we never evaluated the value and success of IIM primarily on the basis of its financial status and security; f) we have established open work conditions that are rarely found elsewhere, v.g. celebrating the cultural and religious feast days peculiar to each one of the

team's members, prolonged vacations, possibility of bringing one's children at the workplace, taking into consideration, in our communications, the different cultural ways of communicating of the members; all adults taking responsibility of everyone's child: children are welcome in public activities; during 10 years, daily meals from different cultures are taken in common at IIM, in cross-cultural dialogue, etc.

e) A radical relativization of modern/Western medical culture, of its conception of health, of its attitudes towards suffering and death, and of its cultural practices of health and social work.

From 1976 to 1980[48] we introduce to the existence of other medical traditions, to other attitudes towards health, sickness, suffering, in Hindu and Buddhist cultures,[49] in China,[50] in Black Africa,[51] among Native Peoples.[52] We add critiques of modern medicine[53] and a bibliography.[54] We take courses in yoga, tai-chi and some of us receive Oriental medicine treatment and experience some traditions of Native Indian medicines (sweat lodge, peace pipe, etc.)

Beginning in 1982, our Director K. Das, starts giving the first intercultural training sessions to social and health workers, inviting them not only to be sensitive to cultural differences and to the existence of other cultural notions of health and medicine, but to develop an intercultural partnership approach (see further) where one calls also upon the specific cultural know-how of practitioners and experts from other traditions. Since then, these training sessions are in great demand, requests coming from both professional and community organizations working in the field of health and social work. Miss K. Das plays a role of teacher, consultant and intercultural mediator.[55]

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48. First we published 3 issues entitled "Intercultural Medicine" #54 (1976), #56 (1977), #67 (1980).

49. See Panikkar, "Four fundamental attitudes towards suffering" #54; Ghan Shyam Birla, "Dynamique de la santé d'après la chirologie hindoue" #56-101; K. Lipman, "The Buddhist Art of Healing" #54. See also R. Panikkar, "Religion and Medicine" #125.

50. See Dr. Huang "The Tai-Chi basis of Oriental Medicine" #67-101. "Some Chinese contributions to oriental Health Services" #54. K. Cohen, "L'énergie du souffle" #67.

51. See Sibomana, "Attitude à l'égard de la maladie en Afrique Noire" # 54.

52. See N'tsukw, "Les autochtones: mode de vie et de santé" #67. E. Benedict and T. Porter, "Native Indian Medicine Ways" #56.

53. See R. de Montvalon, "Vers la création d'une fondation internationale" No. 54, R. Legaria, "Western medicine as viewed by a Non-Westerner" No. 56, J.F. Coombs "Is modern medicine in conflict with natural law?" No. 67, and "Images of Health and Healing" No. 101.

54. See issue 54.

55. See issue 100 (1988) on Social Work and Cultural Pluralism, in particular the articles by C. Sterlin "The Homoethnic social worker in a Multicultural Context" and K. Das "Social Work and Cultural Pluralism in Quebec: some unexplored issues." See also further, note 84.

In 1988 (issue 101) we published "Images of health and healing" which includes an homage to Richard Grossinger and his contributions to medical anthropology, an article by G.S. Singh Birla and Stark on Psyche and Soma in Classical Hand Analysis (India) and an article by Huang and Stark on the way of *Tai Ji*.

In 1994 (issue 125) we publish a very important article by Panikkar on the non-duality between religion and medicine and on their ontonomous relationship, criticizing the conventional separation between both, and proposing a cross-fertilization not only between them, but also between ancient traditions and modern science.

For many years we have been doing research on the alternative knowledge and practices of health and curing in the Hindu and West-Indian communities of Montreal.

f) A radical relativization of the modern/Western notion of communication

In 1974 (issue 46) we start writing on the radical difference in the Western, Hindu, African worlds of communication. In 1977 (issue 57) we shall return to it under the forms of dialogue in the Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Native worlds. And as regards the Native Indian ways of communicating, we shall return to that topic in 1991 (issue 110), focusing on White/Native dialogue; it contains an article by Bob Thomas (Cherokee) and R. Wax (Westerner), both anthropologists, on "American Indians and Whites: some sources of misunderstanding."

In 1987 (issue 94), you will find articles on politeness, terms of address, and the process of social relations in the Vietnamese culture.

Throughout our history, we have tried to make room within IIM and its activities, and also in its internal organization and practice, for the radically different cultural forms of communicating, of speaking or not in public, of doing or not doing publicity, of entering into communication, of sitting together, of looking or not at each other, of entering into and exiting from dialogue, of respecting age hierarchies and the fundamental bases of social encounter, etc.

g) A radical relativization of the modern notions of person, family, community. An intercultural approach.

The IIM has a long tradition of not reducing the person to the individual, the family and community to a "free association of individuals, nor the ontonomy of life to autonomy, as the modern conception too generally tends to do. The latter has a tendency to reduce the human being to a sovereign and autonomous being, as if it were the ultimate principle and purpose of existence through its own "choices," "options," "life-projects."

The IIM has tried to emphasize the fact that there exist throughout the world, and even at the heart of the Western tradition, radically alternative notions of the person, the family, the community. All of this has not only transformed our notions of person, family, community and enriched them

with an intercultural perspective, but awakened to other languages besides those of person, family, community, v.g. *jati*, totemic clans, *lakou*, etc.

Illustrations of all this can be found throughout the writings of IIM, v.g. issues 92 and 94 on the Vietnamese Family and Vietnamese social relations, constant references to the notion of ontonomy, distinct from that of autonomy and heteronomy (see issues 125, 127, etc.); the brief of IIM to the City of Montreal, entitled "La regénération du communautaire dans un esprit interculturel" (1990).[56] Illustrations could also be given throughout the daily practise of IIM as an organism.

h) A radical relativization of the modern notions "equal opportunity" and "fight against racial, cultural, religious discrimination."

When modern culture speaks of "equal opportunity" and of "the fight against racial, etc., discrimination" its aim is generally to bring people of different colours, cultures and religions "to be like everybody else," according to the homogenous (mono-cultural) standards of the mainstream ideology, namely the modern culture of development, human rights, citizenship, etc. The racial, cultural, religious, differences are then seen as obstacles, deficiencies, to be surmounted, and that must disappear as much as possible, or at least should be seen as secondary and trivial.

The IIM however, has always insisted on possible alternatives (to these modern notions), namely the equal opportunity to be culturally different and to live according to cultural criteria and paradigms which are not necessarily those of development and of modernity, In that sense, racial, cultural and religious differences are perceived positively as possible chances, ways of liberation (and something to be acknowledged and enhanced), as opposed to the flattening and standardizing totalitarianism of modern culture.[57]

Conclusion

Let us conclude this portion of our text with a quotation from R. Panikkar:

> "The dream that one can serve two masters and have a peaceful coexistence between a modern scientific ideology and traditional cultures betrays a superficial idea of both traditional cultures and modern science. Cultures are not folklore, nor is modern science a mere mental experiment..."

> The dilemma is this: *either* we believe that the entire history of humanity has a single line of development so that our present

day knowledge supersedes the wisdom of all previous civilizations, *or* we recognize that the unfolding of human creativity may follow paths and take forms which we cannot enframe into one single system.

In the first case, we have to be ready to defend the opinion that other cultures are bound to disappear and give place to our scientific culture. We may proceed with respect and without forcing the rhythm, but with no euphemism or hope which would allow them peaceful coexistence or at least a certain marginal existence.

In the second case, we have to walk towards a healthy pluralism which would allow for the conviviality and coexistence of cultures and civilizations recognizing that no single culture, religion or tradition has the right to claim to represent the universal range of human experience, nor the power to reduce the diversity of humanity to one single form, broad as this may be."[58]

The latter is the fascinating task that IIM has undertaken, according to its measure. "Human freedom is not only the individual power of making choices (among *given* possibilities). It entails also the cosmic power to collaborate in deciding how to shape the destiny of humanity..."

Chapter 7

A radically alternative interculturalism

First, because of its radically different notion of culture (A), then because of its emphasis on the great cultural areas (B), finally by virtue of its original notion of interculturalism (C), which the IIM does not consider as a luxury but as question of survival, since interculturalism and pluralism is not a mere human concoction, but an imperative of Reality itself (D).

A) Its notion of culture (and its dimensions)[59]

It is a non-reductionistic and non-residual notion of culture. Culture is inseparable (but distinct) from nature, philosophy, religion; it is a notion which stems from a deeper and invisible stratum than that of a conceptual and intelligible framework; in fact, we are dealing here with the encompassing myth of a collectivity or of a group in a given moment of space and time, and which is not a mere result of our reason and will, but a gift of life.

A1) A specific form of human nature

For IIM and its journal, the human being is constitutively a cultural being. [Cultures are not mere specific forms of a genius called human civiliza-

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56. See also K. Das, R. Vachon, *L'Hindouisme* (Guérin 1987), Jos Augustin, *Profil Culturel Haïtien* (IIM 1983; Julio Fernandes, *Profil Culturel Portugais*, IIM, 1985; Yaya Diallo, *Profil Culturel Africain*, IIM, 1986.

57. See for example our "Interculturalism against racism" *op. cit.* where we ask the question: "could the modern fight against racism and racial, cultural, religious discrimination be racist?" (Available in English at IIM.)

58. R. Panikkar, *Modern Science and Technology are neither Neutral nor Universal* op. cit. p. 209.

59. For a more thorough presentation see *Interculture* issue 127 (1997).

tion, nor abstract species of a supreme genus which would be human culture (which exists only as an abstraction).] So the human being is always in a concrete culture, whatever may be his activity, even the most secret one. He is a cultural animal. Culture is not extrinsic to him, but natural. Human nature cannot therefore be a-cultural, or trans-cultural (in the sense of supracultural, i.e. above all cultures). In that sense, transculturalism doesn't exist. [There is no transcultural and universal culture (except in some particular context where it is valid). There is not, nor can be, such a thing, as one culture only.] One cannot reduce everything to culture, but everything is cultural. Man is a being who is naturally cultural—or culturally natural. One cannot separate nature and culture, but one should not identify them either. They are distinct. Culture is not a mere accident of Man, but it is not his substance either; it is not identical with human nature. Therefore, there cannot be anti-cultural cultures.

We are therefore seeking to overcome the dichotomy between culture and nature, by insisting on their non-duality, thus avoiding to turn culture, on the one hand into an intemporal substance which is not subject to change, on the other hand into a mere result of human concoction/construction, a matter of the human reason and will, someone's decision and life project.

A2) The IIM does not claim that its notion of culture is universal and transcultural

It is aware that the words *culture* and *interculture* come from a particular culture—a western one—as do the words philosophy, religion, tradition, cosmovision, myth, science, economy, politics, law, etc., and that other peoples have their own words which not only are radically different in meaning, but which come from worlds and horizons that are irreducible to the Western world and horizon, so that they are not necessarily translatable into Western words and vice-versa. Interculturalism is therefore problematic.[60]

But this does not stop the IIM from proposing culture and interculturalism as symbols which could make intercultural communication possible, without trying to turn these words into the unique possible way of intercultural communication. In brief, culture itself is not a cultural universal nor a human invariant.[61]

A3) The IIM and its journal do not subscribe to a restrictive, reductionist and residual notion of culture, as held by modern society:

a) Therefore, it is not a mere sector of life, next to the economic, political, social, religious, natural, etc., sectors.

That is why IIM says that the human being is always in a concrete "economic culture," a "political culture," a social/familial culture, etc., not meaning by that necessarily or primarily, for example, that it is only a variety (species) of, or perspective on, either the modern/Western economic

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60. See R. Panikkar further.

61. There are no cultural universals but there are human invariants (see R. Panikkar further).

culture, or the modern/Western political culture of the Nation-State and Democracy, etc., for there can never be one universal language.

b) culture for us, is not reducible either to art, literature, theater, poetry entertainment (recreation), nor cultural to so-called "cultivated," "civilized," "refined," "urban," "schooled," "professional," or "academic," "learned," etc.

c) it is not reducible to immigrants, refugees,[62] or even to ethnic associations and minorities, or ethnic communities (in short to ethnicity!), even if the ethnic dimension can be part of it.

d) it is not reducible to folklore, nor to traditions that an evolutionist mentality has too often a tendency to define as being static, fixated, backwards and primitive, as if they necessarily had to convert to modernity in order to be dynamic. In fact, IIM likes to use the word tradition as a positive homeomorphic equivalent of culture, all the more so since many cultures speak of their traditions in a dynamic and regenerative sense, which does not necessarily have to embrace development and modernity, etc., to be dynamic.[63]

e) it is not reducible to State nationality, v.g. Canadian, Quebecois, U.S.A., Italian, Malian, Mexican, Portuguese, Pakistani, India (as a State). There exist Nations not only without States but within a State and sometimes across many States.

f) it is not reducible to a label, to a baggage, to a sociological category, to a mere conceptual question of a definition, of organization and clear objectives, nor to a conceptual, intelligible framework, to a system of thinking, of meaning and signs, or to a theory. It is not a purely subjective and/or objective matter, or even the simple result of human reason and will, of some common human project, of some people's historical heritage or collective choice. Cultures are rather ontological fields (worlds or ways of being, universes) that we do not claim to be subjective chimeras, but new dimensions of Reality, through which we may access the human being. Hence the primordial place that we give to experience which does not allow itself to be either objectified nor subjectified.

A4) For us, it pertains to a deeper and invisible stratum—no less real,— that of myth in the sense of an horizon, i.e. of what is obvious, of what goes without saying, of what I believe without believing that I believe in it, of what gives meaning without being the meaning.[64] Hence we explicitate it

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62. Hence the importance that we give to the non-statist, non-citizen culture of the Native and Quebecois peoples, to the cultures of the peoples of this country, who are not reducible to be nothing but immigrants or citizens of a Nation-State or of the Modern Western political culture of a Nation-State.

63. See issues 85 and 134 of *Interculture*.

64. "Myth offers us the basis from which the question as question makes sense. It gives us the horizon of intelligibility where we must situate any idea, any conviction or any act of consciousness so that they may be caught by the mind. It must not be confused with mythologies, mythologoumena, mythemes. Myth here is what makes possible a narration of myths, a science about myths, more or less explicit groups of myths and the themes themselves as rational translations of what the myths them-

as "the encompassing myth of a collectivity or group at a given moment of space and time; that which makes plausible, i.e. credible, the world in which we live, where we are.[65]

IIM oftentimes speaks about culture as being the total knowledge and know-how of a people. But culture is much more than merely a system of meaning-and-signs or merely a perspective of a people on an objective world, or only our convictions and some act of consciousness (our *cosmology*: our *logos* about the *cosmos* (the word of our thinking, our conception of the cosmos). It includes primarily what we believe (without reflexively believing that we believe in it), namely the presuppositions, i.e. what we are not reflexively aware of, and which is disclosed and revealed to us only through an encounter which different cultures. Culture is therefore a gift, a given, a world, a universe which expresses itself (a *K*osmology (*sic*)), i.e. the *logos* of a *kosmos* (the word of being) which manifests itself to us as such thanks to *mythos* (invisible) which makes being visible to us.

A5) The triple dimension of every culture (according to the tree of culture) (issue 127)

- its morphological dimension   (foliage)

- its structural dimension   (trunk)

- its mythical primordial matricial dimension   (hidden roots)

The first two pertain to the *logos* (the word of thinking: our thought systems, our beliefs, our mythologies). The third, pertains to *mythos*: the word of being. It is free from thinking and intelligibility, but pertains to the mythico-symbolic consciousness, which insures a profound continuity and is at the source of creativity and of its dynamism.

A6) Culture is simultaneously a text *(moved by reason), a* context *(moved by the will) and a* texture *(anterior to text and context). Culture is therefore not the mere fruit of our reason and will; it is given to us by life, it is a gift, what we receive or believe we are receiving; the ultimate priority belongs to the texture, to the given, to what we receive or believe we are receiving.*

A7) A holistic and encompassing philosophical notion.

The encompassing myth of a people or group at a given time and space, includes its experience, the expression of the experience, the interpretation that it gives to this experience, and hence its know-how, its knowledge, its cosmovision, its beliefs, its myths, its system of thought and or organization, its deep values, structures, institutions, its political/economic/legal/socio-familial/educational/medical/religious/culture, its cosmology, anthropology, theology,ontology, its faith, hope, consciousness and love, its

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selves allow to appear as translatable. Myth here is the horizon which gives the condition of intelligibility of everything that is subsequently said." (See Panikkar, further.)

65. See issue 127 of *Interculture.*

ethics, its practices and finally the invisible source (the encompassing myth) which makes all of this possible.

A8) We seek to overcome every dichotomy between a) culture and religion b) culture and faith c) culture and politics d) culture and economics e) mythos and logos, etc. by insisting on all of the latter's non-duality, radical relativity and irreducibility to each other.

A9) We seek to overcome also all dichotomy between religion, philosophy, culture. We can neither separate them nor reduce one to the other. Here again, non-duality, radical relativity.

B) Emphasis on the great cultural areas

Throughout its history, IIM and its journal have concentrated their attention, not exclusively but primarily on what could be called the Great cultural areas or galaxies/phyla, such as the Asiatic world (Indic, Hindu-Buddhist, Sino-Vietnamese), the Western world (Euro-Mediterranean), the Black African world, and the Native Indian world (especially of the Americas), each of these great cultures having developed from areas (*topoi*) relatively distant and independent from each other, during millennia, and each being a genus which includes many specific sub-cultures and ethnic groups within its galaxy.

For example, when we met French, English, Italian, Spanish, Germans of Quebec, Canada and elsewhere, we centered our attention not primarily on the French, English, Italian, etc., or whatever nationality, but on the thousand year old primordial tradition common to that great Euro-Western cultural area, which is radically different from the thousand year old primordial traditions of Native America, Africa, Asia.

We thus refused to reduce culture to a difference of nationality (France, Italy, etc.) or to ethnic, folkloric, regional differences within the great Euro-Western area. We did the same with regard to Black Africa, South Asia, the Native Indian world, etc. For example, when encountering an African immigrant, we did not perceive him primarily as an immigrant, a francophone or anglophone, or even as a Quebecois, a Canadian, a Malian, a Senegalese, but a someone coming from the great African cultural galaxy and matrix and its sub-culture, either Bantu, Wolof, Senufo, etc. For there is an historico-mythical depth to these great cultural matrices, a depth which escapes all definition and which is at the source of their common creative dynamism, which, certainly, can take many diverse and constantly changing forms through time and space (i.e. specific ethno-cultural cultures).

We have had the tendency to practise intercultural dialogue, primarily, although not exclusively, at the level of relations between these great cultural "genuses." This is what we call diatopical dialogue.[66]

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66. See *Interculture* issue 50 and Krieger, further.

C) Its original notion of interculturalism

The word interculturalism is often used nowadays as a catch-all term to express everything that takes place in relations between persons, communities, peoples from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds and their value systems.

Thus, it is taken as synonymous with an ideology, theory, model or system like those either a) of multiculturalism, b) of cultural perspectivism, c) of the comparative studies of cultures, d) of "integration/inculturation" of immigrants/"ethnics" either to a dominant and/or a common public culture, or to what is considered as a neutral, universal, transcultural point of view, v.g. citizenship, civil society, some religion/spirituality, etc. Sometimes it is taken as synonymous with either e)culturally sensitive intervention in view of a "better" compliance, or with f) political tolerance of certain differences in a plural/pluralistic democracy, or with g) ethnic and anthropological studies, or with h) the fight against racial, cultural, ethnic discrimination and for equal opportunity for all citizens (from whatever ethno-cultural background, to have access to the system and its power). Sometimes it is synonymous i) with some ideology/theory of a necessary metissage/hybridization of cultures in a *tertium quid* (a rational common denominator where the former differences disappear). In short it is synonymous with some "intercultural" system or theory.

The IIM's notion of interculturalism is not a catch-all term, and is radically different from all these conventional notions of interculturalism in the following ways:

C1. IIM and its journal believe that one should avoid using the word intercultural to mean the study (or the approach) of a culture or of relations between different cultures, on the basis of the categories of only one of them.

a) *Interculturalism is not cultural tourism, i.e. my knowledge of other cultures, but the change of spectacles (glasses) or window. It is approaching Reality in the light not only of my culture, but also in that of many other cultures, i.e. in the light of the different wisdoms of love (of peoples).*

So it is not the little academic game of cultural exoticism where one studies other cultures as objects of curiosity. It is not *my study* of other cultures, v.g. *my knowledge* (as a Westerner) of the Orient, or (as a Christian) of Hinduism, or as Hindu (of the West and of Christianity). It is not either my professional knowledge (as a scholar) of folk knowledge and practices (or vice-versa), but precisely the change of glasses, of windows.

It is not expanding the scope of my knowledge, interpreting the world with my categories, as if one could, on the basis of only one language, one culture (or supra-culture), understand the whole human phenomenon, as if from one perspective (either Christian, Hindu, scientific, or informal, etc.) I could understand the whole world situation.

It is not thinking that within my framework, there are interesting things to know, but to change the categories themselves and use the categories of the other culture to see Reality, and, fundamentally, my reality. It is not seeing others, but seeing (or trying to see with the spectacles of the other, in order to have, from his window, a more complete, convincing and realistic vision of Reality. This new method *"sui generis"* of interculturality, we call *diatopical dialogue.*

b) *Interculturalism is not: expanding, inculturating, globalizing my culture, i.e. transferring it elsewhere, expanding its market.* We are not saying that one cannot proselytize without falling into cultural absolutism. One can want to share a value, seek to convince that what one believes is true, and it is not necessary for that to believe that one possesses the absolute truth. For example, one can seek to spread one's values of democracy, human rights and technology, but it should be done in a spirit of genuine respect for the other culture and with a minimum of mutual knowledge which is not possible without sympathy for, and support of that other culture. Interculturalism is therefore not cultural colonisation or cultural conquest, i.e. seeking to replace the other's culture by one's own or subordinating it to one's own, or trying to integrate within the presently dominating culture, all the riches that other cultures possess.

C2) IIM and its journal believe that one should avoid using the word interculture to mean the study (the approach) of a culture, or relations between different cultures, on the basis of a point of view that one considers neutral or universal (a-cultural, trans-cultural, supra-cultural).[67]

a) *Interculturalism is not mere perspectivism or multiperspectivism, i.e. where we would have different perspectives favoring various options regarding one single and same question.*

In fact, there is no such thing as an *objective* Reality (or culture), a Reality (or culture) *in-itself*, about which we each would have subjective visions. Reality, like culture, is not a mere object because we are constitutively immersed in them as subjects. In fact, culture, like Reality, is not an object, but what allows us to see (cultures) as object(s).

For example, interculturalism does not consist in seeing how democracy, human rights, economics (a Western-modern notion), law (a Western notion), etc.,[68] are lived in other countries and cultures.

b) *Interculturalism, for us, is the recognition that the questions that human beings ask, are not the same everywhere. It is acknowledging that there are no universal questions, no cultural universals, even if there are human invariants.[69]*

Claiming the truth and validity of one's own culture and values, is not equivalent to claiming their universality. The latter belongs of course to a powerful *forma mentis*, but not a universal one.[70]

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67. See above what has been said about science which is neither neutral, nor universal.

68. How health, autonomy, suffering, death, etc. (all of them Western notions), are lived within other cultures.

69. See further, R. Panikkar, *Philosophy, Religion, Culture*. See also further C3b.

70. The cultures that tend to identify the human being with *logos* (I am not speaking of rationalism) tend to universalization; if the essence of Man is his rationality and if

c) *It is not the comparative study of cultures* (comparative philosophy, comparative religion, comparative mysticism, comparative mythology, comparative law, comparative economics, comparative politics, etc.) *but a contrasting, imparative or dialogical approach.* For us, it is *intercultural philosophy, not as a new species of philosophy but as a new genus.*[71]

An authentic comparative philosophy would require a neutral, impartial *fulcrum*, external to philosophy. Now, by definition, this does not exist: philosophy, as we would like to define it, is characterized by its claim of not admitting a higher instance which orders it or dominates it. That instance would then be the authentic philosophy.

Reason, which reigns with great honor in many a culture, cannot auto-consecrate itself monarch of all cultures, since Man and his culture is much more (not less) than his reason and will.

There cannot be a neutral comparison of myths, because one is always within a particular myth, and one cannot eliminate an ultimate horizon (the myth) whence one situates oneself in order to understand.

Interculturalism, for us, does not consist in comparing cultures and their mythologies (legends and sacred stories) in discovering their similitudes and differences; of course, one can find partial similarities and identities between certain cultures, but one cannot reduce cultures to the abstraction of a common denominator. One cannot compare what is incomparable and irreducible to a common denominator. One cannot compare, i.e. put together (*com*) on an equal footing (*par*), what claims to be unique, ultimate, incomparable.

Interculturalism for us is rather the *contrasting, imparative, dialogical approach and which is radically critical of the intercultural enterprise itself.*

Contrasting:

To contrast is not to compare; pluralism and interculturalism is not preoccupied with multiplicity or diversity as such, but with the incommensurability of human constructions with regard to the subject of homologous questions.

Imparative:

The approach is not comparative but imparative (from medieval Latin: *imparare*, to learn), i.e. an open philosophical attitude, ready to *learn from* other cultures/philosophies of the world, without pretending to compare them from an objective neutral, transcendent point of view. It is a matter of being ready to undergo the philosophical experience of other peoples, of

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reason is one, every rational truth must then be universal. But not all cultures identify Man to *logos* (to either rationality, intelligence, or consciousness).

71. See R. Panikkar *op. cit.* further. Also R. Panikkar "Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of Religion," in *Man and World* 3–4 (1980), 357–383, and "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" in Ed. Larson, Deutsch, *Interpreting across Boundaries,* (Princeton University Press, 1988) pp. 116–136.

being constitutively ready to question the very foundations (the unconscious presuppositions) of one's own culture, without ever leaving the latter.

Dialogical:[72]

It is a dialogical approach, i.e. open not only to a dialectical confrontation and to a rational dialogue with another culture, but to a dialogue which goes *beyond logos*, and where the meeting takes place at the level of the *mythos* (see further). Moreover, it is an approach which seeks to form its philosophical vision of the world by systematically taking into consideration the whole of the human experience in as much as this is possible in a concrete situation.

