

Relationality and Everyday Meaning: An Ontological Dialogue between Jean-Luc Nancy
and Raimon Panikkar

by

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A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
Interdisciplinary Studies

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Date: July 23, 2014 Summer Semester 2014
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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Summer Semester 2014
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my Father, Henry Taylor Thrasher

What Heart I have been Given,
I owe all to You,
Nothing I am, but what You give,
With the wu-wei of Fatherhood,
With the Teaching of Autonomous Choice;
Nothing, I could have Truly been.

When Kierkegaard's Eternal Despair Tempted me,
Your Stolid Presence and Love Supported me,
Without 'You will know Yourself as you Grow',
I would not have Engaged with the Question Shown,
A Constant Striving Towards which All I Know,
Is Nothing but what You have Given me,
So for the Father's Love, this Thesis Is devoted to You.

What Comes from the Son,
Is Given From the Father,
And what Comes From the Father,
Is Returned Back Unto Him.
With Love Dad,
-Andy

Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been possible without the heartfelt and intellectual direction of Drs. Randi Rashkover, Rachel Jones, and Young-chan Ro, who serve as the committee for this project. Without their help this thesis would be much longer and broadened to the point of near incommensurability. I am deeply indebted to their hard work and direction that has come out in this final copy. As this thesis shows a strong emphasis on Jean-Luc Nancy and Raimon Panikkar, I am specifically indebted to Dr. Rachel Jones and Dr. Young-chan Ro for the exposure each philosopher. This thesis reflects a continual strand of thought dating from an independent study with Dr. Jones in the Fall of 2013 where I first proposed an idea of a relational ontology, for the long-lasting help and direction of the topic I am extremely grateful. I am also fully indebted to my Mentor Dr. Young-chan Ro for exposing me to the thought of his teacher, the late Raimon Panikkar, and including me in seminars and conferences where Panikkar's thought has been further developed. Interestingly the voice of this thesis is distinctly Romanian, due to long years of listening to Dr. Ro's lectures. The profundity and use of language has ever been a passion of my own since my exposure to his undergraduate class on *Mysticism: East & West* in the Spring of 2011. In long lasting friendship I owe great thanks to Dr. Ro for the development of my thought.

Secondarily there are a few people who have been intellectually influential over the who have helped me grow and have seen me grow intellectually. A great thanks goes to Dr. Cuong Tu Nguyen, who has pushed me to understand that any idea, religious tradition, or philosophy is entirely complex; nothing is simple. He also urged me to understand each religion on its own terms, a distinct way in which I not only look at other religious traditions, but also of each philosopher. While Dr. Nguyen is not a comparative scholar of religion, the foundations of his emphasis on area studies before one can develop dialogue has been a lesson I have taken on as a personal vow to understanding the complexity of things. This thesis could not have been possible without those who have born the burden of listening to me think and talk about my thesis and all of my academic work to this date. I am deeply grateful for the friendship of those who have seen me grow over the years and come to this point. These people are my fellow students over the years by the name of Anne Hardy, Charles Cressey, and Kevin Kruczek. Last, a special thanks goes to Mrs. Donna Goodman of SECEP in Virginia Beach, VA for all of the years of support from my trials to my success.

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List of Abbreviations

B&T	<i>Being and Time</i> by Martin Heidegger
BSP	<i>Being Singular Plural</i> by Jean-Luc Nancy
M&S	<i>Mysticism and Spirituality, Part 1</i> By Raimon Panikkar
RB	<i>The Rhythm of Being</i> by Raimon Panikkar
RUPAG	“Relativism, Universalism, and Pluralism in the Age of Globalization” in <i>CIRPIT Review</i> , no. 3 by Young-chan Ro
TREM	<i>Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man</i> by Raimon Panikkar

Abstract

RELATIONALITY AND EVERYDAY MEANING: AN ONTOLOGICAL DIALOGUE
BETWEEN JEAN-LUC NANCY AND RAIMON Panikkar

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George Mason University, 2014

Thesis Director: Dr. Randi Rashkover

I am arguing in this thesis for an interpretation of a relational ontology as it is presented in the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy and Raimon Panikkar. This thesis offers an understanding of the meaning of being as it is found in the Heideggerean ontological tradition. My aim is to interpret the implications of the relation as it portrays the everyday as meaningful. I argue that both Nancy and Panikkar offer an understanding of relationality in which the everyday becomes existentially meaningful. In a dialogical analysis between Nancy and Panikkar, I offer two in depth interpretations of a relational ontology that differ in the philosophical understanding of the relationality to broaden the implications of intra-philosophical dialogue.

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to understand an idea of a relational ontology. What I am arguing is that a relational ontology necessarily asks the ontological question, the meaning of being. Ontologically the question of the meaning of being is one that embarks on an understanding of the relationship between meaning and existence. I argue that a relational ontology indicates that the relation can be interpreted as an ontological hermeneutic in answer to the ontological question. My interpretation of a relational ontology as it can be found in Jean-Luc Nancy and Raimon Panikkar offers an intra-philosophical dialogue that articulates that the relation can be understood as ontologically meaningful in everyday existence. I am arguing in this thesis that the everyday is ontologically meaningful because of the horizon of the relation.

The ontological question as it is found in this thesis refers to an understanding of the Heideggerean ontological tradition, one that re-positions the ontological question in a new way as it is found in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. For the early Heidegger 'Being' can only be understood as it is existentially meaningful, that is Being is understood as meaningful by the modes of our existence. This leads to the question of how the meaning of being is existentially lived in everyday existence; *but for Heidegger the everyday is overlooked in its ontological potency*. The everyday for the early Heidegger is not where the meaning of Being is existentially disclosed. In contrast, my understanding of a

relational ontology articulates that the everyday is ontologically meaningful because of the relationality of everyday existence.

The impact of the Heideggerean positing of Dasein (being here/there) in the world is a ground breaking articulation of how one can *appropriate* meaning *from* the world. However, the point of this thesis is to articulate that we do not have meaning from the world; rather that meaning is already there as we exist *with and in* the world. It is not only that being is here/there in the world but also that *meaning* is here/there with us as we exist in the everyday. The originality of Heidegger's approach to the ontological question means that it is necessary to offer an understanding of the meaning of being according to the Heideggerean tradition. Therefore before I begin to explicate my interpretation of a relational ontology found in Nancy and Panikkar, I will offer the background to which Nancy and Panikkar are ontologically referring.

The thought of Nancy and Panikkar expresses the horizon of the relation as the foundation of existential meaning in everyday existence. The point of this thesis is to draw out Nancy's and Panikkar's understandings of the relation, and to open a dialogue between their differing understandings as they refer to everyday existence. Nancy posits what I call originary relationality which means that meaning is ontologically understood as it is exposed by being-with others in the everyday. For Panikkar the relation is *experienced* in the everyday as an intrinsic relationality between the three dimensions of a *cosmo-the-andric* reality. In both cases the relation indicates that the meaning of being is found within everyday existence. This thesis offers *two* understandings of the relation as it is existentially meaningful. I will begin with an understanding of Heidegger's

ontology found within *Being and Time*, and turn to the ideas of the relationality as it is found within Nancy and Panikkar consecutively.

The objective of this thesis is to offer an interpretation of the meaning of being as relational. Throughout my dialogical interpretation of a relational ontology as it is found in Nancy and Panikkar I am arguing that the relation is existentially meaningful in everyday existence. What this means is that in our everyday lives the meaning of being is apparent to us because of the relations that constitute us in everyday existence. To know the meaning of being, I am arguing, is to understand that the relations with and in which we exist are existentially meaningful.

The Individuation of Dasein: The Origination of the Ontological Question

The purpose of this thesis is to engage in the question of the meaning of being as it is presented by relationality. I am particularly interested in this question because it entails an understanding of meaningful existence as coming from relationality. To set the scene for this inquiry, the ontological question must be understood in the historical backdrop of its philosophical context. The initial starting point for the question of the meaning of being can be found in the thought of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger opens us to the question of the meaning of being. His raising of this question in his monumental text *Being and Time* implies that Being¹ is existentially understood by the orientation towards one's own death. His approach implies that our existential orientation towards our own end is the orientating factor of our *individual* existence. In this way the ontological question becomes constituted individually as each person seeks to understand his own existence. What Heidegger poses is that Being can only be understood by the individual who seeks to understand the meaning of being.

Heidegger's ontology will serve as the reference point in which this thesis will be grounded. The later chapters of this thesis on Jean-Luc Nancy and Raimon Panikkar refer back to Heidegger's understanding of the meaning of being by offering another way in

¹ In this chapter I will use the distinction that trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson use to differentiate Being from beings. When the capital 'Being' is used I am directly referring to the understanding of Being itself; in lower case I am referring to beings or entities.

which the ontological question can be understood. Both Nancy and Panikkar argue for relational ontologies that are directly referring back to Heidegger's re-posing of the question of Being. What Panikkar and Nancy offer in contrast to Heidegger's emphasis on the individuation of Being, is an approach in which relation (rather than the individual) itself becomes the factor that orients the meaning of Being. Despite their differences for both Nancy and Panikkar the *relation*—in different contexts—becomes the horizon of the meaning of being. However to understand the originality of their position, we must first understand Heidegger's approach to the ontological question.

Heidegger's conception of the ontological question of the meaning of being is grounded in seeking to understand Being itself. To understand the meaning of Being one must understand that Being is what the inquiry uncovers. Nonetheless, Being is understood through the existential modes of beings; the meaning of Being can only be understood by existing. For Heidegger we only uncover the meaning of Being by inquiring into Being through the very nature of one's own existence as a particular kind of being. The inquiry into Being for Heidegger implies that we distinguish the ontological (concerning Being *per se*) from the ontic (concerning beings or entities). The ontological for Heidegger directly refers to the inquiry into Being thus making the meaning of Being ontological in nature. In contrast, the ontic existence does not search for Being, but merely exists in the crowd of beings. However, even though Heidegger prioritizes the ontological as meaningful, one cannot understand Being without understanding everyday being, that is, beings that exist ontically in the everyday; the inquiry into the meaning of

Being can only be done by understanding the ontic nature of being because this is the existential starting point for every being.

The difference for Heidegger is that the ontic understanding of being is a surface level of understanding Being; Being is taken for granted as merely an entity. An ontic understanding of Being implies that we are existent without understanding our own existence; we are merely beings taking for granted our own existence without differentiating who we are from others. An ontological understanding is necessarily an understanding of the depth of the meaning of Being, in which existential modes of being are understood as meaningful by taking up a relation towards Being. An ontological understanding of being implies that one knows and inquires into the meaning of one's existence by inquiring into Being itself; as we will see this involves differentiating oneself ontologically from others.

