

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN'S WORLD VIEW
AND THE MEANING OF HISTORY

by 680

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important trends in modern scientific and philosophical thinking has been the attempt to build a more complete and coherent world view. Men such as Henri Gergson, Alfred North Whitehead, Samuel Alexander, Julian Huxley and many others have produced important works which addressed themselves to this issue. In all these attempts the idea of evolution has been the starting point. The philosophical meaning of the evolutionary theory consists in the fact that a new bridge has been made between history and nature: history has been introduced in nature and all of nature has been conceived as an historical process. The idea of evolution has also opened up a new way for a coherent understanding of the world.

This new understanding of the universe has strongly influenced modern anthropology. A new concept of man's place and function in the universe has been established. The historical dimension of man has been discovered. This means that man is not only a product of an historical process, but also that it is characteristic of man to create history. Man is an active and dynamic element in the building of the world. He is connected not only with the past, but also with the future. In other words, man is co-extensive with the whole historical process.

Among the work of all those thinkers the writings of Teilhard de Chardin take an important place. Teilhard attempted to describe a scientific world-view and then to confront this world-view with the teachings of Christianity. Not since the time of St. Thomas Aquinas has there been a serious attempt to make a synthesis of science and religion.

Teilhard de Chardin's world-view would seem to have significance for the meaning of history. At least, it seems that historians must be aware of this world-view and its meaning for history, even if they do not accept Teilhard's hypothesis.

CHAPTER I. THE METHOD OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

Teilhard de Chardin's primary and major concern was to find out the intrinsic structure and development of the universe. Intimately connected with this concern was to find out man's place and man's task in this world. He sought an answer by way of the natural sciences and by constructing a scientific phenomenology.

Each science gives us only a partial insight into the world phenomenon. That is why in systematizing the sciences a place must be found for a study of the world taken in its totality, without in so doing departing from whatever scheme the phenomena present. In other words, there must be an effort to comprehend the universe as that manifests itself to the observer--as phenomenon, and nothing more. Teilhard called this kind of an enterprise a phenomenology of the cosmic. Such a phenomenology, therefore, is a science which seeks to describe the universe as an observable phenomenon in its totality and its intrinsic cohesion, and to discover the meaning concealed in that totality.

The world is more than the sum of the entities found in it; and because that is so, it is not enough just to combine the results obtained from the various natural sciences in order to arrive at a true picture of what the world really is. In close association with the natural sciences a place must be found for a science which is concerned with the totality of the cosmic phenomenon and seeks to probe right into its structure and inner dynamic. Of course, this science will be assisted by everything that the other sciences have achieved in their several fields, but it will embrace and transcend all that, having regard to what is most specifically distinctive of the whole.

Because a proper analysis of the cosmic phenomenon necessarily goes further than the results yielded by the subsidiary sciences it must have freedom of recourse to extrapolations and hypotheses. On the other hand, it has nothing to

do with philosophy which seeks to uncover the deeper principles and final causes of this world. A true science of totality holds a kind of middle position between the various natural sciences on the one hand and philosophy proper on the other.

A cosmic phenomenology presupposes in the first place that the insights of modern science be taken fully into account; and in the second place, care must be taken to exclude every preconception in the course of assimilating the established facts. Every apriority must be excluded so that the full weight of the total scientific experience and all the available data can be utilized in the spirit in which the various sciences present themselves.

Inherent in such a phenomenology is the study of the inner meaning of the world phenomenon. The inner meaning of a phenomenon is an intrinsic aspect of this world phenomenon and indeed this phenomenon cannot be understood as long as this meaning escapes us. The limits of the phenomenon are not overstepped when the end or purpose for which it is intended are included in the investigation. A true phenomenology has not fully done its job so long as it has failed to make clear what the meaning or purpose of the phenomenon is. What is referred to here is the objective function of the phenomena, the purposiveness actually inherent in them, and not such purpose or significance as may be imputed to them from outside.

This phenomenology of Teilhard's may be characterized as an endeavor, through the use of scientific expertise, to give as complete as possible expression to the world in its totality and inner orientation. Teilhard was convinced that the way in which he saw and represented the world corresponds to the current position in science. However, he was aware that it is, and will remain, open to being supplemented and improved. His purpose was to find

the main lines on which it may be possible to advance and deepen our knowledge of the world and to lay bare its hidden structure.¹

It must be left to the philosopher and the theologian to illuminate the world from their respective standpoints. The physical scientist need not regard all consideration on his part of philosophical and theological issues as so much forbidden territory, but he must always be aware of making the transition and must allow for the fact that every branch of knowledge has its own method and internal rules of procedure.

In order to prevent misunderstanding it will perhaps be necessary to offer some clarification of the term "phenomenology". Due primarily to Edmund Husserl the term has come into vogue in recent years; and it points us to one of the most important tendencies in modern philosophy. Husserl was a German philosopher and considered the founder of modern phenomenology. Phenomenology as Teilhard conceives of it has little in common with the kind pursued by Husserl and his disciples. However, there is some measure of affinity between the two understandings.

Among contemporary philosophers their descriptive study is centered exclusively on the phenomena of consciousness and on the life of the mind: it relates to the life of the psyche. With Teilhard it is a matter of the totality of the cosmic phenomenon, which he aims to describe in terms of its structure and intrinsic meaning.²

The link between Teilhard and the contemporary phenomenologist is to be looked for in the fact that for Teilhard, too, every effort to grasp the significance of the phenomena stands in a relation to man, seen not only in terms of his structure and his connection with other structures, but above all in his interiority. Whereas the contemporary phenomenologists are only concerned with man's interiority, Teilhard's reflections merely bring him to the point of that

interiority, without seeking to penetrate any further into it. The two forms of phenomenology differ where their object is concerned; but in the attitudes which they assume toward that object it is possible to discover a certain affinity.

The goal of Teilhard's phenomenology is to comprehend the universe in its totality, inner cohesion, and its immanent meaning. Yet this total world is not merely the world which exists as of now. A complete knowledge of the world must be conditional upon having been able to survey the entire course of universal evolution, from beginning to end. There is not a single existent having life or motion that can be known, unless our consideration of it allows full room for its historical dimension.³

That the universe in which we live does not have a static character but on the contrary has passed through a long course of evolution cannot in the light of modern science be any longer open to doubt. It follows that when the problem of the world's meaning is posed, what is being asked is the meaning of a course of events. To want to understand the world is to want to understand a process, a history. The universe is seen today as an enormous historical process, an evolutive happening which has been going on for thousands of millions of years and is moving on into an incalculable future. The reason why the idea of evolution is of such great importance is that it points us to the fundamental and dynamic unity or oneness of the world.⁴

There are three principal characteristics of the modern view of the universe: this universe is gigantic in its dimensions, building itself up as a cohesive whole, and impelled by an inner dynamic and energy toward its completion. For the first time we are beginning to come to terms with the revolution that this has brought about in human consciousness.

This new picture of the world did not come about overnight; nor has it been the outcome of one particular science. Insights regarding the dynamic structure of things have been formed and then have gradually expanded until finally they have coalesced into one large whole.

Biology and its kindred sciences have contributed the most to forming this modern conception of the world because it from the study of the forms of life that the idea of evolution, of a process of progressive growth, has come most clearly into prominence. This gave opportunity for the concept of evolution to spread gradually to all the other sciences and in the end to dominate and control the whole way of envisaging the world. The historical dimension of everything has become evident with unprecedented force. From now on the categories of historicity are extended to cover the totality of the universe.

All this suggests that the term "evolution" can be understood in two differing senses. By "evolution" we may mean the mutations that in the course of time have taken place in the various forms of life (biological evolutionism); or we may equally well mean that the cosmos as a whole is subject to the law of evolution and that everything comes to be by a process of growth of some kind (expanded or cosmic evolution). From this standpoint biological evolutionism is only a constituent part or particular aspect of a far more comprehensive phenomenon: the evolution of the universe.

Even though there are still a great many questions to be answered in the area of biological evolutionism this makes no difference to the fact that evolution has been established as an historical "truth". The position with evolution is the same as with so many other phenomena in nature: we can confidently affirm that they exist, without being able to account for their internal structure. In the view of the overwhelming majority of biologists the case for evolutionism has been settled once and for all.

In constructing his world-view, therefore, Teilhard had every right to make his appeal to the historical fact of evolution. He was consequently justified in saying that the world presents itself to us as a system in process of becoming and growth.⁵

Man must also be seen within this universal process of becoming so that the place he occupies in the cosmos can be discovered and his intimate connection with the world around him and his character as a unique and exceptional being can be seen. To employ an image of Julian Huxley's: the earth is not simply a pedestal on which man is set like a statue, but rather a gigantic stalk on which man is the flower.

