

Similar Systems

There are at least three accounts of the universe which bear significant resemblance to Alphomism. The proponents are Teilhard de Chardin, Frank J. Tipler and Egon Bondy. They are summarised, and compared to Alphomism, below.

1. Teilhard de Chardin

Teilhard de Chardin was a Jesuit priest who struggled mightily with the attempt to reconcile entrenched Catholic faith with his metaphysical musings. He was also a scientist who insisted that his seminal *'Phenomenon of Man'* was a scientific treatise rather than a work of metaphysics.

In an introduction to the book, Julian Huxley suggests that it offers a threefold synthesis, of:

- a) the material world with the spiritual
- b) the past with the future and
- c) variety with unity.

In the foreword, Chardin says that the basic plan of his treatise relates to three phases of development; pre-life, life and thought. He thinks of knowledge as emerging from a 'marriage' of object and subject which 'mutually transform' each other. This is very similar to the Alphomist position that 'reality' is neither purely subjective (as rigorous idealists claim) nor purely objective (as per the rigid realists) but the outcome of a constant interaction between perceiver and perceived.

Chardin clearly recognised, as does Alphomism, that an inescapable consequence of this view is that; *'The true physics is that which will, one day, achieve the inclusion of man in his wholeness in a coherent picture of the world.'*

Chardin begins his argument with the assertion that plurality, unity and energy are the 'three faces of matter'. He writes; *'...energy nowadays represents, for science, the most primitive form of the universal stuff'*. The claim is made that consciousness cannot be understood unless the universe is seen as a system (plurality), a totum (unity) and a quantum (energy).

This might seem difficult to grasp but the ensuing argument, that molecular and planetary patterns do not repeat themselves but rather represent unity, is even harder to assimilate, as is the notion that the volume of each atom is the volume of the universe. However, on entropy Chardin asserts that the scientific view that the universe will eventually fade away is erroneous because thus far scientists have looked only from the outside and not considered 'the within'. This, of course, accords very well with Alphomist theory.

The book then goes on to discuss the notion of 'the within', that is, consciousness. Chardin reasserts his belief that the 'two views' of the universe (the objective and the subjective) will eventually merge to generate a 'general physic'. He writes; *'Otherwise, so it seems to me, it is impossible to cover the totality of the cosmic phenomenon by one coherent explanation such as science must try to construct.'* He goes on to comment; *'...is it not the peculiar difficulty of every synthesis that its end is already implicit in its beginnings?'* which might be taken to imply a bias towards a circular account.

The thesis then develops along the lines that, by analogy with other scientific discoveries, consciousness, which is evident in man through introspection, must exist in lower order bodies. Chardin quotes, with approval, JBS Haldane's claim that the fact that man can cooperate leads to the notion that a 'Great Being' might emerge from the process.

Inevitably, the problem of reconciling the apparent determinism of 'the without' and the freedom of 'the within' is then addressed. Chardin promises an answer 'later' but dampens expectations on this issue by repeating an earlier declaration that the purpose of the study is to see rather than explain.

In a passage where the writer suggests that atomicity is common to both the within and the without there is a veiled, perhaps guarded, hint that the original stuff of the universe, prior to the big bang, was God. Chardin then makes an explicit prediction, which accords absolutely with Alphonism, that in a contracting universe there will be a 're-creation' of God, a process which, he claims, humans must control. The text runs: *'Spiritual perfection...and material synthesis...are but two aspects or connected parts of one and the same phenomenon.'* Again in close accord, Chardin avers that the universe moves from an initial state of 'simple material elements' where statistical analysis is appropriate, to a much more complex condition where there is a 'greater within'.

Clouding the argument somewhat, the writer proposes that there are two 'energies', that of the without and that of the within. *'To think we must eat'* is the homespun way of stating the case. However Chardin then suggests that all energy is psychic in nature but divided into two types, 'tangential', which *'links the elements with all others of the same order'*, and 'radial', which *'draws it towards ever greater complexity and centrality.'* Tangential energy, the concern of science, will fade away as 'centration' increases.

