

Love of Knowledge and Knowledge of Love: The Philosophy of Raymond Panikkar

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1. Introduction.

Panikkar will be satisfied with nothing less than whole, *purnam*. This *purnam* is *ekam* and *ekam* is *advidyam*. And *advidyam* is an all embracing multiplicity. Nothing is outside this plurality.¹ All things will acquire a unique role. This vision of Panikkar is reflected also in his philosophy. His philosophy, multi-voiced or rather pluridimensional, is the result of the East-West Philosophical blending.² In explicating, or rather, in deconstructing Panikkar's multi-voiced philosophy, the principle employed here is that of Panikkar's own dialogical dialogue. This dialogue, according to him, "must be capable of revealing the truth of respective philosophies not just expressing their formal correctness."³

2. Starting of Philosophy.⁴

When exposed to phenomenon man gazes on the reality. It is the starting point of philosophy. When one is exposed to reality two reactions will concomitantly follow. One is astonishment and the other is disillusionment. The West took the former (wonder) as the starting point of philosophy. Together with Plato and Aristotle man wonders at the phenomenon. The East took the latter (disillusionment) as the starting point of the philosophical activity. Together with Buddha and Sankara man is disillusioned by reality as it appears to him. The two fundamental phenomena of human experience (sorrow and death), do not let man deceive himself about ultimate reality.

Whether one is astonished or disillusioned one thing is common. Things are not what we think they are. That means the fundamental attitude--the perceiver's objectivity--is the same in both the Western and Eastern traditions. The tension and the rupture between thinking and being appear. The tension arises precisely because one expected something other than what is. Philosophy is coming out of a revolt. Man is not ready to accept the things as they are. He wants to wonder or to be disillusioned. Philosophy makes man restless. This restlessness is also the cause for further philosophizing and further progress of the humanity. Philosophy causes restlessness because of the difference between thinking and being. And it is philosophy which claims to mend the difference. It is philosophy which alienates Man from his environment. For it makes him aware of his distance from the environment. And at the same time philosophy offers Man the possibility of overcoming this alienation. Philosophical awareness makes us conscious of reality at the cost of differentiating us from it, and simultaneously offering to reunite us with the real. The solution offered by the philosophy of one generation will be questioned by the philosophy of another generation. And it will put forward its own solution. Thus philosophy is on pilgrimage. In the course of ongoing pilgrimage philosophy will develop the culture of the humanity.

The pilgrim philosophy must be a holistic philosophy. Nothing is outside the questioning of philosophy. All that is human and phenomenal (mystery), thinking and being is within the span of philosophy.

3. What is Philosophy?

Pythagoras, the one who used the word philosophy for the first time, distinguished three types of people: those who loved pleasure, those who loved activity and those who loved wisdom. The love of knowledge has taken an extreme position in the Western thinking. After Descartes European philosophy was concerned almost exclusively with ideas.⁵ It is just like the pathetic situation of the young man who had written love letters for years to his girl friend. But the girl's love gradually turned toward the postman who brought the letters and she eventually married him. When philosophy found itself no longer in immediate contact with reality, it delivered itself constantly to the intermediary, the *logos*, and finally the *logos*. Philosophy wanted to bridge the gap between thinking and being and thereby to bring salvation to humanity through knowledge, the *logos*. But it has directed its attention so exclusively to the intermediary that it finally identified itself with the bearer of the news about reality, the *logos*.

Today philosophy is concerned almost exclusively with the *logos*. *Logos* was deified by philosophy. Philosophers have forgotten the cult, the game, the dance, the myth and the rite. *Verbum entis* (Metaphysics) has been turned to *verbum mentis* (Epistemology), to *verbum mundi* and finally to *verbum hominis*. This *verbum hominis* became the ultimate criterion for truth.

