EUROPE – AFRICA – ASIA: THE COMPLEMENTARY RELATION BETWEEN THE WORLD CULTURES

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Abstract²

In this paper Heinrich Beck outlines his theory about the relations among the world cultures and their contribution toward what he calls 'creative peace'. Three of the world's cultures, namely that of Europe, Africa and Asia, are seen as much as members of a living organism, which is taken to be a 'Heuristic principle of possible understanding' whereby the integration and mutual reception of these three world cultures can be effected. The European tendency toward rationality and analysis is complemented by the Afro-Asiatic tendency toward holism and synthesis. And there is still further division between the African and the Asian mind. Though both emphasize unity and harmony, the African mind is predicated upon the immediately unity of nature and spirit, whereas the Asian one is characterized by tranquility of consciousness. This, in turn, is contrasted by the European mind which is based upon the separation between mind and matter. These contrasts present themselves, according to Beck, as an occasion for a triadic and dialectical

ontological structure, from which emerges a dynamic unity out of the contrasting unities. Thus a way is shown for world peace, which is not a static kind, but a dynamic and creative one.

Introduction: Urgency and Disposition of the Topic in Question

At present mankind to an ever growing extent is experiencing the provoking challenge of entering into intercultural communication; the world is evolving towards a comprehensive community of interdependent cultures. Is this the emerging of a "*holistic structure*" of mankind's cultures, implying that traditional cultures, so to speak, are "members"? In order to reach this aim, for the sake of our future, philosophically-inspired politics could face the task to enact resp. to promote readiness for mutual completion and integration throughout cultures. This demands a decisive opening and transformation of the spiritual dispositions underlying each different culture.

Thus arises the necessity to develop perspectives on an intercultural thinking which favours mutual understanding and appreciation between cultures. Hereby intercultural encounters could grow more "effective" and, in a deep humane sense, enriching. The task basically includes the philosophical effort to ask for the Being of man as an entity disposed of the development of culture, and to elaborate the evolutive sense of man's differentiation into a multitude of different partial cultures.

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To such a holistic-philosophical foundation of intercultural thinking all the cultures have to contribute from their point of view. In doing so, it has to be kept in mind that there is the always-threatening danger to take one's own position as absolute (and, correspondingly, to take the position of the others as "relative" or even merely to use them for one's own purpose). Especially, a "European vision" of cultures could bring about such a temptation, because, as the historical experience has proved again and again, the European spirit possesses a peculiar inclination (and maybe also potency) to "conceptually grasp" reality, thus determining it rationally. But this very readiness to reflecting putting-into-distance also reveals the ability to see, to recognize and to appreciate the other *as other* and so to enter into a conscious relationship with him, what lays the basis for a dignous partnership and cooperation.

In this sense we want to ask subsequently *in a European manner* whether the culture of mankind and its differentiation into different cultures displays an *ontological structure* which (at least to a certain degree) can be understood rationally. Hereby we have to pay special attention to the question if and to what extent the model of a "living organism" can serve as "heuristic principle of possible understanding". This would mean that *the cultural Being of mankind is related to the individual geographically-historically distinct partial cultures as a whole is related to its partial members*. Given this, the

whole would be the "meaningful aim of the direction of evolution" and, regarding the content it expresses, it would be greater than the "mere summation" of its parts-similar to a corporeal living being or a musical melody.³

Undertaking such an attempt to understand the cultural Being of mankind out of a "*theory of*

³ On the "whole transcending the sum of its parts" cf. The fundamental works by Arnulf Rieber, *Vom Positivismus zum Universalismus. Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung und Kritik des Ganzheitsbegriffs* von Othmer Spann [From positivism to universalism. Inquiries into the development and critic evaluation of the concept of sholeness in Othmer Spann], Berlin 1971; id., *Die Entwicklung der Ganzheitsbegriffs bei Othmer Spann* [The development of the concept of wholeness in Othmar Spann]. In *Zeitschr. Fur Ganzheitsforschung* N.F. 13 (1969) 171-190; id., *Der Ganzheitsbegriff bei Thomas v. Aquin* [The concept of wholeness in Thomas Aquinas]. Ibid N.F. 28 (1984) 99-131; also H. Beck, art. 'Ganzes/Teil' ('whole/Part') V. In: Joachim Ritter (Hrsg.), *Historisches Worterbuch der Philosophie*. Vol. 3, Basel Stutthart 1974, col. 18-20; id., *World Peace as Dynamic Unity of Cultural Differences. The onto- hermeneutic bases for an understanding of the structure of the culture of mankind – as a perspective for a 'dialectic-triadic' conception of reality*. In H.Beck/ G. Schmirber (edd.), *Creative Peace Through Encounter of World Cultures*. Delhi 1996, pp. 19-65. On the aspect of living holistic structures differentiating themselves into opposite parts in order to their mutual completion towards more complete unity, cf. esp. R. Guardini, *Der Gegensatz. Versuch einer Philosophie des Lebendig-Konkreten* [On opposite relations. Essay of a philosophy of the living-concrete], Mainz ³ 1985. Cf. also on the aspect of the whole

wholeness", it has to be considered right from the beginning that the human person (as subject of culture) is essentially different from a biological organism or an acoustic melody, for it isn't totally determined by anything else (even not by the "higher whole"); rather the person provides its own final determination in responsible individual freedom. This should happen, however, as a response given to holistic-comprehensive "higher demands of meaning" which in the first place have been recognized. I.e.: mankind's Being would be disposed as a differentiated whole which is not (like it is in a merely biological structure) *given in its complete actualization* right from the start. Instead of this, it is *given as a task* of further actualization, according to its meaning. This task has to be carried out through a responsible use of freedom by man (and his partial cultures).

Subsequently as "relevant partial cultures" primarily the extensive cultural areas *Europe, Africa* and *Asia* are to be taken into consideration. These regions, however, all come together in regard of their spiritual effects in *America* and *Latin America*; to that extent even this continent, which can offer a striking example for the problems and also for the possible

signifying the "meaningful aim of the direction of evolution" of the parts in the context of a "humanely creative peace": H. Christof Gunzl, Fortschritt zum Frieden. Versuch über die geistigen und strukturellen Prämissen des Friedens [Progress Towards Peace. Essay on the Spiritual and Structural Premises of Peace], Linz 1981.

creativity of a world-wide intercultural encounter, is implied in the topical horizon of our reflection. Through an onto-anthropological understanding of the specific "basic patterns" of the different cultures (and the proportion of their mutual similarity and dissimilarity), the conditions of creative intercultural encounter gain profile.

Our consideration is to be divided into three steps:

In the first place, we look at the essential relationship of each *culture* towards the nature which lays the ground for the given culture; then we put the question to what extent culture is affected by its natural conditions. These are different to a certain degree – to add an elucidating example which has to be worked out in our further deliberations – on the European, the African and the Asiatic continent. Hence, the hypothesis arises that the regions of culture differ due to their optical foundation so that they can complete one another by their specific form of humane value.

In a second part, this hypothesis has to be substantiated and differentiated by pointing at corresponding empirical phenomena. Hereby, at first a "contrary" opposition between the cultural traditions of Europe and Afro-Asia comes to appear; then also a "sub-contrary" opposition between the African and the Asiatic area of culture emerges.

Thirdly, we want to ask in ontological reflection whether the cultural

differentiation of mankind implies a dynamic-evolutive structure of meaning. As is to be shown, this structure can be understood as a holistic dialectical-triadic movement of Being. For a more concrete, deeper understanding, therefore direction-giving impulses con results which are important for intercultural action and for promising future developments.

I. The Relation Culture-nature and the Opposition Between the Spheres of Europe, Africa and Asia

Being the expression and actualization of human spiritual life, every culture depends on physical – material conditions, i.e., basically on the structure of the surface of the earth and on the climate. In this sense culture, so to speak, means the human mind's response to the demanding and provoking challenges given by nature.

Apparently, this dialogue between mind and nature partially succeeds; partially, however, it fails. For it is actualized always by the interplay of two components. On the one hand, the full "actuality" of nature consists in its effects carried out on man – and he has to receive this acting actuality and to take it in. This actuality is "addressing" him and he has to "listen". But then, on the other hand, man can act back on it and give the "response", by articulating himself in the direction of nature and into nature, forming and determining it, thus actualizing and objectivating his ideas and his will. Inasmuch as man really perceives the meaningful structure inherent in nature, i.e., inasmuch as he comes to see this structure out of nature

itself, to acknowledge and to appreciate it, his culture is a "respecting", responsible response. In this case, the self-expression and the re-presentation of human mind in nature through the products of culture "corresponds" to the expression and the representation of nature in the consciousness of the human mind. Inasmuch as, on the contrary, man does *not* live in dialogue and consent with nature, but rather disregards or even despises it, culture which was in accordance with nature is perverted into anti-culture raping nature. However, experience teaches us that a human subject which exclusively is monologizing on the long run needs must destroy itself in the basis of its natural existence, unless it achieves new openness through necessary self – criticism. Thus, in most of the cases de facto an ethice open to the environment and hence in accordance with nature which *in a deeper sense* is "cosmocentric" (and therefore in a unlimited way "in accordance with Being itself") mingles with an anthropocentric point of view locked up into itself and alienated from nature; both of them as discrepant components characterize mankind's real history of freedom and of suffering⁴. Thus concrete culture

⁴Cf. H. Beck, Freiheit und triadische Struktur des Seins- im Ausgang von Erich Przwara [Freedom and triadic structure of Being – starting from Erich Przwara]. In: Freib. Zeitschr. Fur Philos. U. theol. 38 (1991) 385-398 (German version of the Conferencia magistral auf dem Tercer Congreso Mundial de Filosofia Cristiana 1989, in Quito/ Ecuador]; id., Dulturphilosophie der Technik. Perspektiven zu Technik-Menschheit- Zukunft [Philosophy of

appears to be an always more or less fitting and adequate reaction of man towards what nature gives him. This might signify that the world is disposed as a meaningful whole, as an "ontological" structure comprehending nature and culture; how this structure is actualized more or less in accordance with its meaning depends on the historical dialogue between the two.

