



Raimon Panikkar's Diatopical Hermeneutics: Meister Eckhart's World of Holistic Thinking and the Bhagavadgītā's Experience of the World of Wholeness

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Abstract: The phenomena of interreligious and intercultural dialogue as well as of inculturation and interculturalisation, so relevant in our context, have to do with understanding religions and cultures other than our own. Most of our efforts in this domain have got stuck here because beyond prayer meetings and even studies of other faith-traditions we have been unable to promote deeper mutual understanding. It is here that Raimon Panikkar's diatopical hermeneutics have relevance. The aim of this paper is to discover a relationship between two different and differing and even mutually contradictory cosmovisions.

In this article, the author wants to show that Meister Eckhart's *World of Holistic Thinking* and the Bhagavadgītā's *Experience of the World of Wholeness* are functional equivalences, i. e., we have argued that the Bhagavadgītā's specific *Experience of the World* and Meister Eckhart's *holistic thinking* of Reality have the potentiality of disclosing a systemic relationship if followed through. What we have done is tried to show *how to go about it*. On the face of it one would not have dreamt of relating these two utterly different worlds but for Panikkar's discovery of the principle of homeomor-

phic equivalents and their application in the context of his diatopical hermeneutics.

Keywords: Cosmotheandrist, Bhagavadgītā, homeomorphic equivalents, Meister Eckhard, Raimundo Panikkar

0. Diatopical Hermeneutics is about Relating Meaningfully Different Cultures and Religions

Today's interreligious and intercultural dialogue is high on good-will and open attitude, and low on how to go about it. Without good-will one can do nothing; and equally without knowing how to go about it we are unable to proceed. Good-will alone cannot make dialogue fruitful, in much the same way that method alone cannot fructify dialogue. Good-will brings people together and it is method that guides their procedure. Without good-will religions and cultures cannot come together but without some common understanding of procedure it would be difficult for work to progress.

The phenomena of interreligious and intercultural dialogue as well as of inculturation and interculturalisation have to do with understanding religions and cultures other than our own. Most of our efforts in this domain have got stuck here because beyond prayer meetings and even studies of other faith-traditions we have been unable to promote deeper mutual understanding. It is here that Raimon Panikkar's diatopical hermeneutics have relevance. The aim of the following reflections is to discover a relationship between two different and differing and even mutually contradictory cosmovisions. However the search is neither arbitrary nor a wild goose chase. This version of hermeneutics is built on an analogy of proportionality. It can be put simply like this: The significance that Ishvara, for instance, has to believers in the Bhagavadgītā is similar to the significance that Allah has to believers in Islam. Similarly the significance that Christ has to believing Christians is similar to the significance that Jahweh has to believing Jews. This is not the same as saying Ishvara is the same as or identical with

Allah, or Christ is the same as or identical with Jahweh. The focus of such an exercise in diatopical hermeneutics is neither Ishvara nor Allah nor Christ nor Jahweh but the *significance* they enjoy among their followers.

Now how is this supposed to contribute to understanding between different cosmovisions? Aren't these simply parallel lines? In our exposition we are taking for granted that one of the cosmovisions is that of the *believer* who is doing the exercise. This implies that as a believer she knows first-hand or even has experienced the significance of the Mystery of her own faith-tradition. In that case she will be in a position to understand and perhaps even empathise with the position of her dialogue partner. Thus, we who love our parents know what it means to lose them; from that experience we empathise with others when they lose their parents. In an exercise of diatopical hermeneutics falling back on one's own experience is of the essence; otherwise it will become at best an intellectual game or at worst remain an abstract exercise.

More specifically I illustrate this the Bhagavadgītā's world of wholeness and Meister Eckhart's world of holistic thinking. On the face of it the one world does not appear to have anything to do with the other. Diatopical hermeneutics provokes us to think out ways and means of discovering relationships where none seem to exist. This requires familiarity with both the traditions we are trying to relate. I employ the expression "familiarity" intentionally. Familiarity has to do with family and contains the hint of a family relationship. I leave the question "What kind of relationship?" open here with the suggestion that it should exclude *polarization* but at connote *polarity*. Polarity *needs* an Other. A good example is that of the north and south poles where one cannot be without the other!

