Pierre Teilhard De Chardin: Evolutionary Interiorism And Synthesis; And A Comparison With Henri Bergson

Robert Jean Dussault
Carroll College

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PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN:
EVOLUTIONARY INTERIORISM
AND SYNTHESIS;
AND
A COMPARISON WITH
HENRI BERGSON

by
Robert Jean Arthur Dussault

A thesis
submitted to
the Department of Philosophy
Carroll College

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Academic Honors
with the A.B. Degree in Philosophy

Carroll College
Helena, Montana
1965
This thesis for the A.B. Degree has been approved for the Department of Philosophy by

Date April 3, 1965
To my Mother who gave inspiration not only to this paper but to my entire stay at Carroll College.
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INTRODUCTION

At various times during the history of mankind, the intellectual atmosphere seems to have expanded upon itself or reached a critical point—a threshold—a membrane bulging with accumulated thought and waiting for, or even demanding, a man, a mind of brilliant sight, to pierce to the depths of its hidden secret and to lay bare its cherished truth. Such was the case with man's development of the theory of evolution at the outset of the Twentieth Century, and such was the man—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

As a renowned paleontologist, world traveler, mystic, and priest, Pierre Teilhard developed what might be called a 'universal outlook'. From the earliest days of his youth he was attracted and even attached to the durability and strength of matter. Later, during the final stages of his seminary training in England, a new "face" of the Universe crept gradually and ever more forcibly into his way of thinking: underlying and correlative with the durable exterior of the universe (matter), was a driving force, an impetus within (spirit). This was the beginning; a beginning that to all too many men would have been left to wither and die as a seed upon the desert. But Teilhard was no ordinary man. He possessed a keen power of analysis, a wide culture, and a forceful imagination. He acquired an aptitude for synthesis and sported a largeness of mind that scorned the
shabby and second-rate, putting no limit to its ambition and desire to understand.¹

Through this awareness of the within/without faces of the Universe he came to see evolution as an all-embracing movement; a movement running through the entire duration of the Universe and, indeed, forming the Universe itself. He was quick to see that the fully conscious mind was the culmination of one line of evolution, and "such contemplation led him to his perception of the evolutive unity of the Universe, in which all energy converged toward the goal of maximum consciousness."² Teilhard perceived the Universe as involved in a process of involution upon itself; a process of growing from the extremely simple to the extremely complex. Inseparably bound up with this involution of complexity was a correlative increase in consciousness; as things became more complex, they simultaneously became more vitalized—more conscious.

Teilhard's whole purpose seems to have been to rewrite the Book of Genesis in terms of evolution. In his eyes, the 1000 million years of evolution appeared as a single act of creative power, like that revealed by Genesis. Indeed, the creative power is inherent in the Universe, and the Universe, by producing sentient, reflective beings, illuminates itself, and through human thought it gradually


converges towards communion with God.³

This humble scientist-priest was deeply enthralled by the mysteries of the past, but only to the extent that the past held the secret of the future. He was more attached to matter than the materialist, but only in so far as its complexification mirrored the evolving ascendance of the spirit.

Like Descartes of Leibniz, Pierre Teilhard was haunted with the desire to grasp the richness of reality in a truly profound way and to account for and unify that great multiplicity of facts made evident through science.⁴ His entire life was spent formulating and reformulating this world view: that the Universe before us is in a process of evolution—a rising of consciousness from its most hidden presence in the primary stuff of the Universe to the ultra-synthesis of planetized humanity with God-Omega. Indeed, Teilhard's every thought, his every hypothesis, hinged upon the "Cosmic Christ": His very idea of evolution became ultimately a Christogenesis—a striving of consciousness to be united with Christ. Yes, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin spent his life, a life of a man of the world wonderfully balanced, integrated with, and guided by a life of a man of God, struggling to understand the human and religious meaning that lies behind the Advance of the


⁴Russo, America, Vol. 103, No. 5, 187.
sciences and particularly of Biology.

Since his death in 1955, Teilhard's works, previously banned from publication by the superiors of his beloved Order, have created quite a stir among the progressive minds of our age. His wealth of thought and depth of insight are portrayed most inclusively in his greatest work *The Phenomenon of Man*. This work, this masterpiece of literary style and organization, presents Teilhard's "world view" in a manner simple yet profound, deep yet lucid. The man and his spirit flow through every page, revealing a dedication found only in the extraordinary. His main ambition in life was "to see" and to enable his fellow man "to see" along with him. That he has succeeded, is for some a wonderous fact; yet, for others, he remains a foreboding question destined for greatness or obscurity pending the judgment of the future. But the contributions of his life in all realms, the scientific, philosophical, theological, and spiritual, have secured a place of honor for him in history.

Although a *Monitum* from Rome stifled the pursuit of Teilhard's thought for some time, his works have now become some of the most widely read and thoroughly discussed in the world. Some scientists have labeled him a mystic-poet; certain theologians look upon his works as confused science or metaphysics treading dangerously close to heresy; and not a few philosophers perceive Teilhard's world view as a true phenomenological attempt "to see",
but tainted with many philosophical and theological uncertainties. Teilhard himself was well aware of the problems inherent in his theory: he was satisfied merely to provide the germinating seeds for what future men could develop into a truly all-encompassing view of reality. In this lies his greatness.

On the other hand, there are those who see this energetic Jesuit as the Thomas Aquinas of the Space Age. Indeed, during a Fall (1964) workshop at Fordham University, twenty-seven of the foremost Catholic scholars reached a conclusion enkindling boundless hope and foresight concerning Teilhard's thought. The group agreed wholeheartedly that Pierre Teilhard's theories may ultimately lead to the "most radical re-dressing of Catholic philosophy" since the Angelic Doctor introduced Aristotle to the medieval Church. Petro Bilanuk of St. Michael's College in Toronto best synthesised Teilhard's entire view of reality:

He placed all the mysteries of Christianity in relationship to the mystery of Christ and to an evolving world vision, rather than to the static vision so common in the past.

In the pages that follow, I will attempt to trace and explain the rise of consciousness as Teilhard de Chardin perceived it. This indeed is a large undertaking; one that would require volumes and more research than one mind could undertake. Nevertheless, by following the

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5 "The Noosphere Around Us," Newsweek, LXIV, No. 9 (August 31, 1964), 70.

6 Ibid.
general outline of The Phenomenon of Man, and by limiting myself to the key ideas in each advanced stage of consciousness, I feel that I can approach a rather essential, though brief, synthesis of the "world view" as expounded by the truly universal mind of this contemporary genius. Due to the limited size of this paper, many problems will have to be mentioned merely in the passing. It is my hope, though, that by remaining loyal to Teilhard's purely phenomenological approach (already I have encountered a basic problem and one of much debate), I may present a true picture of evolution as he saw it.

The final chapter will treat Teilhard's world view in comparison with the evolutionary theory of Henri Bergson, the first proponent of the importance of the spirit or the "within" in the theory of evolution.

This, then, is my thesis: to trace and explain the rise of evolution through Teilhard's theory of consciousness; to show the importance of the "within" face of the Universe; and to follow Teilhard as he portrays the future of man in the light of his evolutionary theory.

Although Teilhard specifically insists that his work, The Phenomenon of Man, is a scientific approach leaving aside the theological and the philosophical, most authorities in all three fields seem to agree that this masterpiece is basically scientific with theological and philosophical implications.
It is this cry, and this cry alone, which I wish to make heard here— the cry of one who thinks he sees!

- The Future of Man
I. PRE-LIFE

1. The Stuff of the Universe.¹

A milliard or so years ago, a star of unknown origin and size passed rather close to what is now our sun and, in the process of mutual attractions and gravitational pulls, wrested from the sun a "long, cigar-shaped filament which in the course of time broke up into a string of separate globes."² This meeting of the two stars was a purely fortuitous occurrence and formed what is now our solar system. After or even during the cooling process which formed mother earth, the various elements began to take stable form, one from the other, through the acquisition of additional protons, neutrons, and electrons. This was not a process of mere addition or aggregation, but one of complexification in which atoms of different "natures" were produced and distinguished from the rest. That is, each atom arranged on the periodical chart according to its complexity, emerged chronologically in the same order during the genesis of the

¹Teilhard is severely criticized for avoiding the question of creation, but he is concerned mainly with the unitive and not the creative aspect of the divine activity. But in an article entitled "L' Union Creatrice" he points out that "There where is found complete disunion of the cosmic stuff (at an infinite distance from Omega) there is nothing." He did not mean to affirm, by his non-treatment of the problem, that matter pre-existed God's creative act. He would seem to hold a creation from eternity. (Robert North, S.J. "Teilhard and the Problem of Creation," Theological Studies, Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 1963), 578.)

Universe.

But complexification did not halt with the 92 natural elements. Indeed, certain elements, due to their correlative structures and their chance contact with one another, joined to form molecules of varying complexity and size. And, needless to say, these joined to produce megamolecules. But let us stop for a minute!

In the transformation of one atom to another, or in the union of various atoms into molecules, a certain "something" is either lost or gained in the transaction. One atom is diminished while the other is increased. This "something" is energy and is the measure of that which passes from one atom to another in their transformations. It is a unifying power and serves at the same time as the expression of structure. (To this we shall return later).

