

To conclude: the specific contribution of Barnett's *Kierkegaard and the Question concerning Technology* is that it suggests that the question concerning technology is in the end a *theological* issue and therefore requires a theological response. The strength of the book is that it offers a broad introduction to the question concerning technology that guides its readers to the discovery of technology as a theological issue. In this way, it lays a solid foundation for further reflections on this topic. The book may therefore be of interest not only to Kierkegaard scholars and philosophers of technology, but also to theologians and everybody interested in the place of technology in contemporary society. Barnett gives us much to think about because *Kierkegaard and the Question concerning Technology* confronts us with the possibility that the impact of technology on society is detrimental, but that there is no way to counter it while staying within its realm. The question this book raises is therefore the following one: Is it possible at all to repeat the gesture of the Desert Fathers? Is there any desert to be found into which contemporary people could withdraw? Or is the impact of technology in today's world so omnipresent that no such deserts are still in existence?

*Frederiek Depoortere*  
*KU Leuven*

Peter C. Phan and Young-chan Ro, eds. *Raimon Panikkar: A Companion to His Life and Thought*. Foreword by Dr Rowan Williams. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2018. xxvi +293 pp. £75.00, \$150.00, €112.50. ISBN 978-0-227-17633-7.

Raimon Panikkar is not only a ground-breaking Christian-Hindu-Buddhist philosopher and theologian, but, according to Rowan Williams "one of our era's most distinctive and brilliant voices," whose "contribution to Christian (and non-Christian) thought is exceptional in depth and subtlety" (xvi-xvii). Panikkar's thought is, however, difficult to interpret in so far as it is a groping articulation of an experience of being, which is beyond words. Understanding his journey into mystery requires guidance and in this regard this volume fulfills its role as 'companion' quite well, not least thanks to the outstanding scholars who have contributed to it.

Part I focuses on Panikkar's biography, "from his youth to his later multiple and interconnected religious identities" (Francis Clooney, 259). His life story is not limited to objective biographical data ('*identification*'), because, as Milena Carrara Pavan argues, one must take into account the deeper layers of Panikkar's *identity*: "what he has become in freedom and love throughout his entire life" (1).

Part II presents Panikkar's writings under thematic categories that introduce several areas of theology and spirituality. Throughout the different chapters the reader is introduced to his particular approach and vocabulary, such as his distinction between Christianness, Christendom and Christianity, as well as his interpretation of Christianness as "the personal, but not individual encounter with Christ at the center of one's deepest self (the Atman), at the center of

the human community, and at the center of cosmic reality” (Prabhu, 24). The reader gets acquainted with Panikkar’s ‘cosmotheandric’ vision, his shift from Christology to Christophany, and his ‘diatopial’ hermeneutics (“the art of interpreting texts and persons from a different cultural and religious location,” J. Abraham Velez de Cea, 107).

Others explain Panikkar’s reinterpretation of the communion of the saints; his eschatological thinking; his spiritual vision of liberation (“how to free all living beings,” Milena Carrara Pavan, 12); his image of God; his interpretation of the secular, his theology of the trinity and his vision of sexuality and gender. One even learns about his definition of sin as a refusal of being “co-creators with the divine in the ongoing construction of reality” (Prabhu, 36), or, about time as the becoming of the very flow of being itself (Francis X. D’Sa, 174). One author sketches an interesting parallel with Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato si’* (Ranstrom, 39).

The companion contains an excellent bibliography as well as an overview of the content of his *Opera Omnia* edited by Milena Carrara Pavan.

Although most contributors wrote their texts in a spirit of reverence for Panikkar, critical voices are not absent. Jyri Komulainen observes that Panikkar’s approach is “highly selective” favoring a vision of reality “characterized by plurality, relationality and interconnectedness” (p. 91) This vision discards the theist idea of God as creator and remains too silent about the cross. In his epilogue Francis Clooney criticizes the companion itself in so far as it rarely compares or contrasts Panikkar “to other theologians who were also thinking through Catholicism in the post-conciliar church and context of the late twentieth century” (262). But Clooney admits that there are exceptions: Peter Phan refers to Balthasar and Rahner. Gerard Hall pays attention to links with ‘nouvelle théologie’ or, the mystical and religious thinking of Augustine, Anselm, Bernard, Pascal, Newton and Blondel. Clooney’s point is, however, that the lack of reference to Catholic theologians or official Church texts in some contributions, is due to Panikkar himself, being “a cosmic loner” who “stayed outside the great middle range of Catholic theology” (Clooney, 263).

In short, this companion is an outstanding introduction and guide to Panikkar’s life and thought. It is mandatory reading, not only for everyone who is interested in interreligious dialogue, who search for meaning, or who wish to understand the deeper meaning of secularity.

In addition to providing biographical information and theological insights, the companion elucidates how Panikkar’s unique approach is the result of his wrestling with the discovery that words are ultimately not capable of expressing the mystic experience of life. Indeed, as Clooney rightly notes, the final ‘word’ of Panikkar was his entering into silence. That was the ultimate consequence of his deep encounter with mystery (269).

In this perspective, the greatest merit of this indispensable ‘companion’, is perhaps that it inspires its readers to embark, beyond (but not without) their own religious tradition on a journey towards the mystery of being itself. As much as Panikkar himself, this captivating volume does not leave its readers untouched.

Johan Verstraeten  
KU Leuven