Teilhardian Evolutionism: A Philosophical Reconsideration

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https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v24i2.5

Abstract

Philosophers, right from the Classical Greek period, have grappled with the problem of the origin, nature, and future of the universe. On one pole of the debate evolutionists who see the universe as an organism in the process of cosmic evolution. On the other pole of the debate are creationists who hold that reality was created by a supreme being. Interestingly, this debate has led to heated disagreements between these two rival camps. In the face of this problem, this work explores the view of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who proposes a unique theory of evolution which integrates some ideas of the creationists. This cosmic evolution, according to him, is the ongoing and unfolding process of the creative impulse, which is personalized in the human person until it reaches its apex in personal relationship with the transcendent at the Omega Point. This work attempts to expose Teilhard de Chardin's entire theory of cosmic evolution; the stages of the process of cosmic evolution, the laws which govern the process and the end to which it tends, that is, the Omega Point. It points out the strengths and weaknesses of his arguments as well as the implications of his entire theory for the present human society. In the final analysis, this research work maintains that despite its obvious downsides, Teilhard de Chardin's Evolutionism is remarkable for its synthesis of science with

religion, its revelation of the uniqueness of the emergence of internet in the evolutionary continuum and its prognostication of a glorious future predestined for the cosmos from the very onset of evolution. Analytic method of research was employed.

Keywords: Teilhardian Evolutionism, Philosophy and Reconsideration

INTRODUCTION

Many disciplines present various views on the origin of man and his future. A deist's view on man's origin opposes the versions of a scientist. For a religionist, God is the creator of the universe and all its stuffing. For the scientist/evolutionist, all species are the results of change, modification, growth and adaptation rather than creation as the religionists maintain (Eneh, 2000:5). This has resulted in a long-lasting controversy between Creationism and Evolutionism as opposing views. In these two rival accounts on the nature and origin of the world, various scholars have risen and propounded theories that are unique in their different respects. Amongst the evolutionists camp is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Paleontologist, whose intellectual insights have been revolutionary and relevant in the heated debate with creationists.

Teilhard de Chardin, as a biologist, paleontologist, philosopher, theologian, and as well, a Roman-Catholic Jesuit priest, postulates his own theory of evolution as a paradigm shift from other evolutional theories. As a Paleontologist, he used science as the stepping stone for his vast philosophical and religious synthesis in

which scientific findings, philosophical reason, and religious faith (Christianity in particular), are brought into one (Mercier, 2002:117). His theory is largely anthropocentric as his argument centers on the theme that the cosmos has meaning only through 'humanity' as a product of evolution. (Forthergill, 1964:25). The attribute of 'reflection' enjoyed solely by man confers on him a unique ontological position in the whole of reality (Bernard Wall, 1959:184). Man has, therefore, to realize that he carries the world's fortune on himself and that a limitless future of hope stretches before him. This optimistic future for mankind is realized alongside the unfolding of the material cosmos and is finalized in Teilhard's vision of the **Omega Point**; the logical end and *terminus ad quem* of evolution, in which all creation is converged into the Cosmic Christ.

Against this background, this research paper is basically an attempt to expose these far-reaching ideas of Teilhard de Chardin, and as well, give a critical analysis of the claims contained in his theory of evolution. The positive and negative implications of his theory are to be explicitly laid bare.

The Man: Teilhard De Chardin

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was born on May 1 1881, fourth of eleven children, into an aristocratic French family that lived within the Auvergne region of France. He was a Jesuit priest (ordained in 1912), a World War I stretcher-bearer, a university lecturer, a scientist and a writer. He studied Geology, Mineralogy, Philosophy, and Theology at the Jesuit College, and received a doctorate in Paleontology later on in China. De Chardin's works were influenced by various other thinkers, especially by Charles Darwin. Charles Darwin's large influence on De Chardin's thought is seen in the fact that the latter's theory of evolution is basically a modification of Darwinian Evolutionism- a biological theory which states that man developed over millions of years ago from simple organisms, particularly unicellular organisms, by means of 'natural selection'. Another influence on De Chardin was Henri Bergson's concepts of creative evolution and *élan vital*. The story of De Chardin would be incomplete without the mention of the numerous set-backs and oppositions he faced in achieving his life goal. Convincing the Church to accept the evolutionism of Charles Darwin was an effort that was heavily frustrated. His religious superiors banned his writings from being

published and ordered him not to write anymore on philosophical subjects. In fact, as at 1926, the Church had him expelled from the Catholic Institute in Paris where he was lecturing. It was after his death on April 10th 1955 that his works were published posthumously. His *magnus opus* is— *The Phenomenon of Man* (Teilhard, 1959:3).