Matter, then, has three faces: plurality, unity, and energy. From the plurality of atoms, molecules, etc., it is evident that the Universe is a system of interdependent parts holding together to form a whole. Since atoms are basically alike and mutually related, the Universe possesses a unity of homogeneity as well as a unity of collectivity whereby the atoms in a given complexification are held together by a certain bond or force. This bond is energy, and the Universe can be seen as "owning" a definite quantum of energy which, as will be seen, takes on its full significance when defined with regard to a concrete natural movement—duration.  

Therefore, matter, from its most distant formulations, reveals itself in a state of geogenesis or becoming.\textsuperscript{4} From the sub-atomic particles and the simplest atoms, matter has progressed in an upward stream of complexification forming the elements, molecules, mega-molecules, etc. This is fundamental to Teilhard's "world view" and as he so aptly put it:

This fundamental discovery that all bodies owe their origin to arrangements of a single initial corpuscular type is the beacon that lights the history of the Universe to our eyes. In its own way, matter has obeyed from the beginning that great law of biology to which we shall have to recur time and time again, the law of 'complexification'.\textsuperscript{5}

Following further what the great majority of scientists hold about the formation and structure of the Universe (we have seen nothing original on Teilhard's part, as yet), it can be seen that following the laws of thermodynamics the earth is gradually becoming "entropized". That is, a fraction of energy is constantly being lost in the form of heat. As a matter of fact, in each synthesis a certain amount of energy is burned to pay for that synthesis. "The more the energy-quantum comes into play, the more it is consumed."\textsuperscript{6}

Indeed, the very terms of synthesis are subject to this same wearing away, and little by little, the many and varied combinations that they represent become broken down once again into the more simple parts of which they are composed. They fall back and are therefore "disaggregated

\textsuperscript{4}Phen., p. 49. \textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 48. \textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 51.
in the shapelessness of probable distributions." And here, at this point, Pierre Teilhard begins to weave the web that culminates in a truly profound world view. He states:

A rocket rising in the wake of time's arrow, that only bursts to be extinguished; an eddy rising on the bosom of a descending current—such then must be our picture of the world.

So says science; and I believe in science; but up to now has science ever troubled to look at the world other than from without?

2. The Within of Things.

Within/without, complexity/consciousness, radial/tangential: these are the measuring sticks by which Teilhard discloses the growth of the tree of life.

In the realm of science, there has been and still is a disparity of viewpoints as to the nature of the rising complexification of matter. Thus two contradictory schools of thought have formed: on the one hand, the Mechanists begin with the existence of a material, operative substance and proceed to describe its behavior under certain conditions without referring to its ability to react as it does; the Vitalists, on the other hand, demand that inorganic matter possess a fundamental directing force to account for its ability to organize into the complex system called life.

Teilhard was fully convinced that a union of these viewpoints would yield a harmonized explanation of the totality of the cosmic phenomenon, that is, of its external and internal aspects. Let us follow his reasoning!

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7 Phen., p. 52.
8 Ibid.
No one can deny that there is an evidence of consciousness in man, and this being accepted, consciousness seizes upon a cosmic extension, and as such is surrounded by a multitude of indefinite spatial and temporal extensions.\(^9\)

This is the heart of Teilhard's thesis. He sees the conclusion drawn from it to be pregnant with consequences which, by sound analogy with the rest of science, are inescapable. But let Teilhard speak for himself:

It is impossible to deny that, deep within ourselves, an 'interior' appears at the heart of beings, as it were seen through a rent. This is enough to ensure that, in one degree or another, this 'interior' should obtrude itself as existing everywhere in nature from all time. Since the stuff of the Universe has an inner aspect at one point of itself, there is necessarily a double aspect to its structure, that is to say in every region of space and time—in the same way,....coextensive with their Without, there is a Within to things.\(^{10}\)

And again:

In the world, nothing could ever burst forth as final across the different thresholds successively traversed by evolution (however critical they be) which has not already existed in an obscure and primordial way. If the organic had not existed on earth from the first moment at which it was possible, it would never have begun later.\(^{11}\)

For Father Teilhard, then, there is no such thing as "inert matter."\(^{12}\) From the inception of the Universe,

\(^{9}\)Phen., p. 56.  \(^{10}\)Ibid.  \(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 70.

\(^{12}\)It would seem that Teilhard is advocating a "panpsychism" at this point. By his postulating of the ancestor(s) of consciousness as existing in "inert matter" Teilhard presents an induction too good to be a mere dubious hypothesis. While one may consider this as mere speculation, no philosopher can say it is not a true induction on the evidence. (J. Franklin Ewing, S.J. "The Human Phenomenon," Theological Studies, Vol. 22, No. 2 (March 1961), 91. (The question of Panpsychism will be treated at greater length in Chapter IV of the present paper)
then, there has been a dual "face" involved: The within and the without. What has been commonly called inert matter is "pre-life", that is, life of an inferior degree so hidden or attenuated as to elude our perception of it. The evolution of matter prefigures life and is, for this reason, given the name pre-life. Each stage of evolution possesses a characteristic peculiar to itself, but the same dynamism flows through and sustains them all. "What is to be has already been 'fore-announced' by that which is and has been." When the full impact of Teilhard's formulation strikes, the consequent picture of the world daunts and even overwhelms our imagination. But in The Phenomenon of Man (56), Teilhard insists that it is in fact "the only one acceptable to our reason."

Returning to the beginning once again, we find that the primitive matter enclosed in the swirling mass destined to be mother earth must be more than the particulate matter analyzed by modern physics. Indeed, beneath this mechanical layer there must be an attenuated biological layer which is essential to the explanation of the future cosmos. For, if something has appeared somewhere along the ascending line of evolution, its rudiments must have existed from the very start. Where could the consciousness so apparent in man have come from, if it were not present from


14Russo, America, Vol. 103, No. 5, 186.
the beginning at least in some concealed form?

The within, consciousness, and finally, spontaneity are three expressions for the same thing as it appears at an advanced point in the evolutionary process. It would be, then, no more legitimate to fix an absolute beginning to these three expressions than to any other lines of the Universe.

So, correlative with the "without" of things is a "within". But how are they related? How do they hold together? What permits a thing composed of spiritual and material parts to evolve as a whole? These are questions which Teilhard answered with his laws of growth and his notion of energy. But first, the laws of growth.


Keeping in mind, now, that there is a double "face" to each phenomenon—the without and the within—let us pursue Teilhard's thought further. Can we go further than the mere positing of the within and define rules according to which this second face, for the most part entirely concealed, suddenly shows itself? Yes, answers Teilhard, providing we see three fundamental observations as linked together!

First, we must not consider or think that the within of things forms a continuous film, but rather that it assumes the same granulation as matter. Therefore, the stuff of the Universe, looked at from within as well as from without, tends to be resolved backwardly into a dust
of particles that are:

(i) perfectly alike among themselves;
(ii) each co-extensive with the whole of the cosmic realm;
(iii) mysteriously connected among themselves, finally, by a comprehensive energy.\(^{15}\)

In other words, "Atomicity is a common property of the Within and the Without of things."\(^{16}\)

Secondly, although almost homogeneous among themselves in the beginning, the constituent parts of consciousness, like those of matter which they subtend, complicate and differentiate their kind in the slow process of evolution.

Thirdly, when comparing two instances at different levels of the evolution spectrum, we may be certain that without fail "the richer and better organized structure will correspond to the more developed consciousness."\(^{17}\)

Complexity and consciousness are but two aspects, two faces, of the same phenomenon. And, as can be seen above, with an increase in complexity there is a corresponding increase in consciousness. Teilhard's law of complexity/consciousness,\(^{18}\) then, enables us to explain evolution as a development from phase to phase of the within

\(^{15}\) Phen., p. 59. \(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 60. \(^{17}\) Ibid

\(^{18}\) It is interesting to note that the concepts of comparative neurology tend to validate the law of complexity/consciousness. Consciousness advances as the complexity of the forebrain core and exterior portion increases. (James L. Foy, M.D., "Man and the Behavioral Sciences," The World of Teilhard de Chardin, ed. Robert T. Francoeur (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961), Part I, 126.
of things; first its invisibility, then its appearance, and finally its dominance in comparison to the without of things.

Indeed, the degree of complexity/consciousness will enable us to chart evolution and measure its progress.

Man, the most conscious and organized of evolution's products, will be placed at the summit of the cosmos.¹⁹

Teilhard has made the relationship of complexity/consciousness rather clear; now we must follow his thought with regard to the energy inherent in this relationship.

4. Radial and Tangential Energy.

Teilhard was well aware that his concept of the within/without complex of things implied a dualism. He further recognized that matter was subject to the laws of thermodynamics, that is to say, that it was gradually becoming entropized and disintegrating into forms of useless, escaping energy. He proposed a theory of energy that, to his mind, enabled him to pursue his system of evolution without including a dualism and without contradiction to the laws of entropy. He did not conceive that his consideration of the nature of energy was a satisfactory solution, but merely posed it as an example of how an integral science of nature could interpret it. This fact is indeed evident from the varied interpretations of his theory of energy as other men have seen it.

