

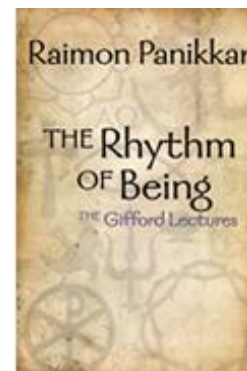
Raimon Panikkar in Scotland

Documents & Reflections 1989 & 1990



In 1989 Professor Raimon Panikkar delivered the Gifford Lectures in natural theology at the University of Edinburgh. These were published shortly before his passing in 2010 as *The Rhythm of Being*. This document comprises some memories of what Panikkar left us with in Scotland. You will find within it:

- The original Gifford Lecture Programme from 1989 (pp. 2-11). Note especially the lecture 10 abstract on p. 10 concerning “the Survival of Being”. This is the humbling subject of the Afterword to *The Rhythm of Being* (below). The print edition of the Gifford programme was given to me (Alastair McIntosh) for scanning by [Alastair Hulbert](#) who, at the time, was Secretary of Scottish Churches Action for World Development. He tells me that the lectures were opened by a young woman flautist playing Debussy – he thinks it was “Syrinx”, originally called the “[Flûte de Pan](#)”. When Panikkar commenced his lecture (chaired, if Alastair remembers rightly, by Professor Duncan Forrester) he said: “We began with music, not with words,” and went on to observe that none of the previous Giffords had addressed the question of *rhythm*.
- An anecdote, pp. 12-14, from [The Gift Half Understood](#) by Alastair Hulbert (who organised Panikkar’s 1990 return to Scotland) describing his “Tragic Law of Technocratic Society”.
- My report, pp. 15-18, of the *No Life Without Roots* conference from Panikkar’s 1990 return visit. It summarises his and other keynotes at that event here in Govan, Glasgow – something that I found seminal to my future work with human ecology.
- Some pages I’ve scanned (and will remove if any objections) from *The Rhythm of Being* (pp. 19-44 of this PDF). These summarise Panikkar on both rhythm and being. There’s also his *Epilogue* (p.44) describing his inability to write up the 10th Gifford. These pages can also be viewed using “Look Inside” on Amazon.com, but to support Orbis, the publisher I’ve linked here to their vendor webpage. This book is a stunning valedictory testimony. Thank you, Orbis; God rest you, Panikkarji.



UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

GIFFORD LECTURES

1988/89

"TRINITY AND ATHEISM: THE HOUSING OF THE DIVINE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD"

a series of ten lectures by

PROFESSOR RAIMON PANIKKAR

on the following dates

Tuesday 25 April
Thursday 27 April
Friday 28 April
Monday 1 May
Tuesday 2 May

Thursday 4 May
Friday 5 May
Tuesday 9 May
Thursday 11 May
Friday 12 May

5.15 p.m. – Lecture Theatre B, DAVID HUME TOWER

Raimon Panikkar was born in Barcelona, Spain, in 1918 and is a citizen of India. Born into two major religious traditions, the Catholic-Christian and the Hindu, he has been striving since his early years towards the harmony of a pluralistic world. He studied Science at Bonn and Barcelona, eventually earning a Chemistry Doctorate at Madrid in 1958; his Doctorate in Philosophy from Madrid dates back to 1946; his Doctorate in Theology was conferred by Rome in 1961. He has lived half his life in Europe, a quarter in India and the last quarter in the United States. Since 1987 he has settled in Catalonia, Spain after becoming Professor Emeritus of the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he held a Chair in Religious Studies (Comparative Philosophy of Religion and History of Religions). He still spends some months in India every year. He has published around three hundred articles on topics ranging from the Philosophy of Science to Metaphysics, and from Comparative Religion to Indology. He has published over 30 books which include: *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, *Worship and Secular Man*, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*, *The Vedic Experience*, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, *Myth Faith and Hermeneutics*, and *Blessed Simplicity*. He has been Guest Lecturer in more than a hundred universities around the world, is a member of the Boards of several Journals and Associations, and has held special Appointments and Lectureships in places as far apart as Barcelona, Madrid, Buenos Aires, Cambridge, Harvard, McGill, Columbia, Pittsburg, Rome, Varanasi, Bangalore, etc. He is a member of the International Institute of Philosophy and many other learned societies.

GIFFORD LECTURES 1989

THE RHYTHM OF BEING THE THEO/ANTHROPO/COSMIC TRINITY

(The Dwelling of the Divine)

The inquiry about the most fundamental questions for humankind assumes already both the meaningfulness of the queries and that there is a factual end to an ever further questioning. The quest eventually stops when we believe that we see things as they are – even if provisionally. We have reached a horizon which is the proper locus of the myth. We take it for granted and the answers are satisfying for the time being. The roughly 8,000 years of historical consciousness seem to show (reveal?) a Cosmotheandric Invariant. We call it the *theoanthropo-cosmic myth*. It is the story of three intertwined elements or dimensions always present in (the human awareness of) Reality: the Cosmos, the Human and the Divine. There is a certain consensus today in believing that we are facing a turning point in the History of Humankind. Plato and the Bible may be insufficient, or Sankara and K'ung Fu Tzū for that matter. There is a felt need for a fresh experience of Reality. We shall explore whether this mood does not reflect a crucial moment in the 'History' of Being as well. Does Being also have history? Or is Rhythm a better word?

These lectures will concentrate on the first dimension of the triad, namely on the nature and function of the Divine. They give vent to the suspicion that most of the traditional ideas about 'God' are inadequate for carrying the burden imposed upon the word by our present day consciousness. This fact may reflect a corresponding event in Being itself. The human world hankers after peace, but this is only a wishful longing as long as we do not become effectively aware of our new situation in the heart of the Real.

Our topic goes beyond the problems usually studied by a theoretical Science of Religions and a classical Theology. And yet we build upon the insights of either 'discipline'. We try to detect the very Rhythm of Reality.

Lecture 1:

THE DESTINY OF BEING

Being designates all that (there) *is*. We designate it with a verb. Being is flowing, *rheōn*, rhythmic. It moves, but it cannot go anywhere else. Humans have life and conscious life. Life seems superior to or independent of its bearers. Has it a destination? Is that its sense? But the **Destiny** of Being is different from though

not unrelated to human History. Humans are historical beings because Reality allows both the expansion and the concentration of the human Being along Time and Space. In the experience of human historicity Man discovers a belonging to a wider universe. The notions that the World is temporal, Man historical and God eternal produce an artificial split in our conception of Reality. Distinctions should be made, but radical separations do not make sense. Being as such is dynamic and all-pervading. But Being for us is invisible except in its aspects. We do not say parts. Being is Being in its beings, and yet it is not identical to them. Being *is* also Be-ing. Being and Becoming are not mutually opposed categories. Be-ing is already an action, and Becoming presupposes already Being. Being is living, moving, becoming, -all inappropriate metaphors. This 'life' of Being is unthinkable. The Destiny of Being appears as Rhythm, i.e., it implies *order*. Rhythm is neither the whole nor the parts. It discloses the encounter of quiet with movement, eternity with time, space with emptiness, the totality with its aspects, identity with difference. The Destiny of Being is a human concern too. Man is more than History, the Universe more than Space, Being more than Time.

Lecture 2:

THE STARTING POINT

We should not rely on any type of intuitions personal or collective, without a strict methodological scrutiny. But, the epistemological circle is unbreakable. The knowing subject would cease to be subject if critically analysed. Unless knowledge is more than an epistemological instrument (for knowing) there is no way of overcoming the aporia of modern philosophy without reverting to a precritical situation or an ultimately irrational attitude. Existentialisms, structuralisms, deconstructionisms, reconstructionisms and hermeneutics of all sorts are sometimes pathetic and often valuable efforts at overcoming the post-Cartesian world-views. Yet, the basic problem is not epistemological. Epistemology and Ontology have the *logos* in common. The previous problem is the *logos*. *Logos* is not without *mythos*, and vice-versa. Thinking, as the basic activity of the *logos*, encompasses Being in its totality, but always from its own standpoint. Being does not need to be totally transparent to the *logos*. Thinking is not the lord of Being, but its steward. The obedience of the intellect is wisdom. The starting point is not reflection on the given (who gives? where is it received?), but that power capable of perceiving the given as giving: a new innocence. A pure heart is not only a requisite for salvation: it is a requirement for authentic thinking. Our starting point is conditioned, but not necessarily determined, by our situation in the overall human history and the very Destiny of Being. But whence does the *Initiative* come?

THE DWELLING OF THE DIVINE IN THE (CONTEMPORARY) UNIVERSE

Omitting Kosmology [*sic*] and Anthropology we limit ourselves to a meditation on the Deity.

a) The Unsatisfactory Answers of – Theisms

If theism does not fall into utter Silence it needs some qualifications. But any qualification of or attribute to God has unsurmountable difficulties.

Lecture 3:

THEISM/MONOTHEISM

Theism is one of the most important treasures of humankind. There are many types of theisms. In the judeo-christian-islamic traditions there is a tension between the notion of God as Absolute Being (*ipsum esse*) and as Supreme Entity (*ens a se*). Three main problems have been haunting the monotheistic mind: the existence of Evil, Freedom, and Multiplicity. Asian religions have proceeded along different lines. African religions and the primitive Biblical tradition have kept theology apart from metaphysics and thus avoided such problems at the cost of others: is God only the ultimate point of reference for acting or also for thinking? Most of the mystical moods either insist so much on immanence, so that theism turns into pantheism, or on transcendence, so that the question does not even appear – and when it does, theism turns into dualism. Modern Science has successfully criticised the picture of a 'gap-filling' God (for unsolved problems). Modern humanistic consciousness has sapped the credibility of a God acting in history. Monotheism may be unconvincing on theoretical, practical and 'scientific' grounds. But is there a more satisfying alternative? For whom?

Lecture 4:

ATHEISM/DEISM/POLYTHEISM/PANTHEISM

A-theism is a theo-logical problem. It is the refusal to close the circle, even hypothetically, and to accept any privileged centre beyond the pragmatic points of reference. All that there is, is all that there is – or shall be. This shall be is another form of facing the ultimate problem of human existence and it is thus concerned with the Divine.

Deism elaborates an idea of God compatible with modern Science; a neutral God who may appear at the beginning or the end of this cosmic and human

adventure and/or also in the private recesses of the human psyche as a human need or intellectual consolation for unassimilated problems – a domesticated God.

The philosophical problem of *polytheism* is more serious than a correct interpretation of the so-called polytheistic religions. It is the problem of pluralism. The question is whether there are many centres of intelligibility, whether Reality can be reduced to one single, even if transcendent, Unity. To face the challenge of pluralism we need to reintroduce the myth as the very invisible horizon of our awareness.

Pantheism is an escalation of polytheism. There is a *pāni* more inclusive than a divine presence everywhere. Pantheism is equivalent to monism. Pantheism does not allay the fear of dissolving all differences into an undiscriminated identity. How can we solve the problem of the One and the Many, taking both seriously?

b) The Divine Mystery

History, on the one hand, and Thinking, on the other, have constantly referred to that 'reality' which in principle cannot have any referent.

Lecture 5:

THEOGENESIS AND THEOLOGY

Theogenesis studies *what* humanity searches after when it searches for the Divine, and *how* it proceeds in this quest. The fact that Man asks about something not empirically given leads to the suspicion that the very questions stem from an extrapolation of the mind, or the other shore. But whether or not there is a revelation from Transcendence it is Man who has to struggle with both the question(s) and the answer(s). The Deity appears, or Man searches for it, in three possible horizons: the meta-cosmic (Prime Mover, Creator) the meta-personal (Supreme Being, Redeemer), or the meta-ontical (Absolute Being, Spirit). There are several methods by means of which Man attempts to penetrate into the Divine Mystery. The classical ways of action, love and knowledge yield three different notions of the Divine.

