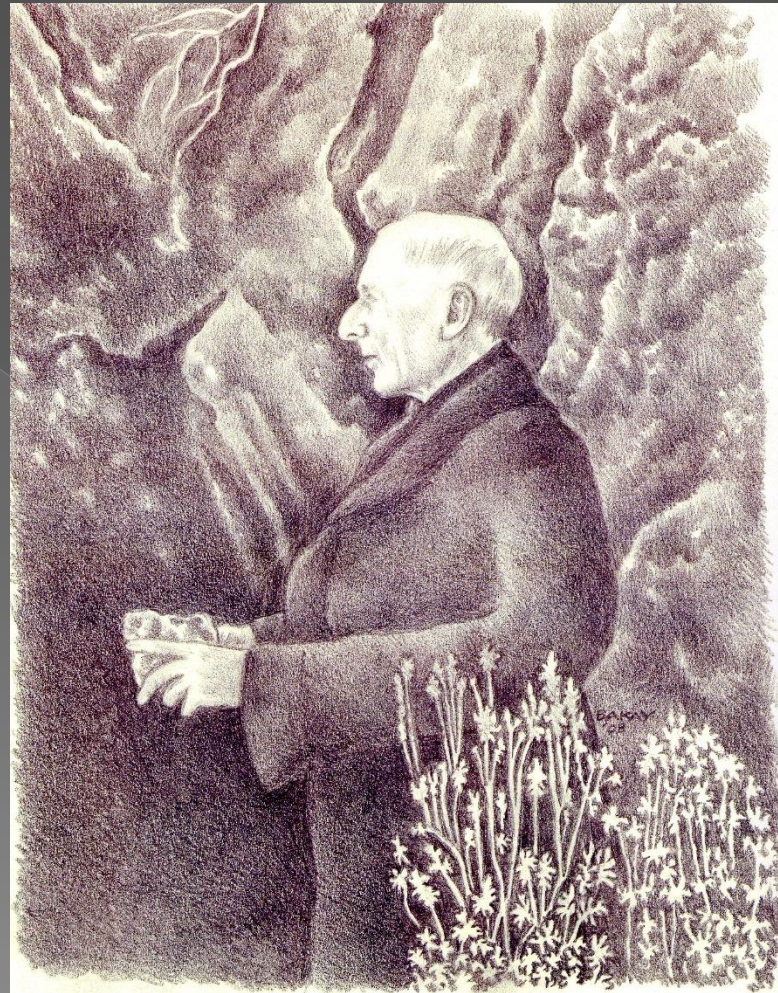


Teilhard's Creative Transformation: From Science to Metaphysics

Donald Wayne Viney
Emeritus Professor of Philosophy
Pittsburg State University

Daylesford Abbey Retreat
Paoli, Pennsylvania
American Teilhard Association
May 29-31, 2026

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
by Michelle Bakay

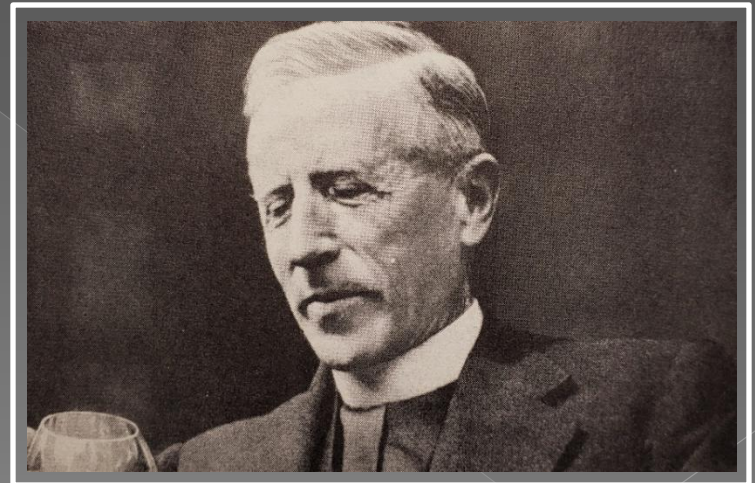


Creative Transformation?

My title is deliberately ambiguous as between Teilhard's personal development and the philosophy of creative transformation that he developed.



Teilhard in 1911



Teilhard in the 1950s

Teilhard (1881-1955) Remembered

A Jesuit priest, educated in the sciences, theology, and philosophy; expertise in geology and paleontology

A stretcher-bearer during WWI, awarded honors for valor:

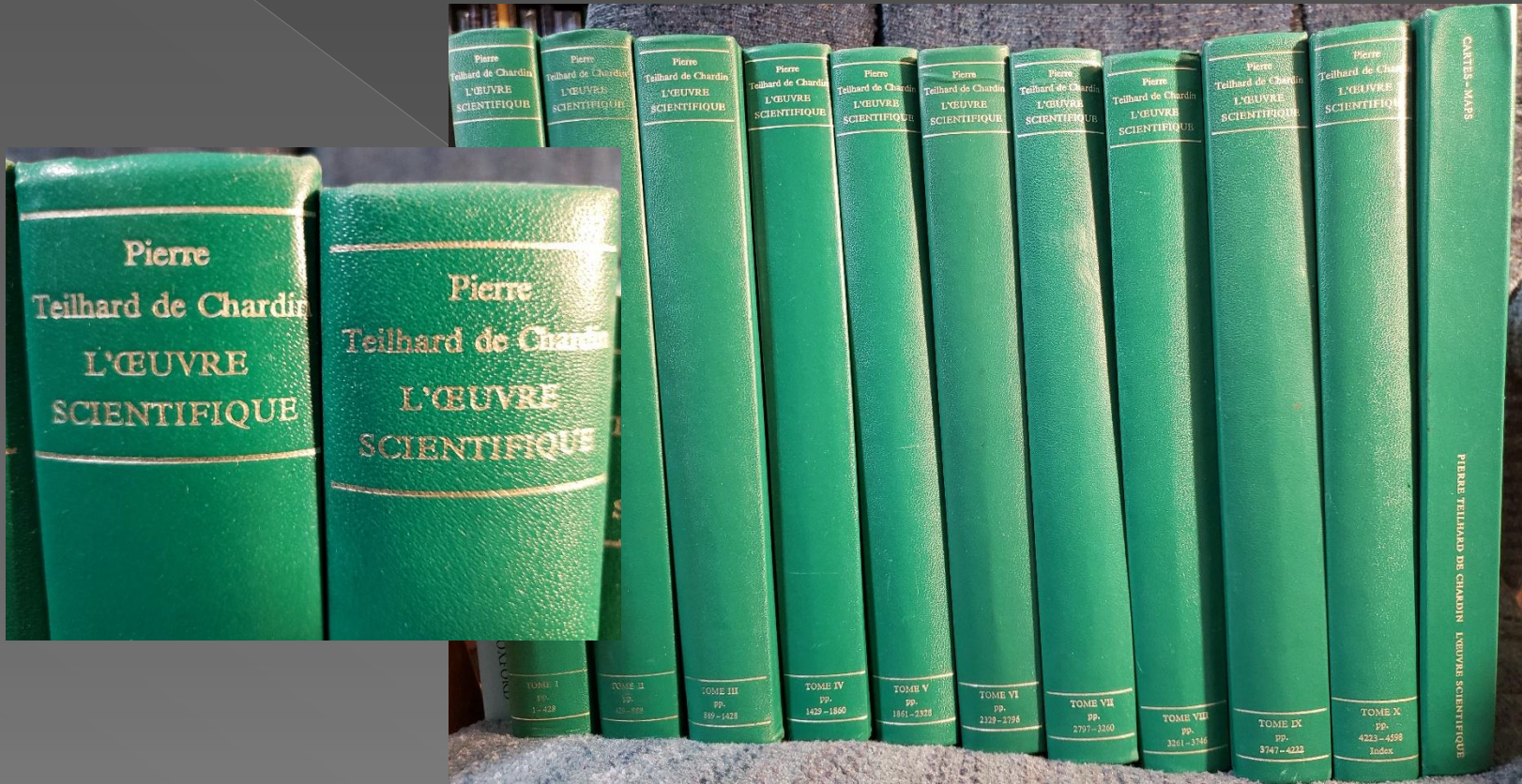
Croix de Guerre, Médaille Militaire, Légion d'Honneur

Participant in many scientific expeditions, including the discovery of *Sinanthropus* (“Peking Man”)

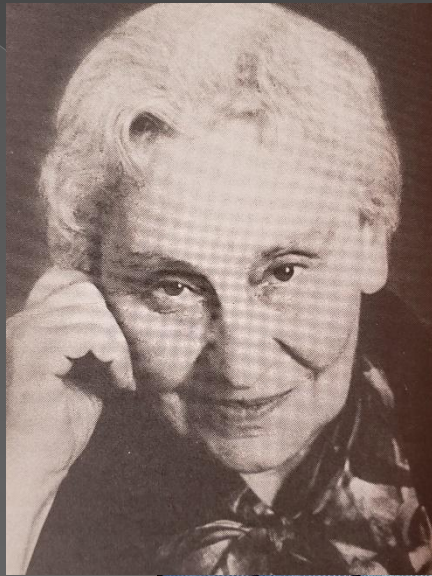
Tensions with the Church over evolution, including virtual exile from France and a life-long prohibition on publishing his philosophical and theological works, which were in high demand because they circulated widely as renéotypes — the so-called “clandestins”

Fame following the posthumous publication and translation of the prohibited works, especially, *Le Phénomène humain* and *Le Milieu Divin*

Teilhard's Scientific Work



L'Œuvre scientifique (1905-1955) published in 1971 in ten volumes , including a collection of maps



Publication of Teilhard's more Philosophical Writings

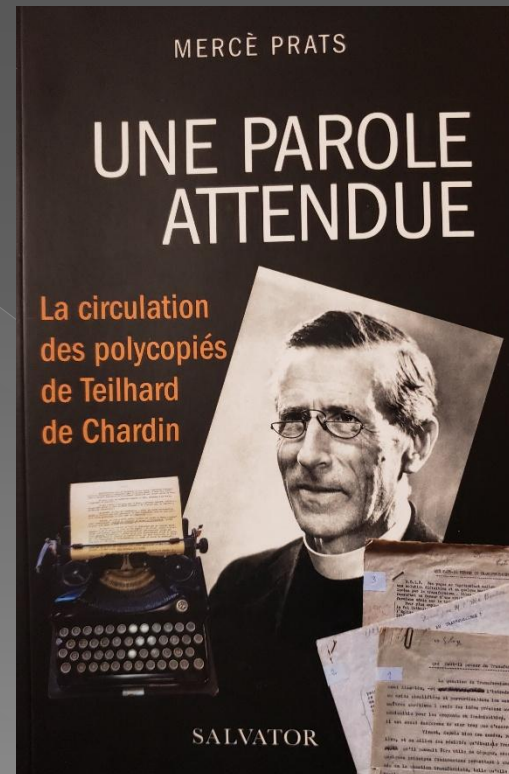
Jeanne Mortier (1892-1982)



Books and essays published after his death, thanks to Jeanne Mortier, to whom he left his works.

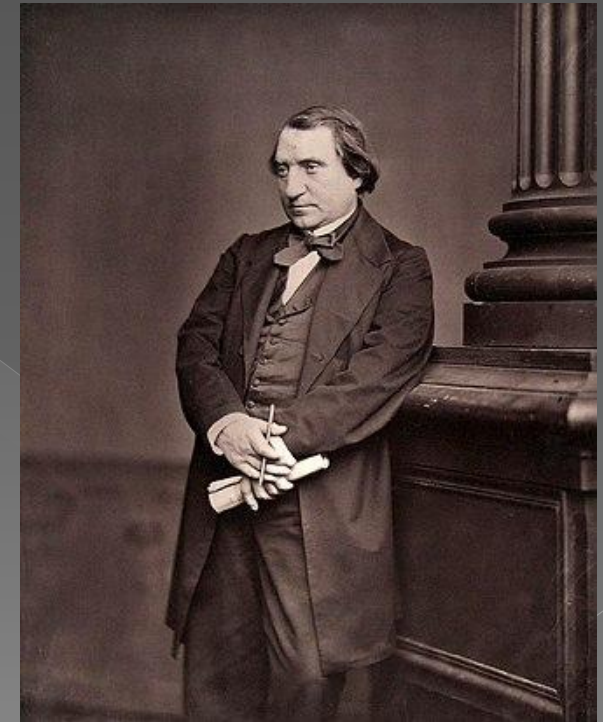
Teilhard's "Awaited Word" (2022)

Mercè Prats, historian and pianist, tells the story of the "underground" distribution of Teilhard's prohibited works.



Becoming and Being

The characteristic feature of the nineteenth century is to . . . substitute the category of *becoming* for the category of *being* . . . In former times everything was considered as being . . . now everything is considered to be in the process of being made.



Ernest Renan (1823-1892)

Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme: Essai Historique*, 3rd ed. (1866), p. vi

Developmental Thinking

Teilhard in Paris at
the office of *Études*



“Today, positive knowledge of things is identified with the study of their development.”

Teilhard, *The Human Phenomenon* (1947), Appleton-Weber, p. 16

Developmental Ideas in Geology and Paleontology



George Cuvier
(1769-1832)



William Smith
(1769-1839)



Charles Lyell
(1797-1875)

Mass Extinction vs. Extinction of Species



The Noahic flood: a story of mass extinction, but not the extinction of species, for the animals and the people on the Ark repopulate the earth.

The world destroyed by water (Gen. 7)
Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

Noah's Ark: Preservation of Species



Extinction: the waste of nature?



Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)

So careful of the type she seems
So careless of the single life . . .

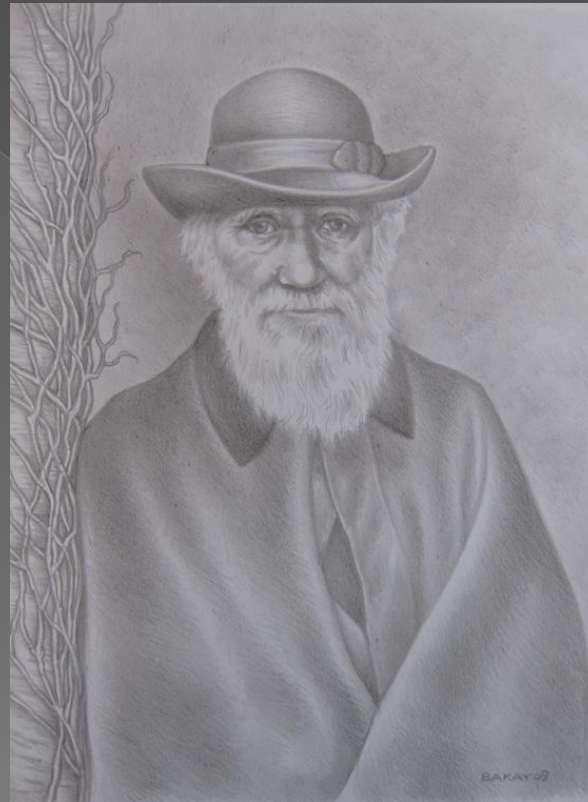
‘So careful of the type?’ but no
From scarped cliff and quarried stone
She cries, ‘A thousand types are gone
I care for nothing, all shall go.’

