

TEILHARD'S PLANETISATION OF MANKIND AS PART OF GLOBALISATION¹

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When Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), a French Jesuit priest and prominent philosopher, anthropologist, geologist and palaeontologist, was developing his theory of the planetisation of mankind, he came up with the concept of the *noosphere*. The theory of planetisation was introduced in 1922 in an essay titled 'Hominization' (Teilhard de Chardin, 1966) and the noosphere became a key concept in Teilhard's evolutionary philosophy. He believed that the noosphere was the next phase of human evolution (1966, pp. 63, 71, 230, 261). Let me briefly clarify what the Teilhardian noosphere is.

The term noosphere derives from the Greek *nous*, which means mind, and *sphaira*, which means sphere. The noosphere (the sphere of human thought) is related to the terms geosphere (the sphere of inanimate matter) and biosphere (the sphere of biological life). The noosphere emerges and is constituted through the interaction of human minds. The internal organisation of the noosphere exists in perfect correlation to the organisation of the "human mass" which populates the Earth. The noosphere grows or shrinks in tandem with the organisation of the human mass. If the human mass increases, the noosphere increases as well; and vice versa. If human society goes into decline, the noosphere will decline with it. This perfect correlation can be expressed not just in the concept of human mass but also in the concept of human society. The more complex human society becomes, the more complex the noosphere becomes as the complexity of the organisation and humanity's experience of social networks increases, the more complex the awareness of the noosphere is. Teilhard maintained that the world as we know it has always been evolving and expanding onwards, outwards and upwards to the Omega Point (a sort of supreme consciousness, the cosmic Christ) and that the noosphere by analogy has been moving towards greater integration and unification, and will culminate in the same Omega Point (Teilhard de Chardin, 1959). This united planetary

¹ Plašienková, Zlatica (Ed.). (2017). *Evolution Science Religion: Teilhard de Chardin's Inspirations in the Contemporary World*. Bratislava: Comenius University.

humanity on Earth is key to Teilhard's notion of the planetisation of mankind. In many ways, planetisation is a similar term to the currently favoured (and overused) one of globalisation. For example, in science, technology, and in human faith in progress as well as in the reality of the emergence of increasingly intricate structures within the interpersonal relations and within increasingly complicated societal relations in general. Slovak Philosopher Zlatica Plašienková has even referred to Teilhard as the first philosopher of globalisation (Plašienková, 2009). The book being reviewed in this paper suggests that Teilhard de Chardin might indeed be considered a visionary of globalisation. This is despite his having developed planetisation theory long before the concept of globalisation emerged.

Evolution Science Religion: Teilhard de Chardin's Inspirations in the Contemporary World (published by Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia, 2017) is the tangible outcome of a meeting of scholars specialising in the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin at the International Scientific Conference in Bratislava, Slovakia, on the 60th anniversary of his death. The team of authors is truly international, with representatives from Argentina, Czechia, France, Italy, Poland, and Slovakia, listed in alphabetical order. The papers are in one of four languages: English, French, Italian or Spanish. The book is thematically divided into four parts and comprises a comprehensive series of Teilhardian studies from different methodological positions.

In the modern world all things have become interrelated. Relations between human beings and their communities and institutions are continuous, interlinking and controlled (in part) through the Internet all around the globe. The infinitesimal diversity of everything (relationships, knowledge, skills, the human world) means that a common vision is required for the future. Might Teilhard's idea of evolution as a great cosmic process, that is, the idea of a world in which there is place for the universe, life and man to evolve and pursue prosperity, and which could lead to solutions to the global challenges of today? That is the starting point for the papers in Part I. Ludovico Galleni, to whom is this book dedicated, is an Italian professor of zoology and prominent expert on the work of Teilhard de Chardin. He introduced Teilhard's philosophy as "a project for Europe" (Galleni, 2017, p. 17), stressing that the European Union is undergoing an economic and political crisis and needs a vision, a spiritual perspective that offers a differentiated future. This project is part of Teilhard's model of biological and spiritual evolution of mankind as an evolution toward the goal of ultrahumans and complete divinity (Galleni, 2017).

Starting from the ideas of Jean Baudrillard, who described our times as the age of the disappearance of man, the Argentinian thinker Teresa Driollet de Vedoya draws attention to the concept of ultra-man (*ultra-hombre*). She points out that "we are assisting terrorism in its various appearances in the first third of the [21st] century" (Driollet, 2017, p. 39). Hence, she is concerned about the vulnerability of human existence. To resolve this, she offers us inspiration from Teilhard's writing in which he predicted the appearance of ultra-humanism. The science, technology, industry, aesthetics and moralities developed by men "lead to a deep dependence among men. Humanity, thanks to an assume devolution, would build a huge body working together. Human Progress means a huge human effort to achieve vision, technique and love between men" (Driollet, 2017, pp. 39-40). Human understanding and personalisation play an important role in this process. In Teilhard's ideas, there is a sharp distinction between person and individuality a person must be understood as an "*individual-*

in-relation”² (Plašienková & Bizoň, 2017, p. 68) to other people, to the world, to God. A similar view of the problem of becoming can be found in Martin Buber’s philosophy of dialogue.³ Slovak philosophers Zlatica Plašienková and Michal Bizoň therefore decided to compare the views of Teilhard and Buber. In summary, they state that it is exactly “the moment of the relation” what connects both philosophies of becoming a person (Plašienková & Bizoň, 2017, p. 68).