1. Diatopical Hermeneutics Requires Homeomorphic Equivalences

Gradually our world is coming to the realization that the spiritual treasures of humanity can be shared by all. Here Raimon Panikkar's *homeomorphic* (popularly called functional) *equivalences* could show us the way of going about fruitfully with cultural and religious differences. Panikkar's sophisticated method, *diatopical hermeneutics*, deals with "human *topoi*, 'places' of understanding and self-understanding... which have not developed their patterns of intelligibility or their basic assumptions out of a common historical tradition or through mutual influence".¹

When, for example, we take avatāra and incarnation then it is not just the single words or concepts that we take up as homeomorphic equivalents but their universes of meaning as well. Panikkar's does not identify avatāra with incarnation and vice versa. For what avatāra signifies in the world of the Hindu Traditions is equivalent to what incarnation signifies in the world of the Christian Traditions. Thus what Krishna signifies in the Krishna traditions is equivalent to what Jesus signifies in the Jesus traditions. In this way each tradition learns a bit the significance of the other traditions.

This of course is only the theory aspect of diatopical hermeneutics. But this comment is not to be interpreted negatively. We need theory to venture out into the unknown and to try out new ways of getting acquainted with the unknown. In what follows we shall attempt to work out the practical side of diatopical hermeneutics. To do this we shall take up two traditions: The Bhagavadgītā from the Hindu Traditions because generally speaking it remains undisputed and it is well known also outside the world of the Hindu Faith; and Meister Eckhart, who compared the Gītā is a relatively unknown Christian mystic from the Christian Tradition (c. 1260 – c. 1328). The contrast could not be greater. But the

choice is deliberate. Is it possible to make a connection across such a vast difference? This is the challenge we have chosen to face here. I am formulating the homeomorphic equivalents thus: The Bhagavadgītā Experience of Wholeness and Meister Eckhart's Holistic Thinking of Reality. When juxtaposing these homeomorphic equivalents I shall make use of smaller paraphrases of both of which I shall place above the columns.

2. The Bhagavadgītā Experience of Wholeness

For the Gītā the experience of wholeness has to do with perceiving reality as it is. It consists of the dimensions of change, non-change and the depth-dimension. This is a harmonious continuum wherein one dimension dovetails into the other. Clearly this kind of wholeness is anything but uniformity as it does not exclude diversity and multiplicity like the levels of change and non-change on the larger background of an unchanging spiritual Infinite Mystery called Krishna or Vāsudeva.

The fact that I am calling this Mystery wholeness should not cause surprise that it speaks the I-Thou language of a personal God like in the Bible. Elsewhere I have argued in detail that the I-Thou language of the Gītā is employed heuristically as its Divine Mystery is more in the nature of a Cosmo-Theos rather than an Anthro-po-Theos.² The revelation is *cosmic*, the major symbol here being the Cosmos and not Krishna. Whatever revelation is made is not by the man Krishna nor as a man Krishna but through the Divine Presence Krishna in the Cosmos, in the cosmic elements, not in historical events. This is not said negatively but descriptively. Revelation is always a subject of faith through the mediation of history in the western christian tradition and through the mediation of the Cosmos in the Gītā tradition. Accordingly I have called the Divine Mystery Anthro-po-Theos in the former case and

and Cosmo-Theos in the latter case. Neither better nor worse but different.

However in the faith-world of the Gītā human beings are incapable of perceiving reality as it is because of *rāgadveṣa*, that is, deep-seated likes and dislikes which misguide human beings in every way. Because of their Ego (Ahamkāra) they are rendered blind to the depth-dimension (their Ātmā, the principle of wholeness). The Ahamkāra binds, whereas the Ātmā liberates one from the negative effects of likes and dislikes in the areas of the understanding, the mind and the senses. At this point the quitesence of the Gītā revelation comes into sharp focus and is expressed through the threefold Yoga of Cosmic Service (Karmayoga), of Communion with the Divine Mystery in the Cosmos (Bhaktiyoga) and of In-Sight into the nature of the Cosmos (Jñānayoga).³

Karmayoga when performed selflessly and for the welfare of all is authentic action because it is cosmic action for *lokasangraha*, no more selfish action. In an age that is gradually becoming ecologically more conscious its relevance should be obvious. Bhaktiyoga leads to the realization that it is not a collection of objects, that it is a living reality, inviting us to participate in its life because we have emerged from it and that we shall return to it and that if we discover its personal and transpersonal dimensions we shall be rewarded with corresponding discoveries also in our Communion with the Cosmos. Christians are used to equating higher life mostly with human life; that the Universe could be a living reality does not resonate in our consciousness. Bhaktiyoga acquaints us with Divine Presence at work in the Universe. Finally Jñānayoga enables insight into the real nature of the Universe. The Universe is the Body of the Supreme Mystery, states Chapter Eleven of the Gītā.

