Hermeneutics and the Empeiria of the Soul in Panikkar

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Pathos, that “passion of life and thought,” essentially based on the profound aspiration to the beyond, to the unknown, to Mystery, characterized Panikkar’s entire existence and thought, always placed “beyond borders.” It is through this “empeiria of the soul” that the philosopher re-reads the complex issue of faith, connoting it as a constitutive, mystical dimension or ontological relationship and consequently as an orthopraxis. From this point of view pathos represents the foundation of his “philo-sophia” in its etymological meaning of “wisdom of love,” which opens to the pursuit of “the fullness of life,” an aspiration of every human being. Today, this generates challenges, which only an intra-inter-cultural dialogical approach, open to different perspectives and based on a diatopical hermeneutics, able to put in contact radically different human horizons, can respond.

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1. Pathos

1.1. *The Pathos of Wandering*

Raul Fornet Betancourt talking about Panikkar’s “passion of life and thought beyond borders,” emphasized the figure of pathos, as the characterizing element of his entire existence and intellectual process, always played between two shores (East and West, life and thought, mythos and logos, mind and heart, theory and practice, etc.), but essentially based on the dimension of faith.¹ Faith intended as the constitutive human deep aspiration to Wholeness, “the urge” to the Unknown, to God, to Nothingness, to Infinite. Panikkar himself when expressing about his pathos, talked of “a passion for a truly saving knowledge,” variously nameable through words like wisdom, philosophia, or even holiness as well as *moksha*, *nirvana*, *gnosis*, *sunyata*.²

In particular, the divine symbol is assumed by Panikkar as *semper agens*, which theologically outlines the continuous creationist perspective, the dynamism of Being, the continuous coming to be of things. Biblical ontology does not separate being from acting; what is, acts. Therefore, action is the biblical category *par excellence*, representing the life dynamism, of which the base and the apex remain hidden in the Mystery (Silence) of Being. The vital dualism is always transcended, as the supreme and final question comes out to be Being or not Being, but the Mystery (Silence) of Being.³

Panikkar’s category of dynamism is represented by the threefold relationship God-man-cosmos in the relational “sympathetic” movement (gr.*sympatheia*: the constitutive invisible connections of reality) intended as

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the relational disposition of the universe, corresponding to man's structure, position, and relational participation to the cosmic divine dimension. Movement is essential to man; it constitutes the transformative law that should lead him from potentiality to actuality. As derived from earth, the human nature germinates her being, taking it to her fruits, that is to human acts. But as the perfection is not of the fruit but of the process that leads to the fruit—because this one, in turn, is already seed of a new process—so man's vocation manifests itself in the never-ending tension (*pathos*) oriented at what transcends and surpasses him/her, but also constitutes him/her, becoming the destination of his/her aim.

Vocation is not to be confused with an existential anxiety or with an attitude of nostalgia but, according to Panikkar's words, it is more properly assimilated to "Heraclitus' daemon," meaning to one's vocation (*gr.ethos*), leading one's way and one's inner existential itinerancy.⁴

This dynamic conception with which Panikkar crossed both biblical and Vedic traditions, at a concrete symbolic level, communicates the deep sense of wandering, that constant, instinctive, nomadic trend inherent the cognitive human aspiration, breaking the barriers of space and of its connected phenomena, such as conquests and dominations. The time of crossing, of the experience of the *dia-ton-logos*, becomes the corrective of historical abuses and excesses of power which are necessarily absorbed by it, keeping man in his most essential, namely more human state.

The state of wandering becomes a *modus vivendi* in poverty or essentiality, where the basic element is not having, but being and consequently the movement of transformation that breaks the prevalence of the concentration space and of the grazing and prehensile effects of the *ego dominans*, of which the final epilogue can be easily identified in implosion.

