

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE: A WAY OF HARMONY OF LIFE ASIAN PRAXIS OF THEOLOGY

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Abstract

By and large, the harmony of life constitutes the foundational ecosystem of Indian religions. Indian theologisation must therefore resonate with the broader Asian understanding of religion as *way*—for religions are fundamentally pathways, wherein the way itself is truth and life. The most authentic way to engage this Asian sensibility is through open, non-judgemental, and non-conclusive dialogue. Such dialogue fosters mutual empowerment, processes of learning and unlearning, and enables a genuine fusion of horizons. Dialogue, therefore, must be understood as an awakening in its own right; it is not merely a means to an end but a religious experience in itself. In this context, the Trinitarian understanding of the Godhead—both in Hinduism and Christianity—offers a profound theological foundation for conceiving interreligious dialogue as an inclusive religious consciousness. This consciousness acknowledges the radical plurality

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of existence while remaining attentive to the demands of justice inherent in all authentic dialogue among religions.

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1. Contextualising

The vision of “one flock and one shepherd” (Jn 10:11–16), which has long animated the Church’s missionary ambition, continues to remain elusive. In the present context of assertive and deepening religious pluralism, it increasingly appears utopian. This pluralism is not only expanding but also acquiring new depth and dimensions in ways that seem irreversible. Concomitantly, interfaith dialogue is already the path, pathos and ethos of the unfolding cultural scenario. Moreover, people have no qualms while asserting multifaith belonging in their religious pursuits. Religious pluralism is going to undergird the present and future cultural flows if the signs of time are justly taken into consideration. In this unfolding scenario, it is a compelling situation of the Church to shed off the set-patterns and beaten paths and think out of the box and nurture a new creative vision and innovative praxis and approximate itself with the present cultural and religious pluralist ethos. Leadership is a question of being at the forefront of change, vibing and syncing with claims of change, especially in the present epoch of knowledge revolution. Nevertheless, it is the bitter truism that the ongoing inter-faith dialogues in the universe of religious pursuits are still polemic, dialectic, apologetic and defensive. Besides, inter-dialogues turn out often counterproductive in the sense that the partners become confused with their religious identity with the political allegiance especially in the aggressive politics of polarisations in the name of religions worldwide. The ongoing wars between Israel and the Palestinians, and the USA and Iran are all because of the perverted interpretation and construction of identity in the name of religion. Religions become victims in the process all over the world owing to political hubris and acquisitiveness, cultural and economic imperialism. In the unfolding scenario of hatred, mistrust and territorial ambitions, people indulge or rather are compelled to entertain an epistemic of exclusion; thereby, one’s identity is negatively constructed by ‘othering’ the partner. Ideological and religious fascism is indoctrinated in our attitudes and mindset in the ever-unfolding war scenarios, just for survival. The US and Israel leadership is propagating “peace through power” and muses about a

homogeneous world-order rather than a heterogeneous world-community through dialogue, harmony and tolerance.

The underlying collective (or engineered) phobia is that the integrity and uniqueness of one's identity would be weakened and compromised in the process of dialogue. This anguish of an identity crisis is the core cause of the failure and fatigue in ongoing conversations among religions. Though we uphold the ideal of 'unity in diversity' the idea of 'unity' is camouflaged by uniformity. It is an undeniable fact that the Church's current praxis of dialogue is figured out of compulsion and fear of being isolated in the present ethos of religious pluralism. Besides the intent of conversion still lingers covertly in the collective consciousness and it is quite explicit in the disparity between the inter religious and intrareligious dialogues in the ecclesial conclaves. The core reason of this opacity or rather dishonesty in the praxis of dialogue of religions is the critical absence of a Theology of Religions, which can only appropriate religious pluralism as a fundamental text and texture in our orthodoxy as well as orthopraxis. The existing theological vacuum in the practice of inter-faith conversations is the primary reason they are choreographed more as social, political, or philosophical conversations than as a faith praxis. We must explore the rationale and potentials to approximate religious pluralism *per se* as one of the theological coordinates of faith consciousness. Moreover, the phenomenon of multi-faith belonging, widening liminal spaces both virtual and real, and the expanding diaspora contexts are transmuting homogeneous faith into heterogeneous one especially among the Gen-C. It is in this context that Inter-Faith dialogue, as a way toward harmony in life, might yield a competent and credible alternative and ecosystem of faith praxis in the present ethos of the sweeping sway of religious pluralism. Faith has become already inter-faith or multi-faith among the young generations. The Christian youth have no qualms in preferring inter-faith marriages especially because of the ever-increasing diaspora population in the present globalised world.

2. Preferring Harmony to Unity

The core issue with the ineptitude of the ongoing dialogue is the latent apprehension about entertaining compromise on identity credentials. Paul Ricoeur speaks of *idem* and *ipse* identities. The former is the 'given' identity construed and constructed in the classicist vision of the Aristotelean and Platonist monolithic, immutable, and normative notions, dogmas, tradition, and creeds.