The ensuing chapter is mainly given over to an account of evolution and the emergence of life. Chardin claims that the growth of the within takes place only thanks to a 'double related involution' – the coiling up of the molecule upon itself and the coiling up of the planet upon itself. This is perhaps an intuitive hint at the concept of the double helix but it is an example of a confusion which pervades the book, namely that relating to the scope of the thesis. Sometimes it seems that the focus is on the entire universe and sometimes simply on Planet Earth.

Soon the writer tackles the deeper problems concerning the origin of life and he is frank in his admission of the difficulty of conceiving of a within for 'elementary bodies'. There

is a notion of different types of consciousness with a critical change in structure, from molecular to cellular, which brings the crucial change in the type of consciousness.

Revealing more of his scientific pedigree, Chardin then expands on the biological processes of mitotic and amitotic cell division. Once the exposition is complete he concludes; *'Taken in its totality, the living substance, spread over the earth...traces the lineaments of one single, gigantic organism.'* There is more scientific material in the following section where it is claimed that the *'differentiation of nervous tissue...proves that evolution has a direction'*. Returning, reluctantly perhaps, to the problems associated with determinism and free will, Chardin reneges on his promise to solve the conundrum. He writes; *'Perhaps we will understand that better some day.'* Controversially he goes on to propose the Darwinian ideas are relevant to early evolution and that later stages require a neo-Lamarckian perspective.

Moving on to 'The Birth of Thought' Chardin avers that of the many species only man 'knows that he knows', that is, is capable of reflection. He depicts 'hominisation' as a leap from instinct to thought. Thus there appears a ladder of development from 'geogenesis' to 'biogenesis' to 'psychogenesis'. He quotes Huxley's dictum that *'Man discovers that he is nothing else than evolution become conscious of himself.'*

The next stage, so Chardin claims, is 'noogenesis'. The reader is told that the noosphere is 'the thinking layer above the biosphere'. It is asserted that human competition for survival does not lead to the elimination of the conquered group, as with animals, but to assimilation and mutual influence. Through this process, mankind has reached a point where evolution not only 'looks at itself' but is free 'to dispose of itself'. Chardin's view is that modern man is uneasy because of the vastness of space and time and he claims that the answer lies in 'genesis' by which he means 'the creation of the future.' There are, he says, only two possible views, one of a 'closed, absurd universe' or the other of an open future with movement towards the generation of a 'super soul'.

Chardin concedes that he can provide no rational evidence as to which view is correct but, in what might be taken to be a leap of faith, he suggests that because 'the world' started the evolutionary process it can finish it. With further reliance on pure belief, perhaps, he writes; *'In the last analysis the best guarantee that a thing should happen is that it appears to us as vitally necessary.'* His view is that 'All conscious energy is, like love (and because it is love), founded on hope.'

Returning to a scientific perspective, Chardin reiterates the observation that alone amongst the species mankind has become 'cosmopolitan'; there has been no division as in the animal world. He cites the roundness of the Earth as a key factor in bringing peoples together. It is clear, he believes, that the process of evolution can lead only to unification.

There is, though, allegedly something beyond the collective, a state which Chardin depicts as the 'hyper-personal'. He cautions against total dependence on analysis, which he agrees to be a powerful tool but which reduces everything to 'evanescent particles'.

He writes; *'Only one reality seems to survive....energy, that floating universal entity from which all emerges and into which all falls back...'*

Chardin then goes on to address the problem of 'the Ego versus the All'. He proposes that every consciousness possesses a threefold property; that of centring everything partially upon itself, that of being able to centre upon itself constantly and that of being *'brought more by this very super-centration into association with all the other centres.'* These properties are taken somehow to guarantee an ultimate union. Chardin avers that; *'Because it contains and engenders consciousness, space-time is necessarily of a convergent nature.'* According to him the universal and the personal grow in the same direction and culminate simultaneously in each other.

