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THE PHENOMENON OF TEILHARD

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PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN died on Easter Sunday, April 10, 1955. This year thus marks the twentieth anniversary of his death, a particularly appropriate occasion, it would seem, to take a comprehensive look at "le phénomène Teilhard"; for after a lifetime spent among the phenomena of evolutionary history, Teilhard became himself a significant phenomenon of human cultural history. The modest circumstances of his death in New York City, far away from his beloved Paris, belied the far from modest controversy which was shortly to erupt. All his life he had sought a platform from which to address the world; only on the other side of the grave did he find one. The life itself had been a remarkable voyage of adventure and discovery across the immensities of evolutionary time, a life lived on many different continents, compounded of brilliant scientific achievement and frustrating ecclesiastical incomprehension. In the aftermath the seed laid unobtrusively into the ground would bear rich fruit, beyond all premeditation or expectation.

Since the publication of *Le phénomène humain* at the end of 1955, ten more volumes of *oeuvres* have appeared together with a weighty volume of essays written during the First World War; numerous volumes of letters have also been published along with ten volumes of scientific writings.[1] Unfortunately no critical editions of any of Teilhard's major works as yet exist. The number of studies devoted to exegeting and assessing this voluminous material is truly staggering.[2] Associations

[1] A complete listing of all of Teilhard's writings can be found in Claude Cuénot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, tr. V. Colimore (Baltimore, 1965) pp. 409–85. Cuénot's book also represents the most authoritative biographical depiction of Teilhard yet to appear. A more popular study has been undertaken by Robert Speaight, *The Life of Teilhard de Chardin* (New York, 1967). To these should be added the more recent biographical assessments by Teilhard's onetime religious superior, René d'Ouince, *Un prophète en procès: Teilhard de Chardin* 1 (Paris, 1970), and Louis Barjon, *Le combat de Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Quebec, 1971). Helpful lexical assistance with Teilhard's difficult vocabulary may be found in Cuénot's *Lexique Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris, 1963) and *Nouveau lexique Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris, 1968). Paul L'Archevêque's *Teilhard de Chardin: Index analytique* (Quebec, 1967) will also prove useful in tracking down particular themes scattered throughout Teilhard's many writings.

[2] Dating back to 1956, the July-December number of *Archivum historicum Societatis Jesu* contains a yearly listing, in all languages, of books and articles dealing with Teilhard. A very useful bibliography of primary and secondary sources, prepared by Romano Almagno, is to be found in Alice Vallé Knight, *The Meaning of Teilhard de Chardin: A Primer* (Old Greenwich, Conn., 1974) pp. 149–65. The *Teilhard Review*, published in England, is an indispensable source of information on Teilhardian activities and publications.

dedicated to the task of promoting Teilhard's work and exploring its relevance to new areas of concern presently exist in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain and Ireland, the Philippines, Poland, and the United States. Whatever may be said about a waning of excited interest in the Teilhardian vision, it is nonetheless quite obvious that twenty years after his death he remains an energizing presence throughout the world, owing to his writings and to his many loyal disciples. The phenomenon of Teilhard may well be entering upon a new phase but it is far from exhausted.

HOW IS TEILHARD TO BE READ?

Le phénomène humain did not appear in an English translation until 1959;[3] hence Teilhard became a phenomenon of the English-speaking world only during the 1960's. It was entirely understandable that this masterwork, which represents Teilhard's most systematic delineation of his understanding of evolutionary history, should have been selected to introduce the Teilhardian vision to a wider public. This decision did, however, cause considerable problems, initially, as to how the French Jesuit paleontologist was to be read and hence interpreted. Teilhard is not a particularly reliable guide into his own thought on this score. In the Preface to *The Phenomenon of Man* Teilhard maintains that "if this book is to be properly understood, it must be read not as a work on metaphysics, still less as a sort of theological essay, but purely and simply as a scientific treatise." [4] Few commentators are prepared to take this claim seriously.[5] In the words of Pierre Grenet, Teilhard must be viewed as "a philosopher in spite of himself." [6] Teilhard's own view of metaphysics as "a sort of 'geometry' which seeks to deduce the universe

[3] Under the title *The Phenomenon of Man*, tr. B. Wall (New York, 1959). A revised translation appeared in 1965. Hereafter cited as PM. Helpful guide books to PM have been provided by W. Henry Kenney, *A Path through Teilhard's Phenomenon* (Dayton, 1970) and Maurice Keating and H. R. F. Keating, *Understanding Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: A Guide to the Phenomenon of Man* (London, 1969). A critical evaluation of the English translations of Teilhard's principal writings has been prepared by Paul J. Kelly, *A Teilhard Corrigenda* (New York, 1973). This is available from the American Teilhard Association for the Future of Man, 867 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021. The Association is the principal promoter of Teilhard study in the United States along with The Phenomenon of Man (POM) Project in Canago Park, California.

[4] PM, p. 29.

[5] See, e.g., Joseph Donceel, "Teilhard de Chardin: Scientist or Philosopher?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 5 (1965) 248–66; Gaston Isaye, "The Method of Teilhard de Chardin: A Critical Study," *New Scholasticism* 41 (1967) 31–57; Norbert Luyten, "Réflexions sur la méthode de Teilhard de Chardin," *Contributions to Logic and Methodology in Honor of I. M. Bochenski*, ed. Anna Teresa Tymieniecka (Amsterdam, 1965) pp. 290–314.

[6] Pierre Grenet, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin ou le philosophe malgré lui* (Paris, 1960).

from certain *a priori* principles"[7] undoubtedly led him astray in attempting to assess the true nature of what he himself called his own hyperphysics. While the metaphysical elements in Teilhard's thought have been generally recognized, Ian Barbour has recently suggested that it is more specifically a process metaphysics, reminiscent of both Bergson and Whitehead, which ties together the scientific and biblical dimensions of the Teilhardian world view.[8] Barbour distinguishes five possible ways of reading *The Phenomenon of Man:* (1) as evolutionary science, (2) as poetry and mysticism, (3) as natural theology, (4) as Christian theology, and (5) as process philosophy. According to Barbour,

A common process metaphysics runs through all the works. He has, in short, given us a genuine synthesis of scientific and religious insights, rather than a natural theology derived from science alone and a separate Christian theology derived from revelation alone. I conclude, then, that Teilhard's most significant intellectual contribution is a *process theology* which combines the fourth and fifth classifications, Christian theology and process philosophy.[9]

While important philosophical insights are to be found in the Teilhardian corpus, it is clear that Teilhard's concerns were neither principally nor directly philosophical in character. With the subsequent publication of *The Divine Milieu*, *The Hymn of the Universe*, and especially the large block of essays dating from the period of the First World War, it has become quite evident that Teilhard is first and foremost a religious thinker whose focus is decidedly Christological in nature. If the term were not open to so much misunderstanding, it might well be most accurate to speak of Teilhard as a religious apologist. Teilhard was a religious apologist in much the same sense that Paul Tillich was a religious apologist, or at least thought of himself as working out an apologetical theology in contrast to the prevailing kerygmatic theology of his period. Teilhard, like Tillich, lived on the boundary between two worlds. He describes the boundary situation himself in a well-known paragraph from *How I Believe*.

The originality of my belief lies in its being rooted in two domains of life which are commonly regarded as antagonistic. By upbringing and intellectual training, I belong to the "children of heaven"; but by temperament, and by my professional studies, I am a "child of the earth." Situated thus by life at the heart of two worlds with whose theory, idiom and feelings intimate experience has made me familiar, I have not erected any watertight bulkhead inside myself. On the con-

[7] Letters of April 29, 1934 and December 3, 1954, quoted in Henri de Lubac, *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, tr. R. Hague (New York, 1967) p. 169.

[8] Ian Barbour, "Teilhard's Process Metaphysics," *Journal of Religion* 49 (1969) 136–59.

[9] Ian Barbour, "Five Ways of Reading Teilhard," *Soundings* 51 (1968) 138. This essay is also available in *Teilhard Review* 3 (1968) 3–20.

trary, I have allowed two apparently conflicting influences full freedom to react upon one another deep within me. And now, at the end of that operation, after thirty years devoted to the pursuit of interior unity, I have the feeling that a synthesis has been effected naturally between the two currents that claim my allegiance. The one has not destroyed, but has reinforced, the other. Today I believe probably more profoundly than ever in God, and certainly more than ever in the world. On an individual scale, may we not see in this the particular solution, at least in outline, of the great spiritual problem which the vanguard of mankind, as it advances, is now coming up against?[10]

Two sides of Teilhard's own personality required reconciliation, and apparently neither was willing to surrender the field to the other. Neither the humanist strain in his personality which bound him in solidarity to the children of earth nor the religious strain in his personality which bound him in solidarity to the children of heaven would relinquish their hold on him. Heaven and earth belonged together for him in a dialectical unity. The two audiences which Teilhard addresses in his writings, the party of science and the party of religion, were initially two dimensions of his own self. His own personal journey involved the fusing of these two into one. After thirty years of reflection, he stood where he hoped his two presently opposed and conflicted audiences would one day stand themselves. What once diverged, like the meridians on the southern side of the equator, have now been made to converge, like the meridians on the northern side of the equator.[11] What has happened personally can happen collectively. This is both Teilhard's faith and his hope. He offers himself to both parties as a possible paradigm of their unity up ahead. To accept Teilhard's solution, however, would mean that neither party would be permitted to remain in its present form. A death would be exacted if a resurrection were envisioned. Teilhard understood himself to be a prophetical sign summoning each side to the dispute to judgment and the renunciation of self-serving claims. He was perhaps also inevitably compelled to understand himself to be the sacrificial victim whose work of negotiation would lead to rejection by both sides as the price of ultimate reconciliation.

Teilhard wished to be both a thoroughly modern man and a single-mindedly committed Christian at the same time. This concern lies at the heart of his method. He wished to bring together the world of modern life and the world of religious faith. This concern also lies at the heart of his ministry. Teilhard's method is not unlike Tillich's "method of correla-

[10] *How I Believe*, tr. R. Hague (New York, 1969) pp. 10–11.

