

## INTRODUCTION

The following essay, “Philosophy as Lifestyle,”<sup>1</sup> serves as a fitting introduction to this volume, *Philosophy and Theology* (a distinction that has no reason to exist since the two disciplines are mutually implicit), because it underlines the importance that philosophy—understood not only as the *love of wisdom* but also as the *wisdom of love*—has had throughout my life.

“No word without voice and form . . .”

1. Philosophy is just as much the *wisdom of love* as it is the *love of wisdom*. And true love is not only spontaneous but also ecstatic, that is, nonreflective: it does not address itself via critical analysis. It does not have a why. As soon as I can give a reason for my love, it is no longer genuine love. Being a philosopher is like being in love—it just happens. Philosophy is a primary, not a secondary, attitude: “He who is cursed by God to be a philosopher!” as Fichte said. Philosophy cannot be manipulated either by will or by reason. Both will and reason are means and tools, but they are not masters. Philosophy is a particular kind of love. It is wisdom, the wisdom of love, the wisdom contained in love. Philosophy is not simply *erôs* or *agapê* or *bhakti* or *preman*. It is the kind of *sophia* (*jñāna*) of primordial love. It is transparency, splendor (*svayamprakāsha*) of the original and all-conceiving *kāma*, impulse, urge, act, the *karman* of Reality. And wisdom is born when both love of knowledge and knowledge of love spontaneously merge.

Primal philosophy will then crystallize into a way of life—or rather, it becomes the expression of life itself, written or expressed in reality by one’s own personal way of life. The kind of philosophy that deals solely with structures, theories, and ideas, and remains distant from life, avoiding practicality and repressing feelings, is not only one-sided, because it does not take account of other aspects of reality, but is also bad philosophy. Reality as such cannot be grasped, comprehended, and realized by a single organ or in only one of its dimensions. Such an approach would not merely turn philosophy into another science, a new form of algebra, but it would destroy philosophy as wisdom and prevent the expression of philosophy in a human lifestyle. For this reason, all traditions require a pure heart, an ascetic mind, and an authentic life as the foundation for genuine philosophical activity.

Philosophical activity needs total involvement. A morally bad person may be a good mathematician, but cannot be a philosopher, at least not in an existential sense. As a Zen master might say, only when you are yourself—your pure self—will you know things as they are. This form of wisdom, together with experience, includes, but also transcends, what the Western tradition since Kant has called the *critical aspect of philosophy*. Every critical analysis has to end at an ultimate experience, and it is here, at the seat of wisdom, that philosophy is born. In the past I have called this *sophodicity*.

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction was inspired by the chapter “Philosophy as Life-Style,” which appeared in A. Mercier and M. Svilar, eds., *Philosophers on Their Own Works* (Bern: Lang, 1978).

2. How can I state my philosophy without thereby adulterating it? The moment my lifestyle is no longer spontaneous and free (because it may no longer be pure, or it may be determined by external factors) my philosophy ceases to be authentic. Can I be a true witness to myself? Can I be truly critical of myself? Can the self remain the knower when it is also the known? Would I not block up the source, were I to return to it? “My dear one, how can you know the knower?” one *Upaniṣad* asks (*BU II.4.14*). I could indeed retrace my life’s journey, yet I can only see the footsteps when no longer standing in them. Therefore, I doubt that it is possible to make a personal statement about myself. *No word, unless it becomes flesh!*

Perhaps, though, I can do something else: recall the burden carried along during my pilgrimage uphill, and see if I can make it lighter by getting rid of the superfluous.

3. I have always felt a great need to encompass Reality, or better, to become (live) Reality in its fullness. Hence my interest in the ultimate questions—not in a purely theoretical manner but by fully participating in them as a person. After studying the speculations on the Absolute throughout human history, I was so filled with the desire to seek what was real beyond its appearances that I felt tempted to leave reality behind. I was tempted to become either a specialized academic or an a-cosmic monk; I felt the immense attraction and fascination of both paths—pure intellectual abstraction and uncompromising asceticism. If I have now taken the academic as well as the religious path, then, it is only because a professor for me is one who “professes,” who expresses a “profession” of faith, a confession of faith, with the whole of his life. And a religious is one who struggles, who strives to reach the harmonious union of the sacred and the secular.

