

# Teilhard De Chardin and the Christian Vision

By  
Philip Sherrard

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THE conflict between religion and science, though it may seem to have become particularly acute during the last century, is not new in our culture. In its modern form it goes back at least to the Latin Averroists, who radically severed the connection between faith and reason, theology and philosophy, and asserted that philosophical thinking must be independent of faith and theology. It is in this secularization of thought that modern philosophy and modern science in general have their basis. Briefly, at the beginning of this process of secularization is the assumption that there are two orders or levels of knowledge. One is that which God may have of things, and which man can only receive through revelation—through the Scriptures, tradition, the Church Fathers and papal decrees. The other is that of philosophy, a system of laws and rules which the individual human reason can discover within the purely natural order and which are adequate for the right conduct of life. This knowledge—human knowledge—has its starting point in, and so in a certain sense must always remain dependent on, the perception or observation of sensible objects. It is what later we have called scientific knowledge, the knowledge of things as we see them, not as they are seen by the "eye of God".

It was this split between two levels or orders of knowledge that St. Thomas Aquinas sought to heal. Haunted perhaps by the traditional Platonic idea of the unity of knowledge, he thought that all views, however contradictory they might appear, could ultimately be shown to be compatible and in harmony with each other; and in his *Summa theologica* he attempted to achieve this harmony. But once the notion that these two levels or orders, the one the object of faith and the other the object of reason, had been accepted, together with the notion that ultimately there need be no contradiction between them, it was not long before the traditional relationship between faith and reason was inverted. Instead, that is to say, of the truths of faith providing the criteria for the validity of the conclusions of the natural reason, what was regarded as truth became increasingly identified with what could be rationally demonstrated from observation. From here it was only a step to say that what cannot be rationally demonstrated is contrary to reason and so valueless. Once the human mind had set out on the path of seeking reasons for its faith, it inevitably ended up by having faith in reason. From now on the only thing of practical importance for man is to establish a systematic theory according to which sensible things may be observed and the conclusions derived from such observation may be correlated. The only thing of practical importance is in fact to establish a systematic theory of experimental science. The final stage is reached when, science having been formally taken out of the framework of theology, theology itself is placed within the framework of science, so that when there is any conflict between the conclusions of science and the affirmations of religion it is the former that provide the ultimate standard. In order to survive at all, religion must accommodate itself to the scientific perspective or simply go by the board. The movement which began as the assertion of the independence of philosophy from theology, of reason from faith, has ended up in the dependence of theology on philosophy, of faith on reason. Scientific knowledge is now

regarded to all intents and purposes as the only knowledge there is.

This state of affairs has put those who still have some allegiance to religious values in what is really an impossible situation. On the one hand their practical activities and, generally speaking, their thought, conform to modes which have little to do with any religious understanding or purpose. On the other hand they confess to a "belief in God" and to the mysteries of His revelation. The result is that they are led to resolve—or to seek to resolve—this split by tacitly separating religion from their living and practical affairs. This of course merely consolidates the split still further. Moreover, it cannot but have a crippling effect on man's creative life. Man can only live creatively when his actions and his thoughts harmonize with his deepest beliefs. It is because of this that many in our time, acutely aware of this split between religion and life, and its effects, have sought to heal it, and to affirm, like St. Thomas, the fundamental unity of religious vision and scientific knowledge. One of those haunted by the dream of such a reconciliation was the Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Teilhard de Chardin saw it as his task to embrace the new vistas of man's history exposed by science and to seek to resolve the conflict between science and religion in terms of a new synthesis.<sup>1</sup> Not to do this, he felt, and to cling to a time-honored, but now outmoded, view of the world and of man in it as if the discoveries of science had never been made or at least as if they were of no significance for man's faith, would simply be to consolidate, the "split in consciousness" that results from separating religion from life. Moreover, it is only by undertaking such a task that man—or Christian man, since it is as a Christian that Teilhard claims to speak—can contribute to fulfilling the Church's role on earth—a role which, according to Teilhard, is to dignify, ennoble and transfigure the duties in one's station in life, to search for natural truth and to develop the scope of human action.<sup>2</sup> If, he maintains, the Christian turns his back on the world and on the natural sphere of human endeavor, then the task which should be fulfilled by the Church—that of sanctifying each new age—is left to the children of the world, to agnostics or the irreligious; and in fact it is often such people who unconsciously or involuntarily collaborate in that building of the Kingdom of God which is really the proper task of the Christian himself.<sup>3</sup> If therefore the Christian is to carry out his task, or to help the Church to carry out her task, he must not turn his back on the world. On the contrary, he must attempt to see how he can reconcile and provide mutual nourishment for both the love of God and a healthy love of the world.<sup>4</sup> He must adapt the Christian system to the new perspectives opened up by science.<sup>5</sup> This for Teilhard did not mean the building of a new Church on the ruins of the old, but the laying of new foundations to which the old Church could gradually be shifted.<sup>6</sup> Only when this was done would the two spheres of rational experience and of faith come into harmonious and fruitful conjunction once more,<sup>7</sup> and would that happy blend, thanks to which reason is harnessed to facts and religion to action, again be produced.<sup>8</sup>

What must first be grasped if one is to situate himself in the perspective of Teilhard's thought is that he accepts without question the discovery of time or, rather, of space-time, which, he claims, has been the achievement of the last few centuries<sup>9</sup> and which, he maintains, is responsible for the intellectual crisis of the modern world.<sup>10</sup> Prior to this discovery men lived in a hierarchically ordered world whose underlying pattern was regarded as unchanging and in a sense timeless. But over the past four centuries this static viewpoint has surrendered to a viewpoint in which everything is seen as in movement and in which there is no place for the earlier idea of the world as a virtually changeless hierarchic order. In the actual process of this shift in viewpoint Teilhard distinguishes several phases, each of which represents a breach in the

geocentric and temporally confined universe of our ancestors. The first phase—that represented by Galileo—involved a change in the concept of space, and the skies were made free for the boundless expansions we have since detected in them. Time was more recalcitrant, and it is virtually only during the past two hundred years that something of the immensities of the past (and hence too of the future) have been exposed to us. But with Lamarck and Darwin it became clear that it is not only sidereal space, but all life on earth as well that is in movement. All life on earth is inextricably involved in a vast process of organic or biological flow in which every element, instead of constituting in itself a fixed point in a hierarchic scale, is seen to emerge from a previous element in an indivisible thread running back to infinity. Man himself is part of this great movement. He is swept along in it and by it in a way for which he is not, it appears, responsible and which he cannot control. He is no longer the mathematical and moral center of the world as he was prior to Galileo, the "lord of creation" on an earth that was itself the center of the universe. Indeed, flattened and submerged by the "temporal" flow which he has discovered, it might well seem to him that he is no more than a particle of dust remorselessly borne along in this cosmic stream which has no direction or purpose and is supremely indifferent to his interests and happiness. This was the immediate effect of what might be called the Darwinian revolution and the discovery of time. The world-picture of Christianity, at least in its pre-Galilean form, has been shattered, and the new view of reality no longer harmonizes with its perspectives or its vision.