In Memoriam A. H. H. (1849), cantos 55 and 56

Developmental Ideas in Biology



**Jean-Baptist
Lamarck
(1744-1829)**

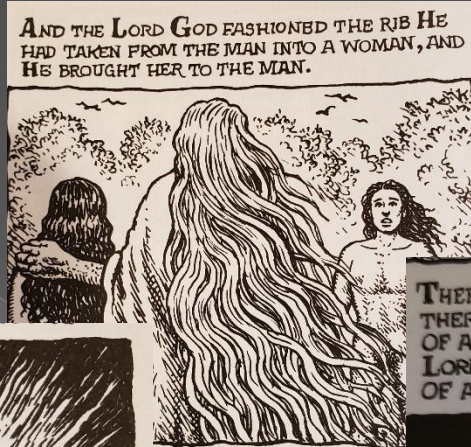


**Charles Darwin (1809-1882)
by Michelle Bakay**



**Alfred Russel Wallace
(1823-1913)**

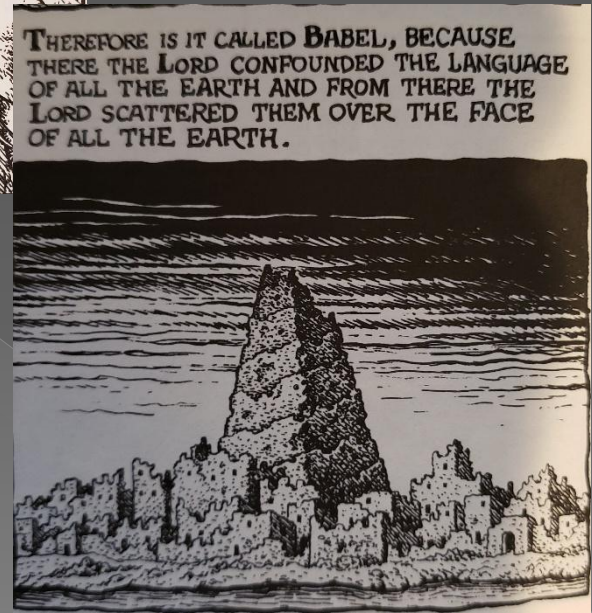
Non-developmental Ideas: Genesis



The Book of Genesis
Robert Alter translation
Illustrated, by R. Crumb



Creation of man and woman
(Genesis 2)



Creation of languages
(Genesis 11)

Caveat: No Single Way to Read Genesis

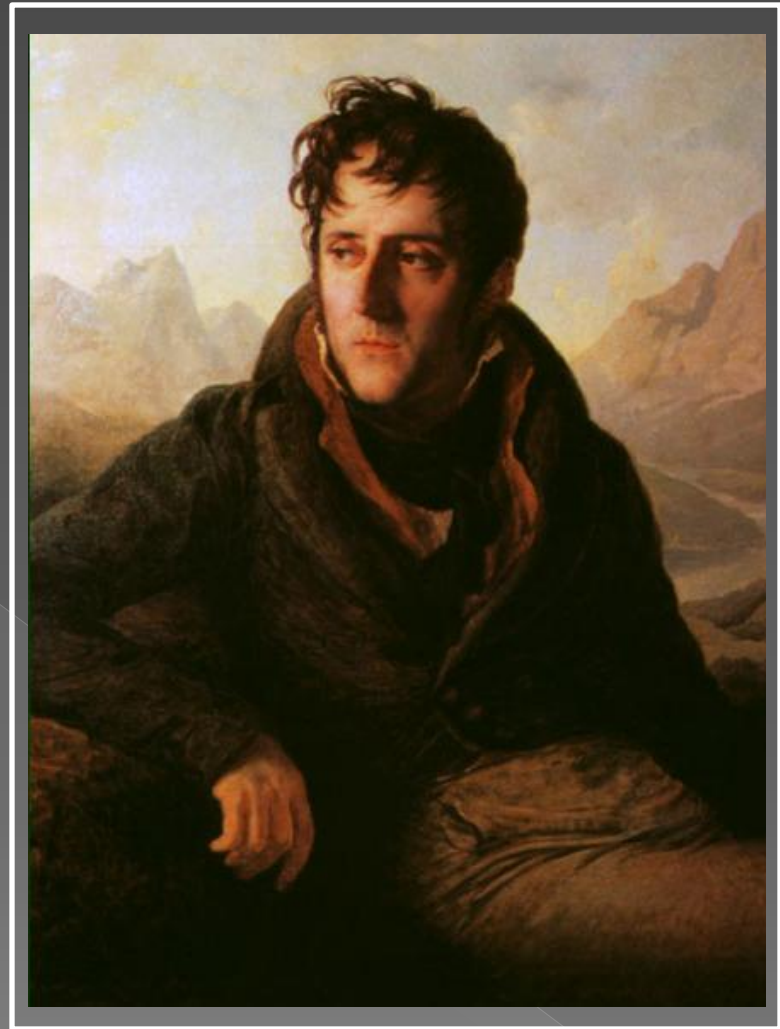
- * As divinely inspired, or even “the word of God”**
- * As multi-authored text (form/source criticism)**
- * As recounting events in the past (history)**
- * As clues to archaeological studies**
- * As science (primitive or otherwise)**
- * As metaphysics or theology**
- * As part of the literature of antiquity**
- * As mythical-poetic**
- * As Hebrew wisdom**
- * As instructive of the human condition**
- * As guide to sanctifying life (Rabbi Heschel)**

Non-developmental Ideas in 19th Century Religion

*God must have
created, and
undoubtedly did
create, the world
with all the signs of
age and complete-
ness that we see in it.*

Génie du Christianisme (1802)

Part I, Chapter V



François-René de Chateaubriand

(1768-1848)

Philip Henry Gosse's *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot* (1857)

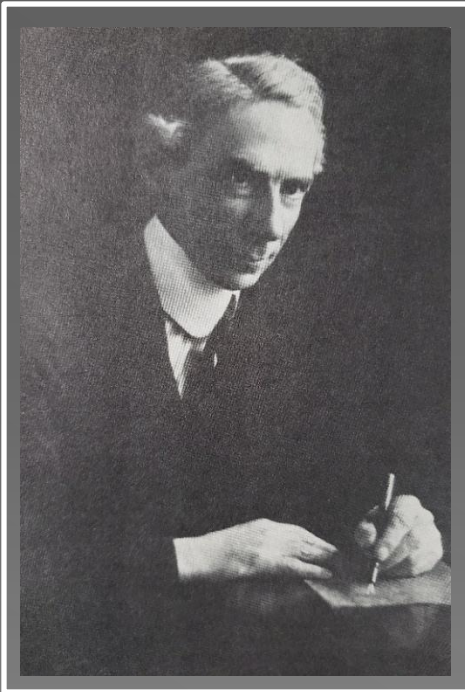


Philip H. Gosse (1810-1888)

Prochronism = anything God creates *necessarily* appears older than it is. Adam must have had a navel (omphalos), thus appearing to have been born of a woman.

Bertrand Russell's Thought Experiment

... Nothing that is happening now or will happen in the future can disprove the hypothesis that the world began five minutes ago. Hence the occurrences which are called knowledge of the past are logically independent of the past; they are wholly analysable into present contents, which might, theoretically, be just what they are even if no past had existed.



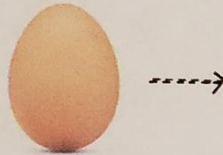
Bertrand Russell
(1872-1970)

The Analysis of Mind, chapter on memory (1921)

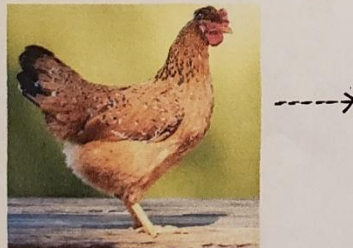
Gosse's answer to an age-old question.

PROCHRONIC PAST

Prochronic egg



Prochronic chicken (Hen)



DIACHRONIC TIME

GOD creates a chicken



Chicken (Hen) lays eggs



GOD creates an egg



Chicken comes from egg

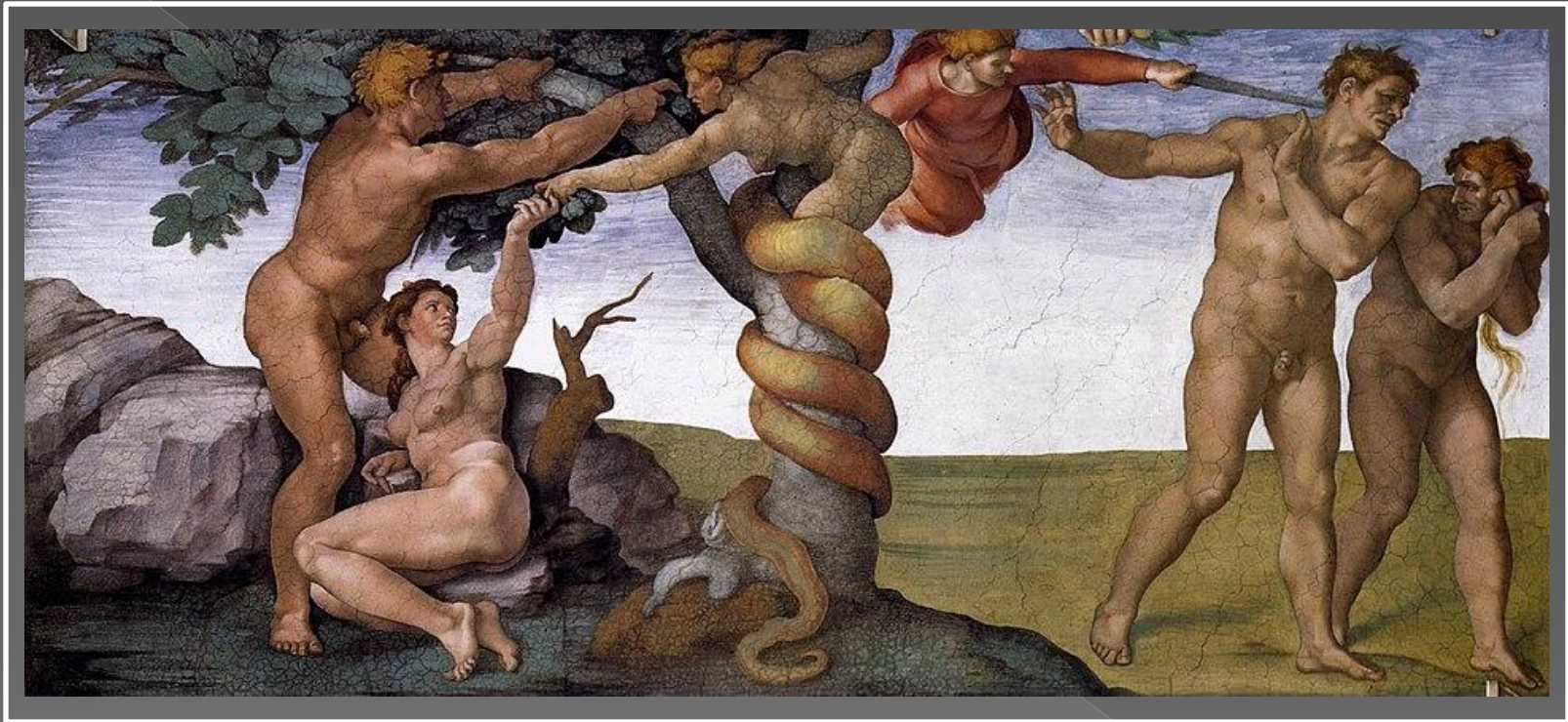


Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

Diachronic time = time that has actually elapsed

Prochronic time = time that appears to have elapsed

What's at stake theologically?

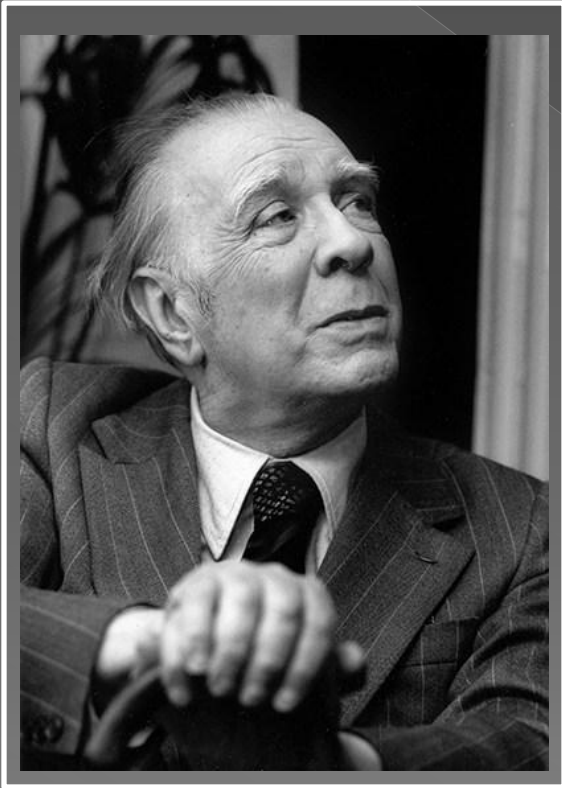


Michaelangelo, Temptation and Expulsion from Eden

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

I Corinthians 15:22 (cf. Romans 5:17-19)

A rather monstrous elegance



Jorge Luis Borges
(1899-1986)

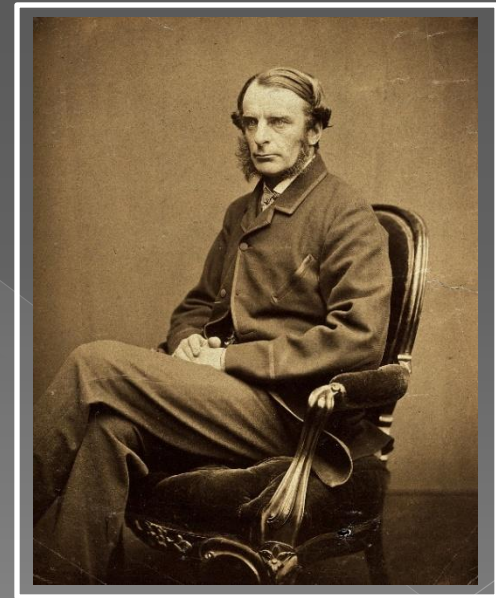
Problems not only of theology, but of the metaphysics of time and causality, come to focus in the theory of Chateaubriand and Gosse. Borges called the theory ingenious and incredible, with a rather monstrous elegance.

“The Creation and P. H. Gosse” (1941),
Other Inquisitions 1937-1952, pp. 23-25.

Charles Kingsley on *Omphalos*

It seems to me that [Gosse's] notion is more likely to make infidels than to cure them. For what rational man who knows even a little of geology will not be tempted to say — If Scripture can only be vindicated by such an outrage to common sense and fact, then I will give up Scripture and stand by common sense.

A footnote in *Glaucus, or Wonders of the Shore* (1859)



Charles Kingsley (1819-1875)

Self-Making Nature



Anyone can make things, if they will take time and trouble enough; but it is not everyone who, like me, can make things make themselves.

