

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON TEILHARD PUBLICATIONS

by *Nicole Schmitz-Moormann*

Editor's Note. In this unique glimpse into scholarship, Nicole Schmitz-Moormann, transcriber and translator of the journals of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, allows the reader to "look over her shoulder" as she deciphers the multilingual, idiosyncratic notes of an erudite thinker. Although the journals have been her primary focus, Nicole Schmitz-Moormann also provides important information about the theological/philosophical work and the scientific writings, placing them in the context of Teilhard's intellectual and spiritual journey.

Abstract. Teilhard's texts were published in two complementary publications, the more philosophical-theological ones in the *Oeuvres* (OV), the scientific ones in the *L'Oeuvre Scientifique* (OS).¹ His letters were published in a nonsystematic way. The publication of the *Oeuvres* presented thematic compilations. The papers had their own production history, creating different versions. Scientific texts were published by Teilhard in widely dispersed journals and have been collected into *L'Oeuvre Scientifique*. The scientific status of Teilhard is related to his positions in the scientific world and the continued use of his publications. The influences causing different versions of theological and philosophical papers are analyzed. The present accessibility of the diaries and their importance for a full understanding of Teilhard is elaborated.

Keywords: diary; history of publications; metaphysics; *Oeuvres*; science; scientist; Pierre Teilhard de Chardin; theology.

COLLECTED RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS: *OEUVRES*

In 1955, Teilhard's *Le phénomène humain* (*The Phenomenon of Man*) (PM[d]) was edited by Jeanne Mortier as the first volume of a

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collection of thirteen, collectively known as the *Oeuvres*. The book was widely distributed and has been translated into all major languages. Twelve volumes followed between 1955 and 1976. For each volume, Mortier made a selection from among the texts. Often, but not always, she placed those covering identical themes in chronological order and gave them a supertitle. For example, volume 3, *La Vision du Passé* (*The Vision of the Past*) (VP), contains essays written from 1921 to 1955, while early versions of and other texts about *Le phénomène humain* (1928, 1930, 1948, 1954) have been published in different volumes (vols. 9, 3, 13, and 13, respectively) by Editions du Seuil, Paris.

The texts published in the *Oeuvres* are mostly philosophical-theological writings. Originally, Teilhard wrote his papers on loose-leaf paper, which he sent from China or the United States to a friend in France who would mimeograph and then distribute them to a closed circle of friends and colleagues. Especially significant were Simone Bégouën, who worked for him during the China years, and Jeanne Mortier, who helped him beginning in the early forties.

Many of the papers exist in several versions. Some differences are in detail, but in other cases an entire text was revised one or many times by Teilhard. One of the most significant examples is *Milieu Divin* (1927) (*The Divine Milieu*) (DM), five versions of which are known. In order to publish the work, a choice of one version among the others was made, or different versions were combined, or Mortier arranged the drafts into a readable text (for example, *Le Cœur de la Matière* (1950) [*The Heart of Matter*] [HM]; *Le Christique* (1955) [*The Christic*] [CH]). The need for a critical edition for further scholarly studies is evident.

Why do different finished versions of the same paper exist? As a Roman Catholic priest and a Jesuit, Teilhard had to ask his superiors and Rome for permission to publish texts that were not strictly scientific. Many times before submitting some philosophical-theological writings to obtain the *Nihil Obstat* (“nothing stands in the way”—i.e., permission to publish), he sent them to fellow Jesuits and a few close friends outside this order, asking for their opinions, advice, and suggestions. Sometimes a paper was kept by the censors for long time. When their negative answer arrived (and he regularly got negative replies), Teilhard reworked the manuscript and proposed it for a second or third time. On this point, Teilhard’s correspondence with P. Leroy, S.J.; P. de Lubac, S.J., P. d’Ouinç, S.J.; P. Valensin, S.J.; Abbé Breuil; Monsignor B. de Solages; and other colleagues; correspondence with relatives and friends; as well as entries in his diaries are revealing and bear testimony. In the end he often insisted that a paper was strictly scientific and not religious,

and that nobody had the right to interfere with the text of the publication.