And which remains radically critical of the whole of the enterprise itself. (see further D4 for examples)

d) *Interculturalism does not consist in abstracting from our culture, in putting it into brackets* (époché) suspending our own personal existential faith. On the contrary. Understanding another culture implies a total personal commitment and proceeding from that inner personal existential faith. It constitutes a growth in who we are (in our being). It is not an abstraction on the basis of an equally abstract mental power.[73]

C3) For us, interculturalism means taking an other culture seriously, as much as our own:

a) *being convinced that what it says is true (understanding as convincement),*[74] *believing in it.*

Our interculturalism says that I cannot understand another culture unless I change my cultural position (decentration and recentration), convert to the other culture in the sense of sharing the other culture, not as other, but as it understands itself (the other culture does not understand itself as other!). To understand the other is equivalent to experiencing the truth of that culture, to being personally persuaded of its truth and affirmations, to be convinced that what it says is true. If I am not convinced that, v.g. what the Native Indian culture says is true, I cannot understand the affirmation itself as understood by those who believe. To understand is to agree, to believe.

Understanding implies the whole person and is therefore not an impersonal and uncommittal act; it is not mere phenomenological objective description; the human intelligence cannot fulfill its function without the implicated love and commitment of the whole person who is trying to understand. Our presupposition is that understanding is not primarily the assimilation of an object in a subject-object framework, but a growth in consciousness, a true becoming, a coming-to-be of our own self, by embracing what, till now, was outside of ourselves. It is being born together (*co-naître ensemble*).

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72. For a more extensive exposé, see *Interculture* 129 on dialogical dialogue.

73. See further C4 Intercultural dialogue. Also R. Panikkar "*Époché* in the religious encounter" in *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Paulist Press, 1978) pp. 40–52.

74. See Krieger further.

One can no longer claim then that one understands all those people with who one disagree. The intellectual basis for a real tolerance is not the condescending attitude which claims to understand the other as being in error, all the while asserting that one respects his point of view, but the *consciousness that one does* not understand, hence is not able to pass judgment. This does not mean that there is no room for fighting against a false point of departure, but it provides the basis for a true intellectual freedom, and, moreover, posits the rules of the game on a basis which is acceptable to both sides, because established by both parties.

b) *acknowledging that there are no cultural universals;*

> "Cultural respect requires that we respect those ways of life with which we disagree or even those that we consider pernicious. We may be obliged to go as far as to combat these cultures, but we cannot elevate our own to the rank of universal paradigm in order to judge the other ones.
>
> It means recognizing that there are no cultural universals, i.e. concrete meaningful contents, valid for all the cultures of mankind throughout all times,"[75]

even if there are human invariants.

We are not denying the possibility that there may exist a certain transcultural validity of certain purely formal ways of thinking, v.g. the principle of non-contradiction (A cannot be non-A). But any universality here is formal and presupposes certain axioms (formal), postulated or acknowledged [v.g. that A remains constant in time and in my thinking, that non-A as negation of A corresponds to what is not A, and especially that my thought of A as well as of non-A corresponds to the extra-mental reality of A and non-A], presuppositions that have no reason to be recognized by all cultures.

But transculturality is not interculturality...

Each era has a certain dominant myth which allows some cultural universals, but which vary with time, with the displacement of dominant myths during a certain temporal or spatial period.[76]

C4) Our interculturalism presupposes an intracultural dialogue[77]

Interculturalism, as we have said, is to experience another culture, to accept the truth of the other culture. It is therefore allowing the other culture and its truth to affect me directly, to penetrate me, to change me, to transform me, not only in my answers to a question, but in my very questions, my presuppositions, my myths. It is therefore a meeting in myself of two convictions. The place of that meeting is the heart (not the head) of a person, within a personal synthesis which can intellectually be more or less perfect. There is no co-existence possible without a co-insistence, i.e. without their penetrating into each other's heart. It is therefore a matter of

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75. R. Panikkar, Religion, Philosophy and Culture (see further).

76. See R. Panikkar, "Politics and Interculturality," (forthcoming in issue 136).

77. See Krieger (further) and R. Panikkar *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, op. cit.

approaching the other from inside. It is contemplative listening to the other where one begins to see the possibilities not only of solutions, but of radically different fundamental questions. It is not therefore *cogitating* (*co-agitare*: co-agitating) the other, but *"connaître"*, i.e. *"co-naître,"* be born together, *"Esse est co-esse"*!

In other words, asking the other: who are you? is to ask ourself the question: who am I? i.e. letting the other ask us existential questions that we do not ask, thus letting him disclose the limits as well as the myths and presuppositions (of which we are unaware), and thus, taking the risk of being convinced, "converted" and radically transformed by the other at the very heart of our culture.

One thus perceives the other culture as an indispensable personal element in one's quest for truth. And this, in all realms of life (notions of person, family, economy, politics, social order, education, philosophy of life, etc.), since no one person, culture, religion, system, can reasonably claim to exhaust the human experience in its totality, nor the mystery of life.

I cannot under-stand, from my own set position; I must "stand-under," go under in order to embrace what is still outside of me. In true understanding, not only does the object disappear, but the subject also changes; it is a movement towards totality, an authentic act of being con-vinced, vanquished by a higher truth; it is a conversion, an opening which never closes up and invites us to pursue under-standing: it is turning towards a more comprehensive, thus more universal sphere of being, an openness to fullness. Another culture is taken seriously when the dialogue sparks an authentic culturo-religious reflection and even a culturo-religious crisis in the depths of the human heart. Our own myth then loses its uncontested character: we become aware of its limits and of its possibilities. It is through the other that we become capable of criticizing, renewing and deepening our own vision of the world. In that sense the intercultural dialogue is a religious act.

C5) Interculturalism, for us, is a middle-way between monoculturalism and multiculturalism (pluriculturalism), between monism and dualism. It affirms the irreducibility, the incommensurability and incompatibility of cultures, but not their incommunicability.

It is a middle way between, on the one hand, a well-intentioned monoculturalism which consists in accepting a broad scope of cultural differences, but on the unique backdrop of a common denominator: a universal and common reason and hence a unique intelligibility, and on the other hand, multiculturalism, pluriculturalism, i.e. a plurality of cultures, without connexion: apartheid, separation of cultures, parallelism of cultures, ghettoisation. A middle way between monism: (one God, one government, one language, one universal and common language) and dualism: plurality, atomization, isolated things in themselves, compartmentalized, autonomous or heteronomous selves.

Monoculturalism is lethal and asphyxiates cultures while multiculturalism is *de facto* impossible, condemns us to a stifling cultural apartheid, ghet-

toization and to a war of cultures.[78] The middle way of interculturalism affirms the irreducibility, incommensurability and incompatibility of cultures, but not their incommunicability, their separability and their absence of mutual conditioning. It affirms that interculturality is inherent to the human being and that a unique culture is as incomprehensible and impossible as a unique universal language and a man alone. All cultures are the result of a continuous mutual fecundation. (See R. Panikkar further.)

> "To think that cultures are incommunicable because they are incommensurable is a rationalistic presupposition which believes that only a common *ratio mensurabilis* can be the instrument of communication. To understand (*s'entendre*) each other does not mean to comprehend each other (*se comprendre*). Intelligibility is not the same thing as awareness (consciousness). One can be aware of something that is unintelligible."[79]

Man is more (not less) than reason and will.

C6. For the Institute, the ground of mutual understanding between cultures, is neither a neutral and universal ground, nor that of "common reasons," nor a "no man's land," nor an utopia, but a non-intelligible basis, i.e. the myth.

The authentic meeting between cultures does not necessarily take place half-way, but certainly outside the field of each one. We meet in a ground which is the property of neither the one nor the other, nor of both. There can be no mutual understanding between cultures without a non-intelligible basis to sustain and make possible our respective beliefs and our incommensurable expressions, our insight and our understanding. That is the myth.[80] It is the one which can serve as springboard for our intercultural alternatives.

We cannot understand each other unless we both "stand" under the same "thing," which is precisely a myth. We then agree in what we take for granted, in what we do not "speak out," or objectify. We place ourselves at the level of "I mean to say," indicating that we do not say what we mean (because it cannot be said). Meaning ultimately cannot be said: it has to be presupposed, under-stood. There is no under-standing without an un-understandable ground to support our understanding. Otherwise, there would not be meeting but phagocytosis or rejection.

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78. R. Panikkar, *Religion, Philosophy and Culture*, op. cit.

79. R. Panikkar, *Religion, Philosophy and Culture*, op. cit.

80. That is why an intercultural meeting requires a dialogical dialogue (beyond the *logos*), distinct from dialectical dialogue; but not opposed to the latter (see issue 129). Myth is the basis of all understanding, of all agreement. When we disagree, it is because we do not understand one other. To understand is to agree. We cannot agree in accepting contradictory statements, but we can agree in accepting the fact not to understand one another. Ultimately we can only agree in what we take for "granted," i.e. in what we do not consciously think to its ultimate conclusion.

Interculturalism for us is to understand, to be conquered, vanquished, together, by the underlying truth which vivifies the affirmations of both related cultures. As Panikkar says:

> "authentic dialogue is neither in what I say, nor in what my partner adds, but in what takes place in the dialogue, i.e. that of which neither I nor the other have a previous knowledge and on which we have no power."[81]

Interculturalism is therefore not a "no man's land," or an utopia, or an ideal, or a conception, something conceptual, imaginary, imagined. That does not exist. There is no such thing as a "no man's land in the land of Man." One always speaks and acts from a particular ground, a particular culture, even when we speak of interculturalism. The important here is to be aware of it, to acknowledge our limits and those of others.

In the intercultural philosophy that we are here talking about, each philosophy is a human effort to go beyond one's own myth. It is an attempt to come out of the horizon of one's own world in order to broaden it. It is therefore a "no man's land" in the sense of agreeing on a common myth, namely that we meet on a ground which is the property neither of the one, nor of the other, nor of both—which is never neutral or universal—but which makes possible our various expressions, beliefs and meanings, systems that are irreducible to each other. This is what we call the emerging myth—thematically new—(and that one still has trouble to discern and to accept), of the interculturalism and pluralism of truth and reality.[82]

C7) The alternative to the dilemma of monoculturalism and multiculturalism of the System: interculturation and mutual fecundation of cultures and their resources.

For us, the alternative to the dilemma of unity and plurality, of cultural globalization and cultural solipsism, is not a new tower of Babel (a great intercultural or transcultural project or system, whatever it may be) but concrete interculturation, mutual fecundation of cultures/traditions of mankind and of their respective knowledge and practical wisdoms.

One can start with the presupposition that intercultural alternatives to the system do not yet exist. But for us, some already exist. It's a matter for us of spotting them out in the various cultures of the world and to make them known.[83]

In the cases where they do not yet exist, the question is to know if some people and their cultures are capable or desirous of accepting a religio-cultural transformation in order to be loyal to (and live fully) their identity, of broadening and deepening their identity in the light of other cultures. It is therefore a matter of opening paths of communication between persons and cultures, that may become places of communion and intercultural creativity.

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81. R. Panikkar, The Intrareligious Dialogue, *op. cit.*

82. See Guswenta 129 and R. Vachon "Le mythe émergent du pluralisme et de l'interculturalism de la Réalité" (forthcoming *Interculture*).

83. See our Data Bank: *Roots*, and issues of *Interculture*.

This interculturation requires more than a superficial consciousness of other cultures and of our own; a critique, even a radical one, of the dominant culture does not suffice; it is not a matter of being content with seeking out what were, in the past, the faults of the one and the virtues of the other; something new must be found and invented. One must allow cultures to live out their own cultural identity, to express it, to say what they have not yet been able to say, because the opportunity wasn't there, or because the problematic did not present itself.

For us, all this goes as far sometimes as to live and propose to institutions and community groups, a true partnership as equals, between the cultures and cultural resources of the different peoples, but also between the "professional" "official" culture and community culture, and this, in all dimensions of life: family, education, economy, politics, law, social life, health care and social work, religion, etc.

But this requires a precondition: the deconstruction of the pyramidal model of relationships between the cultures of the world, between their respective cultural resources, between professional culture and community culture, between the knowledges, in order to allow the reconstruction of a horizontal relationship between them, based on a partnership as equals, a partnership that is no longer vertical but horizontal.

The bulk of daily interculturation at the IIM, consists in this work of deconstruction and decolonizing of knowledges, and in the gradual reconstruction of authentic partnerships, and this, in all dimensions of life, mentioned above.

One can consult the work of K. Das, particularly as regards the fields of social work, health and social services,[84] etc. Also the work of R. Vachon in the field of the "first priority of interculturalism": that of the relations with Native Indian cultures.[85] But also his work in the field of legal pluralism.[86] Finally, one can consult the works of both in the field of interfaith dialogue (see chapter 8) and of international co-operation,[87] etc. (see the whole of chapter 6, above).

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84. See, besides her publications in *Interculture* (issue 100 on "Unexplored issues of Social Work and Pluralism") issue 123: "the intercultural challenge in the non-institutional and informal sector"); "Le partenariat est-il possible entre inégaux?" (notes de communication à la 3ᵉ Conférence nationale du Conseil canadien de la santé multiculturelle, mai 1995); "Working with communities: resource development within the ethnocultural communities and the modalities for partnership" (at the Symposium *Removing the Barriers*, Toronto, June 18–20, 1998). These and other texts are available at IIM and will be published later. See also: K. MacNaughton, Osler and N. Canderan, in coll. with K. Das "Working with Mistreated Seniors from Ethnocultural Communities and their families. A Guide for service providers," Research Series 3, (CLSC René-Cassin, University Institute of Social Gerontology of Quebec, 1997).

85. Particularly "Guswenta" issues 127, 128, 129 (and 2 others forthcoming), his communication at the Royal Commission on native Peoples in 1993.

86. See our ch. 6 (4c) above.

87. See ch. 6 (above) *passim*, and R.V. "From an integrationistic to an intercultural co-operation" and "Towards a radical reorientation of NGOs in *Alternatives au Développement* (Montréal, IIM, 1990). See also the report *Living with the Earth,*

D) Reality's intercultural challenge to us
or
the emerging—thematically new— myth of pluralism and of the interculturality of Reality[88]

This common myth—thematically new—which is emerging both from the contemporary shock of cultures and Reality itself, and which we still have trouble to discern and to express, is what we *call* the myth of pluralism and of the interculturality of reality, or Reality's intercultural challenge to us.

D1) The interculturalism and pluralism that the Institute speaks about, is not of the order of logos, but of mythos. It is not a mere human construction but an imperative of Reality itself.

We are speaking of an *existential interculturalism* and not of an intercultural system (the latter being a contradiction in terms!). It is not situated at the level of dialectics but of existentiality. It is not based on a common confidence in the field of logical consciousness and dialectics, but on a piercing through the *logos* (*dia-ton-logon*), thus embracing that other sphere of human experience, which is not subject to *logos*, and that we name the mythico-symbolic consciousness.[89]

It does not replace dialectics, but completes the latter. Interculturalism here is not an orthodoxy but an orthopraxis. It is a myth, hence non-conceptualizable nor objectifiable, but which allows different cosmovisions to communicate between them.

D2) For us, interculturalism is not the result of reason and will, but a gift, a datum, an imperative and challenge coming from nature, from Reality itself. It is already there, unavoidable.

Intercultural philosophy is an imperative of Reality itself and not a mere rational discovery or decision of the human will. The field of interculturalism here, does not belong to the intellect. It escapes the latter's grasp. It is not intelligible. Reason here is not the competent judge for the *"negotium"* of interculturality. It does not belong to the will either, whether it be the will to power, to knowledge, or to want it (to seek it).

The alternative (our effort to describe interculturalism) must renounce neither reason nor will, but only surmount all idolatry. The middle way (of interculturalism) opens up when we become aware of the function and

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op. cit. One of the important ways of deconstructing the pyramid, is to drop the notions of "developed-underdeveloped (developing)," of the "Third World," of the "Third World poor."

88. See R.V. "Guswenta," issue 129.

89. See R.V. "Le Mythe émergent du Pluralisme," forthcoming *Interculture*.

power of myth, next to the indispensable but not exclusive role of *logos*. The function of myth is essential for an intercultural philosophy.

D3) A few corollaries:

• For us, interculturalism is less a science than a human attitude, an art and a style of (intercultural) life.

• Interculturalism, for us, is not a luxury but a condition for the survival of Man, of nature, of each culture as well as of the sacred dimension of every person. It is not therefore a little game for the elites and aristocrats of thinking.

• Interculturalism, for us, is the belief that harmony between cultures, presupposes, on the one hand, cultural differences as an indispensable condition, and on the other hand, non-duality between these cultural differences, i.e. their constitutive connectedness.

• It is also the belief that harmony between cultures is possible, only in the measure in which no culture commands (orders) another culture.

• One cannot speak of the foundations of pluralism, of interculturality.[90]

• It is an interculturalism which requires that the problematic of interculturalism be examined in the light of two or more cultures.[91]

• It has nothing to do with "an identity underlying cultural and religious diversity." There is no "fundamental intercultural insight." There cannot be a theoretical interculturalism. It is not an ideology. It is neither *necessarily* the celebration of differences nor *always* to be desired. No single religion, culture, philosophy can be intercultural. It is not a metalanguage, an intellectual panacea.[92]

D4) Other words for Interculturalism

a) *Western words:*

i) *The pluralism of truth and of reality.* But pluralism here, as alternative to plurality.[93] For while plurality is an obvious fact to the *logos*, (i.e. an objective and conceptual thought and approach to reality), pluralism on the other hand is a myth for all those (like we) who believe in it.

ii) *Radical relativity* (not cultural relativism); the cultural relativity our intercultural discourse is here proposing, has nothing to do with cultural relativism, which doubts and questions everything. The relativity inherent to interculturalism does not question the discoveries of a culture, but does not absolutize them either; it relativizes them, i.e. considers them valid and legit-

imate within a particular culture and within the paradigms admitted by the latter.

The great challenge of interculturalism is the relativization of all *a priori*, the refusal to absolutize any culture, or any neutral and universal position, even the notion of culture and interculturality; there is no cultural value that is universal, even less so *a priori*. There are no cultural universals, no universal questions.

iii) *The decolonization of knowledge*, i.e. dissidence with regard to the absolutization (cultural or transcultural) of knowledge. It is the affirmation that that there are many different classes of intelligibility, many ways of being aware of reality and of participating actively in it. For example there is a philosophical activity of Man which operates through symbols, intuitions, and not with concepts and a conceptual algebra. It therefore consists in approaching Reality according to these different ways.

iv) *The myth of the interconnectedness and constitutive solidarity of all cultures and of everything that exists.* The myth of the invisible harmony of Reality.[94]

v) *It is the trinitarian and cosmotheandric experience of Reality.*[95]

vi) *The New Innocence* (See Panikkar's writings on this topic).

b) *Asian, African, Native Indian words*

We are aware—this is a constitutive part of interculturalism as a myth— that the word interculturalism itself is a Western word. It comes from a Western cosmovision. This does not mean that the West has the monopoly on the Interculturalism of Reality. Reality and its interculturalism cannot be reduced to Western language. The latter is therefore a provisional word that one must surmount. The same can be said about the words: pluralism, radical relativity, reality, etc. that Hindu-Buddhist traditions name: *Advaita* (non-duality), *Pratitya-Samutpada* (radical relativity...) *Karma* (universal solidarity, constitutive interconnectedness of everything). The Word *Reality, (Esse,* being) in that tradition is *Rita, Dharma, Sanatana Dharma, Atman, Brahman, Satya* (Truth = Reality), *Sunyata* (Void). (The Western word "concrete culture" is called "*svadharma*" in the Indic world.) The African alternative for culture and interculture might be (in French and English) respectively ancestral tradition (transmission), inter-tradition and Life: the Spider-Web, the Vital Force.[96]

The Native Indian world seems to prefer "Medicine Wheel," "Life Circle," "instructions inscribed in the nature of things," "all our relatives," "one-mind, many paths," etc.

90. See R. Panikkar's talk (diskette) at IIM on this topic. Not published but available at IIM.

91. See further, No. 8 and R. Panikkar "A self-critical dialogue" in Prabhu (ed.) *The Intercultural Challenge of R. Panikkar* (Orbis 1996) pp. 227–293).

92. See Panikkar in Prabhu *op. cit.* pp. 254–257.

93. See R.V. "Le Mythe émergent du Pluralisme," *op. cit.*

94. See Parmenides in R. Panikkar, *Interculture*, (issue 108).

95. See R. Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, (Orbis N.Y. 1995).

96. See Emongo Lomomba, issue 133 of *Interculture*.

Chapter 8

A radically alternative interreligiousness; an alternative to the concept of religion and to a universal theory of religion: the challenge of religious pluralism.

We have already mentioned that the Institute is not a conventional interreligious (interfaith) center. It does not identify exclusively with any one culture, is not primarily an objective information center on religions (old or new), nor a center of comparative religion or mysticism. But one must add here that it does not propose the transcendental unity of all religions, nor a new religion or supra-religion, any more than some universal theory of religion. Nor does it consider religion as being an a-cultural or supra-cultural reality, e.g. a universal religion (one faith and many cultures).

But then, what does IIM mean by interreligious and religion? Which alternatives does it propose to the concept of religion and to a universal theory of religion? An if it is an interreligious center, why does it name itself intercultural rather than interreligious?

A. Some background preliminary remarks

A1) IIM, intercultural or interreligious?

The IIM has opted to call itself an intercultural rather than an interreligious Institute. This does not mean that it has abandoned its interreligious dimension. On the contrary, the latter is perceived by the IIM as a fundamental part of any authentic interculturalism. But it feels the necessity to explicitate, here, a radically alternative character of this interreligious dimension, with regard to conventional interreligiousness. And this, at the level both of its practice and of its notions of religion and interreligiosity. We hope that this will help one understand the meaning behind its option in favor of the word intercultural rather than the term interreligious.

This will also allow us to underline another radically alternative characteristic of IIM's interculturality, namely its fundamental interreligiousness, and also the radically alternative character of its interreligiousness, namely the inherent intercultural character of the latter.

It amounts, in other words, to overcoming the dualism between religion and culture, which is at the core of conventional Christian Western religion and culture, to overcoming the dualism between interculturalism and interreligiousness, without confusing them.

A2) A proselytizing Christian and Western world.

One must not forget that IIM was born in a Christian and Western world marked by the missionary and proselytizing "conversion" of other "religions" and "cultures," to the Christian religion and to Western culture, religions, which were considered unworthy of being called religions, and cultures, which in that view, did not (or hardly) merit the name of culture or "civilization." Conventional interreligiousness consisted, at best, in understanding better the cultural, moral and religious values of peoples, and even in dialoguing with them, but with the ultimate purpose of either cleansing them of their imperfections, or in "developing" and perfecting them by christianizing and civilizing them, or in integrating and incorporating their cultures to Christian faith and to the Western civilization of development and modernity. The Christian would refer to these religions as "non-Christian," "pagan," "unbelievers," and to their cultures as "primitive," "backward," "uncivilized," as being at best either mere philosophies, meaning thereby that they were merely human views but not historically revealed by God—the Supreme Being—, or either outmoded, irrational and non-scientific traditions.

Moreover, one would separate culture and religion, so that there was, since time immemorial, a struggle for the supremacy of the one over the other; all this turned out into a separation between the two powers: the power of God and the power of Man, religious power and civil power, religion and science, the spiritual and the temporal, until one later succeeded, in great part, in making religion into a parasite of development and modernity.

A3) Religion, a Christian Western concept.

The concept of religion, which did not exist, even in the Christian New Testament, was elaborated by the Western Christian Tradition since the word has been in circulation. Usually, by religion is meant what makes reference to a Supreme God and to Man's relation to Him, in short to faith in God. God is then considered as the only basic category of every authentic religion. The concept religion is thereby reduced, either to monotheistic religions or to those which come close to them (which have some notion of a Supreme God, of monotheism), or to those which speak of deities, gods and goddesses, divinities. These religions then call themselves "great religions" and see others as "small religions," "quasi-religions," or simply as "humanisms," "animisms," "philosophies," which do not wholly merit the name religion. These Great Religions believe they have the monopoly on Religion, that salvation comes primarily from God and that theistic religions are *the* way for mankind. In their eyes, the ultimate dimension of life rests exclusively in what is called God or the divine. They have a tendency to reduce Reality to a single principle: God, Jahweh, Allah, the divine dimension. or at least to assert the supremacy of a Being or of the divine dimension over the human and cosmic dimensions of Reality and to assert that God has the monopoly on the right questions and right answers regarding the human predicament. They believe that authentic spirituality and religiousness dwells exclusively in what is called God, the divine.

Now, interreligiousness, at IIM, is alternative to all that. The Institute does not reduce the notion of religion to God nor to faith in a Supreme God.[97]

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97. See already in 1972, our issue 34 on the four great archetypes of the ultimate experience: transcendental transcendence (Abrahamic religions), immanent transcendence

One way for us to express it has been "religions do not have the monopoly on religion," i.e. of the ultimate way to peace, freedom, justice, harmony, etc.

For we know for example that many that live and witness to an ultimate experience do not refer it to a "religious" tradition, to a Supreme God, to monotheism, or to God. One thinks for example of **a)** Buddhism which feels no need to even mention God or to even ask the question of his existence: **b)** to the great Chinese tradition which does not speak about any Supreme God; **c)** to the great so called pagan "animistic" traditions of Japan, Black Africa and Native Peoples; **d)** but also to humanism, (whether anti-theistic or simply a-theistic) and **e)** to sacred secularity (not to be confused with secularism) which acknowledges the dimension of ultimacy and irreducibility of the human, the cosmic, matter (the "*saeculum*") and of what some contemporaries call the person, the family, the community, democracy, human rights, Mother Earth, *svadharma* (India), the instructions of Nature (Native Peoples).

That is why the IIM and its journal have constantly invited ecumenism and the World Conference of Religions for Peace to open up also to the great non-monotheistic spiritualities, whether Hindu, Buddhist, Chinese (Confucianism, Taoism), Black African (Voodoo, Candomblé...), Native Indian, to the so-called Pagan traditions all over the world (the West included), and to traditions of ancestral and Nature worship, not to speak of authentic humanism and sacred secularity.

B. Some characteristics of IIM's radically alternative interreligiousness[98]

During the first years (1963–1967), the dialogue is one of *friendship* between persons from different cultures and religions. But in its 1968 charter, IIM defines itself as "a place for human dialogue between cultures and religions in the face of contemporary problems..." IIM does not separate cultures and religions but speaks at first about the dialogue of religions, which it approaches, not only and primarily in an objective but in a human and personal way.[99] The emphasis is on what one could call "contemplative listening," with, gradually more and more the idea of learning from these religions (imparative approach) in one's personal life (intrareligious approach), without any one religion dominating the other.[100]

(Hinduism), transcendental immanence (Buddhism), immanent immanence (Confucianism, Japanese *kami*, and sacred secularity). But also issue 97.