Perhaps before undertaking Teilhard's explanation

¹⁹ Russo, America, Vol. 103, No. 5, 186.
it would be well to remember that science today looks upon matter as no more than energy. Teilhard himself proposes that energy is divided into two distinct parts that "are constantly associated and in some way pass into each other." He continues:

To avoid a fundamental dualism, at once impossible and anti-scientific, and at the same time to safeguard the natural complexity of the stuff of the Universe, I accordingly propose the following as a basis for all that is to emerge later.

We shall assume that, essentially, all energy is physical in nature; but add that in each particular element this fundamental energy is divided into two distinct components: a tangential energy which links the element with all others of the same order (that is to say of the same complexity and the same centricity) as itself in the Universe; and a radial energy which draws it towards ever greater complexity and centricity — in other words forwards.

But does it not seem that following the law of complexity/consciousness, that tangential energy (complexity) as well as radial energy (consciousness) is increased as evolution proceeds. Indeed, Richard W. Bialek, a professor of chemistry at St. Mary's College, Winona, has stated that Teilhard's account of the interrelatedness and interconversion of the energies is "an explanation that is certainly not related to thermodynamics."

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21 Phen., p. 64.

22 Several authors say that this is a mis-translation in the English version: it should be "psychical." (The world of Teilhard de Chardin: Foy, Part X, 118; Fullman, Part XIII, 148.)

23 Phen., pp. 64-65.

Teilhard further we find him allowing for a certain amount of free tangential energy gradually exhausting itself as progressive centration and complexification take place. This seems to imply a twofold aspect of tangential energy, and to be sure, several authors commenting on Teilhard's view have interpreted it this way.

Tangential energy says James J. Foy, M.D. is either an energy of radiation subject to the laws of entropy; or an energy of arrangement, which is basically antientropic.25

In another article in The World of Teilhard de Chardin Fullman and D'Aoust submit a formula that seems best to express Teilhard's view:

\[
\begin{align*}
T & \xleftarrow{\text{less complex}} D \\
A & \xrightarrow{\text{more complex}} t \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
T & \text{ - tangential or "physical" energy} \\
D & \text{ - tangential energy of radiation} \\
A & \text{ - tangential energy of arrangement} \\
R & \text{ - radial or "psychic" energy} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Basically, what Teilhard says is that there is an inverse ratio between the degree of tangential and radial energy as evolution proceeds. At the beginning, tangential energy is at its height while radial energy is very slight.


At the other term of evolution the ratio is reversed. At the start, also, tangential energy of radiation is at its peak while the tangential energy of arrangement is hardly noticeable; the opposite is true as evolution ascends to the more complex.

Radial energy becomes the basis of life and of consciousness which are present in all things at least in some rudimentary form. Further, it is radial energy which gives direction to evolution, leading it from the less conscious to the more conscious. 27

From what has passed, it can be seen that consciousness does not merely stumble on matter, but rather matter, by inner compulsion (by the tendency of radial energy to greater centricity), is groping for consciousness. 28

And now that the fundamentals have been explained, let us follow life as it ascends from the "within" to "consciousness" and finally to "spontaneity."

II. LIFE

1. A Metamorphosis.

Since life is contained in "inert matter" in rudimentary form, Teilhard saw no need to posit an extrinsic cause to make the transit from pre-life to life. The origin of life is indeed the crossing of a threshold, but it is


not the origin of anything absolutely new! It is rather a metamorphosis of what is already present.

A critical change occurring in the intimate arrangement of the elements induces ipso facto a correlative change in the state or degree of consciousness present in them. And following what has been said, does it not seem that such an explosion of internal energy consequent upon and proportioned to the growth in the complexity of matter is just what we should have expected?29

Looking at modern science we find that the essential question of "where does life begin?" remains unsolved. The cell is surely the basic foundation of all life; but what about the virus? Is it living? Some answer in the affirmative, others in the negative. Why stop with the virus? For perhaps with the further advance of technology the so-called protein molecules or albuminoids may be found to reveal traits or hints of life. Must it not be agreed, then, that looking back life becomes progressively less perceptible until we can no longer discern its presence in the matter under study?30 What we call the beginning of life is the point in the evolutionary ascent at which complexity is sufficient to allow the "within" or radial energy to become visible.

It is interesting to note that Scholastics would

29 Phen., p. 89.

require an extrinsic cause at this point in the process. But it is further enlightening that Thomas Aquinas saw no difficulty in the spontaneous generation of living forms from inanimate matter (De Potentia vol. 3, a. 8, ad. 15). Indeed, in an article entitled "Revue de Philosophie" written in 1923, Teilhard quotes Saint Thomas from the Contra Gentes III, ch. 22, in which the great Doctor stresses the continuity and graduation of forms in the general scheme of things: "prime matter" is potentially and successively the element, the compound, plant life, animal life, intellectual life. It would seem that an equation of substantial form and radial energy is possible provided we remember that radial energy is progressive and not static. Even when Thomas speaks of matter he uses such terms as "tendency" and "appetite", which seem to imply a use of terms proper to life in an analogous fashion as applying to matter.

2. The Impulse and Orthogenesis.

Life, properly speaking, has now emerged; and what is more, it reveals itself as a solitary pulsation due to


the fundamental similarity of all living beings. But with
the advent of life, the law of complexity/consciousness does
not become any less significant; if anything, it acquires a
greater importance. For life not only rises by virtue
of an inner impulse but proceeds along lines predetermined
in direction by this impulse. This tendency of life to
proceed along preferred lines toward greater consciousness
and spontaneity Teilhard calls "orthogenesis". Complexity,
and therefore consciousness, arises from atom, molecule, etc., and on up through the long line of plant and
animals revealing a definite progress. Indeed, as Teilhard
put it: "Without orthogenesis life would only have spread;
with it there is an ascent of life that is invincible." Each individual becomes a link—a part of a chain—
transmitting life to a higher degree of consciousness.

Teilhard does not imply here that the chain of life
is solid, or, in other words, that it is completely deter-
mined. Actually, taken as a whole, the biosphere (by which
Teilhard means the envelope of life enclosing the earth)
represents only one branch of the impulse. The progress of
life is one of chance to the extent that it was forced to
grope for the proper line to follow in its ascent towards
consciousness. Many avenues were entered, but specialization
and the inability to ascend further compelled the great
majority of the less-progressive or less fortunate pro-

34 Forsthoefel, The world of Teilhard..., Part IX, 107.
35 Phen., 108.
liferations to die out or disappear.\textsuperscript{36}

What Teilhard means comes down to a groping of life for the avenue open to ascent towards the highest consciousness. But does this not imply a direction in the evolutionary process? Teilhard means just that: a rise of organization reinforced inwardly by a continued expansion and deepening of consciousness until it reaches the highest peak of consciousness attainable.

3. Cerebralization and Order.

Teilhard now glances at the tree of life and finds that the rise of consciousness is correlative with the development of the nervous system possessed by animals. The countless species fall into place according to the degree of development of their respective nervous systems, and indeed, the differentiation of nervous systems indicates a definite direction in evolution. This enables evolution to be charted; it provides a fundamental variable capable of defining the past and looking to the future. The geogenesis of matter has given way to a biogenesis and even a psychogenesis—a directed ascent of the nervous system.

Teilhard now enters upon a discussion of the development of the nervous systems within the animal kingdom. The impetus towards spontaneity has split; one part fanning out to form the insect consciousness, the other rising through the mammals to the primates. But the insects have become ultra-specialized and ultra-socialized and are viewed

\textsuperscript{36} Phen., p. 95.
as struggling pathetically in a blind alley. Their fundamental impulse or metamorphosis has stopped. The primates, on the other hand, have remained the most primitive of mammals with regard to exterior specialization. In their case, evolution went straight to the brain, neglecting everything else, which therefore remained fundamentally malleable.\textsuperscript{37} The orthogenesis of this phylum coincides perfectly with the principle orthogenesis of life itself: the primates evolved only in consciousness.\textsuperscript{38}

III. Thought

1. The Threshold of Reflection.

As consciousness and brain development advanced through the primates and the pre-hominids, psychic makeup began to swell and accumulate as never before. A threshold—the barrier between pure instinct and intelligence—had been reached! Morphologically, the ascent from instinct to intelligence was for the most part imperceptible; but within (we must remember that evolution in the primates had concentrated on the brain and therefore on consciousness) the new world of reflection suddenly burst upon the

\textsuperscript{37}Phen., p. 149.

\textsuperscript{38}Teilhard seems to hold to the Lamarckian theory of evolution; that is, to the inheritance of acquired characteristics. He realizes this and does nothing to clarify his stand. With regard to the modern theory of genetic mutation, Teilhard merely mentions it in passing. He does not involve himself in the controversy as evolution for him is primarily a psychic phenomenon. External changes due to genetic mutation would be a secondary process in the ascent of consciousness. He is criticized on all fronts for this lack of clarification. (Forsthoefel, \textit{The World of Teilhard de Chardin}, Part IX, 106.)
face of the earth. Homo Sapiens was born! The leap forward was accomplished in a single stride for there is no half-way point between instinct and intelligence. In this earth-shattering ascent consciousness becomes reflective; that is, man not only knows, but he knows that he knows. Abstraction, logic, reasoned choice—the whole gamut of intelligence—have invaded the biosphere and have changed the entire face of the earth.

But is this to imply that evolution has attained its goal? Hardly!