Whereas, *ipse* identity is an 'evolving' identity and is continuously constructed in the conflicts and confrontations through a hermeneutics of engagement. When identity is conceived as polyphonic, processual, and relational and is to be constructed through an engaging presence in the socio-cultural process through confrontations and conflicts the understanding of identity in the texture of harmony seems more appropriate and challenging than in reference to the already set-patterns. In this context theology must not be seen a private faith seeking understanding in rational categories but it should be choreographed in a harmony life as one must live out one's faith life in a compelling pluralist ethos; faith is communitarian to the core in the Christian dispensation; in a multi-religious context one should know the art and skill how to make one's faith engaging and dialoguing with the other pursuits of religious faiths. Faith must facilitate the harmony of life so that one can live his or her faith right in the whirlpool of a multifaith context. Theology must be the vital agency to construct the architecture and ecosystem of a faith which is textured and scripted in harmony with life, which is nurtured through dialoguing with diverse faith claims, social concerns, cultural issues and ecological questions and through mutual empowerment. Phrasing differently, theology as faith seeking harmony of life must be grounded, textured and patterned in the fundamental pluriformity and manifoldness of existence so much so that the "fullness of life" is accomplished.

Taking a leaf from Jacque Derrida's Philosophy of "Deconstruction" will help us understand the rationale of preferring 'harmony' to 'unity.' Derrida would say that meaning is always deferred and differentiated; words have meaning because of their contrasts with other words, and meaning is an endless chain of signifiers with no ultimate, stable foundation; it is processual and ever-unfolding. He critiques the Western thought because it is structured around binary oppositions over the other creating an inherent intolerant hierarchy. The Western philosophical "metaphysics of presence" (also called logocentrism), is a mistaken belief that there is a self-sufficient and non-differed meaning. Derridean 'deconstruction' entails rudimentary shifts from unitary to multiple, from a fixed meaning to an unstable meaning, thereby, focalising on difference, interaction, and integration. True dialogue leads to the deconstruction of the binary pairs and hierarchies and leads to reconstruction. Deconstruction (unlike interpretation) brings out the inner contradictions of the text bare and churns out a different

meaning in the process. So, there is a simultaneity between destruction (dialogue) and construction (harmony). Derrida says that these contradictions are neither accidental nor exceptional but very incidental to the core of reality, which manifold, divergent, diverse and plural; the very vibrancy and vivacity of every unfolding Reality must be right in its plurality; the manifoldness of the Reality must be nurtured and fostered. These inner diversities and contradictions of the multifarious Reality expose continuously a "Metaphysics of Pure Presence": it is the manifestation of "transcendental signified" which is always hidden inside the Reality (text).¹ This "always-already" hidden contradictions are the inexhaustible potential of the Reality. Derrida finds his hope (affirmation) in heterogeneity, contradictions, pleurisy, absence, etc. Unlike the structuralists, he sees reality is a play of identity and difference in an exuberant harmony of life. The ubiquitous "Pure Presence," which fosters the polyphony of Existence, is the living narrative of its munificence and inexhaustibility. A unity constructed through the reduction of heterogeneous Existence to the compass of immutable, monolithic constructs is a violence to the ontic polyphony of reality. Moreover, the pleurisy of Existence is further enhanced through its inherent processual and relational dimensions. Obviously, as the Reality is knit in a polyphonic, processual, and relational texture the ideal of harmony would be more appropriate, credible, competent, and plausible than the idea of hypothetical unity. To be actual is to be polyphonic, processual, and relational. Universal concepts of unity are only abstractions, and virtual predicates, and postulates. Moreover,

¹Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication "transcendent signified." Oxford University Press: 2011.

Derrida's philosophy is chiefly concerned with metaphysics. It is "science of presence" 'My principal theme – is the determination of being as presence... all the names related to fundamentals...have always designated the constant of a presence -eidos, ache, telos, energia, ousia, aletheia, transcendentality, consciousness or conscience, God, man and so forth.' "Sign, Structure & Play in Human Sciences," in *The Languages of Criticism and The Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. by Richard Macsey and Eugenio Donato, Baltimore, 1970), 249.

He calls "metaphysics of pure presence." Derrida presents us the strategy of deconstruction, an amalgamation of Heidegger's concept of *Destruktion* and Levinas's concept of Other [Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 70. Deconstruction as a strategy tries to find the most surprising contradictions in texts, unravels them and build upon this; Instead finding the truth, the closure, or the steadfast meaning, it finds absence of presence, free play of meanings etc., It is this absence of presence that is described as 'trace' [deconstruction] by Derrida. See, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trace_\(deconstruction\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trace_(deconstruction))

the harmony of life encrypted in the phenomenal existence subsists and is sustained right in the very polyphonic, processual, and relational texture of the Godhead.

3. Polyphonic Harmony of Godhead

In the book of *Genesis*, we read: “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1: 26). It implies that the Godhead is plural and the decision to create humans is a collective decision. there would have happened long and exhaustive deliberations among the persons of Trinity while ‘they’ took a crucial decision to create human being in God’s own image and likeness; The Biblical narrative, and Jesus himself are not at all ambiguous on the plurality of the inner life of God which is being choreographed through three-fold missions of the Trinity of *Missio Dei*, *Missio Christi* and *Missio Spiritus*, The economy of salvation narrated in the biblical history is textured and engineered fundamentally in the Trinitarian life of the Godhead. A Trinitarian God is not all a monolithic and immutable monad indulging in the eternal loneliness as figured out in the Scholastic Theology; Trinitarian Godhead is fundamentally polyphonic, processual and is an engaging Presence in history through a covenantal rapport with history and creation. The Patristic Fathers (Maximus Confessor (B.C.E 662) and John of Damascus (B.C.E 749)), on the other hand, employed the term *perikoresis* (rotation) to signify the intense movement in the Godhead. It is a compound word meaning ‘going around.’ It connotes the Greek words for dancing (“choreia”). In modern theological writings of theologians like Jürgen Moltmann, the term denotes “co-inherence” in the Triune Godhead which is exploding itself in its missional churning right through in the history.