98. See J. Langlais "L'ouverture du Canada français aux Grandes Religions," and R. Vachon "Pour une foi chrétienne, exprimée et vécue à la lumière hindoue," *Interculture*, issue 8, Nov. 1968. Also issues 11-44, 47-50, 52-53, 57, 61, 66, 68-70, 72, 74, 78, 85-86, 89, 97, 107-108, 125, 133.

99. Through "testimony": see issue 129 of *Interculture*.

100. See above: a radically different interculturalism. Also further, Krieger on Panikkar's interreligious methodology.

B1) IIM drops the terms "Non-Christians and non-believers" with regard to other religions. And it emphasizes a human and personal approach.

"Non-Christians"

We refuse to take the name Christian as reference point when speaking about persons from other ways of salvation. We refer to them by their names: Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, etc., and ideally by those they use to name themselves.[101]

"Non-believers"

For us, Christians and Abrahamic religions do not have the monopoly on faith, nor do religions. Faith is considered as existential openness everywhere present.[102] It is a constitutive dimension of the human being. Every human being is a believer, believes in something, whether it be God, Man, Nature, Development, Family, Science, Atheism, Nothing, etc.

We stop then distinguishing between believers and non believers, and making of our faith the exclusive and first reference point of every faith.[103] Faith in God is not for us the whole of faith. There is also faith in Man and the Cosmos, and in the Mystery of Life. There is cosmic confidence. We thus disconnect faith (and religion) from its necessary relationship to God alone. Religions do not have the monopoly on faith. Faith is not linked merely to religion in the usual sense. No one has the monopoly on faith. We are all men and women of faith, believers, constitutively so. Even atheists who do not have faith in faith but in reason, science, or in the absence/silence of God.[104]

Later on, we shall also refuse to define the peoples of the world as being primarily the poor, the under-developed, or the developing from the Third World.[105]

Emphasis on the human and the personal

For us, religion and culture is a human and personal affair. It is as if it were about a new religion and culture: that of Man and of the person.[106] We

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101. However to shake up the torpor of Christians, we use the expression the Hindu Christ, the Buddhist Christ, the Atheistic Christ, etc. (See in particular my own writings ("Une spiritualité pour le XXᵉ siècle, *Critère*, vol. No. 30, 1981) and Panikkar's *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. (Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1964 and 1981).

102. See R. Panikkar, "Faith as a constitutive human dimension," in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, (N.Y. Paulist Press, 1979).

103. See my first talk at the new Centre chrétien de dialogue avec les Incroyants (Montreal), where we invited the latter to stop speaking about others as non-believers (people without faith).

104. See R. Panikkar, *The Silence of God* (N.Y. Orbis, 1989).

105. See R.V. (ed.) *Alternatives au Développement* (IIM, 1990).

106. See IIM's first seminars (1963–1967 and after) which focused on human problems, on religions freedom, on the person and on an interpersonal approach to dialogue between cultures and religions. The talk is constantly in terms of one's human and personal experience. This will be a constant characteristic of IIM, throughout.

were speaking about religions and cultures, but it was a meeting and dialogue between the humanisms of the world, even if, at that time we did not yet use that word.[107]

B2) Our interreligious dialogue was unconventional also, in that not only did it enter intrareligious dialogue with what was called, at that time, Pagan, Oriental and Western philosophies, African and Native Animism, the ideology of atheistic humanism and secularity, but it did not hesitate to speak of these as being religions, ways of salvation, even in the case where they were not theocentric.

The founders of IIM sought information on all these "great religions" of the world, but especially to undergo a personal (intrareligious)[108] learning of them, by means of a concrete participation in their rituals, worship, feast days, daily practices, but also by means of interfaith prayers and rituals organized together.[109]

Already in 1968, they began living (with other interested people) total immersion seminars with Tibetan Buddhist monks (meditation) with Hindu swamis and *purohits* (*pujas* and meditation), with Jewish rabbis (a Hassidic Sabbath and a Kabbalistic one), with Muslim Sufis, Japanese and Korean Zen masters, Chinese masters of Tai-Chi and Tao, etc. They participated in rituals of ancestral worship, either at a Vietnamese pagoda or in a Vietnamese home, etc. They also participated in the World Conference of Religions for Peace.[110]

But the founders quickly noted that in the latter, the Abrahamic religions (monotheistic) had a tendency not only to consider themselves superior to each other, but also and especially towards Hindu-Buddhist-Chinese (and other) spiritualities/philosophies. Moreover, many would reserve to some

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107. Probably, because we were not yet liberated from the conventional theocentric myth of religion, i.e. a) that the latter was the privileged position to solve human problems; b) that Reality was before and above all else God alone, and that religion was primarily a theocentric affair. But we had not yet quite discovered that God is not a cultural universal and need not become one, even if the mystery of life on the other hand, is a human invariant.

108. This approach follows as a whole, what has been said above about our radically alternative interculturalism, and Krieger's article (further). It is not religious tourism, nor comparative religion, etc., but approaching life's fundamental predicament, in the light of the Humanisms and religio-cultural wisdoms of the whole world, and opening paths of interfaith communication which may become interfaith communion. It meant living and walking together in mutual learning, without any one humanism or faith dominating others.

109. One must note, among other, public interfaith prayers during a Nurses' International Congress, a Congress of "L'Entraide Missionaire," the Dalai Lama's visit in the Montreal Catholic Cathedral (3,000 people). Also interfaith baptism rituals of children from interfaith marriages: Hindu-Christian, Muslim-Christian, African-Christian; interfaith wedding rituals, v.g. Hindu-Christian, Jewish-Christian, Buddhist-Quaker-Christian, Quechua-Berber-Christian, etc.

110. And this since 1971. They even co-founded the Canadian and Quebecois branch of the World Conference, beginning in 1974. One of the IIM founders has remained involved throughout, even becoming its President in recent years.

the title of Great Religions, and would not invite in their World Conference, members from the great African, Native Indian, and other "Animistic or Pagan" spiritualities/philosophies/cosmovisions. The latter were not much appreciated and sometimes even simply ignored. The radically alternative interreligiousness of the IIM, consisted for the Founders in not only learning personally and intrareligiously from the latter[111] but in allowing them to be heard and acknowledged for example at the World Conference of Religions for Peace[112] and elsewhere.[113]

But there were other "great religions" (ultimate ways of salvation) which, it seemed to us, should also have an important place in the World Conference and in the intrareligious meeting of religions, humanisms and cosmovisions; so we spoke of atheistic humanism in all its forms (Buddhist and Chinese, but also of anti-theism), of scientific objective rationality, as well as of the personalistic humanistic critique (with regard to the totalitarianism of the religion of development, of modern science, of professionalism, and of official theology). We spoke of the place of sacred secularity.[114]

Moreover, IIM was interested in knowing how these other religions (faiths) approached inter and intra religious dialogue.[115]

Finally, we were very critical of these religions for peace which sometimes become parasites of the monocultural religion which is that of evolu-

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111. For example, sojourn of two IIM founders in a Black Candomblé family, visiting the *"padre de santos"* and his *terreiro*, participation in Candomblé rituals in Bahia, Brazil (see issues 69-70). Participation in a Voodoo ceremony in a Montreal home. Frequent participation during many years, in Peace Pipe Ceremonies (with Anishnawbes, Wabanakis and others), in other Mohawk rituals (weddings, funerals, sweat lodges, social dances, etc.).

112. I have myself given my resignation as a member of the board of Directors of that Conference (Canadian sector) so that a traditional Native Anishnawbe, Art Solomon could sit on the Board. Which did happen. We have also always encouraged the acknowledgement and regeneration of the primordial so-called pagan Western spirituality and cosmovision, v.g. the Celtic one. And this in many ways, especially since 1979.

113. It is thus that we have accompanied "L'Entraide Missionnaire" in organizing and animating yearly, during 8 years, a total immersion week-end in traditional Mohawk spirituality/cosmovision, on Mohawk land, with participation in their rituals and eventually in sweat-lodges.

We have convinced a Catholic community of Quebec Sisters, living in a favella of Recife, Brazil, to acknowledge and respect the Candomblé religion in that favella. We have worked at demystifying and valorizing Voodoo among the Montreal people as well as in Haiti, through our publication *Profil Culturel Haïtien* (by Jos Augustin) and our participation at Radio-Soleil (Haiti), etc.

114. See issues of *Interculture* 37, 49, 62-65, 68, 80-85, and our book *Alternatives au Développement*, op. cit., 93, 95, 109, 111, 112, the series on vernacular alternatives, and finally 130-131. See also further in this text.

115. See issues 57 (1977), 61 (1978), 68 (1980), 74 (1982), 89 (1985), 107-108 (1990), 110 (1991), 133 (1997).

tion, of development, of the future, in the name of "the option for the poor" (of the "Third World" and "First World").[116]

B3) A radical relativization of the notion of religion. IIM takes religion to be neither a universal panacea nor a universal obstacle.

a) However much the IIM spoke of other ways of salvation as being religions, it noticed that most of those traditions preferred not to be called religions, did not describe themselves as such, but rather as "ways of life," ways of salvation, liberation, of peace, or of realization, as cosmovisions, ancestral traditions, *Tao* (China), *Sanatana Dharma*, or *Svadharma* (Hindus and Buddhists), Great Harmony, Life Circle (Medicine Wheel), Nature or the Instructions of the Creator[117] (Native peoples), Humanisms, philosophies or wisdoms of life, etc. It noticed that many did not even refer to God, but to Man, the Cosmos, *Brahman*, the Void, Mother-Earth, sacred spirits, etc.[118]

Moreover, the word religion is perceived by them as referring too much to institutionalized religions (Abrahamic) and to the notion of a Supreme Being, of which many of them do not speak (Buddhism, Native Peoples, most Africans, Atheistic Humanism).

b) IIM notices other reactions of these other traditions to being called religions (in the sense of a relation to a Supreme God). These traditions have the impression that we reduce the sacred to God, that we desacralize the already sacred nature of the cosmos and of Man: Mother Earth, fire, rivers, trees, winds, animals, birds, the various families of being, the already sacred character of man, his ancestors, his clans and tribes. They have the impression that we thereby reduce Life, the Circle of Life, Reality, to a pyramid where only one supreme principle dominates: God. This amounts finally to no longer seeing Reality (and its cultures) except as a function of a Principle that is separate from them and which comes to "sanctify," to sacralize them from the outside, as if they did not already have an eternally sacred character.

The result in the eyes of those other traditions is that religions separate religion and culture, and are no longer interested in the cultures, the nature of peoples, but only in what is called their relation (or not) to God, their a— or trans—cultural spirituality. In the end, religions are seen as by-passing both the spirituality and culture of these traditions, for the "two" are inseparable, i.e. not-two.

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116. See issue 111 "Global poverty: a pauperizing myth" by M. Rahnema. Also R. Vachon: "Option pour les pauvres ou découvrir notre propre misère?" *Actes du Congrès Missionnaire de 1982*, Montreal.

117. Traditional Native peoples do speak in French/English about the "Creator," but generally do not understand the word in its biblical or Christian sense of a Supreme Being which creates out of nothing. The Mohawk word is: "AHONKWAIATISON or RONHE'ON:WE, the Great Natural Real Thing"

118. See E. Goldsmith, issue 132: "The Way: an ecological vision."

Even the West nowadays has come to oppose the very notion of religion; it claims the rights of Man in the face of that sovereign God, and substitutes to Him: Humanism, and what it calls secularism or secularity.

c) In 1974, the IIM discovers an article by Panikkar: "Have religions the monopoly on Religion?"[119] which will have a great influence on its approach to the religious question. Therein, Panikkar invites traditional religions "to give up any pretence to monopoly of what *religion* stands for." He suggests that religion as way of salvation is not necessarily linked to "theistic" ways of salvation, but includes "anything making one whole, healthy, free, and complete," hence many human endeavours which would not call themselves religions. He mentions among others, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, ideologies, humanisms, atheism, etc., all of them engaged in human betterment, even if they understand this word in very different ways. He recalls

> "the need for a further step, to call the different 'beliefs' of modern men and women to the arena of a new *dialogical dialogue*, even if they, for comprehensible reasons, shun the label 'religion.'"

Not only was he thus transforming—by broadening it—the word religion, in order to include any ultimate way of salvation, but at the same time he was asking people to acknowledge

> "that many of these ways that would not call themselves religions, due to the many associations this word maintains with a certain type of 'Way...' nevertheless claim so strongly to be substitutes for what (old) religions failed to bring about that there would be some point to calling all these sets of ways by one and the same name. *Belief* would then be an alternative to 'religion.' It is a question of semantics and also of cultural decision whether or not these new ways should be called religions."

From that moment, it seemed to us not only that religions do not have the monopoly on religion, but "religion itself" does not have the monopoly of the way of salvation either of man, or of the Cosmos; it is not even necessarily its privileged way.

But this would not impede the IIM to present, along with Panikkar, an alternative to the concept of religion, with the conviction that one cannot resolve the crisis of the concept of religion by a mere negation of religion, by rejecting all that is "religious."

> "To combat religion is already a religious act. To declare oneself an unbeliever is another form of belief. To believe in

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119. *Interculture* republished it in 1990 (issue 107) where Panikkar reports agreed upon elements of an encounter at the World Congress of Philosophy in Bulgaria in September 1973, where participants and representatives not only of the major religions of the world were present, but also different forms of Marxism and Humanism, not to speak of the Moscow Institute for atheism and religion. The article presents the 7 points upon which all had agreed and adds a conclusion.

nothing except the exclusively empirical, constitutes another religious doctrine. Quite possibly, a salient characteristic of the contemporary religious spirit is a conscious awareness of the constitutive crisis of all religion... This does not mean that rupture and alienation from our heritage is the solution to the present crisis. It is my conviction that, in the present moment of convergence, none of the cultural and religious traditions of mankind, by themselves or in isolation from each other, can offer a satisfactory solution to the problems of the human condition nor to the destiny of Man..."

"The religious crisis, likewise, cannot be resolved by negating the problem, through a rejection of everything 'religious.' Such a negation presupposes, first, that 'a-religion' is the au-thentic stance in facing reality; that it is, in other words, the true religion. Such a rejection, in fact, is not a negation of the 'religious,' but a negation of those aspects which appear to be negative, when one looks at them in the light of the criteria provided by other cultures and traditions, like the scientific or the humanistic, for example..."[120]

Let us therefore say that IIM approaches religion, neither as a universal panacea, nor as a universal obstacle. We see the challenge of religious plu-ralism as being the challenge of the pluralism of truth and reality.

B4) Our alternative notion of religion: an alternative to the sociological con-cept. There is no such thing as Philosophy of Religion, only a philosophy of a religion.

It is a matter of a new experience of the religious dimension of existence, where the word is taken as a symbol and not as the sociological concept elaborated by the Western Christian tradition since the word started circulat-ing.[121]

It is the quest of the ultimate, the ultimate way of salvation, a fundamen-tal dimension of Man (adding immediately that here the words "way" and "salvation" do not claim any specific content), in the sense that Man is an incomplete being, that he is aware of it, and hence tends towards his fulfil-ment (his salvation), no matter how he interprets the latter. It is what gives the thrust, the direction, in which Man can live his humanness to the hilt.

Let us call fundamental or primordial experience of reality, this human attitude, which is most of the time spontaneous, and often non-critical, which will express itself afterwards as a set of symbols, myths and prac-tices, more or less organically linked. This basic experience, which need not be conscious of itself, is at the source of each religion and conditions the ul-timate convictions the latter holds with regard to the nature of reality and to the meaning of life. It is an "existential", i.e. a way of being, inherent to the

human being, and consequently concomitant to all his activities, and not merely a category or class of beings or actions of Man.

"In spite of the claim of every religion to touch the very core of the human being, the 'experience of religion does not exist... Religion in general does not exist." (R. Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, op. cit. p. 66.)

In that sense, it is the dimension of ultimacy of Man, the way which goes from X (the human condition) to Y (the ideal goal: what Man believes he truly is, should be or believes he will be). We underline the *belief* factor, for religion is never merely an objective set of values. It is always personal and necessarily includes the person's belief. And the person is not merely an individual... In short, it is the ultimate way (of peace, salvation, etc.) what-ever it may be. The various modes of understanding and interpreting this dimension constitute the different religions in their sociological sense.

Religion is for us therefore what human beings believe will fulfil this function of bringing them from point X (their human condition as they per-ceive it) to point Y (the purpose or end of their existence, whether it be called liberation, salvation, perfect society, justice, paradise, *soteria, mok-sha*, etc.).

Neither the nihilistic position, nor the more extreme one called monistic, escape this notion. So called traditional religions aspire to fulfil this function (to give the maximum of meaning possible to human life), but it is also the function that other ideologies, ideas and movements seek to exercise (v.g. the "religion" of development, of evolution, of progress, of the future, of democracy, of human rights, of technology, of citizenship, etc., in short, of modernity) even if they are not normally called religions because of a sort of monopoly that traditional religions have exercised on the word religion in the West. All this to say that the notion of religion as ultimate way of salva-tion is broader than the notion of God (or that of deity, i.e. of the divine).

It is therefore the set of symbols, myths and practises of the human be-ing, when he is confronted by the most definitive questions with regard to the meaning of life and of the universe, not only at the intellectual, but at the existential and total level.

The question that IIM is here asking itself, is not so much the *sociologi-cal* one of the Future of Religion, but the *philosophical* one of the religion of the future, where the notion of religion is subjected to a radical critique—so radical in fact that it does not presuppose that religion must continue in the future. This study is based on an analysis of the human condition, in the light of an anthropology which does not come from only one particular re-ligion or from the data of only one culture, but rather from the interpretation that Man gives of himself (and of the ultimate way to Peace) on the basis of the vast horizon of Mankind's cultures. Hence the provisional character here, of our considerations.

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120. R. Panikkar *op. cit.* Issue 107, pp. 10–11.

121. See issue 107 pp. 4–26 and 108, pp. 29 ff. It is a radical mutation, opening up to its value as symbol and not only as concept. See also R. Panikkar *The Intrareligious dialogue*, op. cit. p. 66 and pp. 78–95.

B5) The radical relativization of the notion of the divine. God, (in a theistic sense) is not a cultural universal, even if the problem of the divine in the sense of Mystery is a human invariant.[122]

Our first shocks (1968–1970) in this realm were to hear the Hindus address us: "Dear God, Divine and Immortal Self that you are!," to hear that the Buddhist spirituality does not even ask the question: does God exist? and to hear anti-theistic humanists tell us that God was the opium with which one puts people to sleep. The following shocks (1971 on...) were to hear the Native peoples speak seriously about our Mother the earth, our uncles the winds, our grand-mother the moon, and to hear Africans speak about sacred ancestors, the sacred grove, the sacred character of everything and about the invisible as being more real than the visible, etc.

We were gradually discovering that belief in God was not the only form of religion, that God (in a theistic sense) is not a universal category, a common denominator. The ultimate reference point to be religious need not be God or religion. God is not the only true reality. The word God itself is not necessary. God does not exhaust the Divine, the Divine Mystery. God is not the whole of religion or even of God. God is not the only symbol to indicate what the word God intends to transmit. God is no monopoly of any human tradition, not even of those that call themselves theistic or consider themselves religious. In order to be religious, one need not be theistic; theism is not an universal category of "*homo religiosus.*" The problem is to have believed that God is the whole of religion, of the Divine Mystery, of Reality, and that religion is the whole of life: religious, theistic, monotheistic idolatry. God cannot be made the object of any knowledge or belief. God is not intelligible, not only with regard to our mind, but in himself. There is no valid discourse on God. Only God can speak of himself. Any attempt to absolutize the symbol God, destroys the links, not only with the Divine Mystery, but with the men and women who do not feel the need for that symbol.

The question about the divine dimension of Reality is not necessarily the question about a Supreme Being. The Divine Mystery is not the theistic Being. The divine is what one seeks not what one encounters.

God in the sense of Mystery is not Being, the Super-Being or non-Being. It is a pole of reality, ineffable in itself, but which speaks everywhere, being transcendent and immanent to the cosmos and to Man (the latter two being its first *locus theologicus*), infinite but delimited in things. This pole is not nothing in itself, but it is not a thing in itself. It exists only in its polarity, its relatedness. It is the *inexhaustible dimension* of the Real (irreducible to our knowledge and to *any* knowledge), *infinite* (i.e. non-fi-

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122. That third dimension of Reality, everywhere present, distinct from the human and the cosmic, which escapes us all, that peoples name in diverse ways, names that do not exhaust its nature, which cannot be reduced to a common denominator, to a category. On this topic, see R. Panikkar, "Deity" in M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987, pp. 264–276; *The Silence of God. The Answer of the Buddha* (N.Y. Orbis, 1985) 300 pp.; "Nine ways not to speak about God" in *Cross-Currents* (1998); "God of Life, idols of death' in *Monastic Studies*, 17, 1986.

nite, *on the way*, open to fulfilment as to annihilation). It is not nothing without us (even if we are nothing without the divine). The divine is unthinkable, unspeakable, but the source of all thought, of all word. It is the *inexpressible* (of the Real) which makes it possible for everything to be expression. It is more than what can be said, even by itself. The divine is everything to the point of not being it, because the whole is never finished (to say that everything is God [divine] is true, but limiting God and the divine to everything is an error). The divine is therefore the dimension of the unachieved, of the non-being of being, of the silence of the word, both transcendent and immanent, the "I am who am." It is the "is" of everything.

It is a dimension of the real which cannot be isolated from the real. It is a dimension which is visible only in other dimensions of the real—like a fine rain is visible only by seeing its effects on the roof top. The divine is the freedom of being. One cannot reconcile with the Divine Mystery except by reconciling with the whole of Man and with the whole cosmos, but one does not have to go through the theistic God or the Supreme Being to do so. God is not the center of life, but all Reality is.

The acknowledging of God (or of the divine) always transits in tandem with human contingency, with the contingency of our experience of God, of the divine. One cannot take God or the divine seriously, unless one takes Man and Cosmos seriously. The purification of the notion of God and of the Divine can only come by listening to the voice of all humans (without excluding any of them.[123] One should never confuse the God (or Divine) one is talking about with the language of belief which expresses it.

We feel the need to have a Divine which is neither our creature, nor our creator; it cannot be our puppet, nor we his. We condition each other mutually. He engenders us but does not create us. The Divine Mystery is neither the Supreme Being, nor the theistic Being.

The most simple experience of the divine consists in becoming aware of what breaks up our isolation (solipsism) as it respects our solitude (identity).

The most universal human primordial experience is neither monotheistic, nor atheistic, nor polytheistic, but is a deep belief in a divine world, peopled with all kinds of beings or forces beyond Man. Whether these beings be one or many, the important is that these beliefs express a human experience which says that Man is not alone in the universe and that the sensate world is not all of reality. It is the super or extra-human realm.

The divine represents the element of reality which belongs neither to the merely material world, nor to the merely human world, but which is beyond the sensate and intellectual order. The divine is then a third dimension of reality, revealed by almost all human traditions. Something which tran-

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123. Some see the divine as transcendent transcendence, others as immanent immanence. Some perceive it as metacosmological (the divine of the world), others as metaanthropological (the perfection of the human being), others as metaontological (beyond cosmos and human nature (neither being, nor non-being. Absolute apophatism). See R. Panikkar, "Deity," *op. cit.*, pp. 267–269.

scends all other parameters. One knows not what one is saying when one refers to the divine. It connotes the highest form of life.

B6) The IIM believes that Reality (hence religiousness) is not reducible to a single principle, whether it be divine,[124] human or cosmic. It believes that the dimension of ultimacy of life, resides as well in the human and the cosmic, and hence in what some call today sacred secularity.[125]

There exists another dimension of religiosity, which is thematically new with regard to traditional religions, but which should not be confused with the religion of the Enlightenment, modern science, sovereign rationality, nor with the super-religion of modernity and development. It is what could be called *sacred secularity*. The IIM subscribes to it.

It expresses the conviction that Man cannot find happiness, peace, the solution to his problems, merely or primarily in God or in the conventional religious dimension, i.e. the eternal, divine will, divinities, the numinous, the supernatural, "spirits," the "mystery"; for Man himself and the Cosmos as well as their temporal, spatial, material destiny, are also ultimate dimensions of reality, dimensions which are irreducible to God or to the divine dimension of the Real.

Contemporary spirituality must therefore compose with the temporal destiny of the human being, not because the latter has lost his preoccupation for what is ultimate, but because the temporal destiny in Man has become, in a sense, ultimate. It is therefore not because religions have given up the sacred and are now concerned with "profane" things, but because secularity has become sacred.

The IIM makes a fundamental distinction between the sacred which is always defined in opposition to the profane, and the secular: while the sacred and the profane are by definition antagonistic, the secular can be as sacred as any other thing. Secularity is not *secularization*, i.e. the historical process especially of the last centuries of contemporary history, but also extant in Buddhist countries and other cultures in the world—which consists in dispossessing religious organizations from the secular power they like to accumulate. It is not *secularism* either, i.e. the ideology which denies transcendence and evaluates events only in the light of their own empirical data.

Secularity does not see the world, temporal things, the body, space, as secondary things, as being without ultimate importance. Secularity does not exclude transcendence, but it affirms that the spatio-temporal structures of material beings are ultimately real and also irreducible to anything superior, to a beyond, which would have priority. There is there something of definitive value, so that the problems of secular mankind have all become religious problems—in the sense of ultimate questions; for example, issues like hunger, capitalism, Marxism, world market, are not merely technical issues, but they have a sacred, religious dimension in the sense that ultimate

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124. E.g. a Supreme Being, the divine in a theistic sense, or the divine in a Mystery sense.

125. See R. Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man* (Orbis, N. Y. 1973.

human happiness also depends on socio-economic, scientific, psychological, factors and not only on religious factors in the conventional sense of God and the laws of nature; the organization of the city of Man also belongs to the organization of a divine and natural (cosmic) city. Secularity as a *novum* of our times, allows us to discover the religious dimension of political peace, without falling into theocracy. *Pax civilis* is a constitutive element of religious peace and vice-versa.[126]

One can and must therefore speak of the religion of secularity, which should not be confused with the religion (i.e. ideology) of secularism, progress, the future, capitalism, Marxism, and globalization.

One should not either reduce Reality and Religion to secularity, any more than one should reduce the former to some supreme divine principle (separated from the human and the cosmic). Another word for religion and secularity could be integral humanism.

That religions should be at the service of Man, agreed! But, let us be careful, when religion degenerates in an anthropocentristic ideology, setting Man up as THE center of Reality and hence of religions, the equilibrium is lost. As long as religions do not degenerate into ideologies, they communicate the message that Man—whatever be his personal dignity—is not *the center* of Reality, so that he must overcome his empirical situation. In other words, religions are at the service of Man but Man is not *the* center of religions. This equilibrium must be maintained. And religions do that in various ways.