2. Hominization and the Noosphere.

Teilhard employs the word "hominization" in a two-fold sense. The first we have already encountered—that being the process of man's first appearance on earth; his rising from and above his primate ancestors. The second application of the term involves a deeper significance, for by it, Teilhard shows that evolution has not stopped; man is not the goal but the arrow of ascending evolution.

Just as life had spread across the globe forming

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39 Two points of interest enter here. For reasons that are purely religious, Teilhard holds for monogenism; or the birth of the human race from a single couple. But he further asserts that scientific evidence would seem to point to monophyletism; the birth of man from a single phylum of primates. (Phen., pp. 185-187)

Secondly, he is severely criticized for omitting an explanation for the creation of the soul. But Teilhard is working on the phenomenological level and the creation of the soul is beyond this approach. He does not deny that there is room for God's intervention at this time, but that it is beyond the Scientific Approach. In The World of Teilhard de Chardin, Bruns (part XIV, 175,6) proposes a notion of continuous creation in which radial energy could be seen as a secondary cause in association with God's direct intervention.
a living membrane—a new layer—the biosphere, so too, thought, when man had inhabited the entire earth, produced a new layer—the noosphere.\textsuperscript{40} The earth had become enveloped in a thinking layer, and man's expansion had become limited by the spherical shape of the earth. Indeed, with the coming of man, two essential characteristics of evolution were changed—"speciation ceases and the direction becomes centripetal."\textsuperscript{41} The human group has remained perceptibly unaltered in its physical characteristics, producing tools to meet its new needs. Further, whereas evolution up to this time had been spreading out centrifugally—in a fan, the human race now finds itself bound within a sphere, and consciousness is forced to involute inexorably upon itself. Man has become planetized and the rise of evolution has become a "pure" ascent of consciousness. This, then, is Teilhard's second meaning of hominization. Man, and therefore consciousness, has turned upon himself to form a "collective" consciousness—a noosphere of progressive thought and spiritualization.\textsuperscript{42} Man's social nature and the socialization of mankind now acquire a formidable perspective. Mankind is becoming socially united and collectively conscious.

3. Noogenesis

From the beginning, the earth was in a process of

\textsuperscript{40}\textit{Phen.}, p. 180.

\textsuperscript{41}North, \textit{Theological Studies}, Vol. 24, No. 4, 582.

\textsuperscript{42}\textit{Phen.}, p. 180.
geogenesis. With the advent of life, evolution became a biogenesis and ultimately a psychogenesis of the brain, at the terminus of which a cerebral complexity capable of reflection was attained. With thought, a new genesis is born—a genesis which Teilhard calls "noogenesis". "How could we imagine a cosmogenesis reaching right up to mind without being thereby confronted with a noogenesis?" 43

At this point "man discovers that he is nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself." 44 In other words, man has become aware that in the great game of evolution, he is not the player only but the cards and the stakes as well. If man refuses or leaves the playing table the game cannot go on; he holds the future of evolution in his hands and is free to accept or reject the responsibility of its purpose.

Evolution is no longer a mere "V" consisting of various forms of life ascending centrifugally. No indeed, for with the coming of man, evolution rises upward still but inward once again taking the form of a diamond. 45 Man is in the process of becoming "mankind" and even something more.

As we have seen, evolution is directed. With man this is ever more in evidence. But where is it going? Toward what does it converge? These are questions that Teilhard answered in his theory of synthesis—the future of man.

43 Phen., p. 220.  
44 Ibid.  
45 North, Theological Studies, Vol. 24, No. 4, 583.
So that the greatest event in the history of the earth may be the gradual discovery, by those with eyes to see, not merely of Something but of Someone at the peak created by the convergence of the evolving Universe upon itself.
I. AFTER MAN?

"The human monad has long been constituted. What is now proceeding is the animation (assimilation) of the Universe by that monad; that is to say, the realization of a consummated human Thought."¹

And so evolution continues: the process of hominization has taken over, and humanity is being formed. The universal mind of Teilhard de Chardin could not be satisfied with a terminating evolution. There must be something beyond man: something towards which consciousness (now thought) could converge. Indeed, even in his lifetime, Teilhard could see the lines of convergence taking shape: the roundness of the earth had forced man to close in upon himself; the inter-fertility of the various branches into which man had split enabled him to form a single, thinking membrane (noosphere) over the surface of the globe; modern advances in technology, travel, and communications enabled men separated by thousands of miles to become "brothers"; and to be sure, societies had grown from mere family bands to cosmopolitan nations. In fact, before he died, Teilhard received great consolation and joy when, through the institution of the United Nations, the first steps were taken to break down the cultural and nationalistic walls that separate nations.²

¹Future of Man, p. 18.
²Robert T. Francoeur, "A Call to Greatness", Commonweal, LXXII, No. 18, (September 2, 1960), 442.
II. MEGA-SYNTHESIS AND CONVERGENCE.

Man is confronted at this point with contradictory tendencies. Teilhard was well aware of this as he saw that man's first reflex was towards fulfillment in isolation: "to be more alone to increase one's being." But he emphatically adds that "no evolutionary future awaits man except in association with all other men." 

Consciousness must continue to ascend, and it is only through the synthesis of men into a single, collective reflection that it will be able to do so. Man through thought has been given free rein with regard to his future; at the same time, however, he has been compelled to recognize a twofold duty. By his fidelity to the future he must first of all build an opus into which something enters from all the elements of the Universe; that is, he must make his own soul during his lifetime. And secondly, at the same time, he must collaborate with his fellow man in an opus that transcends but narrowly determines the perspectives of his individual achievements—the completing of the world.

The very axis of this ascent is human socialization and education. Indeed, man is becoming ever-more socially conscious; he is rapidly advancing through education; and

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3 Phen., P. 237.                     4 Ibid., p. 246.
6 The Future of Man, p. 35.
as time progresses, he will find himself fast approaching a state of the greatest possible coherence. Men will become a "collective person"; they will be united by an "ultra-reflection" in which the sublime destiny of mankind will be perceived. For Teilhard, then, isolationism of any kind is a direct frustration of the ascent of consciousness. Man must synthesize! Just as matter and spirit have gradually become more complex and more conscious in an ever-ascending evolution, so too, man, the arrow of evolution, must now continue the process by forming the "hyper-person". Isolationism, whether it be that of the individual (Existentialism) or that of the group (Racism), is essentially opposed to man's progress and must be avoided at all costs. Isolation can only lead to disaster, for "like some radiating substance, mankind would in this case culminate in a dust of active, dissociated particles."8

It might be well at this stage to discuss evil or sin in Teilhard's theory. He has been criticized by many for his apparent non-consideration of evil in the world. At no time does he mention Original Sin; but if his approach is truly phenomenological, how could something which is

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8 Phen., p. 237.
known only through revelation possibly enter in? But Teilhard also seems to pass over personal sin which has been so much in evidence since the coming of man. If we take a long look at the "phienomenon of man", however, something appears that for Teilhard is intrinsically evil— personal isolation. What does this isolation entail if not the separation of self from the rest of mankind? And, to be sure, does not all sin fundamentally stem from pride, the isolation of self in the highest degree? The individual must work for the welfare of others; he must "complete the world" in order to insure man's destiny. The proud man—the isolated self—is concerned only with himself and his own advance. He is a stumbling block, and therefore an evil, in the rise of evolution. The universal mind has once again, I think, struck to the profound depths of reality!

A passage from *The Milieu Divin* (141) gives evidence of Teilhard's awareness of evil in the world and of its effects on the evolutionary process:

In the course of the spiritual evolution of the world, certain conscious elements in it, certain monads, deliberately detached themselves from the mass that is stimulated by Your attraction. Evil has become incarnate in them, has been 'substantialized' in them. And now I am surrounded by dark presences, by evil beings, by malign things, intermingled with Your luminous presence. That separated whole constitutes a definitive loss, an immortal wastage from the genesis of the world.

One question remains to be answered before Teilhard can draw his evolutionary theory to a close and complete his "world view". Indeed, it is the very answer to this
question that explains and gives meaning to the entire process. The question is that of Marxism, for it would seem that up to this point Teilhard has advocated nothing more than Marxian totalitarianism—the classless society. To be sure, present day Communists have delighted in Teilhard's views; they consider them a near-suitable explanation of their own dialectical materialism or inverted Hegelianism. But is this what Teilhard is advocating? Does mega-synthesis imply the institution of the totalitarian society?

In actuality, Pierre Teilhard saw Marxism or any other totalitarian collectivity as a perversion of the rules of noogenesis. But he was not naive; he recognized that the great appeal of Marxism stemmed from its realization of two important truths: that man must be capable of building a future which has meaning here on earth, and that man is becoming ever more a social being. Communistism is an attempt to complete the world; it is an off-shoot of the original impetus which has gone astray; it is human energy seeking fulfillment. But, as Teilhard remarks:

When an energy runs amok, the engineer, far from questioning the power itself, simply works out his calculations afresh to see how it can be brought better under control. "Monstrous as it is, is not modern totalitarianism really the distortion of something magnificent, and thus quite near to the truth? There can be no doubt of it; the great machine is designed to work and must work—by producing a super-abundance of mind. If it does not work or rather if it

produces only matter, this means that it has gone into reverse.\textsuperscript{10}

Indeed, these servitors of material progress and of the totalitarian collectivity strive in vain to emerge in freedom. They become bound by the very determinisms they are constructing.