[11] This image is employed in PM, p. 30. A very suggestive approach to the use of imagery in PM has been made by Gerald Reedy, "Metaphor in *The Phenomenon of Man*," *Thought* 46 (1971) 247–61.

tion," for Teilhard too seeks to listen to the questions arising out of the circumstances of modern life and then to address the gospel response in an appropriate way to those questions. Once again like Tillich,[12] Teilhard senses that the central question perplexing modern man is the issue of meaning, personal, social, and cosmic. The gospel, in the symbol of the kingdom of God, possesses a healing and renewing word of response for this anxious questioning, if only the gospel message can be presented in such a way as to cohere with the evolutionary assumptions of modern thought. This then will become Teilhard's task: the creation of a testimony rooted in a personal quest and a personal resolution which will have sufficient power and cogency to illuminate the collective questioning and collective irresolution of modern man. By way of reply to Kant's three questions in the *Critique of Pure Reason*—(1) What can I know? (2) What ought I to do? (3) What may I hope?—Teilhard's work seems to say: (1) The evidence of evolutionary science suggests that the cosmic process has a direction and hence a final meaning. (2) We should therefore co-operate with the upward thrust of the evolutionary movement and build the earth together. (3) As a result, we may hope to enjoy together the ultimate and unending fulfilment which is the kingdom of God, man's Omega.

Teilhard's thought might also be appropriately understood in terms of Moltmann's notion of theology as a *spes quaerens intellectum*.[13] While his hope is clearly rooted in resurrection faith and hence is thoroughly religious in its origins, he was especially concerned to "be ready at any time to give an answer to any man that calls for a reasonable account of the hope that is in you" (1 Pt 3:15). Hence he turned to the arena of evolutionary history for further validation of his hope and for a more convincing context from which to address his contemporaries. Referring to the two alternatives of absolute optimism or absolute pessimism, Teilhard remarks: "On neither side is there any tangible evidence to produce. Only, in support of hope, there are rational invitations to an act

[12] Tillich comments on PM as follows: "Long after I had written the sections on life and its ambiguities, I happened to read Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's book *The Phenomenon of Man*. It encouraged me greatly to know that an acknowledged scientist had developed ideas about the dimensions and processes of life so similar to my own. Although I cannot share his rather optimistic vision of the future, I am convinced by his description of the evolutionary processes in nature. Of course, theology cannot rest on scientific theory" (*Systematic Theology* 3 [Chicago, 1963] 5). I am not aware that Teilhard had any direct contact with Tillich's work. An attempt to illuminate some features of Teilhard's thought by means of Tillich's work has been made by Robert V. Wilshire, "Teilhard de Chardin As Philosopher of History," *Teilhard de Chardin: Remythologization* (Waco, Texas, 1970) pp. 59–101, esp. 81–101.

[13] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope* (New York, 1967) p. 33.

of faith." [14] The hope, in Teilhard's case, came before the rational invitations and it did not in fact derive principally from them. His work represents an attempt on hope's part to achieve understanding—an understanding of the sweep of cosmic evolution and of man's place in it. It is not in its origins an attempt on the part of scientific reason to reach a stance of hope. Teilhard hopes in order to understand (*spero ut intelligam*[15]). Hope is a way of seeing, and what hope sees despair will never see. The seeing that arises out of absolute optimism is not the seeing that arises out of absolute pessimism. The "facts" take on a quite different appearance as one's optic is altered by hope. Teilhard is waging war on three fronts: (1) against those who have no hope whatever, those who are walking down the road of absolute pessimism; (2) against those Christians who do hope but whose hope is too individualistic and otherworldly, those who have no hope for the future of the earth; (3) against those humanists who do have hope for the future of the earth and for the future of man but whose hope does not go far enough because it cannot break through the death barrier. Neither Christianity as it now stands nor humanism as it now stands is sufficiently optimistic; neither has dared to hope boldly enough, absolutely enough. The party of absolute optimism (and it has few adherents) draws sustenance from a comprehensive hope which embraces the whole of cosmic evolution, matter and spirit, man and nature, life and death, within the resurrection power of the Christian God. The party of absolute optimism represents the reconciliation of Christian hope and humanist hope into a new evolutionary mutant.

It seems to be widely assumed that Teilhard's work is to be read as also constituting a massive apologetic for modern science and its accompanying technological exploits. There is some truth in this assumption. Teilhard does argue that Christians must abandon an unsophisticated opposition to the modern evolutionary world view based on the presumption that evolutionary thinking must of necessity be materialistic, atheistic, and promotive of moral anarchy.[16] Teilhard's vision is designed precisely to counter such a presumption by making available an alternative interpretation of the evolutionary data which tips the balance more in the direction of spirit, theism, and co-operative enterprise. What was originally perceived as an unmitigated threat may in this way be seen to represent an unusual opportunity to rethink the Christian gospel. There is a richness to the gospel, Teilhard contends, which cannot be satisfactorily elaborated within the limited categories of the classical

[14] PM, p. 233.

[15] Moltmann, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[16] See, e.g., *The Vision of the Past*, tr. J. M. Cohen (New York, 1966) pp. 132–42.

theology. Moreover, science and technology have brought the human species to an unprecedented planetary threshold which exposes for the first time the genuine possibility, indeed the absolute necessity, of world community. What could be more appropriate or more unexpectedly relevant to such a situation than the gospel message of agape-love, the very energy needed to cement the human community together. Finally, Teilhard feels that the Christian tradition has something important to learn from the scientific and technological traditions in their spirit of inquiry, their sense of responsibility for the future, and their commitment to the earth.

But if it is true that Teilhard is seeking to win a hearing for the modern scientific world view within the Church, it is just as true that he simultaneously devotes considerable critical attention to the limitations and inadequacies of science and technology. The argument of *The Phenomenon of Man* in particular makes this quite evident. At the conclusion of the very first chapter, a chapter in which the viewpoint of science has been under discussion, a quite searching question is raised:

> 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?[17]

Science as presently constituted represents a valid way of seeing, but nonetheless a restricted and deficient one. The scientific approach to phenomena from without needs to be supplemented and corrected by an approach to the phenomena from within, as the following chapter on "The Within of Things" clearly demonstrates. Science is unable to establish a definitive and final meaning to the evolutionary process; in fact, it leaves one with the distinct impression that the process is ultimately without meaning at all. And yet without a sense of overarching purpose can mankind today take in hand the tiller of evolution with anything like the enthusiasm and dedication which will be required for success? Finally, science founders on the problem of death, since it can see no way through it and nothing beyond it. In a later chapter at the beginning of Book 4 the issue of science is once again raised, this time in relation to the agonizing problems convulsing the modern nation-states as they face the alternatives of global disaster or planetary unification. While applauding the role of science and technology in bringing mankind to the threshold of a new age, Teilhard is plainly sceptical about their capacity to lead mankind into the promised land. They have together laid a foundation at the level of the tangential but they will not be able to

[17] PM, p. 52.

complete the superstructure at the level of the radial. Having made the world interdependent in the economic, military, and political spheres, can science and technology bring about genuine human community across the world? Teilhard thinks not. Science and technology are incapable of activating the kind of love-energy needed to bind men together into a truly personalizing form of union. They are likewise incapable of solving the problem of death and thereby providing a guarantee of permanent meaning.

Teilhard's sharpest strictures, however, are reserved for the final chapter of Book 4, entitled "The Ultimate Earth." He laments the subversion of the scientific spirit by what is now familiar to us under the rubric of the military-industrial complex:

> Everything is subordinated to the increase in industrial production and to armaments. The scientist and the laboratories which multiply our powers still receive nothing, or next to nothing. We behave as though we expected discoveries to fall ready-made from the sky like rain or sunshine, while men concentrate on the serious business of killing each other and eating. Let us stop to think for a moment of the proportion of human energy devoted, here and now, to the pursuit of truth. Or, in still more concrete terms, let us glance at the percentage of a nation's revenue allotted in its budget for the investigation of clearly defined problems whose solution would be of vital consequence for the world. If we did we should be staggered. Less is provided annually for all the pure research all over the world than for one capital ship. Surely our great-grandsons will not be wrong if they think of us as barbarians?[18]

The science of the future, however, will have to do more than merely disengage itself from its entangling alliances with corporate business and the machinery of defense. A fundamental reorientation in the direction of the human will be required: "If we are going towards a human era of science, it will be eminently an era of human science. Man, the knowing subject, will perceive at last that man, 'the object of knowledge,' is the key to the whole science of nature." [19] To be even more precise: "We need and are irresistibly being led to create, by means of and beyond all physics, all biology and all psychology, *a science of human energetics*." [20] Such a revision of the scientific enterprise would ultimately put an end to whatever presently remains of the conflict between science and religion and eventually turn that conflict into co-operation. In short, Teilhard's critique of the limitations, inadequacies, and ambiguities of science leads him in the end to reconstruct science according to a model more compatible with his own understanding of the dynamism of human evolution in its present planetary phase.

[18] PM, p. 279. [19] PM, p. 281. [20] PM, p. 283.

Teilhard combined in his life an intense and highly professional interest in scientific research with a deep and abiding intellectual and pastoral concern for the life of the spirit. The Teilhardian corpus is an amalgam of conflicting traditions, an attempt at synthesis and reconciliation. The various strands woven together by Teilhard himself can be unraveled, thus yielding up variant, even incompatible, readings of his intent and meaning. Was Teilhard a scientist, a philosopher, a theologian? He has been claimed and rebuffed by representatives of each of these standpoints. He was, of course, in varying measure each of these things and all of them together. And yet there is a need to set these contending viewpoints in some kind of hierarchical order in Teilhard's life and especially in his writings. It seems reasonably clear at this point in the development of Teilhard studies that he is to be understood principally as a religious thinker with a decidedly apologetic bias in favor of the Christian tradition, at least in some reconstructed form. The dialogue which structures Teilhard's thought is not primarily between Christian faith and the most representative elements in contemporary philosophical reason. This type of dialogue represents the more usual path in apologetic procedure. It is rather the dialogue between Christian faith and the most representative elements in contemporary scientific reason which gives substance to Teilhard's world view. While interest in Teilhard outside religious and theological circles has been sustained and widespread, it is to his influence as a religious thinker within the Catholic community that we must now attend.