From this point of view, the extensive main areas of the earth, the continents, inasmuch as they show significant differences regarding their natural disposition, correspondingly have brought about different "re-actions" and "responses" of human mind. So the historical spirit gains concreteness by objectivating itself in different types of culture which always imply a closer or more distant accordance with (or even partial alienation from) the disposition and "meaningful structure" of the nature which lays its basis.

Let us at first take a look at the Afro-Asiatic area. It appears to be a giant bulk of mainland, filled with oppositions which have no less gigantic dimensions, and determined by a transcontinental far-reaching climate rich in contrasts. Just think of the monsoons and the trade-winds which cover enormous regions of Asia and Africa.

Technical Culture. Perspectives on Technology – Mankind – Future], Trier 1979 (esp. chap. 2: 'Der positive weltgeschichtliche sinn der Technik' ['The Positive Meaning of Technics in the Context of World History'] and chap. 3: 'Die negative Situation der modernen Technik' ['The Negative Situation of Modern Technics']

In contrary opposition to this the continent of Europe shows the face of a delicately differentiated landscape, interrupted and marked by many oceans and middle-sized seas, and determined by a moderate climate.

Therefore, it might be no surprise if in Africa and Asia reality was understood as unlimited unity of strong contrasts and man there developed an according sensitive, intuitive ability and basic habit. Hereby, in the formation of its surface the continent of Africa shows more including transitions and less sharp oppositions as does the continent of Asia. Thus, Africa invites man to live immediately out of nature, to chose the "vital identification" with nature as his way of life; the continent of Asia, however, rather provokes an "intellectual withdrawal", a way of life shaped by introverted "spiritually keeping distance" (and "confronting") against nature by balancing calmness.

In Europe, nevertheless, according to the mentioned geographical-climatic conditions of life, the consciousness primarily inclines to differentiate and to structure reality rationally; there is the typical strife for setting demarcations and for reaching articulating clarity.

The more intuitive disposition of the African and Asiatic consciousness seems to have a more immediate and original relationship to reality; the European disposition, the stronger inclination to rational differentiation, demands more clearly an objectivation which puts the empirical reality into distance, a reflection turned outside.

The immediate-intuitive Afro-Asiatic and the abstract-rational European disposition appear to form a contrary opposition, in which, as we will state more exactly later on, between the two modes of African and Asiatic intuitively again a sub-contrary opposition can be realized. So the differently accentuated structures of consciousness all over the continents could stimulate and complete one another through intercultural encounter; this would promote and enrich the spiritual life of mankind in a "holistic", dynamic erective sense.

Of course, the described dependence of the structure of consciousness on the structure of nature cannot mean a mono-causal deduction of the mental spiritual from the physical-material. For a point of view which sees the spiritual and cultural merely as an effect and a function of its physical and material conditions of existence would not pay enough attention to the free self-determination of the human mind and the responsibility man has for his very own acts and dispositions of behavior. Therefore, in this context one should not so much talk of a (total) "determination", but, more conveniently, of a (primordial) "disposition" of the human consciousness through physical reality. Nature, which lays the basis for us and which surrounds us, to the human mind means a provocation and a task. Developing a corresponding structure of consciousness and activity, mind tries to assimilate itself to this challenge. Such a accordance and assimilation obviously *to a certain degree* is necessary and inevitable for the sake

of survival (and development); on the other hand, it also allows *certain degrees of freedom* for self-determination regarding the way this is going to take place.

In this "dialectics" of necessity and freedom of the human mind in its relationship to its material basis of existence an immanence-transcendence-reference of mind towards matter shows up. On the one hand, the human mind is *immersed* into matter and to that extent determined by it and depending on it (this is the specific human feature of the human mind, differing basically from a *merely spiritual entity*); on the other hand, human mind *transcends* the basis of its material existence and confronts it in a determining way (to this extent the human mind represents the specific feature of mind itself, namely an elevation and superiority against matter).

II. Further Ontological Elucidation of the Basic Spiritual Dispositions of the Cultural Main Areas of the Earth

Now let's try to elaborate in a more differentiated way first the fundamental contrary opposition between the European-occidental and the Afro-Asiatic hemisphere and then, in a second step, the specific divergence between the African and the Asiatic disposition.

II, I. The Contrary Opposition Between the European and the Afro-Asiatic Area of Culture

In propositional logic, two propositions are said to be contrarily opposing each other if their positions regarding the same matter are at maximum distance so that there can be a medium between the two positions. For Examples, between the proposition "every body is heavy" and the proposition in utmost distance against it "no body is heavy", by all means mediating transitions are possible, namely, "some bodies are heavy", and also: "some bodies are not heavy". (Consequently, propositions contrarily opposing each other cannot both be true at the same time. It is impossible that all bodies are heavy and that at the same time, no body is heavy; but they can both be false at the same time. It is thoroughly possible that neither "all bodies are heavy" nor "no body is heavy" is right.)

Accordingly, now is to be shown that the general structure of consciousness of the European, on the one hand, and of the African and the Asiatic on the other hand are disposed in the way of a contrary opposition.

As mentioned above, the European consciousness tends towards rational differentiation and distinction of partial aspects which it abstractingly picks out for itself. Thus, it gains fixing-objectivating distance against the unity offered by the experience of the flowing concrete connection of life and Being. In this manner, within the *unity of Being* European consciousness separates and lays emphasis on the *plurality of the beings*. Contrary to this, the Afro-Asiatic consciousness has a more original and powerful intuition into the

concrete and deep connection of all there is; so it proclaims and stresses within the *plurality of the beings* the coherence and the *unity of Beings which lays the foundation for the beings*⁵. Now this is to be explained by some examples for the relationship to *nature*, to *man* and to the *divine* which differs according to specific cultural features.

The relationship to nature in the occident typically is marked by the intention of the quantifying natural science and technology – expression of a modern development of mind which is to be understood on the historical background of an access to reality which always chiefly has been logical-rational. This access shaped the character of Europe from Greek Antiquity on, during the Middle Ages

⁵This typical diverging accentuation in the understanding of reality might be pointed out according to the perspective and terminology of Martin Heidegger's view of Being: The European-occidental interest is settled on the level of the antic, while the African and, in still another way, the Asiatic orientation apparently is directed more consciously towards the ontological. That is, the former one turns to the different and multiple empirical data which can be rationally grasped and disposed of; the latter one, on the contrary, lives out of the intuitive experience of the truth of Being which "lays the foundation" and which cannot be rationally handled by man, which rather grasps and de-terminate himself further. Cf. on this aspect: V.G. Furtado [Bangalore/India], Asian Perspectives for the Development of Intercultural' at the Universidad Pontifica do Mexico in March 1995; in going to be printed presumably *ibid.* 1996].

up to Modern Times and the present⁶. Science, according to its modern understanding, has to analyze the empirical connection of reality rationally, i.e., the immediately given "unity of experience" has to be resolved into its components ("partial units"); these components have to be picked out, in order to construct out of them – according to mathematical possibilities – in a technical-creative way new complex unities which serve human intentions better than did the structures of reality as given by nature. Therefore, in physics, chemistry and biology, as well as in psychology and sociology, by analytic-synthetic acts of science and elementary functions, and out of these new structures are build up which correspond to the purposes of man. Such a restructuring of reality through the disposing mind of man is to be understood as the manifestation of a spiritual habit which is typical to modern times. This habit originated in Europe and spread all over the world in a determining manner⁷.

⁶ Cf. H. Beck, *The relation of European thought to the 'Logos' and 'Logic'. A possible Contribution to Cultural World Integration*. In: *Lingua ac Communitas* 2 (Warsaw-Poznan 1993) 45-55.

⁷ Cf. as more detailed explanations: author, *Kulturphilosophie der Technik* [form. 2]; id., *Das ek-insistentielle Verhältnis von Natur- und Geisteswissenschaften in der abendländischen Kultur* [*The Ekinsistent Relationship of Nature-orientated Sciences and Spiritual Scholarship in, Occidental Culture*]. In: H. Beck/I. Quiles (edd.), *Entwicklung zur Menschlichkeit durch Begegnung westlicher und östlicher Kultur* [*Development Towards Humaneness Through Encounter of Western and Eastern*

The European-occidental approach of the science of medicine which is different from the Afro-Asiatic tradition in a culturally specific way as an example might serve. If there seems to be, e.g., a disease of the liver or the heart, Western science of medicine primarily pays attention to the physical organ in question; it tries by analysis of the causes to determine the single elements of the defective structure and function, in order to put them into another, more desirable proportion, influencing it by drugs attacking it's chirurgic ally, i.e., through a rationally planned measure centered on the organ. Given certain circumstances, thus not only the original and "natural" structures and modes of functions can be repaired; maybe even new systems can be created which increase the performance of the organism regarding additional purposes – which significantly transcends mere "healing". As on the level of such "biotechnology" the material elements of structure and functions of life are to be isolated and to be put into new dispositions, likewise the modern "psycho- and socio-technology" intends to dissolve the complexes of consciousness in human individuals as in social groups psycho-analytically into their elementary

Culture]. *Akten des IV. Interkontinentalen Dolloquiums zur philosophischen Insistenzanthropologie*, 1. - 6. Sept. 1986, an der Univ. Bamberg, Frankf./M.-Bern-New York-Paris 1988, pp. 171-186; E. Schadel, *Neuzeitliche europäische Rationalität und ihr Ausdruck in der Zwölftontechnik* [*The European Rationality in Modern Times and its Expression in the Technics of Twelvetone Music*]. Ibid., pp. 221-240.

functions, in order to create out to them psycho-synthetically new complexes of individual and social experience and action: the "happy" husband or father, the "gayful" consument of partisan and so on. Here also results a playful area of manifold possibilities; ranging from mere therapy, i.e., the reconstruction of a "healthy", "normal" mental state, to the psycho-technologically guided evolution of the individual and social consciousness.