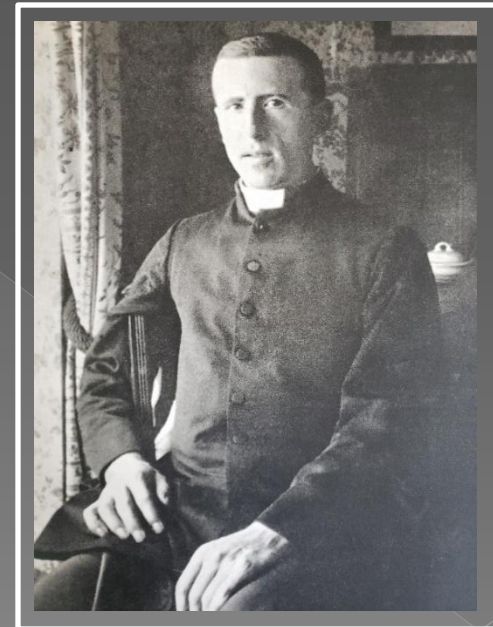
Mother Carey in Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* (1863), chapter VII

Teilhard rethinking former beliefs

“Must we truly conceive of God as capable of creating the World *at any arbitrary stage of its development?*” Teilhard, *Journal* (Sept. 20, 1917), p. 219

Teilhard reporting his former belief: “[God] could perfectly well have created the world in the state it reached in the year 1000, without our being any the wiser.”

“Creative Union” (Nov. 1917), WTW, p. 162

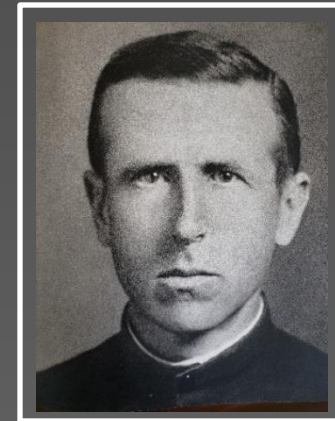


Teilhard de Chardin in 1902

Teilhard on Catholic Teaching (1911)

Two things guaranteed by Genesis:

1. God immediately created the soul of the first man, and likely completely refashioned the matter destined to form his body.

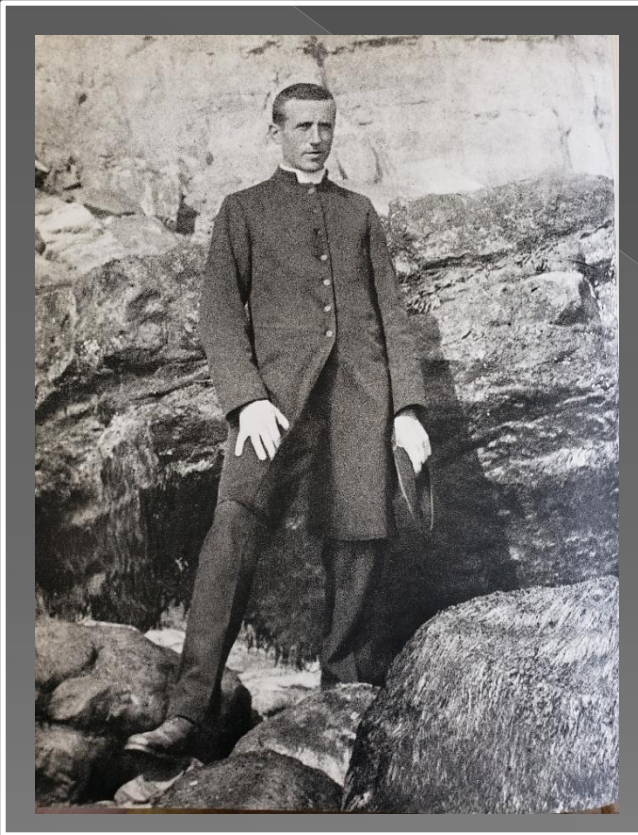


Teilhard (1912)

2. The entire human race descends from a single couple (a monogenism that the doctrine of original sin would, in itself, require).

“Homme” written for *The Apologetic Dictionary of the Catholic Faith*, p. 504 (1911)

Teilhard on Evolution (1911)



Teilhard at Hastings (1911)

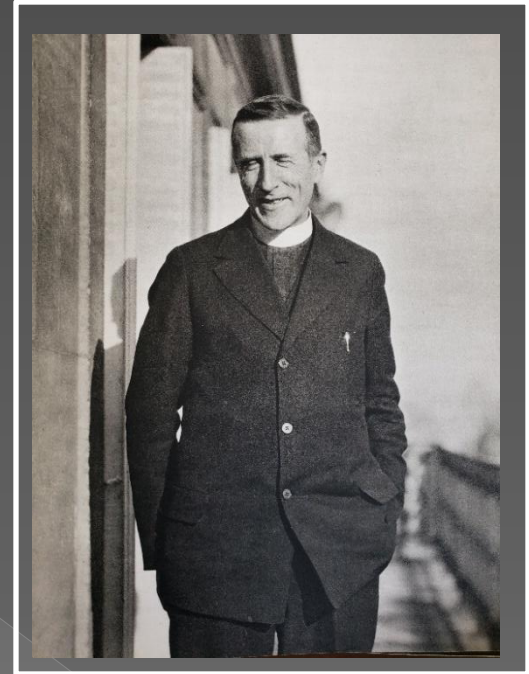
“[Extended] to life as a whole, transformism . . . is, and will undoubtedly always remain, a hypothesis.”

“Évolution,” *Courrier des Cercles d’Études* (1911), p. 230; also in *Œuvre Scientifique*, vol. 1, p. 72

Teilhard's Transformations

Teilhard spoke of “two vocations,” the one he “followed from my youth at age 18” and “that which revealed itself, as my true spouse, in the fullness of my adult life.”

Letter to Auguste Valensin
(May 16, 1925), *Lettres Intimes*, p. 115.



Teilhard in Paris, 1931

The latter vocation challenged, and inspired changes in, the former — the struggle of a lifetime.

Jacob wrestles with the Angel

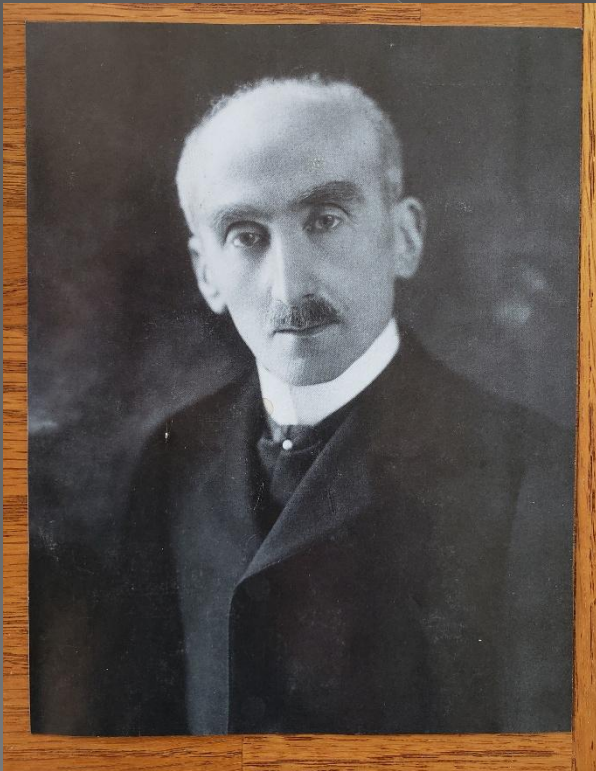
Always, Jacob and the Angel. To be honest, there are times when I feel myself drifting so far away that I almost wonder if I'm still Catholic, or even Christian.

Letter to l'Abbé Gaudefroy (July 14, 1934),
Lettres à Gaudefroy et Breuil, p. 103.



Jacob wrestles with the angel
(Gen. 32:24-32) by Gustave Doré

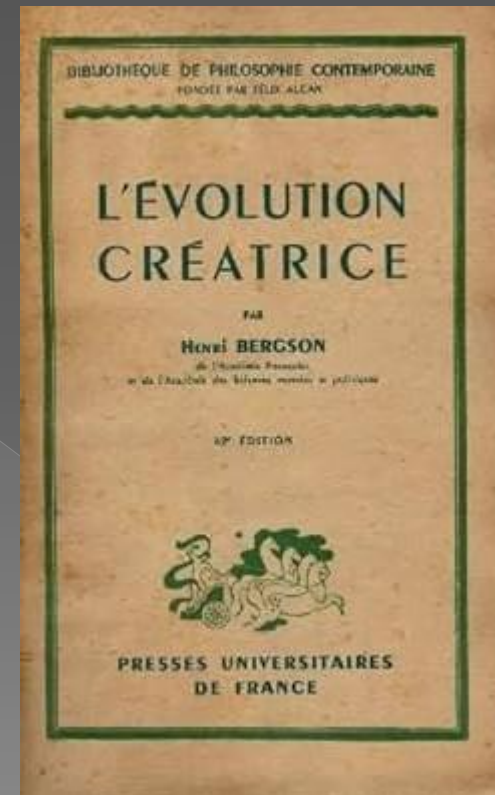
During theological studies at Hastings (1908-1912)
Teilhard read Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1907)



Henri Bergson (1859-1941)

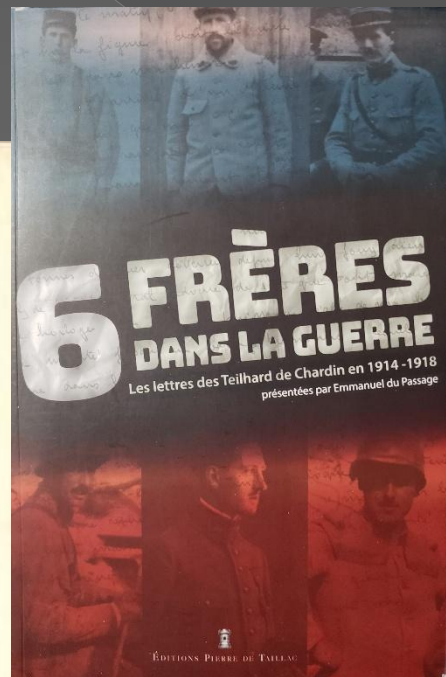
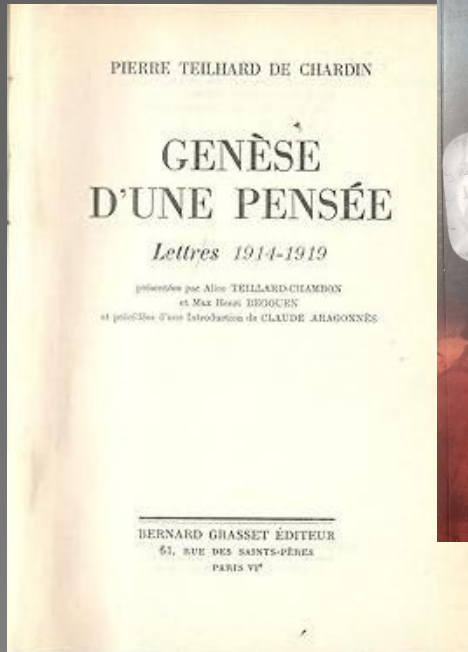
“I pray for that admirable man
and venerate
him as a kind
of saint.”

Letter to Léontine
Zanta, April 3, 1930

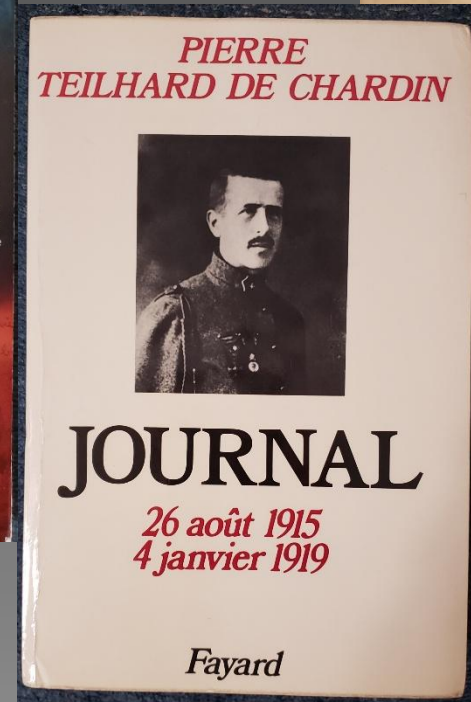


Teilhard during the Great War: 1914-1919

Letters to
Family



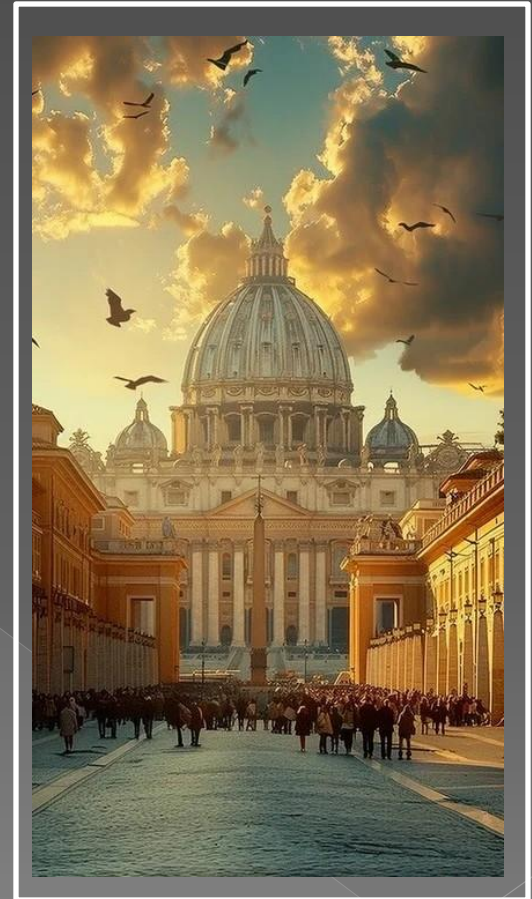
Essays



Notebooks

Teilhard on the Church and Evolution

In the realm of evolution, the Church certainly gives the impression of being towed along, of being dragged behind. And her bewildered children, in order to live the life of their century, seem almost to be begging for the bread of practical knowledge and truth.



“Mastery of the World and the Kingdom of God” (1916), WTW, p. 87

Developmental Thinking: Science and Metaphysics

We have no serious reason for thinking that things are not made in the same pattern as that in which our experience unfolds them. On the contrary, that pattern may very well disclose to us the fundamental texture of Spirit.