THE MICROPHASE OF TEILHARD'S INFLUENCE[21]

One of the questions which has inevitably and insistently arisen in the reading of Teilhard's works within the Catholic Church is that of orthodoxy. This is a question which can be and has been asked even in philosophical and scientific circles. Its more natural locus is, of course, within the religious tradition in which Teilhard stood, to which he avowed loyalty throughout his life, and on whose behalf he claimed to be

[21] The terms "microphase" and "macrophase" as employed in this article have reference to two different interpretive contexts in which Teilhard has been placed. The microphase of Teilhardian interpretation refers to the efforts made within the Catholic community, Teilhard's own native habitat, to grapple with the meaning of his thought and to explore its relationship to the larger tradition. Questions of accurate exegesis and orthodoxy tend to dominate the microphasic stage. The macrophase of Teilhardian interpretation refers to the efforts made within other traditions (including other Christian traditions) to enter into dialogue, both sympathetic and critical, with Teilhard's position so as to be instructed by it as well as to bring to light its limitations. Questions of relationship to other standpoints tend to dominate the macrophasic stage. I am indebted to Prof. Thomas Berry of Fordham University for the terminology involved in this distinction.

a spokesman. The issue of orthodoxy vexed Teilhard during his lifetime, and in large measure his painful exclusion from positions of influence as well as his frustrating inability to publish outside the field of technical science were owing to suspicions of heterodoxy. Teilhard himself made some sporadic and largely schematic efforts to demonstrate his continuity with at least some significant segments of the biblical and patristic traditions by way of vindicating his own orthodoxy. However, it was only after his major writings became available for large-scale public scrutiny that the concern over orthodoxy became clamorous. In the face of mounting confusion and controversy, Church officials were increasingly under pressure to take up sides in the dispute. Defenders of Teilhard's essential orthodoxy were not lacking, but the burden of rebuttal fell, quite naturally and understandably, most heavily on the Jesuits and even more particularly on the shoulders of Teilhard's friend of long standing, Henri de Lubac. The lines of countervailing force met decisively in 1962, when a Monitum was issued in Rome and de Lubac's massive apologia, *La pensée religieuse de Teilhard de Chardin*, appeared in Paris.[22] No further direct action emanated from Rome after this episode, but the number of high-quality Jesuit and non-Jesuit defenses continued to mount substantially.[23] A certain hermeneutical procedure thus came to dominate the field of Teilhard studies, a procedure dominated by defensive concerns. Certain canons of interpretation became firmly established and are worth noting more precisely. (1) A full reading of the Teilhardian corpus is an absolute prerequisite for establishing the appropriate interpretive context for any particular text, inasmuch as isolated texts are inevitably misleading and must be seen against the background of the whole. (2) The contextual framework for considering the orthodoxy of Teilhard's total thought must be the total

[22] De Lubac's book was subsequently translated into English under the title *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin.*

[23] The most substantial systematic treatments of Teilhard by Jesuit scholars are: Piet Smulders, *The Design of Teilhard de Chardin*, tr. A. Gibson (Westminster, Md., 1967); Henri de Lubac, *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin;* Christopher Mooney, *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ* (New York, 1966); Emile Rideau, *The Thought of Teilhard de Chardin*, tr. R. Hague (New York, 1967); Robert Faricy, *Teilhard de Chardin's Theology of the Christian in the World* (New York, 1967); René d'Ouince, *Un prophète en procès: Teilhard de Chardin*, 2 vols. Among non-Jesuit studies mention should be made of Bruno de Solages, *Teilhard de Chardin: Témoignage et étude sur le développement de sa pensée* (Toulouse, 1967); Donald P. Gray, *The One and the Many: Teilhard de Chardin's Vision of Unity* (New York, 1969); Norbert Max Wildiers, *An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin* (New York, 1968). Inasmuch as the presentation of Teilhard's theological thought which follows shortly is drawn principally from these sources, no detailed attempt will be made in the notes to pinpoint the specific locations where individual themes are treated by these authors.

Catholic tradition in its biblical, patristic, and medieval development, not just the Catholic tradition in its narrower post-Tridentine or textbook form; it is possible as a result to see that Teilhard often makes contact with tendencies in the tradition which are little known and appreciated or have by reason of historical happenstance remained insufficiently elaborated. (3) All the parts of Teilhard's world view flow together into a coherent whole and hence are of a piece; parts of Teilhard's system cannot be discarded willy-nilly or wrenched from their setting within the whole and then evaluated within the framework of some other system. (4) Ambiguous essays often written as occasional pieces or for the clarification of a particular point should be judged in the light of material written for publication or reflective of a more considered judgment.

Two major conclusions were then drawn from these interpretive guidelines. In the first place, Teilhard's version of the Christian gospel represents a viable if not fully adequate presentation of the Christian message in a culture whose presuppositions are scientific and evolutionary. It is therefore not the only possible version of Christianity, but it does represent a meaningful alternative within contemporary culture to the static world view dominating the classical version. This suggests that the apparent novelty of Teilhard's thought is in large measure to be attributed to the novelty of his evolutionary world view rather than to the heterodoxy of his underlying faith. In the second place, it must be admitted that there are inadequacies, limitations, lacunae, and ambiguities in Teilhard's thought on particular issues, but these are to be expected in any original thinker and are even more likely to occur in someone who was not a professional theologian. *Sentire cum ecclesia* was Teilhard's abiding aim, whatever the deficiencies of his execution may have been at times. The value of this hermeneutical work for an accurate exegesis of Teilhard's thought can hardly be overestimated, especially in light of the highly charged emotional atmosphere which existed. These criteria make laborious research essential and place a premium on solid scholarship. The debate is thus removed from the camp of merely casual observers. Such at least is the intent.

While Teilhard's thought is remarkably coherent throughout, it is nonetheless incomplete. Many pressing theological issues find no response within his system or are treated in a merely cavalier fashion. His major theological contributions would seem to lie principally in three areas: creation, Christology, and eschatology. In addition, he made some important strides in the direction of a contemporary Christian spirituality. While criticized by friend and foe on many scores, Teilhard left himself most vulnerable to attack on the question of evil. Each of these areas needs to be looked at more closely in brief detail.

Creation

The whole of Christian doctrine was reinterpreted dynamically and processively by Teilhard so as to make it intelligible within the context of an evolutionary world view. The reinterpretation of the doctrine of creation is foundational for the entire enterprise. Creation is not construed by Teilhard as an exclusively divine act at the beginning of all things, although he does attempt with some difficulty to make room for such a *creatio ex nihilo* at the beginning. Creation is rather a continuous process of becoming, novelty, and unification. The creatures themselves share in the creative advance and co-operate with the divine energizing activity according to their individual capacities and opportunities. Creation is both continuous and participative. God neither creates alone nor is His creative work already completed. The consummating creative act is therefore eschatological and depends upon creaturely co-operation. The creative process consists in an ongoing creative union through which the multiplicity of both matter and mankind is gradually brought into ever more complex patterns of symbiotic arrangement. Creation is essentially a process of unification tending towards a final state of unity or, better yet, community. The process is also an ascending one, moving upward, somewhat in the manner of a spiral, from one ontological level to another, all the way from the geosphere through the biosphere into the noosphere. Heightened complexification unceasingly gives rise to more elevated states of consciousness and interiority. The process of spiritualization tends towards a final state of coreflection, coconsciousness, and compenetrating spirit.

The creative process, however, is neither straightforward nor untrammeled. Running countercurrent to the upward sweep of unification and spiritualization, a trend towards multiplication, fragmentation, and materialization is also discernible. The ascending history of life is matched by a descending history of death; the kingdom of spirit is opposed in its forward march by a kingdom of disintegrating matter. The two-cities theme of the Augustinian tradition is thus given cosmic extension and contemporary viability. And so the problem of evil makes its inevitable appearance. Evil is to some extent simply an unavoidable by-product of a world undergoing evolutionary unification from a state of initial multiplicity. Since groping and hence chance elements are mixed together with directionality and purpose, waste, suffering, and aborted process are to be expected. Such ambiguities will become further complicated when responsibility for the evolutionary ascent is placed solidly and irrevocably into the hands of man, a creature capable of reflective thought and hence also capable of asking potentially perilous questions about the meaning of the process as such.

But evil is something more than an annoying by-product of a processive creation. It is also something more than a price to be paid for the advanced consciousness and enhanced freedom of Homo sapiens. It appears to be a "positive" force of negativity, not dissimilar to Freud's conjectured death-instinct. There exists in both matter and man a "positive" resistance to unity, spirit, and futurity. A destructive need to stand alone in isolated individuality is at war with the constructive *élan* of the evolutionary movement towards a standing together in community. Teilhard contends that the elements need not fear their ultimate loss in the process of evolutionary socialization and collectivization; for, as he frequently reiterates, "l'union différencie." Evil, for Teilhard, consists in a perverse standing apart, a refusal to enter participatively into the community of creatures.[24] In a word, evil is disunion.[25] Salvation, the healing and health of the element, lies in organic solidarity with the other. But the resistance to such a way of salvation is real and Teilhard recognized it. He also frequently pondered over its origin,[26] although he was actually much more concerned about finding successful redemptive strategies for overcoming it.