Even the breakthrough in our concepts of space and time represented, however, but the first phases in the revolution in thought that has taken place. It is really the third phase which has been decisive. This phase is marked by the realization that space and time are not merely two great containers quite separate one from the other; they are on the contrary organically linked together; they compose a biological space-time, and it is together that they weave the stuff of the universe. All things that occur in time and space, therefore, all objects from the least molecule and the least of the protozoa to the most complex structures, are in nature and in position a function of an organic space-time process, and neither the individual position itself of each object in this process can be changed, nor can its existence be suppressed without undoing the whole network of life. The whole process, that is to say, which reaches far back into the past and far forward into the future, forms an uninterrupted and organic chain in which not one link could have been displaced or exchanged any more than it is possible to displace or exchange the successive stages of infancy, adolescence, maturity and senescence 'in human life. There is, as Teilhard puts it, an irreversible coherence of all that exists. This realization represents a definite access of consciousness to a scale of new dimensions; and what essentially distinguishes "modern" man from his ancestors is his capacity for seeing in terms not of static and fragmentable space and time alone, but also of this biological space-time in which everything has its irreversible distribution, succession and solidarity. Moreover, not only is man now capable of seeing in these terms; he is incapable of seeing anything, including himself, in any other terms. "We are not only set adrift and carried away in the current of life by the material surface of our being", Teilhard writes, "but, like a subtle fluid, space-time first drowns our bodies and then penetrates to our soul; it fills it and impregnates it; it blends itself with the soul's potentialities to such an extent that soon the soul no longer knows how to distinguish space-time from its own thoughts".<sup>11</sup>

This vital revolution in human consciousness brought about by the quite recent discovery of space-time, or duration, has its necessary counterpart in the theory of evolution; and indeed, Teilhard claims, what makes the world in which we live specifically modern—what

distinguishes it from past worlds—is our discovery in it and around it of evolution.<sup>12</sup> That process itself which determines the position of every living thing in space, in duration, and in form, and gives the irreversible coherence to all that exists is, and can only be, a reality of evolutionary nature and dimension.<sup>13</sup> Evolution for Teilhard is therefore more than a theory, or a system, or a hypothesis. It is a general condition to which all theories, all systems, all hypotheses must bow and which they must satisfy henceforward if they are to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a dogma, a light that must be applied to all facts.<sup>14</sup> Scientists may still argue about the way things happen, about the mechanism of life's transformation and whether change or invention plays the bigger part in it, or about whether life has any direction and is going anywhere. But on the basic fact that organic evolution exists and applies equally to life as a whole and to any living creature in particular, all scientists are in agreement for the very good reason that they could not practice their science if they thought otherwise.<sup>15</sup> Alongside the new space-time concept, of which indeed it is a corollary, the theory of evolution is a categorical imperative to which all thought, scientific or religious, must adjust itself as a condition of its viability and truth. It is this presupposition that is fundamental to Teilhard's whole *Weltanschauung*. It is the cornerstone of his system.

What precisely does Teilhard mean by evolution? In the context of this paper it is impossible to answer this question in detail, but the main principles of his evolutionary theory may be stated. The initial proposition is that in the space-time perspective the world in its present state is the outcome of movement. It is the result of a long process of transformation. Whatever aspect of the world we consider—whether it is the rocky layers that envelop the earth, the arrangements of the forms of life that inhabit it, the variety of civilizations and societies to which it has given birth, or the structure of the languages spoken upon it—the conclusion forced upon us is always the same: everything is the sum of the past and nothing is comprehensible except through its history. The world in its present state is the consequence of a "becoming", a self-creation. Every form of life inevitably assumes a "pre-life" for as far back as the eye can see.<sup>16</sup> This applies not only to the world's material aspects. The soul too, and even love, are involved in the same becoming-process and have grown out of the general movement of things.<sup>17</sup> In fact, nothing escapes this law. And nothing escapes either the law which is its corollary, that everything, in however an attenuated form of itself, has existed from the very first. The seeds of everything—and again this includes such "non-material" realities as the soul or love—are contained in the world-substance from the beginning, and nothing that exists in any form we know could have come into existence had it not already existed in an obscure and primordial way in the past. Everything has a cosmic embryo-genesis, although it may not receive the form in which we know it until a very much later time.<sup>18</sup> Thus, not only are there different thresholds which the world has passed across in its historical evolution —thresholds corresponding to a geogenesis, a biogenesis, and a psychogenesis (or noogenesis, as Teilhard calls it); but also everything has existed, even if in a totally embryonic state, from the original birth of our planet.

To this initial proposition and its corollary, Teilhard adds two other propositions. The first is that this evolutionary process is not merely a haphazard affair, something that depends on the workings of chance and the indiscriminate play of external forces. It is not merely quantitative. There is an inner aspect to it, a qualitative aspect, a direction and a line of progress, so that though chance also has its part in it, at the same time the opportunities offered by chance are, as it were, selected in accordance with a certain positive orientation and axis. To date science has often been reluctant to recognize in evolution anything in the nature of a positive advance, anything more than a seemingly endless succession of ramifications rising in the wake of time's

arrow and doomed to eventual extinction; and it has maintained this reluctance because it has refused to look at more than the external aspect of things, their material aspect. It has persisted in looking at the world from without, and in regarding this as the only legitimate way of looking at things. Even if such an attitude may still be maintained by the bacteriologist, whose cultures are treated as laboratory reagents, it is more difficult to maintain in connection with plants, or in studying the behavior of insects or coelenterates, and it breaks down completely where the vertebrates and finally man himself are concerned. In this last case, the refusal to regard anything but the exterior; the refusal to recognize that as well as a without there is also a within makes nonsense of the whole phenomenon of man, because it is precisely this within--man's consciousness—which is the ground of all enquiry and of all knowledge itself. Not to recognize in man the existence of such a consciousness would be tantamount to saying that there can be no knowledge and indeed nothing to know. But if it is impossible to evade the fact of a within or a consciousness—the two terms are synonymous in this context—in man, it is impossible not to recognize, in accordance with the law already enunciated (that everything which we now perceive as existing has, even if only in an embryonic form, existed from the very beginning), that consciousness too must have existed from the very beginning. It is a property of things diffused throughout the universe, even if often in a state which prevents our recognition of its presence. This means that this interior of things or consciousness is not confined to man or the higher vertebrates; it exists everywhere in nature from all time. There is a double aspect to all things, in whatever region of space or time they may occur; co-extensive with their without, they possess also a within. And just as there are laws determining evolution from without—it is on these that a mechanistic science of matter may be built up—so there are qualitative laws that govern the growth and variation of the within of things; and science may ignore these laws only at the risk of reducing its conclusions to nonsense.<sup>19</sup>