Wandering as a *modus operandi et pensandi*, therefore, means to live in an inner attitude of openness to otherness, in the tension towards a progressive advancement according to space reduction which, breaking the temporal continuity, frees the kairological instant of the meaningful event: the encounter with the other-Other (*lat.alter*: the other part of ourselves), as an essential counterpart, constitutive of the very identity of the person.

Wandering as *modus pensandi* means to live in a state of permanent revolution of thought, conscious of the human individual indigence, of the relativistic polyopia of individual perspectives, therefore, of the necessity of a progressive advancement by the dialogue with the Other and among the others. So knowledge can progress thanks to the "imparative" way,⁵ not according to the dialectic of exclusion (*aut-aut*) but to the empathy of Dialogue (*et-et*), to listening in the awareness of the value and limit of every human expression, which thus remains relative, with no definite solution, as part of a whole that does not belong to man.

Wandering as *modus operandi* means to agree to be exposed to life, to uncertainty, to the instability of relationships and of human situations, to the (Absolute) Unpredictable tangibly operating in the signs of time, when man becomes capable of listening and according to this feeling accepting to be transformed.

In this sense, the only authentic form of knowledge, according to Panikkar, is represented by direct experience, when renouncing to one's concentrationary universe, accepting to suffer and rejoice, to live through *pathos*, as a condition—and not as an alteration of life—so as to transform it creatively, maintaining the hearing exercised to the perception of the universal harmonic connections.

It is through this "*empeiria* of the soul" that the philosopher re-reads the complex issue of faith, connoting it as a constitutive, human mystical dimension or ontological relationship and consequently as an orthopraxis, in this way avoiding any form of ideology, fideism or dogmatism. The logic of appearances is surpassed—not denied—by an a-duality or hyper-logic, of which the paradox is the emergent figure, being the peak and source

of rational logic, harmony as simultaneity of opposites. It appears when the language goes back to the essential symbolic forms, and to their evocative resonances, breaking the barriers of the rational logic of the ontic level, in the direction of an elevation, of a *surplus* of meaning in the over-rational ontological order.

Paradox here appears to be that “passion of intelligence” freed by the bipolar tension of *pathos*, placed between finite and infinite, which presents itself under the form of the Metaphysical Unknown. As indicated by Kierkegaard, the paradox is a concentration of desire, a movement of the passionate finite thinking turned to Infinity, that recognizes the impossibility to reach it and yet is unable to exempt itself from the effort; it represents the essential contradiction of man, of his unsurpassed dialectical insufficiency and constant openness of possibilities.⁶ In Panikkar, paradox becomes oxymoron, as the opposites compenetrates in the cosmotheandric communion. Oxymoron puts us in a Middle position, on the tightrope of the knife blade, in the opening of the contemplative glance, from the inside of the vital force of life.

This “Middle Way” is made possible by the bioptical universal structure, reflecting the double perspective of man and of God, corresponding to two main options: the one of logic, i.e., of conceptual knowledge (*noema*) and of its ethical conclusion, and the one of the meta-logical mystery of the Ineffable, proper to faith, whose conclusion remains unspeakable, placing itself on the side of man’s total surrender to Life, that is Faith (*pisteuma*). Between the two options there is a revolution, represented by the emblematic symbology of the tree. In the first case, the tree roots seem to sink in the *humus* of the earth, in the second one they seem to be placed in the sky. But the two positions are in fact one, being the roots at the same time in earth and in the sky, if we consider the Middle as the empty refractive-reflective plane, according to which its image is torn and recomposed at the same time, giving man the possibility to accept to live in the Middle, transforming it in an open way, freeing his human potential, his existential *pathos*. This drives the effort to the limit allowed, as long as the eye is not accustomed to *viduus*, to that emptiness conceivable beyond the horizon line, unveiling in the glance of the soul (Lat. *Videre*), which constantly moves its border.⁷

The oxymoric a-duality becomes reconciliation of the irreconcilable, in the intuitive “touch” of the simultaneity of the opposites, according to which, there can be no sowing without fruit, no death without life, no separation without encounter, no matter without spirit. The antinomies are simultaneously expressed in one same word, which maintain the co-presence of its contradictory opposites in its tensive *pathos*. This word reflects the original biblical *Davar*, the regenerating word of Love and Life, expression of the totality of man’s cosmotheandric experience, so that life can start again every time, giving a *topos* to U-topia (Gr. *Oy-Tòpos*, no place).