Redemption is a subsidiary category within Teilhard's system. Nonetheless the creative process is also at the same time always a redemptive process because of the evil necessarily connected with the creative unification of the many and the resistance to such unification inherent in the elements. Redemption is no more a momentary act to be located at a specific point in evolutionary history than is creation.[27] Redemption is

[24] In this regard, de Lubac, *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, p. 119, remarks: "Nevertheless, he reflected deeply on sin, even if he did not cover the whole of the problem. Following many other great spiritually minded thinkers, he pointed out its effect of causing disintegration; and in his evolutionary outlook he redisclosed an important dogmatic tradition whose echo had been lost: *Ubi peccata, ibi multitudo*." The theme is explored by de Lubac in greater depth in his *Catholicism* (New York, 1950) chap. 1.

[25] In *The Divine Milieu*, tr. B. Wall (New York, 1965) p. 80 n.1, Teilhard speaks of sin in terms of "positive gestures of disunion."

[26] For much of his life Teilhard was attracted to a precosmic theory of the Fall, as I have attempted to show in my *The One and the Many*, chap. 3. Teilhard's own unrelenting questioning of the traditional position in the light of evolutionary theory undoubtedly had the effect of stimulating a reappraisal in others. This may be seen in Smulders, *op. cit.*, pp. 162–88; A. Hulsbosch, *God in Creation and Evolution*, tr. M. Versfeld (New York, 1965) pp. 14–49; P. Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin: A Theological View*, tr. J. Donceel (Chicago, 1968) pp. 192–99; S. Trooster, *Evolution and the Doctrine of Original Sin*, tr. A. A. Ter Haar (Westminster, Md., 1968). Teilhard's work has also had the effect of stimulating new approaches to monogenism and the immediate creation of the soul, as is amply demonstrated in Robert North, *Teilhard and the Creation of the Soul* (Milwaukee, 1967).

[27] Teilhard's insistence that creation, fall, incarnation, and redemption are coextensive with the entire cosmogenetic and Christogenetic process (cf. Mooney, *op. cit.*, pp. 176–77) seems to find a parallel in John Macquarrie (*Principles of Christian Theology* [New York, 1966] p. 247) when he writes: "Creation, reconciliation, and consummation are not three

coterminous with the process as a whole and is to be understood as continuous in character. It is also participative in the sense that the creatures themselves must co-operate with the divine redemptive action for redemptive unification to take place. The doctrine of redemption is interpreted by Teilhard in strictest parallel with the doctrine of creation. Teilhard does not fall into the danger, so evident in certain other twentieth-century theologies, of overplaying the redemptive motif at the expense of the creative.[28] Teilhard's efforts to hold the two themes together yield significant Christological dividends, as we shall presently see.

Christology

There can be little question that Christology stands at the very center of Teilhard's concerns.[29] From the time of the first unmistakably Teilhardian essays, written during the First World War, right up until the year of his death, he was preoccupied with the possibilities of a Christology commensurate with the cosmic dimensions of the evolutionary perspective. His contribution to Christological reflection is both original and suggestive; it is nonetheless limited. He shows no interest in the scholarly quest of the historical Jesus; in fact, his writings are nearly as silent about the historical Jesus as those of his mentor Paul. Nor was he particularly concerned about updating the ontological Christology stemming from Chalcedon. His energies were almost wholly absorbed by a desire to develop a functional Christology of cosmic proportions. It is not the person of the Christ so much as his work which, in Teilhard's judgment, requires reinterpretation today. Dominating the Teilhardian Christology is the figure of the risen Christ or the Christ as living Spirit

successive activities of God, still less could we think that he has to engage in reconciliation because creation was unsuccessful. The three indeed are represented successively in the narrative presentation of the Christian faith, but theologically they must be seen as three moments in God's great unitary action. Creation, reconciliation, and consummation are not separate acts but only distinguishable aspects of one awe-inspiring movement of God—his love or letting-be, whereby he confers, sustains, and perfects the being of the creatures." For a largely unsympathetic reflection of Macquarrie's on PM, see "The Natural Theology of Teilhard de Chardin," *Studies in Christian Existentialism* (Philadelphia, 1965) pp. 183–93. A still predominantly negative assessment is also evident in his later *God and Secularity* (Philadelphia, 1967) pp. 95–96.

[28] This issue in twentieth-century theology is perceptively discussed by Daniel Day Williams, *God's Grace and Man's Hope* (New York, 1965).

[29] In addition to Mooney's well-known study of Teilhard's Christology, mention should also be made of George Maloney, *The Cosmic Christ: From Paul to Teilhard* (New York, 1968); Francisco Bravo, *Christ in the Thought of Teilhard de Chardin*, tr. C. B. Larme (Notre Dame, Ind., 1967); Peter Schellenbaum, *Le Christ dans l'énergétique teilhardienne* (Paris, 1971).

present in our immediate experience and speaking to our present needs. Teilhard is little drawn to the past except to the extent that the past holds significant clues to the present and especially the future. He was, as he himself said, primarily "a pilgrim of the future," even if he was on his "way back from a journey made wholly in the past." [30] For Teilhard, the Christ-Spirit[31] is the active Agent, the unifying Center, of the creative and redemptive process. Through his energizing presence the many, at all levels of evolutionary development, are made one and the trend towards destructive fragmentation is overcome. In Jesus of Nazareth we perceive the supreme exemplification of the elementary life (i.e., the life of the individual element) lived in communion with the whole and for the sake of the whole. In him the whole past of evolutionary history is recapitulated and elevated onto a new level of consciousness and community.

Furthermore, Jesus points the way to the future and also to the end. In his ministry he directs men towards the source of an unbounded love-energy which alone is capable of creatively uniting all things by redemptively overcoming the ambiguities and negativities inherent in all forms of partisan and partial love. He is himself one with this source of unlimited love-energy, its instrument and servant. The cross of Jesus is not principally expiatory; rather it reveals as nothing else could the terrible price which must be paid by man if evolution is to succeed. Evolution is itself a way of the cross, a way of suffering love. The atoning work of Jesus is not merely a thing of the past; it continues on today in his present at-one-ing activity as the unitive Head of his cosmic Body. This atoning action is even more frequently presented by Teilhard under the image of the Christ as the Form or Soul of the One Body which is presently coming into being and which will only be complete in what Teilhard calls the pleromized universe when "God will be all in all." The divine creative and redemptive activity is not grasped by Teilhard in terms of efficient causality involving the model of the artisan-maker who stands outside the world, but in terms of formal (or quasi-formal) causality involving the model of a soul-like unitive agency from within. The otherness or transcendence of the immanent Center of unification is never lost sight of by Teilhard, but at the same time he refuses to let go of an intrinsic God-world intimacy. For him, the Christ is never simply an individual or an element; he is rather always the universal Christ, that is, Christ and the universe together, or the cosmic Christ, that is, Christ and

[30] Letter of October 23, 1923, in *Letters from a Traveller*, tr. B. Wall (New York, 1962) p. 101.

[31] On the Spirit in Teilhard, see Ewert Cousins, "Teilhard and the Theology of the Spirit," *Cross Currents* 19 (1969) 159–77.

the cosmos together. It is the *totus Christus* which is always in view, the Divine Milieu, which is both Center and centered environment. In this sense Teilhard's ecclesiology is contained within his cosmic Christology, because he is incapable of making any sharp distinction between Christ and Church, Christ and his Body. His Christology and ecclesiology both focus on the mystical or cosmic Body of Christ and find their unity there.[32]

Teilhard speaks of the Church as a "phylum of love," [33] the community where cosmic love is both prized and practiced, at least by its most authentic representatives. The Church is the locus of the energizing presence of the risen Christ, the One who, as Teilhard puts it, activates love-energy. The visible, structured Church is paid but meager attention by Teilhard, in much the same way that the historical Jesus is largely assumed but rarely attended to. His relationship to the Roman Church is understandably ambivalent, combining feelings of deep loyalty with those of considerable disappointment and frustration. His personal problems with the Church only partly explain his over-all neglect of traditional ecclesiological issues. Not only did he have little use for or patience with the juridical and moral categories of the inherited ecclesiology in relation to his own more "physical," biological, or organic categories, but his vision of Church finally transcends any particular church to embrace the cosmic Body of God. The Church in its largest sense (and he does also intend the word in a narrower and more usual sense) is the cosmic process itself, the creative and redemptive process of Christogenesis uniting all things together in the Christ. Just as nothing is profane[34] for Teilhard unless it is moving in the wrong direction—to-

[32] Integral to Teilhard's thought on both Christology and ecclesiology is the theme of the Eucharist, which is impressively elaborated in terms of his over-all cosmic theology. In addition to the major systematic studies already cited, special attention is given the question by Joseph Fitzer, "Teilhard's Eucharist: A Reflection," THEOLOGICAL STUDIES 34 (1973) 251–64; Mary Hottenroth, "The Eucharist as Matrix in the System of Thought of Teilhard de Chardin," *American Benedictine Review* 21 (1970) 98–121; Donald Goergen, "The Eucharistic Presence: A Process Perspective," *Teilhard Review* 9 (1974) 16–23.

[33] Cf. Mooney, *op. cit.*, p. 160. On the theme of love in Teilhard, see Donald P. Gray, "Teilhard de Chardin's Vision of Love," *Thought* 42 (1967) 519–42; Paul Chauchard, *Teilhard de Chardin on Suffering and Love*, tr. M. Chêne (Glen Rock, N.J., 1966). On Teilhard's related thinking on human sexuality, see Emile Rideau, "La sexualité selon le Père Teilhard de Chardin," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 90 (1968) 173–90; Dan Sullivan, "Psychosexuality: The Teilhardian Lacunae," *Continuum* 5 (1967) 254–78; Charles Freible, "Teilhard, Sexual Love, and Celibacy," *Review for Religious* 26 (1967) 282–94. Teilhard also speaks about love under the rubric of "the eternal feminine." The theme has been investigated by Henri de Lubac, *The Eternal Feminine*, tr. R. Hague (New York, 1971); Catherine O'Connor, *Woman and Cosmos* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1974); André Devaux, *Teilhard and Womanhood*, tr. P. Oligny and M. Meilach (Glen Rock, N.J., 1968).