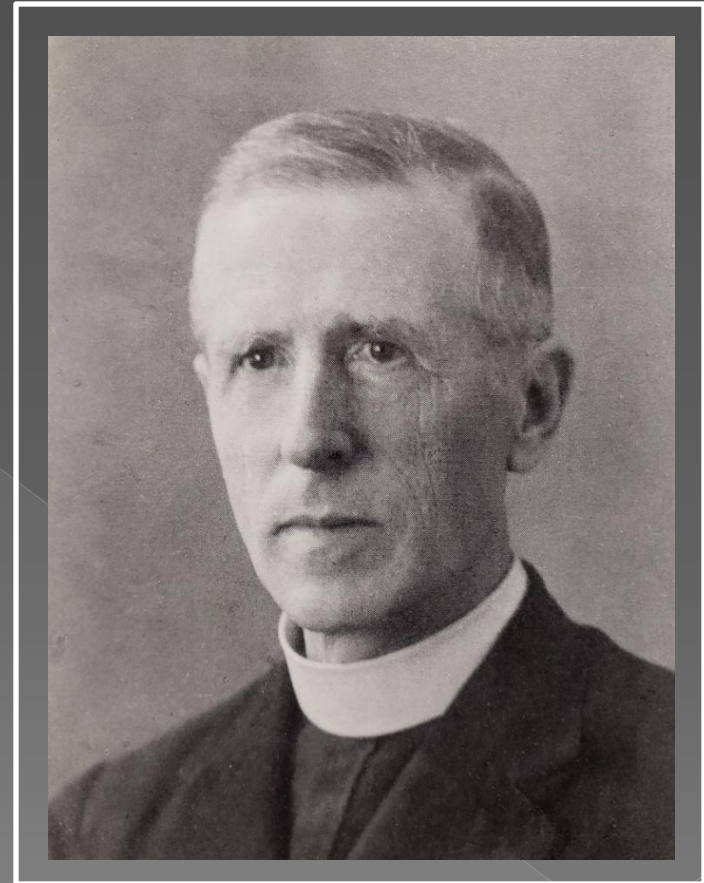


Teilhard in 1918

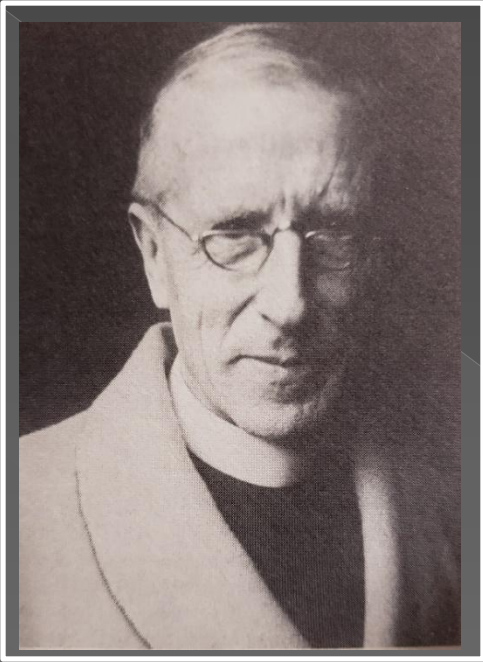
“Creative Union” (1917), WTW, p. 162

Teilhard on what has changed

The perspectives of unbounded time with which we fill our lungs have become so natural that we forget how recently and at what cost they were conquered.



Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 1930s



Yet, nothing is more certain: less than two hundred years ago, the world's leading thinkers did not imagine a past and would not have dared to promise themselves a future, of more than six or eight thousand years. An

incredibly short time; and what is even more disturbing, a span of simple repetition during which things were conserved or reintroduced on a single plane, and were always of the same kind.

Teilhard, "The Mysticism of Science" (1939) in *Human Energy*, pp. 168-169.

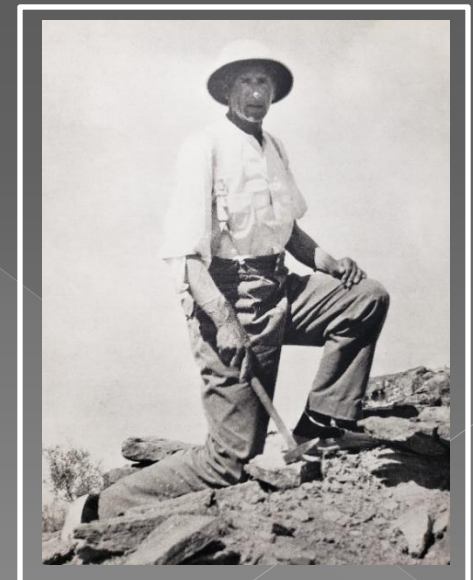
Genesis and Geology

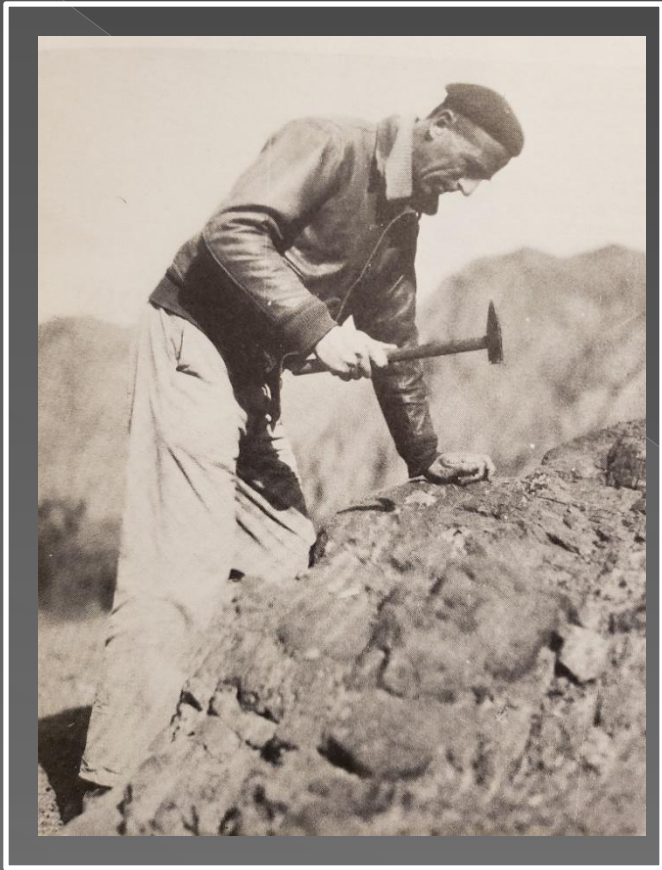
Teilhard had first-hand familiarity with the geologic column as a planet-wide record of the appearance of novel forms of matter, life, and mind.

Eon	Era	Period	Epoch	Years Ago	Animal	Plant
Phanerozoic	Cenozoic (age of recent life, 65.5 mya to present)	Quaternary	Holocene	10,000 BP to present	modern humans (300,000 BP)	widespread grasslands Flowering plants dominate
			Pleistocene	2.6 mya		
		Neogene	Pliocene	5.3 mya	grazing mammals, apes, whales	
			Miocene	23 mya		
		Paleogene	Oligocene	33.9 mya	saber-tooth tigers	
			Eocene	55.8 mya	modern birds	
	Palaeocene		65.5 mya	placental animals		
	Mesozoic (age of medieval life, 251-65.5 mya)	Cretaceous	145.5 mya	modern social insects	grasses and cereals flowering plants	
		Jurassic	199.6 mya	age of dinosaurs	conifer forests dominate	
		Triassic	251 mya	first dinosaurs		
	Paleozoic (age of ancient life, 542-251 mya)	Permian	299 mya	insects with complete metamorphosis	Fern, horsetail Conifer forest	
		Carboniferous	359.2 mya	herbaceous insects winged insects first reptiles	lycophod forests	
		Devonian	416 mya	first amphibians, wingless insects	lycophods, gymnosperms, ferns, modern fungi	
		Silurian	443.7 mya	insect-like organisms	first land plants	
		Ordovician	488.3 mya	primitive fishes		
Cambrian		542 mya	organisms with shells, marine invertebrates in Precambrian times	seaweeds		
Proterozoic			2.5 bya			
Archean			3.8 bya		multi-cellular life	
Hadean			4.5 bya		bacteria	

I thank my brother, Michael David Viney, for helping me with the Geologic Column.

Teilhard
in 1935
Salt Range
(India)





Teilhard climbed the hills like a mountain goat, chipping away at the rocks with his little hammer. More than once, when the bespectacled Paul Raphael went to fetch him back for lunch, he found Teilhard perched on a steep-grade hillside like some strange bird, staring intently at pebbles in his hand. One day, he

commented on the depth of his concentration. Teilhard smiled: “To me these stones are living things.”

Deep Time

“Teilhard’s world-view is suffused with the immensity of time and space and embedded within the great arc of evolution.”

Ursula King, “A Vision Transformed: Teilhard de Chardin’s Evolutionary Awakening at Hastings,” *The Heythrop Journal* 54 (2013), p. 596.



Mike Viney and Indah Huegele at the Smithsonian

Evolution: More than a Hypothesis

Broadly understood, as it should be, transformism is now a hypothesis no longer. It has become the form of thought without which no scientific explanation is possible.

“The Transformist Paradox” (1925)

Not a hypothesis [evolution] but a condition which all hypotheses must henceforth fulfill.

“Evolution of the Idea of Evolution” (1950)

NB: Teilhard often used “transformism” and “evolution” interchangeably.

Teilhard, *The Vision of the Past*, p. 87 and p. 246

“Metaphysical ‘speculations’ occupied only a very slight place in [Teilhard’s] work.”*

... care has been taken to avoid any recourse to metaphysics.

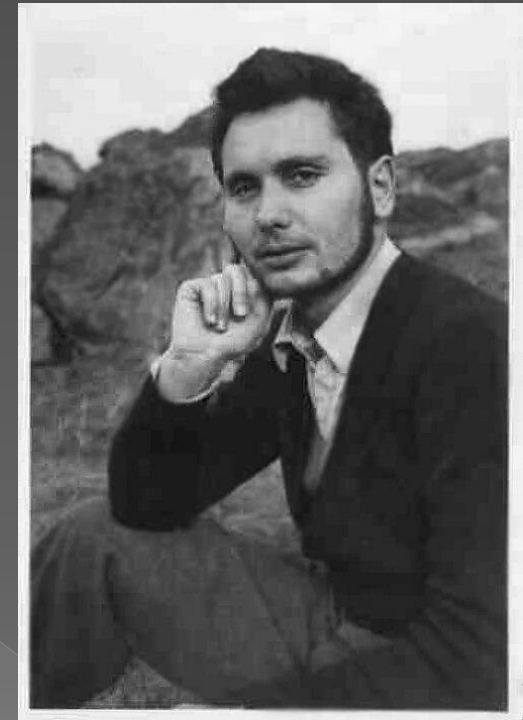
Teilhard, “Hominization” (1925), *The Vision of the Past*, p. 51

Do not look for a metaphysics here

Teilhard, “Man’s Place in the Universe: Reflections on Complexity,” (1942), *The Vision of the Past*, p. 217

“... the book must not be read as a metaphysical work ...”

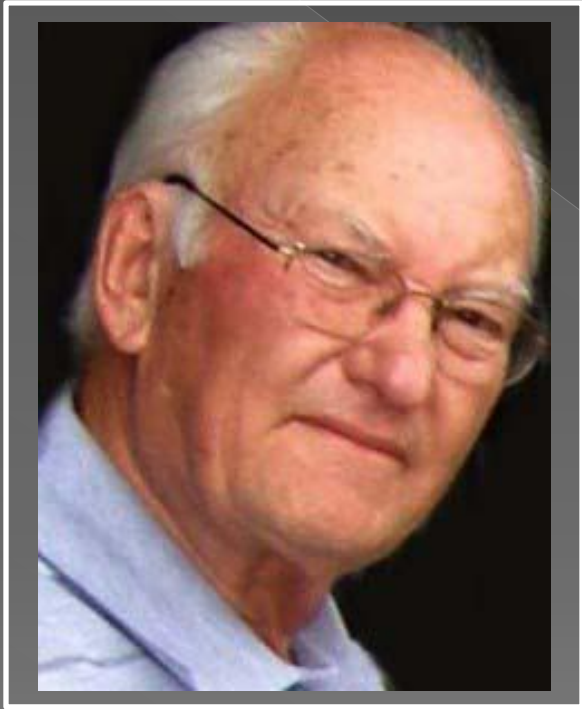
Teilhard, *The Human Phenomenon* (1947), p. 1



**Claude Tresmontant
(1925-1997)**

*** Claude Tresmontant, *Introduction à la Pensée de Teilhard de Chardin* (1956), p. 15**

Softening Teilhard's Rough Edges



Gérard-Henry Baudry
(1935-2014)

Some commentators on Teilhard's thought "tended to soften the rough edges of Teilhardian thought, making it more classic and traditional than it actually is."

Gérard-Henry Baudry, *Dictionnaire des correspondants de Teilhard de Chardin* (Chez l'Auteur, 1974): 89.

Teilhard's Legacy

“Teilhard has so far escaped the Index, although a monition has been issued on him. If they are good, they are dangerous.”

Flannery O'Connor to Fr. J. H. McCown, Letter of March 21, 1964
The Habit of Being, pp. 570-571



Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964)

Playing the Scientific Card

My claims: 1. Metaphysics runs through Teilhard's work from beginning to end.

2. Teilhard tended to identify metaphysics with a more Scholastic model, hence, his denials.

3. He "played the scientific card" (as Mercè Prats says) to alert the censors that he remained grounded in science.

4. He recognized the possibility of a different kind of metaphysics, which he called "hyper-physics," which is in the neighborhood of what Whitehead was doing.

Teilhard's last thoughts on not engaging philosophy and theology

“Go quietly ahead with your scientific work without getting involved in philosophy or theology. . .”

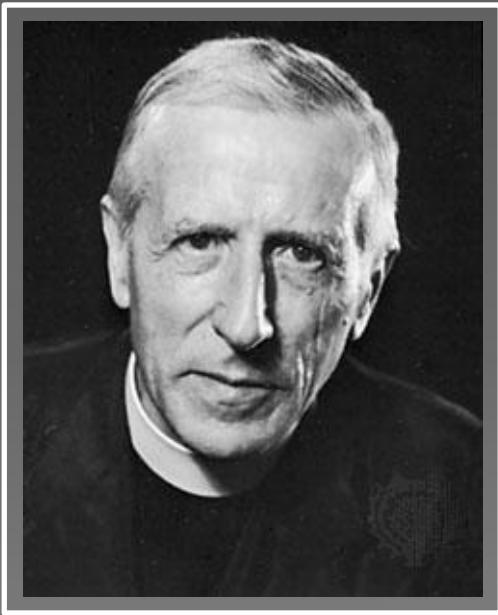


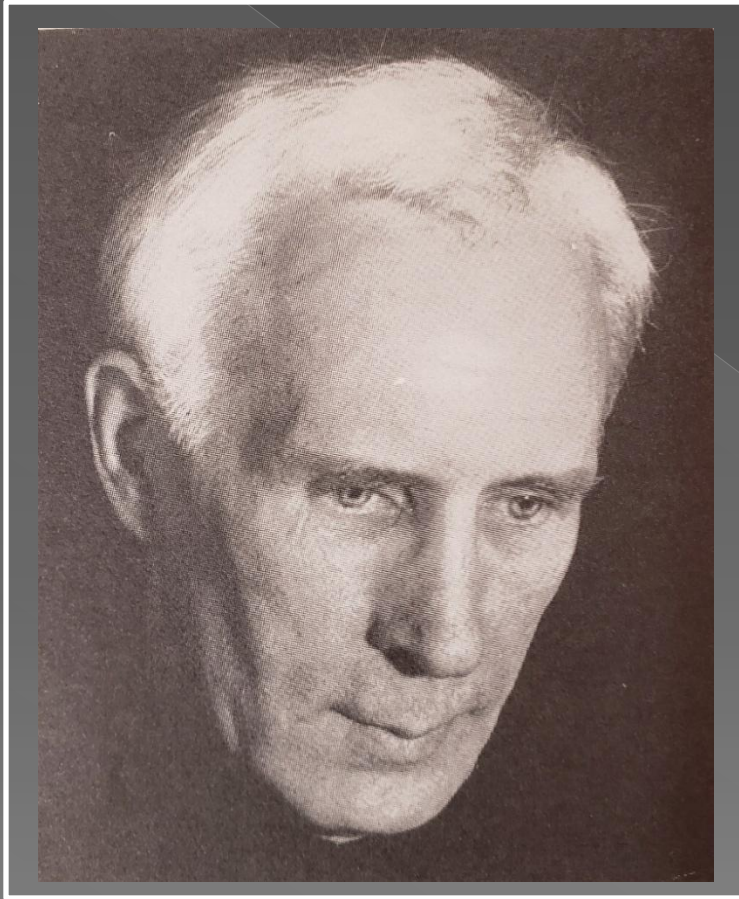
Photo by Philippe Halsman

Throughout my whole life, that is the advice (and the warning) that authority will be found repeatedly to have given me.