In this regard, I sense my calling to a synthesis, to having an all-embracing, global approach. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body has become a living symbol to me. Nothing of what exists must be lost. The Real cannot be dissociated from the bodily—indeed, it cannot exist without matter, although it does not consist of matter alone.

4. My academic studies began with matter. For seven years, physics and chemistry were my most serious intellectual occupations. On the side, I started studying philosophy, but not because I had become disillusioned with my scientific studies. In fact, there was a continuity of interests: my philosophical *pathos* had been there all along; however, it took patience to enable me to follow these interests in an intense and systematic fashion. All that led to long years of strictly philosophical studies and intellectual activity.

The linear structure of the written word forces me to also write about my theological studies, but again, this interest has been present since my early conscious life. There was no break or sudden turning point. But even the term *theology* soon became too small to describe my interest and involvement, my total absorption in life, in full communion with Reality. To me, this point is the religious urge; I understand religions as different paths that lead to fulfillment, to happiness, or to liberation. Rather than understanding religion as something that ties us (*religat*) to the Ultimate End, I view it as something that unties us from all limitations and thereby offers us freedom and joy.

The truly religious person is not the one who says, “Lord, Lord,”<sup>2</sup> but the one who existentially overcomes the separation between God and World. Only thus can we learn transcendence: “Lord, when did we see you naked, hungry, in prison . . . ?” (*Mt 25:37–40*). The ineffability of God can only be maintained by not talking about it.

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<sup>2</sup> See *Mt 7:21*.

The “thought of transcendence” either destroys thought or eliminates transcendence. At this point, it will be evident that I could not have been satisfied with a purely theoretical attitude, but had to live in the wisdom that moves Man, the Gods, and the Universe: “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise!”<sup>3</sup>

Now, leaving my *confession* aside for the moment, I want to say something about my *profession*: about what I “profess” as my convictions, that is, what has subdued me and convinced me (*con-victus*) in my struggle with Reality—which, obviously, has not always looked like an angel.<sup>4</sup>

I would like to sum up my philosophical life under two headings: *existential risk* and *intellectual responsibility*.

5. *Existential risk* is the risk of a life rooted in more than one culture and more than one religion, of an existence of orthopraxis as much as of orthodoxy. Personal circumstances (of a biological, historical, and biographical nature) prompted me to accept the risk of a conversion without alienation, of acceptance without repudiation, and of synthesis or symbiosis without syncretism or eclecticism. Here, the Hindū doctrine of personal *karman* (*svadharma*) became to me a new living symbol. It is not that I consider myself at will both Indian and European, Hindū and Christian, or that I artificially declare myself both a religious and a secular person. Rather, it is that by my birth, my education, my initiation, and my practical life I am a person who simultaneously lives the original experiences of the Western (both secular and Christian) tradition, and the Indic (both Hindū and Buddhist) one.

It took me about three-quarters of my life to be able to say this with confidence. I am aware of the risk involved in doing so, but the challenge remains. Mutual understanding and cross-fertilization among different world traditions can only take place by sacrificing one’s own life in an attempt to overcome the existing tensions, without becoming schizophrenic, and at the same time to maintain the polarities without falling victim to a personal or cultural paranoia. Only such an attitude of serene acceptance makes it possible to bring about the desired transformation. Intercultural dialogue is not just a political necessity or a purely academic exercise. It is a personal issue, and has to begin with intrareligious experience. If I do not feel and suffer in myself the painful tensions and polarities of reality, if I only see one side from the inside, the other from the outside, I will not be able to “com-prehend,” that is, to embrace the two visions of reality and so do justice to them both.

Another way of expressing this experience would be to mention my interest in myth and my trust in the Spirit. This trust brought me to accept (rather than choose) the *dharmā* of my concrete existence and to devote myself to work out a personal spirituality. This kind of spirituality attempts a dialogue with the foundation of the Human that is not solely or primarily based on the *logos* but that considers the Spirit equally fundamental. In the Western tradition there is a tendency toward “crypto-subordinationism” that cannot be overcome, even by a great number of new and well-grounded pneumatologies, and even less by phenomenologies. The Spirit cannot be reduced or subordinated to the *Logos*.