When we speak of the Gītā's experience of Wholeness we are in fact speaking of the Highest Mystery; that is the Gītā's

unique way of speaking of the Divine, more specifically of Divine Presence which is the taste in the waters, brilliance in the sun and the moon, wisdom in the wise, strength in the strong, the beginning, the middle, and the end of all being, and the Ātmā, the principle of Wholeness, established in heart of all beings!

3. Meister Eckhart's Holistic Thinking about Reality

Ours is an intercultural age in a global world. We can no more live secluded in our own world, affected as we are on all sides by other cultures in the form of intercultural eateries, entertainment, films, plays, literature, fashion and even intercultural philosophy and hermeneutics to say nothing about the ubiquitous presence of science and its derivatives in our life and world. Modern science is a product of a culture that is a double-edged sword and is receiving easy, free and uncritical access every where.

But whereas plundering of our treasures has taken place in colonial times, sharing of our mutual treasures is an important aspect of the human race which has not played the role it should have played in human history. We are talking of mutual sharing. We could begin with our spiritual treasures which unlike material treasures has the unique characteristic of increasing, not decreasing, when shared.

While agreeing to this idea of sharing, still one might question in this context the wisdom of resuscitating this obscure Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart of the 13th-14th century who escaped censure by the Catholic Church merely due to the accident of his death. To us Indians he might appear obscure. Two years ago I was invited to a huge international conference in Munich by the International Meister Eckhart Society. On the agenda was a section called Meister Eckhart - Interreligious Perspective. I understood the significance of this title only when I heard a delegation of Muslim scholars

speaking on Eckhart's influence on their traditions already in his life time. That is, Eckhart was not obscure then; and he is not obscure now judging from the number of publications that are appearing. Eckhart's interpretation of Christianity is finding even today more resonance than ever.

Meister Eckhart's thinking has been called holistic because he argues that the reality of God's unity stands out as an eternal and unlimited giving of his own being/existence to creatures, a giving that is in fact a gifting that neither oppresses nor lets them down.⁴ This is basic to Eckhart's argument about God's unity and the unity of reality are not two different things. Eckhart's thinking, one could call it, vision is about unity. The existence of creatures does not militate against the unity of God.

Unlike human giving which is accidental God's giving, according to Meister Eckhart, belongs to God's very nature. "God's Being consists mainly therein not to be alone or to be for himself alone but to communicate himself fully and exclusively."⁵ Divine self-communication is of the essence; hence it is not half and half but complete self-communication. Furthermore: "Because of God's plenitude God is free from power-claims, and keeps back nothing for himself of what he has and is."⁶ Eckhart's God is a God of plenitude who in his self-communication empties himself totally. Plenitude and *kenosis* go together! "At the same time because of this he makes it possible for everyone to have their own proper being and gives them support and the ability to open up."⁷

Such a God has to be a perfectly loving personal Trinitarian unity. "To speak of [God's] unity is to remove all borders [which is brought about by] perspectives, that is, it reveals that the understanding of [God's] being is not like that of a thing. This is the same as being and relationship".⁸

Such an understanding of “[God’s] unity could be interpreted as absolute Openness towards others. In that case dialogical relation and difference would no more stand directly opposite to the concept of unity”.⁹ A concept of unity like this leads to an understanding of God that goes beyond the traditional trinitarian understanding of God.