Man and world cannot be viewed in isolation from each other. Man forms a constituent part, an aspect of the world, and is the highest form of expression from a religious point of view, of the energies operative in that world. An authentic phenomenology of the cosmic must therefore include man within the scope of its reflection, must even in large measure concentrate its attention upon him.

For Teilhard, "the phenomenon of man" is of capital and central importance for arriving at a right concept of the world. The whole of evolution has moved de facto in the direction of man, has led up to the emergence of man, who forms the crown and climax of it. So from the phenomenological viewpoint, it is only from this standpoint that the world can be understood in its innermost being. The phenomenon "world" will not be fully intelligible to the objective observer, unless he concedes to this phenomenon of man the first, salient, key position.

This then is the point of departure for Teilhard's world-view: the universe presents itself to the observer as a four-dimensional continuum, extended in space and time, an organically cohesive and evolving whole which is most completely understood in that context and perspective.

CHAPTER II. THE EVOLUTIONARY WORLD-VIEW OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

The starting point of Teilhard de Chardin's world-view is the idea that the universe is a four-dimensional continuum. To understand our universe the dimension of time, the fourth dimension, is of the highest importance. Our world is completely incomprehensible if this historical dimension is not emphasized. The world is only a moment in a gigantic historical process. If this historical moment is isolated from its past and its future then everything becomes disconnected and absurd. Only by seeing the present world as a moment in an historical process does it become perhaps possible to understand the connection between all things and the structure, or at least the direction, of the whole process.

The history of our planet appears to us as a continuous and uninterrupted flow of events and changing conditions. From the unity and coherence of this evolutive process it follows that every classification we make in terms of epochs and stages is bound to be more or less artificial. And yet if we look at the history of our earth it soon becomes apparent that there have been three very different and clearly distinguishable stages in it.

The first phase or stage is the period during which the earth's crust solidified after a process of cooling down. No trace of life is detectable nor possible because of the tremendous heat. The distinctive thing about this first stage was the exclusive presence of inorganic matter.

The second period begins when life first emerges and the various forms of life gradually unfold. It is not certain when the first manifestations of life occurred on earth. Two thousand million years would be the minimal limit. This second stage is characterized by the emergence and marvelous

upsurge and progress of life. This phase is called the biosphere by Teilhard and he sees it as a band of life enveloping the world.

About five or six hundred thousand years ago a new phenomenon made its entry. From his source in the biosphere man entered upon the scene and this event soon came to have such central and all-embracing significance that it can only be described as a new stage in the world's history. The earth acquired a second "envelope"; the envelope of mind, the noosphere. The three major steps in the "eventualizing" of the world, or the three phases of the world's history can be summed up in the three words: matter, life, mind. There are two events which can be considered as the two hinges of history, of cosmic history as we now envisage it; they form the points of junction between the three phases or spheres of history. These two events or hinges of history are the emergence of life and the breaking through of mind, the coming to birth of man.

The prevailing scientific view is that a gradual transition from the geosphere to the biosphere, or to put it another way, from inorganic to organic matter, is to be regarded if not as a complete certainty, at any rate as being highly probable. The position now reached in this particular field of enquiry can be summarized as follows: that a transition took place from inorganic matter to organic matter and life cannot as yet be completely proved; but it is accepted as a working hypothesis by all scientific investigators.

In The Phenomenon of Man Teilhard set out to show how plausible it is that organic matter came from inorganic matter. As he saw it, the beginnings of life are to be seen as the product or outcome of a kind of maturation process in matter: "In every domain, when anything exceeds a certain measurement, it suddenly changes its aspect, condition or nature. The curve doubles

back, the surface contracts to a point, the solid disintegrates, the liquid boils, the germ cell divides, intuition suddenly bursts on the piled up facts. . . . Critical points have been reached, rungs on the ladder, involving a change of state--jumps of all sorts in the course of development. Henceforward this is the only way in which science can speak of a 'first instant'. But it is none the less a true way."⁶

The emergence of life is to be seen as a critical moment, a phase-mutation in the history of the earth. Much later, when life had gradually developed and had reached a high degree of complexity, an equally critical phase-mutation was to occur once more in the mighty process of evolution: after matter had been vitalized, life was now to be "hominized". An utterly new phenomenon was manifested in the womb of life: the entry of man.

When man does appear, it is in intimate association with the animal kingdom. A phenomenological study of man's first arrival on the scene will stress the links connecting him with the rest of the cosmos; but in so doing it will not lose sight of the quality of originality in man. What differentiates man from the world around him and is his exclusive privilege is his power of conscious reflection; but that does not preclude his being linked in innumerable ways with the higher animal kingdom.⁷

Teilhard is clear and emphatic in making the distinction between man and animal: "We are separated by a chasm--or a threshold--which it cannot cross. Because we are reflective we are not only different but quite other. It is not a matter of change of degree, but of a change of nature, resulting from a change of state."⁸ And again he emphasizes the same point: "The being who is the object of his own reflection, in consequence of that very doubling back upon himself, becomes in a flash able to raise himself into a new sphere. In reality, another world is born. Abstraction, logic, reasoned

choice and inventions, mathematics, art, calculation of space and time, anxieties and dreams of love--all these activities of inner life are nothing else than the effervescence of the newly-formed center as it explodes onto itself."⁹

Teilhard thinks that the process of evolution that has occurred on this planet has an intrinsic orientation. It seems to him that evolution has been a gradual ascent, set irreversibly in one direction. The question posed here is not whether the evolutionary process is being guided from outside in a particular direction by a Higher Being toward a predetermined goal; rather the question posed here relates only to the sequence that has, as a matter of fact, been manifested in the phenomena. De facto, we see evolution taking a particular path which issues eventually in men.

Looking at the whole sweep of evolution it is observed that the course taken by the world as a whole has all the time been moving in the direction of what is more complex. It invariably proceeds from simpler to more intricate structures--from elementary particles to atom, from atom to molecule, from molecule to cell, from the cell to the pluri-cellular creatures, from the most complex entity that we have in our world: man--the being in whom all prior forms of complexity are repeated and surpassed.

By this increasing complexity is meant not so much the fact that as one thing or one creature succeeds another in the passage of time they are equipped with more and more intricate mechanisms, but rather that they exhibit a greater richness of internal organization and manifest in their structure an ever greater degree of intrinsic unity and quality of concentration. This increasing complexity is something quite factual and objectively established by the natural scientist. It is not a philosophical theory or an a priori principle or a vague speculation.

However, according to Teilhard, this is only one aspect of reality; for running parallel to the increasing complexification there is a second distinguishing feature of evolution: namely, an orientation toward an ever-increasing degree of consciousness. Throughout the whole long, evolutive process there is a gradual growth of psychic manifestation, supported by the steady advance to perfection of the nervous system and reaching its point of climax in man. It is evident in the course of animal evolution as a whole that this entire process is marked by a gradual refining and extension of the nervous system, and especially of the brain system. The phenomenon of cerebralization, the proportional development of the brain vis-a-vis the whole organism, gives a key which helps to explain or clarify the direction taken by biological evolution generally.

The two phenomena of evolution, increasing complexity and expanding or ascending psychism, are susceptible of direct and objective observation on the part of the natural scientist. The question arises as to whether there is some intrinsic connection between the two phenomena--as though the second is dependent or conditional upon the first. Teilhard has no intention of asserting that psychism is dependent simply and solely on the degree of organic complexity. But if he is understood in this sense: that each and every degree of consciousness always presupposes an equivalent degree of organic complexity, of interior unity and concentration, and that without such organic complexity psychic life is not possible, then he is completely in line with modern neurophysiology, which has clearly demonstrated that the degree of psychism and consciousness is always conditioned by the degree to which a given organism has an integrated unity.