Heidegger posits the notion of Dasein (being here/there) to articulate how the question of the meaning of Being is approached from ontic existence. For Heidegger, Dasein is the very being who asks the question of Being. Dasein for Heidegger is a being in search of the meaning of being, inquiring *into* itself to understand the constitution of its own existence. Heidegger states, “thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity—the inquirer—transparent in his own Being.”² He also states that, “The constitutive state of Dasein’s Being implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being—a relationship which itself is one of Being... [as an]

² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson, Harper Perennial & Modern Thought (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, Inc., 2008), 27. Henceforth as *B&T*.

understanding of Being [that] is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.”³ To seek an understanding of Being then is the nature of Dasein, as the being in search of its own meaning. Heidegger argues that Dasein has seized upon its ownmost possibility of existence by making its own existence transparent to itself by inquiring into the meaning of Dasein's own existentiality.⁴

Michael Gelven argues that the distinguishing factor of Heidegger's Dasein is that “the meaning of existence can be significant only to the one who asks about his own existence. For this reason, the question of being itself is possible only because Dasein can reflect upon its existence.”⁵ This inherent ontologically reflective quality of Dasein implies that Dasein's inquiry into its own existence is an inquiry into its ownmost possibility of individuality. To search for oneself as Dasein already implies that one is searching to understand one's own existence. To understand my own existence I am trying to understand who I am as an individual being. Dasein discloses its own individual Dasein, its ownmost individuality; Magda King states, “[Dasein's disclosure of being] is its own being that Dasein most originally understands. This understanding, moreover, does not belong to Dasein in general, but belongs to each Dasein singly and uniquely.”⁶ For Heidegger Dasein articulates the reality of one's own individuation of Being as we exist as beings. As we will see in the discussion of being-towards-death, the ontological question of the meaning of Being is grounded specifically in Dasein's striving for the

³ Heidegger, *B&T*, 32. Original emphasis.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵ Michael Gelven, *A Commentary of Heidegger's Being and Time: A Section by Section Interpretation*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 23.

⁶ Magda King, *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time*, ed. John Llewelyn, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 30.

individuation of Being. As approached by Heidegger the ontological question thus indicates that the meaning of Being is orientated by the way in which we are individualized as Dasein.

Dasein's inquiry into the meaning of Being is one that addresses its own Being as it exists in the world. Heidegger understands that Being can only be understood by an existing being, one that meaningfully exists in relation to its own existence. The modes of existence for Heidegger are the ways of being in which we exist in the world. Heidegger posits that Dasein must be understood first and foremost as in the world. To be in the world in Heidegger's analysis amounts to an ontological premise that articulates Being as inextricably related with existence; to exist means to be-here-in-the-world. Dasein's ownmost being, its individuation, can only be understood as it exists in the world and in the terms of how it is orientated to the world.

Heidegger's conception of being-in-the-world articulates an understanding of the spacing in which we dwell in the world. Gelven states that being-in-the-world as Dasein implies that we spatially exist in the world because it is a mode of our existence.⁷ Even so this spacing is not material; existential spacing implies that the world is the space where we appropriate and understand the meaning of Being. As Dasein, to-be-in-the-world implies that we are aware of the modes of our existence reflectively and *meaningfully*. For Heidegger we are in the world, we live in the world, we are existentially aware of ourselves in the world, and crucially our awareness is of the possibilities of existence as

⁷ Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, 62.

we dwell in the world. The ontological nature of Dasein's dwelling is that it becomes existentially *involved* in the world in which it exists.

Heidegger's conception of Dasein implies that authentic being-here-in-the-world means that our existence in the world is something we participate in as a self-reflective involvement with the world. Gelven states that Heidegger's use of the 'world' implies the self-reflective individuation of Dasein as it understands, "the more internal and personal modes of self-existence, such as fear, fateful existence, *and the awareness of possibilities.*"⁸ This is the ontological concern of Dasein; to-be-in-the-world authentically means that Dasein appropriates meaning from the world by being in the world existentially as self-aware of itself. The world becomes the existential space where the possibility of meaning becomes individually appropriated. What distinguishes the authentic existence of Dasein is centrally the relation to the world, in which the subject appropriates possibility and thereby individualizes Dasein.

What must be understood is that Dasein's subjective individualization can be lost to what Heidegger understands as the *Das Man*, the 'they';⁹ where Dasein exists within the everyday as a being lost to existence as possibility. The individuation of Dasein as it appropriates meaning from one's ownmost possibilities is challenged and lost in the 'they' because meaning is no longer important. The 'they' becomes a place in which one's potential Being can become static, where one becomes satisfied with one possibility of existence and no longer searches for other possible meanings. The 'they'

⁸ Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, 52-53. My emphasis.

⁹ Heidegger, *B&T*, 220.

points to the meaninglessness of Being, where Dasein no longer grows in the world, because Dasein no longer cares for other meanings or for other possibilities.

For Heidegger in *Being and Time* the ‘they’ of everyday experience implies the very anonymity of Being where Dasein inauthentically exists. The ‘they’ implies the loss of our own individuality into anonymous existence. Inauthentic Dasein implies that we exist as ultimately determined by our everyday existence in-the-world. In this condition we are no longer determinative of our own individuality; to exist in the ‘they’ indicates that we are always determined by the ‘they’; *we are not free to determine our own existence as individualized Dasein when we are lost in the ‘they’*. The ‘they’ for Heidegger threatens one with not only the loss of our individuation, but with the loss of our own freedom.

Gelven’s understanding of the ‘determinative’ character of Dasein is precisely what I understand as Dasein’s inauthentic mode of being-in-the-world;¹⁰ the world existentially determines who we are as inauthentic Dasein because we are lost to the crowd, the everyday. As inauthentic Dasein we have given up the self-appropriation of meaning from the *possibilities* of Dasein’s existence in the world; the crowd determines us as we exist; we are no longer freely individualized in our existence because our existence is determined by our ontological anonymity. In contrast to inauthentic Dasein, I interpret Gelven’s statement of the “‘free’ character of our occurrence in the world” as the authenticity of Dasein represented in the existential concern for its ownmost

¹⁰ C.f. Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time*, 53.

possibility of existence.¹¹ As I will discuss below, Dasein's ownmost individuation of Being is understood by the orientation towards death as the ultimate possibility from which Dasein appropriates meaning.

The distinction between authentic and inauthentic Being for Heidegger is centrally based on the orientation towards one's ownmost possibility. The focus on the individuation of Being is the primary distinguishing factor that accounts for the meaning of Being. Inauthentic Dasein attaches itself to one possibility of existence and ceases to appropriate its ownmost possibility, thus losing its individuality. Authentic Dasein in contrast is ever open to the possibility of existence to the extent that its individuality is constantly being appropriated. In Authentic Dasein the ontological orientation of being-towards-possibility implies meaningful existence because we are constantly appropriating meaning and understanding ourselves. For Heidegger the ownmost being-towards-possibility is where one's individuality is orientated towards one's own death.

The authenticity of Dasein is disclosed to the extent to which Dasein realizes its *ownmost* possibility. The *individuality* of Dasein is understood as authentic by the radical appropriation of ontological possibility. Heidegger's idea of being-towards-death depends on the fact that the absolute end of our being is distinctly and individually 'my own'; being-towards-death is the ultimate possibility of being and it is the ultimate actualization of my ownmost possibility of being; death becomes the ultimate concern of Being, creating in us an ability to differentiate ourselves from the masses. Authentic Dasein for Heidegger involves being in the world in a meaningful way because we are

¹¹ Ibid.

ontologically aware of our existence as orientated towards our ownmost and final possibility.

Heidegger proposes that the ultimate individuality of Dasein is meaningful through the existential orientation of the absolute possibility of our death. Death is something that is actual—we all die—and it is *always* possible. Authentic Dasein implies that the embrace of our death entails the ownmost individuality of being because we have embraced our ownmost possibility. As being-towards-death, we are ultimately individualized because we are radically orientated towards something in which only I can take up a relation towards as *my* ownmost possibility. Our orientation towards death implies an orientation towards our ownmost possibility for existence and thus leads to the individuation of Being that allows Being to become meaningful.

Being-towards-death as ‘my own’ implies that I exert my freedom in how I exist in the world. The orientation towards death as Dasein’s ownmost possibility indicates that death is embraced ontologically as the ultimate possibility of my own existence to the extent that all possibilities involved in my own existence becomes related towards this ultimate end. The individuation of Dasein’s ownmost possibility of death becomes the horizon of all possible meanings; being-towards-death allows us to take up and relate to the whole of our existence as possibility. This means that the freedom of Dasein’s existence is disclosed by the appropriation of possibility in the world as it relates towards our own death. Death becomes the horizon of being, the ultimate orientator of the meaning of being, the ultimate individuation of Dasein as it exists in the world.

In this chapter I have shown that the question of the meaning of Being can only be approached as Dasein and that to take up an authentic relation to Being is only possible as Being-towards-death; being-towards-death individualizes Dasein. With Heidegger's emphasis on Dasein the question that must be answered is how Heidegger understands the role of Mitsein (being-with). For Heidegger Mitsein is presupposed in Dasein.¹² To be here in the world implies being-with others (Mit-dasein). The everyday is where we are in the world, which existentially is constituted by being-with others in the everyday. For Heidegger without an ontological orientation towards the individuality of Dasein which distinguishes us from the 'they', from everyday existence, we would only exist meaninglessly as inauthentic Mitsein because of the undifferentiation of Being. Nonetheless for Heidegger, Mitsein can be understood as an authentic form of existence, but only after Dasein authentically exists as being-towards-death. Mitsein can only be authentically meaningful after one is individualized in his ownmost possibility; for Heidegger Mitsein comes secondary to Dasein's individuation.

For Heidegger the meaning of Being is always individualized. The individuation of being is centrally orientated by the horizon of death; to meaningfully exist one must be radically oriented towards death as the meaningful horizon of being. What we will see in the next chapter is Jean-Luc Nancy's radical reworking of Mitsein as the key hermeneutical element to understanding the meaning of being as relational. This issue of Mitsein will be taken up by Nancy to offer an understanding of everyday existence as ontologically meaningful. For Nancy the meaning of Being will no longer be focused on

¹² Heidegger, *B&T*, 161.

the individuation of being-towards-death, but rather on the relationality of Mitsein. For Nancy, Mitsein functions on a *primary* ontological level in which authentic being-with others indicates meaningful existence without the emphasis on the individuation of Dasein; Nancy draws out the primacy of Mitsein and indicates that the everyday can be ontologically meaningful.

Originary Relationality and the Everyday: An Interpretation of Jean-Luc Nancy's Relational Ontology

In this chapter I will offer an interpretation of a relational ontology by referring to the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy. Nancy offers a distinct understanding of the meaning of being that radically reworks and critiques Heideggerean ontology. For Nancy the meaning of being is understood by a radical hermeneutical understanding of *Mitsein* (being-with-others). In contrast to Heidegger's use of *Mitsein* as discussed in the previous chapter, Nancy's use of *Mitsein* implies that being is authentically meaningful by what I call the originary relationality of everyday existence. The importance of Nancy in understanding a relational ontology is that his account of originary relationality emphasizes the possibility of meaningful existence in everyday relationships. For Nancy the everyday no longer needs to appropriate meaning, but rather, as I will argue, it is because of Nancy's philosophy of originary relationality that the everyday itself can be seen as meaningful.

To articulate Nancy's conception of a relational ontology I will work through key elements of what he calls a fundamental ontology. Primary in the thought of Nancy is his conception of *Mitsein* which implies the significance of what I will call originary relationality. To fully understand Nancy's conception of originary relationality one must refer to Nancy's understanding of being-with others and of being as singularly plural.