It becomes evident that in occidental culture, mind aims at leaving the habit of receptivity and being determined and at confronting the contents of experience through active determination and alteration, i.e., through destroying the given structures of the physical and mental world until they are broken into their elements, and out of these constructing new structures which correspond to man's very purposes. By objectivation and domination of the world obviously the freedom and all-determining power and glorious master-ship of mind is to be experienced and actively more and more actualized; constituting the world as object that can be determined and dominated, man aims at his self-constitution as determining and dominating "subject".

In a totally other, contrarily opposed way, the spiritual attitude manifests itself in the area of the Afro-Asiatic culture. There it is tending less towards "objectivation" and "domination" but rather towards "participation" and integration": man experiences and understands himself as part of a

preceding meaningful structure of reality. Appreciating this structure, he doesn't try so much to dispose of it, but rather to be at its disposal – in order to make it "come" and "happen" ever more.

The example of "science of medicine" again provides an illuminating example for this. As organ being diseased, the African doctor does not see the cause primarily in the organ itself (in order to fix it by analysis of factors). Rather he understands the disease "holistically" as a decrease in the vital force of the whole organism, wherein the affected organ only participates in a special manner. The vital force, however, steadily flows into the organism from the spiritual-divine source of life which is immanent to the organism. To speak more exactly, this source of life does not inhabit the affected individual organism as a peculiar part, but through the organism's being the member of a more comprehensive community of life. This community comprises not only the short range group of immediate fellow men, but moreover the whole environmental nature. Therefore, the disease basically is made up by vital force flowing only insufficiently into the individual as part of a greater connection of Being, caused by a contraction or pollution of "channels". Thus, channels include also the contact to crystals, plants and animals, but especially to fellow men of the tribe – including the deceased, the ancestors and the spirits; for only through these "mediators for the transmission of life" can life flow in steadily from the creative divine fundamental source. Hence, therapy

has the primary task to make conscious disturbances in the relationship to nature, to fellow men and to the invisible (but highly active) "spiritual background". Such disturbances are being centre around the own ego so that others are hurt, lack thankfulness, reverence, and love. Only through appropriate moral purification can the receptivity of life from God be disclosed anew; in this sense, in the African "science of medicine" it is essential to check the social relationship to the whole⁸. Similar features can be observed in *Asiatic* "science of

medicine" and the art of healing, of which recently also in Europe more and more notice is taken. According to the *Indian* medical tradition (Ayurveda), external nature (e.g., certain crystals and herbs) possesses special healing powers, while, according to the *Chinese* tradition (Think of the method of acupuncture), more emphasis is laid on the harmonious relations within man himself⁹.

⁸ Cf. e.g. the explanations of the Dutch doctor, philosopher and theologian Joseph Gerard Donders, who spent decades in different countries of Africa, investigating and practising: 'Einfluß der christlichen Kultur auf das afrikanische Menschenbild' ['The Influence of Christian Culture on the African Understanding of Man']. In: *Kultur als christlicher Auftrag heute, im Auftrag des Direktoriums der Salzburger Hochschulwochen* hrsg. Von Ansgar Paus, Kevelaer und Graz-Wien-Köln s.d., esp. 369 and 379: John S. Mbiti, *Afrikanische Religion und Weltanschauung*, Berlin-New York 1974; Joseph M. Nyasani (ed. On instruction of the Konrad – Adenauer-Foundation); *Philosophical Focus on Culture and Traditional Thought Systems in Development* [Nairobi 1994]. [Proceedings of a congress of African scholars and philosophers held in 1988 at Mombassa/Kenya]; esp. for the understanding of the community of life wherein also the deceased, the ancestors and the individual. In: E. Schadel/U. Voigt (edd.), *Sein-Erkennen-Handeln. Interkulturelle, ontologische und ethische Perspektiven*. Festschrift für Heinrich Beck zum 65. Geb., Frankfurt/M.-Berlin-Bern-New York-Paris-Wien 1994. [1975-82; *Clement M.P. Oniang'o, The Relation of Nature, Time and Individuality as the Fundament of the*

African Concept of Harmony and Peace. In: H. Beck/G. Schmirber (edd.), *Creative Peace Through Encounter of World Cultures* [footn. 1], pp. 175-197; *Jameson Kurasha, Der Stellenwert des Personbegriffes in afrikanischem Philosophieren* [The Value of the Concept of Person in African Philosophy; translated and commented by U. Voigt]. In: *Symbolon. Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Symbolforschung* N.F. 12 (1995) 185-195; see also *Heinz Kimmerle, Philosophie in Afrika. Annäherung an einen interkulturellen Philosophiebegriff* [Philosophy in Africa. Approach to an Intercultural Concept of Philosophy], Frankfurt/M. 1991; *id., Die Dimension des Interkulturellen: Philosophie in Afrika – afrikanische Philosophie. 2. Teil: Supplemente und Verallgemeinerungsschritte* [The Dimension of the Intercultural: Philosophy in Africa – African philosophy. Second part: Supplements and Steps Towards Generalization], Amsterdam-Atlanta 1994.

⁹ C.f. The explanations of the doctor, philosopher and theologian *Cyrril v. Korvin-Kra-sinski* who for a long time lived in different countries of Asia and in dialogue with Govinda-Yoga: *Tibetische Medizinphilosophie* [Tibetan Medical Philosophy], Zürich² 1964; *id., Mikrokosmos und Makrokosmos in religionsgeschichtlicher Sicht* [Microcosm and Macrocosm Seen From the Perspective of History of Religion], Düsseldorf 1960; *id., Trina*

To recapitulate, it may be stated that the European science of medicine primarily pays attention to the empirical fact which can be picked out rationally. Hence, the connection and the whole are contacted only in a relatively indeterminated manner, if there is such a contact at all. In contrary opposition, Afro-Asiatic science of medicine makes the effort to understand the whole, considering the individual partial phenomena from this perspective. Thus, these phenomena are apprehended with lesser determination in their actual

empirical state. Therefore, both directions of view, the Western one (from the parts to the whole, resp. from the "outside" to the "inside") and the Southern and Eastern one (from the whole to the parts, resp. from the "inside" to the outside") are, so to speak, primordially in disposition to complete one another in their methodological access and in the understanding of their results¹⁰.

Mundi Mundi Machina. Die Signatur des alten Eurasien [The Triadic Structure of the World. The Signature of Ancient Eurasia], Mainz 1986 [An Attempt of Comprehensive Interpretation of Meaning, Pointing to Analogies of a Triadic – Trinitarian Principle of Understanding Reality Which are Expressed by the Ancient Traditions]; On the View of Reality Diverging in a Mode Typical to the Single Culture as Given in the Science of Medicine and Especially in Philosophy, cf. *Ram Adhar Mall*, Die drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie: China-Indien-Europa { The Three Places Where Philosophy was Born: China-India-Europe], Mainz 1989; further: *Hans –Peter Hasenfratz*, Der indische Weg. Die Spiritualität eines Kontinents [The Indian Way, The Spirituality of a Continent], Freiburg 1994.

¹⁰ So the Western empirical-technological science of medicine could appreciate the Afro-Asiatic understanding of wholeness as an exhortation and a direction-giving impulse, encouraging now to do research in regions of experience which usually aren't taken so much notice of. Likewise, on the other hand, occidental science of medicine would be able to provide for the African resp. Asiatic holistic science of medicine more perfect technical instruments which serve the precise dealing with physical (and mental) partial phenomena.

The contrary-complementary attitude towards nature in occidental culture and Afro-Asiatic tradition reveals itself, as it does in the relationship to nature, maybe even more clearly, in the *relationship to man*. This could already be sensed in the example of medical science. The tendency towards laying emphasis on the individual person against the connection of the whole of reality (up to the degeneration into an egocentric individualism), the proclamation of individual "human rights" demanding respect for the individual decision of conscience even if it is in contradiction to the collective opinion – all these historical phenomena are typical products of *occidental* culture and, in their specific manner, they have no parallels in other areas of culture. Doubtlessly, they embody basic humane values and represent a necessary contribution of occidental culture to a communicative world integration and peaceful global order. This tendency towards stressing the individual caused social developments which – inasmuch as they imply partially even an exaggeration of the individual and the particular – are ambivalent in their humane value: in economy, "free

enterprise" (following the "capitalist principle" of maximalisation of individual profit), in politics the idea of the people's democratic "self-determination" (which can be understood also as absolute relativity of moral and juridical values), in science the principle of "free investigation" (which, in the competition of specializations, can seduce to "ideological particularism and individualism"), in art, philosophy and religion "revolutionary" phenomena (which can comprise both creative and destructive aspects)¹¹. Just recall the emancipation movements which accumulate in occidental history, promoting the freedom of the individual in social and religious communities, e.g., the demand of female "equality of right" in relation to male human beings – this postulate, too, was brought up at first in European-occidental culture; now it is spreading also over other areas of culture¹².

¹¹ For further explanations on these areas of culture cf. *Author*. Partnerschaftliche Solidarität als Strukturprinzip fügen Gesellschaft, konkretisiert an Ehe und Familie, Schule, Wissenschaft, Wirtschaft und Politik [Solidarity in the Spirit of Partnership as Structuring Principle of Future Society, with Concretions in the Fields of Matrimony, Family, School, Scholarship, Economy and Politics]. In: Gunter Poltner (ed.), *Personale Freiheit und pluralistische Gesellschaft*, Freiburg-Gasel-Wienn 1981, pp. 23-38; *id.*, *Schöpferischer Gegensatz zwischen westlicher und östlicher Kultur* [Creative Contrast Between Western and Eastern Culture]. In: *Zeitschr. für Ganzheitsforschung* 26 (1982) 99-106.

