A Comparative Study of John Hick and Raimon Panikkar, addressing paradigms of Pluralism to the context of Intercultural Education.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university, and it is entirely my own work. I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgment.

Research Question:

How do the Pluralist Theologies of Religion of John Hick and Raimon Panikkar contribute to our understanding of Education for Peace and a Sustainable Future at United World Colleges, and how does this context of mission-based, intercultural education reveal the potentials and pitfalls of Christian Pluralist Theologies of Religions?

Abstract

The context of Intercultural Education for Peace is one of urgent and growing relevance yet one in which questions surrounding the relationship between religions and the academics, wellbeing, and mission are difficult to articulate with coherence, and therefore often avoided. This study addresses diversity and inclusion, spiritual wellbeing, global citizenship education and the institutional ethos of international education via a comparative analysis of metaphysics in two Pluralist Theologies of Religions. It asks if the paradigms of Critical Realism exemplified by John Hick, and Non-dual Cosmovision, in the message of Raimon Panikkar, frame metaphysics in a way that provides trans-religious coherence to the priorities of intercultural education. Through searching comparison on both secular and theological vectors, we gravitate towards a collaborative theological assessment of their ideas in practice. Theologies represent a necessary interdependence of Epistemology, Ontology, and Ethics and reflect how this relationship constructs the propositional and dispositional aspects of faith as a constitutive dimension of the human person. We explore the implications of this, observing that the idea of salvation aligns as never before with that of experiencing and, in the intercultural learning community, bearing witness to, Peace. Thus, it finds room for the language of spirit as cohering authentic identity and for theological reflection in curricular, pastoral and institutional spheres.

Summary

This study asks if the paradigms of Critical Realism exemplified by John Hick, and Non-dual Cosmovision in the message of Raimon Panikkar, frame metaphysics in a way that provides trans-religious coherence to the priorities of intercultural education. Through searching comparison on both secular and theological vectors, we gravitate towards a collaborative theological assessment of their ideas in practice. In Part One, Hick and Panikkar's Theologies of Religions are seen in the historical context of a twentieth century theological and philosophical quest to articulate an approach to religious difference. They addressed the issues of their day: disaffection with established religion, the progressive secularisation of the West, the relationship between Religion and Science, and the emergent religious nationalisms of the world. While I have spent some time putting biographical and contextual flesh on the bones of their ideas, their responses are differentiated in terms of religious epistemology, concepts of ultimate reality, interpretations of salvation and the role of experience in the discipline of theology. Part Two aims to bring them into conversation with each other around the themes of peace and education through the working-out of their divergent metaphysics, demonstrating a necessary link between epistemology, ontology and ethics. I therefore make the pedagogical experiment of assessing each theology of religions as ideological responses to a series of *ultimate questions*. This exercise reveals strengths and weaknesses in their *critical realist* and *non-dualist* perspectives respectively, and on the key question of the nature of reality, or the 'destiny of Being', I consider in depth Panikkar's idiosyncratic theology of Trinity. The comparison introduces recent critical vantage-points: post-colonial, feminist, Liberation theological, non-Western and non-religious perspectives. They raise the suspicion that Hick reflects a finally parochial, Western form of instrumentalist reasoning, while Panikkar retains an exoticizing distance from the communities whose traditions he appropriates. Therefore, chapter four examines Hick and Panikkar's divergent encounters with the religious life of India. This becomes, under critical examination, a case study about the adequacy of these two emergent pluralisms to encounter difference per se. It reveals a key difference of approach, which I characterise as that between the mission to *convince,* and the mission to *convert*.

Part Three turns to consider the field of education, starting with the study of religions and the question of religious violence. The discussion extends then to the resonances of

theology in academic and pastoral spheres of the learning community. This establishes the relevance of theologies of religions and now accentuates the philosophical challenge to manage the categories *religious* and *secular.* We interrogate Panikkar's notion of *sacred secularity* and Trinitarian ontology of Peace. Pluralist Theologies of Religion emphasise the *unfinishedness* of man and determine to hold a *third space* of mutual seeking. An outline model for a pedagogy of peace informed by the comparison emerges, highlighting a contrast between, on the one hand, the discussion of concepts - a world of skills and certainties - and on the other, the dialogue of hearts - a world of uncertainties and fragile acknowledgments. Neither skills-based, nor a system of dogmatics, a methodology begins to emerge from metaphysical and theological frameworks suggesting a relational pedagogy of person-making. I draw on the key concepts of Integrity, Authenticity and Justice, acknowledging implicit religious and philosophical dimensions of multicultural school communities in order to focus on the sacramental idea of private presence in shared space. Such a meeting is, by definition, a holding of sacred space, and such presence may be called authentic; even, authentically religious. Part Four brings the two strands of pluralist theology into conversation with each other again to throw light on certain tensions within the structure and lived experience of the United World College. I draw on recent sociological analyses of this unique movement and address contemporary challenges to explore the idea that interreligious quest and sacred community are integral to the mission-based education model of founding visionary, Kurt Hahn.

Recommending a methodology that is at the same time a constant affirmation that we find the divine within, among and between ourselves, and from robust philosophical and theological bases, pluralist theologies of religions provide a model advocacy affirming that peace and harmony are trans-religious in scope, acknowledging interculturality as a gift, and honouring hospitality as a prime ethical value in pedagogical practice. The autonomy of interdependent political agents is supported by radically relational and process theoretical theological frames, while hermeneutic approaches centre on the person without constricting us to reductively humanist paradigms. Values of ecojustice and peace are fully rationally defensible, and accord with religious truth. The thesis concludes that Pluralist Theologies of Religion present the opportunity and imperative to work towards an Intercultural Theology of Education.

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Conversations with dear departed friends Don Oberdorfer and John Grimes, colleagues at Kodaikanal International School 2001-2005, and Cyril Desbruslais SJ at Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, were the beginnings of this academic journey. My brothers and sisters have supported with kindness, so to them my thanks. And thanks to my professors at Trinity: especially Jude Lal Fernando, John O'Grady and Andrew Pierce for generously taking me on and putting up with me. Along the way, I was encouraged and informed by conversations with theologians and academics Christian Hackbart-Johnson, Bettina Bäumer, Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Kajsa Ahlstrand, Aloysius Pieris SJ, Canon Giles Goddard; and Professor Martin Rötting's editorial insights were very helpful. UWC colleagues have often given direction to the project and I especially thank: Marloes Vrolijk, Parag Mehta, David Wilkinson, Lodewijk van Oord and Faith Abiodun for their contributions. I am also grateful for the support of my many friends, in Ireland, Netherlands, England and India, and of my fellow students at Trinity.

Dedication

In memory of my parents, *Emily*,
to my loving life companion and wife,
Sindhu Ramchandran Clark

Contents

Introduction 1

PART ONE

Chapter One 25
John Hick's Epistemological Framework and the Shaping of his Theology of Religions.
Section 1 - Defence of Faith 25
1.1.1 Faith and Knowledge
1.1.2 Kantian epistemology
1.1.3 Developing Critical Realism
1.1.4 Systematic Protestant influences
1.1.5 Person-making
Section 2 - The Pluralist Hypothesis 33
1.2.1 The Real
1.2.2 Religious anthropology
1.2.3 Answering relativism
1.2.4 Ethics and politics
1.2.5 Universal ethics - the primacy of ethics in Christian pluralism
1.2.6 Theological controversies over Incarnation
Section 3 - Interreligious Dialogue 45
1.3.1 Comparative theology
1.3.2 De-colonising Hick
1.3.3 The end of dialogue?
1.3.4 Critical trust and cosmic optimism
Concluding remarks - Peace and Pluralism 49

Chapter Two 50
Raimon Panikkar's Non-Dual Ontology and/as Theology of Religions
Section 1 - Early formation and key concepts 50
2.1.1 Introductory overview
2.1.2 Radical beginnings
2.1.3 Priesthood and theology

2.1.4 Continental philosophical themes
2.1.5 Vedanta and non-dualism
Section 2 - Universal Vision 58
2.2.1 Panikkar's non-dual ontology - logical and theological issues
2.2.2 Epistemological consequences - Panikkar's idealism
2.2.3 Myth and hermeneutics
2.2.4 Eschatology and Christology
2.2.5 The Cosmotheandric Experience
Section 3 - Practicalities, a Pluralist Theology of Religions 71
2.3.1 Politics and peace
2.3.2 Panikkar's humanism
2.3.3 Fulfilment theology
2.3.4 Intra-religious dialogue and imparative method
Concluding remarks – A Cosmotheandric Harmony 77

PART TWO

Chapter Three 79
Comparative analysis Part 1: a theo-philosophical appraisal of Hick and Panikkar - theologies of religions as responses to ultimate questions.
Section 1 – Metaphysics Peace and Knowledge Part (a) 79
3.1.1 The status of metaphysics
3.1.2 Coherence – the interdependence of ontology, epistemology and ethics
3.1.3 Theodicy and myth – Irenaean soul-making or primordial sacrifice
3.1.4 Evil and eschatology
3.1.5 The one and the many – one in many or many in one
Section 2 – Metaphysics, Peace and Knowledge Part (b) 104
3.2.1 The Sciences – believable religion or wisdom
3.2.2 Anthropomorphism – God language or anthropocentrism
3.2.3. Feminism and Critical Studies
Section 3 – Trinitarian Ontology of Peace 120
Concluding thoughts - Reality, Process, Peace, Salvation 128

Chapter Four 132
Comparative analysis Part 2 : theological responses to diversity - the encounter with Hinduism.
Section 1 – Pluralism on trial - Encounters with Hinduism 132
4.1.1 The construction of Hinduism
4.1.2 Christian pluralist theologies and Hinduism
Section 2 – Hick's encounter with Hinduism 136
4.2 Hick's understanding of *Ahimsa*
Section 3 – Panikkar's Hinduism 141
4.3 Panikkar's Unknown Christ of Hinduism
Concluding thoughts - conversion and the theological encounter with religious difference. 147

PART THREE

Chapter Five 149
Peace and Intercultural Education
Section 1 – Religious Violence and Nations 150
5.1.1 Peace is the new myth
5.1.2 Pluralism, Peace and Education
Section 2 – Violence and Religious Education 155
5.2.1 Religious literacy
5.2.2 Pluralism addressing politics
5.2.3 Faith critiquing faith
5.2.4 Distinguishing religion and ideology – Liberation Theology's location of the Spirit
5.2.5 Comparative theologies
Section 3 – Sacred Secularity 167
5.3 Sacred secularity and peace
Concluding thoughts 173

Chapter Six 175
Shaping a Peace pedagogy with Theologies of Religions
Section 1 - Integrity 175
6.1.1 An integral view of learning

6.1.2 Hope and optimism
6.1.3 The student as theorist
Section 2 - Authenticity 182
6.2.1 A new innocence, a new maturity
6.2.2 Relational selves
6.2.3 Spirit, obedience and freedom
6.2.4. The monk as universal archetype
Section 3 – Justice 199
6.3.1 Justice and liberation
6.3.2 Multicultural and intercultural
6.3.3 Diatopical Hermeneutics
6.3.4 Conversion
6.3.5 Hospitality and Care
Concluding thoughts 212

PART FOUR

Chapter Seven 213
Religious Pluralism and the UWC Model of Intercultural Education for Peace
Section 1 - Historical context and Mission 213
7.1.1 Kurt Hahn 1886-1974
7.1.2 Christianity and Perennialism in International Education
Section 2 - Religions at UWCs 221
7.2.1 Spaces
7.2.2 Mindfulness
Section 3 - Insights from the Human Sciences 225
7.3.1 Social performance
7.3.2 Harvard Impact Study
7.3.3 UWC Values Survey
Concluding thoughts - Values and Religions at UWCs 233

Chapter Eight 237
Pluralist Theologies of Religions and a Pedagogy of Peace at UWC
Section 1 238

8.1.1 Students as agents of change
8.1.2 Decolonising curriculum
8.1.3 Dealing with relativism
Section 2 243
8.2. Sex, gender and moral development
Section 3 246
8.3.1 Decolonising UWC
8.3.2 Intercultural spirituality
8.3.3 A pedagogy of contemplation
Concluding thoughts - Intercultural Practices for Educators and Students 253

Conclusion
Towards an Intercultural Theology of Education for Peace 256

Bibliography 266

INTRODUCTION

Scope of the Investigation / Problems addressed:

This comparative study of the pluralist theologies of religions of John Hick and Raimon Panikkar aims to contribute by exploring the under-acknowledged relationship between Pluralist Theologies of Religions and Intercultural Education. The inquiry is anchored in the case study of the United World College movement, with its mandate to "make education a force to unite people nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future"[1] by means of creating a maximally diverse community, designed to mirror the diversity of the world beyond its walls. I ask where pluralist theologies of religions intersect with the philosophical foundations, pedagogical functions and day-to-day concerns of such an intercultural learning community.

These questions come into sharper focus when, seeking a pedagogy of peace, we confront the perennial challenge of violent conflict and the existential ultimatum of climate change. Therefore, the argument in its entirety is framed by these two 'ultimate concerns':[2] the curse of war, and the ecological crisis; that is, the challenge to realize climate justice and peace. This aligns with the priorities of the quest to deliver a Theology of Religions. Furthermore, the concerns of the Pluralist philosophers I have chosen to extend to personal and social anxieties: the demise of hope and lack of coherence.[3] Academics acknowledge that human flourishing depends on a strongly grounded sense of what makes a life worth living.[4] The sense of meaning and purpose offered by religious

[1] Mission statement, see UWC, "What Is UWC?" *United World Colleges – Inspiring Young People*, accessed November 1, 2025, https://uwc.org/what-is-uwc/.

[2] The term is adopted from Paul Tillich's use of it as a definition of the scope of religion per se.

[3] Douglas Bourn and Massimiliano Tarozzi, *Pedagogy of Hope for Global Social Justice* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023).

[4] See Harvard University, "Global Flourishing Study: The Human Flourishing Program," *hfh.fas.harvard.edu*, accessed November 16, 2025, https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu; Global Flourishing Study, "Mapping the Mystery of Humanity," accessed November 16, 2025, https://globalflourishingstudy.com; "Campaign for Peace," *Global Campaign for Peace Education*, August 12, 2025, https://www.peace-ed-campaign.org/nl/; Yale, "Life Worth Living | Yale Center for Faith & Culture," *yale.edu*, accessed November 3, 2025, https://lifeworthliving.yale.edu

belonging is problematic, however, due to the great diversity of religious, non-religious or multiply religious perspectives demanding consideration in a modern, secular context.[5] How do you anchor a sense of value and values without shared religious mythology or philosophical metaphysics? The field of intercultural education provides an example of the problem of diversity. The fragmentation of academics mirrors a mental health crisis among students. The point here is not to argue as many do, that it is the lack of religion to blame for this state of affairs, but my investigation begins, to be sure, from the intuition of such a premise.

The convergence of apocalyptic, moral, psychological and ideological themes around existential, global questions is the stock-in-trade of Theology but threatens to overwhelm the individual among the fragmentary specialisms of Humanities, Sciences and Arts that have proliferated in the academy. Ecological theory embraces the metaphysical problematic of the one and the many,[6] but although the IB[7] has adopted elements of systems thinking, for example,[8] the implicitly metaphysical framing of wellbeing, as holistic balance, is left without further examination or clarification. The essential contribution of theology to a pedagogy of hope, variously conceived in different contexts,[9] is to offer coherence. The question, then, is whether the metaphysical frameworks of theologies of religions can offer resolution to the anxiety of fragmentation felt in academic and pastoral dimensions of intercultural education. The key problem investigated by this thesis, is explored via a study of Critical Realist theological pluralism

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[5] See for example: David A. Palmer, "Isomorphism, Syncretism, and Poly-Ontogonal Dynamics," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement*, ed. ___ (Routledge, 2021), https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781003036555-11; Natascha Kienstra, Monique van Dijk-Groeneboer, and Olav Boelens, "Training for Interreligious Classroom Teaching: An Empirical Study," *Religious Education* 114, no. 5 (2019): 594–608, https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2019.1652878; Jackson, Robert, and Satoko Fujiwara. 2013. *Peace Education and Religious Plurality*. Routledge.

[6] Anne Rademacher, Mary L. Cadenasso, and Stewart T. A. Pickett, "Ecologies One and All, Singularity and Plurality in Dialogue," *Environmental Humanities* 15, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-10216195

[7] International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), *"Diploma Programme (DP),"* accessed November 16, 2024, https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/.

[8] Peter Senge et al., "Introduction to Compassionate Systems Framework in Schools," *J-WEL, MIT Center for Systems Awareness* (2019), https://systemsawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Intro-CompassionateSystemsFramework-March-2019.pdf

[9] See, for diverse examples: John E. Hull, *Education for Hope: A Course Correction* (Canada: Friesen Press, 2023); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1994); and Douglas Bourn and Massimiliano Tarozzi, *Pedagogy of Hope for Global Social Justice* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023).

exemplified by John Hick, and a sacramental, mystical pluralist theology represented by Raimon Panikkar. It reveals the necessary link between epistemology, ontology and ethics in theological accounts of the purpose and meaning of life.
Focusing on this as our problematic leads us into a collaborative theological space and into a dialogue of reconciliation which aptly embody the mission for peace professed by contemporary intercultural education. Peace as universal sense of purpose (therefore also universal sense of destiny) is the evident point of intersection between metaphysical schemes of meaning and lived mission. UWCs have a universalist vision, they have always aimed "to educate responsible citizens of a globalised world."[10] Their founding mission, which, as a counter to fascism, promotes peace among diverse nations and aims to establish a global community with a sense of responsible citizenship, has already traversed a complex and transformative history. Yet arguably, it is more relevant than ever, as colleges are forced into a counter-cultural role by the contemporary rise of new forms of authoritarianism. The fact that these political movements often appropriate religious dimensions, symbols, or are even driven by fundamentalist religious enthusiasm, means that the question of how we accommodate religions at UWCs is also an urgent and important one, challenging us to engage with diverse ways of being religious or of holding religious values.

Aims of the study:

I try to do justice to the host of tensions running through school communities in our contemporary context, particularly the tension between religious values and intercultural ethos from which issues proliferate, all of which intersect with theological questions. Pluralisms envision a necessary connection between thriving and peace. In terms of the spaces of intercultural learning, this focuses my study on the negotiation of the personal and the communal; in psychological terms, agency and communion; and in philosophical terms, the one and the many. In the sphere of theology, questions about the nature and destiny of reality intertwine with those about authenticity and freedom. Our analysis turns on the articulation of the relationship between fields of epistemology, ontology and ethics observing the repercussions of these for the encounter with difference, the emergence of authentic identity, and the agreement of shared values in the quest for true understanding.

[10] David Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures* (Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2012), 9.

The project is justified by the link between theological philosophy and pedagogical practice.

Alec Peterson's 1988 articulation of the core vision of the International Baccalaureate aims for holistic scope without specifying what is meant by key terms such as *spiritual* or *individual*.

> To develop to their fullest potential the powers of each individual to understand, to modify and to enjoy his or her environment, both inner and outer, in its physical, social, moral, aesthetic and spiritual aspects.[11]

I suggest that a pedagogy commensurate with the internationalist ethos of the UWC movement, and with greater capacity to draw on wisdom derived from religious traditions, would explore the meaning of these in diverse theological philosophies through collaborative, comparative research. While the 2022 Harvard Impact Study[12] report noted difficulties around the inclusion of students from religious and conservative backgrounds in the progressive political ethos of UWC, this essay centers the issue[13] and moves to elicit participation of religious students in framing key definitions.[14] The discussion is focused by identifying the concern of young people to achieve personal authenticity, integrity and justice and proposes both a new respect for metaphysics and a refreshed methodology, or attitude. This attitude, I suggest, is itself a form of 'being religious' in

[11] IB Pedagogical mission statement – As cited in George Walker, "East Is East and West Is West: Introduction to IB Position Papers" (2010), 8, Alec D. C. Peterson writes in *Schools across Frontiers: The Story of the International Baccalaureate and the United World Colleges*(Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2003), 33.

[12] Shelby Clark, Danny Mucinskas, Sarah Magagna, Katie Abramowitz, and Howard Gardner, "Educational Experiences and Outcomes at the United World Colleges: An Investigation of Impact" (Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2022).

[13] Another finding of the report was that UWC leadership could more intentionally leverage student diversity as a source of learning, see Clark et al., "Educational Experiences and Outcomes at the United World Colleges."

[14] Pioneering approaches to the inclusive acceptance of religious perspectives in intercultural learning spaces include the work of the University of Warwick's Julia Ipgrave and Robert Jackson, particularly their dialogical, reflexive, and reciprocal approaches to student co-interpretation; see Robert Jackson, "Intercultural Education, Religious Plurality and Teaching for Tolerance: Interpretive and Dialogical Approaches," in *Intercultural Education and Religious Plurality*, ed. Robert Jackson and Ursula McKenna (Oslo: Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo, 2005), 5–13.

the world or at least overlaps with the meaning of those words from a great diversity of religious perspectives.[15]

Immediately we may challenge: does it make any sense to speak of education for peace and of a religious education at the same time? I argue that these categories present each other with salutary insights – as educators we can learn from theologies of religions and theologians have much to learn from the context of multicultural education. Do religious perspectives support or contend with the anti-defamation and hate values of intercultural education (truth seeking, identity forming, community building, heart opening)? [16] Can they improve our intercultural sensitivity and efficacy? I argue that diverse perspectives can learn from each other, exhibiting solidarity on issues of convergence and framing metaphysics in ways that provide trans-religious coherence to the priorities and aims of intercultural education. The UWC mission is reaffirmed according to values of unity, peace and sustainability – seen as fully concordant with the potentials and aspirations of religions and education at their best.

Ultimately then, this essay aims to contribute to what could be called a pluralist theology of education. The methodological question arises, though, whether we actually need a Theology of Religions, i.e. a *religious* philosophy of religion? This question has two types of answer. One is derived from metaphysics, and centers on the relationship between religious and other kinds of knowledge. The other is derived from the world of politics, that is, the relations between religious selves and religious, differently religious, or non-religious others. I start with the attempt to find both answers through a comparison of the work of two contrasting philosophers of religion, both of whom developed pluralist theologies of religions.[17] The choice of Hick and Panikkar has proven more telling as the project progressed. Though their work is recent, it already feels of another age. For a time, it was possible to imagine that the confluence of wisdom East and West might save

[15] (albeit sometimes in a very narrowly defined sense of the term 'religious').

[16] Oana Nestian Sandu and Nadine Lyamouri-Bajja, "Intercultural Learning: Theories, Contexts, Realities," in *T-KIT 4 Intercultural Learning: The Training Kits Series*, ed. Mara Georgescu (Strasbourg Cedex: Council of Europe and European Commission, 2018), 15–32.

[17] John D'Arcy May cites Ulrich Winkler as the originator of the concept of "a comparative theology of religions"; see John D'Arcy May, *Pluralism & Peace: The Religions in Global Civil Society* (Bayswater, Vic.: Coventry Press, 2019)

the world.[18] It is no longer attractive, nor ultimately permissible, to think in the terms that pluralist theologians of the 1960's - 90's did. However, that is not to say that their contributions were not formative on international education, that they may not still have important lessons to teach us, or that their wisdom may not return to greater relevance again someday. I try to draw the best from them while also detailing where some critical faultlines may be seen.

Rationale/Justification:

The theoretical work that underlabours for education has, by default, been the preserve of religions, but their role in secular education tends to be downplayed. Intercultural education[19] for peace and sustainable futures, operates without such metaphysical, integrating and coherent articulation. I suggest that we can critique theoretical and theological bases, without throwing away their best contributions. One of the main challenges to this, however, is religious difference. I link theology and the philosophy of intercultural education by observing that seeking peace in many ways overlaps, stands for, seeking salvation in theological terms, and thereby acknowledge the implicitly religious within the secular education context. In this way, I work towards a methodology of intercultural pedagogy that acknowledges the 'beyond' and the way that knowledge, at its limit, invites connection, transcending culture and language. This could be considered a mystical or contemplative dimension of education which, I argue, has the potential to anchor wellbeing and integrity.

It is not so much religion defined as answering (perhaps proto-scientific) questions, but religions as ways of framing ultimate questions that interests us: the questions of ultimate concern, perhaps that of the 'destiny of Being', which is to say, questions of meaning and purpose. And it is not just a dialogue about concepts that this paper invites. I am taking as given a pedagogical direction, that of the identification and nurture of a 'life worth

[18] The geo-political paradigm has shifted to acknowledge the far greater post-colonial and ecological significance of the North/South divide and Christian adherence has asserted its anchoring gravity on the African continent.

[19] (Which may be distinguished in part from International Education and Global Education, but which overlaps with both)

living'.[20] In a multiply religious context, however, this may be defined in contrasting ways, which leads to the question: how can experiential education embrace religious experience? I tackle this in several ways which reaffirm the relevance of the challenge Panikkar identifies as "Living religion as an experience rather than as an ideology."[21] Thus we begin to approach the challenge to contribute to what might be called a theology of intercultural education.[22]

Theoretical heart of the question:

In a nutshell, the problem I have been researching throughout this dissertation from the start is the epistemological, ontological and ethical in religious philosophy as they construct the propositional and dispositional aspects of faith as a constitutive dimension of a person. This formula is already a distillate of pluralist theological philosophy. The challenge, as I frame it, is to appraise the theo/philosophical proposals of Hick and Panikkar as philosophical rationale and theological mandate for a pedagogy of peace, to discover whether pluralist theologies of religions respond adequately to ultimate questions as we might pose them from the perspective of secular intercultural education.

They knew each other, were direct contemporaries, and attended the same events from time to time. Strange, then, that they seem never to have directly addressed each other's work in the same field. Hick mentions Panikkar only once - in his Gifford Lectures - and there only characterised as "a contemporary interpreter of advaitic Hinduism"[23] And in Panikkar's writings, I found only a footnote reference to Hick's co-authorship of a

[20] Cf. With the same idea in mind, the Divinity School at Yale has initiated "Life Worth Living"; see Yale Center for Faith & Culture, "Life Worth Living," Yale University, n.d., accessed November 3, 2025, https://lifeworthliving.yale.edu.

[21] Jonas refers to the quote by Panikkar in the first question of the interview. See, Robert A. Jonas, "Eruption of Truth: An Interview with Raimon Panikkar," *The Empty Bell*, April 2023, https://www.emptybell.org/christian-buddhist-dialogue/eruption-of-truth-an-interview-with-raimon-panikkar/.

[22] Though such a thing as a theology of intercultural education does not as yet exist, see what has recently been explored as a Public Practical Theology of Education supporting, and supported by, their empirical work to assess the responses of Hindu and Muslim teachers to the religious dimensions of working at Salesian mission schools in Tamil Nadu: Francis-Vincent Anthony and Antony Christy Lourdunathan, "Public Religious Pedagogy amidst Religious Pluralism: Qualitative Study among Hindu and Muslim Educators in Salesian Institutions of Tamil Nadu, India," *Religions* 16, no. 5 (2025): 646, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16050646,

[23] John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1989), https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230371286, 37.

technical book about the ontological argument.[24] Perhaps this hints at their differences, and it might also describe their immediate use in the classroom: Hick explains arguments about the existence of God, and Panikkar explains the implications of non-duality. However, we are not looking at them as classroom resources. In the following investigation, they are differentiated in terms of religious epistemology, concepts of ultimate reality, interpretations of salvation and the role of experience in the discipline of theology, as these make a theological contribution to underlying rationales of pluralist pedagogy as a whole. They were on the same side, and the preeminence of ethics as 'first philosophy' in both their outlooks, is pursued here as a pedagogical principle.[25] Pluralism values Peace as a shared ultimate between religious perspectives. It is this rationale that receives the most critical attention, and which becomes the key to applying their thoughts in the field of education.

Literature Review - 1. Theoretical framework and assumptions:

In this study, they represent paradigmatic responses to challenges of a particular historical moment, one whose effects we are dealing with today, and one that has shaped intercultural education. Both Hick and Panikkar were fundamentally concerned to address the secularization of modern life by affirming the meaningfulness of religious discourse - as Christian philosophers, that is their existential self-defense. The tide is turning. 'Secularization' appears not to have been the inevitable consequence of a scientific enlightenment,[26] on the contrary, the world is as defined by religious identities and questions as ever. So much so in fact, that Science, once cast as superseding religion, must now seek to establish solidarity with the spiritualities of nature and stewardship that religious and indigenous teachings have, traditionally, in pockets, preserved. Modern, militant atheism and reactionary religious fundamentalism form a dialectically

[24] Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, 1st ed. 1993 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998, 69.

[25] This derives from Levinas and the post war philosophers making a direct call to Christian conscience, though without necessarily valorising the protestant individual conscience above all.

[26] On de-secularization: literature now emerging attempts to define a landscape that appears both post-religious and post-secular—for example, the metamodernism of J. A. J. Storm or the "anatheism" movement; see Peter L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 2008).

interdependent warring whole over against which ecological vision needs to articulate a fresh scientific perspective and religious life.

There are several distinct worlds of literature that relate to the question raised. While education is always a factor in the sociology of religions, and religious education always a concern of theologians, assessing the theological underpinnings of educational theory and day-to-day pedagogy is less consistently addressed outside the in-house documents of religious schools of education.[27] What exactly is theology of education?[28] This is an area too vast on the one hand (i.e. what education is not at some level a question of theology?) and on the other hand, the pool of actual literature defined as 'theology of education' is tiny.[29] Because I am returning to basics, however, (asking: what is education for?), the essay intersects with the field of educational theory in general. I aim towards a Freireian, humanizing pedagogy, for example, as opposed to a 'banking pedagogy'[30]; one that seeks to realise the potential of students as participants in dialogue, problem posing and solving, people capable of managing and making change.[31] The pedagogical genius of Kurt Hahn, founder of UWC, defines the main case study and is dealt with in depth principally drawing on primary sources, Hahn himself[32] and colleagues of mine, as well as the biography, by David Sutcliffe.[33] Some literature emerges from UWC educators

[27] One such example from a modern context—Calvinist theories informing policy in Canadian schools—is well recorded in Hull, *Education for Hope.*

[28] Leslie J. Francis and Adrian Thatcher, *Christian Perspectives for Education: A Reader in the Theology of Education*(Leominster: Fowler Wright, 1990); Francis-Vincent Anthony and Antony Christy Lourdunathan, "Public Religious Pedagogy amidst Religious Pluralism: Qualitative Study among Hindu and Muslim Educators in Salesian Institutions of Tamil Nadu, India," *Religions* 16, no. 5 (2025): 646, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16050646.

[29] It is an area that merits collaborative, intercultural academic attention, according to this study. A rare exception is Francis and Thatcher, which declares itself as such a contribution; see Francis and Thatcher, *Christian Perspectives for Education*.

[30] Douglas Bourn and Massimiliano Tarozzi, *Pedagogy of Hope for Global Social Justice* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), 148.

[31] Bourn and Tarozzi, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 148. "Freire establishes the following essential elements: love, humility, faith, trust, hope, and critical consciousness."

[32] Kurt Hahn, Reform mit Augenmaß: Ausgewählte Schriften eines Politikers und Pädagogen, ed. Michael Knoll (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1998), 389 pp., https://www.academia.edu/26766626/Kurt_Hahn_Reform_mit_Augenma%C3%9F_Ausgew%C3%A4hlte_Schriften_eines_Politikers_und_P%C3%A4dagogen_Hrsg_von_Michael_Knoll_1998

[33] David Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures* (Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2012).

themselves[34] and there has been growing interest in the question: what constitutes the UWC experience, in fact?[35] The influence of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich is also evident in as much as we bring the critical perspective of a liberative pedagogy of the oppressed to Hahnian education, and the convivial ideal of the school as part of a broader learning community.[36] These and other influences on the theoretical approach must be mentioned, yet to give them full exposition here would not be possible. Conceptual pillars alluded to in passing include Winnicott's theory of transitional space[37], Levinas' constitution of the I by the intersubjective encounter with the face of an 'other,'[38] or the idea of Interbeing, derived from Zen mindfulness practices of Tich Nhat Hanh.[39] We refine these positions in relation to theologies of religions in the multicultural space according to the paradigms of care and justice[40] but only treat in depth more recent sources from the field of international education, which is already conversant with such theoretical bases.

The theoretical framework for the study demands engagement with a series of problems of definition, which, in some ways, structure the entire report. They include the definition

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[34] Lodewijk van Oord and Ken Corn, "Learning How to 'Swallow the World': Engaging with Human Difference in Culturally Diverse Classrooms," *Journal of Research in International Education* 12, no. 1 (2013): 22–32, https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240913478085; Lodewijk van Oord, "Kurt Hahn's Moral Equivalent of War," *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 3 (2010): 253–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/03054981003629870; Lodewijk van Oord, "Culture as a Configuration of Learning," *Journal of Research in International Education* 4, no. 2 (2005): 173–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240905054389; Veronica Wilkinson, "Changing Perceptions of 'International Education' by Students at a United World College" (M.A. thesis, Department of Education, University of Bath, 2002); Andrew Mahlstedt, "Global Citizenship Education in Practice: An Exploration of Teachers in the United World Colleges," 2003, https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:th204gp6905/Mahlstedt_A_Monograph_2003.pdf.

[35] Tristan Bunnell and Nicola Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing: The Evidence from a Residential Short Course," *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 33, no. 4 (2022): 435–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2022.2104743.

[36] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970); Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

[37] D. W. Winnicott, "The Location of Cultural Experience," in *Transitional Objects and Potential Spaces: Literary Uses of D. W. Winnicott*, ed. P. L. Rudnytsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 3–18.

[38] Schalk ten Kate, "The Levinasian Other," in *Philosophical Tools for Climate Change* (University of Groningen Press, April 2, 2025), https://opentextbooks.rug.nl/climatephilosophy/chapter/the-ethical-phenomenology-of-emmanuel-levinas/.

[39] Thich Nhat Hanh and Fred Eppsteiner, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1998).

[40] Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982); Lawrence Kohlberg, The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice, vol. 1 (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1981).

of ‘religion’, the status of ‘theology’, and the meanings of ‘spiritual’ and ‘secular’. It is the relationship between the transcendent and universal, the immanent and particular that marks the key point of focus for our appraisal of these philosophers, and that constitutes part of our further reflections for understanding what we do about religions in a multi-cultural school. From the heart of a struggle between their worldviews - Catholic and Protestant, Continental and English, Non-Dualist and Monotheist - we draw out the contours of a universal philosophical inquiry and plead the case for a balanced pedagogy of faith across the board. This must be seen in the context of repeated attempts through the history of philosophy to ground ethics as necessarily emerging from a coherence between epistemology and ontology - which is to say, identifying a universal moral code. The central debates dealt with here revolve around the theoretical frameworks of Critical Realism and Non-Duality. Hick’s appropriation of Kantian epistemology in the sphere of religious knowledge, occasions a deeper exploration into Kant’s framing of religion, peace, ethics and personhood, which underpin Hick’s theology in a less explicit way. Panikkar’s Vedantic Christianity provides a critical counterpoint, drawing on mystical literature, Heideggerian theory and post-colonial studies to make sense of the experience of multiple religious belonging.[41]

The focal literature of this study is the works of Panikkar and Hick themselves. I survey almost their entire output, yet have been selective for the project in hand and a few key works of each predominate as references.[42] Each engendered secondary literature with which I engage and critical interlocutors to whom I try to do justice inasmuch as they intersect with the themes of this study.[43] I also draw on biographical and autobiographical material to show the origin and development of ideas in each case.[44] Pluralism is

[41] Asad, T., Butler J., Spivak G. contribute perspectives on identity and identity formation in relation to Panikkar. And in attempting to establish a collaboration between him and John Hick, I have drawn in places on the critical realist theories of Roy Bhaskar, who as their contemporary, and who also embodied elements of both: Roy Bhaskar, “MetaReality,” Roy Bhaskar Centre, n.d., accessed November 8, 2025, https://www.roybhaskarcentre.com/metareality.

[42] For both Hick and Panikkar, the invitation to give the Gifford Lectures (1986-87 and 1989, respectively) offered an unparalleled opportunity to expound the essentials of their philosophy – these are among the principal sources in each case.

[43] Prabhu J., Carera Pavan M., Phan P.C., represent ongoing work on the Panikkar legacy in the way that Surgirtharaja S., Teece G. do on that of John Hick. Critical perspectives are drawn especially from Ward K., D’Costa G., Milbank J., while new directions being pioneered in conversation with their work includes Yadlapati M., and Ge Y.

[44] Principally: John Hick, *John Hick: An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005); Maciej Bielawski *Panikkar: His Life and His Works* (Italy: Fazi Editore, 2018).

essentially concerned with social inclusion[45] and is conceived in several different theoretical approaches.[46] Pluralism takes trans-cultural phenomena and cross-cultural relevance as a mark of human authenticity, therefore its intellectual orientation is fundamentally humanist. However, Theologies of Religions raise epistemological issues and also inhabit an experimental area[47] between traditional theological methodologies and Human Sciences approaches. As Merrigan puts it (though it is an observation which needs qualification) Pluralism adopts an "evolutionary view of religious truth."[48]

The question 'what is theology of religions?',[49] has received considerable attention and forms part of the debate about pluralism as a whole. Centers of pluralism produce an ever-expanding literature connecting theoretical and devotional resources with empirical research data.[50] Although it is now spreading to diverse contexts and across religious lines as well, this endeavour remains, for the moment, predominately a branch of Christian theology, rather than a fully-fledged, trans-religious, theological project.[51] Intercultural theology is, perhaps, from the point of view of religious pluralism, almost a misnomer since it remains predominately a branch of missiology. It is also often hard to distinguish intercultural theology from discussion about the definition of religion – this makes up so much of the literature and constitutes so much of the challenge. In the background, stand

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[45] Alan Race, *Thinking about Religious Pluralism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

[46] Cf. Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002); Terrence Merrigan and John Friday, *The Past, Present and Future of Theologies of Interreligious Dialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[47] Merrigan and Friday, *The Past, Present and Future of Theologies of Interreligious Dialogue*; Terrence Merrigan, "Religious Knowledge in the Pluralist Theology of Religions," *Theological Studies* 58, no. 4 (2017): 686–707, https://doi.org/10.1177/004056399705800405.

[48] Terrence Merrigan, "Religious Knowledge in the Pluralist Theology of Religions," *Theological Studies* 58, no. 4 (1997): 686–707, https://doi.org/10.1177/004056399705800405. Other critics, Newbiggin L., Larson G.J., D'Costa G. and others also contribute perspectives.

[49] Paul Knitter, "Religious Pluralism in Theological Education," *Anglican Theological Review* (1992): 418–37, https://www.academia.edu/56649979/Religious_Pluralism_in_Theological_Education; Alan Race, *Thinking about Religious Pluralism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

[50] The Pluralism Project, see Diana L. Eck, "The Pluralism Project," *Pluralism.org* (Harvard University, 2025), https://pluralism.org.

[51] This is pointed out in the introduction to Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Ulrike R. M. Guthrie, Carolina Weening, and Charlie Cahill, *God beyond Boundaries: A Christian and Pluralist Theology of Religions* (Münster: Waxmann, 2017). It is towards a collaborative model of intercultural theology that this study tends (on the early ascent of a long arc).

Paul Tillich's broadening of the definition of religion as sphere of *ultimate concern*[52], Rudolph Otto's psychological approach to religious experience as the sense of the Holy, and William James' centering of experience in the study of religions.[53] These contribute at base to the work at hand. While some parts of the thesis are decidedly theological, here, I am looking at religions as cultural fields of experience, illumination, motivation and inquiry, thus only an approach which includes historical, philosophical, sociological, psychological and anthropological dimensions will be sufficient. I draw extensively on the critique of Pluralism offered by radical orthodox theologian John Milbank because it raises in one place so many of the concerns addressed elsewhere in my thesis.[54] He, among others, raises the critical point that the reification of Religion[55] as a category by ethnographers, anthropologists and pluralist theologians, is challenged by Post colonial/De-colonising perspectives on interreligious encounter. These often highlight devastating psychological and political impacts of the imposition of Western definitions and categories.[56]

Literature review - 2. Conceptual frameworks, Religion and Education:

The other angle the thesis takes at the same time, uses intercultural education as a lens through which to evaluate these pluralist theologies. By characterising the Hickian approach as 'yang' (dedicated to Justice, objective truth, absolute transcendence of the divine) and Panikkar's cosmovision as 'yin' (dedicated to care, radically relational in

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[52] Paul Tillich, *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, ed. Charles W. Kegley (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982).

[53] Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958); William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (SSEL, 2021).

[54] John Milbank, "The End of Dialogue," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 177–78. Other key sources I have referenced critiquing pluralism include: Terrance Merrigan, "Religious Knowledge in the Pluralist Theology of Religions"; Gavin D'Costa, "The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions," *Religious Studies* 32, no. 2 (1996): 223–32, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412500024240.

[55] Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle;* Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[56] Fanon, Asad, Thapar are cited here as they offer corrective nuance and insight, but they represent a world of literature which is only touched on here. Re-framing those exchanges in sociological and anthropological terms is producing new fields of analysis. E.g. David A. Palmer, "Isomorphism, Syncretism, and Poly-Ontogonal Dynamics," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement*, ed. Chris Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover (Oxford: Routledge, 2021), https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781003036555-11

outlook, alert to the entanglement of objectivity and subjectivity), I have tried to bring into focus a third space in which ultimate concerns may be shared, a sense of ultimate value agreed, and a commitment to peace re-defined.

There are certain models of education that have been developed in explicitly religious institutions that nonetheless prioritize an inclusive and pluralist ethos.[57] They provide near analogues to my example, although UWC and the IB have maintained a more determinedly humanist, secular frame. There is a great deal of literature now centered on the different ways in which secularity is framed and practiced in education[58] and policy decisions about religious expression in schools (e.g. *burkinis*, veils and crosses) frequently raise controversy[59] requiring negotiation over the teaching of religions in schools.[60] One part of this study therefore, reviews the actual place or role of religious belief, worship and practices in the United World Colleges now. The Pedagogy of religions is only a small part of this question reflecting debates in the world of RE: whether to take a 'worldviews' approach[61] how to tackle relativism,[62] how to dismantle exclusionary fundamentalism,[63] whether to invite confessional contributions, and so on. As much as the visible curriculum, it is the hidden curriculum which interests us, however. In several studies, religious belonging shows strong positive correlation with

[57] E.g. Islamic education in the spirit of Gülen, and inclusive, yogic, Sanatanadharma-based Avanti schools.

[58] Laïcité, de-confessionalisation, non-denominational, principled distance, interconfessional forms.

[59] Baumann, The Multicultural Riddle, 61.

[60] Winfried Löffler, "Secular Reasons for Confessional Religious Education in Public Schools," *Daedalus* 149, no. 3 (2020): 119–34, https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01807.

[61] Liam Gearon, "The Paradigms of Contemporary Religious Education," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 27, no. 1 (2014): 52–81, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24798870; see also Geoff Teece's contribution in Commission on Religious Education, *Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward—A National Plan for RE, Final Report* (2018), https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Final-Report-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf.

[62] Robert Ellis, "Relativism and the Philosophy of Religious Education," *The Philosophers' Magazine*, no. 2 (1997): 17–18.

[63] Dennis Bates, Gloria Durka, and Friedrich Schweitzer, eds., *Intercultural Education and Religious Education: Education, Religion and Society—Essays in Honour of John M. Hull* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 49–61, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203018187.

mental health[64] and mindfulness practice in education[65] already has strong traction. These findings are borne out in this case, and some aspects of religious practice are, in fact, offered as well-being curriculum at UWCs. Mindfulness and spirituality inclusion also correlate well with self-care and general wellbeing, with positive results on indices of self-worth.[66] Correlative research data has accrued over decades in support of mindfulness practices, and their application in education is well attested. Dangers associated with these are less well researched,[67] though there might be harmful effects for some vulnerable individuals,[68] particularly those recovering from traumatic experience. Preliminary findings suggest that mindfulness practiced in groups is less likely to produce harmful effects than mindfulness practiced alone.[69] In the present context, however, the question revolves around the *meaning* ascribed the practices in question. I argue that converging contemplative and active aspects of life through guided activity, is at the heart of education per se. The coherence of these poles of experience depends on our understanding of what it means to become a person. It is to this fundamental question that theologies of religions, philosophy of religion, and metaphysics as a whole, relate.

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[64] Crystal Amiel M. Estrada, Marian Fe Theresa C. Lomboy, Ernesto R. Gregorio, Emmy Amalia, Cynthia R. Leynes, Romeo R. Quizon, and Jun Kobayashi, "Religious Education Can Contribute to Adolescent Mental Health in School Settings," *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 13, no. 1 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-019-0286-7.

[65] Tich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village, "Wake Up Schools – Mindfulness in Education," accessed June 22, 2025, https://plumvillage.org/community/wake-up-schools.

[66] Cf. David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 248–49.

[67] Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Home – Jon Kabat-Zinn," accessed November 9, 2022, https://jonkabat-zinn.com; see also "meditation in the laboratory" in David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 176–77.

[68] Western allopathic sources often interpret psychic disturbances as harmful effects of mindfulness or meditation practices; by contrast, Buddhist and other religious traditions frequently view such experiences as signs of challenge and progress along a spiritual path—see OMC, "Is Your Mindfulness Program Trauma-Sensitive? 3 Reasons You Need to Know and 3 Questions to Ask," *Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic*, April 15, 2018, https://ottawamindfulnessclinic.com/2018/04/15/is-your-mindfulness-program-trauma-sensitive-5-reasons-you-need-to-know/.

[69] Ruth Baer, Catherine Crane, Edward Miller, and Willem Kuyken, "Doing No Harm in Mindfulness-Based Programs: Conceptual Issues and Empirical Findings," *Clinical Psychology Review* 71, no. 1 (2019): 101–14, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2019.01.001; Ruochen Gan, Liuyi Zhang, and Shulin Chen, "The Effects of Body Scan Meditation: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* 14, no. 3 (2022), https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12366.

In education, the range of diversities is much greater now than heretofore. While they may not entirely supercede national diversity as a first category for the UWC movement, it is certainly important now that we acknowledge pluralities also among ethnic, cultural, religious and gender identities. In assessing the context of International education I have questioned the basis of national and ethnic identity and draw on the notion of nation as imagined community and solidarity on an imagined basis[70] Gerd Bauman has pointed out the error, for multiculturalism, that cultural difference is often essentialised as either national, religious or ethnic.[71] This exploration of metaphysics indeed explores universals, but it does not seek to essentialise these or any other markers of identity. On the other hand, it does aim to support the spontaneous freedom to express identity of any of these forms within a broader sense of mutual solidarity with different others. It is important to realise that these proliferating forms of diversity also question the absoluteness of the categories we identify – this too requires listening and finding within oneself diversities without the need to essentialise personal identity around them. This is the important contribution of Buddhism to the message of Panikkkar and Hick. I bring attention to the concept of individuality, introducing contemporary debates which employ a dialogical concept of self, questioning the prevailing paradigm of identity and reflecting a more irreducibly intercultural perspective.[72] From the Christian and Buddhist inter/intra-religious dialogue also emerges a contribution to this framing of selves and others in the pneumatic theology of Lynn da Silva which offers an example of interreligious theology affirming the Spirit as key to personal integration, well-being and academic insight.[73]

Positionality:

As regards my own positionality and background, it is true that this thesis also asks: does pluralist theology help us live out the Christian values of the intercultural mission in practice? This given context cannot be ignored. Furthermore, in common with the

[70] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983), 166.

[71] Baumann, The Multicultural Riddle.

[72] International Society for Dialogical Science (ISDS), "International Society for Dialogical Science – About," *WildApricot*, accessed November 2, 2024, https://dialogicalself.wildapricot.org/WA-Themes

[73] Lynn A. De Silva, *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

theorists we are focusing on, I tend to think in terms derived from the East/West Dialogue that was the locus of exploration in the Western academic philosophy of religion through the twentieth century, and that is shaped by my own extensive experience of living in India. These are inherent limitations that reflect the author's historical and cultural position.

Methodology:

The thesis is structured to introduce the two pillar theologies of John Hick and Raimon Panikkar, to question and compare them, and then to apply them with reference to the third pillar, Kurt Hahn's United World College pedagogy. In the first place, I attempt a correlational comparative analysis[74] with the aim of discovering a Collaborative Theology to take forward.[75] The first two chapters introduce Hick and Panikkar in some biographical detail to give a sense of the whole person, the critical realist, pluralist hypothesis of John Hick and the Non-dual Cosmotheandric Experience of Raimon Panikkar, and what each may contribute to intercultural education for peace. Both our philosophers could be said to subscribe to Critical Realism to the extent that it tempers the tendency of hermeneuticism to deny the reality of what it observes, seeing everything as reducible to discourse.[76] However, while I investigate their similarities and differences along these and other lines, I am not tasked with forging a synthesis of them, although I do suggest that it might be possible.[77] To appreciate their relevance to education, I rather make an in-depth theological comparison, focusing on questions that embody the challenge of coherence as it has been identified. I have chosen to employ the (almost post-religious) criteria of apophatic theologian Wesley J. Wildman[78] to provide a series of contemporary *ultimate concerns* as points of comparison with which to tackle their

[74] Stephen Okey, *A Theology of Conversation: An Introduction to David Tracy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018).

[75] John D'Arcy May, *Pluralism & Peace: The Religions in Global Civil Society* (Bayswater, Vic: Coventry Press, 2019).

[76] Jens Zimmermann, *Humanism and Religion* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[77] I turn to Roy Bhaskar to suggest a satisfactory theoretical synthesis.

[78] Jeanine Diller, "God and Other Ultimates," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2021), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/god-ultimates/#RespDiveModeUlti; Wesley J. Wildman, "Really Ultimate Reality," *Theology and Science* 15, no. 3 (2017): 260–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2017.1335061.

metaphysical proposals in more detail. By focusing on the framing of epistemology and ontology as constituting ethics, I examine the tension in their work between religious and scientific 'ways of knowing' and question how conceptual coherence, integrating disciplines, may contribute to the integrity, sense of authenticity, autonomy and wellbeing, of the emerging individual. The quest for a joined-up politics of truth and for the resolution of unity and diversity occupy a further comparative investigation, this time focused on their responses to the religious experience of India, its philosophy, religious ethos, and in particular, the figure of Mahatma Gandhi.

As I said, a central concern of this study has been to identify the ontology of personhood as defined within critical realist and non-dual theological paradigms.[79] This psychological dimension is developed with reference to Charles Taylor's theory of the prevailing value of authenticity in contemporary, secular culture,[80] and with reference also to the idea of self as performance, proposed by Irving Goffmann,[81] which begins to develop my definition of freedom in terms of a sense of authentic being in relation. I develop the thesis that the freedom of authentic selfhood as a quality of relation, may be experienced as peace. In the literature on moral development in education, a theoretical parallel is Gert Biesta's concept of 'subjectification,'[82] and the argument here intersects with his particular concern to produce political civic actors for global democracy. Critics of Hick question the Kantian primacy of conscience in his pluralism, suspecting the status of the individual and of instrumental reason that it threatens to impose. The context of moral development in education is an excellent case study with which to examine this argument. Psychological approaches to religion and moral development begin to converge on this

[79] N.b. Roy Bhaskar, "Critical Realism and the Ontology of Persons," *Journal of Critical Realism* 19, no. 2 (2020): 113–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/14767430.2020.1734736

[80] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) and *A Secular Age*(Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

[81] On the "presentation of self," see Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1959), https://monoskop.org/images/1/19/Goffman_Erving_The_Presentation_of_Self_in_Everyday_Life.pdf; and for its application in a case-study context, see Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience,".

[82] This is a qualification to the more well-worn model of *Bildung* and, in this thesis, I suggest that Biesta's development reflects a Panikkarian relational qualification to a Hickian concept of soul-making; see Gert Biesta, *World-Centred Education* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

metaphysical space in terms of the dialectic of communion and agency.[83] Developing ethical character[84] is framed in this essay in terms of integrity, coherence, justice and peace, with individual, moral conscience emerging as a relational quality: the flexible maintenance of autonomy and communion.[85] To address the development of conscience, both for the moral and psychological development of children, and for conscientising of institutions, it has been useful to think in terms of this dialectic.[86] The centrality of moral conscience in Hick's theology needs to be balanced by intercultural theories of the relationship between agency and communion to which the non-dual perspective lends insight. This has also been the point of intersection with Feminist and Post-colonial perspectives on psycho-social and moral development.[87]

The intentional, intercultural, learning space establishes the role of pluralistic approaches, it sharpens the ethics and methodologies of dialogue with practical application, it highlights those metaphysical speculations that remain theologically relevant and offers direction to the conversation between Cultural Studies and Theology. UWC has an extremely good record on educating social confidence and commitment to ecological and peace-focused values. Within this movement, the sacred and the secular combine most obviously in the quasi-religious character of the entire mission. For my analysis,

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[83] David Bakan, *The Duality of Human Existence: An Essay on Psychology and Religion* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1966); Jeremy A. Frimer and Lawrence A. Walker, "Reconciling the Self and Morality: An Empirical Model of Moral Centrality Development," *Developmental Psychology* 45, no. 6 (2009): 1669–81.

[84] Darcia Narvaez and Tonia Bock, "Developing Ethical Expertise and Moral Personalities," in *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, ed. Larry P. Nucci, Darcia Narvaez, and Tobias Krettenauer (New York: Routledge, 2014), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203114896.ch22; Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice*, vol. 1 (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1981); Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[85] David Bakan, *The Duality of Human Existence: An Essay on Psychology and Religion* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1966); Jeremy A. Frimer and Lawrence A. Walker, "Reconciling the Self and Morality: An Empirical Model of Moral Centrality Development," *Developmental Psychology* 45, no. 6 (2009): 1669–81.

[86] Bakan, Duality of Human Existence.

[87] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982); Rachel Sophia Baard, "Original Grace, Not Destructive Grace: A Feminist Appropriation of Paul Tillich's Notion of Acceptance," *The Journal of Religion* 87, no. 3 (2007): 411–34, https://doi.org/10.1086/516741; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

therefore, I employ a distinction between *implicit* and *explicit* religion[88] and acknowledge both dimensions in the lived experience of the learning community. The UWC aims to hold the believer and the non-believer (and the anti-believer) in creative tension and safe space. How can this be achieved? The perspective is developed here that this space may be characterized as a sacred/secular one. It is created and maintained by quality of attention and commitment to universal solidarity. We want to encourage an education that is truly humanizing. That means, in this interpretation, the realization of all potentials, a spiritual potential included. Without flinching, therefore, we must also look critically at how the mission statement of the United World College movement reflects this, while in many cases, the curriculum, lived community values, and internal practices, may fail to.

Trying for humane values[89] requires us to focus on the experience of the people involved. The proposal is presented briefly in tripartite form descending from three key values: Integrity, Authenticity and Justice. Looking through the eyes of contemporary students, *authenticity* asserts its preeminent place in ethics, hermeneutically and psychologically. Critical realism and non-dualism relate to this ethic/aesthetic in the following ways: the authentic self is the self that turns with vigilant attention to the real and to the other, and the authentic self is the self that is mindful of interdependencies and inspired by the non-dual ground state of reality.[90] Interpreted thus, the ethic of authenticity may be to be true to the values that moral teachings and religious mythologies have professed but failed at times adequately to communicate. The key insight from Panikkar, and the way, perhaps to explore the 'sense of idealism' alluded to in the UWC mission values, is that knowledge is communion. This has several consequences for epistemology, ontology and ethics and also for the framing of identity. Authentic identity, according to this view, is Ultimate Identity.[91] I link this idea of freedom to the mission for Peace and a sustainable future. A

[88] Edward Bailey, "Implicit Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Peter B. Clarke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[89] Michael Fielding, "Education as If People Matter: John Macmurray, Community and the Struggle for Democracy," *Oxford Review of Education* 38, no. 6 (2012): 675–92, https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.745044.

[90] The language here coincides with that employed by the later Roy Bhaskar.

[91] Alan Watts. *The Supreme Identity*. London: Wildwood House, (1950) 1973.

series of key concepts, for which Panikkar provided his own array of terminology[92] all relate to this experience of the coincidence of transcendence and immanence as actual presence: *ontonomy, tempiternity, inter-independence*, are terms that prove useful to intercultural approaches to education, in particular his *dialogical dialogue* and the perspective of *sacred secularity* receive exposition here, because they offer concrete possibilities for application. [93]

Contributions and conclusions:

Contributory findings from the comparative theological analysis are many. Hick emphasises the validation of transcendent reality in religious experience while Panikkar emphasises the immanence of transcendent reality in the everyday. Where Hick has implicit faith in objectivism, albeit a limited human approach, Panikkar sees objectivity as one possible mode of perfecting the subjective. The entanglement of consciousness and material reality gives Panikkar a certain idealism which allows him to place hope in an organic spirit in which we participate, whereas Hick's hope is based on trust, optimism, and resilience. For Hick true religion is given, self-evident and absolute, whereas for Panikkar it is embodied in a self-exploratory quest. These differences result in diverse consequences in theology, philosophy, ethics and furthermore imply different approaches to the task of raising the young with wisdom. By engaging ultimate questions we harmonise disciplines and affirm the legitimate quest for truth. Above all, I aim to support authentic self-discovery, integrated learning and truth-seeking ethics on which to establish a sense of mutually assured citizenship. From Hick and Panikkar we can derive the following argument for secular, faith-based model of intercultural education for peace, engaging the best of interreligious, contemplative practices.

Secularity offers an opportunity to understand the nature of religion.[94] Secularity, learned from the Indian context, means an inclusive liberality embracing all religion as opposed

[92] A full glossary of Panikkar's home-grown terminology appears on the website devoted to his life and works: https://raimon-panikkar.org/?page_id=981

[93] I am grateful for Zaida Espinosa Zárate's article on the epistemological foundations of intercultural education, which proved a pivotal resource for considering the application of Panikkar's method of dialogue in the classroom. Zaida Espinosa Zárate, "Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education: Contributions from Raimon Panikkar," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 42, no. 5 (2023): 501–17.

[94] This view is promoted by Hartmut Rosa, *Democracy Needs Religion*. John Wiley & Sons, (2024).

to Secularism as an anti-religious ideological position. According to Panikkar's interpretation, though, it has to do with the eternal significance of the temporal which anchors mutual responsibility in spirited practice. Through the lens of our collaborative theological venture, Peace emerges as eschatological myth and Secularity as soteriological myth, each with its own quasi-religious mystique. It is possible, within the scope of a process theory of reality, to conceive of radical immanence[95] such that the historical (time-bound, the secular) is ultimately meaningful and may thus be encountered with hope, humility, courage: "a thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved."[96] The notion of *sacred secularity* is useful because it allows us both to acknowledge the dimension of implicit religion shaping historical cultures, and remain alert to the potential for the in-breaking of the divine in non-religious contexts.

> I uphold the distinction between the sacred and the profane. I would just not identify it with the distinction between the secular and the sacred.[97]

This awareness introduces a level of solemnity, or seriousness, that raises the stakes in the dialogue about ultimate concerns and provides access to the indispensable third in the encounter of diverse conceptions of identity and difference. And it can remind us to appreciate the wonder of the cosmos we inhabit at all levels of our mutual participation in it.

What emerges clearly towards the end of the study is the importance of values of obedience and hospitality that in certain ways align with religious dimensions of culture. This emphasis can be tracked through the recent data emerging from sociological studies of the UWC movement. According to my analysis, listening embodies the value of vigilance – the quality of listening to discover diversity within yourself.[98] The value of

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[95] A philosophical starting point here would be Deleuze, though a theological proposal exists in the work of Tom Driver.

[96] Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, quoted in Bourn and Tarozzi, Pedagogy of Hope for Global Social Justice, 149.

[97] Raimon Panikkar, *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype* (London: Seabury Press, 1982), 64.

[98] This is 'active listening', variously exemplified in Freirian dialogue, the theatre games of Augusto Boal, or in the psychotherapy of Carl Rogers.

hospitality,[99] I suggest, reflects the converging values of religion and education in a pluralist post-secular and post-colonial context where interculturality and plurality define the self.[100]

> The novelty of the religion of the future will consist, more than anything else, in the legitimate plurality of interpretation which extends the margin of such freedom to the very level of the person.[101]

According to the pedagogical reflections, an interpretation is worthy inasmuch as it frees the person – to achieve their fullest personhood, to respond to truth in spirit, to discover their true face. I am consistently bringing the liminal, relational and non-dual perspectives to bear on this process acknowledging and analysing the role of intercultural communication. Therefore, the emphasis is not on the creation of democratic agents so much as on individual and shared experience reflecting Peace.

From robust philosophical and theological bases, Pluralist theologies of religions affirm Peace and harmony as trans-religious in scope, acknowledge interculturality as a gift, and hospitality as a prime ethical value in pedagogical practice. I have developed the thesis that an interreligious theology of quest can instill faith, secure courageous self-inquiry in the practice of collaborative theology, and also support intrareligious spirituality. Philosophies and theologies of religions have the potential to make ongoing contributions to the context of the secular intercultural school at all levels of community experience. I have used pluralist theologies of religions to address the model of moral development as one of justice and care and (re)affirmed an educational model aligned with the mission and lived community of the intercultural college. This proposal suggests that at all stages the student should be engaged as contributor. The ideal towards which I aspire is that of inviting the student to participate in the shared quest of a wisdom-seeking community, which fosters mutual understanding across cultural difference, and is characterized by *courtesy of the heart*.[102]

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[99] Claudia W. Ruitenberg, *Unlocking the World: Education in an Ethic of Hospitality* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015); Michael Barnes, *Waiting on Grace: A Theology of Dialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[100] John Rowan and Mick Cooper, *The Plural Self: Multiplicity in Everyday Life* (London: Sage, 1999).

[101] Raimon Panikkar, "The Religion of the Future," *Interculture* 23, no. 2 (1990): issue 107, 20.

[102] Sutcliffe, Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges, 59–154

Note:

I have chosen to make very liberal use of itallics. These indicate when a different language has been transliterated, but also when a new concept has been named, or sometimes a name coined, that will be discussed further in the text. I have also, in places, drawn focus onto key concepts that act as themes in Hick and Panikkar or Hahn's thinking by itallicising them.

PART ONE

Chapter One

John Hick's Epistemological Framework and the Shaping of his Theology of Religions.

In this chapter, John Harwood Hick's Pluralist Hypothesis is examined and the context of his thought explained. I evaluate Hick's approach to shaping a theology of religious difference and note the essential link between Pluralism and Pacifism. Hick's critical realist, pluralistic faith is our first theological model towards a pedagogy of peace in the secular intercultural context. To assess the implications of his Pluralist Hypothesis, we must provide a sense of the deepest motivations, scope and limitations of his central project, here encapsulated in one sentence:

> A contemporary apologetic for belief in the transcendent, then, must start from the new situation revealed by our modern awareness of religious plurality and conceptual relativity.[103]

Section 1 - Defense of Faith

Hick's understanding of transcendence, the context of his defense of belief, is clarified, considering the ways in which he conceives "conceptual relativity" in relation to religious difference.