Therefore the first section of this chapter will be an explication of how Nancy's conception of being-with implies Being as singularly plural. Nancy's coining of the term being-singular-plural indicates an ontological understanding of being and existence that articulates how the everyday is meaningful because of originary relationality. What I will argue is that originary relationality implies meaningful existence in the everyday because it exposes to beings the meaning of their singular existence. I am arguing that in contrast to Heidegger the meaning of being can be understood in the everyday. For Nancy, I am arguing that the relation becomes the horizon of the meaning of being; one can meaningfully exist in the everyday because of what I call the originary relationality.

Originary Relationality and Being Singular Plural

For Nancy the meaning of being is centrally constituted by a revisioning of Heidegger's understanding of *Mitsein* that resets the ontological horizon from the individuation of death to the originary relationality that is exposed in everyday existence. To understand *Mitsein* for Nancy, one must understand that being-with-others presupposes an active relating (*rapport*) of existence where the *relation* is exposed between beings as they signify Being as singularly plural. For Nancy, the relationality of the 'with' presupposes a fundamental ontology in which the meaning of Being is reworked by what I call originary relationality. The point of this section is to articulate the originary relationality as it ontologically expresses the meaning of being.

What I will argue in this section addresses an understanding of originary relationality as it constitutes Being by being-with others. Subsequently, in the contexts of the originary relationality I will explain how Being is understood as singularly plural.

From the ontological positing of being singular plural one can understand the nature of the origin insofar as it is ontologically a groundless ground that continuously opens one to Being by being-with others. What I will argue here is that Nancy's originary relationality articulates an 'exposing' of the self as an open distention of Being by being-with others. What Nancy understands as the distention of the self is fundamentally ontological; that in every relationship with others one is exposed to the origin of our Being as singularly plural.

Nancy's conception of originary relationality implies an ontology in which, "it is necessary to refigure fundamental ontology... with a thorough resolve that *starts from the plural singular of origins, from being-with.*"¹³ What one can call the originary relationality of Being is centrally what Nancy understands by being-with, i.e. that our co-appearance with others indicates a network of underlying relations that constitute us as beings. My interpretation of originary relationality implies that the relation is the fundamental horizon in which the meaning of being is understood. Nancy's understanding of being-with others implies an active relation which co-constitutes us as we exist with others.

Nancy's conception of originary relationality implies that Being must be exposed as it is co-constituted in its relationships with others. Originary relationality constitutes who we are, as we are exposed to others and ourselves, implying our co-existence, or as Nancy calls it, the sharing of existence. The primacy of the 'with' implies that I am

¹³ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Bryne (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 26. Henceforth as *BSP*.

always relating with others in an infinite finitude of ontological origins where I am sharing my existence with others. At each instance of sharing between beings the exposition of Being is presented by an originary relationality; I am always relating to others and *between* us is a groundless ground of origins in which originary relationality signifies to us the meaning of our Being. Nancy argues that what I interpret as originary relationality articulates the plural unfolding of singular origins “as the spacing and intertwining of so many worlds that there is a taking place of meaning, or the crossing-through of presence.”¹⁴

Originary relationality implies that beings are ontologically constituted by the sharing of existence. To be with others points back to originary relationality, to the exposure of our existence as ontologically constituted as singularly plural. Sharing one’s existence with another exposes to us an ontological understanding of Being that is co-constituted as a singular plural being defined by being-with others. Each of us is a singular being plurally constituted by originary relations that make up who we are. To be singular plural implies that one is constantly in a network of relationships with others which plurally constitutes us as a singularity in the world; I am a singular being in a plurality of relations with others just as those plural relations indicate my own singularity. To be singularly plural indicates that at every instance of being we are exposed to our own singularity only through the plurality of originary relations.¹⁵ This originary relationality is distinctly singular plural in essence. Nancy states that,

¹⁴ Nancy, *BSP*, 5.

¹⁵ C.f. *Ibid.*

Being singular plural means the essence of Being... [is] only as [a] co-essence. In turn, co-essence, or *being-with*, designates the essence of the *co-*, or even more to, the *co-* itself in the position of the guise of an essence... Co-essentiality signifies the essential sharing of essentiality, sharing in the guise of assembling... if Being is being-with, then it is, in its being-with, the 'with' that constitutes being; the with is not simply an addition.... The 'with' is at the heart of Being.¹⁶

The idea of an originary relationality is foundational to Nancy's ontology where the relation presupposed in the 'with' of 'being-with others' is understood as a co-appearing of what Nancy understands as the plural unfolding of Being as singularly plural. We are singularly plural in the sense that the originary relationality presents to us our own singularity of self-identification which is ontologically constituted by the constant and infinite exposure to the plurality of singular plural origins of being. By being-with others we are continuously exposed to other singularities in which originary relations articulate to us further self-identification. This is centrally the singularization of being as plurally singular; by being-with, originary relationality exposes us ontologically as a singular being that is plurally constituted by a network of relationships with others.

Nancy states that, "the singular is primarily each one and, therefore, also *with* and *among* all others. The singular is a plural."¹⁷ A singular plural Being is represented by the singularization of each singular being as each one is constituted by the plurality of relationships that are presented to us as we exist with others. Each of us are singular plural beings constantly co-constituted as a co-existence with each other. Each of us is a singular being constituted by an infinite network of relationships. Originary relationality indicates who we are as a singular being groundlessly grounded in the plural unfolding of origins. Ontologically, being is exposed by originary relationality as it is co-constituted as

¹⁶ Nancy, *BSP*, 30.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

a singular plural being. Even more so originary relationality continuously constitutes us as a being in every meeting between singular plural beings. Our own “singularity [of being] is not a fixed point of identity but something that is essentially caught up in a movement of identification.”¹⁸ One’s self-identification becomes co-constituted as one co-exists as a singularity in the plural unfolding of existential relationships. Originary relationality indicates that in every relationship with other singularities there is a constant anticipation and movement of self-identification.

As a singular plural being, we become ontologically co-constituted by each meeting between singular plural beings. Each meeting is what Nancy calls the presentation of beings, or the coming to presence of other beings alongside our own. Being-with others implies that in each of these ‘presentations’ we are exposed to other singularities as an origin of being. Nancy’s account of the origin of being implies that Being is constituted by a singularly plural network of relationships in which we are exposed to other origins. Each origin is presented to us by being-with others just as each singularity of existence is an origin of being. Nancy account of the origin implies we are exposed singularly plurally as an origin constantly being exposed to other origins in every coming to presence of singular plural beings. Nancy states that the origin implicates that:

...the ‘with’ is the proper realm of the plurality of origins insofar as they originate... in view of one another or with regard to one another. An origin is not an origin for itself... An origin is something other than a starting point; it is both a principle and an appearing [and necessarily a co-appearing of reality in which]... it repeats itself at each moment of what it originates. It is ‘continual creation’.¹⁹

¹⁸ Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy*, 37.

¹⁹ Nancy, *BSP*, 82-83. Without original emphasis.

Nancy's conception of the origin shows us that the relationality of the 'with' is the principle by which the plurality of origins of being co-appear with the origination of each singular being. My understanding of originary relationality implies that for Nancy the 'with' constitutes a continual relationality in which the plural origin of being is exposed by the relationship found through being-with others in the world. By being-with others, each origin of being is exposed in the world as ontologically singular plural. Nancy states that the world,

Is an origin; it is an affirmation of the world, and we know that the world has no other origin than this singular multiplicity of origins. The world always appears each time according to a decidedly local turn of events. Its unity, its uniqueness, and its totality consist in a combination of this reticulated multiplicity.²⁰

What this implies is that the world presents to us origins of Being; that every relationship with other beings points us to our own ontological understanding as singularly plural. The originary relationality implies to us our singularity of existence in the plurality of origins; as we relate to other beings we are exposed to what I call the groundless ground of originary relationality. This groundless ground forms the basis in which we are existentially co-constituted as singularly plural beings. The originary relationality can be understood as a groundless ground that exposes us to the meaning of who we are in the plural unfolding of origins. Nancy argues that originary relationality,

is a groundless 'ground', less in the sense that it opens up the gaping chasm of an abyss than that it is made up only of the network, the interweaving, and the sharing of singularities... There is nothing behind singularity—but there is, outside it and in it, the immaterial and material space that distributes it and shares it out as singularity, [that] distributes and shares the confines of [being-with] other singularities, or even more exactly distributes and shares the confines of singularity... *between it and itself*... A singular being appears, as finitude itself... the same singularity that is, as such, always other, always shared, always exposed [to meaning]. This appearing... is... at once [a]

²⁰ Nancy, *BSP*, 9.

glorious and destitute appearing of being-finite itself... The essence of being as being-finite is inscribed by finitude *a priori* as the sharing of singularities.²¹

Originary relationality is the groundless ground of being for each and every

singularity of existence. This groundless ground is an existential openness to the meaning of Being that is caused by the plural infinitude of finite relations and origins that are exposed as singularly plural. For Nancy the understanding of finitude implies that, “‘finitude’ signifies the infinite singularity of meaning, the infinite singularity of access to truth. Finitude is the origin; that is, it is an infinity of origins.”²² These origins imply the very co-constitution of our Being as singularly plural. To exist with others implies the underlying groundless ground of originary relationality that ontologically points us to the meaning of who we are. The self becomes co-constituted by originary relationality as it moves between us as we exist singularly plural with others.

For Nancy, the exposing of who we are articulates the very distancing *between* myself and others in a constant movement, a constant tension, that is ever open because of the infinite finitude of originary relationality. At each instance of my life I am exposed to an origin of being as ontologically meaningful because I am actively relating with other beings. Each singular plural being articulates to me my own singularity by plurally co-constituting the idea of my ‘self’ as primarily a distention, a tense movement, a balance, that is ontologically open to meaning. In each instance of a meeting between singularities, between myself and others, we are on an ontological scale that is plurally constituted by the originary relationality that exposes to us the meaning of who we are.

²¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, trans. Peter Conner et al., vol. 76, 87 vols., *Theory and History of Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 27-28.

²² Nancy, *BSP*, 15.

Being-with others implies that we are always in relation because we are always relating with other origins of singular plural beings.

Nancy's understanding of the self is what he understands as "the dissection of the self" or rather that how we identify ourselves "precedes not only via every relation to the other, but also via every identity of the self."²³ Nancy states that the,

'Self' is not the relation of a 'me' to 'itself.'... 'Self' is primarily nothing other than the 'as such' of being in general. Being is only its own 'as Being.' The 'as'... is being constitutively [as a relation].... The 'with' as with is nothing but the exposition of being-as-such, each time singularly such and, therefore, always plurally such.... Prior to 'me' and 'you,' the 'self' is like a 'we' that is neither a collective subject nor 'intersubjectivity,' but rather the immediate mediation of being in '(it)self,' *The [self is the] plural fold of origins.*²⁴

The constitution of our Being can only be understood according to Nancy by being-with others because being with others opens to us origins that constitute who we are as we exist in relation with other beings. The identification of the self according to Nancy arises when one is exposed to the unfolding of origins, to other singularities of being in the world. Being-with others implies that we are ontologically exposed to the meaning of being because originary relationality continuously exposes us to who we are as we relate with others. Being itself as such is only exposed by being with others; as others are ontological origins of Being we are constituted as singularly plural beings whose exposure of being-with others indicates to us our own singular identity of Being through the continual creation of originary relationality that is always exposed by the 'with' of our relationships in everyday existence.