Theology as a merely human *logos* about God defeats its purpose, and as a purely divine *logos* about God begs the very problem. When in the *logos tou theou* the objective and the subjective genitives coalesce the categories of identity and difference collapse. Can we overcome thinking without destroying it? Where is the locus of the Deity?

c) The Triadic Myth

Any attempt to isolate the Divine fails. Any effort at uniting it with the rest of Being makes it superfluous. The non-quantifiable symbol of the Trinity seems to be able to express the universal range of the human experience when dealing with this problem. It is a non-dualistic experience.

Lecture 6:

THE RADICAL TRINITY

The question about Reality entails the awareness that we are also part of it. But it implies also the awareness that we would not ask the question if Reality itself were not, in one way or another, eliciting in us that very question. In any question about Reality we are involved both as questioners and as questioned. The question about the Divine is a question about Reality. It concerns us intrinsically. This leads to a deepening of the christian trinitarian insight on a much broader problematic. Christian theology speaks of an immanent and an economical Trinity. The first 'reveals' to us the nature of the Deity *ad intra*, the second its 'handling' the World *ad extra*. But in both cases the Trinity seems to be a privilege of a separate Godhead. The World is *vestigium* and Man *imago trinitatis*. We introduce the notion of *Radical Trinity*: the trinitarian intuition is neither an exclusive christian doctrine, nor a monopoly of 'God'. It reveals the most fundamental character of Reality. Being is trinitarian. "Natural Theology" is trinitarian. The christian orthodox understanding of Incarnation is also an opening towards this notion.

Lecture 7:

THE COSMOTHEANDRIC INVARIANT

There may be no cultural universals, but there are human invariants. Practically all cultures have experienced Reality as a tress of Matter, Consciousness, and Infinity/or Atoms, Forces, and the Void/or Heaven, Earth, and Man, etc. The modern civilization is not an exception even if the word for the Divine is understood as Future, Justice, Liberty and the like. This seems to be more than just an historical fact. It seems to be also linked with the structure of the human mind. It might as well be a true character of the Real. The interpretations vary from strict dualisms to severe monisms passing through all kinds of non-dualisms. The cosmotheandric insight aims at doing justice to the deepest intuitions of most human traditions and, carrying the insight a step further, claims to elicit a certain

consensus. The data of History of Religions are intriguingly revealing. Everything that is, for the very fact of being, is at the same time cosmic, human, and divine. All the words used are not synonymous, but *homeomorphic equivalents*.

Lecture 8:

THE DIVINE DIMENSION

Is it possible to live a truly 'religious' life, a full human existence while transcending all theisms? The answer is yes. Worship persists, but free from idolatry. Prayer remains, but free from superstitions and being a projection of human frustrations. Love is not split into service of God and concern for our fellow-beings. The 'Presence of God' is not an act of the memory or the will. The Sacred and/or the Holy are then purified of all taboos. Each being recovers its dignity and human freedom is not reduced to making choices. Ethics finds its basis in the very nature of Being. Human knowledge does not need to be divorced from sacred knowledge and the vexing conflict between reason and faith, Science and Religion is dissolved. True piety does not disappear, and humanism is no longer anthropocentric. The rift between philosophy and theology is healed and all sciences rediscover their proper *autonomy*. Furthermore the experience of the divine dimension is compatible with different ideas about the Deity according to the diverse religious traditions of humankind which are then seen as concrete expressions of the deeper cosmotheandric intuition. We are Divine as much as the Divine is Human – without confusion and division.

Lecture 9:

THE EMERGING MYTH

Man is not alone in the Universe. But the human being has no equal partners. The Divine only dwells: disorientating wandering and reassuring abiding. There is a Mystery of Uniqueness in each being. Human self-consciousness discloses a Self which is neither (an) Other nor (my) *ego*, neither a divine Self nor a cosmic Whole. There is a theo-anthropo-cosmic myth – only visible *in statu nascendi, et moriendi*. The Divine is an abstraction. But so is Man, and equally so the Cosmos. Divine Destiny, Human History, and Cosmic Existence are inseparable. The being of God is not the god of Being. The historical character of Man does not exhaust human nature. The Space of the Cosmos is not a 'scientific' magnitude. No one controls or commands the rhythm of the Dance. Nothingness looms in the horizon of Being. It is the locus of Freedom. Truth is related to Time as much as Time is

related to Being. Historicity is dethroned. They put limits to eschatology. Time is not an arrow, nor eternity the target. The human experience of a solar year allows us to surmise the Rhythm of Reality.

Lecture 10:

TRINITY AND THE SURVIVAL OF BEING

The traditional conceptions of the Divine are being assailed from all sides and also being defended from all corners. Traditional religions and their offshoots are certainly not on the wane. This all reminds us that any new insight has to grow out of ancient tenets. There are many lethal divisions in the world today and we have become more sensitive to them: haves and have-nots, males and females, whites and non-whites, and what not. These lectures contest one of such divisions, that of believers and unbelievers. They attempt to demolish the wall of religious apartheid without building an artificial commune. There are, of course, several and incompatible world-views, but the humanness we all have in common is more than a sharing in an elusive human nature and in some somatic commonalties. It is also a sharing in a divine destiny through a faith which is previous to its articulations in beliefs and belief-systems. It is a sharing in a destiny which is more than the survival of the human family or the planet Earth. Human History is a sharing in the very Destiny of Being. The temporal eschatology of an Omega point in a linear future, ultimately only postpones the final end. The Trinity as the very symbol for the Rhythm of Reality does not offer a cheap consoling picture but certainly a more realistic and fascinating hope. There is no guaranty to our Destiny. If we kill the 'body' we may well kill the 'soul'. If we annihilate time we might destroy eternity. But what has been, is, and shall be. The open question is that 'shall be' which was not (yet). The Rhythm is not eternal return, but tempitemity.

THE GIFFORD LECTURESHIPS

The Gifford Lectureships, which are held in each of the older Universities of Scotland, were instituted under the will of Adam Gifford, one of the Senators of the College of Justice, who died in 1887.

Set up 'to promote and diffuse the study of Natural Theology in the widest sense of that term – in other words, the knowledge of God', the Lectureships have enabled a most notable field of scholars to contribute to the advancement of theological thought. In the University of Edinburgh, past Gifford Lecturers have included William James, Sir James Frazer, A.N. Whitehead, Albert Schweitzer, Sir Charles Sherrington, Reinhold Neibuhr, Niels Bohr, Arnold Toynbee, Sir John Eccles, David Daiches, Paul Ricoeur, John Hick and Alasdair MacIntyre.

about everything in his time: a woman crossing the ford of a river in spate which washed her car away and drowned her child, the young foolhardy fisherman drowned at sea leaving a young family, farm accidents, a murder in the High Street, the son of members of the congregation killed in an air crash on the other side of the world, 'the Dunbar cancer cluster'—the high incidence of cancer, inexplicable but for the Torness nuclear power station nearby.

* * *

An elegant antique cast iron signpost at the road junction in Spott indicates the direction and the precise distance southwards to BRUNT $1\frac{3}{4}$, WOODHALL $2\frac{7}{8}$, and ELMSCLEUGH $3\frac{1}{4}$. As I toiled uphill to the Brunt, a cock pheasant gave me the momentary benefit of its doubt by cocking a scarlet cheek at me, before it rushed off across a field with a whirring cry.

From the summit the view south takes in the escarpment of Lothian Edge and the Lammermuirs beyond. Northwards it includes the various rocky outcrops of the region on land and sea from Traproin, North Berwick Law and the Bass Rock to the shipshape Isle of May which guards the entrance to the Firth of Forth. The eye follows the coastline from Dunbar with its two churches and ruined hotel, past the golf course to Belhaven beach sweeping north west to where the little river Tyne flows swiftly into the sea. Beyond it is a headland with a rock formation called St Baldred's Cradle, and then more beach, the Ravensheugh Sands, which stretch for two miles till rocks again flank the channel separating the coast from the Bass Rock. In the other direction the Torness power station is out of sight.

Much of this coastal area is now a nature reserve named after John Muir, the native of Dunbar who emigrated to the USA as a child in 1849, and became one of America's greatest naturalists and the founder of her national parks. 'I asked the boulders I met whence they came and whither they were going,' he wrote about his childhood and youth. 'Around my native town of Dunbar, I loved ... best of all to watch the waves in awful storms thundering on the black headlands and craggy ruins of the old Dunbar Castle, where the sea and the sky, the waves and the clouds were mingled together as one ...'

Someone on the radio that morning had been talking about the search to develop a technology which 'eradicates failure'. Evidence

of results of the struggle to master nature and the human condition was all around me—from the impact of agricultural methods on the skylark, the carnage of war, and infant mortality to cancer clusters. I suppose it is only when, encouraged by a certain level of success, our civilisation makes a god out of technology, that the concept of eradicating failure could even arise.

One glorious day in May ten years ago, I was walking on the Ravensheugh Sands with Professor Raimon Panikkar, disciple and teacher barefoot together. It was his day off from the centenary Gifford Lectures. We had had lunch in Haddington, left the car at the road end beyond Tynninghame, and followed the timeless path through the tall pine trees to the dunes and the beach. Few other people were about. Gannets from the Bass Rock were fishing by companies all down the coast, circling over shoals of fish, and diving relentlessly into the sea. No wonder the French call them *les fous de Bassan*—the crazy ones from the Bass Rock, their madness being in the way they dive.

Professor Panikkar was explaining to me what he was later to call the Tragic Law of Technocratic Society: 'whatever progress there is in the micro-social order represents a regression in the macro-social order ... Once we have broken the natural rhythms, balance—indeed justice—towards nature is no longer possible.'⁵ A simple example can be made of the motor car, which, in its early years was a great step forward in micro-social terms—offering individuals freedom of movement, transport, recreation. But a limit has now been reached and passed. On the macro-social level there are far too many motor cars, with all the negative effect that that implies for nature and the environment. Panikkar's law is rooted in the rhythm of nature and follows the classical logic of tragedy. Here, it demonstrates, we are not just in the realm of ethics, but of something much greater, involving human destiny.

Over skylark's song
Nob cry
of pheasant⁶

For Bashō the pheasant's call had the pathos of the cries of grief heard in *Nob* theatre.

⁵ 1492-1992 *Conquête et évangile en Amérique latine: Questions pour l'Europe aujourd'hui*, p. 39.

⁶ Lucien Stryk, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

Come, see real
flowers
of this painful world.⁷

‘When we try to pick out anything by itself,’ John Muir wrote shortly before his death, ‘we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.’ On the crumbling walls of Dunbar Castle which once welcomed Mary Queen of Scots, and which Cromwell demolished, the din of hundreds of nesting gulls is overwhelming.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

No Life Without Roots - Conference Report

It has long been recognised that 'development' must be culturally sensitive to progress, and its failure whether in the Third World abroad or the 'Fourth World' here has often been traced to culture clash. Over the past three years there has been growing debate in NGO development agencies in Scotland about development's deeper implications and this has led to establishing an active Scottish steering committee of the Brussels based internationally rooted South-North Network on Cultures and Development.