1.2. The Word of Origin

Following the ancient Sacred Scriptures, Panikkar reminds us that the word of origin emerges from the Silence of Being, under the form of Life. The Primordial word is not identifiable with Being, but is distinctly joined to it, as their relationship is constitutive. “*The Word is the habitat of Being, as it has being in herself.*” This word generates the mythical *Logos* (*mytheuma*) that precedes the philosophical rational *logos* (*noema*), since before the word historically gave way to the thought falling into oblivion, it was considered “original epiphany of Being.”⁸

We can think of Heraclitus of Ephesus the discoverer—according to his own words—of a “divine law” he called “*logos*”—which we can homeomorphically relate to the panikkarian mythical *logos* (*mytheuma*)—referring to the “hidden plot” behind the appearance of things. “*The hidden plot is stronger than*

that manifesting itself" (14, A20).⁹ The enigma hides and at the same time manifests reality, as it adheres to the oscillation between being and not being, that is to the bipolarity of life. This universal plot is based on the contradictory element, whose dissolution is represented by the implied unity, by "*the God who is behind it*" (14, A91), that is, by *Logos*: Unity is not to be intended as the sum of the antithesis, but actually as a new one, inclusive of the same, establishing an affinity between things, bringing them closer and at the same time letting them exist in their plurality: "*The God disperses and simultaneously collects and approaches and moves away*" (14, A45).

In this sense, Heraclitus' divine *Logos*, undoubtedly approachable to Panikkar's a-dual vision, describes a dance movement, taking the semblance of harmony. The hidden harmony is better than the one that appears, says Heraclitus (Fr. 54).¹⁰

Harmony for Panikkar is "*concordia discors*," harmony of the opposites, Invisible Harmony, the relational "sympathetic" Rhythm of the Universe (gr.*sympatheia*: the constitutive invisible connections of reality). In particular, we could homeomorphically talk of the relationship between Word, Silence and Being which is reflected in the words of things, in their symbols that carry the whole reality within them, therefore saying more than they are able to express, unveiling and at the same time revealing reality, under the co-present dimension of anonymity afforded them by silence that always accompanies them and by which they can be every time renewed, signifying beyond themselves. The words are in this sense "the breath, the spirit" of things themselves, because they are their symbol: *mythos and logos* at the same time. The philosopher says: "*Things are the revelation itself. The thing is, when it unveils. The thing is this unfolding.*" This Thing-Word, epiphany of Being, is immanent and transcendent at the same time, symbol, dizzying opening for the man leaning over the mystical abyss of Life.¹¹

Panikkar affirmed the importance of the spoken language, the vitality and diversity of the oral word compared to the written one, its sacredness, each word being the bearer of the holistic dimension of the person. Therefore, it is a whole word in its full meaning and in its symbolic value, representing the embodiment of the experience of life and thought. A word that Panikkar considered in the Vedantic threefold sense: spoken word (*Vaikhari Vac*), inner word (*madhyama Vac*), living word (*paśyanti Vac*), three-phase sound manifested, potentially contained in the highest form of unmanifested (*para-vac*) pre-existing sound, in turn originated from the primordial word (*Vac*). The word of life archetype emerges and returns to the inner depths of silence, by which it is fed.¹²

