The 'other' as (Not) *Das Fremde*: Mysticism, Dialogue, and the Hermeneutics of Entanglement

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Abstract: Mysticism as a religious phenomenon could serve to foster dialogue both at the intra-religious and inter-religious levels. But the question of the where to locate the connection between dialogue and mysticism remains to be answered. This article investigates this relationship by focusing attention on what the German intercultural philosopher Bernhard Wandenfels refers to as *Das Fremde*, namely the 'other' as alien. Interestingly, this 'other' functions only within what one might refer to as hermeneutics of entanglement – of identity and difference, which taken further could be defined as an 'existential mysticism'. Along the line of this argument, this article proposes a link between mysticism and dialogue through a phenomenological *cum* theological analysis of the identity of the 'other' as *Das Fremde*.

Keywords: Mysticism • Dialogue • Identity • Difference • The 'other' • *Das Fremde* • Hermeneutics • Entanglement

Introduction

The relationship between dialogue and mysticism is not something that comes as self-evident. It requires an investigation that explores the phenomenon of religious experience and a philosophical analysis that demonstrates that within mysticism is a fundamental kind of dialogue. At the root of this dialogue is a certain form of self-unveiling that is experienced by the religious agent. For a better clarification, the interest of this article is not

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MST Review 24, no. 2 (2022): 77-95
Received, 28 Sept 2022; Accepted, 09 Nov 2022; Published 27 December 2022

on the spirituality dimension of mysticism but at the level of dialogue (understood within the Christian, theological sphere). The idea is to seek insights into how mysticism could provide lessons for dialogue with the other, either ecumenical or interreligious. In that sense, it follows a deductive form of reasoning that re-affirms the funda-mental nature of dialogue as deeply rooted in divine revelation, according to which the primary dialogue is that of God's self-revelation, whether in creation, incarnation or in mystical experiences. Without begin-ning from this fundamental, revelation-rooted notion of dialogue, I shall begin with some clarifications that distinguish between the different understandings of mysticism and the idea of 'other'. To do this, I shall examine the concept of *Das Fremde* in the works of the German intercultural philosopher, Bernhard Waldenfels, particularly in his *The Question of the Other* (2007) and *Phenomenology of the Alien* (2011). The attempt is not to create a dualistic form of reasoning but to argue from a less complicated point of view, because clarity is required for the lessons and insights which this article seeks to draw from the relationship between dialogue and mysticism. Thereafter, I shall articulate a 'hermeneutics of entanglement' that functions within this relationship by appealing to some insights from the German theologian Gregor Maria Hoff as a theological framework to understanding the relation between the two concepts. In all these, the idea of mysticism confronts us with a double meaning that needs to be clarified.

Mysticism and mysticism

Originating from the Hellenistic world, 'mysticism' (Greek, μυω) refers to the genitive "to close/to conceal." Within this tradition, the mystical points to the secrecy that marks religious rituals and ceremonies. Early

Christians would later apply the term to denote "hidden" allegorical interpretations of Scriptures and to hidden presences, such as that of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. A theological application of the term was a later development in which we saw the emergence of "mystical theology" as an articulation of direct experience of the divine by individuals, known as mystics, often aimed at holistic transformation.[1] Thus, in general, 'mysticism' would best be thought of as "a constellation of distinctive practices, discourses, texts, institutions, traditions, and experiences aimed at human transformation, variously defined in different traditions."[2]

Yet there is an evident double understanding of mysticism, both of which are rooted in the same etymology of *hiddenness*. On the one hand, there is the hiddenness that is referred to in the direct human

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[1] Bouyer, Louis, "Mysticism, An Essay on the History of the Word," in Richard Woods, ed., *Understanding Mysticism*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), 42-55.

[2] "Mysticism," Edward N. Zalta, ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mysticism/ (accessed 26 September, 2022). Within Christianity, the mystical element would be conceived, according to the American theologian, Bernard McGinn, as "that part of its belief and practices that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God." Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, the Vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), xvii. McGinn's articulation appear deficient since it evokes some form of static image of God in the use of the idea of 'presence', however his awareness of the complexity of defining mysticism led him to approach the subject matter from three perspectives, namely to present mysticism a) as a constitutive element of religion, b) as a *modus videndi*, a process that is not limited to particular 'experiences' but rather a certain consciousness in the life of a mystic, and c) as expressing a direct consciousness of divine presence. For a critical interpretation of McGinn's articulation of the idea of mysticism see, Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 30-34.