Comprising people associated with Oxfam, the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, Scottish Education and Action for Development, the Adult Learning Programme, the Iona Community, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, the Centre for Human Ecology and Scottish Churches Action for World Development (whose secretary, Alastair Hulbert, convenes the group), we started by acknowledging disappointment in the promise held out by development since post-war years, recognising that in both Scotland and the Third World material progress was often at an unforeseen cultural, ecological and spiritual price.

Indeed, the whole concept of development is a cultural one (known as 'improvement' at the time of the Clearances) and while not able or necessarily wanting to put the clock back, it appears that if concepts like sustainable and integral development are in future to have any real meaning we must start with a critique of both the culture of development and the development of culture.

These issues were brought into public focus at the South-North Scottish Network's "No Life Without Roots" conference held 14th to 16th September in the Pearce Institute, Govan - mainland base of the Iona Community whose helpers ensured magnificent organisation and excellent appropriate food. It was attended by some 100 people from as far away as Eastern Europe, Zaire, Brazil and India, but mostly from Scotland as part of the Glasgow cultural capital events. Without necessarily implying agreement of all the points made, let me summarise the proceedings.

We started on the Friday night with an Adult Learning Programme exercise based on the methods of Paulo Friere, whereby delegates reflected on photographs of Scottish life. Pictures ranged from the activities of shooting estates to the football ground, from the pub to the church, from the Western Isles to the Borders and from amateur photographers to professionals such as Sam Maynard.

The most dominant theme participants identified was powerlessness: the Scots came across as a historically broken people, lacking in self confidence and over-compensating to cover up. But we also have real deep roots, often little exposed but carrying the potential for cultural, social, economic and spiritual reconstitution to a degree which could be of global significance.

Our two keynote speakers, Wolfgang Sachs and Raimundo Panikkar, were both leading radical thinkers on development issues and were invited to reflect on development as a global issue in a Scottish context.

Sachs, a German sociologist and theologian and onetime Co-Editor of the journal, 'Development', spoke of "Development as a Western

Invention", tracing the concept's history and the central role given to it after Truman's 20-1-49 speech in which the expression, "underdeveloped areas", was first used. Fuelled by the concept of GNP developed around 1940 by the ILO, Sachs showed how poverty had become defined specifically in terms of low GNP. This quantified people in terms of what they are not rather than what they are, causing us to value one another by economic criteria rather than on the more sentient basis of relationship to one another and the land.

Earnest expectations that the poor would one day catch up with the rich enabling the whole world to become 'developed' are manifestly absurd. The process at current rates of Third World growth would take up to 500 years, by which time the Earth's ecological carrying capacity will have been many times outstripped.

The global loss of the commons on land and at sea has turned development into a race track from which it is almost impossible to exit: a race driven by ensuring "competitive obsolescence" of what we craft from the Earth's resources so that if we don't keep running faster we get trampled on. Can we name a single nation which considers itself sufficiently 'developed'; sufficiently wealthy? No, because zero growth is an unthinkable concept in conventional economics, therefore the concept of sustainable development for survival in a green future is a contradiction in terms.

Attempts to tinker with the nature of development will fail because development is like rainmaking in which the sorcerer blames his failure not on the principle of rainmaking, but on the particular spell used. We have to recognise that developmental rainmaking is a bankrupt concept, driving us towards an ecological and humanitarian abyss in which honest frugality is replaced by destitution. People become alienated from their traditional land and start to feel inferior, as obstacles in the path of development. The 'development' of their natural forests reaches its epitome when they are cut down to fuel GNP. Such processes force societies into the cash economy which, being based on scarcity, is doomed to create divided societies increasingly threatened by environmental catastrophe.

This, I would suggest, is manifest in today's Third World every bit as much as in Scotland from the 19th century onwards when landlords ordered, "... a new arrangement of this Country. That the interior should be possessed by Cheviot Shepherds and the people brought down to the coast and placed there in lotts under the size of three arable acres, sufficient for the maintenance of an industrious family, but pinched enough to cause them to turn their attention to the fishing... to put these barbarous hordes in a position where they could better Associate together, apply to industry, educate their children, and advance in civilization." (Patrick Sellar, 1815, writing of Lord and Lady Stafford).

Sachs concluded that we must say goodbye to the race track - both in the world and in our selves. How this might be done was a question we were left to ponder, but he indicated that it had much to do with learning the meanings of simplicity of lifestyle, regeneration of self, society, culture and the Earth and self-limitation of aspirations involving resource consumption and power over others.

Raimundo Panikkar then spoke on "Agriculture, Techniculture or Human Culture?". An Indian Catholic priest (considered by many in his home country to exemplify Buddah-hood), he holds doctorates in chemistry, theology and philosophy and is the only Gifford lecturer ever to have commenced the prestigious series with music.

He said that reformation is not the solution to the problematique outlined by Sachs. Only transformation, through becoming conscious of our selves, can offer hope. Our present situation is summed up by agri-business which prostitutes the Earth. We must rediscover true agriculture in the sense of cultivating the land with oneself - "to make love to the Earth".

Most of the world is presently passing from agriculture to techniculture, but it is a task of the conscious person to recognise that the internal time of the machine is based on non-natural acceleration and so plays havoc with natural rhythms. The price of machine rhythm is that our hearts too must be synchronised. Panikkar illustrated this with an anecdote of how the mother of the first Indian airline pilot had advised her son to be extremely careful with this new technology, the airplane, and promise her always to fly very low and very slow!

Machines and mass production turn dignified work into degrading labour. The human need to live poetically is lost for material gain. A diplomat's wife went to a simple rural woodcarver and on viewing a beautiful chair, ordered six to put round her diningroom table. The chair on display cost 10 pesos or whatever, so the woman figured the total cost would be 60 pesos, perhaps minus bulk discount. But the carver insisted on 80, and when she balked and insulted his presumed lack of arithmetic education he replied, "Then who is going to pay me for the boringness of producing six of the same thing?"

So forget about development in the sense which turns a person into a machine's appendage. Its fruits are worthless as they involve selling our souls. Instead, awaken! Realise and re-realise! Walk in beauty!

We relate to the world through experiment (overdeveloped), observation (underdeveloped) and experience (largely undeveloped in western society). Experience is hard because acceptance of our own vulnerability is the price to pay for being open to reality, otherwise we're always busy being defensive of our selves.

We should act without a why and without knowing the how: act from the heart - plan activities but don't try to plan a life. Abandon telos - the need to have a purpose in living, be it riches or heaven. You can only be sure you're following God if you don't know where you're going. So be vulnerable - renounce security. Culture and life has no goal - it's for the fun of it, the sake of it. There's an uninteruptable continuum between the need for security through accumulating wealth etc. at the personal level and the need to have the atomic bomb at a societal level. So eliminate existential fear. Trust in life. Consider the lilies.

Wonderful, moving stuff, but what if you can't pay the rent and how do you feed the kids, I wondered? Where do we find the famous Buddhist middle road between the ideal and practicality? So in

question time I asked Panikkar how we reconcile these conflicts, and he said it wasn't for him to tell another individual, 'how'. Later I took him a cup of tea. He hesitated after taking the first spoon of sugar, and as was understandable for one from a culture where sweet tea is much appreciated asked me, "How much is it acceptable to take in this country?" With a sense of immense vindication I quipped, "It's not for me to tell you, 'how'!" He burst into characteristic effervescent laughter and conceded one-all.

Kay Carmichael (inner city social researcher) and Frank Rennie (crofter from Lewis) closed the Saturday evening by giving formal responses. Kay related many of the points to factors which have created the desolation of British inner city life. Frank was more sceptical. He acknowledged development's tacky history in the islands and used Lord Leverhulme's experiments to illustrate the case, but basically suggested that the keynote speakers were stretching the point too far if they imagined crofters should give up technology as represented by tractors and go back to digging lazybeds by foot. I felt there was insufficient distinction between conventional and appropriate technology: that which controls and that which empowers, but there wasn't time to cover everything.

Panikkar had left us with some sutras - insightful aphorisms about life. Accordingly, we made the Sunday morning workshop sessions a time to think out appropriate sutras to take away from the conference. These were fed back in the final plenary session chaired by Canon Kenyon Wright and it was - wild.

The Friday evening sense of powerlessness and self-doubt melted away and Scottish culture blossomed to communicate sutras from the most phlegmatic to the rarefied, from words, to music, to Gaelic poetry, to mime. Here was the spirit of the East brought by our Third World visitors and Panikkar, dancing with that of the West in a way I've never before seen in a formal gathering. Here was hope, cultural resistance and regeneration in a joyous abundance we conference planners had not dared anticipate might come about.

We ended up, after a civic reception, in pouring rain on the pavement outside Glasgow City Chambers with the seventy year old Panikkar leading a spontaneous reel to the Fairy Dance played on pennywhistle. It was magic. Our culture will not be broken by all that has been destroyed. We must join with other authentic cultures and from the depths of our being start to heal humanity and reconstitute the world. For there can be no true life without roots.

Alastair McIntosh, 25-9-90

THE RHYTHM OF BEING

The
Gifford
Lectures

Raimon Panikkar



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is not just a dot or a point; a center is center only in (*advaitic*) relationship with a sphere or a circumference. The holistic vision discovers everything as a center and not as an isolated atom. For this vision we need an empty or a pure heart. This leads us directly to the following reflections.

3. *The Purification of the Heart*

My subtlest temptation was to prepare these lectures instead of preparing myself. To search for something to say, instead of aspiring for something to be. The danger was to engage myself gathering “materials” (even “ideas”) instead of gathering myself, my Self; to experiment with abstractions, instead of experiencing my-self, and observing reality.³⁵ The destiny of the universe passes in and through us—once the us, of course, has been purified of all that is “our” private property. We are not isolated beings. Man bears the burden, the responsibility, but also the joy and the beauty of the universe. “He who knows himself knows the Lord”³⁶ goes a traditional saying of islām that is constantly repeated by sufis. “He who knows himself knows all things”;³⁷ so Meister Eckhart completed the famous injunction of the Sybil at Delphos: “Know yourself.” The three are here brought together: God, the World, Man. I call this the cosmotheandric experience, but for such an experience we need a pure heart, a heart void of all selfishness—an empty *qualb*, the sufi tradition will say, echoed by San Juan de la Cruz in the company of buddhist and other masters. It is intriguing to know that these three, the “World, the Soul, and God” are the three “realities” off-limits to the kantian “pure reason.” “The way to ascend to God is to descend into oneself,” said Hugh of St. Victor, echoing Plato, the Upanishads, Śankara, Ibn ‘Arabī, and the entire tradition that urges us to cleanse the mirror of the self, the icon of the Deity. Richard of St. Victor seems to complement this thought by recommending, again in tune with the Orient, “let Man ascend through himself above himself.”³⁸

My preparation for these lectures has been as much a spiritual as an intellectual discipline. If my ambition was to utter words of truth for our present world, how could I pretend first to have, and second to convey, such a vision if my life were not harmonious? *Nemo dat quod non habet*: Nobody gives what one does not have. Wishful thinking is not actually thinking. It is a kind of intellectual cancer, a proliferation of groundless thoughts with no roots.

Anything that does not stem from one’s own inner and purified being, from the fullness of life, anything that does not flow from the very wellspring of real-

³⁵ This is not an excuse, but perhaps an explanation for this delay of twenty years in publishing these lectures.

³⁶ “Man ‘arafa nafsa-hu ‘arafa rabba-hu.”

³⁷ Meister Eckhart, *Vom Edlen Menschen*, DW V, p. 498.