On purely phenomenological grounds Teilhard insists that all matter, living or not, has a "within" as well as a "without," that is a "psychic" as

well as a "physical" aspect. This "psychic" aspect Teilhard also calls "consciousness," but it should be carefully noted that this word is never used as a synonym for "thought" but is related to thought rather as the whole is to the part. "The term 'consciousness' is taken in its widest sense to indicate every kind of psychism from the most rudimentary forms of interior preception imaginable to the human phenomenon of reflective thought."¹⁰ This postulate of a "within" to things is of capital importance for Teilhard's subsequent study of evolution, since by it he immediately eliminates a sharp dualism between matter and "consciousness," and situates them not in two separate realms of being, but as part of one and the same pattern for the universe. Such an approach to matter was an attempt on the part of Teilhard to grasp the whole of reality. In evolution he saw not simply a scientific hypothesis, but an experimental affirmation of the coherence of beings. He was convinced that being had to be coherent and therefore intelligible, and that the only possible way to arrive at any constructive explanation of the universe was to treat it, throughout space and time, as if it were one. "Spiritual perfection (or conscious 'centreity') and material synthesis (or complexity) are but the two aspects or connected parts of one and the same phenomenon."¹¹

In everything, therefore, Teilhard distinguishes a double aspect: an exterior; which relates only to the observable connections and dimensions of material things, and an interior--an interior aspect of things, which is to be envisaged as co-extensive with their exterior and in some degree is present in them all. Thus there are degrees of consciousness, degrees of the organic integration of things; and to the extent that this inner complexity increases we find higher and higher--and totally new--qualities being manifested. In other words, Teilhard thinks that if a coherent account of the universe,

based on a scientific phenomenology, is to be arrived at, then all creation possess a certain interiority, and interior aspect, although this is in an analogous fashion and in varying degrees.

Looking at the world from a phenomenological viewpoint, it appears as a coherent whole which has evolved in a particular direction. The universe, seen as an historical process, presents itself as an ascent toward ever higher states of consciousness: it has moved in the direction of mind. The direction of evolution can be judged by following the line of growing complexity and consciousness, a line which has gradually made its way through only one zoological group or phylum, that of the vertebrates, moving through mammals and primates up to man. In the primates evolution went directly toward the brain, neglecting everything else. In their case, consequently, an increase of consciousness is always found to be in direct proportion to the degree of "cerebralization," that is, to the increase in complexity of the nervous system and brain. Through this phenomenon of cerebralization the ascending advance of life was slowly directed toward the critical point par excellence, the threshold of reflection. "Because the specific orthogenesis of the primates (urging them toward increasing cerebralization) coincides with the axial orthogenesis of organized matter (urging all living things toward a higher consciousness), man, appearing at the heart of the primates, flourishes on the leading shoot of zoological evolution."¹²

In applying the law of complexity-consciousness to the first appearance of man, Teilhard is in no sense asserting a relationship of strict efficient causality. "Need I repeat that I confine myself here to phenomena, i.e. to the experimental relations between consciousness and complexity, without prejudging the deeper causes which govern the whole issue? . . . It is only, it seems, under the appearances of a critical point that we can grasp

experimentally the 'hominizing' (spiritualizing) step to reflection. . . . There is nothing to prevent the thinker who adopts a spiritual explanation from positing (for reasons of a higher order and at a later stage of his dialectic) whatever 'creative' operation or 'special intervention' he likes under the phenomenal veil of a revolutionary transformation."¹³ Man may be considered the end and purpose of evolution in the sense that the whole process is oriented toward that end and constitutes a pattern which would be empty and meaningless unless it culminated in man. "For Christian transformism God's creative action is no longer conceived as abruptly inserting its work into the midst of pre-existent beings, but rather as causing to come to birth in the depths of things the successive terminations of its activity. It is not on this account any less essential, any less universal, nor above all any less intimate to things." In other words, "God . . . makes things make themselves."¹⁴

What Teilhard is affirming, then, in this first stage of his analysis, is that the world appears a coherent unity, that a single pattern runs through the whole of the universe, and that the dominant orientation of this pattern is toward man. Far from being an exception to biological evolution, man is in reality the key to the entire process, for this process "is no more than a movement of consciousness veiled by morphology."¹⁵ For Teilhard it would be utterly absurd to think of evolution suddenly going off in a direction other than that running from the primates to homo sapiens. In this sense, evolution is irreversible, though this irreversibility is obviously not absolute, but conditioned on whether or not mankind continues in existence. If it does, then evolution must also continue its upward trend toward complexity and greater consciousness. Consequently to consider man as anything else but the principal aim of cosmic development is unthinkable, not only because he comes

at the end of a progressive interiorization of matter moving upward along the axis of complexity, but much more because the phenomenon of reflective consciousness is of its very nature totally unlike any other event in the evolutionary series. Looked at superficially, the psychic make-up of various species in the proximity of man seems to reach right up to the borders of intelligence. In reality, however, the crossing of that threshold was a unique event, of an order quite different from that of non-reflective consciousness, "a mutation from zero to everything."¹⁶

This advent of thought represents not merely a turning point for the individual or even for the species, but marks a transformation which affects life itself in its organic totality. From now on the evolutionary process continues its development not so much in the sphere of life, the "biosphere," as in the sphere of the mind and spirit, the "noosphere," the "thinking layer," which since its germination at the end of the tertiary period has spread over and above the world of planets and animals. "Even from the most dispassionate point of view possible, the phenomenon of men represents nothing less than a general transformation of the earth, through the establishment on its surface of a new envelope, the thinking envelope."¹⁷

However, there is no reason to think that cosmogenesis has now reached its full and final term and that from now on everything will stay just as it is until the end of time. Evolution moves on; and so far as we can see, it stretches out into the unfathomable future. Why should the laws that have governed the past all of a sudden lose their force and cease to have any validity for the times to come?

But if world history is continuing in the direction in which it has all the time been moving, then it is with man that responsibility for the future rests; it is in and through man that the world moves on toward greater

completion. In other words, the principal forces, or the laws that have governed the past, will take place in the noosphere. "How could we imagine a cosmogenesis reaching right up to mind without being thereby confronted with a neogenesis?"¹⁸ As a conscious and free being, man stands now at the apex of cosmogenesis. He is a terminus--but also a new beginning. Within the framework of the fundamental laws of nature man is the architect of tomorrow's world.

As a paleontologist, geologist, as phenomenologist of the cosmic, Teilhard asks how the human species, in which evolution has reached its highest point, is going to develop from now on. That the historical process in which we are implicated moves forward on its evolutive course is simply a fact. The question is, in which direction is this process of evolution going to move?

For Teilhard, his concern with the problems of the future of the human species is implicit in the inner dynamic of his view of the world as an evolutionary process. But he also concerned with man's conduct. Man in the past has undergone evolution much more than he has helped in the process of bringing it about. Now a fundamental change has now entered into the situation. Both because man knows much more about the past on the one hand and because of the technical potential on the other, a radical transformation has come about in the human condition. Man has at last come to be aware of his task in history and of the powers latent within him. Never in all the long centuries since it came into being has mankind generated so much activity of mind and intellect as today. Is all this activity to no purpose? Does it signify nothing? And is it no essential part or consequence of this activity that we should know what its aim is and what orientation we ought to give to it?

In the present stage of history some knowledge of the future--at least, of its general orientation--has become an urgent need in the spheres of thought and conduct. He is not concerned to know how this or that aspect of man's life may change or be modified in the next century or so, or even to know how art and science, European civilization and living standards generally may evolve. The object of Teilhard's attention is not man as an individual or as representing a particular form of culture. His standpoint is not the philosopher's, the historian's, or the economist's, but that of the geologist and paleontologist--that is to say, of the scientist who because of his training and study is the most obvious person to cover the whole range of the cosmic process. If the historian, the philosopher and the sociologist have a right to ponder the future, then the paleontologist above all has this right because he more than anyone else has a panoramic view of the past and is the most conversant with the more fundamental laws governing the whole of cosmic evolution.

For Teilhard, then, scientific knowledge of the future is not an impossibility. Mathematical certitude about this is ruled out, of course; but by making use of serious extrapolations a reliable picture of the future can be formed. The kind of assurance attained in this respect lies more or less midway between the certainty which mathematics can give and the confidence placed in some guesses or conjectures. This confidence will increase in proportion to the knowledge one has of the past.

Let it be noted here that Teilhard's understanding of the future of man and the world has no connection with the deterministic view of history. The future will be the outcome of an interplay between the laws of nature and human freedom. Teilhard calls most emphatically for man's collaboration in the process of completing cosmic evolution and sees this free collaboration as an essential factor in the course of events. "Evolution, by the very

mechanism of its synthesis, charges itself with an ever-growing measure of freedom."¹⁹ Teilhard's predictions do not have deterministic characteristics but only statistical. Just as man's behavior may to some extent be foreseen on a basis of statistical evidence--without the voluntary character of this behavior being thereby hindered or denied--so with our scientific knowledge of the past and of the laws contained in it as a foundation, we are able to study the future evolution of mankind. It is a future that is offered to us, not one forced inevitably upon us.