A consequence of all this, Chardin claims, is that at the Omega point all consciousness must be present, each one remaining conscious of itself and becoming more distant from the others. He depicts Omega as a distant centre radiating at the core of a system of centres. In a baldly stated, rather than argued, move towards an idea of universal auto-genesis Chardin writes; *'Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come into being.'* The strong suggestion is that Omega already exists. It is not only the last item in a series, it is outside all series.

(It is perhaps worth noting here that in his introduction to *Phenomenon of Man* Huxley claims that Chardin's thoughts on Omega are not clear. He says that it is sometimes depicted as an 'emergent divinity' and sometimes as an 'interthinking humanity' – a new type of organism which will realise new possibilities).

According to Chardin, Omega has four attributes; autonomy, actuality, irreversibility and transcendence. Chardin is not afraid to incorporate the notion of the soul which allows him to write of many such entities 'going upwards', carrying loads of consciousness.

Chardin asserted that there will be no cataclysmic 'end of the world'. He saw religion and science as two faces of the same 'act of knowledge'. The possibility of life on other planets, and even of psychic communication with distant beings, is discussed but Chardin suggests that these are highly unlikely. In what seems like a re-assertion of the local as opposed to the universal principal, Chardin states his belief that the Earthly noosphere is destined to close up on itself in isolation. He even proposes that there may be a final 'ramification' between good and evil.

At the end of the book Chardin makes an attempt to reconcile his views with Christianity. It would appear that not a few of the confusions in *Phenomenon of Man* stem from the psychological need to preserve the notion of a creator god.

2. Frank J. Tipler

In 1995 a book called 'The Physics of Immortality' appeared. It was written by an American academic mathematician called Frank J. Tipler. He was working as a professor

of global relativity at Tulane University, New Orleans. The American journal 'Science' proclaimed the book 'a masterpiece'.

'The Physics of Immortality' is no easy read for the layperson but Tipler uses mathematics to support his view that the universe, having started with the Big Bang, will end in a 'single point' which he labels 'the Omega point'. He proposes that life, which, he maintains, began with a single cell, will '*become omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient*'. His way of representing this state is that the final beings will be, essentially, computers.

Tipler maintains that the Omega point computers will have 'infinite' processing powers. He claims that his calculations, which make use only of existing theoretical material, support the idea that these entities will resurrect every being which has existed during the evolutionary process. The time scale suggested for the entire conversion of energy from inanimate to super-conscious is seven billion years. Tipler suggests that life 'requires' such a conversion and that the laws of physics allow it.

In an interview given to a newspaper at the time of the book's publication Tipler is quoted as saying: *'I think the evidence is very strong that this particular version of you and this particular version of me will be there in the future. It will be you and me emulated down to the atom'*.

3. Egon Bondy

In April 2002, Benjamin B. Page of Quinnipiac University, Hamden Connecticut posted the following message on this website.

I want to call your attention to a recently published translation of a book--THE CONSOLATION OF ONTOLOGY--by Czech poet-philosopher EGON BONDY (Zbynek Fiser, PhD). Bondy develops a monistic, nonsubstantial understanding of the nature of reality as self-creating. He critiques some aspects of Hindu thought but is close to Hinduism--as it seems you are--in terms of "cosmogenesis". I am sure the book will be of interest to people who check your site. I know I would like very much to see a review by someone from your audience. Originally published by the Czechoslovak Academy of Science in 1967 it was republished in Prague, 1999. The attached notice will give a bit more information.

The author was one of the founding members of the Prague's dialogue between religion and Marxism in the sixties, at which time he also published the only book on Buddha to appear during the communist period. All of his other work - numerous volumes of poetry novels, essays, and plays, and book length explorations of Chinese, Indian, and Western philosophy (the last three for the underground university for children of post-68 dissidents - -circulated initially in samizdat; it has all been gathered and published since 1989. For his philosophy, Bondy has been described as a Diogenes figure in modern Czech thought; for his poetry he has long been known as "the bard of the underground",

his place being roughly like that of Allen Ginsberg in this country. (For a short time - in his fifties - he became an underground rock singer, when the group Plastic People of the Universe started using his lyrics and then he himself.)