[34] *The Divine Milieu*, p. 66.

wards disintegration and death, so too nothing is outside the Church in this large sense unless it also is moving in the wrong direction—against the upward and forward tide of cosmic socialization. The church in its narrower meaning will hopefully be a meaningful sacramental embodiment of this vast biological process of unification through love, but it cannot be simply identical with it. The church is cosmic sacrament pointing towards and embodying in itself the present Christically activated process of unification. It is also the eschatological sacrament of the end towards which the process is now moving.

Eschatology

Eschatology is a dominant Teilhardian concern and his speculations in the area are both daring and controversial. Teilhard attempted to confront the difficult question of how to reactivate the dormant eschatological expectations of the Christian community within the context of a world view which takes it for granted that human history will likely continue on for several millions of years. The Teilhardian eschatology is focused not so much on the fate of the individual, although personal immortality is certainly affirmed, as on the collective destiny of the evolutionary process in general and of the human species in particular. In thus refocusing the concerns of the traditional eschatology by subordinating the issue of the individual to that of the collectivity, Teilhard recovers something of the New Testament vision of communal salvation expressed in the symbols of the kingdom of God and the consummating Parousia of the Christ. Significant portions of New Testament eschatology are, of course, predicated on an imminent denouement to human history, and Teilhard could hardly hope to restore a sense of eschatological urgency through an emphasis on the imminence of the Second Coming, even if certain revivalist sects have of late successfully promoted this approach among the young. Teilhard takes a quite different route by joining together what he terms the building of the earth by man and the introduction of the kingdom by God. The Parousia is thus conditioned by the building of the earth, for the consummating act cannot occur until the "raw materials" have all been assembled—in short, until the world is ready. This means that the end can be hastened by man through his commitment to the unifying process, which is after all also the will and work of God as well. It would seem that what Teilhard had in mind by the expression "building the earth" was not primarily the scientific and technological mastery of nature, with all the ecological nightmares such a vision might legitimately summon up today, but rather the building of human community across the earth in view of the final community which is God's kingdom. The socializing

process at work in the contemporary world is the harbinger of the end, even though that end is still far off. In supporting and promoting the socializing or communalizing trend, we are preparing the way for that community which only God can fully and finally establish out of our efforts. The creative and redemptive process thus ends in a final creative and redemptive act through which the many are definitively and irrevocably made one, when "God will be all in all."

In place of the biblical language about the kingdom of God or the traditional language about heaven with its otherworldly overtones, Teilhard substituted the term Omega. Omega basically symbolizes the end and goal of the process, the final destination of the evolutionary journey. For Teilhard, a process which terminates in nothing, which has no ultimate point of arrival and completion, is meaningless. Hence Omega is a symbol of meaning, of the meaningfulness of the cosmic adventure. Omega is also a symbol of collective hope, in that it refers to the final unity of all things. It is moreover a symbol of God, for God is the mystery from which all comes and to which all returns; God is the Center in whom all are unified. Omega is a divine-human symbol, for it points towards the unity of men with God and of men with one another in God. The coreflective community of the end-time is ultimately mysterious; it constitutes a second step of reflection in some continuity with the first step of reflection through which thought first appeared, but at the same time it will necessarily be quite discontinuous with that first step. How Omega will finally come about cannot be prophesied with certainty at this point in human history. Hopefully it will emerge in a spirit of concord after a long process of growing together has taken place in the human community and the evils of human life have been gradually ameliorated. This would represent a utopian close to evolutionary history. In a more apocalyptic scenario the world would end on a note of discord and contention, "ramification once again, for the last time." [35]

Spirituality

The spirituality flowing from this great vision is equally impressive and equally incomplete.[36] It does not attempt to deal with nor in many

[35] PM, p. 289.

[36] On Teilhardian spirituality, see Henri de Lubac, *Teilhard de Chardin: The Man and His Meaning*, tr. R. Hague (New York, 1967); Robert Faricy, *op. cit.*; Thomas Corbishley, *The Spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin* (London, 1971); Marvin Kessler and Bernard Brown, eds., *Dimensions of the Future: The Spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin* (Washington, D.C., 1968); Jacques Laberge, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin et Ignace de Loyola: Les notes de retraite (1919–1955)* (Montreal, 1973); Claude Cuénot, ed., *Le message spirituel de Teilhard de Chardin: Actes du Colloque sur le Milieu divin* (Paris, 1969); Claude Cuénot, ed., *Science and Faith in Teilhard de Chardin* (London, 1967); Cyril

instances even to face the manifold issues under debate in contemporary pastoral, spiritual, and moral theologies. It is nonetheless powerfully suggestive of a Christian life-style appropriate to a world in process of cosmogenesis. Teilhard was a lifelong foe of pessimism, withdrawal, and denial. His spirituality is correspondingly optimistic (although hardly naive), involving, and affirmative. The traditional forms of spirituality with which Teilhard was familiar seemed to him to have been contaminated by the pessimistic consequences of a certain understanding of original sin as well as by a tendency towards an otherworldly aloofness from the so-called "secular" world. Christ and culture were too much opposed to one another in the regnant spiritualities, and the need of the hour was that Christ and culture be put back together again in a dialectical harmony. For in the final analysis cosmogenesis is at base Christogenesis; the becoming of the world when seen from the proper perspective is in fact the becoming of the Body of the Christ.

As a result, the Teilhardian spirituality stresses the need for active engagement and immersion in the world in addition to the passive and self-denying virtues; it also speaks of a necessary attachment to the world in addition to a detachment from the world. It is precisely in action and attachment that Teilhard principally locates his asceticism; for to act on behalf of the evolutionary process requires us to overcome our inertia and apathy, our tendencies towards egoism and self-indulgence. To be attached to a world in process means that we must constantly leave behind what has already been achieved in order to move ahead to what has yet to be accomplished. To act and to be attached is in essence to care about a world outside of oneself and hence in the very act of caring to become detached from that false and destructive self which would stand alone for itself in violation of the unifying directionality of all creative evolution. To build the earth is to build human community and thereby to become a self at the same time that one loses one's self. Once again, union differentiates, or, as we might more appropriately say in this context, union personalizes.[37] Teilhardian spirituality is above all else a spirituality of love; love is its controlling thematic and around it all other themes cluster and cohere. It is love which acts and it is also love which willingly undergoes the passivities of life. It is love which is both

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Vollert, "The Interplay of Prayer and Action in Teilhard de Chardin," *Review for Religious* 29 (1970) 238–45; Peter Bryne, "Teilhard de Chardin and Commitment," *Review for Religious* 30 (1971) 763–74.

[37] On Teilhard's personalism see André Ligneul, *Teilhard and Personalism*, tr. P. Oligny and M. Meilach (Glen Rock, N.J., 1968); Madeleine Barthélemy-Madaule, *La personne et le drame humain chez Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris, 1967); Christopher Mooney, "Method, Person and Marx," *The Making of Man* (Paramus, N.J., 1971) pp. 149–64, esp. 155–59.

attached to the world and yet transcends its present form in detachment. It is love which unites and simultaneously personalizes. For Teilhard, love is the very energy of the creative and redemptive process of evolutionary ascent; it is consequently the very energy of the spiritual life. The Teilhardian spirituality is richly dialectical, seeking after a *coincidentia oppositorum* through the unitive properties of love-energy. While relatively inattentive to the purgative way, it focuses solidly and suggestively on the illuminative way through its emphasis on consciousness, seeing, and vision, and also on the unitive way through its emphasis on union with God by means of union with the evolving earth.[38]

Teilhard has been criticized rightly and wrongly on many fronts, by protagonist and antagonist. He does not bring to the elaboration of his vision the professional concerns of the scientist, the philosopher, or the theologian and hence his work often appears to the professional eye to be a confused and confusing amalgam of all these areas. In relation to the canons of professional or ecclesiastical orthodoxy, Teilhard's thought is at best incomplete. This is, of course, one of the reasons why Teilhard speaks meaningfully to a vast and variegated audience which does not bring these kinds of concerns to his writings. Which is not to say, however, that his thought cannot be improved upon and developed further by precisely such professional expertise. He apparently hoped that just such developments would take place.[39]

Evil

Of all the critical objections posed, however, one in particular has been especially tenacious and widespread, namely, that Teilhard was insensitive to the problem of evil and that because of a congenital and unyielding optimism his treatment of the issue in his writings is woefully and indeed outrageously inadequate. How is it possible, for example, that during the First World War Teilhard could have served for so long at the front and yet have come away at the end exhilarated and filled with enthusiasm for the future? How can Teilhard speak so moderately about Nazism and other forms of totalitarian threat at the same time that he says so very little about Jewish genocide and the horrors of Nagasaki and

[38] In the Preface to *The Divine Milieu*, pp. 43–44, Teilhard observes: "The following pages do not pretend to offer a complete treatise on ascetical theology—they only offer a simple *description* of a *psychological* evolution observed *over a specified interval*. A possible series of inward perspectives gradually revealed to the mind in the course of a humble yet 'illuminative' spiritual ascent—that is all we have tried to note down here. The reader need not, therefore, be surprised at the apparently small space allotted to moral evil and sin: the soul with which we are dealing is assumed to have already turned away from the path of error."

[39] Cf. PM, p. 290.

Hiroshima? What is the explanation for the fact that Teilhard was able to write the whole of his masterwork *The Phenomenon of Man* without adverting in any serious way to the problem of evil until he arrived at a very brief Appendix which was in fact composed some eight years after the original manuscript was completed?

