**Politics, Teilhard, and the world's future**

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If politics and religion are concerned with human life, and science gives us new insights on life — how we emerge, what we are made of — would it not make sense to renew the systems of politics and religion periodically based on the insights of science? After all, if scientific paradigms change as a result of new discoveries, why not the paradigms of religion and politics, as well?

The person who saw clearly a way forward into a life-giving future in a world of change was the Jesuit scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. I do not know if any of the presidential candidates know the writings of Teilhard, but it would be worthwhile to send them Teilhard's book *Activation of Energy*, where the Jesuit outlined principles of human evolution in view of the modern world.

Teilhard did not have a narrow view of evolution based on Darwinian principles of natural selection or survival of the fittest; rather, for him, evolution is the dynamic process of emerging consciousness. It pertains to every level of life; it is a dimension of all aspects of life, including politics. On the most fundamental level, evolution reflects the fact that life changes, new things happen and, given a sufficient amount of time, new forms will appear; hence, there are no fixed forms. Rather, all systems of life are in the process of formation, and thus, openness to the environment is key to change. To live with an evolutionary spirit, Erich Jantsch once wrote, is to let go when the right time comes and to engage in new structures of relationship.

We live in an evolving, unfinished universe, which means the one thing we all share is the future. In Teilhard's view, we must co-create the future together. He saw that computer technology would be our most significant evolver in the modern age. The rise of the internet has given way to Google Earth; mass communication, air travel, space travel, and artificial intelligence have all rapidly altered the map of human consciousness in such a radical way that there is no turning back. According to Moore's law, which states that computing power is doubling every two years, evolution is speeding up. As a result, we are evolving at an exponential rate. Not only will we not return to any former halcyon days, but we are heading for greater convergence and complexification of consciousness, whether we want to or not. The question is not "Can we go back?" but "What are we evolving into?"

In his own day, Teilhard looked around the world and realized that the population cannot sustain unlimited growth. Nor can we continue to spread the human community around the globe; we have maxed out the available space on Earth to set up home. Now we face the brick wall of compression because we have a world of limited supplies.

Teilhard indicated that we must evolve by unifying or suffer the pain of annihilation. As he wrote in his *The Phenomenon of Man*: "The success of humanity's evolution will not be determined by 'survival of the fittest' but by our own capacity to converge and unify." He foresaw that something like the Internet could stimulate the next phase of evolution by linking humanity around the globe, mind to mind and heart to heart, if we use it for this aim. In some ways, it is already doing so. However, we cannot gather ourselves on this new level of mind — what he called the noosphere — unless we have political structures and public policies that support this new phase of global life.

The present political climate is zapping our energies and instilling a new level of fear, just the opposite of what Teilhard saw we needed: a zest for life and a grand option for the future. In his words: "A higher socialization of humankind can only be brought about if people have the will and energy to work for it, if they deeply believe in the positive value of the future." Otherwise, he said, we are a species doomed to extinction.

We are evolving into a new world community, a new consciousness that includes religious and ethnic pluralism and a global economy; we are participants in a global community. We need political structures that realize a shared species on a shared Earth. We are not kings and queens ruling the world; we are part of an indivisible whole. The sooner we can develop new political structures that support the evolution of global humanity, the more zest for life we will have, a zest kindling new energy to create a more unified world.

***Editor's note*:** *This version clarifies that Teilhard de Chardin foresaw a connecting force like the Internet -- he died in 1955 before it came into widespread use.*