¹² Cf. *Author*, *Decline of Culture or Setting Out Toward a More Humane World? Philosophical Considerations on the*

In contrary opposition to this, certainly legitimate strife for differentiation and accentuation of the individual against the unity of the whole (A strife, however, that can be perverted into pluralistic separatisms.) the Afro-Asiatic area of culture shows the inclination towards highlighting and preferring the unity of the whole against the peculiar identity of the manifold and different members. This has also (at least seen from the European point of view) brought about partialities, exaggerations, and distortions, especially by taking for absolute the unity of the whole and correspondingly retarding the formation the individual "consciousness of me" resp. totally repressing of subjecting it in favour of a collective "consciousness of ourselves", which means an integration into the whole whereby all differences are set aside.

Present Consciousness of Crisis. In: *Philosophy and the Future of Humanity* 1 (Jakarta/Indonesia 1991, #1) 75-91; modified version in: *Journal of Humanities* 6 (University of Malawi/Africa, Oct. 1992_) 17-33. Inasmuch as holistic thinking is involved in the perception of reality in occidental rationality, i.e. rational analysis and synthesis. Hereby (especially in modern times) intuitive parts of knowledge serve only as a pre-ceeding function of direction-giving impulses or hypothetical pre-conceptions for the rational process resp. are meant to be conclusively comprehending interpretations which scarcely make the claim of "scientific" value. Nevertheless, in this regard the geographically distinct cultural Traits of Europe show significant differences; cf. Arnulf Rieber, *Basic Types of Holistic Thinking in the Occident*. In: H.Beck/G.Schmirber (edd.), *Creative Peace Through Encounter of World Cultures* [footn. 1], pp.111-144.

So, in the African cultural tradition the individual is defined by his very relations to his tribal fellow men. Life is attributed also one's the ancestors, inasmuch (and only inasmuch!) as they are immediately present to the Unity and to the consciousness of the community¹³. Mutatis mutandis, also according to Asiatic traditions, the Being and the behavior of the individuals was totally determined by their place in the unity of the whole. Just think of the role of the woman in Islam, of the demands the casts carry out on their members in Hinduism, or of the detailed moral codex in Confucianism. The principle of an absolute "preponderance of the whole against its parts" influenced the formation of marriage and family, economy and politics, and the community, especially the religious one, in general.

¹³ Cf. Beside the literature mentioned in footn. 6 (esp. by J.M. Nyasani and J. Kurasha): H. Odera Oruka/D.A. Masolo (edd.), *Philosophy and Cultures. Proceedings of the 2nd Afro-Asian Philosophy Conference in Nairobi 1981, Nairobi [Kenya] 1982*; Joseph M. Nyasani, *An African Metaphysical Conception of the Absolute*. In: E. Schadel (ed.), *Actualitas omnium actuum. Festschrift für H. Beck zum 60. Geb., Frankf./M.-Bern-New York-Paris 1989*, pp. 83-87; Jameson Kurasha, *Plato and the Tortoise. A Case for the Death of Ideas and a Place* 83-87; In: E. Schadel/U. Voigt (edd.), *Sein-Erkennen-Handeln. Interkulturelle, ontologische und ethische Perspektiven. Festschrift für H. Beck zum 65. Geb., ibid. 1994*, pp. 83-87; id., *The African Concept of Personality as A possible Contribution to Global Reconciliation*. In: H. Beck/G. Schmirber (edd.), *Creative Peace Through Encounter of World Cultures* [footn. 1], pp. 199-209.

The contrary way of referring to reality reveals itself basically in the relationship to nature. It is heightened in the relationship to man, and now it reaches its climax in the relationship to the absolute and the divine. While in occidental cultural tradition the difference between the unlimited and absolute divine Being in contrast to the limited and contingent world of time and space, i.e. the "transcendence" of the Divine was stressed, in Afro-Asiatic spirituality transcendence and immanence do not enter in too great a distance from each other; here more emphasis is laid on the closeness and immanence of the Divine.

In *African* religiosity, as mentioned above ancestors go into the dimension of the Divine; nay, the very Divine is conceived of as the starting-point of the series of ancestors. So it is especially in typically African Christianity: Jesus Christ is believed to be the omnipresent, all-embracing primordial ancestor, the omnipotence and vital force which permanently permeates everything within the immanence¹⁴.

¹⁴ Cf. John S. Mbiti, *Afrikanische Religion und Weltanschauung [African Religion and Understanding of the World]*, Berlin-New York 1974; Jean Pliya, *La spiritualité de la culture africaine*. In: H. Beck/I. Quiles (edd.), *Entwicklung zur Menschlichkeit durch Begegnung westlicher und östlicher Kultur. Akten des IV. Interkontinentalen Kolloquiums zur philosophischen Insistenzanthropologie. 1.-6. Sept. 1986, at the Univ. Bamberg, Frankf./M.-Bern-New York-Paris 1988*, pp. 265-275; Segun Gbadegesin, *African Philosophy. Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*, New York-San Francisco-Frankf./M.-Paris-London 1971; Reginald Nnamadi,

In *Asiatic* religiosity, obviously, emphasis is laid not so much on the transcendence but rather on the immanence of the Absolute and Divine: whether human life as “fate” or “kismet” is totally determined by its divine source, so that there scarcely is any freedom-granting distance between the two, like in the Islam of West Asia; or the Divine manifests itself as a plurality of deities immanent to nature and “incarnations” (“Avatars”) immanent to history, like in the Hinduism of South Asia; or the all-embracing final source of mankind’s Being and life doesn’t confront us as personal, addressable “Thou” (as “the one and only God” or as a plurality of deities), but merely is considered to be an immanent standard of human behavior, like in the Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism of East Asia¹⁵. A further significant difference which still accentuates what has been said may be seen in the fact that in the tradition of the European-occidental inculturation of Christianity the Deity pronouncedly was conceived of as “male” (as “Lord” Panto-creator, “Father” and – in a Trinitarian intensification – even as “triumvirate”) who faces his work, the creation, as opposing an object. Up to a certain degree (however, as indicated, modified in a specific manner) this holds true also for Islam, which is to be understood as being relatively close to Christianity. But it cannot be applied to the spirituality of Inner, South and East Asia. Here also female deities are

known, resp. the Divine and Absolute is rather conceived of as a “bearing” femininity and maternity which acts by “letting the beings come and grow and taking care of them”. However, it can be observed that Asiatic (and, lately, also African) ways of understanding exert an ever increasing influence on European – occidental mentality, thus stimulating new forms of a “cosmic consciousness”. This could be understood as “historical counter-reaction” to an era of “Christian world mission by Europe”, when together with the Christian religion also its inculturation into the European culture, i.e., this very culture was propagated all over the globe.

¹⁵ Cf. our explanations: *World Peace as Dynamic Unity of Cultural Contrarities*. The ontohermeneutic basis for an understanding of the structure of the culture of mankind as a perspective for a “dialectic-triadic” conception of reality. In: H. Beck/G. Schmirber (edd.), *Creative Peace Through Encounter of World Cultures* [footn. 1] (esp.: bb. West, South and East Asia, pp. 38-50); *Ram A. Mall, Die drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie* [footn. 7]; *Ralf Moritz, Die Philosophie im alten China* [Philosophy in ancient China], Berlin 1990 (pp. 277-283 : lit); *Kenneth Ch'en, Buddhism in China*, Princetn 1964; *William E. Biernatzki, The Root Paradigms of Chinese Buddhism*. In: H. Beck/I. Quiles (edd.), *Entwicklung zur Menschlichkeit durch Begegnung westlicher und östlicher Kultur* [footn. 5], pp. 241-252; *Yang Jai-Hyuck, Das Verständnis von 'Natur' und 'Praxis' bei Mao Tse-Tung im Hinblick auf die altchinesische Philosophie* [The Understanding of 'Nature' and 'Practice' in Mao Tse-Tung in Regard of the Philosophy in Ancient China]. In: E. Schadel/U. Voigt (edd.), *Sein-Erkennen-Handeln* [footn. 6], pp. 89-97.

Afrikanisches Denken [African thinking], Frankf./M. 1987; the contributions of both J. M. Nyasani and J. Kurasha quoted in footn. 6.

Now let's summarize. A view on the relationship to *nature*, to *man* and the *Absolute* and *Divine* may have made evident: the basic reference to reality seems to differ typologically between the European –occidental and the African and Asiatic areas of culture – in the sense of a “contrary opposition”. (Nevertheless, as to explained above, the concept of “contrary opposition” does not exclude intermediary steps and continuous transitions.)

In the *European attitude* the interest of the consciousness tends from the experienced unity of the connection of reality to the accentuation of the manifold and different through distinguishing and differentiating rationality which enters into distance and confrontation against what is immediately given. This ability in an essential and original sense is to be appreciated as something *positive* (and valuable for all mankind and its further development). Because out of the growing distance and confrontation arises the *possibility* of a more and more conscious, free and decided turning towards reality, in shaping it responsibly and actively according to the principles of Being that have been recognized. However, this also includes a weakness and danger – and to that extent something *negative*: entering into distance from immediate experience easily can be reversed into an alienation from reality – when the component which has stepped out and distinguished itself gets separated from the comprehensive connection and is taken for “absolute” in itself (in “particularism” and “individualism”). The significant

outcome of this is typically occidental forms of a “pluralistic empirism” and “monistic rationalism and apriorism”. One should wonder to what extent this is the expression of a habit which defies a meaningful structure immanent to the experienced reality and which can inflate itself up to destructive aggressivity¹⁶.

However, it has to be seen that the latter as mostly historical fact is a perversion of the ability of rationally confronting and reforming experience. Thus, this ability is pre-supposed as positive basis and as the original task and disposition of Western culture. The perversion, on the other hand, by no means is a (in the sense of Hegel “dialectically necessary”) form of the realization of this ability; it rather means a deviation from true humaneness and from the historical task of occidental culture: an abuse of its positive ability which does not correspond to its responsibility and therefore has to be criticized. In the context of a balanced philosophical assessment which is to do justice to reality, beside disclosure and criticism of the negative one should also,

¹⁶ Cf. Blazenka Despot, The aggressiveness of the European philosophy of freedom in Hegel's philosophy of right. In: H. Beck/G. Schmirber (edd), Creative Peace Through Encoun-ter of World Cultures [foothn. 1.], pp. 163-174: Arnulf Rieber, Krise der technischen Rationalität. Irrationalität und Grenzen des “voraussetzungslosen” Stebens nach Naturbeherrschung [The Crisis of Technical Rationality. Irrationality and Limits of the Strife for Domination of Nature “Without Pre-suppositions”]. In: Lothar Heinz Zimmermann/Claus Kuhne (edd.), Technische Berufe zwischen Leistungszwang und Sinnfindung, Köln 1973, pp. 4-24.

however, stress the endeavor of European rationality which is not only destructive and which has promoted the development of mankind in a positive manner. Take for example the development of science and technology (without which modern culture could not even be thought of), and the consciousness of the dignity and respectability of the single individual, the moral and juridical claim of its "human rights", the effort to form, accordingly, the social order to a "constitutional state" etc., as mentioned above.