The direction of evolutionary process is likely to move is discovered by looking to the past. Here it is discovered that there are three main spheres in the structure of the cosmos: the sphere of matter (geosphere), the sphere of life (biosphere), and the sphere of mind (noosphere), which have been built up, historically speaking, in three successive phases. It is within the noosphere that any further evolution is going to occur. In order to discover something of the structure of the future it is necessary to consider the phenomena manifested in the sphere proper to man and learn to view them in the light of those general laws which govern cosmic evolution.

The noosphere is not a static and immutable whole. Like the geosphere and the biosphere it is subject to an internal process of growth and development. Properly understood, the noosphere presents itself as a noogenesis, as the growth-process of mind. And the law which governs this noogenesis will be the fundamental law which has been deduced from the past: that of increasing complexity and increasing consciousness. Relying on the stability of nature's laws, then this law, when projected into the future, will bring about an increase of complexity and consciousness in the very heart and center of humanity itself. Noogenesis will therefore be spiritual and social, that is to say, it will concern itself with the development of individuals as

as persons and with society on the level of interpersonal relationships.

Looking at mankind today in its concrete situation there do seem to be symptoms tending to support this general thesis of Teilhard. It does seem evident that mankind today evinces a growing tendency to unification and that the life of the mind--especially in the realm of science--is all the time growing in intensity. Under the influence of technology and the modern communication-media and of the stimulus afforded by trade and commerce on a world scale, the whole human race is seen to be evolving toward a unity the like of which it has never known before. For the first time in history a real unification of mankind is beginning to take shape. The history of man, of humanity, would seem to be underway: that is to say that now men around the globe are beginning to sense their solidarity. All peoples and nations are faced with the same problems; and all without exception find themselves concerned with, and involved in, whatever is happening in the world. It would appear that mankind is becoming unified. The biological aspect of this development must be understood. The technical order has its roots in the biological, and in turn radically affects the course of biological evolution. In the case examined--the unification of mankind--the rise of technology tells again the splintering of the human race in a biological sense; instead, its effect is to strengthen and deepen the oneness of mankind more and more. "It is not merely a matter of the machine which liberates, relieving both individual and collective thought of the trammels which hinder its progress, but also of the machine which creates, helping to assemble, and to concentrate in the form of an ever more deeply penetrating organism, all the reflective elements upon earth."²⁰

It is observed then that on the outer surface there is an evident process of unification. Is something similar happening at the deeper levels

of human consciousness, too? Is there in the thoughts and feelings of men a process of fermentation at work, pointing toward greater unification? One result of contacts at the external level is that on the mental plane also an inevitable movement of interpenetration is taking place; and there is a shared maturing and deepening of consciousness. It is not merely that the various cultures are having a seminal, fructifying influence on one another, but that across every frontier of country, race and language, there is developing a common endeavor in the fields of science, thought, art, ethics and religion. In all these areas people have started to work together. All thinking and enquiry assume the form of a dialogue; and through the interchange of ideas and insights knowledge grows and the mental horizon is enlarged.

For Teilhard, these symptoms are wholly in line with the law of increasing complexity and increasing consciousness. They tally with the general cosmic movement in which the fundamental character of biological evolution is itself disclosed in the world. In examining the trend of events in the world today, one is strengthened in the conviction that the whole of mankind is on the road to increasing socialization.

The urge to socialization, to the bringing about of organic combinations, is as old as the world itself. It is found in the atoms, which build up into more and more complex structures. It is found in each line of living creatures, which in their own way strive for some form of socialization. In man the general and universal law of the cosmos is carried further. Teilhard says it this way: "The processes of chemistry and biology are continued without a break in the social sphere."²¹ In man the super-organization of matter in its onward movement is accompanied by a growing liberation of consciousness. "What is really going on, under cover and in the form of human collectivization, is the super-organization of Matter upon itself,

which as it continues to advance produces its habitual, specific effect, the further liberation of consciousness."²² However, Teilhard points out that reflective thinking, however personal and inalienable it may be, always unfolds in a shared relationship with others and has an indispensable social aspect.²³

Man's future, as species, apparently lies in the direction of increasing socialization. Is it possible that this course of evolution will someday lead to a process of "massification" in which the individual is overwhelmed in something that can only be compared to a termite colony or an anthep? The fact must not be overlooked that if the formation of a mass society has a depersonalizing influence, communal intercourse has precisely the opposite effect, in that it stimulates the development of personality. Real community, far from making men undifferentiated, creates diversity and gives men the opportunity to develop his peculiar gifts and talents and to express his personality.

Theoretically there are two ways of unifying mankind: by coercion and force or by a voluntary union of wills. Coercion and force may lead to an outward unification, but they will never bring about an authentic, interior unanimity, an intrinsic condition of unity. Only free and close association can do that. These are the truly creative forces in the world of man, as at an inferior level and in a weaker form they have already been the constructive forces in the cosmos as a whole. The atoms were impelled toward one another by an intrinsic affinity; and so the molecules came into being. The cells coalesced; and thence the great diversity of organisms appeared. Through the association of living entities we get the various forms of community (the forest, the herd, the ants' nest). Human association and union engender the family, the nation, the community of nations. In each case the process of coming together and of becoming united has led to greater diversity and differentiation.

Teilhard uses the word "love" in varying senses. In the world of matter and of the animals he is speaking of an involuntary inclination, a mutual attraction; but the world of men has conscious love which has an irreplaceable and life-giving role to play. And that community which is sustained and actuated by such love is the greatest environment in which the human person is enabled to develop to his fullest and best. So far from annihilating personality, this love affords it the greatest chance of coming to maturity. "Pure union, the union of heart and spirit, does not enslave, nor does it neutralise the individuals which it brings together. It super-personalises them."²⁴ Socialization then presages not the end but the beginning of the epoch of personality. "Thus socialization, whose hour seems to have sounded for Mankind, does not by any means signify the ending of the Era of the Individual upon earth, but far more its beginning."²⁵ "Where Man is concerned, therefore, collectivization, super-socialization, can signify nothing other than super-personalization."²⁶ Thus evolution is pursuing its course in man and, having reached this particular stage in its development, conforming to the same kind of procedure as has been employed so many times in the past, in order to bring to birth a new and still more complex form of life.

The question which arises is this: to what mysterious final point must an evolutive process of this sort eventually lead? The answers which Teilhard gives are expressed in vague and general terms. How could he describe the phases through which mankind is to pass in the further course of its evolution? How could he conceive of the organizational forms which mankind will construct in the remote future? How could he envisage man's psychic life over a thousand or a million years? Teilhard was sure of one thing: the future can only be seen as "produced" or extended along the line constituted by the past, as a further and higher implementation of the law governing the whole cosmic

eventualizing process--the law of growing complexity and growing consciousness. As unification and concentration intensify, mankind will be structured in a higher form of complexity; and this higher form of complexity can only be accompanied by a proportional consciousness. If the law of complexity-consciousness operates in the future as it has in the past then sooner or later a moment must come when mankind will have attained to its maximal complexity and consciousness.

It appears quite certain that the cosmic organizing process of mankind, that is the growing solidarity of all men and the intensification of consciousness, will continue to advance in the direction of a growing unification. Thus, the world must be seen as a world with a convergent structure. These lines of convergence will ultimately come together at a specific point, at a center where the whole movement merges into one--a point which Teilhard refers to as the point Omega, the final or furthest point of the whole of biological evolution, of the whole cosmic process: a final point where the law of universal love will have reached its climax and its crown.