Hinduism would narrate the inherent polyphony of Godhead in a metaphysical tapestry of *Sat-cit-ananda*: Godhead is Being, Consciousness and Bliss. The divine polyphony is not virtual or static but interactive, in a *sui generis creative playfulness*. The blissful synergy is the inner life of Hindu Trinitarian Godhead whereas love is the interior movement of the Christian understanding of the Godhead. Both love and bliss cannot but be ever in a creative, and innovative playfulness outstripping the holy aloofness and loneliness. Playfulness is ever creative, innovative, missional, and visional and the trifold congruent missions churned in love according to the Biblical understanding of Godhead syncs with the blissful synergy of Sat-Cit-Ananda. Therefore, the God-Head as interpreted both in

Christianity and Hinduism seems neither platonic fixed, eternal "Forms" and "Ideas" nor Scholastic pure actuality (*actus purus*) with no potential for change but ever indulging in pluralistic and manifold epiphanies through the Incarnate immanence of Word and in the inscrutable ways of the Spirit *ad infinitum*.

The whole existence is the epiphany of the polyphonic Godhead. As in the dynamic of mutual co-inherence in the triune God, there is an inherent vivacious harmony permeating the fabric of the whole existence, though the reality is ineffably divergent, diverse, ambivalent, and ambiguous. The bewildering polyphonic and heterogeneous text and texture of Reality can never be reduced to a homogeneous, monolithic and immutable monad. The exuberance of reality fundamentally subsists and explodes in its manifoldness in the infinite space and infinitude. It has always been so without a beginning and it will be ever so without an end.

Strikingly, in this immense multiverse of borderless longitudinal, altitudinal, and latitudinal space, there is neither a north pole nor a south pole nor an absolute centre per se. The centre is of a perspective or attitude, or a predicate or postulate. Each subject is ultimately the centre even geographically because one bridges oneself from one's subjective core to the frontier-less, incomprehensible vast and wide space which has no depth or height per se though experientially different. The very idea of space and time is relative and relational in the Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Existence is simultaneity and harmony cultured in correlations, mutual coherence and dialogue. The idea of an absolute centre to which the entire multi-universe is configured in centripetal flow is only a human construct. This multi-universe is more an equitable texture of communion of beings enabling and ennobling the uniqueness and universality of each being simultaneously. It is more a harmony, symphony and holograph of consistent and continuous mutations and permutations of diverse life forces. There is always the happenstance between the phenomenal and noumenal. It is a vibrant juxtaposition of subjectivity and objectivity. It is like an ocean in which waves exist in the ocean and, simultaneously the ocean wants waves to manifest itself; thereby ocean and waves inflow mutually and a munificent communion happens in a playful exuberance in which the identities of the both are sustained in equity; it is more of perennial harmony of inclusion rather than a unity in terms of a centre constructed through the epistemic of exclusion. It is a network of 'power-points' without binding circumstances; it is an immense spatial connect without boundaries.

Existence is and ever will be the vivacious and exuberant epiphany of the polyphonic communion of Godhead.

3.1. Processual Harmony of Godhead

Polyphonic God cannot but subsist in an existential and processual harmony. The innate dynamic of harmony in the polyphonic texture is never inert and sterile but it is simultaneously existential and processual as we intuit into the self-revelation of God in the burning bush to Moses: "I am who I am" (Ex 3:14). Meister Eckhart delineates God's name in the ambit of his dialectic of *exitus-redditus*. "The repetition (of "I am" twice) indicates a turning of Being Itself in Itself, and above itself and yet remaining and being fixed. Yet it indicates also such a boiling (*bullitio*) up and pouring out of itself, scalding, and melting and bubbling itself within itself, light penetrating light, itself whole penetrating the whole itself."² Rudolf Otto describes the Eckhartian dialectic of emanation and return through the metaphor of a wheel rolling out of itself, from inward to outward and back again. "God is, in Himself, tremendous life movement. Out of undifferentiated unity, He enters the multiplicity . . . Out of this, He returns, back into the eternal original unity. (The river flows into itself)."³

Likewise, Hinduism also envisages a processual logarithm in the life of Godhead. As the Upanishads say, God (Brahman) creates the world just as a spider spins its web and withdraws it in a cyclic, spiral movement; thereby the cosmic cycles of creation (*Srishti*), preservation (*Sthithi*), and dissolution (*Laya/Samhara*) are choreographed.⁴ The very word Brahman comes from *Brh* which means "to grow, to expand." Bhagavath Gita masterfully articulates the eternal and creative movement of the Godhead: "Curving back within myself I create again and again."⁵ Again, this processual outpouring is mystically mused in the Isha Upanishad's *Purna Mantra*, which sees Existence as a processual movement from fullness to fullness in fullness in a harmonious symphony.

²The original reference of this Latin writing is missing. see Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East, and West*, 189.

³ Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, 188.

⁴ *Mundaka Upanishad* 1.1.7; "As the spider moves along the thread (it produces), and as from a fire tiny sparks fly in all directions, so from this Self emanate all organs, all worlds, all gods, all beings". *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 2.1.20

⁵ *The Bhagavad Gita* 9: 8.

The whole multiverse is a narrative of the processual communion in the Godhead. The polyphonic and inter-connected reality is processual and ever-evolving through mutations and permutations; it is never static and stagnant. To be is to be processual and anything which is not a process is only a conjecture, not a fact. It is our experience that the world in which we live is one of birth, growth, decay, and renaissance. Whitehead, the proponent of Process Philosophy would say that the temporal process is a "transition" from entity to another. Entities are momentary events and they come and go.⁶ Buddha's theory of impermanence of all phenomena (*anitya*) would concur with Whitehead's process theology. Buddhism would say that everything that caused, conditioned, or created is in a constant state of flux. The *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* says: "All conditioned things are impermanent; strive on with diligence."⁷

Judeo-Christian vision God is coterminous with historical process through covenantal relationship and the Biblical dispensation of Economy of Salvation is processual movement from Creation to Eschaton geared by God who is immersive in the historical process and journeys with the humankind right through. The processual dimension of Godhead is not speculative and abstract but historical dialoguing and journeying with the humankind and staying put in its struggles, showing solidarity with the marginalized especially through the Incarnate, and the Holy Spirit, and thus bringing about the reign of God right in the historical process rather than rejecting this world and ferrying the humankind to heaven. God continues to love this world in spite of 'sin' and 'darkness' and prolongs the incarnational process through the dispensation of the Spirit (*Missio Spiritus*).

Both in Christianity and Buddhism the 'world' (*samsara*) of 'old age, disease and death is verily the way of realisation (nirvana) so much so that 'way' itself becomes the 'truth'. In the mystery of the 'cross' the death is conquered through death, a death celebrated in the vicarious love. It implies that this 'passing' in the transient (*anitya*) world is transformed into 'Passover' (*Pasqua*) of love, sharing and service and thus 'way' becomes redemptive and rightly the means of awakening (salvation) in virtue of itself. The 'suffering' (*dhukha*) is encountered and realised in love, compassion and joy (*mudita*) at its source and

⁶ See, John B. Cobb Jr and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, Louisville-London: The Westminster John Knox Press, 1976.

⁷ *Digha Nikaya* 16.

right in this world of 'sin and darkness,' and thus 'transience is transcended! The very meaning of Christology is that 'death is conquered in and through 'death' itself but in a sublime logarithm scripted in Jesus' Gospel of love (Heb. 2:14-15).

3.2. Communal Harmony of the Godhead

The epiphany of polyphonic and processual God cannot but be communion of love or bliss *per se*, which makes God processual *de facto*. St. John says that "God is love" (1Jn 4:8) and "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16). The inherent synergy of love in the Godhead cannot but spill over in creation and history in a covenantal narrative in which God becomes coterminous with history, and volunteers to be the Immanuel.

In the Biblical dispensation, the whole creation is envisioned and choreographed firstly within the compass of Trinitarian Love; thereby, the economy of salvation is engineered and accomplished in the vicarious love manifested and realised in the Christ event, and continues through the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The prime pneumatic incarnation took place in the Godhead in the self-love of the Father. St. Paul says that Jesus Christ is the "first-born" over all creation (Col 1:15) and is the last Adam (1Cor 15:45). He further says Christ is the 'image and likeness' of God's own consciousness and all things were created through him and by him (Col 1:16). Jesus is the divine agent, means and ultimate purpose of the whole existence. Everything is configured and reconciled in through Christ and for Christ's glory (Heb1:2).

As St John says the whole mystery and mysticism of Existence abides in the fact that God loved us first in Christ. (1Jn4:190). Therefore, the whole Existence is Christological and its grammar is the vicarious love churned in restorative justice fostering and sustaining the harmony of existence. The whole argument is that the polyphonic and processual Godhead is not an immutable and impassionate Monad but an indomitable life-energy from which the whole Existence evolves (Incarnation), and to which the pilgrimage of being involutes (Resurrection) in a consummate way after the pattern of Christic Wheel: "I come from the Father and go back to the Father" (Jn 16:28). The whole creation and our own life continue to participate in the ever-happening paschal movement of 'birth of being' and 'rebirth of being' in the Christological economy of salvation.

Thus, the whole grammar of existence is the vicarious love manifested in the Christ event. Godhead as *Saccitananda* in the Hindu

dispensation vibes with Trinitarian economy of salvation. It is not a monolithic ideal but an inexhaustible energy of blissful communion consciousness. The phenomenal world is the playful epiphany (*lila*) of the bliss of the Godhead. The bliss is justified in virtue of itself; Bliss is playful energy (*maya*); it is sufficient in itself and by itself, and it cannot but diffuse itself as its ontic nature is like fragrance spreading its cologne effortlessly. While Christianity says that love is the inner nature of God, Hinduism would see God's nature as bliss; both love and bliss are synergic life energy, ever processual, creative, and innovative, indulging in the wisdom of vulnerability.