It is this inner aspect of things that Teilhard seeks to include in his theories. In the earlier stages of the world, even in the nascent forms of matter, this inner aspect of things—their consciousness—must not be thought of as forming a continuous film, but as assuming the same granulation as matter itself. Looked at from within, as well as observed from without, the stuff of the universe is mysteriously held together by a global energy. Its two aspects, external and internal, correspond. The elements of consciousness and the elements of matter which they subtend, form a homogeneous whole. This is the condition of things in the first stages of the world's appearance. But with time, with the passage of duration, these elements of consciousness, present from the beginning, complicate and differentiate their nature. From this point of view, consciousness reveals itself as a cosmic property of variable size subject to global transformation. The most decisive step in this transformation of consciousness on earth is marked by the first appearance of organized life, or the critical change-over from the molecule to the cell. It is in this change-over that the pre-consciousness inherent in pre-life becomes the consciousness of the first true living creature, and psychic life must be assumed to "begin" in the world. It is a transformation of this kind which provides the key to the fundamental law governing the development of consciousness: that the richer and better organized the structure is, the higher the degree of consciousness it possesses. Conscious articulation and material complexity are but two aspects or connected parts of one and the same phenomenon, and the more perfectly organized the material edifice the more perfect is the consciousness that informs it.<sup>20</sup>

We are now able to see what Teilhard means when he says that there is in life a continuous line of development, a direction, as distinct from a mere spreading out. The science which is

concerned only with the exterior aspect of things has discerned two principles at work in the transformation of matter. The first is that during changes of a physico-chemical type no new energy is introduced in order to produce the change; and the second is that in every physicochemical change, a fraction of the energy available in the world is "entropised", that is to say, it is lost in the form of heat. This means that, considered from without, the world has a limit in time and will eventually burn itself out. Once, however, the element of consciousness, or of mind, is included alongside the element of matter in the study of evolution, one then has to take into account not merely what happens to energy in the course of material transformation but also what happens to energy in the course of transformations in consciousness. One has to recognize, in fact, that though the energies of mind and matter appear to operate throughout both the inner and outer layers of the world in ways that are interdependent and complementary, yet it is quite impossible to establish a simple correspondence between the manner in which they operate in these two spheres. There is no hope of discovering a "mechanical equivalent" for will or thought. One is therefore faced with the task of resolving the relationship between the inner and outer operations of energy in a way which does justice to both.

The solution that Teilhard proposes is as follows. He assumes first that all energy is psychic in nature, and then that in each particular element this psychic energy is divided into two distinct components: "a *tangential energy* which links the element with all others of the same order (that is to say, of the same complexity and the same centricity) as itself in the universe; and a *radial energy* which draws it towards ever greater complexity and centricity—in other words forwards".<sup>21</sup> That is to say, beneath and within the mechanical energy which he calls "tangential"—and it is to this energy that the laws of thermo-dynamics apply—there is another "mental" or "psychic" energy operating in the interior of things which he calls "radial"; and not only is this energy not subject to the laws of thermo-dynamics but it is also constantly increasing.

The dissipation of energy and disintegration of matter remarked by the science which deals only with the externals of things is in this way more than compensated for by the gradual concentration of the world's physico-chemical elements in nuclei of increasing complexity, each succeeding stage of material concentration and differentiation being accompanied by a more advanced form of inner spontaneity and consciousness. Fundamentally, then, from the point of view of their interior, evolution is not simply an endless proliferation of things; it is nothing else than the continual growth of this "psychic" or "radial" energy. And this growth is marked outwardly by an increasing complexity and perfection of arrangement and inwardly by a continual expansion and deepening of consciousness, an increasing degree of cerebralization. It is this relationship between the tangential and radial energies of the world, between the outer and inner of things—a relationship whose most complete expression accessible to science is the human brain—that gives us the essential clue to understanding in what sense evolution has a qualitative direction. It makes it possible for us to perceive that beneath the historically increasing intricacy of forms and organs there is an irreversible increase not only in the quantity, but also in the quality of brains. Evolution, through all its stages, is nothing but an immense ramification of psychic energy seeking through different forms to become more aware of itself, more articulate. It is nothing but a continuous rise in consciousness, which so far has attained its fullest development in the mind of man.<sup>22</sup>

The second of the two propositions which Teilhard adds to his initial proposition and its corollary is that this rise in consciousness which gives evolution its central direction has not yet come to an end. This proposition may seem to run counter to appearances. It may appear that the

evolutionary process has come to a halt. This is suggested not only by the aspect of relative rigidity which nature now presents, as if it were an ocean-wave caught in a snapshot or a torrent of lava stiffened by cooling. It is suggested also by the fact that the morphological change of living creatures seems to have slowed down precisely at the moment when thought appeared on earth. If this fact is taken into account alongside the fact that the general line of evolution has been in the direction of producing the most perfect state of self-reflective consciousness, and that this may be said to have been achieved with the emergence of the human species, it may well appear that the impetus towards further development has now come to an end in all other branches of life, their purpose as it were being fulfilled in the breakthrough to human consciousness. This would explain why evolution since the end of the Tertiary era has been confined to a little group of higher primates. Moreover, to all appearance the ultimate perfection of the human element itself was achieved many thousands of years ago, so that the individual instrument of thought and action may be considered to have reached its highest state of evolution, and this is to add further weight to the suggestion that we have reached the limit of advance and that all things now have achieved their final form.<sup>23</sup>

But even if no progress is perceptible in either the physical or the mental faculties of individual man over the last twenty to thirty thousand years, this does not mean that the line of development is blocked. It only means that it must continue in a direction that surpasses the individual. Over and above the accession to reflection in the individual, there is another phenomenon of a reflective nature co-extensive with the whole of mankind. For Teilhard, the collective is always superior to the individual, the whole to the parts of which it is formed: this too is basic to his thought, and allows him to posit an idea of collective mankind, and a collective consciousness of mankind, that are superior to the individual human being and his individual consciousness, however highly developed this may be. Hence, though evolution may have come to a halt where the individual person and his consciousness are concerned, it can still progress in terms of mankind as a whole. The individual does not exhaust the potentialities of his race, nor does he contain the ends of life in himself. There is something greater than the individual moving forward through mankind, something that is developing perhaps at the expense of the individual.<sup>24</sup> There is a particular form of mind, a particular form of consciousness, coming to birth in the womb of the earth today. The growth in industry, in communications, population, and other aspects of the modern world has meant that what had previously been scattered fragments of humanity are now being brought into close contact and are beginning to interpenetrate to the point of reacting economically and physically upon each other. The effect of this is that, given the fundamental relationship between biological compression and the heightening of consciousness, the level of reflection is rising irresistibly within us and around us. Under the influence of the forces compressing it within a closer vessel, the human substance is beginning to "planetize" itself, that is to say, to be interiorized and animated globally upon itself.<sup>25</sup> Over and within our earth of factory chimneys and offices seething with work and business, out of the age of the machine and of huge collectivities and of science, a new and collective growth in consciousness is taking place. A kind of super-mankind is being born, a collective super-life. It is mankind as a whole, collective humanity, which is called upon to perform the definitive act whereby the total force of terrestrial evolution will be released and will flourish.<sup>26</sup> We must renounce the idea that each man contains in himself the ultimate value of his existence and realize that our purpose consists in serving like intelligent atoms the continuation of the evolutionary process in the universe.<sup>27</sup> "The outcome of the world, the gates of the future, the entry into the super-human—these are not thrown open to a few of the privileged nor to one

chosen people to the exclusion of all others. They will open only to an advance of *all together*, in a direction in which *all together* can join and find completion in a spiritual renovation of the earth".<sup>28</sup> The advance is neither inevitable nor infallible; but its possibility exists. To mankind as a whole a way of progress is offered analogous to that which the individual cannot reject without falling into sin and damnation".<sup>29</sup>