That means truth and *logos* have been almost identified. In its exaggerated emphasis on *logos* Philosophy forgot the intimate relationship between truth and being. As the reason got upper hand in philosophy, and myth was ignored, as a consequence Being was forgotten.⁶

Truth dwells primarily not in my intellect but in my being. The intellect can grasp only what belongs to its level, the logical or essential aspect of truth, not its existential or ontological core. Therefore philosophy is not love of knowledge, ideas or study of truth. It is the realization of one's truth, one's person.⁷

Often in the past (Greek philosophers, the Christian Fathers of the Church, the thinkers of the Middle Ages, and the Arabic, Chinese, Jewish and Indian Philosophy) it was considered that the Queen of all human forms of knowledge (the ultimate Wisdom about the Universe, including ourselves and God), was Theology, which often they called philosophy or sometimes Metaphysics (Aristotle). This Wisdom, Theology or Philosophy, *Brahmajñāna* or *darsana*, was an integral insight, a complete vision of the ultimate truth of human existence. Philosophy is not to be considered as the discovery of Reality by means of our reason, but as the integral Wisdom concerning the problem of existence. Here reason, though essential, is only a part of the human instrument to face the demands of Being and our participation in it.⁸ That is why Philosophy in India, for example, intends to be reasonable, but not a simple rational speculation.⁹

4. Holistic Philosophy.

Philosophy has to be viewed as the integration of the body, of society, of the cosmos with the infinite. These three gifts of philosophy have not been sufficiently considered in the past. Now the integration should be a common philosophical task accepting *logos*, *mythos* and *pneuma*.

i) Acceptance of the Logos.

We cannot do without the *logos*.¹⁰ *Logos* could be given up only in favour of the one-sided irrationalism, emotionalism, fideism. *Logos* plays a double role in philosophy: that of illuminating and clarifying; and that of criticising, testing and controlling.¹¹ Reason offers the negative criterion for truth: Reason only checks, controls, gives us certain proofs and, when successful, it formulates. Something which does not pass the sieve of reason or contradicts the principle of non-contradiction, cannot be true.¹² If anything contradicts the *logos*, it cannot be

accepted.¹³ At the same time we cannot do with the logos alone.¹⁴ The logos, however, must recognize its lower and upper limits.¹⁵ For reason is not that which reveals, or discovers, or puts us in immediate contact with reality.¹⁶ It dares not to suppress either mythos or pneuma, which are hidden from the logos.¹⁷ As the ,Rg Veda says:

The Word is measured in four quarters,

The Wise who possess insight know these four divisions.

Three quarters, concealed in secret, cause no movement.

The fourth is the quarter which is spoken by Men. (I, 164, 45).

Logos is *vāc*, *śabda*, *brahman*, sound. Speaking is a hermeneutics, an expression, an icon, a form. That itself shows that there is *anāhatanāda* hidden.

ii) *Taking up the Mythos*

Together with Logos, Mythos coexist in philosophy.¹⁸ The philosopher is a "philomythes" (Aristotle), a lover of the myths. For in the myths the meaning of life and the idea of being are crystallized in a popular way.¹⁹ Philosophy is not only entry into the thought, but also into the unthought. Man unearths meaning from mythos per logos for a particular context. Still myth is not exhausted. The myth will be there for the next generation when that generation questions the myth's past meaning acquired by the logos for the then particular context. For the mythical always runs its course above time and space. It is the myth of Sun, for example, that made humanity in one particular historical context to worship the sun. In another context the same myth of the sun will bring about the Newtonian principle. By this the myth of the sun is not exhausted. It is up to the coming generation to examine the sun myth with logos in their own particular historical context, and thereby to improve upon the Newtonian findings.²⁰ Still there will be always something unthinkable in the sun.

iii) Reception of the Pneuma²¹

Not only does the unthought (*mythos*) together with the thought (*logos*) belong to philosophy, but also the unthinkable (*pneuma*). One can neither think on this pneuma nor leave it as unthought, but one must receive it as the never thinkable. The unthinkable does not exist in itself as a fixed dimension. This unthinkable gives futurity and hope to humanity. Receiving the *pneuma* is a permanent passage, a *pascha*, or a pilgrimage. The pilgrimage from mythos through logos to pneuma is endless.