experience of the divine, in which the divine unfolds itself (epiphany) before the human subject, and even enters into union with the subject. Divine epiphany as a free, direct, self-communication of God towards a human person thus falls into this first category in the understanding of mysticism. It operates at the vertical level of the divine-human relationship. On the other hand, and operating at the horizontal level of human-human relationship, is yet another understanding of mysticism that equally serves the purpose of this essay. It is in reference to that which is concealed, hidden, and shadowed, but yet uncovers itself in a person to person encounter. This uncovering of the hiddenness of the other, in the encounter of human persons, reveals something not only about the other person, but also something about the *other-in-me*. There is a movement from the *other-outside-of-me*, as the other that whose presence confronts me at a rather superficial level, to the *other-in-me*, namely the other whom I encounter in dialogue and who mirrors me back to myself. Thus, while the experience of mystics like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross operate at the first instance of divine-human hiddenness/epiphany, the second instance is evident in Paul Ricoeur's intersubjectivity, Cicero's 'alter idem' or, as I shall demonstrate, in Waldenfel's phenomenology of the alien or strange. While both understandings are not diametrically opposed to each other, since theologically speaking the divine Other remains the ground for every other, however the immediate focus here is to highlight the second instance in an attempt to construct a hermeneutical approach to dialogue. In the same sense, therefore, a further clarification is needed in the understanding and use of the concept of the 'other'.

The 'Other' and the 'other'

The concept of otherness is very fundamental in the construction of identities within a society. It is intrinsically linked with concepts such as identification, categorization, and formation all of which aim at setting up a group identity, that cannot stand on its own without the necessary emergence of another. Polish sociologist and philosopher, Zygmunt Bauman argues that in the context of otherness, social identities are constructed as dichotomies. According to Bauman, within such dichotomies that are important for "the practice and the vision of social order the differentiating power hides as a rule behind one of the members of the opposition." In that order thus,

> "the second member is but *the other* of the first, the opposite (degraded, suppressed, exiled) side of the first and its creation. Thus, abnormality is the other of the norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness the other of health, barbarity the other of civilization, animal the other of the human, woman the other of man, stranger the other of the native, enemy the other of friend, 'them' the other of 'us'..."[3]

Bauman goes further to argue that there emerges a form of mutual but asymmetrical dependence of both sides. What emerges is that "the second side depends on the first for its contrived and enforced isolation. The first depends on the second for its self-assertion."[4] It therefore means that to assert the self, one must necessarily be confronted by the equal, simultaneous confirmation of the presence of an 'other'. Sociologically, any conscious creation of dichotomies and boundaries gives rise to the

[3] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 14.

[4] Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 14.

existence of an identity in contrast to the other, the in-group versus the out-group.

Beyond the sociological definition, is the understanding of *the other* within theological discipline. Here there are two classifications of *the other*, both of which could be linked to the sociological understanding. The first instance refers to God, often designated as the 'Wholly Other' (*das Ganz Andere*), a phrase which is said to have been brought into modern usage by the German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto in his 1917 *The Idea of the Holy* (*Das Heilige*).[5] This term which is mired in deep philosophical controversy[6], however, alludes to the alterity of God whether in God's nature as Creator or in the divine attribute of Holiness in contrast to creatures in their finiteness. Moreover, such a designation of God is taken up in the context of the 'strangeness' of God before humans. The second classification, within theology, recognizes alterity in terms of religious affiliation. Specifically, it points to members of other religious communities as representing the 'religious other', yet within an intra-religious context, say Christian, it could also designate the 'ecumenical other' in allusion to the difference that is conterminous with one's communal identity.

Meanwhile, the link between the 'Other' and the 'other' is seen in the strange (*das Fremde*) that manifests itself in the space between the self and the other in both instances. As already stated the strangeness of God is the

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[5] Otto appears to have adopted the term from the 19th century German philosopher Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773-1843). Cf. Philip Almond, *Rudolf Otto: An Introduction to His Philosophical Theology* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 68. On the introduction of the phrase 'Wholly Other', see Tood A. Gooch, *The Numinous and Modernity: An Interpretation of Rudolf Otto's Philosophy of Religion* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 2.