³⁸ Richard of St. Victor, *De praeparatione animi ad contemplationem*, 83: “ascendat per semetipsum super semetipsum.”

ity, is tainted, manipulated, deformed, and not authentic, no matter what lofty names may be ascribed to it. There are ontic indigestions and ontological abortions, which give rise to immature thoughts and would-be intuitions. Reality can be twisted and deformed; and yet all is part of the real. The purification of the heart is not a simple moral injunction, but more than an epistemic condition; it is an ontological requirement.

The only relevant advice in this regard is to recall the old sayings about purification of the heart: not to put up obstacles for the Spirit, or barriers to divine Grace, letting the Tao be, becoming transparent, renouncing the fruits of action, and the like.

To say that the solution lies inside is not to assert that it is not outside as well, or that it lies already coiled somewhere within. Indeed, the *kuṇḍalinī* does not even exist before it stretches up, nor does the potency of Aristotle for that matter. The process is one of creation. If we know where we are going we are not really free, but rather are tied to preconceived ideas and bound to a goal.

For the individual, all this may still make some sense and be possible. I can trust in *Īśvara* (Lord), God, Reality . . . I can be vulnerable, allow things to happen, and attune myself to the spontaneous development of Being. Nonetheless, what can it mean for the collectivity, for the people, for sociological change and historical effectiveness?

My only point here is that we shall not discover the real situation we are in, collectively as well as individually, if our hearts are not pure, if our lives are not in harmony within ourselves, with our surroundings, and ultimately with the universe at large. The conditions for right vision, according to the *Vivekachūdāmaṇi*, concern the aspirant, of course, but they are rooted in the very structure of the real.³⁹ Christ is born in every one of us only if our heart is pure, echoes Meister Eckhart.⁴⁰

The reason is not only moral; it is ontological. Only when the heart is pure are we in harmony with the real, in tune with reality, able to hear its voice, detect its dynamism, and truly “speak” its truth, having become adequate to the movement of Being, the Rhythm of Being. The *Chung Yung* says, “Only the most absolute sincerity under heaven can effect any change.”⁴¹ The spiritual masters of every age agree that only when the waters of our spirit are tranquil can they reflect reality without deforming it.

This implies, of course, that thinking is much more than just concocting thoughts. Thinking discovers the real, and by this uncovering we shape reality by participating in its rhythm, by “listening” to it, and by being obedient (*ob-audire*) to it. Creative thinking is a genuine creation, a contribution to cosmogony, but in order that our contemplation have this resonance and power, we need to be free from both preconceived ideas (*inertia of the mind*) and egoistic

³⁹ Śankara, *Vivekachūdāmaṇi*.

⁴⁰ Meister Eckhart, Predigt 101.

⁴¹ *Chung Yung*, 23 (Ezra Pound’s translation).

will. A traditional name for this is sanctity; a more academic name, wisdom. The strongest formulation is perhaps that of the Beatitudes: the pure in heart shall see God,⁴² that is, the entire reality.

* * *

In retrospect, my entire life seems to have been led by a passion (a *pathos*) for a truly *saving* knowledge. The names may vary. Perhaps it would be better to say, communion with the real, participatory awareness in reality, wisdom, *philosophia*, or even holiness. They are all approximations of what could also be rendered by the aspiration (not desire) for *sōtēria*, *salus*, *mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*, and even *gnōsis* and *śūnyatā*.

This *pathos* also demands a proper *ethos*: the δαίμων, Heraclitus called it (“The *ethos* for Man is the *daimōn*”⁴³). I think I am in the best company in sharing this passion for holiness, perfection, wholeness. The Gospel calls it a thirst for justice, and here I detect a *novum*, a novelty for our times, even if it is at least twenty centuries old. I call it “sacred secularity.”⁴⁴ Justice (δικαιοσύνη) is as much spiritual justification and righteousness as it is material, social, and even political justice. The “theology of liberation” in the christian West has insisted on that.

Here something relatively new seems to emerge in contemporary consciousness. All the lofty words we have used to denote this aspiration toward salvation have generally been interpreted as the “salvation” of the core of the real, the soul, the spirit by blowing up (*nirvāṇa*) the material, this world, the body.

The contemporary aspiration, however, does not discard anything, does not put anything aside, nor despise or eliminate any portion of the real. This *novum* does not take refuge in the highest by neglecting the lowest; it does not make a separation by favoring the spiritual and ignoring the material; it does not search out eternity at the expense of temporality. Should I call it a passion for bringing together the traditional East with the traditional West, as the oversimplified slogan goes? Or the reconciliation between tradition and modernity? Or is it the outer and the inner, the male and the female going together, as the *Gospel of Thomas* says, the *yang* and the *yin* of the chinese tradition?

If not now, at the close of my earthly pilgrimage, when? When shall I gather the broken pieces of specialization—of my many nesting places in the branches of the Tree of Knowledge, and that of Life, of my passing through all the *āśramā* of existence? I do not forget, however, that cherubim with whirling and flashing swords guard the way to that tree of Life.⁴⁵

⁴² Mt V, 8.

⁴³ Heraclitus, *Fragm.* 119: ἦθος ἀνθρώπου δαίμων.

⁴⁴ Cf. Panikkar, *El mundanal silencio* (Madrid: Martínez Roca, 1999).

⁴⁵ Gn III, 24.

C. Regarding the Title and Subtitle

Tot és com una dansa de la vida i la mort:
 hi ha l'home i l'ocell i l'herbeta de l'hort,
 l'avet que sembla etern i la margarida,
 en el dansar de la mort i la vida.

Mor algun astre, temps enllà,
 i la flor de pereta de quintà,
 i la noia daurada s'oblida
 en el dansar de la mort i la vida.

All is like a dance of life and death:
 there is Man and bird and the little grass
 in the orchard,
 the eternal-looking fir-tree and the daisy,
 in the dancing of death and life.

A star dies, long ago,
 and the little pear-flower in the
 farmhouse,
 and the golden girl forgets
 in the dancing of death and life.

—Marià Manent⁴⁶

In these lines we hear echoes of an almost universal experience. Life is a dance. A “serious” thinker like Plotinus writes: “When we regard (only) Him then we reach our end and our rest, [(then) without any displeasure, we dance Him a divine dance].”⁴⁷

This χορεία, this choral dance is the combination of harmony and rhythm, Plato says.⁴⁸ It reminds us of the trinitarian *perichōrēsis*, the cosmic and divine dance. Śiva is Nāṭarāja, the dancing God. The dance is his creation. For popular religions dance may be the most genuine human sharing in the miracle of creation.

Were we capable of experiencing the full power of words, as in the *śabdabrahman* philosophy of ancient India, our title would already convey all that is to be said.

Were I to follow the indic tradition I would be expected to explain the *anubandha-catuṣṭaya*, the four necessary ingredients of any *śāstra* or treatise, namely: *prayajana*, purpose (*aim*), *adbhākāri*, the competent hearer or reader

⁴⁶ Marià Manent, cf. *El Ciervo* XXXVIII, num. 458 (April 1989).

⁴⁷ Plotinus, *Enneads* VI, 9, 8: τὸ μὴ ἀπάδειν χορεύουσιν ὄντως περι αὐτὸν χορείαν ἔντηρον.

⁴⁸ Plato, *Nomoi*, 665a.

(*audience*), *abhidheya*, subject matter (*topic*), and *sambandha*, the connection (*relationship*) between them all.

I have already indicated that our *aim* is liberation from the grids that impede our real freedom, that the *audience* consists of those who are engaged in living life to the full, that the *topic* is the gathering of the fragments of human experience throughout the ages in order to participate in the myth already emerging as the next step in the life of reality, and that the *relationship* among all these is best expressed by the metaphor of rhythm. To sum it up in a single sentence, we all participate in Rhythm, because Rhythm is another name for Being and Being is Trinity.

1. *Rhythm*

In spite of the increasing contemporary consciousness and the permanent voice of traditional cultures, the still-prevalent modern cosmology is that of a mechanical universe in which life is an epiphenomenon and Man a marginal exception. No wonder that the holistic experience of rhythm has been marginalized and reduced to a very restricted notion of music.

The difficulty in experiencing pure rhythm is due to our distracted life, either haunted by the past or worried about the future. In this condition we can hardly experience the present, much less enjoy it. To get rid of the burden of the past we need forgiveness; we need to have eliminated the past *karma*, the burden of our sins. If we are still weighted down with remorse for past deeds (because not forgiven), or the resentment for what others did to us, we shall not be able to dance the dance of life with light heart and unencumbered steps.

We also need a pure heart in order to be freed from the fear of the future. If we are anxious about what time will bring, we shall not be able to experience the present, the present of ourselves, the presence of the surrounding world and of the Self, the *tempiternal* reality.

The cause and effect of this attitude are our capacity to experience rhythm. Because rhythm does not go anywhere, we are no longer *viatores* (voyagers). We have become *comprehensores* (complete, perfect, all-embracing) in the language of the christian scholastics, *jīvan-mukta* (liberated in life) in the vedāntic philosophy. No longer heading toward a future, we have found our goal while still on the way. We are thereby cured of the malady (should I call it a vice or just cowardice?) of postponing for later (in life or in heaven) what is (already) real in the present. We are cured of the fear of definite issues, excusing ourselves by saying that we are not ready to live life to the full—probably because we idealize and dehumanize this fullness.

a) *Universality of Rhythm*

For classical greek culture, where the word has its origin, *μουσική* entails rhythm in sound (what nowadays is called music), movement (not solely reduced to dance), and speech (not limited to poetry). This comprehensive notion of music is what allowed Plato to quote Damon, with approval: “it is not possible

to modify the modes of music without unsettling the most basic political and social constitution [of a state].”⁴⁹ The education of the citizen, therefore, was centered in “physical exercises for the body” (ἐπι σώμασι γυμναστική) and “music for the soul” (ἐπι ψυχῇ μουσική).⁵⁰ Both gymnastics and music are rhythm.

When Kung-fu-tse was asked what he would do to restore order in a certain community, he replied that he would set about to put their music in order. Music is what unites, according to the *Li-ki*, the Book of Rites. Music expresses and reenacts the harmony of the universe. Let us recall that the same chinese character stands for both joy and music. We read in the *Analects*:

Two things are necessary: the first,
to bring about an inner harmony of the
mind. . . . In this pursuit the melodies,
harmonies and rhythms of music are the
great value.⁵¹

The vedic tradition is more metaphysical. The whole of reality is a splash of the sonorous word represented by the *Gāyatrī*, the holiest of all mantras. It is this singing word that lets all beings come to be.⁵²

The *Gāyatrī*, indeed, is this whole universe,
all that has come to be.
And the Word, indeed, is (the) *Gāyatrī*
for the Word sings forth and protects
this whole universe that has come to be.⁵³

For a millennium the western education was centered on learning music as one of the four fundamental sciences along with geometry, astronomy, and arithmetic: the famous *quadrivium*. It is important to remark that these four disciplines were supposed to disclose the ultimate structure of the universe, music as much as the other three.

Summing up not only the indic, chinese, jewish, christian, germanic, african, and other traditions, we may say that the ultimate nature of reality is sonorous, a sensible and rhythmic Word. Rhythm is intrinsically connected with any activity of the Gods, Men, and Nature.

Rhythm, as already suggested by the word [from ῥέω, to flow], expresses the very dynamism of reality. This flowing is an ordered flowing. The indic *rta*, as well as the greek κόσμος and τάχις or the latin *ordo*, all imply a rhyth-

⁴⁹ Plato, *Politeia*, 424c: πολιτικῶν νόμων τῶν μεγίστων.