5. *Exclaiming at the Mystery*²²

The *logos*, the *mythos* and the *pneuma* will converge into the *mysterion*. Panikkar says that he can say nothing about mystery because there is nothing to say. Panikkar may be hinting at the fact that when we have *darsana*²³ of the mystery, we can only exclaim and wonder at the Truth, the Mystery. Kaṭha Upanishad says:

"Neither by the word nor by the spirit

nor by sight can he ever be reached.

How, then, can he be realized

except by exclaiming: 'He is!'" (KāṭhUp.VI, 12).

The exclamation is at the "He" the Subject.

6. Truth is the Subject

For Aristotle philosophy is the study of Truth.²⁴ The difference between logical truth and metaphysical truth lies in the fact that the locus of the former is judgement, whereas that of the latter is found in the thing itself. Truth is more than a concept. Truth lies in reality itself. Panikkar clarifies truth by bringing the traditional Indian classical snake and rope analogy: "This is a rope" is the truth. By rejecting this proposition we do not destroy the truth. "This" remains true independently of human judgement. The nature of the truth will be the nature of "this".²⁵ The meaning of the world is not that I may know the sense of it, but its very existence. The meaning of the world is the world itself and not my knowledge of that meaning.²⁶ Truth lies in the subject of a sentence. The truth is the subject, "this".

Truth is God. God is the only absolute subject and the only absolute truth. Things are true in as far as they are objects to this subject. For they are not subjects to themselves, they do not give themselves their being. On the basis of the fact that they are objects of God, they become subjects only in relation to the objects which they generate, which they objectify, throw before themselves.

"This is a rope" is ultimately true not when I say it or in the sense in which I express it, but in as far as God expresses it, for His expression makes both the rope and the "this" that is a rope. When we say "this is a rope," we only discover that a rope is there and that our proposition is true. That is why the statement "this is a rope" is wrong if we consider "rope" the ultimate reality of "this". Likewise "I am I" will be ultimately true in as far as God expresses. Otherwise my ego, His thou, would not exist at all. The whole mystery of this world's existence consists in this, that He, the absolute I, says the "this" and "you". Of course He expresses it. This "I am I" is "I shall be I", "You will be that."²⁷

7. Partaking in the Truth, by being known

Truth, like being, is my goal. I must win the truth. When the temporalness is past, we shall be in a position to realize the full truth about ourselves; that is, the proper personal identity of His expression, "I am I". My ego will have grasped the truth and will simply answer -- for my being is only a divine answer -- "YOU", "You are," "You are the I," "You are I". My real personality, my true ego, is this "you" of yours. It is this you that I am.²⁸

The Logos is the You of the Father, so that ultimately our being is a partaking of the Logos.²⁹ Man is more than man. Man is a part of God. Man's dependence on God has something in common with that of the animals, plants and the earth. It is a cosmic bond with the Cause, Principle or Source of this very cosmos.³⁰ Whatever a being may be, it is only because it is *that*, Brahman. All that *is* really is only that under-structure, for only that is common to all. That is really the *all* and the real ground of everything (cf. *Atharva Veda*, X, 8, 2). The being is in all beings, yet does not rest in them (cf. *Gita*, IX, 4-5).³¹ In some way God and the world meet in the Logos.³²

I am not a subject, as He is, but I am a predicate, His predicate. The more I am Thou, the more true it will be that "I am I" and the closer I shall come to "Thou" and truly realize myself. Thus the truth of my being will grow. Man comes near to truth only to the extent that he *is* truth.