“All creatures,” says Eckhart, “are a pure nothing. I do not say, they are worthless or they merely exist: they are pure nothing. What has no being, that is nothing. Now all creatures have no being, because their being depends on God’s existence.”¹⁰ It is a mystic who sees things as they are that is speaking here. “For Eckhart the concept of creatureliness implies that no creature is *mere* creature but lives without ceasing [to be] already from the fact that it-is-in-God.”¹¹

For Meister Eckhart, reality as we experience it, is “manifold, partial and multidimensional.” So too are all our statements and truths. But: “They all aim at one common reality that makes them possible in the first place, the reality of God. This, Meister Eckhart calls Unity, because it transcends all perspectives.”¹² Again, it is the mystic that is speaking, drawing our attention to the one common dynamic at work in every single being, a dynamic which leads to the one centre of the inner unity of all reality. This is the centre of all meaning that creatures seek everywhere and in every being.

As an aside but more relevantly, Eckhart’s bold and unique understanding of Christianity could give a filip to Indian/Asian efforts to interpret the Christian Message in the context of the Asian Religions employing languages of Asian cultures.

It is an astonishing fact (at least in the context of western theology) that Meister Eckhart does not speak of or make use of the redemptive value of the sufferings and passion of Jesus Christ, thus ignoring Paul’s injunction of preaching the crucified Christ alone. My reflections on the Hindu

Cosmovision have led me to the conclusion that suffering does not have any salvific significance there. Hence however much Hindus may admire the suffering Christ he can not save them from Punarjanma, re-birth – which in the last analysis is the goal of all Hindu yearning.

4. Homeomorphic Equivalences between Meister Eckhart's *World of Holistic Thinking* and the Bhagavadgītā's *Experience of the World of Wholeness*

Table 1. Eckhart's World of Holistic Thinking — The Bhagavadgītā's Experience of the World of Wholeness

God allows time to flow out from the eternal duration, that is from eternity itself or directly from the now of eternity so that time and eternity appear similar to that which mutually touches and enters into the other. Thus time flows always out of eternity.¹³

For God is the one who does not divide/separate but unites what is divided/separated.¹⁴

Therefore it is appropriately said, that God has created not *from* the originary foundation [Urgrund] but *in* the originary foundation. For what was in the beginning and whose end is the beginning, originates always, will be born always and is born always.¹⁵

Eightfold divided is my Nature - thus: earth, eater, fire and air, space, mind, and also soul, and the ego. This is the lower: but other than this I have a higher Nature; this too must you know. [And this is Nature] developed into life by which this world is kept in being. To all beings these [two Natures] are [as] a womb; be very sure of this. Of this whole universe the origin and the dissolution too am I. Higher than I there is nothing whatsoever: on Me this universe is strung like clustered pearls upon a thread.¹⁶

By Me, Unmanifest in form, all this universe was spun: in Me subsist all beings, I do not subsist in them. And [yet] contingent beings do not subsist in Me, - behold my sovereign activity: my Self sustains [all] beings. It does not subsist in them; It causes them to be-and-grow. As in [wide] space subsists the mighty wind blowing [at will] ever and everywhere, so do all contingent beings subsist in Me: so must you understand it. All contingent beings pour into material Nature which is mine when a world-aeon comes to an end; and then again when [another] aeon starts, I emanate them forth. Subduing my own material Nature ever again I emanate this whole host of beings, - powerless [themselves], from Nature comes the power.¹⁷

Time (symbol for the non-eternal) flows from the Eternal (Symbol for God). The Eternal unites the disparate non-eternal. *In* and not *from* the originary foundation God created, says Eckhart. On the other hand, the Bhagavadgītā states that all beings are “in Me,” the Absolute.

*Table 2. Eckhart's World of Holistic Thinking:
The Bhagavadgītā's Experience of the World of Wholeness*

