

# An Archetypal Glimpse into Teilhard's Evolutionary Vision

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Science and religion have been in an antagonistic battle of refutation since the dawn of modernity. Few have sought to reconcile them, and many would call it futile even to try. However, the Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin brought a revolutionary way of thinking to the two world views that provides a vision of their harmonious relationship. Writing in the first half of the twentieth century, Teilhard, who had a scientific background in paleontology, sought to express the evolution of the cosmos as a divine teleological journey culminating, thus far, in the human being. Teilhard believed the unique self-reflective quality of the human, and the human capacity for Christian love, would ultimately lead to a divine convergence of the human community upon what he called the Omega Point, or the Cosmic Christ.

Throughout his life Teilhard had an immense sense of hope and optimism for the future, in spite of the tremendous suffering he witnessed during his life, especially as a stretcher-bearer in World War I. His ideas on the psychic capacity or interiority of all forms of matter have provided the seeds for subsequent thinkers, such as Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, and Mary Evelyn Tucker. Their work addresses the inherent subjectivity of the cosmos, and the implications of Teilhard's cosmology for creating a confluent relationship between humanity and the Earth community. In his lifetime, Teilhard's innovative thoughts were resisted by the religious and scientific communities alike, yet, in retrospect, he is truly emerging as a visionary thinker far ahead of his time.

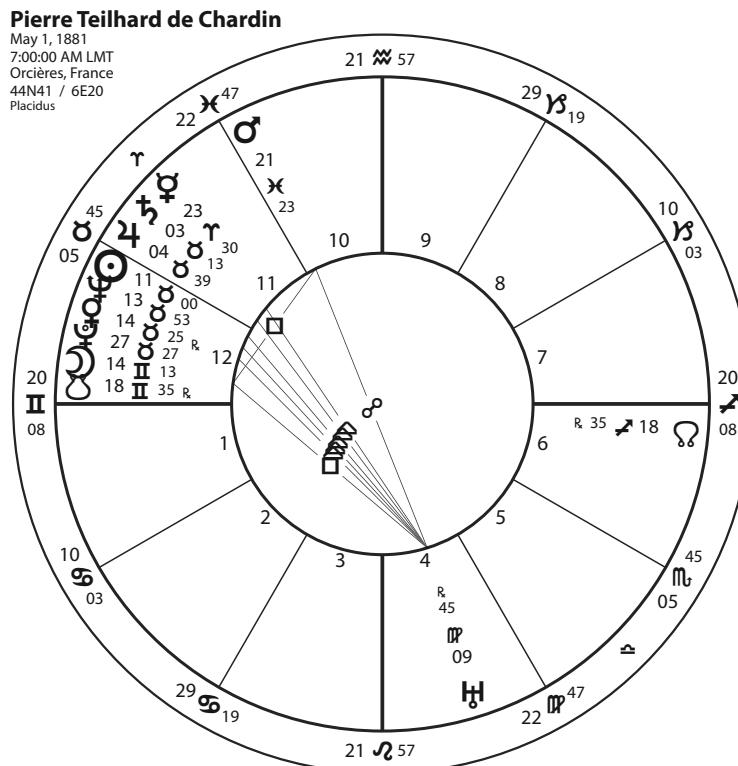
Archetypal astrology provides a unique entry point into Teilhard's ideas, as one can gain deep insight by looking at the positions of the planets when he was born and comparing their associated archetypal character with the ideas he developed over the course of his career. The birth chart is so rich and multivalent in its symbolism that such an inquiry cannot be exhaustive, nor can it do full justice to the brilliance and complexity of his work. However, key examples from some of Teilhard's essays in *The Activation of Energy* and *The Heart of Matter*, as well as his masterwork *The Human Phenomenon*, can illustrate how the planetary archetypes permeate his life work.<sup>1</sup>

Teilhard was born May 1, 1881 in Sarcenat, France, with a stellium of seven planets in his natal chart (see figure 1). In sequence, Mercury, Saturn, Jupiter, Sun, Neptune, Venus, and Pluto are all within the orb of archetypal influence to each other. It is the nature of a stellium, which is a conjunction of three or more planets, that the planets most distant from each other within the stellium may not be within the regular orb of influence, 10°–12°, of a conjunction with each other. However, the archetypal fields associated with the planets situated between them activate the archetypal energies associated with the further planets and pull them into a mutually stimulating relationship. In Teilhard's chart, the planet Uranus is also in a 120° trine alignment to this stellium, in closest aspect to Teilhard's Sun, Neptune, and Venus. Midpoints, which are the axis points calculated between two planets on the circle of the birth chart, are also archetypally operative in Teilhard's chart, as can be seen in his Sun-Mercury-Pluto combination.