In Teilhard's view, every individual, every reflective monad has, with the emergence of man, become "someone." Evolution, contrary to Marxist tenets, is something more than the synthesis and convergence of man into humanity. Besides moving forward, evolution must also rise; there is a twofold convergence involved, and the goal must be more than a fragmented collectivity of individuals. Evolution must be a process of personalization; that is, a striving towards a union of personalities or a synthesis of centered consciousnesses. The convergence must be such that there will be no threat to the individuals involved; it must allow for differentiation as well as total union; it must proceed so that "we reach the personalization of the individual by the 'hominization' of the whole group."\textsuperscript{11}

So man will converge to the hyper-person. The remaining step in convergence will explain the "where to" and the "why" of the entire evolutionary process.

III. OMEGA

Because it contains and engenders consciousness, space-time is necessarily of a convergent nature. Accordingly its enormous layers, followed in the

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Phen.}, p. 257. \textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 174.
right direction, must somewhere ahead become involuted to a point which we might call Omega, which fuses and consumes them integrally in itself.\textsuperscript{12}

So space-time has become 'humanized', and the psychic ascent of consciousness is converging on a point which Teilhard calls Omega. This point, this goal, is the end of the evolutionary process and is the attraction from above that gives meaning and impetus to the entire Universe. The Universe, then, from its very beginning, has been a striving of the conscious element within towards union with and in the hyper-conscious point--point Omega. The entire process and, certainly, the entire Universe now acquire a teleological character, and such a concentration of a conscious Universe at a single point necessarily entails the reassembling of all consciousness as well as all the conscious.

But the union in Omega is one that necessarily differentiates, enabling each constituent element to become ever more conscious of itself and to remain clearly distinct from the others. Thus Omega is not a mere center born of the fusion of the elements which it collects, nor does it annihilate them in itself. Rather, Omega must be a distinct point, a distinct autonomous center drawing all to itself without merging them in an impersonal collective union.\textsuperscript{13}

The term of convergence has been revealed. But what is the "nature" of this term? Let us follow Teilhard\textsuperscript{12,13}

\textsuperscript{12}Phen., p. 259. \textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 261, 262.
further.

As was noted several pages prior, evolution, with the inception of man, becomes a noogenesis and a process of personalization. And since everything in the Universe now acquires meaning in man as a personalized being, and the arrow of evolution, Teilhard proposes that Omega, the ultimate term of convergence, must likewise possess the quality of a Person. Omega must be a special center; that is, it must have its own personality and autonomous reality in order to super-animate and unite a Universe containing personal elements without destroying the elements themselves.¹⁴

Omega, then, is He towards whom all converges. He is a Hyper-personal being who invades the Universe giving it purpose, direction, and design. In fact, He is not only the Omega but the Alpha of all that is. From its very beginning (which indeed is due to Him), the Universe has felt His presence and has been attracted by and towards Him in a never-ceasing ascent of consciousness.

What a picture Teilhard has drawn! And, needless to say, his Omega Point is and could only be the personal God to whom he so faithfully dedicated his entire life.

It is interesting to see that Teilhard's is a dynamic Universe; a Universe striving for completion in Omega. Although he never formally considered this "view" as a proof for the existence of God, I think that there is

¹⁴ Phen., p. 262, 263.
something to be said on this account. Father Marechal proposed a rather convincing proof from the natural dynamism of the mind. The mind is never satiated by knowledge of the contingent and ceaselessly strives for knowledge of the Absolute. Teilhard seems to imply this dynamism of the mind also, but only as the final part of a world-encompassing dynamism by which the entire Universe strives for and demands completion in God-Omega.

IV. LOVE — THE FORCE OF CONVERGENCE.

That form of radial energy which binds person to person and each to God-Omega Teilhard calls love. Love is of an 'intercentric' nature and unites all men with one another in their common ascent towards God. But remaining true to his principles, Teilhard observes that "to be certain of the presence of love in ourselves, we should assume its presence, at least in some inchoate form, in everything else."\(^{15}\) To be sure:

Love in all its subtleties is nothing more, and nothing less, than the more or less direct trace marked on the heart of the element by the psychical convergence of the Universe upon itself.\(^{16}\)

But Teilhard was not the first to claim that love was the basic drive in the world. Empedocles had said long before that love was the driving force underlying all the positive activity in the Universe. Plato in the Symposium hinted that love is "in everything there is." The Angelic Doctor in the Summa Theologiae (I-II, art, 26, q. 1, ad. 3) proposed that "natural love is found not only

\(^{15}\) Phen., p. 264.  \(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 265.
in the powers of the vegetative soul, but in all the po-
tencies of the soul, and indeed, in all parts of the body,
and universally in all things." Even modern writers such
as Pitirim Sorokin and Paul Tillich have held to theories
wherein love is seen as the unitive force of the Universe. 17

Love for Teilhard is the force that unites the
Universe and procures the personalization of the individual
by binding men in the hyper-personal, collective union
with God. Man is now

able to say literally to God that he loves Him, not
only with all his body, all his heart, and all his
soul, but with every fiber of the unifying Universe. 18

V. THE END OF THE WORLD.

Teilhard admits that the various scientific hy-
potheses about the destruction of the world could very
well be true, but he is more prone to believe and assert
that this ordered Universe will find its end when conscious-
ness has involuted upon itself to such an extent that only
the very threshold separating God and synthesized man will
remain to be crossed. In other words, noogenesis will
have reached a peak beyond which it can advance no further
on the human level. God-Omega is the final step of the
evolutionary process, and man, at the end, will have
advanced to a state of consciousness allowing him to enter
in the final, intimate love-union with God. Then and only

17 Fullman and D'Aoust, The World of Teilhard de
Chardin, Part XII, 152.

18 Phen., p. 297.
then will the end come. The earth will have been materially exhausted, and man, the very thrust of consciousness and love, will have split into contradictory poles. That pole, that segment of consciousness which has remained faithful to the evolutionary ascent will be liberated from its material matrix so that it can rest with all its weight on God-Omega.¹⁹

When will this come about? Teilhard hints at the figure of a million years or so. It could possibly occur at that stage when the earth has become completely exhausted materially (tangentially), and when radial energy (in inverse ratio to tangential energy) will have reached its point of union with God. Teilhard’s theory seems almost mystical, but it is nevertheless in conformity with his entire "world view".

VI CHRISTOGENESIS

Teilhard now leaves his dialectical demonstration of evolution and considers what he calls the "Christian phenomenon". A great number of his later essays as well as his spiritual classic The Milieu Divin consider evolution from a Christocentric point of view. He himself admits in The Phenomenon of Man (294) that if he as a believer had not seen the living reality of his hypothesis already taking place in Christianity he would never have formulated his theory of evolution.

¹⁹Then., p. 287–289.
Following St. Paul and St. John, Teilhard gave great emphasis to a "dimension" of Christ rarely treated by theologians. This is the Christ, who, as the mediator of creation, permeates the entire Universe and extends Himself to the totality of space and time. Laying hold of all, he subjects them to Himself and sanctifies them in order to lead them to the Father. This is the "Cosmic Christ"—the Perfecter of the Universe. 20

The Word Incarnate has invaded matter itself, so to speak, and is drawing the entire Universe towards consummation in Himself. Christ Jesus is daily being extended in space and time through the expansion of the Mystical Body, while Christian love and charity have become one of the most fruitful currents to invade the noosphere. Indeed, Christian love is a new state of consciousness, a new force of genesis, which is penetrating the Universe in order to unite all men in an ever-intensifying ascent towards Christ. 21

The force and purity of Teilhard's thought is overwhelming. He found Christ wherever he searched and saw the Universe as a meaningless entity without reference to Him "in quo vivimus". Teilhard's "world view" acquires an endless depth of meaning when he concludes that the genesis of the Universe is really nothing but an ascent

20 Pontet, Thought, XXXVI, No. 14, 183.

towards Christ—a Christogenesis. He plunged to the furthest recesses of his soul to find the truth inherent in the Universe.

Of the Holy Eucharist, to which he had the greatest attachment, he said: "In a secondary and generalized sense, but in a true sense, the sacramental Species are formed by the totality of the world, and the duration of the Creation is the time needed for its consecration." 22

I think the greatness of this man is clearly in evidence from the world picture which he has presented. He lived according to his views and strove to bring "sight" to all men. He himself reviewed the meaning and depth of his life in a letter to his Superior on March 12, 1951:

The unique significance of Man as the spear-head of Life; the position of Catholicism as the central axis in the convergent bundle of human activities; and finally the essential function as consummator assumed by the risen Christ at the centre and peak of Creation: these three elements have driven (and continue to drive) roots so deep and so entangled in the whole fabric of my intellectual and religious perception that I could now tear them out only at the cost of destroying everything. 23

22 *The Milieu Divin*, p. 115.

CHAPTER III

THE THEORIES OF
PIERRE TEILHARD
AND
HENRI BERGSON
COMPARED.
Almost fifty years after Darwin's *Origin of Species* another epic in the history of evolutionary thought appeared, Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. Bergson's ideas were at variance with the commonly accepted position of the day. He vehemently opposed any type of materialism or finalism as both determined the Universe and life in one way or another. His evolutionary theory can be classified as a "life philosophy," and he himself is often called the modern prophet of the "spirit". His philosophy arose during an era of positivism and idealism, both of which he sought to destroy. Although Bergsonian philosophy as such is considered dead, its influence on the great minds of our century has been tremendous.