<p>I state truly that this Light (called the soul) is not satisfied being unified with the fruitful bosom of divine Nature. Yes, I shall say something which sounds more astonishing: I state standing in the truth, in the eternal truth and in the truth that always remains truth that it is not enough for the same Light [to be] at the simple, still standing Divine Being, that neither gives nor takes: rather it wants to know whence this Being comes; it wants to look inside the simple foundation, in the still desert, in the by-no-means-Differentiation (die nie Unterschiedenheit), neither Father nor Son nor Holy Spirit; in the very interiority, where no one is at home, there only is it enough for that Light, und therein is it more interior than in itself; for this foundation (Grund) is a simple stillness, which in itself is immoveable; however all things are moved by this immoveability and all those receive Life who live reasonably in themselves.¹⁸</p>	<p>None knows from whence I came, - not the gods' celestial hosts nor yet the mighty seers: for I am the beginning of the gods [themselves] as of the mighty seers and all in every way. Whoso shall know Me as unborn, beginningless, great Lord of [all] the world, shall never know delusion among men, from every evil freed. Intellect, wisdom, freedom from delusion, long-suffering, truth, restraint, tranquillity, pleasure and pain, coming to be and passing away, fear and fearlessness as well, refusal to do harm, equanimity, content, austerity, open-handedness, fame and infamy, - [such are] the dispositions of contingent beings, and from Me in all their diversity they arise. The seven mighty seers of old, likewise the Manus four, sharing in my mode of being, were born [the children] of [my] mind; from them [arose] these creatures in the world. Whoso should know this my far-flung power and how I use it [whoso should know these] as they really are, is [truly] integrated; and this his integration can never be undone. Herein there is no doubt. The source of all am I; from Me all things proceed: this knowing, wise men commune with Me in love, full filled with warm affection.¹⁹</p>
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Meister Eckhart's expressions are striking: "unites what is separated/divided," "unified," "that it is not enough for this same light to be with the simple, still Divine Being," "it wants to see into the simple ground, in the still desert, in the never-undifferentiatedness of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," "because this foundation is a simple stillness". On its side the Bhagavadgītā stresses that the material aspect of the universe re-presents the lower nature and the spiritual aspect the higher nature of the Absolute Mystery (Krishna): These do not need to be unified because they are organic parts of whole Body of Krishna.

Meister Eckhart: Sermo 28:

[But] in everything that is [only] created - as I have said - there is no truth. [However] there is something, that is above the created being of the soul, and [something] on which createdness touches, which [indeed] is nothing; [...] It is something akin to the Divine Mode, it is in itself, [and] has nothing in common [with others...]. It is a stranger and a desert and is more nameless than it has a name, and is more unknown than it is known. Could you destroy yourself only for a moment, yes, I say, even for less than a moment, then you would have as yours all that which is in itself. As long as you somehow observe yourself or something, you know just how little what God is as your mouth knows what colour is and my eye knows what taste is: that's how little you know what God is. (Pr. 96):
That is why the Soul never has enough when it does not reach there where the perfection of all creatures is undivided and without difference.

The Bhagavadgītā 5:15f & 5:17-19

He takes not on the good and evil works of anyone at all, - [that] all pervading lord. By ignorance is wisdom overspread; thereby are creatures fooled.

But some there are whose ignorance of self by wisdom is destroyed. Their wisdom, like the sun, illumines that [all-] highest. 5:15f

Souls [bent on] that, selves [bent on] that, with that their sin and that their aspiration, they stride [along the path] from which there is no return [all] taints by wisdom washed away. [These] wise ones see the selfsame thing in a Brahman wise and courteous as in a widow or an elephant, nay as in a dog or outcaste.

While yet in this world they have overcome [the process of] emanation [and decay], for their minds are stilled in that-which-is-ever-the-same is Brahman: therefore in Brahman [stilled] they stand. 5:17-19

Eckhart: Man knows so little what God is, [in much the same way that] the mouth knows what colour is. The goal of the Soul is to reach there where the perfection of all creatures is undivided and without difference. Clearly this is a pointer to unity, to a unified reality. The Bhagavadgītā: With those whose ignorance was cleared away by knowledge of the Self, [this knowledge] allows them to see the Highest that is like the Sun. This leads to equanimity and equanimity is the path to the Highest (Brahman). Clearly this is a pointer to wholeness/integrity.

Table 3. Creatures: A pure Nothing — I would cause Chaos

<p>All creatures are a pure nothing. I am not saying that they are less worth or they are something: they are a pure nothing. What has no being, that is nothing. All creatures have no being, because their being depends on God's presence.²⁰</p>	<p><i>For if I were not tirelessly to busy Myself with works, then would men everywhere follow in my footsteps. If I were not to do my work, these worlds would fall to ruin, and I should be a worker of confusion, destroying these [my] creatures.²¹</i></p>
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Creatures do not have their own being, they merely participate in God's Being. That is why Eckhart is consequent when he speaks of Unity, since there is only one Being, that is, God's Being. This is different in the Bhagavadgītā: The totality of all entities finds itself in the Highest Mystery. This totality is able to act because the Total Mystery is active in the first place. Would this Mystery cease to act, so too would the totality of all entities be unable to act.