Teilhard was born with the Sun at the mathematical midpoint between Mercury and Pluto. The archetypal combination of Mercury and Pluto can often be observed in someone who is a deep thinker, who strives to look beneath the surface of reality. This trait is clearly evident in Teilhard, who delved into the core of things with an investigative passion, searching for the psychic interior of matter. Mercury relates to seeing and thinking, while Pluto relates to what lies beneath the surface. Teilhard argues that consciousness was present in matter from the beginning. During the course of evolution, consciousness and matter complexified in concert with one another, leading to the self-reflexive consciousness present in human beings. In the opening of *The Human Phenomenon*, Teilhard persuades his reader to perceive differently, to see deeper into the nature of the world. He

writes that “the history of the living world can be reduced to the elaboration of ever more perfect eyes at the heart of a cosmos where it is always possible to discern more.”<sup>2</sup> He also focuses on cultivating new senses to aid in this seeing, including “the sense of spatial immensity,” “the sense of depth,” and “the sense . . . of the organic,” all of which relate to the Plutonic character of mass, depth, and primordial biology.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1 **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s Birth Chart**



To get a deeper understanding of the components of Teilhard’s stellium, it may be helpful to first look at the conjunctions in discrete combinations. The first two planets in the stellium are Mercury conjunct Saturn. While the Mercury-Pluto archetypal complex is expressed in the depth of Teilhard’s writing, the Mercury-Saturn combination can be seen in its careful, disciplined organization. Every chapter is divided and subdivided into numbered or lettered headings, his arguments are laid

out with bullet-point precision, and each of his sentences is structured according to a distinct patterning. He takes the immensity and complexity of the universe and distills it into clearly articulated, logical arguments. As an example of the multivalence of the planetary expressions, Teilhard's Mercury-Saturn complex also correlates to the posthumous publication of his work. Saturn relates to both negation and death; Teilhard's religious superiors denied him the publication of his work until after he passed away.

The part of Teilhard's chart that is arguably most central to his philosophy is the triple conjunction in his stellium of Neptune, Venus, and Pluto. Neptune correlates to the transcendent, spirituality, religion, and the divine; the archetype of Venus encompasses love, beauty, and harmony; and Pluto archetypally relates to biological evolutionary drive and transformation. The central purpose of Teilhard's work was to marry biological evolution and Christian spirituality. Neptune, Venus, and Pluto are also conjunct his Sun, which relates to the impulse to illuminate and radiate; this aspect can be seen in how these ideas shine forth as the primary focus of his writings. The trine of these planets to Uranus, which relates to innovative, rebellious brilliance, among other things, can be seen in his presentation of both a new science and a new spirituality.<sup>4</sup> He is a rebel against both scientific and Christian orthodoxy.

Teilhard was a Jesuit priest, devoted to a life-long practice of the Christian faith, which is one of the expressions of his Sun-Neptune conjunction. According to his philosophy, the telos of the universe is towards unity, a convergence upon the Omega Point, characterized by Neptune's quality of oneness. He writes in *The Human Phenomenon*, "To be more is to be more united—and this sums up and is the very conclusion of the work to follow."<sup>5</sup> The impulse "to be" is represented by the solar principle, as is the desire to be central and integrated; meanwhile Neptune unites that which has been divided and differentiated because it can dissolve the boundaries of distinction.