1.3. *The Word of Wandering: The Intercultural Oscillations*

It is through this wandering, through this "*empeiria* of soul," that Panikkar operates the passage from the oral to the written word, according to a "continuous rewriting" that, while revealing the constant work of polishing of his thought, faithful to the vital process and reflexive dynamism, on the other hand it sometimes flows in some verbal "fluctuations." Panikkar expressed faithfulness to his experience of life and thought through a constant, often widespread research repeated over time, through steadily updated or modified ideas and concepts and through words able to express more fully—in passing from one language to another, and simultaneously from symbols to concepts and vice versa—what is difficult to translate in a definite sense and that constitutes the vitality and freedom of the symbolic word itself. The fundamental question of Interculturality, as Panikkar underlines, is not a question of literal translation of terms, but of deep communication and cross fertilization of the consciencies, made possible by words-symbols.¹³

The verbal oscillations, the terminological differences which often can be found within the same text or in the translation to another, are therefore due to the fluctuations inherent in those same words that in the translating process, by virtue of their symbolic polysemic dynamics, always “betray” the correspondent ones, never fully adhering to their symbols. Each language unveils and re-veals a peculiar world corresponding to its own culture and linguistic structure; every word represents its own world that can be possibly approached by its context, and from a distance (the silence revealed by its “literal inadequacy”) necessary to disclose the essential difference, that always puts her (the word) beyond any possible translation.¹⁴ Under this perspective translating, according to the Latin etymology of *trans-ducere* (pass, lead beyond) is referred to the sense of *translatio*: “recreating the original in a new environment.” This re-creative process never becomes a conceptual identification, more properly connoting itself as “touch,” “homeomorphic equivalence,” analogy of function.

But those same words and metaphors (literally translations) reconsidered from time to time under multiple cultural meanings and many linguistic forms—in revisions or later reissues of the writings themselves—undoubtedly constitute an opportunity to discover more paths belonging to other languages and to their even distant worlds. And an opportunity to find as many ways as the rational ones—without denying them—able to touch other borders: poetic, mystical, spiritual. These words, owing to translation, undergo a hermeneutical process, transforming the reality of which they are symbol and the hermeneut-interpreter-him/herself, who by virtue of that contact, enters a new culture, simultaneously changing the perception of his/her own.

Such is the profound meaning attributed by Panikkar to the “diatopical” hermeneutics, an art of interpretation able to put in contact radically different and distant human horizons, a sort of “internal revolution,” where all the elements involved in the cognitive process can change in the sense of an extension or an opening of meanings and intuitions, owing to a “cross-fertilization” or interpenetration among cultural contexts, according to a process of slow transformation of consciences. In particular the translation, when interpreting the other language (inter-linguistic translation), activates a series of intuitions, at the same time transforming the idea that such interpreting language has of itself (intra-linguistic translation). An example taken from Panikkar is related to the word “grace” or “religion” for the Christian tradition and to the equivalent *Arul* and *Dharma* for hindu tradition, of which the concepts tend to uniqueness (as in literal translation), while both symbols of the two languages maintain their polyvalence, referring for each respective culture, to a plurality of meanings and different semantic nuances and subjects, thus resulting not translatable.¹⁵ The word as a symbol is described by Panikkar, as sacred *Quaternitas*, being composed of the four elements of the dialogue: the speaker, the listener, the meaning, and the sound.¹⁶

Under this radically relative perspective, we can therefore consider Panikkar’s terminological oscillations (or as they appear to be) as a desired and intended effect, a working method (lat. *Meta-Hodos*, research mode), in full adherence to the conscious, cognitive dynamism marking time in relation to the rhythm of life and speech, through an intense effort of thought authenticity. Another example in the panikkarian work is given by the two words “inter-dependence” and “inter-in-dependence,” used contextually together, that can be considered as a logical contradiction, but at the same time can be interpreted according to different levels of reflection which do not necessarily elide themselves. In this case, “inter-dependence” will focus on the conditioning anthropocosmic relationships of the reality, while “inter-in-dependence” focuses the aspect of freedom, referring to another level, to the inner cosmotheandric fulfillment through harmony, according to knowledge and love.