²³ Jean-Luc Nancy, *A Finite Thinking*, ed. Simon Sparks (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 7.

²⁴ Nancy, *BSP*, 94. My emphasis.

What I have attempted to do above is offer an interpretation of Nancy's originary relationality as it expresses to us the ontological foundation of the meaning of being. The originary relationality groundlessly grounds our existence as singularly plural, constantly exposing us to other beings and to our own understanding of ourselves. The self and others, our singularity and the plural unfolding of origins, ontologically co-constitutes our existence as we share our existence with others. The sharing of our existence uncovers the originary relationality as ontologically meaningful because being-with other beings uncovers to us and points us to our own understanding of ourselves, as singularly constituted by the plurality of origins. Originary relationality is the foundation of Nancy's philosophy. In the following section I will address how Nancy's conception of originary relationality exposes the everyday as existentially meaningful.

The Meaningful Horizon of the Relation in Everyday Existence

In Nancy's thought, the primacy of the relation becomes not only the ontological horizon of being, but it becomes the horizon for the meaning of being as an existential praxis and ethos that is encompassed in ontological everydayness. Meaning itself is constituted by originary relationality which is exposed in everyday relationships with others. Existence functions as providing meaning in everyday relationships. To understand the dynamics of meaning and being in everyday relationships one must understand first the essential nature of originary relationality as an ontologically constituting factor of meaningful existence. In this section I will address the inter-relationality of being, existence, and meaning that only comes from the originary relationality. This primacy of originary relationality underlies all relationships that are

existent in the everyday world. To explicate this I will make the connection between the ontological question and the everydayness of originary relationality.

In the context of originary relationality a significant factor is that the relation necessarily implicates the meaning of being in everyday existence. To be with others implies that originary relationality meaningfully constitutes who we are as a being. As we are constituted as a singular plural being we necessarily exist with the world by relating with others in everyday existence. By being-with others in the world we meaningfully exist as a singularity, plurally constituted by the relationships that we are involved in as we exist in the everyday. Being-with implies that our existence, being, and meaning are all found in what Heidegger calls everyday existence. To exist in the everyday for Nancy is to be with others, as I interpret, in everyday relationships where singular plural beings meet.

At each meeting point between singular plural beings, what Nancy calls a presentation (coming to presence), we are presented to another being, just as in the relationship with him/her we are presenting ourselves to them. In the relation that exists between singular plural beings meaning is derived from what the presentation signifies; just as I go to a party and visibly withdraw from people I do not know, I am signified as not an outgoing person, and that meaning is passed on to others at the party. Nancy's use of signification implies that meaning is apparent in the spacing produced by the active relationality that exists in the presentations of singular plural beings. What a presentation

signifies is the opening to meaning because originary relationality exposes between us the meaning of our singular plural being as we exist in the everyday.

The being-with of our relationships in the everyday exposes us to the meaning of who we are. Originary relationality is exposed to us as meaningful in the very relationships with others in the everyday. The content of our singular plurality of being exposes us to the meaning of who we are as we are exposed in everyday existence. We are ontologically constituted by our singular plurality of being. Hence we are a relational being that is constantly exposed in everyday relationships towards the meaning of our being. Meaning becomes exposed by originary relationality to the extent that the origination of meaning comes from the plural unfolding of the singular origins that are presented in the everyday. In each instance of the unfolding of origins in our everyday relationships with others we are exposed to the meaning of who we are just as others are exposed to us and to themselves; meaning becomes self-identified through the singular plural unfolding of origins found in the everyday.

The origination of being necessarily implies the origination of meaning because in each relationship of the everyday, originary relationality exposes us to the very meaning of our own existence. Just as we self-identify who we are as a being in everyday relationships, we are constituted by our singular plurality as a self-identified meaning that is exposed by the singular plural unfolding of origins. At each presentation of being I am also exposed to meaning; each presentation signifies to me my own meaning as a singularity plurally constituted by the meaningful relationships with other singular beings. As we are exposed ontologically by being-with others we are exposed as a

meaning constituted singularly plurally by the meanings in which we exist in the everyday. The everyday becomes meaningful because in every relationship with others originary relationality exposes us to our own existential meaning. Nancy states culminatively that:

We are Meaning. Before all produced or disclosed meaning, and before all exchanges of meaning, our existence presents itself to us as meaning—and when I say ‘we’ in this sentence, I designate equally and indissociably each of our singular existences, whose singularity is each time the place of such a presentation... *and* the common element of meaning in which only that which takes place in this way can take place. Our existence presents itself as meaning..., and simultaneously, we present ourselves *to ourselves*. That is to say, at once to one another, through one another, and each one to him or herself. We *co-appear*, and this appearing is meaning.

This *we* of meaning, which is meaning, this meaning that is the being of the *we*... calls for an ontology that is yet to come, which does not mean that it will come, but that it is perhaps, in itself, as thought, ordered according to the dimension of a ‘coming’ or a ‘coming to pass’: that of our co-appearing, of our presentation in the element of meaning. This presentation itself has no signification; it only takes place, unceasingly, through innumerable significations [of meaning]. It does not proceed as the recognition of the identification of those—*we*—who are presented. It proceeds as an ex-posure; we *are* exposed, that is our being—or the meaning of being.²⁵

To exist means that we are constantly being exposed to ourselves and others

through the everyday relationships that uncovers between us the very meaning of who we are as a being. What I am arguing here is that every singular plural being is a meaning constituted by and exposed in everyday relationships with other singularities of being.

We exist in relationships and the existential exposure of our ontological meaning *as an origin of meaning* implies that we are ontologically constituted in the everyday by originary relationality; originary relationality exposes us to our existential meaning as a relation existing with the world as a meaning, being continuously and plurally exposed to

²⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. Francois Raffoul and Gregory Recco (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), 62.

meaning, *in the everyday*. Originary relationality makes everyday existence meaningful because it opens us to the relation as existentially meaningful.

In the everyday, beings are continuously created in the infinitude of meanings that are exposed in the finite everyday relationships with other origins of meaning. At each meeting point between singular plural beings, originary relationality discloses to us the meaning of who we are as we co-exist with others as they are themselves a meaning. This co-existent disclosure to the meaning of who we are can be seen in the infinite finitude of presented originations of meaning that are exposed by originary relationality in the everyday relationships with others.. What this implies is that the meaning of being is a *meaningful being* that relates with others in the everyday because the groundless ground of originary relationality exposes us singular plurally as a relationally constituted being. Originary relationality exposes us to our existential meaning just as it is in the singular plural unfolding of origins of the everyday that the meaning of being is found; originary relationality exposes us to meaning and the everyday constitutes that meaning.

These origins of meaning take place in the everyday exposure of who we are as we understand ourselves as existentially meaningful. For example, if I am sitting on a park bench, I am exposing myself to the passerby and to myself my own meaning. As I sit I am exposed to meaning as I am lost amidst my own thoughts just as others are able to relate to my own contemplative solitude as I stare off into the distance. What this shows is that even as I sit on a bench in everyday experience I am relating to myself as I am aware of my own existential distention; I am aware of the effects of my distanced

eyes both to myself and to others. I am constantly exposing myself to others as I relate with others in the everyday by contemplating on a park bench.

The relation that links me with the passerby is what they expose to me by our co-existence the very meaning of our beings. The love stories in the making as two love birds sitting at a picnic expose to me the love that they meaningfully express for one another. Even this exposes to me the loss of my own love. The exposure of our existential meaning, the ways in which we meaningfully exist with others, indicates to me the understanding of myself as a singular being plurally composed as a meaning in the infinite finitude of everyday constituting relationships. In each instance of life I am disposed to myself in a constant re-evaluation of my own meaning in the open sharing of my existence with others as I sit on a quiet park bench. At each instance of being-with others I am ontologically disclosed to the plurality of origins of meaning that take place in everyday existence.

Each origin presents to us a meaning that is ontologically exposed by originary relationality in the finitude and mundanity of our everyday existence with the world around us. Originary relationality exposes the meaning of being as we exist ontologically and meaningfully with others in the everyday. The meaning of being is exposed to the extent that we are singularly plurally constituted as a meaning groundlessly grounded in the infinite finitude of everyday relationships. Originary relationality exposes to us not only our Being but even more so in the Heideggerian fashion, the very meaning of who we are as a self appearing in the everyday. The everydayness of our being not only constitutes our meaning but it implies that the everyday is itself existentially meaningful.

Each of us is a singularly plural being constituted by meanings that are exposed in the everyday world as meaningful just as the everyday exposes to us our own meaning *because the meaning of our being is found in the everyday*. The everyday is the existential space in which we meaningfully relate with others. Originary relationality exposes us as a meaning simultaneously with the exposure of the everyday as meaningful.

The everyday implies an ontological structure in which our existence within the everyday implies the very meaning of being. The structure of being can be expressed in an inter-related triangle where meaning, being, and existence are at each point of the triangle which is connected by the lines of originary relationality. Each point expresses a relationship within the everyday, but it is only the originary relationality that connects these points and exposes the everyday as meaningful. Existence relates to being because originary relationality exposes to us our being as singularly plural existence. Existence relates to meaning because originary relationality exposes to us the ways in which we exist in the everyday as a meaning. Being is related to meaning because being can only be identified through the relational exposure of who we are as we are meaningfully constituted by originary relationality.

As a whole, being, meaning, and existence are all constituted by originary relationality as it is exposed in everyday relationships with others. The relation becomes the primary horizon in which we meaningfully exist as beings. We exist through the relation meaningfully because we are self-identified by the relation which meaningfully constitutes us as we exist in the everyday. What we have analyzed here is an

interpretation of the meaning of being as a radical relationality between being, existence, and meaning in which Nancy prioritizes originary relationality as the horizon of the ontological question. Meaning, Being, and existence are all radically constituted by originary relationality which is exposed through the everyday relationships with others.

Originary relationality exists as continuously creative cause of the meaning of being. It is the cause of how, why, and who we are because originary relationality groundlessly grounds us in the exposure of who we are as we are constantly constituted in everyday relationships. The everyday thus becomes the existential spacing in which originary relationality exposes to us the meaning of being. The meaning of being for Nancy becomes orientated by the relational horizon that constitutes meaning in the everyday. For Nancy the everyday is centrally the space in which we are not only ontologically constituted, but where our existence is meaningfully exposed. The everyday is the space where meaning is found because originary relationality signifies that meaning is exposed in everyday relationships. Ontologically, the relation is the key to understanding the meaning of being because originary relationality allows the everyday to be meaningful. The ontological question for Nancy becomes apparent by the everyday originary relationality that exposes to us the source of the meaning of being because we are constantly co-appearing with others in the everyday.

The Nancy-Heideggerean Contrast

In the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy, one can find a strong Heideggerean bent that encompasses the Heideggerean ontological tradition by radically revising the Heideggerean use of *Mitsein*. Significantly the definition and use of *Mitsein* for Nancy

becomes the point of departure and a radical renewal of Heideggerean ontology. The originary relationality that is exposed by being-with others for Nancy serves as an ontological *a priori* in which the relation becomes a constituting factor of the meaning of being itself. Being for Nancy, as in the Heideggerean tradition, is defined in the context of our existential framework as being in the everyday world. However, for Nancy the everyday becomes indebted to originary relationality as the *exposing* of the meaning of being.