In sum, it can be stated that the whole Reality is a web and vibe in the divine polyphonic, processual, and vicarious network of empathy. The question of identity that has always been the prime question must be resolved in the network of relationships through an epistemic of inclusion rather than of exclusion. It is Jesus' vision and praxis of the Kingdom of God which is knit in peace, righteousness, and the bliss of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the whole existence spins out as a story ever unfolding in the polyphonic, processual and communitarian life of the Godhead.

Textured in the commune of Godhead, the polyphonic existence is a relational and relative. Harmony of life is woven and churns out in the ecosystem of the given network of relations; identity of a being must rightly be constructed in the web of relationship. It is existential and ontological exigent '*da-sein*.' Thereby the being must constantly construct its identity in the web and vibe of relationships, absorbing and approximating the ambiguities and ambivalences of plurality of existence *sui generis*. Uniqueness does not abide in an exclusive aloofness and ideal holism in an inter-connected multi-universe but must be sought right in the network of relationships. The whole universe is an ecological harmony which churns out and evolves in a profound tolerance absorbing and approximating inherent diversities and divergence in a web of relations. Harmony is the grammar of the Existence. It is existential and experiential right in the relationships but the idea of unity is only a human construct; it is an abstraction and a utopian ideology. Though it looks ideal and fascinating, it entails the negation of the inherent harmony of heterogeneity of Reality as it insists on homogeneity eventually; thereby, uniformity is mistaken as unity.

As Reality exists in a network of relationships promoting harmony, it is always and ever relational and relative. Karl Marx famously stated

that “the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations.”⁸ Thereby human nature can never be fixed or fixated; it is continuously formed by social, historical, and economic conditions. Human beings are fundamentally social beings. Jesus’ Gospel is more a social gospel of justice, love, and bliss than a system which insists on homogeneity. Reality is ever and always dialogue *per se* as well as in dialogue *sui generis*. Interfaith dialogue must be appropriated to the ecosystem of ontic dialogue of existence at the Ground of Being so that harmony of life is fostered in justice, respect, dignity, and sharing rather than in musing about a utopian unity. Each religion must find its unique identity in the network of diverse religious pursuits by dialoguing with them, not by indulging in a delusional ideal of unitive holism but right in dialogue itself incorporating all ambiguities and ambivalences and transforming dialogue as religious consciousness and experience in virtue of itself.

The very idea of unity is misplaced and is a misconception as the reality is ontically polyphonic. The bewildering polyphonic text and texture of Reality can never be reduced to a monolithic and immutable monad. The exuberance of reality fundamentally subsists in its plurality. Though the Reality is ineffably divergent, diverse, ambivalent, and ambiguous there is an inherent harmony permeating in the fabric of existence. Strikingly, in this immense multiverse of borderless longitudinal, altitudinal, and latitudinal space there is neither north pole nor south pole nor an absolute centre *per se*. The centre is of a perspective or attitude, or a predicate or postulate. Each subject is a centre even geographically because one bridges oneself from one’s subjective core to the frontier-less, incomprehensible vast and wide space which has neither depth, nor width nor height in its immense vastness and immensity though experientially different. The idea of an absolute centre to which the entire multi-universe is configured in centripetal flow is only an elusive human construct. This multi-universe is more an equitable texture of communion of beings

⁸The statement is the sixth of Karl Marx’s, *Theses on Feuerbach*. Originally, it was a private jotting (1845). They appeared in print in 1988 when Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. Marx critiqued Feuerbach’s understanding of human being: “Human essence as a static, internal biological or spiritual quality common to all individuals. But Karl Marx argued: “The essence of man [woman] is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations. Prior, in *The Holy Family* (1844). See, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holy_Family_\(book\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holy_Family_(book))

enabling and ennobling the uniqueness and universality of each being simultaneously. It is more a harmony, symphony and holograph of consistent and continuous mutations and permutations of diverse life forces. There is a vital happenstance between the phenomenal and noumenal. It is a vibrant juxtaposition of subjectivity and objectivity. It is like an ocean in which waves exist in the ocean and, simultaneously the ocean wants waves to manifest itself; thereby ocean and waves inflow mutually and a munificent communion happens in a playful exuberance; thereby, the uniqueness of the both are sustained in equity; it is more of perennial harmony of inclusion rather than a unity in terms of a centre achieved through the epistemic of exclusion. It is a network of 'power-points' which have no circumstances; it is an immense spatial connect without boundaries.

Moreover, Reality exists neither in binaries nor in a centre but in the 'middle' which is not a hotch-potch convenient compromised sterile points, but the binaries are appropriated so much so that they are transformed by giving birth to new syntheses, mutations and permutations; thereby new pathways are choreographed; new "fusions of horizons" (Gadamer) happen and novel 'network of intelligibility' (Paul Ricoeur) are constructed so that the Reality maintains itself in the processual unfolding ever deepening and widening its bandwidth. The very 'path' is then 'truth,' 'life' and 'awakening.'