One can say that there cannot be a true religion unless it be also secular, just as there cannot be a truly secular religion unless it be also divine and cosmic. Just as "religions" do not have the monopoly of religion and reality, the religion of secularity does not have the monopoly on Humanism and Reality.

Modernity, of course, has had a great influence on this emphasis given to secularity, to the spatio-temporal, to Man, to organization and to building the temporal city, to what it itself calls Humanism, to the dignity of the person, of critical reason, of matter, the body and the societal project. All this it has done under the name of development, Evolution, Progress, Democracy, Science, Justice, Human Rights, civilization, freedom of choice, equal opportunity for all. It has done so to such a point that it believes (it is therefore its religion) that this new way of salvation is universal and has the sacred duty non only to expand it, but to impose it throughout the world.

Just as religions do not have the monopoly on religion, so the religion of modernity does not have the monopoly of (the religion) of secularity and of Humanism.

B7) The cosmotheandric experience: the emerging religiousness? An Institute which intends to be exclusively neither theocentric, nor anthropocentric, nor cosmocentric. It seeks rather to realize harmony between

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126. See R. Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace.* (Louisville, Westminster Press 1995) pp. 37–62.

these three ultimate dimensions of Life, dimensions that are mutually irreducible to each other, but constitutive of the Real, without any one of them dominating or governing. And this through a personal religiousness.

The great challenge of religious thought today, seems to us, is to surmount all theism, thus deepening the trinitarian experience in the sense of a cosmotheandric insight. God is no longer the center of life, but all of Reality is. Religion cannot be exclusively, either theocentric, anthropocentric or cosmocentric, but must harmonize the three ultimate dimensions of reality: a) the material and corporal aspect of Reality with b) the various aspects of man and of his activity, and equally these last two with c) the acknowledgement of a mysteric, divine or transcendent principle, guaranteeing a freedom without any amputation... Religion must recognize the irreducibility of these three poles of reality, thus changing the unilateral meaning of the concept of religion. Religion will of course continue to link (*"religare"*) not exclusively Man to God, but also to the whole universe, thus discovering it in its cohesion and meaning... Religion cannot be the specialty of a few, nor the refuge in the sphere of the numinous, of the sacred, but it must permeate all of reality.[127]

For the IIM, religion/religiousness/spirituality consists then, like the *Dharma*, not only in linking Man to God/and to the divine, but also to the Whole Man and to the Cosmos (Nature). Religion is again becoming central in human life, but without dominating anything, for its limited function is to secure linkage (*religio*) and cohesion (*dharma*) between every sphere of reality. The bond (to speak in Christian terms) is the Spirit which must not be confused either with the Source (the Father), nor the *Logos* (the Son). It is *ad-vaita* (non-duality) to speak in Hindu terms. It is *Silence or radical relativity*, to speak in Buddhist terms. It is the *Medicine Wheel (The Circle of Life)* to speak in Native Indian terms. It is *Life* or the *Spider-Web* to speak in African terms. It is *the invisible harmony* to speak in the terms of Heraclitus; there is harmony because no element dominates, governs: neither the divine, nor the human, nor the cosmic.[128]

This is what prompts Panikkar to speak of the cosmotheandric experience as the thematically new emerging religiousness of our times[129] without making it into a new universal religion or a universal theory of religion.

Religion then is not considered as an a-cultural or supra cultural reality (v.g. one universal religion and many cultures). This allows us to speak about the IIM in terms of an interreligious and intercultural Institute, in terms of an institute of integral Humanism and Cosmic Confidence, without presupposing the supremacy either of the divine or of the human, or of the cosmic, nor of either religion or culture.

This allows us never to separate religion, culture and philosophy (nor to reduce any of these to the other) nor to separate what is intercultural from

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127. See R. Panikkar, issue 107, p. 23.

128. It is not true that God alone, Man alone, the Cosmos (Nature) alone can save us. See R. Panikkar, issue 108, pp. 48–84.

129. R. Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience (op. cit.)* and issue 107, pp. 22–23.

what is interreligious (and vice-versa). Its way is therefore spiritual/religious, humanistic and cosmic, an ever-open horizon, a faith which constantly seeks its expressions.

It is as if the Mystery of Life, of Reality, in all its dimensions, throughout the world, and in each one of us, were reclaiming its rights. First through the divine dimension of Reality, which refuses to be reduced to the Supreme God of the monotheistic religions, to the God of philosophers, to the divinities and spirits of nature, to theisms of all kinds, to Being or to non-Being, to the Buddhist silence and void, to nothingness, and which refuses to be disconnected from the human and the cosmic.

Second, through the human dimension (of Reality), which is reclaiming its rights as Man, too often bypassed by the exclusive claims of divinity and of nature; it refuses to be reduced, either to the divine, or to nature, or to be disconnected from its divine and cosmic dimensions.

Third, through the cosmic or nature dimension (of Reality), also reclaiming its rights, too often underestimated by the "supernatural" and superman."

The three ultimate dimensions are telling us: "we are irreducible to each other, and to consciousness; we cannot live without each other and without consciousness. It is as if religion were discovering that it has no monopoly on religion, the human has none on the human, nor the cosmos on the cosmos.

We are in the epoch of a great mutation, experiencing thematically, the cosmotheandric character of Reality. We find ourselves face to face with a thematically new myth or horizon: that of the pluralism of truth and of reality, that of the radical interconnectedness and non-duality or invisible harmony of everything. And because all this takes place in human consciousness, we are facing the interculturality of everything. All this is taking place within our consciousness and experience, without the latter ever being able to exhaust Reality which is free with regard to all consciousness. All over the world and even in our bodies and minds, we are seeing signs of all this, but we have not yet accepted it completely.

It is therefore an eminently personal and communitarian path, including as many expressions as there are persons. "It is centered on obedience to one's personal consciousness, and not necessarily tied to a cosmology, nor to a metaphysics, nor therefore to a doctrinal interpretation."

This IIM does not confuse this personal religiousness with an individualistic or collectivistic path

> "i.e. the individualistic interpretation of the set of practices and symbols of a given religious confession. A personal religiousness, on the contrary, underlines a global interpretation of which my viewpoint is also an integral part. It requires a dialogical method in discussions about reality, and therefore cannot be content with a dialectical method, which, by silencing

my objections, may masquerade conquest as convincement."[130]

C. Why IIM prefers to call itself intercultural rather than interreligious

The answer to this question may have appeared already from reading our text. But let us try to explicitate and summarize a conclusion.

The crisis of the concept of religion can probably find a solution, if one accepts a radical mutation of the concept along the lines we have proposed, which is an alternative to the concept, but not a negation of religion.

But maybe the word religion is already too loaded with its usual meaning, namely Christian/Western, vertical and pyramidal (i.e. too exclusively tied to God and the divine, to something a-cultural and supra-cultural[131] for a) ways of peace which do not reduce the Mystery of Life to God and to the Divine, do not separate spiritual and civil peace, spirituality and culture, spirituality and politics, meaning of life and economics, etc., and for those who perceive life more as a circle than as a pyramid, or b) for other ways of peace that are more humanistic, cosmocentric and secular.

It seems to us that the words "religion" and "interreligious" respectively, have spontaneously too much of a resonance restricted to faith in God (link to God) and a flavour of historical alliance of those who believe in God (or that link people to God), to be accepted by the radically different ultimate ways of peace throughout the world, and to mean the alliance for peace of the world's integral wisdoms.

It seems to us that the words culture and interculture in the encompassing sense of cosmovisions (*Weltanschauungen*, "ways of life," total wisdoms of life, various anthropologies, cosmologies and ontologies) are generally more acceptable, and that they carry less of a risk of excluding the dimension of Mystery from all that is human and cosmic. They run less of a risk, it seems, of making a dichotomy between culture and religion, of neglecting the integral wisdoms of life of the peoples of the world, and of presupposing a necessary duality between civil peace and spiritual peace, between religion and politics, meaning of life and economics, etc. We therefore prefer the word intercultural, but we take care as we do so, not to evacuate the interreligious dimension of every intercultural act.

Distinction, but non-duality between culture and religion, politics and religion...

Our legal charter describes IIM as a center of human encounter between people of different cultures and religions. I believe that one can say that the IIM, in its practise, has never really separated "intercultural" and "interreligious," even if it did not yet formulate clearly the distinction and non-duality between the two.

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130. R. Panikkar, issue 107, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

131. or either too supra-institutional, or too institutional.

In the early stage (1963–1972), it presented itself mostly as interreligious, but by being also intercultural; gradually, it presented itself mostly as intercultural but by being also interreligious.[132] It sought to overcome the dichotomy between culture and religion, civil peace and religious peace, between politics and spirituality, between economics and meaning of life, between religion, philosophy, culture.

For us, Man is a being who is fundamentally and at the same time cultural and religious in all that he is and does. Every religious act is a cultural fact, and every culture is a religious fact. Culture gives religion its language, its body, and religion gives culture its ultimate content, its soul. The meeting of cultures (interculturalism), is always a religious and interreligious act and encounter. Ultimate values are at play. On the other hand, no authentic encounter of religions (interreligiousness) without an encounter of their cultures (interculturalism), i.e. without respect and a serious knowledge of each other's distinct cultural languages.

This distinction and non-duality constituted a radical departure from the Christian Western dualism and from the theocracies and disembedded spiritualities of secularism, found in the alienation from life, characteristic of modern humanism. We refused to separate the divine, the human, the cosmic.[133]

Furthermore, the great traditional African, African, Asian, Native Indian cultural galaxies, did not make that separation, which was characteristic of the Christian and secular West, which had the tendency to interpret this non-duality as being necessarily theocracy or religious totalitarianism.

In our view, the authentic intercultural dialogue that we are talking about is always a religious/sacred act. And vice-versa. An interreligious dialogue, worthy of the name, must needs be a human intercultural dialogue. For example, one cannot respect the African, Hindu, Native Indian "religion," without respecting their own political, social, family, economic, etc., cultures, and without lighting our lanterns at their fires. Vice-versa, one cannot respect their cultures without respecting their spiritualities, without reducing one dimension to the other. We therefore refuse to reduce what is religious to what is not cultural, and what is cultural to what is not religious. But we also refuse to confuse both in some formal unity (monism). We seek to maintain their distinction but within non-duality, and in a radical in-

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132. Already in 1972, one can notice that the Center prefers to present itself as intercultural. But this trend became stronger, beginning in 1974, when we became aware how the conventional interreligious approach generally by-passed peoples' radically different cultures, i.e. their own wisdom and know-how in the political, economic, legal, medical, educational, etc., fields. In 1977, it presents itself as an intercultural center. In 1981, thanks to the initiative of its Executive Director, Kalpana Das, it is officially named Monchanin Intercultural Centre, and its journal, under my initiative, becomes *Interculture*. It is only in 1990 that the Centre will finally be named the Intercultural Institute of Montreal.

133. See R. Panikkar "The Religious dimension of political peace" in *Cultural Disarmament*, op. cit. pp. 27–53, and the whole book. See also his *Le Métapolitique* (to be published) and *Interculture*, issues 47, 49, 53, 68, 77, 89, 130 and 136 (to be published).

terconnexion which constitutes them. And we refuse to make absolutes of the language of interculturalism and interreligiousness.

Conclusion

An Intercultural Alternative

Both the IIM and the Journal have, from the start, constituted an intercultural alternative. I am saying *a* and not *the* alternative, because *the alternative* does not and cannot exist, not even *the intercultural* alternative. That is why IIM speaks of "the research-action of intercultural alternatives," ours being one among others. There is no alternative, but alternatives, all provisional, for such is the human condition.

Alternative to what? First to the "System," i.e.

> "to the technocratic complex and its variants in the capitalist, ex-socialist worlds and non-aligned satellites, which propose one economy and mixed regimes, a system based on an underlying cosmology which upholds the political structure or infrastructure: the myth of the Nation-State and the modern economy, as being the essential issues of politics and economics."[134]

Alternative, because the system doesn't work. But also alternative to any one culture.

Moreover, there is no alternative within the system, nor outside the system. We have to *live with it*. To be in the system without belonging to it, we said. Why then still use the word alternative, if we see no way of getting rid of the system and of substituting another? Because we can still use the word according to the tasty ambivalence that the word possesses.

It does not say "the other," "the stranger," nor "one or the other" in an exclusive and substitutive sense. We use it in the inclusive sense of "the one and the other," reality being alternative, relational polarity and not only dialectical alternation. Reality itself is polar or rather trinitarian.

The alternative we seek cannot be the adversary, the enemy of the system, but its complement, its polarity, its challenge; which presupposes its transformation, its radical metamorphosis, its mutation. The alternative consists primarily, in acknowledging the right of the other to exist—this other that the system has a tendency to ignore—but that the "others" must not imitate (by ignoring the system). We need each other, not in the style of States that are sovereign in principle, whose tolerance towards others limits (with courtesy or by force) that supremacy, but because we are all bound up with each other. *Esse est coesse*, to be is to be together.

Expressing it in our language: we need intercultural alternatives, i.e. of mutual fecundation of cultures, namely to listen and to accept inwardly in depth, other cultures, i.e. a dialogue which can bring about a mutual fecundation.

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134. R. Panikkar, *Le Métapolitique*, op. cit.

"The latter requires more than a superficial knowledge of other cultures. A critique, even a radical one, of the dominant culture, is not enough: it is not a matter of being satisfied with searching in the past, for the faults of the one or the virtues of others: one must find something new. We must invite these cultures to express themselves, to say what they have not been yet able to say because the opportunity to do so was lacking, and because the present problématique did not present itself. For the inter-fecundation to take place, we must love each other, know each other, and avoid all preservatives in order to be able, maybe, to make possible the birth of a new-being."[135]

How to emancipate from technology and to radically transform the system? It is through the cross-fertilization of cultures that we shall exit from the dilemma. We must overcome cultural inertia and recognize that to solve the human problems today, no single culture, religion, ideology, tradition, is self-sufficient. Interculturalism is an imperative, not only of the contemporary human condition, but of Reality itself. This is the imperative by which the IIM and its journal have been trying to live by, during the past 35 and 30 years respectively. Interculturalism for us is not a luxury but a question of survival. It is unavoidable.

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135. R. Panikkar, *Le Métapolitique*, op. cit. (forthcoming).

APPENDIX 1

FOUNDERS' WRITINGS ON IIM PUBLISHED IN *INTERCULTURE*

Jacques Langlais

1968	Le Centre Monchanin après 5 ans	unpublished
1968 Sept.	Le Centre Monchanin est enfin chez lui	issue 6
1969 Feb.	Notre communion à Monchanin	unpublished
1969 March	Le Centre Monchanin : entrevue dans *Nouvelles de Sainte-Croix dans le Monde*	
1969 Nov.	Ce qui sous-tend le Centre Monchanin	issue 18
1970 Feb.	Basic Philosophy of Monchanin Center	issue 21
1970	Sessions de sensibilisation aux grandes religions officielles aux cégeps (dans *Prospectives* vol. n° 3).	
1970 Aug.	Rapport du Directeur Général	issue 26
1972	De Lubac et Jacques Langlais. Correspondance.	issue 33
1972	Mes sept années au Centre Monchanin	issue 34
1973	Les origines du Centre Monchanin et son avenir	issues 39-40
1973/1974	Une approche existentielle de la religion : la rencontre au Centre Monchanin.	
1976	Mon expérience de la rencontre au Centre Monchanin	interview, issue 52
1977	Les chrétiens face aux autres traditions. Du dialogue à la rencontre.	issue 57
1986	Looking back on 13 years of intercultural co-living.	issue 90
1998	Memoirs (to be published)	

Robert Vachon

1968 J.F.	Réflexions sur les orientations du Centre	*Orient*
1968 J.F.	Comment je suis venu à Monchanin	*Orient*
Nov.-Dec. 1970	Monchanin : orientations 1970–1971	issue 27
June 1971	Rapport du directeur général	

1973	Cahier du 10ᵉ anniversaire	issues 39-40
1977	Monchanin Centre. Its Fundamental vision.	issue 55
1981	Pour une meilleure compréhension du C.I.M.	*Monchanin Bulletin* 14
1986	L'éducation interculturelle et la formation des maîtres. L'approche dialogique.	unpublished
1986	C.I.M.: orientations	issue 91
1989	Co-presentation of IIM to Plenum, Vancouver	unpublished
1990	Presentation of IIM to the National Conference of Religious Communities. For endowment fund.	unpublished
1995 (1)	The intercultural foundations of Peace	issue 127
(2)	Accepting the emerging new encompassing myth: the pluralism (of truth and of reality), and interculturalism.	issue 128
(3)	A new method: dialogical dialogue, mythico-symbolic consciousness, intercultural mediation.	issue 129
1997–1998	Fragments autobiographiques 1–2–3.	

Kalpana Das

March-April 1974	Quelques réflexions d'une hindoue sur le Christ et le Christianisme	issue 44
Sept.-Oct. 1974	Communication and Group Interaction: a Hindu View	issue 46
May-June 1975	The Monchanin Experience. Intercultural Education.	issue 45
Oct.-Dec. 1977	Hindu Perspectives on the «Dialogue» between Cultures and Religion	issue 57
1986	L'éducation interculturelle et la formation des maîtres. Approche dialogique.	unpublished
1986	The Monchanin Cross-Cultural Centre. Its practice.	issue 90
1988	Social Work and Pluralism in Quebec.	issue 100
1989	Co-presentation to Plenum Calgary.	unpublished
1994	The challenge of interculturalism in the non-institutional and informal sector.	issue 123
	See the Annual Reports of the Director since 1979. Also: many documents on IIM's Intercultural pedagogy. (Non published.)	

APPENDIX 2

COLLABORATORS TO THE JOURNAL BY CULTURAL AREAS 1968–1998

ASIATIC AREA

SOUTH ASIA	Hindu India: Kalpana Das, Raimon Panikkar, Ashis Nandy, J.L. Mehta, G. Mehta Baquer, A.K. Saran, Swami Ranganathananda, Swami Chidananda, Ursula Sharma, Madhu Prakash, Ghan Shyam Birla, Usha Sainani, T.Ramachandra, Chitta Goswami, Varna, Suhri Shanta, Gonsalves, J. Melchior, C. Alvares, Tagore, Vinola Bhave.

Pakistan: Audrey Saldanha.

Sri Lanka: Aloysius Pieris.

Bangladesh: Abdur-Rabb, Hedayetullah.

SOUTHEAST ASIA:	Vietnam: Thuong Vuong Reddick, Le Thi Que, Do Quy Toan, Thick Nhat Hanh, Ding Ngoc Mo, (Dorais) (Merrill Jackson), Nguyen Khac-Kham.

Thaïland: Sulak Sivaraksa.

Burma: Myint Maung.

OTHERS:	China: William Huang, Jan Yun-Hua, Tchoung-Tseu, C. Lam, Mr. Lee, Dr. Han, Joseph Liu (Kenneth Cohen, Robert Garry).

Tibet: Dalaï Lama, Geshe Sopa, Lopsang Lhalungpa, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Michael Van Praag.

Japan: Dr. Kusano, Masaji Chiba, Takahatake, Aoki T.

Korea: Dongschick Rhee.

AFRICAN AREA

BLACK AFRICA:	Jacques Njoya, T. Nkoa, A. Mvilongo-Tsala (Cameroun); A.Sibomana and Nzi-Iyo-Nsenga (Rwanda); Yaya Diallo and V. Koulibaly (Senufo, Mali); Omar Jah (Gambia); Emongo Lomomba and Bilolo Mulalinge (Tetela, Congo); Salomon Nkiwane (Mozambique); Hauman (Kenya).

Haïti: Joseph Augustin, G. Anglade, Carlo Sterlin, E. Douyon.

Black anglophones: Leo Bertley and C. Christensen (Canada), C. Carnall (England).

Maghreb: Hassan Zaoual (Marocan Berber), Abdellah Boudahrain, Abdelfettah Benchekroun.

NATIVE INDIAN AREA

Iroquois: Kaientaronkwen Ernest Benedict, Sakokwenionkwas (Tom Porter), Oren Lyons.

Ojibway: Basil Johnston, Art Solomon, Archie Cheechoo, Jim Dumont, Adam Cuthand and Dr. Newbery.

Denes: René Lamothe and René Fumoleau.

Montagnais: N'tsukw and Yvette Barriault.

Yukon Indians: Ken Kane.

Inuit: Tamusi Qumak

Cherokee: Bob Thomas, Dreadfulwater.

Wabanakis: Andrea Bear Nicholas.

Metis: Robert Laplante.

WESTERN AREA

FRANCO-PHONES	Quebec: J. Langlais, J.R. Milot, Yvette Barriault, M. Proulx, G. Cossette, Lopez-Therrien, G. Fisher, Jarquin, Plante, F. Gauthier, Guy St-Michel, Y. Montplaisir, Danielle Blanchet, J. Petit, Y. Poitras, Rodolphe St-Pierre, Georges Tissot, J.P. de Lagrave, C. Guyon, Sylvie Vincent, Alain Bissonnette, J. Mailhot, R. Folco, M. Ouelette, P. Beaudoin, N. Guidon, Thérèse Boileau, Janine Lévesque, Rosario Demers.

Franco-americains: Robert Vachon, Lucien Coutu, Denis Goulet, A. Proulx.

France: Jacques Masui, H. de Lubac, Henry o.p., Étienne Le Roy, R. de Monvalon, Sr. Marie de l'Assomption, J. Monchanin, H. Le Saux, Norbert Rouland, Bernard Hours, S. Latouche, D. Temple, C. Isauzu, R. Garaudy, Anne Moreau.

Belgium:Luc Heymans, Thierry Verhelst, Marc Luyckx, Eric Van Monckhoven.

Switzerland: Fredy Kunz, Gilbert Rist, Dominique Perrot, Jacques Scheuer, Krieger.

ANGLO-PHONES :	England: Edward Goldsmith, C. Carnall.

Scotland: Alastair McIntosh, Wrightman, Morgan.

Canada: Mary Stark, D. Bedford, S. Pobihushchy, Paul Younger, Arthur Boorman, Jennifer Mercer, Dr. Newbery, Robert Slater, M. Strong, C. Christensen, W. Mackey, Bradford Morse, S. Block, Eric Wesselow, S. Berry, T. Mercier, Werner W., Connors B., Aoki, Dahli.

United States: Thomas Berry, Philip Kapleau, Jim Lotz, K. Lipman, Thomas Merton, Elsie Mitchell, Robertson, Alan Watts, Tom Kubat, Scott Eastham, Gary Snyder, D. Saunders, Joseph E. Brown, K. Fink, Neil Jamieson, John Spellman, Mary Mc Donald, Susan Hunt, Hinzmann, J.F. Coombs, Howard Berman, Gregory Schaaf, Roger Rapp, Frederique Apfell-Marglin, Sol Tax, Ferguson, William Johnston, Merrill Jackson, Gregory Schopen, Frederick Frank.

OTHERS: Greece: Marco Pallis.

Holland: Jan Vermeulen, Michel Van Pragg, Haumaan.

Russia: Mariquita Platov.

Germany: Bernard Weiss, Wolfgang Sachs.

Norway: Hvalkoff Soren.

Italy: N. Bottani.

Yugoslavia: Ivan Illich.

Austria: Bro. David Stendl-Rast.

Catalonia: Raimon Panikkar.

Ukraine: S. Pobihushchy.

OTHER CULTURAL AREAS

JEWISH: Henri Cohen, Rabbi Zalman Schachter Hassid, Maurice Elmeleh and Yossi Levy Sépharades, Rabbi Joel Orent, David Rome, J.R. Fishel, Eric Wesselow, Frederick Frank, A. Haim, Roger Rebstock.

ISLAMIC: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Mahmoud Ayoub, Majid Rahnema, (Iran), Hoceine Bayod (France), Abdur Rabb and Hedayetulhah (Bangla Desh).

LATIN AMERICA: Mexico: Rafael Legaria, Gustavo Esteva.

Brazil: Bishops and Brazilian missionaries, François de l'Espinay, E. Hoornaert, Marès de Souza Filho, Carlos Frederico.

Peru: Alfredo de Romaña, Julio Valladolid Rivera, (Pratec group).

Part II

METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

DAVID J. KRIEGER[136]

IT IS ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS of our time that the borders between cultures and religions are disappearing. The existential risk and the intellectual burden of interreligious dialogue is, therefore, not merely the personal adventure of privileged individuals, but the very condition determining all relevant theology today.[137] Raimon Panikkar poses the problem of the encounter of religions in the following way:

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136. David J. Krieger teaches at the University of Luzern, Switzerland, and directs a research project on interreligious environmental ethics financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation. He is founder of the Institut für Kommunikationsforschung in Meggen, Switzerland, and author of *The New Universalism, Fundamentalismus — Prämodern oder Postmodern*, et *System, Kommunikation und Konstruktivismus*. (Editor's note. The text reproduced here was first published in J. Prabhu ed. *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar* (Orbis, N.Y. 1996) pp.201–226.)

137. Karl Rahner bases his dogmatic theology of the non-Christian religions in "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions" (see *Theological Investigations*, vol. V, Baltimore, Helicon, 1966, p. 114–34) on precisely this fact. The following sentences do not appear in the English translation and are therefore offered here in my translation. They are found on page 137 of the German text.

"Earlier another religion was practically also the religion of another cultural circle, a history with which one communicated only on the edge of one's own history. Today it is different. There is no Western culture enclosed within itself any more, no Western culture at all, which could consider itself simply as the center of world history....Today everyone is everyone else's neighbor, and therefore determined by the global communication of life-situations: Every religion which exists in the world is, as all cultural possibilities and realities of other men, a question and a possibility offered for all."

In order to get an idea of the magnitude and significance of the historical shift which occurred within the first half of the twentieth century, one need only compare the above statements to the cultural isolationism in which Ernst Troeltsch ended forty years earlier (see "The Place of Christianity among the World-Religions" in *Christian Thought: Its History and Application*). For Troeltsch,

"the only religion that we can endure is Christianity, for Christianity has grown up with us and has become a part of our very being" (p. 25). "But this does not preclude," he continues, "the possibility that other racial groups, living under entirely different conditions, may experience their contact with the Divine Life in quite a different way, and may themselves also possess a religion which has grown up with them, and from which they cannot sever themselves so long as they remain what they are" (p. 26).