So behind the “fluctuations” that characterize Panikkar’s writing and work, to the point of presenting contradictory aspects or at least apparently so, a profound even if unintentional teaching emerges. It is an implicit element, which urges us to “embody” his work, inviting us to go back to his texts several times in a circular reading, requiring to adapt ourselves to his way of rewriting them according to current thinking, abandoning acquired certainties and usual cognitive paths marked by the levees of the logical distinction, of the exclusion (“or this/or that”) or of non-contradiction principle. An invitation to dialogue. The dialogical principle is different, it is *Advaita* (a-dual): “neither this nor that, and this/and that” according to cross-fertilization and to its principle of growing.

In particular, the outcome of the oxymoronic (a-dual) oscillation is thus to be considered as the deconstructive, deadly but at the same time active and regenerative tool, referring to the possibility of simultaneous penetration of the symbolic, a-dual or triadic dimension of reality (God-Cosmos-Man/spirit-psyche-body) urged by the intuitive experience in reading. The a-dualistic intuition implies the symbolic knowledge, i.e., the overcoming (not negation) of rationality, and the opening of the heart (intuition), corresponding to the aspiration or natural tension of man towards the Unknown. That Mystery both unveiled and revealed, placed at the apical border between known and unknown, such that we would not search it if we had not already an albeit rough idea of what we’re looking for.

Panikkar says: “*The real process of understanding is a rhythmic process between the three dimensions of reality.*”¹⁷ In this sense, and against this background, we may therefore venture that this type of intensive-contemplative reading, to which Panikkar’s texts implicitly invite, becomes a sort of “rhythm of being,” as it shows the a-dualistic (ternary)structure of Reality, at the same time demanding the union of the oscillations between mind and heart, reason and intuition, knowledge and love, in a constantly changing process, according to an open synthesis, which can be such only when Being overcomes Thinking, remaining harbinger of ulteriority. If we stay on that boundary line, we enter the breath of the universe because as Panikkar reminds us, Thinking corresponds to Being, but it runs out, being the latter beyond any reflexive possibility but at the same time constantly nourishing it. It follows that the careful reading of the panikkarian texts transforms itself into an inner experience, owing to an *empeiria* of the soul.

2. The Pathos of the Word: Transculturality and Interculturality

A complex linguistic example is represented by the term “trans-cultural” placed in relation with the predominant and fundamental one: “Intercultural.” We will analyze the “swings” according to three different meanings present in Panikkar’s work. The first relating to the term “trans-cultural,” is negative; it pertains to Panikkar’s criticism against the universalistic conception: “transcultural” is understood in relation to the claim of a cultural perspective superior to others (correlated to Western colonialist vision) and to the consequent idea of a “global language” that would destroy the cultural and ethnical differences of the peoples. But in reality, there is neither one culture nor one universal language. This conception has produced the historical aberrations as the philosopher has deeply and widely criticized, attributing them to the ruthless phenomenon of the “erroneous aggregation” or “syndrome of globalization.”

According to the philosopher, in fact an overcultural absolute criterion of evaluation provided by the conceptualizing, totalizing reason (rational *logos*), which discriminates between cultures of progress and underdeveloped ones, cannot exist. This proved to be quite a morally and socially unjustifiable claim of our Western mind. In fact, there is an undeniable cultural plurality according to which every culture has its own

claim to truth. But the evaluation criteria of any culture are necessarily inadequate as they are conceived within the same respective conceptual parameters. They can therefore be only relative.¹⁸

But between these two absolute and relative positions (transcultural and overcultural), Panikkar invites to take a third way: “Interculturality,” i.e., “intercultural dialogue” based on “cultural relativity” or “relative relatedness,” which has nothing to do with an annihilating relativism. There is in fact a substantial difference between relativity and relativism. Relativity has to do with the value of a thing in relation to its context of reference, while relativism means that one thing is like another and then its value is neutralized. Interculturality is also intra-culturality as it permits the awareness of relativity, and therefore of the limits of the individual cultural perspectives and, without falling into relativism, allows for a revealing autocriticism; every culture is in fact a world whose myth, whose history and whose language have value in relation to its limited context.¹⁹