COLLECTED SCIENTIFIC WORKS: *L'OEUVRE SCIENTIFIQUE*

With few exceptions, the only texts Teilhard himself ever published were his scientific memoranda, reports, and notes, as well as prefaces on scientific works. Teilhard's scientific writings, originally published in different reviews and in different countries, have been collected in eleven volumes. Writings Teilhard had ready for publication have been included, except those already published with philosophical and theological texts. They appear in chronological order in their original version, in either French or English. Edited by Karl and Nicole Schmitz-Moormann, the collection was published in 1971 by Walter Verlag, Olten, Germany.

Some polemicists still doubt the value of Teilhard's contribution to science during his lifetime and his impact on the sciences today. Yet on the first point one need only look at his career, at his honors and appointments: Docteur es-Sciences, 1922; president of the society of geology of France, 1922-23; professor of geology at Institut Catholique of Paris, 1922-28; scientific adviser to the Geological Survey of China beginning in 1929; corresponding member of Nanking National Research Institute; representative of the Geological Service of China during the 1931-32 "Yellow Expedition"; member of the Academia Sinica beginning in 1932. In 1934, after Davidson Black's death, the Rockefeller Foundation named him acting head of the laboratory, Peking Union Medical College. In 1938 he became the director of the Geological Laboratory for the Study of Human Origins at the Institute of Human Paleontology in Paris. Teilhard was director of research at the National Center for Scientific Research (Paris) beginning in 1947; Officier de la Legion d'Honneur, 1947; corresponding member of the Institut de France (section Academie des Sciences) beginning in 1947; elected non-resident member of the Institut de France, 1950; and adviser to the Viking Fund (later Wenner Gren Foundation), New York City.

On the second point, one need know of only a few of the research projects Teilhard started that have been carried on by paleontologists. In 1967, Professor Jean Piveteau wrote, "Thanks to Teilhard, since 1920 French paleontology in the field of mammals has recovered a most honorable place." This statement is still valid today. In 1991, while visiting with Professor Chia Lan Po, director of the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology at Beijing, Karl and Nicole Schmitz-Moormann saw Teilhard and

Pierre Leroy's *Chinese Fossil Mammals* (1942) being used as a basic reference work. According to Chinese paleontologists, it remains the most important study on mammals in the past sixty years. His study *Les carnassiers des phosphorites du quercy* (1914–15) (CPQ) is still used at Université de Montpellier (France) by Professor Thaler and his associates.

As Karl Schmitz-Moormann wrote in the introduction to *L'Oeuvre Scientifique*, any systematic study in Teilhardian thinking requires the knowledge of the *fundamentum in re*, of the "reality" that was his everyday work, the soil where his thoughts took root. One can no more pretend to understand the philosophical thinking of Teilhard without knowing his work in natural science than one could pretend to understand Aristotle's *Metaphysics* without having read his *Physics*.

Nor can the study of Teilhard's own evolution—that is, the historical study of his thinking—be separated from his natural science work. The reciprocal influences of science and philosophy can be traced throughout his writings. Thus, you must have a complete picture of Teilhard's personality before undertaking a specialized study of Teilhard as a theologian, philosopher, mystic, or scientist.

LETTERS

Teilhard's letters to his family, relatives, friends, and colleagues illuminate our understanding of the man, and this personal knowledge, in turn, provides a context for his work. The letters, available in many publications, will not be discussed in detail here.

JOURNALS

For most of his life Teilhard kept a journal, which eventually filled dozens of notebooks. He called his journals "Notes et Esquisses" ("Notes and Sketches"), handwritten French school copybooks known as *cahiers*, most of which were 17 by 22.5 centimeters (6.8 by 8.8 inches). They follow in a strict temporal sequence, with a few exceptions. For example, from 25 March 1917 to 10 July 1917, Teilhard did not make any entries. On 10 July 1917, he wrote, "Nothing written for four months, since the copybook has been resting in a trunk while the regiment was at Chemins des Dames."² Similarly, there were no entries between 17 July 1918, and 8 September 1918, nor between 30 May 1947, and 30 July 1947: on 1 June 1947, Teilhard had had a heart attack; he was able to resume his diary only two months later.

A more critical gap concerns the copybooks that Teilhard kept in China between July 1925 and July 1944 and left behind when he

was hastily evacuated during a period of political upheaval. They have yet to be located.