As Teilhard saw it the future of man in all probability lies in the social plane. The great body of mankind must be built up out of the many cells which now lead their separate existences. Just as the human brain consists of millions of neurons which have been composed into a unity through innumerable connections and combinations and thus make possible the unitary consciousness in man, so must men combine with one another to form a kind of super-organism in which a communal consciousness, a suprapersonal unity, would be manifested--with this difference: that the cells which constitute our brain no longer have an individual existence, whereas man, in virtue of his reflective consciousness, retains his individual freedom and separate existence, even within the larger organization.²⁷

There is a fundamental difference between the hopes and expectations of Teilhard and the picture of the future offered by Nietzsche. Nietzsche with his idea of the Superman (whether understood in a biological or an ethical sense), puts the whole emphasis on the individual man and condemns the idea of community. Teilhard on the other hand, without underestimating the value of the individual personality, sees the true completion of mankind in terms of community. Nietzsche predicted the arrival of a superman. Teilhard looked forward more to a super-mankind. Teilhard does not think that the future course of evolution is likely to bring with it any further appreciable change of a morphological character in the human species: "To all appearance the ultimate perfection of the human elements was achieved many thousands of years ago, which is to say that the individual instrument of thought and action may be considered to have been finalized."²⁸ And again: "It is not to the idea of anatomically super-cerebralized individuals but to think of super-socialized groupings that we must look, if we want to raise a scientific prediction as to what Super-Humanity will be like."²⁹

CHAPTER III. TEILHARD'S HYPOTHESIS FOR THE SUCCESS OF EVOLUTION

In the last chapter Teilhard's phenomenological analysis of the evolutionary course was described. The pattern which Teilhard discovered is irreversible, but this irreversibility is external and relative. The cosmic coiling of noogenesis must indeed continue toward some supreme consciousness, but only on condition that it continue at all. There is absolutely no way of knowing whether this condition is to be fulfilled on the level of phenomena. As a phenomenological law, the pattern of complexity-consciousness is unable to tell us if the universe is in reality destined in and through men to reach a terminus in some ultimate pole or center, and concerning the so-called Omega Point we can know almost nothing at this stage, since by Teilhard's own reckoning it will not be attained for some hundreds of thousands or even millions of years. Teilhard's study of man has shown him that evolution is moving across humanity to a kind of "super-humanity," By this term he means "the biologically superior state which humanity appears destined to achieve if it succeeds in totalizing itself completely upon itself, body and soul, by pushing to the end the movement of which it is the historical culmination."³⁰

This fact is important because Teilhard changes his perspective and he leaves the level of strictly observable phenomena. He advances from his hypothesis of probability, based on the experimental law of complexity-consciousness, to an hypothesis of actual convergence. In other words, he advances to a study of the conditions required in order for mankind to know that here and now it is actually converging toward a supreme center. Teilhard announces this change of perspective at the end of the third book of The Phenomenon of Man. "Wither nature is closed to our demands for futurity, in which case thought, the fruit of millions of years of effort, is stifled,

still-born in a self-abortive and absurd universe. Or else an opening exists-- that of a super-soul above our souls. . . . On neither side is there any tangible evidence to produce. Only, in support of hope, there are rational invitations to an act of faith."³¹

"Faith" in this context has nothing to do with Christian revelation. It concerns faith in the world's future and is a common Teilhardian synonym for "intellectual synthesis." This "act of faith" for Teilhard means accepting the intellectual perspective he proposes in which an ultimate failure of evolution becomes a completely unacceptable possibility.

"On the strictly psychological plane. . . I mean by "faith" any adherence of our intelligence to a general view of the universe. . . . The essential note of the psychological act of faith is, in my opinion, to see as possible and to accept as more probable a conclusion which, because it envelopes so much in space and time, goes far beyond all its analytical premises. To believe is to achieve an intellectual synthesis."³²

Teilhard begins his "act of faith" with two factors which have profoundly changed the whole character of noogenesis. The first is modern man's sudden awareness of what is taking place in him and by means of him. This awareness of evolution is indeed the specific effect of the process peculiar to our present age. The Phenomenon of Man links the whole psychology of modern disquiet with the confrontation of space-time. The result of this "malady of space time," the feeling of both anxiety and futility is the sense of being crushed by the enormities of the cosmos.

The second factor, which is far more decisive, is that of human freedom. For it is not only in man that the movement of evolution is now carried on, but by man. Through man evolution has not only become conscious of itself

but free to dispose of itself,--it can give itself or refuse itself. Upon man therefore falls the awful responsibility for his future on earth. "The last century witnessed the first systematic strikes in industry; the next will surely not pass without the threat of strikes in the noosphere. . . . If progress is a myth, that is to say, if faced with the work involved we can say 'What's the good of it all?' then the whole of evolution will come to a halt--because we are evolution."³³

Teilhard's first assurance to modern man is to point to the pattern he has uncovered through phenomenological analysis of evolution. Time and space are terrifying only if they are thought to be motionless and blind; they immediately become humanized as soon as a definite movement appears which gives them an inner character and shows them to be part of a developing whole. In Teilhard's mind we are not simply face to face with change in the world but with genesis, which is something quite different. This genesis applies to any form of production involving successive stages oriented toward some goal. The law of complexity-consciousness is thus an assurance that there has been genesis, that the universe has been pursuing an aim, that a single pattern has been oriented toward man. Man is the key to the whole biological process, since it was through him and him alone that evolution crossed the threshold of reflection into the mysteriour realm of the person.

What Teilhard sees clearly is that the present generation needs assurance not about the past but about the future of evolution. The universe has always been in motion and at this moment continues to be in motion. But will it be in motion tomorrow? "Tomorrow? But who can guarantee us a tomorrow anyway? And without assurance that this tomorrow exists, can we really go on living, we to whom has been given--perhaps for the first time in the whole history of the universe--the terrible gift of foresight? . . . What disconcerts the

modern world at its roots is not being sure, and not seeing how it ever could be sure, that there is an outcome--the right outcome--to this evolution."³⁴ He then asks a question which could never legitimately have been asked on the strict level of phenomena. "What should the future be like in order to give us the strength or even the joy to accept the prospect of it and to bear its weight? . . . In the last analysis the best guarantee that a thing should happen is that it appears to us as vitally necessary."³⁵

There is an important qualification, however. Such a guarantee must be given in the context of human freedom; it cannot come from an order imposed by coercion or sustained by fear. For Teilhard this is precisely the reason for the world's present discouragement with the whole human aspiration toward unity. Up to now every gigantic effort to reduce the multitude of mankind to some order seems to have ended by stifling the human person. "Instead of the upsurge of consciousness which we expected, it is mechanization that seems to emerge inevitably from totalization."³⁶ In our modern world what has gone wrong is that those forces of freedom which emerge from the depths of the human person and therefore constitute a unitive force which is interior, a force based not upon coercion or fear but upon love, have not been utilized properly.

Love is the only energy in the world that is capable of personalizing by totalizing. It is consequently the highest form of that energy which Teilhard has called "radial." It alone unites human beings in such a way as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone joins them to what is deepest in themselves. On the strictly phenomenological level this is a fact of daily experience, not only in the sexual love between man and wife, but also in the love of parents for children, the love between friends, and even to a certain extent love for one's country. In order therefore for men to continue in freedom toward that

unity in the noosphere which is their destiny, their power of loving must gradually develop until it is capable of embracing the whole of mankind and the whole of the earth. A common objection against such an idea is that man's capacity to love does not carry beyond the radius of a select few, that to love all is contradictory, a false gesture which will lead in the end to loving no one. "To this I would answer that if, as you claim, a universal love is impossible, how can we account for that irresistible instinct in our hearts which leads us towards unity whenever and in whatever direction our deepest emotions are stirred? A sense of the universe, a sense of the whole, . . . cosmic affinity and hence cosmic sense. A universal love is not only psychologically possible, it is the only complete and final way in which we are able to love."³⁷ At this level, then, the law of complexity-consciousness has been transformed into a law of growing amorization.

But how then are we to explain the appearance all around us of growing repulsion and hatred? If such a strong potency is really besieging us from within and urging us to unite, what prevents it from passing into act? One thing only: "that we should overcome the 'anti-personalist' complex which paralyzes us, and make up our minds to accept the possibility, indeed the reality, of some source of love and object of love at the summit of the world above our heads. So long as it absorbs or appears to absorb the person, the collectivity kills the love that is trying to come to birth."³⁸ Unless the modern impetus toward union is leading us toward "Someone," it must certainly end up by plunging us back into matter. In order to turn this failure that threatens us into success, what we must do is to recognize "not only some vague future existence, but also, as I must now stress, the radiation as a present reality of that mysterious Center of our centers I have called Omega."³⁹

This mode of conceiving Omega is certainly different from conceiving Omega as a state of collective reflection at the end of the evolutionary process which Teilhard talked about in his purely phenomenological approach. Perhaps the clearest expression of Teilhard's distinction in the way in which he talks about Omega is found in the last of his Sorbonne lectures in 1949. "Under pain of being unable to act as keystone of the vault for the noosphere, 'Omega' can only be conceived as the point of encounter between the universe, once it has reached the limits of centration, and another Centre deeper still--one which is self-subsistent, an absolute ultimate principle of irreversibility and personalization: the only real Omega."⁴⁰ An hypothesis therefore of actual convergence would demand that the ultimate terminus of evolution be already in existence, and especially that it be personal, "loving and lovable at this very moment." Love energy, the only force capable of moving free men toward unity, must have something to draw it. "Love dies with contact with the impersonal and the anonymous. With equal infallibility it becomes impoverished with remoteness in space--and still more, much more, with remoteness in time. For love to be possible there must be co-existence. . . . A real and present noosphere goes with a real and present Centre," the supreme source and the supreme object of man's love.⁴¹

Such an absolute and indestructible Centre must likewise be postulated by the very play of man's operative activity, for men will never bend their backs to the task of unity unless convinced that the effort demanded has a chance of succeeding. The prospect of a total death on which consciousness would crash and forever disappear would certainly doom the whole evolutionary ascent. "No consideration of any kind could rightfully authorize us to take the least step forward if we did not know that the rising road leads to some summit from

which life will never again descend."⁴² In no sense therefore can the real Omega be the end product of natural evolution. "To satisfy the ultimate requirements of our action, Omega must be independent of the collapse of forces with which evolution is woven. . . . While being the last term of evolution's series, it is also outside all series. . . . If by its very nature it did not escape from time and space which it gathers together, it would not be Omega."⁴³ While by its action Omega influences directly the movement of each element in the noosphere, its own nature must be truly transcendent, capable of being present at the beginning as well as at the end of the evolutionary process.