Drawing on fifty years spent living in the heart of the problem . . . this is psychologically unviable and directly opposed to the greater glory of God.

“Research, Work and Worship” (March 1955), *Science and Christ*, p. 214.

Another Sort of Metaphysics?

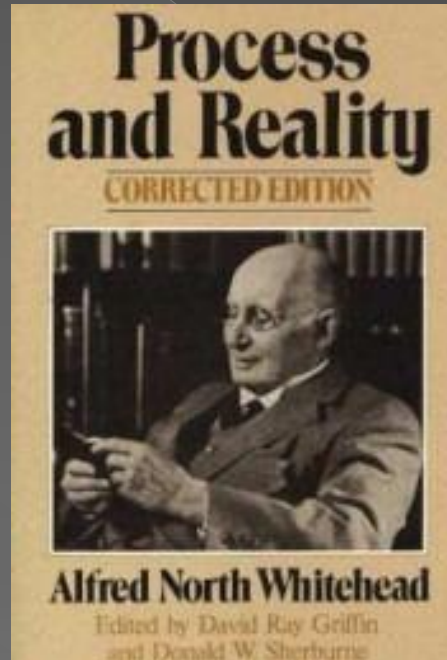


Henri de Lubac
(1896-1991)

I mistrust metaphysics (in the usual sense of the word), because I smell a geometry in it. But I am ready to recognize another sort of metaphysics which would really be a hyper-physics, — or a hyper-biology.

Teilhard to Henri de Lubac
(April 29, 1934) *Lettres Intimes* (1974), p, 273

Speculative Philosophy?

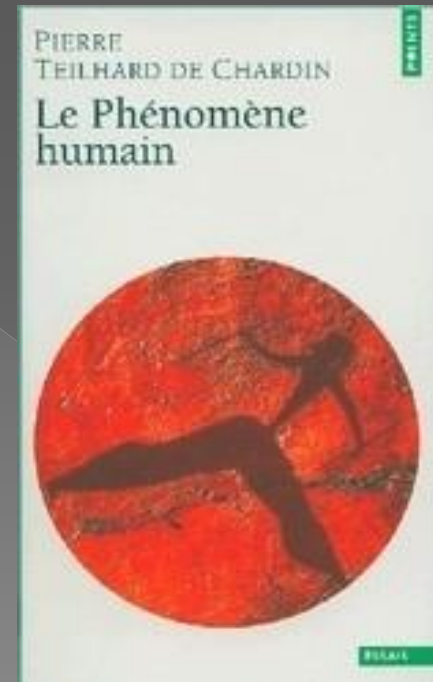


“ . . . the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted.”

A. N. Whitehead,
Process and Reality, p. 3

“ . . . to develop a *homogenous* and *coherent* perspective of our general experience extended to the human.”

Teilhard, *The Human Phenomenon*, p. 6



Teilhard's metaphysical ventures

Development is real: denial of Gosse-type creation

Time as asymmetrical — “closed” past, relatively “open” future

Causal conditions as necessary for effects, but not always sufficient: forms of matter, life, and mind — both unpredictable and genuinely novel — emerge in the course of evolution.

Within and without of things: correlation of lesser and greater physical complexity with lower and higher forms of mentality

Endless varieties of experience, reflective-awareness as highest, hence, the importance of hominization

Evolution as convergent, “groping” for greater consciousness.

Development according to Teilhard

Nothing makes a complete beginning. Things are born from what existed before them.

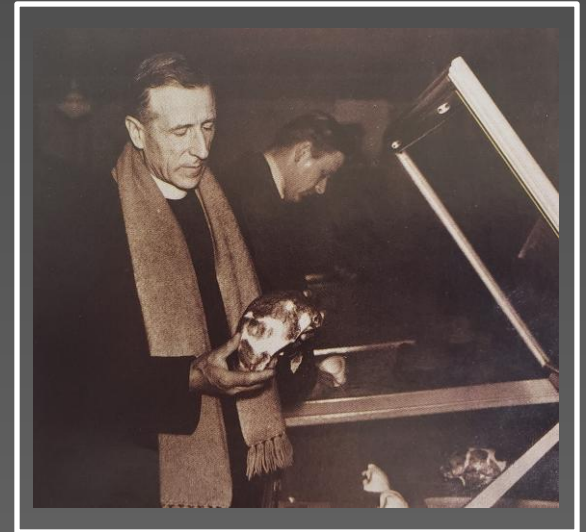
(The Vision of the Past, p. 130)

[There is an] indeterminacy at the very heart of every element of Matter . . .

(The Future of Man, p. 251)

Temporal and causal processes are asymmetrical: law of birth, not determinism.

(The Vision of the Past, p. 105)

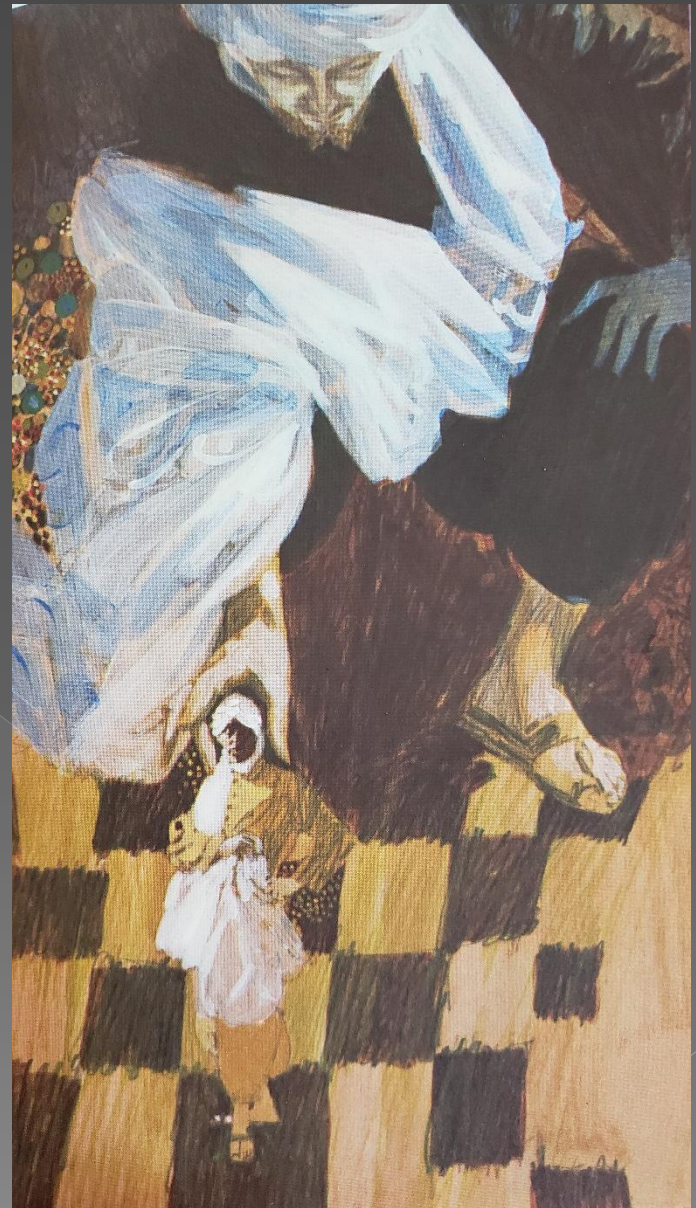


Teilhard in 1927

Freedom or fate?

'Tis all a Chequer-board
of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men
for Pieces plays:
Hither and thither moves,
and mates, and slays,
And one by one back
in the Closet lays.

Omar Khayyam, *Rubayyat*, LVIII
Edward Fitzgerald translation



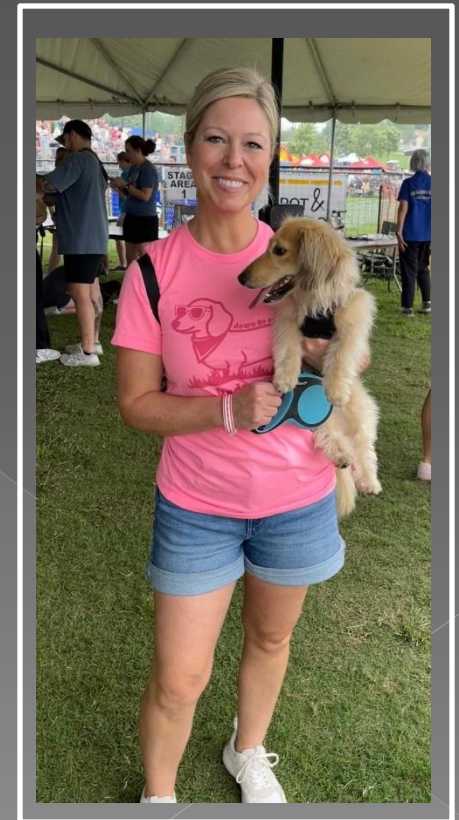
Causes, effects and self-making



Every effect arises from a nexus of causes which are the *necessary conditions* of its existence, but are they *always sufficient*? *Is an element of self-creativity possible*? For example,

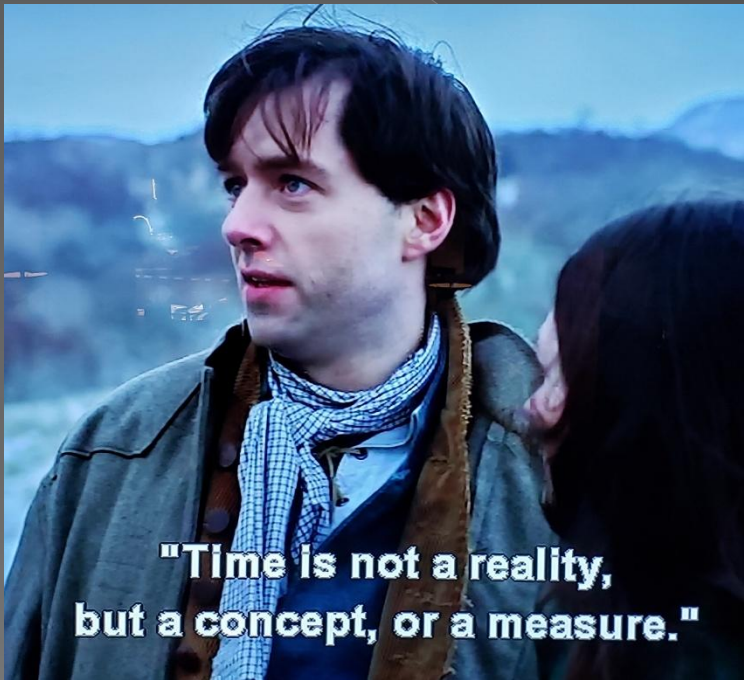
every woman was once a child, but can it be that the adult she becomes is, in part, her own doing, not merely the fated product of her past?

Jenny Smith, ages 2 and 46



The Nature of Time

Richard Rankin and Iona Claire in the time-travel saga, *Outlander*



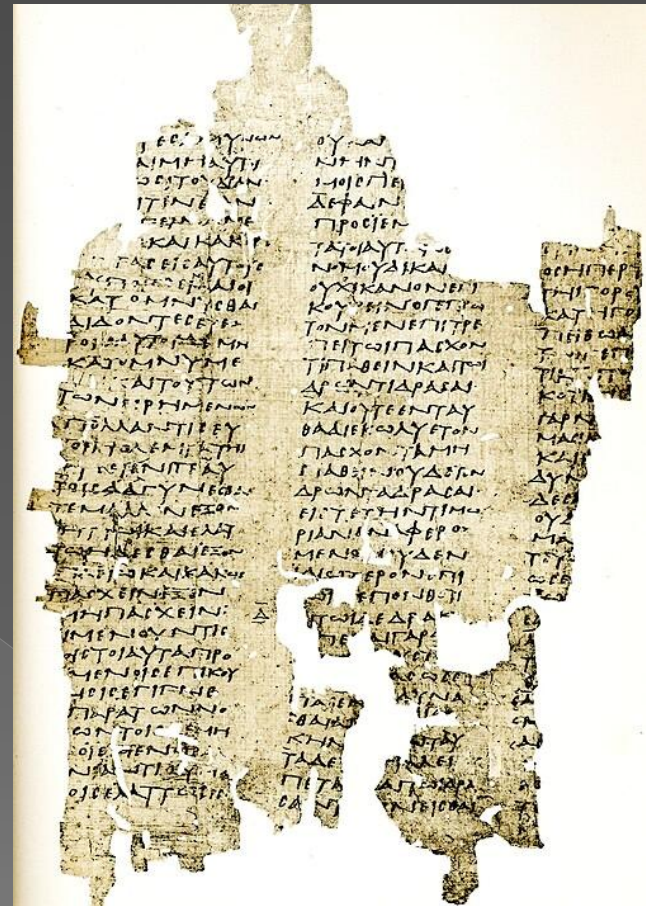
fascinating ways, a question as old as philosophy itself: what is the nature of time?

Time-travel stories make for good fiction, and they raise, in the most

What is possible?

Time is a thought or a measure, not a substance.