1.1.1 Faith and Knowledge

The ideas that John Hick goes on to develop throughout his life were established in his early *Faith and Knowledge*. Published in 1957, *Faith and Knowledge* (*FK*), Hick's first book, was written in his first year as assistant professor at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, when he was thirty-five. Although it was based on his doctoral thesis,

[103] John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1989), https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230371286, 9.

undertaken under H.H.Price (the Critical Realist) at Oxford[104], whose fascination with perception and interpretation must have helped form Hick's epistemological emphasis, it is a direct response to the Wittgensteinian, Positivist ethos into which he was immersed at Cornell. The defining struggle of the work is to defend the rationality of Christian faith and the verification of religious concepts and experiences. He argues that certainties by which we live do not appear to us as clear and distinct Cartesian ideas but are in fact arrived at by complex and unconscious processes of synthesis and evaluation - what Newman called the *illative sense*.[105] "In short, it is not a mind but a person that reasons… Furthermore, we cannot stand outside the special structure of our intellect on order to criticize it."[106] Hick points out to the dogmatic scientific reductionist that our everyday knowledge is not confirmed by apodictic proofs but by an illative interpretative process; thus religious faith may also be considered reasonable, convincing, though not amenable to ultimately compelling, certainty-inducing, empirical demonstration. As Newman did, Hick employs this concept to defend the rationality of both religious respect for traditional wisdom and subjective, conditioned processes of meaning-making. It is worth noting here, however, that Hick does not go so far as to acknowledge the historically conditioned nature of all knowledge in the thorough-going way some have[107], rather he tries to build a bridge with Positivists, retaining both Kant's definition of *a priori* truths and their understanding of these as absolute analytic truths (both within language games and axiomatic schema, and universally). Thus, Hick's theology retains an Anglo/American objectivism in contrast to Continental philosophy's starting point of radical deconstruction of the subjective perspective. Hick's first step is to question Newman's concern with assent to religious knowledge as a proposition. Faith according to Hick, though nonetheless a form of cognition, is different from the consideration of propositions. The religious person has an awareness of God mediated to them especially by the intuitive demands of conscience. As he was later to put it, religious faith, according to Hick, is "a form of cognition by acquaintance… more like sense perception than

[104] 1948-1950

[105] John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870; repr., Aeterna Press, Kindle ed., 2014)

[106] John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (reprinted; London: Fontana, 1974), 85.

[107] e.g. Vico, Gadamer

propositional belief."[108] The central feature of Hick's epistemology, the place he gives *interpretation*, which he later developed into his critical realist stance, appears here in this early work. Again, he reduces to the analysis of perception -

> we must accept the Kantian thesis that we can be aware only of that which enters into a certain framework of basic relations which is correlated with the structure of our own consciousness. [109]

The role of interpretation, he cites as his first great influence in Philosophy, his tutor at Edinburgh, Norman Kemp Smith, translator of Kant and authority on Hume and Descartes, who was known for a combination of naturalism with epistemological idealism. On the other hand, acknowledgment here of the relational features of our human cognitive landscape, did not take him so far as to adopt the stance of another of his early Edinburgh tutors, John MacMurray. MacMurray's *The Self as Agent* and *Persons in Relation*[110] were an attempt to establish that the human person is an ontologically relational entity, a reciprocally constructed agent, and further, that knowledge, given the network of intersecting relations about the self, has the ultimate and inherent purpose (teleology) to achieve the best quality of those relationships. MacMurray, from a distinctively Quaker perspective (Hick's own native tradition and MacMurray's last home), defined this best quality as *friendship.* Those Gifford lectures of MacMurray's received a somewhat dismissive review by Hick, implicitly accusing his philosophy of looseness and incoherence, which Hick was later to reconsider as maybe too harsh.[111] While the conduct of his thought rejected MacMurray's altogether, the conduct of his life, however, did not, and we can see the theme of seeking friendship as defining much of his work in social contexts after his move to Birmingham in 1967. This has been a digression which will show its relevance only by resonance with a later chapter and after we have looked at Panikkar as well. However, it is mentioned now as these perspectives were all

[108] John Hick, God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion (Oxford; Chatham, NY: Oneworld, 1993), 38.

[109] Hick, God and the Universe of Faiths, 98.

[110] John Macmurray, The Self as Agent: Being the Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Glasgow in 1953 (London: Faber and Faber, 1968)

[111] John Hick, *John Hick: An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005) 67.

concurrent with Hick's development of the foundations of his later pluralist theology of religions. For now we return to the track of his argument in *Faith and Knowledge*.

1.1.2 Kantian epistemology

Hick's concern was with the psychological or spiritual experience of an outward turn, to acknowledge reality beyond the self and beyond self-interest, that he interpreted in Christian terms as *metanoia*, a foretaste of salvation. He had himself undergone a sudden epiphany on the top deck of a bus in the University City of Hull when he was a young law student there. His understanding of this experience was no doubt then shaped by his subsequent immersion in the fraternity of an evangelical Christian association and then his training for ministry of the Presbyterian Church of England. However, as he later reflected, the central idea of "an outward turn, a salutary state of mind in which everything is seen as alive and mysterious and worth looking at"[112], an ego-transcending interest in the real, was an insight that subsequently informed all his life's work, the evangelical phase of his life appearing, in hindsight, as an early aberration in a consistent and long term train of development.

The key to Hick's conceptual framing of religious knowledge comes from Kant's analysis of perception: that there is an inherent disconnect between that which we observe (the real thing in itself - *Das Ding an sich*) and the perception we can derive of it (necessarily subject to biological and psychological degrees of interpretation), a Cartesian dualism. Hick uses this idea of the epistemic distance between the *noumenon* and the *phenomenon* as a theological analogy to explain the diversity of mankind's experiences of the divine. This allowed him to adopt a phenomenological approach to the comparative study of religions, in the footsteps of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, a specialist in the exposition of Islamic religion to the Western academy. However, the Kantian appropriation, applying the noumenal/phenomenal distinction to religious knowledge, or rather, to knowledge of God, as we shall see, is not entirely unproblematic.

[112] A quotation from John Hick's first published paper (pre-conversion), "On the Importance of Heresy," appears in Hick, *John Hick: An Autobiography,* 33.

1.1.3 Developing Critical Realism

Throughout his long career, Hick continued to develop and refine his theory of the Real in religious discourse, developing his position as a 'critical realist' one. The reality of the 'really Real' receives its fullest philosophical treatment in Hick's *An Interpretation of Religion*, his Gifford Lectures of 1989, where he devoted a chapter to *Religious Realism and Non-Realism*. Here, he clarifies that he is not intending *realism* in terms of the realist/nominalist dichotomy of the Scholastic era, rather as identified with the rising 'Critical Realist' movement in America. The first principle of Critical Realism is the ontological intransitivity of reality – i.e. that reality exists independently of any knowledge of it. In this sense he is, he says, *realist* as opposed to *idealist* according to the definition of those positions as they developed through the 19th century with the German idealist philosophers. Hick is not developing a realist philosophy as such, however - in fact, he uses the term "*by analogy*"[113] (my emphasis) to impose the view that the religious transcendent, however conceived by different cultures, "is really 'there' to be referred to."[114] Now the concept of a *really Real* in ancient and modern traditional analyses of perception (e.g. Platonism or *Samkhya*) is not just the affirmation of an existent God, it is clearly also the suggestion that the real as we perceive it is somewhat less real, ontologically, than that Real which transcends it. However, Hick was careful to distinguish his Critical Realism, descending from his inspiration Arthur Lovejoy and the empiricist school of critical realism in America exemplified by R.W. Sellars, with its emphasis on epistemological realism (empiricism), from the Critical Realism of George Santayana or C.A. Strong, whose philosophy engaged with the ontological questions raised by this line of argument about the relationship between human consciousness and material reality.[115] One brief passage from Hick's autobiography that provides deep insight into his appropriation of Kant's famous distinction is worth quoting here as it encapsulates his epistemology, and the religious ethics and implied ontology that hinge on it:

[113] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 172.

[114] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 173.

[115] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion. 174.

> Although Kant himself did not apply his noumenal/phenomenal distinction to religion it can in fact solve the problem which he did not solve, namely how the noumenal reality can be said to cause the phenomenal reality when causation is itself an aspect of the latter. For if we hold, with the mystical strand of all the great world religions, that there is a spiritual aspect to our own nature that is akin to or continuous with the noumenal divine reality, then causality only enters in on the human level in our overcoming of the ego-centered point of view and thus becoming open to our own deepest nature which naturally responds to the universal presence of the transcendent divine reality.[116]

Thus, human interpretation had ontological significance for Hick although he never, as far as I can tell, elucidated this profound connection between ontology and his dualist epistemology beyond this hint.

Hick spent much of his career responding to positivist objections to verification of the existence of God. At its simplest, his argument is that a theology may be verified eschatologically. In other words, in response to Popper's famous falsification principle for scientific propositions, though we might not be able to tell whether our religious beliefs are true apodictically until we die or until the end times, nevertheless they are in theory falsifiable when we get there. Therefore, neither do they fall into Wittgenstein's category of the meaningless. Thus, Hick could maintain a commitment to Anglo/American analytic orientation, to logic and objective certainties about the real and the Real, maintaining that in principle, objective eschatological verifications of the existence of the Real are possible. This proof of the rationality of religious discourse and theology emboldened Hick to propose that assent to the reality of the transcendent is a trans-religious given, and further, to argue the rational defensibility of giving such assent. Hick's approach is notable for the bridge that it establishes between the positivist language of the academy of his day and the often rather too literally held religious beliefs of communities with which he interacted. As apology, it sidesteps the need to establish proofs of God's existence. His epistemological focus worked, in fact, according to the

[116] Hick, John Hick: An Autobiography, 69.

principle of *innocent until proven guilty*, allowing him to argue for the admissibility of religious experience into rational discourse.

> The role of philosophical argument is not to prove or probabilify God's existence but to establish our right, as rational beings, to trust our religious experience as we trust other modes of experience, except in each case when we have good reason to doubt them.[117]

1.1.4 Systematic Protestant influences

Just as characteristic of Hick's theological scheme, were key appropriations from the Protestant, systematic theology of Paul Tillich on which he taught in his first professorship and with whom he met while at Cornell. Certain key points of Tillich's theology on which Hick depends, stand out as integral to the evolution of the idea of the *really Real* - the transcendent singular behind religious plurality. The first, Tillich's definition of God as the *ground of being*, allows theology to consider the variety of religious experience in a way whereby theistic, non-theistic and a-theistic traditions are included and cross-examined. The second, the *unconditioned* nature of the absolute, matches the ineffable transcendence of Hick's *really Real* and his proposal of a necessary epistemic distance between the human and the divine. Third, they shared the concept of faith as a commitment of the whole personality, not just a matter of intellectual assent: in Hick's terms, that religious faith is not only *propositional,* but also *dispositional* belief .[118] The key difference here is that the ultimate paradox of the unconditioned nature of the absolute, as Tillich understood it symbolised by the cross, is the unity of the Unconditional and the Conditioned. This ontological unity begins to be suggested in Hick's theological writings about the Incarnation at the very end of his career,[119] but for the most part, he preferred a de-mythologising, historical/critical approach marked by a deep suspicion of doctrinal articulations of *incarnation*.[120] Finally, Tillich's post-

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[117] Hick, John Hick: An Autobiography, 314.

[118] John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (1993; repr., London: SCM Press, 2005) 9-11.

[119] Hick strikes a new speculative tone in this regard; see John Hick, *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm* (London: Oneworld, 2013).

[120] Hick held the dogma of the absolute uniqueness and exclusive sufficiency of Christ responsible for a litany of atrocities perpetrated in Christian intolerance through the centuries. Hick, *Myth of God Incarnate,* 145; Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate,*187.

existentialist, broad definition of theology as responses to that which is of *ultimate concern,*[121] defined religion in terms not of its content, but of its psychic character;[122] an anthorpological definition, of a trans-cultural, universal, human phenomenon. Hick was attracted to this definition[123] also because it emphasized that the contents of our faith are revealed when we face catastrophe and are shaped by what is of most concern to us. The existential function of religious beliefs and practices is integral to them.[124] Thus, for Hick, religions are to be interpreted as human responses to a universal human predicament defined by the experience of relation to the Real.[125] However, here again, we should note two important differences. First, while Tillich focused on the experience of existential doubt, as providing the grounds for faith, Hick responded eagerly to the challenge of the rational verification of religious propositions. And second, where Tillich argued against religion as a separate sphere of culture,[126] Hick maintains the distinction (i.e. the absolute transcendence of ultimate Reality) consistently. These are key distinctions which have bearing on the comparison which follows and resonate through the discussion of education towards which we are leading.

1.1.5 Person-making

At Princeton Seminary Hick found the dominant theology of the academy to be that of Karl Barth with which he disagreed both temperamentally, finding German and Continental theology obscurantist in general, and then, more pointedly, on the issue of Barth's account of evil. This is surprising when we think of the application of this Barthian sense of the absolute transcendence of divine in Hick's thought. Hick distanced himself from Barth on two key points. One was the issue of original sin, the concept of

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[121] Stanley Grean, "Truth and Faith in Paul Tillich's Thought: The Criteria and Values of Ultimacy," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 16, nos. 1–2 (1993): 149–66, https://doi.org/10.3138/uram.16.1-2.149, quoting Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 14.

[122] Grean, "Truth and Faith in Paul Tillich's Thought," 149.

[123] Hick employed it in the introduction to his Gifford series; see Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion,* 4.

[124] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 4.

[125] Geoff Teece, "John Hick's Religious Interpretation of Religion: An Unexplored Resource for Religious Educators," in *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World: An Ongoing Engagement with John Hick*, ed. Sharada Sugirtharajah (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 169, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230360136_20.

[126] Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

universal salvation worked out in detail in his *Evil and the God of Love*[127] which takes on perhaps the ultimate theological challenge - the problem of pain. In it, the epistemological gap between the human and the divine in Hick's theology led him to characterize human life in the world as "a person-making environment."[128] Human freedom itself is predicated on ignorance, for if we could know the Real we would never choose other than to live our lives entirely in accordance with it. Hence, there is no *fall*; mankind's rupture from the divine is to be understood as epistemic. It is not the fault of mankind that has imposed this ignorance either, rather it is a gift; the gift of freedom and the opportunity to grow into full personhood. The resulting understanding of suffering as character-building confirms the coherence of Hick's Protestant work ethic. The second was Barth's concept of evil as *das Nichtige*, expounded in what was for Hick at Princeton then, a ubiquitous tome, Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik* (1932). Hick's objection was that this view compromises the power of the ultimate. From Hick's point of view, there is a radical freedom inherent in the world that God has provided for us, which is, if you like, the gift of evil. Ultimately, all-powerful God can be forgiven the evil in the world because it comes with the promise of infinite reward, the seal of which is the taste of faith in the human heart which turns to accept the influence of God/the Real. The relevance of these distinctions will become clearer in subsequent chapters, though surely already apparent is that the vision of life as a soul-making journey is one which has profound potentials for the sphere of education where formation of character is centered.

Section 2 - The Pluralist Hypothesis

> the transcendent divine reality, which I call the Real, which is from our human point of view transcategorical (or ineffable) but which we experience as the humanly constructed God figures of the different religions.[129]

[127] John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010b)

[128] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion. 119.

[129] John Hick, Between Faith and Doubt: Dialogues on Religion and Reason (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010a). 69.

1.2.1 The Real

Hick's *transcategorical,* ineffable ultimate lies beyond the scope of human epistemic categories whatsoever, thus cannot be known by us. To illustrate, he referred to a model in Upanishadic thought acknowledging both personal and non-personal forms of the deity (without and with attributes - *nirguna* and *saguna Brahman*). Hick reported the first articulation of the idea as a transreligious key taking place at a Catholic conference on 'Christian Revelation and non-Christian Religions'[130] in 1964 where discussion of Vatican II moved for a shift from an ecclesio-centric to a theo-centric understanding of religions. Hick's 'Copernican' revolution in theology consisted in shifting the center of the religious universe for Christians of all stripes, from *Jesus* to the *Real.*[131] He always presented this trans-religious theory as a hypothesis, since we cannot be sure that indeed the same center informs the religious cultures of the world. As Knitter points out, this interpretation involves, in the first place, a pragmatic ethical decision against literalism and exclusivism.[132] It is a working hypothesis given to some recognized unknowns. These unknowns include the nature of salvation for religions other than one's own, and the ethical status of the worldviews of diverse religions. Hick's formula, however, offers a way to engage with different religions by sharing an epistemological foundation, already, he believed, native to the *world religions*, especially in their mystical traditions.

1.2.2 Religious anthropology

Hick establishes his theological interpretation on the basis of a comparative anthropology of religion invoking the Axial Age as a defining moment in the evolution of human consciousness.[133] According to this view, at this point in history, a certain type of religiosity becomes possible for human beings, which Hick takes as definitive of religions as a family of phenomena today. He draws principally on Mircea Eliade and Trevor Ling to observe the ritualised stability and order characteristic of ancient Egyptian monarchical polytheism, an essentially conservative rather than revolutionary archaic

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[130] 38th International Eucharistic Congress Bombay 1964, see International Eucharistic Congress, "38th International Eucharistic Congress, Bombay," 1964, www.malankaralibrary.com

[131] Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 133.

[132] Knitter, Introducing Theologies of Religions, 114.

[133] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, Part 1.

religious outlook, being overturned by the individualizing insights of the age of Buddha, Elijah and Socrates.[134] Like the concept of *World Religions* itself,[135] Hick's readiness to assume that "for centuries and millennia the conditions of human life remained essentially the same, and generation after generation lived and died within the same familiar mental horizons"[136] is now questionable; Karl Jaspers' theory that "a movement began from archaic religion to the religions of salvation or liberation."[137] There is no doubt that the anthropological perspective of Jaspers' theory contributes centrally to the definition of religion as genus across different cultures for Hick as for many. For example, this reference point is integral in the work of Karen Armstrong at the Parliament of the World's Religions.[138]

1.2.3 Answering relativism

The Kantian doctrine Hick developed insists that from our human perspective, we cannot possibly, lacking "the eye of omniscience", judge if one tradition "is, on balance, superior to the rest. But to our fallible human view they constitute different ways of being human in relation to the Eternal."[139] Thus, for Hick, Kant's epistemological frame could offer a corrective against the arrogation to oneself, or one's own tradition, any monopoly on absolute truth. Though he did not do so, we might call this 'epistemic humility', and the possibility of maintaining epistemic humility is considered in greater depth in subsequent chapters. However, the problem inherent in Hick's approach to religious diversity is that neither can we, by these criteria, stipulate the world religions as of roughly equal

[134] The characterization is questionable from the point of view of archaeological history; like many others of his time, Hick's understanding of Vedic history, for instance, seems to revolve around the myth of the Aryan invasion, and his Egyptian religion analysis leaves out the anomaly of Akhenaten and the female character of Ma'at, for example.

[135] In terms of the study of religions, wisdom traditions, including shamanic, African, and indigenous forms of wisdom are often lacking from the syllabi that purport to study religion. A focus on the institutional 'world religions' and the forms of schooling this has engendered, has compromised access to these sources. Both Panikkar and Hick, sharing these, sensed the limitations inherent in their putative hypotheses and yet remained committed to the indelible East/West experience from which they were derived.

[136] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 72.

[137] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 72.

[138] Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Knopf/Random House, 2006).

[139] John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 30.

soteriological value[140], as he does, or indeed perhaps make any judgments about them whatsoever. We are obliged to consider seriously the criticism that Hick's theology of religions invokes an ultimate relativism. Alvin Plantinga, Gavin D'Costa, and Paul Knitter[141] are among many who have wrestled with the problem in various forms that Hick's radical transcendentalism suggests that no contents of religious belief can be considered true knowledge. Not only, they argue, does this undermine the truth claims of many religions, but it renders unlikely the possibility of fruitful dialogue between religions since the truth itself is deemed to lie outside the scope of religious knowledge.

Hick brought several arguments in response to this frequent accusation. The first derives directly from epistemic distance from the Real in his metaphysics. The *transcategorical* transcendence of the Real, according to Hick, allows that the different religions may be considered distinct but equally authentic manifestations of the human encounter with the divine, not just relativistic interpretations. He points out

> We cannot rationally hold both that the ineffable, or transcategorical, ultimate reality is indescribable in human terms and also that it is correctly decribable in the terms provided by one's own religious tradition.[142]

Thus, Hick's Pluralistic perspective is radically opposed to absolute religious claims apart from, and here a further criticism is raised, those of the hypothesis itself; i.e. that these act as an absolute metaphysical schema to which all other religious (or world-view orientations) must submit in order to enter into dialogue. Hick maintained in response to this accusation that "a common core" of religious experience could be found across religions that constitutes the basis for their meeting. In particular, he found a ready supply of correspondences between the *mystical* texts of several world religions which confirm, from his point of view, the universal nature of that core experience.[143] The mere correspondence, however, does not establish what then are the criteria for judging among

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[140] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 369.

[141] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Gavin D'Costa, "The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions," *Religious Studies* 32, no. 2 (1996): 223–32, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412500024240; Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

[142] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 21.

[143] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 51.

religious truth claims.[144] Although one must suspect that Hick used the criterion of correspondence with the hypothesis itself as a measure of truth, Hick affirmed two fundamental criteria of judgment in this regard. The first relates to the transformation of the perspective of the adherent - i.e. the nature of the conversion experience. Hick's own experience was the measure of this, involving, as it did by his interpretation, an outward turn from an ego-centered to Real- or God- centered life. A religion that turns the hearts and minds of its adherents outward in compassionate service to those about them is one that reflects the presence of the Real. The second, flowing from this, was Hick's view from first to last that it is in the behaviour of the religious that you can identify the quality of their religious convictions: "by their fruits shall ye know them" (Matt. 7:16).[145] Religious belief has more importance in terms of dispositional value than propositional value, and the Real can, according to Hick, be identified by the authenticating fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22): 'love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, self-control'[146] Thus, representing his own *ultimate concerns*, Hick's philosophical project as a whole is predicated on a particular ethical stance, which we now turn to examine in more depth. These were convictions that Hick felt had always been native to him; just as he was a born philosopher, he was born with a moral compass.

1.2.4 Ethics and politics

The philosophical and political climate in which John Hick grew up included paradigmatic influences: Mahatma Gandhi and Betrand Russell. They inspired his pacifism, his pluralism and his positivism, three elements which underpin his output. Hick answered the criticism that he engages in an outright relativism with reference to the quest for peace; his conviction that, whatever the position of phenomenal religions, war is not sanctioned by the divine Real:

> religion has sanctioned human sacrifices, torture and burning of 'witches' and 'heretics'; it has blessed almost every war that has ever been

[144] Mary Ann Stenger, "Mediating Relativism in Tillich's and Hick's Theories of Religious Truth," in *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World: An Ongoing Engagement with John Hick*, ed. Sharada Sugirtharajah (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 164.

[145] John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (reprinted; London: Fontana, 1974), 174; and Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion,* 225.

[146] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 225.

> fought…"[147] On the other hand, "We see individuals and societies being morally and spiritually elevated by the claim of the Real touching them through their religious traditions.[148]

According to Hick, this 'claim of the Real', mediated through religions inspires "men and women who have risen above self-centeredness to serve God or to live out the *Dharma*; it has also been a major influence in such developments as the abolition of slavery, the beginning of the liberation of women, the struggle against racial discrimination, the rise of political concern for the unjustly disadvantaged and the search for international disarmament and world peace."[149]

Hick's theology developed as a critical response to his own experience. In first place his conversion, and then also his legal training. These informed his inability to stand by certain dogmas in the light of advances in historical/critical theological studies of the Bible and its histories, including literal interpretations of creation stories in Genesis. In what became a high profile case in 1962, he was censured by the New Brunswick Presbytery when he confessed that he could not affirm the doctrine of the virgin birth as related in Luke and considered it a peripheral rather than a central Christian article of faith. It was a matter over which he might have lost his Princeton Seminary professorship. However, he received much support internationally and closest to hand, he was defended through this critical moment by his minister, Ben Anderson at the predominately black First Presbyterian Church (originally the slave church) where John and his wife Hazel were only the second white family to have joined.[150] Such personal experiences certainly contributed to his ethical orientation.

Hick's enduring solidarity with the scientific positivist contingent, despite disagreeing with them entirely on the central matter of religious faith, was not motivated only by intellectual honesty, but also by political orientation. Bertrand Russell, peace-activist and atheist, had been an early Left-wing influence[151]. Hick saw himself as similarly in the

[147] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 9.

[148] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 8-9.

[149] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 8-9.

[150] Hick, John Hick: An Autobiography, 124-130

[151] Hick, John Hick: An Autobiography, 25.

tradition of the great English empiricists and was still reading biographies of Russell with pleasure into his eighties.[152] Hick, like Russell, was a Peace campaigner. In the 1930s he had been a member of the Peace Pledge Union and wrote for the pacifist organization in the run up to the Second World War. He was also, to the disappointment of his father, a conscientious objector. This decision changed the direction of his life and faith. With the Friends Ambulance Service in Egypt he experienced firsthand of the plight of refugees and worked at a makeshift field hospital among a diverse crew of doctors and carers before serving also in Greece and Italy among friends from other Christian denominations.[153] Although barely discernable in his writing at that time, surely, we could guess that these encounters with people of diverse cultures and religions sowed the seeds of what would become his abiding interest in religious belief systems other than his own and his advocacy for interreligious tolerance.

Hick was to spend most of his entire later career working on the basis that peace needs to be established between religions by achieving an epistemological accommodation and he wanted to secure this in a way that would satisfy positivists and atheists as well. The problem, for Hick, is the absolute claims of religions and the exclusivist ethos that many of them adopt. This allows religions to be marshalled as conflict intensifying and aggravating ingredients in a world constantly at war with itself. The paradigm shift proposed by Hick looked, as Paul Knitter explains "not for a name, but a pointer" … Hick was "searching for a term that would indicate not what is at the center, but that there is a centre, even though humans will never know clearly and fully what it contains."[154] Hick's argument for the necessity of such a referent is made on the grounds that both exclusive and inclusive attitudes to intercultural religious encounter fail on ethical grounds. Hick regularly listed the evil consequences of what he defines as a Christian superiority complex, with examples of centuries of anti-semitism, the colonial exploitation of the global South, the arbitrary subjugation of women (citing Aquinas), a deplorable history of in-fighting and endless conflict with other religions.[155] According to Knitter, Hick's

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[152] Hick, John Hick: An Autobiography, 314.

[153] Hick, John Hick: An Autobiography, 45-66.

[154] Knitter, Introducing Theologies of Religions, 114.

[155] John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (1993; repr., London: SCM Press, 2005). 3-46.

mutuality model, his Pluralist Hypothesis, acknowledging the many religions in their diversity as symbols and metaphors of the one Real, invites us to acknowledge that if we plumb their depths, contradictions between them may turn out to be less exclusionary than they first appear.

1.2.5 Universal ethics - the primacy of ethics in Christian Pluralism

If we are to assess the internal coherence of the Pluralist hypothesis, therefore, we should make explicit the link between his epistemological starting point and its foundational ethical convictions. Hick's adoption of Kant's epistemological 'distance', with its often rejected Cartesian dualistic separation of the perceiver from the object, self from other, is also a way in which Hick intends to assert the universal possibility of moral arbitrations between systems of belief. Hick's interpretation of Kant's epistemological insight includes the reflection that for Kant, the free and independent exercise of one's reason represents the necessary degree of maturity by which an agent may do good by rational obedience to their moral duty.[156] For Hick, such judgments are guaranteed by the universal, if ineffable, nature of the Real.

> Faith for Hick is a free (uncompelled) interpretative response to a dimension of experience, that is the Real, that grounds moral understanding and invites or challenges a person to 'a radical self-transcendence'.[157]

In this regard, Hick relied on Kant's defense of a priori knowledge (against Hume's empiricism), in *A Critique of Natural Reason*, which upholds the primacy of metaphysics and prioritizes ethics. Here, the systematic unity of reason and reality is seen as intrinsically moral: "the cause of nature is a supreme reason, which governs according to moral laws."[158] Kant furthermore argues that his moral theology has the peculiar advantage in contrast with speculative theology (transcendental or natural),

> of leading inevitably to the conception of a sole, perfect and rational first cause, whereof speculative theology does not give us any indication on

[156] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Mieklejohn (1787; repr., London: Everyman / Dent, 1934).

[157] Mary Ann Stenger, "Mediating Relativism in Tillich's and Hick's Theories of Religious Truth," in *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World: An Ongoing Engagement with John Hick*, ed. Sharada Sugirtharajah (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 166.

[158] Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 456–61.

> objective grounds, far less any convincing evidence. …if we take our stand on moral unity as a necessary law of the universe, and from this point of view consider what is necessary to give this law adequate efficiency and, for us, obligatory force, we must come to the conclusion that there is one only supreme will, which comprehends all these laws in itself.[159]

Although Hick never explicitly refers to this underpinning argument, it is fair to say that it influenced his whole approach.[160]

Hick's pragmatic hypothesis takes ethics as basic. Hick's conviction was that the teachings of Christ and especially the passages gathered as 'the sermon on the mount' and 'the beatitudes' make an "inherent claim upon us". To substantiate his claim for the self-evidenciary nature of the truth of Christ's instructions to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, he points out that

> if we did not bring an existing moral discernment to our encounter with Jesus we would never have recognised him in the first place as a 'window onto God'. If we had reason to believe that he was devious, selfish, dishonest we would never have come to take him as our lord. And so his moral teaching, which presupposes while it deepens and widens our existing moral discernment, does not depend upon questionable miracle stories for its validity or its inherent claim upon us.[161]

His contention is supported, by remarking that the most admired exponents of the world's religions tend to exhibit many of the same core virtues as one another; the singularity of the Real is reflected in the character, behaviour and teachings of the exemplars of the world religions in their moral teaching.[162] Thus Hick's theory of the Real and Pluralist

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[159] Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 462.

[160] On the other hand we should also note that because Hick applies Kant's epistemology almost exclusively to the knowledge of God, he allows less room than Kant for the knowledge of God through nature, the continuity between transcendence and creation/immanence and, as we have already noted, sidesteps an important series of questions about the relationship between phenomenal and noumenal.

[161] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, xxxv.

[162] Hick cites the *Mahabharata*, the *Analects* of Confucius, The Buddhist *Udanavarga* and the Hadith *The Muslim* in addition to Luke 6:31 as confirming the universality of the Golden Rule among the world's religious traditions.

hypothesis as ethical response to the problem of diversity is defended on the grounds that it precedes scripture and transcends culture. While Hick could concede to empiricism that miracles are a matter of faith and may not be grounded in historical account, he insisted that ethical intuitions and human moral conscience are intimations of the really Real, accessible trans-culturally; religions can teach us something about these intuitions, they can qualify and develop them, but they cannot claim to be the origin of them. Thus, according to Hick, the Real exists and makes its moral perfection felt despite the paradoxes of our existence as we interpret it, and we can bring a reliable moral conscience to weighing the relative merits of differing religious values, which leads him to the controversial theological position that, in fact, they are "contexts of salvation to a more or less equal extent."[163] Thus, the Pluralist Hypothesis makes the argument that Pluralism, in some form, is demanded by Christian experience and ethics.

Hick's about-turn in relation to his own conversion included, his rejection of literalism and fundamentalism and especially the doctrine of double pre-destination from the Westminster Confession (1646), the Standard of churches of the Reformed or Calvinist tradition:

> In such a doctrine, the supreme insight and faith of New Testament monotheism, that God loves all His human children with an infinite and irrevocable love, is lost and there is a relapse to the conception of God as Lord of a chosen in-group whom He loves, who are surrounded by an alien out-group whom he hates.[164]

Hick developed, by contrast, a vision of *Universal Salvation* suggesting that the world's religions have within them the means of salvation.

1.2.6 Theological controversies over Incarnation

Of all the theological controversies that Hick invited, that over the doctrine of Incarnation was probably the most serious. Twenty-six years elapsed between the publication of a provocative collection of essays edited by Hick in 1977, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, and his 1993, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*. Both countered the central Christian claim that

[163] John Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 80–88.

[164] John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010b), 125.

"Christianity was the only religion that was founded by God in person, and must as such be uniquely superior to all other religions"[165] while the second is Hick's personal essay on the themes of the first. The whole enterprise reflects his historical position as a Christian liberal questioning Biblical literalism and the doctrinaire ethos of established institutions. Though many have taken this work to be an attack on traditional Christology and the uniqueness of Christ, Paul Knitter argues[166] that Hick's Christology drew on the new range of scholarship available[167], to demand that Christians distinguish between Jesus *totus Deus* (wholly God) and Jesus *totum Deum* (the whole of God), and choose the former. There does, however, seem to have been quite a progression in Hick's sense of the Incarnation, from his earliest embrace of fundamentalist belief, to his tentative questioning of historical and mythological sources, to his later re-appraisal of doctrine in the terms of Catholic process theology. His through-going commitment was to the historical Jesus in these terms:

> God's gracious and demanding love was embodied in Jesus' love in so powerful a way that we ourselves are grasped by it today, some nineteen centuries later [168]

His rejection was of the claim that Jesus embodied God's love *exclusively* or *fully*. The argument is that the historical Jesus could not have conceived of himself in the terms later ascribed to his person in Christian cosmic theology. Thus, he appeals to the earliest sources for authority: the argument that the language of incarnation is mythological in nature, draws on authoritative patristic corroboration in his later work: "Thus far it has been impossible to 'unpack' the concept of incarnation" says Hick[169]

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[165] Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate, preface.

[166] Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 119.

[167] E.g., the recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls; the latest commentaries by Géza Vermès; and the historical detective work of E. P. Sanders, who points out that the "Son of Man" sayings bear multiple readings depending on context and that the title "Son of God" was one Jesus would not have used of himself; see E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Géza Vermès, *Jesus the Jew* (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 1981).

[168] Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 122, citing John Hick, "Incarnation and Atonement: Evil and Incarnation," in *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, ed. Michael Goulder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 83–84.

[169] John Hick, God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion (Oxford; Chatham, NY: Oneworld, 1993), 170.

> trying to turn the myth into a hypothesis, we not only falsify its character but also generate implications that would make impossible any viable theology of religions.[170]

There is a tension in Hick's writing here, between this appreciation of mystery as inaccessible to conceptual reduction on the one hand, and his determination to de-mystify and deconstruct concepts to achieve inter-cultural theological insights on the other. The consequences of this are examined in more depth as we proceed.

[170] Hick, God and the Universe of Faiths, 179.

Section 3 - Interreligious Dialogue

1.3.1 Comparative theology

Hick remains a reference point the field of comparative theology. However, there are real questions about the impartiality of his comparative religious work. His own greater familiarity with theistic tradition might be held responsible for his preferential advocacy of the doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism for example, or his elision of the terms *Dharmakaya* and *Ishtar-devata*. Hick drew on Perennialist themes and what has become a standard litany of scriptural resources to support the Pluralist conviction.[171] Another criticism suggests that his approach is too much of the head and not enough of the heart. Knitter ends his chapter on Hick by acknowledging that it may be that "Hick's model of interreligious dialogue is too narrow or demanding for Christians of a less rational bent."[172] With Hick, perhaps a discussion of concepts outweighs inclusive religious dialogue. This question is raised by the juxtaposition with Panikkar, and will be addressed in depth through this thesis. Nevertheless, the practical context in which this work started, his encounter with the Windrush generation in Birmingham, and with the diversity of religious communities in that cosmopolitan city should not be forgotten. Hick's understanding of religious diversity was framed in advocacy for these diverse 'world religious' communities and they formed the crucible in which he applied his experiment in thought.

1.3.2 De-colonising Hick

Criticisms of Hick's comparative religious approach include that the de-mystifying and synthesizing approach has been largely misguided. The faith traditions cannot bear de-mystification, which is the other side of literalism's coin. It is reported that Kenneth Surin, reaching the end of his patience with the interreligious conference that resulted in the publication of *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, asked why the conversation about pluralism generates a "plethora of mutualities" with which pluralists console themselves about apparently irreconcilable difference, while in "the hegemonic culture of late capitalist society", what is actually being emphasized is "disjunctions, disunities,

[171] (e.g. the Mandukya and Chandogya Upanisads are the ones he refers to most frequently).

[172] Knitter, Introducing Theologies of Religions, 122.

countervailing distances, dissonances."[173] Surin's critique identifies the inner tension, contradiction even, in Hick's work while voicing an objection, that has grown ever since, to the tendency of the Western intellectual to judge by the categories of Western thought and to appropriate at liberty artefacts of culture from ill-understood traditions East and South. Tom Driver, considering the overall defensibility of pluralism agreed that "The agenda of this book is certainly Western, and there is no reason to deny that it is couched in Western terms, addressed to Western audiences and aimed at a Western conscience."[174] Tom Driver's own thesis, that of radical immanence, highlights the tension between Hick's analytic model of pluralism and Christian theological need for a model which responds to what we have called Tillich's paradox - the fundamental unity of the unconditioned and the phenomenal. This criticism becomes a persistent theme in the comparison we make with Panikkar.

Finally, one of the most searching criticisms points out that maintaining the functional equality of status of different religions in the secular context of 'freedom of religion,' is not at all the same as a value judgment on their moral worth or soteriological capacities. Hick's argument is that Pluralism does not constitute "an a-priori, free-standing theory, unrelated to living religion, but an attempt from within it to make sense of the actual religious situation world-wide."[175] Thus, there are weaknesses in Hick's Pluralist Hypothesis in practice. However, if it is understood as a second-order hypothesis of adequate terms of engagement and an encouragement to find common life on the basis of commonalities of belief and experience, then I suggest that it constitutes important ongoing work, perhaps especially in the context of intercultural education.

1.3.3 The end of dialogue?

The severest critic to feature in D'Costa's *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*[176] was John Milbank. Milbank's essay returns to haunt this discussion because by being so radically opposed to Pluralism in all forms it acts as a focal point of criticism.

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[173] John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 205.

[174] Hick and Knitter, The Myth of Christian Uniqueness, 206.

[175] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, xxvi.

[176] Gavin D'Costa, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990).

> Being - both cultural and natural - or 'what there is', can get construed in sheerly different and incommensurable ways by the many religions… dialogue obscures the truth-of-difference… one can only regard dialogue partners as equal…if one takes them as liberal, Western subjects, images of oneself.[177]

Hick is countered as someone who addresses only a western audience, prioritizes instrumental reason, valorises autonomy of self over the porous, communally formed identities of global South cultures, appropriates doctrines and scriptures inappropriately, and as a thinker who confines himself to the conflictual discussion of concepts between religions, forming theories that misrepresent lived experience. His most vehement critics came from Christian circles to oppose his Christological formulations and his rejection of key orthodox doctrines. But Hick showed his hand also by action, especially in his action for peace. He was a conscientious objector, a strong advocate of interreligious dialogue, and he was instrumental in generating harmonies among Birmingham faith communities where he lived. He also sought to close the epistemological gap between religion and science and to understand faith as a mode of wellbeing through empirical exploration of religious experience. His most profound contributions perhaps, concern the stance he advocated in relation to the encounter with difference, his principles of engagement. These may be reduced to two key attitudes: Critical Trust and Cosmic Optimism. We close the chapter by considering these virtues in particular before moving to the work of Raimon Panikkar, against which, and with the help of which, we attempt to evaluate the Pluralist Hypothesis as a contribution to intercultural education.

1.3.4 Critical trust and cosmic optimism

Two attitudes may be considered Hick's cardinal virtues for the intercultural study of religions. The first of these, Critical Trust, relates to the *epoché*, the suspension of judgment, commitment to rationality and individual conscience that derives from the phenomenological method of Husserl. Finding a balance between trusting openness and critical discernment lies at the heart of interpersonal relationship and does not, according to Hick, conflict with faith: "the religious person should, even whilst living in the world

[177] John Milbank, "The End of Dialogue," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 177–178.

religiously, be able to acknowledge its theoretically equivocal character."[178] Inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism require a phenomenologist's hermeneutic distance. The second virtue Hick prescribes is that of Cosmic Optimism.[179] He was fond of quoting Julian of Norwich "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well," and described the world's religions as basically optimistic. One of the principal certainties associated with religious faith is the teleological confidence it secures about the final destiny of life. Hick devoted much time and many chapters to considering the question of what happens after we die, and he saw this optimism as derived from "mystical experiences occurring within the great theistic traditions"[180]

> My own religious experience …backed up by the experience based teachings of so many much greater figures makes me nearly as certain as it is possible to be of the ultimate goodness of the totality of which we are a part.[181]

It is in this spirit that, in one of his last books, John Hick decided to make a more popular account of his faith sharing some more of his empirical investigations into the experience of faith.[182] This included his long-term allegiance to the Quakers, his practice of Buddhist meditation and his lifelong interest in the neuroscience of religious and paranormal experience. No doubt he saw optimism as facilitating innovation. Hick's interest in empirical approaches to religious experience offers directions for both Science and Theology[183] and suggests ways in which scientific exploration of spiritual/religious phenomena and concepts within a more holistic paradigm.

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[178] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 129.

[179] Scratch the surface of a pessimist and you'll discover a defender of privilege," attributed to William Beveridge; see David Bley, "Privilege, Pessimism, Optimism & Equity," *Medium*, December 4, 2018, https://medium.com/@davidbleysea/privilege-pessimism-optimism-equity-cc429dce65e.

[180] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 169.

[181] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 169.

[182] John Hick, The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm (London: Oneworld, 2013).

[183] ...although research into the paranormal is still an entirely marginal field receiving the least of academic funding and support. It is the kind of work that Rupert Sheldrake has been pioneering - the open-minded experimentation with psychic and religious experience in a way that contributes both to our understanding of the phenomena of human experience, and also brings interpretative methodologies from science and religious traditions together: Rupert Sheldrake, "Rupert Sheldrake – Author and Biologist," *Rupert Sheldrake – Author and Biologist*, accessed July 14, 2024, https://www.sheldrake.org.

Concluding remarks - Peace and Pluralism

Through this chapter I have tried to reflect the scope of John Hick's religious philosophy, appreciating some of the nuances that inform his contribution to the dialogue between religions today, highlighting also problematic tensions in the development of his central positions as a Critical Realist philosopher and as a Pluralist theologian of religions. I have traced his early conversion and subsequent rejection of exclusive religiosity and observed how life experience and intellectual honesty led him to appreciate the worth of dialogue between religions. From the epistemological approach of his early work, in which he established the rationality of theological philosophy in the academy, to his commitment to the Real as a post-Kantian and Protestant vision of the trans-religious, absolutely transcendent ultimate, he engaged a diversity of religious beliefs to interpret religion as phenomenal expression of the Real. I have also briefly alluded to his theodicy, afterlife theories and scientific explorations. Considering objections to his Pluralist Hypothesis, the ways he defended and developed his response, brought out the ethical commitments that underlay his hypothesis - his pacifism and his basic pragmatism. We have also noted the way that he sidestepped certain forms of critical realism that emerged in his day and perhaps avoided acknowledging some of the consequences of the positions he stood by. I now turn to contrast Hick's pluralism with his close contemporary, Raimon Panikkar's more mystical philosophy to provide an alternate experience and vision with which to consider the contribution that Christian Pluralist Theologies of Religions can make to education for peace.

Chapter Two

Raimon Panikkar's Non-Dual Ontology and/as Theology of Religions

The perspective Panikkar brings to the question of the diversity of religions is an essential one because like increasing numbers of us, he embodied more than one tradition from birth. Introducing Raimon Panikkar's non-dual theological cosmovision, this chapter notes the multicultural context in which his ideas were nurtured; one where sometimes contradictory influences were in play at the same time. Panikkar's non-dual ontology set against Hick's Critical Realist approach, his hermeneutics, idealism and humanism, sheds new light on the strong link we have observed between peace activism and Christian Pluralist Theologies of Religions.

Section 1 - Early formation and key concepts

2.1.1 Introductory overview

Raimundo Panikkar is in some ways less accessible than his English contemporary; you will not find his works on school reading lists. A compendium of his works now exists as a resource in theology of religions.[184] His own life journey was one of self-discovery, first through the inherited Catholicism of his Catalan mother and then in encounter with his Keralan father's Indian religious roots. His work to promote inter-religious dialogue has been influential, while it has also stirred much controversy. Panikkar was a metaphysician and activist who excised deep flaws in the mythologies of contemporary cultures of knowledge. While his work may now be considered revolutionary in some ways, his formation could not have been more severely conservative. Panikkar's academic triumphs - his three doctorates in Philosophy, Chemistry and Theology - were achieved as an emissary of Opus Dei. The third of these, undertaken partly in Rome and partly in Banares, was a comparative reading of Thomas Aquinas and Adi Shankara. It already displayed his need to forge neologisms, to extend the boundaries of philosophical categories, and to find an alternative way of seeing. The application of non-dual frames of reference became central to his development and bore fruit in his defining theological

[184] Panikkar's *Opera Omnia* is now available in twelve volumes published by Orbis, Maryknoll.

statement *The Cosmotheandric Experience,*[185] in which he prophesied a convergence of human religions based on commitment to the harmonious restoration of the human, cosmic and divine spheres. While many have expressed admiration for the openness of his philosophical framework to post-colonial perspectives, some accuse him of misrepresenting Hinduism or other traditions[186], and many find his language perplexing or simply incoherent[187] and are left wondering if he is a polytheist, or an atheist; he has even been accused of manipulative evasiveness. This chapter aims to provide context to his thought, and clarify some of his distinctive themes in order to bring him into constructive dialogue with John Hick.

2.1.2 Radical beginnings

Having already fled to Barcelona to escape the First World War, (Raimon Panikkar was born there in 1918), the Panikkar family was forced to flee the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and settled at Siegburg, near Cologne, where Raimundo and his sister Mercedes were enrolled at the University in Bonn. Reportedly, it was his stay in Germany that provoked the young Raimundo's interest in Philosophy, his intention to become a priest, and taught him German.[188] In 1939, as a university student, he bicycled back from Bonn to Barcelona, not knowing that he was just ahead of the German invasion and was not able to return to his studies afterwards. In Barcelona, he was enrolled again to complete his Chemistry BA. At that time, he seems to have been influenced by the Spanish philosopher Garcia Morente whose lectures he secretly attended. Morente was interested in the link between ontology and faith. Another influence was Xavier Zubiri whose Theological and Historical perspectives on Philosophy of Science emphasised the impossibility of reducing God to an object of human knowledge.[189] These begin to give a clue to the

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[185] Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness* (1993; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998).

[186] Yvette Claire Rosser, "Puzzling Dimensions and Theoretical Knots – Indic Mandala," *Indicmandala.com*, accessed January 18, 2025, https://indicmandala.com/puzzling-dimensions-and-theoretical-knots/ and
Sita Ram Goel, *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters*, 2nd ed. (India: Voice of India, 1996), chap. 16, http://voiceofdharma.org/books/hhce/.

[187] Gerald James Larson, "Religions, People, and Peanuts: A Response to Raimon Panikkar," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 79, nos. 1–2 (1996): 193–96, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41178747

[188] Maciej Bielawski, *Panikkar, His Life and His Works* (Italy: Fazi Editore, 2018), 43.

[189] Bielawski, Panikkar, His Life and His Works, 48.

young philosopher's interest, but a more thorough-going influence came in the form of Escriva de Balaguer, the charismatic initiator of Opus Dei, who recruited Panikkar as a promising missionary. Escriva called young Catholics, lay and clergy alike, to contemplative practice in the midst of the world, emphasizing the sanctity of the ordinary and the holiness of everyday work, acts of service and secular duty. Panikkar's commitment appears to have been total and his energy within the missionary organisation perhaps instrumental to its success in Catalunia.[190] Despite his conviction in promoting the values of Opus Dei, however, Panikkar was also a maverick.

Milena Carrara Pavan,[191] tells us that at around the age of thirty, Panikkar wrote a book on patriotism, decrying the heresy of nationalism while "defending the need for concrete rootedness in and loyalty to one's own region, together with a universal ideal with no human limits."[192] He further produced an, as yet unpublished, trilogy of books of Christian theology - *Mysterium Crucis*, *Christianismo y Chistianidad*, and *Introducion a la Esperanza* - radically questioning the sources of hope to be found in Christianity as historical faith and culture. In these he was forging some of the motifs of his later work - the Trinity as revealing the structure of the relationship between mankind and the universe, the difference between Christian faith and Christian culture, and Hope as the most wanting of religious virtues in his day. In addition to all this, his meditations resulted in his *El concepto de la Naturaleza; Analisis Historico y Metafisico de un Concepto*, his first doctorate, in Philosophy (Madrid 1946): *The Concept of Nature; historical and metaphysical analysis of a concept*.[193] It argued that modern science, by removing the metaphysical and theological from our understanding of Nature has "flattened, reduced and impoverished the concept."[194] These early achievements show that Panikkar had already envisioned much that would later characterize his diverse, philosophical output: the sanctity of secular service, the dangers of nationalism, the

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[190] Bielawski, Panikkar, His Life and His Works, 51.

[191] his friend and editor of Panikkar's recently published *Opera Omnia*

[192] Bielawski, Panikkar, His Life and His Works, 48.

[193] Milena Carrara Pavan, "Raimon Panikkar: Life and Work," in *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*, ed. Peter C. Phan and Young-Chan Ro (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co., 2018), 16.

[194] Bielawski, Panikkar, His Life and His Works, 68.

mysterious centrality of Trinity, the status of Nature. They also show the beginnings of what would be his commitment to the practice of Theology in Augustinian terms as "faith seeking understanding." His theological writing also integrated contemplative practice and was drawn from the regular experience of silence; a private search for truth; a journey of inquiry and self-inquiry, and a mission to communicate religion as quest:

> When I say that the study of religion is a religious activity ...a total involvement and demands total surrender - which is quite different from uncritical commitment and blind fanaticism. It may not be enough in itself, but it may perhaps be a start if we strive to kindle true love in the hearts of people and inspire a genuine search for truth in the minds of both the young and the not-so-young[195]

2.1.3 Priesthood and Theology

In 1946 Raimon Panikkar was ordained a Catholic priest through Opus Dei's newly established Society of the Holy Cross. It was a decision that his family found difficult to understand and which alienated his father.[196] Panikkar's interpretation of his own priesthood meanwhile, was intricately bound up with his broader theology. A biographer records how later he used the phrase *dharma of Melchizedech* to highlight the cosmic dimensions of his own role as priest and mediator of the sacred.[197] Each eucharist he celebrated evoked a new and special sense of occasion. By all accounts, his outdoor Masses were inspired and sometimes eccentric liturgical performances.[198] At Santa Barbara University they drew crowds of students, and his Easter Masses in later life, at his retreat in Tavartet, brought their own regular pilgrims. It was perhaps in performance of these duties that Panikkar most integrated, in embodied, ritual terms, his vision of harmonising the human, cosmic and divine dimensions of existence. Panikkar's

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[195] Panikkar, unpublished, February 17, 1976, in Phan and Ro, *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*, 18.

[196] The timing of this event coincided with his father's paralysis and confinement to a wheelchair which must have put added stress on the relationship. Bielawski, *Panikkar, His Life and His Works*, 55.

[197] Bielawski, Panikkar, His Life and His Works, 56.

[198] Joseph Prabhu, "Raimon Panikkar, 'Apostle of Inter-Faith Dialogue,' Dies," *National Catholic Reporter*, 2022, https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/raimon-panikkar-apostle-inter-faith-dialogue-dies

priesthood and his contributions to Catholic intellectual life reflected Escriva's emphasis on work as the means of progressive sanctification and his theology meditated the *Christian materialism* of his mentor:

> … our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations, their noble and original meaning[199]

2.1.4 Continental philosophical themes

Bielawski reports that Panikkar was introduced to Martin Heidegger in 1953,[200] and pinpoints this moment as Panikkar's entry into the sphere of Europe's greatest intellectuals. The two struck up a correspondence and friendship that would last the rest of Heidegger's life, and Panikkar went on to become an international public intellectual and interreligious celebrity. The influence can also be seen as defining two main conceptual features of Panikkar's subsequent work. These are, the hermeneutical methodology of deconstruction (Heidegger's *Destruktion*) and the central importance of ontology (*Dasein*). The following brief quotation from *Being and Time* illustrates how the language of Heidegger (which had perhaps become *the* language of Philosophy in Europe at that time), and the concepts in question, impacted Panikkar's emerging theology of religions.

> Ontological inquiry is a possible way of interpretation… If such an interpretation becomes an explicit task of an inquiry, the totality of these presuppositions (which we call the hermeneutical situation) needs to be clarified… In ontological interpretation beings are to be freed with regard to their own constitution of being.[201]

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[199] Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, "Conversations · 114 · Escriva.org," *Escriva.org*, n.d., accessed June 18, 2025, https://escriva.org/en/conversaciones/114/

[200] Bielawski, *Panikkar, His Life and His Works* - At the time of their meeting Heidegger had recently been reinstated, as professor emeritus, after being banned from teaching by the de-nazification committee after the war.

[201] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ed. Dennis J. Schmidt, trans. Joan Stambaugh (1953; repr., Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010, 144.

Heideggerian Deconstruction is here not an endless nihilistic process, but rather relates to the affirming quest to arrive at an ontological point of reference, a there-to-be-found, ontic dwelling. One may indeed have doubts about the unsettling correspondences between the concept of *dasein* and Hitler's policies regarding Germany's *lebensraum,* but, in theory at least, the ontological affirmation of place in time, if applied universally and equally, suggests a fundamental right of each thing to be what it is and to experience its own being in time as a fundamental security.[202] Heidegger may have been instrumental in Panikkar's development of the idea of *ontonomy* to represent that ideal function of interpretation which is "freeing with regard to their own constitution of being."[203] In the same year as that meeting, 1953, Panikkar published a paper presenting *ontonomy*.[204] Typically, he introduced this as an integration bridging a historic opposition, a harmonising third element: in contrast to the medieval world's *heteronomy* (differentiation and therefore power imbalance), and to the modern world's *autonomy* (complete self-determination), the postmodern situation, he argued, requires us to acknowledge the *νομός του όντος* : identity internal to, and constitutive of, each being: *ontonomy*.[205]

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[202] Something has to be said about the compromised history of German intellectuals (and especially Heidegger) at this time, but the extent of their complicity in the dealings of the Nazi party is only beginning to be fully apparent and re-assessed now. The question does have bearing on our theme, although it appears that Panikkar's communication with these figures was at a decidedly philosophical and abstract level; thus we should move on, though certainly with caution. Somehow, it seems Panikkar managed to sidestep the War entirely, remaining a student throughout, and yet he was able to glean the best of European intellectual life from its wreckage. In contrast to the majority of his contemporaries for whom the subject dominated in almost every area, he seems hardly to have spoken or written about the War. The talk Panikkar delivered in 1953 was called "Cultural Sin in the West" which pre-figured a preoccupation with the project of de-colonisation throughout his life's work, and gives a hint also of how he was to re-direct the existential philosophy of Heidegger, while with it, re-appropriating the ontological, steering away from the epistemology-based, post-enlightenment Cartesian tradition. At the same time, despite the all-encompassing involvement in his life as a priest, and intellectual, in 1958 Panikkar also managed to finish his Chemistry doctorate (his second) in 'the kinetics of bi-molecular reactions'. His achievement of it attests to his commitment to empirical investigation and his thorough training in Science. It also underscores his qualification as proponent of interdisciplinary methodologies throughout his career, see Universitat de Girona, "Thought-Provoking Dialogue: A Conversation with Panikkar and Heidegger," *Càtedra Ferrater Mora de Pensament Contemporani*, July 9, 2024, https://www.catedraferratermora.cat/activitats/panikkar/lectures/en/thought-provoking-dialogue-a-conversation-with-panikkar-and-heidegger/.

[203] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 144.

[204] Gerard Hall, citing Raimon Panikkar, "Le concept d'ontonomie," in *Acts of the Eleventh International Congress of Philosophy, Brussels, 20–26 August 1953*, vol. 3 (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1953), 182ff.

[205] hermeneutically situated, temporally defined, relationally constituted, yet particular and present to itself

2.1.5 Vedanta and non-dualism

The death of Panikkar's father (1954) may have been the instigator of his first journey to India. Arguably, the next years' developments would define his theology. It was after experiencing the reality of living and studying in the Indian context with its ubiquitous temple culture and Hindu, Buddhist and Sufi philosophical traditions that his theological interest turned to the dialogue between religious cultures. It is often quoted that he returned with the claim to have become Hindu, and then Buddhist as well, while never ceasing to be a Christian.[206] He was incardinated into the diocese of holy city of Benares (now Varanasi) on the Ganges (remaining a priest of that diocese for the rest of his life)[207] and took two modest rooms above a *Siva* temple there as his base and study. Panikkar's third doctorate, from University of Banares and Rome's Lateran University; was a comparative theological study of the writings of two sainted theologians East and West, Adi Shakara (788-820) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), later published as *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*.

In Varanasi, Panikkar also set up a study group of young students[208] who would work with him as translators and researchers to support the trans-cultural undertaking of his *Mantramañjarī.* This compilation of Vedic Sanskrit texts was organised as a manual for contemplative study, sacrificial celebration, and as interreligious liturgy for contemporary readers. It took from 1964-1976 to complete. It is, according to Panikkar a "*Vedic epiphany"*[209]*,* offered as intercultural spirituality in practice. In it he finds a resolution to the Western Existentialist dilemma:

> Indeed perhaps the fundamental insight of this book is that there is no essence without existence, no existence without an essence.[210]

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[206] Joseph Prabhu, "Raimon Panikkar, 'Apostle of Inter-Faith Dialogue,' Dies," *National Catholic Reporter*, 2022, https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/raimon-panikkar-apostle-inter-faith-dialogue-dies

[207] Bielawski, Panikkar, His Life and His Works, 55-56.

[208] including his friends Bettina Bäumer, and Mary Rogers

[209] Raimon Panikkar, The Vedic Experience, Mantramañjarī: An Anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration (1977; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 2016).

[210] Panikkar, The Vedic Experience, Mantramañjarī, xxxvi.

The theme of overcoming dualism at all the levels of human experience must be understood as emerging at least in part from Panikkar's Indian/Spanish origins, as an existential quest.
For him, *Advaita* was liberating, an experience of overcoming a duality in his own being:

> 'to be' is a verb and is not therefore reducible to either a subject or an object. If we let our being go through our own body and also 'the earth', then we will feel freedom within us. To live my identity, our identity, is an indescribable, amazing experience. It is Advaita.[211]

Panikkar was developing a radically immanent ontology of the divine through his encounters with Heidegger and in the practical spirituality of Opus Dei.In addition to this, the Vedic double negative - *neti …neti*, *neither …nor* [212]- the keynote of Shankara's advaitic inquiry, provided him a means to denote his intimation of the identity of the transcendent and the immanent dimensions in Christian spiritual experience. Furthermore, the Vedantic *Tat Tvam Asi*[213] suggested for Panikkar *deification*, as taught by the early fathers of the church.[214]

Nonduality was not just a paradoxical way of speaking, but was embodied in the presence and teachings of the, then living, silent saint, Sri Ramana Maharishi, whose ashram at the foot of the sacred mountain Arunachala drew, and still draws today, pilgrims in great numbers. Ramana held a special attraction for Panikkar's close friend and fellow priest, Henri le Saux. Having started as a missionary, Abhishiktananda (his advaitan devotional name) became an inclusivist in the Rahnerian sense, a crusader for Vatican II perhaps, and then later surrendered his inclusivism, determined to live out a radical non-dual philosophy, a Christian non-dual consciousness. He was also someone who shared with Panikkar the belief that human persons are not isolated monads but connected via a micro-macrocosmic relationship to the whole - the humanun, the cosmos and the divine. Thus, the challenge for was to harmonise within himself the experience of spirituality in

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[211] Carrara Pavan, "Raimon Panikkar: Life and Work," in *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought,* 15.

[212] Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

[213] Chandogya Upanishad

[214] e.g. Irenaeus, Athanasius, Clement, Cyril, Justin, Theophilus.

two modes. He did this by taking the Hindu status of *sannyas* – renunciation - living a life of extreme poverty, hardship and constant prayer. It was a revolutionary, mystical quest to realise a future by, as it were, being the stone that, sinking deep, sets the ripples in motion on the surface. As Panikkar later reminisced:

> as Abhishiktananda and I used to say: once a Christian assimilates the advaitic experience in all its purity and depth, the two religious traditions will have come together and their union will have begun - regardless of whatever may take place on the plane of mere administration.[215]

Abhishiktananda's quest, and his life, ended it seems, with an apotheosis that took the form of 'surrender to the mother' and the spiritual blissfulness of his parting after a fatal road accident is reported.[216] The non-dualist ontology Panikkar's theology relies on is more than a theory, it is an experience.[217]

Section 2 - Universal Vision

The emergence of Panikkar's non-dual philosophy, however, presents insurmountable conceptual, theological and philosophical challenges for many. Key to its relevance to education for peace is the hermeneutic turn on which Panikkar's religious interpretation relies, and the ultimate experience to which it points.

2.2.1 Panikkar's non-dual ontology - logical and theological issues

G. J. Larson takes issue with the logic of non-dualism as a position from which to make pluralist claims.[218] His mathematical critique argues that Advaitan thought transgresses

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[215] Panikkar, unpublished notes, February 17, 1976, in *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*, 18-19.

[216] His biographer Shirley du Boulay relates the end of his life in detail, in *The Cave of the Heart* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005).

[217] It is noteworthy that unlike others, including his friend, the monk Abhishiktananda, Panikkar did not take *sannyas*, nor did he submit to instruction at the feet of a particular guru in the Advaita tradition. On the contrary, he was himself viewed by some pandits as an authority in his own right. Bielawski, *Panikkar, His Life and His Works*, 55-56.

[218] Gerald James Larson, "Religions, People, and Peanuts: A Response to Raimon Panikkar," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 79, nos. 1–2 (1996): 193–96, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41178747

the logic of the excluded middle.[219] In reply, it could be argued that Larson ignores the fact that paradoxical utterances of religious language often attempt to point beyond themselves to that which lies beyond the scope of conceptual reference. Sayings that precisely intend to do that might be called 'explosive metaphors'[220] such as Augustine's famous: the circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. To such objections, Larson continues:

> there is nothing wrong rationally with going beyond a two-valued logic (that is, violating the principle of the excluded middle) so long as one does not go on to make assertions.[221]

Larson's frustration builds:

> Panikkar's position... is that…Truth, rather, is plural at the outset and thus, it would seem that a meaningful analogy can never get started.[222]

He concludes that Panikkar is simply "equivocating".[223] These criticisms, it could be countered, ignore the fact that in many cases of religious logic, at least one of the values is infinite, which compromises the law of the excluded middle, or that contemporary mathematicians experiment with other models of logic, such as *fuzzy logic*, with its spectrum of truth values. More tellingly, such critics fail to acknowledge the rich heritage of philosophy from the various Vedantic schools and the contexts in which they arose.

In Vedantic philosophy, dualism and its alternatives in logic were already, Panikkar discovered, an evolved discussion. Atheistic non-dual logic, and the theological example

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[219] It is a law of logic that the distinction between p and not p cannot be bridged by 'or' without nullifying the import of the distinction. The law is axiomatic according to Aristotle but is presented as theorem in Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*. cf 'laws of thought'. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Laws of Thought | Definition, Theories, & Facts," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 1998, https://www.britannica.com/topic/laws-of-thought#ref180925.

[220] Alois M. Haas, "Chapter 7: The Nothingness of God and Its Explosive Metaphors," in *Void and Fullness in the Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian Traditions: Śūnya-Pūrṇa-Plerôma* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2005), 143.

[221] Larson, "Religions, People, and Peanuts," 193.

[222] Larson, "Religions, People, and Peanuts," 196.

[223] Panikkar might smile at the use of the term, in that its etymology reflects the idea of giving equal voice to conflictual views, which is something that Panikkar in some ways wanted very much to achieve. However, it must be acknowledged that for a majority perhaps of those who encounter Panikkar, the objections raised by Larson are fatal.

of qualified non-dualism (Ramanuja's *vishishtadvaita*), logic in trinitarian forms, and modal forms of logic are all examples of the ways in which different schools of thought from the ancient world, particularly from the Indian subcontinent, have liberated themselves from the constriction of imposed binaries.[224] From his point of view, Panikkar was able to draw on a rich tradition that had already considered the merits of something like a Cartesian dualism and found it wanting centuries earlier.[225] I cannot pretend to have mastered the variety of these traditions in mathematical logic yet still feel compelled to defend Panikkar's embrace of them. In answer to the charge of relativism, Panikkar dissociated himself entirely, simply pointing out that relativism logically eats its own tail. Radical relativity, as an ontology, is to be distinguished categorically from absolute relativism of values.[226] Other critics have tried to wrestle Panikkar back into the box of a theo-centric monotheism. But Panikkar rejected monotheism. And he was not a subscriber to Polytheism either, although recent attempts to revive a classical awareness of the Greek myths[227], for example, reflect an impulse to reinvigorate the mythic imagination in a way he found interesting.[228] And neither was he a pantheist, although his theory of mind suggests a conscious universe.

