

**“The Teilhard Review — A Journal Bridging Science and Religion”**  
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Coinciding with the preceding book review, [note: other books were reviewed in this British publication] the arrival of this book from America also pursues the quest for “ultimate explanations”. This approach however, is through the development of philosophy, culminating in Teilhard de Chardin. I am going to straight away nail my colours to the mast, and say that I feel this book provides what we all need so much at the present moment, namely, an advanced primer to Teilhard’s thought. Provenzano, who works at the California Institute of Technology, focuses his book on getting philosophy to measure up to providing answers to the “Big Questions”—What is it all about? How should we live? The criteria that he uses to examine each philosopher’s stance are:

1. A philosophy should rest on a fundamental insight that is intuitively pleasing.
2. A philosophy should be internally consistent.
3. It should not contradict the findings of modern science.
4. It should reinforce the notion of the importance of the individual person.

With these criteria in mind, he commences to chart the evolutionary development of philosophy from Thales in the seventh century B.C. to Aquinas, Kant, Darwin, Kierkegaard, and Ayer in the twentieth. All in all, he examines thirty three major philosophers en route. But, he leaves the “piece de resistance” to the last—Teilhard de Chardin who he maintains, provides a breakthrough in relating philosophy to the “Big Questions”. He provides an immediately understandable portrayal of the key concepts of Teilhard’s thought and of its implications. This summary is without doubt the clearest that I have read on Teilhard. He then continues in truly evolutionary manner, to develop those concepts a little further into what he calls, The Philosophy of Conscious Energy. This he bases on four assumptions:

1. The Law of Consciousness and Complexity is the most fundamental law in the universe.
2. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the universe except energy, in one form or another.
3. The transformation of energy from one form to another, sometimes results in differences so great that the two forms are actually two distinct states of energy. This transformation must be thought of as a change of state.
4. All “laws” are potentially state dependent as a consequence.

From here he moves out to chart his philosophical system as moving through four states of evolutionary development—from Radiation to Matter, to Conscious Energy to Self-Conscious

Energy. He applies his criteria (see above) to his own philosophical thought and makes therefore very clear links with everyday living. This ranges from putting the social crimes current in our lives such as drugs, into an explanatory context of consciousness–(because society has reached a state of higher consciousness, some wish to reduce consciousness and this is evil at a higher state)–to understanding the reason for evil; to explaining the drive for scientific research; to understanding God’s “composition”; to the immortality of the soul. In short, a mind blowing book, yet very practical in its charting of implications, an extremely rare combination.

Reviewer: Tom Baxter, editor