Religions have been converging, for example, in the wordless drama at Assisi in October 1986, and perhaps during the past four or five millennia. But inter-religious dialogue was still gasping for breath at Singapore in July 1987, and perhaps will be for some time to come. For convergence to generate effective dialogue, there is need of a common mode of expression that is purified of all ambiguity arising from differences of culturally conditioned nuances. Such a language must first emerge if meanings of religious experience are to be authentically communicated among dialogists schooled in different cultural traditions. This is a Herculean task and may require a re-reading of Lonergan’s insights into method in theology.

OBJECTIFICATION: SCIENTIFIC VS. ARTISTIC

One approach to this task is based on Lonergan’s notion of objectification of pure patterns of religious experience. Experience is “religious” if it occurs within a state of “being-in-love” in an unrestricted fashion. A pure pattern excludes alien patterns that instrumentalize experience. A purely experiential pattern

5. Lonergan, Topics, 213.
excludes didacticism, moralism or social realism.6

"Objectification" can be carried out in various ways, whether scientifically or artistically. For example, the physicist Eddington may objectify (or express an object like) a table as consisting mostly of empty space thinly occupied by wavicles7 (or tiny quanta conceived as wave centers of probability). In contrast, the pianist Chopin objectifies a rhythmic pattern of tones, chords and cadences into elemental meanings "that explore the possibilities of fuller living in a richer world."8

There is a subtle but very important contrast between these two modes of objectification. Eddington is objectifying a pattern that is neither pure nor purely experiential: it is a pattern that is shaped by a particular theory in physics. In contrast, Chopin’s pattern is spontaneous: "it is not dictated to by the world of science, the world of inquiry, the world of information, the world of theories about what experience should be, or by utilitarian motives":9 it is not influenced by theories in physics, metaphysics, macroeconomics or geopolitics.

AMALADOSS: VIEW FROM ASIA

The artistic mode of objectification seems to be preferred by Asian theologians who speak of a theology of harmony. For example, at an international colloquium held in Pattaya, Thailand, on April 10-16, 1994, Fr. Michael Amaladoss, S.J., read a paper entitled "Inter-religious Dialogue: A View from Asia"10 where he mentions the word "harmony" six times, and twice he uses this within the phrase "theology of harmony," for example: "the development in Asia of a theology of harmony is worth looking to." In view of this happy coincidence, it may be helpful here to review Lonergan’s thoughts on inter-religious dialogue.

PANIKKAR: SEVEN-POINT FORMULATION

In September 1973, Lonergan attended the World Congress

6. Ibid. 214.
7. Lonergan, Method, 84.
8. Lonergan, Topics, 217.
9. Ibid. 215.
of Philosophy at Varna, Bulgaria. Its research group on "religions," composed of representatives of the major world religions and of atheism, unanimously approved a 7-point formulation drawn up by Raimundo Panikkar. This unanimity was considered by Lonergan as a "remarkable consensus." Panikkar speaks of "harmonic discordance." This suggests religious convergence that has not (yet) found and is still groping for an acceptable mode of objectifying pure patterns of religious experience. Lonergan's infrastructure of "being-in-love" and Panikkar's 7-point formulation of "harmonic discordance" may well be the start of a heuristic process towards such a mode.

PROCRUSTEAN METAPHYSICS

If a pattern of religious experience is shaped, for example, on a Procrustean bed of theories that deny or affirm advaita or non-duality, the dialogue is in danger of ending up gasping for breath. The danger may be reduced by a spontaneous emergence of elemental meanings "that explore the possibilities of fuller living in a richer world." Such elemental meanings cannot be verbalized. Perhaps they can only occur during shikan taza or during a wordless drama as at Assisi, graced by kenosis and open to the gifts of contrition, faith, hope and love. These gifts are absolutely necessary for fuller living in a richer world; a Procrustean bed is not.

SUSTAINED DISSONANCES

When Panikkar speaks of "discordance," he is no doubt attuned to the Asian "cry of deep anguish" later articulated at the Pattaya colloquium. Even such discordance can be likened to the tensions in Chopin's Prélude Ballade; these tensions of

13. See n. 8 above.
sustained dissonance are inevitably followed by gentle hints of releases, in the manner of rhythms of breathing out and breathing in, thematically converging through an “inevitability of form”\textsuperscript{15} into a finale that is surprisingly resonant.

HARMONIC RESONANCE IN POETRY

Harmonic resonance can also occur in a poetic objectification of experiential patterns. Poetry presents rhythmic flows of symbolic figures like metaphor or metonymy. ("Metaphorical theology" has recently been suggested.\textsuperscript{16}) Metonymy prescinds from similarity and dissimilarity and may thus be better adapted (than metaphor) to pure patterns of religious experience.

In the metonymic use of the name of one thing for another somehow suggested by it (for example, metonyms in the tribal narratives chanted by Asian shamans), such suggestions sometimes tend to provoke numinous memories too ancient to be clearly recalled, or dreamlike experiences of mysteries too fleeting to be verbalized beyond the tip of the tongue. The function of inter-religious dialogue is to verbalize beyond the tip of the tongue the purely experiential patterns of religious experience. This function is still faced with the problem of a heart-to-heart communication of meanings.

BASIS FOR OPTIMISM

Theologians with an ear for music or poetry may wish to compare their experience of artistic freedom with the constricting effects of Procrustean metaphysics on inter-religious dialogue. When they do, they may discern in these insights of Lonergan a basis for optimism about an Asian theology of harmony.

\textsuperscript{15} Lonergan, \textit{Topics}, 215. Here Lonergan says: “If you sing a single note, there are no implications as to what the next note must be; but if you sing four or five, the inevitability of form is taking over; there is only a limited number of notes you can go on to. The surprise that the master musician or composer causes is to go on always to further notes that would not occur to you, and yet retain the inevitability of form.”