Panikkar's critique of monotheism sheds light on his non-dualism, and also gives insight into the reasons for his quest. It is based on the principle that a God who does not share in the destiny (the eschatology) of the human story transcends *care*: "Rigid monotheism wants to save God from Destiny,"[229] "we cannot exclude the divine from sharing in the Destiny of Being."[230] While in the ancient world, Stoic philosophy recommended

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[224] See Jordan Howard Sobel, *Logic and Theism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Logic, Language and Reality* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2017); and Hilary Putnam, *Mind, Language and Reality*(Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[225] Panikkar, "Opening Address," in Void and Fullness in the Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian Traditions, 15.

[226] Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, ed. Scott Eastham (1993; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 58.

[227] At the time of writing this has been the most recent direction of the atheist humanist campaigner Stephen Fry.

[228] Panikkar was interested in the ways polytheism as an anthropological phenomenon might inform development of a valid pluralistic religious philosophy. For example, he would from time to time cite David LeRoy Miller, *The New Polytheism* (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications Inc., 1981).

[229] Raimon Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being: The Unbroken Trinity* (2009; repr., Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 55.

[230] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 55.

yielding to destiny, and Christian spirituality struggled against fate, the non-dual *inter-in-dependence* Panikkar proclaims between the divine and the human, takes as his question of ultimate concern, "the destiny of Being."[231] Concern for survival or ultimate salvation, according to this ontology, is really a concern about the destiny of all Being:

> an inter-in-dependence or an intra-in-dependence of all things in which each being has its *ontonomy*, that is, its degree of freedom and responsibility.[232]

But the question stated as about God is not the ultimate concern of atheists and others. Increasingly over the years of his international celebrity, as a theologian promoting interreligious dialogue and understanding, Panikkar acknowledged parallels between the teachings of *not-self* and *dependent origination* with the apophatic utterances of Dionysus the Areopagite, Meister Eckhart and John Scotus Eriugena.[233] The nothingness of God[234] became a mystical touchstone concept in Panikkar's philosophical theology, and it was in conversation with Buddhism that Panikkar developed the language of salvation as achieving a *new innocence*.[235]

Of all non-dualities, that between emptiness and fullness is perhaps the most basic, the relationship of *Shunyata* and *Purnata*.[236] Panikkar considers carefully the difference between realisation of emptiness as the background of phenomenal reality, revealing the nature of reality, as opposed to any nihilistic negation of being as such: "in the words of

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[231] Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being,* 53. It is also a question of salvation and pre-destination, and reflects a movement from the objective question about existence (or the existence of God), to a subjective question about identity: the Upanishadic 'Who am I?'

[232] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 53.

[233] Haas cites the German mystics—Meister Eckhart, Heinrich Seuse, and Marguerite Porete; see Haas, "The Nothingness of God," in *Void and Fullness*, ed. Bäumer and Dupuche, 55, 125.

[234] This is taken up as a key theme in Chicago more recently Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (1991; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[235] Bettina Bäumer and John R. Dupuche, *Void and Fullness in the Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian Traditions* (Delhi: D.K. Printworld Pvt. Ltd., 2005), 1.

[236] This topic was addressed in comparative theological terms through a landmark conference convened by Bettina Bäumer through the Abhishiktananda Society in Varanasi 1999.

Nagarjuna, that samsara is nirvana and vice versa." [237] Panikkar's apophatic mysticism approaches God in the emptiness of phenomenal reality, (the silence of turiya) which is also an identity "akin to Yaweh's self-disclosure."[238] Thus, human and divine become creative partners in seeking out and realising that Destiny of Being that was the first and ultimate question. Panikkar, working this out through the non-dual idea of an *inter-in-dependence* between God and creation (including humanity), finds himself at odds with monotheism. According to Panikkar this rupture is to be hoped for:

> just as circumcision of the body was abrogated by the First Council of Jerusalem, perhaps in its third millennium, Christian self-consciousness may overcome the circumcision of the mind and overcome monotheism.[239]

Panikkar's unmediated experience of the *self-transparent subject* as Being affirms a radical immanence, presence which may be referred to as non-non-identity.[240]

The complexity of his view is already beginning to overwhelm, and the discussion of the theoretical positions and objections to them is truncated at this stage. These will emerge in greater detail. However, I hope to have shown that it would be unworthy to halt inquiry into Panikkar's theology of religions simply on the basis of Larson's objection for now. Panikkar's non-dual ontology may also be considered in pragmatic terms as a hermeneutic of difference that affords insights and possibilities for an intercultural pedagogy. One such hermeneutic key Panikkar applied was his thorough-going

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[237] Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, 58, 72. - It may be worth clarifying how Panikkar dealt with what remains a key controversy within the conversation about non-dualism:
"The confusion between Nothingness and Emptiness has had dire consequences in the history of human thought. Nothingness is still an object of our consciousness; it appertains to the realm of the logos. Now, if knowledge is a total human activity and not just an epistemological function of a disincarnated mind, it is an assimilation of the being known, a personal embrace in which love is as necessary as cognition. In such a case, when apprehending a stone in the horizon of our sensitivity, we not only apprehend 'stone' in the horizon of our intelligibility and become conscious of the 'non-stone' in the horizon of nothingness, but also perform a fourth act. We experience the stone in the horizon of Emptiness or Sunyata. Unlike Nothingness, which still belongs to our logical thinking, Emptiness is not the negation of any affirmation. Emptiness does not negate; it offers a blank horizon beyond the possible or the impossible. Learning from the Kyoto School , one could call the former 'relative nothingness' and the latter 'absolute emptiness.'" The distinction is the same as that between implicative and non-implicative negation sometimes made in qualifying the nature of sunyata in Madhyamaka thought.

[238] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 58.

[239] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 155.

[240] Again, employing the Upanshadic double negative

Trinitarianism. In 1973, (still early in terms of his voluminous output), Panikkar translated this doctrine, via interreligious dialogue, as the experience of presence he called *theandrism*. Participation in the mystical experience of the non-dual gave rise, in Panikkar's theology, to a proposal that divine Trinity resolves dialectical process at level of ontology:

> The cosmotheandric vision overcomes dialectics because it discovers the trintarian structure of everything - and that third dimension, the divine, is not just a 'third' opposition, but precisely the mysterium coniunctionis. Truth, for instance, is not the opposite of error - as if only these two extremes existed. The continuum runs from one to the other. All things are, as it were androgynous and ambivalent because they are in fact trinitarian. The relations which pervade the universe penetrate the innermost chambers of every being. The cosmotheandric intuition is not a tripartite division among beings, but an insight into the threefold core of all that is, insofar as it is.[241]

He communicated this vision as an interpretation of Christian trinitarian theology in what, according to Rowan Williams,[242] one of his most important and least appreciated texts: *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*.[243] It was, for Panikkar, radical re-discovery of a lost language that he hoped would be understood as in keeping with church tradition:

> I believe this interpretation to be authentically orthodox - i.e. that which gives to God a truly right (*orthos*) honour and glory (*doxa*) - and thus to be fully ecclesial.[244]

At the same time, he was developing a liberation from dualistic thinking:

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[241] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 1998, 60.

[242] In his foreword to Phan and Ro, Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought.

[243] Raimon Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973)

[244] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 6.

a three-dimensional anthropology, overcoming "the paranoia of monism and the schizophrenia of dualism," and he saw here a way to evolve the dialogue between religions:

> …In the Trinity a true encounter of religions takes place, which results, not in a vague fusion or mutual dilution, but in an authentic enhancement of all the religious and even cultural elements that are contained in each.[245]

In this small book, you can see the emergence of his all-encompassing inter-cultural theology, and Panikkar's definition of Being begins to emerge: Being is the rhythm of perichoresis, and "Every being is a Christophany."[246]

2.2.2 Epistemological consequences - Panikkar's idealism

Panikkar's suspicion of the criterion of the principle of individuality as a way of denoting being surely arises from his encounter with Buddhism and the *anatta* teachings, his adoption of the ontological perspective of radical interdependence. The principle of intelligibility can thus be extended from the epistemological to the ontological dimension, "Everything that is, is *cit*."[247] Thus Panikkar's theory of knowledge is radically participative:

> knowing that we are knowing beings makes pure knowledge impossible - unless or until we become the absolute knower, which by knowing itself knows all being and all knowing.[248]

Consciousness itself is participation in the mind of God, you might say. At the same time, Panikkar also maintains that he is a *realist*.[249] Panikkar intends this definition in the terms not of the debate between realism and idealism, but as *realist* in the medieval, neo-Platonic sense of the word, to be distinguished from *nominalist* i.e. the belief that

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[245] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 43.

[246] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 68.

[247] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 63.

[248] Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 50. - the footnote is added that similar statements may be found in Aristotle and Aquinas, though I have not been able to find which ones

[249] This is a position which we will examine more closely when we consider Panikkar alongside Hick, the Critical Realist.

universals (such as the term Being) are to be considered realities. At the same time as Panikkar rejects nominalist denial of Being as a universal, he embraces skepticism about the status of the perceptible universe. "Being...is not a concept."[250]

> All too familiar is the nominalist attack against the meaningless use of an empty concept, a box…that contains nothing for which such a box would be necessary. One need only recall the names of Hume, Carnap, Russell and Ayer.[251]

Panikkar derived a further insight from this onto-epistemology; that transcendent knowledge is available to human perception in some degree. According to this view, human knowledge is a creative, participatory activity and part of an ongoing, eternal *creatio ex nihilo*. Reality in this sense is always predicated on knowledge[252] and thus the mind of God[253] is the field and cause of both reality and also human knowledge, of which it is the primordial model. There is a suggestion then, here, of an unmediated experience or participation in the divine which as we have said, sits almost paradoxically beside Panikkar's postmodern suspicion and critical attitude. To understand how these co-exist and to appreciate his contribution to interdisciplinary methods and intercultural theology as they will impact our thinking towards a pedagogy of peace, we must follow his story further.

2.2.3 Myth and hermeneutics

If Panikkar's adoption of the non-dual ontology was basic to his philosophy, hermeneutic method and comparative theology were the ways in which this found expression in his scholarship. Comparative reference to scriptures from different religions is employed to investigate key metaphysical themes across traditions; Time, the meaning of 'Nature', the cosmic significance of Sacrifice. This approach is exemplified in *Myth Faith and Hermeneutics*,[254] which employs scriptural reasoning across predominately Christian and

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[250] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 68.

[251] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 67.

[252] An idealist concept, but not the absurd solipsism of the caricature.

[253] This is not Panikkar's terminology, though it is suitable.

[254] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics.

Hindu texts to approach the question of religion as meaning-making myth and to analyse themes of the human condition, human destiny, history, human freedom and time itself. Methodologically, the radical immanence of Panikkar's vision underpins his integration of disciplines. Joseph Prabhu, Panikkar's long time disciple and friend, maps how this integration reflects Panikkar's definition of three key concepts: *Logos* - is thought, the thinking and reasoning capacity; *Mythos* - as background to thought, is unthought cultural, religious and historical knowledge; and *Pneuma* - is the Spirit, by definition unthinkable, the guarantee of a constant openness into which we may step.[255] The epistemological status of Myth, in Panikkar's use of the term, is therefore as integral component of all knowledge. The purpose of Myth, in his system, is, above all, to mediate between Spirit and Logos. Thus for Panikkar, the articulation of stories, concepts and words in theological contexts always involve complexity: ¨There is no primum analogatum"[256], he declares, theology is irreducibly polysemic and all theology subject to the polyvalency of Myth.[257]

2.2.4 Eschatology and Christology

The *sat cit ananda*[258] of yogic attainment, the advaitic realization, parallels a *Christophanic* experience of reality transfigured by grace. For Panikkar, a Christology of this kind is required if Christians are to learn to be "ecumenical and fully Christian."[259] In other words, ecumenical tolerance and openness is a mark of the Chistophanic eschaton, lending the mission for peace interreligious understanding and cosmic significance. "It is

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[255] Joseph Prabhu, "Panikkar the Christian Thinker," in *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*, ed. Peter C. Phan and Young-Chan Ro (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co., 2018), 24.

[256] Panikkar, "Nine Ways Not to Talk about God," 149.

[257] It would be a mistake to think of Panikkar's epistemology as passive in any apathetic sense, this encounter with the reality of Being he suggests surely requires a certain epistemic seriousness, an existential, immediate concern, a readiness with the scholastics to consider "Being the self-revealed name of God." Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, 70. In what was almost his last work (the laboriously edited Gifford lectures), Panikkar's thought converges on reality, the divine, Being - "Being is not a concept" - searching for a way to communicate and understand "the Being which is more than existence and more than essence" What is needed is a more feminine attitude of openness and readiness than the active epistemology of the hunter searching for an object to apprehend; a certain receptivity and passivity, is needed and in mythological terms, relates Being to the idea of the mother of God, θεοτοκος in the same passage.

[258] (bliss of the consciousness of being)

[259] Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999a), 4, quoted in Jyri Komulainen, *An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion?: Raimon Panikkar's Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), 128.

not Christianity as a religion, but Christ as symbol that becomes central." Yet again, the way to such a peace is a profound encounter with primordial identity. The Christic principle for Panikkar is, in essence, self-understanding: "Christ as fully human, fully divine is the symbol of divine-human unity."[260] Prabhu explains that from Panikkar's perspective *Christ* is a subjective mystical experience; not something or someone about whom assertions are made,

> rather one regards Christ as a subject whom one attempts to know and commune with in an intersubjective, I to I way. One is, in other words attempting to know Christ from within one's own experience.[261]

> The call to Chistianness in the third millennium, according to the final words of Panikkar's *Christophany*, is

> to live the mystical experience of Christophany from the deepest interiority of all of us, the abyss in which in each one of us, there is a meeting between the finite and the infinite, the material and the spiritual, the cosmic and the divine.[262]

2.2.5 *The Cosmothendric Experience*

Panikkar spent the years between 1966-1999 stationed for the most part either in India or in California and he settled as professor of Religious Studies at University of California in Santa Barbara (1972). Panikkar's announcement of the "emerging religious consciousness" at the end of the 20th century came in the form of his 1993 publication *The Cosmotheandric Experience*,[263] which proposed a radical vision of trans-cultural humanist spirituality for the future.[264] It is structured in two parts. The first argues that our understanding of reality is fragmented and advocates for an integration. The

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[260] Phan and Ro, Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought, 26.

[261] Phan and Ro, Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought, 27.

[262] Prabhu, "Panikkar the Christian Thinker," in Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought, 30.

[263] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience.

[264] The 60's American twang of the title of his defining work is unmistakable and likely to date it in terms of reception today, which is not to deny its continuing relevance.

epistemological argument Panikkar makes is that Western and Indic traditions have tended to follow opposite principles of intelligibility - the former that of *non-contradiction*, a differentiating discrimination, and the latter, a principle of *identity*, a synthesizing discernment. He calls for integration of the two approaches such that the act of identifying and individualising particulars does not simultaneously separate them from the ontological - the participation in Being they share. The example he gives is sacramental: the Eucharist, at which, a particular piece of bread becomes the body of Christ resurrected and also the body of the church, the communion of saints, on a cosmic scale. According to this non-dual approach, the *eschaton*, similarly, may not be understood in purely historical terms but must be seen as both end and fullness of time: "we may come to have a *tempiternal* understanding of this fullness…which would allow the presence of the whole to fill our lives - precisely in the present."[265] Thus the non-dual ontology becomes a sacramental, realised eschatology.

The thesis that this emergent consciousness is a phenomenon of our present time, is supported by his anthropology of religion presented as three 'Kairological moments' in human development.[266] The first suggests a primal innocence: "he is neither a spectator nor an actor on the Earth, but its 'natural' product. He is thus sacred, for the entire universe is sacred and he is part of the whole."[267] The second is characterised by Pythagoras' "Man is the measure of all things" - Man at the centre and measurement at his centre - places Man above nature, which hides the divine from Man.[268] Our present is seen as an ecological *interlude* "The total solidarity so long shunned by the elites now devolves upon the entire human race"[269] which will at last lead to a new and *ontonomic* order in which a new innocence, a conscious *participation mystique* will prevail, which is redemption.[270] We are at the crossroads of the human, the cosmic and the divine - that is the *cosmotheandric* myth. It prophecies that the destiny of humanity is to realise

[265] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 66.

[266] Typically Panikkar refers to this human as *Man*.

[267] Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 25. His footnotes refer to Eliade and Toynbee.

[268] The footnotes feature Aristotle and Descartes.

[269] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 39.

[270] Like Heidegger, Panikkar thinks we need to be saved and cannot save ourselves.

harmonic relation with the cosmos (Nature) and the divine (God) by attaining new awareness - the *Cosmotheandric* intuition. Panikkar argues that "this vision that has always been with us, and that it has always been the function of the wise to remind their contemporaries of the whole."[271]

Although this is the crowning statement of his non-dual vision, one gets the sense that Panikkar is drawing on erudite theological sources to illuminate everyday experience in theological terms. Keeping with Heidegger's philosophizing of the *Dasein*, it is really the experience of the everyday as spiritual rather than any extraordinary spiritual experience that defines the emergent new consciousness. That is not to say that his language does not also, at times, become poetic speech - "Time betrays, exhumes (perspires) eternity"[272]; or Prophetic utterance - "The Earth will not belong to the powerful, or to the resourceful or to those who are superior to it; but to the meek, the gentle children of the Earth."[273] Naturally, however, this vision has a number of consequences for Christian theology.

The second part of *The Cosmothandric Experience* develops what Panikkar calls a trans-historical consciousness of the *human scale*. It is full of extraordinary digressions, in brief, though, it is a contemplation on the themes again of time, history, and freedom. Some strands from this part of the work will be referred to in later chapters, however, at this introductory stage, let us take note of the main features of the *transhistorical consciousness* that Panikkar presents as characteristic of the Cosmotheandric insight. The transition in consciousness from a monotheistic frame, via non-dual awareness, to trinitarian vision is the key - "it is the transition from a two-storey model of the universe to a non-dualistic conception of reality,"[274] a middle way between monism and dualism. Added to this, he affirms the irreducible connection of being and time, (i.e. that there is no atemporal Being), a principle synonymous with the secular; "I mean by secularity the irreducible character of time"[275] Where time is experienced as a constitutive dimension of Being, secularity, which is not exhausted by its temporality, becomes *sacred secularity,*

[271] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 57.

[272] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 60.

[273] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 73.

[274] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 121.

[275] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 121.

the simultaneous sense that Being is temporal and also more than temporal.[276] Finally, he points out that the pluralist perspective that derives from this vision goes beyond political strategy or expedience, reflecting rather a sense of "the ultimate structure of reality." And here Panikkar makes the epistemologically perilous assertion that "we shall have to overcome the assumption of a single pattern of human intelligibility."[277]

Jyri Komoulainen concludes his study of Panikkar by challenging the suggestion that there is such an emergent cosmothandric consciousness on the count that Panikkar's esoteric theory of Being and his radical pluralism contradict each other. It is, he says, an

> existentialist-anthropological reduction of religiosity…ultimately one more option among existing world views… in danger of becoming a normative vision that is in obvious tension with his claims of a radical pluralism[278]

However, perhaps we may temper this judgment by recalling that Panikkar also provides hermeneutic lenses - keys to creative patterns of thought:

> the presentation of a unifying paradigm, which is not at the same time a monolithic and closed system, seems to be of the utmost importance. ...I am not presenting a system, i.e. a systematic treatise regarding the situation of man in the universe. I am offering a synthesis which not only remains open but which allows, even calls for differing interpretations.[279]

As open a horizon as he intends, however, there are inevitable political implications to his thought. I now turn to these.

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[276] Again, that Panikkarian immanent transcendence: *tempiternity*

[277] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 121.

[278] Jyri Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion?: Raimon Panikkar's Pluralistic Theology of Religions (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2005).

[279] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 15.

Section 3 - Practicalities, a Pluralist Theology of Religions

In this section I approach Peace from Panikkar's perspective, briefly weighing his political views with the methodologies he was developing for intercultural dialogue.

2.3.1 Politics and peace

For much of his life, Panikkar regarded religion as essentially *meta-political*.[280] At the same time, Panikkar seems to have courted danger of a political nature. The encounter with Heidegger's post-Christian attempt to infuse the secular with the sacred is a case in point. How was it, after all, that Panikkar had survived the fundamentalist climate of Opus Dei or the ethos of the Freiburg philosophical school? Complete naivety?... "innocence bordering on puerility"?[281] We have seen that his theology of religions took the form of a utopian and spiritualised vision. In 1999, Panikkar expounded his theory of the *metapolitical*, including an analysis of global politics with recommendations for the realisation of a confederation of peoples and a theological sermon on the importance of maintaining awareness of the meta-political dimension of experience. Often controversial, he struggled with the call to be an activist in the world and his own personal and mystical call to continue writing in his ivory tower. Yet Panikkar was prescient : "the human predicament cannot be ignored; a 'business-as-usual' mentality is irresponsible."[282] And his perspective challenged the assumptions of his day:

> The Third World War has already come, and the atomic phase of it will be only the predictable outcome and final act of a drama which is now… a world tragedy of massive proportions and devastating implications.[283]

Panikkar saw as pathological the emerging techno-oligarchy of the twenty-first century: "the real establishment is the mega-machine of the technocratic civilization."[284] While the

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[280] Panikkar R. 1999b. "The Discovery of the Metapolitical." *Interculture*, no. 136: 24–60.

[281] Carrara Pavan, "Raimon Panikkar: Life and Work," in *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*, 16.

[282] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 22.

[283] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 117.

[284] Panikkar, unpublished notes, cited in Phan and Ro, *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*, 18–19.

question of his own effectiveness as an activist for peace and a renewed future troubled him throughout his life, in his writing, Panikkar aimed to be provocative and truth-telling in the face of power, not least that of the Catholic church.

As for his interpretation of violence, this always included the psychological sphere of 'epistemic violence'.[285] He was sensitive to the potential for language to include misrepresentations, aggressions and injustices; one of the defining reasons for his adoption of a deconstructive hermeneutical approach. His main work on peace therefore, was entitled *Cultural Disarmament*. In it, he advocates a dismantling the embedded violence of habitual, mythologised cultural norms; "we cannot fight evil with evil."[286] Panikkar's analysis looks to the roots of violence and the source of war.

> We would have to go back six thousand years before the Christian era, at the epoch of the birth of patriarchy. I think we can, as a working hypothesis, date the origin of wars to that epoch.[287]

Panikkar invokes the philosophy of non-dualism to argue that *peace* is not a spiritual condition without it being a present political, ecological and religious responsibility, by focusing on the distinction between power and authority to envision a transcendence of violence: "Democracy is the art of managing power through authority."[288] The *tempiternal* significance of the present means that ultimate destiny (salvation) and immediate justice (peace) are interdependent. "God's peace and the world's peace can be neither identified nor separated. Their relation is non-dualistic."[289] Therefore, he can insist on the relevance of the *cosmotheandric* vision as a metapolitical and trans-religious perspective: "the metapolitical is not a moral or metaphysical discourse but a political discourse rooted in the very nature of Man who is a metaphysical…"

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[285] ...to use the term coined by Franz Fanon

[286] Panikkar, unpublished notes, cited in Phan and Ro, *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*, 18.

[287] Raimon Panikkar, "The Discovery of the Metapolitical," *Interculture*, no. 136 (1999b), 25.

[288] Panikkar, "The Discovery of the Metapolitical", 27.

[289] Raimon Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament: The Way to Peace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 57.

> The metapolitical opens one up to this truly human dimension. It is the human locus where the political project gets its soul, a soul which is immanent to the political while being also transcendent to it.[290]

2.3.2 Panikkar's Humanism

The cosmic scope of Panikkar's metaphysics reflects his attempt to address the entire humanum. As one biographer reports: "he had the excruciating conviction that everything he wrote had to be authenticated by the entire human experience."[291] However, he was critical of Humanism (capital H) as an anthropocentric tendency to reductive naturalism and mere moralism.[292] He went so far as to call *Christian Humanism* a contradiction in terms, technically speaking, nevertheless, he acknowledged an important form of universal spirituality:

> humanism also requires a proper belief in humanity, which is a belief in the unseen. Humanism demands of us as heroic a posture as any traditional religion.[293]

According to Panikkar's interpretation, Humanism (though sometimes unbeknownst to the humanist) is an act of faith, and furthermore, often contributes to spiritualising the human towards true identity as fully human. However, Humanism's denial of faith's role as the *sine qua non* of principled action, and as a point of connection with the transcendent, also denies the possibility of existential comfort and support: "Without a vertical dimension, life would be unbearable"[294]. So the human is, for Panikkar, always fundamentally seen in terms of *homo religiousus*:

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[290] Panikkar, "The Discovery of the Metapolitical.", 58.

[291] Carrara Pavan, "Raimon Panikkar: Life and Work," in *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*, 14.

[292] Raimon Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973a), 79,

[293] Raimon Panikkar, "The Foundations of Democracy and the Discovery of the Metapolitical," *Interculture*, no. 136 (1999c), 129.

[294] Carrara Pavan, "Raimon Panikkar: Life and Work," in *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*, 18.

> *Crede ut sis*. I dare say 'believe in order that you may be'. Faith is not only necessary in order to understand, but also to reach full humanity.[295]

Thus the dialectic between religion and humanism as it manifests today may be overcome, and indeed must be overcome, according to Panikkar, at an existential level, by understanding the sphere of the humanum as intrinsically sacred. Thus he developed the (qualified by the non-dual) idea of *sacred secularity,* an apparent paradox, he saw as the challenge of our time:

> We have suffered so much of fanaticisms, political, religious, and cultural that we are legitimately thirsty for a universal understanding…. Everyone can welcome a theology based on openness, tolerance and self-criticism… but is it so easy to be really open to the fanatic, tolerant with the intolerant, and to accept the criticism of those who do not agree… there is an inertia of the mind visible in most modern efforts to deal with this problem. I have a hunch we have to face a radically new vision of reality.[296]

2.3.3 Fulfilment theology

The missionary impulse that took Abhishiktananda to India was thoroughly shaken by the fervent and inclusive religiosity of the native population. This had been a pattern from the earliest Jesuit missions,[297] yet the underlying goal was to convert the Hindu to Christianity, the aim was to embrace in order to include. This embodies a form of pluralism that Paul Knitter has identified as a *fulfillment model,* according to which, while the seed is there waiting to grow, the *anonymous Christian*[298] will one day reach fulfillment, overcoming their anonymity and becoming fully realised as Christian.[299] In many ways, Panikkar's interreligious doctoral thesis, published as *The Unknown Christ of*

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[295] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 190.

[296] Raimon Panikkar, "The Pluralism of Truth," *World Faiths Insight* 26 (1990a), 10.

[297] We still have a portrait of the 17th century Robert de Nobili with shaved head, wearing the saffron and sacred thread of the Brahminist priest, see Robert de Nobili, SJ (1577–1656) - IgnatianSpirituality.com," *Ignatian Spirituality*, accessed November 30, 2025, https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-voices/16th-and-17th-century-ignatian-voices/robert-de-nobili-sj/.

[298] Invoking Karl Rahner's theology of religions

[299] This is the inclusive Rahnerian theology of Vatican II. Abhishiktananda finally rejected this approach.

Hinduism, must be seen in this light and it was met with severe criticism East and West. Hindu critics of Panikkar see Hinduism framed within Christian paradigms and Hindu practices appropriated to serve inappropriate ends,[300] while others ask whether Panikkar gives due attention to the particulars of either tradition.[301] The critique of his encounter with Hinduism bears further analysis (and will be considered in more detail in the next part), it must be acknowledged that Panikkar's career was a process of deepening appreciation for the complexity of cultural exchange. For example, he extended Alan Race's model of interreligious exchange - 'exclusivism', 'inclusivism', 'pluralism' - by adding two more, reconciliatory, patterns: 'parallelism' and 'interpenetration.' And in his main work on dialogue: *The Intra-religious Dialogue* (1978 - republished in 1999), he went on to propose five models of pluralism itself.

2.3.4 Intra-religious dialogue and imparative method

"Panikkar's conviction was that Religions will meet only in their transformation into Spirit. 'Religions meet in the skies – that is, in heaven'"[302]A that a "dialogue at the level of faith" such as Panikkar advocated, required not so much a comparative methodology but a way of self-inquiry that was suitable to the intercultural context. Reaching again for the language, Panikkar called this form of theological exchange *imparative* rather than comparative. He made the further qualification to the inter-religious dialogue that it should be undertaken with consciousness of the frame(s) within which it is conducted and should impact the internal dialogue that a person is having with their own tradition while also progressing as a conversation between different, culturally formed, perspectives. Panikkar's inter-religious communication is predicated on an intra-religious inquiry. He called this process the *dialogical dialogue*. A requirement of the participant in such dialogue is that they be ready to be converted if the conversation should reform the mythologies within which it is taking place. There will always, by necessity, be a

[300] In conversation with the author, Bettina Baumer remembered being one of the voices that persuaded him to republish his text in a second thoroughly re-written edition. Bettina Bäumer, *Life and Works of Raimon Panikkar*, interview by Benedict Clark, unpublished, 2022.

[301] D'Costa, Theology and Religious Pluralism.

[302] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), Raimon Panikkar, Invisible Harmony: Essays on Contemplation and Responsibility, ed. Harry J. Cargas (Minneapolis: Fortress Publishing, 1995), 48.

mythological substructure to the dialogue, but the dialogue has the potential even to shift the myth.

Thus, Panikkar proposed pluralism is itself to be understood not as a supersystem, but as an *attitude*.[303] In answer to the obvious complaint about pluralistic theology: "Is it not a new kind of religiousness that makes selective use of the main tenets of the traditions while neglecting the others?"[304], his answer was that this attitude itself "can contribute to the spiritual growth of the partners."[305] Pluralism is, for Panikkar, a shared attempt to *understand* and, as such, the conversation is (or should be) predicated on a communion. "Communion… implies that the human condition in its *present* reality should not be neglected, let alone despised in favour of an ideal."[306] The word *presence* is emphasized because on the one hand, it is clear that presence in the dialogue is the sine qua non of the exchange; and at the same time *presence* is the aim of the dialogue, *communion*; to be truly present to one another, in the presence of the divine. The application of Panikkar's ideas has more to do with attitude and ethos than with the contents of belief systems. According to him, non-dual ontology respects ultimate horizons of difference, '*ontonomy*.' The method by which such a conversation can bridge difference at the level of *ultimate horizons* will be considered in Chapter Six as I try to apply Panikkar's *diatopical hermeneutics* in the context of intercultural education. To conclude however, I will re-iterate the relationship between epistemology and the ontology in Panikkar's view.

The Cosmotheandric vision assumes a non-individualistic approach which regards knowledge not only as communion with the object, but also as communion among subjects:

> To understand is to stand under the spell of… it is an existential attitude, we really stand under the power of the risky act of knowing… to know is

[303] Raimon Panikkar, "The Foundations of Democracy and the Discovery of the Metapolitical," *Interculture*, no. 136 (1999c), 10.

[304] Panikkar, "The Foundations of Democracy," 10.

[305] Panikkar, "The Foundations of Democracy," 10.

[306] Panikkar, "The Foundations of Democracy," 10.

> to become the thing known… if we overstand, we simply apply our own categories or superstructures[307]

Concluding remarks – a Cosmothandric Harmony

Panikkar formed the key concepts that defined his life's work early in his formation as a Catholic priest and missionary of Opus Dei. I have traced the way he appropriated the re-discovery of ontology in Continental, post-existentialist, Philosophy, as a way to re-interpret the orthodoxies of his Christian faith. Then, considering his accommodation of Vedantic non-dualism within the symbolic scope of his faith, I investigated some of the theological issues that Panikkar sought to resolve by drawing on Eastern and Western sources, remaining, as far as he could, true to the spirit of each. This resulted in the expression of a unified vision whose internal coherence relies on Panikkar's non-dualism. As a form of Pluralism, this constitutes an attitude and a methodology of engagement.

To some extent, it must be left with the reader then, to side either with Komoulainen in thinking that

> When carefully analysed, Panikkar's radically pluralistic theology of religions discloses an inclusivistic way of thinking that interprets religions as culturally-bound concretizations of one cosmotheandric spirituality.[308]

…or whether to agree with Panikkar that religions will one day find their own peculiar and more complete ways of embodying a cosmotheandric spirituality, accepting that *cosmotheandrism* is a limited attempt to define what spirituality means and something of its final destiny.

Voluminously productive as a writer, Panikkar was thought of as a genius for his quick and resourceful memory and he wrote in a great number of languages.[309] Exhaustively systematic, though, he was not, and his approach was more like that of a creative artist,

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[307] Raimon Panikkar, "The Pluralism of Truth," *World Faiths Insight* 26 (1990a), 8.

[308] Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? 213-214.

[309] Cf. Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being,* 60. He published in Italian, Catalan, Spanish, French, German and English, and he also worked with Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi and more in his studies. Panikkar lamented the loss of indigenous languages, calling it one of the greatest genocides of the twentieth century

drawing on the wellsprings of his own silence and a broad range of references to weave elaborate new iterations of his visions of non-dual harmony. Above all, perhaps, Panikkar managed to maintain the line that paradox, mystery, lies at the heart of the experience of life and that this reality invites us to take the risk of engaging with diversity, an adventure of faith, which promises the realisation of our freedom. What does Panikkar's cosmovision, bring to the project of education for peace and a sustainable future? To begin to answer this, we will first take apart some questions in more depth by a comparative analysis based on the first two chapters.

PART TWO

Chapter Three

Comparative Analysis part 1: a Theo-philosophical appraisal of Hick and Panikkar - theologies of religions as responses to ultimate questions.

The potential of Theologies of Religions to contribute to Intercultural Education for Peace depends in part on their philosophical coherence. The question of coherence in religious philosophy is basic. In this chapter, therefore, these two paradigms of pluralism are challenged with a series of such *ultimate questions.* An in-depth comparative analysis on the basis of these sharpens our comparison, assessing them both as Christian theology, and against contemporary, non-religious, critical standards. Six questions, or tests, drawn from Wesley J. Wildman, frame the interrogation.[310] They are 1) Coherence of worldview, 2) Theodicy, 3) Eschatology, 4) Resolution of the One and the Many, 5) The accommodation of Science and 6) Avoidance of anthropomorphism.[311] The opportunity for Hick and Panikkar to comment on each other, reveals correlations between their attempts to ground ethics in epistemology and ontology. This investigation strongly suggests that the key to their collaboration lies in the philosophy of process, and the ethics of liberation, towards which they latterly tended, lending support to Panikkar's immanent Trinitarian ontology of peace.

Section 1 – Metaphysics, Peace and Knowledge part 1

3.1.1 The status of metaphysics

According to Nietzsche:

[310] Wesley J. Wildman, "Really Ultimate Reality," *Theology and Science* 15, no. 3 (2017): 260–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2017.1335061.

[311] Jeanine Diller, "God and Other Ultimates," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2021), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/god-ultimates/#RespDiveModeUlti

> a metaphysical world could exist… (but) …even if the existence of such a world were never so well proved, it would be certain that knowledge of it would be the most useless of all forms of knowledge.[312]

Hick and Panikkar proposed that trans-religious convergences in metaphysics undergird the shift to a new age - a turn quite as radical and necessary as the Axial and Copernican revolutions (according to Hick), or *Kairological* moments[313] in the history of human self-consciousness (according to Panikkar). Furthermore, by reviving, in their different ways, a systematic metaphysics, they both aspired to engender hope in desperate times. However, the re-emergence of metaphysics as new forms of idealism in modern Western philosophy demands scrutiny. Nietzsche's most vehement invective is reserved for 'the priest'[314]; in his view, a figure of such hypocrisy that, blinded by the light of his own metaphysical language, he comes to see himself as speaker of the world into being, ritual sustainer of the universe, centre of Being. Panikkar and Hick are ordained ministers, priests, as well as philosophical realists. Neither falls into the fallacy of a crass solipsistic idealism, on the other hand, their realism is not reductive either - they must both argue the relevance of human belief and understanding to historical, eschatological reality; i.e. the participation in a divine teleology, the meaning of life. Their questions converge on a single one – that of 'the destiny of being.' Panikkar and Hick seek in different ways to secure the ultimate significance of their religious metaphysics.

3.1.2 Coherence - the interdependence of ontology, epistemology and ethics

Our pluralists propose epistemic humility in the face of cultural difference as a paramount virtue, and both claim not to be striving to complete a systematic theology, but it is inescapable that we should, at least to some extent, assess their insights as *systems of ultimate belief.* In other words, I now compare them more closely as theological and philosophical proposals about *ultimate meaning*; because they claim to have trans-religious relevance and because they propose that religions embody the intention and means to establish peace. According to Panikkar, the problem of our age is to reconcile

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[312] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 192.

[313] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 20-54.

[314] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ.* (cf. ibid. p.188 "The will to a system is a lack of integrity")

the political and the religious. The religious seems to precede the political epistemologically, in that there is a transcendent dimension to human knowledge, whereas the political seems to precede the religious ontologically, in the sense that we cannot conceive of human being outside human relationship.[315] Whether appropriately attributed or not to David Hume, the problem here is neatly posed by the famous quip: "You can't derive an ought from an is." In order to establish coherence in religious philosophy, it seems that that is exactly what you must be able to do, or at least demonstrate the logical interdependence of these. In Pluralist Theology, they are conjoined in Peace as a universal moral telos. It is through this symbol that Theologies of Religion aim to provide a human, religious philosophy, holding out the promise of a broad heuristic, sometimes a reassuring overview, a translation of tradition into the present, and to bring coherence, and therefore hope, to intercultural encounter. The different ways they do this is the subject of these two chapters.

The first thing we can say that unites Panikkar and Hick, and yet also distinguishes them, is their arguments for the epistemological status of faith.

> faith is not necessarily bound to a particular religion. Faith is not a religion, but stands at the basis of all religion.[316]

On this they agree. However, faith, according to Hick, consists in an act of interpretation like any other:

> interpretation takes place in relation to each of the three main types of existence, or orders of significance, recognized by human thought- the natural the human and the divine; and that in order to relate ourselves appropriately to each, a primary and unevidenceable act of interpretation is required which, when directed toward God, has traditionally been termed 'faith'. Thus…while the object of religious knowledge is unique, its basic epistemological pattern is that of all our knowing.[317]

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[315] Cf. Avram Alpert, "Many Wisdoms — There Are No Transcendent Insights That Rise above Human Difference, yet Wisdom Exists If We Look in the Right Places," *Aeon*, December 2022, https://aeon.co/essays/cant-agree-what-wisdom-means-all-the-more-reason-to-seek-it

[316] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 69.

[317] John Hick. 1974. *Faith and Knowledge*. 2nd ed. (Reprinted). London: Fontana, 97.

Despite the clear parallel here between the three orders of significance and Panikkar's three dimensions of the *cosmothandric experience*, as we have seen, what Hick understood as interpretation is in point of fact, for Panikkar, actual communion. To know, for Panikkar, is not the analogical rational apprehension of patterns in reality, it is to become the thing known. The act of knowing is really participation in the being of the object/subject of knowledge and therefore also in the knower of all being.

The distinction is reflected in the ways they define faith. In the first place, there is a distinction to be drawn between Greek *Pistis* and Hebrew *Emunha* in the definition of faith. This is perhaps the source of Hick's important delineation of 'propositional' (the rhetorical dimension of *Pistis*) and 'dispositional' (the active dimension of *Emunha*) forms. Hick and Panikkar cite faith as courage, a source of hope and positive action. In her enquiry into *Panikkar's Theological Vision and Presuppositions*,[318] however, Kajsa Ahlstrand notes that the Buddhist term for faith, *Sraddha*, is contrasted with theistic faith by Walpola Rahula[319], who characterises it as assurance and conviction, something like positive certainty. She points out that he does this in a particular apologetic climate and that in fact the term's use in Buddhist tradition comes closer to its understanding in Advaita Vedanta, or as Panikkar has elucidated *fiducia*: "not so much an intellectual disposition, as a presupposition for any human activity, including the intellectual."[320] With this trans-religious reference to Buddhism, Panikkar asserts that all knowledge is fiduciary. Going beyond Hick's dispositional category of faith, then, Panikkar's participatory epistemology comes closer to both Buddhist and Hindu understandings of faith as primordial relation. Furthermore, according to Panikkar, it is a specific challenge as well: "Let us not forget that the *culture of certitude*, inaugurated in the West by Descartes, leads logically to a *civilization of security* - modern society's prevailing ideology."[321] So, understanding the fiduciary nature of knowledge presents an ambiguous

[318] Kajsa Ahlstrand, Fundamental Openness: An Enquiry into Raimon Panikkar's Theological Vision and Its Presuppositions(Uppsala: Studia Missionaria Upsaliensia, 1993).

[319] Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (1959; repr., London: Fraser, 1982).

[320] Ahlstrand, Fundamental Openness.

[321] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 96.

epistemological insight, and more, it constitutes an ontology of relation and also an ethical/social challenge.

In the first place, what is demanded is a default epistemic humility. Faith, by its nature, entails a certain agnosticism, a recognition of one's own ignorance, the presence of territories that lie beyond the scope of one's knowledge. Some would indeed define this attitude as wisdom itself. To place one's trust in reality means placing trust in ourselves and also placing trust in the uncertain good (which was Augustine's definition of Peace)[322], or, again, in the goodness of uncertainty (which is a challenge of the post-Quantum era).[323] Panikkar controversially connected this idea with the Christian tradition of apophatic mysticism, making frequent reference to Meister Eckhart, John of the Cross and Origen. A number of key Pluralist contributions descend from the principle of ignorance, which relate to the interpretation and status of religious experience. For the purposes of this discussion however, the key insight is that, according to Panikkar, because knowledge is never complete, humanness is an incomplete project, and humanity, as a result, still in the process of realising its own, truly human, nature. The remembrance of our ignorance is an integral link between what we know, what is, and what we should do about it;[324] a contribution to the rational basis for construing ethics from the ever-changing facts of life.

Panikkar's Pluralist Theology of Religions draws from the encounter with Buddhist teachings about the nature of the self to critique what it sees as a culture of ready certainties established by Enlightenment reason. To some extent, we even see this in Hick, despite his Kantianism: "Ethics is grounded in this *de facto* character of human nature as essentially inter-personal"[325] he proposes. However, again, a more intercultural experience of the tension is evident in Panikkar's writing. What Panikkar does in the first place, is to stress the priority of human encounter with the other over the question of

[322] Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, Book 19, chap. 4, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003 [420 AD]). St. Augustine's 'earthly peace' contrasted later with the 'eternal peace' that derives from union of wills human and divine.

[323] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 96.

[324] Rory Stewart, "The Long History of Ignorance," BBC Radio, 2024, https://www.bbc.com/audio/play/m0020xyx.

[325] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 98.

conceptual truth, demoting *logos,* in a sense. This is an attempt to keep faith with Buddhist *anatta* and Christian ethics at the same time.[326] Panikkar's formula is typically non-dual on this matter as well. He proposes that we should understand ourselves as *inter-independent*, autonomy arising as a gift from the radical interdependence of all reality. We afford each other independence as the fruit of our acknowledged inter-dependence.[327] And this dynamic is not without transcendent sub/superstructure; Panikkar calls all dialogue into the presence of a third. So the I-it, I-thou self, the relationally conditioned self, empty of independent reality, comes into dialogue with another in the presence of the self-existent, which is both ultimate self of each participant and also the ultimate reality within which, and in relation to which, their encounter takes place. Thus Panikkar offers the reflection that the scope of forgiveness and liberation, love and justice, are cosmic and divine, not just human.

> *Karuna*, *charis*, love, and so on, do not consist simply in the good sentiments of a few individuals. They are the pillars of the universe.[328]

How can we assess the coherence of the foregoing conversation between our pluralists? In logical terms there are strong arguments here for the transcendent/divine character of reason and therefore also for the religious character of education. Furthermore, though, we have an important insight, from the intercultural perspective, which involves us acknowledging the importance of certain attitudes. *Logos* is not enough according to Panikkar's view, rather we need to cultivate an attitude of existential faith, and an attitude of epistemic humility. Openness and uncertainty characterize the faithful truth-seeking conscience, on principle, and this coherence is embodied in something like a religious way of being in the world.

3.1.3 Theodicy and myth - Irenaean soul-making or Primordial Sacrifice

In this section I extend the comparative analysis to ultimate questions concerning suffering and destiny. Pain, for the religious, and in the mythological formulations of

[326] In this way his vision may be thought of as complementary with, and in part derived from, the dialogical as defined by Martin Buber's "I-Thou" relation, or with the radically relational concept of duty to the other (as self) to be found in Levinas.

[327] Valerio Marconi, "The True Ring Cannot Be Worn: A Panikkarian Way out of the Logic of the Three Rings," *Sherm* 5, no. 1 (2023): 86.

[328] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 23.

religions, is enmeshed with debt, forgiveness, justification and restitution. Theodicy, often described as the defense of God's innocence, actually has to do with the destiny of humankind, and, as Panikkar would have it, the destiny of Being.[329] The question of theodicy also concerns the extent to which we can believe ourselves capable of, destined for, or deserving of peace. For these reasons, the mythological field of theodicy needs to be part of Peace Studies.

The heart of the contrast between their approaches to scripture reveals itself when we consider their ideas about the nature and meaning of Christ. Both considered Jesus of Nazareth to have been an incomparably wise teacher and looked to the beatitudes as the apogee of that instruction. However, they diverged significantly from the every-day articulation of the central doctrines about the personhood, divinity and eschatological significance of Christ. Hick's *Myth of God Incarnate*,[330] and then the later *Metaphor of God Incarnate*[331] presented by now fairly well-known theories. The first argued that literal interpretations of the sonship of God, the incarnation of divinity in human form, fail to meet the test of both historical and logical critique. The second, argued that, as *metaphor,* teachings of the tradition may be accepted, but that if they are taken without such qualification, they distort the message of Christ entirely. These books give a strong sense of the impatience widely felt at the time with traditional dogma, and especially with historical literalism and the mercantile doctrines of atonement and sin associated with the tradition of Augustine. Thus, according to Hick, a Christian understanding of the nature and purpose of Christ must reject the language of unique sonship and incarnation along with that of original sin.

Hick uses the term *myth,* then, in the sense of de-bunking certain untenable stories. One of the key criticisms of Hick is that he tended to delete from the *credo* those elements that to him appear difficult to reconcile with other beliefs he held. This issue was one of serious political consequence at the time. The defense of rational belief was integral to his Christian apologetics but this meant excluding certain elements of Christian tradition. The scandal that had him temporarily suspended from the Presbytery for disavowing the

[329] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 55.

[330] Panikkar, The Myth of God Incarnate.

[331] Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate.

doctrine of the Virgin Birth is a famous instance where this tension escaped into open conflict. Similarly, according to John Hick, the idea of the pre-existence of the Son, the Word, as expounded in the mystical gospel of John, and the exclusionary language of John's 14:6 [332] are unacceptable, or could not have been said by the historical Jesus. The enthusiasm for new, historically informed readings of the gospels[333] was palpable after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls[334] and the Essene site at Qumran, so Hick's argument was very much of its time. With the benefit of hindsight, however, it seems that while his approach aimed at discrediting literalism, he was himself committed to the need for a literal basis to Christian faith in reference to an ever-retreating island of historically verifiable Christ sayings.

Hick's provocative use of the term *Myth* fits his whistleblower intention, which is, as Hick says, to inform priests and lay people of what the theological academy had understood for a long time already.[335] In contrast, Panikkar, just two years later, in 1979, was progressing the hermeneutic movement in theological interpretation with a cross-cultural study: *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*[336]. Myth is here considered both in the post-modern sense of the mythological meta-narrative and also in the anthropological sense, that myth is in fact the poetic language of religious truth. Myths, when we spot them, demand our suspicion, according to Panikkar, but we have also to acknowledge their inescapability; therefore they earn our respect as well. We might debunk myths, but others will perforce replace them, because, much like *faith*, *myth* is prior to knowledge itself. Thus, the hermeneutic turn in Continental philosophy offers the starting point for a renewed theology and, which is integrally linked, for truly interfaith dialogue. Panikkar situates knowledge as participation in that which lies beyond, in what he sees as an organic process of translations between culture and truth.

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[332] *The KJV Study Bible* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing Inc., 2011). - **"**I am the way the truth and the life, no-one cometh unto the father but by me"

[333] e.g. Geza Vermes (Jesus, Son of Man) and E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin UK, 1995).

[334] 1947

[335] Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate.

[336] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics.

> Man cannot live without myths, without indeed a plurality of myths that intertwine and follow upon one another in a way that allows the continual passage from *mythos* to *logos* and the constant re-sourcing of the *logos* in new *mythoi*.[337]

This perspective meant that controversies over the historical Jesus were of altogether less interest to Panikkar. Ahlstrand cites the contrast between Panikkar and the European de-mythologizers, Robert Bultmann et al:[338]

> ...while the European demythologizers were interested in severing the myth from historicity, Panikkar appears to be genuinely uninterested in questions of history and historicity. Rather than demythologize, he wants to re-mythologize. According to Panikkar, the biblical narratives are valuable to the extent that they transmit myths – stories which open up towards the transcendent – their possible historical content is of no particular religious interest.[339]

Panikkar's basic orientation to religious truth is that, as mythic paradigm, it needs to be re-imagined by succeeding generations and refreshed in light of contemporary concerns. Remember that Panikkar envisages myth as the translator between Spirit and Logos. While again, he and Hick would agree on the importance of myth, the basic difference of approach to scripture and tradition has a considerable impact on their interpretations of Original Sin, the meaning of pain, the nature of salvation and therefore also any prospect of peace.

To explore these consequences, first, let us briefly remind ourselves that Hick rejected what he saw as the Augustinian aberration in theological tradition,[340] which he replaced

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[337] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 100.

[338] Kajsa Ahlstrand, *Fundamental Openness: An Enquiry into Raimon Panikkar's Theological Vision and Its Presuppositions*(Uppsala: Studia Missionaria Upsaliensia, 1993), 164 - Bultmann "was of the opinion that real faith needs no footing in history"

[339] Ahlstrand, Fundamental Openness, 164.

[340] Hick's rejection of Augustine is a position that Panikkar questions, citing a misunderstanding which he demonstrates with reference to Radhakrishnan. Augustine's theology has been wrongly assumed to entail the damnation of the vast majority, he thinks. The rule he quotes is rather: "faciendi quod est in se, Deus non denegat gratiam." To the one who does what it is in them to do, God does not deny grace, or "God does not deny grace to those who do what they can."

with reference to the earlier Irenaeus, elaborating a vision of life as a process of *soul making*. Panikkar, on the other hand drew on the Vedic creation myth of the primordial sacrifice of *Prajapati* to situate human suffering in a cosmic vision of nature as continual rebirth. It is worth noting that they both appeal to the authority of ancient sources, but Panikkar relies more on the appeal to cross-cultural correspondence and pan-human relevance as a mark of authenticity. Panikkar agrees in rejecting the retributive model of redemption (neither Panikkar's vision of justice nor his vision of sacrifice is expiatory in this sense), in favour of a model he calls *renewal*; his view of sacrifice is as the revelation of the creative and kenotic nature of reality. Yet, as often seems the case, Panikkar's stated objection to the inherited Catholic doctrine of original sin seems to be a more pointed expression of Hick's, aimed as it is against those Christians who will not take a responsible stand against war. The Augustinian doctrine is an excuse for them, he observes, to ignore the Christian imperative to seek peace, "cowering behind the shield of original sin and thinking that war is inevitable because we are sinners."[341]

Hick's *Evil and the God of Love* (2010) is a bold attack on the Augustinian formulation of original sin. It is not easy, however, to dispense with the myth.[342] The originating fault if there is one, the human condition, according to Hick, is ignorance, as we have seen. Both he and Panikkar rejected the literalism of a historical fall, yet their embrace of the biblical myth, and of the human condition is different. According to Hick, our *epistemic distance* from God is a gift on which our present freedom is conditional, according to Panikkar it is a measure of our failing to achieve our human potential, an alienation more closely related to the traditional doctrine, in that it is imposed not by God, but by mankind's greed and hubris. Like Hick, Panikkar essentially retains an idea of original fracture in the relationship between mankind and the divine while disconnecting it from the Genesis myth of Eden which stresses the freedom of humans and their inadequacy to accept responsibility for it. In contrast, he takes it out of the historical frame, seeing creation and redemption as tempiternal process:

[341] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 96.

[342] Hick does not go so far as more recent theologians have to suggest an alternative, more positive myth E.g., the creation theology of Matthew Fox, which proclaims a reorientation of faith in the light of "original blessing"; see Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality Presented in Four Paths, Twenty-Six Themes, and Two Questions* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Co., 1983).

> Redemption is not a kind of historical accident of the cosmotheandric adventure, it is not conditioned solely by human affairs, it belongs to the very economy of reality.[343]

This *creatio continua ex nihilo*, this *tempiternal* economy of creation and redemption corresponds with what Hick describes as the 'aesthetic theme' in Augustine - the idea that evil is lost in the picture's overall beauty when considered from a divine perspective.[344] Hick's emphasis is on an eschatological resolution, Panikkar's on a present reality. Putting it another way, the *economic moment* according to Panikkar separates us from the knowledge of the sanctity of all things and our own sacred place within that, more primal, *ecumenic moment*.[345] The synthesis Panikkar drives at is this: "We are God's fault". He means that, while there is not, nor can be, any sin in God, creation is an act of separation from God which results in the condition of sin as a necessary feature of reality (until reality be re-divinised which is the resurrection cosmically interpreted, the eschaton).

> If there is a creator, there must be a creative act, which insofar as it produces not-God, constitutes a fault: the originating fault of creation. The creature itself is this fault. Salvation lies in stepping beyond creatureliness.[346]

Hick's Irenaean theodicy with its soul-making work ethic rewards the believer's humility with comfort and with supernatural grace. Panikkar's primordial myth on the other hand offers solace in the cosmic sense of rising to apotheosis. As sources of hope, the Irenaean theodicy gives us reasons for optimism about our final, mysterious ends (though hard to maintain without extraordinary faith). The Vedic myth of the primordial sacrifice describes, albeit in a nebulous way, something of the process by which that underlying faith in renewal is linked, ontologically, with the cosmos. Thus it too provides an energetic symbol of hope.

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[343] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 85.

[344] Hick, Evil and the God of Love, 82-85.

[345] Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, 20-54. The quotation demonstrates the need to define the *human condition* for the purposes of comparative theology. Often such approaches to Hindu mythology for example, look through the lens of Catholic theodicy; there is a need to establish the provenance of an 'originating fault'.

[346] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 82.

That there is suffering in the universe, however, is only part of the problem. More important, from our perspective, are the ethical implications of such mythological formulas. Which of them is readier to admit that the suffering of others matters? As coherent theologies of suffering, what do they finally say about the meaning of suffering in terms of the final destiny of mankind? Hick points out that "'pain' is derived from the Latin *poena*, which bears the meaning of penalty or punishment,"[347] so the punitive model of pain is inherent in the language we have for it. Panikkar, on the other hand, lends a perspective reminiscent of medieval monasticism: "suffering could be said to be the most universal sacrament through which Man is opened up to a higher instance, otherwise forgotten in gloomy mediocrity."[348] For Panikkar then, a primordial sacrifice, a self-dismemberment of God, engenders reality and entails the fault line (evil) that runs through it. As mythological destination, Panikkar draws on Orthodox tradition and the vision of Christ as the Cosmic Wisdom - "a Christic conception of the real …and the divinization of the cosmos"[349] With this final destiny a given, then, in *Myth Faith and Hermeneutics*, Panikkar writes that the *felix culpa* of Christian doctrine is "a moment in the divinization of the cosmos"[350] "The sin is not in originating i.e. not *in* God, the sin itself is originating, it gives rise to *samsara*, time, the mortal and decrepit face of the universal schema."[351]

Panikkar's theodicy, if we may call it that, is reminiscent of the uncompromising vision of Simone Weil and perhaps her way of understanding evil clarifies matters. Simone Weil fought in the Spanish Civil War and was a victim of the Second World War. Hers is perhaps the most revolutionary of all. In stark opposition to the characterisation of evil as the privation of being, Weil sees the act of creation as one of self-delimitation, absencing. Things ex-ist rather by virtue of concealment from the absolute fullness that is God.[352] In order to *be* in a finite sense, then, the created must become not less in terms of being, but

[347] Hick, Evil and the God of Love, 173.

[348] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 9.

[349] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 80.

[350] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 80.

[351] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 80.

[352] The idea is perhaps drawn from the central notion in the Kabbalistic creation narrative, the 'tzimtzum' of Rabbi Luria.

more in terms of difference - we become that which is not holy, that which does not have the possibility of perfection. As in Panikkar's Vedic image, humanity and God are to be understood as mutually excluding facets of a single divine cosmotheandric reality. For Weil, this results in the following reflection: "Evil is the form that God's Mercy takes in the world."[353] Since creation is separation, evil reminds us of the longing that is properly ours for union with the eternal. "The extreme affliction which overtakes human beings does not create human misery it merely reveals it."[354] In her Christian thinking, this first negative kenosis of creation is corrected in a sense by the positive kenosis of Christ's incarnation.

Such visions agree with Hick's theology in rejecting tribalism, and hence relate to the ecumenical negotiation of peace. For example, the doctrine of heaven and hell: "Theologians who have confidently affirmed an ultimate salvation-damnation dichotomy have almost invariably assumed that they themselves are among the saved."[355] Hick distanced himself from Calvin's theory of election for the same reason: quoting Calvin's Institutes " 'election itself' he says, 'could not stand except as set over against reprobation'."[356] He finds this a failure to think of "God and of His attitudes to mankind in fully personal and agapeistic terms, which is the basic defect of theodicies of the Augustinian type."[357] The conception of "God as the Lord of an in-group whom he loves... surrounded by an alien outgroup whom He hates",[358] is rejected. However, it is possible that Hick's pacifist and inclusive perspective presents an insurmountable problem for eschatology per se. Keith Ward brings the objection to Hick's theodicy that it depends on two postulates which are mutually contradictory.[359] Considering the question of human freedom at the heart of Hick's argument, he points out that the first of these, that mankind must be free either to choose to trust and love God or to reject the love of God, sits

[353] Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (1947; repr., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2002), 69.

[354] Weil, Gravity and Grace, 70.

[355] Hick, Evil and the God of Love, 125.

[356] Hick, Evil and the God of Love, 126.

[357] Hick, Evil and the God of Love, 126.

[358] Hick, Evil and the God of Love, 125.

[359] Keith Ward, "Freedom and the Irenaean Theodicy," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 20, no. 1 (1969): 249–54, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/xx.1.249

uncomfortably with the second postulate, that mankind must be placed at epistemic distance from God in order to have such freedom. He suggests that Hick is refusing determinism at the expense of the reasonableness of a decision to be obedient to God, for if there were reason to obey God, the decision would, in some sense, be coerced by the nature of the creation. Ward sees a neo-Platonic thread here in Hick's theodicy which envisions the eventual salvation of all - "we must thus affirm in faith that there will, in the final accounting be no personal life that is unperfected."[360] Hick's stipulation that Freedom is a condition of genuinely trusting God (i.e. of being accountable for the choice to embrace obedience to God) is incompatible with the determinism inherent in his commitment to the idea of universal salvation.

We will return to the question of free will; however, first let us conclude that both Panikkar and Hick propose salvation as the final destiny of all life, asserting Peace as a universal telos. Now we must consider the theological consequences of such belief.

3.1.4 Evil and eschatology

One objection to Panikkar's more mystical interpretation, or experience, stems from the historical perspective of traditional Christian eschatology, the Messianic expectation in ancient Judaism carried over into the apocalyptic expectation in Christianity. According to this view, God's action in history precludes the realisation of union, at least until the end times, a view which suspects, therefore, all mysticism of hubris or heresy. To this, Panikkar responds by raising the paradox of the nature of Divine action. Is it eternal, the action of the creator of time, or is it action in history, the determiner of human destiny? He can only answer this by coining a neologism which allows him to hold two apparently contradictory ideas in creative tension. Again, *tempiternal* refers to the action which is both experienced/understood in time, by us creatures, and performed in eternity, by the Creator. What this means for the interpretation of salvation is that a person can be, in the temporal sphere, a participant in divine, eternal action by virtue of that inner, granted necessity. Salvation is *sempiternal*, we might say, at all times realizing a timeless potential in time.

[360] Hick, Evil and the God of Love, 376.

> "My kingdom is not of this world"(John 18:16) : 'world' should be translated 'age' - cosmos and aeon translate olam. i.e. not of this age but of a world to come, a future…[361]

The eschatological Peace promised as Christ's kingdom has always presented Christian theology with a challenge. If this destination is not of this world, and is a realm outside time, why are we expecting its appearance in time, at a future point? And yet does any Christian notion make sense at all without this future expectation? And if we do have future expectation, then Christian justice must operate in relation to it. Since no one can see into the future (literally) that vision must be perceived in the time we inhabit, it is to be read in the signs of the times. Hence, no Christian theology can be situated outside the exigencies of the moment, and its attendant responsibilities towards the future; no Christian ethics can be content with an otherworldly retreat from the revolutionary call of faith to respond to the need of the hour. The radical relativity on which Panikkar insists derives from the mystical non-dual insight of Advaita, yet he is also concerned to point out the absolute mutuality it entails; an inescapable responsibility not only towards other people, but to the cosmos entirely. Both the vertical dimension of human spirituality - seeking enlightenment by, and eventual release into union with, the transcendent (nirvana) - and the horizontal dimension - placing hope in an eschatological destiny which will be worked out through the process of history (salvation), must carry equal weight in a truly *tempiternal* consciousness, which cross bears the character of peace.

With reference to the criticism brought by Keith Ward to both their positions, i.e. that Hick's soteriology is logically compromised (universal salvation negates the need for freedom built into Hick's religious epistemology), and that Advaita is ethically challenged ("it is difficult for Advaita to have any strong sense of sin, evil or injustice"),[362] we can identify the limitations of their theodicies as gospel (messages of liberating good news, peace and love) and as rationales for community building on the basis of religious faith. Hick's theodicy offers us a robust theological rationale for the character-building educational model we strive to implement. However, it never quite frees itself from the tangle of its historically conflict-inducing elements of divine pre-

[361] Pieris Aloysius, *Intercultural Education*, interview by Benedict Clark, unpublished, 2023. Tulana 2023

[362] Ward, Religion and Human Nature, 19.

election. Panikkar's cosmic interpretation invites the believer to self-transcendence and a merciful perspective towards the universe, but its non-dualism lacks dynamism in the sense of responsibility to the other. Yet there are ways to compensate for these short-comings and these are manifest already in the later works of each philosopher. Thus we find Hick quoting Haight in his later theological writing whose Catholic Process philosophy can lend credibility to Hick's vision of universal salvation. Panikkar too tends this way. In *The Rhythm of Being* (1989) he draws on scholastic and interreligious sources to promote a theology of process in which "Being presents itself as rhythm" and "harmony is the supreme value."[363] Panikkar's theodicy requires also a theology of liberation to direct its conscience, an element that comes out strongly in the more political later writings.

> liberation theology's renowned 'option for the poor' wins a meaning for cosmic history that frequently has gone unrecognized. Such an option for the suffering element of humanity, on the part of those who have not been oppressed to the same extent, expresses a human solidarity of planetary proportions.[364]

We can see, then, that Hick's protestant formation was tending through pluralist theological endeavour towards a more sacramental view of creation in the form of process theological speculation, while Panikkar's Vedic appropriations pushed him towards a greater appreciation of liberation theology – a Catholic theological movement conscientized by Protestant and modern revolutionary philosophy. The rapprochement in their trajectories (in terms of a more immanent sense of the divine and a more focused attention to social justice) over time suggests the *paths up the mountain* analogy might at least pertain to pluralist Christianities in search of truth - so too perhaps between Catholic and Protestant orientations, which, it is hoped, might bode well for an ecumenical collaborative theology.

I turn now to Hick and Panikkar's approaches to this archetypal question of difference in order to get closer to their ideas about the resolution of differences between people(s).