⁵⁰ Plato, *Politeia*, 376c.

⁵¹ *Analects* 15:10.

⁵² RV III, 62, 10.

⁵³ CU III, 12, 1: “gāyatrī vā idam sarvaṁ bhūtam / yad idam kim ca, / vāg vai gāyatrī, / vāy vā idam sarvaṁ bhūtam / gāyati ca trāyate ca.”

mical structure. Plato says literally: “The order of movement bears the name rhythm.”⁵⁴

The movement of beings is a temporal flowing. Rhythm is the order of things, both in their temporal movement and in our human activity. In the first case, we have rhythm as the natural order of time (φύσει). In the second, rhythm is human acting according to proper behavior (νόμοι). Plato’s philosophy is an outstanding example of the central place of rhythm—not only for the education of Man, but also for understanding the nature of the real. Plato almost equates education (παιδεία) with bringing forth the experience of rhythm, to which not only Aristotle but Kung Fu Tze and many others agree.

Playing with a probably “scientifically” wrong etymology of ἀριθμός (number) Augustine, among others, renders the greek ῥυθμός (rhythmic) as *numerus*, whereby number still has a pythagorean flavor. God is the highest number, and the proper field of ἀριθμός is the *ritus*, the ritual, which is closely related to the chinese intuition about the rites as expressed in the *Li-ki*, as well as the vedic idea of ritual.

* * *

Rhythm is essential to christianity. “To be a christian means to participate in the christian rhythm.”⁵⁵ In fact, most traditional views of reality were rhythmical. Zoroastrian, hindu, greek, and african cosmogonies, as well as the idea of the movement of the universe and of life, *encouraged* rhythmical views. Life on earth—beginning with the stars, the sun, the moon, the seasons, the day, and the body—follows a rhythmic pattern. Archaic traditions and islamic mysticism could provide us with outstanding examples from two extremely different cultures. When the greek Bible speaks of divine Wisdom “arranging all things according to measure [μέτρῳ], number [ἀριθμῶ] and weight [σταθμῶ],”⁵⁶ it certainly has in mind this cosmic rhythm of the universe. It may also be pointed out that “number” here, *arithmos*, contains an etymological reference to the latin *ritus*, ritual. Indeed, the vedic *ṛta* (cosmic order) is undoubtedly rhythmical. The roots *sreu* (from ῥέω, to flow) and *ar* (from which come *ordo* and *ritus*) are related.

It is significant that this most central insight has lately been almost entirely relegated to the specialized field of elementary music. Even one of the few books dedicated to this theme, while stressing the importance of the topic, seems to concentrate exclusively on the human experience of rhythm.⁵⁷ More recently, a german philosopher, Albert Stüttgen, has proposed a *return to rhythm*.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Plato, *Nomoi*, II (664-665 e-a): τῆ δὴ τῆς κινήσεως τάξει ῥυθμός ὄνομα εἶη.

⁵⁵ Pieper (1951), p. 64, leaning on Pius X.

⁵⁶ Wis. XI, 20.

⁵⁷ Klages (1944), p. 23.

⁵⁸ Albert Stüttgen (1988).

b) *Phenomenological Approach*

In trying to describe the nature of rhythm, our first observation is that as an ultimate human intuition there is no possible definition of rhythm.

Rhythm is neither only dance nor merely movement. Dance offers us a beautiful and profound image: the cosmic dance of creation, the *nāṭarāja* spirituality of shivaism, the purposeless activity of God who has in itself all possible purposes. "All for the sake of himself acts the Lord,"⁵⁹ as the judeo-christian-islamic tradition says, because God is moved by love. There is no "why" behind the display of creation as an act of joy, a gratuitous activity with no afterthoughts, projects, or eschatological intentions. "The root *div*, from which the noun *Devī* (Goddess) is derived, means to play," says Abhinavagupta.⁶⁰ All this implies rhythm, but we should not identify rhythm with dance. If every dance follows a certain rhythm, not every rhythm is dance.

The simplest definition of dance is to say that it is a rhythmic movement of the body. This is the common phenomenological approach, but it does not help us much to understand the nature of things. It is more helpful to realize, for instance, that in dance we have one of the first manifestations of the passage from the more or less rigid determinisms of nature to the free play of culture. The dance of animals is indeed rhythm, but strictly speaking not a real dance. The conscious awareness of rhythm in the dance is a cultural act—and culture belongs to human nature. To dance is to learn to breathe at the rhythm of the world—said the famous dancer Martha Graham.

There is a fundamental distinction between the series of time-beats (in german *Takt*) and rhythm. The former is pure repetition, and it involves our conscious faculty of reckoning perception. The latter is the return of the similar in a new way. *Taktschlag* is repetition, rhythm is innovation. "Tact" in english is not this time-beat, and yet it is related to the (well-timed) opportune time of rhythm. A person who has tact is aware of and respects the rhythms because that person is in "touch" (*tactus*) with the real situation of the particular circumstance.

Repetition succeeds according to a model. Rhythm, however, has no model. A machine generates repetition, not rhythm. A purely mechanical ballet is no longer rhythmic; a real ballet is never a mechanical repetition of the identical. We may call it improvisation or genius in the example. Each performance is good or bad, not in terms of whether it comes closer to an ideal performance but according to an inner harmony inherent in the selfsame ballet. Repetition follows a temporal straight line. If it continues for too long it may be tedious. Rhythm does not follow a line as straight time. When a ballet, for instance, becomes tedious it has degenerated into mechanical repetition, or the spectator has lost the *Takt*, the "touch" with the performing artists. The example of ballet helps us to realize that rhythm is a word expressing a symbol and not denoting exclusively a concept. This latter is objective within an objectifiable field (of

⁵⁹ Prv XVI, 4 [not in the LXX and susceptible of another translation]: "Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus."

⁶⁰ Abhinavagupta, *Parātrīśika-vivaraṇa*, p. 3.

concepts). The former includes the participation of the subject for whom the symbol is symbol. Rhythm is a symbol and not merely a concept.

Rhythm is prior to dance. Dance is an appealing image for the Creator in its creative fervor (*tapas*), for God *ad extra*, if we may use this traditional but misleading expression. Rhythm also applies to God *ab intra*, to the very heart of reality. The cosmotheandric order of the universe, the *perichōrēsis* of the radical Trinity is rhythm, as we shall explain later. It is out of this ultimate rhythm that we perceive other rhythms.

* * *

Rhythm is not identical to movement either. Movement can be interpreted as any act or, in a more restricted sense, as any change, mutation, or transition. In this latter meaning it entails space and time and their myriad variations. All things move. Presumably the experience of this universal phenomenon led Aristotle, and following him the scholastics, to consider movement as the transition from potency (capacity to be) to actuality (realization of that capacity). Being is being insofar as it acts, whether it “actualizes” itself or is actualized by another. There is a movement intrinsic to each being. Movement is not only translation from one place to another.

Rhythm is full of movement, but not every movement is rhythm. There can be movement without rhythm: unnatural movements. Nature is rhythmic, but there can be, and there are, unnatural movements. Significantly enough, Aristotle (in his discussion of the void) calls them violent movements.⁶¹ Ultimately, it is the enigma of evil, which is interference from outside the particular field where each being has its place, its *ontonomy*. Rhythm is endogenous movement proper to each being. *Omnia appetunt Deum*, “all things move toward their Source,” has been the short formulation of the dynamism of Being for over two millennia of western history since the pre-socratics. This movement, whether called *nisus*, *impulsus*, or even the *svadhā* of the Ṛg Veda,⁶² is a natural one and belongs to the very nature of things. Rhythm is precisely the dance of Being toward and around an elusive and presumably nonlocalizable Center. Follow your *truly* inner urge, says human wisdom from taoism to christianity and the african traditions. Trust the rhythms of Nature could be another formulation. The fact, however, is that these rhythms can be disturbed and Man needs intelligence and strength (discernment and power) to overcome what in many cultures is called temptation.

Having put dance to the right of rhythm, and movement to the left, let us bring them together once again. I said that every dance is rhythmic, but not every rhythm is a dance; every rhythm is movement, but not every movement is rhythmic. The link is nature, the natural. When the dance is natural, it is rhythmic. When movement is natural, it is rhythmic. The natural flowing of things

⁶¹ Aristotle, *Phys.*, IV, 8 (215a ff.).

⁶² RV X, 129, 2.

is rhythmic. The non-rhythmic is not natural. Nature is rhythmic, even though natural rhythms can be disrupted. This is to say that Nature, like rhythm, is neither purely objective, nor merely subjective. Rhythm is only such if we are involved in the rhythmic process. Nature is not just “out there”; we are also nature. Nature is rhythmic because Being is rhythmic, as we shall explain in the next section.

* * *

Here is another example: *poetic rhythm*. The rhythm of poetry is not a mere accident for the poetic text, just something added to the meaning. Poetic rhythm is not a mere device by which one adds beauty to a line or a strophe. It belongs to the full word of the living phrase. Rhythm allows the sentence to reveal itself as what it is, makes it possible for the sentence to flow and be spoken aloud. Rhythm makes the sentence not only palatable but also digestible, that is, easily understandable and memorizable. There is a profound sense in the now almost forgotten practice that every reading was a recitation. Some decades ago one could still hear the murmur of the readers in indian libraries. Today they are “civilized”; at most you hear the whirl of computers and the chatting of the *chaprāsīs* (clerks).

Rhythm is intrinsic to the word, the phrase, the sentence. It is not the phoneme alone or any arbitrary succession of them, something we put in once the meaning is clear to our mind, a kind of cosmetics. We need art, we need inspiration, and this means freedom. When our sentences are creations and language is our invention, we discover that rhythm belongs to human words. As with music, it is not produced capriciously; we have to find the proper rhythms. Goethe knew it:

Stirs them, so rhythmic measure is assured?
Who calls the One to general ordination,
Where it may ring in marvellous accord?⁶³

Rhythm is not only “rime,” although rhyme and rhythm have the same etymology, nor is it mere sound. Rhythm is part of the life of any authentic phrase. Even more, any sentence is literally a rhythm between sound and silence, comprising gesture, mimicry, and life. Living language is also a dance. Scripture, and even writing, is an *Ersatz*, as useful as it may be. “The letter killeth.”⁶⁴ The word needs to be spoken and heard.

In his *Reminiscences*, R. Tagore recalled his first hearing of a bengali rhyme (“the rain patters, the leaf quivers”), and wrote that it is rhyme that makes “words come to an end, and yet do not end.”

⁶³ Goethe, *Faustus*, I 147-49: “Belebend ab, dass sie sich rhythmisch regt? / Wer ruft das Einzelne zur allgemeinen Weihe, / wo es in herrlichen Akkorden schlägt?”

⁶⁴ 2 Cor III, 6.

The modern technocratic system threatens both cosmic and human rhythms. Modernity aspires to make everything artificial, including intelligence, precisely in order to escape the natural rhythms of life. Bacon, Galileo, and Descartes speak against Nature because Man is its sovereign lord, and even Kant writes about subduing Nature: *die Natur nötigen*.⁶⁵

c) *Rhythmic Quaternity*

Modern civilization ignores most rhythms of nature, those of the seasons as well as those of our bodies, the earth, and the forces of nature. We erect cities and construct houses without regard for the rhythms of the earth. We increase speed for its own sake, beyond any acceptable human rhythm. Not only is rhythm rarely mentioned in philosophical works, but most dictionaries and encyclopedias discard the topic altogether, except as it pertains to music.