Evolutionism: A Cursory Look

First and foremost, what is evolution? Etymologically, the word *evolution*, whose root word is 'evolve,' is derived from the Latin word *volvere* which means—to roll out. Simply put, it is the rolling out or unfolding of things. Winick defines it as "a continuous development distinguished by each stage's growing out of the one before," (Winick, 1977:340).

Evolutionism as a Scientific Theory

Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1887), a British naturalist and biologist, is popularized to be the father of the evolution theory. Through his observation and study of fossils, Darwin noticed similarities among specific species of organisms in the globe, leading him to believe that the species we know today had

gradually evolved from common biological ancestors. The evolving of these organisms occurred in such a manner that the species which successfully adapted to meet the changing requirements of their natural habitat thrived and reproduced offspring, while those species which failed to adapt and reproduce, died off. He used the term 'natural selection' to refer to the process where some species of organisms survived through time.

Evolutionism as a Philosophical Ideology

Apart from the scientific view of evolution, the idea of an evolutionary movement also permeates the thoughts of philosophers, like Hegel and Marx, who view reality as following a logical pattern that gives intelligibility to the process and moves history closer to its culmination. Common to both the scientific and philosophical theories of evolution are the notions that: 1.) a dynamic principle at work causes nature/history to pass through successive stages, 2.) change occurs when existing forms of organization (biological species or historical eras) face the

challenges that beset them by producing radically new forms that are more advanced over previous ones, and 3.) that the total process follows a consistent pattern.(Lawlead, 2015: 385)

Teilhard's Theory of Evolution

The Influence of Henri Bergson

Taking the theory of evolution as a starting point, Teilhard de Chardin adopts Henri Bergson's organic paradigm of the universe which sees the universe as a living organism and all elements of nature, as being dynamically interrelated and in constant flux. (Vidal, 2020:2) However, he differs from Bergson in that while Bergson sees evolution as a wholly naturalistic (biological) process, he (Teilhard de Chardin) sees it as a bifurcated process with both naturalistic and psychic dimensions (Teilhard, 1959:62). As a Paleontologist and Theologian, Teilhard de Chardin combined his scientific study of the fossil records with his Christian faith to produce a general theory of evolution which gives a serious consideration to the future of the cosmos. He takes *Darwinism* and Bergson's *élan vital* as the base of his evolution theory. In his evolution theory, Teilhard de Chardin avows that

the universe has been in continuous motion of spatial expansion from an infinitesimal point in the distant past. He is of the view that the cosmos undergoes irreversible changes in the direction of greater complexity of organization. This evolutionism of Teilhard de Chardin, thus, transcends the biological evolution theories of Charles Darwin and Henri Bergson as his postulations touch on the development of even the psychic and social aspects of the world. According to him, evolution is a directed process governed by what he refers to as 'The Law of Complexity-Consciousness.'

Teilhardian Evolutionism as a Directed Process

In Teilhard de Chardin's Evolutionism, the evolving of matter occurs spontaneously but is accomplished with certain unanimity (Koop, 1964:37). This unanimity, for him, points to the fact that there is a goal to the evolution process. For him, evolution is 'directed' even though some instances tend to show randomness. This would later explain why Teilhard de Chardin remains optimistic that the future of the cosmos (the Omega Point) has been determined from the onset of evolution.

Teilhardian Evolutionism and the Law of Complexity-Consciousness

According to Teilhard de Chardin, the law of complexity-consciousness states that it is a compulsory property of all cosmic elements and structures to have a rise in consciousness as complexity increases. By *complexity*, he simply refers to the natural tendency of matter to become increasingly complex in its organization, forming greater wholes as evolution goes; by *consciousness*, he refers to the psyche present in every component of the bio-physical world.