For this reason, “interculturality seeks transcultural words” as Panikkar says, bringing the example of the term “philosophy” and of its three Sanskrit philosophemes.²⁰ Hence, the word “transcultural” appears in its second meaning referring to the dialogical relationship. The underlying problem is in fact represented by finding the bases of a common dialogue, as the intercultural dialogue—fundamentally tending to communicate the main insights from different cultures—cannot favor any particular language, but at the same time cannot be reduced to a kind of literal translation.²¹

Thus, what is being sought in a cross-cultural sense, are not terms (simple conventional signs) nor unique or globalizing concepts, which tend to universal conceptions, but polysemous and polyvalent words-symbols that can generate homeomorphical equivalences between cultures and religions, in the light of respective similarities and at the same time of cultural differences. The word “transcultural” is therefore not reducible to a “cross-cultural concept,” also including the mythical intuition about the different horizons of intelligibility of the interlocutors, finally requiring to embrace the other’s myth and to share its correspondent faith.

Panikkar notes that while interdisciplinarity deals with the relationship and with the mutual contributions of the different disciplines within one culture, and interculturality deals with relationships among cultures—although in a different way as it relates to a larger myth—transdisciplinarity (and transculturality when considered from this perspective) goes “one step further,” beyond the deepening of cultures and disciplines. In fact, while they exclude a “meta-cultural” sense, nevertheless they require our opening to a “quid,” to “something (ineffable and indefinable) that crosses and exceeds each specific discipline and/or culture.”²²

Interculturality is not in fact authentic nor effective unless it is referred to the person in the full sense, worth its transformation into interculturalism. It means that the social, psychological, political dimensions convert into misleading ideologies when the different myths (or cultural horizons) of the different cultures, traditions and religions are exclusively reduced to rational *logos*, to conceptual logic. Panikkar brings distinctions using the example of “Babel” myth to represent “a language without spirit”—a product of man’s *hybris*—and “Pentecost,” as an opposite example, to represent the plurality of languages, on the contrary, including the spiritual element which is at the same time unitive and distinctive.

Intercultural communication in fact requires not only language learning and verbal exchange joined to the search for words roots, but also communion in the *mythos* and then, a living and active participation in the language of symbols. In this regard symbolic thinking, thinking through symbols, is of paramount importance. The symbolic knowledge, unlike the conceptual one, in the process of symbolization is already a relationship of dialogue between symbol and symbolizing. The symbolic dimension transcends the conceptual *logos* (without

denying it), involving body, gestures, emotions, feelings, intellect, that is, the whole person; it is an involvement of awareness (*mythos*) and consciousness (*logos*). Reflection belongs to *logos*, contemplation to *mythos*, but the two dimensions are inseparable. “*There is no logos without mythos nor mythos without logos. In every logos there is a myth, the myth that the logos expresses. In every myth there is logos, logos that communicates the myth*” (279).²³

The language, therefore, is never merely communication of communicable, but also a symbol of what cannot be verbally communicated. In particular, full participation to the symbol of dialogue by the interlocutor, starts up a transversal passage. Symbol is in fact relation. In the “dia-logical” intercultural relation differences and similarities emerge, preserving the uniqueness of different cultures, at the same time activating a transgressive process (lat.*trans-gredior*, pass) borrowed from the archetypal imaginary and its metaphors (lat.*meta-phorèō*, carry over). Therefore, something “transits,” “passes,” between the interlocutors, not only at the linguistic conceptual level, but also emotionally, empathically, intuitively, we may metaphorically say, at the level of savor/of flavor/of fragrance (sscr.*dhvani*), the level of awareness,²⁴ through not reflected communicative dimensions, of immediate apperception, requiring the *synesthesia* of the person to be activated, together with his/her openness and acceptance of the other’s diversity.²⁵