Nancy provides a radical critique of Heidegger's being-with by providing the ontological primacy of being-with. As we have alluded to above, being-with is presupposed in Heidegger's use of Dasein. Nancy states that, "Dasein's... understanding of Being already implies the understanding of others,"²⁶ and that "Heidegger clearly states that being-with is essential to the constitution of Dasein itself. Given this it needs to be made clear that Dasein... is not an isolated and unique 'one' but is instead always the one, each one, [and] with one another."²⁷ For Nancy the concept of Mitsein and its relational implications becomes the point of continuation and radical revisioning of Heidegger in which being-with others in the everyday becomes the ontological horizon.

Heidegger's use of Mitsein is one that lacks a full understanding of the implications of being-with; Ian James states that:

For the Heidegger of *Being and Time*... Dasein occurs as being-in-the-world only insofar as it is singularized in its ownmost possibility, that is, in its projection toward the futurity of death. *It is only then with or alongside others in a more secondary sense.* [In contrast]

²⁶ Heidegger, *B&T*, 161, quoted in; Nancy, *BSP*, 27.

²⁷ Nancy, *BSP*, 26.

Nancy's use of the term *being-with* seeks to think our worldly existence with others in a more fundamental or originary manner.²⁸

This more fundamental and originary manner of understanding being-with in the everyday is Nancy's originary relationality that being-with implies on an ontological, not ontic, level. What one must understand is that according to Nancy being-with becomes primary, not secondary, to understanding the ontological question. The meaning of Being for Nancy is fundamentally found by the exposure of originary relation as ontologically meaningful in everyday existence with others in the world.

The differentiation between being-with for Nancy and Heidegger is particularly grounded in their distinct approaches to the role of being-with and its relationship with meaning. For Heidegger being-with implies the undifferentiation of being as inauthentically existent. Authentic existence as Dasein for Heidegger is only meaningful as one relates to its ownmost possibility of death. Being-with-in-the-world implies an inauthentic existence in which the everyday becomes the space where meaning is lost. What we see with Nancy and my understanding of the originary relationality is that being-with itself must be understood in terms of the everyday relations which *themselves* are meaningful. Meaningful existence for Nancy does not need an orientation towards death, but rather it is in the horizon of originary relationality that the everyday is existentially meaningful. Originary relationality is the ontological horizon where meaning comes from because the 'with' implies the ontologically constituting factor of Being itself. For Nancy being-with implies meaning in the everyday because of the complex

²⁸ Ian James, *The Fragmentary Demand: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 104. Original Emphasis.

constituting and differentiating relations that exist in the infinite finitude of everyday existence.

Nancy implicitly argues that Heidegger's conception of being-towards-death is not needed for authentic existence, because originary relationality itself exposes everyday existence as authentically meaningful by being-with others in the singular plural unfolding of everyday origins of meaning. The complexity and variety of the everyday implies the existential singularization between singular plural beings. In this way, originary relationality opens us to the singularity of our own Being, existence and meaning by the plurality of beings which we relate with in the everyday. Nancy critiques Heidegger by stating that, "one cannot affirm that the meaning of being must express itself starting from everydayness and then begin by neglecting the general differentiation of the everyday [because of] its constantly renewed rupture, its intimate discord, its polymorphy and polyphony, its relief, and its variety."²⁹

What this implies is that the everyday itself is complex, and that each singular being is constituted by the plural complexity of the finite relations that exist between us in the everyday. Meaning comes from the complexity of the everyday because the everyday exposes us to the meaning of being. For Nancy, the horizon of originary relationality implies the affirmation of meaning in the reality of everyday existence for singular plural beings. This point is the central difference that Nancy revises in the Heideggerean ontology; it is in the everyday that we are singularized/individualized; we do not have to be orientated towards death to be individualized as meaningful beings. For

²⁹ Nancy, *BSP*, 9.

Nancy the everyday is the existential space in which we meaningfully exist by being-with others because of the horizon of originary relationality.

Conclusion

In the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy one can see a definite reworking of the ontological question in which the primacy of the relation becomes the ontological horizon of what it means to be. The meaning of being is one distinctly characterized in the Heideggerean ontological tradition that invokes an ontological analysis that attempts to understand the very nature of Being as it exists in and with the world. From what we have discussed above, the nature of Being for Nancy is intimately related to meaning and existence which is ontologically presented in the everyday. The relation for Nancy serves as the foundation of a relational ontology because the relation is the constantly creative source of both beings and the meaning of being. What we will turn to next is a relational ontology found within the thought of Raimon Panikkar. In the next chapter I will address the ontological understanding of the relation as Panikkar understands in a cosmotheandric relativity, where the relation ontologically constitutes who we are as and in dimensions of Reality. Significantly I will turn the ontological question towards what it means to be in relation with Reality, not merely being-with others.

Cosmotheandricism and Intrinsic Relationality: An Ontological Interpretation of Reality

Throughout the course of this thesis I have been attempting to lay out an idea of a relational ontology. Nancy's conception of the relation implies an ontological understanding of the meaning of being where meaning, being, and existence are meaningfully exposed by originary relationality. In contrast to the Nancy's conception of the relation, I will offer an alternative understanding of a relational ontology as it is found in the thought of Raimon Panikkar. Panikkar's conception of ontology is one that is expressed by an understanding of a cosmotheandric reality that is constituted as intrinsically relational. Panikkar's conception of being must be understood as an expression of reality composed tripartite by an inter-relationality of cosmic matter, Man³⁰, and the divine. I will argue that for Panikkar a relational ontology can be meaningfully understood within³¹ the conscious experience of the inter-in-dependency of the cosmotheandric reality.

I will argue that Panikkar's conception of intrinsic relationality expresses a relational ontology that presupposes the meaning of being as intrinsic to man's existence *as a cosmotheandric reality*. Panikkar's understanding of Reality is one that implicates

³⁰ Panikkar's, and my own, use of Man expresses a gender binary that includes man and woman as a concept that expresses 'human beings'.

³¹ My use of the word 'within' specifically denotes the very meaning of being with reality while simultaneously being in reality. Throughout this thesis I will use with-in or with and in reality to signify the very meaning of cosmotheandric existence.

meaningful existence through the very experience of the inter-relatedness of the three dimensions of reality. To exist for Panikkar, I argue, each person is a being that reflects a cosmotheandric reality that is intrinsically constituted by the inter-in-dependency of cosmotheandric relativity.

This inter-independency of a cosmotheandric reality is what I express, following Panikkar, as a cosmotheandric ontonomy in which each cosmotheandric person presents a *pars pro toto* of reality, a part of reality that expresses the whole ontological understanding of reality. Detrimental to understanding the ontological meaning in a cosmotheandric context is what Panikkar constantly expresses as the conscious participation with-in reality as a reality. To be conscious of a cosmotheandric reality implies that one is aware of the dimensions in which one is relating with as one meaningfully exists within them as a cosmotheandric being. I am arguing in this thesis that a cosmotheandric reality implies meaningful existence in the everyday experiences of the cosmotheandric reality just as each person reflects that reality as a cosmotheandric being.

To understand the distinction between Panikkar, Heidegger, and Nancy, I have offered first an overarching comparison of continuities, differences, and broadenings of insights that each offers in the context of my interpretation of Panikkarean ontology. The following section will address specifically what Panikkar understands as the intrinsic relationality of the cosmotheandric ontonomy. This section articulates the nature of a cosmotheandric reality as intrinsically relational. In turn, the following section articulates the how the cosmotheandric reality is ontologically understood for a cosmotheandric

being. Following these foundations I will then explicate an understanding of how Panikkar's conception of intrinsic relationality is ontologically meaningful in the everyday experience of cosmotheandric reality. In conclusion, one can find an understanding of the intrinsic relationality as an experiential mode in which the everyday is ontologically meaningful.

Broadening the Perspective

In this section I will argue that in the thought of Raimon Panikkar one can see a certain broadening of perspective in understanding the meaning of Being. The continuation of the Heideggerean tradition in Panikkar is centrally the Heideggerean idea that Being is understood as that which understands Being as ontologically Real insofar as it is meaningful. What I will articulate in this chapter is that Being for Panikkar is understood *as* reality. I will argue that Panikkar understands a cosmotheandric being as reflecting reality as a whole. Subsequently, I am arguing that Panikkar's ontological understanding of being as reality can be expressed as meaningful in the very experience of everyday cosmotheandric relationships.

Significantly, I am arguing that there is a continuity of thought between Panikkar and Nancy in which both philosophers argue a subtle critique of Heidegger's ontological understanding of the everyday. For both Nancy and Panikkar the horizon of the relation becomes the orientating factor to understanding the meaning of being. However, Nancy's understanding of the relation differs from Panikkar because it is constituted by the co-appearance of the originary relationality as it is exposed by being-with others in everyday experience. Furthermore, Nancy's understanding of originary relationality implies a

heavily anthropic emphasis in which the everyday is existentially meaningful. In contrast to Nancy, Panikkar's understanding of the horizon of the relation emphasizes not only the anthropic relationality as meaningful, but also that the experience of the cosmic and theistic perspectives of reality is also ontologically meaningful in everyday experience.

A certain point in which Panikkar and Nancy are in full agreement is that reality is ontologically meaningful through the lens of the relationality. That lens of the relationality for both Nancy and Panikkar is one that is experienced in the everyday by Man, but is not exhausted by Man. However, the point of my argument is to exemplify the difference between Nancy and Panikkar on the issue of *relationality* as it is ontologically constitutive in everyday existence. For Nancy originary relationality implies that it is a constant source of the meaning of being; that it becomes the inexhaustible source of meaning. In contrast for Panikkar, what I will argue below is that the intrinsic relationality of the cosmotheandric reality implies meaningful existence because one is experientially participating in reality as one exists with-in it. What I will turn to next is what Panikkar understands as the intrinsic relationality of the cosmotheandric ontology.

Cosmotheandric Ontonomy

To understand Panikkar's conception of the intrinsic relationality of the cosmotheandric reality one will attempt to lay out first an understanding of what I interpret as the cosmotheandric ontology. This concept is an interpretive understanding that I offer to better explicate Panikkar's understanding of an intrinsic relationality. The explication of the inter-dependency of a cosmotheandric ontology will offer an

understanding of how each dimension of reality represents Panikkar's ontological understanding of an intrinsic relationality.