For Teilhard de Chardin, matter becomes ever more conscious at each ascending level of evolution. He describes this interiorization process characterized by an intensification of the consciousness within matter as 'involution.'(Teilhard, 1959:59). By implication, the process of evolution (the external complexification of matter) is accompanied by involution (the inward unification of consciousness).

The Stages of Evolution

In his analysis of the development of the universe, Teilhard de Chardin categorizes the process of evolution into stages: beginning with the origin of matter (Cosmogenesis), then to the emergence of life (Biogenesis), of man (Anthropogenesis), of a global mind (Noogenesis), and finally, of the cosmic Christ (Christogenesis) at the **Omega Point**.

Cosmogenesis

Cosmogenesis (which etymologically translates to 'the beginning of the cosmos') is the first stage of the evolution process. This covers the period of the emergence of complex forms of lifeless matter found in the cosmos—the birth of galaxies, stars, cosmic gases, asteroids, meteors, planets etc. Within this stage, the earth's geosphere emerged, consisting of the barysphere (the metallic component of the earth), lithosphere (the rocky/sandy crust of the earth), hydrosphere (the liquid component of the earth), and atmosphere (the gaseous component of the earth).

Teilhard de Chardin explains the origin of the universe using the Big Bang theory of modern physics which states that billions of years ago, the universe began with some sort of an explosion (a

big bang) of a primordial atom, from which elementary corpuscles such as photons, electrons, and protons, spontaneously emerged (Teilhard, 1959:48). As time passed and the universe cooled down, a gas of nuclei containing protons and neutrons, which attract electrons and atoms was formed. These atoms, in turn, united and formed molecules which then gathered to form polymers. Continued condensation produced molecules of hydrogen atoms which gravity fused with helium to produce stars (Steinhart, 2008: 4)

Furthermore, Teilhard de Chardin asserts that, at the stage of cosmogenesis, the interior psychic energy (*consciousness*) present in all matter, propels matter into motion, and gives matter the internal addictive power of uniting. As he puts it; "…even macro-molecules and smaller matter have a form of consciousness as part of its limited complexity that is diffuse and imperceptible to human instruments of detection"(Teilhard, 1959:59). This expresses the fact that at the stage of cosmogenesis, Teilhard de Chardin sees the psyche of matter as existing in the most 'rudimentary form.'

Biogenesis

This is the second stage of Teilhard de Chardin's process of evolution, the stage at which living organisms emerged. As the atom is the natural granule of matter, the origin of life is the *cell* which is made up of large organic compounds of polymers. These polymers (containing protein and nucleic acid) evolved to develop RNA's and DNA's, which store information that are all contained in the cell. As the cell grew and became more structured, it reproduced itself and multiplied. As these cells evolved too, they came together to become more complex and produce living microcellular organisms—unicellular and multicellular organisms.

As evolution continued, these microcellular organisms led to the emergence of plants, algae, arthropods (insects & worms), and chordates—which includes the fish, molluscs (snail, oyster, octopus etc.), and *amphibians* (frog, toads etc.). Furthermore, reptiles and mammals evolved from the amphibians. In the line of mammals, different orders of animals evolved out and the most prominent were the *primates.* They include the monkeys, apes, gorillas etc. Teilhard de Chardin further elucidates that, in the

primates, evolution was *directed* to work specifically on the brain bringing about a complex network of the nervous system. He calls this noticeable advancement in the brain- 'cerebralization' or 'cephalization.'(Teilhard, 1959:159). Following the law of complexity-consciousness, every increase in the brain is matched by a corresponding intensity of consciousness. This leads to the birth of thought (Teilhard, 1959:160). Here, the brain becomes the seat of consciousness and the summit of biogenesis is reached.