Studies by Polish theologians and philosophers Konrad Waloszczyk, Józef Kulisz, and Zbigniew Kubacki form Part II of this book. The common denominators in their work are the relationships between science and religion. In his examination of Teilhard’s main ideas on science and religion, Waloszczyk has identified some that could be disputed by experience from the field of human tendencies. Teilhard’s concept of human unity, for example, is based on his belief that the global trend would be to build small, isolated and autarkic communities. The current global trend, however, suggests the opposite. The human population is increasingly concentrated in big cities because people have effective communication tools. “The past decades have brought such a huge rise in the flow of information, ideas, goods, capital and people, that even Teilhard himself would be surprised if he could see it. I believe that the exceptionally strong globalisation trend which began after his death confirms his premonitions” (Waloszczyk, 2017, p. 93).

Józef Kulisz attempts to establish how Teilhard would deal with the question of religious choice. He compares various traditional religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, the old Chinese wisdom, Islam) with new forms⁴ (humanistic pantheisms, fascism and Marxism) and concludes that Teilhard de Chardin saw opportunity in the mysticism of the West. “For in this creative and often feverish West lies a new leaven of mysticism the fruit of Christianity and a new humanism” (Kulisz, 2017, p. 112). The non-Christian religions also play a significant role in the next chapter by Zbigniew Kubacki, in which he argues in favour of Teilhard’s idea of “axis” (*l’axe*) as “the idea of a central stream of the evolutionary process around which everything evolves” (Kubacki, 2017, p. 128). Teilhard understood Christianity as such an axis, important for the future of the convergence of religions. For him all the religions will come closer together through a parallel process of differentiation and unification “on the Christian axis” (*sur l’axe chrétien*) (Kubacki, 2017, p. 128).

No matter how contradictory it might seem, “for Teilhard there is a deep resonance” (Euvé, 2017, p. 143) between scientific research and mysticism. Readers of this book will find clarification of this idea in Part III. First French theologian, Jesuit François Euvé considers the Teilhardian approach to the research process “the goal is not made of individual truths put one beside the other. The goal is global, not the result of analysis but of synthesis” (Euvé, 2017, pp. 143-144). Slovaks Zlatica Plašienková and Július Krempaský then describe a mathematical and physical simulation of the evolutionary processes relating

² Italics in original.

³ Martin Buber (1878–1965) was a prominent Jewish philosopher and professor of comparative religion and social philosophy, and who is known for his philosophy of dialogue.

⁴ “These are completely new forms of religion, religions where there is no God or revelation. They bring forward the belief in an ideal that is worth dying for, or even, as Erich Fromm says, worth losing one’s mind for.” (Kulisz, 2017, p. 97)

to Teilhard's evolutionary theory, which they see as a source of inspiration for development of relationship between theology and sciences (Plašienková & Krempaský, 2017, p. 188).

Czech theologian František Mikeš has explored comparable (and sometimes identical) features of the lives and works of Teilhard de Chardin and Czech priest and bishop Felix Maria Davídek (1921–1988). Among other things, Davídek applied many of Teilhard's fundamental ideas to the curricula of the clandestine theological faculty he founded in communist Czechoslovakia (Mikeš, 2017, p. 157).

Finally Part IV contains insights into the current application of evolutionary theories especially regarding the place of man in nature and the biosphere as a whole. Slovak philosopher of science Miroslav Karaba characterizes four types of relationship between science and religion conflictual, independent, dialogical and integratory in the context of Neo-Darwinism as a modern evolution theory (Karaba, 2017, p. 205). Argentinian philosopher and theologian Lucio Florio reminds us that the growing “environmental crisis requires a reformulation of epistemology” (Florio, 2017, p. 250), because of the situation regarding the legitimacy of natural science and the rigorousness of human science. In this field, he sees the space for such a type of consideration, which he calls “a strong thoughts” (*un pensamiento fuerte*) (Florio, 2017, p. 250).

The Slovak interdisciplinary team Jozef Masarik, a nuclear physicist; Zlatica Plašienková; a philosophical anthropologist and Kristína Kmeťová, a young philosopher introduced a philosophical and anthropological set of views on the issue of man's home. First they consider the universe to be the “spatially defined home of man”, and secondly evolution to be the “home of man defined in terms of time” (Masarik, Plašienková, & Kmeťová, 2017, p. 224). Instead of a conclusion, they say “something about the ‘end’ of the universe. When we admit that the evolution of the universe, as Teilhard said, ‘has its God’, then we can assume it must have a certain goal. If this goal is not attained, then God would fail. But if God's goal is reached, any further development of the universe loses its meaning. After all, the universe, according to current scientific knowledge, will eventually come to an end” (Masarik, Plašienková, & Kmeťová, 2017, p. 244).

Today's world is overcrowded (but not as yet saturated) with reasoning and findings, arguments, rules, schemes, and principles of knowledge on how to classify and where to place anything in the natural, social, and human sciences. The infinitesimal rationalisation of modern society as the legacy of the Enlightenment has trained us to favour science over mysticism or religion, proof over belief and to distinguish facts and values in terms of objectivity and the progress of humanity. Nevertheless, the beginning of the 21st century is full of hard-to-solve problems that result from this rationalisation. That is why the work of Teilhard de Chardin may still yet be inspiration for the Academy. It combines religion, spirituality, and science in a complex harmonious whole. Teilhard's planetisation of mankind and the noosphere seem too similar to globalisation and the anthroposphere and technosphere to prevent us from exploring them together in their synthetic nature. In this regard, *Evolution Science Religion: Teilhard de Chardin's Inspirations in the Contemporary World* should become a must-read, not only for Teilhardians but for anyone interested in the specifics of globalisation or in general.

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