Accordingly, Teilhard's journals may be divided into three main periods: pre-1925, the China years, and post-1944.

26 August 1915–17 July 1925. Before leaving for China in 1925, Teilhard left his diaries with his cousin Marguerite Teilhard-Chambon. He never asked for them back. In the fifties, Teilhard-Chambon loaned them for the work of Monsignor B. de Solages at Toulouse. In 1966, Alice Teilhard-Chambon asked Karl and Nicole Schmitz-Moormann to bring Teilhard's cahiers back to Paris. Joseph Teilhard de Chardin gave them the authorization to publish the texts.

The entire original French text of the diaries kept during the period of World War I has been published as *Journal I, 1915–1919* (JN), edited by Karl and Nicole Schmitz-Moormann (Paris: Fayard, 1975). In addition, a German translation of the diaries 1915 through 1922 has been published, *Tagebücher 1–3*, also edited by Karl and Nicole Schmitz-Moormann (Olten, Switzerland: Walter Verlag, 1971).

Following is a list of the nine cahiers that Teilhard kept during the period 26 August 1915 through 17 July 1925.

- Cahier I. 26 August 1915 (Les Cinq-Chemins de Quaedypre, Nord) to 22 September 1916. Seventy-five written pages. On the cover: "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, caporal brancardier, 4 mixte tirailleurs zouaves, 1 compagnie."
- Cahier II. 5 October 1916 (Nant-le-Grand, Meuse) to 2 December 1916. Twenty written pages. On the cover: "Teilhard de Chardin, caporal brancardier, 4 mixte T. Z., 1 C, S. P. 131."
- Cahier III. 2 December 1916 (Foucheres pres Bar-le-Duc) to 10 November 1917. Forty-eight written pages. On the cover: "Teilhard de Chardin, caporal brancardier, 4 mixte T. Z., 1 C, S. P. 131."
- Cahier IV. 6 December 1917 (Champigneul, Marne) to 13 May 1918. Sixty-six written pages.
- Cahier V. 14 May 1918 (Pontoise-les-Noyon) to 4 January 1919. Sixty-one written pages. The first five pages, from 14 May 1918 to 7 July 1918, are on looseleaf paper. On the cover: "Teilhard, 4 mixte tirailleurs-zouaves. C.H.R.S.P. 131."
- Cahier VI. 5 January 1919 (Strasbourg) to 21 May 1919. Sixty-four written pages.
- Cahier VII. 20 May 1919 (Paris) to 25 February 1920. Seventy-two written pages.

- Cahier VIII. 28 February 1920 (Paris) to 26 February 1922. One hundred and thirteen written pages.
- Cahier IX. 12 March 1922 (Paris) to 17 July 1925. Ninety-nine written pages.

July 1925–July (?) 1944. From late August 1939, after World War II began, to March 1946, Teilhard remained in semi-isolation in the Peking (now Beijing) area. At the end of the war, his Jesuit superiors asked him many times to return to France, but he had no opportunity to leave. In a letter to Lucile Swan he wrote: “Dec. 13 1945. . . . Communications by boat continue to be very difficult; flying is expensive, not mentioning the fact that I would like to arrive in Paris with more than 50 pounds of luggage” (LTS, 171). Then in March 1946 an American general arranged a seat for him on a small plane. It deposited him, with little baggage, in Shanghai, where he “decided to jump on a large British repatriation boat.” Unfortunately, he had to leave behind most of his belongings—almost all of his books, his diaries, and notebooks. At the time, he expected to return once the situation in China had settled.

Since Teilhard’s death many unsuccessful attempts have been made to find the trunk that contained his things, the trunk Pierre Leroy, S.J., had so precisely described. Many people have tried, among them French diplomats, scientists, and scholars. In 1984 and 1985, with financial help from the Max-Planck Gesellschaft, the Academia Sinica, and the Hellmut-Ley Stiftung, Karl and Nicole Schmitz-Moormann went to China to start a new search for Teilhard’s personal papers. In 1991 they returned to Beijing and Tientsin, again with financial help from the Max-Planck Gesellschaft, the Academia Sinica, and Stifter Verband (Hellmut-Ley Stiftung). They were unable to retrieve any new diaries but remained reasonably certain that Teilhard’s papers were collected by officials in the early fifties and have since been kept in China.