In all that has been said so far about the evolutionary process, Teilhard could claim—and indeed he does claim—that he is speaking simply as a scientist. He is looking at the facts—or at least (and this is a considerable reservation) at those facts which can be discerned; and he is not, he claims, going beyond what they can substantiate. In completing and crowning his evolutionary theory, however, he steps outside the scientific framework and crosses over into the sphere of spiritual interpretation. As he perceives, the theory as it stands so far is lacking in one vital respect. Although we may feel confident that we are given the opportunity of progressing still further along the road to greater consciousness, yet we are still ignorant of what awaits us at the end of the road, and of why we should endeavor to advance along it at all. There is no satisfactory outcome to the movement; and, as Teilhard says, it is this uncertainty about a satisfactory outcome, and the feeling that there never can be any certainty about a satisfactory outcome, that lies at the root of the malaise of the modern world.<sup>30</sup> What is lacking is a center that can give meaning to and ultimately transfigure the whole process. And, what is more, to be able to give this meaning and effect this transfiguration, such a center must transcend the limitations inherent in the process itself. If the final and resultant form of all our efforts towards greater consciousness is subject to reversal; if, so as to satisfy the law of entropy, it is one day to start disintegrating and to fall back indefinitely into pre-living and still lower forms; if, finally, all our acquisitions and achievements, in whatever sphere, and our own lives as well, are merely subject to the destructive action of time, so that the ultimate outcome we must expect is one of universal blankness or of cosmic death, then the whole impetus towards advancing any further is crippled and negated. So long as our acquisitions and achievements, and our own lives as well, are ineluctably tied up with the earth, they will perish with the earth. The radical defect in all forms of progress as they are expressed in positivist credos is that, however far they may push the threat of annihilation into the future, they do not envisage any outcome which escapes this eventual annihilation. They propose nothing which definitely eliminates death. What is the use of positing even the most ideal form of golden age ahead of us if, whatever we do, it must one day disintegrate? For mankind to be liberated from its present discontent and sense of frustration, it must have before it a prospect, a focus, which is independent of the collapse of the forces of which evolution is woven. And it is in trying to clarify this prospect and focus that Teilhard leaves the realm of science for that of religious speculation.

The solution which Teilhard proposes as the consummation of the evolutionary process is really the crux of his effort to conjugate religion and science. What in effect he posits as this consummation—what transcends the process itself and confers on it its ultimate significance—is a reality that he calls Omega and that he identifies directly with the Christian Savior. Omega or Christ is the outcome towards which everything tends, the term finally resolving mankind's effort to achieve ever higher psychisms. We have already seen how evolution is a continuing ascent towards and rise in consciousness, and how the crucial phase in this process was the awakening of thought on earth, or what Teilhard calls the *noogenesis*. This crucial phase does not represent merely a development affecting only the individual or even the species as a whole. It affects life itself in its organic totality, and consequently it marks a transformation affecting the state of the entire planet. "When for the first time in a living creature instinct perceived itself in its own

mirror, the whole world took a pace forward".<sup>31</sup> This step forward, explicit in man's power of self-reflection, is only definable as an increase in consciousness, and logically, since, as Teilhard has also argued, evolution is still continuing, it must culminate in the future in some sort of supreme consciousness. But that consciousness, if it is to be supreme, must possess in a supreme degree the three-fold quality which distinguishes every consciousness and particularly our own consciousness. This consists of centering *everything* partially upon itself; of being able to center itself upon itself *constantly*; and of being brought *more* by this very super-centration *into association with all other* centers surrounding it. What we are witnessing in the collective human *Weltanschauung* which is being propagated throughout the planet in our own times is an advance in the involution of being upon itself, an advance which is the first symptom of the birth of some single center from the convergent beams of millions of elementary centers dispersed over the surface of the thinking world. The sphere of consciousness, or of what Teilhard calls the *noosphere*, is not only closed; it is also centered. The millions of centers of consciousness which make up the world are as so many radii all converging upon an invisible and supremely involuted point, a point which fuses them and consumes them integrally in itself. It is this point that Teilhard calls Omega.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, Omega not only consummates and concentrates in itself the hoard of consciousness liberated little by little on earth by noogenesis. If its function were limited to this it still could not provide that inspiration without which our impulse to continue our advance must wither and die. The mere hoarding in itself of consciousness in an impersonal manner, if it involves the elimination of our own personal consciousness, is not something we can regard with any great enthusiasm. What man needs is the assurance that he can establish in and by himself an absolutely original and personal center in which the universe reflects itself in a unique and inimitable way; and in addition that this center is perfected, and not eliminated, in any higher aggregate of centers in which it may be concentrated. Such a center—a center of consciousness—is man's very self and his personality; and for him to surrender that at the price of its extinction would in personal terms be a meaningless act. It follows that Omega, if it is to fulfill its function in a way that confers personal and unrepeatable value on our lives, must reclaim and reassemble in itself all *consciousness* as well as all *the conscious*. At the end of the operation, not only must each particular consciousness remain conscious of itself, but even each particular consciousness must become still more itself and so more clearly distinct from all other consciousnesses. In Omega, supreme union must coincide with supreme differentiation. In its ultimate principle, Omega must be a distinct center radiating at the core of a system of centers. It must be not only the Hyper-Universal but also the Hyper-Personal, so that each of the centers which it gathers and guards within itself becomes through this concentration both universal and personal to the highest possible degree.<sup>33</sup> This it can only be on condition that it operates according to the power of love. Love alone is capable of uniting living beings in such a way as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in themselves. It alone is capable of "personalizing" them by totalizing them.<sup>34</sup>

This is not all. We have seen that the function of Omega is to initiate and maintain within its radius the unanimity of the reflective centers of the world. It is to act as a universal center of unification, and to do this through the power of love which it exercises. But there could be no positive relationship between Omega and the centers it is to fulfill if it were only capable of exercising this love in some vague and remote future. For love to be effective, it must be a present reality, not something far removed in time and space. Remoteness either in time or in space spells the death of love. This is to say that Omega cannot be something that emerges from

the evolutionary process in the extremely distant future and in total dependence on the reversible laws of energy which govern this process. For love to be possible there must be co-existence, and this means that to exercise its functions of reconciling and liberating the play of human attractions and repulsions Omega must be in a position to act with direct proximity, both spatial and temporal. An ideal center, or a potential center could not act in this way. A present and real noosphere goes with a real and present center. Omega therefore must be an entirely present center. It is already in existence and operative at the very core of the thinking mass.