Anthropogenesi

Hitherto, Teilhard de Chardin spoke of the cephalization process in which obvious advancements in the brain of primates are noticed. Simultaneously, through the process of involution, consciousness is further raised to the level of *reflection*. Also referred to as 'self-consciousness,' Teilhard de Chardin defines reflection as: "the power acquired by a consciousness to turn in upon itself, to take possession of itself as *of an object* endowed with its own particular consistence and value: no longer merely to know, but to know oneself; no longer merely to know, but to know that one knows" (Teilhard, 1959:169).

At this threshold of reflection, *hominization* occurs and man enters the world. Teilhard de Chardin explains hominization as, firstly, the anatomical leap from instinct to thought and, secondly, the spiritualization of the forces in the animal world. This threshold of reflection marks the third stage of evolution—Anthropogenesis, the emergence of man into the evolutionary timeline. As the evolution process unfolds, man continues to reproduce, converge, and develop increasing complex arrangements of social structures. This begets the emergence of culture, civilization, science (Kureelhaam, 2003:68).

The phenomenon of reflection, is for Teilhard de Chardin, a unique manifestation which validates the ontological superiority of man over animals. He admits that the animal can know but it cannot know that it knows. For this reason, it is denied access to a whole domain of reality by a chasm which it cannot cross.[i] Furthermore, Teilhard de Chardin remarks that reflection nourishes man with the ability of raising himself to a new sphere. This transcendence is seen in man's capacity for abstraction, logic, reason, inventions, mathematics, art, anxiety and dreams of love, which are all activities of *inner life*.

Just as Max Scheler placed the future of the cosmos in the hands of man, Teilhard de Chardin also maintains that humanity is responsible for the 'future direction of the evolving culture, science, and religion of an embodied spirituality' (Todd, 2013:3). The latter emphasizes that, "Man is not the centre of the universe as once we thought in our simplicity, but something much more wonderful—the arrow pointing the way to the final unification of the world in terms of life." (Teilhard, 1959:224). This accounts for man's unique place in the cosmos, (man) whose entry into the evolution process remains a significant one in Teilhard de Chardin's evolution theory.

Noogenesis

Noogenesis is the fourth (and present) stage of Teilhard de Chardin's process of evolution. It refers to the natural evolution of mental properties into a global membrane of consciousness connecting all human beings. So far (that is, from cosmogenesis to anthropogenesis), the force and direction of evolution which began from the convergence and mutual attraction of atoms and molecules, has created more and more integrated complex forms

of entities up till the emergence of the nervous system and the production of self-consciousness in man. At the stage of Noogenesis, the converging psychic energy present in the universe moves people all over the globe into tighter and more complex relationships. Teilhard de Chardin states that this force of convergence generates an expanding network of consciousness which is the present stage of evolution in human history. It is man, who being capable of self-consciousness, has added a new layer to earth's surface by turning the biosphere of the world into the new order of the noosphere.

Teilhard de Chardin affirms that as a result of noogenesis, interaction across space and time tightens the bonds of harmony and the psychic energy in this interaction manifests a higher degree of consciousness. He refers to this noogenic process as 'planetization'(Teilhard, 1964:102). By *planetization*, Teilhard de Chardin means that the diverse elements of the world, just like the neuro-cerebral interconnections of an individual, are welding into a single collective consciousness and thus, reducing the whole planet to a global person, (North, 1963:586). He underscores this global converging process with reference to the

increasing wave of globalization and the technological developments in communication. He puts it this way:

> [E]conomically and psychically the entire mass of Mankind, under the inexorable pressure of events and owing to the prodigious growth and speeding up of the means of communication, has found itself seized in the mould of a communal existence—large sections tightly encased in countless international organizations, the most ambitious the world has ever known; and the whole anxiously in the same passionate upheavals, the same problems, the same daily news (Teilhard, 1964:127).

Christogenesis

Christogenesis, for Teilhard de Chardin, is the fifth and last stage of the process of evolution. This is a stage in the future of the cosmos, to be characterized by a communion of love and victory over evil. At this stage too, dimensions of the divine would arise and the cosmic Christ shall emerge. The terminus of this stage will be the convergence of all things in Christ, what Teilhard de Chardin refers to as the *Omega Point*.