We can assume that the China cahiers were the same size as the others (17 by 22 centimeters) because Teilhard was able to buy copy-books in France almost every year, and he returned to France with a completed Cahier XIII, and Cahier XIV in progress. We can suppose that Teilhard numbered his cahiers from the beginning and that, upon his arrival in Tientsin in June 1926, he marked the cahier he had been using since mid-July 1925 with the numeral I. It is also likely that Teilhard completed twelve cahiers between July 1925 and July 1944.

18 July 1944–6 April 1955. The following cahiers have not yet been published.

- Cahier XIII. 18 July 1944 (Pekin, rue Labrousse) to 27 October 1945. One hundred and sixty-three written pages.

- Cahier XIV. 27 October 1945 (Pekin, rue Labrousse) to 6 April 1947. One hundred and fifty-three written pages.
- Cahier XV. 6 April 1947 (Paris, Etudes) to 31 December 1948. One hundred and eighty-eight written pages.
- Cahier XVI. 30 September 1948 to 5 November 1948 (Rome). 1 January 1949 to 6 August 1949 (Paris, Etudes). Seventy-eight written pages plus 20 written pages.
- Cahier XVII. 10 August 1949 to 31 October 1950 (Paris, Etudes) One hundred and eighty-three written pages.
- Cahier XVIII. 1 November 1950 (Paris, Etudes) to 19 June 1952 (Purchase, N. Y.). One hundred and sixty-eight written pages.
- Cahier XIX. 23 June 1952 (Purchase, N. Y.) to 18 June 1953 (Park Avenue, New York). Seventy-seven written pages.
- Cahier XX. Retreat 1952 (Purchase, N. Y.), 24 June 1953 to 8 October 1954. Seventy-six written pages.
- Cahier XXI. 10 October 1954 to 7 April 1955 (Hotel Fourteen, New York). Thirty-nine written pages.

The author is in the process of transcribing these cahiers onto diskettes. Problems and difficulties in doing so will become evident to the reader who examines Fig. 1 (see pp. 100-101, which shows page 135 of Cahier XVIII, and Fig. 2 (see pp. 102-3), which shows page 25 of Cahier XX. (Copies such as those shown were necessarily the basis of the work.) Some examples follow.

1. Reading of hand-written words. For example, in Cahier XVIII, page 135, the word "vie" appears on the second line from the top, and the word "afric" (africaine) on the ninth line from the bottom; in Cahier XX, page 25, the word "perception" appears on the first line from the top, and the word "dynamiquement" on the ninth line from the bottom.

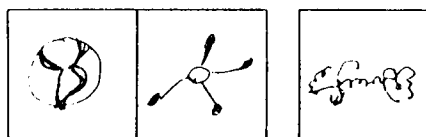
2. Interpretation of abbreviations. Teilhard often used Greek letters. For example, in Cahier XVIII, page 135, on the twelfth line from the bottom, ϕ = physique and ψ = psychique. In Cahier XX, page 25, on the first line, ϕ_H = *Phénomène Humain*. In the middle of the page, γ = Noosphere. In the lower left corner, Δ = Dieu and Ω = Omega.

3. Interpreting the correct meaning of abbreviations according to the context. A case in point are the letters *h*, *H*, \mathfrak{H} , which can be read homme, Homme, Homo, Humain, Humanité, Hominisation, Humanisme. In Cahier XVIII, page 135, on the ninth line from the bottom, H = homo, and on the fourth line from the bottom, H = Homme. U. or u. can be read U(u)niversal or U(u)ltra. For example, in Cahier XX, in the upper half of page 25, U-Humain = Ultra-Humain, and u-H = ultra-Humanisant.

Other abbreviations commonly used by Teilhard: *co/co/co* may be read *complexité/conscience/connaissance*, or *compression/complexité/conscience/convergence*. ϕ can be read *phénomène* or *féminin*. S.C. can be *Sacré Cœur* (Sacred Heart), or *Super Christ*.

4. Deciphering of sketches. For example, in *Cahier XVIII*, page 135:

Colomb Today



(Amer.)³ (Atom) (Molecules → Man!)