Teilhard's central focus on the human in his work is clearly reflective of Uranus trine his Sun. He expresses the Promethean character of Uranus giving the fire of consciousness to humanity, in his emphasis on the exceptional self-reflexive quality of human thought. Sun-Uranus can correlate to the unique, individual human personality that must, in Teilhard's view, be cultivated for the ultimate spiritual convergence at the

Omega Point. This theme is suggested not only by Teilhard's Sun-trine-Uranus, but also by the presence of Neptune in the aspect, which is in a 2° conjunction with Teilhard's Sun. Neptune, which symbolizes spirituality and transcendence, as well as unity, correlates to the convergence on Omega.

Through his study of evolution, Teilhard was in the process of discovering and developing a new form of mystical Christian spirituality. He wrote in his essay "The Stuff of the Universe," that "Far from being shaken in my faith by such a revolution, it is with irrepressible hope that I welcome the inevitable rise of this new mysticism and anticipate its equally inevitable triumph."<sup>6</sup> His words express the Uranus-trine-Neptune complex in his natal chart, with the Uranus archetype bringing a new revolution to the Neptunian realm of mysticism.

Many of the qualities of Teilhard's new mysticism are archetypally conveyed by the rich, dynamic conjunction of the two outermost planets, Neptune and Pluto. He writes of the need for "a Christ who can be and is commensurate with the universe, in other words a God—the God we look for—of evolution."<sup>7</sup> He greatly fleshes out this concept of an evolutionary God in his essay "The Zest for Living," in which he describes "zest" as "nothing less than the *energy of universal evolution*, which . . . wells up in what is most primitive . . . in each one of us."<sup>8</sup> For Teilhard, it is the human responsibility to cultivate this primordial zest, or energy, through the knowledge of religion. The Plutonic imagery is evident in his descriptions of evolution and primitive energy, as well as the zest for living itself, which manifest in the realm of Neptunian religion or spirituality. "A zest for living, *the zest for living . . .* would appear to be the fundamental driving force which impels and directs the universe along its main axis of complexity-consciousness."<sup>9</sup> The "zest for living" and the "fundamental driving force" relate archetypally to Pluto, while "consciousness," in this context, is reflective of the Neptune archetype in combination with the Sun.

Faith is a motivating force in the zest for living, but for Teilhard humanity needs what is "no longer simply a religion of individuals and of heaven, but a religion of mankind and of the earth."<sup>10</sup> In the essay "From Cosmos to Cosmogenesis," Teilhard redefines and expands his conception of God, describing "the primordial transcendence of this new *evolutive God*," "a God of cosmogenesis—that is a creator of the

‘animating’ type.”<sup>11</sup> Not only is the Neptunian-Plutonic imagery clear in the description of primordial (Pluto) transcendence (Neptune) and a God (Neptune) of evolution (Pluto), but the archetypal nature of the trine to Uranus comes through in the characterization of God as animator, the bringer of the spark of life.

In the conclusion of “The Zest for Living,” Teilhard pulls both Venusian and Uranian themes into his evolutionary mysticism, by writing of “the vital charge of the world . . . in its higher, immediate, and most heightened form—love, as an effect of ‘grace’ and ‘revelation’.”<sup>12</sup> Uranus relates to the “vital charge” and awakening of “revelation,” and Venus relates to love and grace, with grace particularly reflective of the archetypal combination of Venus with Neptune. The final paragraph bears the themes of Pluto, Neptune, Uranus, Venus, Mercury, and even the Sun: “The zest for life: the central and favoured ligament, indeed, in which can be seen, within the economy of a supremely organic universe, a supremely intimate bond between mysticism, research, and biology.”<sup>13</sup> The “organic universe,” the “zest for life,” and biology relate to Pluto, mysticism to Neptune, new research to both Uranus and Mercury, the “supremely intimate bond” and even the word “favoured” to Venus, and the “central ligament” reflects the Sun as the archetype associated with the center.

A specific look at Venus in conjunction with each of the two outermost planets illustrates Teilhard’s thinking further. Archetypally, the Venus-Pluto aspect comes through in his descriptions of “an *amorized* universe,” and also “a cosmogenesis of union in which everything, by structure, became inflexibly lovable and loving.”<sup>14</sup> Teilhard sees the ultimate harmony of physical and biological evolution; his view of the cosmos as a teleological cosmogenesis, a universe in an evolutionary process, bears the mark of the Pluto archetype, while the amorization and harmony reflect Venus.