Bergson and Teilhard de Chardin were contemporaries; the former died in 1941, the latter in 1955. It was during Teilhard's final years of seminary training in England that he read *Creative Evolution* which proved to have a profound effect on his future thought. Reflecting upon this event much later, Teilhard remarks:

I remember clearly having read *Creative Evolution* with avidity at this time. But although I didn't very well understand at this period exactly what Bergson's *Durée* meant -- and in any case it was not sufficiently convergent to satisfy me -- I can see clearly that the effect of these passionate pages on me was merely, at the right moment and in a flash, to stir up a fire that was already burning in my heart and mind.¹

In the pages that follow, I intend to discuss the

similarities and differences found in the theories of these two men. Emphasis will be place on Bergson and his thought as the previous chapters have considered Teilhard's views to an extent sufficient for the comparison.

I. DURATION

Bergson viewed the world in much the same manner as Heraclitus had centuries before him. Ultimate reality is neither material nor spiritual but something of less determinacy from which both matter and mind derive—change.

To Bergson change became more than one instant replacing another; rather, it was a ceaseless flow of events or a constant surging of life moving incessantly toward new forms. The ultimate reality, then, was even more than mere change; it gushed forward like an ever-advancing stream along whose course the same state was never encountered twice. Bergson called this reality, this flow, "duration", and defined it as "the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances."\(^2\)

Duration involves a continuous series of changes in which each change is richer and more advanced than the previous one since it possesses more of the past. The Universe is growing, indeed evolving, and each moment finds it at a more progressed state of advancement. The Universe is literally making itself, for with each swelling of the past, with each advancing moment, a new form appears. True

duration can only mean creativeness, and the Universe must be caught up in a process of "creative evolution." Of necessity, the Universe is continually growing, and the accent of life, the living reality, is measured by an unceasing creativeness.3

In his own explanation of the Universe, Teilhard de Chardin assigned a decisive role to duration. This duration, which recalls the more elaborately treated duration of Bergson, is the flow of time encompassing everything within it. There is no escape from time as it is a passage to the infinite; it must be explored in all of its dimensions.

Teilhard did not delve into duration and its significance as thoroughly as did Bergson, nor did he assign to it the position of the "ultimate real" in a world that is continually becoming. Nevertheless, he did recognize the importance of this concept to explain the continuity of the Universe as well as to account for the unity of the evolutionary process. Indeed, evolution in Teilhard's thought can be equated to the temporal dimension of reality,4 and from this point of view, his theory of evolution involving all reality is somewhat similar to Bergson's idea of duration or "creative evolution." But the similarity itself is weak as Teilhard once wrote that evolution


is not creative; rather, "it is the expression for our experience, in time and space, of creation."\(^5\)

II. BERGSON’S ELAN VITAL

1. The Impulse Itself.

In order to explain the phenomenon of a growing Universe, Bergson posited the existence of a vital thrust (elan vital). This vital impulse is a single act of becoming which has existed from the very beginning in a state of constant flux. It is the principle of all process and is spreading out like the concentric circles of a wave as it charges through the world.\(^6\) One of the basic characteristics of the elan vital is the creation of the absolutely new; and therefore, from generation to generation the impulse gains in momentum as it produces an ever more organized Universe in the process of duration.

Bergson could find no other solution to the advancing (creative) evolution he perceived in the world. He was well aware of the ascent and continuity of life, and that all life manifested essentially the same characteristics. From this he concluded

...to the idea...of an impetus of life, passing from one generation of germs to the following generation of germs through the developed organisms which bridge the intervals between the generations. This impetus, sustained right along the lines of evolution among which it gets divided, is the fundamental cause of variations, at least of those that are regularly


\(^6\)I. M. Bochenski, Contemporary European Philosophy (Berkeley and Los Angeles; University of California Press, 1956), p. 104.
passed on, that accumulate and create new species. But just what does this steady ascent involve? In what form does the elan vital express itself? Bergson proposes that:

...the more we fix our attention on this continuity of life, the more we see that organic evolution resembles the evolution of a consciousness, in which the past presses against the present and causes the up-springing of a new form of consciousness, incommensurable with its antecedents.

So evolution, for Bergson, is an ascent of consciousness. It is an ascent of inner freedom toward states of greater self-expression. The rise of consciousness is parallel to the liberty inherent in a given being, and with the coming of organisms of greater organization, there is an interdependence of consciousness and the nervous system.

The resemblance between this and Teilhard's view is striking, but a closer inspection will reveal several points of variance which are irreconcilable.

2. Consciousness and Matter.

One important point at which the two men differ is in their conception of the nature of matter and its function in the Universe. In Bergson's theory, evolution consists of two opposing streams: matter, which tends downward, and spirit or consciousness, which rises upward to freedom.

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7 Creative Evolution, p. 87  
8 Ibid., p. 27

Indeed, matter is an obstacle confronting the normal ascent of the elan vital. It forces the vital flux to dissociate thus forming different species and branches of life. The whole process of life is an attempt to re-mount the incline that matter descends. Life itself is riveted to matter and is therefore subject to the general laws of matter. But, to be sure, everything happens as if it, namely life, were striving to free itself from these laws.\textsuperscript{10}

The two currents are very much opposed. Matter appears as the degradation of the energy of the elan vital; it is sort of an entropizing trail left by the movement of life. The descent of matter only unwinds something already made, whereas the ascent of life is an inner work of creating more and more new forms. The latter imposes its rhythm and unity on the former and thereby retards the decay of the Universe.\textsuperscript{11} There are two realities involved: a reality, a process of evolving spirit, which is making itself in the face of a second reality, a process of entropy-bound matter, which is unmaking itself.

Teilhard recognized this descent of matter and allowed for a certain amount of free tangential energy which would conform to the laws of thermodynamics. But matter opposed to spirit? Never! Indeed, for Teilhard, "matter is life in its physico-chemical preconditions, sharing by anticipation in the vital upward movement of convergence

\textsuperscript{10}Creative Evolution, p. 245 \textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 11.
of all things." Matter and spirit are correlative, and the intensity of the "within" increases as the complexity or arrangement of the "without" increases. Teilhard's Universe will certainly exhaust itself materially, but this is not to say that matter is directly opposed to the ascent of consciousness.

The following graphs compare the evolutionary process as conceived by both men.

First Bergson:

As can be seen, life and liberty ascend as matter descends. The two currents directly oppose each other. Through the flow of duration, life is forced to overcome the retarding pull of matter in order to rise to greater consciousness and freedom.

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Teilhard's view:

- R - radial or psychic energy
- T - tangential or physical energy
- A - tangential energy of arrangement
- D - tangential energy of derangement

As is evident, radial energy or consciousness (R) becomes more intense as the tangential energy of arrangement (A) becomes more complex. At the same time, the tangential energy of derangement (D) decreases. Matter is still entropizing in the form of wasted heat from the processes of complexification.

3. Finality

Bergson avoided any implication in materialism or finalism. The former determined evolution by external circumstances, while the latter provided evolution with an established plan or course. Both theories were foreign to Bergson's way of thinking because he conceived evolution primarily as a free-creative process. The existence of a pre-determined goal inherent in the vital thrust and attracting it forward and upward seemed to hinder than aid the
ascent of life.

Nevertheless, he was well aware of the harmony inherent in the Universe, and this fact led him to formulate and accept some sort of finalism. This finalism, if it may be so called, must secure the freedom of the creative thrust as well as allow the doors of the future to remain wide open to any further advancement. Bergson's idea of finality (not strict finality in any sense of the word) involved a single indivisible thrust embracing all life and the entire Universe in a harmonized unity. This thrust was, certainly, the elan vital.

The world is a unified spectrum acquiring its harmony not from any goal or end towards which it is attracted, but from a common impulse literally pushing it forward in a never-ending creative evolution. The continuity and harmony of the Universe is due to an identity of impulsion rather than to a common aspiration. Harmony does not exist in fact, but only in principle.

There can be no pre-determined goal for life in Bergson's theory of evolution. The future must not be closed in upon the creative thrust of the elan vital. Bergson's harmony of "finality" cannot be taken as an anticipation of the future but as a "particular mode of viewing the past in the light of the present." Or, as he himself explains his views further:

If life realizes a plan, it ought to manifest

\[14\text{Creative Evolution, p. 43.}\] \[15\text{Ibid., p. 51.}\]
a greater harmony the further it advances.... If, on the contrary, the unity of life is to be found solely in the impetus that pushes it along the road of time, the harmony is not in front, but behind. The unity is derived from a vis a tergo; it is given at the start as an impulsion, not placed at the end as an attraction.\textsuperscript{16}

Bergson's evolution, then, is based on a fundamental impulsion running through duration and spreading out in a wider and wider fan. There appears to be no element of convergence in this plan; for even man, the highest proliferation of consciousness, fails to draw the title of "goal" of evolution. Bergson, remaining true to his tenets, remarks that

\textit{...in the last analysis, man might be considered the reason for the existence of the entire organization of life on our planet. But this would be only a manner of speaking. There is, in reality, only a current of existence and the opposing current; thence proceeds the whole evolution of life.}\textsuperscript{17}

From what has been said, it can be seen that Teilhard and Bergson are at opposite poles concerning the question of finality. For Bergson there is no plan inherent in the Universe itself, but only a quasi-finalistic course imposed from without and below by a creative, ever-fluctuating life force. His Universe becomes ensared in an inevitable tendency toward divergence and represents a continuous process of proliferation. Matter fragments, dissipates and ultimately terminates the ascent of the \textit{elan vital}. There is no organic unity at the end of the process (if we can speak of an end at all), but merely a

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Creative Evolution}, p. 103. \textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 185.
Pierre Teilhard seems to have been thinking of Bergsonian evolution when he said:

Hence we find our minds instinctively tending to represent energy as a kind of homogeneous, primordial flux in which all that has shape in the world is but a series of fleeting 'vortices'. From this point of view, the Universe would find its stability and final unity at the end of its decomposition. It would be held together from below.  