Table 4. Divine Unity of Being — Divine Integration of Totality

No [single] vessel can hold two kinds of liquids. If wine is to be contained then water has to be perforce thrown out: the vessel has to be empty and single. Therefore: you must take up Divine joy and God so that you perforce throw out creatures.²²

*Where two have to become one, there one has to lose its being. It is like that when God and the Soul have to become one, the Soul has to lose its being and life.*²³

*From anger comes bewilderment, from bewilderment wandering of the mind, from wandering of the mind, destruction of the soul: once the soul is destroyed the man is lost. But he who roves among the objects of sense, his senses subdued to self and disjoined from passion and hate, and who is self-possessed [himself], draws nigh to calm serenity. And from him thus becalmed, all sorrows flee away: for once his thoughts are calmed, his soul stands firmly [in its ground].*²⁴

As the waters flow into the sea, full filled, whose ground remains unmoved, so all desires flow into [the heart of] man: and such a man wins peace - not the desirer of desires. The man who puts away all desires and roams around from longing freed, who does not think, 'This I am'. or 'This is mine', draws near to peace.²⁵

Since neither water nor Soul have their own [private] being, Eckhart's argument is based on everyday life. Self-emptying, *kenosis* is the presupposition for being filled up by God, says Eckhart. The Bhagavadgītā however speaks differently: Being freed from passion, hate, etc leads to peace. Both these are spiritual paths. The former leads to Divine Being/Unity of Being, the latter to Divine Totality/Integration.

Table 5. God's Unity is guaranteed by God's Uniqueness -
God's Wholeness is guaranteed by the indestructibility of the
Divine

<p>...note that the One is higher, earlier and simpler than the Good and stands nearer to Being and God or corresponding <i>much more to the name one Being with the Being itself[...]</i> Due to that God is overly rich because of the fact that he is one. For he is the First and the Highest because of the fact that he is one.²⁶</p> <p>Would one take away being from all creature of this whole world which God give, then they would remain a pure nothing, bleak, worthless and odious.²⁷</p>	<p>Yes, indestructible [alone] is That -know this- by which this whole universe was spun: no one can bring destruction on That which does not pass away. Finite, they say, are these [our] bodies [indwelt] by an eternal embodied [self],-[for this self is] indestructible, incommensurable. Fights then, scion of Bharata.²⁸</p>
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Eckhart: God's unity is thematic here because of a unique reason, namely, because of the uniqueness of his Being. "For he is the First and the Highest because of the fact that he is one." Entities do not disturb God's Unity because they do not have being. The Bhagavadgītā: The plurality of mortal bodies and of immortal Souls also do not militate against the ontological integrity of the Divine, because they are "part" of the Divine integrity.

Table 6. The One [climbs down] into everything...and unites what is separated - The brilliance in the moon, in the fire...know that it is mine

<p><i>That is why the One climbs down into everything and in every single thing and [still] remains always the One and unites what is separated.</i></p> <p>²⁹</p>	<p><i>The splendour centred in the sun which bathes the whole world in light, [the splendour] in the moon and fire,- know that it [all] is mine. [Thus] too I penetrate the earth and so sustain [all] beings with my strength; becoming [the moon-plant] Soma, I, the very sap [of life], cause all healing herbs to grow. Becoming the [digestive] fire in [the bodies of] all men I dwell in the body of all that breathes; conjoined with the inward and out breaths I digest the fourfold food. I make my dwelling in the hearts of all: from Me stem memory, wisdom, the dispelling [of doubt]. Through all the Vedas it is I who should be known, for the maker of the Vedas' end am I, and I the Vedas know.³⁰</i></p>
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Again we encounter here the thematisation of Unity and Integrity. The task of unity consists in unifying what is separated and that of integrity in the fact of indwelling of the Divine “I” in every single “part” so that every single part develops its specific identity.

