

THE COSMOTHEANDRIC VISION OF PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND RAIMON PANIKKAR

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The Milan World Fair or Expo, held in 2015, was organized under the overall theme “Feeding the Planet—Energy for Life.” In conjunction with this exposition a joint conference was held on the thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) and Raimon Panikkar (1918-2010). The great Expo topic was congenial to both these outstanding Catholic universalists, but commenting on their ideas here is a daunting task, since it is impossible to do justice to the thought of these two most remarkable human beings in such a brief space. Both have left a vast corpus of writings covering many important themes in science, philosophy, theology, and spirituality, and countless people around the globe have been inspired by their life, vision, and thought.¹

Both men belong primarily to the twentieth century, although Teilhard’s roots reach back into the nineteenth, and Panikkar’s life stretched to the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Their lives overlapped by 37 years but they never met in person. Panikkar’s work first emerged into wider public awareness only after Teilhard’s death, but in later years comparisons were made between the two great thinkers, and in his books, Panikkar occasionally refers to some of Teilhard’s thought in passing. However different, both thinkers share certain similar perspectives, especially when they refer to a threefold dimension of reality as “cosmic, human, and divine” which Panikkar often names “*cosmotheandricism*.” The idea of “*theandricism*,” of an integral relationship between the divine and the human, is found as far back as Maximus the Confessor (c. 580 - 662). It is an ancient theme in Christian theology, closely connected with the understanding of the Incarnation, whereas the term “cosmic dimension,” also present in nascent form in earlier texts, has by now acquired a new, rich meaning which continues to grow because of contemporary knowledge of the complex evolution of the entire cosmos and all life.

¹ This essay was part of the original conference papers which have been published in Italian in the review *Teilhard Aujourd’hui, Editizione Italiana*, Nr 19 – Ottobre 2015 under the theme “EXPO MILANO 2015, *Scoprire la saggezza della Terra. Le visioni cosmiche di Teilhard de Chardin e Raimon Panikkar. Terra, Vita, Coscienza*. Urban Center, Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Milano, 30 maggio 2015. The conference was organized by the Italian Teilhard Association and Milena Carrara Pavan, the editor of Panikkar’s *Opera Omnia*. Permission was gratefully obtained for the reprint of my essay in English.