An example of Bondy's thinking may be found in his contribution to an anthology I edited back in 1993, on Marxism and Spirituality. I will be happy to send any further information or to have the publisher send a review copy of THE CONSOLATION..., and look forward to hearing from you.

*Sincerely,
Benjamin B. Page
Box 163 Quinnipiac University
Hamden, Conn., 06518*

Benjamin Page is absolutely right that there are striking links between Bondy's thinking and that which informs Alphonism. The resultant review, reproduced here for the sake of convenience, was posted on this site.

The Consolation of Ontology – On the Substantial and Nonsubstantial Models. Written by Egon Bondy, Translated by Benjamin B. Page. Published by: Lexington Books, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 10706, USA and 12 Hid's Copse Road, Cumnor Hill, Oxford, OX2 9JJ, UK.

This is not a book for the faint-hearted, the text is dense and sometimes Bondy seems to rely more on assertion than rigorous argument. However, it is a very rewarding read for anyone who is interested in the nature of reality and quite often the technical language is lightened by lovely touches of humour. The work provides refreshing insights into the old debate about what it is for things to exist. However it also, as the translator's introduction records, '*...deals with the question of the purpose of human life.*' There are very many interesting resonances between Bondy's work and the ideas expressed on this web site.

First, Bondy examines what he calls 'the substantial model' of existence; that is, the notion that there is a 'hard' reality which persists, regardless of whether or not it is perceived by sentient beings. Bondy makes his repugnance towards the substantial model very evident but he admits that he cannot refute it, for the same reason that he cannot disprove the existence of griffins. The implication is that the 'hard' approach to reality is somehow intrinsically unreal. Bondy points out that belief in such a substrate leads to all manner of metaphysical problems. He examines various ideas of the god who might be, or have created, such a substrate and comes to the conclusion that all such accounts are inherently self-contradictory. He goes on to argue that belief in the substantial model is seriously detrimental to creativity and the good ordering of human relationships.

In the second part of the book, Bondy explains the advantages of a 'non-substantial' approach. This formulation has self-conscious beings as central. He acknowledges that there are many problems associated with the alternative approach but suggests that, unlike the case with the rival system, they are all ultimately solvable. Bondy proposes

that a huge advantage of adopting the nonsubstantial model is that all limitations to human activity are removed. He acknowledges that this is a frightening prospect, especially for those powerful people who have vested interests in curtailing individual freedoms, but pleads that fear should be no deterrent.

What follows is a by no means exhaustive summary of ways in which Bondy's development of the nonsubstantial model foreshadows the ideas expressed on this web site.

Life after death

Though he does not make a very specific claim, Bondy seems to concur with the notion that the creation of life after death will be the work of conscious beings. He writes: *'For death is not invincible for those who control the evolution of the universe. Even today this problem of death is not just a fairy tale but a matter for systematic scientific work.....will a way not be found to 'transfer' memory and other contents of the brain into some specially prepared synthetic moulds?'*

With apparent approval, he also writes: *'Manicheans had the deeply human belief that those in paradise would never be fully happy until all who had previously died had been restored to life and united with them, regardless of how they had lived...'*

This latter sentiment is very much in line with Alphomist thinking.

Spirit

'Regretfully we must confess that we have no idea what 'spirit' is...I should be delighted to have some instruction on this point, provided that it be more adequate than that of St. Augustine and his successors.'

Reincarnation

'From a purely practical viewpoint belief in reincarnation is totally unnecessary (this is so even if we disregard its deadening fatalistic consequences). If after death I reappear again as XY who has not the least recollection of me, then this XY can be an object of complete indifference to me.'