R. C. Zaehner has written quite acerbically of Teilhard's apparent insensitivity and naïvete in the whole area of evil:

> Teilhard has been attacked for his glossing over of the problem of evil, and rightly so: he has no more sense of the "wickedness of evil" than the average nature mystic as represented by R. M. Bucke. In his apprehension of the total indifference of Nature to man and his sufferings Richard Jeffries is far more clear-sighted than Teilhard. Jeffries cared, Teilhard all too often seems not to care at all. His whole vision of a world converging irreversibly on a cosmic "centre of centres" is based, it seems to me, on his prolonged participation in "cosmic consciousness" which he had experienced from boyhood but which only became acute in the mire and misery of the First World War. Combining this with his pathetic faith in biological evolution and human progress and pretending that this faith was scientifically based, he succeeded in firing the imagination of many Christians who were sick and tired of the rigidity of the Catholic Church as personified in Popes Pius IX to XII. The vision of course is nothing more than a vision, but his insistence that evolution *must* result in man converging on himself runs very much counter to the evidence of our times, is frequently puerile, and makes a mockery of human suffering.[40]

While Teilhard's approach to evil is at times questionable and deficient, several considerations need to be kept in mind in attempting to evaluate this aspect of his thought. Teilhard was neither personally unacquainted with evil, nor was he unaware of the horrendous events of this century which had given rise to a broad range of pessimistic ideologies. Teilhard seems to have been determined to provide an alternative reading of the facts of the world situation, a reading suggestive of hope and hence of new lines of attack and action. It is arguable, I think, that Teilhard feared the effect of pessimistic self-fulfilling prophecies and that at the same time he hoped that his own considerably more optimistic prophecies might have a similar self-fulfilling quality. The evidence for pessimism (or realism, if one prefers) had been widely disseminated; Teilhard was obviously proposing that a hearing be given to the neglected evidence for optimism. Teilhard continued to hope in face of and in spite of the counterevidence. He sees something, call it an inextinguishable possibility in man or the indefatigable grace of God (or, more probably, both together), that others can no

[40] R. C. Zaehner, "Salvation through Death," *Zen, Drugs and Mysticism* (New York, 1972) p. 179.

longer see or for the time being refuse to see. In the end it all comes down to seeing. For many, the mystery of evil in the contemporary world has cast a pall over the possibilities of the good; for Teilhard, a certain vision of the good has served to set the mystery of evil into a different perspective. The evidence offered by either side has already been contexted by preliminary presuppositions; it seems not to be conclusive apart from the interpretive context. In commenting on this issue himself, Teilhard remarks:

> Between these two alternatives of absolute optimism or absolute pessimism, there is no middle way because by its very nature progress is all or nothing. We are confronted accordingly with two directions and only two: one upwards and the other downwards, and there is no possibility of finding a half-way house. On neither side is there any tangible evidence to produce. Only, in support of hope, there are rational invitations to an act of faith.[41]

Is it that Teilhard is insensitive to evil and suffering or is it that he is so sensitive to them that he must at all costs find a way through them and beyond them to salvation?

We must also take account of a long-standing and troublesome anxiety at work in Teilhard's life,[42] an anxiety which his vision, at least to some extent, attempts to allay and finally to overwhelm. It is difficult to be specific about the exact nature of this anxiety, but judging from the vision with which it is connected we might surmise that it was related to the question of meaning and the insecurity and despair which meaninglessness would unavoidably entail. Teilhard's vision is clearly a response to the anxiety-provoking meaninglessness widespread in modern culture; it is possibly also a response to the threat of meaninglessness in his own experience. If there is any merit in such a hypothesis, then his thought and his life together are rooted in a fundamental courage to be in the face of the threat of nonbeing in the guise of meaninglessness.[43] From such a perspective evil, far from being marginal to Teilhard's concerns, is absolutely fundamental. The problem of evil dominates his thought in spite of the fact that it is not talked about extensively; it is, in short, the reverse side of his entire system, the issue with which he never ceases to struggle. Teilhard's vision is centered in an intuitive, indeed mystical, apprehension of logos, i.e., of meaning, and presumably this is why its theological center of gravity is to be found in Christology. Teilhard's

[41] PM, p. 233. On "the Teilhardian optimism," see Henri de Lubac, *Teilhard Explained* (Glen Rock, N.J., 1968) pp. 65–69.

[42] See Mooney, *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ*, chap. 1, and Jacques Laberge, *op. cit.*, chap. 9.

[43] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, 1952) pp. 46–51.

sense of logos is not widely shared in the modern world; what he sees others do not. To many he even seems anachronistic and out of touch with "reality." But Teilhard himself is not unaffected by the widespread purposelessness in the modern world; he himself is not invulnerable to the anxiety which follows in its wake. The problem of others is at least in part his own. Perhaps he was afraid to express more forthrightly his own doubts and anxieties for fear of weakening in any way the case he was arguing. Perhaps he was largely unconscious of his own conflicts in this regard and the deeper psychological motivations of his work. Of course, Zaehner and many other critics may be right in charging Teilhard with a blind spot or fault of character at this point. In the end, it may be worth while simply to keep alternative possibilities open at this stage of our understanding of the man, especially on such a momentous question.

The microphase of the Teilhardian phenomenon is not yet complete but its energy is nonetheless in many ways largely spent. The controversy over Teilhard remains alive only in a few dying embers. His thought has passed almost imperceptibly into the documents of the Second Vatican Council and into the bloodstream of the postconciliar Church.[44] His work lives on effectively but often unobtrusively. The exegesis of his writings has attained a relative limit beyond which it will not be able to go very fruitfully. His writings are widely available in easily accessible editions; commentaries of value are plentiful. We may yet hope for critical editions of his major writings but that eventuality is probably distant. Our appreciation of the psychological dynamics of the man and the effects of such factors on his work presently lags behind our understanding of the thought itself. A psychohistory of Teilhard is a fascinating prospect but may be out of our reach. In short, Teilhard has taken deep root in his native environment and has borne much fruit in spite of the fact that that environment appeared initially to be entirely inhospitable to such a rare plant. But Teilhard has also taken root in other environments and so has passed into other lives and into other traditions. In these new environments new readings of a great mind have arisen and new criticisms as well. Teilhard wished to be a man for many seasons and he had proved in death, as in life, to be such. Along with the

[44] See Cyril Vollert, "Teilhard in the Light of Vatican II," *Dimensions of the Future*, eds. Kessler and Brown, chap. 7. The place accorded evolution in the postconciliar Dutch Catechism vis-à-vis the very tentative openings in *Humani generis* (1950) perhaps provides an index of the distance traveled in less than two decades. The shape of Dutch theology in general over the last decade has been considerably influenced by Teilhard's writings. Even a theologian of the stature of Karl Rahner would appear to have undergone some influence from his French Jesuit confrere, judging from his interest during the sixties in such issues as hominization, monogenism, and Christology within the context of an evolutionary world view.

microphasic trajectory of the phenomenon of Teilhard within the Catholic community, there is evident a macrophasic development which is equally significant and should prove equally enduring.

THE MACROPHASE OF TEILHARD'S INFLUENCE

Since Teilhard's work only became available in the English-speaking world in the sixties, it was inevitable that he should play a significant role in the multiple transformations which theology underwent during that decade. Teilhard's relationship to three theological perspectives in particular requires some special comment: secular theology, process thought, and the theologies of hope.

Secular Theology

Teilhard's thought and spirituality are decidedly secular in the sense that they are both directed to a discovery of God in and through the evolving world and to "the building of the earth." No dichotomizing distinction between the sacred and the secular, the Church and the world, exists for Teilhard, although he does recognize a profane direction to evolutionary creation, a direction leading back into multiplicity and hence chaos. The world has been turned over to man; the evolutionary future of the world is man's responsibility. Science and technology, the principal tools of modern secular man, are both valued by Teilhard but by no means uncritically, as we have noted. Religion is not a foe of evolutionary humanism but a dialogue partner and at times a comrade in arms. Religious faith is not the antithesis of a convinced humanism but its complement and completion.

In commenting on the relationship between Teilhard and Bonhoeffer, the prime mover behind contemporary secular theologies, Thomas Oden has remarked:

> The differences between Teilhard and Bonhoeffer are surely obvious: Teilhard the sacramental scientist, Bonhoeffer the Lutheran exegete; Teilhard the natural historian, Bonhoeffer the theological ethicist; Teilhard the strangely mystical empiricist painstakingly working with detailed evidence, Bonhoeffer the political revolutionary sharing dramatically in the bloody upheavals of his day. But how similar they are in their interpretation of history, their affirmation of the world come of age, and the worldliness of the action of God! What a deep kinship can be seen in their cosmology, soteriology, and ethics! Both find crucial rootage in Col. 1:17. Both are determined to be unassailably modern men, and yet at the same time traditioners of the apostolic witness within the context of modernity. How harmoniously does Teilhard (who wrote earlier and published later) symphonize the fragmented Bonhoefferian motifs of concreteness, reality, formation, nonreligious interpretation of Biblical concepts, the arcane discipline, radical disciple-

ship, deputyship, and above all, a Christological cosmology! In the light of all this it is even more ironic that these two remarkable theologians suffered similarly the cruelest rejection by and alienation from the very historical and churchly structures they most deeply loved.[45]

For his part, Bishop John A. T. Robinson, while noting Teilhard's affinity for the concerns of what he calls "the secularizers" such as Bonhoeffer, Ronald Gregor Smith, William Hamilton, Paul van Buren, and Harvey Cox, prefers to locate Teilhard among what might be termed "the mystics"[46] of contemporary theology such as Tillich, Berdyaev, Buber, Hartshorne, Jung, Alan Watts, and Leslie Dewart. The points of contact between the two camps are real and important, but they do diverge on a crucial issue:

> The difference between them is one of starting point. Bonhoeffer once remarked that for the Bible 'man lives just as much from "outwards" to "inwards" as from "inwards" to "outwards"'. And this could stand for the difference of approach of the two groups. The latter begin from the inside out (the more traditional approach for theology), the former, in an age when so many doubt whether there even is an inside, from the outside in.[47]

Teilhard is in fact a mystic of the secular world, a secular seer.