[363] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 47.

[364] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 91.

The question in its most philosophical form is handed down to us from the ancients in the form of the problem of the one and the many.

3.1.5 The one and the many - one in many or many in one

The problem has many layers; it reflects the juncture between the metaphysical and the physical. The many and the one represents one of the fundamental problems of philosophy and therefore also of theology – the origin of difference. How do you reconcile the intuition of unitary being, with the lived experience of difference? In other words, monistic and dualistic accounts need a third option. There is a logical need for this and a pastoral need too. And perhaps we should also say that there is an inherent psychological need involved. I have already explored in some depth above some metaphysical and mythological aspects of this question, I now move to the question of the one and the many as one of difference and identity in terms of human community. It is here that religious pluralism finds its most practical challenge and most immediate relevance.

Religious diversity is at the heart of Panikkar and Hick's theology and an issue that is rarely out of their sights. Hick was one of the most influential of progressive voices, valued at centers of Western academic pluralism, Birmingham and Boston, and it defined Panikkar's international career. Panikkar, it is sometimes argued, is diametrically opposed to Hick in that he insists on the value of difference per se.[365] Yet in the end, though he sees religions moving on parallel lines, his vision is that of a final resolution between religious cultures constituting what he variously envisions as a new humanism, a sacred secularity, a Christ all in all. Is there a difference in the end between acknowledging that there is one Reality to which all religions turn the hearts and minds of their adherents and the vision of all religions as progressing towards one reality along parallel lines converging up a mountain?[366] The point of agreement we can most confidently assert is that both Panikkar and Hick refuse to believe that the gospel of their faith is anything less than universal in scope, and at the same time accords respect to the diversity of religious others.

[365] Kärkkäinen, Trinity and Religious Pluralism, 2008.

[366] Cf. Knitter, Introducing Theologies of Religions.

> Any message directed to the whole of mankind that takes a part for the whole or ignores the variety of peoples, cultures and religions is bound to be suspicious from the outset.[367]

Religious diversity presented a problem for John Hick because, in a world where increasingly the claims of religion must answer critique on the basis of empirical reason, the disagreements between teachings of the various religions present a challenge to religious faith of any kind. His mission was to elaborate a theory of religious knowledge and a defense of faith in a world losing hope in religion. As a result, his work has provided important insights for the encounter between religions and also for that between religion and science. Hick's answer to the issue of religious diversity was to assert that a single and absolutely transcendent, universal Reality, of a different quality to our experienced reality, is mediated to us all differently, through the symbols and metaphors of our religious traditions, cultures and beliefs. In other words, there is one God, towards which all religions aim to direct hearts and minds: one Reality in many forms. Against Hick's theory stand the frankly contradictory doctrines that diverse religions present us with. Firmly committed to the intelligibility of the universe,[368] the singularity of truth, Hick was sure that there is enough common ground between religions, especially in their social values and ethics from which to derive universally true insights and affirm saving belief. Thus, from tantalizing correspondences between religions, and the necessary distinction between truth and falsehood, Hick inferred his theory of the unitary Real. How else to reconcile the one and the many?

Hick's appropriation of Kant's distinction between the noumenon and phenomenon is by analogy only, for Kant specifically did not use this in relation to knowledge of religious truth, but applied it to all empirical knowledge. Hick's distinction of the transcendent Real and the interpretative realm of religious experience gives him a way to bring the major world faiths, as he sees it, to the same table. The moral force of the argument that Hick makes is in his insistence that the religious attitude per se involves a turn from self-centered concern to an awakened Reality-centeredness, which manifests as altruistic and self-sacrificial service. A virtue of his analysis is that it works. As Schmidt-Leukel says

[367] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 325.

[368] (which rests on the uni-, singular, nature of it)

> Under such critical realist conditions, interreligious learning is still theologically exciting, bold and promising. It encourages and stimulates an interreligious theological inquiry... But interreligious learning under critical realist conditions is also sober and down to earth.[369]

It is this character of accessibility and grounded mutual inquiry that it is right to celebrate, and which lends Hick's hypothesis well to the encounter with religious difference in the intercultural schooling context. In practice, the turn to the Real in this context can denote a lucid intelligent engagement, critical and awake.

From any universalist religious perspective, Hick's contention that all religions seek to encourage adherents to turn to one Reality is not, on the face of it, controversial, although S. Mark Heim and others have been pursuing the idea that perhaps they do not and need not.[370] From the perspective of Christian pluralism, it is rather the idea that all World Religions might be equally *apt* to do so that is really the contentious claim; that all religions equally bear witness to the truth.[371] Hick has answered this criticism as we have seen. Nevertheless, underlying it, the challenge that is as likely to create impasse is the declaration that the Real, the *noumenon* that lies beyond the *phenomena* of diverse religious devotions, is One - Hick's "non-physicalist, panentheist monism" (as one analyst has described it).[372] Hick's confidence about the trans-religious interpretation of the Real loses explanatory power when it is stretched beyond the 'world religions' as defined in the modern Western academy. It stumbles against polytheistic cultures, doctrines of reincarnation, African, or so-called animist and aboriginal religious sensibilities do not feature in his analysis, and so on. Increasingly immanent references to

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[369] Perry Schmidt-Leukel, "Chapter 3: Religious Pluralism and Critical Realism," in *John Hick's Religious Pluralism in Global Perspective*, ed. Sharada Sugirtharajah (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-11008-5
p.84

[370] S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of the Riches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000).

[371] Hick's qualifying references limiting this claim to 'the major world religions' do nothing to reassure the sceptical reader

[372] Yujin Nagasawa, "Chapter 12: John Hick's Pan(En)Theistic Monism," in *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World: An Ongoing Engagement with John Hick*, ed. Sharada Sugirtharajah (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 187.

the Divine that appear in Hick's later writing which begin to temper the rigorous transcendentalism of his philosophy.[373]

In Panikkar's view, the appropriation of Kantian language to speak of the ultimate already makes a fatal assumption.

> We say …there is an a priori, that this noumenon, this thing, in itself, exists. And we speak then about the Ultimate. Now this Ultimate by its very nature cannot have a further point of reference which will allow me to say, 'it is the same' or 'it is not the same'. How can I say, 'it is the same' or 'it is not the same' if I do not have a canvas behind the ultimate which allows me to say 'they are the same' or 'they are not the same'? Thus the paradoxical language of the mystics. ..perhaps this Kantian thinking itself is a way of approach, but in these ultimate problems it does not help.[374]

In other words, as others have done, Panikkar rejected what he saw as the ultimately arbitrary pragmatism of Hick's formulation of a Pluralist Hypothesis as inadequate, although he could see the value of it as a means of approach to encounter and dialogue. Perhaps the best way to understand the difference here, and to settle it, is with reference to the distinction between apophatic and cataphatic. Again, as Schmidt-Leukel explains, Hick's appropriation is an attempt to "have it both ways by using positive religious language and yet acknowledge the ultimate ineffability."[375]

Hick's metaphysics offers us a picture of one truth presenting itself to mankind in many different religious guises – an apposite image might be that of stained glass – the source of light is one, though it is refracted in the many cultural and psychological coloured lenses of humanity. This account of religious difference differs from Panikkar's (although Panikkar was also fond of the stained-glass image) in that, because Panikkar's ontology entails a participative co-creative role for humankind, we must regard religions also as the

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[373] Schmidt-Leukel, "Religious Pluralism and Critical Realism," in *John Hick's Religious Pluralism in Global Perspective*, 2023, 79.

[374] Raimon Panikkar, "Opening Address," in *Void and Fullness in the Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian Traditions: Śūnya–Pūrṇa–Plerôma*, ed. Bettina Bäumer and John R. Dupuche (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2005), 15.

[375] Schmidt-Leukel, "Religious Pluralism and Critical Realism," in *John Hick's Religious Pluralism in Global Perspective*, 2023, 77.

many that in actuality constitute the one. This brings a level of responsibility into focus which is rarely to be met with in theological discourse at the knife-edge of pluralism i.e. that we create our gods. The key is the relationship between human reason and the ever-present human responsibility to realise the nature of the divine more truthfully. This task is envisioned as a necessary collaboration. Not the deals-hustling of a global economic monopoly, but the humble acknowledgment of *inter-independence*.[376] Religious diversity presented a problem for Panikkar, for many of the same reasons that it did Hick - as a direct contemporary, he shared a world of context. However, he experienced the added discomfort, and richness, of embodying in himself the mixed heritage of two religious traditions, therefore, his contribution has been especially appreciated by the ever-expanding community of those who experience 'multiple religious belonging'.[377] He too felt himself driven to address the lack of hope in world culture;[378] he attempted to "communicate an effective hope in the deepest dimension of our world."[379] However, where the unitary, transcendent, singular truth of the Real girds Hick's epistemology, pure, refined and universal, Panikkar centers an intuition of 'wholeness', transcendent yet ineradicably immanent, unitary yet irreducibly plural as well. According to this view, knowledge must always point beyond itself in order to mediate grace.

> Dogma is rather a means to bridle our intellect in order that our higher knowledge may reach, as far as it is possible here on earth, the unfathomable inner nature of reality.[380]

In Panikkar's scheme, the radical dependence of each of us is a mirror of the divine person. Our personhood, relative and dependent, is where we encounter the likeness of the divine and participate in it.

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[376] Raimon Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, 2nd ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1999b).

[377] Cf. Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church," *Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2003): 495–519, https://doi.org/10.1177/004056390306400302

[378] Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, p.24: "Marxism may have been the last intellectual effort to rescue human optimism in history…What, then, is a plausible narrative for humanity today?"

[379] Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, p.25.

[380] Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, rev. and enl. ed. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), 5.

The independence of reason according to Kant seems to be inherently guaranteed by the intelligibility of the universe. Kant reasons that faith in the reasonable character of the universe and its destiny must precede faith in reason when it comes to human affairs. The independent character of reason (the God-given *logos*) is what furnishes the human being with the dignity of independent selfhood. The evidence adduced for this cosmological hierarchy of knowledge is human conscience and sense of the good.[381] It is in this sense that we may *keep faith* with another or *have faith* in oneself. It is also key to *conscience* as providing coherence not only to moral reasoning but also the integration of personal identity. As a pacifist and Protestant, a Quaker, the concept of individual *conscience* is of ultimate importance to Hick, and as a conscientious objector, he certainly believed in freedom of conscience (and therefore acknowledged freedom of religion broadly). From a Humanist perspective, personal *conscience* is tied to rights, such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Hick, as a Christian, also understood personal conscience to reflect an innate sense of moral rectitude, therefore, *conscience* is a source of increasing evidence of divine law.

If anything, Panikkar's understanding of *conscience* is closer to *consciousness*, more firmly and ontologically inseparable from the experience of the divine, retaining the Catholic formulation that authentic freedom is understood as obedience to truth, in fact. It is also more intercultural, in that the qualities of epistemic humility and imaginative participation reflect a Buddhist fundamental suspicion about the status of that self that is dignified by human reason. Again, individual identity and personal flourishing are inseparable from the quest for alignment with ultimate truth, of which reasoning conscience is a sense. But for Panikkar, *logos* is not sufficient. Peace must be conceived in cosmic terms - epistemology must embrace ontology. To clarify this distinction further, it is worth returning to Kant's original arguments to see in more detail how they differ from those of the Pluralists.

[381] In this he is as indebted to Plato as any Catholic theologian; so is the famed dualism of Kant really the dualism of Plato in new clothes? This is where the interpretation of Plato is very key and this is the heart of the struggle for Panikkar and indeed for much postcolonial theology. For, if we decide that Plato was in fact not a dualist but was referring to a more nuanced foundational understanding of the hierarchy of human knowledge and its relation to being (i.e. ontology and epistemology), then even Kant (unless he takes the dualist paradigm too much at face value, inherits a misunderstanding) may be maligned by this characterisation.

The most contentious passage in terms of the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism in Kant's reflections, is perhaps this one. I quote it[382] extensively now with interjections for emphasis. In it, Immanuel Kant judges against all forms of mortification and penance as worthless castigations, self-delusions, doomed attempts at propitiation, religious illusion. Among the absurd sacrifices of this kind, according to him, are to be found the observances of Tibetans, who believe in the efficacy of flags and prayer wheels; all, according to Kant, "substitutions for the moral service of God."[383] His judgment rests on the basis of his rational moral theology which is framed thus:

> This world it is true is only an intelligible world; for of such a systematic unity of ends as it requires, the world of sense gives us no hint. Its reality can be based on nothing else but the hypothesis of a supreme original good. In it independent reason, equipped with all the sufficiency of a supreme cause, founds, maintains, and fulfils the universal order of things with the most perfect teleological harmony, however much this order may be hidden from us in the world of sense.[384]

The highest good to which humans may aspire, therefore, is faithfully to try at all times to fulfil their duty to contribute "to the highest good of the world."[385] "Everything depends upon the adoption or rejection of the unique principle of becoming well pleasing to God - upon whether we rely on the moral disposition alone,"[386] Thus conscience guarantees reason in the Kantian scheme, because in the hierarchy of knowledge, logos, the means of translation between the divine and the mundane, fully accords, by nature, with the given sense of justice. As Hick puts it, "moral goodness is one form of Reality-centredness in this world – the form that consists in becoming an unselfish moral agent."[387] Nevertheless, this argument also works the other way round, to lend divine sanction to the status of human reason:

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[382] Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (1793; repr., New York: Harper, 1934), 162.

[383] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 160.

[384] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 162.

[385] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 160.

[386] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 160.

[387] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 39.

> …independent reason, equipped with all the sufficiency of a supreme cause, founds, maintains, and fulfils the universal order of things with the most perfect teleological harmony, however much this order may be hidden from us in the world of sense.[388]

Kant's enlightenment rationalism is expressed in his suspicion of religious superstition among the pagans of the East. And he is not uncritical of his own perspective:

> But is there not also perhaps a dizzying illusion of virtue, soaring above the bounds of human capacity, which might be reckoned, along with the cringing religious illusion in the general class of self-deceptions?[389]

Indeed, we are all familiar with the harm that do-gooders are wont to do while meaning well, and the legacy of colonialist missionary activity is one biting contemporary testimony to this flaw. But Kant replies to his own question:

> No! The disposition of virtue occupies itself with something real which of itself is well pleasing to God and which harmonises the world's highest good.[390]

Let us have faith, then in the reality of the moral good, the natural law, the true religion (Christianity), he seems to be declaring. Yet, there is a concession here:

> True, an illusion of self-sufficiency may attach itself thereto, an illusion of regarding oneself as measuring up to the idea of one's holy duty;

In other words, there is a danger that a certain arrogance may creep in here, but Kant immediately dismisses this caution: "but this is merely contingent." he says,

> To ascribe the highest worth to that disposition is not an illusion, like faith in the devotional exercises of the church, but is a direct contribution which promotes the highest good of the world.

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[388] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 162.

[389] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 162.

[390] Kant's sublime language reminds one of Portia in her guise as the learned clerk from Padua. First she reminds us that the quality of mercy is not strained and her speech breathes out a divine quality, and next her judgment on the Jew is absolute, the forced conversion cruel, and all mercy rendered irrelevant outside the Christian circle.

Returning then to the dynamic polyphony of Nature and Grace, Kant's position is that

> The illusion of being able to accomplish anything in the way of justifying ourselves before God through religious acts of worship is religious superstition, just as the illusion of wishing to accomplish this by striving for what is supposed to be communion with God is religious fanaticism.[391]

This passage highlights Kant's duty-based approach to ethics, yet it also reveals perhaps the Enlightenment prejudices of Kant's generation.[392] Hick and Panikkar's epoch finds it much harder to accept as a given that "the disposition of virtue occupies itself with something real which of itself is well pleasing to God and which harmonizes the world's highest good," after the evident failure of Christian virtues to forestall the inhuman atrocities of the twentieth century.[393] There is also, nowadays, a growing defense of what some Kantians might consider 'magical thinking', as there is of Buddhist Wisdom, on the basis of an unmistakable alignment between Buddhist metaphysics and the new Physics of quantum mechanics. According to this perspective, the "cringing religious illusion" identified by Kant is not so much *servility* as two things: 1. intentional interaction with the indeterminate by virtue of the effective imaginary, and 2. a proper humility before the unknown, an acknowledgment of the infinite. From this perspective we might suspect moral blindness on the part of the Kantian apogee, "a dizzying illusion of virtue" indeed; not only the illusion of self-sufficiency, but that of independent selfhood, which, in Buddhist thought, is regarded as the very root of all evil.

I must leave this tension unresolved for now. The foregoing argument has taken us through issues of the status of metaphysics, the coherence of theodicy and eschatology and the vexed question of diversity in the form of the problem of the one and the many. Guiding questions investigated the nature of the human person, our perplexity about suffering and the suffering of others, and whether it is possible to achieve solidarity with all beings. There is more to be said and understood about themes here of mankind's

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[391] Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 161.

[392] For the Buddhist, the means of justification is to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, which may be regarded as a return to child-like trust and a repentance of one's folly, an acknowledgment of insufficiency and ignorance. Justification (an especially Christian formulation of the soteriological telos) works the same in this regard for Buddhists as for Christians - we are not able to do it for ourselves, we rely on a higher order. The difference does not lie here.

[393] As, for example, those against the Buddhists of Tibet.

responsibility, and God's passibility. The difference between the two metaphysical visions - Hick's one Reality manifest in many forms on the one hand, and Panikkar's polyphony of diverse forms constituting *tempiternal* unity on the other - are now brought out more starkly. It remains to be seen what consequences may follow from these positions. Before I attempt their application, in the next section, I move on to differentiate them in more detail by reflecting on their divergent ways of approaching the relationship between theology and science, their use of theological language and their responses to the rising tide of critical studies during their time.

Section 2 – Metaphysics, Peace and Knowledge part 2

Wildman's criteria for the believability of religious philosophy continue to frame the inquiry now by bringing Science to question Religion (classified as warring opposites for much of the twentieth century). Related to this, they next ask the question, who is this 'God' to whom our theologians refer, by taking a perspective that intuitively rejects God-language as vague at best, and meaningless at worst. The pluralist theological uses of language and of received concepts is then briefly subjected to the critique of feminist theology.

3.2.1 The Sciences - Believable religion or Wisdom

For Pluralist theological apologetics, religious mythological literature and ritual as contrasted with the de-mythologising project of modern Scientism. Religions require belief, but are they believable? It is an ultimate question. Panikkar's first publication was on the word, concept, and symbol *Nature*, and his first doctorate was in Chemistry; yet he campaigned tirelessly against scientific reductionism and saw it as antagonistic to the integral vision he was developing. Hick also battled reductionism, though he became more and more fascinated with Science as he grew older.[394] Hick tried to produce a naturalistic interpretation of religion such that a transcendent Reality becomes also part of the naturalistic frame, whereas Panikkar rejected naturalistic accounts of reality as

[394] Eventually, he wrote scientifically on the supernatural and on the relevance of cutting-edge neurology to theology - John Hick, *The New Frontier of Religion and Science* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010b); and *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm* (London: Oneworld, 2013).

insufficient; in fact, suspicion about this was one of the prime instigators of his philosophical journey. Whereas Hick wanted to make sure that science-oriented minds would find religion believable, and so interpreted religion in scientific terms, Panikkar was a scientist who wanted science to be understood in religious terms. Panikkar retrieved a sense of the meaningfulness of inherited language through historico-cultural etymology and creative neologism to illuminate how Science can only be understood in terms of culture, which is mythological perforce. Hick insisted on the meaningfulness of religious discourse, but his response to the linguistic turn and Positivism was more acquiescent. Panikkar at times railed against nominalism and the Kantian subject-object divide as a schizophrenic, dualist fragmentation in modern culture. He saw the challenge before us as that of restoring transcendence to the scientific outlook.

The application of empirical methods to the study of religions can lead to distortions of both and the failure of scientific approaches to acknowledge the inherently subjective processes of interpretation and evaluation which determine which questions to ask, and which truths undergo proof. An example of this is the fascination with the paranormal which has been the stock in trade of the scientific study of spiritual experience. 'Experience' is so often framed in the Jamesian, phenomenological privileging of the "discrete and unusual."[395] The *everdayness* of experience is something more radical than the cogito, for Martin Heidegger :

> If being in the world is a fundamental constitution of Dasein, and one in which it moves not only in general but especially in the mode of everdayness, it must always already have been experienced ontically.[396]

The Alister Clavering Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, which drew Hick with its studies of mediums, parapsychology and its archive of the paranormal, is a case in point. We might say, that from an epistemic starting point, it is the abnormal, that which registers on the epistemic dial, that deserves attention, whereas from an ontological starting point, it is the very existence of the *everyday* that bears examination and attention

[395] Andrew Pierce, in *The Critical Spirit: Theology at the Crossroads of Faith and Culture – Essays in Honour of Gabriel Daly*, ed. Andrew Pierce, Gabriel Daly, and Geraldine S. Smyth (Blackrock, Dublin: Columba Press, 2003), 193.

[396] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ed. Dennis J. Schmidt, trans. Joan Stambaugh (1953; repr., Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 47.

especially. Thus, there is an important difference of emphasis likely here in the ways in which Science may illuminate the Psychology of Religion and Religions inform the practice of Science.[397] Perhaps one can make too much of the distinction too. Hardy, Sheldrake, Hick and Panikkar have all shared the conviction that it is encumbent on Science to study phenomena without arbitrarily pre-reducing mind or the transcendent to matter, and with due sensitivity to the role of the researcher in the process. However, it is Panikkar for whom the rejection of nominalist reductionism is most vital in the conversation about Peace.

Hick and his followers share an implicit belief in the phenomenological approach to religion. There is a danger, however, of bias in the phenomenological project, in that its taxonomies reflect the presuppositions upon which its categories are constructed. Panikkar embraced the hermeneutic turn in European continental philosophy and his critique of the Anglo/American epistemological monoculture is unequivocal. In an article entitled *The Pluralism of Truth* he started from the problem of the encounter of different *absolute horizons*, the interreligious meeting, finding Science hampered by epistemological culture:

> To Know, as the Upanishads and Thomas Aquinas (following Aristotle) explicitly said, meant to identify oneself with the thing known. Now, due to the shift of meaning of her notion of knowledge, introduced and popularised by the modern so-called natural sciences, to understand has been reduced to being able to foresee, calculate and dominate.[398]

The community of Science is an international community although in some ways the terms, methods and resources available to that community are set by the dominance of Western paradigms. Lest this fact be entangled, though, with any kind of religious suprematism, Hick points out, "Christianity can claim no proprietary interest in the

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[397] Rupert Sheldrake's interest in almost ubiquitous, yet unexplained psychic phenomena and biological wonders like the murmuration of starlings, follows up on Hardy's earliest inspirations from the world of Zoology and Biology and proffers the possibility of a more balanced collaboration of disciplines. Rupert Sheldrake, "The Sense of Being Stared At Part 1: Is It Real or Illusory?" *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 12, no. 6 (2005): 10–31, https://www.sheldrake.org/files/pdfs/papers/The-Sense-of-Being-Stared-At-Part-1-Is-it-Real-or-Illusory.pdf.

[398] Raimon Panikkar, "Faith, a Constitutive Human Dimension," *India International Centre Quarterly* 26/27, no. 1 (1999a): 34–47.

modern scientific enterprise."[399] Panikkar for his part, laments that scientific reductionism in our epistemology is reducing our capacity to experience reality.

> Our sense of the real is linked with our identity. With the conviction that something matters in our lives and that this something is not a totally private affair, that it somehow extends into a sphere that transcends our egos, that we have a sort of biography or destiny because we belong to a larger Whole that has at least as much reality as we have.[400]

Panikkar and Hick also give different accounts of 'objectivity'. Where Hick's concern is with objective values and as certain knowledge of the really Real,[401] for Panikkar objectivity is relation, communion, a kind of celebration, it is the allowing/according of fullness of existence and otherness. In fact, it is a perfecting of subjectivity, which presents as a spiritual aspiration of the contemporary seeker.

> Science itself has always wanted mainly to know, to discover and, ultimately, to *contemplate* reality. …Contemporary Science will try to leap over the chasm between the objective and the subjective[402].

Their responses to scientistic atheism relate to the conversation about secularism and also to the philosophical challenge of difference. A philosopher whose perspective embraces elements of both Hick and Panikkar, and whose thought may promise to synthesise the two perspectives, is Roy Bhaskar.[403] Bhaskar offers a version of Critical Realism that begins from the point of reclaiming the ontological in a thorough-going, not merely analogical way. Bhaskar's ontological shift moves against the 'implied ontology' of an atomistic paradigm (against Hume's rejection of real causality for instance) and the reduction of ontology to epistemology (the tendency of Kant and the idealists who

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[399] Hick and Knitter, The Myth of Christian Uniqueness, 26.

[400] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 64.

[401] John Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 338–39; and Faith and Knowledge.

[402] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 44–46.

[403] The following references to Roy Bhaskar's Critical Realism may be found in Roy Bhaskar, *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom* (London: Routledge, 2016); Roy Bhaskar, "MetaReality," Roy Bhaskar Centre, accessed November 8, 2025, https://www.roybhaskarcentre.com/metareality

followed him) to declare being as such to be the necessary non-identity of the real. He positioned himself against the *nominalism* (of Kant and Popper, for example) in affirming that universals, categories, illusions, meanings and concepts are also real, ontologically; nothing escapes ontology. For the purposes of understanding and analysing reality, Bhaskar also affirmed the primacy of identity over difference: unity, or rather *non-duality*. Differentiated from monism, this articulation does not make duality disappear but tries to make us understand differentiation not as the process of forming fragmentary atomistic identities but as that of producing differentiated and developing identity. For Bhaskar, this is evidenced by the shape of human logic and language: the fact that comparison is always on the basis of what is shared (e.g. *being*) and that we use the term *the Universe* as an all-embracing inclusive singular, without which theorising becomes impossible.[404]

Thus, for Panikkar, the status of nature in the cosmological outlook is integral to what he hopes will be a re-discovery and renaissance of religion. The zeitgeist he describes as the 'ecological moment', prioritizes an ethical question about nature.[405] This evolutionary dimension is less emphasized by Hick, although there is an interesting parallel in Bhaskar's formulation of Critical Realism as a dialectics of scientific knowledge. Here an organic process is at work - incompleteness leads to contradictions which lead to new discovery. In examples such as the suffragette movement as a response to political imbalance, or independence movements in Latin America necessitating de-colonization, we can observe, according to this view, the natural restoration of harmony to living systems. Thus we may interpret justice in terms of natural processes, a pervasive *neg-*

[404] Raimon's brother, Salvador Panikkar was also a philosopher and became a professor at Barcelona University. He developed a parallel theory in his *Approximacion al Origen*, that of retro-progression. They seem to have shared an instinct to design a philosophy which undermines the prevailing Myth (in this case the myth of progress) and yet supplies reassurance (albeit paradoxical reassurance) to those engaged in the ongoing dialectic of pluralism, that the conversation is meaningful and it is going somewhere. When, early in his academic career, Panikkar become Secretary General of the International Congress of Philosophy and presented his paper on *ontonomy* there as a proposal for multi- or inter-disciplinarity, a plea for collaborative harmony between traditions of philosophy (heteronomy) and modern science (autonomy). As was usual also of his brother, it was to promote interdisciplinary methodologies and intended as a plea for psychological wholeness/health. See Josep Maria Camps, "Salvador Pániker and Retroprogress," *Cròniques Subsidiàries*, June 30, 2020, https://croniquessubsidiaries.org/2020/06/30/salvador-paniker-and-the-retroprogress/

[405] There is an organicism in the philosophy of Panikkar which he shares with that great mystic geologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Cf. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008); and *The Divine Milieu* (New York: Perennial Library, 2001).

entropy. Panikkar too regarded harmony of the natural order as prior, and therefore peace as the given, political ground state. But Panikkar refused to accept that any dialectical process could lead to peace or that the final destiny of mankind would be reached by a purely evolutionary process of this sort. The present and future harmony he envisaged is the result of arising non-dual consciousness, the cosmotheandric experience. Panikkar's non-dual reality is characterised in Buddhist terms by reference to *Madhyamaka* philosophy; the doctrine of dependent origination, *Pratityasamutpada*. In *The Silence of God, the Answer of the Buddha*, Panikkar developed his fundamentally relational ontology thoroughly in these terms. And his theology therefore entails a mutual dependence between the human and the divine (Man and God). Panikkar rejects the equation of God with Being in Christian scholasticism for as "Christian philosopher Merleau-Ponty expresses this succinctly: 'To posit God as Being (in the metaphysical sense) is to bring about a negation of the world.'"[406], but he also rejects the dualism of mind/body that characterised the Deist and Cartesian perspectives; "To equate God with a timeless, otherworldly Being that is sovereign cause of itself and has no desire for nature or humanity—as Descartes and the rationalists did—is to reject the sanctity of the flesh …a betrayal of the original message of the Incarnation."[407]

Does Hick's model offer an adequate theological response to the question of our human relationship to nature? Both he and Panikkar subscribed to a vision of microcosm and macrocosm in relation - the great chain of being.[408] As we have discovered, though, Hick's theology did not encompass re-mythologization on the basis of the re-enchantment of nature.[409] Panikkar's focus on presence, on the other hand, leads to a re-sacralization of nature and a sharper sense, therefore, of the injustices perpetrated against her by mankind. Panikkar acknowledges crimes against the earth,[410] his condemnation of a certain kind of science is final, therefore, and his definition of peace embraces cosmic dimensions,

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[406] Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 93.

[407] Kearney, Anatheism: Returning to God after God, 93.

[408] Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion?, 213.

[409] Matthew Fox, The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance(San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

[410] Raimon Panikkar likens the splitting of the atom to an abortion. See *Cultural Disarmament: The Way to Peace*(Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995b), 98.

including other species and the natural world. He finds a prophetic voice to declare that "Matter too, rises again."[411] Cosmic Peace will assert itself despite the incompetence of technological Man to address causes rather than just respond to symptoms with solely technological solutions. Panikkar offers that it is not sufficient to achieve mutual tolerance between men, rather the vision of peace must be extended to a cosmic embrace with all of nature.

3.2.2 Anthropomorphism - God language or Anthropocentrism

The last of Wildman's categories with which I challenge our pluralists, finds religions to be believable or not on the basis of the language they use to refer to the divine. How we speak of God has always been a matter of considerable gravity and the charge of blasphemy in many countries remains a serious one. It is true that the pluralist philosophers we study were liberal in this regard. Nevertheless, as theologians they frequently struggled with questions about the meaningfulness of discourse about that word, Panikkar going so far as to publish in 1997 an article entitled *Nine Ways Not to talk about God*.[412] In part the controversy is about what one can truthfully claim about the nature of divinity, in part it is about competing truth claims of different religions, and in part it is about the performativity of language itself. From the perspective of the critical criteria we are bringing, it is more specifically about the implausibility of ascribing human characteristics and motives to the absolute or infinite category.

For Christian theology, the encounter with other conceptions of divinity than the personal has focused this difficulty. Hick argued "God who is conceived as personal, without the corrective of the concept of Brahman, threatens to become an anthropomorphic idol."[413] Theological discussion of Hick's category, the Real, however, tends towards reifying language and interpretative foundationalism. As we have seen, his speculations on the nature of life after death, his theory of epistemological alienation, and even the entire pluralist hypothesis, involve theorizing about God's intending, human-like will. Hick is Stoic in his sense of the transcendence of the divine. However, seen from the perspective

[411] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 98.

[412] Panikkar, "Nine Ways Not to Talk about God."

[413] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 142.

of a Levinas or Marion,[414] Hick's 'God' language reduces that transcendence by surreptitiously making God available to an objectifying knowledge.[415] John Hick points out, there is a distinction to be drawn between the realist and reductionist perspectives. On the one hand, there is reduction:

> the metaphysical to the psychological, or the ontological to the existential, or the transcendent to the immanent. In contrast to this, theological realism affirms both dimensions and refuses to reduce one to the other.

Supporting this view, Schmidt-Leukel quotes Hick[416] to emphasise that, Hick's view that the divine transcends the grasp of the human mind is a point he made repeatedly.

> For otherwise we would miss the truly transcendent character of the ultimate and confuse it with a human idol.[417]

However, the defense that Hick has made of the cataphatic mode of theological speech has already trespassed in terms of Panikkar's apophatic stance.[418]

> the very assumption that there is a will of God who could have created us so or so, happy or unhappy, with free will or without it is a crude anthropomorphism.[419]

I think the point that Panikkar makes is that theological realism, of the kind Hick professed, expressed in the terms in which Hick expressed it, does not do justice to the profound sense of absence that is often the essential character of religious faith and

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[414] Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012 [orig. 1991]).

[415] Peter Jonkers notes that "eventually, theological realism runs the risk of annihilating God's radical transcendence and reducing religion to an alternative scientific theory." See "Living as If God Exists: Looking for Common Ground in Times of Radical Pluralism," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6, no. 1 (2014): 111, https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.v6i1.194.

[416] Hick, God and the Universe of Faiths.

[417] Schmidt-Leukel, "Religious Pluralism and Critical Realism," in *John Hick's Religious Pluralism in Global Perspective*.

[418] An early example of Hick's view appears in *Faith and Knowledge*, where he writes, "God from the beginning wishes neither to be entirely manifest to human consciousness nor entirely hidden" (Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 140.

[419] Panikkar, *Rhythm of Being,*108.

spiritual quest.[420] Faith must find a way to make itself at home with the unknown, to dwell in the discomfort of not knowing.[421]

Panikkar, like the French philosophers, is not anti-realist in any sense but they refuse to be drawn into the question of the reality of God for the theological reason that to do so makes us insensitive to the "excessive character of God's existence, radically exceeding the bounds of (earthly) being"[422] as a *present experience*. The Nirguna Brahman Hick refers to, may not be considered as featureless image of the divine, nor remembered as counterbalancing idea to anthropomorphic representations, rather, for Panikkar, Brahman without qualities is conceived as Socratic silence itself: *Turiya* - that is, the end of dialogue - in the sense of the proper destination and resting place of dialogue - the mystery, and silence of communion. The obliquely Kantian maneuver Hick makes, to postulate a Reality towards which religions progressively orient the lives of their adherents, involves a mistake from the point of view of the mystic. That mistake is a) to make an object of the divine, and b) to misunderstand the nature of objectivity. The distinction is a fine, yet vital one. Hick identifies and *describes* the non-dual

> Beyond this is the fourth and final level, turiya, related to nirguna Brahman, the absolute reality itself. Shankara says 'that which was designated as prajna will be described as turiya separately when it is not viewed as the cause, and when it is freed from all phenomenal relationships'…Turiya then, as human state, is the self-realisation in which the finite self is one with the universal self …that into which the world is resolved, the peaceful, the benign, the non-dual.[423]

Panikkar's writing reveals him grappling in real time with the experience itself:

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[420] Cf. Mother Teresa's account, in the pain and darkness and utter absence of God: Yadlapati delves into the example of Mother Teresa's private letters (published in 2007), which reveal the emptiness of her *Dark Night of the Soul* and note how they defy the usual categories of "faith" and "doubt." See Madhuri M. Yadlapati, *Against Dogmatism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 9.

[421] The contrast is with Heidegger's ontological distinction between being and Being (usually rendered by the capitalisation) which does not postulate a metaphysical Being in quite the sense that Hick's really Real does, but rather attempts to remind us of the conceptual category of Being as such.

[422] Peter Jonkers, "Living as If God Exists: Looking for Common Ground in Times of Radical Pluralism," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6, no. 1 (2014): 111–32, https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.v6i1.194, 119.

[423] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 281.

> The realm of silence, or *turiya*, which we can denote only by saying 'neither-nor'… when this experience dawns it remains in the twilight of an expecting awareness before coming into the light of consciousness… how can we speak of this? …The scheme of Being-Speaking-Thinking may perhaps help us here albeit with one important qualification. The Parmenidean schema I am trying to overcome plays with the dual paradigm Being/Non-Being, where the former *is* and the latter *is not*.[424]

And:

> Thinking reveals Being as, at least potentially, intelligible. Speech is the revelation of Being as Silence.[425]

Panikkar is insistent on the dangers of idolatry involved in anthropomorphism of the divine and especially vigilant about the ways we may or may not, in theological terms, speak truthfully. It would be better, according to Panikkar, to be what is called (usually wrongly) a *polytheist,* than to subscribe to the inherently reductive *monocultures of theism* - monotheism, monotheist dualism, Deism.[426] So while some have criticized Hick for instantiating a radically transcendent, transcategorical, unknowable divine, an ultimately dualistic scheme, others (among them Panikkar) might reject what they would see as his anthropomorphic God language and Hick's *Real*, as a reified understanding of an even more indescribable category, 'Being'.

Heidegger's Being and Time (*Sein und Zeit*) contemplates what it means *to be*, by returning to Aristotle, as Kant had, to begin from the sensation of time as the phenomenon of movement. It is worth noting in this comparative stage, Panikkar's discussion of this in his later Gifford Lectures:

> I will not linger on the meaning of Being. We may provisionally agree that the word...in a unique way encompasses all that *is*. I would probably have

[424] Panikkar, *Rhythm of Being,* 72.

[425] Panikkar, *Rhythm of Being,* 72.

[426] According to this view, Hick maybe does not do justice to the polytheist cultural difference.

> preferred to use *reality* instead of Being as a word encompassing Being and Non-being[427]

But then should Being as such be equated with God? The language of being, the "'ontologism' which interprets being as God"[428] tends to render the scriptural traditions untenable and is not quite satisfactory either. And why is this issue so important in the conversation we are trying to pursue about peace? The reason is that human *Peace* in the terms of religious traditions reflects a status of relationship, either with the cosmos, or with the divine or both. Thus the issue turns on the nature of human participation and personhood in such a theological outlook for how can we have a relationship with the radically immanent?

Panikkar provides this:

> The World is no longer an enemy to vanquish, exploit or crush, neither is it any longer an 'other' to love; it is part of the whole to be freed from physical necessity by the sacerdotal act of its human liberator[429]

Is Panikkar's metaphysics, as here expressed, a dubious scheme to cast himself as God, or as the Nietzschean priest we mentioned earlier? His commentator and critic Komulainen, thinks that Panikkar's work as a whole betrays an anthropocentric tendency in that here *Man* is characterized as participating in cosmic rhythms which are transformed by his participation; "an existentialist-anthropological reduction of religiosity."[430] However, a careful article by Peter Jonkers considers the mystical strain in continental philosophy,[431] and rescues Panikkar.

> the radical passivity (not just the theorized dependency of Schleiermacher's theology, but now the felt sense of post-existential apophatic mystical philosophy of religion in the mode of Marion and

[427] Panikkar, Rhythm of Being, 49.

[428] Panikkar, *Rhythm of Being,* 70.

[429] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 452.

[430] Komulainen, An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion?, 214.

[431] Jonkers, "Living as If God Exists."

> Levinas, breaking in on experience, almost as a traumatic experience would.[432]

Mystical passivity is an ontological status and an experience, but it is only action that confirms an experience. This may function as a defense for Panikkar against the charge of aiming for union between man and the divine rather than an alignment of wills constituting a communion of person and divine which manifests full personhood and personalizes the divine.[433] In Christian theology, Peace considered as a mystical union of the human and divine returns us to the theological question of incarnation and doctrines about deification.

For Panikkar, there are three key points here in relation to persons and *Being*. First that human knowledge is the locus of the imago Dei – that it is in our capacity to know that we are like to the divine. Second, that all reality is predicated on Mind which is inseparable from Being. And third, that human minds participate in the creation of reality itself. This is a dynamic vision of relational understanding which derives from Thomistic metaphysics while affirming itself in other terms. Acknowledging the perversity of the position which regards the world as deriving from inner experience and not the other way round, it diagnoses the reason for the mistake. Even the Critical Realist Bhaskar himself towards the end of his life, as he began to seek solace in the Perennialist Theosophical beliefs of his parents, came to understand that while Critical Realism refuses the idea that reality exists only in our minds, it has no quibble with the idea that all might subsist within the consistent mind of an altogether other being.[434]

Similarly committed to the unitive experience, Panikkar rejects concepts that require delineating identity which is based on difference[435] but then defends his use of Christ as

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[432] And this image is worth bearing in mind as we consider the contribution of anthropological interpretations of religion that take account of the mythological and initiatory elements of childhood religious formation.

[433] Hick quotes Butler; see Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism* (London: Constable, 1967), 114: "the union of God and man is brought about not by confusion of natures, but by agreement of wills…"; see also John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, introduction to the second edition (London: Macmillan, 1989), xxxvii.

[434] This is Berkeley's famous theory. Even so, he would probably reach for Occam's razor to slice away what now appears like a piece of extraneous speculation. The key difference between the young and older Bhaskar is experience. And it is ever thus. Those who experience a kind of unitary consciousness, their mind a part of a greater harmonious whole, somewhat of the quality of Mind (often written with a capital) tend towards a religious metaphysics.

[435] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism,15.

ultimate trans-religious symbol because it is not an "apersonal, undiscriminated (ultimately inhuman) unity."[436] Metaphysical speculation must conclude in the silence of apophatic contemplation, but as mythological symbol of the divine, only a person will do because the symbol must be the means by which we realise full personhood ourselves. "The person is there where-it-is, in its *Dasein*"[437] Yet this conception of the person is also interpersonal, a corporate being, in the organic sense of belonging to the whole, "to be a person here means to be a living center of the whole of reality."[438]The most constructive way to read through these, sometimes contradictory, assertions may be to acknowledge that Panikkar recommends a Humanist outlook, but in a way that tempers its anthropocentrism with reminders from multiple religious traditions about the relationships, intersectionalities, at the heart of reality that constitute the human person.[439] The mode of approach becomes all, in the relational ontological paradigm.[440]

Concluding Wildman's tests, I hope I have sufficiently considered the terminology and concepts at the heart of our Pluralist Theologies of Religions and raised points of convergence and difference clearly. It will be the task of chapter four to apply these insights to embracing intercultural difference in education. I finish this section by reflecting on feminist perspectives that constitute a nearby 'other' to both men.

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[436] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 15.

[437] Raimon Panikkar, *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype* (London: Seabury Press, 1982), 69.

[438] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 71.

[439] In this sense, Panikkar's work can be seen as an important forerunner of the hermeneuticist theology of Jens Zimmermann, for example, who aims for precisely this, albeit with reference almost exclusively to the Christian tradition. See Jens Zimmermann, *Humanism and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[440] In medical science, attention is now paid to the connective tissue much more than it was, and with this has come the dawning perspective that this focus reveals; pain as a form of communication, a more dynamic awareness in fact. The model of dynamic awareness in a relational field now succeeds static formulas. In the same way others have theorized that Music becomes a verb only, not a noun, and God a term only truly meaningful in the vocative case.

3.2.3 Feminism and Critical Studies

Women and men writing through the latter half of the twentieth century maintained the traditional use of the male pronoun. 'Man' language predominates in philosophical discourse throughout Hick and Panikkar's writing, although both acknowledged this as a failing. Hick claimed to be old fashioned, and Panikkar advocated the adoption a third gender designation at a future time. Both, however, argued the vital importance of female perspectives to religious understanding. As we have seen, Julian of Norwich, whom many group within the medieval proto-feminist Beguine movement, was Hick's closest comforter and spiritual guide. *The Fifth Dimension* has this passage:

> It is Julian's intense awareness of the divine love as gracious (or as she says 'courteous') and accepting that led her to conclude that 'as truly as God is our father, so truly is God our mother'. God is both 'the power and goodness of fatherhood', and 'the wisdom and lovingness of motherhood.' Again, she speaks of 'our true mother Jesus', and 'our heavenly Mother Jesus.' To think of the divine in female as much as male terms has long been familiar within Hinduism, where female and male deities equally manifest the infinite reality of Brahman, in itself beyond personality and gender.[441]

Both acknowledged the patriarchalism of religions in general and Christian traditions in particular.[442] Panikkar, though, is the more determined to set the record straight somehow. For example, according to Panikkar, in the broad sweep of the history of our species, war began concurrently with patriarchy,[443]so patriarchal religions already reflect something of a fatal flaw. Hick's willingness, at least in principle, to engage with the God image as female was adventurous for the time. Panikkar, though, went further, for instance, in exploring the interchangeability of the terms *logos* and *vac* to suggest that a feminine way of experiencing the divine is the right/highest way:

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[441] John Hick, The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm (London: Oneworld, 2013), 153.

[442] Hick, The Fifth Dimension, 153.

[443] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament.

> Vac is grammatically feminine…if an ontology of sex has any meaning at all, it would find here a decisive basis. However that may be, vac expresses that total surrender to the source from which it springs which is characteristically found in the archetype of feminine love, the feminine feature of love being that of finding not only fulfilment, but being itself in the beloved.[444]

There is a question mark here, though, about Panikkar's frequent characterization of his theological outlook as more feminine. Does he intend that true knowledge is ascertained by the feminine loss of self as opposed to the more masculine assertion of self? This interpretation conforms with his critique of knowledge conceived in instrumentalist terms. Under the title *What is an ultimate question*? Panikkar muses:

> Perhaps the very method of inquiry is wrong. Perhaps we should not search, much less question, but allow ourselves to be searched and questioned – a much more feminine attitude.[445]

> And: To come to know Being, "what is needed is a more feminine attitude of openness and readiness"[446]

This characterization of the feminine, from a feminist perspective, might come across as a perpetuation of patriarchal stereotypes about the roles women may traditionally be permitted, and the damage these do to an autonomous sense of selfhood.[447] The question turns on the Protestant framing of justification. That a man is justified in the sense of restored as a free, autonomous moral agent, is deconstructed by feminist theology as a patriarchal model. They point to inherent problems with the idea of justification in religious terms, when the agency, passivity, autonomy or freedom of men and women are in fact so differently configured in real life. As we have seen, Panikkar avoids the issue of justification, by framing the question of our relationship to the ultimate truth, goodness

[444] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 89.

[445] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 59.

[446] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 69.

[447] Rachel Sophia Baard, "Original Grace, Not Destructive Grace: A Feminist Appropriation of Paul Tillich's Notion of Acceptance," *The Journal of Religion* 87, no. 3 (2007): 411–34, https://doi.org/10.1086/516741, 419.

and beauty, as the quest to realise a new innocence: he recasts the question as one about the right direction of desire.[448] Panikkar takes seriously and engages with feminist theories of difference and otherness to question the notion of autonomy, finding it to be "a historically, socially, and culturally specific ideal that parades as a universal norm."[449] In fact, advising a feminine attitude as the only way to receive Peace[450] – which cannot be won – Panikkar emphasizes: "In every whole human being there is an androgynous dimension which, sociologically at least has been ignored." The receptive is the deepest human aspect, by no means belonging exclusively to a particular sex, though women would know more about it.[451]

Panikkar's writing resonates with those who reject received categories to explore identity through sometimes complex intersectionalities, as do a growing number of students in International secondary education.[452] Hick's eagerness to secure coherence across evangelical and positivist persuasions leaves him with a definition of knowledge that does not engage with this existential risk identity loss, and this may be perceived as a lack of existential engagement which disqualifies Hick in some ways also from dealing with the post-colonial experience in theology. Here is the epistemological difference that we are beginning to characterise as male and female approaches. Intellectual discernment that requires inclusion and exclusion may be called instrumental logic. Discernment which differentiates while including the one and the other, may be less efficacious in ways, but Panikkar is drawn to find it equally valuable. This can take the form, as in Hick, of bearing with a degree of paradox, or a suspension of disbelief/judgment in the phenomenologist's tool kit - Husserl's *epoché* – Hick's *critical trust*. In the non-dual scheme of Raimon Panikkar, however, knowledge yearns to encompass polarities in

[448] I revisit this question in chapter 8

[449] Baard quotes, "Original Grace, Not Destructive Grace"; see Rachel Sophia Baard, "Original Grace, Not Destructive Grace: A Feminist Appropriation of Paul Tillich's Notion of Acceptance," *The Journal of Religion* 87, no. 3 (2007): 422, https://doi.org/10.1086/516741.

[450] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 7.

[451] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 8.

[452] For figures and a discussion of the complexities involved in establishing data on this topic, see Anne C. Campbell, Jordyn Dezago, and Quintessence Townsend, "Queer Students in International Higher Education: A Review of Distinct Motivations, Considerations, and Challenges," *Higher Education* 88 (February 2024): 1567–88, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-024-01183-4.

creative *coincidentia oppositorum* acknowledging an ontological non-non-identity. Again, this has to do with the balance between autonomy and identity in a consciousness radically reminded of interdependence, (sometimes by dint of historical or cultural trauma). This is one of the binary oppositions addressed by the key concept which occupies us for the final section here, where I examine the inspiration they take in different ways from Trinitarian theology.

Section 3 – Trinitarian Ontology of Peace

The Holy Trinity is the focus of a final meditation on Hick and Panikkar's interreligious encounter before I move on to examine that meeting in practice and reflect on the lessons learned for peace education. It is nonetheless a vitally important interlude. The development of the doctrine of the Trinity is so central to Christian thought and belief that it would be no exaggeration to say it comprises within itself all the most important central features of this religion as distinct from others. The ways it is interpreted and deployed by Hick and Panikkar differ while also demonstrating their fundamental reliance on it as a conceptual framework for the interpretation of the religious beliefs of others. Trinitarian theology provides an important key in several respects. Theologically, the Trinity acts as a symbol of transcendent and immanent, cosmic, harmonious relation and psychologically (and therefore pastorally), it performs a harmonising function by invoking the presence of the third, or holding the third space in which reconciliation and healing may occur, perhaps even between those of differing religious and ideological orientations. Both Hick and Panikkar explore the applicability of the analogue of Trinity in the context of dialogue with other religions. It is a symbol of unity in difference, which has the potential to reconcile, and which equally might apply in contexts that include dialogue with the non-religious as well. While Hick's interpretation was, as usual, controversial, it was Panikkar for whom a Trinitarian vision revealed itself as all-encompassing in scope. His approach is so idiosyncratic and so fruitful that it deserves careful attention here before we encounter many possible applications in practical contexts.

First, the Trinity is construed by Hick in what he calls a "modal way" – thus the differing aspects of divinity reflected in it may be taken as analogous to the difference between religions.

> Religious thought offers two important models of diversity in unity to which we can turn for illumination: the Christian concept of the Trinity and the Buddhist concept of the *Trikaya*.[453]

Hick chooses to pursue the analogy by reference to the *Sarvastivada* Buddhist *Trikaya* doctrine: the *Dharmakaya*, *Sambhogakaya* and *Nirmanakaya* Buddha bodies. It is an analogy that both he and Panikkar considered fitting. According to Hick, there is a functional equivalence reflected in the different doctrines: the three levels of Buddha nature bridge the divine and material planes in a *perichoretic* way. This leads him to reflect on the imaginative psychological process involved. It is one of projection, "mental ideations" that act as "appropriate expressions", or "veridical hallucinations."[454] "It does constitute a transformation of authentic information of which the Real is the ultimate source... In worshipping this divine 'Thou' we are accordingly relating ourselves to the Real"[455]

Once again, although he would agree with Hick that worship relates us to Reality, Panikkar rejects the modalism Hick recommends on the basis that the Trinity is not a conceptual analogical tool, it is an ontological experience, an experience of the nature of Being.[456] He would not have used the language of "information transformation" for example. Panikkar hoped for a perichoretic, authentic, interreligious enhancement, seeing the Trinity as a pan-religious truth, an experience that each religion would, with its own peculiar emphases, make available to its adherents; and thus he claims to be realizing potentials in the doctrine that were inherent since its inception in the second century. As Kärkkäinen comments, both perichoresis and Advaita are philosophical concepts that try to go beyond monism and dualism. Thus, while "Trinity is… the practical, concrete and

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[453] Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 270: Both reject the over-simplification of the too often touted correspondence between the Christian trinity and the Hindu *Trimurti*; or indeed any such grouping of three gods as de facto Trinitarian. That is thoughtless. It does however, come perilously close to Hick's own Pluralistic Hypothesis or we might say analogous to Joseph Campbell's 'masks of God', see Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God* (London: Souvenir Press, 2000).

[454] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 273.

[455] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 273.

[456] Ahlstrand, Fundamental Openness, 151.

existential basis of the Christian life,"[457] as archetype, the Trinity may be employed as a paradigm of encounter with other religions. As Panikkar puts it:

> The Trinity may be considered as a junction where the authentic spiritual dimensions of all religions meet.[458]

So, here we are at the heart of Panikkar's response to John 14:6. It is a psychological formula.

> The Son is not an object, He is the knowledge of the Father, since he is the being the *asti*, the *esti*, of the Father. The identity is total and the alterity is equally total, infinite and absolute.[459]

According to Panikkar, to go to the Father directly, makes no sense; one would only find negation and non-being there. God is the silence of Being. The assurance of continued personhood is only possible with some kind of inherent guarantee to the experience of the absolute, which is the personhood of the Son who is the Father, by whom we too may, in fact, rise to full personhood. For Panikkar, the Trinity is a key concept in the resolution of the problem that divides Hick and Panikkar, that of Panikkar's insistence on the possibility and necessity of unmediated experience, the authenticity of the *self-transparent subject.* It is the problem that "No relationship is conceivable with the absolute as immanent"[460] and this is why Panikkar equates it with *apophatism*.[461] Referring again to his sacrificial view of creation, Panikkar expands his cosmovision of the Trinity: "This is what I have called elsewhere 'the cross in the Trinity' i.e. the integral immolation of God, of which the Cross of Christ and his immolation are only the images and revelations."[462]

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[457] Raimon Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973a), 42.

[458] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 42.

[459] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 47.

[460] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 33.

[461] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 46.

[462] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 46.

> Is it not here, truly speaking, in this essential apophatism of the 'person' of the Father, in this kenosis of being at its very source, that the Buddhist experience of Nirvana and Sunyata (emptiness) should be situated?[463]

Ewert Cousins saw prophetic reach and purpose in Panikkar's *Advaitic Trinitarianism* as he called it, to bring religions towards convergence and mutual understanding.[464] And this would gratify Hick, who called for the development of "forms of trinitarian, Christological and soteriological doctrine that are compatible with our awareness of the independent salvific authenticity of the other great world faiths."[465]

Kajsa Ahlstrand points out that Mahayana[466] Buddhist *pratityasamutpada* offers a non-hierarchical insight into the nature of reality. This is a mirror for Panikkar of the perichoresis of Trinitarian relation in the Chalcedonian formula: "the Trinity is radical relativity par excellence".[467] Furthermore, *Perichoresis* provides the image by which Panikkar may envisage religions in a relation of mutual dependence and mutual affirmation while retaining their distinct identity. Ahlstrand finds this use idiosyncratic in the extreme, in that Panikkar expects a mutual transformation of religions, which is a development not envisaged in Trinitarian theology; i.e. *perichoresis* does not imply transformation, on the contrary it affirms continuing identity. However, Panikkar might reply that he regards the truth that is being brought out of each of the religions as imperishable, and inherent in their natures, such that the mutual relations between religions will clarify and distil those distinct essences, representing their true natures more, not less. Thus, perichoretic relation realises itself as unity in diversity evermore until the relationship reaches its Christophanic destiny. The point, indeed, imaginative, but not necessarily inaccurate, is that plurality in the heart of truth[468] becomes not a problem but an asset. In some ways this makes no sense from within the paradigm of

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[463] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 46.

[464] Kärkkäinen, Trinity and Religious Pluralism, 126.

[465] Hick, The Myth of God Incarnate, 149

[466] Ahlstrand, *Fundamental Openness: The author* details that Theravadin sources conceive of this doctrine more as a chain of causality whereas Madhyamaka conceives of it in terms of ontological *anatta*

[467] Raimon Panikkar, *The Silence of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 141.

[468] Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999a).

Trinitarian thought. But for Panikkar, the gift of the Trinity as an image is that it allows us to begin to imagine that mutuality. As Aloysius Pieris puts it, "the purpose of a myth is to reveal an intuition."[469] Just as there is no sense that the members of the Trinity could be finally captured by the terms we use to denote them, the trinity as myth can nevertheless be true; as in, capable of accurately revealing the intuited reality.

It was Keshub Chandra Sen who first explicitly applied the Trinitarian theological analogy to the advaitic designation Sat Cit, Ananda,[470] thus invoking a Christian theological model in the re-invention of Hinduism. The relationship between missionary Christianity and the new Hinduism with its incipient suprematism now revealed in Hindu nationalism is a highly problematic one in both Christian and Hindu terms. The mutual appropriations in this historical context will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter. For now, the convergence in this instance is suspicious to Ahlstrand:

> So I think Panikkar has committed the most typical sin of pluralism (of which he is often most critical), namely, dismissing the real differences among religions and their conceptions by assuming a similarity behind the terminology.[471]

Panikkar famously declared himself Hindu, Buddhist and all the while Christian. Within the Trinitarian formula he found a way to avoid the danger of a monist interpretation of Advaita by invoking the interdependence of all - *pratityasamutpada* - and thereby move towards an ontological radical relativity which permitted this sense of multiple belonging. Later, the perichoretic movement of Trinity was to become, for Panikkar, the analogy of the Rhythm of Being itself and the triadic shape of its harmony.[472] Thus, process and movement become ever more central metaphors in his thought.

Ahlstrand also finds the vision of the Father too apophatic in Panikkar's theology, the Son is the only person and the Spirit pure immanence – abstracted beyond objectification or

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[469] Aloysius Pieris, *Interfaith Dialogue and Liberation Theology*, interview by Benedict Clark, 2023, unpublished.

[470] Ahlstrand, *Fundamental Openness,*146: (*Saccidananda* was the name Bede Griffiths and Jules Monchanin took for the Christian ashram they established on the Cauvery river)

[471] Kärkkäinen, Trinity and Religious Pluralism, 130.

[472] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being.

invocation entirely. Kärkkäinen and Ahlstrand object that the historical person of Jesus seems to have gone missing from Panikkar's theological speculations. The latter complains:

> Unless there are compelling theological reasons to change the meaning of terms, theology in my opinion should rather try to operate with the commonly agreed terminology.[473]

But this is precisely the issue. Panikkar and Hick both feel that there are indeed compelling reasons, given the unacceptable situation in which application of these theological concepts to the world in which we live will not work. Furthermore, Panikkar often seems to feel that he is reinterpreting or reinventing language in order to retrieve concepts, recovering a lost sense that these terms once had. After all, the apophatic mystics were medieval Europeans for whom the nothingness of God and their hopes for ultimate communion with God, were in no sense contradictory. Thus, the Trinitarian mystery always did have profound and polyvalent psychological dimensions in which the holding of paradox may carry effective healing functions – this indeed is the nature of mystery as religion. Perhaps Kärkkäinen and others have too readily hoped to stifle Panikkar's enthusiasms by reference to a theological monoculture that, at least from his perspective, and that of John Hick, has already failed.

Be that as it may, whether we finally agree with Hick or Panikkar is not the issue for us now, as much as it is to observe what we can that may be relevant to intercultural education for peace. Let me briefly take note of some of the examples Panikkar cites as instances of the trinitarian nature of reality itself, to see whether the vision he offers communicates applicable insights. For Panikkar, the Trinity is a polyvalent symbol sometimes identical with the *cosmotheandric* experience - the trinity of anthropological, cosmic and divine spheres[474] - thus, for Panikkar the Trinity becomes the way to refer to the triadic structure of ontological unity and diversity.

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[473] Kärkkäinen, Trinity and Religious Pluralism, 130.

[474] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 71.

> By Trinity, I mean the ultimate triadic structure of reality... the radical relativity of the Divine, the Cosmic, and the Human...theo/anthropo/cosmic trinity.[475]

So, the trinity is, for Panikkar, the statement of a quality of relationship in the Divine which permeates all of creation. He shifts the emphasis away from economic trinity towards understanding the immanent Trinity in all experience. This affords Panikkar creative liberty to expand the definition to include the feminine, which he sees expressed in all reality: the feminine Spirit, the male Father, the personal Son.[476] The Trinity maps onto his Cosmotheandric vision; the interdependence between different levels of nature and the universe may be regarded as both graced and grace-giving. Thus, with this proposed ontology, Panikkar aims to explore, justify and secure the radically trinitarian *Cosmotheandric Experience*. In fact, Hick did also consider the possibility of a trinitarian ontological interpretation in his *Death and Eternal Life* with its focus on eschatology.[477] It may be that he was influenced by Panikkar, though he makes no mention of it if so. The formulation is strikingly similar. He starts by recalling that the Greek word περσωνα originally intended a mask as worn by an actor, and thus meant a role, or character, and briefly develops the idea of an inter-personal definition of personal identity[478] and then sees this reflected in the perichoresis of Trinitarian relation. His eschatological vision is of a final destination "no longer self-enclosed egos but members of a perfect community of mutually open centres of consciousness."[479] This is a trinitarian vision of Peace.

As Gerald Hall SJ points out, this formula was also Panikkar's way of de-constructing the binaries on which religious and ideological conflict sustain themselves by various forms of monotheistic fundamentalism.[480] For Panikkar, it represented the creative intuition that

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[475] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 57.

[476] Ahlstrand, Fundamental Openness, 149.

[477] John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 458-462.

[478] (much along the lines of John MacMurray's earlier relational personalism)

[479] John Hick, Death and Eternal Life, 462.

[480] "Panikkar's trinitarian hermeneutics— perceiving God, humanity and cosmos in terms of creatio continua and perichoresis—is certainly a deconstruction of such a monotheistic paradigm" Gerard Hall, "Radicalizing the Trinity: A Christian Theological Reflection on Panikkar's Radical Trinity," in *Proceedings – Rhythm & Vision Conference in Memory of Raimon Panikkar*, ed. P. Calabrò (Italy: Mimesis Edizioni, 2012), 15.

could harmonise oppositions: Trinitarian theology is a theology of ontological peace - the harmony of difference:

> the elements of the problem are not just two - subject-object, Man-World, idealism-realism, theory-praxis, concept-reality, intellect-will, etc. - but rather that the relationship between them forms the link which constitutes the trinitarian unity of the real. The vicious circle gives way to the vital circle.[481]

The Trinity introduces us to process and movement as healing by virtue of the prior harmony of what is. This ideal is to be distinguished from utopianism (e.g. Fascist) because it suggests that peace is ontologically prior, now in this moment, not in a golden age past or yet to come, it is present and demands our responsible witness. Ontological trinitarianism overcomes dialectic not by eventuating in a historical solution or synthesis, but *tempiternally* acknowledging the necessary third of relationship. Thus, we are brought back again to the key notion again of sacred secularity.

> The saeculum is the triad of time, space and matter which…constitutes an irrevocable, definitive dimension of reality. ...The sacred and profane are opposites, but the secular transcends this dichotomy[482]

In addition, the *dialogical dialogue* is trinitarian in form. A theo/philosophical outlook which regards opposition as, de facto, indicative of an underlying unity, brings a third into the equation. Where there are opposites, polarization, there is an underlying unity of category at least; only things of the same category may be opposed. Thus, Fascism and Communism are opposites in as much as they are both forms of authoritarianism. Religious fundamentalism and missionary atheism are opposed in as much as they are unified by both being reactive knowledge systems based on exclusion. According to Panikkar's rendition of trinitarian relation, when you identify the unity you identify the location of Spirit. This already resolves the tension as far the perceiver of the unity is concerned. There is a harmony of opposites established. But it does not resolve the conflict for those inside it. The promise that this perspective holds out, though, is that it opens to a third element in the dialogue that makes conflict resolution possible. In many

[481] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 17.

[482] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 51.

cases this might be an insight or a creative thought that allows the opposed parties to escape from the constriction of the binary terms of conflict to a greater freedom. At other times, the third in question may be the divine, as in the mysterious processes of reconciliation and forgiveness that transform lives and heal trauma. This is the pluralist theological concept both most challenging and most promising for our particular concern to exemplify peaceful relations in the intercultural learning space and its application receives more attention in Part Three.

Concluding thoughts: Reality, Process, Peace, Salvation

It is time to conclude the comparative discussion about Pluralist Theologies of Religion in response to ultimate questions. Our theologians have led us via the question of reality.