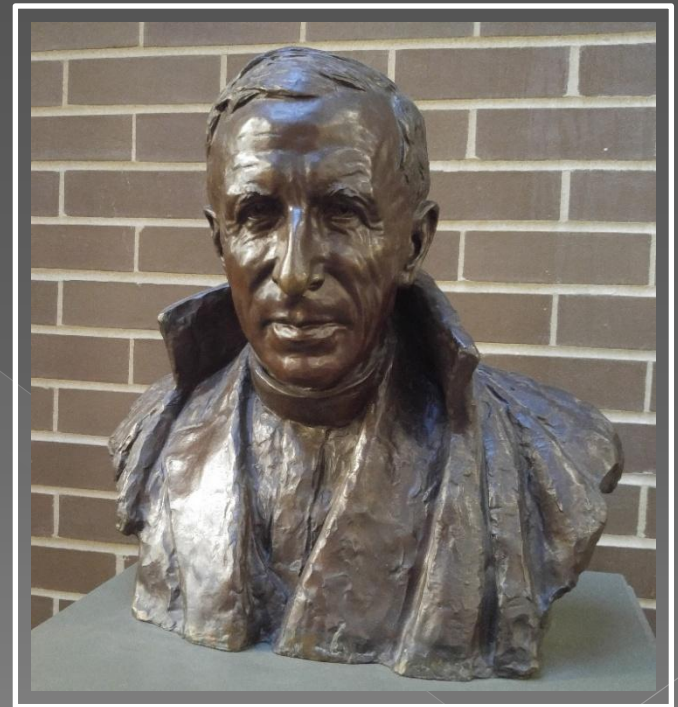
There can be no reversal of a thing that has happened: it is possible only for what is in the future not to happen.



Antiphon the Athenian (late 5th century BCE), Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, pages 145, 151

Teilhard on Duration

For the last century . . . philosophical thought is turning towards more generalized perspectives. For us duration now permeates the essence of beings to their last fibres. . . . Once considered ‘point-like,’ their ‘natures’ now stretch indivisibly before our eyes along the whole length of experiential time. They become to some degree ‘threadlike’.



Teilhard by Malvina Hoffman

“The Basis and Foundations of the Idea of Evolution” (1926), *The Vision of the Past*, p. 129.

Teilhard on Novelty and the Order in Nature

Strictly speaking, if matter is defined as ‘something with no vestige of consciousness or spontaneity,’ it

does not exist. . . .

Physical determinisms (‘laws’) are simply the effects of large numbers, in other words, of *materialized freedom*.



George O'Keefe, The Lawrence Tree

“Centrology” (1944), *Activation of Energy*, p. 125

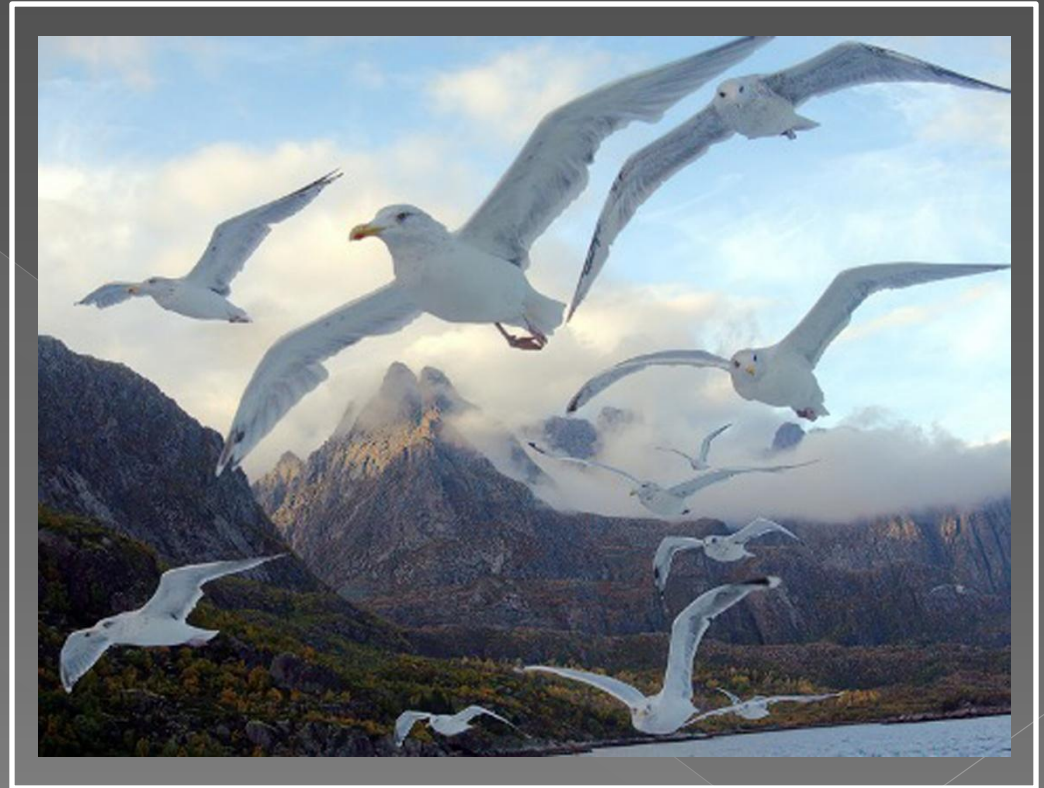
The *Within* and the *Without* of Things

... the Stuff of the Universe has an inner face, hence, it is *structurally bifacial*, that is to say, in every region of space and time, just as it is, for instance, granular: *Coextensive with their Without [Dehors], there exists a Within [Dedans] of Things.*



Lucien Cuénot and Teilhard, 1947

Consciousness . . . [emerges] along an immense fan of nervures, each representing a particular kind of perception and knowledge. There are as many wavelengths of consciousness as there are of living forms.



Norway gulls, photo by Lynn Matson

What is it like to be?



honey bee



paramecium



octopus



gorilla



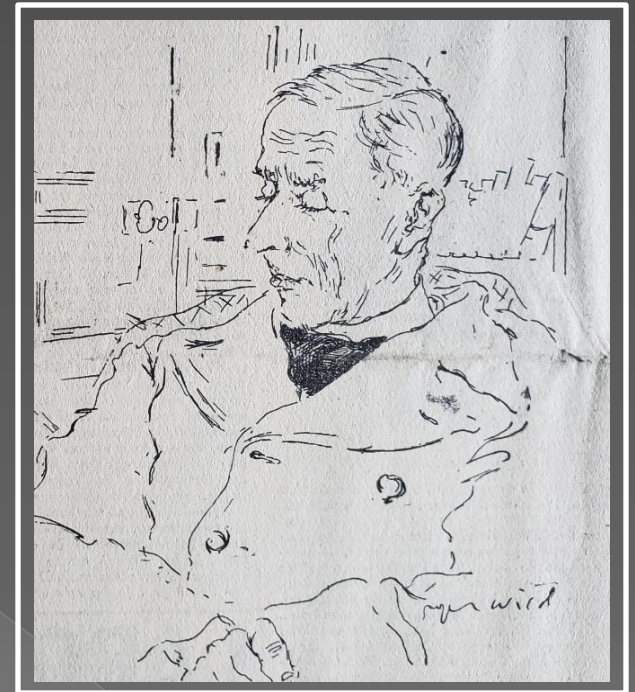
inhabitant
of another
planet



whale

Convergence toward the Noosphere

The idea [of the noosphere] was actually born in me, in the trenches, of a human spiritual community extending to the organic: the idea, I mean, of a kind of special biological “mega-unit” constituting the thinking envelope of the earth. This, for me, is the noosphere.

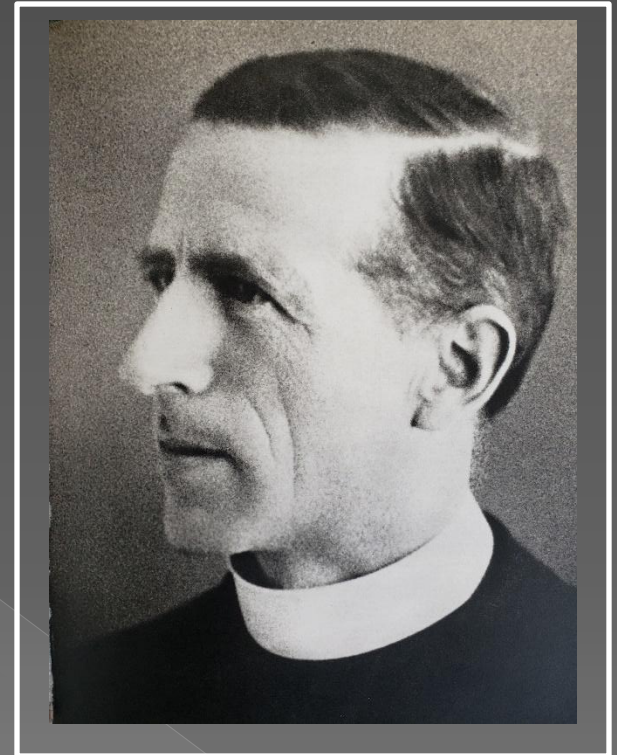


Teilhard in 1951, by Roger Wild

Interview with Marcel Brion, *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* (January 11, 1951), translation in Delio & Davis (eds.), *Whitehead and Teilhard* (2024), p. 342

The Noosphere

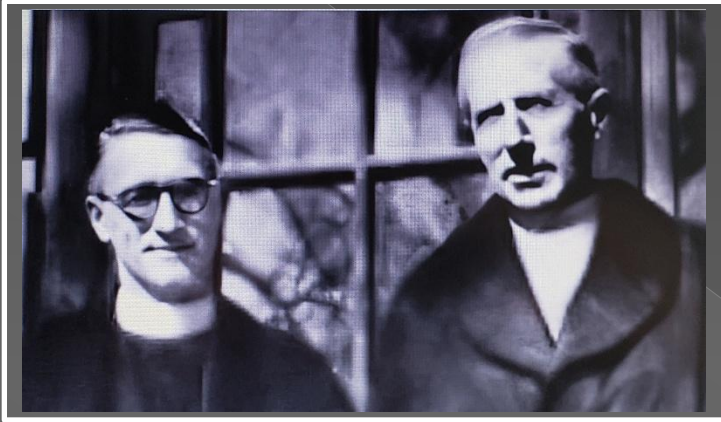
Teilhard coined the term “noosphere”* by analogy with, and as an extension of, the biosphere. With the advent of human beings, evolution had crossed the threshold of reflective thought, and so a “thinking envelope of the earth” began to develop.



Teilhard in 1923

*Teilhard first used the word in his essay “Hominization,” finished in Paris on May 6, 1925, reprinted in *La Vision du Passé* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957).

Teilhard's theological ventures



Pierre Leroy and Teilhard

God must create developmentally

God's "need" of creation — *qualified* doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*

God takes risks; open-ended future

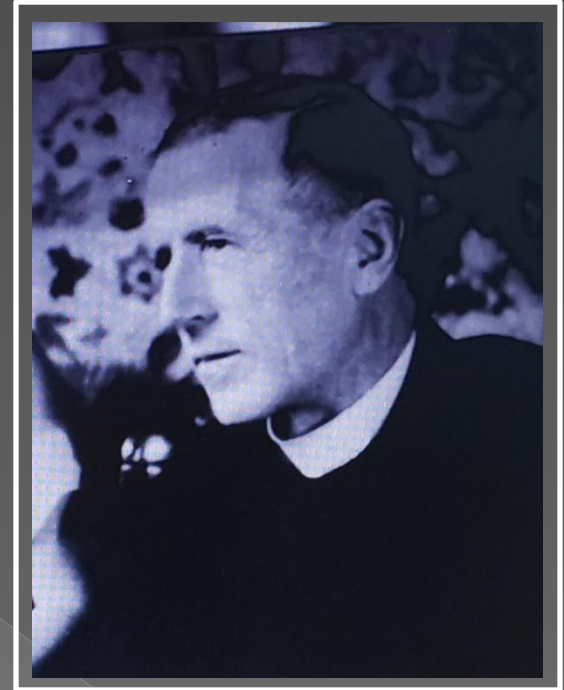
God creates other creators,
making things make themselves

God in a "strictly bilateral" relation with the creatures,
"complexity of God"

God as both "above" and "ahead" — convergence of the
universe toward Omega

What is Creative Transformation?

Besides '*creatio ex nihilo subjecti*' [creation from no pre-existing subject] and '*transformatio ex potentia subjecti*' [transformation from the power of the subject] there is room for an act *sui generis* which makes use of a pre-existent being and builds it up into a completely new being.



Teilhard on Divine Creation

God is no more able to create apart from a developmental process than to make a square circle, do an evil act, or make something past never to have happened.

Christianity and Evolution, p. 33 [1920], p. 83 [1933]

... Not only are we created, we also *create*.

Journal (March 4, 1918), p. 285.

God makes things make themselves.

Christianity and Evolution, p. 20 [1928];
The Vision of the Past, p. 25 [1921], p. 154 [1930]

The idea of an absolutely *free creation* is absurd, “God must create in order to complete himself in something outside of himself.”

Teilhard to Mgr. Bruno de Solages (April 2, 1935), *Lettres Intimes*, p. 302

God's Power and Inevitable Risks



Gonzague (1893-1914)

God's power is always obliged, in the course of its creative effort, to pass through a whole series of intermediaries and to overcome a whole

succession of inevitable risks — whatever may be said by the theologians, who are always ready to introduce the absolute power of God.



Olivier (1887-1918)

“Note on the Modes of Divine Action in the Universe”
(January 1920), *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 31

Photos of Teilhard's brothers killed in the war. Joseph (1889-1978) survived but was wounded.

Omega, the complexity of God

God is only definable as a *Center of centers*. In this complexity lies the perfection of God's unity — the only final goal logically attributable to the developments of Spirit-Matter. Complexity of God . . . Let us not fear this consequence.

Teilhard, "Sketch of a Personalistic Universe,"
Human Energy, p. 68.