A terse phrase represents Teilhard's final understanding of cosmic evolution and which ultimately determines his line of approach to Christian revelation which will be treated in the next chapter: "Everything holds together from above."⁴⁴ "Contrary to appearances still accepted by physics, the great stability is not at the bottom in the infra-elementary sphere, but at the top in the ultra-synthetic sphere. It is thus solely by its tangential envelope that the world goes on dissipating itself in a chance way into matter. By its radial nucleus it finds its shape and its natural consistency in gravitating against the tide of probability towards a divine focus of spirit which draws it onward." Omega is thus seen as the "Prime Mover ahead . . . the principle which at one and the same time makes this cosmic coiling irreversible and moves and collects it."⁴⁵ The entire ascent toward life, that of life toward spirit and of spirit toward Omega, this whole movement of radial energy is due not to some mechanical thrust from below, but to an attraction from above. It is "an inverse form of gravitation."⁴⁶

For Teilhard, therefore, what evolution ultimately depends upon is not its point of departure but its point of arrival. "Not a single thing in our changing world is really understandable except in so far as it has reached its terminus."⁴⁷ At the end of the second stage of his phenomenological approach to evolution Teilhard had discovered a universe whose convergence was so far in the future and whose outcome so problematical that it could provide no guarantee, no issue at all for mankind. The principal axis of zoological evolution had now passed from the realm of brute nature into the realm of the human person, and whether or not radial energy would continue its advance toward higher consciousness had come to depend entirely upon the free decisions of men. More concretely, the future of the noosphere now hinged upon the growth of amorization, the free circulation over the surface of the earth of that highest form of radial energy, love. Such amorization would in turn depend upon belief in a personal source and object of love who alone would motivate progress and conquer man's tendency toward repulsion and isolation.

Through his "act of faith" Teilhard has now given to evolutionary convergence a stability it could never otherwise have had, for he now demands for its very existence a real attraction from a real supreme Being, "loving and lovable at this very moment." "Since Aristotle we have never ceased to fashion our 'models' of God after an extrinsic Prime Mover acting a retro. But since a consciousness of evolution has developed, we are no longer physically able either to conceive or adore anything but a God who is an organic Prime Mover ab ante."⁴⁸ For Teilhard, therefore, the ultimate explanation of life's movement is that the universe is converging upon God, "God reflecting himself personally upon the organized sum of thinking monads, to guarantee an outcome for their hesitant activities which is

certain and guided by exact laws."⁴⁹ In order completely to understand the dynamism of evolution in his system of thought, we are thus forced in the end to recognize the primacy of being over becoming, of act over potency--which is indeed, as Teilhard himself noted, "along the lines of the perennial philosophy."

It is this final hypothesis of convergence, that of an already existing personal Centre able to activate the love energy of the world, which constitutes the background, the framework, the stage for Teilhard's next stage: his faith in Christian Revelation where he attempts to move from a philosophical hypothesis to an historical fact. Teilhard is well aware that his act of intellectual "faith" in the existence of a divine Omega, however clearly demanded by his analysis of love energy, must necessarily remain fragile and insecure. The God he has discovered is a faceless God, the God of a philosophical speculation. "This pole Omega is reached only by extrapolation; it remains of its nature an assumption and a conjecture. . .which nourishes our hope on traits that are vague and ethereal. . . . There is need therefore to support our muddled extrapolations with some positive facts."⁵⁰

CHAPTER IV. CHRISTIAN REVELATION AND THE OMEGA POINT

Teilhard believes that he can at last bridge the gap between a philosophical hypothesis and an historical fact by appealing to Christian revelation. "In place of the vague focus of convergence demanded as a terminus for evolution, we now have the well-defined personal reality of the Incarnate Word, in whom all things hold together."⁵¹

If we pursue the perspectives of science as they relate to the humanization process to their logical and final conclusion, we then discover the climax of anthropogenesis to be the existence of an ultimate centre or focus of personality and consciousness which is indispensable for the orientation of the historical growth of spirit and for its synthesis. Now this Omega point (as I have called it), is it not the ideal centre from which to see radiating the Christ whom we worship--A Christ whose supernatural lordship is accompanied, as we are aware, by a predominating physical power over the natural spheres of the world? In quo omnia constant. Marvellous coincidence, indeed, of the data of faith with the processes of reason itself! What at first appeared to be a threat instead turns out to be a splendid confirmation. Far from coming into opposition with Christian dogma, the vastly increased importance assumed by man in nature results (when considered exhaustively) in traditional Christology being given a new lease of relevance and a new vitality.⁵²

In the Christian idea of things the whole of history is directed toward the building up and unifying of the entire human race into a supranatural community of which Christ is the head and all of us the members. Christianity bids us look toward the future, toward the realization of the Kingdom of God.

Christianity's vision of the future is a vision of a supernatural and definitive unity, a unity built up and held together by a personal Centre, the historic Christ, whose return at the end of the Age we now await. The doctrine of the Mystical Body, which Paul and John expressed under a variety of images and similes, is one of the most central data of the Christian tradition. "The essence of Christianity is nothing more or less than a belief in the world's coming to be one in God through the Incarnation."⁵³

Teilhard acknowledges the fact that this line of approach takes us beyond the plane of phenomena.⁵⁴ He draws a clear distinction between the two sources of knowledge, one natural on the level of phenomenon, the other supernatural on the level of revelation. Teilhard was continually trying to avoid the charge that he was establishing a single epistemological line running from a scientific knowledge of evolution to a philosophical hypothesis of a personal Omega, which in turn demanded that this Centre of centres be none other than the Person of Christ. There is indeed a single epistemological line up to his hypothesis of a personal Omega, but what Teilhard does at the beginning of his theological enquiry is not to prolong this line of thought, but rather to break it off and confront it with a totally different source of knowledge. Here is the reason that the section in The Phenomenon of Man dealing with "The Christian Phenomenon" is entitled an epilogue and not a further chapter or a conclusion. In this brief analysis of Christianity Teilhard certainly recognizes Christianity as a phenomenon in the world, but all its elements are new, recognized as such, and in no sense either inferred or deduced from what has gone before.

A text from the epilogue of The Phenomenon of Man will serve to bring this out more clearly. "To confirm the presence at the summit of the world of what we have called the Omega Point, do we not find here (in Christianity)

the very cross-check we were waiting for?" This is then correlated in a footnote: "To be more exact, to confirm the presence at the summit of the world of something in line with but still more elevated than the Omega Point. This in deference to the theological concept of the 'supernatural,' according to which the unitive contact between God and the world, *hic et nunc*, already begun, reaches a super-intimacy, and therefore a super-gratuity, of which man can have no inkling and to which he can lay no claim by reason of the exigencies of his nature alone."⁵⁵

Consequently there is no attempt whatsoever at a facile concordism which would confuse these two sources of knowledge, either deducing God's plan of salvation from purely natural reasoning, or finding in the data of Christian revelations a scientific explanation of the world. "Concordism must not be confused with coherence. Religion and science obviously represent two different meridians on the sphere of our minds, and it would be wrong not to keep them separate (which is the concordist error). But these meridians must necessarily meet somewhere at a pole of common vision (which is the meaning of coherence). Otherwise our whole intellectual and cognitive enterprise collapses."⁵⁶ Teilhard again expresses this view which throws much light on his methodology: "The essential test of truth, its specific mark, is to be able to develop indefinitely, not only without ever developing an internal contradiction, but especially in forming a positively constructed whole, in which all the parts are mutually supporting and complement each other in ever more perfect ways. On a sphere it would be absurd (concordism) to confuse the meridians at the equator; but at the pole (coherence) they ought to rejoin each other by structural necessity."⁵⁷

The last sentence of the above quotation makes it clear that Teilhard is not trying here and now to cast into a single mould the data of revelation and

that of science as we know it today. Not only would such a juncture be hazardous and premature, but it would tend to stifle the spirit of independent research, which, in the case of both science and theology, is carried on by modes of investigation quite different and distinct. Rather, what he proposes to do at present is to confront the respective movements of each meridian and to examine them critically for signs of their future juncture. His presupposition is that a pole of truth already exists and that here and now the two lines of thought are dealing with one and the same objective reality. Teilhard believes he has found an extraordinary rapprochement between this revelation two thousand years old and his inductive vision of the world drawn from cosmic and organic evolution. The result is in fact a single great anticipation of that moment when, within the human mind, the two meridians reach their pole and the two sources of knowledge are perfectly harmonized.