Suffering is apparently inherent, yet how much we suffer and how much we make others suffer depends absolutely on how we view reality and therefore what value we place on the other and their suffering. The person is a uniquely gifted being in this view yet integrally connected with reality as a whole and engaged in the co-creation of reality continually. Universal solidarity, meanwhile, is a feature of the ideal of peace, which has now attained eschatological significance as the eternal reality. We have here a neat combination of the two theological perspectives, perhaps, but is it a fair description of Christian Pluralist theologies of religions as systems of ultimate belief, and therefore as modelling religious difference for Intrareligious dialogue? The answer to this too is dependent on the seriousness with which we take the question of reality and the radical relativity it reveals to us. Thus, agreeing with Hick and Panikkar - "let us assume that our ultimate question is the question about reality"[483]- in the first place we can accept that a turn to the real, readiness to engage with reality as reality and not as fantasy, determination to experience, find and accept the truth, even self-forgetting commitment to the Real are all one and the same impulse and reflect a transcendent good. The further contribution is that it is the embodiment of the good in the immanent relational paradigm, a sacramental consciousness, that confirms salvation as a cosmic reality.

Appeal to a process philosophical approach can begin to do justice to the radically relational, rhythmic simplicity and complexity that we encounter as the reality of being

[483] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 61.

through these theologians of religion. We have seen that where Hick inherited the task from Norman Kemp Smith to bridge the naturalism of science and the idealism of Kantian Philosophy making a robust defense of theology in a positivist world, arriving at a form of Critical Realism, Panikkar sought out the epistemological roots of transcendental idealism in Thomist and Vedantic paradigms of religious knowledge to assert a non-dual experience. Panikkar's Continental starting point in contrast with Hick's Anglo-American, could almost be characterised as ways to resolve the tension between on the one hand, subjective experience moving outward to make meaning of the world and, on the other, the objective 'view from nowhere', that applies itself to acquire knowledge of the world. This is more than a cultural difference of style and emphasis between the French and the English, or between America and Europe; it is, as Alfred North Whitehead put it, a 'bifurcation in Nature'. Much of Process Philosophy (and Theology) aims to heal this schism in modern thought. It is also quite easy to see how process thinking may play an integral role, aligning the radical relativity of the doctrines of *Sunyata*, *Pleroma*, and dependent origination, with the Judeo-Christian cosmology of creation and messianic eschaton. The creative thought that provides movement to the epistemological, cultural deadlock in Panikkar's thought, is the Trinity and retrieving faithfully the 'creatio ex nihilo' vision of Aquinas resolves the modern problematic with an ontology of continuously othering creation. Coming together in this vision are Panikkar's investigations of eschatological myths and his meditations on time and history, represented in his non-dual reference word; *tempiternity*. This term captures also the form of realised eschatology in which Panikkar understood the resurrection. Like Panikkar, younger theologians retrieve an ontology of participation to resolve the problem of the one and the many:[484] the unity of God supports the otherness and independence of created beings, their reality secure in their otherness, and their goodness theirs by analogy or by reflection, not by essential unity with the goodness of God. This doctrine secures the coherence of a morally reasonable universe and a vertical relation to a transcendent absolute, furthermore immanent in all creation, while defending the meaningfulness also of created difference.[485]

[484] Yonghua Ge, The Many and the One: Creation and Participation in Augustine and Aquinas (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021).

[485] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was educated in Thomist theology before the Thomistic re-discovery of the doctrine of analogical being that has tempered contemporary Thomist interpretation. He proposed an alternative to the saint's ontology - ontogenesis - which situates not othering but unifying at the centre of

The invocation of Process philosophy[486] in the Theology of Religions also subverts appeals to fear and resentment by reminding us of the primordial rhythms (of breath), more diastolic than dialectical, nonetheless progressive. There is not the scope here to determine whether Panikkar or others thinking along these lines achieve a more global reach by virtue of the symbolic language of process. It is clear, though, that Panikkar felt a deficiency in the mystical inheritance of Vedanta - "The experience of movement is totally absent in the Upanishadic discovery of the nontemporal"[487]- which he was later to address by reference to the *Rhythm of Being*. And it may also be that he was impelled by his Thomistic training to find a way to express the Christian marriage of Greek philosophy and Hebrew historical mythology this new way. In any case, the message is: if we understand ontological difference as real and if we conceive of this reality as process, we are better equipped to stay the course of inter-cultural dialogue.[488]

To reconcile this post-quantum vision of reality with the demands of an ethic of respect for the dignity and autonomy of individual persons, and above all, a concept of peace, Panikkar developed the idea of *ontonomy* to suggest that everything has its proper place. But he would frequently qualify the idea to suggest that in fact, no place or time could be designated by *ontonomy* yet that this was nevertheless a fundamental category, to be understood both relationally, in terms of constant process, and functionally, in terms of duty. Peace, for Panikkar, is *ontonomy*: "when a being is in its place it is at peace" … "but the spatial metaphor must be understood dynamically and freely." This is not to be

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creation. His evolutionary organicism sees creation as process and emphasises the unfinished project of becoming fully human, fully God's creation, and envisages an eschaton of unification when all things will be fully God.

[486] On one hand we have Isabelle Stengers, Matt Segall and a new wave of process theological idealists carving out a new cosmo-political/theological space, on the other hand, others are engaged on a very important work of refining foundational interpretations of the bedrock thinkers Plato and Kant Quote by Alfred North Whitehead; see "Footnotes2Plato," *Footnotes2Plato*, accessed January 29, 2025, https://footnotes2plato.com. An intriguing example of this can be found in Necip Fikri Alican's analysis, which challenges the tendency to characterise Plato as a dualist and instead presents his philosophy of Forms as a systematic "unitary pluralism"—layers of reality mediated by interpretation. See Necip Fikri Alican, *One over Many: The Unitary Pluralism of Plato's World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021).

[487] Panikkar, The Vedic Experience.

[488] Surely a related insight, liminal therapeutic processes, and the theoretical lens of third space as it applies in the interreligious dialogue and by extension also in the work of cultural theorists such as Homi Bhabha, who explores hybridity and syncretism in cultural production at the interstices of cultural interaction. Cf. Jonathan Gordon Smith, *Advaita, Christianity and the Third Space: Abhishiktananda and Bede Griffiths in India* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2020).

conceived of as military or mechanistic order, but as intrinsic nature, "Each being's ought-to-be is where it belongs. When each being fulfills its function…"[489] Again, he posits religious categories as preeminent. His concern here is with fulfillment and belonging as constituting peace and with peace as the criterion by which *ontonomic* fulfilment may be acknowledged:

> A community has peace when it is integrated into an internal and external order that permits the *ontonomic* realization of all its components. But peace is the very criterion.[490]

Thus "peace is the relation that joins us equitably and with freedom, to a harmonious whole."[491]

It is time to complete the comparative analysis of the theologies of religions of Panikkar and Hick by closer attention to a case study of actual encounter.

[489] Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament,* 77: The Bhagavad Gita's fixation on innate duty as the key to human thriving is seen to have been a key influence on Panikkar.

[490] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 77.

[491] Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament,* 78. Note that Panikkar's idea of Peace and the onotnomic order is acknowledged not to be quite as simply conveyed as it might appear here – cf. Panikkar's discussion of the nature of Peace as defying the categories 'natural', 'supernatural' and even 'metanatural'. Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 76

Chapter Four

Comparative Analysis Part 2: theological responses to diversity - the encounter with India.

Hick and Panikkar represent a *philosophical* approach and a *mystical* approach respectively. Despite Hick's appropriation of Kant's noumenon/phenomenon distinction, we have seen that his general approach is that of a British philosopher. And, despite the fact that Panikkar is a scientist and a realist, he nevertheless shows (by making his metaphysical starting point the interior experience of *being*, and by his insistence on the priority of the ontological its entanglement with the epistemological) a more characteristically Continental approach. With this outline distinction established, in this chapter, we reflect on their different relationships with a key shared influence, a source of inspiration and context of all pluralist theologies of religions, and also, most definitely, for the world of education: newly independent India's religious renaissance. Tracing the details of this encounter through our two theologians reveals complexity, suggesting potential limitations of Pluralist Theologies off the page. However, we also discover two expositions of the view that Christian ethics demand openness, quest and mutual transformation: a high aim for religious and non-religious alike in the sphere of intercultural education.

Section 1 - Pluralism on trial – Encountering Modern Hinduism

All pluralist theology owes a debt to the Indian subcontinent and the secularism of its heterogeneous, multi-religious society under the Nehruvian formula of 'unity in diversity'. It is appropriate, therefore, that the encounter with India provides the next step in our comparative analysis. The historical emergence of an independent, secular nation, a beacon of modern, pluralist democracy, and the way this emancipation was achieved by non-violent struggle (India's moral victory over colonial subjugation by a Christian empire), proved inspirational for both philosophers, though in very different ways. India and its overlapping religions offered a key to pluralist theological responses to diversity. We now reflect on these and on post-colonial perspectives that interrogate Western theological interpretations of both kinds. The insights I gather will inform pedagogical applications when we consider the encounter with difference as it bears on the vision of an *education for peace*.

4.1.1 The construction of Hinduism

Brian Pennington[492] and others have elucidated the constructed nature of Hinduism in the era of the post colonial 'Hindu renaissance'. The problem is highlighted by the oppressive dominance of *Hindutva* in Indian politics today, a cultural distortion in part brought about by the tendency to mould modern understandings of Hinduism, and also Hindu self-understanding, in the image of *religion* defined in Judeao-Christian terms (i.e. creed-based, relying on scriptural authority and comprising revelation, etiological myth, histories, moral laws and so on, and in addition, imperialist, dogmatic, patriarchal...) It is revealing to note that Hick's references to Hindu mystical traditions and texts are key to his pluralist hypothesis and how both he and Panikkar tend to make the prevalent assumptions of their time. They both appropriated the concept of *ishwara,* and *ista-devata* as *homeomorphically equivalent* to God and Christ in Christianity, for example. While this is not the place to do a full-scale analysis of the processes by which Hinduism became a 'world religion' of a kind that Pluralists found amenable to comparison, this complexity is nevertheless an indispensable consideration, because it reveals the sources of Pluralist thought, of several features that must be regarded as problematic and of much that remains inspirational.

The social forces at play in the emergence of ancient Hinduism and their re-shaping in the modern context have been brought out most clearly by the pre-eminent historian of Hinduism, Romila Thapar. She positions today's majoritarian Hindu rule in chronological perspective from Ancient to Modern. Against the backdrop of conflict between *Shramana* schools and Brahmanism, between *Shakta* sects and Brahmanism, *Puranic* religion and Vedic ritualism, she traces the gradual privileging of the Brahminical with its Sanskitised *high culture* of caste distinction, its *sruti* and *smrti* canonical textual heritage.

> This definition was the result of various factors: of Christian missionaries who saw this as the lacunae of religions in India and which they regarded as primitive; of some Orientalist scholarship anxious to fit the 'Hindu' process into a comprehensible whole based on a known model; the efforts

[492] Brian Kemble Pennington, Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

> also of Indian reform movements attempting to cleanse Indian religion of what they regarded as negative encrustations and trying to find parallels with a Semitic model.[493]

Furthermore, "the East India Company's interest in locating and codifying Hindu law, gave a legal form to what was essentially social observance and customary law."[494] Such processes were designed to assert an identity which "irons out difference" and which can thus "best be used for political ends."[495] It led to unfortunate, immediate and long-term social consequences - for example, the tendency to view the *Manu Dharamashastra* (*The Laws of Manu*) as universally normative within Hinduism and thus promoting its reinforcement of caste and sex discrimination, and other purity obsessions, with Brahminical *Smrti* scriptural authority. Thapar points out: "it was probably the high social and economic status of the brahmana castes which encouraged the modern idea that Brahminism and Hinduism were synonymous."[496] Such erroneous notions as that 'Hindus' never embarked on religious persecution, or that the absolute value of *ahimsa* was normative for Hinduism as a whole have been part of the recent characterisation of Hindu identity over against Islam and Christianity.[497] She notes the absence of the term *Hindu* in the historical record until the geographical designation came into use to mean all the religious cultures of India together in contradistinction to Muslim or Christian others (which themselves were not identified as 'religions' by the Hindus of the time, because the latter didn't acknowledge the category 'religion'). She also notes the tendency through Indian history for the intermingling of religions in the context of local communities of worship (famously Kabir, Tulsidass and the Sufis reflect this Indian tendency to hybridization). But she also traces the myth of Aryan racial supremacy that would appeal so strongly to the megalomania of German fascism as parallel to the now Brahmanic Indo-european linguistic identity.

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[493] Romila Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity," *Modern Asian Studies* 23, no. 2 (1989): 209–31, at 218, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00001049

[494] Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities?", 218.

[495] Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities?", 209.

[496] Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities?", 213.

[497] Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities?", 218.

These few observtions should serve to problematize the characterisation of Hinduism (especially in the West) as a scientific meta-religion of peace and harmony. Theosophy is but one example of many schools of thought that emerged from India through the twentieth century presenting as schools of peace.[498] Perhaps initiated by Vivekananada's message to the Parliament of World Religions in 1893 - a clarion call for interreligious tolerance and mutual understanding - the idea that Hinduism was the articulation of an (essentially brahmanical as we have said) all-inclusive, eternal, scientific and primordial *Sanatana Dharma* had far-reaching impact.

4.1.2 Christian pluralist theologies and Hinduism

Panikkar's move to India coincided with his falling out with Opus Dei. Over the next twenty years he would be six months there (mostly in Benares) and six in Santa Barbara or travelling. He struggled with the emergent neo-Hinduism - "If Hinduism claims to be the Sanatana Dharma, the highest, everlasting religion, how can it start a true dialogue with Christianity?"[499] He initiated two long-term projects - *Mantramanjari* and the two editions of his *Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. Alongside many articles, conference papers and books, they represent his attempt to find an internal harmony between the two dimensions of his own being and at the same time propose something approaching a complete Theology of Religions. John Hick, on the other hand, encountered Hinduism in textual form and in the diaspora communities of Great Britain. Hick's focus on finding commensurable doctrines between religions and his characterisation of the post-axial traditions as normative - in fact as definitive of religion per se - encounters the problem in relation to Hindu tradition(s), of divorcing theological speculation from concrete social conditions.

In Hick's Theology of Religions, as with Panikkar's, the message of peace as interreligious understanding relies considerably on finding conceptual analogues between Christianity and Hinduism with which to affirm trans-religious human values. I will look first in detail at Hick's encounter with Gandhi and then at Panikkar's developing Hinduism. In 1987 the two men contributed articles to the controversial publication of

[498] High profile examples include Transcendental Meditation, Hare Krishna, Jidda Krishnamurti

[499] Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, rev. and enl. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), 31.

The Myth of Christian Uniqueness.[500] Their approaches to pluralism appeared here with strong correspondences and also revealing differences. John Millbank, the 'radical orthodox' theologian from Britain, responded critically to both and now serves as the key reference for the following brief discussion.[501] Millbank cannot be considered an interlocutor, exactly, but his ominously titled *The End of Dialogue,* delivered in a subsequent answering collection, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered,*[502] invites us to compare their theological responses to religious diversity from a number of important angles.

Section 2 - Hick's encounter with Hinduism

4.2. Hick's understanding of *ahimsa*

Questions of religions and peace haunted the pluralist project for a democratic post-colonial Indian state, and the entire issue revolved for a time about the figure of Mahatma Gandhi in particular. As Thapar points out "the notion of a Hindu community does not have as long an ancestry as is often presumed."[503] As Gandhi wrestled a nation from colonial ownership, he had to re-imagine 'Hindu' community and stake a claim to India's soul. The disparate forms of Hindu religion, and diverse communities of Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Christians and Jews presented a challenge that perhaps only a sainted leader could surmount. To some extent, Gandhi was himself someone who embodied a plurality of religious. He did not consider himself a Christian, but drew inspiration from the Bible and in particular from *Matthew 5*, centering Christian belief on the teachings and beatitudes in the selective way of John Hick:

> If I had to face only the sermon on the mount and my own interpretations of it, I should not hesitate to say 'Oh yes, I am a Christian.'[504]

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[500] Hick and Knitter, The Myth of Christian Uniqueness.

[501] I do not pretend to deal with all of Millbanks critical points, still less with his position in toto, but selectively draw points from his essay with which to qualify the comparison between Hick and Panikkar.

[502] Milbank, "The End of Dialogue," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, 174-191.

[503] Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities?", 220.

[504] Joseph Prabhu cites Gandhi in "Panikkar the Christian Thinker," in *Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*(Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co., 2018), 25.

The sermon on the mount includes the strongest admonitions against conflict and war to be found in the Bible. It stands to reason that this would constitute a core value for harnessing society to Pluralism.

John Hick was inspired by Gandhi's deployment of the idea of *ahimsa* in his *Politics of Truth*.[505] The principle corroborated Hick's own religious intuitions by providing Hindu/Buddhist doctrinal support for his pacifist reading of Christianity, while supporting the principle of intelligibility, and the singularity of truth in his philosophy. Gandhi's model gave coherence to the ethics of resistance, affirming the inter-connectedness of all, integrating his spiritual outlook and political strategy.[506] For Gandhi, *ahimsa* descends logically as a binding ethical principle in relation to the oneness of a transcendent truth - i.e. emphasizing the singularity of ineffable Reality.

> The word Satya (Truth) is derived from Sat, which means "being". Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why the term Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God.[507]

The ethic of harmlessness which is so developed in Jainism but also integral in certain strands of Hinduism and Buddhism formed part of the overall rationale of *Satyagraha,* the way to *swaraj,* self-rule, by peaceful protest. It is this link to transcendent truth that for Hick affords Gandhi's policy of non-violent resistance integrity.[508]

It must be pointed out, though, that others have interpreted Gandhi's non-violent strategy of resistance with more admiration for its efficacy given the particular situation rather than its commitment to absolute principle. Niehbuhr, for example, was reported to have called it the "canny arrival at a power strategy (non-violence) that took full advantage of

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[505] Hick, The Fifth Dimension, 229.

[506] It is surprising to find that Hick gave no explicit consideration to the significance of the term *ahimsa* throughout his work until the later attempt to communicate his thought in more accessible terms as *The Fifth Dimension*: Hick, *The Fifth Dimension,* 171-244.

[507] John Hick quotes Gandhi's *The Voice of Truth* (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Publishing House, 1968), 68, in *The Fifth Dimension, 229.*

[508] It is notable that Hick does not elaborate that the absolute concept of *ahimsa* embraces the natural world, animal, plant, soil and sky as potential sites of harm. This sense is perhaps one of the great contributions of Indic thought to present day articulations of Christian ethics, but it is a dimension that receives more recognition in the theology of Panikkar.

British Christian reticences (Anglican engineers won't run over Indians prone on the track)."[509] Furthermore, Gandhi's reported scriptural inspirations, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bible*, could not be called pacifist texts, as in both, conflict seems to be a necessary, given context. Indeed, the *Gita*, while it is a song about achieving peace with one's destiny and status, with God or with the ultimate, is perhaps the very opposite of a pacifist manifesto. Romila Thapar points out that Western commentators have tended to mischaracterize *ahimsa* as a universal Hindu principle in light of Gandhi's appropriation, though it has very specific provenance.

> Among the normative values which were highlighted in the discussion of Hinduism in recent times, has been the concept of ahimsa or non-violence. It has been argued that non-violence and tolerance were special features of Hinduism which particularly demarcated its ethics from those of Islam and to a lesser extent Christianity. Yet ahimsa as an absolute value is characteristic of certain Sramanic sects and less so of Brahminism.[510]

How we understand *ahimsa* has had a bearing on the interpretation of Hinduism in India and outside. Again drawing solely on Chaudhury's *Hinduism*, Milbank accuses Hick (and indeed Pluralists generally) of a more fundamental misinterpretation. *Ahimsa*, according to Milbank should be understood as "selective coercive pressure through refusal,"[511] a form of self-denial for the purpose of the achievement of specific worldly ends, not an overarching moral principle or precept of natural law.

The image of Gandhi is nowadays highly contested, and his economic model of smallholder *swaraj* is held responsible for delaying India's ascent as a capitalist world power. Paradoxically, however, while his vision of India is rejected by the majority of BJP (it was an RSS member that assassinated Gandhi), his status as a saintly figure nonetheless bolsters the religious-nationalist self-image.[512] To this extent his Hinduism is

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[509] Theodore A. Gill, *A Short Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 47, describing Reinhold Niebuhr's interpretation in contrast to that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

[510] Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities?", 218.

[511] Milbank, "The End of Dialogue," in D'Costa, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered,*176.

[512] For a recent discussion, see Neha Chaudhary and Saarang Narayan, "Hindutva in the Shadow of the Mahatma: M. S. Golwalkar, M. K. Gandhi, and the RSS in Post-Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies* (April 2024): 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X24000040

remembered, while his pluralist approach to religious diversity begins to be forgotten. Inclusivist peacefulness can be characterised as the imposition of a Western love affair with Gandhi on the facts of Hinduism. The characterisation of Hinduism by some Western scholars as a pacifist philosophy is now rejected; exemplified by the Hindu popular re-appropriation of war-like heroes of the past. At the same time, the re-casting of Hinduism as a national and world religion (undoubtedly in many ways a Western intellectual project) is uncritically embraced. Gandhi's legacy is also controversial because his religious commitment to the Hindu docrtine of *varna* was absolute and may have reinforced caste discriminations at crucial moment when those prejudices might have been mitigated. The capacity of religion to perpetuate injustice is extreme, and sadly Gandhi's racism and casteism is on record. The reassuring certainties of a sense of social place can be no justification of the dehumanising stratifications of caste. Where Gandhi viewed caste as reflecting the self-organising strength of India as a people, Ambedkar was keenly aware of it as the religious institutionalisation of profound injustice. It is surely lamentable that the encouragement of systematic caste discrimination by the divide and rule policies of the British Raj has been succeeded by a project to 'unsee caste' in Indian society and continued, unrelenting persecution. Arundhati Roy points out how the abomination of caste discrimination that led to Ambedkar's characterisation of 'Hinduism' as "a chamber of horrors" has managed to escape the censure of the international community:

> perhaps because it has come to be so fused with Hinduism, and by extension with so much that is seen to be kind and good - mysticism, spiritualism, non-violence, tolerance, vegetarianism, Gandhi, yoga, backpackers, the Beatles - that at least to outsiders it seems impossible to pry it loose and try to understand it.[513]

As Milbank says, then, Hick's metaphysics loses sight of the particular, and religions must be subjected to scrutiny as contextualised systems of social organisation.[514] "There

[513] Arundhati Roy, The Doctor and the Saint: Caste, Race, and Annihilation of Caste, the Debate between B. R. Ambedkar and M. K. Gandhi (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017).

[514] Milbank, "The End of Dialogue," in D'Costa, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered,* 187.

cannot be a more degrading system of social organisation than the caste system"[515] When Arundhati Roy describes Gandhi as 'the saint of the status quo', her accusation extends to Hick, Panikkar and Gandhi's Western admirers: the hero-worship of Gandhi in Attenborough's epic, for example, could be seen as an example par excellence of orientalist *othering*.

This is not the place to take the analysis any further, but a few balancing remarks might be made. First, is that Gandhi's legacy is widely rejected today not because of his record on caste persecution (which he decried, and which continues unabated) but in favour of more aggressive economic policies and a more defensive Hinduising of cultural identity. The pluralist spirituality he seemed to embody may yet be worthy of attention. Second, Hick's admiration for Gandhi's *ahimsa* is qualified well by recent scholarship which steers away from characterising Gandhi as a pacifist[516] and points out the key distinction to be drawn between *pacifism*, as a failed twentieth century movement to counter wars, versus, on the other hand, the success of *non-violence* as a policy that turns attention away from the dynamics and means of war, to positive action with peaceful means, in a way that *pacifism* appears not to have been able to.[517] This is an important distinction which bears a Panikkarian mark. It presents a positive twist to answer Millbank's argument, and indicates that while the clay feet of idols may lead to their downfall, these symbols, icons and myths of culture are not without meaning in terms of a society's sense of real and ultimate value (i.e. revealing and communicating truths that surpass them). Gandhi's pluralist, truth-seeking religiosity is notable as an effective strategy for peace and his appropriation of the concept of *ahimsa* proved a genuinely coherent integration in the doctrine of *Satyagraha*; so Hick's admiration for the consistency of the integration of ethics and metaphysics here is not entirely without basis. Furthermore, the model of pluralist religiosity as *quest* challenges Millbank's critique, suggesting he uses a too

[515] Roy, *The Doctor and the Saint* quotes Ambedkar. See Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, "Annihilation of Caste: Groundbreaking Speech – That Was 'Prepared… but Not Delivered,'" accessed January 25, 2024, https://indianhistorycollective.com/annihilation-by-babasaheb-part-2/.

[516] Anand Sreekumar, "The Pacifist and the Hypophysical: A Cosmological Reading of Gandhi," *European Journal of International Security* 8, no. 4 (2023): 431–49, https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2023.18

[517] Dustin Ells Howes, "The Failure of Pacifism and the Success of Nonviolence," *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 2 (2013): 427–46, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592713001059

limited range of reference and is prepared to characterise Hindu religious concepts without due vigilance; and more importantly, without an interest in learning from them.

We started by asking critical questions about Hick's Pluralism: does it undervalue specific context by imposing a generalised definition of religion for the purposes of conceptual comparison and does his interpretation distort particular religious phenomena? The discussion of the tradition of Bhakti has shown that it is easy to be tempted by the formulas of the Geeta in this regard, and that Hick's appraisal is not free from the tendency to homogenise Hinduism. Nevertheless, we have also seen that it benefits from being open to the possibility that certain concepts, religious motives and emotions may be commonly shared between apparently disparate cultures. In the case of the place of *ahimsa* in the religious philosophy of India, we have seen that by seeking out the commonalities, Hick is able to derive insights and communicate interpretations on both sides of an interreligious inquiry. We have not fully established Hick's eagerness to learn or his willingness for his own Christianity to stand correction in terms expressed by the witness and example of another religion. However, in what he sees as a Gandhian way, he does profess the ethical principle that the adherents of another religion may be the means by which a religious consciousness comes to transcend itself, overcome its own limitations and understand itself better. Pluralism, as embodied and non-violent quest for truth, may yet come closer to truly Christian praxis than any particular orthodoxy.

Section 3 - Panikkar's Hinduism

4.3 Panikkar's *Unknown Christ of Hinduism*

Panikkar's main work on Hinduism met criticism from Hindus and Christians alike; this is, the *realization*, or *fulfilment,* theology the young Panikkar professed and which we must now examine.[518] does suggest the tendency to regard the other as the yet-to-be-fulfilled version of oneself,

Could it not be argued that Christians that have done so have been right, in Christian terms, to take elements of other religions and re-interpret them to fit the overall project and understanding of Christian witness? Is this not a legitimate, nay inevitable, mode of

[518] Knitter, Introducing Theologies of Religions.

evolution in the sphere of religion, and the means by which Christianity has propagated itself worldwide? To address the same critical point, could it not be argued that the appropriations and improvisations of *Mantramanjari* reflect the perennial mode of Christian mission? Thus, Panikkar, in the early days, was not afraid to quote St. Paul: ο ουν αγνοούντες ευσεβειτε τουτο εγω καταγγελλω υμίν "who is being worshipped unknowlingly, that I am proclaiming unto you."[519] The question of theologies of religions as encounter with difference is brought into sharper relief by comparing the two versions of his doctoral thesis, published as *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. The first edition appeared in 1964 and the second edition, an attempt to reframe the conversation between Christianity and Hinduism in the first, was published nearly twenty years later, in 1981. They were years in which Panikkar was resident in India and through which he distanced himself from Opus Dei and committed himself energetically to interreligious dialogue. No doubt, his own Hinduism was in a process of development over those interim years as well, and they reveal something of the dynamics of the quest to find peace with his own dual/multiple sense of religious identity.[520]

The title, *Unknown Christ of Hinduism,* was drawn from the language of Vatican II and Karl Rahner's revolutionary articulation of the idea that members of other faiths could be considered Christians in waiting, *anonymous Christians*, graced despite their distance from the Church. Especially in the earlier text, Panikkar's evangelical enthusiasm is palpable at what he seems to be discovering to be a shared destiny between Hinduism and Christianity, a *mystical marriage* between the two ancient streams of human culture. Most controversially, Panikkar prophecied that Hinduism would find its proper apotheosis in Christian theology eventually. This was a position he was later to qualify, though arguably one he never finally relinquished.[521] According to Panikkar "The desire for fullness…that is fullness of Christ"[522], in other words, all people who desire fullness have the seed of Christianity in them waiting to grow. To be fair, he expands on the Thomistic *sensus plenior* to show that this is potentially a mutual process a *sensus semper plenior* -

[519] Acts 17:16-34

[520] Ranstrom, "Panikkar's Dharma, the West's Karma," in *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought,* 39.

[521] Enrico Beltramini, *The Unknown Christ of Christianity* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2020).

[522] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 62.

an ever-growing fullness for all of the unfolding of human consciousness and of divine revelation. However, the terms of this theological meeting suggested an ultimate Christianising:

> they do not meet at any other point… according to Christianity and according to Hinduism as well, they can only meet in Christ, if they meet at all.[523]

The problem here is also with the specialised use of 'Christ' language. Panikkar intends the cosmic dimensions of a Christic principle to be understood, continuous with, but not contingent on, the Christ of Judaeo-Christian history and scripture. But his language can easily be taken as quite aggressively one-sided. The second edition replaced the above with:

> "if such an encounter is to take place it can only take place in that reality *that Christians call* Christ"[524] (my emphasis), and looks for a corresponding Hindu symbol, and finds *Rama*.

The ways in which he chose to respond to criticisms of his youthful work highlight in other ways the complexities of negotiating difference at the level of Pluralist theology. It was one key aim of the second edition to do more justice to a Hindu perspective. That his first chapter in 1964 *The Christian Encounter* is, in 1981, entitled *The Encounter* gives another example. Virtually none of the actual language of the first edition remains unchanged in the second, in fact there is a shift in tone throughout, though much of the content remains the same, and what is also discernable is that the critique of Hindu universalism also becomes more pointed:
"If Hinduism …claims to be the Sanatana Dharma, the highest everlasting religion, how can it start a true dialogue with Christianity?"[525]As Milbank (again we refer to his critique of Pluralism) points out:

[523] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 6.

[524] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 31.

[525] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 31.

> It is true that Western imperialism has sought to deny and obliterate the other yet this does not mean that the other cultures themselves are thereby the innocent sources of a discourse validating otherness, or any the less totalizing in their ambitions.[526]

Panikkar clearly shared the discomfort of other theologians expressed here[527] who have felt the need to wrestle Christian theology out from the constricting embrace of Hindu universalism. However, the point Panikkar is making is different. It is not that Christianity as Western Imperialism is mirrored by the imperialistic intentions of other religions. It is rather that, albeit Hinduism is not a religion of creeds and conversions in the way that Christianity is, the claim made by the Hindu philosopher that religions can co-exist independent of their need to share fundamental understandings and practices with others is unrealistic and ultimately lifeless.

> their claim for an innocent co-existence is much more radical than the Christian claim for conversion, for a theoretically co-existing Christianity would no longer be Christianity, whereas conversion does not mean destruction, but sublimation, transcendence, realisation.[528]

Panikkar's vision had been that Christianity would simply realise the best in the other - nothing about Hindu religion and culture would change but that it would be realised in its proper fullness by the mystical union. This view attained mythic proportions in his thinking:
"Hinduism is the desired bride whose betrothal was celebrated long ago in the Vedic times, and whose marriage still remains the mystery of history," and an urgent sense of mission:

> In these pages I wish to suggest certain lines of thought capable, I consider, of aiding this deepening and universalisation of faith so necessary in our day and age. In undertaking this one desires above all to follow a method of universal religious validity and not adopt a sectarian viewpoint for the

[526] Milbank, "The End of Dialogue," in D'Costa, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, 188.

[527] Keith Ward, for example, includes a detailed response to Vivekananda in *Religion and Human Nature* (Oxford: OUP, 1998).

[528] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism.

> benefit of one group. By collaborating towards the universalisation of christianity, towards the actualisation of its catholicity, one is contributing to the development of all religions towards unity.[529]

The essence of his idea is, given that Christian faith is the proper shape of faith per se, Christianizing the other is bringing fullness to the other's potential.

> The Christian line of all times, which is based on the staggering assumption - for those who have no faith - that Christianity is the full truth and that by Christianizing some value you do not harm such a value… but you let it shine brighter and purer.[530]

It is difficult to imagine there being no objections raised to such a plan in a multi-cultural school environment! Panikkar was persuaded to temper his language. In the 1981 edition, the language of mystical marriage has gone, and the solution to encountering religious difference described involves change in both, and a common ground of meeting:

> co-existence can only be lasting if there is a co-essence to the two parties… a mutation in the self-interpretation of these self-same religious traditions.[531]

John Milbank, considering the same question, is surely right to cite Levinas on this point:

> As Emmanuel Levinas argues, the biblical tradition conjoins to the recognition of a transcendent Good, the idea that what must be respected as the always-beyond is the face of the Other[532]

Levinas' ethic, drawn from his particular ontology of persons, is one of recalled agnosticism - *respect* for the other is the *not-yet*, the *always more* of encounter. Moving on swiftly however, Milbank adds the comment on Levinas: "- although he too little

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[529] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 5.

[530] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 135.

[531] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 33.

[532] Milbank, "The End of Dialogue," in D'Costa, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered,* 187-188.

comprehends that this encounter can only be peaceful via the construction of a common space of intersecting and overlapping practices."[533]

Now, this last critical point could conceivably be extended also at Hick perhaps, but certainly not to Panikkar, who, by living in India for much of the time it took to complete the project of an intercultural liturgy,[534] was exploring the intersection in practice. One of the insights established by Romila Thapar's histories, Milbank's critical points and Arundhati Roy's analyses, is that Hinduism is to be interpreted as *orthopraxis* rather than as *orthodoxy* - and that this distinction may have a bearing on the definition of religion in all contexts. The meeting place of religion becomes what Hick calls the *dispositional* realm, the lived values. Where Hick is characterised by synthesising of trans-religious conceptual systems, towards an emergent explanation, Panikkar's approach is perhaps more attentive to the Levinasian moment of encounter with difference that imposes reflection on one's own cultural conditioning: "real meeting does not belong to the merely doctrinal level,"[535] rather to the sphere of a *mutual conversion*. And clearly, over the span of Panikkar's career, there was an evolution in his own Christianity and Hinduism.[536] In his careful re-scripting of the book, his vision of the mystical marriage between Christianity and Hinduism, verging on ecstatic, is downplayed, but his commitment to Christianity and Hinduism as sharing a mutual destiny remains.

The way in which the Christian encounter with Hinduism (unbalanced in some ways) has offered potential for this level of embodied transformation is precisely in the centering of Peace as a religious value. The prayer of Peace, the Shanti mantra - *santi santi santi* - must be at the beginning and end of everything,[537] and it brackets the prayers of the *Mantramanjari* as it would the invocations at the *havan*. But to keep the critical at our side, perhaps John Milbank is right that Christians have been too ready to find beatitude in the teachings of other religions. Apart from the mistake of seeing correspondences

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[533] Milbank, "The End of Dialogue," in D'Costa, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered,* 187-188.

[534] Raimon Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience, Mantramañjarī: An Anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, [1977] 2016).

[535] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 6-9.

[536] Ranstrom, in Phan, Ro, and Williams, Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought, 39.

[537] Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, 304-307.

where there are none, perhaps such participation tends to dissipate authenticity, for Christian and other, and is never free of power imbalance that distorts what we can understand of each other. Panikkar's claim is bold
that

> It is not the Christian, but the 'new' meaning that may emerge that gives the fuller significance of a text. Further, the new meaning we find in our sutra does not blur the differences between the two traditions, but permits a point of encounter and a possibility of mutual fecundation.[538]

What will require much more elaboration in the next chapter, is that the issue here affects every facet of our conversation about Peace. Panikkar's *inclusivist*, *fulfilment* model of encounter seems to leave little scope for difference to be in any sense ultimate. But then a Humanist commitment to the dignity of persons requires acceptance of a universal context of sameness from which to delineate and defend difference. Panikkar's refusal of the *intellectual victory* model of inter-religious/inter-cultural discussion entails an orthopraxy of dialogue, a shared experience.

> The decisive point is not whether Hindu and Christian concepts of grace tally with each other, but whether the Hindu and the Christian are really 'graced' - according to the other.[539]

Concluding thoughts - Conversion and theological encounter with religious difference.

The encounter with India finds John Hick enriching his own pacifist Christian stance by reference to the coherence of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance, the internal coherence of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha.* And in both cases, Pluralism, it has been shown, does not abandon its Christian call to evangelism and mission. Where Hick tends to create the catalogue of apparently corresponding ideas, an "interpretative map"[540] of religious

[538] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 163.

[539] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 39.

[540] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 282.

concepts, Panikkar implies that a system might be possible to define, yet he aims to create experience, on the basis that only a decisive experience could convert. Both propose therefore, that their systems are hypotheses, not full synthetic creations. And in the case of Panikkar, we perhaps see more obviously the commitment to *mutual conversion* as an ongoing relationship. At heart, there is no evidence to suggest that Panikkar ceased to believe in a shared destiny between different religious cultures and the ultimate apotheosis of religions in a universal realisation, "Religions meet in the skies,"[541] although his definition of the type of theological and spiritual experience required for this to happen was to develop considerably.

[541] Panikkar, "The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges," in Hick and Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, 92.

PART THREE

Chapter Five

Peace and Intercultural Education

This chapter takes on the seemingly inherent relationship between religion and violence and the task of intercultural education to address its causes. Education for peace, reflected in the new intercultural paradigm of global citizenship education,[542] is considered in light of Panikkar's interpretation of peace as the new eschatological myth of the age. Conflict is perhaps the most considered of all the subjects of etiological myths in all traditions, so a first point in this discussion might be to distinguish carefully between conflict and violence.

> Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I am come to send not peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and daughter against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be of his own household.[543]

These verses unsettle any easy idea of Christian peace, for here is the 'prince of peace' announcing the conflicts that will result from taking his message seriously. It is a feature too often apparent that religious observance makes violent conflict all the more vitriolic when it occurs.[544] To grapple with this inconvenient truth, we might first challenge the normative presupposition that peace is non-violent, and that conflict is violent. A recent contribution at a conference of the European Society for Intercultural Theology pointed out that "when religion is voiced as a concept in academic and public discourse, it is inherently entangled with its stake towards positionality, identity, and ultimately:

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[542] Wolfgang Edelstein and Tobias Krettenauer, "Citizenship and Democracy Education in a Diverse Europe," in *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, ed. Larry P. Nucci, Darcia Narváez, and Tobias Krettenauer (Routledge eBooks, February 2015), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203114896.ch22; Gert Biesta, Maria De Bie, and Danny Wildemeersch, *Civic Learning, Democratic Citizenship and the Public Sphere* (Springer, 2013); Andrew Mahlstedt, "Global Citizenship Education in Practice: An Exploration of Teachers in the United World Colleges" (2003), https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:th204gp6905/Mahlstedt_A_Monograph_2003.pdf; Jeffery Porter, "Formations of Secular Liberal Arts Education: A Critique of Martha Nussbaum's Education for Democratic Citizenship," *Journal of Church and State* 63, no. 4 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csaa061

[543] (Matthew 10:34-36) KJV

[544] Daan F. Oostveen, presenting at the ESITIS Conference 2024, identifies the issue in "Methodologies and Ideologies of Interreligious Engagement," *Esitis.org*, 2024, https://www.esitis.org/esitis-conference-2024/.

belonging. Therefore, conflict is unavoidable." Actual violence, and specifically religious violence emerges, counter-intuitively perhaps, from the effort to avoid conflict, Ostveen proposed, whereas "*conflict*, instead, is a creative process towards justice".[545] As Panikkar puts it, "violence (not force) is to be excluded."[546] This suggests that, if we are committed to peace, we need a pluralistic theology which can somehow defuse the bomb of belonging. In this chapter, we investigate the relationship between religious education and peace. Peace, understood as a soteriological and eschatological myth pertaining to the ends and means of education, suggests that *peace education* is, by nature then, religious education. This evokes Panikkar's intuition of *sacred secularity*.

Section 1 - Religious Violence and Nations

> Peace is a fugitive that has escaped the victors' camp[547]

According to Panikkar, never before has the idea of salvation so closely aligned with that of achieving peace and the problem of our time is to reconcile religion and politics.[548] The intercultural pedagogy of peace is a concern of International education, but to what extent peace is a matter for arbitration between nations is moot. The essays of Kant, which go a long way to establishing the primacy of this new eschatological myth argue that the rule of reason will eventually prevail, armies will eventually become redundant, international citizenry (*Weltburgerkeit*) the norm, and universal hospitality (free crossing of borders) normalized, as mankind develops from the Hobbesian rule by "monopoly on the use of violence"[549] and outgrows even Mill's Utilitarian vision of mercantile relations replacing war in the spirit of free trade (*Handelsgeist*).[550] Kant's metaphysics of reason makes peace a moral duty. There is also an optimism in them that infects Hick, who, as a conscientious objector, refused to take part in War per se.

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[545] Ostveen, "Methodologies and Ideologies of Interreligious Engagement."

[546]Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 59.

[547] Panikkar paraphrases Simone Weil; see Raimon Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament,* 19.

[548] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament.

[549] Kant, Perpetual Peace.

[550] Which is perhaps the guiding spirit of the techno-oligarchical and arms-trade-dependent new world order we see today (2025)

Anderson observes the emergence of the nation[551] as a thing imagined and written, dependent on the education of its citizens. Education and literacy of the emergent middle classes made a relationship possible between people who did not know each other, but who could share print:

> in world-historical terms, the bourgeoisies were the first classes to achieve solidarities on an essentially *imagined* basis.[552]

International education, therefore, serves the production of a bureaucratic middle class, certainly, but also and more importantly, a community of ideas, an *imagined* community, solidarity through the reverberations of a shared literacy we call democracy. Here is the 'communicative rationality' of Habermas,[553] and also the emergence of what Charles Taylor refers to as the 'imaginary' of the 'secular frame'.[554] I will return to the entanglement of peace education and colonial interests when we discuss de-colonisation as a contemporary challenge in education. Here, though, let us briefly consider the way in which Panikkar problematizes the historical consciousness per se in the soteriological myths of both nations and peace. The ontology associated with the 'social imaginary' of nationalism is, according to Anderson, the expanse of *empty* time in which imagined national communities appear in due sequence. Anderson sees this modern view of historical time as integral to the very idea of national identity and therefore also of secularism, its sister. This is exactly the view of time that Panikkar takes as his starting point to consider the myth of peace as a secular soteriology.

5.1.1 Peace is the new myth

The role of myth in human cultural understanding is for Panikkar, as we have seen, like that of the Kuhnian paradigm in the development of scientific knowledge: "that on which intelligibility is grounded in any given situation." Panikkar notes that Peace, though it has

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[551] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983), 83.

[552] Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, 77. (my italic)

[553] Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, trans. Max Pensky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

[554]Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

been envisioned and discussed in many ways and for ages, has become a question of particular urgency recently,

> Peace is not simply a concept. Peace is the eminent myth of our days.[555]

This is due to the global nature of our perspective on the question; a change that has come about as a result of world wars, of the cold war, experienced as 'perpetual war', and the development of weapons of mass (potentially global) destruction.

> God was once a universal myth. Wars were waged in the name of God…Peace too was signed in the name of God. Now peace seems to be the unifying myth of our times. And wars are waged in its name too![556]

Not only does Peace present itself as a horizon of ultimate concern, then, but as a symbol, the idea of peace holds a vital hermeneutic ground, while remaining essentially undefined. The Rahnerian theological notion of an *Absolute Future* (*die absolute Zukunft*) aligns with this eschatological significance now accorded to Peace, as does the Marxist, materialist end-point of the perfectly classless society. No matter what your political orientation, then, in the secular context, peace is the secular myth of salvation or *eschaton*, and Hick too reflects broad subscription to this universal heuristic myth of the secular world. Panikkar identifies Peace as the *urmyth* of secularity; a Peace that for him, must be conceived in cosmic terms. In this ecological moment, peace is to be understood as an existential concern, in political terms, the struggle for peace is a struggle for salvation, and in spiritual terms, peace is the common end of religions.[557]

> *Pax in terris* is a problem that concerns the entire being of human persons as such, since their final destiny is at stake in the *civitas homini* itself.[558]

The re-emergence of the religious in the political sphere frequently presents as a retrograde step in our present context. How might Panikkar's vision for the re-integration of the fields of ultimate concern be realised without a regression to the medieval? This is a problem on a human level both individual and social and it is an international problem

[555] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 21.

[556] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 21.

[557] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 22.

[558] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 53.

too, on the scale of the unification of Europe or the governance of postcolonial states. The affirmation that we have from these Theologies of Religions is that Peace is a concrete universal. Both our theorists claim the reality of Peace.

> The problem of peace is a human question, and therefore a real one. Its very difficulty instils a serene joy, for it enables us, at least at the individual level, to live the real and not the fictitious.[559]

Panikkar is trying to heal what he calls the 'mortal division' between the religious and the political.[560] The line he walks to do this is a dangerous one, it is to regard the political as having significance at a cosmic scale and the religious as immanently political. What is peace? It is *ontonomy*. "Presence is parousia"[561]

5.1.2 Pluralism, peace and education

Believing religious difference to be absolute in some way forces a "peace of difference" on belligerents the ultimate rejection of which must follow. Such a belief may itself be violent if it is held unconditionally or might be creative of peaceful relations if conceptions of radical multiplicity and constructive transformation are prioritized. This is an important qualification to the aspiration to religious inclusivity that Alan Race has pointed out as one of the key impulses of Pluralism. Inclusion can often mean the religious insights of one group being subsumed under the terms of another or the uncomfortable denial of real difference. Panikkar cites Gilles Deleuze's "real difference", as a way to escape the imposing character of perceptions of difference, by acknowledging an underlying fundamental identity. It is attractive to engage the open-endedness of a process philosophy. The underlying ontology that Deleuze, and others in their own ways, have proposed resonates deeply with the practice of maintaining two views at once which is what *madhyamaka* and the appreciative, non-violent Buddhist stance that results from it embody. Yet, in practice, we see the psychological impact of such a view resulting again and again in explosive communal violence or the furious gesture of self-immolation when difference becomes insurmountable, or the degree of imposition intolerable. Nevertheless,

[559] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 92.

[560] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 54.

[561] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 57.

the insight is key, that religions can, by determining to eradicate difference, continue to nurture violence within. Whereas, an ontological perspective that appreciates the primordial reality of a unity of difference offers a way to become free of, while moving within, the repetitive, seemingly inescapable, dialectic.[562] It is precisely for this reason that Panikkar adopts a non-dualistic ontology to resolve the tensions in his own being between the Hindu and Catholic strands of his own DNA. In addition, distinguishing between violence and conflict helps us to be clear that while our understanding of peace must exclude violence, it cannot, and must not, exclude conflict. Panikkar makes a similar distinction between violence (that which violates the dignities proper to one or more of the combatants) and force (which is an essential component of resolving conflict): "violence (not force) is to be excluded."[563]

What does this mean, in terms of an education for peace? According to the Indian theologian peace is the transformation of conflictual situations, and so something continuously in process and continuously present – it is not a utopia, nor is it a Hegelian given, nor is it a religious foregone conclusion and certainly not a *deus ex machina.* It is important too, that we note the implicit reverence for the warrior virtues and fighting spirit that Panikkar seems to have as regards the ongoing effort to achieve reconciliations. The definition of Peace in Panikkar's *Cultural Disarmament* (1995) is multi-faceted, it includes distinguishing political and religious forms of peace relating to human flourishing, on the one hand among humans and on the other, amid all reality. He cites three primordial human experiences as essential indicators of peace: harmony, freedom and justice.[564] The common root shared by the words Freude, Frieden, Freiheit, Freundschaft, affirms his conclusion that "without freedom and friendship, there is no peace."[565] He also points out the dynamic relationship that 'peace' indicates; as opposed to the static condition often vaguely envisaged, peace is not simply the absence of war, but a society's "capacity to handle conflicts with empathy, nonviolence and creativity."[566]

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[562] (such as the radical immanence proposed by Deleuze and in Theological terms by Tom Driver, or the non-dual metareality of Bhaskar)

[563] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 59.

[564] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 41.

[565] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 113.

[566] Panikkar's analysis aligns with Professor Johan Galtung: see Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1996), 9.

Panikkar conceives of peace as a relational quality of being[567]and a defining quality of wisdom "wise is the one who transforms destructive tensions into creative polarities."[568] According to this view, wisdom and peace are interdependent qualities of relation and education for peace is education in wisdom.

While case studies from the field of intercultural education will highlight techniques of conflict resolution, a point worth noting here, is that more recent approaches to the discussion about and between religions, aim to problematize the predominance of conflict as a guiding category. The incommensurability of certain key religious concepts certainly persists (dualistic and monistic worldviews for example) but conflict between peoples is rarely motivated by conceptual divergences of this kind. The binary oppositions we construct, such as those of science and religion, or religion and secular culture, are examples of categories that are often supposed to conflict more perhaps than they actually do.[569] Raimon Panikkar was ahead of his time in wanting to dismantle some of these mythologies embedded in the study of religions and his generation of the idea of *sacred secularity* is an example. It emerges from etymological investigations as part of Panikkar's attempt to define peace and to offer analytical support for practical steps towards it.

Section 2 – Violence and Religious Education

Religions are taught in schools as ways to establish peaceful community, yet now, with a growing awareness of the dangers of religious difference, 'Religious Education' addresses itself to defusing tensions between different religious perspectives. Whatever the status of theological discourse in the academy its role is, at least partially, to address religious fundamentalism, bigotry and violence in the context of school. Both Hick and Panikkar were teachers and their paradigms produce insights when considered in the context of religious education.

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[567] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 77.

[568] Raimon Panikkar, *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1995a), 137.

[569] A recent conference in Estonia focused on this theme in interreligious studies: European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies (ESITIS) Conference, *"Methodologies and Ideologies in Interreligious Engagement: Building Bridges in a Multipolar World,"* University of Tartu, Estonia, May 8, 2024, https://www.esitis.org/esitis-conference-2024/.

5.2.1 Religious literacy[570]

The phenomenological approach to religious education exemplified by Ninian Smart shared Hick's idea that an objective and dispassionate appraisal of religious traditions could be made, albeit with unanswered questions as to the final definition of the term 'religion'.[571] Included in a series of essays continuing engagement with John Hick, one dedicated to Religious Education is by Geoff Teece,[572] who has been a contributor to more recent developments in RE curriculum in the UK.[573] Teece explores where in the curriculum a subject such as *Religious Studies* actually sits, via Keith Ward's observation that Hick's pluralism actually takes different forms.[574] At times it is 'hard pluralism,' which claims that an essentially unknowable reality is manifested in equally authentic ways in the world faiths. This is an apparently self-contradictory, or at least unverifiable idea, for who could possibly judge the relative authenticity of representations of a completely unknowable, divine reality? At other times, Hick seems to offer a revisionist pluralism which invites believers to adjust their beliefs to accommodate those of others to an extent that requires a total revision. Teece favours the third kind, Hick's 'soft pluralism' which focuses on the non-exclusive revelation in religions of the supreme value of the outward turn to the other, and the ethics of transformation towards a less ego-centric humanity. The distinction for Teece is

> That any interpretation of religion operates as a second order explanatory framework rather than a first-order commitment is a necessary requirement if the aims of critical religious education are to be fulfilled.[575]

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[570] Rudolph Steiner coined this term

[571] Smart, Hull and Hick were contemporaries at Birmingham and from there, had a defining impact on religious education in Britain. Geoff Teece, "John Hick's Religious Interpretation of Religion: An Unexplored Resource for Religious Educators," in *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 253–66, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230360136_20

[572] Smart, Hick, Hull and Teece encountered each other at Birmingham where their work has established a tradition in UK religious education.

[573] Geoff Teece is credited with initiating the shift to the use of the term "worldview" in the CoRE report of 2018: see RE Council, *"Commission on Religious Education – CoRE," Religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk*, 2018, https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/our-work/other-projects/core/

[574] Keith Ward, "Truth and the Diversity of Religions," *Religious Studies* 26, no. 1 (1990): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412500020175

[575] Teece, "John Hick's Religious Interpretation of Religion," in *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World*, 253.

In the field of intercultural education, John Hick's epistemological frame contributes to the quest for interreligious literacy; critical and open-minded encounter with the professed beliefs and ritual practices of communities other than one's own. (And it is not hard to see how this can have a direct bearing on a purposive pedagogy of peace as well). As a framework for on-going intercultural theology it is limited however, by its emphasis on conceptual categories and its focus on constricted range of traditions designated 'World Religions'. Again, as we hear from Panikkar, this is a meeting which may fail to acknowledge its own attempt to instate a first-order value in place of the lived religion of the interlocutors. A secular, shared dialogue may be viable, but a first order interpretation of religion imposes on the mysterious potentials of a meeting at the ultimate horizons of meaning. In terms of a pedagogy of peace, the question hovers over the place of meeting – is it humanising or de-humanising? Key to the process, then, of intercultural pedagogies of religion, is reflection on both the effects of new learning on the student and on the means by which new knowledge is acquired as well; a philosophy which is able to understand itself, and pedagogical methodologies that are dialogical (i.e. go beyond the interpretative and engage the relational and experiential).

Pluralism argues for the inclusion of literary critical perspectives, and approaches drawn from the Human Sciences. However, the confessional dimension of religious self-expression is often a point of contention. While inviting the confessional can induce ranting proclamation - the 'buffered self'[576] asserting itself - or simply lazy, anarchic self-importance - at its best, it invites the courage to share vulnerability among participants and real empathy in communion. Pluralist religious education may look to engage the experiential dimension with a scriptural reasoning approach. A higher-level religious studies task, therefore, might ask a student to engage with a religious *practice* from another tradition and then to reflect on what has been learned, what insights attained, how, and then what future impact this will have on the student's spiritual life in relation to their own inherited or adopted traditions. Such tasks develop interpretative skills, and enlist a number of levels of engagement: participation, self-awareness, empathy and mature reflection on the personal spiritual journey. Religious literacy may furthermore be established by the trans-religious contemplation of questions of ultimate concern, in a

[576] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

correlational or collaborative theological mode, just as we worked with Hick and Panikkar in the third chapter. As Paul Knitter says, it is a matter of finding the right hermeneutical points of inquiry:

> use areas of needed liberation as the starting points or shared context for establishing the common ground of genuine conversation. Courses on "Religions and Peace" or "Buddhism, Christianity, and Ecology," or "Feminist Voices in Muslim-Christian Dialogue" would be both more engaging of student interest and would provide a more effective "hermeneutical link" for both entering into and being challenged by other religious worlds.[577]

'Religious worlds' is a telling form of words, for rather than 'World Religions' (those religious institutions deemed to have world status by one measure or another) what we are dealing with is encounter between *axes mundi*, complete in themselves as ways of being in the world. This suggests that Teece's[578] 'worldviews' approach might serve better as an introduction to Hick, by persuading one another that our religions or ideologies do not forbid our ecumenical shared quest for peace and understanding. Panikkar's *dialogical dialogue* would, then, be an advance, more suitable for a further stage in community building and soul searching.[579] At the intersection between Religious Studies as knowledge of the religious beliefs and practices of others, and Religious Education, as a more holistic *Geisteswissenschaft*, a discipline that hopes to nurture wisdom and self-knowledge, arise further theological questions about the relevance of theology in the scheme of academic disciplines as a whole.

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[577] Paul Knitter, "Religious Pluralism in Theological Education," *Anglican Theological Review* (1992): 418–37, https://www.academia.edu/56649979/Religious_Pluralism_in_Theological_Education.

[578] The approach is still avowedly Hickian in terms of its commitment to critical realist approaches and the acknowledgment of a single spiritual reality about which these worldviews revolve.

[579] It may be appropriate to characterize these two as developmental phases in education. If we regard religions, as Hick and Panikkar do, as ways in which truth has sought to speak to power, it may be useful to bear in mind the gendered forms that the quest for power(s) may take. Yang power being associated with instrumental reason, dominance and control of materials, Yin power associated with prestige and influence, nurture and transformation, for example.

5.2.2 Pluralism addressing politics

Whatever one makes of Hick's metaphysics, his adoption of the simple insistence that we level the field of dialogue loses none of its moral weight today. Covenantal pluralism is often a very necessary starting-point for peace and democratic process where substantial communities of different religions or ethnicities find themselves at odds politically.[580] In this sense, pluralistic theology of religions is arguably the only horizon of intelligibility that does justice to the actual need for reconciliation. According to Panikkar, not only must we have the courage and maturity to choose our working myths while reserving the right to hold private opinions or to change our minds, if we are to create a genuine space for the emergence of new interreligious understandings that go beyond the immediate aim of mutual toleration, we must also draw on myth that extends to the cosmos and induces a convincing sense of a *human scale* – placing humans in the context of a much broader sphere of concern. Spiritual traditions are our most promising source if we want to establish the rational and necessary ethics entailed by a shared ontological and epistemological frame.

The intercultural approach and focus on peace, of theologies of religions argue well for the continuing relevance of theological disciplines in the secular sphere of academia; offering not only historical perspectives but also providing contemporary critical lenses with which to examine other fields.[581] The levelling suggests the retrieval of intelligibility between religion and politics, the problem of Peace being the paradigm example of the fact that politics and religion are inextricably bound up in one another. For Panikkar, all the great problems of our time are both political and religious - the tension between capitalism and socialism for example, or the connection between justice and lifestyle. According to him, the separation of the two derives from the distinction that the role of

[580] For example, see Olusegun Noah Olawoyin, "The Significance of John Hick's Soteriological and Ethical Criteria for a Religiously Pluralistic Nigeria," in *John Hick's Religious Pluralism in Global Perspective*, ed. Sharada Sugirtharajah (Cham: Springer Nature, 2023) and Robert J. Joustra, "Have We Reached Peak Pluralism? Proposing a New Paradigm," *Covenantal Pluralism, LSE*, January 2021, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2021/01/have-we-reached-peak-pluralism-proposing-a-new-paradigm

[581] "Marxist Bloch perhaps came the closest to revealing the strong religious impulse and millenarian dreams to which Marxism was playing God"; see Shashi Joshi, "Religion and Marxism: Some Theoretical Problems," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 45 (1991): 2564, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4398276

politics is to guarantee religious freedom, while the latter guarantees the rationality of the politics.

> A myth is not incomprehensible nor irrational. It is that which makes understanding to be understandable, reason to be reasonable, that is, convincing.[582]

Above all, though, it is religious violence that occasions the debate about the relevance of Theology as a school subject and as academic discourse, and its necessity may be more practically defended with reference to the classroom itself. Here I present two arguments. First I follow the line that theology is the necessary antidote or inoculation against religious indoctrination. This is developed by the blind theologian John M Hull in an essay considering how educational institutions may respond to cultures of religious violence.[583] In the next section, a second argument will be presented, which concerns the benefits of theological reflection on the development of young people, in terms of wellbeing, authenticity and integrity.

5.2.3 Faith critiquing faith

The first argument relies on making clear the connection between religion and existential concerns. Drawing on Evolutionary Psychology, John Hull presents religion as the means of binding and guiding human collectives for the purposes of adaptation and survival. He then refers to Rene Girard's mimetic theory of religious violence and sacrifice to elaborate sociological perspectives on religious violence. This, he says conscientizes students by making them aware that "in a contemporary sense the scapegoat is always suffering for the sins of society."[584] By reference, then, to the mutually dehumanizing

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[582] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 21.

[583] John M. Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*, ed. Marian De Souza et al. (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer Science & Business Media, 2006), 23–40, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/1-4020-5246-4_3#citeas

[584] While Girard's argument is that Christianity of all the world's religions brings us the revelation of these processes at work and therefore offers us the possibility to free ourselves once and for all from the Satanic cycle of desire, envy and violence, Hull is critical of his dismissal of other religions in this regard. I might go further to warn that the mythological structure of Christianity itself may tend to perpetuate the very evils it addresses. After all, it is Christian societies that have refined consumerism and advertising as pillars of social existence, and it remains as prevalent as ever a feature of those societies that we demonise and scapegoat others in order to expunge our own social ills. The most extreme example perhaps (the Holocaust) arose in a culture that saw itself as specifically post-Christian; see Marian De Souza et al., eds.,

rhetoric of Iranian revolutionary Islam versus the American/Western 'war on Terror' Hull illustrates how both reinforcement and disintegration of religious identity can lead to what he characterizes as 'religionism', a form of violent delirium[585], to be distinguished, in both cases, from religion.

> Religious education can make a contribution to understanding and perhaps restraining the occurrence of exclusive forms of religious identity… a new kind of anti-religionistic religious education should be created, comparable to anti-racist and anti-sexist kinds of education.[586]

This envisaged direction is not to be confused with non-, or anti-religious education, however. The point he is making, on the contrary, is that religious fanaticism is, in essence, a theological problem; "From what source of ultimate value is the absolute value to be evaluated?"[587] Thus, in the end, it is faith that must speak to faith: "Only faith can relativise faith."[588]

The definition of faith prompted several of Hick's most important contributions.[589] Hick argues that a clear and vivid certainty arising from religious experience is traditional grounds for certainty, thus we can safely agree that a person may be justified in holding religious beliefs,[590] but there is a tension between this Cartesian formula and the urgent need for faith in another sense; that is, the mutual assent of disputants to keep faith with one another, and in the prospect of the conversation approximating closer to truth. Nevertheless, by means of invoking John Hick's *critical trust*, we can elicit the

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*International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education (*Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer Science & Business Media, 2006), 495.

[585] Hull refers to Joseph Gabel, *False Consciousness: An Essay in Reification* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), 14–15, in John M. Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*, ed. Marian De Souza et al. (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer Science & Business Media, 2006), 596.

[586] Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education, 598.

[587] Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education, 599.

[588] Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education, 599.

[589] I refer in particular to: Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 200-214.

[590] Hick, Faith and Knowledge, 210.

intellectual assent of teachers to engage in this matter of the internal, dialogical, and relational dimensions of religions. Now there are key points to understand here. One is that faith may here be construed in both explicit and implicit forms. In other words, it is not necessary to profess a particular religious faith identity or position to engage in this vital dialogue, but it is necessary to acknowledge faith as a vital component in all knowledge. This is an aspect that comes out clearest in the writings of Panikkar. The other, is that religions are here understood as the source of appropriate means by which to critique religion. John Hull declares, "Most major religions possess internal criteria for self-transcendence."[591] This is questionable, for surely, the often-criticized tendency is for religious tradition to encourage uncritical adherence to formulas. In the same, article Hull draws out this principle of the 'self-surpassing' character of religious faith (at its best) with reference to the Protestant theology of Paul Tillich. Protestantism has very often taken puritanical ideological form,[592] but Tillich cites its essential spirit as a 'self-transcending truth':

> 'The Protestant principle… contains the divine and human protest against any absolute claim made for a relative reality, even if this claim is made by a Protestant church.'[593]

This draws a distinction between absolute and relative that, in the terms of Process theology[594] characterizes God as ever-self-surpassing absolute. The remembrance, then, of human finitude and incompleteness, is here seen as the very heart of religion per se, a source of the hope that religions profess. Faithfull Spirituality according to Hull, is that which carries the memory that only the transcendent can transcend itself, "Religion must

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[591] Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education, 599.

[592]Presbyterian Calvinism that Hick so avidly rejected might be one example, but other religions exhibit the same tendencies; surely the re-invention of Islam by Taliban and Isil are examples.

[593] Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*, 599, quoting Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 14.