We return therefore to the panikkarian distinction between *noema* (element of mental understanding) and *pisteuma* (element of faith and intuitive vision), stressing how it is necessarily the reciprocal participation of the interlocutors at both cognitive levels. In this regard, we can think of the Japanese ideogram for “kiku,” meaning to listen, being symbolically made up of three simple ideograms indicating the ear, the eye and the heart, homeomorphically approachable to the panikkarian combination of knowledge-love. The word in this sense is “trans-cultural.”²⁶

Two levels of dialogue emerge, determined by “horizontal and vertical borders,” to which we may refer the two meanings of the term “cross-cultural:” the first meaning that resides in the person-to-person crossing, and the second meaning that concerns the transcendent aspect (lat.*transcèndere*). The first is defined by “horizontal boundaries” determined by single individuals and by their different communicative ways (horizontal transculturality), the second by the contingent human condition and its myths, to depict “vertical borders,” open horizons of intelligibility (vertical transculturality). The two are inseparable. To neglect the second (the mythical religious dimensions) means to enter ideology. The last critical dialogue frontier therefore concerns the holistic or cosmotheandric dimension of the person: it is mystical. At this level as Panikkar says “the agreement is easier,” as it takes place according to harmonic-loving connections. “*Mysticism is the passport to cross cultural boundaries, mysticism is not authentic if it lacks love.*”²⁷

In particular, pluralism opens to tolerance and to the discovery of the third dimension of transcendence, allowing us to overcome the boundaries of different cultures: geographical, historical, and cultural boundaries. Panikkar uses the metaphor of the “in-nocent” climbing over the boundary line, underlying that a frontier to be crossed without breach, without touching the dividing line, should be transcended. In this sense, the aspiration to transcendence provides a common ground for intra- and inter-cultural dialogue as every philosophical question concerning the “*plus ultra*” (the beyond, the invisible, the void, the infinite) already presupposes a tensive common passage beyond reciprocal knowledges, although as it is humbly remarked: We human beings can be only “babbling something about transcendence,” because “true dialogue does not reside in what I say, nor in what the other says, but in what happens in dialogue, beyond us, of which neither I, nor the other can have a premeditated knowledge and on which we have no power” (2001).²⁸ Therefore it is in that “beyond”

that runs through us (lat.*trans*), variously and freely interpretable, we can refer the third meaning of the “trans-cultural” word of the dialogic dialogue.

A change of perspective is needed, from that individual self-referring to a personal relational one, including cosmotheandric relationships. Basically it comes to letting the Being inspire us and the thought of Being crossing our interiority, when we abandon our individualistic perspectives, the armed reason, the prevaricating dialectical attitude—typical elements of our contemporary culture—on the contrary emptying (gr.*kénosis*) the mind from certainties, from cultural prejudices and abstract systems, in order to accept diversities represented by the different cultures and religions of our fellow humans. And in this sense, each interlocutor represents a world, every man a source of knowledge. Therefore to open ourselves to a kind of an empathetic, synaesthetic, and intuitive savoring of the many myths and symbols of the horizontal inter-cultural and trans-cultural words, but at the same time to connect ourselves (lat.*religare*) also to hope, to the invisible, to the Unknown, to Mystery, that is, to the vertical transcultural word, representing our roots, our deep religiosity; the two dimensions are inseparable.

3. Conclusions

In conclusion, the word “trans-cultural,” here taken as an example of a significant “panikkarian oscillation,” shows to assume different even opposite meanings in the context of the work, depending on whether the meeting-crossing of cultures, indicated by the preposition between (lat.*trans*), operated by man, is both conceptual (horizontal) if referring to a logical reading, and holistic/mystical (horizontal and vertical, i.e., cosmotheandric) if referring to a symbolic reading, the one Panikkar invites us to. Semantic oscillations are therefore an integral part of its “radical relativity,” or “*Ad-Vaita* (a-dual) perspective,” showing themselves only to a certain philosophical unidirectional reading, while fading away in front of the holistic vision of life.