Process Theology

Process theology represents a unique blend of the secular, the mystical, and the metaphysical. Many similarities between Teilhardian and process thought exist[48] and are at least partly to be explained by the common context provided by the evolutionary world view. There is no evidence of any Whiteheadean influence of a direct kind on Teilhard's

[45] Thomas Oden, *Contemporary Theology and Psychotherapy* (Philadelphia, 1967) pp. 51–52. See also Charles Hegarty, "Bonhoeffer and Teilhard on Worldly Christianity," *Science et esprit* 21 (1969) 35–70, and "Bonhoeffer and Teilhard: Christian Prophets of Secular Sanctity," *Catholic World* 207 (1968–69) 31–34.

[46] On the mysticism of Teilhard, see F. C. Happold, *Mysticism* (Baltimore, 1967) pp. 363–71; Hilda Graef, *Mystics of Our Times* (Glen Rock, N.J., 1963) pp. 217–38; Alfred Stiernotte, "Process Philosophies and Mysticism," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 9 (1969) 560–71.

[47] John A. T. Robinson, *Exploration into God* (London, 1967) p. 78. A comparison of Teilhard with another secular mystic of a rather different type, Thomas Altizer, has been made by James Heisig, "Man and God Evolving: Altizer and Teilhard," *The Theology of Altizer: Critique and Response*, ed. John B. Cobb, Jr. (Philadelphia, 1970) pp. 93–111. Comments on Teilhard's importance (particularly in relation to Ernst Bloch) by Harvey Cox may be found in *The Secular City Debate*, ed. Daniel Callahan (New York, 1966) pp. 197–203.

[48] See the anthology of essays assembled by Ewert Cousins, ed., *Process Theology* (Paramus, N.J., 1971), and the two essays of Ian Barbour cited above, nn. 8 and 9.

thought,[49] although both thinkers were influenced by Bergson. The differences between the two perspectives are also notable, particularly in relation to the doctrine of God and to eschatology. Bishop Robinson has observed that "Teilhard de Chardin says remarkably little about God: his real theology is of the *milieu divin*."[50] Teilhard's God is thought of in functional rather than ontological terms. There is nothing in Teilhard that begins to rival the magnificently elaborated doctrine of God to be found in a process thinker like Charles Hartshorne, for example. It is not even very clear that Teilhard thought of God in incipiently processive categories, although there are hints that such was the case.[51] His repeated disavowal of pantheism would perhaps have found a more satisfactory theoretical foundation in Hartshorne's notion of panentheism,[52] for like other process thinkers Teilhard is congenitally incapable of thinking of God as separate (even if distinguishable) from the world or of the world as separate (even if distinguishable) from God. For Teilhard, as for Hartshorne, God is the Soul of the World, and the world consequently is to be understood as the Body of God. The process notion of God's persuasive agency in the creative advance of the evolving world would also seem to shed light on Teilhard's understanding of the divine activating and attractive agency in the upward ascent to Omega. It is clear, however, that Teilhard is far more concerned to guarantee the ultimate success of the evolutionary process than is process thought in general. At this point decisive differences in eschatology emerge.

Following Whitehead's lead,[53] process theologians usually prefer to speak of an objective immortality in the infallible divine memory and consequent nature of God and are reluctant, although not universally or irrevocably so,[54] to affirm a subjective or personal survival of death. Teilhard, on the other hand, argues strenuously in favor of personal

[49] Cuénot, *Teilhard de Chardin*, p. 237, indicates that Teilhard "had studied *Whitehead's Science and the Modern World*." Barbour, "Teilhard's Process Metaphysics," p. 137 n. 3, citing the original French edition, observes, however, that "Cuénot says that in 1945 Teilhard 'songe à lire Whitehead, *La science et le monde moderne*'—which may mean that he actually read it." The reference is to *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: Les grandes étapes de son évolution* (Paris, 1958) p. 292.

[50] *Exploration into God*, p. 81.

[51] Cf. Mooney, *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ*, pp. 174–76; and Barbour, "Teilhard's Process Metaphysics," pp. 151–53.

[52] Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* (New Haven, 1948) pp. 88–92. Cf. Karl Rahner, "Panentheism," *Theological Dictionary*, tr. R. Strachan (New York, 1965) pp. 333–34, and John A. T. Robinson, *Exploration into God*, pp. 83–92.

[53] Alfred North Whitehead, "Immortality," *Science and Philosophy* (Paterson, N.J., 1964) pp. 85–104.

[54] See, e.g., John B. Cobb, Jr., "What Is the Future? A Process Perspective," *Hope and the Future of Man*, ed. Ewert Cousins (Philadelphia, 1972) pp. 10–14.

immortality on the ground that it is necessary to insure meaning and hence to provide a solid bedrock for action. A hope in the personal immortality of spirit also coheres well with the spiritualizing trend of the evolutionary movement as a whole.[55] A major contrast between the two positions is further evident in their respective approaches to the end of the world. Just as process theologians envision no beginning to the creative process, so they postulate no final ending to it. While it is true that this particular planet and this particular epoch will someday come to some, at present unforeseeable, denouement, the process as such continues eternally. Teilhard, on the contrary, did seek to hold on to a beginning point of the creative process and even more forcibly maintains the need for a conclusive goal. For Teilhard, meaning is inevitably dependent upon finality, and even though objective immortality does represent a kind of finality within ongoing and unending process, a kind of permanence within unrelenting change, it apparently would not have seemed satisfactory to Teilhard, who at this point echoes the process-limiting eschatology of the Bible. Whether or not process is still conceivable within the definitiveness of the Omega state is not to my knowledge a question which Teilhard ever considered.[56]

By way of a very rough generalization, it might be suggested that the differences discernible between the two positions on eschatology are rooted in variant concerns about the issues of freedom and order. Reacting against a mechanistic and deterministic scientific world view as well as a Calvinistic predestinarianism, process thought seems especially committed to making room for the freedom and responsibility of the elements while not neglecting the divine ordering activity within the world. A preordained goal which must necessarily become actual at some point in the future (even if not all attain it) might well be perceived as

[55] This point is argued by Ignace Lepp, *Death and Its Mysteries*, tr. Bernard Murchland (New York, 1968), chap. 6. Lepp is clearly influenced by Teilhard. On difficulties in Teilhard's understanding of immortality, see Joseph Donceel, "Teilhard de Chardin and the Body-Soul Relation," *Thought* 40 (1965) 371-89.

[56] Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (New York, 1961) p. 35, observes in this regard: "Even after the total consummation, it would be impossible to conceive the eternal life of the blessed spirits as an immediate companionship with the Infinite God; it must be conceived rather as a never-ending movement of the finite spirit into the life of God." John Macquarrie (*Principles of Christian Theology*, p. 320) concurs: "The end would be all things gathered up in God, all things brought to the fulfillment of their potentialities for being, at one among themselves and at one with Being from which they have come and for which they are destined. But this end too could not be thought of as a point that will eventually be reached, for at every point new vistas will open up. Being must remain at once stable and dynamic. A static perfection, achieved once for all, would be frozenness. We have to visualize rather what, already long ago in the idealist tradition, Sir Henry Jones described as a 'moving from perfection to perfection.' "

antithetical to such a preoccupation.[57] Teilhard, for his part, while repeatedly affirming that the future of evolution rests on the fragile foundation of human consciousness and co-operation, is only too evidently intent on guaranteeing the final outcome. As a result, some find his work unduly deterministic and undermining of human responsibility. Teilhard, it would seem, is reacting against a biological evolutionism which to his mind exaggerates the role of chance and is insufficiently orthogenetic. He exhibits a deep need for divine order while not neglecting the place of human freedom in the achievement of the end. The difference of accent within the two outlooks is by no means unilateral, since both are seeking balance and synthesis, but the peculiar concerns of each lead to significantly contrasting results.

Theologies of Hope

When we move to the recent hope theologies, we are immediately struck by the affinity between these theologies and Teilhard,[58] precisely in terms of the eschatological motif. Their shared desire to take eschatology seriously, however, yields up markedly contrary conclusions. For Teilhard, the consummation of the evolutionary process is to be seen as continuous with the past and present trends discernible within the forward movement. The end grows out of evolutionary history and is dependent upon that history. It would not be wide of the mark to say that for Teilhard eschatology fulfils history as grace fulfils nature; necessary discontinuity and transcendence are held within the bounds of a basic and overriding continuity. It is for this reason apparently that hope theologians often accuse Teilhard's thought of being basically teleological rather than genuinely eschatological in character. For them, the *eschaton* comes out of the future as *adventus* breaking up the complacency of every present, calling it into question, and summoning it to conversion for the sake of the *novum*. It is the discontinuity between past, present, and future which is stressed here. Even for Teilhard, however, the present is never more than an anticipation, a sacramental presentiment, of the end; it is never a place to rest in the mistaken

[57] On this question of the end Lewis Ford (*The Future of Hope*, ed. E. Cousins, p. 136) comments: "There are strong metaphysical reasons why Whiteheadians resist any notion of an ultimate end of history or a final consummation of the evolutionary process. If all being lies in becoming, the end of becoming would signify the annihilation of all things, including God, for the continuation of the divine concrescence requires a constant enrichment of novelty from the world. . . . Furthermore, God's appetition for the actualization of all pure possibilities requires an infinity of cosmic epochs for the world."

[58] On the relation between Teilhardian thought and the theologies of hope (as well as process theology), see *The Future of Hope*, ed. E. Cousins.

illusion that the end has already occurred. Whatever elements of realized eschatology we find in Teilhard, they are always outweighed by his insistence on future eschatology. The future end is a summoning presence relentlessly inviting to perpetual passage until the promised land of Omega is reached.