The 'middle' is the inherent 'Tao' which is the 'grammar,' 'logos' 'dharma,' bonding all divergences (*yang and yin*) and ambivalence of plurality of existence and transforming the whole Reality ever creative and innovative. Chinese would say the 'Middle-Path' is a Golden Mean which configures and sustains the pluriform reality ever golden, and live. The 'middle' is *Advaita* in Hinduism; *Advaita* is neither 'one' nor 'two' but creative, playful tension or mutual flow of 'one' and 'many;' it is not a monolithic and immutable 'centre' of unity but a texture of creative and blissful communion in which nothing is excluded or alienated; on the contrary, the reality blossoms and becomes '*purnam*.' From a Christian point of view, the 'middle' is not diplomatic and constructed Pax Roma, but 'vicarious love' absorbing and transforming all the evils and sins of the world and engendering a new jurisprudence of reconciliation and restorative justice. In the process, the 'cross' becomes 'plus,' the source of 'New Light and New Life.' Reality is ever synergetic *Missio Spiritus* which is unknown and even unknowable but ever enchanting, mystical, and ecstatic.

Besides, the concept of unity is more of a construct of rational and practical mind (*cogito*) but harmony is more of 'consciousness' which is all inclusive, open-ended, and welcoming. Again, under the clout of unity, there is always a chance that multifarious and multi-layered Reality is under the threat of reduction to a monolithic and normative centre so much so that its vivacity and vitality are denied and drained. It is a reality bite that the idea of unity is oft confused with uniformity whether be it political, or ideological or religious dispensations; thus the 'centre of unity' indulges in a compulsive and obsessive fascist epistemics contradicting the very dialogical text and texture of existence. The praxis of dialogue nurtures and fosters a network of tolerance, *ahimsa* (non-violence), *sarvodaya* (welfare of all), *maitri* (amity), *mudita* (happiness), *karuna* (compassion), and fraternity.

4. Existence per se and de facto, Processual Polyphonic Harmony in the Vision of Reality

"The New Vision of Reality," unveiled by the different branches of Modern Science, syncs with the polyphonic, processual, and relational harmony within the inner life of the Godhead, as discussed above. The Modern Physics interprets the manifest multiverse as a unified field of energies. The Physicist David Bohm speaks of the 'implicate order' which is the unmanifest enfolded reality in which every spec of the multiverse is interconnected contrasting the 'explicate order' of the manifest pluralist world. He introduces the dynamic "holomovement" which is a continuous flux in which everything is enfolded and unfolded. It means that the whole is contained in each part like in a hologram. Hence, we are living in a universe which is co-ordinated and integrated as a whole. Though Bohm's views are essentially philosophical they sync with the Modern Physics.⁹ Einstein's theory of Relativity further ratifies the Implicate Order. Also, Quantum Field Theory holds that the universe is permeated by fields of electrons and photons, like waves (quanta: pockets of energy) in the ocean, rather than a cluster of independent particles. Even the new molecular Biology speaks of 'morphogenetic fields' of formative causation countering Darwinian evolutionary development of living organisms in terms of random mutations and natural selection.¹⁰ Rescinding from going further to the particulars of the new vision of

⁹See Ibid 19, See David Bohm, *Wholeness, and the Implicate Order*, 1980.

¹⁰ Rupert Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life: Hypothesis of Formative Causation*, New York: Tarcherperigree, 1982.

Reality by the modern science as hinted above,¹¹ it can verily be stated that we are now living in a new world radically different from the classicist world vision of absolutes and immutable concepts and Newtonian classical physics of "absolute space" and "absolute time." Radical paradigm shifts are happening in the hermeneutics of Reality inciting cascading impact on all aspects and layers of human life, including religious talk. Modern Physics, Quantum Mechanics, Quantum Computing, Quantum World, Digital World, Genomics, Deep Research, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and General Intelligence (GI), Space Tech, Eco Tech, New Cosmology so on and so forth interpret an entirely innovative and alternative ecosystem of the Existence. Religions cannot remain aloof from these phenomenal changes happening in the world of science and technology. They question scientifically the very founding principles of religions. For example, the Christian Economy of Salvation is fundamentally textured in the conception of absolute time and absolute space in which the ecosystem of salvation history unfolds from definitive Creation to Eschaton. An absolute historical process is not tenable at all when there are no absolute time and space and the reality is a timeless and spaceless flow without a beginning and end?

What is needed is new imaginations and new configurations of the very idea of God and innovative pathways of religion vibing with new visions of Reality. The new vision of reality unveils an inherent cosmic tapestry and offers an existential mandate for the praxis of Inter-Faith Dialogue as a way of harmony. First and foremost, the new vision and interpretation of Reality discerns that Existence is ontically polyphonic, processual, inter-connected, frontier-less and a continuum. Secondly, the texture of Existence is a harmony of interactive communion rather than unity centred around an immutable centre; it is rather a borderless network of implicate order; thereby, the uniqueness of each being is constructed through inclusive epistemics rather than an exclusive logic. Thirdly, Existence is a web, wave, and way so much so that utter objectivity is misnomer in the understanding of Quantum World;¹² hence, reality unfolds in the

¹¹ See chapter 01, Bede Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality, Western Science, Eastern Mysticism and Christian Faith*, New Delhi: Harper Collins, 1992.