What are the implications for Teilhard's thesis that the place which Christ has in the universe coincides with the place denoted in his scheme of the world by the point Omega? In the first place, it implies that Christ is linked, not simply in a moral or juridical context, but as it were structurally and organically with the cosmos. In and with the very process of creation the world is orientated upon him. Secondly, it implies that through Christ the world acquires its ultimate unity and cohesion. The point Omega is indeed the element that imparts to the whole of cosmic evolution its final unity--the point at which multiplicity is reduced to unity and on which all the threads of history converge. It is just such a function that Teilhard ascribes to Christ. He is the cornerstone in God's plan for the world. In him, as Paul says, all things are brought to unity. In the third instance, this thesis implies that Christ is the very meaning of history. The point Omega gives to evolution its orientation: de facto, evolution is focussed upon this final

term; and at the deepest level its laws are governed and regulated by this final goal. Even this property of the point Omega can be assigned to Christ. In the Christian perspective he is truly the meaning of history, in that everything is centered on him. The whole world order is to be discovered in Paul's thought: the entire lower world is centered in man--but man is centered in Christ, and Christ in God. Transposed into Teilhard's terms, this idea is expressed in this way: cosmogenesis eventuates through biogenesis in a noogenesis; but the noogenesis is consummated in a Christogenesis. As Teilhard envisaged it the world is an instrument for realizing the total Christ, looked at from this standpoint, Christ really does govern and control the vast abysses of time and space. However brief the span of his earthly life there is nothing to prevent his constituting the axis of a universal process of maturation.⁵⁸

Lastly, this thesis implies that Christ is the great source of power and energy which is drawing all things toward itself. From him there radiates an influence which in the final instance nothing can escape. "Being so situated (in our world view) Christ must necessarily, whatever the ultimately supernatural character of his domain, exert his radiating influence by degrees over the whole body of nature. Since, in the concrete sense, there is but one synthesizing process taking place from top to bottom in the universe, it follows that no element whatsoever, no movement at any level of the world, can exist outside the informing influence of the main centre of things. Thus, already co-extensive with space and time, Christ, by reason of his position at the world's central point, is automatically co-extensive with the scale of values which extend from the peaks of Spirit to the depths of matter."⁵⁹

Teilhard was acutely aware of the fact Christian revelation as such does not directly concern that natural process by which mankind makes progress on earth, which was the principal object of his phenomenological study. His

Christology (that is to say, a reflection upon the data of revelation regarding the Person of Christ), is concerned with postulating a connection between this natural process and the supernatural consummation of mankind. The following text makes this explicit: "For a Christian (on condition, of course, that his Christology recognizes in the collective consummation of humanity on earth not an indifferent or hostile event, but a preliminary condition necessary though insufficient for the establishment of God's kingdom at the Parousia),-- for such Christian, I say, the final biological success of man on earth is not a simple probability but a certitude: for Christ (and in him, virtually, the world) is already risen. This certitude, however, belongs to a supra-phenomenal realm and proceeds from an act of faith which is 'supernatural.'⁶⁰ In other words, Teilhard holds that in order to find in Christianity a positive guarantee of evolution's success, one must be ready to accept the collective consummation of humanity on earth as a necessary though insufficient condition for the coming of the Parousia (the return of Christ in glory at the end of time). "On the horizon of the Christian world the Parousia occupies a central place--something which, because men have awaited it over so many centuries, is easily forgotten. In this unique and supreme event, in which (as the Faith instructs us) the historic is to be fused with the Transcendental, the mystery of the Incarnation culminates and is manifested with the realism of a physical 'elucidation' of the universe."⁶¹

In a Christian perspective it is conceivable, therefore, that this moment of Christ's Parousia should coincide with the moment at which mankind will have attained its natural completion: namely, in the moment Omega. In a sense, this natural completion would form the condition, as it were, for the second coming of Christ at the end of the Age. "Christ's first coming to earth was only feasible--and nobody will dispute this--after the human species,

in the setting of the general process of evolution, had been anatomically constituted and from the social standpoint had attained in some degree a collective consciousness. If this much be granted, why not go a step further and ask whether in the case of his second and last coming also, Christ defers his return until the human community has realized to the full its natural potentialities, and thereby becomes qualified to receive through him its supernatural consummation? Indeed, if the historical development of spirit is bound by definite physical rules, must not this be equally the case--a fortiori, even--where its further unfolding and completion are concerned?"⁶²

This quotation is of special interest because it illustrates clearly how Teilhard distinguishes sharply between the natural and supernatural order and plainly declares that the natural completion of mankind can at most constitute a condition, and not a cause, of its supernatural consummation. The second coming of Christ, like the first, has the character of a free and unmerited gift.

The whole of history according to Teilhard de Chardin is to be understood as an ascent of the whole world toward its consummation in the natural and supernatural order--and the two forms of completion do not in any way conflict. For Teilhard this practical reconciliation means recognizing that "the supernatural Plenitude of Christ receives support from the natural plenitude of the world," and that "Christ gives himself to us through a world which is to reach completion even on the natural level by reason of its relationship to him." It means recognizing that, "concretely speaking, there is only a single process of synthesis going on from the top to the bottom of the universe," since "the natural and supernatural fulfilments of the world envelop each other, the latter incorporating and transforming the former." This means that "God unites himself in such a way to the axis of the natural evolution of spirit; taken in

its entirety, that Christogenesis appears as the sublimation of the whole of cosmogenesis."⁶³

Teilhard insists that the salvific action of God is also to be found at work in the natural energies of man, and, conversely, that the natural evolutionary process does not operate, and above all cannot reach its own natural fulfillment independently of Christ. Evolution (the progress of radial energy toward higher spiritual consciousness) is thus situated within the total supernatural movement from creation in Christ to the final Pleroma at the Parousia. The relationship is therefore that of part to whole, the distinction between the two movements being likewise so that between part and whole. Through his Church, which he inserts as an organic phylum into evolution, Christ slowly takes possession of the natural process and through his supernatural influence upon radial energy, gradually relates the whole movement to a higher order of being. If it is detached from man's final destiny, therefore, evolution simply cannot be understood, for the divine purpose in cosmic history is ultimately salvation history. Christ is at the beginning and end of evolution precisely because he is at the beginning and end of salvation.

EPILOGUE

In the thought of Teilhard de Chardin there are three different levels, each dependent upon the other two and therefore not always clearly distinguished. The first is his phenomenological analysis of the evolutionary process based on scientific data. This results in an hypothesis that the human species, if it continues to develop according to the pattern of increasing complexity and increasing consciousness, should in all probability converge after hundreds of thousands or even millions of years upon a point of planetary maturation, provisionally called Omega, at which mankind would cross a second threshold of reflection and enter into a single collectivity of consciousness that would bring to perfection all personal elements precisely in so far as they are persons.

This first level or stratum then merges with a second, which is Teilhard's "psychological act of faith" in an Omega which is personal and which must be personal, "loving and lovable at this very moment," if it is to activate the love energy of the world.⁶⁴ Fundamental to this philosophic "option," as Teilhard calls it,⁶⁵ is his conviction that true evolutionary progress resides not in the forces of tangential energy, now moving inevitably toward an ever-greater technical mastery of mind over matter, but rather in the forces of radial energy, which in men have become "psychosocial,"⁶⁶ urging him forward toward an ever-higher form of inter-personal communion. Because man today has become conscious of what is taking place in him, it follows that the successful outcome of evolution now depends upon his free decision to cooperate with these forces of radial energy. Hence Teilhard's insistence upon a divine Omega who, as personal source and object of love, cannot only motivates this free decision by giving certitude of eventual success, but also conquer man's native tendency toward repulsion and isolation.