Moreover, as has been said, to satisfy the ultimate requirements of such action, Omega must be superior to the forces and laws governing the evolutionary process, and it must be independent of their collapse. If Omega emerged only in the course of evolution, even though at its summit, it would emerge with mechanical dependence on what precedes it. In so far as Omega is the synthesis in which the whole evolutionary movement culminates it will be discovered to us at the very end of the process, as the last in the series. But from this evolutionary point of view, Omega only reveals half of itself. Although it is the last of the series, it is also outside all series. Thus, it is not enough to say that it emerges from the rise of consciousness; it must also be added that it has already emerged from this genesis. It not only already escapes from entropy, but does so more and more. Unless this were so it could neither operate as the mysterious center of our centers *as a present reality*, nor be above the mechanistic laws of corruption and disintegration that science posits for evolution. It could neither subjugate consciousness to love, nor establish it ultimately in incorruptibility. In the final analysis Omega cannot be what it is unless it is simultaneously autonomous, actually present, irreversible and transcendent.<sup>35</sup>

From all that has been said of Omega one can see how Teilhard can recognize in it an essentially Christian phenomenon, and in fact identify it with the Christian Savior and so achieve that reconciliation between the evolutionary and the Christian perspectives which he is so anxious to realize. Given the attributes with which Teilhard has invested Omega, the transposition from the one to the other is not difficult to make. In effect, he argues. God creates, fulfils and purifies the world by uniting it organically with himself. This He does by partially immersing Himself in things, by becoming "element", and from this point of vantage at the heart of matter He assumes the control and leadership of what we now call evolution. This partial immersion is accomplished in the Incarnation. Through His Incarnation, through becoming a man among men, Christ, the universal principle of vitality, puts Himself into a position to purify, direct and superanimate the general ascent of consciousness into which He has inserted Himself. By a perennial act of communion and sublimation, He aggregates to Himself the total psychism of the earth. "And when He has gathered everything together and transformed everything, He will close in upon Himself and His conquests, thereby rejoining, in a final gesture, the divine focus He has never left". Then, in the words of St. Paul, God shall be all in all, and the universe will fulfill itself in a synthesis of centers in perfect conformity with the laws of union".<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the Incarnation is a making new, a restoration, of all the universe's forces and powers; Christ is the instrument, the center and the end of the whole of animate and material creation; through Him, everything is created, sanctified and vivified, His influence spreading and penetrating through the entire mass of Nature in movement.<sup>37</sup> Christ, in other words, is Omega; and the end of man's evolution is not disintegration and death, but a new break-through and rebirth, this time outside time and space, through the very excess of unification and co-reflection of which Christ-Omega is the principle. The salvation of the species is not in any tempo-spatial

consolidation or expansion but by way of spiritual escape through the excess of consciousness. The end is not *well-being* in any materialist or naturalist sense, but *more-being*; and the ultra-human perfection in which the evolutionary process consummates itself coincides in concrete terms with the crowning of the Incarnation awaited by all Christians.<sup>38</sup> In this way the perspectives of science and Christianity are reconciled and it can be understood how the rôle of the Church in building the Kingdom of God is linked ultimately with the evolutionary progress which the world is in any case following naturally.<sup>39</sup> So perfectly does Christian dogma appear to fuse with Teilhard's conception of Omega that, as he himself remarks, he would never have ventured to envisage the latter or formulate the hypothesis rationally if, in his consciousness as a believer, he had not found not only its speculative model but also its living reality.<sup>40</sup>

This in brief outline is Teilhard's system; and it at once poses the question of determining whether its synthesis of science and religion has been achieved in terms which leave the religious point of view—in this case the Christian vision—intact or mutilated. Several aspects of this system do indeed immediately stand out as being diametrically opposed to Christianity. For instance, Teilhard's understanding of the relationship between the whole and the parts leads him, as we have seen, to attribute greater value to collectivities than to particulars. In fact, the whole of Teilhard's thought requires the concept of collective realities which are not reducible to their component elements. This reversal of the Christian viewpoint attains its full development in the uncouth notion that for God mankind is a more important and a more valuable and complete category than the single person. This in itself would be enough to demonstrate the anti-Christian nature of Teilhard's thesis. But the main focus of any criticism must be the central concept of the system, the concept of Omega and its assimilation to the Christic function or, rather, the placing of the Incarnation within the framework provided by evolution seen as consummated by the Omega concept.

Here the first thing to observe is that to be true to his principle that evolution must form the starting-point and pre-condition of all our thinking, Teilhard is compelled to envisage Christ himself as involved in the evolutionary process, and so in that respect as subordinate to it. There is indeed a certain degree of ambiguity, not to say confusion, in Teilhard's thought at this crucial point. In effect, when discussing the Omega concept we saw that to fulfill its nature and function Omega has to be not only supremely attractive but also supremely present. This it can only be on condition that it does not simply emerge from the rise of consciousness at the end of the whole evolutionary process. To be supremely present and, it may be added, to be irreversible and so not subject to the laws of entropy, Omega must in some respect have *already emerged* from the evolutionary process. Thus, Omega has two facets, or two halves. The one half is that which is discovered to us at the end of the evolutionary process, and the other is that which has already emerged from this process. What is ambiguous, or confusing, is the question of whether this second half of Omega is ever engaged in the evolutionary process at all, or whether it remains permanently transcendent. At one point<sup>41</sup> Teilhard speaks of it as having "already emerged", with the implication that it has previously been involved in it. But at another point<sup>42</sup> he remarks that, precisely to fulfill its motive, collective, and stabilizing function, Omega, the universal center of unification, "must be conceived as pre-existing and transcendent". This would seem to imply that this second half of Omega is never engaged in the evolutionary process at all.