Panikkar argues that reality is intrinsically understood as being constituted by the cosmotheandric relationality. Panikkar's understanding of the cosmotheandric reality states that:

This [cosmotheandric] intuition [of reality] does not claim that these three dimensions are three modes of a monolithic, undifferentiated reality, nor does it say that they are three elements in a pluralistic system. Rather [they are] one, though intrinsically threefold, [a] relationship [that] expresses the ultimate constitution of reality. Everything that exists, any real human being, presents this triune structure expressed in three dimensions. I am not only stating that everything is directly or indirectly related to everything else—as in the radical relativity or *pratityatsamudpada* of the Buddhist tradition. I am also stressing that this relationship is not only constitutive of the whole but that it shines through, ever new and vital, in every spark of the real. The cosmotheandric intuition is not a tripartite division of beings but an insight into the threefold core of all that is insofar as it is.³² What we see is that the real is ontologically constituted as a threefold unity of

reality that is expressed as a cosmotheandric inter-independency. Each person is existent as a cosmotheandric reality that reflects an intrinsic relationality within reality itself. This relationality for Panikkar is the basic ontological constitution of Reality. Joseph Prabhu offers an understanding of the cosmotheandric reality by stating that:

[The main thesis of Panikkar] is the triadic structure of reality comprising the divine, the human, and the cosmic in thoroughgoing relationality. In saying that, “God, Man, and World are three artificially substantivized forms of adjectives which describe Reality,” Panikkar is pointing to his own version of the Buddhist *pratityatsamudpada*, the espousal of what he calls ‘radical relativity’. There are no such things or beings as God or Man or World considered as completely independent entities. Not only are they dependent on each other, but this dependence is not just external but rather internal, i.e., constitutive of their being. Panikkar coined the term ‘inter-in-dependence’ to express this relationship....

³² Raimon Panikkar, *Mysticism and Spirituality*, vol. 1.1, 12 vols., Opera Omnia (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2014), 28. Henceforth as *M&S*. Opt.cited. in Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, ed. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 60.

The mutual dependence of the divine, Human, and the cosmic are co-constitutive of their very 'being'.³³

Panikkar's understanding of the intrinsic relationality of cosmotheandric reality is one that invokes a distinct understanding of cosmotheandricism as a mutual inter-independence within reality itself. Each person reflects this cosmotheandric relationality because he is constituted by it. This is what I interpret of Panikkar as the cosmotheandric ontonomy; a law of being that states that the intrinsic relationality of reality as a whole is understood as ontologically constituted by the relation. Ontonomy expresses that each dimension of reality within Man is wholistically expressed *pars pro toto* as a part of reality. Each person expresses the triune partition of reality as a whole of reality, but we are not the exhaustive whole of reality. Ontonomy expresses that we reflect a whole of reality because we are cosmotheandrically constituted as only a part of reality. Panikkar states that we are,

Ontonomically intended to express the recognition of the inner regularities of each field of activity or sphere of being in light of the whole. The whole is, in fact, neither different nor merely identical with any one field or sphere. Ontonomy rests on the assumption that the universe is a whole, that there is an internal and constitutive relationship between all and every part of reality, that nothing is disconnected and that the development and progress of one being is not to be at the expense of another.³⁴

According to [the ontonomic] vision we *are* inasmuch as we participate in the whole and allow the whole to participate, i.e., to express itself in us. I am, inasmuch as the others are in me, inasmuch as I am involved and committed to the whole of reality, inasmuch as I take part, i.e. I participate in the entire process of the universe.³⁵

Reality is understood by each person to be intrinsic to his or her own being even

while each person reflects the cosmotheandric ontonomy in which reality is expressed as an intrinsic relation. The mutual inter-independence of Reality is what Panikkar

³³ Joseph Prabhu, "Panikkar's Trinitarianism and His Critique of (Mono) Theism," in *CIRPIT Review*, vol. 5 (Milan: Mimesis, 2014), 79-87: 81, 84-85.

³⁴ Raimon Panikkar, *Worship and the Secular Man* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), 41-42.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

understands in a broad stroke as Indian Karma. The intrinsic relationality of reality implies the very contingency of reality as mutually inter-independent with-in itself.

Panikkar states:

Karman is the link that connects us to every particle of reality and restores our sense of unity with the whole universe, for all beings are, without exception, governed (and nurtured by the same cosmic law). This law is not a mere causal chain, for there are forms of dependence that belong to *karman* and are not necessarily causal, unless we expand the concept of cause to any process of interdependence. Essential in this view is the universality of such a law. All that is, precisely because it is, has a relatedness to everything else.

Karman is also the expression of the contingency of all beings. It expresses their interrelatedness and thus their unity precisely because no individual being—nor even the entire universe—is complete, full, perfect, achieved. The world is unfinished and, in this sense, infinite. This infinitude accounts for freedom and the unforeseeable movement of all that is. Existence is open, ongoing, [becoming], a spontaneous unfolding of possibility. Thus *karman* stands paradoxically both for the unity and the freedom of the contingent creature.³⁶

The contingency of reality is the inter-independency of the relationality in which one exists as and with-in reality. Karma presents an ontological understanding that the intrinsic relationality expresses the meaning of being in an open infinitude of meaning that is contingently understood by our intrinsic relationality with-in reality. What one can understand of the inter-independence of reality implies that we are contingently understood as in a radical relativity of contingent relationships. Panikkar understands reality as ontomically and contingently constituted by a radical relativity that emphasizes the mutual inter-independence of all existences that participate with-in the whole of reality. Jacob Parappally states that:

Ontonomy recognizes the radical relativity of all beings, sees reality as non-dualistic polarities and opens the way for the integration of every being into [a] harmonious whole... It is this ontonomic intuition that reveals the radical relativity of everything. The symbol of this ontonomy which reveals the radical relativity is [the] Person. Person is

³⁶ Panikkar, *M&S*, 56.

neither singular or plural. *A person is a conjunction...* Panikkar affirms that a person is a bundle of relationships and a knot in the network of relationships.³⁷

What I am arguing is that this understanding of Panikkar's ontology is

represented in the ontological experience of a *person* that is aware of the cosmotheandric ontology. To be racially relative implies that a person is constituted by the intrinsic relationalities within which one exists as an expression of a cosmotheandric reality.

Young-chan Ro understands Panikkar's conception of relativity as ontologically meaningful because it represents being as an intrinsic relation. He states that relativity,

Is a notion emphasizing the nature of inter-dependence of every being. This affirms that each being is in need of the other in the sense that no single being can exist on its own independently. Relativity is an ontological constitution of all beings. Relativity is a way of recognizing the intrinsic relatedness of each being. Relativity in this sense... describes the relationship found in all beings. Every being is in relationship with other beings to become its own being... Relativity is... an 'intrinsic relation' of every being. Every being exists in relation to other beings. In this sense, relativity is nothing but the affirmation of the relatedness of every being to other beings in an intrinsic way. Relationship is not to be understood as an external string binding one being to another being, but it expresses the idea of the intrinsic relatedness of one being [with] another being. In this respect, relationship is the foundation that allows each being to be found in existence with other being[s], both epistemologically and ontologically.³⁸

What this indicates is that every person is himself relative and relatively

constituted by intrinsic relationships with other cosmotheandric persons. The notion of radical relativity implies an ontological understanding of cosmotheandric reality as it is experienced and lived by persons. Panikkar's cosmotheandric conception of Man should be understood culminatively as the person, the conjunction of reality, in which cosmos and *theos* are intrinsically related. The person is a human being who reflects reality just as he shares reality with other human beings that also reflect the triune inter-

³⁷ Jacob Parappally, "Panikkar's Vision of Reality and Contextual Theology," in *CIRPIT review*, vol. 4, (Milan: Mimesis, 2013), 217-26: 224.

³⁸ Young-chan Ro, "Relativism, Universalism, and Pluralism in the Age of Globalization," in *CIRPIT review*, vol. 3, (Milan: Mimesis, 2012), 91-101: 98. Henceforth as "RUPAG."

independency of all that is. Each human being must be understood in relation to one another and cosmotheandrically as being conscious of others as *pars pro toto*. Each person is a conjunction in which reality is expressed ontomically with-in his very being.

Panikkar's idea of a cosmotheandric ontology implies that we are a cosmotheandric being intrinsically constituted by three dimensions of reality that we adventitiously experience as a *pars pro toto*; that we are cosmotheandrically experiencing reality both as a cosmotheandric person (a part that expresses the whole) *and* as we participate within a whole cosmotheandric reality. Cosmotheandric reality permeates through every person as an intrinsic relationality; each person expresses a knot of relations that relates to every other person and to all of reality as we are cosmotheandrically constituted. The person is a conjunction to the affect that he is *aware* of his own inter-independence within reality. Our consciousness is precisely the human invariant; the factor that indicates the person as intrinsically and ontologically aware of meaning. The consciousness of being in reality as one is aware of the cosmotheandric intrinsicity of all reality implies that Man becomes the ontological lens from which the cosmotheandric reality becomes meaningful. Before I address Panikkar's conception of ontological meaning, I will first address the intrinsic relationality of the cosmotheandric dimensions of reality.

The Intrinsicity of Cosmotheandric Reality

What I will turn to next is an articulation of the cosmotheandric reality as it is understood as an intrinsically relational reality. To do this I will break down and explain

the relativity of cosmotheandric dimensions as they intrinsically relate to and constitute reality. To begin I will examine first Panikkar's understanding of the cosmos as intrinsically relational to reality. Subsequently I will examine the theistic relationships within the divine itself as well as its relationality with matter and Man. The cosmotheandric reality implies that each dimension can only be understood as intrinsically relational as inter-independently co-constitutive of reality as a whole.

For Panikkar, the cosmos is at its most basic level a relative structure of atomic and molecular constitutions.³⁹ Each molecule is constituted by atoms, such as water, constituted of oxygen and hydrogen. Materially each atom is made of at least one proton and one electron connected by the relative randomness of what scientists posit as string theory. The relative randomness of the direction of the electron flowing around the nucleus implies not only the relativity of its randomness, but also the relativity of its relationship to the center of its nucleus. Each atom is relatively constituted as it connects and participates with other atoms. This implies that at the most basic level of the cosmos there is an intrinsic constitutive relationship between reality.⁴⁰ Panikkar affirms this when he states that "matter presents, in its atomic and subatomic structures, practically all the features of traditional living beings."⁴¹

³⁹ I must note here that I am not a scientist nor have I extensively studied atomic structure nor string theory. Panikkar held a Doctorate in Chemistry as well as Philosophy and Theology yet my experience in chemistry is admittedly at a high school level. This exposition is basic because of my own limitations in chemistry. I rely on others more versed in the subject to object to any understandings I may have misconstrued.

⁴⁰ My use of 'between reality' implicates an inter-independency of reality in which the tripartite unity of reality crosses through every other part of reality as a constitutive whole.

⁴¹ Panikkar, *RB*, 279.

The cosmos also reflects an intrinsic relationship within the constitution of Man and his life. Man is made of molecules, atoms, and is supported by the cosmos as he lives. Man is made of 90% water, a molecule, and even as I am living I am breathing oxygen which supports the physical functions of my body. The cosmos implies that Man is supported relatively by the intrinsic constitution of molecules, cells, and atoms that respond to the physical dimensions of the universe. Each Man needs the physical universe to survive, implying Man's contingency upon matter to exist, to even have being. To exist implies that we are dependent upon the cosmos to even live; Man's reality can only be real as long as it is contingent upon the cosmic constitution of the universe.