Determinism

'In the nonsubstantial model, determinism is impossible (I am still thinking of rigorous, mechanistic, '100%' determinism – i.e. I am not confusing determinism with causality!)

'Determinism as a 'quality' of matter or of ontological reality is simply a mystery without explanation – and obviously without any reason for having been postulated.'

The fundamental alteration of energy through organisation

'..sooner or later the molecules, atoms, electrons etc that pass through the organisation of living matter are permanently changed thereby.....Even should humankind during its existence fail to take control of the universe into its hands, it would still have contributed to the realisation of this stage in two ways; on the one hand.... it can leave its experience to other humankinds; and, on the other hand, our humankind will have 'enriched' the material substrate of the universe.'

The existence of god

'The nonsubstantial model excludes the possibility of any sort of privileged being.'

Time

'The system we are dealing with is thus not immersed in the flow of absolute time...for in the nonsubstantial model such a flow of time cannot be assumed.'

The reference here is not entirely clear but Bondy's comment could be taken to allude to something like the two-phase system of time proposed in Alphomism.

The future of the universe

'The appearance of 'beings' capable of (taking the direction of the universe into their own hands) is not and will not be 'the work of chance,' the result of some 'miraculous mixture' of molecules; it is and will be prepared by the whole process of the articulated cosmos.'

'When the existence and movement of the galaxies come to be directed, controlled, created and led by man, sooner or later their very existence will become dependent on him.....Cosmologically, the trend towards the control of the universe by humankind is undeniable.'

'Ultimately, the whole fate and solution of the existence of humankind, and along with it the existence of all of reality will not depend on anything more than on the value judgements which humankind makes about its own existence and about all of reality.'

Morality

Touching, in an incidental way, on morality, Bondy writes; *'I am announcing that humankind...has an absolute right to everything and to do anything.'* And: *'Since there is no intrinsic value in things, there is no appeal from the judgement of man.'*

This sounds alarming perhaps but Bondy softens the effect by writing of the essential 'human-ness' of mankind and alluding to the potency of love.

The origin of the universe and eternity

This is perhaps the least convincing section of the book. Bondy deals at some length with the idea of self-origination of the universe. He writes; *'In the nonsubstantial model it is not only possible but even consistent to assume the 'primordial' self-origination of ontological reality.'* About eternity, he comments: *'...the concept of eternity as nonorigination seems to be nothing more than a totally empty statement.....To say that a system toward which nothing is external is 'eternal' is only to say – stammeringly – that it exists.'*

He seems to be implying that 'eternity' is a meaningless notion, as Alphomism maintains, but wishes still to cling to the idea that the universe emerged out of nothing, seemingly as a result of pure thought. But of course, there cannot be thought where there is nothing.

Perhaps Bondy would have reached a yet more radical position on origination had he not been so rooted in the dialectical tradition. The very subtitle of his book suggests that he is bent on finding absolute answers to fundamental dilemmas. The Alphomist position on this is different and is outlined in a recently added supplement to this web site (see the 'Why the notion of 'trinity' is so pervasive' pages in the 'Explanations' section)

It is, perhaps, highly significant in this context that Bondy writes; *'...the triadic form (of dialectics) Hegel elaborated is only an infantile schema of one of its types of regularity, relatively the simplest at that.'* It is as though Bondy recognises the severe limitations of the basic thesis/antithesis/synthesis approach but has nothing to put in its place

Despite the reservations about absolutism and origination, and the caveat about the density of some of the prose, this book is very much to be recommended to anyone who feels that something along Alphomist lines is the closest to the truth we can get at this stage of evolution. Bondy reaches the crucial conclusion that it is conscious beings who will decide the fate of the universe and bring about the prize of a blissful life after death. He is right to draw attention to the frightening nature of the shift from 'father god' to total responsibility and right again to insist that it is up to conscious beings to overcome this fear and thereby find true freedom.