Teilhard’s Venus-Neptune conjunction shines archetypally in his sense of Christian love. The convergence of humanity and the noosphere upon the Omega Point is ultimately achieved through a universal love, a loving of human center to human center, carried out by a love of the Cosmic Christ. “In other words, what we have to do is to love one another—because love is equally by definition the name we give to ‘intercentric’ actions,” as Teilhard describes in “The Atomism of Spirit.”<sup>15</sup> He continues: “The fact that the infinite and the intangible can be lovable,

that the human heart can beat in true charity for its neighbor seems simply to be impossible,” but Teilhard posits that such universal love between all humans is possible through spiritual convergence on the Omega Point through a love of the Cosmic Christ.<sup>16</sup> If all the love of humanity unites through each individual coming into loving relationship with Christ, then that love is also extending through Christ back to each individual. Teilhard describes the need to transcend personal love relationships, represented by Venus, so they can be dissolved, spiritualized, and universalized by Neptune. When this universal love is achieved humanity has reached the Omega Point.

The attainment of Omega, the ultimate convergence of humanity in the noosphere, is the ultimate moment of both transcendent unification but also bears an “external resemblance to a death” or a “terminal paroxysm” of the previous human situation.<sup>17</sup> As part of his seven-planet stellium, Teilhard has a 10° conjunction of Saturn and Neptune, which is reflected in the above observations. The Omega Point is a conjoining of Saturnian material reality with spiritual transcendence, reached at the moment of Earth’s termination. Omega is “to unify the real” in “the concentration on itself of what we call ‘consciousness’ or ‘spirit’,” Teilhard writes in “The Activation of Human Energy.”<sup>18</sup>

At a young age Teilhard sought the divine in what was incorruptible, starting with iron, moving on to geology, and finally to the realm of spirit. What he desired was something of “*Consistence*: that has undoubtedly been for me the fundamental attribute of Being.”<sup>19</sup> His Saturn-Neptune complex also clearly comes through in his statement: “The truth is that even at the peak of my spiritual trajectory I was never to feel at home unless immersed in an Ocean of Matter.”<sup>20</sup> Saturn relates to the hard, the consistent, and the material, while Neptune comes through in the realm of spirit, consciousness, and oceanic imagery. Another illustration of his Saturn-Neptune can be seen when he writes “Matter was the matrix of Consciousness; and, wherever we looked, Consciousness, born of Matter, was always advancing towards some Ultra-Human.”<sup>21</sup>

Teilhard’s vision of the evolutive drive toward complexity-consciousness also carries the mark of the Saturn-Neptune-Pluto archetypal combination, with Saturn bearing the details of complexity and Neptune the realm of consciousness, while Pluto is related to the evolution and transformation inherent in this process. The ultimate convergence upon

Omega, which preserves the individual personality within the transcendent unity, indicates Saturnian differentiation within Neptunian oneness. Teilhard's Sun-Neptune complex can also be seen here, as the Sun relates to the individual personality. In his personal life, Teilhard's dedication to his conservative Roman Catholic faith through every hardship, until his death, can also be associated with the qualities of Saturn-Neptune.

In the essay "A Clarification: Reflections on Two Converse Forms of Spirit," Teilhard compares two approaches to unity, one of expansive Jupiterian quality, the other of Saturnian concentration. This essay is one example of Teilhard's Jupiter-Saturn conjunction, which also conjoins his Sun-Neptune. He describes two paths to unity: "The one involves relaxation and expansion, the other tension and centration."<sup>22</sup> Conclusively, Teilhard favors the way of tension and centration (Saturn), describing the other method as belonging to "youthful mankind" who would "try immediately to embrace all" when striving for unification with the divine.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, despite his rejection of this path, it is still reflective of his aspect of Jupiter trine Uranus, which correlates to youthfulness and expansion of perspectives. Additionally, the Jupiter-trine-Uranus can be seen in Teilhard's overall sense of cosmic wonder, in his abundance of new ideas, and the expansive new horizons which are constantly opening up to him.