[594] Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education, 599. Here Hull refers to Charles Hartshorne, The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 20, "God is the self-surpassing surpasser of all."

continually relativise itself by surpassing itself."[595] This corrective to religious certainty (the fanaticism that claims ownership of religious truth) should be humbling. The human is called by religion to participate in a constant self-transcending movement. Paradoxically, says Hull, "one realizes that one becomes true to one's religion by being false to it. Religion that surpasses itself is more faithful to itself than religion that always looks to past achievements and its present situation."[596] Faith that is not fetishized, about which we do not delude ourselves that we can know its full scope and consequences, and that values clarity and particularity over absolute certainty, is closer to the truth. Furthermore, such faith usefully binds community avoiding the abuses of *religionism*. Thus, for our discussion of the mission to enable peace through education, the key insight that Hull offers is this: that if faith becomes a fetish, education cannot be an instrument of peace.

5.2.4 Distinguishing religion and ideology - Liberation Theology's location of the spirit.

Hull suggests that the role of religion, far from the often-assumed function of filling gaps in our knowledge and providing certainties in the face of the unknown, is in fact to problematize and perplex as much as to reassure and console. The key distinction he is asking us to make is between religion and ideology.[597] That such a distinction really exists is by no means a given,[598] but Liberation theology also makes this distinction clearly. According to Sri Lankan Catholic Buddhist liberation theologian Aloysius Pieris, the dream of a realizable future presents a trans-religious eschatological hope. His definition of *faith* as such is 'the memory of an absolute future'. 'Memory' here, refers to the conservation of a communal tradition while the 'absolute future' refers to that which is realized in the liberative spiritual experience, as foretaste of an ultimate destiny. The 'absolute future', in the first place realized in the spiritual experience of the religious founder/genius is both the treasured memory and the progressively realized hope. It is this experience, rediscovered continuously, which is, according to Pieris, the basis for self-

[595] Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education, 601.

[596] Hull, "Christian Education and the Reconstruction of Christian Faith," in International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education, 601.

[597] As above: religion as faith vs. religionism as fetish.

[598] witness rising ultra-nationalist, populist forms of quasi-religion world-wide in our times

critical development within religious traditions, it is the distinguishing factor between living spiritual tradition and mere systematic ideology.[599] Thus, we should be able to go back to the authentic/primordial experience to recover perspective on the present and future. But this picture, as Pieris immediately points out, is fraught with danger too, for

> How can religion discern and discard its enslaving ideological assumptions, by consulting the (collective) memory of the Future if that memory itself is ideologically contaminated?[600]

The difficulty is compounded by the sense of election characteristic of religious belonging and hope.[601] Pieris' argument leads to a particular (sociological) locating of Spirit in broadly human terms. He notes that it is the conscientized oppressed to whom the task of the ideological purification of religion belongs. Thus, women theologians have started to "cleanse the Bible and the Christian Church of its patriarchalism"[602] and Black Christian Churches "through a consistently dignified affirmation of their chosenness" mitigate racist ideology in the collective memory of the broader faith-community of Christians. His conclusion then, is that "only the oppressed know and speak the language of liberation, the language of the spirit, the language of true religion."[603] Furthermore, from the midst of an evolving comparative theology in the Sri Lankan Christian/Buddhist context, Pieris believes that different religious traditions must provide correctives for each other and that the dialogue between them is the path to genuine insight. The Spirit, according to this Liberationist view, is present in, but also radically free of, the institutions of faith.

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[599] Aloysius Pieris, *Relishing Our Faith in Working for Justice*, 2nd ed. (Kelaniya, Sri Lanka: Tulana Jubilee Publications, 2022).

[600] Pieris, Relishing Our Faith in Working for Justice, 121.

[601] Pieris, *Relishing Our Faith in Working for Justice*, 121-128. To illustrate the point beyond doubt, Pieris presents numerous examples: the "dangerous compromise between racism and religion" that characterizes the Israelite tribal cult as reported in the Old Testament, "the antisemitism that characterizes the New Testament", and the ethnocentric Church of colonialism. And from Asian religions: the Aryan demonization of the Dravidian in ancient Vedic lore the blight of caste discrimination, the defensive xenophobia of the Thai Buddhist State, and the hatred of Tamils and Christians characteristic of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism.

[602] Pieris, Relishing Our Faith in Working for Justice, 130.

[603] Pieris, Relishing Our Faith in Working for Justice,130.

What conclusions may be drawn from the preceding reflections on violence and religion as regards the location of spirit in the context of intercultural education?

1. First, a theological conversation is indispensable because only a language of faith can speak to faith.

2. Second, that religions must transcend themselves if they are to be truly Spiritual, to reflect the presence of the Divine.

3. Third, is that it is those who have been oppressed by ideological contamination and fetishistic delirium (often within faith traditions), who speak the language of Spirit.[604]

4. And fourth, that religious traditions provide perspectives and resources for each other - practical responses that constitute and re-constitute the spirit of truth.

If we can agree with Hick that it is not de facto meaningless to entertain theological conversation and if we can agree with Hull (and Hick) that a pedagogy of religion needs to progressively attune its vigilance to the strains of fundamentalisms and religionism, then we have the basis here (above) of a critical and exacting religious studies. It should be noted though, that the critique of religionism extends to unspoken, and often unconscious, inculturated forms of religionism that may condition the ways in which the secular and the ideological are framed. This will be the focus of the next section.

5.2.5 Comparative theologies

According to Francis Clooney SJ a quest for mutual conversion has been underway in Catholic pluralist mission in particular, employing a definition of comparative theology as:

[604] There is an important distinction to be made here, though. It is a real danger in voicing victimhood as well because, as Hull points out, the tendency of believing communities is to identify the wellbeing of the community with the mission of the religion, see Hull, "Religion, Violence and Religious Education," in *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*, 602. Herein lies the temptation to tribalise the religion and again a fetish or a veil obscures the spirit of truth. In the last century, the extermination of European Jewry was justified by a doctrine of the victimhood of the German people to an international conspiracy of Jews. Today, the sense of oppression felt by those who sense liberal values as alienating becomes the occasion for manipulation by religio-nationalist demagogues.

> acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which venture into learning from one or more other faith traditions… for the sake of fresh theological insights.[605]

Thus, comparative theologians can teach us about the quest for true understanding across the lines of all sorts of world views and the proviso Clooney makes - "which are rooted in a particular faith tradition"- provided that no matter what the worldview of the inquirer, their positionality will be registered as part of the discussion. This can sustain added complexity, such as Maria Voss Roberts' elaboration of the *outsider within* perspective of, for example, a feminist theologian within a Christian orthodox frame making a cross-reading between an orthodox mystic and a Muslim contemplative. Perry Schmidt Leukel has recently proposed that "religions are comparable precisely in - and because of - their internal diversity. Religions are internally so diverse that the other religion always contains some familiar features or elements."[606] However, for Panikkar, this is not enough:

> Phenomenology permits us to compare religious phenomena, but it amounts at most to a comparison of their structures or doctrines. It cannot take the place of a philosophy or theology of religions which alone possesses the requisite vitality for an understanding in depth between the intuitions of one religion and those of another such as may lead to a mutual fecundation.[607]

Panikkar's communication is an attempt not just to convince by persuasive reason, it is the attempt to communicate a present experience.

> True 'orthodoxy' is not the correct formulation of doctrine but the authentic experience of the 'glory of the truth.'[608]

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[605] Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 10.

[606] Alan Race and Paul Knitter, eds., *New Paths for Interreligious Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019), introduction.

[607] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 4.

[608] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 48.

His words attempt to perform a sacramental act of instantiating, transfiguring in the here and now, by virtue of the participation (as he saw it, moving from Phenomenology to Theology) at an ontological level of mankind's modes of perception and interpretation.

> "Am I able to offer a real symbol and not merely a sterile sign? Will this meditation bear a fruit that stems not from me but from the very Life of Being?"

Again we meet Panikkar's challenge to fit the form to the elusive content. Returning to the question of religious difference and violence, even if you believe, as John Hull did, that the truly religious dimension is a characteristically self-critical and self-transcending realization of human best potentials, the question remains for religious education: how do you turn the dial down on the occasions for religious conflict, while turning the dial up on the opportunities for truly religious experience? The question extends to every aspect of college life: curriculum creation, classroom practice, social ethos and educational policy. However, to return first to our investigation of the positive role of Theology in the academy; if all of this above was a negative argument - that theology is the indispensable dialogue partner of religious extremism - the second, the positive argument, values Theology as a subject which focuses on the encounter of a student with themselves, i.e. that remains at all times committed to the humanization of the student, through both content and pedagogy. This is investigated in chapter six. To conclude here, there is one key concept that deserves much fuller exposition at this point, and that is Panikkar's proposal of *sacred secularity*.

Section 3 – Sacred Secularity

> I uphold the distinction between the sacred and the profane. I would just not identify it with the distinction between the secular and the sacred.[609]

John Hick's Interpretation of Religion might be accused of assuming too readily a definition of religion, a phenomenological approach that is not adequate to the diversity inherent in the subject. Perhaps just as important, for all the good work that Hick did as supporter of interfaith understanding, his founding of the Birmingham Interfaith Council and as a peace campaigner, with his outspoken criticism of militarism, his critique in the

[609] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 64.

field of Christian theology and his movement for interfaith dialogue, his interpretation depends on an unspoken assumption, an *unthought* element.[610] This is the context of liberal secular society in which such initiatives can flourish and without which they fail. Thus faith, in the broad sense in which Hick chose to define it and religious meaning in all its diversity appears to be, in the practical application of his worldview, almost metaphysically supported by the horizon of secularity as the mythic given.

Religions, in their more pacifying meditations can often remind us that we are creatures that seek peace.[611] From within the perspective of the religious, the distinction between sacred and secular can either disappear or become absolute, and this has implications for peace building. As disenchantment has taken hold in the West some fear that secularization may alienate mankind from her best instincts, while others on the contrary, regard the secular world as the one bulwark against inevitable violence if politics should become entangled with religion. The mutually constitutive binary of the secular and the religious begins to founder however, as a conceptual tool, particularly given the instrumentalization of it in recent world conflicts. As Mark Jurgensmeyer points out the irony:

> religious activists of today are unwittingly modern, therefore, because they accept the same secularist notion that there is a fundamental distinction between secular and religious realms.[612]

I now raise the question of the significance of the religious in the secular context of intercultural education for peace, with the help of Panikkar's *Sacred Secularity*.

5.3 Sacred secularity and peace

Panikkar differentiates *secularization*, which he defines as the historical process of de-churching Europe and its many off-shoot movements; *secularism*, which regards religion

[610] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

[611] Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his daughter, minister and UWC alumna Mpho Andrea Tutu, collaborated to declare this message forcefully in their book; see Desmond Tutu and Mpho A. Tutu, *Made for Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference*, ed. Douglas Abrams (New York: HarperOne, 2010), https://archive.org/details/madeforgoodnessw0000tutu/page/n7/mode/2up

[612] Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, and Van Antwerpen, *Rethinking Secularism,* 261.

per se as superstition; and *secularity*, commitment to a consciousness of the *saeculum*.[613] As Panikkar is more than aware, *saeculum* is a somewhat ambiguous term, having been used historically to denote a sense of temporal completion (a cycle perhaps, an aeon, age, century or lifetime), and also implying eternity, as in the Vulgate: *saeculum saeculorum*.[614] The paradoxical use in the Christian mysteries cannot be understood in our literal times without retrieval of an ancient understanding, a hermeneutical key which Panikkar finds in the non-dual *tempiternal*. The *secular,* then, is a term with which he constructs a bridge, we might say, with tradition. At the same time as wanting to retrieve the term and restore its ancient dignity, Panikkar wants to explore its possibilities as realising a vision of the sacred for a newly de-churched society. In fact, Panikkar viewed modern secularity as a coming of age in human critical consciousness, not at all the antithesis of the sacred. "Sacred and profane are opposites, but the secular transcends this dichotomy, and a secular affair can be as sacred as any other affair conducted by the traditional religions."[615] The secular (as immanent frame), is the location and guarantee of the interpenetration of the eternal and the temporal - *tempiternity*. The job of mysticism is to "help us understand the nondualistic experience of tempiternity"[616]- according to Panikkar, the essence of secularity, just as it is also the sacramental consciousness (awareness, imagination) of Catholicism.

This is to challenge most people's understanding of 'secular', although, as always, his use traces a direct etymological lineage - the *saeculum* originally intends the aeon, the age or generation, and by extension in church Latin, the temporal sphere. His definition indicates the myth that undergirds contemporary Humanism. It is the myth of history. In the *secular* world, according to Panikkar, humans have become irrevocably historical beings, and human consciousness is essentially defined as consciousness of history - of past, present and future facts. From Panikkar's point of view, the temporal character of the *saeculum* and its ascendency to primary importance in the mythology of our age changes also, for us, the significance of *peace*. The result is that "secular persons have the

[613] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 51.

[614] A translation of the New Testament Greek: τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων, understood as referring to endlessness and eternity (*Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit* in the German, Lutheran translation).

[615] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament.

[616] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament.

sensation that their salvation is in direct relation to their situation in the *polis*. This ultimately transforms political peace into a religious affair."[617] "The city of earth is regarded no longer as simply a preparation for heaven, or as a reflection of the city of God, but as an arena in which man's ultimate destiny is being forged." [618] While Panikkar sees the essential struggle of our time as the attempt to heal the split between the religious and the political,[619] he also regards our time as mythologically prepared, because our secular age presents us with the opportunity to bridge the divide. Today, "Man depends exclusively on his history. In this sense, peace among men becomes a matter of ultimacy, one on which all existence depends."[620] He cites the Papal encyclical of John XXIII *Pacem in Terris*, noting that the pontiff ascribes a 'glorious transcendence' to earthly peace, and quotes Catholic tradition ("the first principle of peace is to direct subjects to their eternal end")[621] to establish the point: to interpret and realise peace between us is a (*the*) call of our ultimate destiny.

According to Panikkar, then, the secular perspective we inhabit makes a radical, religious claim on our participation (i.e. our ultimate salvation depends on it). In addition, the existential threats to life on earth that we experience in our time (ecocide, genocide, weapons of mass destruction) teach us that peace cannot simply mean preservation of the *status quo* either, because peace entails justice. Peace, for Panikkar, is a rhythmic process - it is neither the maintenance of *status quo* nor simply participation in the *fluxus quo*, but an ongoing mediation between them and reconciliation of them both.[622] "Peace", he says, "is participation in the rhythm of being."[623] The stasis of monarchical dominion is not peace, nor is the tension of dual polarities, so peace has a triadic structure, and *harmony*

[617] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 52.

[618] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 53.

[619] Healing the rift between religion and politics perhaps includes the Enlightenment impulse epitomised by Kant's need to reconcile theory and practice—and, above all, politics and morality; see Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), 61–92.

[620] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 52.

[621] Panikkar lifts this from Janssen W.'s 1975, *Friede*, who claims to be quoting Nicolas of Cusa, but the reference is not clear. See Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament,* 57. footnote 61

[622] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 59.

[623] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 15.

means the balanced function of that threesome. This is conceived of as inherent in the natural order for all it may be yet to be realised in human terms.[624] It is also conceived of as movement in time - or, in an Aristotelian sense, as movement defining or creating the experience of time.[625]

Panikkar's definition of the secular derives from his understanding of the nature and function of myth in human culture and evolution. So secularity does not dislodge *homo religiousus* from priority in Panikkar's vision, on the contrary, the *secular* perspective is to be recognised as a moment of spiritual evolution. As foundational myth, Peace reflecting harmony is also freedom and justice. Freedom must be considered not as a matter of individual license, but as rightfully belonging to the order of the *saeculum*, to reality itself.[626] Panikkar has many things to say about freedom, which will not be dealt with here, except to observe that again he emphasises participation in a naturally emergent order.[627] Again, harmony is defined in a broader scope than the human by linking it with *dharma*, an inherent *telos*, the moral destiny of the universe, and justice, then means harmonising relationships, which effects peace. In Panikkar's view, the struggle of our times to reconcile the political and the spiritual leads to a kind of realised eschatology: salvation is the resolution of the dichotomy of transcendence and immanence (and to this extent, the concepts salvation, *moksha*, *nirvana* are interchangeable according to him) and is to be progressively realised by individuals in secular societies. The reconciliation between the political and the religious in the secular sphere is fundamental to Justice and Salvation. In keeping with liberation theology, he defines salvation in terms of the achievement of full freedom: "freedom *from* all slavery,

[624] Interestingly enough, Kant theorized similarly that nature is evolving towards the telos of the peaceful human cosmopolis in *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent* (1784) and *The Beginning of Human History. see* Kant, *Perpetual Peace.*

[625] It was very much with the idea of sacred secularity in mind that Panikkar proposed *The Rhythm of Being* as the title for his summative contribution in the Gifford Lectures; see Raimon Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being.*

[626] Again, we compare Kant, who observes that human misunderstandings of freedom revolve around the confusion of the 'principle of pleasure' with the 'principle of right'. The principle of right here would be interchangeable with that of the divine order, embodied in rta (in Vedic terms) or religion, as both Panikkar and Kant would see it.

[627] He seems prescient in identifying the rifts that define the (progressively more polarized along intergenerational lines) politics of our time - climate change denial on the right (the refusal of the prophetic dimension of discourse in the public sphere) and on the left the militantly atheistic tenor.

and freedom *for* all sovereignty"[628], and that this amounts to salvation when balanced in relational terms: "The essence of justice consists in the harmonious realisation of all Man's constitutive relations."[629] So the opportunity of Secularity is salvific - the natural emergence of a universal myth reflecting a new maturity, a new human freedom and a new possibility of cosmic harmony - "Peace is cosmotheandric harmony."[630]

Finally, Peace, according to Panikkar, as the new ur-myth of our time, is also the trans-religious myth par excellence: "Every religion" he declares, "understands peace as a symbol polysemic and pluralistic enough as to allow the use of it."[631] It is both natural and supernatural. While peace may be envisaged as *tempiternal*, *ontonomous* harmony it is also revolutionary, in a sense contrary to nature by being of a transcendent dimension:

> Only forgiveness, reconciliation, and ongoing dialogue lead to peace and shatter the law of karma.

Panikkar is therefore suspicious of any idea of 'peace keeping force'.

> Let us not forget that the culture of certitude, inaugurated in the West by Descartes, leads logically to a civilization of security – modern society's prevailing ideology.[632]

A mythic scope of interpretation reveals the inescapable entanglement of politics and theology. The ascendent myth of the human family and the natural rights of people can only be guaranteed by a corresponding growing awareness of a natural and supernatural law (an *ecosophy*). Thus the order that Panikkar envisages is not finally a rules-based order.[633] The collective subscription of nations to the regulations of the UN, even if it were ever truly universal, could not alone effect the peace that he envisages. Agreement will not be enough to mediate the transcendent energies of spirit. The absolutely

[628] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 54.

[629] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 54.

[630] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 41.

[631] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 22.

[632] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 96.

[633] i.e. neither epistemological process nor ontological reality will submit to a 'rules' analogy in the final analysis.

transcendent must be understood, studied and worshipped as absolutely immanent too. This is problematic - it is a question not of agreement and coercion, but a religious one, of desire.

> the road to peace consists in wanting to walk it. The desire for peace is pacifying in itself.[634]

Concluding thoughts

Although Panikkar's sacramental experience of the coincidence of transcendence and immanence is absent in Hick, the latter turned to Feuerbach to enlist the idea that all moral relations are, per se, inspired: "Life as a whole is, in its essential relations, throughout of a divine nature."[635] And

> it must be remembered that Kant was a 'meta-physical naturalist' and not an existentialist. Reason itself is for him an ideal limit: indeed his term 'Idea of Reason' expresses precisely this aspiration to perfection which is characteristic of moral activity.[636]

Similarly establishing a coherent relationship of ontological, epistemological and ethical, Panikkar proposes: "A *philosophia pacis*, then, presupposes that the ultimate structure of reality is harmonious. Now, this supposition is a strict tautology, and nothing more."[637] This insight derives from the observable fact that our cognition may only ever be an intuition from within the reality we perceive not impose a model from without:

> understood as synonymous with being, (this) ...also means becoming and '*oughting*' to be. Accordingly, a *philosophia pacis* is more than a passive observation. It is also an active participation.[638]

Both perspectives suggest that every important question is a religious question. Peace in educational terms is very often associated with leadership studies rather than with wisdom

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[634] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 103.

[635] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 193.

[636] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1980; originally published 1970), 31.

[637] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 14.

[638] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 14.

or transcendental insight. Thus, systems of power are the focus of analysis and religion is interpreted in sociological terms as part of the trappings of culture which contribute to peace or war. That religions hold out promise as epistemological insight, still less as ontological peace bringers, is generally off the table. However, the conflation of peace studies with the attitude that we can sort it out with the right administrative strategies and protocols and inducting children into the arrogance of leadership before inviting them to instantiate peace in themselves is a 'solutionary' mode in one key. Peace is an ongoing project, a continuous and sometimes conflictual negotiation but theological perspectives remind us that there is an ontological dimension to peace, a form of peace, you might say, which is regularly attested in the mystical states of consciousness and the harmony of cosmovision to be found in religion; *Religion* and not religions, because here referring the category, one that we require even to speak of religions, and one that does actually exist - it's defining characteristics become especially clear through this peace-seeking lens. Religions in their healing forms instantiate peaceful psychological and physical state of harmony. It is these that can underpin rational and patient negotiation; they give access to *bodhichitta* and the gifts of the spirit.

Chapter Six

Shaping a Peace Pedagogy with Theologies of Religions

The existential questions, theological controversies, politics of peace and principles of religious education I have raised now inform a closer look at the experience of a young person's psychological and spiritual identity and values formation in the intercultural learning space. To create a pedagogy of peace that coherently promotes authentic being in relation, I look at teenage student moral development, framing three core values: integrity, authenticity and justice, counterbalancing Hick's *critical trust* and *cosmic optimism* with Panikkar's immanent vision, and framing a pedagogy of hope. In the first section, I reflect on 'integrity' in the learning environment as it relates to integration of the individual, revealing the role of faith. The second section focuses on the ethics of authenticity as cultural value, a psychological good, and as an ideal, in moral formation. The third section focuses on justice, in the pedagogy of peace and I find strong theoretical support for inviting critical engagement of and maintaining an ethos of hospitality and care. An ideal of human thriving emerges, which aligns Panikkar's human quest for *ultimate experience,* characterized as the ideal of a life lived to the full, with holistic authenticity and commitment, with Hick's principle that a fully human life is a life lived for others, a life of service.

Section 1 - Integrity

According to Liam Gearon,[639] "Religious education still awaits a fully integrated and intellectually coherent model which could be termed in any meaningful sense paradigmatic."[640] We have observed that the ideal of peace already offers an anchor of integration; now I ask how this may lend coherence, in terms of psychological and moral integrity, grounding a student's growing sense of self and other.

[639] Liam Gearon, associate professor of religious education at the university of Oxford from 2010 to the present, "The Paradigms of Contemporary Religious Education," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 27, no. 1 (2014): 52–81, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24798870. The paradigms are: the scriptural-theological; the phenomenological; the spiritual-experiential; the philosophical-conceptual; and the historical-political.

[640] Gearon, "The Paradigms of Contemporary Religious Education".

6.1.1 An integral view of learning

Theories of education have often conceived of education as inherently religious.[641] However, Integral Education is a term with several current meanings. For instance, referring to the boy scouts of Brazil, 'integral' means physical, emotional and mental indoctrination, nationalism and martial asceticism based on conservative politics and idealist philosophy. This form of integration, semi-militarised youth movements, is one of the most thoroughly tried and tested. The term, however, also refers to education as a process of spiritual development and attainment with modes of assessment quite alien to the mainstream. For example, the education of energies devised by Sri Aurobindo, or the 'Integral Studies' of Ken Wilbur. Any model of International Education meets with the problem of assessment. Academic assessment[642] in International Education tends to rely on the well-worn, requirements of generic, content-heavy examination. Furthermore, although the epistemological framework of the curriculum is stated as Critical Realist in principle, little explicit rationale is provided as to how these qualities derive from a source of ultimate value which may validate all aspects of the syllabus. It is above all by defining the ideal student that intercultural education rationalizes assessment, commitment to diversity demanding a prior commitment to a holistic view of the human person. However, character and virtue ethics may be subject to differing cultural definitions. In addition, while the International Baccalaureate proclaims its 'student learner profile' as the basis of its pedagogy, arguably, there is limited scope for the assessment of students directly on the basis of their exhibiting the qualities it lists - compassionate, service-oriented, international-minded, risk-taking, open-minded, knowledgeable, caring, principled.[643] In theory, *metacognitive* models of student engagement, encouraging students to own their own learning journey and democratizing the classroom experience, are encouraged.[644] However, it is by enlisting the participation

[641] Famously William James held this view, Anton Weber, and the mathematician, A.N.Whitehead. John Dewey argued about the case for a shared spirituality in the learning institution, and both Hick and Panikkar were teachers. In the case of Simone Weil, the definition of virtue as attention posits learning as religion, so we might imagine religion to be decisive in this way.

[642] What should a fully integrated pedagogy assess – a student's humour? Their happiness?

[643] International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), "Learner Profile for IB Students | International Baccalaureate®," *International Baccalaureate*, accessed October 5, 2022, https://www.ibo.org/benefits/learner-profile/

[644] Beyond the epistemological explorations of the IB TOK course: See International Baccalaureate, "Theory of Knowledge," *International Baccalaureate*, accessed October 12, 2022,

of the student as theorist in re-considering the definition of the human person, that *ultimate questions* may be addressed, and the integration of education pursued.

6.1.2 Hope and optimism

Enlisting the participation of students in philosophical aspects of their own learning sounds less than promising at least in part due to the prevailing atmosphere of despair among students as to the prospects of human thriving and the likelihood of their being able to contribute anything to it. Some students are weighed down by, and others have already shrugged off, the impending doom of climate change. As for war, it is more present than ever, the suffering it causes normalized, draining hope of any political resolution. The despair that characterizes our time, according to both our philosophers, is a religious problem. "Our double disappointment," Panikkar calls it, "by a promised heaven that does not prevent man's inhumanity to man, and by a perfect or classless society that never comes."[645] Faith suggests a basic orientation of trust towards the process of life and it is assuming this as a given that Hick develops his theory of *cosmic optimism* and *critical trust*. These are important ways to model the open, critical yet hopeful stance that we would like our students to be able to take.

Hick's cosmic optimism is hard to maintain without the given of a robust faith.[646] Whereas optimism springs from the rationally acknowledged potentials of one's present situation, what Panikkar describes as hope is the capacity to acknowledge reality and nevertheless to find the unspeakable and invisible resources to carry on.[647] Highlighting their different eschatological interpretations, we might contrast Hick's 'optimism' with

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https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/dp-core/theory-of-knowledge/, this methodology is increasingly strongly supported by pedagogical research, much of which cites Vygotsky - responsible self-reflection in scaffolding the *zone of proximal development* - as the starting point for thinking about metacognition in classroom contexts.

[645] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 443.

[646] Iain McGilchrist provides what may be developed into a working distinction between optimism and hope by pointing out that the locus of the experience/activity of optimism is in the left hemisphere of the brain. According to his research, the left side tends to behave like an arrogant orderly, and tends to be unrealistically optimistic by failing to appreciate the broader malaise of the bigger picture, which is the imaginative right side's strength. What we may call hope, then, is something rather more located in the activity of the right hemisphere, which alone is able fully to appreciate the direness of the situation.

[647] "Man cannot live without hope, but hope is not about the future but about the invisible, about that within time that transcends it without negating it." Raimon Panikkar, "The Discovery of the Metapolitical," *Interculture*, no. 136 (1999b), 58.

Panikkar's 'hope'. According to Panikkar: "Hope is not of the future, hope is not the expectation of a bright tomorrow. Hope is of the invisible."[648] Hope, says Panikkar, is derived from a sense of the hidden meaning of the present. And he attributes the term's common misuse to "a lack of contemplation"[649] Hope is a prerequisite to placing faith in the enterprise of encounter, and it reflects an inherently eschatological awareness. Comparably, Panikkar recalls the integrating function of Ahimsa in Gandhi's philosophy:

> Nonviolence is an end in itself, because it embodies a form of life that believes ultimately in the harmonious structure of reality.[650]

This interpretation of hope contrasts with Hick's professed Cosmic Optimism in as much as optimism may rationally be predicated on a positive interpretation of the evidence to hand, whereas hope, as Panikkar understands it, is independent of such verification. Hope is, in a sense, its own reward. Thus hope, like faith, is a constitutive dimension of human being, pointing to a prior and a yet to be realised reality, in other words, to the eternal which is its source.[651] In Christian terms hope derives from repentance - a return with humility to 'the father' - the internal source of justification/peace, which expresses itself in openness, generosity, peacefulness, courage. The hope embodied in 'peace process' is often found in a place beyond despair. It could also be said that hope belongs to the oppressed; they have it in their need, others may share it by empathic relation and by virtue of the imagination. If we agree that knowledge is fiduciary, we may add that keeping faith with another is at the heart of social knowledge construction. The economy of knowledge relies on good faith. Hope, then, is itself an integrating shared sense of purpose, a necessary element in the pedagogy of peace, and an instantiation of peace itself.

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[648] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 20.

[649] Panikkar, The Rhythm of Being, 25.

[650] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 88.

[651] We might recall here: William J. Abraham, "The Epistemological Significance of the Inner Witness of The Holy Spirit," *Faith and Philosophy* 7, no. 4 (1990): 434–50.

6.1.3 The student as theorist

> You can preach at them, that is a hook without a worm; you can say 'you must volunteer'. That is of the devil. Or you can say 'You are needed!' This appeal, he concluded, hardly ever fails.[652]

Kurt Hahn's advice loses none of its bite as we reach out to the young, as I suggest, to help us reframe the mythologies of our social, political, moral universe. Students often crave introduction to the existential and metaphysical dimensions of the discussion of global issues, more even than clear instructions as to how to achieve good grades. For the young, despite the competitive atmosphere and strong forces at work on them through social media and convention, education is still not simply utilitarian but retains significance as a genuine quest for existential understanding. Teachers and institutions need to proclaim this fact and acknowledge their capacity to answer this need and not just demonstrate effectiveness in terms reduced to preparation for corporate success. Many students too also judge relevance in terms only of the published curriculum, which in the case of the International Baccalaureate is almost cripplingly burdensome.[653] Hahn warned,

> Depth is what matters. Curricula overloaded with subject-matter [are] the source of intellectual shallowness, [654]

What many students themselves want is wisdom, and to have their wisdom recognised and invited. Although students at this level are not ready to accept full responsibility, they are aware that on some level, as Alisdair MacIntyre puts it, "every piece of theorizing and every expression of belief is a political and moral action."[655] To engage students at this level of conversation demands caution, sensitivity and care. Teachers may feel unqualified to mediate such conversations, establishing mutual trust demands a certain

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[652] Joshua D. Holland, "Kurt Hahn, the United World Colleges, and the Un-Making of Nation" (MA thesis, University of Texas, 2016), 408, http://hdl.handle.net/2152/68264.

[653] Shelby Clark, Danny Mucinskas, Sarah Magagna, Katie Abramowitz, and Howard Gardner, *Educational Experiences and Outcomes at the United World Colleges: An Investigation of Impact* (Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2022); Kirsten McHugh, "The Good Project," *The Good Project*, June 30, 2022, https://www.thegoodproject.org/good-blog/2022/6/27/new-report-available-investigating-impacts-of-educational-experiences-with-united-world-colleges

[654] Kurt Hahn (1958) quoted in David Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures* (Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2012).

[655] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 72.

seriousness and courage. Students must be invited to the deconstructive process of untangling some of the real complexities that pertain to the facts they are so often asked to recite. And this is especially the case in relation to the religions and their scriptures which may, and should, always be amenable to literary, historical and socio-cultural analysis.

This approach may bring about the realisation for the teacher as much as for the student, that there is rarely, if ever, one simple evaluative answer or conclusion to be drawn. To cite one example of this, closely apposite to the theologies of religions we have been studying, Keith Ward turns his critical eye on Vivekananda's neo-Vedantism pointing out that

> Vedanta is reinterpreted by an incorporation of the Hegelian theme of history as a progressive realisation of the Absolute. It is not without irony that when the Wisdom of the East is proclaimed in modern Europe, it is very often a version of the European philosophy of Hegel, given a Vedantic religious dress, that is being brought back to those who have forgotten or are unaware of it.[656]

Thus, the challenge of constructing a pedagogy for peace involves the pre-requisite of skillful openness and the invitation of the student as theorist demands a readiness to engage with complex layers of interpretation, with nuance, irony and also ambivalence of conclusion. Ward's criticism discounts neither Vivekananda's interpretation of the Vedantic corpus nor the Western reception of it, but it does demonstrate the intersectional character of contemporary, hybrid, and therefore perhaps all, spiritualities. Readiness to engage with the complex challenges of theology and philosophy in the life of the school/college is supported by the strong epistemological and ethical arguments of both our pluralists. The brief visit we have made to a number of these existential questions, to compare the treatment they receive in the theological writings of Raimon Panikkar and John Hick, will, it is hoped, prepare the ground for acknowledging them in the intercultural school context. In addition, our theologians also provide, along with suggested answers from Christian and comparative theological approaches, a broadly humanist sense of value and direction.

[656] Ward, "Truth and the Diversity of Religions," 25.

The approach recommended here also centers the student as a theorist with an existential stake in the conversation and therefore brings the project of learning into that liminal zone in which the student must reflect on their own positionality, sensations and values at the same time as apprehending, and sometimes deconstructing, those of others. References to theological perspectives may transgress the boundary between the confessional and the analytical, emphasizing the importance of ethno-autobiographical and anthropological approaches, centering fundamental values and ultimate questions in the study of the humanities and enabling communication and reflection through the arts. Theological worldviews or cosmovisions provide conceptual structures within which safely to question not just the integrity of sets of concepts but also personal, psychological integration of an authentic sense of self, and moral integrity in terms of embodying a coherent sense of justice.

Drawing on the interreligious dialogue, three oppositions offer indispensable theoretical tools for students who might take such a theme-based approach to coming to terms with the intercultural experience of their schooling. These are the distinction between inclusive and exclusive forms of religious belonging, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic forms of religiosity, and the distinction between etic and emic perspectives in the study of religious experience. The first, Alan Race's distinction between exclusive and inclusive modes of religious belonging has proven definitive in the field of pluralistic theologies of religions.[657] This is often applied to the way in which particular religious beliefs are framed, expressed or ritually enacted, although it can also be useful to distinguish broader cultural features of religions as well. It gets to the heart of the conversation between religious and non-religious communities and addresses the question of belonging and inclusion in the way we frame cultures at micro and macro levels. The second, Gordon Allport's data collection methodologies framed around the Authoritarianism Index and the vectors of extrinsic (i.e. outward behaviours) and intrinsic (inward motivations) lend powerful tools to the critique of religiosity without trespassing on the sphere of religious belief itself.[658] And the third, the Anthropological distinction between the perspective from within (emic) or without (etic) a given social construction, or community of

[657] Alan Race, *Thinking about Religious Pluralism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015).

[658] Wulff introduces Allport's *Religious Orientation* Scale on which these were developed: see David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997)

belonging, offers an important reminder that neither is fully accessible to the other, and thus acts to recall that apophatic element we have encountered, the wisdom of knowing that you do not know.

The one area of study that has now built a record in this multidisciplinary approach is that of Art history[659] which frequently takes the form of cultural analysis and even of theological reflection while relating history, and at the same time providing an opportunity for the contemplation of universal philosophical questions through aesthetic artefacts. So far, the World Arts and Cultures course, developed as a school-based syllabus at UWC Duino was pioneering this approach, incorporating elements of critical studies and attempting a less Eurocentric frame. Although that too did not escape this failing altogether, the demise of this course is a retrograde step for the Internationalism of the IB. In principle, the model of this approach might be extended to other subject areas and to the study of religions themselves.[660]

Section 2 – Authenticity

> 'Know thyself' was written over the portal of the antique world. Over the portal of the new world, 'Be thyself' shall be written. And the message of Christ to man was simply 'Be thyself.' That is the secret of Christ.[661]

Self-realization as identification with a higher Self (Panikkar), and soul-making as progressive maturing individuality (Hick), are both directed towards realizing the fullness of a person's human potential as human. The quotation highlights how conceptions of authentic being or self-presentation may differ greatly depending on time and place and how cultural and religious differences reach the very depths of our sense of identity. This section will argue that authenticity is a radically desired quality which, along with spontaneity and freedom, is contingent on a kind of obedience. Spontaneous freedom to

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[659] For example, see Jeremy Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie, eds., *Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), or the Centre for Arts and the Sacred; see ASK, "Centre for Arts and the Sacred," *King's College London*, accessed November 2, 2024, https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/ask.

[660] It has been adopted so far in part by the Theory of Knowledge core at IB from 2021, in the form of the Exhibition component, see: International Baccalaureate, "Theory of Knowledge."

[661] Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, *Oscar Wilde Archive*, *Marxists.org*, 1891, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/wilde-oscar/soul-man/.

be fully oneself is a token of interior peace and a sign of peace in relationships is an expression of self-knowledge.

6.2.1 A new innocence, a new maturity

According to Panikkar the *transmythicization* of contemporary culture, which begins to prioritize the dignity of the human person, in terms of private conscience, over every or any transcendent value is not just a post-modern relativistic aberration, it is the glimmering into being of a new possibility for human freedom and responsibility. This is most thoroughly treated in *Myth Faith and Hermeneutics*[662] offering two key points: first, that centering the individual and their relational reality provides the strong affirmation that *the other* (that is the other to me) is always a source of, and not just an object of, knowledge,[663] and second, that as this new perspective demands freedom of religion as a proper right, affirming human dignity, so it also asserts the inherent nature of religion as an expression of freedom. In other words, the religious act is a free act, and freedom precedes religious forms.[664] Religion exists to express and guard the freedom and dignity of the individual, or it fails as religion. It is thus a new responsibility for us today to walk the fine line between relativism and relativity to maintain this new sense of the absolute value of the human person. In contrast, Charles Taylor decries the relativism of a new fixation on 'authenticity' as ultimate concern, and he is suspicious of the sanctification of choice as a prime value[665], yet he thinks it both unavoidable and positively necessary that we acknowledge the age of *The Ethics of Authenticity*[666] as the natural historical moment and "enter into its animating ideal."[667] This is because the idea to find your true self, and to be true to yourself, becomes in this context a religious aspiration (a metonym for salvation).

> There is a certain way of being that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's. But this gives a new

[662] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 426-431.

[663] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 426-431.

[664] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics.

[665] See this text 7.3.4

[666] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992)

[667] Taylor, The Ethics of Authenticity, 79.

> importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me*.[668]

Hence authenticity assumes the status of absolute moral ideal. The dangers of this emphasis are all too evident in the ways that populist politicians have been able to leverage the value of authenticity by presenting it as a form of communal, anti-establishment victimhood, demoting truth to favour emotional resonance, affecting the absence of artifice, presenting themselves as genuinely 'of the people' because 'relatable' and supposedly 'unpretentious'. *Authenticity* of this kind is reflected in the ability of such leaders "to say what others are thinking"[669] and it is validated by the raw, unfiltered and often incoherent nature of its communication. Charles Taylor notes the historical coincidence of the valorization of the ethic of authenticity with the self-discovery of *youth* as a conscious, middle-class "political reference point, or a basis of mobilization."[670] He cites the Fascist examples of the German *Jugenbewegung*, the 'Hitler Youth', or Mussolini's call to *Giovinezza*, we might perhaps as easily reference the Indian Nationalist RSS youth corps. The net effect of the supremacy of an ethic of authenticity is, according to Taylor, fragmentation – psychological, intellectual, social, political and indeed, geographical. Taylor traces the ascent of the culture of authenticity from Nietzschean existentialism through an ideal of self-realisation and self-fulfilment. From this perspective, Panikkar is in the firing line, perhaps, as a post-existentialist egoist, except that Panikkar has the argument that defends Charles Taylor's other point, that we should enter into the age of authenticity's "animating ideal". The reason for this is that this emergent ethic is a new way of understanding freedom. As Iris Murdoch has pointed out, a key distinction must be made between existentialist philosophy, in which "an authentic mode of existence is presented as attainable by intelligence and force of will"[671] and on the other hand, an understanding of personal identity which sees the true self as having a primordial character as reflection of the Good. Nietszche's "yes" to life is proposed as the opposite of religious assent while the scholastic thesis of the *imago dei*

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[668] Taylor, The Ethics of Authenticity, 29.

[669] the dubious talent of Peron, or Mussolini reflected in today's Bolsonaro, Trump, Johnson, Duterte, Orban and so on..

[670] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 475.

[671] Murdoch, The Sovereignty of Good, 50.

views authenticity as obedience to a higher nature, as opposed to behaviour in keeping with a fallen one. In their different ways, these two opposed perspectives both aim to prioritize the particular existence, the dignity of the individual, "superior to 'objective truth', even to objective religion." The latter sees the *ontonomy* of the person in a context of obedience, however, to a given harmony.[672]

Panikkar's Christology locates the person of Christ as the authentic self in a psychological sense. Uncovering your true face,[673] is revealing the Christ within, very much aligned, *homeomorphically*, he might say, with the *Bodhisattva* ideal, the Buddha nature, or body - the *Dharmakaya*. The human person becomes the icon of the Trinity.[674] A key defense then against false authenticity, this is commitment to self-realisation as an on-going and never-ending journey; one which entails the progressive transfiguration of the individual self. If we accept a fundamentally relational view of the human person,[675] however, are we at the same time playing in to the hands of those who can manipulate this temperament in favour of their own agendas and lust for power? There are psychological and psychoanalytic critiques of Advaita Vedanta, just as there are of Protestant Christianity. The repression of desires and emotions, for a start, is considered dangerous to self and others, potentially. Then, the denial of the independent self might strike some as a kind of nihilism and lead to repression of the self in an attempt to realise a 'self-less' spiritual state. This would be a misunderstanding of the spirituality of Advaita or Christianity in that the realisation of the Self through these teachings acknowledges the self and all its desires and emotions yet includes and exceeds all of them. The frustration of individual autonomy in a world framed by the ethics of obedience is another serious consideration, and to understand this we need to think through the relationship between obedience and freedom.

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[672] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 429.

[673] Ama Samy, *Zen: Awakening to Your Original Face* (Thiruvanmiyur, Chennai, India: Cre-A, 2005).

[674] Rowan Williams, "*Idols, Images and Icons*," **YouTube video**, 1:01:39, posted by "Rowan Williams," 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdsbsmCaRy8

[675] and this perhaps for the convincing ethical considerations of Levinas et al.

6.2.2 Relational selves

The first step here is to acknowledge the relational ontology adopted by Panikkar and to ask whether autonomy and authenticity may be found there. Panikkar's identification of the need to find a new innocence implies not just an epistemological estrangement from God, but an existential one, a broken-heartedness at the centre of the human condition (in the way that Tillich envisages, with his image of our central estrangement from the Ground of Being).[676] The new innocence, that Panikkar says we yearn for is precisely the unperformed, unmediated self, a new maturity. For Panikkar, though, authenticity has a deeper and eschatological significance - each has a calling - to incarnate the authentically human:

> The essence of the religious act consists precisely in the realisation of freedom[677]

Freedom is Panikkar's opposite of sin: true religion confirms a new innocence and freedom, which also constitutes salvation and realizes peace.

> "Life according to the spirit is authentic existence."[678]

Is there a passive dependency implied in this theological construction? Pluralist theology is easily accused of being passively dependent and lax on firm distinction. As a theological point about the nature of faith, Schleiermacher is often cited as an influence on Pluralist theologies because he asserted the absolute dependence of the individual on the divine at all levels of being.[679] As Ahlstrand points out, this perspective has been more prevalent among mystics and poets than among theologians,[680] but the relational in Panikkar's thinking owes more to Buber; where Buber's 'I-Thou' "reserves the term 'relation' for the 'I-Thou' attitude: it is a subject-to-subject relation, it is mutual, and it involves the whole person. God is perceived as the eternal Thou", which may be glimpsed

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[676] Tillich, The Courage to Be.

[677] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 439.

[678] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 65.

[679] e.g. Terrence Merrigan, "Religious Knowledge in the Pluralist Theology of Religions," *Theological Studies* 58, no. 4 (1997): 686–707, https://doi.org/10.1177/004056399705800405.

[680] Kajsa Ahlstrand, *Fundamental Openness,* 113.

through every particular 'Thou'. "According to Panikkar, however, God is not the 'Thou' of humans, humans are rather the 'Thou' of God's 'I'."[681] Thus Panikkar's mystical theology offers a potential for Self-realisation and wholeness that Buber does not envisage, perhaps ecstatic abandonment too.

Theologically speaking, there are losses, however. The prophetic element, that of complaint against God, and relation to God as a 'Thou', in Buber, suffers in Panikkar's vision. And for feminist theologians, furthermore, this loss of self may itself be interpreted as the experience of sin – an especially female form - the woman's disjuncture from the very ground of being, her loss of identity, occasioned by her finding being and purpose in serving another.[682] According to this view, a woman's (culturally defined) tendency to derive a sense of self only by relation to the other and, as serving another's needs, is her fundamental dislocation from the divine that might otherwise authenticate her genuine autonomy. Thus sin and virtue may be differently configured along lines of gender. Theological articulation of the radically relational view of human being and personhood still has a long way to go.

For Panikkar this turns very much on our definition of freedom

> Freedom does not mean a denial of our itinerant condition or contingent being, blurring all frontiers and overflowing all boundaries. All this does not set us free, but enslaves us to ever-greater powers τα στοιχεια τον κοσμον, Saint Paul called them.[683]

And

> No authentic spirituality defends an escape from the real world.[684]

Kant offers us the most steadfast defense of the concept of legitimate independence in his epistemology (knowledge is derived from transcendent relation via the particularities of

[681] Ahlstrand, Fundamental Openness, 115.

[682] Rachel Sophia Baard, "Original Grace, Not Destructive Grace: A Feminist Appropriation of Paul Tillich's Notion of Acceptance," *The Journal of Religion* 87, no. 3 (2007): 429, https://doi.org/10.1086/516741

[683] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 451.

[684] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 17.

culture), in his metaphysics (moral reasoning is the analogue of metaphysical knowledge) and in his Human Rights (the inalienable dignity of the person is sacred). This legitimation of independence by secure moral integrity and logical reasoning represents a defense of freedom in the theological philosophy of John Hick. However, taking Kant as basic is not without its problems, as we have seen. For example, the Dalai Lama, despite his commitment to Human Rights, forbears to claim the right to a legitimate independence because of a religious conviction that independent existence itself is a fallacy, an illusion. Therefore, he has chosen 'meaningful autonomy' as the way to enunciate the aim of his political struggle for Tibetan recognition and freedom in relation to the Chinese State. The concept of 'meaningful autonomy' reflects a theological position which conceives of freedom differently and articulates it with reference to a different cosmovision. As we might define psychological autonomy as freedom to participate in the terms of your own dependency, political autonomy might be considered participation in the generation and application of the "individual and social norms of order constituting the community."[685]

'Autonomy' is qualified by Panikkar as *ontonomy*. It is a concept that proposes each thing as having its proper place, nature, purpose, function and status in its own particular context, be that natural or cultural. So autonomy means to be called by one's own name and amounts to this perhaps: to realise one's own nature. The respect owed to a thing or a person is proportional exactly to its quality, which is inherent. However, the being of that *ontonomous* self is constituted by the relations that 'name' it. Independence is seen as *inter-independence*. Thus Panikkar is at pains to emphasise the intra-related nature of reality and to remind the individual that each one is in fact a many. It is an ontology that refuses to neglect interrelation for ease of reference.

Several contemporary analysts comment on the way our language embodies alienation from a relational reality so conceived.[686] Panikkar, however, takes the trouble to unearth the etymological roots of terms to find encoded there the deeper insights and awareness that were, subliminal to culture, there all along.

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[685] Kelsen defines democracy: See Hans Kelsen, "Foundations of Democracy," *Ethics* 66, no. 1, pt. 2 (1955): 3, https://doi.org/10.1086/291036.

[686] Paul Knitter, "Religious Pluralism in Theological Education," *Anglican Theological Review* 74 (1992): 418–37, https://www.academia.edu/56649979/Religious_Pluralism_in_Theological_Education.

> the ancients had an entire language for the living world but we moderns have interpreted it as primitive nonsense or, at best, poetic license for sentimental emotions.[687]

The Sanskrit saying *So Hum* may be translated 'you are therefore I am' as an expression of the inherent interdependence of personal identity. As such it appears to be a close analogue (though differently culturally situated) of the Southern African Bantu *Ubuntu*, almost at times, as Panikkar would put it, a *homeomorphic equivalent*. It has received the most direct attention, however, in the Buddhist/Christian dialogue to which both our theologians were contributors. *Anatta*, the understanding that selfhood as such is constituted by the mutual arising of factors extrinsic to any objective point of subjectivity, is contiguous with the concepts of *sunyata* and *pratityasamutpada* given that theology returns time and again to that which lies beyond being, or that on which being is predicated. Marion,[688] Wildman and others explore the theology of divine absence in the apophatic tradition, along the same lines as Panikkar did.

However, from the outside, there is clearly one outstanding issue here, which is that of accountability. A sovereign moral agent, a responsible self, is a requirement of justice, law and punishment, and perhaps therefore, also of freedom. This reservation partly underlies Hick's repeatedly underscoring the logical problem of the Buddhist "claiming a personal memory of a state beyond individual personal existence"[689] Hick believed that we do survive death and that the nature of that life to which we transfer in spiritual body form, makes sense of the suffering we undergo in this one. Physical resurrection in some form is integral to Hick's theology and sense of a just order to the universe. Panikkar is not so explicit in his meditations on the afterlife, like the Budha, he refrains, perhaps suggesting a higher reality (our human destiny) as transcending self in any embodied understanding of the term.[690] The question of reincarnation is also left unclear in Panikkar's writing although, given the ecological seam throughout it, a sense of the

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[687] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 147.

[688] Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012; originally published 1991).

[689] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, xxxviii.

[690] Cf Panikkar's view of a general resurrection – present in a kind of realized eschatology – must be considered alongside these reflections. It is a subtle vision. Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament: The Way To Peace, 98 "Matter too rises again"

circularity of life is certainly pervasive. How can these divergent views of the self be reconciled to affirm the freedom and responsibility of moral agents? The question appears in different forms in much of the comparative theological literature about Buddhism and Christianity to which I will return shortly. For our purposes, however, the radical relationality of selves and their capacity for freedom and responsible agency is a question encountered within a discussion about the formation of character in education; and our concern is with education directed towards peace.

Education theorists have also sought to develop pedagogies contra the alienating, atomistic sense of self framed by modernity. Recent work to articulate the self as relational or dialogically construed in terms of culture and values includes that of Geert Biesta who has qualified the conversation about *Bildung* (the model of education as character-formation), with insights drawn from a more relational theoretical base under his term, *subjectification*. The influence of Levinas is apparent in the way in which Biesta develops the idea of *subjectification* to denote the growth of the autonomous political actor he wants contemporary education to produce. Above all, though, it is the intercultural context challenges us to observe the difference between conceptions of autonomy and authenticity. Sociologists observe the issue that authentic selfhood and autonomous decision making are understood by some as rights and freedoms and by others as duties and rewards.

> individual choice equality and personal decision making (are) a hallmark of children's development and socialization in Western, individualistic societies, whereas in other societies…autonomy is believed to be realised through increasing conformity to received social duties, the dictates of authorities, and the desires of groups to which individuals have strong identifications.[691]

This can present the international student with a tension around their own sense of values, and their sense of self-worth may also fall into the chasm of such intercultural lacunae.

[691] WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic) societies reflect the former, while the latter include China. Sharon To, Shaogang Tang, and Charles C. Helvig, "Democratic Moral Education in China," in *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, ed. Larry P. Nucci, Darcia Narvaez, and Tobias Krettenauer (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 410.

However, it may be argued that autonomy of students and the ability to take part in the direction of their learning are in fact universal requirements of young people.

> autonomy may be more than an historical or social fact emerging out of changing societal conditions; rather, autonomy may be a universal human need that is importantly related to individuals' psychological health and well-being.[692]

It is undeniable that attempting to supply this need produces complexities in the diverse contexts of intercultural learning.

Biesta's version of character formation rejects the pre-Kantian metaphysics of Being for a post-Kantian metaphysics of Experience. He sees the school (σχωλη) as providing free time, time to be freely exploratory and also freely political - and contrasts this freedom with 'obedience'. The difference he wants to establish is between the institutional obedience of the highly regulated monastery and the relative de-regulation of the intra-student political space. Rather than a contemplative school he is looking for a politically engaged school, in fact, a school for political engagement. At the same time, though, he is trying to disassociate the autonomous political individual from the metaphysically ordained, autonomous persona of the enlightenment. One might envision the products of his school sitting in citizen's assemblies taking an active role in community politics. Such global citizenship is indeed what the UWCs aim for as well. And in this way, the contemplative is marginalised somewhat, but the point is well made perhaps that pedagogy, or for that matter theology, for the public space is going to rely on the sense of personal responsibility, detachment from the logic of market and readiness for democratic citizenship that he wants to promote. Others, however, have framed the relational self in terms of justice and the sense of contemplative leisure originally implied by the term σχωλη. In Sociology, Hartmut Rosa has been developing the concept of *resonance* as a key to understand and communicate a relational paradigm in practice.[693] Carlos Alberto Torres points to this as a way to conceive of educating towards the sustainable

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[692] To, Tang, and Helvig, "Democratic Moral Education in China," in *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, 407.

[693] Hartmut Rosa, *Democracy Needs Religion* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2024); Harmut Rosa, "The Idea of Resonance as a Sociological Concept," *Global Dialogue*, 2022, https://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/articles/the-idea-of-resonance-as-a-sociological-concept.

development goals (SDGs) in a way that incorporates global citizenship education (GCE).[694] This approach reflects a more Panikkarian, mystical strain in the interpretation of character formation amid interdependency, whereas Biesta's model of subjectification, bearing a more Protestant stamp is more Hickian in character. Again, when we consider the psychological dimension, the question of ideology is vexed because it inhabits the troubled zone where philosophical positions and a sense of identity overlap.[695]

6.2.3 Spirit, obedience and freedom

John Hick was invited to write an introduction to the 1979 edition of Lynn de Silva's work on the topic of Christian and Buddhist understandings of authentic selfhood. De Silva's work draws on biblical and canonical Buddhist sources to elaborate the idea of ego-transcendence that is radically relational and spirit-dependent; simultaneously the negation of self and the fulfilment of authentic human personhood.

> Dr de Silva proceeds to look beneath the surface, and finds hidden in the depths an analogous insight. He draws out what might daringly be called the Christian-Buddhist concept of *anatta-pneuma*, or non-ego-centric mutuality.[696]

His work has an intimate bearing on the project of education for peace in that it goes to the heart of the processes by which a person may be considered to reflect authentic selfhood. To explain: the formation of good character is very aptly, if too briefly, summed up in Hick's terms, this way: that the soul of the growing person develops "depth and nobility" by taking "a positive response to life's hardships and problems - a courageous response to our own, and a compassionate and self-sacrificing response to those of

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[694] Douglas Bourn and Massimiliano Tarozzi, *Pedagogy of Hope for Global Social Justice* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), 25.

[695] Thus, as an example, Teece, in his 2010 doctorate (p. 145), refers to Donovan (1993, p. 220), who distinguishes between ideological and epistemic liberalism—the one promotes a worldview, while the other reflects a concern for intellectual freedom; see Geoffrey Teece, "A Religious Approach to Religious Education: The Implications of John Hick's Religious Interpretation of Religion for Religious Education" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2010), http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1103/1/Teece10PhD_A1b.pdf.

[696] John Hick, in the introduction to Lynn A. de Silva, *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), xii.

others."[697] The self-possession of the person so imagined is admirable and accords with the courage and optimism Hick promotes. However, according to de Silva:

> Man is not self-possessed from within as the doctrine of becoming implies, but is possessed from above.[698]

De Silva sees the Spirit as constituting personality by containing identity and difference within itself – it is the "communal dimension of life in which a person emerges in community"[699] and "the category of self-transcendence."[700] So, then, by nature, "Man is a communal being... marked out for a special relationship and destiny."[701]Thus, freedom and justice may be understood in application to the fundamentally relational nature cast into perspective by the Spirit as transcendent and radically immanent presence ("a non-egocentric mutuality", as Hick described it). From his own Christian perspective, and as one trying to come to terms with the inheritance of Buddhism in his Sri Lankan home, de Silva makes a note with regard to the Spirit, that separates this discussion from the afterlife speculations with which it is usually combined by Hick: "the biblical understanding of *pneuma* leaves no room at all for a concept of an immortal soul."[702]

De Silva's yoking of the biblical concept of spirit (*pneuma*, *ruach*), and the Buddhist principle of anatta is founded on the observation that in both cases these concepts support the identification of moral action, they understand the good.

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[697] Hick, An Interpretation of Religion, 120.

[698] Lynn A. de Silva, *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 87.

[699] de Silva, The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity, 93.

[700] de Silva, The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity, 95.

[701] de Silva, The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity, 98.

[702] de Silva, *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity*, 101. There is not the scope here to elaborate on what would be an interesting conversation between the two, perhaps, about soul, Spirit, and afterlife.

> The elaborate analysis of existence is thus undertaken[703], as Karunadasa says, in the interest of ethical discipline that would lead to salvation from *samsara*.[704]

Thus personhood and autonomy are understood as qualities of authentic being, which is living in response to a spirited and relational truth:

> Authentic being is not what one attains for oneself, but something that is shared; something that brings persons into relationships with one another. Love is the basis of this shared life. It is love alone that is capable of uniting persons in such a way as to negate exclusive individuality and to complete and fulfil personality.[705]

To return to Hick's determined optimism and courage; we can now interpret these not so much in terms of self-possession - the intentional reposing of belief, deciding to believe that things will turn out for the best, for example, or deciding to foster an attitude of gratitude, rather as an act of autonomy and obedience at the same time. The disciplines of selfless attention and service are thus the ways to achieve full personhood and the fulness of human thriving.[706] At the basis of free will, from Hick's theological perspective, is the freedom to accept or reject God's love; in Hick's characterization, Gandhi is Kant's 'good person' – one who lives life according to the duty imposed by enlightened reason, a practical selflessness. For Panikkar, divinization represents a growing freedom of capacity to enact the will of God. Both may be interpreted in terms of a pneumatic theology like de Silva's without surrendering the moral responsibility of agents. And if we have a view of the personal formation in these terms, the free time of the school offers for our project of peace education, the space for forgiveness and reconciliation. As Panikkar reminds:

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[703] The analysis of the non-existence of independent self in Buddhism

[704] de Silva, The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity, 33.

[705] de Silva, The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity, 102.

[706] There is one issue here which is that the language of the annihilation of self persists in the Buddhist context which appears to be a contradiction 'self' is annihilated by and for commitment to ethical discipline – the good of the other. If there is no self, however, it cannot and need not be annihilated at all. What is annihilated, if anything, is merely the delusion of self-subsistent selfhood.

> "Forgiveness can be mutual only when the source of the forgiveness is transcendent to those who have offended one another."[707] for "No-one can jump over his own shadow."[708]

From Panikkar's perspective the potentials of theology, the Spirit, crucially, transcends institutions and cultural traditions as well:

> To sum up the transmythicisation that has taken place regarding freedom and human dignity, we could quote the well-known Pauline saying "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom", but instead of reading it only as saying that the Church, being where the Spirit dwells, is the place of freedom, we read it also as saying: 'where there is freedom, there is the spirit of the Lord.'[709]

Individualism and collective consciousness whether religion/religiousness is entirely private or shared is a question for the meaning of that religion, the authentic sense of identity of its adherents, and the prospects for just peace. The next section continues to focus on personal identity and authenticity by exploring in more depth the relationship between freedom and obedience through Panikkar's idiosyncratic interpretation of the monastic calling. It relates to contemporary spiritualities which seek to realize the fulness of human potential outside the institutions of religion.

6.2.4 The monk as universal archetype

The aim of education as character-building is often seen in terms of the inculcation of particular virtues, and in many traditional systems of pedagogy this constitutes also attainment on a spiritual path towards transcendence or spiritual communion. Thus the quest for personal authenticity and the struggle to acquire personal virtue converge in the life lived as spiritual learning journey, or pilgrimage. The model of monasticism, which reflects this convergence, has been the original archetype of schooling in many cultures worldwide. Furthermore, because monasticism and personal mysticism are so universal

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[707] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 99.

[708] Panikkar, The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, 18.

[709] Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics,* 431. (I am not sure if the lack of capitalization on the 's' of spirit in the last line is significant in this quotation).

among the religions, the monk is also the pluralist archetype par excellence. Panikkar takes up the question of the diversity and unity of the monastic vocation to life learning journey therefore, with the contemporary context in mind.

> Whatever monkhood may be – and there are scores of definitions and descriptions - it seems to have exhibited a symptomatic polarity. On the one hand it is something special, difficult, even sometimes queer, with tinges of social and cultural non-conformity; on the other hand, it is something so very much human that it is ultimately claimed to be the vocation of every human being.[710]

Those seeking access to the traditions of spiritual instruction without the trappings of religion turn to a monastic paradigm. The now popular designation 'spiritual but not religious' in some ways aligns with Panikkar's *sacred secularity* and in his work *Blessed Simplicity*[711] he encourages the emergence of a secular form of monastic community which he sees as a potential starting-point of mature, responsible faith community in the intercultural context. So it is that the 'New Monasticism'[712], a contemporary movement to live monasticism in a new form, draws on Panikkar as a principle resource. It is a movement which embraces spiritual practices, political engagement on behalf of the planet and an experimental approach to community formation. Hence the ideal of the monastic archetype still holds significant potential as informing integrated approaches to intercultural education.

Monasticism so conceived is an active a change-making stance in relation to the world.[713] The great purpose of it is, according to Panikkar, to "find the centre", to develop "the deepest core of our humanness."[714] According to Panikkar, the centre is the coincidence of

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[710] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 9.

[711] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity.

[712] Rory McEntee and Adam Bucko, The New Monasticism: An Interspiritual Manifesto for Contemplative Living(Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015).

[713] Panikkar distinguishes between Christian monasticism and Hindu asceticism in a telling way here. If Christian monasticism is a vocation (you have to follow), Hindu monasticism is an answer (that you give). For those who interpret transcendence as ascending to 'divine *apathia*', the already-experienced enlightenment may be expressed, lived-out, in this simple life just as the vocation to fullness of being may be followed in it. Stepping over this perilous chasm between *advaitic* and Cristian mystical consciousness, Panikkar tries to re-set the focus by situating the monastic in the secular worldly context.

[714] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 16.

transcendence and immanence (where immanence means ultimate sameness and transcendence means ultimate difference).[715] Whichever view of transcendence you take, the core discipline of new monastic virtue embodies an ecological spirituality which prioritizes affirming our connection to the earth, dependency on the web of mutualities that constitute the natural environment and therefore humility in relation to the mysteries these relations implicate us in. It is a vision that is shared by a creative subculture of protest and interventions for peace; Satish Kumar, luminary of the Green movement and editor of *Resurgence*, has written of a new trinity *Soil, Soul, Society*,[716] for example, and Vandana Shiva draws attention to the shared root of the words human, *humus* (soil) and humility.[717]

There is a basic solemnity to the religious consciousness encountered here as an integral feature of the pedagogy we are developing. With the patience of craft, the student must embark on self-character-building; "simplicity entails a kind of universal and ultimate pessimism regarding the secondary structures of the universe."[718]. As I noted earlier, optimism and happiness are often associated with reduction and control, whereas pessimism, hope and joy are associated with patience and virtue. Above all, the monastic as an archetype and ideal seeks freedom in the form of obedience, meaning that real authenticity takes the form of honest and humble obedience to your highest human potential.[719] And by this is certainly not intended any uncritical compliance or slavish conformity in Panikkar's interpretation:

> Obedience does not seek to be blind, but intelligent.[720]

Listening implies receptivity – even more so than seeing, in that the ears have no lids – yet there is equally a distinction to be made between passive receptivity and active,

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[715] Panikkar, *Blessed Simplicity*, 14-18.