Religious truth is bound to its particular historical and cultural setting and there can be no real encounter or dialogue between such mutually inaccessible realms. "The various racial groups can only seek to purify and enrich their experience, each within

To be sure, each tradition, seeing itself from within, considers that it is capable of giving a full answer to the religious urge of its members and, seeing other traditions from outside, tends to judge them as partial. It is only when we take the other as seriously as ourselves that a new vision may dawn. For this we have to break the self-sufficiency of any human group. But this requires that we should somehow have jumped outside our own respective traditions. Herein seems to lie the destiny of our time.[138]

How can we consciously accept this destiny and approach the encounter of religions with methodological adequacy? Much of Panikkar's published work is primarily concerned with the concrete dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism. Still, there are important methodological reflections throughout these works, as well as major essays dealing specifically with methodological issues. Drawing upon these various sources, I will attempt a systematic *reconstruction* of Panikkar's method for conducting interreligious dialogue.[139] To state the result at the outset, the method will be found to consist of seven steps:

1. One begins with a faithful and critical understanding of one's own tradition—an understanding won with historical-critical, philological and phenomenological methods.

2. In the same way, an understanding of another tradition is acquired.

3. This understanding becomes conviction.

4. An internal, *intra*religious dialogue begins between the two convictions.

5. The internal dialogue becomes an external, *inter*religious dialogue with representatives of the other tradition.

6. Steps 1 through 5 are presupposed for all partners in the dialogue.

7. New interpretations are tested for their "orthodoxy."

In the following discussion I will be primarily concerned with presenting a *method* not only specifically for interreligious dialogue, but also for inter-cultural encounter in general. The focus upon method necessarily implies a certain narrowness of vision with respect to the full body of Panikkar's thought. To a certain extent the entire philosophical and theological "system" which surrounds and, to a certain extent, grounds Panikkar's method

its own province and according to its own standards" (pp. 27–28). There can be no conversion or transformation of one into the other" (p. 30).

138. See Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, revised and enlarged edition (Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1981) p. 34.

139. The following discussion draws heavily upon material published in my book *The New Universalism: Foundations for a Global Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y. Orbis Books, 1991). See also "Communication Theory and Interreligious Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 30:3-4 (Summer–Fall 1993), pp. 331–53.

must be neglected. I will also not attempt to answer the historical question concerning the development of his thought.

Panikkar places certain "indispensable prerequisites" at the beginning of the encounter of religions:

a deep human honesty in searching for the truth wherever it can be found; a great intellectual openness in this search, without conscious preconceptions or willingly entertained prejudices; and finally a profound loyalty towards one's own tradition.[140]

Already we have here the first two steps of the method any interreligious dialogue must follow. The first step consists in obtaining a faithful and critical understanding of one's own tradition; the second step requires that one acquire a similar understanding of another tradition.[141]

In order to clarify the procedures by which this is to be accomplished, Panikkar proposes to view the problem of intercultural understanding in terms of three kinds of hermeneutics: "morphological," "diachronic," and "diatopical."[142] If we take the three kinds of hermeneutics which Panikkar describes as *levels of human communication*, then Panikkar's diatopical model allows us to distinguish *three levels of discourse* upon which communication may take place. First, *within* a culture, tradition, world view or religious understanding it is achieved by means of a first level of discourse, which Panikkar calls "morphological" hermeneutics. This refers to that language in which we make assertions about matters of fact in the broad sense. This is everyday language, the normal language in which we communicate and co-ordinate our practical as theoretical concerns. Whatever we say in this language is meaningful by reason of being either true or false according to commonly accepted criteria of truth and validity. These criteria form the life-world horizon, the set of taken-for-granted truths about reality which constitutes our "world." Within this horizon of shared criteria, methods according to which we handle statements claiming to be true and meaningful may be called methods of verification.

When systematically developed, first-level discourse becomes the well-known methods of *argumentation*—formal, empirical, historical-critical and phenomenological—in which scientific inquiry is conducted. Panikkar refers to this form of understanding as "morphological hermeneutics," for it is by means of these methods that the distance which separates us from understanding that which is strange or unknown within a given world horizon, whether a natural phenomenon, a text, a work of art or a social institution, is overcome.

Morphological hermeneutics, therefore, mediates understanding *within the same cultural and historical context* as the interpreter. To take an example from everyday life, an expert explains the proper use of a computer to

140. *Ibid*, p. 35.

141. *Ibid*, p. 67 f.

142. See R. Panikkar *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979) p. 8 f.

someone from his own culture who has a similar general education. He may presuppose a common language and a shared form of thinking and even a common world view. It is presupposed that the person who is seeking information about the computer already knows, at least to a certain extent, what a "computer" is, what a "machine" is and what one does with such things.

The problem of explaining, understanding and discovering truth becomes very different, however, when it is a matter of obtaining information about something from the past, from a culture which lies far distant in time, say, a text or artifact from ancient Rome or Greece. We can no longer presuppose a common language or world view. The world has changed, ant the context in which the text originally was written or the artifact produced no longer immediately determines our view of the world. Understanding now requires that the context itself be reconstructed and mediated with our present-day context or life-world horizon. This is a task which must be carried out upon a different level of discourse: namely a discourse which, since it cannot appeal to common criteria of truth or meaning, must itself express these criteria and thus "set boundaries" for our life-world horizon.

We may speak of this second-level discourse as *boundary discourse*. Panikkar here speaks of "diachronic" hermeneutics, because the task is to overcome alienation of meaning *caused by temporal distance*. Diachronic hermeneutics, or second-level boundary discourse, articulates itself as the retrieval of founding texts and events. Consequently it is concerned to define and preserve *one* specific cultural tradition (e.g. Western culture). The understanding it expresses by mediating horizons of meaning constitutes the historical continuity and cultural identity of a "tradition." As a systematically developed method of inquiry, boundary discourse becomes historical hermeneutics or dialectic.[143]

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143. See *ibid*, p. 9. Panikkar's relation to dialectics is ambiguous. On the one hand, he seems to limit its usefulness to the reconstruction of meaning in history, that is, within the history of one particular culture—this is history as seen from the point of view of a particular people; it is "their" history. Nevertheless, he himself employs dialectical constructions without restricting their scope: see, for example, "*Colligite fragmenta*: For an Integration of Reality" in *From Alienation to At-Oneness*, Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova University, ed. F.A. Eigo (Villanova, Pa., Villanova University Press, 1977) pp. 19–91. Here Panikkar speaks of "three kairological moments" in the "unfolding of consciousness" (p.35ff.). But since dialectical reconstructions of this sort necessarily presuppose an evolutionist or developmental scheme, it is difficult to apply them in the intercultural encounter, wherein each culture sees itself as the peak of historical evolution. Eric Voegelin (see *The Ecumenical Age*, vol. IV of *Order in History* [Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1956 ff.]), calls all such developmental reconstructions of history into question when he admits that his original project of conceiving history as "a process of increasingly differentiated insight into the order of being in which man participates by his existence" (p. 1) could not be carried out because of "the impossibility of aligning the empirical types in any time sequence at all that would permit the structures actually found to emerge from a history conceived as 'course'" (p. 2). This would also seem to preclude the possibility of any scheme of dialectical development the moment the one-sided perspective of a given culture is abandoned. [*Editor's note: see Raimon Panikkar's response in Prabhu* op. cit. *pp. 244–245, where R.P. acknowledges that "I should have been perhaps more*

Both morphological and diachronical hermeneutics may be applied in the attempt to understand another culture, as, for example, is the normal procedure in ethnology, anthropology and history and their respective applications in the science of religions. Nevertheless, says Panikkar, they are not sufficient to overcome the radical distance which separates different cultures from one another. For this reason, still another form of hermeneutics and thus a higher level of discourse must be postulated wherein these disciplines will be able to go beyond their present methodological limitations. Only upon the basis of a discourse which opens up a *horizon of encounter* within which radically different traditions may "co-respond" with one another does intercultural understanding become possible. Interreligious understanding, therefore, goes beyond the mere preservation of a tradition and acquires the character of a founding *event*. For, at a certain point, there occurs an appropriation of a new horizon of taken-for-granted truths, a new "myth," as Panikkar would say.

Such understanding is necessarily different from merely acquiring new information about something in the world. It cannot, therefore, be carried out upon the level of argumentative discourse, that is, by means of historical or phenomenological comparison of beliefs. Furthermore, it cannot limit itself to the continuity of a single historical tradition and the retrieval of its founding texts or events, as does the second level of boundary discourse or diachronic hermeneutics. It is for this reason that Panikkar has introduced a "third moment" into hermeneutics:

> There is...a third moment in any complete hermeneutical process and the fact that it has often been neglected or overlooked has been a major cause of misunderstandings among the different cultures of the world. I call it *diatopical* hermeneutics because the distance to be overcome is not merely temporal, within one broad tradition, but the gap existing between two human *topoi*, "places" of understanding and self-understanding, between two—or more—cultures that have not developed their patterns of intelligibility or their basic assumptions out of a common historical tradition or through mutual influence. To cross the boundaries of one's own culture without realizing that another culture may have a radically different approach to reality is today no longer admissible. If still consciously done, it would be philosophically naive, politically outrageous and religiously sinful. Diatopical hermeneutics stands for the thematic consideration of understanding the other without assuming that the other has the same basic self-understanding and understanding as I have. The ultimate human horizon, and not only differing contexts, is at stake here.[144]

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clear in specifying that it was one particular language that I was using," but defends the coherence of his statement which he distinguished from its absolute universal validity, since "no language is universal and presuppositionless...]

144. See Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, p. 9.

If diatopical hermeneutics is to be possible the "ultimate human horizon" is and must always remain a horizon of *encounter* rather than a horizon of *indifference* and *exclusion* as presumed by first-level discourse and projected by second-level discourse. The phenomenology of religion, for example, has its function in the identification and preliminary clarification of religious phenomena, but not in actually carrying out the dialogue between religions because, as first-level discourse, it operates within a horizon of phenomenal *indifference*, or givenness, which precludes the radical *discontinuity* among different religious traditions.[145] This is also true, according to Panikkar, for the philosophy of religion.[146] Philosophy of religion operates, along with theology, upon the second level of discourse, which is con-

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145. See R. Panikkar, "Epoché in the Religious Encounter." *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 39–52, for a discussion of the limitations of phenomenology in the interreligious dialogue. Panikkar understands *epoché* to mean

> "putting aside one's personal convictions, suspending judgement on the validity of one's own religious tenets; in a word, bracketing the concrete beliefs of individual allegiance to a particular confession" (p. 42).

Although he admits that such a methodological device has its place "in the introductory stage" of "getting to know a particular religiousness by means of unbiased description of its manifestations." He nonetheless finds it "psychologically impracticable, phenomenologically inappropriate, philosophically defective, theologically weak and religiously barren" when applied to the interreligious dialogue (p. 43). It is *psychologically impracticable* because "I cannot act...*as if* I did not believe in these tenets" (p. 45); *phenomenologically inappropriate* because "it is a methodological error to leave outside the dialogue an essential part of its subject matter" (p. 47); *philosophically defective*, first, because the bracketing of ultimate convictions would imply that "there is no *doer* left to perform such a manoeuvre," and second, because philosophical encounter "requires a sincere and unconditional search for truth and there can be no such search if my truth is removed from the sight of my partner" (p. 48); *theologically weak* because it would imply that faith is "a kind of luxury" (p. 48) of "no fundamental relevance for my humanity" (p. 49); and finally, the *epoché* is *religiously barren* because it would "delete at a stroke the very subject matter of the dialogue" (p. 49), namely, religion. Panikkar concludes:

> "The peculiar difficulty in the phenomenology of religion is that the religious *pistema* is different from and not reducible to the Husserlian *noema*. The *pistema* is that core of religion which is open or intelligible only to a *religious* phenomenology. In other words, the belief of the believer belongs essentially to the religious phenomenon...This being the case, the *noema* of a religiously sceptical phenomenologist does not correspond to the *pistema* of the believer. The religious phenomenon appears only as *pistema* and not as mere *noema*" (p. 51).

146. See "The Category of Growth in Comparative Religion: A Critical Self-Examination" in Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, pp.53–75, especially p. 67, where Panikkar again emphasizes that

> "to elaborate a Philosophy of Religion we need to take religions seriously and, further, to experience them from within, to believe, in one way or another, in what these religions say....Religions are not purely objectifiable data: they are also essentially personal, subjective....Without that belief no philosophy of religions is possible."

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cerned to establish criteria of meaning and truth as the encompassing boundary of a particular context of interpretation.

From the methodological point of view, the first two levels of discourse together with their respective systematic method of inquiry are not able to appropriate constructively the moment of *praxis* which necessarily accompanies interreligious understanding, namely, the moment of becoming *convinced* of the truth of the other religion or world view as a new possibility for one's own life. Although it is certainly *necessary* to study another religion or culture with all the methods which the various sciences place at our disposal before a meaningful dialogue can take place, it is not *sufficient*. This follows from the fact that the understanding of another culture or religion inevitably brings with it the disclosure of an entire world of meaning and value which includes new possibilities for human existence. The disclosure of such a world of meaning implies becoming convinced of its truth. Understanding upon this level is itself a "religious" event, which in turn implies that we experience, with respect to the other religion, what can only be called a *conversion*.[147]

Of course this can and must be said for second-level boundary discourse also. To set the boundaries of a life-world is not to make assertions which may be either true or false according to given criteria, for boundary discourse expresses or "sets" the criteria. Here also the pragmatics of discovering truth consist not in procedures of verification but in processes of initiation, socialization and conversion. But the experience of conversion on the second level of discourse is limited to establishing the cultural identity and historical continuity of a single tradition to the exclusion of all others. Therefore, it is necessary to postulate a third level of discourse where conversion is not exclusive.

It is precisely this requirement which the various scientific disciplines cannot fulfill. The empirical sciences are bound to methodological abstinence from value judgements, whereas the hermeneutical and dialectical sciences are bound to a confessionally exclusive closure of the horizon of meaning which projects specific criteria as absolute.

In order, therefore, clearly to bring out the implications of the problem of understanding on the level of interreligious encounter and also to explain what is involved in diatopical hermeneutics, Panikkar puts forth the following provocative thesis: "To understand is to be convinced."[148] This refers to the way in which truth is discovered on the level of a discourse that does not presuppose common, taken-for-granted criteria of meaning and validity. What is said within first-level discourse is meaningful, as we saw, precisely

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147. For a forceful and convincing presentation of this view of understanding other religions see the methodological studies of Mircea Eliade in *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1969).

148. See R. Panikkar, "Verstehen als Überzeugtsein," in *Neue Anthropologie*, ed. by H.-G. Gadamer and P. Vogler, vol. 7 in the series *Philosophische Anthropologie* (Stuttgart, Thieme, 1975) pp. 132–67. This citation is taken from p. 134 and is, as all other citations from this essay, translated by me. Here we are not concerned with the philosophical foundations of the interdependence of truth and meaning which Panikkar postulates.

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because it can be either true or false according to given criteria. Upon those higher levels of discourse, however, where it is not a matter of asserting facts about the world but "proclaiming" the very boundaries of the world, language is either meaningful or meaningless and its meaning *is* its truth.

This implies that on the "religious" plane understanding what a statement means is the same as acknowledging its truth. Or, put the other way round, on this highest level of discourse a false proposition cannot be understood at all. Panikkar says, "To understand something as false is a contradiction in itself."[149] This is because "understanding produces conviction."[150] Panikkar summarizes, "In the thesis lies the assertion that one cannot really understand the views of another, if one does not share them."[151]

Before looking more closely at how Panikkar seeks to establish this assertion, let us attempt to make clear just what is at stake. It is asserted that the historical, phenomenological and philosophical methods, with which we hitherto have understood our own and also other traditions, on the one hand, inevitably lead to conviction, whereas on the other hand, because of their ideals of value-free objectivity, they can neither consciously admit nor adequately appropriate the "conversion" which accompanies all understanding. In a non-pluralistic situation characterized by relatively unquestioned agreement on basic values, this moment of conversion does not become explicitly problematical. Methods of understanding which are explicitly or implicitly intended to secure the cultural reproduction of a society are at first unproblematical; that is, they perform an enculturating function more or less adequately and actually do simultaneously bring about understanding and belief in the basic values and truths of a society. We are usually unaware of the fact that we have been "converted" to our own cultural life-world and that such a conversion lies at the basis of almost all our beliefs and convictions.

As soon as this naive unanimity is broken, however, as it is in a radically pluralistic situation, methods of understanding which do not explicitly take the moment of conversion into account become counterproductive. The implicit convictions of the interpreters, as long as they themselves are not raised to the level of methodological awareness, cause polemical distortions and block understanding. What is at stake in this claim, therefore, is the insight that the interreligious encounter requires its own method of understanding which explicitly includes the moment of conversion.

Let us now look at how Panikkar establishes his thesis. He offers the following example:

> Granted "A is B" means "Jesus is the Lord" and you, as orthodox Jew would not agree to the statement. Now you go further and say: "M is p," that is, "Christians believe that Jesus is the Lord." You ask yourself: How do they come to believe this? The reason: "M thinks that n is correct," that is, "Christians understand the Jewish messiah to be the Lord and

149. *Ibid*, p. 136.

150. *Ibid*, p. 135.

151. *Ibid*, p. 137.

suppose that Jesus is this messiah." You, however, do not believe that n is correct, that is, that Christ is the messiah, although you admit that the messiah is the Lord. You understand clearly that some men consider Jesus to be the messiah and therefore say: "Jesus is the Lord" ("A is B"). But you will object that this is not correct, because the statement is grounded upon a false reading into the facts, namely, the identification of Jesus with the messiah. Although you understand "M is p," you do not understand "A is B," because for you A is not the A which M means (Jesus, the messiah), but A_1 (Jesus, a condemned Jew). This means that Jesus is not the messiah for you so that the sentence "Jesus is the Lord" is for you unacceptable. You understand, therefore, the sentence "A_1 is B" and even "A_1 is not A"—and therefore you cannot perform the spiritual act of saying with meaning: "A is B." You understand what "they" say, and even why they say it, but you do not understand what they understand, and this precisely because you have another understanding of A (namely A_1).[152]

Since it is precisely the human sciences which formulate such sentences, namely, "M thinks that n is correct," or "M says, A is B," this argument shows the limits of a certain kind of scientific method. For if understanding of what the other says depends upon our insight into the truth of his or her statement, then the methodological ideals of value-neutrality and objectivity actually hinder the process of understanding in every situation where a common agreement about basic convictions cannot be presupposed. Not only is the claim of such methods to be the only ones capable of yielding true knowledge itself unscientific, but such "scientific" ideals of knowledge tend to make interreligious dialogue impossible. In the first place they do not acknowledge other forms of thought as equally valid means of knowing, and in the second place they produce an interpretation wherein the other cannot, as Panikkar says, "find himself":

> We investigate, for example, the customs of some "animistic" tribe and describe them in every detail, whereby we also show the logical connections between them, etc. We are able to reproduce "M is p" almost like a photograph, but if we overlook the other (deeper lying) level, upon which the truth-claim arises, then we do not really attain to the thing which we are describing. In other words: The group M will not be satisfied with our purely phenomenological explanations, which have intentionally placed the question of truth, which to them is the most important question, in "parentheses." This means, "M is p" may indeed seem to me to be so, but the group M will not at all see itself in this statement.[153]

152. *Ibid*, p. 143.

153. See Panikkar, "Verstehen als Überzeugtsein" p. 145. The hermeneutical requirement that the one to be understood must be able to "find himself" in the interpretation was already decisively formulated by W.B. Kristensen:

> "Let us not forget that there is no other religious reality than the faith of the believers. If we want to make the acquaintance with true religion, we are ex-

It is in this context that the full significance of *conversion* as the *third step* in the method for the interreligious dialogue becomes clear. Referring to the dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism, with which Panikkar has primarily been concerned, this means:

> A Christian will never fully understand Hinduism if he is not, in one way or another, converted to Hinduism. Nor will a Hindu ever fully understand Christianity unless he, on one way or another, becomes a Christian.[154]

The concept of conversion must be taken seriously. Literally the word, coming from the Latin *convertere*, means "to turn about." It implies a change, which, because it occurs in the dimension of a person's basic beliefs, is a radical change involving the whole person, his or her vision of the world and the entire network of social relations in which the person is embedded. Traditionally, conversion has been confessionally understood in terms of a model of *rejection and acceptance*, that is, as a complete rejection of the "old" view and similarly total and unquestioning acceptance of the "new." For this reason it has become important in the theological rather than the philosophical or scientific traditions.[155]

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clusively thrown on the pronouncements of the believers. What we think, from our standpoint, about the essence and value of foreign religions, surely testifies to our own faith or to our conception of religious belief, but if our opinion of a foreign religion differs from the meaning and the evaluation of the believers themselves, then we have no longer to do with their religion. Not only our own religion, but every religion is, according to the faith of the believers an absolute entity and can only be understood under this aspect" (cited in C.J. Bleeker, "The Phenomenological Method," *Numen* 6 [1959] pp. 106–7).

This statement has haunted the methodology of the science of religions until today. As we will argue below, the "ghost" will only be exorcised when the possibility of methodological conversion is explicitly acknowledged.

154. See Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, p. 43.

155. It is my purpose to correct this situation and show that the idea of a methodological conversion must replace the confessional understanding of the event of conversion, and then to show its importance also for a general theory of understanding. In another place (see *The New Universalism* [Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1991]), I argue that the universality of hermeneutics as well as an adequate theory of communication in the global situation is only conceivable on the basis of *methodological conversion*. This is so because no life-world, no universal horizon of meaning—which is the necessary condition of knowledge of innerworldly matters—is simply "given," rather, it must be appropriated, internalized and made one's own through an *event* personal, social and transcendent, which is most adequately conceived as a conversion, though, of course, not as a confessionally biased, polemical and apologetic conversion, as this term is normally understood. In this sense, conversion lies at the beginning of all knowledge, or in other words, knowledge is always grounded in a conversion. What sort of conversion this is, whether methodological or confessional/apologetic is decisive for the question of whether the knowledge therein grounded will be truly universal.

Biblically, the idea of *metanoia* contains several moments: (1) a *total* disposition which involves the whole person and all of his or her abilities and powers; (2) a *religious* conversion, that is, the complete turning about which someone experiences when he or she gives up an old way of life and returns to a way of life in harmony with God; (3) not only a turning away form the old, but a turning into a *new orientation* for the future, which (4) implies a new and deeper *understanding* of God and God's will; and finally, (5) all the above are seen as a *response* to God's call to reconciliation and his granting of the possibility of salvation through grace.[156] Psychological and sociological studies of conversion experiences yield a scenario of conflict, crisis of meaning and resolution of crisis by means of a personal and social reorientation in which socialization processes, group support and institutional determinants play a decisive role.[157]

Summarizing these various moments, we may understand the methodological concept of conversion—as opposed to the apologetic and exclusive confessional form of conversion—to denote a transformation of one's whole world view—in its cognitive, affective and social dimensions— whereby the *turn away* from an inadequate and incomplete knowledge of truth, the *turn into* a true and valid order and the *turn toward* new possibilities for life and thought are all a function of genuine *communication* between religions rather than the result of an apologetic and defensive conflict.

As we saw, the diatopical model allows us to distinguish between a second and third level of discourse, so that the idea of a methodological conversion, as opposed to an exclusive, confessional conversion, becomes conceivable. Quite apart, however, from the question of whether such an idea is adequately founded philosophically, a question I will take up below, there immediately arises the question of whether it is theologically acceptable. At first sight it would seem that as a step in the method for interreligious dialogue, methodological conversion brings with it insurmountable theological problems. Must not dialogue be rejected from the very beginning in order to remain faithful to one's own religion? If understanding the other inevitably leads to some sort of conversion to what the other believes, as Panikkar seems to claim, then the dialogue would appear to demand that I be prepared to give up my own faith, which is, of course, neither theologically nor methodologically acceptable.[158]

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156. These elements of the biblical idea of *metanoia* are taken from Rudolf Schnackenburg, *"Metanoia"* in *Herders theologisches Taschenlexikon*, vol. 5 (Freiburg, Herder, 1973) pp. 60–63.

157. See Lewis Rambo, "Conversion" in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 4, pp. 73–79.

158. According to Carl-Heinz Ratschow, for example (*Die Religionen* [Gütersloh: Mohn, 1979]), we can employ the concept of faith "only in relation to God the Father of Jesus, because the relation to God in other religions is only accessible, to us from the outside." For "he who has an insight into the devotional relationship to a God, worships this God and becomes His devotee." Therefore, as Christians, we must reject this insight; and this constitutes the "unbridgeable hiatus" and the "unsurmountable difficulty" which accompany every theological comparison of religions" (p. 123–24). (Translation mine).

Panikkar attempts to solve this difficulty by means of a distinction between *faith* and *belief*.[159] Faith is a "constitutive dimension of man." Human existence is such only by virtue of an openness to transcendence, that is, to the absolute and unconditioned. If men and women did not have this possibility of openness toward the transcendent, then they could not distance themselves from the things around them and become aware of themselves as knowers of the world. Humans would not have the ability to become self-conscious at all and thus to become what a human being essentially is. The existential movement beyond oneself, however, must have a direction. This is the absolute as ground of being. For to go beyond oneself means nothing else than that a human being knows that he or she is *not* a thing in the world (see the *neti neti* of the Upanishads). but that existence is grounded in the mystery of the absolute and unconditioned.

It is the unconditioned ground of being which the Western Judeo-Christian tradition calls God. The constitutive self-transcendence of human existence is, therefore, nothing other than the ontological relation which a person has to his or her creator, to God. And since it is the relation to God which the Christian tradition has always called faith, Panikkar feels entitled to use the properly theological term faith to denote this constitutive dimension of human existence.[160]

It follows that it is faith, and not, say, a common biological structure or purely natural reason which fundamentally unites humanity and makes communication and communion among men and women everywhere and at all times possible.

Faith, however, must not thereby be confused with *belief*, that is, with the many expressions and formulations of faith. As Panikkar puts it, "Faith is not in dogmas, but in the 'thing' expressed in and through them."[161] The "thing" which is here spoken of is "the ever inexhaustible mystery, beyond the reach of objective knowledge,"[162] which, therefore, we can only attain

through a "real mysticism" that carries us "beyond—not against—formulae and explanations."[163]

Panikkar finds support for this view not only in philosophical reflection but also in the theological tradition. For Christian theology, it is an axiom that humans can only be saved by faith. The problem thus arises of whether only those who have been reached by the gospel and possess the *explicit* Christian faith may be saved, or whether God, out of his will to save all men, has not given every people always and everywhere an "implicit faith." Further, the ancient praxis of baptizing children could have no possible effect apart from faith—a faith, however, which is not dogmatically formulated or even consciously perceived. According to Panikkar, "Both of these—the doctrinal insufficiency of the ignorant and the doctrinal incapacity of baptized infants" imply that "faith must be something common to Men, whatever their religious beliefs."[164]

If faith is not to be identified with some particular historically conditioned expression, then it must be constituted as indefinite openness, and it must function to ground the possibility that humans can always go beyond whatever conception of them they or their society may have.

