REFLECTING RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS.
ECHOES FROM ANCIENT EAST-WEST ENCOUNTERS

Heinz Georg Held

The following text is the slightly modified script of a performance given at the start of the conference, entitled “An audio-visual Journey through the Parthian Age”. The thematic focus on what appears to be a marginal episode within the long and wide-ranging history of Euro-Asian East-West encounters is intended as an example. On the one hand, the Parthian Age, stretching from the third pre-Christian up until the third post-Christian century, and in which the cultural driving forces of the preceding Achaemenid and the subsequent Sassanid era culminate\(^1\), offers a significantly broad spectrum of religious contacts, conflicts and transfers and thus varied forms of transmission, condensation, hybridization, differentiation and suppression of religious ideas and cult practices. On the other hand, the historiographic tradition represents a negative imagology\(^2\) developed insistently since antiquity and whose terminology and vocabulary have also become milestones in a permanent East-West demarcation. Far beyond the contemporary context, the Hellenic-Persian concepts of the enemy which consolidate in the Roman-Parthian Age and communicate themselves in their intensified Byzantine-Sassanid form in the Islamic Age, have inscribed their reciprocal identifications into the collective imaginations of both