The Omega Point

At the unique culminating point of evolution, Teilhard de Chardin asserts, humanity will attain a supreme level of complexity containing the highest degree of perfection of consciousness. This culminating point is what he expresses as the *Omega Point.* This Omega Point will be ushered in by a final convergence of every individual. Teilhard de Chardin warns sternly that one danger which poses threat to the progress of the cosmos (advancing towards the Omega Point) is the practice of isolation. As a result, he speaks against all forms of individualism, egoism and racism saying that no evolutionary future awaits man except in association with all other men.

In addition to the above-stated points, Teilhard de Chardin states that certain distinctive features will characterize the ushering in of this stage of the evolutionary process (the Omega Point). These features include: the ultra-transformation of science, the final unification of consciousness, the rise of universal love and the conquest of evil.

The Ultra-Transformation of Science

Teilhard de Chardin prognosticates that as the cosmos advances towards its Omega Point, the nature of *science* would be transformed. This 'end time' is to be characterized by three signs, the first of which is *The Organization of Research*. The second is *The Discovery of the Human Object.* Here, man, the knowing subject, will perceive at last that humanity itself is the key to the whole science of nature and the solution of everything we can know. The third is *The Conjunction of Science and Religion.* This implies that as the cosmos advances towards the Omega Point, science will find itself increasingly coming face to face with religion. For Teilhard de Chardin, the ushering in of the Omega Point would resolve the age-long conflict between science and religion by means of a synthesis.

The Final Unification of Consciousness

Owing to the forces of convergence at play in the cosmos, Teilhard de Chardin states that at the Omega point, there is a three-fold property to be possessed by every consciousness. They are: (i) of centring *everything* partially upon itself; (ii) of being able to centre itself upon itself *constantly*; and (iii) of being

brought by this very super-centration into *association with all the other centres* surrounding it. In this association, the grains of consciousness do not lose their essence and blend, but, on the contrary, accentuate the depth and incommunicability of their egos. It is in this sense that the unification of consciousness would occur. Thus, for Teilhard de Chardin, it would be mistaken to represent Point Omega simply as a centre born of the fusion of elements, but rather, as a *distinct Centre radiating at the core of a system of centres*, (Teilhard, 1964:262). But how is this radiation and union of centres to be made possible? This brings in the element of *Love.*

The Rise of Universal *Love*

For Teilhard de Chardin, the convergence of all things at the Omega Point does not mean the fusion of persons but their communion in the unity of love, (Mercier, 2002: 122). This love is the affinity of being with being which alone is capable of uniting beings in such a way as to complete and fulfil them, joining them by what is deepest in themselves (Teilhard, 1964:45). It is the energy which will be responsible for the

ultimate psychical convergence of the universe upon itself. This universal love would bring about an affinity of the entire cosmos, of even the animate with the inanimate.

The Conquest over Evil

Due to the influence of some cultural/religious dogmas and scientific fictions, we generally think of some great catastrophe—of colliding planets and exploding worlds—when we think of the end of the world, (Teilhard, 1964:274-275). On the contrary, Teilhard de Chardin predicts that the Omega Point will not be characterized by such catastrophes. Instead, the universe would gain victory over evil at the Omega Point. He puts it this way:

> Evil on the earth at its final stage will be reduced to a minimum. Disease and hunger will be conquered by science and we will no longer need to fear them in any acute form. And, conquered by the sense of the earth and human sense, hatred and internecine struggles will have disappeared in the ever-warmer radiance of Omega, (Teilhard, 1964:276).

At this future point of the cosmos characterized by a communion of love and victory over evil, dimensions of the divine will arise

and the cosmic Christ shall emerge. According to Teilhard de Chardin, the Omega Point, which will be marked by the convergence of all things in Christ is the logical end and *terminus ad quem* of evolution. In the cosmic Christ, the world will attain its final destiny and become "the divine milieu." (Teilhard, 1966:45).

Appraisal of Teilhardian Evolutionism

Having exposed in details, the nuance and breadth of Teilhard's ideas on the evolution of the cosmos from the genesis of its movement to its Omega point, what we have left is a critical evaluation of the plausibility of the claims contained in the above-discussed ideas.