5. Readings of words, endings of which have been abbreviated in all pages of the diary. For example, in *Cahier XVIII*, page 135, on the ninth line: “*La formation (africaine).*”

6. Recognizing English or German words in the middle of a French sentence. For example, in *Cahier XVIII*, page 135, at the top: “To add”; at the bottom: “Apes”; in the middle “Weltstoff”. In *Cahier XX*, page 25, on the fifteenth line from the bottom: “next.”

7. The most important and relevant difficulty is getting the original material into a form acceptable for the computer. Often Teilhard adds sentences or a few words in the margins, or he adds short sentences in the middle of the text and later inserts them with parentheses, arrows, or asterisks into the already written text. He often includes diagrams and sketches. First the meaning of the text must be understood to avoid any confusion. Then the appearance of the original text, as written by Teilhard, must be reproduced as faithfully as possible to avoid any misunderstandings by the reader. Unfortunately the PC has its limits. Sentences often must be interrupted, new paragraphs made, and at the same time the meaning must be maintained. Yet it is important to reproduce the original appearance of the text since it offers precious information about Teilhard’s thought processes.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JOURNALS

When Teilhard made his first copybook entry, he was a thirty-four-year old stretcher bearer on the front lines of World War I in northern France. On 26 August 1915 he wrote, “To while away the boredom of quartering and to oblige myself to think, to observe and

to clarify, I am starting some kind of diary.”⁴ His last insert was “What I believe . . .”⁵ on Maundy Thursday, 6 April 1955. He died on Easter Sunday, 10 April 1955, in New York City.

During the first few months he used a narrative and descriptive style. Then on 28 January 1916 he wrote, “If I write anything, if I act intellectually, it seems to me that it must be to conciliate, to reconcile (in some sense) God and the world, it means to show that God completes eminently our immanent and pantheistic aspirations— (e.g.: God and matter; ‘Divine Matter’) (= astonishing realization of this in our Lord Jesus Christ).”⁶

For almost forty years he wrote down his intellectual reflections, mostly on theological subjects. There were to be no personal, emotional, or poetic entries. During this time Teilhard was never allowed by his superiors to publish any philosophical or theological papers. In 1926, he was asked by his order to resign his chair at the Institut Catholique, and in 1948 he was denied permission to accept a professorship at the Collège de France. Moreover, since he spent the greater part of his life outside of France, he had few opportunities to share and discuss his ideas and reflections with other scholars and colleagues. Nevertheless, his essays were distributed as “clandestins” among friends and other interested people, and he addressed listeners in closed circles and salons. Teilhard never deformed or hid his thoughts in his essays, talks, or letters. He presented and formulated them in a way that a reader, a listener, could follow and understand. In the diaries, the birth of Teilhard’s original ideas and reflections, their development over the years, and their stages of maturity can be studied. They may be categorized as follows:

- Reflections on general and present problems in his own and others’ lives, such as war, faith, love, chastity, the feminine, and sexuality.
- Reflections on scientific, theological, philosophical, and psychological topics of importance at the time, such as Darwinism, relativity theory, principles of thermodynamics, Thomistic theology, existentialism, Eastern mysticism, and Freudian theory.
- Reflections on his own approach to new ideas and their evolution. On 25 June 1952 Teilhard wrote, “My great illuminations: . . . Milieu is a Center (1927, *Divine Milieu*) . . . Union differentiates (personalizes) (Peking 1937) . . . Complexity generates Consciousness (Peking 1942) . . . Reflection grows (Peking) . . . Convergence of the universe, Evolution converges.”⁷ And on 24 June 1955: My “testimony (cf. *Divine Milieu*, *Mass on the World*, *The Heart of Matter*) (The pure Me, total).”⁸

... le vinet (surtout A. L. Ring) qui le lui a dit — l'opinion de
 vol. du x, j'ay fait compréhensible que le mot est venue de l'italien
 (le valletto), abrégé valletto, c. valletto fait tout au dit le
 tout, de l'allemand, aussi bien que de la fin. Mais c'est un fait
 que rien d'être venu de l'allemand, et l'allemand: valletto,
Omija: cf. Bokkomin (dans le 1^{er} état), est le mot valletto de
valletto, mais le valletto de valletto est un fait valletto,
 n'a rien d'allemand mais valletto (le valletto, valletto,
valletto) fait tout au dit le valletto.