[6] Cf. Simon D. Podmore, "The Holy & Wholly Other: Kierkegaard on the Alterity of God," *The Heythrop Journal* 53, no. 1 (2012): 9-23.

ground for divine alterity in the human calculation. The same applies to the operation of the other within the horizontal realm, whereby in the construction of one's identity, that which appears alien becomes the strange, and it is exactly within this alienness/strangeness (*Fremdheit*) that the other is constituted.

Interrogating the 'strange'

Otherness as already argued is associated with that which is strange or alien to one's identity. Everything that lies outside of one's existential habitat, and therefore considered as foreign, is characterized as the other. Difference denotes otherness by pointing to the distinction between one's self and that which is alien. Waldenfels associates the other with the strange or alien (*das Fremde*).[7] Strangeness (as otherness, alienness or *Fremdheit*) according to Waldenfels, "presupposes that a self (*ipse*) should have a sphere of ownness and its own being, and that this self should not be confused with the same (*idem*), which is discernible by a third party."[8] But is the other recognizable at all? How exactly am I able to recognize the other? Waldenfels locates the other not in that which is to be appropriated by experience. Otherness

[7] In speaking of otherness, English language appears very weak in presenting a sufficient ontology. The reference 'my sister' could refer to 'my other sister' as long as she is different from me or from any other person in comparison. Such a difference pales when I refer to a total stranger as representing an 'other' than myself. The German distinction between *Andersheit* and *Fremdheit* might be more instructive in this manner. Otherness as used in our investigation refers to *Fremdheit* which points to the stranger, the alien. A table and a chair might be different but both are not alien to each other. cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *The Question of the Other*, Tang Chun-I lecture series (Albany/ Hong Kong: State University of New York Press/ Chinese University Press, 2007), 6.

[8] Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phenomenology of the Alien: Basic Concepts* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 12.

does not possess an ontological structure that is independent of myself. It "does not simply emerge outside of myself, it already appears within myself and within ourselves in terms of an intra-subjective and intra-cultural otherness."[9] Identity and otherness are thus entangled with each other.

> The central idea of entanglement is opposed to the extreme contrast between complete congruence or fusion, on the one hand, and complete disparity on the other. When we apply this concept to the opposition of the self and the alien, entanglement implies, on the one hand, that the self and the alien are *more or less* intertwined, just like a net can be denser or looser; and on the other hand, that there are always only *blurred borders* between the self and the alien, which have more to do with accentuation, weighing and statistical accumulation than with clear-cut separation.[10]

To distinguish the other from one's identity becomes then a conscious act that is achieved by boundary making. Waldenfels argues that the act of boundary making is not something *real* in itself. According to him, "the act of drawing a boundary, which takes place when something separates itself from another, can be neither seen nor touched; it can only be grasped as a *trace* of drawing a boundary."[11] It rather denotes the position of the person who makes the act. In other words, it is self-referential. To highlight the impact of self-referentiality in constructing the boundary between identity and otherness, Waldenfels illustrates with the act of contract making. This act in itself is never part of a contract. It is

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[9] Waldenfels, *The Question of the Other*, 9.

[10] Bernhard Waldenfels, "Verschränkung von Heimwelt und Fremdwelt," 53-65 in Ram A. Mall and Dieter Lohmar, eds., *Philosophische Grundlagen der Interkulturalität* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 53–54. Translation mine.

[11] Waldenfels, *Phenomenology of the Alien*, 15.

intangible. It can only be felt in the new tasks that are initiated by the contract. In this way, the binary of identity and difference, belonging and not-belonging, in-group and out-group is put to question when conceived in terms of boundaries. In fact, the binaries tend to disappear if the boundary is considered as unreal. According to Waldenfels, "the operative boundary is thus neither a definable thing, nor nothing, since without this boundary there would be neither this nor that; likewise, there would be neither I nor others."[12] This argument raises a critical question: If the boundary is considered unreal, how then is it possible to identify the binary as distinct? The importance of this question rests on the reason that, often people are not conscious of any blurred boundaries but perceive the issues of identity and difference as clearly evident, without confusions or contortions.

For Waldenfels, that identity is distinct from difference presupposes an action, that is manifested either as a choice or a preference. It entails the agency of the one who makes the boundary. If I consider myself as different from the other person, I *refer* to myself, and can only refer to myself. In other words, I mark myself as distinct, subsequently creating a boundary between myself and the other. Since this act is coming from the agency of the boundary maker, it reflects "an *inside which separates itself from an outside* and thus produces a *preference in the difference*."[13] Entanglement, on the contrary, recognizes and accepts the inseparability of the self (as the inside) from the outside.