Positive Remarks

The Synthesis of Science and Religion

Teilhard de Chardin, as a palaeontologist, philosopher, and theologian, remains remarkable for using science (evolutionism) as the stepping stone for his vast philosophical and religious synthesis in which scientific findings, philosophical reason, and religious faith (Christianity in particular), are brought into one.

This synthesis reaches its apex in the Omega Point which, according to Teilhard de Chardin, is characterized by *The Conjunction of Science and Religion*, (Huxley, 1959:283). Furthermore, if the Omega Point is the point of final convergence resulting from increasing complexification and concentration of matter into larger wholes, then it becomes a fact readily acceptable by evolutionists because it reflects the on-going process of evolution. On the other hand, the Omega Point is also a reality for the Christian believer for it is the stage of Christogenesis—the emergence of cosmic Christ who is the *alpha* and *omega* of all things. This synthesis achieved by Teilhard de Chardin's theory of the *Omega Point* proves Ezebuilo's point that science and religion are two sides of a coin; two distinct but inseparable departments through which holistic knowledge of reality could be acquired. He puts it this way, "It is only through the complementarity of science and religion that humanity could gain fulfillment in its quest for knowledge, (Ezebuilo, 2022:34).

Technosphere: A Realization of Teilhard's Noosphere—
Teilhard's idea of the noosphere is linked directly with the Internet when Kreisberg states that:

> De Chardin imagined a stage of evolution characterized by a complex membrane of information enveloping the globe and fuelled by human consciousness. It sounds a little off-the-wall, until you think about the Net, that vast electronic web encircling the Earth, running point to point through a nerve-like constellation of wires (Kreisberg, 1995:345).

The rapid means of communication are uniting man into a unified consciousness as we are more able to share with rapidity our thoughts with one another. The Noosphere can now be successfully interpreted as a Technosphere (a realm of human technological space) where the internet accompanies man in his task of fulfilling his evolutionary destiny- arriving at the Omega Point. Rolston states that a technosphere is constructed inside the biosphere of the Earth, a technosphere that could one day supersede that of the biosphere, (Rolston, 2011:3). Some thinkers are critical of the idea that the technosphere could replace the biosphere in any beneficial way. However, if De Chardin's philosophy is applied to current technological development we perceive not the replacement of the biosphere (of which humanity forms part) with the technosphere through noogenesis, but rather

the fuller integration of the natural (biosphere) with the technological (technosphere), (Toit, 2013:128).

Where noogenesis constitutes the evolution of consciousness into an increasing unity, the internet is obviously becoming a similar phenomenon of self-conscious mental activity which forms a "thinking layer" across the planet's surface and encompasses all human thought.[ii] This threshold in the field of technology is no other than humanity's collective realization of Nietzche's *Ubermensch*- the overman. Nietzsche prognosticates of a time when man who evolved from the apes, evolves into a super man (an elevated whole/consciousness) which is his true destiny. Humanity for him is only a rope fastened between the Ape and the Overman, which all men should seek to cross over.

Contributions to the Problem of Evil

In the ending pages of his *Phenomenon of Man*, Teilhard de Chardin realizes that his exaggerated optimism led him to neglect the existence and place of evil in the structure of an evolutionary world, (Teilhard, 1964:311). He, thus, dedicates the last section of his work to address the existence and role of evil in the

teleological movement of evolution. Teilhard de Chardin avows that the problem of evil only arises for those who view the world from a misconstrued perspective. He insists that the cosmos should rather be seen as one "in which evil appears necessarily and abundantly… not by accident (which would not much matter) but through the very structure of the system."(Teilhard, 1964:313). For him, the world is in process, and evil must be understood thus as a *necessary* part of the evolving system. He is, therefore, of the opinion that evil is essentially disorder and every order presupposes a disorder (an evil) that has been overcome. This continuous overcoming of disorder to attain order in the universe is what accounts for the optimistic advancement of the cosmos towards its *terminus ad quem*—the Omega Point. Teilhard de Chardin claims that at this culminating point, perfection would be attained and all evil would be annihilated, (Teilhard, 1964:288). Thus, until the Omega Point is reached, the world remains imperfect and evil remains a necessary integral part of it. This alternative solution to the problem of evil, though not without its own problems, is an improvement on the traditional solutions.