Rhythm combines in a unique way at least four fundamental elements of human awareness: time, space, objectivity, and subjectivity. If long digressions were not required I would be tempted to exemplify it in two basic insights of classical christianity and shivaitic hinduism: *beatitudo* as the joy of human fulfillment in the vision of God, and *rasa* as the human “relish” in the “aesthetic” experience of infinite beauty. Both require total participation in the rhythm of reality that unites the four elements mentioned in a harmonious way.

To be brief, I will elaborate on these four themes simultaneously, since they come together in rhythm and as rhythm. First of all, there is no rhythm without time, but rhythm is the most primordial sort of time; it is natural time, real time. Linear time, the “time” required for techno-science and modern civilization, is not natural time. This is a topic of capital importance that will permeate all the pages of this book.⁶⁶

What is time? The often quoted comment of Augustine, “What then is time? If nobody asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to some one who asks me, I do not know,”⁶⁷ may have a deeper explanation than the one commonly given. Augustine’s embarrassment comes from a deeper cause than the difficulty of the answer or the inadequacy of the question. It touches a fundamental point, especially for a culture that has achieved revolutionary feats in conceptual thinking, as witnessed by modern science, and notably by mathematics. Augustine senses that he cannot give an answer because time is not an object and that the *concept* of time does not touch the real time he knows (*scio*) by experience.

Time, in fact, defies reduction to a concept. Kant saw this clearly, but, since his philosophy was at the service of the nascent modern science, it went another route, one that would permit calculus with temporal magnitudes. Mere reason attempts to find a concept of time that would allow us to operate with it, and so

⁶⁵ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Preface to the 2nd edition (B XIII-XIV).

⁶⁶ Cf. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza: Análisis histórico y metafísico de un concepto* (Madrid: CSIC, 1951; 2nd rev. ed., 1972), pp. 203-32 and passim; (1996/32).

⁶⁷ Augustine, *Confessiones*, XI, 14, (17): “Quid est ergo tempus? Si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio.”

we have identified it as a measurable relation between distance (called space) and velocity (a concept that already includes time). This may be a scientific concept of time as the measure of a supposed uniform movement within a postulated homogeneous space, but natural time has little to do with that, as the theory of relativity began to suspect. Modern science cannot have a concept of real time, just as it cannot detect the nature of the soul. Modern science does not have the tools for dealing with the experience of time, and such experiences may not need tools.

The time of nature is neither linear nor circular nor spiral. It is irreducible to scientific geometry or mathematical space, in spite of the heuristic legitimacy of such a reduction. We can extract a concept of tree, train, and eventually even beauty and goodness from trees, trains, and some recurrent ideas of people who call a phenomenon beautiful or some person good. We can also elaborate a concept of mass by observing, or rather measuring, different relationships of bodies with respect to pressures (forces) we put on them. With time, however, where are the "times" from which we can extract the concept of time applicable to all that "perdures" in be-ing, in ek-sistence? Scientific time is either a heuristic and pragmatic postulate or an a priori of our mind.

The temporal processes we observe in ourselves and Nature are all rhythmic times. Rhythm is not the quantitatively regular repetition of beats, sounds, movements, events or the like. Once given a unit, a computer can measure homogeneous intervals of time, but it can never detect rhythm because the time proper to rhythm is qualitative. Rhythm is not simply the repetition of a previous drumbeat. The second beat is different, precisely in time, in spite of the possible equality of pitch. The sound is differently situated; its space is different. Above all, the essential subjective ingredient of rhythm has changed. There is no rhythm without a subject attuned to that rhythm.

As already said, rhythm is never sheer repetition. The second sound, to continue the acoustic example, carries with it something of the first; the listener still remembers the previous stroke. Rhythm is more than the interconnection of things or events; it is their *intra*connection, the indwelling of all in all. The first sound is not just followed by the second; it is still present in the heart of the second. There is resonance in every sense. Just ask a poet, or simply read a verse. The movement of the rhythm needs to be internalized. From afro-american jazz to the rhythms of music in the Middle East and in medieval Europe, to the *japa* and *mantra* spirituality in South and East Asia, the rhythmic *li* of ritual in the farthest East, and the african drums, there is a spiritual and material connection.

Without memory there is no rhythm. Paradoxically enough, however, without the fading away of memory there would be no rhythm either. We do not remember the previous sound, step, or event just as it was. That would be boring, sheer repetition. Yet the previously heard sound, the similar step performed, or the analogous event witnessed, still lingers in our being and is present and somewhat transformed there. We have a sort of memory of a certain discontinuous continuity. Rhythm flows. We remember the flowing, and this flowing is time as such.

Rhythm is not linear. If anything, it could be imagined as somewhat curved. Rhythm is not possible on a plane surface. It needs the curvature of both space and "time." It recoils, but in a peculiar way. The "second" moment is new and yet not new because it is not disconnected, but second. It is the same only as an abstraction, abstracted from its *Sitz im Leben*, its living context. In fact, it is not the same because everything has changed—the situation in time and space, the influence on the subject, and the objectivity of the event—and yet everything belongs together. The rhythm is recollected as equal and yet different. It leaves you unfulfilled in expectation. You were looking for something else, and this is why, as in *The Thousand and One Nights*, you are in suspense, you keep expecting. . . . Maybe a third moment, maybe the very next event will bring you the desired "end," but it never comes. Yet closure is also somewhat there. You know that you are in a way responsible for not putting an end to it, for going on in *epektasis*, looking ahead for the Messiah still to come. All previous manifestations are somewhat disappointing; history has to go on and on. Or the musician has to arrange for a solemn and more or less artificial finale in order to break the spell and let the audience know that this is finally "it." Is this human longing? Is it objective imperfection? Both?

We call it circular space, or perhaps spiral. These are only figures to indicate both regularity and irregularity, the possibility of prediction and unpredictable events, the interplay of pattern and variation. You always expect, but you never really know what to expect. As in an indian musical performance, it all depends on the players, who are themselves attentive to the changing moods of the audience. They do not know how the whole thing is going to end. The end of the world has to be a catastrophe, an overturning, so as to break the rhythm and its spell. A rhythm has no natural ending because it carries time away with it. Ultimately, all spatial metaphors break down.

Rhythm has an "ever more," but it does not have, properly speaking, a future. You expect, you recognize, but you do not exactly foresee. If you were to foresee it all, the rhythm would cease and you would quickly begin to be bored. The sensitive musician would certainly stop.

Rhythm entails movement, and movement implies space. Both demand change, which is not just the "periodic return at regular time intervals" of the formal definitions. This might describe mathematical recurrences but not rhythmical realities. "One would have to wait for the end of history in order to possess the complete material for determining its meaning,"⁶⁸ Dilthey says, seeking to overcome the static character of Being, and thereby paying tribute to the modern scientific mentality by assuming that time is linear. Man is a historical being, but not only that. History evolves alongside linear time, but this is not the Whole of history. Must we really wait until "the end of time" in order to find meaning in our lives?

Once we introduce time into Being, as it has been reintroduced in western metaphysics since Hegel, and this time is considered to proceed forward—as

⁶⁸ Dilthey (1927), VII, 233. See Jürgen Habermas, *On the Logic of the Human Sciences* (Cam-

progress, or perhaps only as “process”—we are bound to project the meaning of everything into the future. Christian theology, both catholic and protestant, has to catapult God into a future Omega Point à la Teilhard. All is postponed; “eternal life” runs the danger of being situated in the future. Karl Rahner understands God as “Absolute Future”; Wolfhart Pannenberg says that “God does not yet exist . . . God’s being is still in the process of coming to be.” “*Gottes Sein ist im Werden*” [God’s Being is in Becoming], is the title of Jüngel’s spirited defense of Karl Barth’s theology. The sovereign shadow of Hegel is, of course, brooding over all these efforts. I said above “reintroduced” time into Being, because the greeks knew and Origenes, Gioacchino da Fiore, Vico and many others remembered, that Life is the time of being, χρόνος τοῦ εἶναι, as we are going to say later, the very “life of the soul” as Plotinus suggests.⁶⁹

It is within this context that we should understand the power of the Rhythm of Being. We do not need to postpone Life and meaning, and therefore peace and human realization, into a “world without end” at the end of time. One can well understand why James Joyce spoke of the “nightmare” and Mircea Eliade of the “terror” of history in the lives of individuals and peoples. On the other hand, however, I assert that the Rhythm of Being does not mean the circularity of time.

There is still one important feature to be mentioned. Rhythm is always perceived as a Whole. It has no real parts. Any partition would destroy the rhythm, which is not the sum of its components. Each sound, if isolated, would make no rhythm, nor would it do so if each sound were not “inside” its neighbors, so to speak. As we have already hinted, rhythm demands a certain type of *perichōrēsis* (a dancing interpretation—as we are going still to comment upon), being so intertwined that we are not able to decompose the “units” without destroying the true rhythm. If you do not perceive the Whole, there is no rhythm. Μελέτα τὸ πᾶν, as we said before; experience the melody of the Whole, as one may freely translate it.

I scarcely need to stress that rhythm is more than just a subjective sensation, but something material and tangible, even if it also demands interiorization. Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*,⁷⁰ speaks of rhythm (proportion) as σχῆμα, *figura*, scheme, structure, the shape of things. The greek verb ῥυθμῶ means to shape, to mold.

Rhythm manifests a peculiar relation between rupture and continuity, between the old and the new. It is also intimately related to an essential ingredient of human life: celebration and ritual. Ritual implies a rhythmic reenacting of primordial realities. Seen from the outside, ritual may look like lifeless repetition. This is why many external observers, incapable of detecting the rhythm that is the soul of the ritual, criticize the rites of others. From the inside, any ritual is at least an *anamnesis*, a reminiscence, that represents and thus transforms the past into the present: an actual reenactment. How can a christian

⁶⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads* III, 7, 11.

⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Met.*, 985b16; 1042b14.

understand the Eucharist without this sense of rhythm? In linear time the part is part and cannot come back except as psychological commemoration (μνήμη Plato would say) or by an act of pure magic.

Making allowances for oversimplification, I would say that western Man lives mainly in time. History is then simply the human habitat, and journeying in time becomes the image of personal and collective existence. In contrast, the african Augustine says, “Transcend time in order that you may be.”⁷¹

Here transcendence is specifically temporal transcendence. Eastern Man, on the other hand, lives mainly in space (*ākāśa*). *Ātman* or *anātman* is the human habitat, and overcoming space the image of human and cosmic fulfillment. *Nirvāṇa* “is” beyond, says buddhism. *Śūnyatā* is the void.

Rhythm is both temporal and spatial; it is the combination of different times in the same (apparent) space and of diverse spaces in the same (apparently repeated) time. Linear time is somewhat defeated; rhythmic time is all in the “timing.” Space is also defeated; the *situs* changes but the *locus* remains the same. It seems as if you would expand, and yet you are not displaced.

Rhythm is the marriage of space and time, in the tantric sense that the one is the other: time has become space and space, time. You can distinguish them, but cannot separate them.

d) *The Experience of Rhythm*

In sum, we discover rhythm when we experience the subjective difference of an objective identity (subjective genitive), but we could equally have said: the objective difference of a subjective identity. Identity and difference, subjectivity and objectivity, are overcome. In other words, the experience of rhythm is the experience of the neither-identity-nor-difference of the real. This is precisely the *advaitic* experience: neither monism or identity, nor dualism or difference. Neither the subjective nor the objective views are real. In rhythm we find the (re)conciliation between an objective physical process and a subjective human feeling. The indic *rasa* theory provides an important example of this. Rhythm overcomes the epistemological split between subject and object, the anthropological fissure between knowledge and love, and the metaphysical dualism between the human and the divine.