The consciousness of the human beings in the *Afro-Asiatic* area of culture, on the other hand, does not to that extent look from the unity to the differentiatedness; rather it longs for unity in the very midst of the manifold and different. It appreciates harmony and the balance of contests. A weakness, nay a danger – as especially the European sense it – may consist in a lack of rational distinction and abstract confrontation out of distance. Hence may result too little a readiness to change reality actively and to plan a future for oneself according to intelligible and meaningful principles. Think of certain economical, social and political conditions in huge regions of Africa or India. Here also, however, the basic positive possibility and task has to be stressed; the obviously special disposition and ability in favour of unity must not be confounded with the always limited modes of its actualization. Fulfilling the task by overcoming the (bilateral!) one-sidednesses requires the readiness to mutual completion through open encounter – a demand for

humanely holistic, transcultural thinking which inevitably is raised in the face of mankind's woeful history.

This demand results in, notwithstanding, the question as to whether the contrary opposition between "occidental" and "oriental" culture described above is rooted in the "natural disposition" of the cultures or whether it is a product of merely "contingent" historical circumstances. Nevertheless, we favor the former alternative. Because – as shown above (see I.) – "culture" can be understood as the human mind's reaction and response to the conditions and provoking challenges of nature's basic structures. These structures in the European and the Afro-Asiatic area show the differences mentioned above (see I.) Moreover, we have to consider that through the coming together of contingent factors in history only those constellations can be arranged which were possible or disposed out of the natural source; this source, however, differs from one area to the other, what evidently is relevant for the historical development of culture.

Moreover, according to *Jean Gebser*, the entire development of mankind's structure of consciousness in a certain way is parallel to the development of the single human individual (Herein a further aspect of "culture's relatedness to nature" can be seen which doesn't primarily refer to "external nature", the geographical environment, but rather to the "inner nature" of man himself which is embedded in the former). Thus, the more intuitive-holistic consciousness of the African and the Asiatic would

correspond to the evolutionary stage of mankind's "childhood"; the abstract-rational consciousness basic to European-occidental culture would correspond more pronouncedly to the evolutionary stage of youth. However, one must not draw the premature conclusion that Africa and Asia got stuck on a more primitive evolutionary stage of human consciousness, while European man reached a higher stage of consciousness and so even a higher state of being human. For what is later in evolution is not necessarily perfection itself. Progress in one sense (e.g., towards more differentiation) in manifold ways has to be paid by losses in another sense (i.e., here, lack of intuitive immediacy and wholeness of reference to reality). Furthermore, a child is not supposed to be responsible for its actions, unlike the adult in African or Asiatic culture.

Anyway, the two structures of consciousness contrarily opposing each other seem to be interrelated in favour of mutual completion – towards a consciousness which is rational-differentiated as well as intuitive-integrated. This consciousness should be strived for as a stage of maturity and perfection. Seen from the point of view of philosophy of culture, this means, as a task, mankind's future lies in a "creative encounter" between European-occidental and Asiatic-oriental and African culture¹⁷.

But it has to be stressed once more that the concept of "contrary opposition" signifies the utmost distance between two positions within a common medium

(as for example, black and white in regard to brightness; totally affirmative and totally negating propositions in regard of the quantity of propositions). Hereby between the extremes, mean values may occur (i.e., grey or half-light resp. particular propositions). This means in the given context that the opposition between originally European and Afro-Asiatic structures of consciousness in reality always is actualized only up to a certain degree; there are many soft transitions. Especially there is a so-called "sub-contrary opposition" included in the "contrary opposition", expressing a lesser distance resp. more closeness of the opposing components. This leads us now to considering the cultural relation of the opposition Africa – Asia.

II.2. The Sub-contrary Opposition Between the African and the Asiatic Area of Culture

¹⁷ Cf. J. Gebser, *Ursprung und Gegenwart* (T. 1: Die Fundamente der aperspektivistischen Welt; T. 2: Die Manifestation der aperspektivistischen Welt) [Origin and present (T. 1: The Foundations of the Aperspectivistic World; T.2: The Manifestation of the Aperspectivistic World)], München ³1988; *author*, *Decline of culture or setting out toward a more humane world?* [footn.10] (with reference to J. Gebser); *id.*, *Die Lebensetappen: Kindheit – Jugend chung im Horizont eines triadischen Wirklichkeitsverständnisses ("Analogia Trinitatis")* [The Phases of Life: Childhood – Youth – Maturity – Old Age. The Question for Their Meaning and for Ways to Actualize This Meaning in the Horizon of a Triadic Understanding of Reality ("Analogia Trinitatis")]. In: *Zeitschr. für wissenschaftl. Pädagogik* 68 (1992, #1) 39-62; *id.*, *World Peace as Dynamic Unity of Cultural Contrarities* [footn. 13].

As may result from the data offered above, the African and the Asiatic spheres of culture apparently agree with each other in the following respect: they are not dominated by an analytical rationality which gains distance from reality through abstraction. Rather they are laying emphasis on an intuitive consciousness of the "unity of the connection", of "harmony and balance of the contrasts". Within these common features, however, there seem to exist also significant differences between the large cultural areas of both continents. These differences can be represented by the concept of "sub-contrary opposition". So our attempt to "ontologically comprehend" the geographical structure of mankind's culture gains still more profile.

In logic, two propositions are said to be sub-contrarily opposing each other if their positions regarding the same matter are at some distance; however, not at maximum distance (as in "contrary" opposition), but in the sense of a difference between *opposite directions* and thus *clear distinctions*. For example, "Some bodies *are* heavy" and: "Some bodies *are not* heavy". (Therefore, propositions sub-contrarily opposing each other can both be true at the same time, but they cannot both be false at the same time.) The relationship of opposition between both propositions is not expressed primarily by the quantity of the proposition ("Some bodies..."), but rather by the quality of the proposition (... *are* heavy" resp. "...*are not* heavy"). In this sense, the sub-contrary opposition, too, always is the expression of a "quality" which can plainly be characterized.

"African" and "Asiatic" cultures both lay emphasis on "harmony" and "integral unity". But they do so in "qualitatively" opposing manners: African spirituality *out of the immediate impulse of the natural Being*; Asiatic spirituality *out of the detached tranquility and calmness of the consciousness*. Let's explain this again in regard of the threefold aspect of the relationship to nature, to man, and to the Absolute and Divine.

African spirituality expresses itself as being-in-motion which basically is rhythmical: music, dance and drama permeate the whole life and determine all regions and references of existence. The Being of material nature is experienced as thoroughly "rhythmical", as "rhythmical event". This being-in-motion is continued by "eidetic identity" into the sphere of the intellectual. It gains its complete expression in the products of culture. the *Asiatic* mind, on the other hand, shows a more contemplative attitude which can be deepened to a philosophical mysticism, as in Buddhism. The unity, harmony and balance with nature here consists in "standing-in-oneself" in the spirit of partnership against nature: "letting it come" and "letting it happen". This is neither an "anti-thetical grasping of nature (as in Europe) nor a "synthetically (or maybe more clearly, synergetic) penetrating flow of the Being" of nature (as in Africa); rather "synthetically adjustment" to nature characterizes the Asiatic mind.

The *African* culture mind, so to speak, effuses into the material nature, joining

its vibrations and entering into it, "incarnating" in it and completing it. The *Asiatic* culture mind transcends material nature and tries to overcome it, to break free from it and any "material dependency and limitation", as in Hinduism.¹⁸

Correspondingly, *African* culture discovers the unity of spiritual Being in and together with the plurality of the material beings, in their own *midst*, as immanent to them. In *Asiatic* culture, on the other hand, unity is searched for *beyond* and *above* the material beings, as transcendent to them. "*African harmony*" of Being and consciousness is derived from Being; it consists in the immediate vital complex of motion. "*Asiatic harmony*" of

Being and consciousness is derived from consciousness; it consists in the tranquil, detached calmness of the mind.

In both cases mind does not primarily try to subdue nature scientifically-technologically, but rather to live in consonance with it. This *relation to nature* is continued in the *relation to man*; hereby the typical differences between African and Asiatic spirituality may become still more evident. As mentioned above, while in *European-occidental* culture the human individual determines itself by creating sharp limits against fellow man (through rational definition of one's own rights and competences, up to the danger of egocentric individualism), according to *African* understanding human individuality consists merely in its relationships to fellow men, to the whole group and to nature, in "being there for them". In this sense, the actualization of human individuality is considered to be the highest value of life. According to *Asiatic* understanding, on the other hand, individuality is something which must be overcome, for it is limited because it is conditioned by the immersion of mind into matter, whereby mind suffers its spatial-temporal multiplication and a limitation of its unity. So, in Asiatic spirituality the strife for unlimited unity and harmony tends to overcome nature and, through it, human individuality.