[716] Satish Kumar, *Soil, Soul, Society: A New Trinity for Our Time* (Lewes, East Sussex: Leaping Hare Press, 2017).

[717] Vandana Shiva, "Vandana Shiva: We Are the Soil – Toward Freedom," *Toward Freedom*, May 27, 2014, https://towardfreedom.org/story/archives/environment/vandana-shiva-we-are-the-soil/

[718] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 36.

[719] *Obaudire*: to listen attentively to...

[720] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 73.

critical listening. Listening is the central practice that distinguishes the life of the monastic, and in this context, it is the key to authenticity and therefore freedom. For Panikkar, such authenticity defines the religious act: "free because fully human."[721] In this way, the monastic ideal does in fact clarify the important link between obedience and freedom that underlies the rightful autonomy of individuals as well as the legitimate authority of loving guides and which may serve as an integrating basis for institutional rules.

Finally, the monastic an ideal, as we said, is a way to pursue spiritual perfection. The aspiration to perfection is a significant part of children's education which from this perspective is not in danger of being misinterpreted as a selfish aim.[722]

> The monastic ideal does not seek an egoistic perfection (that is to say, of the individual), but locates the meaning of life in the total perfection of the person which reverberates its benefits unto the entire reality.[723]

Furthermore, nurturing a subjective experience of the value of progressive self-perfection is not the same as enforcing conformity to a particular ideal of perfection.

> As a universal, transreligious human experience, monasticism does reflect perfection, but there is no perfect model or form of the human to which we can conform. There is, then, inherent in the ideal of monasticism, a call, then to de-colonise perfection, for "an indefinite number of people can realize each uniquely their own perfection.[724]

There are dangers involved in taking the monastic ideal out of institutional contexts and implementing it as a subculture, a political movement in the world. Panikkar warns that "... even monkhood that seeks incorporation into a family can become a totalitarian ideal."[725] As we have discussed in the previous chapter, there is nothing perhaps

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[721] Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, 441: The entire chapter (p.438-451) develops the idea that a religious action is a free human act by definition and emphasizes the definition of freedom, therefore, as obedience (which is a definition Panikkar shares with Simeone Weil)

[722] if it is we may create selfish children – a teacher must believe in the possibility and joy of selfless service and hold sacred the quest for perfection.

[723] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 69.

[724] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 13.

[725] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 13.

intrinsically peaceful about spirituality. This secular vision however, does not just offer us education for spirituality, but strives to reflect a religious way of being in the world which holds the secular dimension in constant communication with the dialectic of immanence and transcendence. If education does involve archetypes and ideals,[726] it has one in the form of the monastic. This element in Panikkar's theology may now act as a reference to inform our critical approach to the construction of virtue in the learning context, where we must weigh up which values most align with our growing understanding of intercultural education for peace. In the first place the monastic paradigm suggests acknowledging the young person's aim to perfect themselves and being ready to model the quality of obedience that is their key to achieving perfection on their own terms. The next section looks in more depth at what teachers and students can learn from the mode of communication by which interreligious dialogue bears witness to the quality of peace.

Section 3 – Justice

The archetype of the monastic marks a point of connection between the theoretical arguments of the first two parts, and their practical application in this third part. We call into question the 'learner profile' approach characteristic of International School curricula to suggest rather that the freedom of the individual may be held sacred in a pedagogical framework, the destiny of the human being as spiritual woven into the fabric of contemporary, secular, humanistic education. This is to understand the quest of the individual as towards perfection of a holistic, cosmic kind, intrinsically related to the aims of education for peace. In this section, therefore, I return to the question of ultimate destinies, and consider again the idea of salvation in Hick and Panikkar; this time in conversation with Liberation Theology's message about the relationship between religious freedom and ultimate justice. In the last subsections, I distinguish between Hick and Panikkar's approaches to dialogue as methods in the classroom context. A pedagogy of Peace is discovered to be essentially about realizing and recalling our incompleteness.

6.3.1 Justice and liberation

Panikkar was critical of those who would glorify the poor or regard the problems of the oppressed as purely political or economic. He refuted "the 'bourgeois' criticism of the

[726] e.g. those expressed in the form of the IB learner profile: see IBO, "Learner Profile for IB Students."

theology of liberation" that it has degenerated into "mere naturalism and political struggle," because such a critique has "not heard the suffering cry of the poor but has listened only to the threat to the lifestyle of the oppressors."[727] At the same time, Panikkar used the example of the Latin American context, to make the point that *liberation* is always a matter of ultimate salvation:

> mere conscientization (consciousness-raising) leads not only to rebellion but to desperation, when the oppressed … have been oppressed to the very quick. The absence of justice has destroyed their capacity for justification. They no longer want it or even know what it is… One must have lived in contact with the oppressed in order to realise that, in becoming 'conscientized', they come to notice that at stake is not only their human happiness but also their eternal salvation itself… the cry of liberation theology is more than a game of class struggle: it is the struggle for salvation.[728]

When social justice (advocacy on behalf of the marginalized and oppressed) becomes, at the same time climate justice (advocacy for the future of the planet and interdependent ecosystems globally) liberation takes a new, post-Marxist definition. This type of theology, then, aims to heal profoundly by addressing injustice as an indispensable component of salvation, cosmically imagined. Panikkar, as ever, has his sights firmly set on the universality, the catholicity, of his message; the whole of humanity is thirsting for the same ultimate liberation.

Nevertheless, Panikkar affirms that although salvation is not reducible to earthly justice, at the same time, salvation depends on earthly justice. Liberation eschatology embodies the hope of the world to come not as an afterlife state, but as a future just reality to be realized here on earth and among us. Panikkar invokes the philosophy of non-dualism to argue that peace is not a spiritual condition without being a present, political, ecological and religious responsibility. The *tempiternal* significance of the present means that ultimate destiny (salvation) and immediate justice (peace) are interdependent.

[727] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 54.

[728] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 55.

> "God's peace and the world's peace can be neither identified nor separated. Their relation is non-dualistic."[729] "Justice in its entirety, as a just order, is an essential ingredient of peace."[730]

This relates the concept of 'justice' not just to Roman '*iustitia*', but to '*Dharma*'; 'peace' as a transcendent harmony of being.[731] According to this view, individual moral development intertwines social, political and cosmic dimensions. How might a teacher embody and communicate this awareness?

6.3.2 Multicultural and intercultural

Zaida Espinosa Zárate has produced the only detailed discussion of Panikkar's theology as it relates to intercultural education I could find.[732] The starting point she takes is that of looking for epistemological conditions of intercultural encounters that are *humanising*. Culture is defined as open and variable, never pure or monolithic, in the process of being rebuilt through the personal history of the subject - a flexible, dynamic internal plurality.[733] Panikkar's terminology is deployed as encouraging us to be active co-creators of the culture in which we find ourselves, reflecting also his methodological distinction between inter-culturality and *intra-culturality*. Unlike the working-model definitions of Multicultural or Intercultural, this term highlights subjective experience and supports the process of self-examination initiated by inter-cultural encounter.[734] Espinosa Zárate's

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[729] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 57.

[730] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 54.

[731]Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 77.

[732] Zaida Espinosa Zárate, "Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education: Contributions from Raimon Panikkar," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 42, no. 5 (2023): 501–17.

[733] Espinosa Zárate references Ramon Mínguez, "La Educación Intercultural como Respuesta Ético-Moral," in *Educación Intercultural e Inmigración*, ed. José Luis Álvarez and Luis Batanaz-Palomares (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2014), 23–41; and Juan Escámez, *Educación Intercultural*, 2002, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323144017_Educacion_intercultural, in Espinosa Zárate, "Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education; see also Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle,*

[734] "Since the 1980s, an intercultural model of understanding and managing cultural diversity was proposed in Europe, in contrast to other theoretical approaches such as transculturalism or multiculturalism, see: avoiding the supposedly static, symmetrical character of these latter in favour of a post-colonial perspective in education focusing on the development of intercultural competencies. Conservative central government in Britain subsequently laid stress on achievement and assessment implementing standardized National Curriculum in the 1980s and 90s. The election of Labour in 1997 heralded 'citizenship education' (2002) which recalled some of the earlier efforts at an inter-cultural improvement on the multi-culturalism of the 1970s. Espinosa Zarate references (Spitberz and Chagnon 2009)

starting point is a scenario in which "there is no shared tradition, nor, therefore, a community of meaning that ensures (logical-linguistic) understanding."[735] Here, analogous to the impasse between religions, is difference on the level of *mythos* or 'ultimate horizons', no common background of certainties against which to argue the final truth or falsity of claims. It is a situation which invites Panikkar's *Diatopical Hermeneutics*.

> the incommensurability of cultures should be taken seriously without trying to assimilate differences or reduce them to something else. Panikkar calls this the plurality of truth, which is not relativism but requires understanding the relationship with people from different cultural backgrounds in terms that are not exclusively persuasive or rhetorical but, as he argues, of conversion.[736]

6.3.3 Diatopical hermeneutics

The practical context of education amid ever growing diversity[737] furthermore reflects inequalities arising from epistemic diversity and thus requires us to seek a justice within the process of such communication. Hick's 'epistemic distance', in this context, is a worthy reminder to retain the Phenomenalist *epoché*, the 'not yet' ethic of the exchange. However, Espinosa Zárate would question his tendency to assume a shared ultimate basis of rational encounter upon which one or other will ultimately be persuaded.

> Ariso (2022)[738] acknowledges that persuasion is a "very invasive means" because it somehow assumes that there is something in the other person that must be modified, that is worth changing and, on this basis, the person

[735] Espinosa Zárate, "Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education," 505.

[736] Espinosa Zárate, "Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education," 505.

[737] Espinosa Zárate references José Luis Álvarez, Hugo González, and Gemma Fernández, "El Conflicto Cultural y Religioso: Aproximación Etiológica," in *Dioses en las Aulas*, ed. Miquel Àngel Essomba (Barcelona: Graó, 2012), 23–59; and Zygmunt Bauman and Agostino Portera, *Education and Intercultural Identity: A Dialogue between Zygmunt Bauman and Agostino Portera*, ed. Riccardo Mazzeo (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021), in Espinosa Zárate, "Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education.

[738] José María Ariso, "The Teacher as Persuader: On the Application of Wittgenstein's Notion of 'Persuasion' in Educational Practice," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 54, no. 10 (2022): 1621–30.

> is required to go through her beliefs.… In contrast to persuasion, Panikkar's intercultural proposal does not focus on the other so as to change her certainties or most basic attitudes, but rather on the self that accepts to be affected and transformed by the other's mythos and way of being.[739]

She cites corroborating examples[740] where the space opens up to reflect about the self when the arrow aimed at the other is deflected. An encounter committed to mutual humanising is one in which transformation is likely and is embraced. Sensitivity to the potential for epistemic violence[741] and injustice in the modes and manners of intercultural encounter is integral to this aim.[742] The epistemological change in perspective at work here, is that it is not just what, or how, we know, but what we *are,* that is at stake at every moment of the encounter; an existential mode of engagement has the potential to transform individuals and cultures:

> Gerd Bauman distinguishes between *dominant discourse* in which people reify views of cultures, religions and ethnic groups and *demotic discourse* the language of interaction with others at the personal level, which creates new culture.[743]

According to Panikkar, faith that "all things are possible with God"[744] entails acknowledging the brokenness evidenced by incommensurable horizons of meaning; Λόγος is not sufficient. If we meet to make peace, we may not expect to find rational

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[739] Espinosa Zárate, "Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education," 507.

[740]Cf. Brownlee et al. and Markauskaite and Goodyear; see Espinosa Zárate, "Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education," 503 and 507.

[741] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove/Atlantic, 2008; originally published 1952).

[742] The same concern may be expressed in terms of *epistemic violence* and its effects in the psychology of post-colonial cultures. The term was coined by Franz Fannon, see Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks.*

[743] Robert Jackson, "Intercultural Education and Religious Education," in *Education, Religion and Society: Essays in Honour of John M. Hull*, ed. Dennis Bates, Gloria Durka, and Friedrich Schweitzer (London: Routledge, 2006), 49–61, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203018187, referring to Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities* (London: Routledge, 1999), 26. Jackson quotes Baumann, who likens culture formation to "a historically improvised jam session". It only exists in the act of being performed, and it can never stand still or repeat itself without changing its meaning."

[744] *KJV Study Bible*, Matt. 19:26.

terms of agreement acceptable to each intellectually. We may also not expect to reach out in sympathy of heart towards one another, with a feeling connection. No, however, we may and must connect at the root of our basic humanity which is a fundamental identification, an indispensable level of respect at which respect for oneself is respect for the other and vice-versa.

What Rowan Williams describes as a 'not-yet' ethic characterises the Pluralist approach to interreligious dialogue (and for Christians this may depend on the character of Christ as the 'always more'):

> It is the time of the No-more of the gods that have fled and the Not-yet of the God that is coming.[745]

This patience has Hick's theoretical weight behind it too. Though he did not develop the idea of a diatopical methodology, Perry Schmidt Leukel reports of Hick that

> He explicitly rejects the parable of the blind men and the elephant if and in so far as it presupposes 'someone who can observe both elephant and blind men... the advocate of the pluralist understanding cannot pretend to any such cosmic vision'

However, the idea of a diatopical hermeneutics goes further than just withholding judgment, suspending disbelief even, in critical trust, to an actual *de-centering* of the subject. It is not even simply that the act of attending is an occasion of the inbreak of the divine. According to the epistemological ontology (for all according to Panikkar, as we have seen, that can be known subsists within the knowledge of God) the blind men indeed do research the elephant as known in the mind of God, you might say, and the in-breaking of the divine enlightenment is a mode of participation in the mind of God.

It is characteristic of Panikkar's theology of religions that neither cultures nor (and especially) God should be reified in theological discourse. Engaging with culture as present creative participation in irreducible process is intrinsic to his approach to dialogue and to truth. Hence the interpretative methods that Hick proposed and that we might apply to the content of belief systems, are now taken a step further into dialogical

[745] David LeRoy Miller, *The New Polytheism* (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1981), 68, quoting Martin Heidegger, *Collected Works* 6, paras. 755, 761.

methods in the classroom. “Neither side can unilaterally lay down the terms of the game.”[746] In a sense, dialogue becomes a new ritual, the new form that theology must take, a communion beyond the bounds of cultural tradition. As Baumann, again, puts it: “Is multiculturalism the freedom of cultures, or the freedom to culture?”[747]

6.3.4 Conversion

Conversion is a contentious word, perhaps especially in the context of education.[748] By distinguishing along the lines of convincing (a Hickian approach) and converting (a Panikkarian one), Espinosa Zárate offers a quite different perspective:

> Effective communication with people inhabiting a different mythos is possible and, moreover, desirable, inasmuch as it has humanising potential.[749]

She notes that Panikkar’s approach centers not on converting the other to one’s religion, or to one’s way of thinking, but on the experience of self in harmonic flux with others and events; what he has called *mutual conversion*.[750] According to this view, conversion means becoming fully human – thus we are talking about a shared hope. At one point she asks,

> Can we really speak of rhetorical rationality as being universal, so that this kind of rationality is the one that guides not only intercultural encounters, but any human encounter…?[751]

This degree of mutual respect requires opening to the meaning presented by the speaker, taking the other seriously; in fact a kind of shared hope, an “anticipation of perfection.”[752]

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[746] Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 333.

[747] Baumann, The Multicultural Riddle, 63.

[748] India’s state-level anti-conversion laws, for example, have been a point of recent contention as they are driven by Hindu nationalist legislators: see M. Sudhir Selvaraj and Kenneth Bo Nielsen, “Hindutva and Anti-Christian Violence in Contemporary India,” *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 63, no. 1 (2025): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2025.2521918

[749] Espinosa Zárate, “Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education,” 503 .

[750] Espinosa Zárate, “Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education.”

[751] Espinosa Zárate, “Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education,” 504.

[752] Hans-Georg Gadamer, quoted in Zaida Espinosa Zárate, “Epistemological Foundations of Intercultural Education,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 42, no. 5 (2023): 504; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and*

For Panikkar, it is salvation, union, divinization that is anticipated; which is religion: "the transit from the natural to the supernatural."[753]

> Conversion means transformation, but not simply a moral change. It means a radical mutation from natural man to supernatural, divinised person.[754]

The secular meeting places of religions (and, as we have seen, religious education) tends to be circumscribed, limited to the discussion of differences about traditional convictions. However, when we are dealing with religious myths, concepts, energies and activities, we are dealing with elements of discourse that at times inherently try to convert - they are not propositions, they are not even dispositions, they are living, polyvalent phenomena (and in some ways perhaps they transcend even phenomena), so that the meeting place of religions is always a dangerous space in terms of identity. When we enter the dialogue, indeed, we are there to convert the other, and the other is there to convert us, unless, and this is Panikkar's point, we enter the dialogue with willingness to be converted and perhaps more than that, the intention to be converted. We do have to stake our beliefs and listen to the beliefs of others in conversations that wrestle with the logical incommensurability of certain concepts or the apparent ethical dilemmas that these present us with when we act on them. The aim to be converted goes beyond this, though. It is to regard the meeting itself as a religious act, and act of being present before the absolute, a private act as well as a public one, an interior dialogue as well as an outward one, demanding sensitivity to the re-orientation processes at work at the level of the whole person, not just the definition of concepts. So, according to Espinoza Zárate, in the intercultural meeting place of the school, we must hold off from trying to convince, in favour of acknowledging this dimension of conversion; the space between us must become sacred space.

It is, as Panikkar says, an inherently religious space. So is this a new religion - an inter-religion?[755] And if so, how are we to discern the quality of the conversion experience?

Method (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013; originally published 1960), 302, here translated as "anticipation of completeness."

[753] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 38.

[754] Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, 38.

[755] This is the research question to Komoulainen's critical treatise on Panikkar, see Komulainen, *An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion?*.

Religions teach us that experiences like that which changed the course of John Hick's life as a boy on the top deck of a bus, are more than culturally conditioned perceptions; *conversion* is a gift from God, or even an actual encounter with the divine. There are those mystics whose lives seem to bear witness to an ongoing and even, in some cases, continuous, encounter at that level. Hick understands conversion as a defining instant of *metanoia*, an outward turn of attention and responsibility a shift to an extrinsic centering of life on the really Real. Panikkar, on the other hand, regards conversion as a progressive movement of self-realisation to be enacted, transfiguring the very nature of the here and now. There is the difference. And there is a point of convergence to remind ourselves of here, which is (as John Hull argued and Tillich professed) that religions that affirm the divine provenance of the conversion experience also recognise something beyond themselves and thus have, at least in seed form, the means with which to convert themselves, to transcend themselves. This is the vital feature of religious consciousness that permits meeting across lines of religious/cultural difference and, as long as we regard the gift as possible for the other, makes it possible to keep faith with the other. Hick and Panikkar can both agree that inter-cultural meeting is fruitful for all concerned as long as we are open to the divine and open to the divine together, and as long as the activity of the divine is acknowledged to transcend the religious body itself.

6.3.5 Hospitality and Care

The whole sweep of twentieth century Western Philosophy may be interpreted as an attempt to retrieve a lost sense of the relational as the foundation of reality (and this through a proliferation of disciplines relating to human psychology, history, social analysis, literary theory, theology too).[756] In this quest, adventures in the interpretation of quantum phenomena have found themselves aligned with theological revisions of the scholastics and medieval mystics and these in turn have found themselves the unlikely allies of transpersonal psychologists and progressive philosophers. As quantum mechanics points in the direction of a fundamentally relational ontology in the field of science, contemporary work on the concept of *the dialogical self* - deconstructing the objectivity/subjectivity binary as complex subjective construction - links insights from transpersonal psychology with other disciplines under a revised paradigm of the human

[756] Again we might cite Rosa as evidence of this, see Rosa, "The Idea of Resonance as a Sociological Concept."

self.[757] It is perhaps feminist philosophers, acknowledging a relational ontology as fundamental, and advocating care as a primary ethical paradigm, who have developed this way of thinking most practically. Cheryl Hunt working on relational ontology in the world of nursing, contemplates *Spirituality as a Way of Knowing*[758] which leads her to reflect that we are at root, as humans, basically interested in caring for another – that is our nature, our need and our way of knowing.[759] It is a perspective that Archbishop Desmond Tutu and HH the Dalai Lama have both elaborated in theological terms, drawing on the psychology of early childhood[760] to reflect that a child, nurtured in the arms of its mother is actually shaped and formed in the model of care; thus, they reason, a person is 'made for goodness' essentially.[761]

Though drawn from the field of 'object relations'[762], the insight is reminiscent of the mystical visions of Julian, whose faith in the maternal providence so inspired John Hick.[763] The female character of the ethics of care is inescapable, and the consequences of a relational ontology are the instantiation of a more porous sense of personal identity sometimes also associated with femininity. Yet the two are interdependent and they resonate with the Advaitan philosophy of Panikkar. The conditions of care also include a certain necessary limitation, however. One criterion is that there be a proximate realistic

[757] For examples of how this perspective is being developed systematically, see the International Society for Dialogical Science, founded at Radboud University Nijmegen in 2002, or the collected essays in John Rowan and Mick Cooper, eds., *The Plural Self: Multiplicity in Everyday Life* (London: Sage, 1999).

[758] Cheryl Hunt, Critical Reflection, Spirituality and Professional Practice (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

[759] We might align her with Carol Gilligan and think of this insight from the nursing community as a specifically feminine interpretation of human motivation. But there is something to be said for an ethic of care as a universal interpretation in Cheryl Hunt's context of the nursing profession or equally in the field of education.

[760] Most often cited in this regard is the post-Freudian theory of object relations developed by Donald Winnicott and others; cf. D. W. Winnicott, "The Location of Cultural Experience," in *Transitional Objects and Potential Spaces: Literary Uses of D. W. Winnicott*, ed. P. L. Rudnytsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

[761] cf. Dalai Lama XIV, Desmond Tutu, and Douglas Carlton Abrams, *The Book of Joy Journal: A 365-Day Companion* (New York: Avery, 2017) and Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness.*

[762] D. W. Winnicott, "The Location of Cultural Experience," in *Transitional Objects and Potential Spaces: Literary Uses of D. W. Winnicott*, ed. P. L. Rudnytsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

[763] Cf. Claire Gilbert, a recent interpreter and biographer of Julian of Norwich elaborates this interpretation fully: see Claire Gilbert, *I, Julian: The Fictional Autobiography of Julian of Norwich* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2023).

possibility of present relation, another is that there be the potential for growth in relationship.[764] This is an important, worldly recollection. Accordingly, the mutual fecundation between diverse cultural orientations also depends on proximity and the potential for sustained reciprocity. This argues that the nurture of such discourse requires sustained belonging in multi-cultural community. There are, then, two levels on which we can think of these intercultural spiritual attitudes, recollections, as forms of hospitality – a porous and open sense of personal identity, and an inclusive, welcoming community.[765] Hospitality to the other is the first step to developing a dwelling place for wisdom (in the human heart) according to Panikkar. It is a hospitality without conditions; therefore, "This kind of hospitality is a form of surrender, a risk."[766]

> Our hospitality is genuine only when we do not know the guest ahead of time ... hospitality is real when we accept the guest regardless of standing or appearance and without any form of discrimination.[767]

It is perhaps no coincidence that the educational theorist Claudia Ruitenberg, is a graduate of a United World College.[768] More radical, and perhaps more Panikkarian, than most, she observes that ethical frameworks embodying concepts of the good life fall into three categories - autonomy, virtue or care – when applied to educational practice:

> While ethics of autonomy and virtue focus on the ethical subject itself, and the ethic of care focuses on the ethical relationship between subject and other, none of these three frameworks goes so far as to de-center the subject… the ethic of hospitality assumes a de-centered subjectivity[769]

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[764] Claudia W. Ruitenberg, Unlocking the World: Education in an Ethic of Hospitality (Oxford: Routledge, 2015).

[765] Michael Barnes, Interreligious Learning: Dialogue, Spirituality and the Christian Imagination (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[766] Raimon Panikkar, *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1995a), p.24

[767] Panikkar, A Dwelling Place for Wisdom, 24.

[768] Lester B. Pearson College 1987-89: see Pearson College UWC, "Pearson College UWC: An Education like No Other," *Pearson College UWC*, accessed November 2, 2024, https://www.pearsoncollege.ca.

[769] Ruitenberg, Unlocking the World, 9.

She draws on Derrida[770] in charting a relational ontology in terms of hospitality.

> The de-centered subject… is not reduced to inaction but operates in a mode of response. The mode of response is predicated on the condition of being addressed, and the decentered subject, while still able to act, is no longer the origin of their action.[771]

The de-centering of the subject suggests a Hickian outward turn, an attentive and progressive virtue. In some ways, though, this overturns the desired cultural impact of religious instruction. If education may be interpreted as the initiation of the young into the inherited traditions of elders, Ruitenberg's approach differs decidedly:

> the primary responsibility of the host is not to assimilate the newcomer into his inheritance but rather to create or leave a place where the guest may arrive.[772]

The emphasis is on the critical seeker and, for Panikkar, hospitality as attitude of both of teacher and pupil, is the first duty of wisdom.[773]

> One should never go out looking for wisdom. One can only begin by preparing a dwelling place for wisdom.[774]

This approach also sets an example of that unilateral extension of trust which embodies a teacher's courageous hope on behalf of a student. This mode of creating space for another to inhabit is also the means by which we are able to accord autonomy to another (affirm the meaningful autonomy of another) who is, as we are, dependently constituted. Thus, it

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[770] e.g. Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001) and Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[771] Ruitenberg, *Unlocking the World*, 12. This theory too has its corollary in the field of systematic theology, in Linda Zagzebski's notion of the omnisubjectivity of the divine, the idea that divine responsiveness requires presence in every subjectivity which is aligned with, though only one step in the direction of, the non-dual cosmovision; see Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Omnisubjectivity: A Defense of a Divine Attribute* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2013).

[772] Ruitenberg, Unlocking the World, 7.

[773] Panikkar, A Dwelling Place for Wisdom, 24.

[774] Panikkar, A Dwelling Place for Wisdom, 19.

describes well the dynamic of trust demanded of the teacher who would draw out a genuine and autonomous sense of personal responsibility from the student.

Concluding thoughts

In this third part I have investigated peace as a religious ideal and as a guiding principle for pedagogy in an international context and confronted the danger posed by religion per se in the realm of the political and vice versa. Pluralist theologies of religion offer ways to navigate this territory and, with them, defining the aspirations of students as a quest for integrity, authenticity and justice leads us to something close to a definition of that 'religious being in the world' with which we concluded Part Two. I have elaborated an approach to embodying peace in the intercultural learning community that draws on the ethic of service and the maternal ethic of hospitality and care. And now, with a liberationist ethics of social justice and care we can begin to acknowledge harmony as a supreme value. Not the fraudulent 'harmony' of a past golden age, but a present responsibility and rational intuition. Our theologians have not let us down. Philosophically, we have a clear idea of the moral good and of the meaning of wisdom. These unfold very clearly in practical application as the virtues of self-forgetting service and commitment to social justice. It is these, now more qualified and nuanced values that we can take on towards an intercultural pedagogy of peace. To foster the courage and compassion required for global citizenship, it will be discovered how important the Anglo/American pragmatism and recourse to common sense for which Hick advocates is, and furthermore that we need a humanist and sensitized understanding of common decency to balance the spiritual quest of our time, which is to maintain an open soul/heart, as Panikkar calls us to do. It is the responsibility of the secular sphere to hold sacred space and to realise the spiritual dimensions of the citizen. I now turn to the example of intercultural education provided by the United World College movement. This specific context will highlight the ways in which the emerging pedagogy may be instructive in facing some contemporary challenges in intercultural education for peace.

PART FOUR

Chapter Seven

Religious Pluralism and the UWC Model of Intercultural Education for Peace

The United World College movement was established as a beacon of peace and internationalism for the post-war generation, and it remains, in some ways, the model on which international schools worldwide have proliferated. It has been, since the founding of the first college in Wales in 1962, a movement in constant flux and self-re-invention. In this chapter, the relational, experiential pedagogy that we have been developing is set alongside the pedagogy of Peace which has been the project of the United World College movement. In particular, considering explicitly religious aspects of its founding mission and implicitly religious aspects of its ethos today, helps us question the place of religions in the diverse communities that make up its 18 campuses worldwide. The study is situated more specifically now in the context of education at the particular stage of life with which the UWC model originally concerned itself; that is, the two-year initiatory phase between secondary and tertiary levels of education, forming the key shift between child and adult identity. A pedagogy of peace conducted in an intercultural setting draws on pluralistic philosophical values that are also exemplified by both the pragmatic Hick and the mystical Panikkar. Thus it provides a revealing practical counterpoint to their theory. At the same time, their theological perspectives interrogate the UWC model over its effectiveness in realising the fullest human potentials of students, and in its mission "to unite nations, people, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future."

Section 1 - Historical context and Mission

In his youth, so the story goes, Hahn discovered an inscription in a Belgian church which read, "Plus est en vous"[775] "There is more in you than you know,"[776]which became the

[775] C. P. Stetson, *An Essay on Kurt Hahn: Founder of Outward Bound, Genius of Experiential Education in the Twentieth Century* (2017), https://www.kurthahn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2017-stet.pdf, accessed June 12, 2025.

[776]Sutcliffe, Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges, 59–154.

motto of his educational philosophy and inspired his larger-than-life contribution to education; a legacy that remains influential today. The adage “there is more in you than you know”, invites assent to become what one is destined to be and suggests that we thrive when called forth to contribute to the world about us. It is also a reminder for teachers to remain open to the ‘always more’ that their charges bring. It has been argued that the language of Spirit is appropriate to the discussion of this act of faith and imagination. In this section, I consider Kurt Hahn’s educational legacy in the United World Colleges as related to the mission of education as he saw it, the original conception of education for peace, and to understand more about the act of trust at the heart of his pedagogy.

7.1.1 Kurt Hahn 1886-1974

An irrevocable change in life came upon Kurth Hahn as the indeterminacies of Weimar began to subside into the terrible inevitabilities of the Nazi Reich. An intelligence operative during the First World War and a political kingmaker in the Weimar period, Kurt Hahn was not one to retire from political engagement or controversy. Jewish, a political activist and former spy, his support as secretary to former chancellor prince Max von Baden and their mission to renew Germany through education, fell afoul of Hitler and he was forced to flee to England. Hahn had connections there, having been educated in part at Oxford, and as an international political figure, his escape was secured by British government offices. The progressive vision of education that he had been developing with Prince Max, at Salem, a former Cistercian abbey near lake Constance, had also informed his founding of a small school in Scotland, which was to become Gordonstoun. Despite exhaustion, and a recurring migrainous illness, Hahn, established his school with the intention to

> Free the sons of the wealthy and powerful from the enervating sense of privilege[777]

As ever, there was in this, the invitation extended to students to join in with the quest to build a better society, surely in grief for the errancies of his homeland. Throughout this last part I am looking for ways in which the pedagogy we have been discussing through

[777] Seventh of the Seven laws of Salem, Schloss Salem Schule Kurt Hahn c.1922

the lens of theological reflections on the encounter with difference, may reveal, inform or learn from the example of UWC.

First let us note that Kurth Hahn was not a pacifist and that he operated also from religious (Biblical) principles. Kurt Hahn's message against the prevailing doctrine of appeasement was "no peace with the murderers,"[778] while his religious convictions[779] and courage are evident in a statement from a speech he delivered in 1917: "To love your enemy is the sign of those who remain loyal to the Lord even in time of war."[780] There are several features of Kurt Hahn's vision of education that support the contention that his ideal was a holistic, spiritual education; his stress on connection with nature has been especially influential. Sporting activity was to be encouraged, but the usual emphasis on competition removed; climbing the mountain is an adventure, yes, but not to conquer the mountain, rather to test oneself and appreciate the need for others on the way. UWC schools have centered rescue training and emergency services as a life-affirming duty, providing physical, mental and emotional challenge along with experiential learning about real-world contexts. Hahn's *Outward-Bound* movement and *County Badge Scheme* aimed to build the will, vision and resilience of the young to defend against the threat of the Third Reich, or anything like it. There was no explicit intention that they were to become a military force, but this was Hahn's response to the problem of organizing, strengthening, and emboldening young people and to that of building consensus among democratic, peace-intentioned youth. The Teutonic virtues and mystical ethos of Kurt Hahn's educational vision for Salem were in many ways the same as those instrumentalized by the Hitler Youth for the radicalization of a generation of German children. The difference could be put like this: in contrast to Hitler's ideological Nazification, Hahn's core value was the Samaritan ethic,[781] and unlike the stress on *unity* in the monoculture of the militaristic and hierarchical Hitler Youth, the stress in Hahn's schools was on *friendship*. In his Liverpool Cathedral War sermons,

[778] "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Isaiah 57:21

[779] After some delay, he formally converted to Anglicanism directly after WWII.

[780] C. P. Stetson, 2017. "An Essay on Kurt Hahn Founder of Outward Bound, Genius of Experiential Education in the Twentieth Century," 2.

[781] i.e. the parable of the Good Samaritan *KJV Study Bible*, Luke 10:25–37.

> We cannot deny the watchman's virtues[782] are demanded also by Hitler. They are neither heathen nor Christian: they may be used for good or evil but it is vital that Christians should not lack them ….Hitler's slaves are moved it is true by great passion…their hatred. Their hatred is their magical spring.[783]

Josh Miner remarked that "no other human being, perhaps, responded as avidly as Hahn did to William James' call to seek the 'moral equivalent of war."' Hahn's "moral equivalent of war" was to captivate the young through active Samaritan service, demanding of them care and skill, courage and endurance, discipline and initiative.[784] Thus, for Kurt Hahn, prayer, peace and virtue converge on the single value, that of the "watchman", vigilance, a quality of attention. Peace and the harmonisation of diverse cultural perspectives (Salem, the name being synonymous with *Shalom*, *Salaam*, *Peace*) was also part of the original vision of Salem. As the highly active pursuit of peace, in fact, this education was first envisaged by Hahn as a preparation of youth for war if necessary, and specifically, to strengthen a new generation to defend against the evils of fascism, but for peace at all levels of society essentially.

> "The problem of how to educate the whole person cannot be done without preparing the entire world society in the arts of living harmoniously at the highest levels of potential activity and understanding."[785]

Thus, according to Kurt Hahn, a school is not just a transit for young people into sustaining employment or meaningful professions, but must be understood as a community project with a mission to the world beyond its walls. In the United World College, Kurt Hahn attempted to provide

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[782] The Watchman's virtues he refers to descend from the Biblical prophetic age; the visions and the ethical instructions of Isaiah (Isaiah 21:6-17 and 56-60), the injunctions to the prophet (Joel 2:1, 2:15), and we could add the stance of the young Samuel in response to the quiet voice of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:10), and the wakefulness of Habakkuk, waiting for reproof (Habakkuk 2:1). The virtues of the watchman are: Vigilance, responsibility, integrity, courage, discretion, perseverance, compassion, judgment, loyalty, humility. Above all the Watchman is entrusted with the duty to speak the truth.

[783] Kurt Hahn, sermon, December 22, 1940, quoted in Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges*, 136.

[784] Stetson, An Essay on Kurt Hahn, 2017.

[785] T. James, *Kurt Hahn and the Aims of Education* (2000), https://www.kurthahn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/james_final.pdf, accessed May 15, 2024.

a living example of what it means to be at peace.[786]

Hahn died in Germany in 1974. The entry in Britain's Dictionary of National Biography calls him "headmaster and citizen of humanity."[787] However, different from many other progressive educators, his aim was not to educate students for democratic citizenship. On the contrary, Hahn tried to educate an 'aristocracy of service' who would be able to save democracies from their inherent mediocrity.[788] Thus Hahn's schools might rightly today be regarded as derived from an Imperialist vision. However, as in the complex post-colonial education contexts we have looked at briefly, the gifts of such an education in the national/international context include the articulation of national and personal identity. Furthermore, the fact that they are not specifically geared towards fitting the requirements of bureaucratic, technologized, political or corporate systems, but on the contrary, promote a visionary and independent mode of leadership, has given these colleges a special status. It also suggests that the culture of schools need not reflect the prevailing values of society, but rather that they should be a forum of creative questioning and sometimes of outright protest.[789] The idea then emerges from Hahn's model that Education is a form of activism in two ways: on the one hand, the school itself has a political role in upholding what may at times be alternative values to the prevailing values of the society around it, and on the other, the school has the responsibility to enable the students to become active political entities, voices and groups on their own initiative.[790] We will be exploring both these possibilities in more depth in the analysis that follows.

Hahn's work championed the importance of developing the whole person, and inspiring a new generation to show "confidence in effort, modesty in success, grace in defeat, fairness in anger, clear judgement even in the bitterness of wounded pride, and readiness

[786] James, Kurt Hahn and the Aims of Education, 2000.

[787] UWC, "United World Colleges," *United World Colleges*, June 12, 2025, http://www.uwc.org

[788] Lodewijk van Oord, "Kurt Hahn's Moral Equivalent of War," *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 3 (2010): 253–65, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25699584

[789] David Sutcliffe reminds us that Hahn counted Dietrich Bonhoeffer among his friends and that his Samariatn vision embodied "compassion and moral courage hand-in-hand." Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges,* 139-140.

[790] A stark example of this is the case of Mike Stern's Southern African mixed race school that was to become Waterford Kamhlaba UWC after retreating into exile from apartheid South Africa into Swaziland (now the Kingdom of Eswatini).

for service at all times."[791] Hahn tried to forestall the emergence in his students of Hanah Arendt's banal and complacent evil. Readiness to help is all, a spirit of unencumbered service and the determination to see that through. Furthermore, through insightful connection, Hahn strove to bring out from students not so much self-regulation or good manners, as a personal authenticity he called 'the courtesy of the heart.'[792]

7.1.2 Christianity and Perennialism in International Education

Salem and the other Hahn schools were de facto Christian institutions. Christian inspiration for the UWC movement is clearest in Kurt Hahn's appeal to the parable of the Good Samaritan as its founding ethic. The parable serves as a practical metaphor for the model of deliberate diversity, teaching us who our neighbour is. However, the schools have never been religious institutions as such, and, as the concept of diversity has changed an expanded over time, they have been able to include a great deal of religious diversity on their campuses. According to Hahn, it was William Temple, then archbishop of York, who advised Hahn to 'leave Christ out' of the pledge:[793]

> He [William Temple] added in effect: 'You see, I am not only interested in the mission to the Christians but also in the mission to the heathens.' And then he added: 'Samaritan service is a source of the Revelation.' I am certain today that the Archbishop was right. 'The Unloving do not know God.' He who drills and labours, accepts hardship, boredom and dangers, all for the sake of helping his brother in peril and distress, discovers God's purpose in his inner life.[794]

Like our pluralists, the colleges were to undertake Christian mission in a mode of openness to difference and inquiry framed by the secular articulation of values. Although the focus on Samaritan service was in order to discover the Christian purpose of life, Hahn saw it as preparatory only, and thus perhaps not uniquely Christian. It was not the purpose of his education to convert students to Christianity, only a hope to make them

[791] Sutcliffe, Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges, 59–154.

[792] Sutcliffe, Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges, 59–154.

[793] Kurt Hahn, "Address by Dr. Kurt Hahn at the Conference at Harrogate, May 9," (London: Outward Bound Trust, 1965).

[794] Hahn, "Address by Dr. Kurt Hahn at the Conference at Harrogate."

"ready to respond favourably when the inspiration would come."[795] The decision is finally left to the divine:

> …we cannot say that the love of men necessarily ends in the knowledge of God. The final inspiration has still to come. Yet we have done more than simply to restore the response, in readiness for the inspiration if and when it will come: we are now approaching a great mystery.[796]

The Outward Bound movement, in its early decades included explicit religious instruction allying itself with a "muscular Christianity."[797] These elements started slowly receding during the years of secularization in the later twentieth century, translating into connection with nature and communing with the outdoors. Thus, there have been elements of continuity and change in the spiritual ethos of the colleges over time. While representation of national diversity was always the point, it was not the original intention of UWC to cater to so very great a diversity in terms of gender, socio-economic background, or religion, as now.[798] As the relevance of these forms of diversity to the cause of world peace have become more apparent, the UWC movement has grown in the direction of accommodating them. The movement as a whole has affirmed its commitment progressively more centrally to what might be called imagining a future peace together, and adapting its concepts of diversity accordingly.

Kurt Hahn's first inspiration to dedicate himself to heading a school after the failure of his efforts as a political activist was reportedly his encounter with the writings of the vegetarian, reforming British educationalist Cecil Reddie. Hahn drew on the Perennialist's vision of a holistic, character-building education, spiritually integrated and

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[795] Oord, "Kurt Hahn's Moral Equivalent of War," 253–265.

[796] Kurt Hahn, "The Love of Enterprise. The Love of Aloneness. The Love of Skill: Lecture Delivered in Liverpool Cathedral, 22 December" (Privately printed, 1940).

[797] Mark Freeman, "'You Can't Be an Atheist Here': Christianity and Outward Bound in Britain, c. 1941–1965," *History of Education Review* 49, no. 1 (2020): 67–84, https://doi.org/10.1108/HER-04-2019-0011

[798] Although a comment in Kurt Hahn's letter entitled '*The public school as a centre of social service*' reveals his sense that genuine diversity constitutes the health of a UWC community: "Der Kern is noch nicht gesund. Um ihn zu heilen, müssen wir eine bessere Mischung von ärmeren Jungen mit unseren Internats-schülern erreichen - The core is still not healthy. In order to heal it, we must achieve a better mixture of poor boys with our International students" (my translation), see Kurt Hahn, *Reform mit Augenmaß: Ausgewählte Schriften eines Politikers und Pädagogen*, ed. Michael Knoll (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1998), 237.

in touch with nature.[799] The Theosophical Society was pioneering in interreligious thought and fostered the vision of a trans-religious, humanist spirituality and its influence on International Education should not be underestimated. Though he was later to dismiss it as fanciful and as "professing to know too much", it is notable that Hick reported being attracted, as a child, by the theosophy of a family friend, "as the first *coherent* religious philosophy I had met."[800] It is tempting to attribute to it a greater influence on him than he does himself, in that its themes of comparative religion, harnessing science and religion, notions of the subtle body and belief in a perennial wisdom, were underlying constants in his life's work. Both he and Panikkar were invited to give Gifford Lectures, which are devoted to the pursuit of a Natural Theology - reconciling modern science and religious tradition – also at the heart of the Theosophical endeavour. It is a tenet of this movement that the modern age is in a crisis of despair and that the re-discovery of other levels of reality is essential to revive hope and ensure broad human community resilience. Not only did Theosophy have a decisive early influence on both Panikkar and Hick, but it was also greatly influential on the entire field of comparative religion, and it had a transformative impact on education for the twentieth century.[801] Perennialist spirituality contributed substantially to Pluralism and in secular education.

Finally, Prince Philip remembered above all Hahn's moral conviction:

> History will probably judge him on his ideas, but as a Headmaster, I believe it was his absolute certainty about right and wrong, his utter conviction on

[799] Kurt Hahn also shared with Reddie a mission also to protect adolescents from the "poisonous passions" of sexual vice, and neither of them embraced the emerging Summerhill model of de-stigmatizing sex in the interests of fostering what were beginning to be seen as more healthy liberal attitudes, counteracting psychological repression - Richard Farrow, "The Early History of Sex Education 1890–1930" (University of Sydney, 1980), 122 https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/handle/2123/4037/The%20Early%20History%20of%20Sex%20Education%201890-1930.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[800] Hick, John Hick: An Autobiography, 40. (my itallics)

[801] In the first place, Steiner and Waldorf schools are testament to this. The Krishnamurti Foundation, furthermore, stretches to six schools in India, one in England and one in America. The reflective, values-based holistic education model they strive to embody sees education as a religious activity that takes place in a purposefully secular institution. These, and Montessori are only the most prominent luminaries.

> morality and behavior which made him such a stabilizing influence in developing community.[802]

The ability to provide an absolute sense of right and wrong in a community of young people is a rare commodity outside the bonds of religious or ideological conviction. Even the resolutely and joyously atheist headmaster of two UWC's, David Wilkinson pointed out, "remember that I'm not just an atheist, I'm a Methodist atheist!"[803]

Although I have not done justice, here, to the aspects of danger, service and initiative that famously characterize the experiential education Hahn forged, this section has provided, it is hoped, some insight into the religious convictions and humanist strategies that inform the philosophy of education that was his life's work. The United World Colleges are a living case study in the intercultural endeavour of peace education. It is now time to take a critical look at the movement today in light of theo-philosophical principles discussed in Part Three. It is time to question the accommodation of religious difference at UWCs and the ongoing impacts of religious diversity on the lived values of its institutions.

Section 2 - Religions at UWC

I now aim to inform the argument by seeing how religions appear in the cultural fabric of community life, in the predominately campus-residential communities of the UWC colleges. This is drawn from secondary sources and personal experience and is not an exhaustive overview. However, it addresses again, more directly now, the question we asked at the beginning, about how well the UWC colleges accommodate religions and religious difference, this time in terms of explicit religious practice and belonging, acknowledging the relevance of implicit religion in UWCs' lived values.

[802] Charles P. Stetson, "An Essay on Kurt Hahn: Founder of Outward Bound, Genius of Experiential Education in the Twentieth Century" (2017), https://www.kurthahn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2017-stet.pdf

[803] David Wilkinson, *Interview: Remembering a Career in UWC*, interview by Benedict Clark, 2025, unpublished.

7.2.1 Spaces

Like the monasteries of medieval world, the colleges are set apart in castles, on mountains, in places of telluric,[804] or mythic power.[805] Thus, in some ways the colleges may be viewed as liminal initiatory spaces themselves.

> Hahn is probably the most explicit practitioner of Rousseau's ideal of removing naturally good children from the corrupting forces of society.[806]

Climate and Geography as much as anything, perhaps, define a UWC spirituality, and one might speak of *ecologies* of spiritual connection at UWC. In some cases the colleges have also made special provision for the diversity of prayer needs of students from religious families, in the form of isolated prayer rooms, most impressively in New Mexico, with the spectacular and tranquil Dwan Light Sanctuary.[807] At Mahindra College in the Sahyadri Hills of Maharashtra, the conversion of the abandoned sewage treatment plant into SPACE,[808] aimed to serve the cultural function of a contemplative, flexible sanctuary. Explicitly religious activities extend even to the weekly Catholic mass on campus at Waterford Kamhlaba UWCSA for the minority of Catholics there, who include stalwart veterans of the faculty. But this is the exception. The colleges are not usually sites of actual religious ceremonies or sacerdotal activity. Other campuses include the singing of devotional music in choirs, and all enjoy the celebration of religious festivals – *Santa Lucia* is a special feature at Red Cross Nordic, *Holi* with its youthful exuberance and imagery of colour and diversity has gone viral across the colleges, a general invitation to *Ifthar* goes out annually at some colleges as well as the feast of *Eid al-Fitr*. Many students worldwide engage in Ramadan as a sympathetic fast and draw their own lessons, benefits and blessings from the exercise. Christmas appears at all the colleges by defining one of the semester breaks and local religious festivals are honoured by colleges – (e.g. Ganesh Chaturthi, Diwali, Wesak or Chinese New Year). There are opportunities for

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[804] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 58.

[805] The symbolism of the bridge at Mostar, Maastricht as the birthplace of Europe or the cachet of Dilijan as a place of spiritual and artistic retreat spring to mind.

[806] Oord, "Kurt Hahn's Moral Equivalent of War," 253–265.

[807] UWC USA, "Embracing a Sacred Wholeness: Virginia Dwan and the Dwan Light Sanctuary," February 4, 2025, https://www.uwc-usa.org

[808] Studio for Performing Arts, Cinema Etcetera is used for Yoga classes, musical instruction, and cultural events and workshops designed and delivered by students.

students to learn about one another's religions, and to experience something of the religious sensibility and spiritual intuitions of the other through these shared occasions. At some of the colleges concerted forms of interfaith dialogue have been attempted. Yet there is a sense in which each of these is re-contextualised as cultural artefact, and secular festivals and celebrations too, having many of the same elements of pageant and collective, may arguably have as much spiritual import as these.[809] The profusion and variety of the celebration of diversity represents a spirit unto itself. For the majority of students, you don't just arrive at a UWC, you are initiated through a rigorous selection process and are sometimes perhaps even symbolically birthed into the experience.[810]

Third spaces of dialogue and encounter are also created by students and staff as interventions to address global conflicts – dialogue between Pakistani and Indian students, Tibetans and Chinese, Palestinians and Israelis. These, sometimes tense, encounters are supported by the cultural ethos and strong mission of the colleges. Other interventions may take the form of role play as in Theatre of the Oppressed workshops to interrogate issues of sexual consent (UWC Mahindra), or the annual Feminist Play - a safe space for sharing personal, sometimes traumatic, experience (UWC Maastricht). Initiatives like the 'Living Library' also create dialogue spaces that allow for new intimacies to open up and issues to be addressed through personal connection that might have no possibility of occurring in any other place or time. Furthermore, the inescapable religious dimensions of the mission itself, and its lived values in the day-to-day of college life, are regularly the subject of appraisal and re-affirmation at all levels of the learning community as a whole in those colleges where open-ended college meetings invite such introspection.

7.2.2 Mindfulness

Kurt Hahn's opposition to the competitive element in sports and the competitive framing of challenge in regard to nature has not always survived the translation of his pedagogical ideas into the actual colleges. Nowadays, however, the spheres of competition that generate most anxiety between students are those of academic achievement, university placement and most recently, over social media self-presentation. These are reportedly

[809] The popularity of 'Bald for a Cause' tonsure-taking at several colleges, for example.

[810] e.g. through a birth channel of national flags, as at UWCM Maastricht, see UWC Maastricht, "Welcome to the Community," *Instagram*, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/DN5vyatiMCH/

the most significant stress factors of college life.[811] Competition for grades, university placement and financial assistance are real-life concerns that complicate and intensify the teenage issues of establishing a sense of personal identity and exploring the possibilities of this in community.

Mindfulness practice in Education is nowadays becoming recognized as an important way to mitigate stress and anxiety among students and staff. The technique is derived from Buddhist insight meditation and the theory is embedded within religious cultures as a message of peace and truth. The heart is a pool of water wherein we may find reflected the hearts of others.[812] But if the heart is not still, the reflection will be distorted and then, failing to see the other clearly, we attack others for the imperfections of our own hearts. This is the root of hypocrisy, and this is why meditation is vitally important, stilling the heart. The movement for mindfulness in schools associated with Tich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village monastic community[813] is a case in point where the art and skills of active listening[814] to engage empathy and risk-taking vulnerability go further than standard client-centered therapeutic models to invoke the ontological *Order of Interbeing*.[815] The heart here is understood as embodied imagination and a relational organ. Mindfulness meditation is progressively applied at learning institutions as a conflict resolving measure and as a way to institute a gentler rhythm of discipline[816] and an ethos of respectful forbearance.[817] In many cases these techniques are viewed as training core competencies in conflict resolution and self-care towards the wellness of individuals and communities.

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[811] Kirsten McHugh, "The Good Project," *The Good Project*, June 30, 2022, https://www.thegoodproject.org/good-blog/2022/6/27/new-report-available-investigating-impacts-of-educational-experiences-with-united-world-colleges.

[812] cf. Proverbs 27

[813] Plum Village, "Wake Up Schools – Mindfulness in Education," *Plum Village*, accessed June 22, 2025, https://plumvillage.org/community/wake-up-schools.

[814] Cf., for example, Carl Rogers' concept of "active listening" in person-centered therapy; see Carl R. Rogers and Richard E. Farson, *Active Listening* (1957; repr., Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2015).

[815] Thich Nhat Hanh and Fred Eppsteiner, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1998).

[816] At Pathways School near Delhi, the pastoral head instituted a mindfulness bell and a moment of silence between lessons in place of the aggressive alarm of the school bell, for example.

[817] e.g. Beyond Borders, "Mediators Beyond Borders International," *Mediators Beyond Borders International*, accessed April 4, 2005, https://mediatorsbeyondborders.org.

And mindful meditation has been an ongoing practice at UWC Thailand[818] since its inception in 2009, where, in addition to provision for children of all ages, the practice has also been made available for parents and staff.

According to the preamble of the constitution of UNESCO 'wars begin in the minds of men; it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed.' The question whether UWCs subscribe to the idea that peace starts from within the individual remains current and a source of some disagreements within UWC circles. The practice raises further questions for intercultural theological reflection: how do religious traditions envision peace? Or even, are religions to some extent definable as social strategies for peace? Meditation, though, is certainly enlisted for the purposes of instilling interior peace and affirming peaceful intentions in community at times. Mindfulness meditation represents a secular act of worship. The place where we can work on the fundamental relationship between individual, collective and the universe, is in the liminal space of prayer - i.e. the space created by assent.

In addition to these explicitly religious aspects of celebration and prayer in college life, in some ways, the day-to-day lived values of the college reflect implicitly religious dimensions, spirituality in action. Festivals and culture take the place of religious community in substantial measure, yet spirituality as self-forgetting service is valued, and theologically, such self-forgetting is the gift of Spirit. Thus the lifeboat team of Atlantic College or the fire-fighters of Mahindra were invited to view their community and the wider community of humanity as a family to be protected, valued and at times, saved. Purpose in life is discovered through active service for others. This might be considered the most significant spiritual aspect of the community.

Section 3 - Insights from the Human Sciences

The last section revealed diverse religions playing some part in college life and implicit religion in the fabric and values of the college experience as a whole. This section draws on a selection of surveys and reports that have been generated by recent interest in sociological analysis of the UWC movement as a unique phenomenon. These studies

[818] UWC Thailand, "Mindfulness – UWC Thailand International School Phuket," *UWCThailand.ac.th*, accessed May 5, 2025, https://www.uwcthailand.ac.th/beyond-the-classroom/mindfulness.

focus on the experience of the UWC student and the impacts of their experience on the formation of identity and values. They reveal that the immersive experience of a UWC equips students with a greater stock of tools for encountering difference. But they also raise the question whether the UWC, as an elite internationalist organization, reflects a left-leaning doctrinaire politics to the exclusion of other voices.[819]

7.3.1 Social performance

Bunnell and Savvides, from the University of Bath, employ Erving Goffman's Frame Analysis[820] to provide a sociological analysis of the unifying and motivating call on young international students.[821] It points out the dichotomy between

> the idealistic 'internationalist' stance driven by values and a strong sense of mission to facilitate intercultural understanding and global peace, and the more pragmatic 'globalist' one driven by the need for a competent globally skilled workforce[822]

The latter is a branded commercial entity while the former are defined by being ideologically internationalist and purposed to promote international peace and intercultural understanding.[823] The article takes the view that UWC is a decidedly elitist organisation serving a particular social stratum and maintaining a veneer of charitableness through its scholarship endowments and by virtue of the college in Swaziland (being an outlier in terms of the degree of privilege of its students). While it is a somewhat jaundiced view, it is undeniably true to some extent. Right from the inception

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[819] Tristan Bunnell and Nicola Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing: The Evidence from a Residential Short Course," *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 33, no. 4 (2022): 435–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2022.2104743

[820] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1959), accessed October 17, 2025, https://monoskop.org/images/1/19/Goffman_Erving_The_Presentation_of_Self_in_Everyday_Life.pdf and Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[821] Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing,".

[822] James Cambridge and Jeff Thompson, "Internationalism and Globalization as Contexts for International Education," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 34, no. 2 (2004): 2, https://doi.org/10.1080/0305792042000213994.

[823] Cites Round Square network and the UWCs – both are Kurt Hahn inspired, see Cambridge and Thompson, "Internationalism and Globalization."

of the International Baccalaureate, it was a given that these colleges and the IB curriculum itself would serve a privileged, jet-setting elite with global aspirations.[824]

The study focuses on what it takes to be UWC's Internationalist approach, about which it is worth making a note or two up front. The UWC movement has defined itself on the basis that a nation is an international phenomenon and thus that peace is achieveable only in terms of international relations.

> The reality is quite plain: the 'end of the era of nationalism', so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.[825]

The value attributed to national identity is questionable and receives question at international institutions; however, equally, there is an immediate sense in which the national identity of students is accentuated by their arrival into a community that centres internationalist values in the way UWC does. In a way, each becomes a de facto ambassador which substantially impacts the formation of identity possible through the course of a 'UWC experience'. The Bunnell/Savvides article focuses on the presentation of self under these conditions. It recognises in UWC what Goffman identifies as a 'total institution', a closed system in which the residents are immersed in a segregated setting, and then applies a sort of dramaturgical analysis of this set-apart context.[826] Some students saw

> the shared experience as a bonding and interconnecting one in a safe, secure environment where they might feel free to act out of character, as if on stage[827]

[824] Alec D.C. Peterson, Schools across Frontiers: The Story of the International Baccalaureate and the United World Colleges (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2003).

[825] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983), 3.

[826] Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing," 8.

[827] Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing," 8.

This is a mini-society (exactly as Kurt Hahn envisaged) and "a 'safe space' for the participants to express and share their feelings and thoughts, often in ways they dare not at home with their 'ordinary' friends."[828]

It refers to the "theatrical behaviour" of students who find themselves involved in an emotionally intense process where they are invited to express their opinions, say what is on their minds, and often find themselves making new friendships with others who think the same way or at least who find the same sorts of questions important. They encounter and share their vulnerabilities.

> In short, the course seemed to have provided a stage whereby the participants, as actors, could express their views and worries as a 'community', or 'mini society'.[829]

This, it is argued, allows a collective sense of reality to emerge.

> There is enough intensity of emotional and rhythmic interaction, or drama, as a group, to enact some degree of transformation in terms of personal identity.[830]

In terms of the experience under the microscope, this study is based on the 10-day UWC short-course experience, which of course, is significantly different from the two-year diploma program experience.[831] "Arsenault's (2007) account of the 10-day trek through India revealed the transformational potential of the service-project based learning experience that all UWCs offer."[832] Defining the UWC student experience as a 'liminal' in the sense used by Van Gennep's and Victor and Mary Turner's models of initiation,

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[828] Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing," 441.

[829] Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing," 443.

[830] Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing," 15; cf. Veronica Wilkinson, "Changing Perceptions of 'International Education' by Students at a United World College" (M.A. thesis, Department of Education, University of Bath, 2002), on the UWC experience as life-changing.

[831] Bunnell and Savvides acknowledge the limitations of the study they were able to carry out: "Although a longitudinal study was beyond our remit, and is evidently needed"; see Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing," 438.

[832] Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing," 439, citing Arsenault, "Liminal Experience in International Education: A Study of Experiential Programming in a United World College" (master's diss., Lincoln University, 2007).

Arsenault's work is interesting in that it comes closest of all the studies to reflecting that the UWC experience may play an analogous role to that traditionally played by religious initiations of various kinds. However, in terms of the reliability of the findings of this study it is worth pointing out that, simply put, ten days is long enough to maintain a mask, two years is not. In fact, even three weeks is not, according to the theory behind the *Nyatsela* program at Waterford Kamhlaba UWC, Eswatini (2019). *Nyatsela* involved a planned walkabout for the entire year group graduating to the senior years of school (i.e. from year 8 to year 9, or MYP 3 to MYP 4). It lasted a full three weeks[833] during which the young treckers were denied the use of their cell phones and had to rely on each other to a far greater extent than they had ever experienced before. Nevertheless Bunnel and Savvides' theorizing about the 'safe space' and the 'mini-society' generated within it are nonetheless telling. The 'performance of self' perspective demonstrates well the initial stages of what in a separate analysis of the UWC experience, J.D. Holland calls "the triumph of the personal."[834] It is much as an actor learns by wearing masks to reveal her true face, that young people thrown into the challenging, yet in many ways liberating, space of the UWC community must experiment with identity to achieve (even if by final exhaustion) a sense of *authentic being in relation*. This is one of the most valuable gifts of the intercultural experience and it is perhaps the central most important learning common to UWC students as a whole. The sense of social confidence, a certain relaxed and open, friendly and helpful bearing is noted by Universities and colleges to which UWC students are admitted.[835] Their readiness for the encounter with difference is palpably of an exceptional order.

There is another dimension here to authenticity in the age of social media, in which we lament the performativity of politics in our twitter-fed times. The problem here is with performance in the sense of performed identities: personal identity communicated as a process of 'perception management.' In the discourse of *bravery*, *performativity* is pejorative; it quite rightly criticises hypocrisy, the action done as a hollow signifier of virtue, lacking substance. And it would be worth asking whether there is, in the malaise of

[833] After the first year, this was adjusted to two weeks.

[834] Joshua D. Holland, "Kurt Hahn, the United World Colleges, and the Un-Making of Nation" (University of Texas – ScholarWorks, 2016), 13, http://hdl.handle.net/2152/68264

[835] McHugh, "The Good Project."

the anxiety-ridden generation z, a longing for an unmediated sense of personal identity, the safety net of affection, the nest in which personal identity may be expressed spontaneously and explored without fear of misinterpretation or judgment against the shifting values of celebrity culture. The rather overly legalistic culture of *Safeguarding* in public institutions (especially education) reflects this concern absolutely, but does not address directly the cultural malaise from which it stems. However, performativity has another meaning too. Acknowledging the performative dimension of poetry, for example, means recognising the power of consciously performed symbol to evoke the reality to which it points, which constitutes its power to impact the world.[836] The experience of peace for the transition of private contemplation into communal experience. This is what musicians and performers do when they practice and rehearse in seclusion to bring something to share. It is the translation of this liminal prayer space into the shared group experience which might most legitimately be called religious, and this is what I associate with the performance of authentic identity. Furthermore, in some ways, a UWC is a performative community which performs Peace, for the purposes of understanding what peace is, and instantiating examples of peace for the world.

7.3.2 Harvard Impact Study

The Harvard Impact Study[837] (2022) was clearly pointed to interrogate the degree to which a UWC experience leads to active change-maker values formation: 'whether students emerge from schools that promote such values actively demonstrating the desired characteristics'.[838] It does not enumerate (because how could we?) the extent to which these people are actually change makers. It tends to suggest, however, that most students and teachers at UWCs take a 'be the change you want to see' cumulative approach to social change rather than more actively campaigning for, or producing, concrete difference. In the summary of its findings, the Harvard Impact Study report asks

[836] It is this dimension of theology that John Hick's theoretical world seems to avoid. And so we come to acknowledge that our question about ontology and epistemology relates directly to the historically fraught, though many would agree tragic and unnecessary, controversy over transubstantiation.

[837] Shelby Clark, Danny Mucinskas, Sarah Magagna, Katie Abramowitz, and Howard Gardner, "Educational Experiences and Outcomes at the United World Colleges: An Investigation of Impact" (Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2022),

[838] Bunnell and Savvides, "The United World College Experience and Its Framing," 436, citing Maki ItoTsumagari, "The Enduring Effects of a United World College Education as Seen through a Graduate's Eyes," *Journal of Research in International Education* 9, no. 3 (2010): 289, https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240910388916

the colleges of the UWC movement to think about whether they want to be more centrally governed, more closely intertwined, or more autonomous in how they tackle this. It asks them to generate a 'theory of change'. What is reportedly lacking is a degree of 'critical consciousness'[839] and the application of sustainability values in practice. This is a direct challenge to the institutions of the UWCs to model and embody the values of the mission rather than just to profess them. There is a perceived shortfall in authentic (and not just performative) reflection of the UWC values in the administration and day-to-day of the colleges.[840] One striking quotation reveals a trend in the results:

> Half of the time I feel as if the values of the school are in some way in some very substantial tension with the values of our governing body… some of them are explicitly dismissive of the values… and the toxicity that creates, and the pressure, and the…internalized conflict…[841]

Cognitive dissonance arises in response to perceived inconsistencies between values as communicated to students by teachers, and those embodied by the institution's administrative leaders. [842] Although the Harvard Impact Study certainly attests to many aspects of the UWC movement which are effective in producing 'agents of change', the two critical issues raised by the extended report are, as above, a) whether students and alumni are active political self-organisers when it comes to action for peace and sustainability and b) whether they are supported in this by genuine buy-in from the wider community of UWC colleges, in particular at the levels of administration and board governance. These two considerations in many ways frame the analysis in relation to pluralist theologies of religions that follows in chapter 8.[843]

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[839] Clark et al., "Educational Experiences and Outcomes at the United World Colleges," 215.