It is, therefore, upon this distinction between the universally human and religious dimension of faith, on the one hand, and the various beliefs it gives rise to, on the other, that Panikkar grounds the theological acceptability of the interreligious dialogue once it is admitted that all understanding implies conversion. The significance of this distinction for a methodology of the interreligious encounter cannot be overestimated. We will do well, therefore, to pause here to consider some of its implications.

First, let us note that this distinction enables us to overcome the exclusivist truth-claims of both secular humanism and orthodox theology. Because humanist science confuses faith with belief it must suppress the universality of the religious dimension. This compels it to assign belief to the aesthetic or affective realm of subjective opinion, with in turn allows it to base its own universal claims upon the methodological ideals of value-free objectivity. But, as we saw, scientific method cannot reach the level of knowledge upon which the interreligious encounter takes place. Conversely, because orthodox theology confuses belief with faith, it can only experience the moment of conversion, which all understanding on the interreligious level implies, confessionally and exclusively and thus as a threat to saving faith, and not as a transformation, deepening and growth of belief.

A second important result of this distinction, which follows from the first, is that it allows a *horizon of encounter* to be opened up wherein all religions may take their place. For once belief is distinguished from faith, it becomes clear that there exists a certain *similarity* between religions that can be articulated in a third level of discourse which is neither that of the mere

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159. This is a constant theme of Panikkar's work. See especially, "Faith as a Constitutive Human Dimension," *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, pp. 188–229; and "Faith and Belief: A Multireligious Experience," in *Intrareligious Dialogue*, pp. 1–23.

160. See Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, p. 190:

> "Our thesis maintains that if creatureliness can be said to be simple *relation* to God, to the Source or whatever name we give the foundation of beings, faith is another name for the *ontological relation* to this absolute that characterizes Man, distinguishing him from all other beings. If beings as such are nothing but this relation (the creature neither is nor has its foundation in itself), Man is that unique being whose rapport with the foundation becomes the *ontological link* that constitutes him as Man. Thus faith is not the privilege of some individuals or the monopoly of certain defined groups, however large their membership. Faith is not a superfluous luxury, but an anthropological dimension of the full human being on earth."

161. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, p. 52.

162. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, p. 6.

163. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, p. 59. "Mysticism" here should not be understood as the mere negation of all differences, the "night in which all cows are black" (Hegel), but a pragmatic condition of universal validity.

164. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, p. 205.

comparison of phenomenal similarity nor the apologetic projection of totality based upon a particular systems of beliefs, whether orthodox-exclusivist or secular-rejectionist. Religions may thus encounter each other upon the basis of a functional similarity, for they are all expressions of a fundamentally human search for the absolute.[165]

On the one hand, this insight, as already noted, delivers us from the impasse in which the science of religions currently finds itself, for it grounds the possibility of universalistic thinking upon a religious basis, instead of on the basis of the secular ideals of objective, value-free knowledge. On the other hand, it discloses a space of encounter and thus grounds the possibility that the different religions can enter into open and honest dialogue with each other without fearing that the conversion, which dialogue brings with it, will necessarily lead to the loss of saving faith.[166] It therefore serves to free religion from its exclusivistic aspects, its sectarian and confessional character and from an apologetic universalism incompatible with the emergence of a global culture and a universal human community.[167]

Third, it is equally instructive to see what consequences follow for the interreligious dialogue when this distinction is *not* made and dialogue must occur upon a lower level of discourse. If faith is identified with belief, there arise certain *typical deformations* of thought: *exclusivism, inclusivism* and *indifferentism*. All three represent inadequate solutions to the problem of the interreligious encounter. They remain, nevertheless, typical theological approaches to this problem today. It is useful, therefore, briefly to describe these programs in order to see what the interreligious dialogue is *not* before coming back to the question of how the third step of a methodological conversion is to be concretely carried out.

It is important at the outset of this discussion to keep in view the fact that although faith is distinct from its many expressions, there is still no such thing as a pure, expressionless faith:

> Faith cannot be equated with belief, but faith always needs a
> belief to be faith. Belief is not faith, but it must convey faith. A
> disembodied faith is not faith.[168]

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165. This becomes clear when we consider that *as* formulations of faith all religious doctrines are *functionally similar*. See Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, p. 22:

> "I am not suggesting that all beliefs are equal and interchangeable; I am saying that in a certain respect they exhibit the same nature, which makes dialogue, and even dialectics, possible. Moreover, I assert they are generally equivalent in that every belief has a similar function: to express Man's faith, that faith which is the anthropological dimension through which Man reaches his goal—in Christian language, his salvation."

166. Thus is the "unsurmountable difficulty" of all "theological comparison of religions," which, according to Ratschow, *Die Religionen*, condemned all interreligious dialogue to failure, in principle overcome.

167. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, p. 191.

168. Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, p. 18. This qualifies what was said above about mysticism.

The three theological models for interreligious dialogue mentioned above arise from the different ways of reacting to this fact which are possible upon the second level of discourse.

Second-level of discourse, we recall, is concerned with projecting the unity and totality of a life-world horizon, a tradition. On this level there are three possible relations to other traditions. First, our own symbols may be assumed to be the only valid ones and all others are rejected. Second, it is admitted that symbols other than our own are true, but only to the extent that they allow themselves to be integrated into our system of thought and belief. Third, all traditions may be thought to be equally true, but with the proviso that they, for that very reason, should not and cannot have anything to do with one another. All of these positions may be developed into deliberate methodological models or programs. The first represents an exclusivist model, the second an approach which may be termed inclusivism, and the third is indifferentism.

The upshot of this seems to be that we are confronted with a decision:

> Either [one] must condemn everything around him as error and
> sin, or he must throw overboard the exclusivistic and mo-
> nopolistic notions he has been told embody truth—truth that
> must be simple and unique, revealed once and for all, that
> speaks through infallible organs, and so on.[169]

Here the methodological significance of the distinction between faith and belief becomes clear. For only after we have consistently carried this distinction through, not only theoretically but also existentially, will it become possible to "throw overboard" the presupposition of the monological unity, continuity and totality of truth lying at the base of all apologetics and thus overcome these three inadequate programs.

Our step-by-step reconstruction of the method for the theology of religions on the basis of Panikkar's work has so far led through the steps of a critical and faithful appropriation of one's own religion, a similar appropriation of another tradition and then directly into the problem of conversion as an unavoidable step in interreligious understanding. In order to show how such a methodological conversion may be conceived, the diatopical model of communication was used to distinguish between a second and third level of discourse. Second-level discourse, or what Panikkar calls diachronic hermeneutics, articulates religious understanding as an exclusive, confessional conversion. Only upon the third level of discourse—which opens up a horizon of encounter wherein religions may appear as equally valid life-worlds and enter into genuine communication with each other—does the notion of a methodological conversion become meaningful. To show that such a notion was also theologically acceptable we appealed to Panikkar's fundamental distinction between faith and belief. We saw that upon the basis of this distinction, to allow our beliefs to undergo transformation does not necessarily imply the loss of saving faith. Finally, we saw what consequences follow upon the failure to make this distinction, namely, the derailing of the dialogue into one or another of the inadequate programs of exclu-

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169. Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, p. 5.

sivism, inclusivism or indifferentism. It remains now to show what that discourse is which claims to mediate radically different systems of belief while maintaining itself within a horizon of faith.

This roundabout way was necessary to put us in the position to comprehend the fourth step in Panikkar's method. For it is not sufficient that I simply allow myself to be converted to another world view. This is only the beginning of the real process of understanding. If the conversion experience is not to derail and become confessionally distorted into one of the inadequate responses to the encounter of cultures and religions discussed above, I must somehow bring the two convictions which I have within myself into harmony with each other. If the experience of conversion is to be sustained and I am not to break under the stress of conflicting loyalties, and the process of understanding is not to be forced back onto the second level of discourse and thus into a defensive, apologetic "jumping-back" or "jumping-over," then there must occur, as Panikkar says, a meeting of the two religions in myself:

> The meeting of two differing realities produces the shock of the encounter, but the *place* where the encounter happens is one. This one place is the heart of the person. It is within the heart that I can embrace both religions in a personal synthesis, which intellectually may be more or less perfect. And it is also within my heart that I may absorb one of the two religions into the other. In actuality religions cannot sincerely coexist or even continue as living religions if they do not "co-insist," i.e. penetrate into the heart of each other.[170]

Accordingly, the fourth step is what Panikkar calls the "intrareligious dialogue," that is, the encounter and co-responding of two convictions in me. This is how the third-level discourse of disclosure becomes concrete. Only at this stage can we begin to speak of dialogue in the full sense of the word:

> The real theology task, if you will, begins when the two views meet head-on inside oneself, when dialogue prompts genuine religious pondering, and even a religious crisis, at the bottom of a Man's heart; when interpersonal dialogue turns into intrapersonal soliloquy.[171]

My intrareligious soliloquy will have to blend my earlier beliefs with those acquired later....Here an alternative lies before me: Either I have ceased to be a Christian...or else I am able to establish a special kind of

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170. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, p. 12.

171. Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, p. 10. Also interesting in this connection is Panikkar's answer to the question of whether the interreligious dialogue does not carry with it a certain risk ("Dialogue with Panikkar," p. 22):

> "A total risk, of dying, and you believe that you may rise again, but you really don't know it. The resurrection is not a trick. There is real religious risk in religious dialogue, if you take the faith or beliefs of all your fellow beings seriously."

bond between the two that both religions, at least one of them, *can* acknowledge and accept (I do not say they already *have* accepted it.)[172]

The *intra* religious dialogue is, therefore, the place where diatopical hermeneutics actually begins. For it is only when we find ourselves between two worlds, two *topoi*, that they become for the first time disclosed and thus questionable. In the encounter with the other which occurs internally, as Panikkar says, within the "heart" of the person, our own myth loses its unquestioned taken-for-granted character and we become aware of its limits and thus also of its possibilities. It is through the other—and this is his or her great service to us—that we become capable of criticizing, renewing and deepening our own world view, a critique which is desperately needed if we are to realize the transcendental movement of faith. In this respect Panikkar writes:

> Dialogue is, fundamentally, opening myself to another so that he might speak and reveal my myth that I cannot know by myself because it is transparent to me, self-evident. Dialogue is a way of knowing myself and of disentangling my own point of view from other viewpoints and from me, because it is grounded so deeply in my own roots as to be utterly hidden from me. It is the other who through our encounter awakens this human depth latent in me in an endeavor that surpasses both of us. In authentic dialogue this process is reciprocal. Dialogue sees the other not as an extrinsic, accidental aid, but as the indispensable, personal element in our search for truth, because I am not a self-sufficient, autonomous individual. In this sense, dialogue is a religious act par excellence because it recognizes my *religatio* to another, my individual poverty, the need to get out of myself, transcend myself, in order to save myself.[173]

It is, therefore, a presupposition of the internal intrareligious dialogue that our traditional symbols can be questioned without reducing them to mere signs and subsuming them under a nonreligious, logical discourse which rejects revelation.

This does not mean, it must be emphasized, that we simply throw our tradition overboard, or that we must give up the idea of a *common language*. Were this the case all dialogue would be impossible. The very task of diatopical hermeneutics is fulfilled and the intrareligious dialogue realized only when a common language arises, wherein the two religions, which previously were perceived to exclude each other, now are seen to complement and mutually fecundate each other. Panikkar describes his program thus:

> I am attempting to speak a language that will make sense for the follower of more than one philosophical tradition—a risky

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172. Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, p. 14.

173. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, pp. 242–43.

task perhaps, but necessary if one is to do justice to a cross-cultural investigation.[174]

This claim immediately gives rise to serious questions: Where is such a universal language to be found? And if it could be found, how does it legitimate the claim it makes to speak for more than one tradition? Wherein is such a language grounded, if not in one religion/culture or another? Is a thinking not bound to any specific tradition possible? Would not such a "free-floating," culturally unconditioned thinking suffer from exactly the same illusion Panikkar criticizes in the scientific ideals of objectivity and value neutrality? Do we not in the end have to decide *either* for a universalistic and thus *scientific* thinking, *or* for an inevitably exclusive religious *confession?*[175] Whatever the sought-for universal language might be, it certainly can be neither the allegedly neutral language of science nor the exclusively valid symbols of a particular confessional proclamation.

We must learn to think in and with the symbols of another tradition as with our own. Much depends upon whether we succeed in thinking these symbols together: first, the adequate appropriation of the conversion experience itself; second, understanding the other religion as well as our own (for we can, in the end, only understand the other religion *together* with the other);[176] and finally, upon the success or failure of our attempts to think the two traditions together depends our success or failure in avoiding the programs of exclusivism, inclusivism and indifferentism, and thus preserving the creative tension between faith and belief.

All this leads to the question of how different symbols can be thought together. Panikkar answers:

> As an example of what is needed, we may use the notion of homology, which does not connote a mere comparison of concepts from one tradition with those of another. I want to suggest this notion as the correlation between points of two different systems so that a point in one system corresponds to a point in the other. The method does not imply that one system is better (logically, morally or whatever) than the other, nor that the two points are interchangeable: You cannot, as it were, transplant a point from one system to the other. The method only discovers homologous correlations.[177]

An example of such an "homologous correlation," or as Panikkar also says, a "functional equivalence,"[178] may be found in *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism.* In this book Panikkar attempts to bring the symbols Christ and Ishvara (the lord) into correlation with each other through an analysis of their "functions" within their respective systems. He constructs the following analogy: *As* Christ constitutes the relation between God and the world in Christianity, *so* in Hinduism, a similar function is fulfilled by Ishvara. We cannot here examine how Panikkar substantiates this "comparison." Rather, let us note that he is uncomfortable with the term analogy. Homology, he will say, is not identical to an analogy.[179] Nevertheless, Panikkar does not wish to dispense with the idea of analogy altogether:

> Now a homology is not identical to an analogy, although they are related. Homology does not mean that two notions are analogous. i.e., partially the same and partially different, since this implies that both share in a *"tertium quid"* that provides the basis for the analogy. Homology means rather that the notions play equivalents roles, that they occupy homologous places within their respective systems. Homology is perhaps a kind of existential-functional analogy.[180]

What is meant here by an "existential-functional analogy" we may perhaps discover by reflecting upon what is meant by a "system." In systems symbols like Christ and Ishvara have a definite meaning. They function in a certain way and play a "role" which is defined in relation to all other symbols, practices and doctrines of a religion. The question is whether a system or a religion is completely delimited and defined on all sides, or whether it is not rather the case that religious systems are essentially open, that symbols are never exhaustively interpreted, that their meaning is never completely defined and fixed once and for all. Can and must we not delve always further and always more deeply into the meaning of the revelation which has been granted us? Does not this growth in understanding belong necessarily to religious experience? And is the transformation of religious consciousness not much more than a mere increase of information, but rather, an existential and historical event which not only changes a man or woman but also the "world" in which he or she lives? "At the very least," says Panikkar, "human consciousness is set in evolution"; and with it "the entire cosmos, all creation, reality."[181]

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174. *Ibid.* p. 381.

175. See Krieger. *The New Universalism.* for a discussion of these questions on the level of a philosophical foundation of the interreligious dialogue as intercultural hermeneutics and a demonstration of the possibility of a universal language as discourse of disclosure.

176. That a faithful and critical understanding of one's own revelation can only be attained through understanding all other revelations is a consequence of the methodological concept of "conversion."

177. Panikkar. *Intrareligious Dialogue.* p. 33.

178. *Ibid.* p. XXII.

179. For a thorough discussion of the analogy problem. see L. Bruno Puntel. *Analogie und Geschichtlichkeit I* (Freiburg, Herder. 1969). Although the functional equivalence between Christ and Ishvara looks like a classical *similitudo proportionum.* that is, a relation of relations according to the schema: a\h=c/d. it is not this. for this would degrade both symbols to the level of interchangeable elements in a formal structure. On the other hand, the similarity between Christ and Ishvara is also not a typical analogy *unius ad alterum.* for then Christ and Ishvara would be subjugated to a third. higher moment.

180. See Panikkar. Intrareligious Dialogue. p. 33.

181. "The Category of Growth in Comparative Religion." *The Intrareligious Dialogue.* pp. 69–70. Panikkar develops this idea against the background of his "cosmotheandric vision":

A religious system, therefore, insofar as it is part of a living religion, is not finished and closed, neither in its doctrinal *content* nor in its conceptual *form*. For behind all formulations stands the mystery from which they spring forth. This is the goal of self-transcending faith. This is what third-level discourse of disclosure expresses. Religions, again, are not things which, for example, can be compared in the same way as two organisms in order to see in what respects they are alike or different. Comparison and abstraction to the next higher generic concept is not a reliable method when it comes to religions, cultures and world views.

Neither can we attempt to avoid the problem by apologetically projecting the closure of our own mythological discourse upon all other myths. The discovery of functional similarities, therefore, is neither an objective knowledge about something nor an apologetic proclamation, but rather an existential event, a spiritual praxis and an authentic religious experience through which religious consciousness responds ever more deeply to the mystery of revelation. "Dialogue," Panikkar reminds us, "is not a bare methodology but an essential part of the religious act par excellence."[182]

What makes the discovery of functional similarities possible can be nothing other than the horizon of encounter opened up by the discourse of disclosure, or in other words, the ground of faith. For if it were not possible to discover such correspondences, the human spirit would either suffocate in an exclusivistic ideology or disintegrate into a myriad of little "worlds," none of which would be capable of communicating with the others. But faith, as we saw, is precisely that which keeps human beings open to transcendence and thus guarantees spiritual unity. From the point of view of the discourse of disclosure, that which is revealed in one religion cannot exclude what is revealed in another. From a Western-Christian standpoint, the ground of faith is the one "God" who is present in all religions. In this sense, Panikkar speaks of a "previous homogeneity" or a "certain presence" of one religion within the other:

> If the use of a concept foreign to a given cultural setup is to be made viable, if it is to be successfully grafted onto another system of thought (the Christian for example), it will succeed because it has somehow attained a certain homogeneity with the host cultural and religious world so that it may live there. If

this is the case, it amounts to recognizing that its possible use depends on a certain previous homogeneity, on a certain presence of the one meaning within the other framework; otherwise it would be completely impossible to utilize the concept in question. In spite of the heterogeneity between the Greek and Christian conception of the *logos*, for instance, the former had to offer a certain affinity with the new meaning that would be enhanced once it was assumed.[183]

The full realization of such a functional similarity between the central symbols of two religions—in the cognitive as well as existential dimension—implies a considerable rethinking of traditional Christian (and Hindu!) self-understanding. But it is precisely this "mutual fecundation"[184] which is "one of the primary tasks facing theology."[185]

Naturally, the intrareligious dialogue stands or falls with the discovery of those symbols, which really are rooted in the transcendent ground of all religions and thus really do correspond with each other over and beyond the socio-historical trappings in which they are clothed. Panikkar does not underestimate the difficulty here, and he is well aware that such symbols can neither be found lying about nor simply invented; they must be *revealed*. This sets a clear limit to all methodology in the sense of prescribed rules of inquiry which guarantee objective knowledge. At this point in the encounter of religions and cultures there are no "controls," and we must admit that understanding is never continuous and progressive, but always discontinuous and surprisingly different from whatever we may have expected. As Panikkar puts it, "the continuation of the dialogue has to produce its own rules and categories."[186]

Supposing now that the sought-for categories and symbols have been found, namely, that the intrareligious dialogue has come to a preliminary conclusion, then the next step is to present this new understanding to a representative of the other religion.[187] At this point the intrareligious dialogue becomes a truly *inter* religious dialogue:

> My partner in dialogue will then judge whether what I have learned...is sound or not. I will have to give him an account of

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"I submit that the one category able to carry the main burden in the religious encounter and in the further development of religion (and religions) is *growth*....Religious consciousness is something more than an external development of a knowing organ that at a certain moment discovers something of which it was not previously aware. And, since religious consciousness is an essential part of religion itself, the development of this consciousness means the development of religion itself. Secondly, it amounts to more than just a development in personal consciousness: at the very least human consciousness is set in evolution. What develops, in fact, is the entire cosmos, all creation, reality. The whole universe expands. In a word, there is real growth in Man, in the World and, I would also add, in God, at least inasmuch as neither immutability nor change are categories of the divine."

182. *Ibid.* p. 10.

183. *Ibid*, p. 61.

184. Panikkar. *The unknown Christ of Hinduism*, p. 163.

185. Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, p. 19; also the important programmatic essay "Methodology as Fundamental Theology." *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, pp. 322–34.

186. Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, p. 17. Here Panikkar finds himself in basic agreement with Heidegger's notion of truth as disclosure and Hans-Georg Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics as not reducible to objective methods.

187. The question of which persons, groups or institutions may be considered representative of a particular religion is, of course, a matter for itself. Most probably this question would have to be answered differently within each tradition. Representative status is also, as we shall see below, not independent of preparedness for interreligious dialogue.

my belief and he will tell me whether what I say...represents fundamental belief...or not.[188]

The criterion of the correctness of my interpretation is the well-known hermeneutical rule that "the interpreted thing can recognize itself in the interpretation."[189] Panikkar writes:

> In other words, any interpretation from outside a tradition has to coincide, at least phenomenologically, with an interpretation from within, i.e., with the believer's viewpoint. To label a *murtipujaka* an idol-worshiper, for instance, using idol as it is commonly understood in the Judeo-Christian-Muslim context rather than beginning with what the worshiper affirms of himself, is to transgress this rule.[190]

And in another place he says that,

> any genuine "Christian" interpretation must be valid and true, and for this very reason it must also be acceptable to those who are being interpreted; a basic methodological rule for any interpretation. This means that no interpretation of any religion is valid if the followers of that religion do not recognize it as such.[191]

This rule not only firmly excludes reductionistic explanations of religion on the part of psychology and sociology, for example, but it implies that both partners in dialogue must have gone through the same process up to this point. All the steps of the method which have been described up till now must be presupposed for both partners. This is itself an important methodological step. For "there must be *equal preparation* for the encounter on both sides, and this means cultural as well as theological preparations."[192] An exclusivist apologetic approach on either side would, of course, make all dialogue impossible.

Supposing, however, that both partners have gone through the intrareligious dialogue and have entered the interreligious dialogue with "a set of propositions that may answer the requirements of orthodoxy on both sides,"[193] then they must be prepared to accept the judgement of the other whether their new interpretations are *orthodox* or not. This claim to orthodoxy—not to be confused with the distorted orthodoxy of exclusivism!—constitutes the last step in the method of the interreligious dialogue. If I do not succeed, that is, if my new interpretation is not accepted by the representative of the other religion, then I am automatically sent back into the intra-religious dialogue, where I search for another, more adequate understanding.

Here it becomes clear that the method is circular, that the last step leads us back to the first. For in the methodological insistence upon orthodoxy exactly that is realized which was required by the first two steps of the method; namely the appropriation of a faithful and critical understanding of one's own and of another tradition. "Faithfulness" to one's own and to another tradition is only to be secured by means of the principle of orthodoxy, whereby "critique" of one's own and of another tradition can only be consequently carried through when understanding is no longer a one-sided apologetic for one particular tradition, but adequate to *both*. Therefore, it is only *through* the interreligious dialogue, and as it were, at its end, that we come back to a faithful and critical understanding of our own religion. Orthodoxy and critique do not exclude each other, rather, they complement each other, but only from the point of view of a truly *global* theology.

The method of the interreligious dialogue, and therefore also of the theology of religions, turns out to be a circular movement. The end leads back to the beginning. This circular structure of thought is typical of all genuinely *hermeneutical* methods. It is hermeneutical in that it begins from an implicit "fore-conception" or anticipation of meaning, not in order to progress to new and unheard of results, but in order to come back to itself through the explication of what was already there. Methodological inquiry here, is not, as in the empirical, phenomenological and dialectical methods which Panikkar terms "morphological" and "diachronical," fundamentally limited in scope. Since it is only in the encounter with other forms of thought that our own becomes at all questionable to us, no hermeneutics which remains within one tradition can claim critical competence for itself without reservations.[194] Only diatopical hermeneutics, which operates in the realm *between* religions and cultures and aims at a universal horizon of encounter—only such a method of understanding fulfills the requirement of radical critique demanded of all thinking today, while at the same time remaining faithful to (i.e., bound-back, *re-ligare*) revelation and thus not giving up the claim to orthodoxy.

In conclusion, we should note that Panikkar always emphasizes that it is not the goal of the interreligious dialogue "to obtain agreement at the cost of fundamental...principles."[195] By means of an incessant mutual criticism and correction the dialogue brings about an ever-deeper understanding of what is revealed in the various religions. Panikkar closes his defence for a non-exclusive religiosity with the remark:

> I can only be free from a certain type of Christianity or Hinduism (and for that matter from a certain type of Buddhism

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188. *Ibid.* p. 14.

189. *Ibid*, p. 30.

190. *Ibid.*

191. *Ibid*, p. 64.

192. *Ibid*, p. 36.

193. *Ibid*, p. 15.

194. It is for this reason that neither the "regressive hermeneutics" of a psychoanalytic model nor the "progressive hermeneutics" (Paul Ricoeur) of a model based upon Hegelian dialectics can really claim universality and thus the right to criticize ideology as Jürgen Habermas, for example, asserts. Furthermore, no hermeneutics which limits itself to the historical retrieval of founding texts, as does Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, can fulfill this requirement.

195. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, p. 7.

and Secularism) if I become a better Christian and a better Hindu.[196]

In summary, on the basis of Panikkar's many important theoretical contributions to interreligious understanding we have reconstructed the following steps of a *method* for the theology of religions:

1. One begins with a faithful and critical understanding of one's own tradition—an understanding won with all reliable methods which we have at our disposal: empirical, historical-critical, philological, phenomenological, etc.

2. In the same way, an understanding of another tradition is acquired.

3. This understanding becomes conviction. One experiences a genuine *conversion*.

4. An internal *intra* religious dialogue begins between the two convictions. One searches for a *common language* capable of expressing the truth of both religions.

5. The internal intrareligious dialogue becomes an external *inter* religious dialogue when one lays one's new interpretation before representatives of the other tradition.

6. Steps 1 through 5 are presupposed for all partners in dialogue.

7. New interpretations are tested for their "orthodoxy" in both traditions. If they are found inadequate, one returns to the level of the intrareligious dialogue and begins again.

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196. *Ibid*, p. x.

Part III

RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE[197]

RAIMON PANIKKAR

Summary: Religion, philosophy and culture are three "elements" of the human reality. If the first could be compared to the feet with which Man journeys towards his destiny, philosophy could represent the eyes that scrutinize that journey, and culture, the earth on which Man is walking during his concrete pilgrimage. Interculturality represents the relativity (not the relativism) of everything human, and therefore of these three notions.