This ambiguity, or confusion, is not without its significance. If Omega were not outside the evolutionary process from the beginning, as a pre-existent and transcendent principle of the movement towards unity and convergence that characterizes this process from the beginning,

from where did evolution derive its impulse to unification and convergence? During immense periods of evolution, Teilhard writes,<sup>43</sup> the radial energy in things, "obscurely stirred up by the action of the *Prime Mover ahead*", was only able to express itself, in diffuse aggregates, in animal consciousness. Once, however, thinking entities emerged, "the sublime physics of centers" came into play. When these entities became centers, and therefore persons, "the elements could at last begin to react, directly as such, to the personalizing action of the center of centers". But again, unless Omega, the center of centers, is outside the whole evolutionary process from the beginning, from where could the stimulus to become centers, and therefore persons, so that they could react directly to the personalizing action of the center of centers, have come in the first place? On the other hand, if Omega pre-exists and principally transcends the whole evolutionary process, as Teilhard's argument would seem to require, then this process must either have derived from it, or have its origin in another world-principle. If it derived from it, then Omega is its author, and so, apart from anything else, it is Omega and not evolution which must form the starting point and pre-condition of all our systems and theories, and whether evolution or anything else is true and thinkable must depend on what views we have about Omega. It is Omega, and not evolution, that is the Absolute; and it is in the light of this Absolute that anything we say about evolution must be considered. If, in order to escape this dilemma, it is now said that evolution does not derive from Omega, but has its origin in another world-principle, then there are two principles at work in the universe, and one has admitted a fundamental dualism in things, a dualism which, Teilhard states, is "at once impossible and anti-scientific".<sup>44</sup>

Teilhard might claim that these latter considerations go beyond the strictly scientific point of view to which he has limited himself, and that from this point of view all that is important is to know that Omega is already in existence and operative at the very core of the thinking mass. But if one is claiming to reconcile science and religion then the metaphysical implications of even the most rigorous scientific hypothesis must be scrutinized in order to ascertain whether in fact this reconciliation is possible. This is all the more important in Teilhard's case, because, ambiguous and confusing as it is, his way of regarding the relationship between Omega and evolution is transferred directly to the relationship between Christ and evolution. Thus Christ, like Omega, has two facets, or halves. In respect of one half of Himself He must be regarded as pre-existing and transcendent, though in this respect His relationship to evolution is left extremely vague. In respect of the other half of Himself He must be regarded, as we said, as involved in the evolutionary process, and in fact as the final synthesis in which the movement culminates. This notion of Christ's insertion in the evolutionary process necessarily compels Teilhard to formulate the idea of an evolving Christ, of a Christ who is incomplete and whose final form is being elaborated in time together with that of all other things. In fact it is precisely because Christ is still incomplete, still in the process of becoming, that the evolutionary flow itself is kept in motion. Through the Incarnation, Christ became the instrument, the center, and the end of the whole of animate and material creation; He became its motive force. And since He was born, and ceased to grow, and died, everything has continued in motion because He has not yet attained the fullness of His form. He has not yet reached the peak of His growth. His Mystical Body is still unfulfilled. It is in the continuation of this fulfillment that lies the ultimate driving force behind all creative activity. All human action and endeavor serves to complete the Body of Christ, so that Christ fulfils Himself gradually through the ages in the sum of this action and endeavor. Without this, without the evolution of collective thought, there can be no consummated Christ. He will remain for ever incomplete. Ultimately, and in a real sense, the

whole evolutionary process is working towards the salvation of Christ. Ultimately, and in a real sense, only one man will be saved, and that is Christ, the head and living summary of humanity. It is the garment of His flesh and love that is being woven by the lives of the faithful on earth. It is He who is the term and the consummation of even the natural evolution of living things.<sup>45</sup>

This conception of an evolving Christ, inescapable so long as the theory of evolution itself is regarded as the dogma of all dogmas and the standard of all truth, virtually stands Christian doctrine on its head. According to this doctrine, Christ is at once perfect God and perfect man, not in any sense that remains potential, but as a consummated whole. The Body of His Resurrection, His glorious or mystical Body, is already exempt from the conditions of duration to which the natural world—the world which is supposed to be in the course of evolution—is subject, and in no sense is awaiting completion at the end of time. It is through the sacraments and through sacramental activity that man may participate in the spiritualized reality of Christ's Body, and so complete himself. Were His Body still unspiritualized, still itself subject to the same conditions as those to which unsanctified man is subject, it would be incapable of exerting a transfiguring power on the natural world and on individual man; it would be incapable of releasing them from those conditions to which they are subject. The sacraments, in other words, would have no ultimate transfiguring efficacy, whatever else they might have. To transcend, here and now, the limitations of death and corruption which characterize the natural world, man must be able to participate, here and now, in a reality already exempt from these limitations. This reality, in Christian terms, is the Mystical Body of Christ. If this Body were still itself waiting for deliverance till the end of time, were still itself waiting to be completed and saved, there could be no salvation for individual men and women till the end of time. The Resurrection and the ascension of Christ in His glorious Body would be not something which have happened, once and for all; they would be something which is to happen in the indefinite future. And the Eucharist would not bear witness to and be the consummated Body of Christ, and so capable of communicating its deifying, energies to the faithful; it could only be at best a kind of anticipatory token or foreshadowing of a form that will not attain its fullness until the evolutionary process is at an end.

The notion that Christ's Mystical Body is not already a fully spiritualized reality would, if true, mean that the sacramental life of the Church is without any real foundation. It would also mean that man is not a substantial creature, the image of God, capable here and now of opposing and rising above the natural laws of the world through participation in the spiritualized reality of Christ's Body. It would mean that he is on the contrary a passive instrument of these laws, to which he must adapt and submit himself in the pious belief that in this way he is helping to save Christ. Fundamentally, Teilhard sees Christ integrated into the cosmos, absorbed in the cosmic process. He sees Christ in biology and chemistry but not as He is in Himself in the divine Trinity. Christ the Logos, that pre-existing and transcendent "other half" of Christ of which Teilhard speaks, remains a shadowy, even a token figure in his system. He is eclipsed by the notion of an evolutionary Christ. This notion of an evolving Christ—of a Christ who is still to be saved and whose Body is still to be completed—is a bastard notion subtly eliminating the divine transcendence and making God subservient to human interests and purposes. Admittedly, it is also a notion very flattering to human vanity. To assume that Christ—or God—has need of man's assistance in order to be saved vastly increases man's sense of his own importance, which is what he is always trying to do. In fact, it is but a short step from here to reversing completely the Christian position and to saying that it is not so much man who is to be saved through Christ as Christ who is to be saved through man. This is perhaps really the secret thought which lies

behind such a notion as that which Teilhard proposes, although it cannot be proclaimed so openly. Man can now think of himself as saving Christ in a vital and indispensable manner. Indeed, not only can man attribute to himself a divine purpose, but God actually has need of man. He ceases to be an independent God, existing in and for Himself, and not requiring man's services in any form whatsoever. The traditional Christian idea which implies, not God's dependence on man, but man's dependence on God in an unequivocal way, does not of course contribute anything to man's sense of his own importance. But to turn it upside down, as Teilhard does, and to pretend that Christ, and so God, are dependent for fulfillment on the collective will of mankind, is radically to disfigure the original meaning of Christ and of the Christian sacraments.