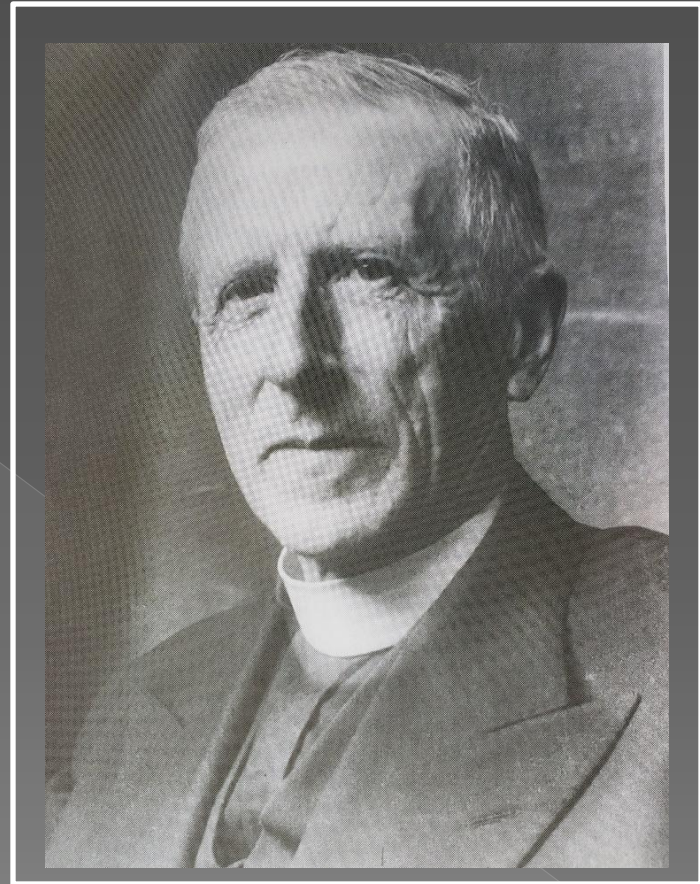
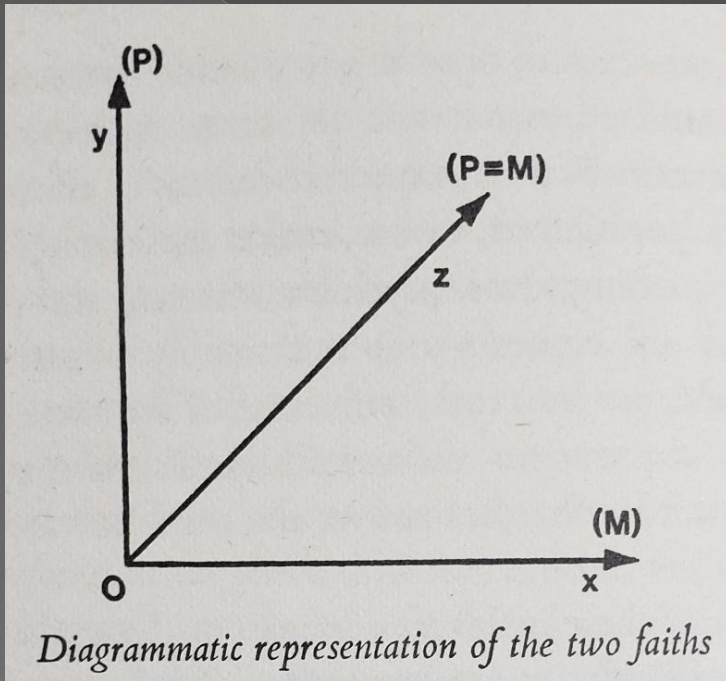


Photo study for sculpture by Malvina Hoffman

God “Above” and God “Ahead”



Simone Bégouën and Teilhard

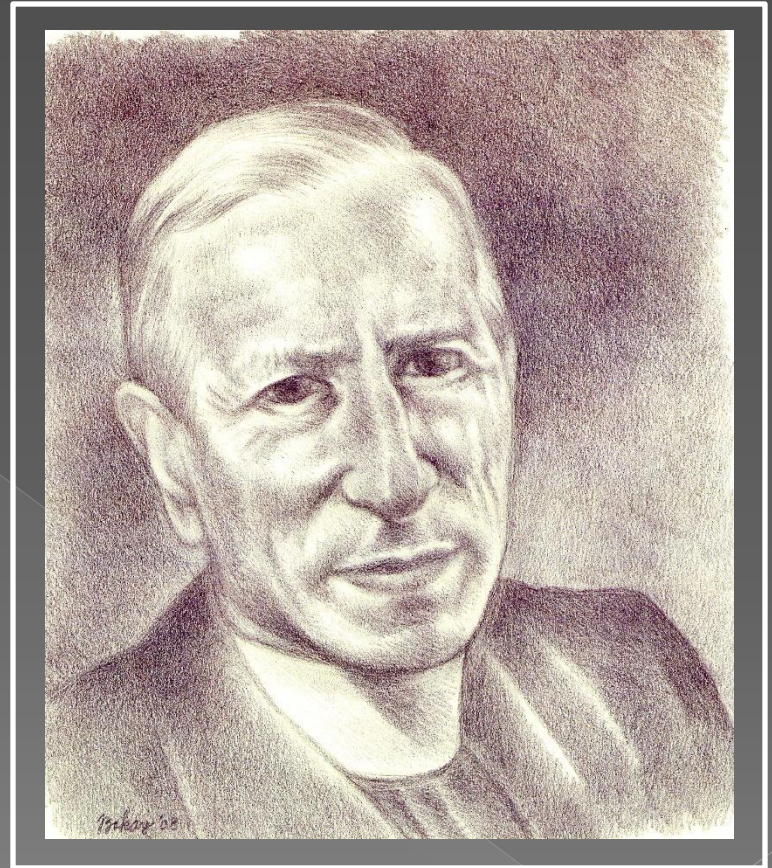
Dieu en-haut (OP) and Dieu en-avant (OM) reconciled in the maturation of humanity in the Parousia (P=M)

Toward the Future [essay of 1948], p. 160 (cf. *The Future of Man* [essay of 1949], p. 269)

God and the World: a Two-Way Street

“Let us forget about ‘*Ens a se*’ [Being existing by itself] and ‘*Ens ab alio*’ [Being existing by another]. . . [and affirm] a strictly bi-lateral and complementary relationship between the world and God.”

“The Contingence of the Universe and Man’s Zest for Survival” (1953), *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 226.



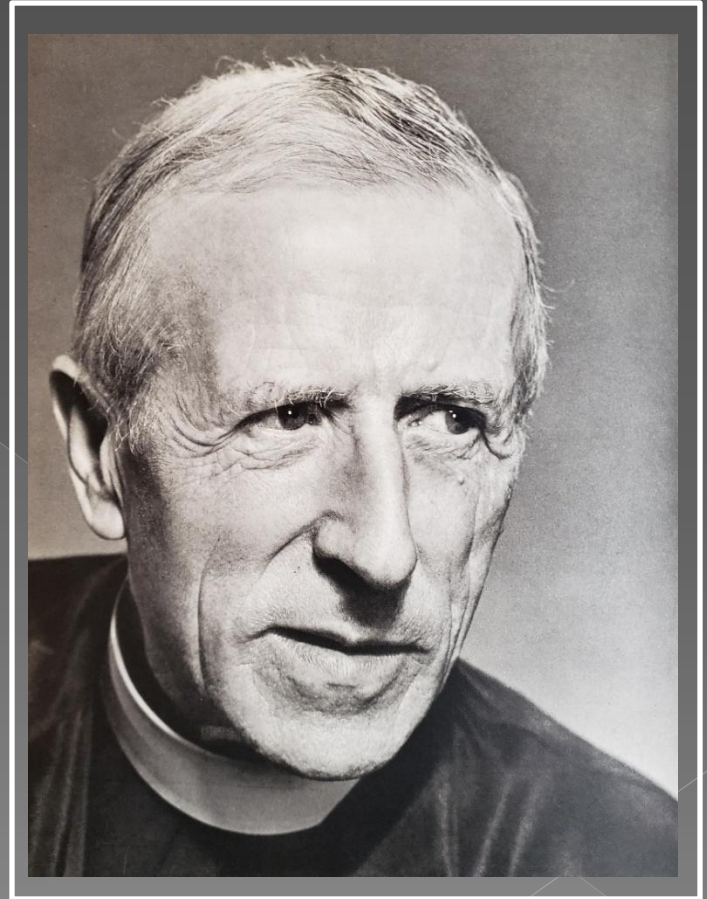
Teilhard by Michelle Bakay

Teilhard's Question

“Who at last will give
evolution *its* God?”

Teilhard de Chardin, “The God of Evolution”
in *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 240.
(October 1953)

Photo by Philippe Halsman



What Teilhard looked for in a concept of God

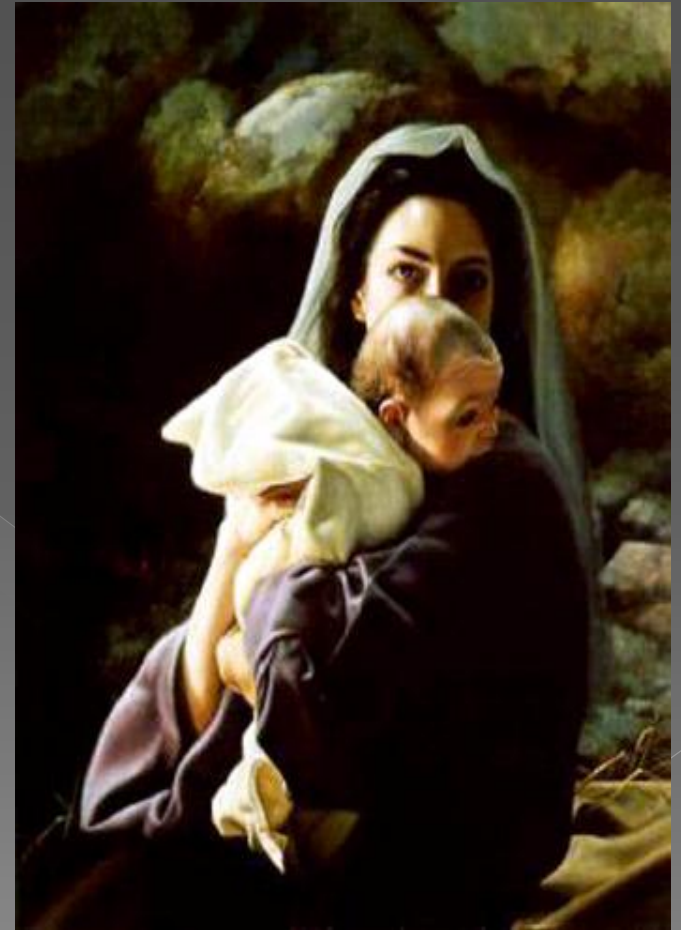


A theism of cosmic dimensions, friendly to science . . .

a “God” adequate to the dynamic processes of the universe



A personal “God” who has compassionate concern for the creatures . . .



God, Personal and Cosmic

God cannot be proven as “*one alongside things*” nor as “*one among things*,” but rather as a condition of all life, of all being... To make this understood, one must *combine personal predicates and cosmic predicates*.

Journal (Sept. 20, 1917), pp. 220-221

No true theologian would deny . . . that we cannot exactly pin down God's features. But . . . God must be as enveloping as the universe and as warm as the human heart, and incomparably more besides.

Letter to Ida Treat (June 13, 1926), *Letters to Two Friends*, p. 42



Ida Treat and Teilhard in 1936

A Cosmic Christ

What we need now, might it not be to recognize and distinguish, within Christ, a kind of “third nature” (no longer divine, nor human, but “cosmic,” enabling Him to act as Omega)?

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
Claude Tresmontant

CORRESPONDANCE INÉDITE

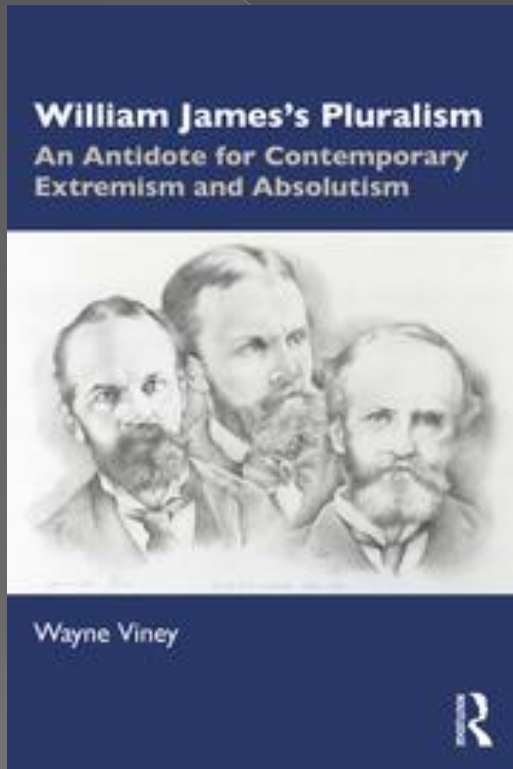
Édition procurée par
Emmanuel Tresmontant et Mercè Prats
avec un inédit du P. Teilhard de Chardin



ARCADES AMBO

Teilhard to Claude Tremontant, letter of April 7, 1954, p. 138.

Teilhard reads William James*



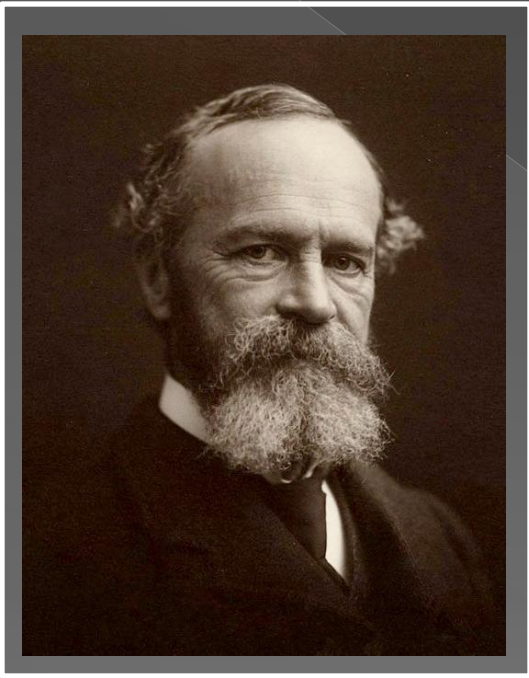
Teilhard found a kindred spirit in William James, someone who considered monism and pluralism to be “the most central of philosophical problems,” and who asked, “What is life eventually to make of itself?”

(*Pragmatism*, pp. 122, 129)

Cover drawing by Michelle Bakay

* See especially, Teilhard’s *Journal*, entries of January 20, 26, 28, and 30, 1918, and February 1, 1918; pages 264, 267, 268, 269, 270, 272.

William James's Thought Experiment



William James (1842-1910)

In 1918, Teilhard read James's *Pragmatism*. His idea of God inviting us to participate in a creation where success is not guaranteed, where risk is real, caught Teilhard's attention.

“God inviting us to the *risks* of Creation.”

Journal (January 29, 1918), p. 269

Teilhard on Monism and Pluralism: 1918 to 1948

Reading William James's *Pragmatism*, I was surprised to see how Creative Union aligns with his conceptions (providing them with a more absolute basis) and combines Monism (final) and pluralism (initial) . . .

Journal (Jan. 20, 1918), p. 264

Creative Union is pluralistic (1) in the initial multiplicity, (2) in the convergent multiplicity, sought through *differentiation*.

Journal (Jan. 29, 1918), p. 269

The inclination and thrust of my vision evidently tend toward *perceiving every form of activity and passion as a form of union* . . .

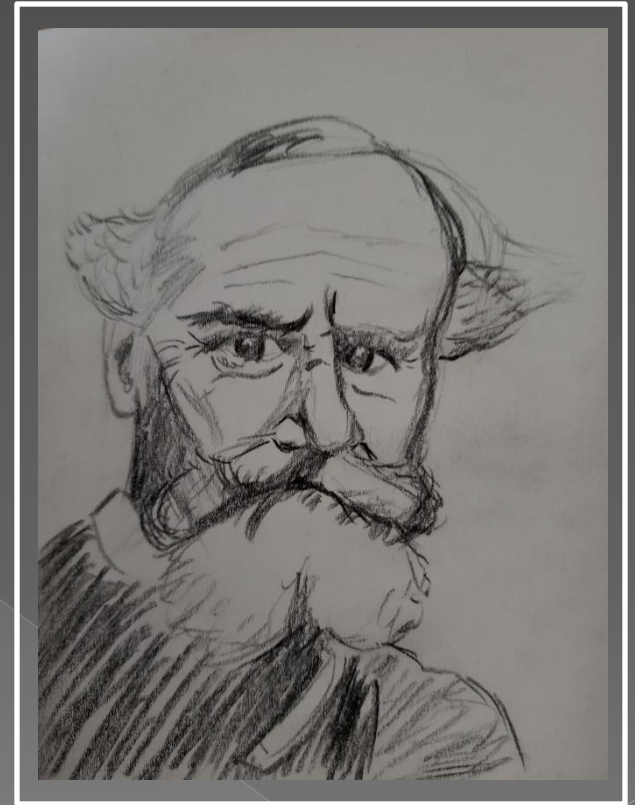
Journal (April 24, 1918), p.311

Monisation: a Multiverse being Unified

The Cosmos is *truly* incomplete, that is to say, plural. . . . [this] allows us to understand that the Truth about the Universe is not monism, but the formation—the establishment — of a certain Monism (in Christo).