But to Teilhard, the above way of thinking only produced an unordered and decomposing Universe. This was heretical to him both as a scientist and as a Christian. In its place, he substituted a plan of finality which united the entire Universe and especially man in one common ascent to the ultimate goal, God-Omega. There is indeed a plan inherent in the Universe; a plan in which every element of the Universe, having been concentrated in the reflective monad—man, is striving in and because of man toward a hyper-personal union with God. As Teilhard notes:

A more complete study of the movements of the world will oblige us, little by little, to modify it; in other words, to discover that if things hold and hold together, it is only by reason of complexity, from above.

For Teilhard, then, evolution is characterized by an intensifying consciousness which has existed in some rudimentary form since the inception of the Universe. Furthermore, this consciousness, this "within face" of the

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19 Phenomenon of Man, p. 42. 20 Ibid., p. 43.
Universe, does not rise merely as an independent impulse, but is drawn from above to a convergent goal. Having become reflective in man, consciousness ceases spreading out in a fan and begins to converge to the hyper-personal. The entire Universe is a plan of exitus-redditus; a plan that finds its beginning in Alpha and its end in Omega.

III. INTELLIGENCE AND INTUITION

As evolution advanced, Bergson envisioned a split of the original impetus into vegetative torpor, instinct, and intelligence. These are not three successive degrees of development of one tendency, but are three divergent directions of one activity that split as it grew.

Leaving aside the vegetative part, instinct and intelligence can be seen to take almost contradictory paths. Instinct becomes so enmeshed in its living envelope that it is able to embrace only the very small portion of life that interests it. Instinct remains within the current of life, but in so doing, it becomes isolated and hardly visible. It tends toward the unconscious. On the other hand, consciousness in turning to intelligence seems to externalize itself in relation to itself. In other words, it frees itself from the bonds of the life impulse and adapts itself in an unlimited manner to the objects that confront it.21

But if intelligence has separated itself from the life impulse and has concentrated upon the "exterior" world,

21Creative Evolution, pp. 181,182.
has not the elan vital, the vital creative thrust, come to a stand-still?

It is indeed true that the intellect is essentially pragmatic in the Jamesian sense. It can work, according to Bergson, only on the solid and tends to store or concentrate energy rather than spend it. Thus, as can be seen, intellect parallels matter and blocks the progress of the vital impulse. It concentrates and collects rather than grows. It is static. But Bergson has noted that there is no instinct without a fringe of intelligence and no intelligence without a touch of instinct. Instinct in man is for the most part subjugated to intelligence, but at a certain stage in man's intellectual career he accumulates enough of the vital elan to enjoy a surplus. At this point, he can recover the vitality which he has lost through the development of intelligence, and instinct, now recovered, becomes what Bergson calls intuition. Whereas intellect was attached to the solid and the static, intuition becomes a part of the flow of duration and is joined with the vital impulse. The two are very much opposed in Bergson's view. Indeed –

Intuition and intellect represent two opposite directions of the work of consciousness; intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction, and thus finds itself naturally

Creative Evolution, p. 136.
Smith, p. 226.
in accordance with the movement of matter.\textsuperscript{25}

And so evolution continues to diverge. For with the introduction of intuition, Bergson insures an evolution which can advance only in each reflective being. Intuition is highly and strictly personal and exhibits no tendency towards convergence.\textsuperscript{26}

Teilhard, on the contrary, viewed evolution as a divergent ascent of consciousness running through duration until the appearance of man. But with man, however, the spraying fan of evolution turned in upon itself and began to converge in ever-narrowing lines towards God-Omega.

Bergson's distinction between instinct and intellect led Teilhard to believe that he, namely Bergson, had indeed accepted 'complexification' but had failed to leave room for 'convergence'.\textsuperscript{27} Bergson's idea of a static intellect hindering the natural ascent of life could find no place of rest in a theory as optimistic as Teilhard's. Indeed, the intellect, by its very nature as reflective consciousness, fosters the formation of a convergent nososphere in which each intellect, each person, is drawn towards all others and upwards to the hyper-personal point of convergence--God-Omega. Teilhard's concepts of social unanimization, amorization and Christification are so

\textsuperscript{25}Creative Evolution, p. 267.

\textsuperscript{26}Maurice Pontet, Thought, p. 179.

conspicuously absent from Bergson's views that any attempt to unite the two theories would be futile. Bergson saw the world as clutched in an ever-creating but diverging evolution; Teilhard, on the other hand, stressed the intensifying convergence of man and the entire Universe to a hyperpersonal point which was and is the Alpha and the Omega of all that is.

IV. THE FUTURE

Teilhard de Chardin formulated a wonderous future for man in his theory of convergent evolution, but the "future" seems to have been a very confused idea in the mind of Henri Bergson. He was not a Christian, and until the very last years of his life, during which only his loyalty to the Jewish race retained him from the waters of Baptism, he seemed unable to decide on the question and conditions of an afterlife. In his earlier years he preferred not to concern himself with these questions. Indeed, in Creative Evolution he says:

When a strong instinct assures the probability of personal survival, they (philosophers) are right not to close their ears to its voice; but if there exist "souls" capable of an independent life, whence do they come? When, how and why do they enter into this body which we see arise, quite naturally, from a mixed cell derived from the bodies of its two parents? All these questions will remain unanswered.??

Towards the end of his life, as we shall see, he carried his idea of creative evolution into the realms of morality and religion. But for Bergson, evolution was
basically divergent. The vital thrust produced individual men or even super-men, but it could never synthesize men (as Teilhard envisioned) into a converging, love-united "humanity." This was completely contrary to the idea of a creative impetus as it implied that -

...we learn to love mankind. Our sympathies are supposed to broaden out in an unbroken progression, to expand while remaining identical, and to end by embracing all humanity. This is a priori reasoning, the result of a purely intellectualist conception of the soul.29

Man has now reached the supreme state; the earth is covered by a divergent multitude of beings who possess the ultimate in consciousness; the creative elan can do nothing but diverge to an ever-greater multitude of individuals.

It is not very difficult to imagine Teilhard's reaction to such a theory, because the good Jesuit's only purpose for exploring the present and the past had been to find the road leading to the future. This future could be nothing other than a deeply convergent stream uniting man to God.

But what of Bergson's later reflections?

It is indeed true that this "pioneer of the spirit" had approached near to embracing Christianity when he died. It is also true that his work, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, envisioned man's union through love with God.

But the resemblance of this to Teilhard's "future" is not as striking as would first appear. Bergson remained true to his earlier convictions. Morality and religion were divided (as was all else) by the opposing thrusts of intellect and intuition. Intellect produced a pressurized, static morality and religion, which hindered any progress of the ascending elan, while at the same time intuition fostered a dynamic system capable of nourishing the freedom necessary for progress. But Bergson was not about to admit a general convergence of all men. No indeed! In fact, he portrayed the vital thrust as advancing only in certain individuals who were capable of a personal intuition of God. These men were the Christian mystics. As he himself saw it:

Yet it is from this (intuition) that the light must come, if ever the inner working of the vital impetus were to be made clear in its significance and in its object. For this intuition was turned inward; and if, in a first intensification, beyond which most of us did not go, it made us realize the continuity of our inner life, a deeper intensification might carry it to the roots of our being, and thus to the very principle of life in general. Now is not this precisely the privilege of the mystic soul?

These mystics, these men of great intuition, were then to move back into the world to relate God's love for all men and to inspire all by their great love for God. The open or dynamic religion was to embrace life with love.

30 Smith, pp. 227-228
31 Bergson, The Two Sources..., pp. 249-250
32 Smith, p. 230.
and supply a basic sense of freedom.

But the convergence (if we may call a mystical experience a convergence) is in all reality a greater divergence. This experience is deeply personal and draws men further and further apart. There is no common converging ascent of "man", as Teilhard saw it, but only an individual "ascent" through intuition.

Such, I think, are the basic differences and similarities between these two great minds of our century.
CHAPTER IV

PERSONAL CRITIQUE

OF

PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN
In these times when man's role in the Universe and his dignity as the "image" of God are being questioned on all fronts by Materialism, Behaviorism, and certain lines of Existentialist thought, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and his epic "world view" have burst upon the scene with an optimism that is almost foreign to contemporary thought. Man is not the mere product of a material complexification; his intellectual and volitional make-up is something more than a system of stimulus-triggered responses; human life and existence laugh at the "absurdity" tacked on them by Jean Paul Sartre. Indeed, for Teilhard, man is the product and, in a sense, the pinnacle of an evolutionary ascent of consciousness that has flowed through and actually formed the entire Universe. The reality underlying and explaining the Universe is evolution—an evolution that has been, from the very beginning, a concurrent and correlative ascent of complexifying matter and intensifying consciousness.