This different relation to the human individual is continued, so to speak, beyond death. According to the understanding of *African* culture, the souls of the dead keep on living in the

¹⁸ Into this context a remark is fitting made by Arnulf Rieber during a discussion in our mutually organized cultural-philosophical research colloquium at Bamberg University in the summer term 1992: "The triangle of Cultures – Europe, Africa, Asia": In African as well as in Asiatic cultural tradition there is the conviction that in nature, e.g., on mountains or on trees, spirits are dwelling (deities or souls of the ancestors). According to *African* understanding, the spirit is located in the centre of the tree; it forms the "heart" of the tree, its life in a deeper sense of the word. According to *Asiatic* understanding, the spirit is sending effects into the tree "from above"; it forms the "head" of the tree, dominating it. From the *African* perspective, the spirit is living in the midst of material nature; from the *Asiatic* perspective, it is tending towards domination, overcoming and liberation. (Of course, the expressions: "from above", "midst" resp. "head" and "heart" are not primarily to be understood in a properly spatial sense, but rather in a symbolical and ontological sense.)

community of their families, supporting them, inspiring them, protecting them as their "good spirits". According to *Asiatic* understanding, e.g., in Hinduism, it means an evil, a sign of wrong attachments and still ungained freedom, when souls of the deceased keep on affecting the living persons in time and space. It fits into this scheme that in African culture bodies are *buried* (and so given back to the immediate unity with material nature), while in Hinduism they are *burnt* (in order to complete the overcoming of matter and the detachment from it).

A further interesting expression of the typical difference between African and Asiatic spirituality regarding the relation to fellow man and to the community can be seen in the *different manners how culture is handed down*: In *Africa*, they prefer oral tradition; in *Asia*, they prefer written tradition. Through oral narration the generation handing down its tradition at present in a vivid way gets involved into the contents of culture which are handed down; the current generation keeps on shaping these contents, thus living on with them. The written word, on the other hand, in a certain way is closed and independent against the people handing down a tradition. Herein the detachedness and distance of the "general" spirit is documented in contrast to the many individuals in space and time who hand it down.

In the last and deepest instance, the differently accentuated understandings of unity and harmony in the areas of the African resp. of the Asiatic culture are

represented in the *relation to the Absolute and Divine*. While in European mentality, as explained above, the difference and transcendence of divine Being against the limited and contingent world of space and time has been elaborated sharply by rationality, in the regions of the African and the Asiatic culture more emphasis is laid on mutual oneness, i.e. on the immanence of the Absolute and Divine. This is done in the utmost immediate way in *African* culture: Here the Divine is considered as the starting-point of the series of ancestors, whence the flow of life permanently is coming in. So the Divine is very close to mankind and nature, continuously acting in them in a creative way. Such an immediacy of tendency mentioned above towards "overcoming matter by withdrawal to the inside", rather the spiritual distance (and confrontation) gains special actualization. One might call this an "immanence of transcendence as transcendence".¹⁹ So in Islam, which originated in West Asia, the absolute One God indeed is transcendent to all multiplicity of the world events, but in such a way that these events seem to be determined by Him totally; therefore, an adequate distance granting free encounter and partnership scarcely can exist. Hinduism in South Asia knows a multitude of manifestations of the Divine in nature and history. Thus, the unity of the Divine seems to be immersed into the multiplicity of the world without plainly mingling with it. Finally, in East Asia,

¹⁹ Cf. the further explanations by the *author*, *World peace as dynamic unity of cultural contrarities* [footn. 13], pp. 40-42

Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism do not conceive of the Absolute as transcendent Thou confronting world and mankind, but rather - in different manners - as immanent standard of Being. Hence the ethical habit of a specific "calmness" and "wisdom" arises.

These examples demonstrate that talking about "African" resp. "Asiatic" culture can only refer to certain typical basic tendencies of these extensive areas of culture which spread over continents and which are subject to grave differentiations in their concretions. So for example, one has to speak about the spiritualities of West Asia, South Asia and East Asia, i.e., about a multitude of Asiatic cultures rather than about the one and only "Asiatic culture". However, belonging to the same continent does not mean an absolute historical contingency and essential irrelevancy, but -(as we tried to show above) a being also ontologically related through the common rooting in spiritual "basic tendencies" typical to the continent; nevertheless, by the progress of technological culture (which originated in Europe) the continental borders grow more and more relative. Against all tendencies towards blurring and leveling intercultural distinctions, however, must be stressed the primordial spiritual similarities and differences of the world cultures offer essential possibilities of mutual stimulation and completion.

In order to prevent the *monistic* misunderstanding (which takes the cultural differences on one continent for

nothing else than optional variations of one and only one basic theme of culture) as well as the also one-sided *pluralistic* misunderstanding (which denies any common contents of the different components) it would be best to speak about *gradual similarities* - which are not contingent, but essential. Interestingly the wide-spread inclination to mere "distinction" and to accentuation of differences originates from (maybe one-sided use of?) European science which always provokes the monistic counter-extreme²⁰.

Now let's try to summarize the *result* of our considerations from the viewpoint gained above: the culture of mankind seems to present itself as a *holistic relational structure of the extensive cultural areas Europe-Africa-Asia*. This structure obviously is, to a certain degree, "pre-formed" in its cultural-geographical properties (or better, basic dispositions) by natural conditions (i.e., above all, the surface of the earth and the climate) which lay the basis for all human culture - in the sense of a primordial *pre-disposition*, which means no total *pre-determination*. Thus, human freedom and self-determination is not excluded, but addressed and provoked. This can

²⁰ An attempt to see the different and dissimilar on the background of the common and similar (e.g., the difference between West, South and East Asiatic culture as different modes of expression of specific Asiatic way of culture) was undertaken by the *author*, entering deeper into the matter: World Peace as Dynamic Unity of Cultural Contrarities [footn. 13]

be shown by corresponding examples, as we tried to do, in regard of the relation to nature, man and the Absolute and Divine, differing typically from culture to culture. So, the spiritual relational structure of mankind emerges as a complex of contrary resp. sub-contrary basic references to reality which, in their "humaneness", can complete one another and thus open a perspective of future cultural development which means not only a de facto possibility, but also a task to be handled responsibly.

Concretely it became evident that the European-occidental and the Afro-Asiatic spheres of culture form a "contrary" opposition and, within the latter, the African and the Asian region are again opposing each other in a "sub-contrary" way. Here we have to notice that both types of opposition include soft transitions; therefore, they signify no absolute determination of structure, but nevertheless a relative one. To know this has the value of a "help for substantial orientation" in favour of cross-cultural understanding and promising shaping of the future.

The *American* (and especially the *Latin American*) continent is playing a particular role in our attempt to "holistically comprehending the structure" of mankind's culture. Because there influences from all large cultural areas – Europe, Africa and Asia – come together, thus America can serve as an example of mankind's future task – with all its dangers and sufferings of failure, but also with the chances of creative integration and innovation.²¹

Now let's enter into a deepening final reflection. Is it possible to comprehend the dispositional structure of mankind which has revealed itself in the "wholeness of nature and culture", proceeding from a fundamental ontological principle of understanding? Such a principle is offered in a dialectic-triadic conception of Being.

III. The Ontological Unity of the Formation of Nature and the Structure of Culture as Triadic Event.

At first, *methodological preliminary remarks* may be required. Subsequently, we do not want to attempt an *a priori proceeding by deduction*. This would force the data given by experience to obey a pre-conceived principle, e.g., a triadic pattern of explanation, thereby surely falsifying them. Rather we try to go the way of a *posteriori induction* (maybe better, *transcendental reduction*). This way starts from the data given by experience and helps us later to understand them more deeply as expression of a dialectical meaningful structure of Being which lays their basis.²²

Thus, our starting-point is the connection of experience described

²¹ Cf. *author*, Lateinamerika als Ort kreativer Kulturbegegnung. Zukunft im Widerspruch zur Gegenwart? [Latin America as Place of Creative Intercultural Encounter. Future as a Contradiction to the Present?] In: George Stenger/Margarete Röhrig (Hrsgg.), Philosophie der Struktur – "Fahrzeug" der Zukunft? Für H. Rombach, Freiburg-München 1995, pp.211-231.

above. According to it, culture results from a permanent encounter between nature and mind: Both form an *ontological unity*; they are proportional to each other and can be understood as a meaningful wholeness.²³

²² But even then we must not expect that all data given by experience can be "ontologically deduced". They can only approximatively be "elucidated onto-hermeneutically". To say it more exactly, the procedure follows a circular figure repeating itself again and again, i.e., a spiral movement. Departing from experience, we try to view its ("dialectical-trinitarian") basic source, in order to understand out of this source experience more "basically" (as more or less coherent connection of meaning). Hence a first, preliminary understanding arises, a pre-understanding of the data of experience. Hereby still more aspects of experience, which confronted us understandably as problems before, can be taken into consideration and put into their proper place. Thus our view can turn back again and so on – in the direction of an ever more "broad" and "basical" understanding of reality. In this way, the manifold and different "being of experience" should and can be elucidated in the "truth of the Being which lays its basis"; at the same time, this truth is to be revealed more clearly. The foundation for this concept of knowledge is the Aristotelian differentiation between the sensual as what is "the former *for us*" (the starting-point of our experience) and the basic source of meaning and Being which is detected hereby as what is "the former *by nature*" (wherein the inner constitution of the sensual is apprehended and where our strife for knowledge reaches a certain conclusion); cf. Aristotle, *Anal. post.* I,2 [71b.34]; see on it Horst Seidl, *Beiträge zu Aristoteles' Erkenntnislehre und Metaphysik* [Contribution to Aristotle's Theory of Knowledge and Metaphysics], Würzburg-Amsterdam 1984.

Within this ontological unity the relationship of mind and nature, as explained, seems to be differentiated according to the individual cultures. In the *European-occidental* culture, mind is (very clearly since early modern times) orientated primarily towards the rational ordering and technological domination and "working up" of nature.