The question of the nature of philosophy is already a philosophical question, and intimately connected with what Religion stands for. An intercultural approach shows that one cannot separate Philosophy from Religion, and that both are dependent on the culture which nurtures them. In order to do justice to the problem, we need to introduce the function of *mythos*, which complements that of *logos*.

Introduction

PHILOSOPHY is but the conscious and critical accompaniment of Man's journeying towards his destiny. This journeying is called religion in many cultures

The following considerations, intending to put or discover a certain order in the world of religio-cultural galaxies, will serve as prolegomena to the unavoidable problem, today more than ever, of the meeting of religions.

Intercultural philosophy situates itself in *terra nullius* (no man's land), in a virgin place that no one has yet occupied; otherwise, it would no longer be intercultural but would belong to a determined culture Interculturality is no one's land, it is utopia, situated between two (or more) cultures. It must keep silent. Now today, since it is coming to vogue, and because historical archetypes repeat themselves, I fear that we are finding ourselves, like Moses face to face with a "promised land," but without anyone having promised it to us; maybe because it does not exist—except as an utopia.[198]

When Aaron enters it, that land ceases already to be "promised" and he appropriates it as a Hebrew land, which must "expel" its original inhabitants. When Christianity and later modern science have entered these foreign

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197. This text reproduces, with some variations, the inaugural address of the first Congress of Intercultural Philosophy, held in Mexico City in March 1995, address whose title was "Filosofía y cultura: una relación problemática." It was translated from the French by R. Vachon and which was published in *'ILU Revista de ciencias de las religiones* No. 1, 1996 pp. 125–148.

198. The major part of all of the themes considered in this article have already been at least sketched in many of my writings, even if only those are mentioned which can help to justify the brevity of this text.

lands, they equally believed that these were promised lands, they believed that their duty was to "expel" the ancient errors and convert the "Natives." It is not customary for philosophy to go out and conquer or convert, but it has often been the one that has justified such intercultural skirmishes.

This somewhat polemical introduction would like to put us on our guard against the risk that the growing movement towards intercultural studies be nothing but the symptom of a culture, which, because it is in crisis, seeks to expand its "market," as does the capitalistic system with its investments in the "Third World."

Interculturality is problematic. The very moment that I open my mouth to speak, I am obliged to use a concrete language, and thus I am completely in a particular culture; I am on a land which already belongs to someone. I am in my culture, cultivating my land, speaking my language. And if I must, moreover, be understood by my readers, I must necessarily enter a land which is common to all. While we have, in a certain sense, conquered space, since there are readers on all continents, we have been unable to dominate time, since we are necessarily contemporary. While assuming the past and taking into consideration the possible futures, we communicate in the present and cannot escape the myth of contemporaneity, no matter how polydimensional it may be. We are obliged to representation.

What therefore is the territory that belongs to a problematic intercultural philosophy? My answer would be simple if we were not dealing with philosophy. It would then be sufficient to say that it is a territory acknowledged as common, for example that of music, and then approaching it according to the distinct perspectives of our respective cultures. But this is not valid in the case of that human activity which claims to leave thematically no territory outside of its critical reflection.

It follows that we are thematically obliged to question the very nature of our question about philosophy and about the very soil where what we call "philosophy" has flourished.

In the following text, after having put forward three reflections on the issue of philosophy, followed by three considerations on what is culture, we shall then dedicate three chapters to our specific problematic.[199]

Chapter 1

PHILOSOPHY

We have already insinuated that we initially and provisionally understand by philosophy, that human activity which asks questions about the very foundations of human life under the heavens and on earth.

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199. See the pioneering work of R. Fornet Betancourt, *Filosofía intercultural,* Universidad Pontificià, Mexico, 1994; and even more recently, R.A. Mall, *Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1995.

1. What are we talking about?

Let us repeat: the question about philosophy is already philosophical, and, thus, already belongs itself to philosophy.

To which philosophy? Obviously, to all philosophy, as we have just said. But the answer to be given to the question: what is that philosophy, is no longer a common one, since we shall give one answer or another according to the particular conception that we have of philosophy. Now, this conception depends on the culture within which we elaborate an answer. We are dealing here, not with what is called a hermeneutical but a prior philosophical circle. We cannot ask the question what is philosophy except within a specific philosophy, even if, in most cases, that philosophy is not explicit.

The answers are varied. We know many of them: we ask about Being, about Reality, about the nature of the question itself, about what saves us, makes us aware, critical, free, happy, gives a meaning to our life, allows us to act, etc.

What is it about? It is about knowing what different cultures have understood by philosophy.

The "histories of philosophy" have much to say about that question. But what is the question asked by these philosophies? Obviously, they relate the "history" of the different conceptions of "philosophy." Within cultures where philosophy has a certain validity or importance, no major problem arises. But once again, what are we talking about when the word does not exist? How are we going to translate it, and what criterion do we have, in order to know that our translation is correct?

This brings us to an unavoidable methodological issue.

2. Homeomorphic equivalents

The majority of studies on this theme have been more or less monocultural. This is due to the global predominance of Western culture during the last 500 years, and to the concrete fact that an Hellenic word has been used to formulate the question. The question: what is philosophy, was asked on the basis of what the Greeks originally understood that word to mean. It is on the basis of that one culture and with instruments of that same culture that we have approached those foreign lands, those foreign cultures.

This is all the more meaningful since the majority of learned people from other cultures have hastened to show us that what we call by that name also existed in their respective cultures. Thus we have important studies on Indic, Chinese, Bantu, Japanese and other, philosophy, as being so many branches that enrichen the known studies on Ancient, Medieval, German, Spanish... philosophy.

These experts usually tell us that their respective philosophies are oftentimes more rich in certain aspects that have been neglected by Western philosophy, and that they help us to broaden and deepen the very conception of philosophy. But it is rare that they have asked themselves in a critical and thematic way, what question they were asking when asking the question of philosophy. We know today, for example, that there are idealists in India, materialists in China, mystics in Japan, a more sensuous and concrete philosophy in Africa, etc. The majority of those who cultivate (or engage in)

philosophy, have started from the Western model and have made known to us that what is called philosophy in the West, has existed and still exists in other cultures. But the Greek concept of philosophy, with all its variation and reforms, continues to be the paradigm according to which one proceeds to research what is philosophy in other cultures.

When translating the word, one seeks equivalents to the concept of philosophy, equivalents conditioned by the original Greek model; even if the notion has somewhat evolved subsequently.

I have introduced, a few years ago, the notion of *homeomorphic equivalents*, as a first step towards interculturality. One should, in our case, research both the eventual equivalent notions to philosophy in other cultures, and the symbols (not necessarily the concepts and even less a unique concept) that express the homeomorphic equivalents of philosophy. Homeomorphic equivalents are not mere literal translations, any more than they merely translate the role that the original word claims to play (in this case: philosophy), but they play a function which is equivalent (analogous) or comparable to that supposedly played by philosophy. It is therefore not a conceptual but a functional equivalent, i.e. an analogy of the third degree. One does not seek the same function (as that exercised by philosophy), but the function that is equivalent to that exercised by the original notion in the corresponding cosmovision.

Let us consider a few examples that may help us. "*Brahman*" is not a translation for "God," since the concepts do not correspond (their attributes not being the same), and since the functions are not identical (Brahman not having to be creator, providence, personal, as God is). Each one of these two words express a functional equivalence within the corresponding two cosmovisions.

There is more. In that example, the correlation is almost biunivocal (one word homeomorphically corresponding to the other); but it could not be. We can for example translate "religion" by "dharma" without necessarily translating "dharma" by "religion." "Dharma" equally means duty, ethics, element, observance, energy, order, virtue, law, justice, and has been even translated by reality. But the word "religion" can also mean *sampradâya, karma, jati, bhakti, marga, pûja, daivakarma, nimayaparam, punyasila...* Each culture is a world.

If by philosophy, one then understands the intellectual activity which clarifies the use of our concepts or which purifies our language, we shall not seek what plays that role in the other culture, but what accomplishes the function equivalent to that which the clarification of concepts and words plays in the first conception that we have talked about.

There are at least 33 notions in classical Sanskrit which could be homeomorphically compared to the equivalent function of philosophy.[200]

One can therefore discuss the issue of whether this activity of the human mind should be called philosophy. We believe that it is appropriate if we do

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200. See my study "Satapathaprajnâ: should we speak of Philosophy in classical India?" in *Contemporary Philosophy*, G. Floistad (ed.), vol. VII, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1993, pp. 11–67.

not wish to condemn ourselves to a cultural solipsism: but we must not forget that the relationship must be established in both directions, moving for example from the Greek equivalents to those of the other culture, and from the latter to the Hellenic ones...

We cannot claim to define through one single word what intercultural philosophy is, nor even presuppose that such a philosophy exists. What is possible however is to inquire about the many homeomorphic equivalents, and, from within the other culture, to try to formulate what can correspond to what we are trying to say when we say the word philosophy.

We must seek a middle way between the colonial mentality which believes that we can express the totality of the human experience through the notions of a single culture, and the opposite extreme which thinks that there is no communication possible between diverse cultures, and which should then condemn themselves to a cultural apartheid in order to preserve their identity. I am thinking of the case of Bhutan as a political example. Our problem is not merely a "speculative" one.

Without claiming in the least to say something which is universally valid, let me venture, as I journey through this middle way, to sketch an answer to the problematic that we have set forth.

3. What it is that we are talking about

Given the contingent fact that today's Western languages are somewhat intercultural vehicles, we could adopt the Hellenic word philosophy as a symbol of something, which, up till now, had no reason to be present in the meaning of what was called philosophy originally and that is still called philosophy.

What we could call intercultural philosophy would then not be a new species of philosophy, alongside the classifications offered to us by the histories of philosophy, but it would be a new genus of philosophy, an enriching of the term beyond its cultural limits.

Just as—as we shall see—the great cultures of mankind are not real species of a real genus, but each one of them is rather a genus (with subcultures as species), so the intercultural notion of philosophy would represent a distinct superior genus (which we could perhaps continue to call philosophy) and not another species of a unique genus.

This kind of supergenus, of a purely formal character and valid only within a specific moment of time and space, would be a transcendental, and not a categorial relation with what, until now, has been called philosophy. This philosophy would be a formal transcendental and not a category. In this sense, intercultural philosophy does not exist as does an idealistic philosophy (one which presents certain common traits), or a Catalan philosophy (without content that is necessarily common, but cultivated by the Catalans or in the Catalan language). An intercultural philosophy exists only as transcendental to the different human activities which correspond homeomorphically to what, in a certain culture, we call philosophy.

As I try to follow this middle way which avoids solipsism without falling into colonialism, I shall try to describe in a very provisional manner, as follows, the philosophical activity that would have a certain intercultural validity:

Philosophy could be understood as the activity by which Man partici-pates consciously and in a more or less critical manner, in the discovery of reality and orients himself within the latter.

By saying *activity*, we wish to surmount the reductionism that is repre-sented by a certain conception of philosophy as being something purely the-oretical. An intercultural philosophy cannot eliminate the dimension of praxis, understood not only in a platonic and/or Marxist sense, but also eminently existential, to use another polysemic word. The word "activity" also indicates that it is a matter of acting, of a human *agere*, which need not therefore be limited to a mere mental or rational operation.

By using the word *Man*, we refer to the philosophical activity which is specific to the human being. Neither angels nor animals philosophize. Philosophy is an activity, belonging to Man as such. Philosophy would be that primordially and specifically human activity.

The notion of *participation* in our description claims to indicate the pas-sive aspect of philosophical activity.

Life, as well as the reality in which we live, has been given to us and we find ourselves immersed in it. We are, as we participate in it, something anterior and superior to ourselves, both individually and collectively. Philosophical activity is an activity of acknowledgement before being one of pure knowledge.

By qualifying philosophical activity as *conscious*, we wish to indicate that consciousness embraces an activity and a reality which is much broader than reason, not only because Spanish and French words include very wisely moral conscience, i.e. the knowledge of good and evil, but also be-cause while it includes rationality and intelligibility, it does not limit itself to the latter. We are aware that there is something that we do not understand, we are aware that both Nothingness and Being, even if they are unintelligi-ble, can be real. There exists a thinking which is non discursive, nor deduc-tive, an imaginal, iconic awareness, a non reflexive intuition, etc. And ex-perience shows us that many cultures have cultivated these types of con-sciousness which are not included in rationality—without necessarily falling into irrationality, the latter being incompatible with philosophical activity, thus abandoning the realm of the human strictly speaking.[201]

We add the word *critical* because we seek to underline both the intellec-tual dimension of philosophical activity and its questioning character. Every man could potentially be a philosopher, but the word "critical" suggests that the first innocence has been lost, and that, in the vision of reality held by any man, the philosopher asks the why of what is given to him. The word "critical" comprises also reflexion, *skepsis* and introspection. Human con-sciousness is constitutively *consciousness*: it is a *gnosis* which knows that we are not alone [*"ni estamos ni somos solos"*]. We have added degrees to critical consciousness, for even if a minimum of self-consciousness seems

to belong to all philosophy, it is not necessary to accept a Kantian type of "critique" as being essential to the notion of philosophy.

No matter what, with a more or less critical consciousness, philosophy is a *discovery* of what is and of what we are. Not only is reality disclosed to us by itself, but we also discover it in virtue of our active participation in the dynamism of reality itself of which we are a part. There is no point in say-ing that this discovery or revelation takes place within some limited parame-ters that make us who we are and of which we are aware. Philosophical ac-tivity is as much a discovery of reality as that of what we are. It is a partial, hypothetical, doubtful, imperfect, contingent discovery, but a re-velation in the last analysis. A revelation which, because it is one, continues to be so; i.e. an unveiling which never ceases, not only because of a possible infini-tude of reality, but because of our own finitude, which results in that every discovery is at the same time a covering over. Practically all philosophies have known that truth has a seductive appearance; it simultaneously reveals and hides itself. Not only would absolute truth dazzle us, but it would not enlighten us, for it could not be total if we ourselves were not in it. Or, as we shall insinuate further, all incursion of the light or of the intelligibility of *logos* within the obscure realm of the *mythos* is accompanied by another shadow that the *logos* leaves behind it and which the *mythos* discreetly cov-ers anew. All demythization is accompanied by a remythization;[202] it is al-ways necessary that something be "pre-sup-posed."

By *reality*, we understand all that is, or is thinkable, all that can enter our consciousness, the representation (whether realistic or idealistic), the *idam* of the Upanishads... We exclude neither Being nor Nothingness, nor do we limit ourselves to what can be expressed by the verb to be. We use this word as the broader and (maybe) deeper of all—not as all (no theory what-soever is formulated here), but as an ultimate symbol which would hence encompass also what could dialectically appear as non-real. Let us not for-get that the great challenge of interculturality is the relativization of all apri-ori.

The notion of *orientation*, finally, wishes to underline the vital aspect, both practical and existential, of philosophy. It is through philosophy that Man gives orientation to his life, forges his destiny and moves towards what he considers his goal (whatever may be its meaning). Philosophical activity would thus be that specifically human activity by which Man real-izes as such—what many cultures have called the salvific character of phi-losophy, or of what it is customary to translate by religion. This orientation may postulate a North or at least a magnet, but it is philosophy, as con-scious activity about the meaning of life or of reality, which puts the com-pass into our hands. And while some extremist positions say that we should do away with the compass, that waying on our own without an (external) compass, would also be the interiorization of a compass which does indicate no other direction but the one that we create or imagine. From the starting point of interculturality, philosophy can be considered as the conscious and

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201. One can quote as an example the work edited by D. Fraser, *African Art as Philosophy*, Interbook, New York, 1974, who overcomes the aesthetic and anthro-pological "cliches" that are usually applied, in a more or less condescending man-ner, to African culture (sensual, aesthetic, vivacious, joyous, primogenial—but with little "thinking.")

202. Playing with the possibilities of the German language, I have introduced a few years back, the word *"Unmythologisierung."* See my article (published in Italian in 1961) "Die Unmythologisierung in der Begegnung des Christentums mit dem Hinduismus" *Kerygna und Mythos*, Hamburg. VI. I (1963) DD 211–235.

more or less critical companion of Man's journey—corresponding in many cultures to what could be translated by religion.

It is obvious that every word used, will be differently interpreted by different philosophies. It follows that an intercultural philosophy questions all notions, and each one of the notions of a current in a given culture.

After having taken all these precautions, I believe that one can speak provisionally of intercultural philosophy as being a transcendental relation to what we call philosophy. We have not thereby left our culture, we have not jumped over our own shadow, but we have opened ourselves, as much as possible, to the experience of the reality of other cultures, ever ready to dialogue with the latter, as we shall now say.

Chapter 2

CULTURE

It is well known that the term culture has undergone, during the 17th century in Europe, a certain mutation, which has crystallized in a modern sense only since a little less than a century ago. It is a term which remains suspect to some, especially the Anglo-Saxons. Before that, culture meant something else.

"Cultura animi" may be one of the better definitions of philosophy [Cicero, Tusculanae *disputationes*, II, 13]. The word means I cultivate (*cura, curatio, cultus*), implying honor and veneration. Culture was always culture of something. Hence has it come to mean what we still mean when we speak of a cultivated man. And it is through the intermediary of "civilization" that "culture" has come to take on the meaning that is widespread today.[203]

4. The encompassing myth

To the hundreds of definitions of culture that exist today, I shall risk adding one more, which has at least the advantage of being maybe the shortest of them all, and which finally coincides with the majority of accepted descriptions. All the latter say that culture is constituted by rituals, customs, opinions, dominant ideas, ways of life which characterize a certain people at a given period. If language is an essential element, history and geography are equally cultural factors.

We summarize all that in the word *myth*, understood as symbolizing that which we believe at such a deep level that we are not even aware that we believe it: "it is useless to say it," "it is under-stood," "it is obvious," "we shall not pursue the investigation any further..." We question myth only when we already partly stand outside it; this is because it is precisely the *myth* which offers us the basis from which the question as question makes sense. For the myth gives us the horizon of intelligibility where we must

203. See among many other studies; vol. III of *Europaïsche Schlüsselwörter*, entitled *Kultur und Zivilisation*, edited for *Sprachwissenschaftliches Colloquium*, Hueber, Bonn-München, 1967, and the chapter *"Zivilisation, Kultur"* of volume VII of *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, edited by O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1992.

situate any idea, any conviction or any act of consciousness so that they may be held by our mind.

Of course, there are particular myths and we must also distinguish between on the one hand, mythologies, mythologoumena, mythemes, and on the other, myth strictly speaking, which is what makes possible a narration of myths, a science about myths, more or less explicit groups of myths and the themes themselves as rational translations of what the myths themselves allow to appear as translatable. All this should not be confused with the myth strictly speaking, that horizon which gives the condition of intelligibility of everything that is subsequently said.

Each culture, in a sense, could be described as the encompassing myth of a collectivity at a certain moment in time and space ; it is what renders plausible, credible, the world in which we live, where we are. This accounts for the flexibility and mobility of myth as well as the impossibility of grasping our own myth, except when we hear it from the mouth of others because having accorded the latter a certain credibility or when it has ceased to be a myth for us. Myth and faith are correlative, just as there exists a special dialectic between *mythos* and *logos* (as well as between *logos* and *mythos*).

Each culture possesses a cosmovision and reveals the world in which we live—in which we believe to be. Each culture is a galaxy which secretes its self-understanding, and with it, the criteria of truth, goodness, and beauty of all human actions.

Cultures are not folklore, as certain mainly political milieux are in the habit of interpreting them, when they speak arrogantly and condescendingly of multicultural tolerance—Cultures are not mere specific forms of a genus called human civilization. Each culture is a genus. Cultures are not abstract species of a single sovereign genus. The sovereign genus, which would be human culture, exists only as an abstraction.

Let us say it more academically: *there are no cultural universals*, i.e. concrete meaningful contents valid for all the cultures, for mankind throughout all times. What one calls human nature is an abstraction. And every abstraction is an operation of the mind which removes (abstracts) from a greater reality (as seen by this mind) something (less universal) which it considers as important. There cannot be cultural universals, for it is culture itself which makes possible (and plausible) its own universals.

By saying that there are no cultural universals, we are using a way of thinking which is foreign to the modern "scientific" mentality, in which predominates (when not dominates) simple objectivity (and objectibility) of the real. Culture is not simply an object, since we are constitutively immersed in it as subjects. It is the one that makes it possible for us to see the world as objects, since self-consciousness, i.e. subjectivity, essentially belongs to the human being.

It ensues that all classification of cultures is nothing but a formal abstraction with a claim to objectivity to which no real culture can be reduced. Culture is the encompassing myth which makes it possible for us to believe the world in which we live. Every cosmology is the *logos* of a *kosmos* which shows itself to us as such, thanks to the *mythos* which renders it visible to us.

There are no cultural universals. But there are, for sure, *human invariants*. Every man eats, sleeps, walks, speaks, establishes relationships, thinks... But the way according to which, each one of the human invariants is lived and experienced in each culture, is distinct and distinctive in each case.

It is undeniable that at certain given moments of mankind, there are myths that acquire a greater universality than others, but even in such cases, the way we usually interpret them, is distinct. "You shall not kill" can be the formulation of an abstract universal myth that we all interpret today as the condemnation of cannibalism; however, the real belief in an absolute "thou shall not kill" is far from being universal. Let us not forget that a myth is constitutively inobjectifiable and that it is myth (in the sense in which we use this word) only for those who believe in it. As for the others, these are myths only in a condescending and pejorative sense of the word, as used in the modern colonial era. We see the myths of others as more or less legendary mythologies—we do not see the beam in our own eye. It is very revealing to inquire whence and why a "mythology" was born (not the narrative, *mythos-legein*) as a rational science about others' myths (legends). All those who do not come from the South or the Center of England speak English with an accent: only the "natives," of course, speak without an accent... Everything which did not fit into the mental framework of what is called the Enlightenment, which flourished precisely when the West had politically "conquered" more than three quarters of the planet, has been called primitive myth, and still nowadays, "on the way to development."

Cultural respect requires that we respect those ways of life that we disapprove, or even those that we consider as pernicious. We may be obliged to go as far as to combat these cultures, but we cannot elevate our own to the rank of universal paradigm in order to judge the other ones.

This is the great challenge of pluralism and one of the cements of interculturality.

5. Nature and culture

We can pursue with a double assertion:

a) Culture is the field that makes it possible for us to cultivate the world that it itself presents to us, so that Man may become fully human and achieve his fullness.

b) Culture is the specific form of human nature. The nature of Man is cultural. Culture is not an additive to Man, it is not something artificial. Man is a cultural animal. Culture is not extrinsic to him, but natural. Man is a being that is naturally cultural—or culturally natural. The ultimate criterion for condemning another culture will therefore consist in showing that it is anti-natural—although the very idea of nature is already culture-specific.

One could critique western civilization by saying that it is the culture which has championed a dichotomy between the natural nature and cultural nature of man, so that it has separated religion (a cultural fact), from what is natural, thus converting it either into something that is supernatural, or into an ideology (comparable to a mere doctrinal superstructure). By thus separating culture from nature, it has constructed a culture which is artificial in the pejorative sense (although it is said to be scientific). According to the Chinese proverb, one cannot stay too long on the tip of one's toes. It seems to me that it is a key for understanding Western culture.

Yet the Western experience is fertile. We cannot separate nature from culture, but neither should we say that they are simply the same. The problem in the West has been acute ever since the Greeks. The *physei*, what corresponds to *physis*, to nature, is not identically the same as *nomôi*, as what pertains to *nomos*, to the norm. To separate them or to make them into something identical would lead to the destruction of the *humanum*. Their relation is non-dualistic. Culture is neither a mere accident of Man, nor is it his substance: it is not identical to human nature. There can be antinatural cultures.

Much water has flowed under the bridges since the Greeks. Maybe the following considerations could be of some help here.

While in the world of nature, there are things, in the world of culture, there are objects. Here either, it certainly is not possible to separate them. Everything that man touches, no matter how natural he believes it to be, is always at the same time cultural. So-called natural things never cease to be representations of human consciousness. But natural things are distinct from artificial ones, especially from "ideas," "representations," "idols," "images..." which do not claim to be in the world of nature, but to be real in the human world of culture. These realities we call objects, since they are undoubtedly projections, objects of our mind, objects of thinking. Justice, for example, is not a thing: being a cultural reality, it is an object of human thinking.

For animals also and maybe also for sensient awareness, there are things. But for man, there are also objects, and he thinks objects as such. That is why, he can thus meditate upon them, experiment with them and manipulate them.

We must here take up a theme which is unavoidable when speaking of an intercultural philosophy. An object is a representation of human consciousness. From that perspective, natural things, as we call them, are also objects. But it is the human mind itself which distinguishes between the objects that exist in nature and those that belong to the world of culture. A horse does not belong to the same order of reality as does justice, but one cannot say that an African mask, in its ritual reality, is simply natural, nor exclusively cultural. The whole sacramental view of the universe, whether Hindu, Christian, Bantu... presupposes this non-dual relationship between the natural and the cultural.

Objects of thinking are cultural invariants. Every man thinks, and to think is to think something. This something is the *objectum* of thinking, what the activity of the mind projects, throws in front of itself in virtue of the stimulation it has received.

The concept, however, is not such an invariant. The concept is a universal in the most technical meaning of the term, it is an abstraction of the mind which grasps or claims to grasp the "quiddity" of a thing, called essence, substance, representation, idea, or as one wishes. The same word has been used with many meanings. But the concept is not a cultural universal. And this is what we wish to underline: not all cultures operate with concepts.

The concept, which is maybe the genial "invention" of Socrates (or of the Platonic Socrates), in spite of the protests of Isocrates at that time, has become the best instrument of Western philosophy. For Hegel, concept is the mediator par excellence between being and becoming, and not only an instrument, but, so to speak, the soul of the things themselves.

The concept has been identified with the intelligibility of a thing: it follows that if philosophy wants to know what things are, it must necessarily operate with concepts. The concept has thus become the unique instrument of philosophy.

There are, however, homeomorphic equivalents to philosophy, which do not operate with concepts. I am not referring only to what the 19th century colonial mentality has called prelogical or preconceptual thinking, but equally to systems of thought as elaborate as a good portion of Indic philosophy.[204] There is, for example, a philosophical activity of Man which operates with symbols and not with concepts. It does not therefore try to do a conceptual algebra which corresponds to reality, but to present or to make possible intuitions of reality itself. There are numerous classes of intelligibility, many ways of being aware of reality and of participating in it. That is the intercultural challenge.

6. Interculturality

We have already asserted that interculturality is the philosophical imperative of our times. But we have mentioned a twofold temptation: monoculturalism and multiculturalism.