A phenomenology of the Spirit, of spiritual reality, is as incomplete as a ballet performance in a silent film. *Mythos* and *logos* belong together. Yet their relationship is neither dialectic nor mythical; it is rather a relationship that constitutes them. If the connection were logical, the Spirit would suffocate in the *logos*; if it were mythical, the *logos* would be reduced to Spirit.

<sup>3</sup> Panikkar here quotes a sentence by Luther. [Ed. note.]

<sup>4</sup> See Gen 32:29.

In other words, there is no *logos* without *mythos* (of which the *logos* is the language), and there is no *mythos* without *logos* (of which *mythos* is the foundation). The “no-man’s-land” of their relationship is completely empty. Neither dominates the other. Here the Buddhist *śūnyatā*, radical emptiness, became a living symbol for me. Only *pratītyasamutpāda*, the radical relativity of all that exists, can maintain a harmony without prevarication.

6. *Intellectual responsibility* is not lesser than existential risk. It consists of expressing these basic existential experiences in an intelligible way. Can the multitude of one’s personal experiments and experiences find intelligible expression? This could bring us back to the question whether it is possible to overcome the monism/dualism dilemma in the intellectual as well as in the existential sphere.

This is the exact place for the notion of *advaita*. By that I mean the immediate experience that opens up to us a reality where differences are not absolutized (dualism: God/world; matter/spirit), not ignored (monism: pure materialism, pure spiritualism), not idolized (pantheism: everything is divine and only divine), and not reduced to mere shadows (monotheism: one single principle; one ruler, many subjects). A polarity under tension is characteristic of Reality. Here the symbols are secularity, *advaita*, and Trinity: time and timelessness are co-extensive and correlated; the ultimate intuition is a-dualist; Reality is Trinitarian.

It is impossible to elaborate on this intellectual task in detail here. I limit myself to a few thoughts.

a. The concept of *ontonomy* (*nomos tou ontos*), relating to both the internal and the constitutive *nomos* of every being, contributes—I believe—to mutual understanding and enrichment among the various areas of human activity and spheres of Being by allowing (ontonomic) growth without breaking harmony. This concept seems to me crucial in politics, economics, science, metaphysics, religion, and life itself. It does not establish a loose and severed independence of particular spheres (autonomy) or the dominion of the so-called higher spheres over the weaker and smaller ones (heteronomy), but the reciprocal relationship, the radical relativity (*pratītyasamutpāda*) that shows us that Ultimate Reality is an a-dualist polarity, and that therefore the good for every particular sphere of being *is* its harmonious integration in the Whole (ontonomy).

In our ecologically damaged world, we are beginning to accept that it cannot be in any country’s interest to use more energy than others; that it cannot be advantageous to become the strongest military power in the world; that it *is not* reasonable to practice liberalist laissez-faire or to impose artificial measures; that limiting freedom provokes rebellion; that encouragement of anarchy provokes totalitarianism; and so forth.

Is it possible to develop an ontonomic order? In this respect, the symbol is the *person*, in my opinion. Does not the mystery of the person consist in being neither singular nor plural? A person is the conjugation of all pronouns. If I hurt the “I,” the “you” will suffer. If I honor the son, the mother will rejoice. Developing such an ontonomic status, where the optimum is not necessarily the maximum, is not only a science but an art. Here theory needs *praxis* and also *poiēsis*, creativity: not technology but *techno-culture*. The latter should not be confused with technocracy, where it is the power of technology that is expressed, not the art of the *technē*.

b. I would like to introduce here—along with the ultimate and therefore irreducible differences, like those formulated in ontology and theology—the *symbolic difference*. This shows the symbolic structure of all reality and overcomes the dichotomy between subject

and object on the epistemological level as well as the ontological level. A symbol is not another “thing” like a sign (which is noetic by nature). A symbol is simply what appears in the symbol itself. To take the symbol for the thing is as wrong as taking the thing for the symbol—and yet they are not *two*. The symbol is neither on the side of the object nor on the side of the subject, but in the relation between them. Recognizing Being as a symbol opens, in my opinion, a new chapter in the encounter of cultures and worldviews.