Consciousness, inherent from Creation, has tended towards completion in man, and man, in Pierre Teilhard's view, is presently situated at the summit of the "fan" of evolution. But man is not the goal, and consciousness, having become reflective, takes command of the evolutionary process and gives it new direction. Evolution continues to rise, but man, the reflective monad, is now converging toward a hyper-personal, hyper-conscious point of union—God-Omega.
What an insight! What a picture Teilhard has painted! Man, the arrow of evolution, finds himself responsible not only for his own salvation but for the salvation of all mankind as well. He must commit himself through Christian love and cooperation with God's grace to "build the Universe". Man is "evolution become conscious of itself", and is converging toward a love-union with God, the Alpha and the Omega of all that is.

Teilhard professed that he "saw" the Universe in its true perspective, and I am fully convinced that he did "see" and that his "sight" at times penetrated to a depth far beyond the grasp of his contemporaries. His own personal life, both as a Priest and as a scientist, was molded around the idea of converging evolution. He lived as he thought.

It is very difficult to classify Teilhard's theory as a particular type of knowledge. The Phenomenon of Man delves beyond the reaches of science as such and is based on certain premises that cannot be questioned philosophically. (and have the theory survive) The humble Jesuit insisted that his approach was phenomenological, but even this does not seem to suffice unless perhaps we include Teilhard's personal, almost-mystical experiences in "that which appears". Father Raymond Nogar, O.P. (The Wisdom of Evolution) treats Teilhard's evolutionary thought as an ideology, and this is, I think, the most acceptable clas-
sification. It is not a philosophy nor a pure science but an interpretation of nature, history and society based on certain necessary and presupposed premises.

The first basic premise is that evolution is a fact. This is fundamental and necessary for Teilhard's view, and there are few today who would disagree with him on this point. But the second premise and perhaps the most important one appears to harbor the seeds of doubt for many in all fields of learning. For Teilhard to insist that there is a "within" face of the Universe correlative with its "without" face, and that this internal face is striving for ever greater consciousness, implies that he has "seen" the Universe as few, if any, have been able to see it. For Teilhard, then, the law of Complexity/Consciousness, dynamically bound with a Consciousness aimed evolutionary process, is the fundamental law of the Universe.

Let us see what this implies.

Teilhard approaches his "world view" as an expert mathematician approaches a basic equation: he "sees" so clearly that he deems it unnecessary to chalk down the steps leading to the solution. (It is also possible that Teilhard did not understand the problems and deliberately refused an attempt at explanation. But knowing Teilhard and his brilliance of mind, I seriously doubt this.) The Phenomenon of Man is plagued with instances where the unschooled reader and even the expert, for that matter, find it difficult to pursue the thought of this Jesuit scientist. One such
point, and certainly the most disturbing, is his proposal of the within/without faces of the Universe. What Teilhard advocates is very clear, but what he means is left to interpretation. To deny that he posits the presence of consciousness in some rudimentary form at the beginning of the Universe and rising subsequently to forms of higher expression is to accept a position that will render the rest of his theory meaningless. Indeed, for Pierre Teilhard, there is a "within" correlative with the "without" even at the stages involving inert matter of pre-life as he calls it, but just what this rudimentary consciousness or pre-life means is left to the reader's imagination.

Teilhard's induction from the presence of consciousness in man and animals to its presence in some rudimentary form from the very beginning of the Universe seems valid enough (Do not Thomists use a similar induction to "prove" finality in nature?), but it is extremely difficult and, at this point, impossible to substantiate. That the atom and molecule possess a degree of consciousness is something well beyond observance and experience. Teilhard's apparent panpsychism (it is not a panvitalism as he never proposed that the atom or molecule were alive; nor that they manifested properties of life.) has been questioned and criticized since the day his works were published. If he had merely stated or explained what he meant by rudimentary consciousness this problem would probably never have occurred. But to insist that "inert matter" possesses some
form of psychism, and a dynamic psychism at that, seems to me to be a fairly unstable premise upon which to base an entire theory of the Universe.

But who am I to say that Teilhard is wrong. I may question his ideas, as do many, but to refute him with firm conviction is to stand on equally shaky grounds. He professed that he "saw", and time, when it has overtaken his thought, will surely bear witness to his "sight" one way or the other.

Robert Francoeur (American Benedictine Review, p. 210) suggests that Teilhard meant physical liberty or natural "choice" when speaking of rudimentary consciousness. The consciousness or radial energy that would allow or influence one atom to unite with another to form a molecule, and molecules to form a virus etc., would be an expression of affinity. And since love is the highest form of radial energy and the greatest expression to affinity, this lower form of affinity must be analogous to it. This analogous use of love, affinity, consciousness, liberty and pre-life would seem for Francoeur to dismiss the charges of panpsychism. When a complexity of the "without" is reached that is capable of supporting "life", this natural affinity or propensity becomes self-expressive and perceptible. A threshold is crossed.

Father Nogar (Wisdom of Evolution, p. 233) points out that modern science, and especially biochemistry, has become interested in the theory of biopoesis. This hypothesis
proposes a natural chemical evolution of life out of the inorganic world. This view, if seen in the light of the affinity of elements for one another, would seem to coincide somewhat with that of Francoeur. But Father Nogar is quick to point out that the term evolution, when employed to mean the step from the inorganic to the organic, is being used equivocally. Teilhard would apply the term analogously to the entire process from the Alpha to the Omega. (or even univocally!)

Francoeur's theory is extremely interesting and well planned, but it appears to be compromising Teilhard's original thought. Maybe this is what must be done. Who knows?

The evolutionary process expounded in The Phenomenon of Man would almost seem to be a closed finality or determinism. Teilhard indeed leaves room for chance and free will, but the reader of the Phenomenon cannot but conclude that this entire process is bound to be completed, and that nothing or no one can interfere with its fulfillment. Sure, man sins and disrupts the flow toward convergence, but even the man detached by sin "seems" to be caught up in the ceaseless current.

But in this case, the determinism is not relative to man alone but includes the entire expanse of space and time. I think that Teilhard has taken the question "Why did God make us?" and elaborated upon its answer to an extent far beyond the dreams of any theologian. His Universe
is one created by and tending toward a loving, providential God, whose plan for the Universe and therefore, for man, in no way interferes with man's essential freedom. Each man must personally accept or reject this plan, but the over-all plan remains on either count.

As for a natural disaster or chance event destroying the "divine plan"; I am inclined to agree with Teilhard that it "could" happen but won't. Of course, one must accept his basic tenets before any of this makes sense.

I find Teilhard's idea of converging man and the hyper-conscious collectivity somewhat difficult to accept. Following his premises and adhering to his reasoning, I will certainly agree that the process seems sound, but because of the current conditions and the present tendencies evident in man I feel constrained in my attempts to extrapolate along with him to such a distant future. Short-sightedness might be to blame.

Teilhard implies that at the end of the world consciousness will have attained such heights in man that the "elect" will be just this side of a threshold separating them from God. Such thoughts, while beautiful and deeply spiritual, seem to require an almost universal mysticism. Once again, Teilhard has left me wandering in the labyrinth of the present. I cannot help thinking that this "worldly" Priest experienced certain things in a fashion much akin to mysticism. Could Bergson have been right on this point?
Theologians criticize Teilhard for his failure to include or explain creation, the soul, sin and grace. Personally, I find no difficulty in Teilhard's exclusion of creation proper and the direct creation of the soul from his "world view", but sin and grace are another matter. Teilhard was well aware of sin and would seem to have taken it into consideration when formulating his views. Since his approach was "positive" he did not mention sin explicitly in the Phenomenon, and in this, I think he is deserving of criticism. Sin is certainly a "phenomenon of man."

Grace would indeed belong to the "Christian phenomenon", but whether or not Teilhard is justified in excluding it from his phenomenological view is debateable. He seems to imply (even in the Christian phenomenon) that man is saved almost by a cosmic necessity. He, namely man, is caught up in the current, and only his assent is necessary for advance. Such it seems: but the mind of this Priest-scientist was concerned with what "appeared", and divine grace is not apparent to all. From an examination of Teilhard's life, however, and from reading The Milieu Divin, one cannot but see the importance of love and grace in man's ascent.

I feel that a consideration of the expanse of Teilhard's subject combined with a knowledge of his personal life helps to explain away many of the problems inherent in The Phenomenon of Man. Other problems remain, however, and remain, as Teilhard had foreseen, to tax the minds of
the future. This is the greatness of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: he opened so many doors and uncovered such a vast multitude of new "phenomena" that future men will be compelled to come to grips with his wealth of thought. His fate, to a certain extent, resides with posterity.

Personally, I am extremely thankful for having chosen Pierre Teilhard as the subject of my thesis. His thought is stimulating and truly contemporary. I cannot even now profess to have a grasp of his "world view", but this paper has provided a spark that will lead to many enjoyable hours of future research in the world of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.
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