Panikkar's understanding of the anthropocosmic relationality is one that he calls ecosophy.⁴² Panikkar's conception of ecosophy articulates that Man's relationship with matter implies that he must be conscious of how he/she relates with reality. Man is dependent upon matter to survive, and matter's contingency upon Man is necessarily how Man treats matter around him. Ecosophy implies an awareness of a mutual contingency between man and matter, one that implies their inter-in-dependency upon one another to exist. The ecosophical relationality indicates an awareness of Man of the material and physical reality around him; both spatially and of matter's constituting affects within reality. Just as the world is affected by our human actions, human life is contingently affected by the intrinsicality of our ecosophical relationality. Panikkar takes the example

⁴² For an understanding of Panikkar's positions on anthropocosmic relationality, or ecosophy, C.f. Anthony Savari Raj, *Ecosophical Justice*, (Bangalore: Capuchin publication trust, 2010).

of the stone to exemplify the ontonomic relationality of the anthropocosmic reality. He states:

This stone, the real stone, and this earth, the real earth, imply our human consciousness of them. I am saying that the link between consciousness and stone is constitutive. A consciousness that could not be conscious of stones would not be consciousness; and a stone of which no consciousness could be aware would not be a stone. The stone *qua* stone implies the (human) consciousness for which it is a stone....

We can have a concept of stone in our mind, and our mind projects the (conceptual) stone onto the outer world, helped in this case by the testimony of our senses, a testimony that is validated by our mind, by our awareness of it... Yet a real stone does not really exist without the constitutive link with the human mind, but nevertheless is not a product of the mind. The reality of the stone and the human mind belong together [in ontonomic harmony].⁴³

This implies that the cosmos is intrinsically related to Man by the very experiential consciousness of Man as he is constitutively aware of his physical surroundings and physical constitution. To be aware of reality is necessarily the key factor to understanding the intrinsicity of matter and its relationship with reality; our consciousness of matter is not only of how it constitutes me, you, and that tree, but it is ontonomically constitutive of the whole of reality as we experience reality as a *pars pro toto*, as a distinct part that makes up a whole by representing the whole.

Adding in the theistic dimension of the intrinsicity of cosmotheandric reality, one can find another factor that implicates the mutual inter-independency between reality. The ontological constitution of the *theos* implicates a necessary relationality with creation, both with matter and Man. The cosmos as it is understood by the Judeo-Christian tradition was created *ex-nihilo* by the *logos* (word) of God. This creation from nothing implies that no-thing existed before creation, but the cause of creation; the source of the inter-related contingency of reality (karma). Here I am arguing that reality is

⁴³ Panikkar, *RB*, 282-83.

theologically contingent upon the divine for its existence. The cosmotheandric reality implies that the divine comes alongside us, dwells with-in us, and exists separate from us. The theistic dimension of reality according to Panikkar indicates a radical relativity between Man, the cosmos, and the divine. Panikkar's understanding of the mutual inter-independency of the divine can be articulated by his understanding of tempiternity and the Christian Trinity. The intrinsic relationality of the divine with-in matter and Man can be understood as an ontologically orientating factor that intrinsically constitutes our existence. The cosmotheandric person indicates that the reality of the divine is present to Man as Man is conscious of the divine's existence alongside, with, and in Man.

Before one can explicate the theistic relationalities with reality I will articulate the theological inter-independency of the divine itself as it is ontomically understood by Panikkar's understanding of the Christian Trinity. Immediately one must understand the intrinsic inter-relationality between God Himself; that the Father, Son, and Spirit are radically related to one another as the constituting idea of the Christian God. Panikkar makes the argument that the Father serves as the absolute transcendence who subsisted His entirety into the Son; to the point that the Father has no ex-sistence except through the Son, "No one can come to the Father except through Me."^(John 14:6) Panikkar states that: "Everything that the Father *is* he transmits to the Son. Everything that the Son *receives* he *gives* to the Father in return. This gift (in the final analysis) is the Spirit; the Father affirms Himself only through the Son in the Spirit."⁴⁴ The Father Himself *is* not.

⁴⁴ Raimon Panikkar, *Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), 46, 48. Henceforth as *TREM*.

His Being is only seen as manifested in the Son through the Spirit that they share.⁴⁵ That the Spirit is the common shared-ness between the Father and the Son signifies that within the Trinity itself the Spirit is the intrinsic relation that exists and subsists between the Father and Son.

What we see here is that the Trinity is itself intrinsically related as it is constituted by the Father, Son, and Spirit. It represents a relativity of Being in which the divine is understood as ultimately co-constituted by the Spirit. The divine exists in an intrinsic relationality not only between the Father and Son, but between the Son and those who follow the Son. The intrinsic connection between Man and God is represented by a relationship with Christ through the Spirit.^(Ephesians 2:18 & 22) Theanthropically this relationality indicates an ontonomic relationality in which Man becomes dependent upon the Spirit to be in a relationship with Christ, and thus with the Father. The theanthropic relationality in the Christian tradition does not mean that one is lost in the intrinsic relationality within God, that he/she loses himself in the Spirit, but rather that the Spirit fulfills Man as he is in a contingent and meaningful relationship with Christ through the Spirit.

Panikkar's argument of the theanthropic experience of the divine also begs the question of the divine's relationship with matter. Panikkar's coining of the term tempiternity implies an understanding of the contingency between the divine and creation. Tempiternity indicates that God exists alongside his creation as a continuous presence that is actively seeking and creating Man and matter. It is not that God created

⁴⁵ C.f. Ibid., 60-61.

and stepped to the side, but rather the living God of creation is eternal just as it participates with and in temporality. The divine for Panikkar is not some abstract conception of reality but is a Real dimension of reality that mutually interacts with and intrinsically constitutes reality as ontologically existent with-in reality. Panikkar even goes far enough to affirm that the divine is nothingness defined as a symbol characterized by the Hindu ākāśa (space) or Buddhist śūnyata (emptiness) in which the advaitic (non-dualistic) experience of the divine allows anthropocosmic reality to exist in the space of the divine's own existence.⁴⁶ Panikkar understands that all of reality is intrinsic to the presence of God. He states that:

From the side of the creature, creation is con-temporal and co-extensive with the creator because time and space are created in the very act of creation. Or rather time and space are not created, they are not creatures; rather it is the creatures that are temporal and spatial. From the side of God, so to speak, creation is coeternal, continuous with and contiguous to God.⁴⁷

Tempiternity implies that the divine is intrinsically related to creation and the creature as it co-exists alongside temporal reality. The dynamics of the divine mystery, as Panikkar calls the *theos*, indicates that the divine is always present with and in creation; just as we participate with-in reality the divine is there participating with and in us as we are intrinsically constituted as a cosmotheandric reality. The dynamics of the cosmotheandric reality as we have seen thus far indicates that reality is fundamentally one that presents an intrinsic relationality to the very structure of reality.

For Panikkar the cosmotheandric reality is understood as a radical relativity in which reality is mutually inter-independent as it is intrinsically constituted as a

⁴⁶ Panikkar, *RB*, 313-314.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 286.

cosmotheandric ontology. I am arguing that the ontonomic constitution of a cosmotheandric reality is the foundation for understanding how the meaning of being, or as I will state from here forward, the meaning of reality is ontologically constituted. What I will return to next is the explication of the person as he consciously experiences reality as existentially meaningful through his intrinsic ontological constitution.

Advaitic Pluralism and the Meaning of Reality

The point of this section is to explain the meaning of reality. Ontologically reality is meaningful as we are conscious of it as we exist intrinsically with and in the experience of the Real. This section will explicate what Panikkar understands as the advaitic (non-dualistic) experience of reality and the intrinsic ontological pluralism of reality. Both articulate a human invariant in which Man existentially experiences reality as intrinsically constituted by relations. The intrinsicality of reality implies ontological pluralism or difference in unity. Even more so what Panikkar understands as the advaitic intuition, where one touches reality in the very experience of the real, implicates the ontological pluralism as it is consciously experienced.⁴⁸ I am arguing that both advaitic consciousness and ontological pluralism are necessary components in understanding what I interpret as the meaning of reality. In this section I am arguing that we ontologically experience reality as we are conscious of the advaitic pluralism of reality.

The meaning of reality for Panikkar is grounded in what he understands as the advaitic experience of reality. Advaitic experience is non-dualistically known as one experiences the intrinsic constitution of reality by consciously being aware of one's

⁴⁸ Panikkar, *RB*, 220-221.

existence as a cosmotheandric being participating within reality. To be within reality implies that one is standing under the roof of reality as one is a part, taking part and experiencing the intrinsic relationality of an ontonomic reality. Advaitic experience implies that we are conscious of the intrinsicity of the real in the very modes of our existence as a cosmotheandric person. Ontologically the advaitic experience of the real implies that the meaning of reality is intimately and intrinsically known as one exists as an experiencing part of reality. Moreover, reality is a sphere of meaning in which we participate; it stands around us in an intricate web of inter-connectedness while each of us stand as a thread of the real contingently experiencing reality as it crosses through us and constitutes us as we exist.

The ontological meaning of reality is constituted by what Panikkar calls the radical relativity of our advaitic experience. The meaningfulness of our existence as a *pars pro toto* experiencing reality implies that one is aware of this ontological relativity. I interpret of Panikkar that radical relativity can be meaningfully understood as advaitically experiencing the ontological pluralism of reality. This advaitic ontological pluralism is ontonomically constituted by the cosmotheandric reality as we are existentially conscious of reality's diversity in unity. The diversity of the parts of reality, not only of Man, but cosmotheandrically, is advaitically constituted as an whole ontology; each aspect of our ontological diversity implies a unified part of reality within which we participate as a whole reality.

The cosmotheandric intuition implies that the advaitic consciousness of our ontological pluralism is understood as meaningful because we are able to consciously

differentiate between reality as we participate within the sphere of our intrinsic web of relationalities. Ontological pluralism indicates that we are able to differentiate between ourselves, identify, and know who we are as we participate within the intrinsicity of reality. I interpret of Panikkar that what we find meaningful is already present to us as we exist with-in reality; it takes being *aware* of the intrinsic relationality of our existence that we are able to ontologically differentiate the very meaning of who we are. The consciousness of our intrinsic pluralism becomes an existential horizon in which we meaningfully participate and experience reality.

What I call advaitic pluralism is an attitude that existentially opens us to cosmotheandric reality through the conscious life of our intrinsic relationality; we are constituted by the pluralistically orientated and triadic structure of reality.⁴⁹ Panikkar states that “pluralism adopts a non-dualistic or advaitic attitude that defends the pluralism of truth because reality itself is pluralistic; that is, incommensurable with either unity or plurality.”⁵⁰ The intrinsic pluralism of reality presents to us ontologically the incommensurability of a deeper understanding and consciousness of our own intrinsic relationality. Panikkar’s understanding of advaitic pluralism implies that we are neither unified as one monolithic being, nor differentiated as two beings. Rather one’s advaitic pluralism indicates that every person is a conjunction of intrinsic relationships. Youngchan Ro states that:

Each and every being is already pluralistically composed to become its own being. From the communal and collective point of view, pluralism is a way of recognizing that the

⁴⁹ Ro, “RUPAG,” 100.