²³ Nature implies, so to speak, the "inviting" and "provoking" *possibility* which the mind grasps and *actualizes* through the work of culture, the receptive potency, into which mind can express and "objectivate" itself. Mind lays its claim on the possibilities of nature and fulfills them, shaping them through its ideas, i.e., by passing through nature (by taking into service and actualizing its possibilities) mind can gain more and more its own actuality; and in a certain correspondence, by "passing through the mind" (i.e., by its technological-cultural performance) nature gains more and more its own actuality, reaches an increased energetization of its material and vital potencies. So the work of culture means an actualization of ontological possibilities of nature by mind as well as of ontological possibilities of mind by nature. Both correspond to each other essentially and so comply with the requirements of the concept "ontological unity". On the further elaboration of this connection cf. by author. *Kulturphilosophie der Technik* [footn.5], esp. pp.48-73: The Positive Meaning of Technology in the Context of World History. There we try, from the perspectives "technics as 'actualization of the possibilities' of nature", "technics as spiritual history of nature" (and as "natural history of mind") and "technics as unifying movement of mind and nature", to analyse the extent of the mutual, holistically comprehensive dynamis-energeia-relationship between nature and mind. This holds true especially for the modern culture which is thoroughly determined by technics.

Inasmuch as nature hereby merely is of interest as “value useful for man” and not respected as “value meaningful in itself”, this leads to a partially aggressive and destructive habit. So, mind behaves against nature here as *anti-thesis*.

On the other hand, in the *Afro-Asiatic cultural tradition*, mind primarily searches for harmony and unity, i.e., participation and integration. However, inasmuch as hereby not only the unity, but also the difference of mind and nature is revealed (for otherwise one could scarcely speak explicitly about *the two* being a unity), this means the habit of *synthesis*.

Synthesis originates from the coming together of “thesis” and “anti-thesis”; its original basis lays in the one as well as in the other. Now, in the concrete case one or the other of these partial aspects of the basic source can *predominate*. Depending on this, the character of the synthesis varies “*basically*”, i.e., in our context. Inasmuch as the synthetically harmony flows more strongly from the “thesis”, namely nature and the reference to nature, the type of the *African* culture is characterized. Because here unity and balance, as elaborated above, result immediately from vital-natural Being. In *Asiatic* culture, on the other hand, it results rather from the calmness by detachedness (and confrontation) against nature; so the emergence of the synthesis here obviously is accentuated by the “antithesis”.

Thus the concrete profile of an ontological-holistical interpretation of

the unity of nature and culture shows itself in the sense of a triadic-dialectical concept of Being. *Nature* (as “Being in itself” preceding every cultural working-up, laying the basis for it) is, as a “thesis”, sharply confronted by *European-occidental culture* as an “antithesis”. *African* and *Asiatic culture* represent two “basically different” types of “synthesis” and harmony between the human mind and nature. Thus we can cast a glance on the possibility of a *creative interplay of world cultures* which offers a chance and task: to become *permeable* for one another, to notice human one-sidedness and limitations and to tackle them in teamwork – by mutual complementarily disposed for a humaneness which is “culturally differentiated” as well as “universally integrated” and so vivid in the full sense of the word.

The mode of a dialectical intertwining and possible mutual fertilization of cultures described above in particular considers the important distinction grounded in experience. The relation between European and Afro-Asiatic culture is to be understood as *contrary* opposition; the relation between African and Asiatic culture, however, as *sub-contrary* opposition. For in the latter the members of the opposition are closer to each other. They are two modes of mediation and balance between mind and nature which are disposed so that they oppose each other. Precisely through their mutual complementary relation they are able to “compensate” the European-occidental disposition and to bring it into proper proportion again – since it tends

to grasp nature in active tension, to dominate it and to make it serve man's purposes. (This at first brings about a "lack of balance", namely a "preponderance" of mind in confrontation to nature.) Vice versa, the "scientific-technical" dynamics of the occident can exert its influence on the orient and the "spiritual vivacity immediate to nature" of Africa, thus promoting the development of a "*still more active calmness*" resp. a "*still more purposeful vivacity*". Both influences, as mentioned above, can be enacted in a mutually fertile complementary relation.

Our dialectical-triadic attempt to understand the actual unity of nature and culture may in a way remind us of the philosophical approach in *Hegel*. However, Hegel's idealistic presuppositions are not shared by us. Especially in calling nature "thesis" we still totally leave out of account whether nature is to be conceived of as position of an (absolute) mind or not; instead of this, we only mean the Being preceding all spiritual working-up and culture, laying the basis for it (and in this sense: "immediate"). Just as calling the occidental culture "antithetic to nature" intends to express already an "essential aggressivity", rather a confrontation in order to determine the confronted rationally. This confrontation may grow constructive by explicitly and decidedly turning towards nature; it is also exposed to destructive alienation. But alienation takes place only inasmuch as nature is used as a "mere means for optional purposes" – a danger and maybe also a temptation of perverting

meaning which certainly, to a large extent, has become historical reality without thereby (as claimed by dialectical idealism) making a necessary and intelligible step towards harmony and peace²⁴.

Hegel's terminology which we used above (not without giving restricting explanations) represents a *modern-occidental* form of triadic understanding of reality. An *ancient-occidental* form can be found, e.g., in *Plato's* doctrine of the "trichotomy of the soul"²⁵.

²⁴ As topical "triadic interpretations of reality" which partially proceed by critical dialogue with Hegel, which partially and particularly also are inspired by the deeper ontotriadic thought tradition of the *medieval occident*, as e.g., Augustine, Thomas Aquinas or Bonaventura, in this context may be mentioned: *author*, *Der Akt-Charakter des Seins. Eine speculative Weiterführung der Seinslehre Thomas v. Aquins aus der Anregung durch das dialektische Prinzip hegels* [Being as Act. A Speculative Continuation of the Ontology of Thomas Aquinas, Inspired by Hegel's Dialectical Principle], München 1965; *id.*, *Ek-in-sistenz. Positiven und Transformativen der Existenzphilosophie. Eine Einführung in die Dynamik existentiellen Denkens* [Ek-in-sistence. Positons and transformations of existential philosophy. An Introduction into the Dynamics of Existential Thinking], Frankf./M.-Bern-New York-Paris 1989 (esp. chap.7, 2: Die 'triadische' ek-insistentielle Bewegungsstruktur der Wirklichkeit [The 'Triadic' Ek-insistentential Motional Structure of Reality]). Here 1. the primordial Being-in-itself of reality is called 'in-sistence', 2. the Being-expressed (resp. Being-proceeded-from-itself) and Being-confronting-itself 'ek-sistence', and finally 3. the Being-returned-to-itself 're-in-sistence' (and also, as coming together of 1 and 2, 'consistence').

According to it, firstly, a “vital desire-soul” is accentuated. It is the basis of the human Being and lives fundamentally in the abdomen. Contrarily “confronted” to it is the “mind-soul” to which the head, as the main part of the body, is ascribed. Between the two, the “courage-soul” mediates; it is situated in the breast and in the heart (as origin of “cordial” courage).

In the context of this approach, the essential habit of *Europe* can be

See further also Arnulf Rieber, Trinitätsanalogie und ganzheitlicher Seinsbegriff [Analogy of Trinity and Holistic Concept of Being]. In: E. Schadel (ed.), *Actualitas omnium actuum* [footn.11], pp.131-161; Clemens Kaliba, Die Welt als Gleichnis des dreienigen Gottes. Entwurf einer trinitarischen Ontologie [The World as Likeness of the Triune God. Sketch of a Trinitarian Ontology]. With a ‘preface to the reprint’ by H. Beck (Writings on Triadics and Schöpfung. Entwurf einer analogia trinitatis [The Bond Between God and Creation. Sketch of an Analogy of Trinity] (Writings on Triadics and Ontodynamics. Vol.5), *ibid.* 1991; Radoslav Kutra, Die Schule des Sehens. Klischeefreie Vollendung triadischer Wirklichkeit [The School of Vision. Non-stereotype Completion of Triadic Reality] (Writings on the triadics and Ontodynamics. Vol.6), *ibid.* 1994; Erwin Schadel, Musik als Trinitätssymbol. Einführung in die harmonikale Metaphysik [Music as Symbol of Trinity. Introduction into Harmonical Metaphysics] (Writings on Triadics and Ontodynamics. Vol.8), *ibid.* 1995.

²⁵ Cf. e.g. Thomas A. Szlezák, Unsterblichkeit und Trichotomie der Seele im zehnten Buch der Politeia [Immortality and Trichotomy of the Soul in Politeia X]. In: *Phronesis* 21 (1976) 31-58.

understood as being disposed to ascribe greatest importance for life to the head (with an inclination towards exclusive concentration on the head), while in *Afro-Asiatic* culture it is more originally the “heart” which marks the disposition of man and whence man lives. Here, the “heart” mediates between “abdomen” and “head”. To continue out of the perspective opened above in a plastic manner, in *African* culture the heart is motivated more immediately and strongly out of the “abdomen”; in *Asiatic* culture, more accentuated out of the “head”.

Thus, the cultural structure of mankind may be understood in certain correspondence and analogy to the ontological structure of man the individual, so to speak as “macro-anthropos”. This very comparison makes it evident that to none of the cultures in its *original* humane value (if we disregard, e.g., the factual perversions of meaning mentioned above) a lesser value has to be ascribed than to another one. Because for the entire whole of an organism (to which mankind’s culture in its basic dispositions, as we tried to show, may be compared) all organs are inevitably necessary: exactly *by their diversity* they have to complete one another in position, structure and function.

The dialectical vision of reality in Hegel is influenced above all by the doctrine of the three hypostases in *Neo-Platonism*. Here the second member of the triad – modeling Hegel’s “anti-thesis”, (in our view: the “confrontation”) – already clearly is

conceived of as "consciousness" resp. "reason"; so, e.g., in Plotinus.²⁶

He offers some interesting parallels to *African* and *Asiatic* conceptions – both philosophical and mythological – of a triadic basic structure of reality.