The tendency of modern civilization to compartmentalize has made it difficult to achieve the holistic experience of rhythm. We need a pure heart to discover the harmony of reality. Here are two examples of West and East.

Pythagoras is reported to have said: “Harmony (is the) Best.”⁷² According to the belief that “The whole heaven is harmony and number,”⁷³ where number means more than modern numerals and hendiadys. Or again, the sanskrit notion of *samanvaya* suggests that harmony is the supreme value, the utmost

⁷¹ Augustine, *In Ioannis Evangelium*, tract. 38, n. 10: “Ut ergo tu sis, transcede tempus.”

⁷² Pythagoras, *Fragm.* 58 C 4: κάλλιστον ἁρμονία.

⁷³ Pythagoras, *Fragm.* 58 B 4 (in Aristotle, *Metaph.* I, 5 [98b a]): τὸν ὅλον οὐρανὸν ἁρμονίαν εἶναι καὶ ἀριθμὸν.

wisdom. “That but because of harmony.”⁷⁴ This cryptic text, which refers to the internal harmony of the Veda whose only purport is *brahman*, can and has been interpreted as the transcendent reconciliation of all the contraries because of the universal harmony of reality as a whole, because of the rhythmic dance of the universe. In fact, no vedic seer would have dreamt that the bulk corpus of the Veda “says the same.” What the *Brahmasûtra* states is that there is a harmony in all the *mantra* and narratives of the vedic revelation. The conclusion of the entire Rig Veda sings this harmony or concord as a cosmic and human ideal:

Let us be in harmony in our intention,
 in harmony in our hearts
 in harmony in our minds
 that we may live in concord.⁷⁵
 —according to divine and cosmic rhythm of reality.

We adduce these texts, which could be multiplied, just to show that, while the famous *reductio ad unum* or primacy of the One, may be a postulate for rational intelligibility, it is not the only intuition of humanity. Even many of the defenders of Oneness specify that there is a Super-One and that even the One is not a number but a symbol of the harmony we are speaking about. This harmony is neither monism (there is more than one real being) nor dualism (all are intrinsically related entities).

The experience of rhythm makes a me of me, a unique me, liberating me from being just a member of a class, and grants me a certain fellowship with all other fellow beings in their uniqueness. Rhythm, in fact, is not merely objective. I have to feel it in me (subjective), and at the same time outside me (objective). Time flows, but it goes nowhere. Yet it is not sheer repetition. It is at the same time constant novelty, an ever-new experience that is superimposed on the previous one. Rhythm is real growth, overcoming the dualism between continuity and discontinuity; it is new creation, both objective and subjective. Rhythm is outside me; I do not invent it. I have only to listen, to obey (*ob-audire*, listening) the beats of the real, and in order to listen I need to be silent, to silence my egocentrisms, my *ahamkāra*. More, I need to be pure. In addition, rhythm is also inside me. My reception is indispensable, and my identification is a requirement. It is not superimposed on me. I discover it in myself by means of the drums from outside. Serenity, *upekṣa*, *Gelassenheit*, and all these similar virtues consist in discerning the rhythm of life by being attuned to it. Centuries ago we heard the injunction that we should be like children of the Father in heaven who “makes his sun rise on good and bad alike, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.”⁷⁶ Even before that, the philosopher of rhythm had said: “Before God all things

⁷⁴ BS I, 1, 4: *tat tu samanvayāt.*

⁷⁵ RV X, 191, 4.

⁷⁶ Mt V, 45: τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ πονηροῦς καὶ ἀγαθοῦς καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους.

are beautiful [and good and just].”⁷⁷ Continuing the thought, he said: “But Men have judged some to be unjust and some others to be just.” This is perhaps why he could also declare, as we have already quoted, “The invisible harmony is stronger than the visible.”⁷⁸

“Virtue is a harmony, as well as health, goodness as a Whole, and the divine. This is why all (beings) are organized according to harmony (διὸ καὶ καθ’ ἁρμονίαν συνεστάναι τὰ ὅλα) and even friendship is a harmonic correspondence (ἰσότητα, equality),”⁷⁹ runs a classical text of the third century.

This does not at all imply an uncritical optimism blind to the arrhythmic processes of Nature. Traditional medicines see illness as a disturbance of the natural rhythms, as a lack of harmony. Disorder is a traditional name for sin. There is a hidden harmony difficult to discover, but Nature is also vulnerable and can be brought to disarray. Evil is rather this disorder than a so-called *privatio*, a deprivation of being.

The experience of Rhythm is a holistic experience; it involves the senses, the mind, and the spirit, the three eyes we mentioned. It requires the *advaitic* intuition. Reason alone (as distinct from intellect) cannot grasp rhythm. Rhythm cannot be brought back to a unity, the *reductio ad absurdum* required for a rational intelligibility is not possible—which is what I have been saying all along. To conclude this section I may share an old note I wrote in 1962:

Music is an arch between *mythos* and *logos*.
 Music tells, but does not speak. It inspires,
 but has no particular meaning.

The auscultation of Being is Thinking.
 The dancing its Rhythm is living.
 The one doesn’t go without the other.

Rhythm is like the mother of time and space. The children will do well in being emancipated, but will do even better not to deny their Source.

2. *Being*

Our title contains a much more formidable word still. It speaks of Being, indeed, of the Rhythm of Being, and tries to open that Pandora’s box of blessings and ills.

I will not linger on the meaning of Being. We may provisionally agree that the word, as a verb and with all its pronouns, modes, and tenses, encompasses in a unique way all that *is*. In another context I would probably have preferred to use *reality* instead of Being as a word encompassing Being and Non-being,

⁷⁷ Heraclitus, *Fragm.* 102: τῷ μὲν θεῷ καλὰ πάντα.

⁷⁸ Heraclitus, *Fragm.* 54 (cited in I, 1, b).

⁷⁹ Diogenes Laertius, VIII, 33.

and introduced distinctions in the notion of Being. For our purposes, however, it may suffice to employ the word Being as the overall symbol that encompasses, in one way or another, all to which we may meaningfully say “is,” “anything” that enters the “field” of our “awareness” and about which we can speak in one way or another—as we will elaborate in chapter II.

The Rhythm of Being is more than just a metaphor. What kind of attribute can we apply to Being that is not already Being? In this case we cannot speak of a transporting, a carrying over (μετα-φέρειν). Nor can we apply Aristotle’s definition: “Metaphor consists in giving (the thing) a name that belongs to something else.”⁸⁰ The standard latin definition “*translatio est nominis alienis illatio*” is also interesting, but inapplicable. The Rhythm of Being cannot be the rhythm of some “thing” called Being. Being is not a thing. There is nothing “outside” Being. The Rhythm of Being can only express the rhythm that Being itself *is*.

We should interpret the word “name” in a non-nominalistic sense. Names are more than labels. If the Rhythm of Being has any sense, it should be in the subjective genitive: the rhythm that appertains to Being. It is Being’s rhythm. The phrase would then spell out a transcendental character of Being itself. Being *is* “in” the beings, and rhythm belongs to Being itself. Could it be the revelation (*aspectus*) of Being to us? The itself (*en soi*) is always a *quoad nos* (according to us).

Material things are temporal, humans are historical, ideal entities are spiritual. Being as such is rhythmic. The Rhythm of Being is the *sui generis* “temporality,” “historicity,” and “spirituality” of Being. The Rhythm of Being is the very dynamism of Being, its Becoming. Because material things, human beings, and spiritual entities are beings, temporality, historicity, and “ideality” are encompassed in the “rhythmicality” of Being. Being “is” not a genus, and therefore to affirm that “things,” “humans,” and “spirits” are beings as a plural to Being is not a proper classification of entities. Language is awkward here because our present culture is rather “undeveloped” in this field.

We can be aware of the Rhythm of Being in the same measure that we can become aware of Being. If this is the case, we are very close to a rather general statement—which I propose *cum magno timore et tremula intentione*, “with a great caution and mixed feelings,” as I would freely translate this sentence of that extraordinary abess of the twelfth century.⁸¹

Rhythm is an aspect, I said, of Being itself. But this “aspect” is neither an accident nor the essence of Being. Rhythm is neither something that befalls Being, a mere accident, nor its essence in the scholastic sense—since there is little point in asking for the essence of Being. What can it be that makes Being Being, if not Being? Aristotle has already warned us: “We should not seek to put limits on [should not delimit, define] everything.”⁸²

⁸⁰ Aristotle, *Poet.*, 1457b6: Μεταφορά δέ ἐστιν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορά.

⁸¹ Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias* p. 17.

⁸² Aristotle, *Met.*, X, 1048a36: οὐ δεῖ παντὸς ὄρον ζητεῖν. (*Non oportet cuiuslibet rei quaerere terminum.*)

Nothing ultimate can have any definition.

Interestingly, although much contemporary metaphysics tries to recapture the meaning of Being, the shadow of the *ens commune*, as a pure abstraction, haunts it. The old scholastics considered *motus* (which only with qualifications could be rendered as movement), to be a “post-predicament,” that is, a kind of second-class category or “predicament.” I would use this insight as a springboard for affirming that rhythm is a *meta-transcendental*—that is, a property that belongs to every being as Being. Rhythm adds nothing to Being, but only expresses a property of Being qua Being. If truth is considered a transcendental because it expresses Being as intelligible, that is, in relation to the intellect, similarly, rhythm belongs to Being considered not in relation to the intelligence or the will, but in relation to *its totality*. Being as such, when considered in its own *wholeness*, appears with that apparent complexity that we may designate as rhythm.

The Rhythm of Being (subjective genitive), therefore, belongs to Being itself—and in that sense I dare to call it a *meta-transcendental*.

Being is not a lifeless reality, an *ens commune*, an abstract common denominator of all that there is. Being presents itself as rhythm. Every being qua Being in relation to one of our human faculties is one, good, true, and beautiful—without now entering into discussion on the nature and number of transcendentals. Every being qua Being in relation to its “Beingness” as it were, inasmuch as we can be “aware” of it, is rhythmic; it presents an apparent complexity that is yet simple, reflecting the Whole with an inner dynamism, or rather energy, for which I do not find a better notion than that of rhythm. This foreshadows the traditional interpretation of the Trinity, but my task now is only to explain the title.

The awareness of Being as rhythm will allow us to think about beings without losing sight of Being, and to pay attention to Being without forgetting beings, to know the particular without abandoning the totality. We do not take the *pars pro toto*, but instead discover the *totum in parte*.

The *advaitic* vision of the Rhythm of Being stands at the “middle way” between a monistic and a dualistic (or pluralistic) view of reality. If Being is a monolithic block, beings have ultimately no freedom and the way to relate to beings is through a pyramidal *heteronomic* order in which every level of beings has to follow the *norms* of *another* superior order: *heteronomy*. Here, beings are mutually dependent, but this mutuality is unequal, since the weaker, smaller, or less perfect will depend on the more powerful ones. Mutual dependency will tend to one-way traffic.

If Being is pluralistic in the classical sense of the word, that is, a conglomerate of atomistic entities in the last instance, then individual freedom will not have internal limits, and the way to relate beings to one another will be through a horizontal *autonomous* order in which every being follows its own (*autos*) norms: *autonomy*, except when it is prevented from doing so by another more powerful entity. Beings are mutually independent, but the mutuality is endangered, since the weaker, smaller, or less perfect entities will have their own inde-

pendence curtailed by the more powerful ones. Mutual independency will (also) tend to be one-way traffic.