The deliberate attempt to separate the self from the outside, as Waldenfels points out, implies that the distinction between identity and difference is only a matter of conscious preference. A preference that is lopsided since it is determined by a self-referential act of

[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

boundary making. In concrete terms therefore, one could say for example, that the boundary between two distinct ecclesial communities, say an Orthodox community and a Roman Catholic community, is both real and unreal. On the one hand, it is to be considered unreal prior to any boundary making act. On the other hand, it remains real as long as each identity is constructed in reference to itself, thus favouring its own self-understanding, and by default, conceiving the other as an outsider. But then, there arises an interrogative provocation to discover the conditions that make it possible to define oneself only in reference to oneself. If the other, the outsider, is entangled in my definition of myself, why is it possible for me to keep my identity without acknowledging this entanglement? Perhaps people are not conscious of this entanglement, but perceive themselves as totally unrelated to the other. Or maybe in cases where the entanglement is perceivable, the boundary is kept for some other reasons, like the ideological reasons of maintaining isolation, hostility, or competition, as offered by David Lochhead.[14]

Rethinking the contemporary self-understanding of religious communal identities, requires thus a theological assessment of the manner in which difference is interwoven in the very identity of such a community, like the church. Waldenfels' analysis makes it impossible to conceive of one's self without the necessity of incorporating the other within this same self-conception. A theological account provides a re-reading of the church's relationship with difference, in a way that the difference is no longer taken to be the extraneous 'outside' that I can only mingle with by choice, but one that is inseparable from my identity. My identity, likewise the identity of my

[14] David Lochhead, *The Dialogical Imperative: A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter* (London: SCM Press, 1988), 8-27.

religious community, must be interpreted as sustaining this tension.

Hermeneutics of entanglement as ground for dialogue with the 'strange'

Gregor Maria Hoff, reasoning in line with Waldenfels considers the question of identity and difference as fundamental, contrary to the secondary attention given to it by philosophical hermeneutics. The fundamental nature of identity and difference, as Hoff perceives it, demands therefore that any theological attempt to interpret both must take into consideration how both are intertwined or entangled. It is precisely in this entanglement that both realities could be considered as fundamental questions. In his *Die prekäre Identität des Christlichen*[15], Hoff makes a philosophical case for this entanglement from a comprehensive historical background that includes a critical synthesis of Foucault, Deleuze, Blumenberg, Ricoeur and some others. While synthesizing his thoughts, Hoff argues that,

> Identity and difference are not secondary concepts. They signify a fundamental orientation of thinking. Metaphysics and religion(s) for centuries have been able to relate everything to an identical ground, to being or to God. Heidegger understood being itself in the difference, and the plausibility of monotheism seems to be increasingly used up in Western cultures. The experience of reality hardly agrees with such thinking, and therefore makes this form of faith more difficult – often more empirically based than theoretically. Here, difference thinking intervenes for theology in the most severe way. Hermeneutics as a

[15] Gregor Maria Hoff, *Die prekäre Identität des Christlichen: Die Herausforderung postmodernen Differenzdenkens für eine theologische Hermeneutik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2001).

> form of perception has become an existential challenge for Christian theology precisely in this postmodern movement towards the different, divergent, competing, irreducible.[16]

Entanglement thus constitutes a way of understanding the self in relation to the other, not as an alien whose ontological identity beckons me to encounter as an opposite, a contrast, difference. Rather we are faced with the other, whose existence uncovers itself within my identity as a fundamental constituent. The mystical epiphany of the other takes place within my identity as result of this intertwining. Entanglement constitutes therefore a hermeneutical means of reaching at this fundamental core, and this has a lot of implications not only for philosophical hermeneutics, but also for ecclesiology and the dialogue that is sought within ecclesiological frameworks.