These first two strata follow a single epistemological line. The third level or stratum, however, is based upon a totally different source of knowledge, namely Teilhard's faith in Christian revelation, and it is through this third level that he seeks to move from a philosophical hypothesis to an historical fact. Toward the end of The Phenomenon of Man he admits that his concept of a personal Omega was in fact motivated by the knowledge he had through faith of the Person of Christ.⁶⁷ Christ is the true Omega of evolution through whom mankind is destined to achieve its ultimate unity on a new plane of being. Full to understand evolution, therefore, means to see as its goal and centre of convergence "the figure of Christ wrapped in the mystery of his Resurrection and Parousia."⁶⁸ Teilhard's third level of thought thus completes and complements the other two. His phenomenological analysis and his psychological act of faith merge with the data of revelation to become a Christology in which the Prime Mover of creation actuates all the energies of the universe. "More urgently than ever I feel that the great question in the depths of my being is one of a faith, a 'Christology,' that will give the fullest possible stimulation to the forces of hominization in us--or, which comes to the same thing the forces of adoration."⁶⁹

The work of Teilhard is governed by two general presuppositions: first, that at the present stage of our knowledge of nature a synthetic interpretation--phenomenology of the universe--is beginning to be possible and, secondly, that in the realm of action as well as of thought a synthesis is possible between Christianity and the modern world view, with all that the latter involves. Anyone who rejects those hypotheses will, of course, dismiss Teilhard's work as a whole--although such a person might well be able to concur with many of Teilhard's views. But for anyone prepared to admit that the questions of a properly balanced world view and of a religious understanding of the world are

legitimate questions--for such a person Teilhard's work can serve to be valuable and helpful and a worthy stimulus to further reflection on the subject.

It may not be too far afield to say that Teilhard's primary intention was to show by what route it might be possible to arrive at a new unity in our thinking. Professor Bernard Delfgaauw has observed in this connection: "A conception of this sort is open to attack on a number of heads; but the crucial point is whether in its main features it is acceptable and really does provide the lines on which positive scientific, philosophical and theological enquiry can be co-ordinated. It is quite foolish to rush to the support of Teilhard's theory with uncritical enthusiasm--and just about as foolish to dismiss it out of hand. The only sensible thing is to submit to searching examination the various aspects and consequences of the theory in the fields of non-speculative science, philosophy and theology."⁷⁰ The diffused influence of his ideas can hardly be ignored or dismissed from the intellectual milieu of our time.

FOOTNOTES

¹Teilhard de Chardin, Comment je vois (Paris, 1963), p. 1.

²Teilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man (London and New York, 1959), pp. 43-45.

³Teilhard de Chardin, The Future of Man (London and New York, 1964), p. 12.

⁴Teilhard de Chardin, l'Activation de l'Energie (Paris, 1963), p. 267.

⁵Teilhard de Chardin, Le Christique (Paris, 1968), p. 3.

⁶The Phenomenon of Man, p. 78.

⁷Ibid., p. 102.

⁸Ibid., pp. 165-6.

⁹Ibid., p. 165.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 183-4.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 60-61.

¹²Ibid., pp. 180-1.

¹³Ibid., p. 169, note 1.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 168.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 183-4.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 221 and 223.

¹⁹The Future of Man, p. 72.

²⁰Ibid., p. 167.

²¹Ibid., p. 131.

²²Ibid., p. 132.

²³Ibid., p. 133.

²⁴Ibid., p. 119.

²⁵Ibid., p. 54.

²⁶Teilhard de Chardin, Science and Christ (London and New York, 1963),
p. 6.

²⁷The Future of Man, p. 89.

²⁸Ibid., p. 16.

²⁹Science and Christ, p. 6.

³⁰The Phenomenon of Man, p. 303.

³¹Ibid., p. 233.

³²Teilhard de Chardin, Comment je crois (Paris, 1968), p. 2.

³³The Phenomenon of Man, pp. 225-6.

³⁴Ibid., p. 229.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 229-234.

³⁶Ibid., p. 257.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 266-7.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 267-8.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Teilhard de Chardin, Le Groupe zoologique humain (Paris, 1956), p. 162.

⁴¹The Phenomenon of Man, p. 269.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 226-34.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 270-1.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 43 and 271.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 271 and 307.

⁴⁶Comment je vois, p. 14.

⁴⁷Teilhard de Chardin, Pantheisme et Christianisme (Paris, 1968), p. 3.

⁴⁸Teilhard de Chardin, Le Dieu de l'evolution (Paris, 1968), p. 3.

⁴⁹Teilhard de Chardin, L'Esprit de la terre (Paris, 1965), p. 59.

⁵⁰The Future of Man, p. 236.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 34.

⁵²Teilhard de Chardin, Le Christ Evoluteur (Paris, 1942), p. 4.

⁵³Teilhard de Chardin, L'Energie Humaine (Paris, 1965), p. 113.

⁵⁴The Phenomenon of Man, p. 308, note 2.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 298, note 1.

⁵⁶Teilhard de Chardin, Ma position intellectuelle, 1948, published as "La Pensee du P. Teilhard de Chardin par lui-meme," Les Etudes Philosophiques, X (1955), 581.

⁵⁷Comment je vois, p. 1.

⁵⁸Teilhard de Chardin, Christologie et Evolution (Paris, 1965), p. 9.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰The Future of Man, p. 268.

⁶¹Teilhard de Chardin, Trois Choses que je vois (Paris, 1948), p. 7.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁶³Comment je vois, p. 25.

⁶⁴The Phenomenon of Man, p. 284.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 237.

⁶⁶The word is Julian Huxley's and is used in his Introduction to the English edition of The Phenomenon of Man, pp. 18 and 27.

⁶⁷The Phenomenon of Man, p. 294.

⁶⁸Comment je vois, p. 23.

⁶⁹Teilhard de Chardin, Letters from a Traveller (London and New York, 1962), p. 344.

⁷⁰Bernard Delfgaauw, Teilhard de Chardin (London and New York, 1968), p. 35.

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TEILHARD DE CHARDIN'S WORLD VIEW
AND THE MEANING OF HISTORY

by

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The starting point of Teilhard de Chardin's world view is the idea that the universe is a four-dimensional continuum, by which he means that the world is completely incomprehensible if this historical dimension of true is not emphasized. Only by seeing the present world as a moment in an historical process does it become perhaps possible to understand the connection between all things and the structure, or at least the direction of the whole process.

The present stage of science indicates the great trends of this history. As distinguishes between three great periods we know. The first is the period in which the material world came into being: atoms, galaxies, stars and planets. The second is the period of the origin and development of life on our earth, while in the third, man arose from the world of animals with self-consciousness and freedom.

The whole process suggests that evolution is always going in the same directions of increasing complexity and consciousness. The increasing complexity can be seen on the level of atoms, molecules, living matter, and multi-cellular beings. Consciousness, or psychism, becomes apparent in the first forms of life, and becomes more and more developed and prominent in the different forms of animal species, so that various degrees of psychism can be distinguished.

In terms of complexity and consciousness, man occupies the highest place. By his brain and nervous system he is the most complex being we know, and at the same time his psychism represents the highest level of consciousness. From this, Teilhard concludes that the whole cosmic evolution is directed by the law of increasing complexity and increasing consciousness.

In this conception of things, man's place in nature becomes intelligible. He is placed on the top and is seen as the culminating point of evolution.

If the law of increasing complexity and increasing consciousness is indeed the fundamental law of the whole of evolution, then it can be expected that the direction of the future will be in the direction of a higher complexity and higher consciousness. This higher complexity and consciousness will be realized principally on the level of human society. Now is seen the threshold of the planetization and socialization of the whole of humanity. Already the interpersonal relations and the world organization are becoming more and more complicated, while on the other hand the intellectual and spiritual life of humanity is growing in depth and extent.

Teilhard's view of the world is that of a world with a convergent structure. He holds that these lines of convergence will ultimately come together at a specific point, at a center where the whole movement merges into one--a point which he describes as the point Omega--the final or furthest point of the whole cosmic process. Omega is a super-individual and super-personal center and is the goal of evolution. Apart from the existence of such a center upon which all forces converge, the cohesion of the totalized humanity is impossible. It is this goal of evolution, the unitive association of the entire community of men with Omega, which according to Teilhard gives history its meaning.