⁵⁰ Raimon Panikkar, *Invisible Harmony: Essays on Contemplation & Responsibility*, ed. Harry James Cargas (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 97.

nature of reality and being are mutually dependent on each other (*pratityatsamudpada*)... pluralism assumes the inter-dependence of all beings as both an external relationship with other beings and an intrinsic structure of every being... Pluralism is an existential attitude of openness to others, to nature, [and to] heaven and earth... pluralism is a way of discerning the nature of reality and being. It is a way of finding wisdom to comprehend how to relate to each other without losing one's own being and identity.⁵¹ The ontological implication of the consciousness of our advaitic pluralism

becomes the point in which we meaningfully exist. To be for Panikkar indicates that we are real, and we are real in the very consciousness of our being as we become with and in reality as a pluralistically constituted reality. Ontological meaning for Panikkar is known by the very experience of the cosmotheandric reality as we are advaitically aware of our ontonomic pluralism. Our Ontonomic pluralism implies that the advaitic meaning of our existence is characterized by our awareness of the ontonomic "net itself, the whole of consciousness as the Whole as such."⁵²

The meaning that I am aware of as a cosmotheandric reality implies the very relationality of myself with-in the world; I am conscious of being with the world, just as I am conscious of being with others and the divine. Consciousness of our ontological reality becomes the point that our intrinsic relationality is known as meaningful. Meaning comes from the intrinsic relationality, but only when one becomes aware of the relationships in which we participate. Our existence as a cosmotheandric person becomes existentially meaningful as the conjunctions of our intrinsic relationality are experienced within the whole of and as a part of reality. Every person is a part of reality for Panikkar, and every person is existentially meaningful by being conscious of cosmotheandric relationality.

⁵¹ Ro, "RUPAG," 100-101.

⁵² Panikkar, *RB*, 220.

The meaning of reality comes from the very awareness of our whole ontological reality as we are advaitically constituted as experiencing the intrinsic relationality of reality with-in us. Then it is within the very consciousness of our existence as we are cosmotheandrically constituted that we are meaningfully aware of our ontological pluralism; that the cosmotheandric reality is relatively constituted as an ontonomic inter-dependency in which Man is meaningfully aware of his intrinsic pluralism of reality as he participates with-in reality. Cosmotheandric reality allows us to be as we become in the everyday experience of our ontological intrinsicity. The everyday experience of the cosmotheandric reality is what the next section will address.

Cosmotheandric Meaning

Throughout the course of this chapter I have introduced what Panikkar understands as the intrinsic relationality of cosmotheandric reality. Reality for Panikkar is understood as meaningful in the awareness of everyday existence as an intrinsic relation; as an advaitic pluralism that intrinsically constitutes reality as a relation that is experienced ontologically by a person in the everyday. To be within the everyday, cosmotheandric reality implies that one is actively relating with reality as we are consciously experiencing it. Panikkar's conception of ontological meaning and the relation, I interpret, indicates to us a further opening of the possibility of the meaning of being in which being becomes not only constituted by the everyday experience of Man but as the everyday experience of reality. This section is to articulate cosmotheandric modes of experiencing reality in which the everyday reality becomes ontologically meaningful.

The cosmotheandric understanding of reality implies an original insight into the possibility of existence in everyday experience. Living existentially in the experience of reality, one becomes conscious of not only everyday experience with others, but also of the very life, beauty, and decay of the earth around us. Everyday experience of the cosmos indicates to Man an existential meaning which specifically places Man within the world. Man becomes intrinsically a part of the world yet ontologically separate from it because he is consciously experiencing it as an advaitic pluralism in which we are able to differentiate ourselves from the world, while remaining advaitically conscious of our experience of the world. Just as I am writing this I am aware of the rising sun and the beauty of the flowers and the songs of the birds. One can find meaning in this consciousness because the reality of the cosmos, of our earth, is intimately experienced within us as we find beauty and peace in the quiet charm of birdsong. A new day starts and meaning becomes known to me as I am conscious of the ever abundance of the life in the world that surrounds me.

Even more so, everyday experience of the cosmotheandric reality implies the everyday presence of the divine. To live cosmotheandrically indicates that one is intrinsically conscious of the presence of God in the world as he exists within us at the very heart of one's soul. The presence of the divine participates with us in the experience of Life, manifesting itself within creation as the space in which we all come into life. The divine is intrinsic to us, whether in the experience of the world or in a direct experience of the divine with Man. The tempiternal contingency of the divine alongside creation implies a consciousness of the divine's presence as we advaitically experience the very

source of all reality. That Man is conscious of the divine in the world implicates an understanding of an intrinsic relationality between reality that indicates an ontonomic understanding of the advaitic inter-relationality intrinsic to all of creation.

Cosmotheandrically the cosmos and the divine opens to Man a broadening of possible meaning in which all of reality becomes ontonomically constitutive to our meaning in the everyday experience of reality.

I interpret that the awareness of ontological meaning in the everyday experience of reality is understood by the advaitic consciousness of our ontological participation within cosmotheandric existence. Panikkar posits that our being is only as becoming⁵³ and I interpret that it is within the conscious act of the becoming of being within everyday experiences of reality that our intrinsic relationality becomes meaningful. The meaning of who we are is advaitically known as we exist within reality as a becoming being that is constituted by the cosmotheandric experience of everyday reality. The depth of reality is only understood by understanding its unity and diversity; the pluralism of its ontological dimension. Intrinsic relationality implies that the meaning of being is always ontologically constituted by our experience of reality. One is within reality to the extent that he or she is conscious of being a whole reality that presents a part of reality; a microcosm in a macrocosmic universe that is ever caught up in its own intrinsic experience of becoming cosmotheandrically as a person meaningfully experiencing reality.

⁵³ Panikkar, *RB*, 98.

Relationality and the Everyday

What we have seen is that the ontological horizon of the relation has taken two distinct and different orientations in understanding the meaning of being. Importantly one must note, the ontological meaning of being for both Panikkar and Nancy is understood in everyday existence/experience. For Nancy the everyday itself is the open space in which originary relationality exposes us to meaning. However, as we have seen with Panikkar, he draws a particular interest to what one may call the experience of everyday *reality*. Not merely is meaning found in everyday relations with others as for Nancy, but I would argue that Panikkar's understanding of cosmotheandric reality implies that meaning in the everyday experiences of our intrinsic relationality within reality is fundamentally an opening of existence that becomes existentially meaningful as one participates with and experiences reality.

The difference between Nancy and Panikkar is the focus on how the relation opens one to meaning in the everyday. For Nancy, the everyday is an opening of meaning in which Being becomes co-constituted as it is exposed by being-with others in everyday relations. In contrast for Panikkar, the everyday experience of reality is open to meaning because meaning is intrinsically a part of the experience of reality. Experiencing the within-ness of the cosmotheandric everyday implies that we are conscious of our own existence, conscious of the meanings that are invoked by our intrinsic relationality. The everyday for Panikkar implies its own meaning, one that involves an advaitic consciousness of our ontological pluralism. On a cosmotheandric scale, the everyday implies meaning as one experiences reality as an intrinsic relation that constitutes us.

As I have argued above the horizon of relationality for Panikkar extends meaningful existence to the participation and experience of both the cosmos and the divine in the everyday experience of Man. This conception of everyday existence radically departs from Nancy in the Panikkarean context of the *experience* of the relation as we participate within reality as a cosmotheandric being. Thus as I have discussed above, the point of departure between the two philosophers is in the understanding the *relation* and how it implies existential meaning in the everyday. For Nancy the horizon of the relation indicates that meaningful existence is exposed in the everyday relationships with others. The contrast for Panikkar is that reality becomes existentially meaningful because the intrinsic relationality of cosmotheandric reality is experienced in the constituting participation of being with-in the three dimensions of reality; *reality is intrinsically constituted by the relationality*.

Reality for Panikkar does not need to be uncovered, but rather it must be experienced as meaningful as we exist with-in the everyday reality. The key distinction here is that for Panikkar the horizon of the relation indicates that meaning is already there and is understood as intrinsically relational *and* intrinsically meaningful because of the ontological experience of everyday reality. In contrast, for Nancy the horizon of the relation indicates the need to see the everyday reality as meaningful by uncovering originary relations as one exists with others in the everyday. For Panikkar the relation must be understood as experientially meaningful, because we are intrinsically participating within reality.

A Common Ground: The Opening of Dialogue and the Relationality of the Everyday

What this thesis offers is essentially an understanding of two distinct relational ontologies that attempt to answer the question of the meaning of being. The horizon of the relation offers a radical critique and revisioning of Heideggerean ontology. Both Nancy and Panikkar offer an understanding of the meaning of being through ideas of a relation that implies meaningful existence in the everyday. Nancy understands the relation as an originary relationality exposed in everyday relationships, while Panikkar sees the experience of cosmotheandric reality as ontologically meaningful through the intrinsicity of the relation with-in the experience of the everyday. What this thesis offers is an understanding of two relational ontologies but also an understanding that the everyday is ontologically and existentially meaningful through an idea of the relation.

The meaning of being indicates an ontological search for meaning, and despite the interpretive differences of the relation between Nancy and Panikkar, they both offer understandings of the relation that ontologically constitutes us in everyday existence. By being-with others the everyday becomes ontologically meaningful; by the intrinsic relationality of everyday experience of a cosmotheandric reality, the everyday becomes open to meaning by participating and experiencing the threefold reality. The idea of a relational ontology indicates that the meaning of being is understood in everyday

existence through understandings of the relation as existentially and ontologically meaningful. To be means to be in relation and to be in relation implies meaningful existence. The everyday is the space of our existence and the relationality involved in the everyday articulates to us the meaning of being.

A relational ontology implies that both Raimon Panikkar and Jean-Luc Nancy offer the horizon of the relation as an answer to understanding the meaning of being. The relation is itself an interpretive understanding that can differ according to the circumstances of philosophical points of view. This thesis's goal was to open up a dialogue between Nancy and Panikkar in which the relation becomes the horizon of the meaning of being; that the everyday is meaningful because of the relation. Furthermore, this thesis articulates that the idea of relation cannot be seen in isolation but that it can be compared and expressed in a multiplicity of forms that can articulate ontological meaning. By emphasizing the relation as ontologically primary I argue that both Nancy and Panikkar offer ideas of a relational ontology that can be further understood through intra-philosophical dialogue. This thesis provides an opening to dialogue on the understanding of relationality as it is expressed in Nancy and Panikkar. Indeed this thesis can also open up the idea of the relation not only to ontology, but also to comparative theology.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ It is my intention to extend this thesis in the future to offer theological understandings of the relation in the contexts of Hindu Vedantic philosophy, Buddhist conceptions of conventional and ultimate reality, and a further analysis of Christian theology in a practical context of Man's relationship with Christ.

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Biography

Andrew D. Thrasher was born in Virginia Beach, VA and is currently pursuing a Master's of Arts in Interdisciplinary studies at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. He currently holds a Bachelor's of Arts in History from George Mason University and a Associates of Arts in Liberal Arts from Tidewater Community College. Andrew's course of study delves into various interdisciplinary fields including intellectual history, comparative theology, ontology, and the philosophy of religion. He is currently working on an interdisciplinary project on the topic of historiographic hermeneutics. He has a strong interest and intellectual bent towards Indian philosophy, specifically Hindu Advaita and Visistadvaita Vedanta, and Theravada Abidharma and Mahayana Madhyamika Buddhism. He has projected plans working in intra-inter religious dialogue between these fields of Indian philosophy to offer an ontological interpretation between conventional and ultimate reality as it is found in each tradition. He has an avid interest in high fantasy and has plans to write on the underlying philosophy and religion of Robert Jordan's and Brandon Sanderson's 14 book series *The Wheel of Time*. Andrew plans on pursuing a Ph'd in Comparative Theology, and hopes one day to be a professor of religious studies or philosophy.