Negative Remarks

Evolution Theory: A Faulty Foundation for the Omega Point

For Teilhard de Chardin, not only is evolution a fact: it is the general condition which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must satisfy if they are to be true.[iii] He also informs us that evolution is founded upon evidence which "is henceforward above all verification, as well as being immune from any subsequent contradiction by experience."(Teilhard, 1964:140). But then, we are left entirely in the dark on the crucial question of wherein, precisely, this evidence consists. He goes further to claim that since it is true that the teleological universe is working, perhaps, toward this one end (the Omega Point), then it is impossible that it will not achieve it. Thus, the Omega Point is based upon the hypothesis that evolution is infallible and it must go through to the end. It is this very root of Teilhard's theory that Rabut attacks when he says:

> The weakest point of the argument lies at its very root. We are to assume that the universe has one aim alone—spirit; and that the whole universe fails if the spirit is balked of its natural desires, it is arguable that the universe is tending in all directions at once, or, to take

> one possibility, in the direction which leads to more and more improbable assemblages; the coherence of the universe is in no way at stake if the natural functioning of its laws wipes out all spirit tomorrow (Rabut, 1961:114).

The problem here is that when Teilhard de Chardin insists that evolution cannot fail to arrive at the Omega Point, he offers no proof for this. In other words, he is seen in this light to be naively optimistic of the certainty of our arrival at this Omega Point and thus, presents this idea as infallible and unfalsifiable. Interestingly, the fact is that in recent times there has been increasing disagreement on the adequacy of evolutionism within academic and professional ranks, and a growing number of respectable scientists are defecting from the evolutionist camp.[iv] It is even more interesting that for the most part, these scholars have abandoned evolution strictly on scientific grounds. The scientist, Louis Bounoure, for instance, points out that the theory of evolution is not in fact empirically based, (Bounoure, 1957:48). For another philosopher-scientist, Jean Rostand, "we have never been present even in a small way at one authentic phenomenon of evolution."(Rostand, 1974:143). If this is the fate of evolution in

the world of science, how then can one say that evolutionism is a satisfactory theory and that the hypothesis of the Omega Point is authentic? It is with regards to this that Wolfgang Smith says that, "For indeed there is actually not the slightest empirical evidence in support of Teilhard's Omega hypothesis. From the start the celebrated Omega Point was nothing more than a quasi-theological notion, masquerading in scientific dress."(Wolfgand, 1986:109).

The Neglect of Moral Evil

One other problem, similar to the one discussed last, which Teilhard de Chardin faces with his theory of the Omega Point is an inadequate assessment of the problem of evil. We have seen that his view that evil is an integral part of the evolutionary process of the cosmos is an improvement on the traditional solutions which directly or indirectly attribute evil to the actions or inactions of God. However, his position trivializes moral evil. As opposed to natural evil which refers to instances of natural disasters and other unpleasant situations resulting from no fault of man, moral evil refers to the *moral action* of a moral agent that is detrimental to man. Interestingly, when the problem of evil is

discussed as a philosophical problem, it is essentially the moral evil that is brought into critical investigation. However, when Teilhard de Chardin suggests that evil would be annihilated at the Omega Point, he makes no reference to moral evil. The whole calamities—diseases, hunger, and so on, (Teilhard, 1964:288), which he enlists in his work all qualify as natural evil. In his criticism of Teilhard de Chardin, August Brunner points out this loophole when he says:

> Investigation into the origin of evil is almost completely absent. The question comes up only toward the end of the work, apparently in response to objections. Teilhard's explanation that all evolution involves suffering and possible missing of the goal may account for physical evil. It does not account for moral evil.(Brunner, 1960:145).

In fact, this neglect of moral evil also stems from Teilhard de Chardin's naïve optimism (which was discussed earlier) because he falls prey of an unreasonable belief in the goodness of man. He, thus, never faces the fact that vices like sin and greed are organically rooted in human nature. Though it is of no doubt that advancements in scientific research are really uniting people

across the globe, it still remains naïve to conceive all men as unselfishly putting their efforts for the good of the entire cosmos. This is a valid concern in our day because historical evidences of past World Wars reveal the opposite of Teilhard de Chardin's claims.