¹²The quantum world (of atoms, subatomic particles viz: photons, neutrons, electrons) refers to a world of probabilities, superpositions (being in multiple states at once) and wave-particle duality where particles can act as both waves and entities. This quantum layer configures and governs the entire existence demonstrating that matter and energy exist in discrete "quanta." It explains the phenomena like radioactivity and is the basis for modern technologies. For example, Photons are

inviolable correlation between the subject and object; there is no any empirical world standalone out there. Fourthly, this fundamental harmony of existence is textured in the invisible universe (dark matter and dark energy) which would be around 95 percent or so, according to Quantum Mechanics. Moreover, the core principle of Quantum World, the “Uncertainty Principle”¹³ says that reality is beyond all conceptual or empirical definitions. What is needed today is an intuitive quantum consciousness which churns out in a mysticism buffered by science. Newton and Einstein had greatest discoveries through pure intuition. The scientific discoveries are worked through hypothesis to start with as religions are textured in faith concepts. Therefore, science and religion are operational through intuitive dynamics and are envisioned through the unmanifest. What is interesting is that these scientific predicates and faith postulates procure a mystical synchronicity in the new Modern Physics of Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, the new Cosmogeny and Genomics.¹⁴ What we find in the new vision of reality is a bond between religious mysticism and the empirical virtuality which is now more real and actual.

This reminds us of the Perennial world of seers and mystics. In the Ancient World, all existence is a divine harmony suffused with the sapiential wisdom of “wholly is holy.” The Ancient Man intuited aura around every spec of existence; the whole creation was a ‘burning bush’ and ‘holy-ground’ and was an epiphany of the Creator. In the sapiential world, the phenomenon was equally noumenon and the idea of holy was glowing and throbbing ubiquitously. It was a sacred world. Today, the mainstream religions are estranged from their Sapiential Wisdom because of excessive conceptualisations, and cultic and ritual practices. The present Gen-C while searching the religious core of life are toying with multiple belonging as they become comfortable with tribal religiousness which is more ecological and cosmic unlike the mainstream religious notional constructs; the body

fundamental quanta (smallest units) of electromagnetic radiation (including visible light, radio waves, and X-rays; they are massless, chargeless and travel at the speed of light in a vacuum; they exhibit wave-particle duality: behaving as both waves and particles simultaneously. They are carriers of the electromagnetic force and act like energy packets; they are emitted or absorbed by atoms and molecules.

¹³Heisenberg’s indeterminacy principle regarding the position and momentum of the particle.

¹⁴ See, Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics, An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*, Boston: New Science Library, 1985; *The Hidden Connections, a Science for Sustainable Living*, London: Flamingo, 2003.

tattoos, tribal ornaments, and colourful costumes with sharp strips and textures speak volumes subtly of the return to Perennial Wisdom among the youngsters. Moreover, the earth spirituality owing to the resurgent ecological awareness and profound popularity of Eastern spiritual pathways of yoga, zen etc., are signs of the revival of the lost sight of the Ancient Wisdom. The Modern Sciences like Quantum Mechanics, genomics are gearing us to the forlorn and forgotten Perennial wisdom of Ancient man's vision; there is a pronounced metaphysics in the modern science as it intuits unmanifest Dark Matter and Dark Energy as foundation of the manifest multiverse;¹⁵ thereby an ecological mysticism is becoming a spiritual coordinate in the emerging religiousness which makes the religious boundaries seamless and diffusive; the pronounced vision of harmony and holiness in the cosmic wisdom is being unveiled in the collective consciousness and conscience. Paradoxically, the present humanity is rediscovering the forlorn Ancient Wisdom through the agency of Modern Science and its interpretations. The roots of all religions are the Sapiential wisdom, which interprets the whole multiverse as a divine milieu and the whole creation as a theophany; thereby, every speck of this whole existence is a sacrament that binds human consciousness and conscience to the Author of Life, despite the diversities and ambivalences in the phenomenal realm of human pursuits. Hence, dialogue of religions must ironically recapture the forgotten sapiential wisdom with the agency of modern science and must steer humanity to harmony of life

5. Dialogue as the Religious Praxis for Harmony of Life

The potential harmony inherent in the polyphonic, processual, and interconnected Existence must be the comprehensive field and resources of the praxis of dialogue so much so that the very dialogue churns into a religious experience in virtue of itself. Consequently, dialogue evolves into a fundamental referral of a theology of religions which is very critical and pivotal for an enduring dialogue. At the same time, Theology of religions cannot be a notional construct but fundamentally experiential and existential and must be crafted in the multifaith *sensus fidelium* (sense of the faith), which is already

¹⁵Though invisible, the universe is made of Dark Matter and Dark Energy which account for about 95% of the cosmos of ordinary matter, and stars, planets, plants, and animals make up only 5%. Dark matter provides extra gravity to hold galaxies together, while dark energy is a repulsive force causing the universe's expansion to accelerate, acting as an opposite to gravity's pull. <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=dark+energy+and+dark+matter>.

happening especially among the C-Gen. A dialogue choreographed in the theophany of God in the very polyphonic and processual network of the universe of faiths must be the fundamental theological constituent for an inclusive faith.

In this process the pivotal and all comprehensive concern seems to be the question of justice. In simple terms justice is just relationships in which the claims of the partners must be recognised, appreciated, and accepted in an inclusive epistemics. Each religious pursuit has a social, cultural, political, and even geographical claims and validation; be it Hinduism, or Buddhism or Islam; all religions embody inviolable uniqueness, and universality. They have theological legacy and spiritual mandate; they have their own history, and tradition independent of other religious paths. Above all, there is living community for each religious pursuit. Moreover, all religions exist, move, and live in the Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient God who is unbound and can never be frozen and fossilised in one religion's construct, creed, and cult. In this context, the pedagogy of Michel Foucault will be insightful to facilitate the process of dialogue.