Dialogue, identity and theology

Theology, as an ecclesial interpretation of divine revelation, can only become the *locus* for an

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[16] Hoff, *Die Prekäre Identität*, 74-75. *"Identität und Differenz sind keine Nebenbegriffe. Sie bezeichnen eine grundsätzliche Ausrichtung des Denkens. Metaphysik und Religion(en) konnten über Jahrhunderte alles auf einen identischen Grund beziehen, auf das Sein oder auf Gott. Heidegger verstand das Sein selbst in der Differenz, und die Plausibilität des Monotheismus' scheint in den westlichen Kulturen immer mehr aufgebraucht. Die Wirklichkeitserfahrung stimmt mit solchem Denken kaum mehr überein und macht von daher diese Glaubensform schwieriger – oft mehr erfahrungsbezogen als theoretisch. Differenzdenken greift hier für die Theologie auf das massivste ein. Hermeneutik als Wahrnehmungsform ist gerade in diesem postmodernen Zug hin zum Differenten, Abweichenden, Konkurrierenden, Irreduziblen zu einer existenziellen Herausforderung für die christliche Theologie geworden.*" Translation mine.

understanding of Christian identity in the face of difference, a space for the experience of mysticism in its ordinariness. The question of identity can thus be understood as a theological issue, and at once an ecclesiological question since the latter deals with the understanding of church. Ecclesiology as the proper theological platform to address this question constitutes thus what Hoff called the church's theory of knowledge.[17] For Hoff this ecclesiological question of identity in relation to difference does not simply imply a contrast with an 'opposite', rather it is a matter of reconceiving the outside perspective (*Außenperspektive*).[18] It becomes clear that for Hoff the identity of a community, the 'inside perspective,' can only be understood in relation to the 'outside perspective' and as such cannot be considered separable from it. The inside and outside, that is, identity and difference are thus "constitutively intertwined."[19] More still, Hoff would agree that in some instances even the *Außenperspektive* becomes part of the *Innen-perspektive*, as evident in the church's relationship with Israel, in which the historical appreciation of the continuity in faith tradition replaces the supersessionist hype that aided antisemitism.

In other words, the identity of the church consists of differences. To think of the church therefore is to think of a plurality of churches which does not admit of any 'ecclesiocentric narrativity'.[20] Any conception of the

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[17] Gregor Maria Hoff, *Ekklesiologie* (Gegenwärtig Glauben Denken – Systematische Theologie 6) (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011), 13.

[18] Hoff, *Ekklesiologie*, 13.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Hoff, *Ekklesiologie*, 14. 'Ecclesiocentric narrativity' would imply an understanding of the church as an identity that is totally closed in on itself, as a community around which everything revolves; a community that is conceivable only in reference to itself, and one that does not admit of any interference by another outside of itself.

church as *one* must take into consideration the plurality of churches that constitutes the one church, and such an analysis remains true even when the church is defined in contrast with the secular world. The secular is only to be seen as the outside without which the church cannot be fully identified, and one that the church is entangled with. In fact, for Hoff, the right question should no longer be that of the *one* church, but of where to locate the *true* Church,[21] because a situation where the church is primarily understood as *one* appears to trivialize the plurality of voices that constitute her.

To take things seriously, the tension created by the different voices in the church constitutes an important element in the understanding of divine revelation which sustains the Christian faith. In fact, the tension of different voices remains the only condition for grasping the very truth of revelation. According to Hoff, this idea of difference "corresponds to the topographic difference of the one church at many places" signaling "the variation of interpretive perspectives on an event, that cannot be reduced to one single concept."[22] The tension that is created by these differences underscores the authenticity of the divine revelation that is handed on. As such, in the *different differences* is the faith of the church constituted. Invariably, for the Christ-event to be authentically transmitted, it should take place only in difference, taking into consideration the plurality of voices. Vatican II recaptures this plurality in its liturgical reform which gave voice once again to the differences in the church.[23]

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 100-101.

[23] In the opening paragraph of the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), the Council already indicates, as one of the aims of the liturgical reforms, the gathering or promotion of union among the different voices of those who believe in Christ (SC, 1-2). These differences, which in an instance, are represented by various liturgical rites, were recognized as being of "equal right and

These differences were already present at the coming to being of the church, and so, it is important to see these differences as generating the ground for what it means to be a church.

Often the claim that the church has a mediating function raises a lot of debate in the arena of dialogue, specifically in theology of religion.[24] A similar debate also takes place among Christian churches when it goes alongside the identity of individual ecclesial communities as evident in the ecclesiological questions on the sacraments, grace and salvation.[25] However, there is perhaps another way of thinking about the mediating function of the church as it concerns the tension between identity and difference. Hoff suggests this mediation as located in the 'outside-inside' perspective.