Table 7. God's Being consists essentially in his complete self-communication - I have no yearning for the fruits of my actions

<p>Pr. 9, DW I, S. 149,?-12; Übersetzung S. 463:)</p> <p>God is the one who is the most communicative. No thing communicates of its own. For all creatures are not of themselves. Whatever they communicate, they have it from another. Also they do not give themselves. The sun gives its light but it remains at its place. Fire does give heat but [still] remains fire. God communicates what is his, because he exists by himself; what he is, and in all the gifts he gives he first gives himself. He gives himself as God as he is in all his gifts in as much as is possible for the one who would like to receive him.³¹</p> <p>RdU, <i>Von der wâren pênitencie und sæligem lebene</i>:</p> <p>Many people think, they have to do great works externally like fasting, going barefoot, etc. which one call works of penance. However the true and best penance consists in that one turns away totally and completely from all that is not God or Divine in oneself and in creatures and turns to one's loving God completely and perfectly[...]."</p>	<p>In the three worlds there is nothing that I need do, nor anything unattained that I need to gain, yet work [is the element] in which I move.³²</p> <p>Bear Me in mind, love Me and worship Me, sacrifice, prostrate yourself to Me, so you will come to Me, I promise you truly, for you are dear to Me. Give up all things of law, turn to Me your only refuge, [for] I will deliver you from all evils, have no care.³³</p>
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Eckhart: God is the most communicative of all. He does this in all his gifts. His unity with all his creatures operates and manifests itself in his gifts. What brings us closer to Him is not *human deeds* but giving up all that is not God's in our

lives. The Bhagavadgītā: Though God has nothing to achieve or attain he works out of love for his creatures.

4. Conclusion

Our thesis in this paper has been: Meister Eckhart's *World of Holistic Thinking* and the Bhagavadgītā's *Experience of the World of Wholeness* are functional equivalences, i. e., we have argued that the Bhagavadgītā's specific *Experience of the World* and Meister Eckhart's *holistic thinking* of Reality have the potentiality of disclosing a systemic relationship if followed through. What we have done is tried to show *how to go about it*. On the face of it one would not have dreamt of relating these two utterly different worlds but for Panikkar's discovery of the principle of homeomorphic equivalents and their application in the context of his diatopical hermeneutics.

Homeomorphic equivalents are not just any kind of equivalents. They are neither arbitrary nor figments of the imagination. They show an ontological grounding in Reality. Different cosmovisions express this differently. But the three dimensions of Reality (i.e. the Human, the Cosmic and the Divine)³⁴ are our meeting-points (however we may perceive and express them). "Everything is related to everything but without monistic identity and dualistic separation."³⁵ The cosmotheandric nature of Reality manifests itself in expressions which in course of time are discovered to be homeomorphic equivalents.

Notes

1. Raimon Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics (New York: The Paulist Press, 1979). 9.
2. See F. X. D'Sa, "Zur Eigenart des Bhagavadgītā-Theismus," in: W. Strolz/S. Ueda (Hrsg.), *Offenbarung als Heilserfahrung im Christentum, Hinduismus und Buddhismus*. Schriften zur großen Ökumene Bd. 8 (Herder: Freiburg, 1982), 97-126.

3. For a somewhat more detailed exposition see F. X. D'Sa, "The Yogi as a Contemplative in Action," in: *Studies in Formative Spirituality. The Journal of Spiritual Formation* XI:3 (Nov. 1990), 289-302.
4. Christine Büchner, *Die Transformation des Einheitsdenkens Meister Eckharts bei Heinrich Seuse und Johannes Tauler*. Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch Beihefte, Heft 1 (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2007), 25. In the following cited as *Die Transformation*. My translation.
5. Christine Büchner, *Die Transformation*, 25.
6. Christine Büchner, *Die Transformation*, 25.
7. Christine Büchner, *Die Transformation*, 25.
8. Büchner, *Gottes Kreatur* - "ein reines Nichts?," 24-25. Einheit Gottes als Ermöglichung von Geschöpflichkeit und Persönlichkeit im Werk Meister Eckharts (Innsbruck/Wien:Tyrolia, 2005), 24-25. In the following cited as *Gottes Kreatur*. My translation.
9. Büchner, *Gottes Kreatur* - "ein reines Nichts?," 24-25.
10. Büchner, *Die Transformation*, 9.
11. Christine Büchner, *Gottes Kreatur* - "ein reines Nichts"?
12. Büchner, *Die Transformation*, 20.
13. In Ioh. n. 216, LW III, S. 181,15-182,1: *deus iubet tempus descendere immediate ab ipso aevo, quod est aeternitatis ipsa vel nunc aeternitatis, ut tempus et aeternitas sint quasi quaedam continua et contigua sibimet mutuo, ut scilicet semper ab aeterno tempus ab aevo fluxerit*. The original quotations from Meister Eckhart's works have been supplied by the publishers of a lengthier contribution in German I made at an international Congress on Meister Eckhart in Munich, Germany in 2014 which is forthcoming. The translations into English are by me. The present article is an independent piece. For the abbreviations for Meister Eckhart's works see Christine Büchner, *Die Transformation*, 119-121. See note 4 above.
14. In Ioh. n. 267, LW III, S. 222,8: *Deus enim, utpote unus, nihil dividit, sed divisa unit*.