It might be said that this charge fails to do justice to Teilhard's teaching. It might be said that unless such an idea as Christ's immanence in the evolutionary process is admitted, it is impossible to envisage the world as anything more than the "dead" matter of mechanistic science. Only if Christ Himself participates in the world He has created can this world be recognized as having an intrinsically sacred nature and as being capable of ultimate spiritualization or transfiguration. Christ must be concealed at the heart of everything; and, Teilhard's argument continues, if everything is still in the course of evolution, it follows that Christ too, in so far as He is present in everything, must also be evolving. Were He already perfected—and so beyond the conditions of duration—the world would be deprived of any qualitative goal towards which it could progress in time. Evolution would lose its spiritual dynamic. Only by envisaging a Christ whose one half is not only immanent but also incomplete and evolving can the world be perceived as a spiritually animated mass in the process of transforming itself in time towards ever higher degrees of consciousness. Only in this way can it be realized how the world is gradually being formed into the Body of Christ and so prepared for that organic complex of God and world—the Pleroma—when, at the end of time, God will be all is all.

It is true that, as St. Maximos puts it, Christ is ever wishing to perform the miracle of His Incarnation in all things. But this does not imply any incompleteness in Christ. It implies incompleteness in the present state of creation, which is by no means the same thing. It is here that Teilhard is led virtually to suppress another central aspect of Christian doctrine, that which concerns the "fall" of man. It is not accidental that Teilhard scarcely mentions this doctrine, and that in one of the few places where he does mention it, it is to speak of the "exaggerated conception" that Christians have of it.<sup>46</sup> The traditional idea of the "fall" does of course cut right across the notion of evolution, and the acceptance of the one must mean the rejection of the other. Christian doctrine not only posits a creation *ex nihilo*; it also claims that this original creation, which includes man, is, within the limits imposed by existence, a perfect creation. It is an organic complex of God, man, and world. Existence as we know it, and the conditions of time and space as we know them, issue from a disruption of this original creation. Life and consciousness have not emerged on earth as the result of any long process continuing through time. Life and consciousness are present *ab initio*, and it is their loss and obfuscation that projects man outside the state in which he is originally created, and plunges him into the fragmented and alienated world in which he now finds himself. Yet this loss and obfuscation of life and consciousness are but relative. It is not so much that through the fall man is totally deprived of life and consciousness, as that they are now reduced in him from a state of activity to one of passivity. The divine image is still present in man in the very fact of his existence; but it is present in, so to speak, a passive mode. Growth in the spiritual life consists in developing the

divine image, inherent in man's very existence, in whatever time or place this may be, from the passive to the active mode. This development corresponds to the recovery of that life and consciousness eclipsed through the fall.

The essential point to grasp is that in the Christian perspective ultimate life and consciousness are innate in man (and, *mutatis mutandis*, in all created things) from the instant of his creation; and they remain innate in him (as in all created things) as a realizable potential of his being at whatever point in the course of history he comes into existence. In the Christian perspective, there can be no question at all of life and consciousness evolving with the supposed evolution of matter. Life and consciousness are integral qualities of the original creation; and they remain integral qualities of fallen creation, fully present in all phases of its existence. The difference between the two states of creation, unfallen and fallen, depends upon the degree to which this life and consciousness are actualized in the one and in the other. But the possibility of their complete actualization is again fully present at every phase of the existence of the fallen world. This is why saints and prophets and sages may arise at any time in history: at whatever time in history a human individual may occur he possesses within himself the full potentialities of life and consciousness as well as the means to realize them in an active mode should he seek to do so. This is to say that the highest level of intelligence accessible to man and in many cases indeed realized by man is a constant and immutable and implicitly divine virtuality of his existence, not subject to change or in any way "evolving" as the world "progresses" in time. Christ is not only Omega; He is also Alpha, "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever"; and if He wishes to work the miracle of His Incarnation in all His creatures, this is not because He is in any need of completion—how could God ever be incomplete?—but because His creation as a whole has fallen away from its original glory, has lapsed, is incomplete, and needs for its completion to recover the full measure of that life and consciousness of which He is the principle and gauge. In Christ, creation is already transfigured. To the degree to which man remains impervious and blind to the transfigured reality of creation in the Body of Christ, he keeps the world in a state of fragmentation and alienation which is a reflection of his own fallen state.

It follows from this that if Christ is concealed at the heart of all things; if the whole of creation is impregnated with divine life, this is not because creation is Christ's Mystical Body in the process of being fulfilled, as Teilhard would have it. Quite apart from the grotesque notion which this involves of splitting Christ into two halves and of making one half subject to an evolutionary "becoming", it also, in spite of Teilhard's protests to the contrary, involves a confusion of God and the world that either leaves God dominated by natural categories, or equates the world with God. In both cases the reality of the relationship between God and creation is misconceived. Indeed, one may say that the almost exclusively Christocentric attitude adopted by Teilhard makes it impossible for him to envisage the full reality of this relationship. If creation is "incorporated" into the glorious Body of Christ, this is through the Spirit and the divine energies which the Spirit manifests. The Christocentric attitude adopted by Teilhard, and inherited from western scholasticism, tends to diminish the rôle of the Spirit in creation, as it further tends to ignore the distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies through which God penetrates and acts in all things. It is these energies, luminous radiations of the divine rooted in the heart of everything that animate and transform the world—or would transform it did not man project on to it that opacity which is his as the consequence of the fall. It is these too that manifest the divine Presence in the Eucharist, a Presence again sadly concealed by the fall. If the world is intrinsically sacramental, this is because the divine energies secretly circulate through the veins of everything, seeking to reveal to everything the miracle of the

Transfiguration. To imagine that this Transfiguration and the perfection of the glorious Body are to be achieved in the unspecified future is to mutilate the Christian vision at its heart.

Teilhard's notion of an incomplete Christ, of a Christ who is to be saved, and his tacit suppression of the doctrine of the fall, are imposed on him by his need to accommodate the Christian vision to what in effect is his primary dogma, the theory of evolution. As we saw, the theory of evolution itself derives, according to Teilhard, from the revolution in our thinking about time. This change amounts to the replacement of an hierarchically ordered world-picture in which relationships are seen as occurring in a "vertical" series, by a world-picture in which everything is seen as occurring in a "horizontal" space-time dimension that stretches far back into the past and far forward into the future and forms an uninterrupted chain in which not one link can be altered. Preoccupation with temporal succession has taken the place of preoccupation with realities that have no past and future in the way that evolution demands. Not only might one point out the manifest absurdity in basing what amounts to a whole philosophical theory on a space-time concept that itself is formed by a mind still on its own confession in the process of evolution and still therefore immersed in the space-time world it seeks to interpret, and whose conclusions consequently cannot be more than the most tentative hypotheses. One also might ask whether this change in our thinking about time does not represent a further declension from the Christian vision, a further secularization of thought.