. . . Creative Union [is] *Monisation*

Journal (October 11, 1918), p. 363.



William James by Cory Rice

A Personalizing Universe

To energize us, Teilhard believed we need “a universe that is not only open but can also be seen to be *centered* (or which comes to the same thing, *personalizing*) in the direction of the future.”

Activation of Energy [essay of 1948], p. 174

Par nature tout ce qui est foi monte; et tout ce qui monte converge inévitablement. [By nature all faith rises; and all that rises inevitably converge.]



L'Avenir de l'homme [1947], p. 242

I believe I see most clearly that neither of the two (*esse* and *unire*) [to be and to unite] precedes the other, but they together form a linked pair inseparable in grandeur and in variation.



Jeanne Mortier (1892-1982)

Letter to Jeanne Mortier (August 24, 1948), *Lettres à Jeanne Mortier*, p. 36

[*Being* and *union* are] equally primordial and fundamentally irreducible, ontologically inseparable — like two surfaces of one and the same plane — and constrained to vary simultaneously in the same direction.

“Comment je vois” (August 26, 1948), *Toward the Future*, p. 207

Fundamentals of Process Philosophy

Nature is composed of dynamic processes

Nature is a theater of interactions among these processes

Dual nature of the stuff of the universe — objects/subjects

Enduring objects are processes.

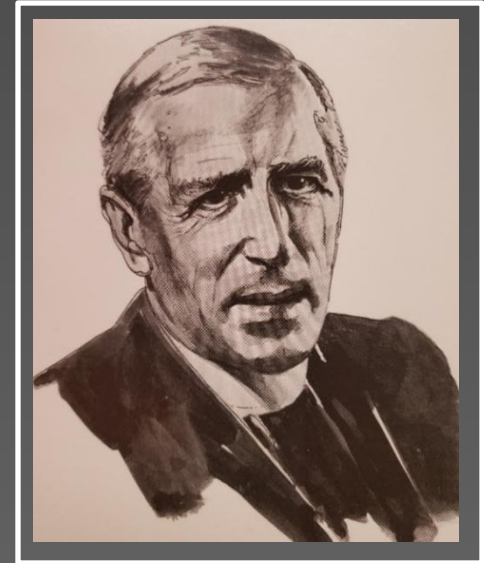
Reality is open-ended, incomplete, and in the making.



Creative Union and Process Thought

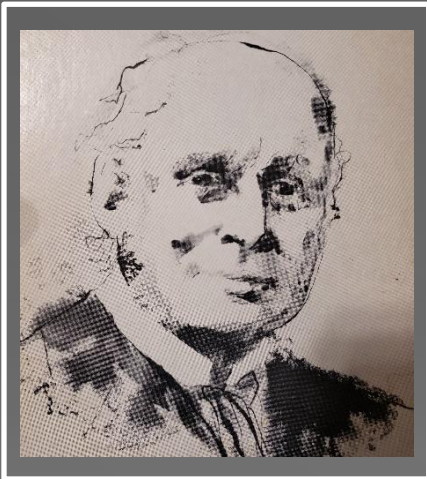
“Each new union realized increases the absolute quantity of being in the universe.” (1917)

Teilhard de Chardin



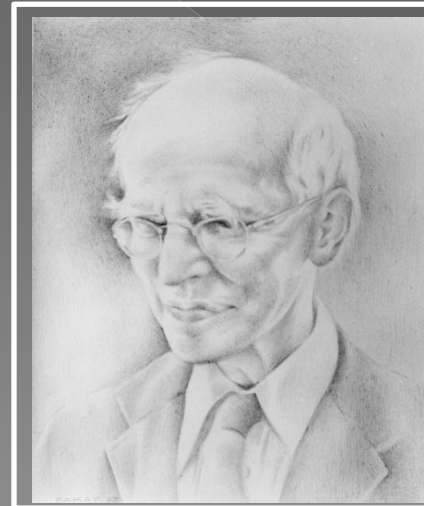
“The many become one, and are increased by one.” (1929)

A. N. Whitehead



“‘Creative’ means *additions to the definiteness of reality.*” (1970)

Charles Hartshorne
by Michelle Bakay



Process Theism

God surpasses all as a creator unique in scope and excellence, but all real beings are creative in some degree (hence, no creation *ex nihilo*).

God is the most *and best* moved mover (hence, not an unmoved mover).

God affects and is affected by the creatures—"the divine relativity."

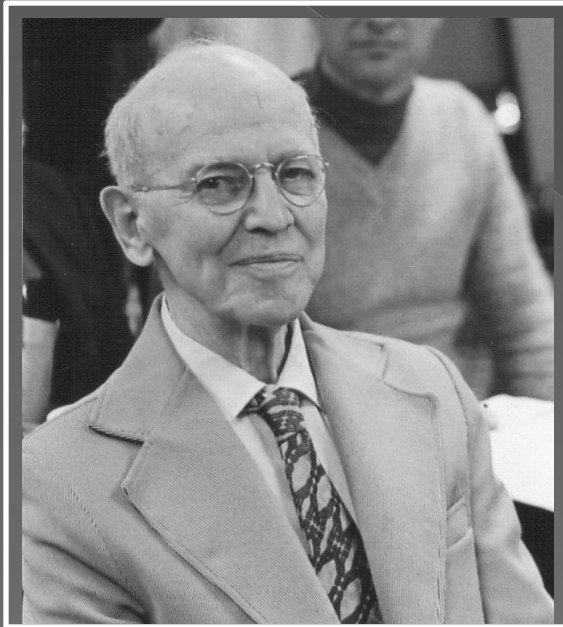
God has a future (hence, no timeless knowledge of time).

God experiences tragedy (hence, no impassible deity).

God is the inexhaustible ground of hope in the betterment of the world and the preservation of achieved value.



Hartshorne on Process Theology



Charles Hartshorne (1987-2000)

The Church Fathers, after Philo Judaeus, defined God as unmoved mover, but failed to consider seriously the possibility of other definitions. . . . “Process theology” is the culmination of three centuries of more and more searching reconsideration of the proper meaning of the religious term “God.”

Charles Hartshorne, *Insights and Oversights of Great Thinkers*: (1983): 365-366.

Jules Lequyer as Pioneer of Process Theology



Jules Lequyer (1814-1862)
by Michelle Bakay

Relation of God to the creatures [is] as real as the relation of the creatures to God.

[God] creates beings capable of creating.

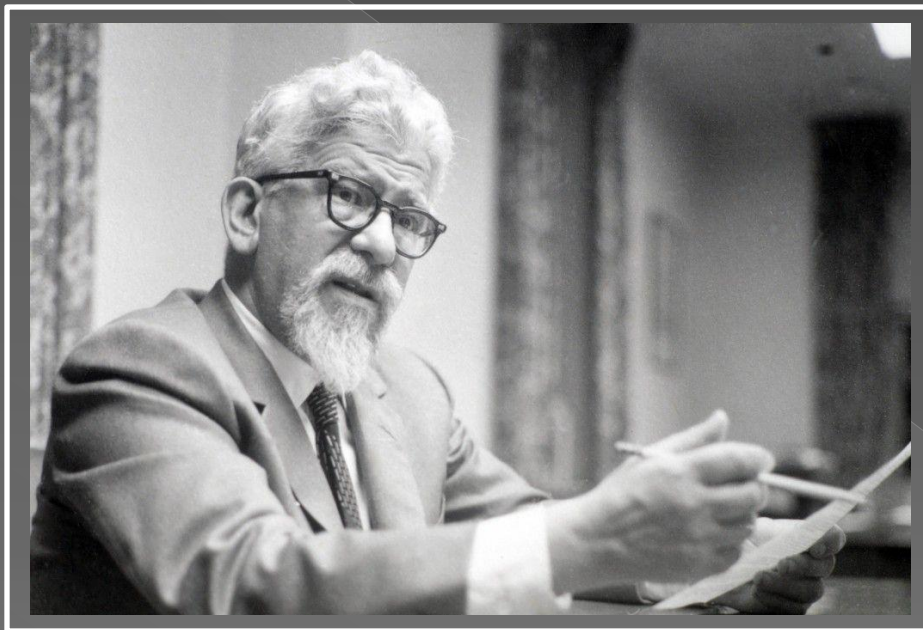
God created me creator of myself.

Man deliberates, God waits.

The succession of things, it seems, casts a shadow even on God.

Œuvres complètes (1952) pgs 70-74 [ca. 1850s]

Rabbi Heschel on Divine *Pathos*

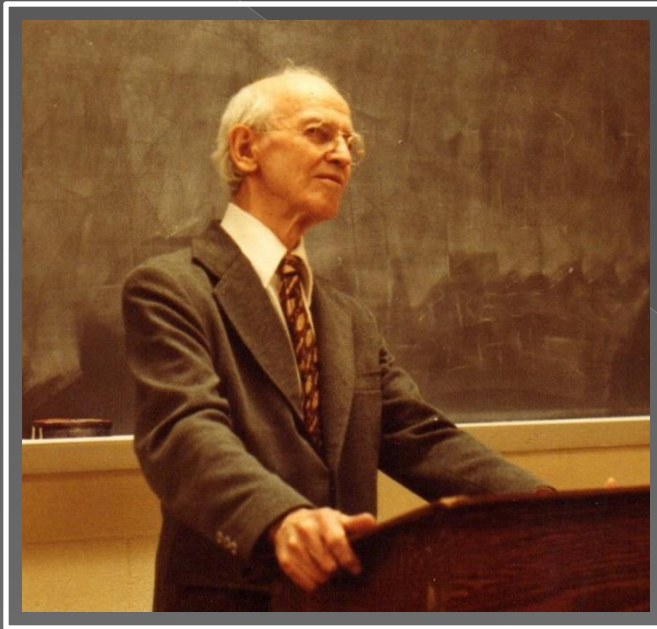


Rabbi Abraham Heschel (1907-1972)

God is “moved and affected by what happens in the world, and reacts accordingly.” . . .
“*Pathos* is a movement from one state to another, an alteration or change, and as such is not compatible with the conception of a Supreme Being Who is both unmoved and unchangeable.”

Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. II (Hendrickson, 2017 [1933]), pgs. 4 and 40.

God: the Most, and Best, Moved Mover

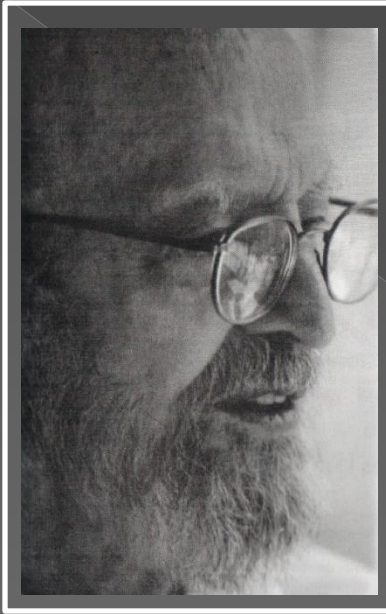


Hartshorne in 1981

“Rabbi Heschel has said what some Christians ought to have said long before . . . ‘God is the most moved mover.’ By adding two words, these six words virtually cover the subject to perfection: God is the most *and best* moved mover. Surely, of the ancient Greeks, Plato came closest to this [in his later work]. It precisely corrects Aristotle just where he was most definitely wrong, but where he

was followed all too definitely by nearly two millennia of writers in the three principal schools of Western theology.”

Charles Hartshorne, *The Zero Fallacy* (1997), p. 39.



Divine Openness

Thomism denies passivity in God, *divine openness to creaturely influence*. As Jules Lequier, that neglected genius, so well realized: If we decide, and God does not, what our acts shall be, then we and not God decide to that extent what world God is to know. Freedom is both self-creative and creative of something in all who know the free being. Thus, a person, or other creatures, as free, is not mere creature but also creator, and God as knowing free creatures is not mere creator but also creature.

Charles Hartshorne, *Wisdom as Moderation* (1987), pp. 92-93 [from 1963 article]

True Union Differentiates

“L’union différencie.” There is a full metaphysic, ethic and mystic, contained in those three words.

Letter to Lucille Swan (Sept. 8, 1935), p. 46

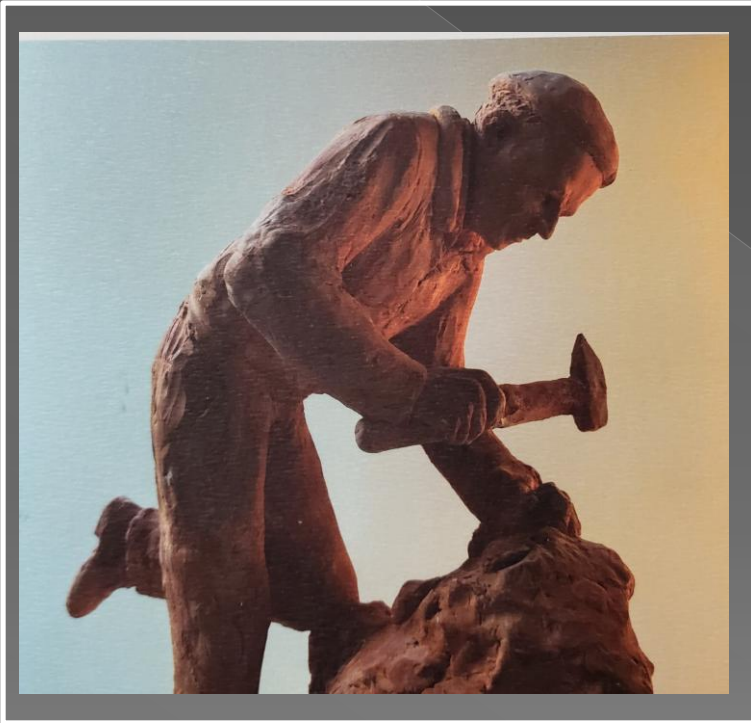


Lucille Swan and Teilhard in Peking

The day will come when, after mastering the ether, the winds, gravitation, we will capture for God the energies of love. And then, for a second time in the history of the world, we will have discovered Fire.

Teilhard, “L’Evolution de la Chasteté” (1934), *Les Directions l’Avenir*, p. 92.

Communion with God



“There is a communion with God, and a communion with the earth, and a communion with God through the earth.”

La Vie Cosmique (1916)

Marie Bayon de La Tour, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
2019, bronze, photograph: Marie Bayon de La Tour