15. Prol. gen. n. 17f. (Rec. L), LW I,2, S. 25,8-22 (Rec. CT, Lw I, S. 162,2-163,1): *Propter quod siganter (significanter CT) non dicitur (ait CT) a principio, sed in principio deum creasse [...]. Quod enim est in principio et cuius finis principium, semper oritur, semper nascitur, semper natum est.*
16. Bhagavadgītā 7:4-7. All translations from the Bhagavadgītā are from R.C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad- Gītā* (London/Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.)
17. Bhagavadgītā 9:4-8.
18. Meister Eckhart, Sermo 48 from Sermones et Lectiones super Ecclesiastici c.
19. Bhagavadgītā 10:2-8.
20. Pr. 4, DW I, S. 69,8-70,3: *Alle crêatûren sint ein lûter niht. Ich spriche niht, daz sie kleine sîn oder iht sîn: sie sint ein lûter niht. Swaz niht wesens enhât, daz enist niht. Alle crêatûren hânt kein wesen, wan ir wesen swebet an der gegenwerticheit gotes.*
21. The Bhagavadgītā 3:23f.
22. BgT, DW V, S. 28,3-6. Vgl. Auch RdU, DW V, S. 269,5-7; Pr. 80, DW III, S. 386,5-387,2; Pr. 103, DW IV, 1, S. 487,113-119: *kein vaz enmac zweierleie trank in im gehabt. Sol ez wîn haben, man muoz von nôt wazzer ûzgiezen; daz vaz muoz blôz und îtel warden. Dar umbe, soltû götliche vröude und got nemen, dû muost von nôt die crêatûren ûzgiezen.*
23. Pr. 65, DW III, S. 101,8-10: *Swâ zwei ein suln warden, dâ muoz daz eine sîn wesen verliesen. Alsô ist: und sol got und diu sêle éin warden, sô muoz diu sêle ir wesen und ir leben verliesen.*
24. Bhagavadgītā 2:64-68.
25. Bhagavadgītā 2:70f.
26. Sermo 29 n. 299, LW, S. 266,4-8; Übersetzung ebd.: [...] *nota... (lat. Text wird noch von den Hg. ergänzt).*
27. BgT, DW V, S. 50,19f.; Übersetzung S.491: *Benæme man allen crêatûren aller dirre werlt daz wesen, daz got gibet, sô bliben sie blôz niht, ungenæme, unwert und hezzeclich.*
28. Bhagavadgītā 2:17f.

29. Sermo 29 n. 299, LW IV, S. 266,8f.; Übersetzung ebd.: *unum descendit in omnia et singula, manens semper unum et divisa uniens.*
30. Bhagavadgītā 15:12-15.
31. *Got ist daz aller gemeineste. Kein dinc gemeinet sich von dem sînen, wan alle crêatûren von in selber niht ensint. Swaz sie gemeinent, daz hânt sie von einem andern. Sie gebent sich ouch niht selben. Diu sunne givet irn schîn und blîbet doch dâ stânde, daz viur givet sîne hitze und blîbet doch viur; aber got gemeinet daz sîne, wan er von im selber ist, daz er ist, und in allen den gâben, die er givet, sô givet er sich selben ie zem êrsten. Er givet sich got, als er ist in allen sînen gâben, als verre als ez an im ist, der in enpfâhen möhte*
32. Bhagavadgītā 3:22f.
33. Bhagavadgītā 18:65-66.
34. Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience. Emerging Religious Consciousness.* S. Eastham (Ed) (New York: Orbis, 1993).
35. Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being.* The Gifford Lectures (Maryknoll/New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 404.

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