The *area of African culture* knows, e.g., an ancient Egyptian tradition. According to it, reality is based on three primordial deities: Ré ("Creator-God"), Ptah ("Word-God") and Amun ("Sprit-God"). The first one can be interpreted as archetypical reference to the primordial vital force (esp. the sun); the second one as an equivalent reference to confronting consciousness (expressing itself in the word); the third one as reference to love and joy that connects all.²⁷

²⁶ According to this position, reality as "actuality" moves in three hypostases, i.e., modes of standing in itself: all kind of reality at first owns its basic standing-in-itself as "primordial unity". Thence it proceeds into the objective and differentiating "reason" where it gains a second standing-in-itself. Finally, it returns via the "soul", its third standing-in-itself, by passing through matter, back to the primordial unity. Cf. esp. Plotin, En. V, 1 ("On the Three Original Hypostases"); moreover: H. Beck, *Triadische Götter-Ordnungen: klassisch-antiker und neuplatonischer Ansatz* [Triadic Configurations of Deities: Classical-ancient and Neo-Platonic Approach]. In: *Theologie und Philosophie* 67 (1992, #2) 230-245.

²⁷ Cf. Manfred Görg, *Mythos, Glaube und Geschichte. Die Bilder des christlichen Credo und ihre Wurzeln im alten Ägypten* [Myth, Faith and History, The Pictures of the Christian Creed and Their Roots in Ancient Egypt], Düsseldorf² 1993.

In the *area of Asiatic culture* we encounter at first the South Asiatic "Hindu Trinity" ("Trimurti") wherein the supreme Divine Being is represented: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva²⁸. In an even clearer way, for Indian thinking the deepest essence of reality articulates itself in the abstract philosophical formula "Sat-Chit-Ananda", i.e. Being-consciousness-joy of love.

According to the philosophical tradition of East Asia, the wholeness of Being lives in the complementary contrariety of the powers (resp. directions of motion) Yang and Yin, which also can be interpreted in the sense of a triadic circular movement²⁹.

In this perspective, "Yang" represents the "male" power of the heavens, proceeding from itself and

²⁸ Brahma is believed to be the "Creator-God", the unlimited primordial unity of Being whence the manifold and limited being emanates. Vishnu is the "Preserver-God" who carries and preserves the emanated manifold and limited being. Because his most important incarnations, as Ram, Buddha (according to Hindu understanding also he is an incarnation of Vishnu) and Krishna, were guiding teachers of mankind, it is not absurd to assume that he is, in his essence, deeply "word-like". Shiva, the "Destroyer-God", "destroys" the limitations (and also the perversions of meaning, the evil and the suffering, which are connected to limitation) of the emanated manifold and different, thus giving it back to the unlimited unity and harmony of the origin. – On this context cf. H. v. Glasenapp, *Die Philosophie der Inder, eine Einführung in ihre Geschichte und ihre Lehren* [The Philosophy of the Indians, An Introduction into its History and its Doctrines], 2 vols., Salzburg 1953/56.

expanding; "Yin" represents the "female" power of the earth, returning to itself and receptive. So a far-fetched parallelism between Yang and the proceeding from "thesis" towards "anithtesis" (resp. from "Being" towards "consciousness" and "word") can be drawn, as well as between Yin and the re-folding of the proceeded opposition into a "synthesis" of integral unity and fulfilling harmony.

²⁹ In this perspective, "Yang" represents the "male" power of the heavens, proceeding from itself and expanding; "Yin" represents the "female" power of the earth, returning to itself and receptive. So a far-fetched parallelism between Yang and the proceeding from "thesis" towards "anithtesis" (resp. from "Being" towards "consciousness" and "word") can be drawn, as well as between Yin and the re-folding of the proceeded opposition into a "synthesis" of integral unity and fulfilling harmony.

This explanation of the philosophical and mythological concepts of triadic basic essence of reality, which differ typically from culture to culture, may be articulated less clearly in the respective traditions. It may also seem to be far from the perspectives of the individual scientific approaches. Our interpretation, however, suggests itself in the hermeneutic perspective of the given context. The more or less huge similarity resp. dissimilarity between the given examples even demonstrates the possible difference and multiplicity of the expressions of the basic unity of being humans as well as of Being itself; vice versa it demonstrates the unity of the basis in the multiplicity of the phenomena. – An extensive preliminary work on the project of a triadic ontology of culture is contained in *E. Schadel. Bibliotheca Trinitariorum. Internat. Bibliographie zur trinitarischen Literatur*, Vol. 1-2 Munic-New York-London-Paris 1984/1988.

This hint at the transcultural and transcendental character of triadic thinking (and thus, at the evidence of the issue itself!) can fundamentally confirm our attempt of a final onto-hermeneutical understanding of the unity of "natural formation and cultural structure" in its meaning and give it an even broader basis.

Now let's conclude by an outlook on a continuation of our project in the sense of a "*Analogia et Participatio Trinitatis*" as offered in a *Christian philosophical-theological perspective*.³⁰ This obviously is of

³⁰ Cf. the four works of the author: *Analogia Trinitatis – ein Schlüssel zu Strukturproblemen der heutigen Welt* [*Analogia Trinitatis – A Key to Structural Problems of Today's World*]. In: *Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie XXV* (1980) 87-99; *Kulturelle Begegnung und Bewegung zwischen Europa und Lateinamerika – gedeutet in der Perspektive einer 'Analogia Trinitatis'. Retrospektive Verstehbarkeitsimpulse interkultureller Verhältnisse und Beziehungen aus einem Ansatz christlicher Philosophie* [*Cultural Encounter and Movement Between Europe and Latin America – Interpreted in the Perspective of an 'Analogia Trinitatis'. Impulses for Retrospective Understanding of Intercultural relations and Connections from an Approach of Christian Philosophy*]. In: *Politische Studien* 40 (1989) 263-269 [*German version of a corresponding Spanish contribution at the II. Congreso Mundial de Filosofía Cristiana, Oct. 1986, Monterrey/México*]; *Triadische Engel-Ordnungen: Frühchristlicher und mittelalterlicher Ansatz* [*Triadic Orders of Angels. Approaches in Early Christianity and in the Middle Ages*]. In: *Philosophie und Theologie* 67 (1992, no.3) 321-355; *Freiheit und triadische Struktur des Seins – im Ausgang von Erich Przywara* [footn.2] 386-398.

special importance in our context, also because the founder of Christianity lived at the cultural intersection of Europe, Africa and Asia (although Christian theology at first was developed more in the form of European-occidental conceptualization).

From this point of view, the Divine basic reality is to be conceived of as a tri-personal unity in motion. Being in an unlimited way, it expresses in unlimited knowledge and consciousness of itself its essence as "inner word" (= "Logos"), thus confronting it as it's totally co-essential "Thou". The space of encounter between the two which is constituted this way is filled with life by both of them breathing a common "spirit" in mutual acceptance and love, so transcending (i.e., not "blurring" or "extinction", but rather "fulfilling" and "heightening" their duality and contrariety, confirming their unity and harmony.³¹

In our context which is coined by the philosophy of culture thus the following interpretation becomes plausible. *Occidental culture* in its *confronting logicity* participates in a special way in and points to the proceeding of the Logos in the Divine basic reality; regarding the partial alienation and the perversion of meaning of this "logicity" this happens, however, expressed in Christian terms, rather as a participation in the "crucified logos". In contrast to this, the area of *Afro-Asiatic* culture in its different *spiritual* disposition appears to be embedded more deeply in the proceeding of the divine Spirit:

Asiatic "spirituality of illumination" more clearly in the emanation of Spirit from the Divine *Logos*, *African* "spirituality of immediacy" more distinctly in the effluence of the Spirit from the Divine *Being*, inasmuch as this precedes Logos and Spirit. Such an attempt to interpret the world event in onto-trinitarian way hints at the possibility of a fruitful dialogue between philosophy of culture and Christian theology wherein, however, not only

³¹ On the 'co-essentiality' between logos and Divine Being cf.: "In the beginning there was the word and the word was with God and God was the Word" (Joh. 1,1); on the 'equal rank' and 'succession' of the three Divine hypostases resp. persons: "Baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28, 19).

This means, the unlimited Divine Being proceeds within itself totally "out of itself" (as self-expression in the Word) and "into itself" (as self-completion in the Spirit); thus it enacts a circular motion without any temporal or spatial limitation. The limited world – i.e., the unity of nature and culture – by Divine freedom is implied in the articulation of the unlimited Word; therefore it participates in the "swinging" of the Divine Being which is moved in a Trinitarian way. Hence the world bears a thorough Trinitarian character based on its transcendent and at the same time immanent Divine foundation, hereby pointing to the Trinitarian structure of this foundation as its "weak reflection"; vice versa, understanding trinity can elucidate some aspects of the world. On this cf. *author*, *Natürliche Theologie. Grundriß philosophischer Gotteserkenntnis* [Natural Theology. Outlines of Philosophical Knowledge of God], Munic-Salzburg² 1998, esp. pp. 192-205 [Essence and Personality: God's Essence as Personality], 213s., 220s. and 224s.; *id.*, *Der Akt-Charakter des Seins* [footn.22], pp.190ss.

European, but also African and Asiatic modes of thinking are to be involved.³²

Summing up, it may be said that the extensive continental areas of the earth, i.e., Europe-Africa-Asia, in a certain correspondence to the varying natural conditions, have brought forth different mental and cultural dispositions which are complementary to one another and

can be understood more deeply in the perspective of a "triadic conception of reality". Here holistic thinking has an important task of philosophical and empirical research, whereby it could give important impulses and helpful orientations to intercultural action.

Translated by Uwe Voigt.

³² Such a dialogue can receive many impulses from the works of *R. Panikkar*. For example, this author sees a special relation between Buddhism with its teaching of the "absolutely silent stillness" of Nirvana and the first of the three Divine persons which is "before" the Word; he also stresses the possible deeper understanding of Judaism, Christianity and Islam as Word-Religions by a reference to the second person of the Divine Trinity, the "Word"; finally, according to him, by aiming at "non-duality" (Advaita), at the overcoming of oppositions and at synthesis, Hinduism enacts a turn to the inside, to the "unity of the Holy Spirit". Cf. e.g. his writing: *Trinität. Über das Zentrum menschlicher Erfahrung* [Trinity. On the Core of Human Experience]. Munic 1993; see also the corresponding remark by *author*, *World Peace as Dynamic Unity of Cultural Contrarities* [footn.13], p.49, footn.28.