If Being is *rhythmic*, the whole is not divisible into parts, and therefore the sum of the parts does not constitute the whole; each member is an image of the Whole and the Whole is reflected in its members. Each being is unique and indispensable because the Whole is reflected in that being in order to be whole. Reality has inter-in-dependent order. This is the sphere of *ontonomy*.⁸³ If Being is rhythmic, each entity will enjoy a real freedom according to its nature in relation to the Whole. The way to relate to one another is similar to a rhythmic dance in which I spontaneously create my role in the dance listening to the overall music (which I may also contribute to making). The order is an *autonomous* order in which every being (*on*) discovers its proper *nomos* within the Whole: *ontonomy*. Each being is mutually inter-in-dependent and obviously according to how I play my score I shall have more or less influence on others, who will be stimulated or disturbed by my melody and will also act or react correspondingly.

If rhythm were not the very Rhythm of Being, the order thus created would become a competitive chaos. If, however, Being itself is Rhythm, the order is ever new and does not follow a preexistent or preordained pattern. It is the *creatio continua* I mentioned several times. The *ontonomy* referred to is not the blind following of an absolute and immutable norm or *nomos* (law), but the discovery of the ever-new or renewed *nomos* of the *on*. The mentioned inter-in-dependence becomes an *intra-in-dependence*.

We may make distinctions, but not separations. Consciousness, for example, is one “thing” and matter another, but the one is not and cannot be without the other. They dance together.

In order to know what Man is, for instance, an isolated anthropology will not suffice. We shall also need both physics and theology, as well as ontology. The being of Man is not independent from Being, but this is equally true for matter and for God. They are all intertwined. Relationship is ultimate. Reality is *περιχώρησις*, *circumincessio*, the later Patristics would say, resurrecting a word used by Anaxagoras⁸⁴ in a sense very close to rhythm. We could perhaps adduce here the vedic notion of the *anyonyayonitā* or “mutual emerging from one another”—as a homeomorphic equivalent.

Theology is not reducible to anthropology, nor physics to theology. The three disciplines are mutually irreducible, yet also inseparable. This may be the *trayī vidyā*, the “triple knowledge” of the indic tradition.⁸⁵

As an expression of this Rhythm of Being I may give two examples from that same tradition:

That from which beings are born,
that by which, when born, they live,

⁸³ Cf. Panikkar, “El átomo de tiempo,” *Arbor* (Madrid), pp. 1-32.

⁸⁴ Cf. Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, h. 1.

⁸⁵ Cf. JaimUB II, 9, 7.

that into which, when dying, they enter,
 that you should desire to know:
 that is Brahman.⁸⁶

This stanza probably inspired the following one, which speaks about *Sarvarṃ* (the all, everything), here translated throughout as Whole:

In whom the Whole [is], from whom the Whole [comes],
 who [is] Whole and who [is] in Whole [everywhere],
 who eternal, [is] immanent in the Whole,
 Him the *ātman* of (the) Whole, I adore.⁸⁷

We find here all the ingredients we discovered in our description of rhythm.

There is a rhythm in each and every being. No being is isolated; each reflects and is reflected by the Whole. The one text speaks of *brahman* and the other of *ātman*. It is not as if there were one special being, a supreme entity pervading the others, somewhat interfering with the others. Everything is in everything precisely because every being is more than an isolated entity. The vision of the Whole does not blind us to the particulars. It just does not make us shortsighted with respect to the All. The buddhist notion of *pratītyasamutpāda* (radical relativity or dependent origination) is a homeomorphic equivalent of the same insight.

Being is rhythmic, rhythm is harmony, and harmony brings peace and joy. This rhythm, however, is not automatic. It can be disturbed. Evil is real and so is freedom. Destiny is also in our hands.

Our human world is not a paradise. The Rhythm of Being is not a panacea against all evils. The different rhythms may interfere with each other and the harmony is not automatically established. *Ontonomy* is not a totalitarian order. The interconnection of all with all is governed neither by heteronomy nor by autonomy. The relation of all with all is not an automatic and one-to-one relationship. Things may be prosperous in Europe and rotten in Africa, the conquest of America or the recent Gulf War may have been a great historical success. The rhythm I am trying to describe, however, will sooner or later establish a connection between those apparently so distant facts. The conquest of America by the europeans has repercussions still today, just as the crusades or the more recent Gulf War will be still felt a century from now. It is this Rhythm of Being that interconnects all with all in ways that we do not foresee. The discourse about Being is not just intemporal metaphysics; it has also physical and human aspects.

⁸⁶ TU III, 1.

⁸⁷ Abhinavagupta, *Paratrisikā*, xviii, translated by the author.

3. *Trinity*

The subtitle has already been obliquely introduced. We may need not say much more at this stage.

By Trinity, I mean the ultimate triadic structure of reality. By saying unbroken Trinity, I am foreshortening the exposition of the radical relativity of the Divine, the Cosmic, and the Human. The expression theo/anthro/cosmic trinity may be clear enough to indicate the triad that traditionally goes under the names of God, Man, and World. As I will explain later, it can be said that at least within the horizon of the historical period, Man sees Being as a threefold reality of Heaven, Man, and Earth, or else Gods, Humans, and Nature.

Another, perhaps less cacophonous, phrasing would be to call this *the cosmotheandric trinity*. The word theandric is common in oriental christian spirituality. The neologism is also straightforward. It has the drawback of containing the word *anēr*, which, unlike *anthrōpos*, Man, denotes mainly the male, although there are also enough cases in which *anēr* is used in the feminine and stands for *anthrōpos*. I make a distinction: the theanthropocosmic intuition appertains to human awareness; the cosmotheandric insight is my interpretation of the former—as it will be explained in chapter VI.

A complete study of Reality would then entail three parts of a single treatise on the Divine, the Human, and the Cosmic—understanding these words in their utmost general sense. In this book we shall concentrate on one dimension of this threefold distinction: the Divine. The original title, as I said, was *The Dwelling of the Divine in the Contemporary World*.

It would not be adequate to subsume under “natural science” the study of what one may still call Nature and which I have also termed cosmos. The “natural sciences” represent a cluster of very specific disciplines about material reality. They deal with a fascinating and important subject, but they do not fit well with what human consciousness has traditionally held about the material world. This is also the case for the “scientific” disciplines that still use the name of cosmology to designate the idea of the material universe as a whole, under a general “scientific” viewpoint. I will, therefore, have to make a distinction between a modern scientific notion of the cosmos, usually called cosmology, and what I am tempted to call kosmology—as will be explained in chapter VIII.

Something similar might be said concerning anthropology. Unless anthropology is understood as *anthrōpou legein*, as what Man says about himself, anthropology generally means the (modern) science about Man, what the human *logos* has to say about an object “Man”—as if Man were just an object. *Anthropophany*, on the other hand, would be how Man sees and interprets himself throughout his history.⁸⁸ We need the *pneuma* besides the *logos* in order to be open to any epiphany of the real.

⁸⁸ Cf. Panikkar, “Antropofanía intercultural: Identidad humana y fin de milenio,” *Thémata, Revista de Filosofía* (Facultad de Filosofía y CCEE de la Univ. de Sevilla), vol. 23, pp. 19-29.

At any rate, “cosmology” and “anthropology” cannot be dealt with separately and disconnected from “theology” (which also should undergo a change of name). These three branches of human knowledge are part of the tree of Life, and not just of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁸⁹

I have already suggested that one of the main features of modern times is fragmentation and specialization. The “Trinity” has also been interpreted as a specialty of the Divine, locating God in a sublime apartheid. Without plunging into the depths of the christian Trinity, our subtitle wants to point toward a holistic view of the real, for which the Trinity offers us a paradigm. I speak, therefore, of an unbroken Trinity. If the Divine is real and the Trinity is a consecrated word, this Trinity has to pervade everything and be everywhere. It has to be an unbroken Trinity, despite all the distinctions we may be obliged to make.

I am aware that the very name “Trinity” may have disturbing connotations on both sides of the cultural spectrum. Some christian readers may feel uncomfortable that I use a consecrated christian word to speak about something not officially christian. Others may find it irritating that I do not follow common usage and that I insist on employing the same word to connote a “non-christian” doctrine.

My response is threefold. Nobody has a monopoly on names. It would be an abuse of power to “copyright” names. In the second place, “Trinity” is a common name in many cultures, philosophies, and religions. We find trinities everywhere. Third, the dogma of the christian Trinity is not a dead dogma incapable of growth. Furthermore, the christian dogma of the Trinity has been respectfully kept closed under seven keys for almost the last millennium and a half of christian history—some exceptions notwithstanding. It may be all the best for christians to receive some inputs, stimuli, and provocations from an intercultural approach, which is the cultural imperative of our times. My main motive in keeping this name is precisely because I am convinced that, if more fully deepened and unfolded, the traditional christian idea of the Trinity opens immensely fruitful perspectives for our times.

Furthermore, the Trinity, whether the traditional christian idea or a more general one, brings together without confusion the transcendent character of the Deity with its equally immanent aspect, and at the same time overcomes the two-story worldview in which many theologians have built a comfortable apartment for the Divine that does not interfere in human affairs, thus paying a heavy tribute to the fragmentation both of knowledge and the knower.

It has become a cliché to say that we are entering a new turn in human history, but the tempo of modern life leaves little time and leisure to reflect on the meaning of the radical change and deep conversion (*metanoia*) that humanity needs in order to overcome our present-day predicament. One of the great obstacles to this, besides the inertia of the mind and the laziness of the will, is that we lack an adequate language and intellectual framework. We will have to

⁸⁹ Cf. Gn II, 9.

use eroded words, polish them again, and eventually give them a more complete meaning.

* * *

Let me offer one final reflection to close this introductory chapter. I recall Lord Gifford's injunction to deliver "popular lectures." Unfortunately, the cultural depth of the "popular" readers of our times in philosophical and theological matters is so thin that the context of ancient wisdoms about these ultimate issues of Life is practically unknown, which makes it rather difficult to deal with such topics without banalizing them if one wants to be easily understood.

Certainly the main burden is on the author. I recall Ortega y Gasset's advice that the courtesy of the philosopher is clarity and elegance. But I also recall the frontispiece of the platonic academy twenty-five centuries ago that nobody should enter the premises without knowing geometry, whatever the actual meaning of the sentence might have been. I am not writing for initiates alone, but I trust that the reader will put a certain amount of effort and passion into a theme that ultimately concerns us all.

This study is an effort in this direction.

Epilogue

Since delivering the Gifford Lectures twenty years ago, I have hesitated to publish this book, because of the last chapter, which was supposed to be titled “The Survival of Being.” No matter how I reflected on that topic, the results did not satisfy me. On the contrary, what I wrote seemed to be lucubration, a solemn literary work about something we do not and cannot know anything about. I could only move forward to publication and approve the final revisions when I decided to omit chapter 9.

Led by the enthusiasm aroused by the Gifford Lectures in 1989, I imagined I could tackle a subject that proved to transcend the powers of my intellect.

I must admit that all ultimate questions cannot have final answers, but that we can at least be aware of the problem we have presented. I have touched the limits of my understanding and must stop here. The Tree of Knowledge again and again tempts one at the cost of neglecting the more important tree, the Tree of Life.

How can human thinking grasp the destiny of life itself, when we are not its owners?

This is my humble conclusion to much presumptuous research. It has taken me twenty years to admit this, and I apologize.

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