Truth is not something that we possess but something that possesses us or besets us, something which we find in our being. I approach real truth not through wisdom of knowing the One alone, but through a wisdom (or consciousness) of being known.³³

8. Existential Truth in Union

Absolute truth is one, which is absolute reality, the God. But existentially truth is not one. Truth is as manifold as the things that are. If truth is many, as are existing things, then it also has the metaphysical unity of existing things. According to St Thomas Aquinas everything is intelligible in so far as it is one. For he who does not understand the one, understands nothing.³⁴ All can say "I am I" only in relation to the absolute Truth. This is an inexpressible ontological relation between God who calls me and my being which is His call.

9. Truth is Relational and Personal³⁵

Truth brings about freedom and fulfilment (both in the East and West). This truth is not mere rightness of a proposition but it is an existential truth. In general, Greeks had the vision that man's fulfilment is by the union with the divinity, assimilation to being. But here begins Greek intellectualism. For to be united with being means to know being. Knowledge is precisely this mysterious assimilation, this union, between the knower and the known, between subject and object. The wise man is the seeker of truth,³⁶ for truth always liberates.³⁷ The wise man is he who works for the salvation of his soul.³⁸ The wise alone will be divinized and achieve immortality and being.³⁹ As a consequence philosophy has become a purely rational, or rather rationalistic, enquiry about Reality or the ultimate Reality. It is in fact an anti-philosophical conception of Philosophy.⁴⁰ For how can man by his knowing be sure of his salvation, his acceptance by the ultimate Subject?

10. Love of Wisdom and Wisdom of Love⁴¹

In the passionate love for Truth philosophers often forget the truth of love. Love not only ascends but also expects a response. Philosophers often forget the ultimate Subject's speaking. His speaking is the real truth. Truth always comes as a revelation. First we hear it, then we believe it, and finally we see it (St. Augustine). Through it God communicates himself to us and we rise to Him as persons. Philosophy is, because of the activity of the Subject. It is the love of the Subject, the unmoved mover, who brings perfection to the universe (Aristotle). Man's love of Truth (philosophy) comes out of the Subject's love for the perfection of the universe.⁴² *Karma* is the first principle of activity, the creative and procreative force leading the Supreme Being to come out of the closed circle of its own existence.⁴³ Hinduism will say that man is religious, not primarily because he discovers or recognizes his relationship with God, but because of the reality or the ground which makes such an awareness possible.⁴⁴ We are children of the divine Truth. Truth is the epiphany of being as existing and therefore the authentic road to being: being as manifestation of truth.⁴⁵

For our temporal being also truth is a manifestation, but for us it is equally the veil of existing things, the envelope under which we grasp being, as long as we have not reached our God-filled state. It is not a mere intellectual identification of "I" with "I" but an ontological descent - avatar - from "I" as "I".⁴⁶ When the "I" as "I" appears, that means when the subject comes, not just the logical subject of a predicate but simple as existing, then there is truth present: truth is being as being. We are, as far as we are truth, and meanwhile we are in the state of becoming as long as we are true. Truth is the horizon of being, the line of meeting of earth and heaven, man and God.⁴⁷

Philosophy as love of truth will aspire for union, because it is the nature of love to tend to have union with the beloved. Through love philosophy helps to realize the Truth, the Mystery, the Person. For truth of philosophers is not an amorphous God or Brahman, not a kind of sum total of the total being.⁴⁸ Panikkar may be intending to change the philosophical dictum of Descartes: "I think therefore I am", to "I love therefore I am". For love presupposes the relation with the Other and the relation from the part of the Other. This correction on western philosophy clarifies the Eastern *darsana* "*Aham Brahma asmi* therefore I am". Thus we come to the full meaning of the Pythagorean insight that philosophy is a way to achieve salvation, relation to the Transcendent.

¹Cf. R.P., *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), pp.35-39.

²R.P., "The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel - A Meditation on Non-Violence," *Cross-Currents* 29, (Summer, 1979), pp. 216, 221; R.P., "Hermeneutics of Comparative Religion: Paradigms and Models." *The Journal of Religious Studies* VI, (Spring, 1978), p. 45.

³R.P., "Hermeneutics of Religion...." *Religious Studies*, VI, 1978. p. 45-46.