Foucault would say that for the polemicist, "the person he confronts is not a partner in search for the truth but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful, and whose very existence constitutes a threat. For him, then the game consists not of recognising this person as a subject having the right to speak but of abolishing him as interlocutor, from any possible dialogue; and his final objective will be not to come as close as possible to a difficult truth but to bring about the triumph of the just because he has been manifestly upholding from the beginning. The polemicist relies on a legitimacy that his adversary is by definition denied." Thus, Polemics is an obstacle to the search for the truth and dialogue is the only veritable alternative of polemics. Instead, Foucault proposes the hermeneutic of 'problematization' to take on the polemics prevailing in all the realms of life.¹⁶ It implies posing problems to religion, politics, and judiciary, thereby '*a posteriori*' solutions and resolutions are preferred to '*a priori*' predestined answers and referrals. Problematization is akin to experience and to the existential and futuristic concerns. It is fundamentally a dialogic process which respects and recognises the

¹⁶Ibid See, Polemics, Politics and Problematizations: An interview conducted by Paul Rabinow in May 1984.

— Foucault, Michel. "Polemics, Politics and Problematizations." Interview by P. Rabinow, May 1984, In *Essential Works of Foucault* Vol. 1. The New Press, 1998.

polyphony in the realms of religion, politics, and judiciary right in the existential situations. Hermeneutics of Problematisation makes dialogue open, non-conclusive and non-judgemental; thereby truth is experienced and celebrated as processual and paradoxical transcending the binaries found in religion, politics, and jurisprudence.

In this context, we must increasingly imagine the 'future of religion' and 'future of God' rather than being arrested by a God of the past. Edward Schillebeeckx speaks of "God, the Future of Man." He sees God not a static historical past event but a promise and horizon of humanity's potential. 'God' is visualised as a source of hope in a secular world appropriating various advancements happening in diverse realms of cultural perceptions, social values related to social justice, gender equity, political perceptions of a welfare society, human rights, and the emerging global order. It necessitates a theology of experience as "fundamental theology" to take on modern questions about faith and life and its meanings to live and act in a better world rather than lagging and lulling in the forlorn Aristotelean immutable notions and idioms.¹⁷

Today, for example, Quantum Physics and Artificial Intelligence are unveiling entirely novel narrative in the hermeneutics of Reality, compelling revisits and revisions of the existing paradigms and perspectives. The past perceptions and patterns are not resourceful or rather incapable of fathoming the immense scope hidden in the future if the Informatic Age continues the present elan and panache. Unlike the given past, the future space seems immensely potential and promising; it necessitates the history of the future must be prioritised by the history of the future especially in the dialogue of religions in the light of the immense potential hidden in the ever deepening and widening bandwidth of the ongoing Informatics, be it Artificial Intelligence or Quantum Science; the range and scope of the ongoing revolution of knowledge is immense and unfathomable in the whole historiography of humankind. The volume of Informatics, the astronomical speed of data analysis, numerous AI and GI platforms, media connections, the ongoing knowledge revolutions daily, and the mushrooming growth of Startups are all beyond traditional references and radars of human imagination. Sources and resources of knowledge are distributed and diversified but simultaneously inter-

¹⁷See Edward Schillebeeckx/s, *God, the Future of Man*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1968.

disciplinary fusions and disseminations are happening; thereby the depth and bandwidth of knowledge revolution is widened immeasurably and is happening beyond hitherto known frames and norms. This phenomenon of knowledge revolution in a network of various disciplines is the new normal of history that new narratives are written and rewritten on a daily basis. The ever-expanding platforms and deepening discourses in the public square are continually challenging the established patterns and normative hypotheses of organised religions.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the ongoing inter-religious dialogues are still dense with unhealed memories of the violent and militant missions of the past. It is advocated that religious dialogue be more futuristic and existential if it is to be competent and credible in today's ethos and pathos. Instead of defending the history which is mired with colonialism, militant missions, violence, vandalism, apartheid, inquisition, slavery, crusades, etc., the Church must engage with potentials of the *aposteriori* revelations through various agencies like new sciences, cultural and social interactions, mass movements, and mass media. A way of harmony integrating and appropriating especially the new interpretations and vision of Reality and preferably seeing God as the horizon of future rather than the God of the past, would inaugurate a novel ecosystem, choreography, paradigm, and narrative of the praxis of dialogue leading to harmony of life solidly crafted in a creative and inclusive religious consciousness and conscience. Harmony of life must be the new horizon as well as path of theologisation and spirituality so that the Gospel procures new range, scape and scope in a polyphonic, dialogical and all-inclusive socio-cultural texture. A theology which fosters a faith seeking harmony of life nurtures a convincing, competitive and credible ecosystem well integrated in the present and future pathos and ethos. Such a theology cannot but sync with the unfolding polyphonic, dialogical and all-inclusive religiousness. A faith seeking harmony of life must be the fundamental theological text and path of building a World-Church which is fundamentally ecumenical and will always be in dialogue with the various religious pursuits, God's creation, social movements, cultural flows, and revolutions happening in science and technology so much so that the Church nurtures a corporate identity through an engaging presence in the joys and sorrows of humanity right in the hub and web of the world.