Nonetheless the differences of tone and style between the two approaches are unmistakable. This is in part due to the prominence of an apocalyptically oriented biblical theology in the hope theologies. It is also in part due to the influence of recent Christian-Marxist dialogue[59] on the emergence of the hope theologies and the resultant development of theologies of revolution and liberation. There can be little question that Teilhard does not stand in the same solidarity with the Third World or with oppressed groups generally as do the proponents of liberation theologies. His own aristocratic background perhaps plays a role here. At any rate, he regularly formulates the future from the perspective of the technologically advanced nations of the world to which he himself belonged. The future of evolution lies in the hands of the scientifically informed and technologically powerful West. It is not merely coincidental, to be sure, that Christianity, the religion of the West, is also, in Teilhard's view, the religion of the future. Science and technology by themselves are inadequate, according to Teilhard, to the task of achieving Omega in spite of the utopian hopes of some humanists. However, science and technology as revised and renewed within the creative matrix of a vital and up-to-date Christianity could become powerful instruments for building the earth and forging the kind of human community which heralds the coming of the kingdom. In the usual sense of the word, Teilhard's thought is not promotive of political or social revolution. Nevertheless, were the cosmic love which he champions and which he sees as crucial to the success of evolution to become widespread, the effects would be unquestionably revolutionary in some larger sense of that word. For Teilhard, as for the hope theologians, *theoria* is necessarily linked to *praxis* of a socially relevant and transforming kind. It is clear, however, that in each case differing theoretical articulations have generated differing practical conclusions. Or perhaps it is the other way around.

[59] Teilhard's work has also been drawn into the Christian-Marxist dialogue on several accounts. See, e.g., *Evolution, Marxism and Christianity* (London, 1967); Christopher Mooney, "Method, Person and Marx," *The Making of Man*, pp. 149–64; Ernan McMullin, "Teilhard, China and Neo-Marxism," *China and the West: Mankind Evolving* (London, 1970) pp. 82–102; Roger Garaudy, *Perspectives de l'homme: Existentialisme, pensée catholique, structuralisme, marxisme* (4th ed; Paris, 1969) and *From Anathema to Dialogue* (New York, 1966).

Eastern Thought

Thus far we have spoken of Teilhard's posthistory solely in terms of the Christian tradition and some of its varied theological alternatives. But Teilhard has also found a future, and an increasingly important one, within the context of Asian religious concerns and studies.[60] In spite of his protracted residence in the East, Teilhard exhibits neither a very profound nor a very accurate understanding of Eastern thought, which he in fact generally speaks about in large and denigrating generalizations. His attitude is something less than ecumenical. For Teilhard, since the future of evolution lies in and through the West, the East must reformulate its aspirations in Western terms if it hopes to have a viable stake in that future. Such a cavalier assessment, based as it was on a merely superficial acquaintance with the rich complexity of Eastern religious and philosophical thought, was unfortunate, inasmuch as it prevented Teilhard from grasping important points of contact between his own world view and that of certain Eastern traditions. This fact has recently been ably and suggestively underlined by Beatrice Bruteau in her *Evolution toward Divinity*, in which she demonstrates that the Hindu traditions provide "a highly congenial environment for Teilhard's worldview,"[61] an environment in some ways more serviceable than the one available within the Judeo-Christian traditions. With their sense of the plasticity of nature and of the immensity of both space and time, together with their highly sophisticated attention to states of consciousness and the evolution of forms of energy, the Hindu traditions make immediate contact with central concerns of Teilhard. They also exhibit more naturally than the Judeo-Christian traditions the kind of synthetic and cosmic consciousness which provides the matrix for the Teilhardian vision.

Up to the present, the major focus of interest in the area of Eastern-oriented studies of Teilhard has been the figure of Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950).[62] While the two were contemporaries, they never met and apparently Aurobindo had no knowledge of Teilhard's work since little of significance was published until after his death. According to Ursula King,

> Teilhard learned about Aurobindo some time after 1946, when he had returned from China to Paris. Jacques Masui, who had close connections to the

[60] For Teilhard's influence within an African context, see Thomas Melady, "Teilhard and the Emergence of African Nationalism," *World Justice* 9 (1968) 435–46.

[61] Beatrice Bruteau, *Evolution toward Divinity: Teilhard de Chardin and the Hindu Traditions* (Wheaton, Ill., 1974).

[62] A useful introduction to Aurobindo is provided by a special number of *Cross Currents* 22 (1972) 1–116, edited by Robert A. McDermott and devoted entirely to the Indian seer.

Pondicherry Ashram, lent him Aurobindo's masterpiece *The Life Divine*, which Teilhard acknowledged to be of a similar conception to his own work.[63]

Although an Indian by birth, Aurobindo had been educated in England and there had succumbed to the attraction of evolution, particularly in the form expounded by Henri Bergson, an important formative influence in the life of Teilhard as well.[64] The common influence of Bergson is noted by Zaehner in a comparison of the two thinkers elaborated in a series of lectures delivered in India in 1969:

> Both not only accepted the theory of evolution but enthusiastically acclaimed it, indeed were almost obsessed by it. Both were, it seems, profoundly influenced by Bergson, both were deeply dissatisfied with organized religion, and both were vitally concerned not only with individual salvation or "liberation" but also with the collective salvation of mankind. Hence their sympathetic interest in Marxian socialism, for it was the hope of each of them that the unity in diversity which the mystic finds in himself would be reflected in a socialized and free society in which, as Marx had prophesied, "we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." [65]

Continuing his comparison, Zaehner goes on to note the mystical roots of their respective systems of thought:

> Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin had these two things in common, the repeated experience of cosmic consciousness and a profound belief in evolution, the goal of which they saw to be the divinization of man.... For what was the ideal of both men? "The hope of the kingdom of heaven within us and the city of God upon earth," as Aurobindo said, or, in the words of Teilhard, "to promote in equal measure the mastery of the world and the kingdom of God." The two should go hand in hand; for man is, according to the mystics, a microcosm, an exact replica *in parvo* of the Universe as macrocosm.[66]

Teilhard first went to the East in 1923. Reluctantly he returned there in 1926 to remain, except for visits home and periods of travel, until shortly after the Second World War. Today he is returning there once again to find a new context in which his thought may be newly enriched, newly criticized, and newly appreciated. The hermeneutical task he left largely undone has now been taken up by others with a clearer insight

[63] Ursula King, "Sri Aurobindo's and Teilhard's Vision of the Future of Man," *Teilhard Review* 9 (1974) 2.

[64] On the relationship between Bergson and Teilhard, see Madeleine Barthélemy-Madaule, *Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris, 1963); Alan Biondi, "Teilhard and Bergson," *Teilhard Review* 8 (1973) 82–85.

[65] R. C. Zaehner, *Evolution in Religion: A Study in Sri Aurobindo and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (London, 1971) pp. 3–4.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

into the possibilities of the Eastern traditions for the human future. His own views on the hegemony of the West today seem uncharacteristically parochial and provincial. Beatrice Bruteau expresses well the change in optic which has taken place since Teilhard wrote:

> If we have any advantage in vision—having learned a great deal from Teilhard himself—we may dare to protect and fulfill his beautifully constructed model of a world in process by adjusting one of his tenets: The axis of evolution, in the long perspective, does not run through the West, but is, like the lines of specific descent, a sheaf of axes, running through humanity as a whole, knitting together the rich heritages of all cultures in the mighty convergence which Teilhard glimpsed. We, the people of the future, can no longer think of ourselves as heirs only of this culture or that, belonging to one or another corner of our tiny globe. Each of us is the heir of all that humanity has ever produced in diversity and splendor of life, knowledge, art, and wisdom. Only as we bring all of this, our human wealth, into an intense but differentiated union, will we be able to live beyond, to survive, our present phase of development and continue our evolution toward divinity.[67]

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

During his lifetime Teilhard became a terrestrial man, "un homme terrestre." In death he has become a terrestrial phenomenon, "un phénomène terrestre." In the microphase of his posthistory he became a sign of contradiction within the Catholic community, which he dearly loved and unflaggingly chided during his own life history. To conservatives he appeared to be a new and more dangerous version of earlier modernism, a destructive innovator whose thought undermined the Catholic tradition by capitulating to modern thought-forms. To liberals he came to embody the end of a disturbing antimodernist repression and the beginning of a new openness to the modern world on the part of the Church. He necessarily provoked a rereading of the biblical and traditional sources in the light of his own cosmic theology; fortunately his own thought as a result came to be appreciated within this larger context of earlier tradition, a context which he himself pointed towards but could not adequately document. He was unquestionably the single major force responsible for making the evolutionary perspective both viable and significant for Catholic theology.[68] The major lines of Teilhard's world view are today clearly in focus; a moderate critical scholarship, princi-

[67] Bruteau, *op. cit.*, pp. 255–56.

[68] For an earlier impressive but ultimately abortive attempt to introduce evolutionary categories into Catholic dogmatic theology, see Edwin Kaiser, "Before Teilhard There Was Herman Schell," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 166 (1972) 320–30, and "Cosmic Evolution: The Contemporary Setting of Theology," *Proceedings of the CTSA* 28 (New York, 1973) 31–46.

pally inspired by the great Jesuit commentators, has largely established the important links with the past.

Teilhard has also secured for himself a reading within contemporary humanism, the scientific community, a variety of recent theological movements, and the rising tide of Eastern studies. He hoped to be a bridge builder and he has become precisely that in death. But traffic on a bridge flows in two directions; hence not only has Teilhard influenced the thought of others but his own thought has been critiqued, modified, and put to new uses through the ensuing dialogue. In this way his work has entered into the public forum of constructive discussion which was unfortunately denied him during his own lifetime.

The phenomenon of Teilhard has by no means run its course. Teilhard studies are undergoing a change of phase, crossing a new threshold, but the field is still essentially vigorous. Today the emphasis in research falls less heavily on straightforward exegesis of the Teilhardian corpus and more heavily on Teilhard's relationship to other traditions of thought and on the uses to which his thought might be put in dealing with the urgent practical problems of the human future. The grandeur of his vision and the irrepressible optimism to which it gives expression hold great appeal today across the boundaries of various traditions. He remains one of the significant voices pointing the way to a human future capable of providing necessary meaning for present commitment. Today we tend to see him as one of a larger chorus, not so much any more as one standing alone. For many, however, he has made it possible to see that there were others and to hear and understand what they were saying.