The Limitation of Absolute Freedom in Man

Teilhard de Chardin's theory is largely anthropocentric as his argument centres on the theme that the cosmos has meaning only through 'humanity' as a product of evolution.[v] He argues that due to the unique ontological position of man in the cosmos, he (man) has to realize that he carries the world's fortune on himself and that a limitless future of hope stretches before him. If this is the case, then it follows that man's knowledge and actions are key to the arrival of the cosmos at the Omega Point. This stand raises two serious problems. Firstly, it appears inconsistent with Teilhard de Chardin's earlier claim that the evolution process which advances towards its culminating point (the Omega Point) is governed strictly by the cosmic law of complexity-consciousness. Secondly, if he insists that evolution is solely governed by the cosmic law, then he leaves us with the

implication that man's actions which would lead to the Omega Point are not entirely free. This is because such actions that are executed are only free to the extent that they are subject to the direction of the cosmic goal—arrival at the Omega Point. One wonders if this does not implicitly indicate a sort of determinism in the cosmos. In this sense, man is not to be held morally responsible for his actions in so far as these actions are determined for the progress of the cosmos.

Flaws of the Technosphere

Mercier says that Teilhard's optimism is remarkable but it makes one ponder.(Mercier, 2002:121). Teilhard has so much confidence in each future stage of evolution. He sees evolution as a glorious and perfect process that is directed towards an optimistic end. No room is granted to explain the failures, evils, errors and calamities that befall the universe and humanity in history. In the same vein, it is tempting to tow the line of Teilhard's over-optimistic claim in interpreting the internet/technosphere as a realization of the noosphere.

To speak of the technosphere as consisting only of 'good tidings,' as leading only to the progress of humanity would be a neglect of the uncountable negative impacts of the internet. Moral evils amidst many others have been on the hike since the advent of the internet and this fact cannot be denied. For this very reason, the internet has been severely criticized and condemned over a long while. Does this not pose a problem to Teilhard's philosophy which speaks little or nothing about the upsurge of evil in the cosmos?

Conclusion

When we look around ourselves in our world today, we readily find evidences of the abundant fruits we harvest from the bountiful emergence of the internet. This cannot be a product of mere chance, it did not just emerge at random neither is it a spontaneous result of evolution. It is indeed a 'golden age' pre-determined and pre-destined for humanity from the very onset of evolution itself. Predestined to come into being not just for invention's sake, but as a sustainable tool to facilitate the deification of man; the unification of consciousness into one super intelligent and ultra-connected whole. This is the internet which

we have at our doorsteps today! The reign of the internet, in fact, of technology as a whole, should no longer be merely regarded as a random invention in the development of human history, but as a fully integrated element of the cosmic process. Indeed! What better way have, than to interpret De Chardin's idea of Noosphere as the present-day *Cyberspace*; a technosphere where the internet unites all consciousness into one 'Global Mind'? Consequently, this is a clarion call to all humanity for a re-orientation and re-conception of the idea of technology; a clarion call to seek how the internet could be utilized that it becomes a sustainable tool for the realization of the 'good tidings' of cosmic history in the evolutionary continuum.

Additionally, it must be acknowledged that Teilhard de Chardin remains remarkable for his revolutionary efforts in bridging the chasm between science and religion. He has brought about great advancements in the world of academia. From the above-discussed implications, we have seen the positive and negative impacts of Teilhard de Chardin's Evolutionism. This validates the fact that no single individual is a reservoir of all knowledge. Despite the uniqueness of his ideas, we see areas

where his thoughts are laden with lacunae. This work in itself is not exhaustive of all the implications, both positive and negative, that are contained in his work. Also, it is pertinent to note that the flaws contained in Teilhardian Evolutionism do not in anyway, undermine the plausibility of the theory. To a very large extent, this research work concludes that despite the shortcomings of his theory, Teilhard's evolution theory remains remarkable for its revolutionary input in the intellectual world.

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