⁴R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics: Cross-Cultural Studies*, (New York 1979), pp. 337-338.

⁵R.P., "The Existential Phenomenology of Truth," *Philosophy Today* 2 (Spring 1958), p. 13.

⁶R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), p. 340.

⁷R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today* (Spring 1958), p. 16.

⁸R.P., "Does Indian Philosophy need Re-orientation? The recovery of its theological background for the re-orientation of Indian Philosophy." *Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (October, 1957), pp. 191-193.

⁹R.P., "The Hermeneutics of Hermeneutics. Reflections on the hermeneutics of Tradition in Hinduism in view of a dialogue with Christian thought." *Philosophy Today* 2 (Fall 1967) p. 170.

¹⁰R.P., "Athens or Jerusalem? Philosophy or Religion." *Logos* 2 (University of Santa Clara 1981) p. 37.

¹¹R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), pp. 343-344.

¹²R.P., "Athens...", *Logos* 2 (1981) p. 37.

¹³R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), pp. 343-344.

¹⁴R.P., "Athens...", *Logos* 2 (1981) p. 37.

¹⁵R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), pp. 343-344.

¹⁶R.P., "Athens...", *Logos* 2 (1981) p. 37.

¹⁷R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), pp. 343-344.

¹⁸R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), pp. 344-345.

¹⁹R.P., "...need Re-orientation?...", *Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (October, 1957), p. 193.

²⁰R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), pp. 344-345.

²¹R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), pp. 346-347.

²²R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), pp. 347-348.

²³Cf. R.P., "The Hermeneutics of Hermeneutics...", *Philosophy Today* 2 (Fall 1967) p. 170.

²⁴Aristotle, *Metaphysics* II, 1.

²⁵R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), pp. 14 f.

²⁶R.P. in "Contemporary Hindu Spirituality," *Philosophy Today* 3 (Summer 1959), p. 122.

²⁷R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), pp. 14-18.

²⁸R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), pp. 15, 18.

²⁹R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), p. 15.

³⁰R.P. in "Contemporary Hindu Spirituality," *Philosophy Today* 3

(Summer 1959), pp. 124-125.

³¹R.P., "The Brahman of the Upanisads and the God of the Philosophers." *Religion and Society*, (Sept., 1960) pp. 16-18.

³²R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), p. 15.

³³R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), p. 16.

³⁴*De Veritate*, q. 21, a3, as quoted by Panikkar in "Contemporary Hindu Spirituality," *Philosophy Today* 3 (Summer 1959), p. 120.

³⁵Cf. R.P., *Blessed Simplicity...*, New York, 1982. p.128.

³⁶R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), p. 19.

³⁷R.P., "Athens...", *Logos* 2 (1981), p. 35.

³⁸R.P., "...need Re-orientation?...", *Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (October, 1957), p. 193.

³⁹R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), p. 19.

⁴⁰R.P., "...need Re-orientation?...", *Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (October, 1957), p. 191. Cf. also R.P., "Athens...", *Logos* 2 (1981) p. 27.

⁴¹R.P., "The Philosophical Tradition," *Myth...*, (1979), p. 343.

⁴²R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), pp. 19-20.

⁴³Cf. BG III, 37, where *kṛma* is said to originate from *rajoguṇa*, the principle of activity; and also AV IX, 2, 19-21; 23-35 as given by Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), pp. 242-243.

⁴⁴R.P. in "Contemporary Hindu Spirituality," *Philosophy Today* 3 (Summer 1959), p. 124, 127.

⁴⁵R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), pp. 19-20.

⁴⁶R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), pp. 20-21. Cf. also R.P. in "Contemporary Hindu Spirituality," *Philosophy Today* 3 (Summer 1959), p. 125.

⁴⁷R.P., "...Truth," *Philosophy Today*, (Spring 1958), pp. 20-21.

⁴⁸R.P., "The Brahman of the Upanisads and the God of the Philosophers." *Religion and Society*, (Sept., 1960) p. 18.