[840] Clark et al., "Educational Experiences and Outcomes at the United World Colleges," 217–20.

[841] Clark et al., "Educational Experiences and Outcomes at the United World Colleges," 220.

[842] Sir Ken Robinson makes an excellent critique of the corporatization of education in his TED Talk "Changing Education Paradigms." Sadly, though many years have lapsed since he delivered that talk (2010), the college in Maastricht, for example, is surely not alone in holding on to many of the features he most pointedly criticised—the isolation of dimensions of learning, the use of factory analogies, and the language of hierarchical structures (line managers, Human Resources, etc.); see Ken Robinson, "Changing Education Paradigms," *TED Talks*, October 2010, https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms.

[843] They were also centered by the focus groups of the UWC congress in Thailand 2024, see UWC Thailand, "Shaping the Future: An Overview of the UWC International Congress 2024," January 11, 2024,

7.3.3 UWC Values Survey

At UWC Maastricht it was observed that, over several years at the organic garden, it was often religious students (Tibetan Buddhists, Muslims from the Middle East, Christians from Africa and others) who commit themselves to the activity with a sense of the inherent value of connecting with, and contributing to, the earth and her wellbeing. A sense of interconnectedness at an organic level is matched by the intuition of an ethical responsibility to the garden. This sense of the meaningfulness of gardening in a wider cosmic and moral economy both sustains the students and uplifts the quality of their contribution. And this appears to be derived from grounding in a variety of religions (or cosmovisions) in early childhood.[844]

A local survey[845] carried out during the COVID pandemic sought to gauge effects on the UWC experience, of early religious upbringing and the practice of living according to religious values, that characterize a minority of students.[846] The questions aimed to understand what differentiates the interaction of religious and non-religious students, with the ethos and values at UWC, and longitudinally, whether there is notable difference in values development over the two-year course. Although results in these areas were inconclusive, a notable finding was that few students distinguish between the right to religious freedom and an outright ban causing any offense to the religious beliefs of others whatsoever.[847] This suggests that a majority hold a relativistic outlook on the meeting of worldviews which sidesteps the possibility of genuine dialogue. Those who made the distinction, were predominately Muslim and Christian students. Another found that values identified by students as most in need of affirmation, were those of *freedom of*

https://www.uwcthailand.ac.th/publications/blog-detail/~board/general-blog-posts/post/shaping-the-future-an-overview-of-the-uwc-international-congress-2024

[844] Nathan Hunt, *UWC Values and the Permaculture Garden*, interview by Benedict Clark, 2023, unpublished.

[845] Benedict Clark, Elena Borisova, and Steve Basaraba, "UWC Maastricht – UWC Values Survey" (unpublished internal survey, UWC Maastricht, 2021).

[846] Benedict Clark, Elena Borisova, and Steve Basaraba, "UWC Maastricht – UWC Values Survey" (unpublished internal survey, UWC Maastricht, 2021).

[847] Benedict Clark, Elena Borisova, and Steve Basaraba, "UWC Maastricht – UWC Values Survey" (unpublished internal survey, UWC Maastricht, 2021) – (117 respondents) Q. Do you feel that it is always wrong to cause offense to the religious sensibilities of others? A minority of respondents (20) said 'No.' The majority (15) of these were self-identified as Christian or Muslim.

choice and *self-care*,[848] which perhaps highlights a tension between the *IB learner profile*, with its emphasis on the virtues of risk-taking enterprise and self-directed action, on one side, with traditional virtues such as gratitude, humility, kindness, generosity and patience, which sustain wellbeing, on the other.[849] While the former encourages a kind of freedom, perhaps the emphasis may also exert pressure on students, neglecting opportunities to encourage the love of wisdom which may contribute both to wellbeing and to effectiveness.

Concluding thoughts - Values and Religions at UWCs

What emerges from the above is a sense of the hidden curriculum of a living college. We are left with a number of insights, but how do they really fit into the picture of UWC and its mission in the world? First, there is the issue of coherent integrity of the institution. When the values of the UWC mission are not well reflected by the administration, the board, the parents, the staff, what do the students actually learn? The student is a member of three layers of community, three spaces of democratic community that form the social ecology – the classroom, the college as a whole, and the community beyond the college of all those related to it.

> schools must work towards turning formal membership in the institution into active and motivated participation in …a moral community.[850]

It is the process of re-articulating, re-discovering and re-appropriating, of modelling and re-identifying those values that defines the actual pedagogy. The Samaritan ethic at the root of UWC education needs to be understood in the context of virtue aligned with worldview and cosmological meaning, with buy-in from across the board. A mission-based education needs not only to engage students in building latrines or painting community libraries, it needs children to understand and inquire about why those needs

[848] Benedict Clark, Elena Borisova, and Steve Basaraba, "UWC Maastricht – UWC Values Survey" (unpublished internal survey, UWC Maastricht, 2021).

[849] N.b. to these might be added more specifically Hahnian virtues too—self-discipline and fitness, for example; cf. Lodewijn van Oord, "Kurt Hahn's Moral Equivalent of War," *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 3 (2010): 264, https://doi.org/10.1080/03054981003629870.

[850] Wolfgang Edelstein and Tobias Krettenauer, "Citizenship and Democracy Education in a Diverse Europe," in *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, ed. Larry P. Nucci, Darcia Narváez, and Tobias Krettenauer (New York: Routledge, 2015), 386, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203114896.ch22

are there in the first place, what is the root of injustice and to feel along with the people they help, what it means to be helped and to be in need.[851] This is something we can learn from the entire mission-based learning community acting not only as a charity, but also as a mission of inquiry towards social justice, sustainable wellbeing and peace.

Secondly, the question of religious diversity presents issues for unification as vaunted in the mission statement. It is now becoming well-established by quantitative neurological studies that fear of social exclusion is existential in the teen years, that the force of peer pressure in adolescence has its roots in a primal need for social inclusion at this stage of psychological development, both in boys and in girls.[852] A worthwhile empirical study focusing on the effects of religious formation on adolescents would compare fear of social risk-taking among religious and non-religious students. It is likely that the effect of a religious foundation in early childhood will be seen to be a reduced fear of social risk-taking in adolescence.[853] On the other hand, also familiar is the danger of religious or ideological social belonging groups closing ranks, leading to isolation of the group and discrimination. Thus, for psychological wellbeing, there are benefits and risks attached to encouraging religious exploration and adherence in adolescence. The increased need for social belonging tends to lead to reliance on the inclusion group and can lead to alienation from other sources of connection,[854] while the reassurance of the modes of social belonging encouraged by this participation can lead to greater self-confidence and the assurance that permits of a more open and inclusive attitude, as well as a greater degree of self-reflection and regulation.[855] To avoid paranoid insularity on the part of belonging groups on the one hand, and rootless impressionability of individuals on the other, therefore, it is key that values of inclusion and understanding are lived in reality, not only

[851] John E. Hull, *Education for Hope: A Course Correction* (Canada: Friesen Press, 2023).

[852] Livia Tomova, Jack L. Andrews, and Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, "The Importance of Belonging and the Avoidance of Social Risk Taking in Adolescence," *Developmental Review* 61 (2021): 1–10, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2021.100981; this article includes an impressive bibliography on this subject, including M. Gardner and L. Steinberg, "Peer Influence on Risk Taking, Risk Preference, and Risky Decision Making in Adolescence and Adulthood: An Experimental Study," *Developmental Psychology* (July 1, 2005), https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16060809/

[853] Livia Tomova, Jack L. Andrews, and Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, "The Importance of Belonging and the Avoidance of Social Risk Taking in Adolescence," *Developmental Review* 61 (2021): 100981, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2021.100981.

[854] Tomova, Andrews, and Blakemore, "The Importance of Belonging."

[855] Tomova, Andrews, and Blakemore, "The Importance of Belonging."

professed systematically, and that the conversation about them engages participation from the full range of religious and non-religious diversity.[856]

The question of conflict between religions at UWCs is almost a non-issue according to the data; there is a broad spirit of tolerance and curiosity among the diverse students of the DP years.[857]Although some feel disempowered or ostracized because of the way they express their faith, this is a very tiny minority of students.[858] On the whole, the array of religious representation is wide and sensed as adding to the cultural wealth of the community. However, is there an opportunity being missed to engage the potential unity between religious voices on issues of vital urgency? Mobilizing creatively for peace and on behalf of fragile ecosystems is a public good, a positive emergency response and a religious calling. The research in this section builds the case that religious communities of belonging need to find common ground and make common cause on issues of existential importance, on behalf of the relations that obtain between humanity, nature and the divine. Diversely religious community members could, by virtue of their shared religiosity, affirm this action as a necessary response to truth, since religion is properly cosmic in scope. This is a project that requires patient work, and a United World College is indeed an ideal place to practice it.

As an example of intercultural education for peace, the UWC movement could not be bettered and yet through a brief historical survey and overview, we can see that the relationship between the secular, intentionally diverse, learning community and its various explicit and implicit religious elements can be complex and delicate. Can we adopt an approach which incorporates the contemplative into education for peace in such a way as to do full justice to the various strands of religious philosophy which inform historical precedents of our intercultural educational model, while also doing justice to the much greater range of diversities who may find belonging in it? My analysis of pluralist theologies suggests that we can. Deconstructive critique, which is so important in

[856] Faith Abiodun, *UWC Schools and Expressions of Religious Identity*, interview by Benedict Clark, 2024, unpublished.

[857] This is not to say that there may not be instances of racism and discrimination on the basis of religion in the earlier year-groups and not to ignore the importance of addressing these issues with younger children too.

[858] Benedict Clark, Elena Borisova, and Steve Basaraba, "UWC Maastricht – UWC Values Survey" (unpublished internal survey, UWC Maastricht, 2021).

the intercultural setting, can be practiced without damage to sacred human values, and with some provisos, our *paideia* may safeguard the sources of nourishment from which these spring. With this hope in mind, I try to unlock some of the complex issues facing intercultural education for peace today in the final chapter.

Chapter Eight

Pluralist Theologies of Religions and a Pedagogy of Peace at UWC.

In this final chapter I treat the International College as, de facto, a spiritual community, looking for the points at which the discoveries of our theologians of religions intersect with those of my contemporary example of an intercultural pedagogy of peace. Pluralist theology has been accused of backing into an elitist clique of knowledgeable initiates,[859] and UWC is liable to the same kind of accusation. The struggle to acknowledge the universal and absolute and at the same time to do justice to the particular, presents a problem in the field of education as it does for intra/inter-religious dialogue. As we have seen, for example: is interaction framed by Western liberal, ideological motives? We are looking to the resources of pluralist theology for shared universals from which to cohere an intercultural pedagogy of peace. It has been argued throughout this essay that positive engagement with religious traditions is to be dared, and the wisdom of religious cultures shared; just as we must try to preserve elements of indigenous wisdom, this is an existential need. However, fundamental questions persist about freedom, responsibility and autonomy at the intersection of politics and religion in this highly complex intercultural space, all of which relate directly to the heuristic myth of peace.

This final chapter addresses these, acknowledging political realities (related to epistemology and curriculum), moral realities (relating to social dynamics and moral development), and spiritual realities (regarding spirituality in and for the movement and its institutions). We do this aware that the context creates a sharp division between worlds internal and external to the college. Peace at a UWC is something that must be instantiated and lived, exemplified through an extended community. At the same time, a UWC is a bubble which reflects the vision of a global culture, and thus, the democratic community to which it introduces its students is an imagined one, or one which is yet to come into being.

[859] e.g. by D'Costa, Lindbeck, Heim, Grifiths, Millbank

Section 1

8.1.1 Students as agents of change

Kurt Hahn's project took on the challenge to find William James' "moral equivalent of war" to build a peaceful mini-society[860] (perhaps a utopia) which nevertheless retains the primordial function of war as a social impulse, instilling in its members, all the best civic virtues. In contrast to Capitalist or Communist analyses of conflict and its resolution, James referred to war not as a question of economics but as a spiritual problem, a fundamental need, tied to the grand romance of human history; in other words, to our sense of personal and ultimate destiny. At the time that James was writing, war was about to take new form in the mechanized slaughter of the trenches. The ecological crisis has the same existential reach and is closer to us now than World Wars I&II. It is climate change that affords the 'equivalent' in our present age, and properly constitutes the apocalyptic myth of our time,[861] and it is, of course, the Global South which is disproportionately affected. Thus, Panikkar insisted that WWIII is already upon us, and urged that mankind needs to seek the appropriate myth to reset our relationship to each other, to nature and to God.

The warrior archetype, then, remains relevant, with students encouraged to embody the virtues of the watchman as self-efficacious agent of change. According to Dewey, it is "existential and social experience" scaffolded[862] by the institution, that grounds forms of democratic citizenship. To an exceptional degree, UWCs do include service learning, youth social entrepreneurship, frequent elections, student participation in school governance, peer mediation and peer support training, active debate and introduction to democratic practice. Student initiatives in service reach out to local communities, making transformational change.[863] UWCs are also the crucibles of innovative curriculum

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[860] van Oord, "Kurt Hahn's Moral Equivalent of War,".

[861] In 1977, Jimmy Carter addressed the American people with a prescient analysis of the oncoming 'energy crisis' which he declared would be decisive in testing the values of this still young nation. It would be, he said, "the moral equivalent of war." CBS News April 1977, see: CBS News, "From the Archives: Jimmy Carter's 'Moral Equivalent of War' Speech," *YouTube*, December 29, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHi9IcK3Dxw.

[862] Vygotsky informs this methodology on the basis of the theory: the zone of proximal development

[863] UWC International, "Life at UWC," *United World Colleges*, accessed November 30, 2025, https://uwc.org/life-at-uwc/.

development, such as the World Studies Extended Essay (2006), and have themselves created new school subjects at IB.[864] These innovations aim at creating opportunities for student agency of various kinds. Teachers invite students to engage at the metacognitive level by including them in the planning and decision-making processes of their own learning, giving them greater agency in relation to curriculum content. This gives the student considerable autonomy and means that expectations are secured by agreement and contract rather than by dictate.[865] Ultimately, such education is not skills oriented. Knowledge is not for skill, although skills, and the artful application of knowledge, are certainly a constant requirement. Knowledge in this case is first for self-efficacy. The shift in perspective requires the commitment of the community at large to cultural change; individual agency is a gift of community.

> *Self-efficacy* follows logically and psychologically from the experience of being accepted, recognised and appreciated. *Responsibility* (for tasks as well as for persons) follows from shared social action towards a common goal.[866]

Such agency is a quality of relationship. While students must find ways to organize politically, they must do so on the basis that they are mature enough to answer first to their own conscience and then form collectives with others recognizing individual commitments. While we try to bring the students into shared terms of rational and liberal dialogue, we must also embrace the divergence of ultimate horizons of meaning with patience, fostering mutual solidarities of the heart. Panikkar's *dialogical dialogue* reminds us to benefit from the liberative contribution of the outsider, the bearer of hope, often the marginalized speaker of another language.[867]

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[864] e.g. Human Rights, Global Politics and World Arts and Cultures, and most recently CP variants like the *Systems Transformation Pathway* at Atlantic College.

[865] A word of caution here might add that it also brings the danger that in some cases, students may lose the benefit of the teacher's experience and expertise when making consequential decisions. The relationship between the teacher and student is key.

[866] Edelstein and Krettenauer, "Citizenship and Democracy Education in a Diverse Europe," 391, with reference to Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1994).

[867] Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), and *An Awareness of What Is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010).

8.1.2 Decolonising curriculum

While the pedagogy of UWC (and the IB) purportedly invites students to develop engagement with theory, it is compromised by other considerations of curriculum at this level. The contributions of theological reflection, as I have illustrated, lie at the core of the programme,[868] where values and worldviews shape methodologies. A key question of decolonization is about how to sensitize students to de-legitimizing, and therefore dehumanizing, impacts of hegemonic cultures of reality. Panikkar's perspective is that "military disarmament requires cultural disarmament. We must disarm our respective cultures."[869] And that includes the use of reason as a weapon or as a tool of deception. It applies even to the notion of peace itself, as meaning-making myth: "Peace is polysemic… my notion of peace can be nonpeaceful for others."[870]

> Cultural disarmament …entails a criticism of culture, not only in the light of all the shortcoming of western culture, but also in the perspective of an intercultural framing of the question.[871]

Here he warns against the easy assumption that disowning elements of culture will effect reparation, without the radical change in perspective that provides for a future mutuality.

> The ideal of a global perspective - with well-intentioned slogans ("Think globally, act locally" etc.) is unconvincing ... a vestige of the diehard imperialistic habit of … uncritically extrapolating one's limited perspective into a global imperative that is supposed to suit everybody; the fit is never perfect, and the consequences can be devastating indeed.[872]

The Hahnian model of intercultural education does not stipulate 'global perspectives' and focuses, in fact, much more on the methodologies of actual contact in experiential education. When Panikkar proposes his term *open horizon* as preserving "the vitality of

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[868] The IB Core includes an extended essay project, service learning, creativity and action, and Theory of Knowledge components.

[869] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 19.

[870] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 21.

[871] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 20.

[872] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 13.

the trend towards unity and universality, but without closing it up in any single perspective"[873] it seems firmly in keeping with the UWC model and supportive of its intended cultural ethos. Although, typically of Panikkar, the *how* of this aspiration remains harder to define. There is some flexibility in the curricula of Languages, Humanities and Arts for the exploration of non-Western perspectives, and Theory of Knowledge can at times support a culture of meaningful dialogue to address injustices that post-colonial theorists find embedded in the forms of reason itself. *Logos*, as Panikkar says, is not enough. The paradigm towards which we gravitate brings us closer to Paulo Freire's vision of education as dialogical community in which curriculum must evolve with extraordinary flexibility to remain open to outsider voices; the excluded voice, from which comes the crucial insight, and which is, as a consequence, the source of hope.

> The total solidarity so long shunned by the elites now devolves upon the entire human race.[874]

8.1.3 Dealing with relativism

In response to pluralism, Lesslie Newbigin lists what he sees as the available responses to cultural difference:

> The first is simple rejection and putting up fences around the home ground. A second is surrender to the invader. A third is the struggle to reform the existing plausibility structure so that it can take account of the new insights brought by the invader. The fourth is pluralism: What is true for us may not be true for them. The third of these options is what a living culture will choose, the fourth I suggest is the sign of approaching death.[875]

The criticism conflates Pluralism and Relativism. It could be argued on the basis of the last chapter that both Hick and Panikkar are engaged on what Newbigin describes as the

[873] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 13.

[874] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 39.

[875] Lesslie Newbigin, "Religion for the Marketplace," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 135, https://archive.org/details/christianuniquen00dcos/page/n7/mode/2up.

third response to difference - that of accepting the challenge and opportunity to reform and include, and thereby to approach the truth. In the phrase "What is true for us may not be true for them," both the opposition of us and them, and the presumption that truths are inherently exclusive are suspect. Yet the demand that students distinguish between relativity and relativism can be a tall order indeed.[876]

While moral character education is a constant aim, it is clearly observed that "children cannot be taught character but rather 'catch' it from the adults around."[877] As for moral reasoning, it is an expected developmental phase that students will, as they grow out of the absolutist positions of early childhood enter phases or more or less completely relativistic outlooks on ethics.[878] However, it is the most despairing of all stances that adopts the apathy expressed in the voice of the absolute relativist. Young people[879] find it a little too easy to shrug off questions about motivation to political and social change in fatalist terms – 'we are all doomed anyway, humanity is finished, why should we care either way?' The anti-intellectualism of fascism holds iconoclastic appeal, especially for the young; it can feel like a losing battle. Absolute relativism is not relativity at all; it is merely willful ignorance in the guise of relativist language.

In theory, it is easy to counter relativism as an absolute epistemological position because it contradicts itself by making an absolute claim, but in practice the creative balance for the student is a delicate one to strike. It needs to be pointed out that acknowledging the radical relativity of the Universe does not entail absolute relativism as a value stance. To make the mistake of failing to acknowledge the pervasive interrelatedness of all facets of the universe is equally fatal as not acknowledging the need for absolute concepts (e.g. the Universe, Truth and Goodness). It is tempting, certainly, to resign from the clamour of the

[876] It could be helpful here to allude to Bhaskar's distinction between 'epistemic relativism' as describing the objective status of human knowledge - recalling the unknowns that encompass the possible knowns – and 'judgmental relativism' which arbitrarily prejudges all claims or statements of value to be equally valid. David Corson, "Bhaskar's Critical Realism and Educational Knowledge," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 12, no. 2 (1991): 223, https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569910120206

[877] Maurice J. Elias, Amy Kranzler, Sarah J. Parker, V. Megan Kash, and Roger P. Weissberg, "The Complementary Perspectives of Social and Emotional Learning, Moral Education, and Character Education," in *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, ed. Larry Nucci and Tobias Krettenauer (New York: Informa, 2015), 284, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203114896.ch16.

[878] Anne Colby, "Fostering the Moral and Civic Development of College Students," in *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, ed. Larry Nucci and Tobias Krettenauer (New York: Informa, 2015), 373, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203114896.ch16.

[879] (especially young men?)

competing truth claims of apparently equally intractable and illogical religious positions, but the risk is that the disaffected student, by absolutizing relativism, then misses out on the positive potentials for values formation, empathetic emotional development, integration of knowledge, and a sense of belonging; the positives of faith community.

Section 2

The ideological battle is, for Panikkar, against the emergent techno-oligarchy of the information economy most pointedly. Panikkar observes the distinction between culture and technology - all culture is craft, is *techne*, but modern technological proliferation under the myth of progress acts, he says, tragically, as a trojan horse by which indigenous cultures may be subverted, converting to technocracy with fatal inevitability and temporal acceleration. There is no shortage of examples of the economic, social and epistemic dominance of technology: one very close to home is that we now have the proposed panacaea of so-called "solutionary (*sic*) thinking" in Education. This latest soundbyte in curriculum design vaguely indicates a problem-solving attitude, while directing itself at nothing in particular. Panikkar might respond: "This is the technocratic mentality: to look for solutions without ever going to the causes"[880] But furthermore, of course, the solutions offered by such thinking inevitably serve the interests of particular groups who define the problems, i.e. the already powerful. Technocracy is fundamentally at odds with the religious view we have been elaborating with reference to our theologians. Panikkar lists the ways this is so, in nine statements, of which it will suffice to quote two here. 1. That "technocracy is founded on a nominalistic view of reality" and 2. that "it presupposes that matter has no life."[881] According to the cosmovision of Panikkar, of course, matter matters, and indeed, shares the life we breathe.

In this way Panikkar goes further than Hick in his critique of "the prevailing taboo of modern science." Hick, the legal mind, has done what he could to keep science on side, Panikkar, the scientist, insists that the contemporary status and roles of science are a distortion of its proper spirit and action. "Knowledge is union, compenetration… knowledge entails joy because it is salvation…it opens out to the very confines of the

[880] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 98.

[881] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 85.

universe."[882] Science no longer represents knowledge in the full sense of the word, which would involve gnosis, love and joy integrally and by definition, and has reduced itself to instrumental means but also, fatally, arrogated to itself, via technocracy, an eschatological role as absolute judge "outside science is no salvation."[883]

> This poses humanity a fundamental option, which, for all its vagueness and difficulty, is nonetheless transcendental. Shall we have a technocratic regime on a planetary, indeed solar, scale, or shall we integrate ourselves once more into the rhythms of the earth and even the sun? Shall we choose acceleration or rhythm?[884]

8.2 Sex, gender and moral development

As an alternative to the warrior archetype lauded by William James, Panikkar has suggested invoking the archetype of the monk, but it is fully acknowledged that a detailed comparative examination of the two might render plausible and useful insights into the framing of 'civic virtue' and therefore of citizenship education. A problem with the warrior archetype is the masculinity of the values it enshrines. For all these virtues may be good, they are not enough, and their application to a new paradigm, in the context of a new mythology, requires that virtue ethics[885] take an ever more nuanced view of the moral formation of character, including in scope the divergences we begin to appreciate between the emotional and intellectual development of boys and girls. Paternalistic politics and the legacies of patriarchy are also brought into question as a paradigm shift in our time. There is a concerted move to redress the balance in education today and to serve the underprivileged demographic of girls in education. We now have a situation where UWCs are made up of a majority of female students, on average seventy percent are girls.

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[882] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 87.

[883] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 87.

[884] Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament*, 84. Note the opposition of acceleration and rhythm, which is exactly carried forward in the message of Hartmut Rosa's theory of social acceleration; see Hartmut Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality* (Malmögade, Denmark: NSU Press, 2013).

[885] Even the term *virtue* embodies the suggestion of equivalence between the ideal of the good and male virility.

There is a difference between girls and boys when it comes to felt access to these principles moral development, and even desire is differently configured for each. Hope must be restored differently in each case too: Carol Gilligan's model of female moral development diverges in its care paradigm from the justice paradigm of Kohlberg's more famous (boys) model. The relationship between freedom and desire needs more careful and thorough elaboration in a way that respects yet bridges gendered trajectories of moral development. Professor Fiona Ellis[886] is working at Roehampton University with John Cottingham at the time of writing, to develop the thesis that desire, which defines the human condition, is actually desire for the divine, an original theological approach that also in some ways intersects with Gayatri Spivak's notion of the direction of desire as the unconscious shaper of identity.[887] Fiona Ellis sees desire as an amorphous longing that has its origin and object in God and which is therefore the key to liberation if rightly directed. This suggests that there might be an authenticity of selfhood to be accessed through desire, but only through a process of spiritual direction of desire towards its divine source and object. It is presumptuous to suggest that there lies here a way towards the radical transformation of desire that would constitute healing re-formation of identity in the postcolonial context. However, I suggest that her interest aligns with the perspective that authentic selfhood is to be found in the de-centering of the subject, and in the context of selfless service. The postcolonial critique, regarding the self as inherently wounded and ambivalent and operating within a secular, and often atheistic, paradigm would suspect her claim because it raises the specter of the absolute self of the enlightenment, that is precisely the object of their critique, perpetuating colonial versions of salvation. The turn to God here demands a singularly determined act of faith when you consider the depth and pervasiveness of the disruption caused by the distortion of desire by colonial subjugation or other forms of psychological abuse. Indeed, the notion of the transcendent source and object of desire might be viewed as a Western Christian fantasy. However, Ellis' approach promises to contribute to a less gender-biased theology and might constitute a therapeutic model, one which draws attention to the mimetic nature of desire, helping to liberate young people from misdirected desire, giving them hope and even a joyful detachment. Kurt Hahn, it is reported, had a deep distrust of psychotherapy in

[886] Fiona Ellis, "Desire for God Is Human Nature," *Templeton Religion Trust*, 2025, https://templetonreligiontrust.org/explore/desire-for-god-is-human-nature/

[887] Ellis, "Desire for God Is Human Nature."

education[888] nevertheless I include this contemporary articulation of a trans-religious psycho-theology of desire because, by offering a means of instilling peace in the embattled individual whose desires are constantly being shaped by extrinsic forces, it may inform the pedagogy of intercultural encounter and peace.

Young men are the specific targets for marketing of far-right political organisations. Political factions defined according to exclusionary religious postures, misogynist sloganeering and the identification of masculinity with glamorous technology and aggressive consumerism fill the visual feeding bowls of boys as young as 11 or 12. The offering of our theologians in this situation is to restore the dignity of the human qua human and to restore the status of knowledge encouraging a perspective that is not driven by anxiety. Modelling masculinity for young men requires demonstrating a 'minimal moral integrity'[889] However, enabling young minds to think through the options themselves is also necessary. At an early stage of development, Hick's pragmatic, ethical and engaged approach promises greatly for young philosophers. And as soon as someone engages with the question of knowledge as faith, with questions of what they put their faith in and why, their conscience is awakened. Thus, we might suggest that engagement with theories of knowledge and interpretation that undergird Hick's Pluralist hypothesis might be especially appropriate for the instruction of young boys. A more caring paradigm and a more involved philosophical approach characterise the work of Raimon Panikkar whose philosophy should be studied as a matter of urgency for the many questions it raises and the breadth of intercultural reference it draws on. In an increasingly non-binary context, Panikkar's approach to spirituality and religions may nurture the development of those at the margins of a binary world.

Section 3

8.3.1 Decolonising UWC

Panikkar's concern for 'Cultural Disarmament' implies that culture itself is weaponized. However, the aim to decolonize institutions and guiding myths of culture, is fraught with the perils of misinterpretation. Complexities multiply and suspicions deepen; is this an

[888] Sutcliffe, Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges, 64.

[889] Noam Chomsky, *On Afghanistan*, interview by Tim Sebastian, *Chomsky.info*, 2002, https://chomsky.info/20020227/

inevitable consequence of interculturalism? For example, nationalism is written in to the charter of UWC in the form of Internationalism, and there is a sense in which each student in the Diploma years becomes a de facto representative of their regional identity. The question then arises whether, as we try to address prejudice, national identities so combined exacerbate issues of racism or classism. A brief review of some of the history of racism reveals layers of irony and complexity. In the first place, as Anderson points out, racism does not descend in any inevitable sense from nationalism. According to him,

> The dreams of racism actually have their origins in the ideologies of class, rather than in those of nation: above all in claims to divinity among rulers and to blue or white blood and breeding among aristocracies.[890]

…of which he sees the doctrines of the Nazis as a vulgarization. The English education imposed in Bengal by the East India Company described by Thomas Babington Macauly in his *Minute on Education* 1835 would create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect." And in 1836

> "No Hindu who has received an English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. It is my firm belief (so they always were) that if our plans of education are followed up there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence."[891]

But nationalism also entailed the creation of deliberately impotent or insignificant sectors of the population in terms of education and democracy – the *gastarbeiter* from British Malaya, Netherlands' New Batavia, Turks in Germany and of course the trans-Atlantic slave population. Thus, perhaps we might suggest that UWC re-cast its own identity to centre the focus on interculturalism rather than internationalism. Meanwhile, those disenfranchised populations have since become the immigrant political voice. The class of those alienated from their parent cultures and disempowered in their adoptive ones, the third culture, the post-colonial. In schools, the liberation narratives of the bible were reinforced by those that told the patriotic stories of the struggle of emergent European

[890] Anderson, Imagined Communities, 149.

[891] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 91, citing Donald Eugene Smith quoting Thomas Babington Macaulay.

nations against Imperial domination. Thus colonial education often inadvertently informed and empowered subsequent struggles for independence. Although the famous case of Christian abolitionists among the missionaries of the 'New World' demonstrates that the project of education in the colonial era was always ambivalent and that although education worked to feed the machine of colonial bureaucracy, its inherent values were progressively prioritising the rights and prospects of free individuals. The notion of freedom here may be problematized in the post-colonial context. It existed to break the ties between individuals and their parent cultures,[892] yet it hoped to provide "a politically reliable, grateful and acculturated indigenous elite"[893] who would in many ways exemplify the ideal of responsible autonomy. While it remains a task to think through the possibilities for freedom after such distortions of culture have been inflicted, in some cases the missionary/educational codification and preservation of indigenous languages is remembered as the gift of an indigenous print-language by which a generation could become the first nationalists.[894] Thus,

> the key spokesmen for colonial nationalism, were lonely, bilingual intelligentsias unattached to sturdy local bourgeoisies.[895]

Such ambivalence in the historical context of international education should alert us to the complexities and ironies that proliferate around the project to de-couple the UWC movement from Eurocentric mindsets and the monocultural tendencies of globalization. Again, we might suggest that it is the interaction between cultures rather than nations that reflects the actual work of UWC communities. There is no doubt a singular responsibility for the UWC teacher to fulfill the aims of the mission and to honour the diversity of the students. As we have seen, part of this is to exemplify the character of hospitality in relations, which is the same as extending trust to the students. Here Hick's principle of *critical trust* can be applied as a rule. It is rather like Eric Fromm's *good enough parent* –

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[892] Anderson cites the renovated pagoda schools established by French colonisers to reorient the Khmer away from identification with Siam towards modern Indochina; see Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 91, citing Donald Eugene Smith quoting Thomas Babington Macaulay.

[893] Anderson, Imagined Communities, 126.

[894] Examples that might be cited include the haphazard emergence of the Indonesian language, or fiscal German and Ottoman in the Habsburg context; see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 133. In India, Tamil in Tranquebar and Khasi in Meghalaya, Northern Assam, provide further illustration.

[895] Anderson, Imagined Communities, 140.

to provide, in the words of UWC policy, "the reassuring presence of an adult",[896] while extending a great degree of autonomy and responsibility to students, even where this entails an element of risk. The even greater extension of faith would be to acknowledge, as Panikkar does, the unknown quality of the emergent realities of the young.

> we are undergoing a profound cosmological change in the self-understanding of the various cultures, which vouches for my suspicion that we are assisting at a mutation in human consciousness, for which I would like to use the codeword of secularity.[897]

It is students themselves who take the reins of the reinvention of culture and I am suggesting that this is best served by their being invited to take part as theorists and imaginative, creative contributors in that task.

8.3.2 Intercultural spirituality

Paradoxical as it might seem, engagement in dialogue with those from other religious traditions, as we have argued, leads to a deepening appreciation of the resonances of one's own formative traditions. This is a peace-making process that should be integral to the pedagogy of an intercultural college. A related issue is the question of whether an intercultural spirituality might support such communities in transition. To this question Theology of Religions has many contributions to make, and this study has aimed to elucidate some of these. The situation of a multicultural college at a time of global conflict is a particular moment of opportunity for the emergence of something that might be called an intercultural spirituality. This is because the context of common ultimate concern is the key to the shared sacred space. There are other key factors at work here. The field of *ultimate concern* is actually a field of very immediate and personal concern, albeit one that intersects with, or is mirrored in, questions of global or even universal reach. Conflict resolution, while it may impact families, tribes or nations far away, really concerns the relationships that someone is able or unable to establish in their immediate sphere. In any case, the 'spiritual work' is to realise that personal vulnerability is not incidental to these conversations; it is a condition of them.

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[896] UWC International, "Educational Model," *United World Colleges*, accessed November 30, 2025, https://uwc.org/educational-model/ under how do we achieve this?

[897] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 62.

The liminal third space where we are not inside a religious frame, but nor do we exclude the religious perspective is a sensitive but important space to hold. It is a space that acknowledges the depth of inculturation around particular values and also a psychological and social space of initiation. Here is the indispensable location of cultural experience that is transformative. These third spaces are more available to students who are resident together at the colleges and especially to those who attend the isolated two-year colleges where interdependence between students is reinforced by every aspect of their living situation. An example of this kind of space is student-facilitated interreligious dialogue. At UWCM,[898] a carefully curated scriptural reasoning and story-sharing between Islam and Christianity was recently conducted by some determined students. Framed as a *non-debate*, this took the form of a series of readings on the birth of Jesus Christ and dialogues on themes of faith, perseverance, miracles and love. It had been initiated by the Islamic society and was warmly taken up by the Christian society. It was conducted with generosity and intent listening by an articulate panel of students, on their own initiative. This is the point. It is not only in abstract terms that religions display family resemblances but in the actual sharing of faith stories of the struggles and joys of navigating spiritual growth that a sense of real kinship emerges.

Intentional third spaces are also fruitful for the development of theories of change and cultural interaction which may generate shared imagined futures, to be actualised together in time. Listening to each other and trying to access a 'heart layer of connection' begins with sharing hopes and expectations and then progressing to sharing some personal stories (sometimes family stories). This is the work of the hidden curriculum, and it is spiritual work. It was the approach of Martin Cadee[899] who was invited to be that outside ear who could attend to the pain of the community dealing with the effects of contemporary wars, especially Israel's divisive bombardment and siege of Gaza. The therapy took the form of a series of isolated conversations with Palestinian and Israeli students, and employed a 'Fourth mode of Listening'[900] approach both from the facilitator and from the students to bring the two groups together. Education for peace in times of

[898] United World College, Maastricht.

[899] Cf. Martin Cadee, "Courageous Spaces for Real Connection & Transformation," accessed October 2, 2023, https://martincadee.mystrikingly.com.

[900] He references Otto Scharmer (MIT) who navigates a journey towards re-imagining divided communities.

war, needs to enable forgiveness and reconciliation. By any realistic pedagogical measures, this means that teachers must be models of these values themselves.

8.3.3 A pedagogy of contemplation

Finally, as I have referred to the thought of Simone Weil, Iris Murdoch and Iain McGilchrist on the quality of attention as embodying the good, so the theological perspectives we have explored make the case for the contemplative as an indispensable and transformative dimension of human experience and schooling. Weil believed education should seek to produce saints and geniuses,[901] for the world is in need of both. Although less focused on education as schooling, pluralist theologies focus on religion as processes for the transformation of the human individual. The aim to humanize is one that applies throughout the community equally to students, teachers, support workers, administrators and the wider community and it is one that cannot be fully realized without silence and contemplation. It is easily forgotten when a strong emphasis is put on action, when busyness becomes the motor of an institution and academic skills the measure of achievement. Panikkar stresses that contemplation is not to be understood as the opposite of action, but on the contrary as the source of action at its best:

> Thinking leads to intellection... you think of something and then finally you may understand. Contrariwise, contemplation leads to action.[902]

Panikkar points out that "Contemplation is the integration of theory and praxis"[903]and healing, "the best of all remedies."[904] Again, this emphasizes authenticity and harmonious being as the integration that engenders the conditions of peace. We have argued that such a pedagogy requires a contemplative practice at its core, and as Kurt Hahn did, affirming that outward boundness is first an inward practice.

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[901] Simone Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God," in *Waiting on God* (London: Collins, 1965 [1950]).

[902] Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, 98.

[903] Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament, 14.

[904] Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament,* 14. (makes reference to the advice of Marpa to the peerless Milarepa)

> Neither the love of man nor the love of God can take root in a child that does not know aloneness… habits of prayer are vital.[905]

The concept of the liminal makes a reappearance here as the psychological borderland of prayer. If we understand prayer as both a form of attention and also of sensed relationship we can interpret the act of prayer as preparation for encounter - a set apart and sacred realignment that will condition the encounter with reality that will follow. In the context of the liminal and relational zone of the pluralist intracultural community, prayer takes on an important role as the preparation of de-centering the subject, for listening relationship. And the particularity of this intercultural context gives prayer a singular purposefulness. The leisure implied by the original meaning of the term Σχωλη is rightly interpreted in these terms, as the scope for the contemplative to inform intellectual and active approaches to understanding – the process of assimilation which can overleap difference. Panikkar proposes that "to assimilate culturally the spiritual universes that Africa, Oceania, South-East Asia open up for us."[906] The practice of attention and prayer are not incidental or extra to curriculum and the concerns of the contemporary educational environment, they are key to the UWC mission for transformative learning and to the process of intercultural understanding. They are the source of our understanding of peace.

In Hick's writing, the contemplative aspect appears perhaps most markedly in reference to the sense of the numinous. The cultural mediation of transcendent experience resonates with his pluralist hypothesis. Thus even with the cerebral Hick, contemplation which seeks insight, understanding and empathy may be the first basis of analysis.

> In our times when a dry theology seems to have reserved for herself the right to talk about God, the role of aesthetics in uncovering the divine dimension is paramount. Every artist knows, or rather feels it - whereby we should stress that true knowledge is also sensible and authentic sentiment is intelligent.[907]

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[905] Kurt Hahn, sermon, December 22, 1940, quoted in David Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures* (Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2012), 136.

[906] Panikkar, The Cosmotheandric Experience, 24.

[907] Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, 244.

There is an intuitive unity to the concepts truth and goodness. That is not to say that such eternal values might not also evolve in human terms inasmuch as we are able to realise them, or different aspects of them. Iris Murdoch is sure that this task is never complete, yet it is one that artists must set themselves. Art at its best is ennobling. Why? Because beauty reflects a spiritual instinct for "unpossessive contemplation," "the enjoyment of art is a training in the love of virtue."[908] Thus, according to Murdoch, a metaphysical reality is evidenced in the artefacts of culture, or rather in the way we are invited to contemplate them. Even if we do not share her Platonism, it is easy to appreciate, however, that contemplating the artefacts of culture engages the subjective in ways that inform and add value – the disciplines of 'thick description', poetic resonance, and then beyond language as well - exploration as an outward bound engagement of wonder, a re-enchantment of learning. In pedagogical terms, the appreciation of beauty is the shared space in which the harmonisation of diverse perspectives may take place, and appreciation of beauty provides profound insight not only into the object and its context, but into the subjectivity of the observer too. The Arts make a central and indispensable bridge, providing the contemplative third spaces in which the individual may be themselves, as it were alone, at the same time as in the presence of others, which affirms their sense of self and self-acceptance. The aesthetic experience may be shared spiritual experience and a moment of communion.

Concluding thoughts - Intercultural Practices for Educators and Students

An intercultural education for peace requires that the institution, and in this case the movement as a whole, recognise its own positionality in the broader category of International Education. This means reflecting on the past, re-appropriating and re-inventing as required to address historic misconceptions, injustices or changing circumstances, as the post-War, Christian pedagogical vision of Kurt Hahn is distilled through the lessons of a further four generations of international education research and development. Furthermore, this requires acknowledgment of the political implications of values professed and methodologies adopted by this model. While the process of intercultural education reserves a kind of neutrality, the mission of UWC is not politically neutral. Simply put, the aim to *unite across cultures for peace and a sustainable future* entails a vision of human thriving that is, apparently, not shared by a majority political

[908] Murdoch, The Sovereignty of Good, 86.

faction today. Thus, the vision and mission of UWC needs constant re-articulation, review, consolidation and defense. Furthermore, the pedagogical method that aims to enlist the student as theorist and active contributor, is one that supports the political activism of students on behalf of a certain spectrum of views within the overall integrity of its vision of justice and peace. When such activism runs counter to the prevailing politics, the colleges are, and must be, complicit in a degree of legitimate subversion.

In part three I recommended thinking of education in terms of hospitality, de-centering the subject, and in part four, I have explored the idea to conceive of virtue, of persons and their freedom amid conditioned reality, in terms of the re-directing of desire, deepening our engagement with Hick through the lens of feminist theologies and theories of education. Panikkar points out that contemporary spiritualities aim for the coincidence of transcendence and immanence, subjective and objective, and other supposed *coincidentiae oppositorum*. I have applied his vision of Being as dialectical rhythm reflecting a transcendent third, the presence of the Spirit. This offers a way to work with a sense of the sacred amid the secular and to direct desires to divine sources, and towards chosen, imagined futures. Especially if we define peace in terms of restoring balance as religiously conceived (i.e. cosmic harmony) these categories hold potential as a conceptual framework for future research. Trinitarian and process thinking help discern the experience of a just balance. It is hoped that such an approach may give access to the liberating narratives of religions as they lend insight, nuance and colour to the question of reality and then the values that spring from that, human dignity, and the dignity of the planet. Methodologies of this approach become opportunities for the encounter with, and experience of, Spirit.

In the freedom that this approach aims to protect, lies its political contribution since it affirms that a person, rather than entirely culturally determined, is a participating co-creator in their experience and identity

> The self is therefore not caught in a static text but is, rather, a living human document participating in a dynamic hermeneutic spiral[909]

[909] Rachel Sophia Baard, "Original Grace, Not Destructive Grace: A Feminist Appropriation of Paul Tillich's Notion of Acceptance," *The Journal of Religion* 87, no. 3 (2007): 425, quoting David Tracy, "Lindbeck's New Program for Theology: A Reflection," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 49, no. 3 (1985): 460–72, https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.1985.0020

An ontology of participation calls for re-shaping our ideas of secularity and of human rights. Coherent meaning-making across the sectors of our total experience and modes of enquiry is not a matter of enrichment so much as emergency. Areas habitually relegated to enrichment in schools are not inessentials but should be the core of refreshed curriculum which seeks to facilitate sacred space. Arts practice and appreciation, as we have argued, may be essential to realising any of the insights coming from the field of comparative theology/intercultural spirituality. Where the aesthetic space permits of opening private experience into shared experience, it fulfills a role of religion in the intercultural environment. It is a dangerous space, relying on mutual vulnerabilities, it is the analogue of disarmament – cultural disarmament as Panikkar has described. Therefore, safeguarding is the primary concern here and attention to the process and the forms of performative enactions is essential. Likewise, while there are opportunities for students to take part in mock trials and debates or to model interactions at the UN, which encourage debate over real-life issues, in some cases the opportunity to learn the protocols and potentials of the citizen's assembly, and to engage with grass roots issues at home is less accessible. This requires eliciting participation from sometimes apathetic or disengaged subsections of the community – day students at a residential college for example, overworked teachers, busy parents or distant administrators. Where there is broad commitment to the voices involved, such citizen's assemblies might awaken the political conscience of students through issue-based interaction and referendum. These are one example of what we have been suggesting as spirited forums of encounter with existential questions and spaces of authentic presence, they are a way for the community to acknowledge political context and defend agreed values. Another way to answer the call to a sacred duty of witness to peace.

CONCLUSION

> There are only two educational principles, example and love.[910]

This investigation led us quite a long way towards articulating methodologies of interreligious dialogue and collaborative theology that reflect what I have called religious ways of being in the world. I have suggested that collaborative hermeneutic development around the mythological metanarratives of culture is essential, not with an intention to de-bunk, but rather to recognize what is worthy, for their potentials in application to real-life problems and also simply to appreciate their beauty, which is its own reward. In the sphere of pedagogy, I have gone beyond discussing religious instruction as part of civic literacy to acknowledge the integral role of theology in shaping institutions, constructing disciplines, framing values and inspiring collectives.

The essay started with John Hick's robust Christian pluralism and that remains an important influence today. I may have gone too far with Panikkar and marginalized Hick by the end. This is perhaps because there was more to say, and more complexity to unravel with Panikkar, but it was also because Panikkar's theology comes across as more coherently and consistently environmentally aware. He goes further in recognizing the apocalyptic seriousness of climate change and the fraught complexity of post-colonial multiculturalism which are problems that have grown to occupy more of the horizon since their time.

The United World College movement, it is acknowledged, represents only one model of many, and proliferating, possible contexts. There is a need to examine the status of the ideal of peace to which education in the intercultural society commits itself. It has also been a concern to see what type of religiosity is appropriate to such a context and to make recommendations about that. Pluralists agree that a theology which centers love and mutuality, connectedness, harmony, service, self-sacrifice, communion is not an exclusively Christian theology. Seeing the entire ecological context as an other to be

[910] Stekel's dictum cited in Richard Farrow, "The Early History of Sex Education 1890–1930" (master's thesis, University of Sydney, 1980), iv, https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/handle/2123/4037/The%20Early%20History%20of%20Sex%20Education%201890-1930.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

welcomed and accommodated is a perspective I have only begun to touch on in this study. The common good expressed by the mission of UWC, as "Peace and a sustainable future" might coherently intend 'common' in the widest ecological terms as peace (harmony) at all levels of life. Towards a pedagogy of peace, I have noted the internal coherence of non-violent forms of political action, the inclusive hospitality we can derive from relational ontologies of the human person, and the consistency with these of care for ecosystems, in terms of holistic wellbeing. This was extended to clarify what I mean by *authentic being in relation* and the development of the *autonomous moral agent*.

I have pursued here the theoretical positions of two theologians of religions as regards religious diversity. The essence is the problem of the one and the many. Pursuing this line of inquiry has led to a focus on the relational ontology of Panikkar and its application in the multicultural context of UWC experience. Whereas Hick saw religions coexisting in a liberal secular sphere and exploring meeting points and mutual enlightenments, Panikkar precipitated a convergence of the rivers of religions in a cosmovision defined by trinitarian vision. Attempting to harmonise the perspectives of Panikkar and Hick, what I have tried to argue and exemplify here is also that we need not so much a Comparative, as a Collaborative Theology - a theology in movement;[911] theological examples of the dialogue between religious value systems creating, "not a static, intellectual, but an interactive pluralism, in which differences can at once be recognized and overcome, without loss of identity but with considerable gain in plausibility."[912] "A theology of reconciliation and friendship is a theology shared by both parties whether they be of the same religion or a different one."[913]

The way that pluralist theologies center the heuristic ideal of peace has the potential to transform aspects of curriculum, especially in approaches to ultimate questions in the classroom, in how to study religions and in traversing disciplinary borders. In the pastoral life of institutions, we have seen that interreligious approaches have the potential to

[911] As proposed by John D'Arcy May: see D'Arcy May, *Pluralism & Peace*.

[912] D'Arcy May, *Pluralism & Peace*, 165–66.

[913] D'Arcy May, *Pluralism & Peace*, 167.

contribute to conflict resolution, offering articulate sources of hope, providing therapeutic forms of dialogue and facilitating convergence of communities of mission.

Despite the many ways in which as twentieth century Christian pluralists committed to peace and intercultural understanding, agree, my attempt to resolve differences between the philosophy of Hick and the mysticism of Panikkar is an attempt to "harmonise impossibles".[914] I have traced the Anglo/American positivist influence on Hick and the Continental hermeneuticist one on Panikkar, the impacts of German Idealism on them both, and the ways their positions developed. I went on to contrast the anthropomorphic language of Hick's Irenaean with Panikkar's apophatic eschatology, in order to ask other ultimate questions, this time about suffering – why do we suffer? Why do we cause others to suffer? Can we feel the suffering of others? and what motivates us to respond adequately or inadequately? Bound into complex, essentially theological worldviews, both philosophers adapted over the course of their lives to include theoretical counterbalances that could restore ethics and mercy to the preeminent place in their theology. The contribution of critical studies reveals how deeply the aim of achieving solidarity with the oppressed challenges received culture and knowledge. And so the last *ultimate* question was that of achieving the elusive ideal of 'universal solidarity.'[915] This idea constitutes an analogue of peace, and the question relates absolutely to the case study of intercultural education for peace, on which I focused the final chapters. In some ways, then, Peace and Interculturalism have been asserted with more definition as the guiding context and vision of these theologies, as they encounter education for peace in the UWC movement.

In the following ways, Pluralist Theologies of Religions contribute to our understanding of the religious dimensions of intercultural education for peace. In the first place, by defining peace as the trans-religious myth, the ideal of secularity, they affirm peace as a transcendent reality and, in consequence, as the original face of humanity. The comparison between Hick and Panikkar reveals that acknowledging the Real involves a quality of attention that reflects harmonization with a higher self, with a spirit of hope, an identification that instills a sense of authentic being in relation. By problematizing the

[914] Raimon Panikkar, Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics, 440.

[915] Again, this is Bhaskar's term.

definition of religion, they have also sensitized us to the implicitly religious elements of institutional and community life. If we accept that 'religion' does not indicate a separate activity so much as a quality of relation, then they have much to offer about conflict resolution, deriving modes of non-intrusive interaction from the practice of interreligious dialogue.[916]

There are elements of Hick's pluralist hypothesis which appeal, and we are particularly in debt to him for the theological, trans-cultural interpretation of religion as a turn to the Real, and for his defense of scientific and religious discourse as complimentary to one another. Hick's basic identification of attention as the primary virtue leading to the good, 'the good life,' means checking selfishness in the interests of seeing the real.[917] It is a contemplative virtue, graced, and also an active mode of service. The metaphysical reasoning traverses religious traditions and academic disciplines, and situates ethics as first philosophy. There are, though, limitations with Hick's model in relation to marginalized voices and to the Protestant framing of some of his key concepts. The turn to the real reflects the Kantian rational moral agent, an empowered and autonomous self that much education for global democratic citizenship aims to produce. Post-colonial critical studies, however, reveal the power bases that inform such an agent are not all transcendental, and not always pure, and that agency is framed by appropriation of narratives of identity.[918] This is a factor that the framework of Hick's phenomenological interpretation of religion sidesteps, thus, perhaps, failing to do full justice to diverse particularities; except inasmuch as he sees the self as constituted in service, which is a crucial, relational insight. Panikkar on the other hand, does acknowledge these difficulties in respect to diversity as an ontological given. To some extent, where we might take issue with the entire pluralist project along these lines, Panikkar offers viable alternatives. Similarly to Hick, he acknowledges that the fiduciary nature of knowledge demands of us an epistemic humility that can traverse disciplines and keep faith with others' knowing what we do not. But the difference is that, according to Panikkar's metaphysical epistemology, to know is to become the thing known; knowledge is identification.

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[916] This is ironic when you think of the record of religious schools on this issue of safeguarding.

[917] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1980 [1970]), 65.

[918] Rachel Sophia Baard, "Original Grace, Not Destructive Grace: A Feminist Appropriation of Paul Tillich's Notion of Acceptance," *The Journal of Religion* 87, no. 3 (2007): 411–34, at 424, referring to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, https://doi.org/10.1086/516741.

Individual identities, therefore, in this view, are always fluid to some degree and also polyvalent according to context. The way to understand Buddhism, according to Panikkar, is to be a Buddhist. Metaphysical speculation, and intercultural dialogue, therefore, are to be undertaken in terms defined by existential concern and risk. Grappling with *sunyata* and *advaita*, he frames the *self* as non-self-existent, however, the *person* as cosmically ordained, *ontonomic*, *Christophanic* when fully realized: "Then shall I know even as I am known."[919] Conversion, according to this non-dual emphasis, is an ongoing ontological mutual transformation.

I have brought these criteria to a meeting, in the pedagogy of peace, which ideal is the apogee of Kant's vision, an eschatological true north, a way to define moral responsibility in the global village. In terms of Panikkar's metaphysics, Peace is the primal identity that creates difference, the harmonic tension between poles. The question was whether these pluralist theologies present us with complimentary or contradictory metaphysics, and whether their metaphysics offers any scope for our taking the interreligious dialogue as analogue of hope for peace education. Panikkar calls us into the triangulating presence of a third – this might be the voice of science, the majesty of the cosmos, or the presence of the divine. I draw the conclusion that it is in the practice of certain attitudes and virtues embodying such presence that the intercultural learning community may become exemplary of an intercultural witness to peace. It is a specifically UWC vocation and therefore spirituality, to bear witness to such a harmony. Simply put, the argument of this thesis has been that Outward Bound education is complemented by an inward turn. While countering the methods and fantastic allures of fascism requires training in the vigilant virtues of the warrior, the spirit of truth and the wisdom of discernment equally need nurture throughout intercultural communities of learning.

Education is always situated and engaged in the production of certain explicit social impacts (whether this be uplifiting the poor, empowering the girl, enhancing economies, or creating leaders for change) therefore, the potential is there for diverse religious orientations to coalesce around such missions, which provides an opportunity for cross-fertilization of theological perspectives and constant enhancement in the articulation and

[919] I Corinthians 13:12; see *The KJV Study Bible* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2011).

delivery of the mission itself.[920] Social studies and critical studies approaches call in to question the integrity of the lived practice of layered communities making up a school, revealing the college as a political entity that must, at times, collectively defend intercultural education from prevailing political winds. Academic institutions inhabit an uneasy position between the quest for true knowledge, and the utility of knowledge as serving the interests of the parties which support them. For schools, those 'stakeholders' include most notably the parents of students. United World Colleges are not exempt in this respect. Fostering listening virtues is something that depends on the whole community's apprehension of the need of the hour. Commitment to humanising convictions and the inward turn of outward bound education promote universal solidarity along with the paradigm of care/hospitality as a priority in the expression of mission values.

The context on the ground is always more complex than the theory can accommodate. We have not had time to address the vexed present-day question of AI in education, for example, or social media's impacts on the young. But perhaps the integrated, relational approach suggested here may contribute along the lines that a public digital theology needs first to "consider the interdependency of connectivity and reflexivity"[921] This theme, which has been highlighted here in relation to forming personal conscience and self-efficacy, is one that has been left predominately in the field of theory, yet has possibilities when reflecting on all the constitutive relations of a young person's development. This, like other projects that appeared along the course of this research, proved too ambitious to fully clarify within its scope. They remain pointers for future research.

There was not the scope, either, to treat of Bhaskar's transcendental dialectics: *meta-reality*; although it was a finding of this study that his non-dual metaphysics may be the maturation of critical realism in spiritual terms. Bhaskar works out a very powerful

[920] An example is the recent study of attitudes to the religious framing of learning institutions among teachers of different faiths conducted among the Salesian schools in Tamil Nadu. Francis-Vincent Anthony and Antony Christy Lourdunathan, "Public Religious Pedagogy amidst Religious Pluralism: Qualitative Study among Hindu and Muslim Educators in Salesian Institutions of Tamil Nadu, India," *Religions* 16, no. 5 (2025): 646. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16050646

[921] Anthony and Lourdunathan, "Public Religious Pedagogy amidst Religious Pluralism." who cite (Simojiki 2019)

interreligious metaphysics which, at the same time as providing a theoretical underscore for intercultural education also offers incentives for collaborative theology, resolving the conflicts between the two pluralist metaphysical positions described here. This suggests that intercultural education is already a well-directed framework for the emergence and development of the best potentials of the interdependent, autonomous moral agent who is capable of realising her/his/their destiny (salvation, enlightenment). A worthwhile follow-up study would focus on Bhaskar's levels of reality[922] as a metaphysical theory in relation to interreligious dialogue and intercultural education.[923]

Though I have looked at issues of de-colonising institutions and curriculum, this has only been touched on, and that too only through the lens of the student's formation of an authentic sense of agency and belonging. There is endless scope for development of education models in response to the challenges of a supposedly de-colonising world. From the point of view of this study, the questions we are left with are a refinement of those with which we started. How to secure the coherence and integrity of virtues in mission-led intercultural education beyond exclusive commitment in the mythological terms of a particular religious or metaphysical ideology becomes a more focused question about human thriving, what makes a life worth living, and intercultural education emerges as an opportunity and resource in the pursuit of this question. This study has taken us in the direction of a Theology of Intercultural Education from a Christian Pluralist perspective. It has revealed the pervasive influence of pluralism in this field. But it has also opened up the prospect of what would be a much larger study. This is to develop a genuinely Intercultural Theology of Education. Such a work would draw in many more examples of practice for comparison and elucidation, expanding the field of 'communicative rationality' through a multi-disciplinary approach based on Pluralist principles of engagement, defining 'Theology' in terms of open and existential questions and inviting the wisdom of multiple faith traditions, and respecting diverse contexts.

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[922] Roy Bhaskar, "MetaReality," *Roy Bhaskar Centre*, accessed November 8, 2025, https://www.roybhaskarcentre.com/metareality , The vision relates, in Theology of Religions terms to that of Huston Smith.

[923] I suggest that a task for metaphysicians will be to elaborate the 'levels of reality' in Bhaskar with reference to Platonic layers mediated by interpretation identified by recent scholarship, and to synthesise these with the insights of pluralists such as these we discuss here. See the recent reading of Plato: Necip Fikri Alican, *One over Many: The Unitary Pluralism of Plato's World* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2021).

The pervasive influence of theosophy on pluralist thought and on the practice of international education is another book waiting to be written. While I acknowledged the perennialist leanings of Hick and Panikkar, controversies surrounding *sanatanadharma*, true religion in the Indian pluralist context, and the debt to these in Kurt Hahn's legacy, I have not gone into detail here about models of spirituality in education of, for example, Krishnamurti, Steiner and the Waldorf schools, whose perennialist theological model embodies a trans-religious spiritualism. Certainly these would be a contributory voice in any further development of an intercultural theology of education; they represent considerable advances for intercultural theology and intercultural education. However, my focus has been restricted to a more resolutely secular context. The focus therefore, has been on epistemological issues where such approaches intersect with colonial, post-colonial, democratic and globalising theories. In the foreground has been the student as democratic global citizen, leader and change maker, which in some ways, contrasts visions of education as a process of spiritual liberation and enlightenment. Investigating this difference as reflected in the epistemic contrast between the critical realist and the non-dual perspectives, I have focused on secular contexts of education to problematize the notion of secularity with reference to Panikkar's exposition of the term. A closely related area that has been revealed by this study, and that would merit further investigation, is the relationship between the school as the location of a Public/private nexus of authentic being for emerging identitites (of students) and the School as a (the) Public and Private nexus of the developing character of the secular state itself.

It is hoped that this thesis contributes to a pedagogy based on mutual respect and a sense of the sacred. In practice, the study reveals a need for considerable training and sensitization of teachers but also of the interdependent communities involved in the schools. It is, as we have argued, a pedagogy of extending trust which is an expensive commodity for teachers. Such a pedagogy demands also exemplifying humility, being of the earth as being our full humanness. Teachers must be very resourceful to educate by way of extending trust. Virtues are not imposed, instilled or inculcated, but drawn out by incremental genuine encounters and the invitation to participate responsibly as theorist and co-creator. Professional Development too should be considered in terms of lifelong learning, not skills-based and goal-driven so much as individually appropriate character-building. The form that professional development takes is the invitation to collaborate at the theoretical level and to share experience towards the creation and implementation of

new curriculum or new methodologies. In other words, it is less about employability as about contribution to cultural shift in the workplace. Of course, this can never take the place of professionalism with regard to the everyday functions of an institution in all its details, but it shifts the emphasis in terms of ownership and teamwork at the level of shared vision.

In theory, there is potential for diverse religious convictions to energise and cohere communities to address systemic injustice. This requires a degree of vigilance against epistemic violence or the threat of ideological epistemic monoculture, religious or Secularist (with a capital S). Theology contributes to education both as a resource and as a continuous site of dialogue. Thus, while all religion remains a conversation partner in shaping the mission, in practice, the values of that mission may embody, in intra-religious terms, the best of religion. Furthermore, Theologies of Religions that remember their incompleteness open a space wherein students, teachers and the broader community may draw together on transcendent sources of integrated and coherent values while reaching across conceptual and cultural divides. I have proposed the thesis that theology, and in particular pluralist theologies of religions, can give us the philosophical insights with which to form a theoretical basis and the radical sense of value that can underpin a lived worldview commensurate with such a project as George Walker in his IB position paper of 2010 identifies as the need of cultural development at the heart of the IB and UWC pedagogical model:

> Perhaps the best way forward lies with a less assertively humanistic learner profile that gives greater emphasis to social cohesion and the "respectful mind"; with a learner profile that is perceived as a stimulus for debate rather than a tablet of stone, and is reviewed regularly by a multicultural team; a learner profile that leaves some space for regional tradition.[924]

I advocate for continuing the work of inviting students to engage with the process of deconstruction and also reconfiguration of mythic narrative (i.e. the stories by which we live), seeking the location of Spirit, and centering the focus of education on the love of wisdom and the wisdom of love.

[924] George Walker, "East Is East and West Is West: Introduction to IB Position Papers," 2010, https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/new-structure/about-the-ib/pdfs/east-is-east-and-west-is-west-en.pdf, 9.

The essential call is to engage on matters of ultimate importance, to become theorists together in relation to the ultimate questions. The invitation is extended to students to wrestle with themes across disciplines and to see their findings expressed in lived values, framing curriculum around themes of ultimate questions.[925] Especially teachers can benefit from the practice of keeping the ball in play – retaining openness about the interpretation and expression of the core values of the institution. Teachers must engage with each other at the level of theory and first principles if they are to achieve the dimensions of trusting collegiality on which they may rely. A pedagogy of peace is a challenge to imagine community – the community in which you live – and must also be a pedagogy of hope which, again, is a challenge in which we lift up the oppressed.[926] This task to imagine new community is one for young theorists. Our study has suggested that young people need to experience integrity, coherence, freedom, justice as fundamental building blocks of identity, autonomy, authenticity and peace. We have argued that this discipline is not merely psychological but properly religious, albeit trans-religious in character. The intentionally diverse community is not a utopian construct. It is an experiment, an exercise and a form of witness. If this thesis makes solidarity with the other a little more possible, patience with change a little more bearable and hope against hope a little more accessible it will have fulfilled its potential.

[925] Yale Center for Faith & Culture, "Life Worth Living," accessed November 3, 2025.

[926] Cf. A creative Jungian approach to comparative theology acknowledges the importance of imagination: Ali Qadir and Tatiana Tiaynen-Qadir, "Towards an Imaginal Dialogue: Archetypal Symbols between Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Islam," *Approaching Religion* 6, no. 2 (2016): 81–95, https://doi.org/10.30664/ar.67594.

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