The church can only be 'church' in the process of mediating between the outside perspective and inside perspective, between in-group and out-group, between identity and difference, between the self and the other. Indeed, it is only within "this complex determining structure, sociologically between inside and outside perspective, theologically in the interconnection of her (church) visible and invisible identity, the epistemological locus for the question of the church can be detected."[26] The 'outside-inside' perspective reflects a

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dignity" by the Council, and the wish was expressed "to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way" (SC, 4). In further respecting the plurality of voices, there was a liberalization of the use of the mother tongue in the liturgy (SC, 36:2-4), and adaptations were made with respect to cultural differences in the church (SC, 37-40).

[24] The debate on whether the church mediates salvation or not is at the center of the theology of religion.

[25] American evangelical theologian, Donald G. Bloesch, outlines this debate according to the different churches. See, Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 46-68.

[26] Hoff, *Ekklesiologie*, 98-99. "*Nur in diesem komplexen Bestimmungsgefüge, soziologisch zwischen Innen- und*

mediating function of the church which admits of the connection between identity and difference, the self and the other. A contrary perspective is perhaps that of 'inside/opposite' perspective which sees the 'outside' simply as the strange, an opposite, as threatening and therefore good to be either converted or condemned. Such an approach interprets difference as fundamentally a place of mission rather than of dialogue, and could even perceive it as a place where the grace of God does not operate. If the church were to operate with this 'inside/opposite' perspective, it would consequently open up to the danger of constituting itself as the center around which every question of salvation revolves, a radical ecclesiocentricism that tends to take the place of Christ or God. Within this context is dialogue located as a way of understanding one's constitutive self as un-detachable from the other as a reflection of the strange or alien.

Conclusion: Locating the mystical

Waldenfels and Hoff have from the subject areas of intercultural philosophy and ecclesiology succeeded in doing two things. First is their redefinition of where the other is located through their analysis of identity and difference. The other is no longer to be fundamentally conceived as the alien or strange that is exclusively and ontologically 'out-there', completely separated and intrinsically disconnected from a self. Rather the other refers to a strange or alien that is part of the self, having no independent existence and therefore *unreal*. The other therefore is a creation or construct of the self in a double understanding, namely a) in its self-referentiality, for in

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Außenperspektive, theologisch in der Kopplung ihrer sichtbaren Identität mit ihrer unsichtbaren, lässt sich der erkenntnistheoretische Ort der Frage nach der Kirche ermitteln." Translation mine.

referencing one's self, the other is consciously brought into being, and b) in assignment of tasks, for through task-based epistemology, the other is radically defined as strange. For instance, the one who carries the cross, who goes to church, is radically the stranger to the one who worships in a mosque, and lives by the Qur'an. Second, both scholars have provided an interesting hermeneutics of dialogue, denoted by the concept of entanglement. In this hermeneutical platform, the interpretation of the other bridges the gap that we find in most perceptions and understanding of the other. Entanglement challenges the polarizations that are prevalent in our society today and encourages a dialogical encounter from the vantage point of an epistemology that conceives the outside as a constitutive part of the inside. The other as the strange or alien is never swallowed, overshadowed, rejected or denied, but rather perceived it is anew and recognized as fundamentally intertwined with the self. One could even argue that most conflicts in the world are traceable to attempts at denying the strange or trying to undo the fundamental entanglement of the self and the other.

Despite the above-mentioned double insights, one wonders where the mystical is located? The mystical remains at the presence of the other. An encounter with the other evokes an experience with *that which is unveiled before me*. Hence, the designation of the other as strange or alien recalls this sense of wonder, fascination, and of new or different kind of knowing. Even where the experience is defined in negative terms whereby the other is encountered with a sense of horror, insecurity, and intimidation, the sense of the mystical persists. More still, mysticism in this context can be taken further to imply the epistemological discovery of entanglement of the self and the other – *that which is unveiled within me*. Such a discovery elicits the scientific '*Heureka!*' as an

encounter with that which has for so long been hidden before one's eyes: the mystical that is *in me*, which at the same time is *not me*. A constant self-discovery, which is based on an existential ignorance, can also elicit such sense of wonderment and fascination. The definition of a being as an entity that is in a constant state of becoming means therefore that the self remains a locus of mystical experience. Yet the mysticism of the other in the self implies a double locus in which the *discovery of the other in one's self* remains connected but different from *one's self-discovery in itself*. In this sense thus, the preceding question of the relationship between dialogue and mysticism answers itself as primarily located within this *encounter of the self and the other within the self*. This remains true in the classical understanding of mysticism which is located in a similar and profound encounter of the infinite and the finite, the divine and the human, the sacred and the mundane.

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