S. F. — le valletto (l'opinion) (pour l'allemand et l'allemand) et l'allemand.

dit { valletto (l'allemand) (cf. valletto en l'allemand)... (le valletto
 { valletto (l'allemand) (l'allemand) ... (le valletto en l'allemand) ... }.

cf. valletto (l'allemand): valletto (l'allemand) ... valletto ...

cf. valletto (l'allemand): valletto (l'allemand) ... valletto ...

valletto (l'allemand) ... valletto (l'allemand) ... valletto ...

Fig. 1. Page 135 of Cahier XVIII, dated 3 February 1952. This sample of Teilhard's journals illustrates some of the difficulties of deciphering them. Marginal notes, by Nicole Schmitz-Moormann, identify problem areas discussed on pp. 97-98 of this article. The boxes on the upper right are also shown on p. 98.

perception

Phénomène Humain

1954

- about a vision of the (God) in the sky
 - the vision of the... (spirit) - seen by...
 - the... (spirit) of... (vision)

Remarques: "L'exploration" de...
 "L'exploration" de... (vision) avec le... (vision)

L'H... (vision) plus... (vision)

A X {
 {
 {
 LES 2 EVENTS / phases: {
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Ultra-Humain
 Ultra-Humain
 Humain

= Plan: (1/2) Com. ca. / (Comp. ab. 1000/1100) (2) D. v. 1012-1013 (D. v. 1012-1013) (D. v. 1012-1013)
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 4 Oct. - 4. by "actum" sancti idemque in "vicibus" /- fine annuaty C. E.
 suffragium de BICEMALLE (sunt x /- fine annuaty /- fine annuaty C. E.
 - dim. in 1012 /- fine annuaty /- fine annuaty C. E.
 1) 9^a }
 2) D. v. 1012 }
 3) X → 1012 }
 4) X → X }

2) oct. 1012 /- fine annuaty /- fine annuaty C. E.
 " de v. 1012-1013 (2) D. v. 1012-1013 (2) D. v. 1012-1013 (2) D. v. 1012-1013
 3) X → 1012 }
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2) oct. 1012 /- fine annuaty /- fine annuaty C. E.
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2) oct. 1012 /- fine annuaty /- fine annuaty C. E.
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 3) X → 1012 }
 4) X → X }

Fig. 2. Page 25 of Cahier XX, written by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin on 4 October 1953. Marginal notes by Nicole Schmitz-Moormann identify problem areas discussed on pp. 97-98. Nicole Schmitz-Moormann worked from photocopies approximately as shown.

- Reflections about his position and attitude toward Rome and his order.
- Notes about readings, talks, and meetings with different people.
- Extracts of letters to and from different people.

Thus, Teilhard's journal may be seen as the missing link between his essays, as essential to their interpretation.

NOTES

1. Initials refer to abbreviations used throughout this issue of *Zygon*, as shown in the key on pp. 7-8.

2. "Rien écrit depuis quatre mois, parce que le cahier a dormi au fond d'une cantine pendant que le régiment était aux Chemins des Dames."

3. Columbus (America).

4. "Pour tromper l'ennui du cantonnement et me forcer à penser, à observer, à préciser, je commence une espèce de journal."

5. "Ce que je crois . . ."

6. "Si j'écris quelque chose, si j'agis intellectuellement, il me semble que ce doit être pour concilier, réconcilier (en un sens) Dieu et le Monde, c'est-à-dire montrer que Dieu termine éminemment nos aspirations immanentes et panthéistiques—(e.g.: Dieu et matière; 'la Matière Divine' (= réalisation étonnante de ceci en N.-S. J. C.)."

7. In Journal XX, p. 2: "Mes grandes illuminations: . . . Le Milieu est un Centre *(1927 Milieu Divin). . . . *L'Union différencie* (personnalise) (Péking 1937). . . . *La Complexité "engendre" la Conscience* (Péking 1942) . . . *La Réflexion croît* (Péking) . . . La Convergence de l'Univers*, *L'Évolution converge*."

8. In Journal XXI, p. 22: "«Témoignage» (cf. Milieu, Messe, Cœur de la Matière (le Moi pur, total)."

REFERENCES

Works by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin are indicated by abbreviations of the titles. For a list of these abbreviations, see pp. 7-8.