Although he lived through a deeply transformative and disruptive time, surviving two world wars, and witnessing immense suffering as a stretcher-bearer in World War I, Teilhard had an overwhelming optimism concerning the future of humankind. In "The Moment of Choice," an essay on World War II, Teilhard still sees such devastation in service of ultimate good: "The height of a peak is a measure of the depths of the abysses it overtops."<sup>24</sup> He sees the way forward as "the road of comradeship and brotherhood—and that is as true of nations as it is of individuals."<sup>25</sup> The optimism of his Sun-Jupiter conjunction is colored by the Venusian qualities of relationship and love, as the planet Venus is also part of his stellium. Teilhard's sense of hope in regards to the future is directly related to his faith in technology, which is reflective of his Sun-Jupiter trine Uranus, describing his progressive age as "not an industrial age but rather an age of research."<sup>26</sup> Humanity's innovative, technological genius, associated with Uranus, is key to the ultimate convergence of the noosphere upon the Omega Point.

Although it is primarily connected with his Saturn-Neptune conjunction, Teilhard's profound understanding of suffering is, in many ways, reflective of his entire birth chart. A single sentence he wrote in "The Spiritual Energy of Suffering" shines with each of the planetary archetypes conjoined in his stellium: "The astounding Christian revelation of suffering . . . can be transformed into an expression of love and a principle of union."<sup>27</sup> The "astounding Christian revelation" relates to a Jupiter-Uranus awakening of the Neptunian spiritual realm, while suffering relates deeply to the Saturn-Neptune complex. The positive transformation of the suffering reflects Jupiter and Pluto, while the expression of love is both Mercurial and Venusian, and the principle of union is that of Neptune.

Neptune and Pluto, as the slowest moving planets in our solar system for which astrologers have adequate research, correlations, and consensus on their meanings, only conjoin approximately once every 493 years. Their conjunction is therefore the rarest of all two-planet world transits. These conjunctions have marked the beginning of each major epoch for the last three millennia of recorded human history. Teilhard was born in 1881, at the beginning of the most recent Neptune-Pluto conjunction. A consistent pattern has been observed in astrological correlations that when a new, innovative, or transformative idea, invention, or creation is born it is reflected in the current transits but may not yet impact the current paradigm and thus remains relatively hidden. However, it appears that while the idea has been seeded under a certain transit it will often come to full fruition under a subsequent transit of the same planets. In Teilhard's case, his monumental philosophy, which so clearly reflects his natal chart, may indeed be such a seeding. His dream of humanity's convergence on the Omega Point may someday blossom fully under a future conjoining of the spiritually transformative planetary archetypes Neptune and Pluto.

## Notes

1. The interpretations of the planetary archetypes put forth in this essay come from a long astrological tradition, but are primarily grounded in the work of Richard Tarnas, Robert Hand, and Sue Tompkins, courses presented at the California Institute of Integral Studies, lectures from the Institute of Archetypal Cosmology, and from my own experience and practice.
2. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Human Phenomenon*, trans. Sarah Appleton-Weber (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), 3.
3. Teilhard, *Human Phenomenon*, 5.
4. The trine is called a “soft” aspect and tends to have a more confluent, flowing, harmonious quality in comparison to the “hard” or “dynamic” aspects of the conjunction, opposition, and square. The 60° sextile is also considered a soft aspect.
5. Teilhard, *Human Phenomenon*, 3.
6. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Activation of Energy: Enlightening Reflections on Spiritual Energy*, trans. René Hague (London: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd., 1978), 383.
7. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 383.
8. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 231–232.
9. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 235.
10. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 240.
11. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 262.
12. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 242.
13. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 242.
14. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 266.
15. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 47.
16. Teilhard, *Human Phenomenon*, 212.
17. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 262.
18. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 393.
19. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Heart of Matter: The Important Spiritual Autobiography of One of the World's Greatest Thinkers*, trans. René Hague (London: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd., 1978), 18.
20. Teilhard, *Heart of Matter*, 20.
21. Teilhard, *Heart of Matter*, 45.
22. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 219.
23. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 220.
24. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 14.
25. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 17.
26. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 354.
27. Teilhard, *Activation of Energy*, 248.

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