There is a *monoculturalism* which is as subtle as it is well-intentioned. It consists in admitting a vast range of cultural diversity, but against the unique backdrop of a common denominator. Our categories have taken root so deeply in the substratum of modern man, that it is difficult for him, for example, to imagine that he could think without concepts or without applying the law of causality. One postulates therefore a universal and hence common reason, and a unique intelligibility: likewise, one finds it difficult to see how we could abstract from our categories of space, time and matter.

An example, which is powerful in every sense of the word, can be taken from modern science, which claims to be universal, forgetting that its cements themselves have been drawn up from a particular culture. We have already mentioned as monocultural examples the "scientific" ideas of space and time, to which we could add those of matter, energy, and above all the possibility of translating in algebraic terms the phenomena of nature, the docility of the latter towards set and determinating laws. Because of the spectacular feats that it has made possible, modern science, often without willing it, has converted these polysemic symbols already mentioned (time, space, matter...) into univocal and definable (circumscribed, although not understood) signs.

Whatever may be the case, since we shall not enter now into a global evaluation of modern science and of its underlying epistemology, we only affirm that all these pillars on which modern science rests, are not intercul-

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204. See my book: *La experièncià filosofica de la India*, Madrid, Trotta, 1997, which dispenses me from being more explicit.

tural: they belong to one culture only. We do not intend to say by this, that other forms of thought and their underlying myths are more valid or less valid, nor that they should or should not disappear. We are only stating that we have here a monoculturalism which does not allow the full blossoming of other cultures.

Let us repeat that monoculturalism is not incompatible with tolerance of all those ways of life which accept the encompassing myth of modern culture In the present situation, the latter could be described as the law of the market, the power of money, the universal value of modern science, the technological complex as the necessary framework of the common life of human beings, and above all, the specific way of thinking and seeing life. To the dominant monoculturalism belong the major portion of what are usually called the definite assets of modern science, such as the fact that it is the earth that rotates around the sun and not vice-versa, the law of entropy or the malaria cycle, Modern man is not ready, and rightly so, to accept a cultural relativism which would bring him to doubt about his "scientific progress." But the cultural relativity of an intercultural discourse has nothing to do with such relativism. The relativity inherent to interculturality does not question the discoveries of a culture, but neither does it absolutize them. It relativizes them, i.e. it considers them valid and legitimate within a given culture and within the parameters admitted by the latter; in a word, within the encompassing myth of that culture. Not to be disposed to relativize the present cosmology when we have relativized all others, is equivalent to a fossilization of time and to the very negation of the idea of progress—unless one wishes to domesticate the latter in order to oblige it to a gratuitously postulated linearity or to set the realm in which the "paradigm" could change—a very significant attitude of modern monoculturalism. We have indicated at the beginning that monoculturalism is very rooted in the human mind and difficult to surmount. Here again dawns the challenge of interculturality.

Our civilization accepts easily other cultures as long as the latter accept the rules of the game that the former postulates. And it is obvious, that because of its very power, our civilization can allow itself the luxury of being more tolerant than weaker cultures.

What has brought about the theoretical justification of monoculturalism is the practical triumph of evolutionary thinking, which in turn is indebted to the linear conception of time. According to that thinking, mankind follows a linear "progress"; with its meanderings, twists and turns, up to an "omega" point—that some philosophers interpret as the secularization of the eschatological thinking of Abrahamic religions. It is not so much a matter of the hypothesis according to which man has come from the monkey as of the fact of believing that we have evolved within a geography and history which have a double dimension, and that the meaning of human life, of mankind and of the whole cosmos consists in "developing," i.e. evolving towards that "end." Evolution is primarily a form of thinking which believes that it can reach the intelligibility of a phenomenon if it has explained its linear temporal gestation, in other words, if it visualizes the trajectory according to which a given phenomenon has come to be, by riding a time which has brought it all the way up to us. Cosmology is being reduced to a cosmogony; to explain the gestation of something is equivalent or comparable

to having understood it: the *how* has then become equivalent or "equipara-ble" to the *why* and has replaced the *what*—for to control the *how* it is su-perfluous to know the *what*. What is important, because that is what is effi-cient, is to "know" *how* things operate.

If such be the case, it is enough to "know" the evolution of man and of cultures in that unique sense. The official language of the United Nations, which speaks of "developed" and "developing" countries is highly reveal-ing. We are in a monocultural world: there is no consolation in saying that it is pluricultural. Only one culture sets the rules of the game.

It is precisely the task of philosophy to reach the ultimate roots of reality and to become aware of this monoculturalism which is invisible from within our own myth. Then, possibly, we may find a window which will allow us to find an exit. We are saying exit, because it is practically a world consen-sus that we must exit from this modern civilization which has no future, since it cannot continue to grow and develop indefinitely.

An intercultural philosophy could show us that other civilizations, with-out denying their negative aspects, have had other myths which allowed them to live a full life—obviously for those who have believed in them; but we must immediately add here, that this is in no way a matter of idealizing the past or of seeing only the bright side of other cultures. And that is what precisely brings us to interculturality.

The other temptation mentioned, comes from the extreme opposite, which we have called *multiculturalism*. We have already said that multicul-turalism is impossible. Acknowledging the primordial function of each cul-ture, which consists in offering a vision of reality which allows man to live his life, we could maybe defend an atomised and separated *pluriculturalism*, i.e. a separate and respectful existence between diverse cultures, each in its own world. We would thus have the *existence* of a plurality of cultures without mutual connection. But what is obviously impossible, is the *coexis-tence* of their fundamental diversity in today's world.

One cannot put forward that acknowledging this incompatibility already supposes a supracultural or universal logic. For such an incompatibility can be justified within the respective categories of diverse cultures. For exam-ple, for a culture such as the Western one, it appears obvious that there can be no life in common possible with a culture which believes that spirits constantly and freely interfere in human actions, without consideration for what is called physical or psychological laws.

Also from the point of view of other cultures, it is obvious that there is incompatibility, not so much because there is formal contradiction, but be-cause there is a de facto incompatibility. The theoretical justification would then be, for example, not that A is incompatible with B because B is equiparable to Non-A, but because A is simply greater than B and phagocy-tises B.

In no way are we denying that there can be a transcultural validity of certain formal ways of thinking. Let us not forget that every universality is formal and that formality presupposes certain axioms (precisely formal ones) that are postulated or acknowledged. Thus, for example, the principle of non-contradiction which applies when affirming the incompatibility be-tween A and non-A, presupposes that A remains constant both in time and in my thought, that non-A as negation of non-A corresponds to it-is-not-A, and mostly that my thought of A and of non-A corresponds to the extra-mental reality of A and of non-A, etc.—presuppositions that need not be recognized by all cultures.

Moreover, multiculturalism today is also de facto impossible. The domi-nant culture has already penetrated foreign territories to such an extent that it would be myopic not to see it. Technocracy, to say it in a word, has practi-cally penetrated the four directions of the earth. We may have to surmount or dominate it, but we cannot ignore its ubiquity. Maybe it is destined to be-come the unique culture which will replace all others ; but this does not mean that it is a super-culture encompassing all others.

In that context, we have, to this point, said two things: that monoculturalism is lethal and multiculturalism is impossible. Interculturality recognizes both assertions and seeks a middle way. Monoculturalism asphyxiates other cultures through oppression. Multiculturalism leads us to a war of cultures (with the foreseeable routing of the weakest) or condemns us to a cultural apartheid which also in the long run, becomes stifling.

We have taken the position that cultures are mutually incompatible, but in no way have we said that they are incommunicable. The fact that the circum-ference and the radius are mutually incommensurable (we could have said it in a more poetic and Platonic way, of the lyre and of the bow), in no way means that they do not condition each other, nor that they can become sepa-rate.

We could even expand the metaphor and add that, just as there is no cir-cumference without a radius, there is no culture without interculturality, at least implicit. Every circumference has its radius even if the latter is not out-lined. No culture can remain static without destroying itself. A culture is nothing but an abstraction if it is not concretely embedded in human beings that cultivate and live it, and thus modify and transform it without following logical laws. A certain discipline called by the modern name of *Begriffsgeschichte* or *History of Ideas* has inclined us to believe that, except for certain modifications of paradigm, cultural transformations follow roughly the laws of deduction or of induction—as if they were computers. Human reality does not exhaust itself in history, nor human history in the history of ideas—may Hegel forgive us! One thing is the condition of pos-sibility for a particular cultural stream to emerge, and the necessary plausi-bility for that stream to find root and to grow, another thing is to limit hu-man freedom, the activity of the mind and the creativity of men to these simple intellectual operations. A man is not a machine, anymore than think-ing is mere calculus.

This means that interculturality is inherent to the human being and that a unique culture is as incomprehensible and impossible as a single universal language and as one man alone. All cultures are the result of a continuous mutual fecundation. The dream of the Tower of Babel is the great temptation of the powerful, of the "entrepreneurs" (of works-of all kinds) and of those who inhabit the higher mansions. The human condition is made up of more or less comfortable huts, but within human scale and with practicable path-ways (not highways) between them.

The example of language is an eloquent one. One only has to live in Australia, in India or in the U.S. of America, to become aware of the variations and variants of the English language. Suffice it to move across Peru, Bolivia or Mexico to understand that Spanish is an abstraction and that living languages are always dialects, at least the spoken languages—for example the academic dialect.

To think that cultures are incommunicable because they are incommensurable is a rationalistic presupposition which believes that only a common *ratio mensurabilis* can be the instrument of human communication. To understand ("*s'entendre*") each other does not mean to comprehend each other ("*se comprendre*"). Intelligibility is not the same thing as awareness (*avoir conscience*). One can be aware of something that is unintelligible, as we have said. The fact of having separated wisdom into knowledge (without love) on one hand, and love (with knowledge), on the other hand, has fragmented the human being.

Interculturality is the complete form of human culture. But interculturality means neither one (single) culture, nor a disconnected plurality. Here again, emerges the necessity of surmounting monism without fading into dualism: *advaita*. Intercultural communication presents a special "problematique." This will be the aim of our following chapter.

Chapter 3

"PROBLEMATIQUE"

Our topic will be met only partially since we are not trying to elaborate an intercultural philosophy but only to describe from outside this *terra nullius* (no man's land), by opening windows and doors in an attempt to communicate.

For that purpose, we can formulate the following considerations.

7. The transformative function of philosophy

The purely formal description of philosophy, as being that human activity which deals in a practical and/or theoretical fashion with the ultimate problems of which man is aware, allows us to assert that it is its mission to overcome the possible (and real) inertia (physical and mostly mental) of man, who, ensconced more or less comfortably in his culture, doesn't try to look beyond his own myth.

Assuredly, each culture offers to philosophy the language that the latter needs to formulate its insights. But it is no less certain that each philosophy tries to question the very foundations on which each culture is based: it is philosophy that investigates the ultimate content of the more or less explicit cosmovision of each culture. We have already indicated that a specific difference of philosophy with respect to other "disciplines," consists in looking back rather than ahead, in questioning what holds a culture together instead of hurrying up to scale a (cultural) edifice in construction. In that sense, philosophy is authentic *skepsis*, revolutionary, protesting and transforming.

In other words, each philosophy emerges from the womb of a culture, and simultaneously, by questioning what holds that culture together, can

transform it. In fact, every deep cultural change has emerged from philosophical activity. It has repeatedly been said that philosophers, although with chronological time lags, are those who influence the most the destinies of history. This radical character of philosophy means that it takes its nourishment from a sub-soil where also other cultures take their roots. By that I mean that the stimulus of philosophical thinking comes from its underground contact with other roots. Or if we were to radically change metaphor, will be transcultural what carries far away seeds and lets then fall into the philosopher's cogitation (without forgetting the irony and humor hidden in that cogitation—a philosophy without humor loses the humus which keeps it vigorous and stops it from wilting into fanaticism). By trying to be aware of its myth, philosophy opens itself up to interculturality in order to accomplish its task of transmythicization, thus transforming the original culture's vision of reality.

This transformation takes place although at velocities that can be very different within both cultures in question. The authentic meeting between cultures does not necessarily take place mid-way, but certainly outside the respective field of either. Otherwise, there would not be meeting but phagocytosis or rejection. I insist on this point because the skirmishes (generally economic and political, even military) of certain cultures in foreign fields are not examples of interculturality but of domination.

Each philosophy is a human effort to move out of its own myth, an attempt to move out of the horizon of one's own world, as represented in miniatures of the late renaissance, which show man piercing the heavens, and glimpsing into an infinite universe which was then starting to dawn before his very eyes. Every philosophy, by approaching the *mythos* with *logos*, exercises a demythologizing function, although it otherwise necessarily remythologizes, as I have said. One cannot separate the *logos* from myth or the myth from *logos*.

Let us summarize a very complex situation. One receives this incitement to philosophize, as much from the avatars of one's own culture as from the stimuli that come from foreign cultures.

8. Interculturalization

The contemporary effervescence within the dominating culture has sparked a series of efforts to try to move out of this culture's apparent dead-end.

The present culture, preoccupied by the growing specialization of knowledge, has begun to cultivate, especially among academics, what has been called pluri-disciplinarity. The latter consists in approaching a problem belonging to a given discipline with the help of the methods of other disciplines, although the problem continues to belong to the original discipline. It is as if one were calling upon mates to jump aboard ones ship and help one avoid shipwreck.

Another effort consists in a methodological transfer, i.e. in applying the method belonging to one discipline to another discipline. This has been called *interdisciplinarity*. Here one does not ask others to come and help us, but we go over to their ship or, at least, we want to navigate together. Obviously, for a method to work, it has to abide by and be more or less homogeneous with the object under investigation. One can only help us if

we are experts in the functioning of our own ship. Thus the mathematical method can apply to physics, but it would not be adequate to apply it to theology for example. In other words, interdisciplinarity can only apply to homogeneous disciplines.

More recently, some have introduced the term *transdisciplinarity* to designate a method which claims to go beyond the barriers of discipline. When neither the oars nor the sails of our boat are of use on the river, we ask people somewhere to throw us some ropes, to pull us from the shore, maybe in order to navigate upstream. This method wishes to confront the most diverse disciplines and approach a plural intelligibility of the complexity of human phenomena.[205] One must navigate on the water and move on earth. But both the fact of starting from the existing disciplines within the contemporary culture, and the requirement that the methods used should be dependent on those disciplines, result in that one does not go beyond the culture in which these disciplines have their *"raison d'être."* The sailors in the boat and the hawlers on the embankments both try to have us go up the ever same river.

Transdisciplinarity represents a decisive step towards interculturality, but one is still within disciplines that claim to be universal and belong to a particular culture. One is still within the syndrome of globalization just as the *studium generale* a few centuries ago, believed in the unique *ars magna* which claimed to be able to be the foundation of a true *universitas*, by unifying all knowledge The challenge of interculturality is more disconcerting and must hence be more humble and not claim to displace transdisciplinarity but situate it and relativize it. The question will then be asked: what is appropriate? *Universitas* or rather *pluriversitas?*

In another order of things, one speaks of *inculturation*. Two great examples: Christianity and modern science with its technology. The initial presupposition is, obviously, that these living great historical facts of mankind are supra-cultural, and that they therefore have the possibility and even the right to inculturate in the different cultures of mankind, without thereby bringing them to lose their identity.

After all that we have said, it should be clear, that, unless one is defending a reductionist conception of culture, no human phenomenon can aspire to be supra-cultural. This does not prevent that there be values or cosmovisions which, born in a particular culture, may be adopted or accepted by others. I am not denying that there may be and must be relatively transcultural values, but this is not synonymous with *transculturality*. In that respect one can rather speak of *interculturation* or of *mutual fecundation*.

I have insisted on the polysemy of words, and I myself have used this word as a possible reinterpretation of inculturation in the present Christian reflection.[206] In our intercultural context, that word could also serve as

symbol of the middle way mentioned above, between cultural solipsism and imperialistic globalization.

Another word, polysemic also, which could help us, would be *pluralism*. In both cases, it is a matter of not cutting off potential human communication, without having to reduce them to a common denominator of a unique reason.[207]

It may be appropriate on this occasion to express some considerations, that we shall reduce to three, on what could be called a methodic of interculturality. Let us first set the main "problématique."

The "methodic" belonging to interculturality cannot be one that is followed in interpreting and comparing texts. Nor can it be a hermeneutic of contexts. To interpret a text, one is required to know how to read and to know the pretext which made it possible. The adequate hermeneutics for such an enterprise is one that I have allowed myself to call diatopical. The *topoi*, or cultural sites, are distinct, and one cannot presuppose *a priori* that the intentionalitites which have made it possible for these different contexts to emerge, are equal. However, with the necessary caveats of a diatopical hermeneutics, contexts can be put into relationship and thus one achieves a certain understanding of these contexts.

However, as previously said, cultures cannot be reduced to contexts which house different texts and give them meaning. Texts can give distinct answers to a problem. It is the contexts that present a problem for us, but it is not legitimate to suppose that the problems of the different cultures are the same (only with different answers). The questions themselves are different.

Nevertheless, as we have said, human communication is not impossible because man is much more (not less) than reason and will. The text is run by reason, the context by will. But the human texture is anterior to both the text and the context and it is the fruit neither of reason nor of will. It is given to us, it is a gift, we find it, we acknowledge it, we accept it or rebel against it, but it is there as *materia prima*, that some will call divine, God or in some other way. It is sufficient for us to acknowledge that the ultimate priority belongs to the given, to the gift, to what we receive or believe that we receive.
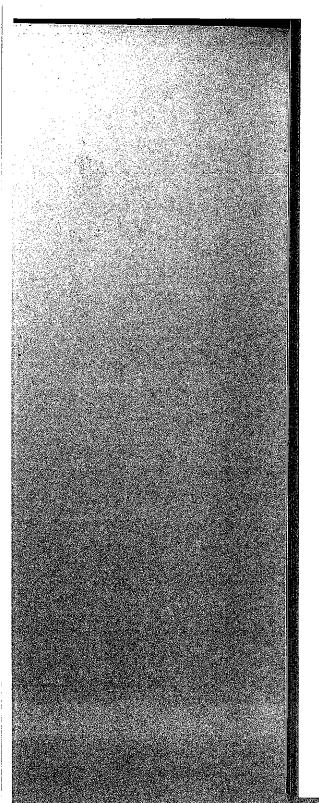
From that perspective, interculturality is also a given. And while each one of us, from within, is seeking to encompass or to situate other cultures, at least formally, we cannot but acknowledge that the instruments we hold

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205. See the interesting book by B. Nicolescu, *La transdisciplinarité*, Rocher, Monaco, 1996, which inaugurates a whole movement, and which has published a collective manifesto (at Arrabida, 1994) on transdisciplinarity.

206. With respect to Christianity which offers us a good example but which I cannot deal with here, see the contributions of the Indian Theological Association, little known outside its milieu (while noting its maturity in the course of time): S.B.

Chethimattan (ed.), *Unique and Universal, Fundamental Problems of an Indian Theology*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1972 ; J. Pathrapakal (ed.) *Service and Salvation*, TP., Bangalore 1973; M. Amaladoss, T. John Gispert-Sauch (eds.), *Theologizing in India*, TP, Bangalore, 1981 ; G. Van Leuwen (ed.), *Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology*, ATC, Bangalore 1984; K. Pathil (ed.), *Sociocultural Analysis in Theologizing*, ITA, Bangalore, 1987; K. Pathil (ed.), *Religious Pluralism. An Indian Christian Perspective*, ISPCK, Delhi.

207. Sorry not to be more explicit on the theme of pluralism inherent to interculturality, that I have treated at length and repeatedly on other occasions. See for example *Invisible Harmony*, Fortress, Minneapolis, 1995, and J. Prabhu (ed.) *The Intercultural Challenge of Panikkar*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1996.

to come closer to other cultures, come to us, forged by the culture in which we are living. There is in man, a feminine dimension which has been too much ignored in the majority of philosophical reflections.

a) The first consideration, after that general reflection, is not very popular in the mainstream culture: the field of interculturality does not belong to the will; it escapes it, and is found beyond the will to be able to, to know and to seek.

Authentic interculturation is not the inculturation of a culture which considers itself superior, or as having the duty to inculturate, to save, to colonize, to civilize… It is a spontaneous fruit of the human condition, a natural result of man's life on this planet, a *hieros gamos*, if we wish to abuse a certain mythology in which the Gods pull the strings of the elective affinities and avatars of history. The healthy relations between cultures, those which seek no sort of conquest, belong to the very dynamism of the "yin/yang" of reality, to the "*commercium*" between the divine and the human, as attested by history itself.

Hence the necessity of a pure heart ; although, by pronouncing the word necessity, we already introduce the great temptation of wanting to direct and even to manipulate it, in order to realize our "good intentions," so often justified under cover of divine Will (interpreted by us, inevitably). Moreover, wanting to possess a pure heart already soils it, to desire nirvana is the greatest obstacle to its attainment, or to think in advance how we are going to witness to the spirit makes us lose not only credibility but the very power (purity, grace) of the Spirit.

In a word, the methodic of interculturality is not voluntary, but simply natural.

b) Interculturality also shies away from the hold of the intellect (its apprehension, comprehension, grasp, *"begriefen"*); interculturality is not of the domain of reason. Reason can only operate from its own field, and from the particular field of a given space and time. "Sociology of Knowledge" also includes a History and Geography of Knowledge. Our intelligence is imbedded in time and space and cannot function outside of them and outside of very particular spaces and times. It is appropriate to mention here if only parenthetically, that even the cultures that we geographically experience as borderline, are not contemporary but diachronical. Each has its own space and lives in its respective time. Neither the clock nor the sun are the masters of human time, any more than Newton or Einstein are those who have discovered space.

It follows that reason, which is always our reason, is not the competent judge for the *negotium* of interculturality. A first consequence of this, is that what is called comparative philosophy is a pure impossibility and a leftover from that imperial and colonialistic past that the intercultural discourse obliges us to mention more than once. The basis for this is very simple. For an authentically comparative philosophy, we would need a fulcrum that is neutral, impartial and hence external to philosophy. Now, by definition, such does not exist. Philosophy as we would like to define it, is characterized by the claim of not admitting a superior authority which orders or dominates it. That authority would then be the authentic philosophy. It is significant in this respect to remind oneself that comparative studies have

emerged when the goddess Reason reigned in monarchical and despotic fashion in western culture. And nowadays, even if it is no longer absolute queen, it has not yet abdicated its throne of constitutional monarch—thus giving free rein to the struggle, especially political, for power, through the means of each one's instrumental reason.

Many years ago I have introduced the notion of "imparative" philosophy to situate more adequately our irrepressible aspiration to know the concrete human panorama as it presents itself to our intellect. We cannot compare, but we can and must learn ("*imparare*" from high Latin) from the wisdom of other philosophies and cultures, and hence criticize.[208]

In a word, reason does not have the mission of governing (man), but the function of policing. Reason which reigns with much honor in more than one culture cannot autoconsecrate itself the monarch of all cultures. But the alternative is not chaos.

c) The alternative if we wish to name thus our effort to describe interculturality, must renounce neither reason nor will, but only surmount any idolatry. The median way opens up when we become aware of the function and power of myth next to the indispensable but not exclusive role of *logos* in Man. This is what I have called the *new innocence*.

From the outset we suggest that the present mainstream culture had set its stakes on *logos* in all its dimensions, but had omitted to take the *mythos* into account, reducing the latter to being the Cinderella of the former.

My aim here is not to underline the importance of *mythos* nor give it back its role.[209] Let me just state that its function is essential for an intercultural philosophy.

9. *Mythos* and *Logos*

Let us try to come to a certain conclusion. Cultures are plural. The plurality of cultures in this world does exist, not only in times past but also today. We have already criticized the mainstream culture's facile temptation to phagocytize them all, with the consolation of making them evolve towards a superior culture, without their truly losing anything. This is the modern syndrome of "conversion" according to the Christianity of the second half of this century, a syndrome which manifests itself even more crudely in the contemporary scientific mentality: nothing should be renounced, one must surmount and progress.

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208. See my "Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of religion," *Man and World*, La Haye, Boston, London, 1980, XIII, 3–4, pp. 357–383, and "What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?," G.J. Larson and E. Deutsch (eds.), *Interpreting across Boundaries. New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, pp. 116–136.

209. The bibliography is immense. May I signal, because of their importance, the two volumes (which comprise a vast bibliography) of LI; Duch, *Mite i Cultura. Aproximacio a la logomitica*. I published by the Montserrat Abadia, Barcelona, 1995, and *Mite i interpretacio. Aprimacio a la logomitica II* Published by the Montserrat Abadia, Barcelona, 1996.

According to the vocabulary that we are using here, one could say that the plurality of cultures is a fact that is obvious to the *logos* ; their pluralism is a myth, obviously for those who believe in it.

By pluralism, I mean that human attitude which, recognizing the contingency of everything which is human, and that man is not only an object of knowledge but also a *knowing subject* (knower), acknowledges that systems of thinking and cultures exist which are mutually incompatible and even contradictory, and that nevertheless man does not have the capacity to pass absolute judgement. This does not mean abstaining from critique, nor from the obligation to oppose certain forms of culture which are considered to be noxious or erroneous from another culture's viewpoint.

But the nature of intercultural philosophy is not so much a question of dealing with borderlines cases, or with decisions to be taken regarding aberrations, as of seeking paths of interculturality which, without aiming at building a new tower of Babel, do not renounce human communication. This means giving up the spiritual and material bulldozer, but not the human word, which is dialogue.

We have already said that interculturality is the locus of dialogue. What is lacking to reach cultural conviviality is dialogical dialogue, whose condition, among others, is mutual respect.

We say dialogical and not merely dialectical dialogue because the latter already presupposes the primacy of a *logos* (a very restricted one at that) that many cultures do not accept.

The dialogue between cultures requires not only mutual respect but also a minimum of mutual understanding, which is impossible without sympathy and love.

All this brings us to the re-valorization and maybe the transforming reinterpretation of a notion which, in spite of being very Hellenic, might be able to serve as a springboard to interculturality. We are obviously referring to the myth which is word, narration, which is conscious, which is not incompatible with *logos*, but which is irreducible to the latter. We cannot embrace reality, no matter how proteic our effort : neither the individual alone, nor one culture alone, nor man isolated from the cosmos and the divine.

We cannot on the other hand, as men, renounce aspiring to the whole, we cannot settle for a part of the whole of which we are in some way conscious. And so the binomial *mythos-logos* seems to open the window for us unto that vision which, unsatisfied with the *pars pro toto*, becomes aware of that which (without dominating it) laughs, enjoys, lives... the *totum in parte*.

Interculturality continues to be a no man's land that we all can enjoy, provided we do no seek to possess it.

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