The more the Christian consciousness is developed, the more it experiences things as essentially reborn, or new-born, at every instant. This means that as one's consciousness grows the idea of temporal succession is increasingly replaced by that of divine instantaneousness. In the light of the mature consciousness, the past and future of things have little significance. Indeed, a condition of grasping the true nature of things involves rising above the notions of past and future. "Let the dead bury their dead" and "Take no thought for the morrow" are the two injunctions which the Christian must seek to apply before he begins to see the world aright; and he begins to see it aright when he sees it "in a grain of sand, and eternity in an hour", and when "new every morning is the light". Ultimately, should his spiritual growth permit it, he would see the whole process of creation from the initial *Fiat Lux* to the Parousia as a single timeless moment of divine self-manifestation. In God, nothing is past, nothing is future; all is simultaneously created in the eternal Now. The Word or Logos of God has an eternal birth, and the birth of all things made by Him is equally eternal: every particle of the universe is continually being recreated by the immediate activity of the divine energies. The process of creation is continually and everywhere being enacted "in the beginning". It is not something that has been set in motion in a remote place and time and which is thereafter operating according to its own evolutionary laws. It is a continual and ever-present "opening of the centers of the birth of life" (Boehme's phrase) in which each creature, however minute, comes into existence at the center not only of its own space and time but of all space and time. As Blake puts it:

And every Space smaller than a Globule of Man's blood opens into Eternity of which this vegetable earth is but a shadow.

The degree therefore to which man fails to perceive things in the light of the eternal present, but sees them as subordinate to the categories of duration, indicates the degree to which his mind and experience fall below that of the mature Christian consciousness. It indicates the degree to which his mind and experience are estranged from the "mind of Christ" and are dominated by what is "but a shadow". Preoccupation with temporal succession; the viewing of things as if they existed only, or chiefly, in a space-time continuum stretching back into the past and far forward

into the future, is not only a vast distraction making it impossible to see things as they truly are; it is also evidence of the density of the veil that has fallen between man and God.

The radical distortions of Christian doctrine that Teilhard is forced to make in order to accommodate it to the theory of evolution, however, ultimately do no more than point to the fundamental fallacy involved in his attempt to reconcile religion and science. This fallacy consists in the belief that science is capable of producing any theory adequate to stand as a criterion of truth. In fact, as Teilhard himself admits, only to forget it in elaborating his system, all scientific theory is no more than hypothesis, and there can be no question of demonstrating that it corresponds to the real nature of things. To be scientific, a theory must fit the facts of observation. Yet when it comes to the point, what are the facts to be observed? It is a long time since scientists imagined it possible to observe phenomena in themselves, or even that there is a material world subsisting in itself which can be observed. As Teilhard says, "our sensory experience turns out to be a floating condensation on a swarm of the undefinable".<sup>47</sup> Moreover, if on the one hand what was thought to be the observable world itself turns out to be a shifting field of unseen energies, on the other hand the notion that the scientist can observe objectively, as if he, with all his personal and subjective being, were not involved in the phenomena that he is observing, is equally spurious. This, too, Teilhard readily admits, though again he appears to forget it equally readily. "There is no fact", he writes, "which exists in pure isolation, but every experience, however objective it may seem, inevitably becomes enveloped in a complex of assumptions as soon as the scientist attempts to express it in a formula".<sup>48</sup> Physicists and naturalists are now beginning to realize that "even the most objective of their observations are steeped in the conventions they adopted at the outset and by forms or habits of thought developed in the course of their research; so that, when they reach the end of their analyses they cannot tell with any certainty whether the structure they have reached is the essence of the matter they are studying, or the reflection of their own thought... Man willy-nilly finds his own image stamped on all he looks at".<sup>49</sup> In other words, the facts of observation in physics or biology are not objective phenomena, but phenomena submitted to human interrogation where man encounters only the reflection of his own thought and its formulas.

In the light of this the fundamental fallacy in Teilhard's attempt to reconcile science and religion is clearly evident. The theory about man and his destiny which he propounds and to which he so ruthlessly adapts Christianity is not, as he claims it is, purely and simply scientific, purely a matter of scientific reflection or verified by objective observation<sup>50</sup>; it is but the conjecture of a mind committed to looking at things in a certain way because of its implicit categories of thought and response and the personal character of the thinker himself. It is the presuppositions which the thinker bears with him as a person, often at a level of which he is unaware or which, when he is aware of it, he is unable to specify, that provide the framework within which and according to which he interprets what he observes. It is well said that the eye sees in things only what it looks for and it looks only for what it already has in mind. Ultimately the conflict between science and religion is not between theories and ideas that are objectively verifiable and those that transcend such verification, or between reason and faith. It is between different kinds of faith, between what authority one accepts as providing an adequate ground for thought and action in the first place, and the strength with which one believes in it. This is only another way of saying that as one is, so one will see the world. A person who accepts reason as the final arbiter of truth and has faith in its norms will produce a picture of the universe which is as rationally coherent as he can make it. A person who denies the divine image in himself will effectively estrange himself from it, and will see the world as a spiritless desert. It is the meaning

one confers on things that finally determines their significance for one and even their appearance, since in the end what the world looks like depends on the image we impose upon it. This does not imply that all theories and ideas are equally hypothetical, and that no one way of seeing things is more true than other ways. But it should help to make one aware of the limitations of what are put forward as scientific theories, as well as of how totally inadequate these are to provide standards according to which the truth of a religious doctrine can be measured or modified. It should help also to make one aware that if there is any theory or idea that is more than hypothetical then it can only derive from a source that is itself more than hypothetical; and in that case it is this theory or idea that must provide the final standard for assessing the value of all other theories and ideas, whatever may be the scientific standing and authority attributed to them.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

*The science of sciences and the art of arts is the capacity to master harmful thoughts. The best method and remedy against them is to watch with God's help for the appearance of their suggestion and always to keep the thought pure, just as we protect our physical eye, watching sharply for anything which might injure it and not letting even a speck of dust come near it.*

Hesychius of Jerusalem to Theodulus.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, London, 1966, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Milieu Divin*, London, 1960, pp. 20-21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *The Future of Man*, Fontana Books, London, 1969, p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>9</sup> *The Future of Man*, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>10</sup> *Le Milieu Divin*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, op. cit., pp. 216-220.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140, note 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> *The Future of Man*, op. cit., p. 13; *The Phenomenon of Man*, op. cit. p. 264.

<sup>18</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, op. cit., p. 71 and p. 78.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-58.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-62.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

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- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-66 and pp. 147-152.
- <sup>23</sup> *The Future of Man*, op. cit., pp. 14-16.
- <sup>24</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, op. cit., p. 178 and p. 230.
- <sup>25</sup> *The Future of Man*, op. cit., p. 308.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- <sup>28</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, op. cit., pp. 244-245.
- <sup>29</sup> *The Future of Man*, op. cit., p. 19.
- <sup>30</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, op. cit., p. 229.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 261-263.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-271 and p. 291.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 293-294.
- <sup>37</sup> *The Future of Man*, op. cit., p. 319 and p. 98.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317 and p. 280.
- <sup>39</sup> *Le Milieu Divin*, op. cit., p. 43.
- <sup>40</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, op. cit., p. 294.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 309-310.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- <sup>45</sup> *The Future of Man*, op. cit., pp. 319, 320, 23, 24; *Le Milieu Divin*, op. cit., p. 136.
- <sup>46</sup> *Le Milieu Divin*, op. cit., p. 149.
- <sup>47</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, op. cit., p. 41.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.