c. A third neologism enables me now to outline briefly something of crucial importance for understanding Man and the plurality of cultures and religions. Phenomenology has made it possible for us to understand quite diverse states of consciousness by means of an appropriate *epoché* (the shelving of the question of real factual existence), thereby arriving at the intelligible *noëma* (unit of perceptual meaning). Correspondingly, we need *pisteuma* in order to access the symbols of faith. Two basic assumptions are made here: first, that faith is an essential, fundamental phenomenon of the *humanum*; and second, that human self-understanding is another fundamental element of Man’s essence (unlike the essence of an objectifiable “thing”). Therefore, one needs to know first what Man believes himself to be in order to understand what Man is, and therefore, to a certain degree, one must also understand his beliefs. Clearly, we should not underestimate the “methodological” difficulties involved here.

d. Furthermore, my studies on the relationships between cultures have led me to the notion of *diatopic hermeneutics*, which differs from morphological as well as from diachronic hermeneutics. The difference is that diatopic hermeneutics starts out with the awareness that the *topoi* (the *loci* of the various worldviews) cannot be understood using the categories (tools of understanding) of only one tradition or culture. While morphological hermeneutics unfolds the hidden treasures of a certain culture, and while diachronic hermeneutics bridges the temporal gap in the history of human culture, diatopic hermeneutics seeks to effect the convergence of radically different human horizons. The first step here could be *dialogical dialogue*, which penetrates the *logos* all the way to the *mythos*, thereby differing from simple dialectic dialogue. How can we share in the self-understanding of another person? The problem here is vast and complex: again, we need a love union between *mythos* and *logos*, or between *ātmavāda* and *nairātmyavāda*.

e. Another way of expressing the same insight is to speak of the *tempiternal* nature of Reality. Secular culture is correct in saying that Being and Time are “co-extensive,” so that there is nothing that remains untouched by time. However, the time aspect of reality is only one aspect of the tempiternal nature of all things. Reality is not exhausted solely by its temporal aspect; reality is not temporal now and eternal “later,” but tempiternal, both temporal and eternal at the same time.

f. Finally, I have been wrestling with the formulation of what I have called the *cosmotheandric* or the *theanthropocosmic* intuition. Reality is a-dualist, and every being has three constituting dimensions: the cosmic, the human, and the divine; one could also say the material (space-time), the intellectual (conscious), and Mystery (infinite).

After a period in which a mythical-holistic vision of reality prevailed, over the past three thousand years people have tried to master reality by means of division, abstraction, and specialization. Now the time has come when the fractured pieces of these partial insights can slowly be put together in a new, global vision. There is no matter without spirit and no spirit without matter, no world without Man and no God without the universe, and so forth. God, Man, and World are three forms, artificially given substance, of the three primordial

attributes that describe Reality. The three worlds (*triloka*), found in practically all traditions, should be synthesized into a view that does not overlook the insights of analysis but makes possible the rediscovery of Reality as a dynamic whole. There are not three separate areas or levels; instead, each aspect interpenetrates the other two; each dimension is present even in the smallest piece of Reality.

An example from the field of religion is the view of the various world religions as dimensions of one another. No single religion—not even all traditional religions taken together—has a monopoly on *religion*.

g. What has been said results from a personal experience that is neither individualistic nor sociological, but that occurs in the tiny mirror that reflects, and therefore contains, all Reality—in the intimate microcosm of the person, in the depth of contemplative love to which I referred at the beginning.

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While the first section of Volume X, *Philosophy and Theology*, features the entire book *The Rhythm of Being*, a reworking of my talk at the Gifford Lectures (Edinburgh) in 1989, *Philosophical and Theological Thought* includes a large number of essays, beginning with a short book dating back to 1948, *F. H. Jacobi and the Philosophy of Sentiment*, and spanning a period of over fifty years. As it proved extremely difficult to order the various subjects in logical form, we have chosen to simply arrange them in chronological order.

As an epilogue, two texts have been added: one of the author's "unfinished symphonies," in memory of Martin Heidegger, and a poem sent to the author by Heidegger, entitled *Sprache*, bearing witness to the profound intellectual bond between two thinkers who are both aware that dialogue can only take place if it is deeply rooted in each of the respective traditions and concerned about the degraded language of our time.