The word “Transculturality” because of its complexity and relativity, can then help us to deepen the intercultural question, when “Interculturality” in the form of our actual historical perspective and social urgency, is understood like in Panikkar, especially as the possibility of a profound change, not only in terms of information, but also of slow transformation of the vision and practice of life, oriented to a desirable historical transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace. A difficult and complex process should certainly not be prosecuted as he says with violence, nor with the prevailing of one culture over the other, but through the change of our inner attitude. It requires a change of mind and of heart (*metanoia*), the sacred union of knowledge and love, to reach “man’s new innocence.”

Notes

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1. Raoul Fornet Betancourt, Foreword, *Raimon Panikkar Being beyond Borders*, ACPI, Ed. Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, Bangalore, 2012, xiii.
 2. Raimon Panikkar, *The Rythm of Being, The Gifford Lectures*, Orbis, New York, 2010, 36.
 3. Ibid., 88.
 4. Ibid., 7.
 5. Michiko Yusa, “Gender, the Feminine and Cultural Disarmament in the Thought of Raimon Panikkar,” *Cirpit Review* 5/2014, 122.
 6. Soren Kierkegaard, *Timore e tremore*, tr.it.di F. Fortini, Se, Milano 1989, 80-90.
 7. M. Roberta Cappellini, “Panikkar’s Intra-Inter-Dialogical Philosophy: Imparative vs. Comparative?” *Cirpit Review* n.5/2014, Mimesis, 47-55.
 8. Raimon Panikkar, *Lo spirito della Parola*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2007, 31.

9. M. Blanchot, Heraclito. L'esperienza limite in *L'infinito Intrattenimento*, Einaudi, Torino, 1977, 111, 122. As the author outlines the discourse on the sacred becomes discourse on the *physis*, through the strength of the words coming out of their silence.
10. Raimon Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being, The Gifford Lectures*, Orbis, New York, 2010, 7. For Heraclitus fragments see: Giorgio Colli, *La sapienza greca*, Vol. III, Heraclito, Adelphi, Milano, 1988.
11. Raimon Panikkar, *Lo spirito della parola*, cit., 39.
12. Ibid., 38-40. The author draws the distinction between the Sanskrit *artha* (literally) and *dhvani* (the sound of the word) then in the unified theory of *sphota* (consistency of meaning and discourse).
13. Raimon Panikkar, *Pluralismo e Interculturalità*, Jaca Book, Milano, 2009, 267.
14. Raimon Panikkar, *La Dimora della Saggezza*, Mondadori Milano, 2005, 98.
15. Raimon Panikkar, *Lo spirito della parola*, cit., 14 and *La experiencia filosofica de la India*, Trotta, Madrid, 2000, 106-7.
16. Raimon Panikkar, *Lo spirito della parola*, cit., 29.
17. R. Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, cit., Introduction and Preface xxix.
18. Cit., 223. The intercultural approach is constituted by the dialogical dialogue (non-dialectical), and imparative (non-competitive), in order to better understand others and oneself through others, through the simultaneous deepening of their respective cultures to touch their respective roots.
19. Raimon Panikkar, *Pluralismo e Interculturalità*, Vol. 1, Opera Omnia, Jaca Book, Milano, 2009, 259.
20. R. Panikkar, *La experiencia filosofica*, cit., 113.
21. Cit., 269-72.
22. Cit., 252-3.
23. Cit., 279.
24. Young-chan Ro, "An Epistemological Foundation of Raimon Panikkar: A Mystical Approach," *Cirpit Review* 5/2014, Mimesis, Milano, 107.
25. R. Panikkar, *La Experiencia filosofica*, cit., 111.
26. Raimon Panikkar, *Pluralismo e Interculturalità*, cit., 111.
27. Cit., 251.
28. Raimon Panikkar, *Il dialogo intrareligioso*, Cittadella Editrice, Assisi, 2001, 73.