

God Tracks V – Progress toward the World Wide Love Blob Who's Choosing the Trail Markers?

June 25, 2006

Bulletin quote:

The day will come when, after harnessing the winds, the tides, and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of Love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire. – Teilhard de Chardin

Opening Words:

Number six of our UU seven principles is:

-- The goal of a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all --

We live in an era of science. We entered this era 400 years or so ago when thinkers began to entertain alternatives to the existing beliefs about the natural world. That summation of the revision is basically, "Wait a minute! How do we know that's how things work? Suppose they work this way instead. Let's look, measure, think and find out."

And, along the way, Galileo got in trouble with the Pope, Newton fantasized about an invisible force, Darwin gained some credibility and, here and there, some of the magic went out of religion.

Some believers became confused. They thought since we are now in the era of science, they needed scientific support for their religion. Not content just to believe, they had to “prove.” Unfortunately, when religionists play in the stadium of science, they must play by the rules of science. And science plays by tough rules.

We all have been in the bleachers watching this game, and each of us has puzzled over the moves and claims. I’ve played the part of the local sportscaster on this contest, offered up some play by plays on a few of the innings, and tried to lead the after-action discussion. I’ve labeled this series of talks “God Tracks” as we’ve watched the claims of proofs and joined the hunt through the scientific and philosophical woods for confirmation of the influence of a higher being, intellectual design, or other such influences that reportedly guide our past and manage our future.

In God Tracks I, we looked for a viable supernatural alternative to the scientific explanation about how we got here from bacteria to mousy-like creatures to apes to humans. Couldn’t find anything that played by science’s rules.

In God Tracks II, we went to the mountain, beat the burning bush, read the tablets, and explored other such doctrines looking for proof that societal rules had to have divine input and discovered there are other ways that could have got us all working and living together in reasonable harmony.

God Track III started with the premise that humans were the planned destiny of the evolutionary process, but then we found that such an increasing level of complexity is a natural and expected evolutionary path, and we just happened to be one of the complexest stepping stones along the way. Planned destiny had scientific alternatives. Struck out again.

In the fourth inning, the concept that we are evolving ever closer to god-like creatures ourselves was up for grabs. We all liked this idea. We could all see ourselves, in robes and crowns, moving toward a one-world view, a kinder and gentler world, where each of us, generation after generation, is more and more god-like. Was god then less an alpha and more an omega and we've just not got there

yet? But when we looked behind us, we didn't see God Tracks, only our tracks. And in front of us? The usual mix of angels and devils.

So here we are with God Tracks V. We know change is accelerating – accelerating with such a ferocity that sometimes we feel we just need to close our eyes and hang on. Where are we going? Toward Tielhard de Chardin's (Tay-yard Du Shardan), uni-world, one for all and all for one, what's been called his world-wide love blob? And is anybody driving or are we on board a runaway?

Sometimes I think we're alone.
Sometimes I think we're not.
In either case, the thought is quite staggering.
■ R. Buckminster Fuller

meditation

Main Talk:

Let's tackle the question of acceleration of development first, from the long view. Borrowing the memory of the World Trade Center Building as a reference, consider its quarter mile height representing time.

If street level is the formation of our planet, 4.6 billion years ago, the first living cells appeared about 3.5 billion years ago, on the twenty-fifth of the building's 108 floors. Photosynthesis evolved around the fiftieth floor, and bacteria that breathed oxygen came another ten floors later – more than halfway up.

More complex cells, capable of sexual reproduction and possessing a central nucleus, appeared at about the seventieth floor. Multi-cellular organisms came another ten floors above that, and crustaceans ruled the waves on the ninety-fourth floor.

Fish appeared on the ninety-seventh floor, and crawled out of the sea on the ninety-ninth.

Dinosaurs reigned on floors 104-107. Mammals arrived on the top floor.

But Homo Erectus did not first walk on two legs until a few inches from the top of the top floor. It had taken 99.9 percent of life's journey to reach this step, and humanity was only beginning.

The Neanderthals, with their enlarged brains, simple tools, and tribal culture, appeared in the last quarter-inch. Then came Cro-Magnon people, with clothes, painting, and language.

The Pharaohs ruled Egypt a fiftieth of an inch from the top. The Greek and Roman empires thrived a hundredth of an inch above that. The Renaissance occurred in the top one-thousandth of an inch – less than the thickness of a layer of paint.

The whole modern history occupies but the thickness of a microscopic bacterium. The age of the microchip, rock 'n roll, nuclear power, moon walks, this latest cycle of global warming, and the Internet is a layer almost too thin to measure.

One thing is clear, wherever we're going, we're going there faster and faster. But where are we going?

Let's move on from biological evolution to cultural evolution. The programs that now influence our behavior and development are to be

found not in our genes but in our minds. They are our attitudes and values: the way we see life, and the way we see ourselves, and what we think is important. It is these, not our genes that determine most of our decisions and our day-to-day activities.

A horizon such as the “Omega Point” could well exist for humanity, using the word “horizon” in the sense of time rather than one in space. A million years ago, change for humanoids was almost imperceptible. A thousand years ago, change was slow and the future a hundred years on would not have been markedly different. By the time of the Industrial Revolution, the pace of life had increased dramatically, making it much more difficult to foretell the future a hundred years ahead. But it would still have been possible to look a decade or two into the future with reasonable certainty.

Today it is not possible to see even that far ahead. Unforeseen developments mean that we can no longer predict the future of the world more than a few years ahead. So closely are our affairs now interwoven that unexpected events in just one person’s mind can have reverberations around the world, changing the future for all

concerned. And when the buildings we just used as a time scale crash without warning along with economies and other products of our minds, the best-laid plans of machines and men can vanish overnight. The horizon is an increasingly fuzzy one. Like the Stephen Wright one-liner about the photographer who is obsessed with getting a close-up shot of the horizon, (pause) we run up against a clash of paradigms, ours and those of our planetmates. Beyond this horizon, the future will probably be unlike anything we can anticipate. And the faster change occurs, the closer we come to this unknowable horizon.

As the predictable future shrinks from decades to years to months and less, there may well come a time when it is difficult to make any forecasts at all. Forward vision will have become chaotic – not chaotic in the sense of disorganized, but in the mathematical sense of unpredictable. However much progress we may have made in our inner evolution, it will be impossible for us to be sure what is coming next. Completely unexpected developments could always be just around the corner.

The biologist, Richard Dawkins, calls the inherited thought patterns that impact our direction, individually and as a society, memes. The values we hold about right and wrong, the beliefs we have about work and leisure, the value we put on money, our assumptions about the purpose of life – these are all memes. Like genes, memes reproduce as they pass from one person to another. A hundred years ago, the meme of using computers to help us in our work did not exist. Today it has spread to everyone; the idea is firmly implanted within us all. Memes are the basic unit of cultural heredity; like the genes in a cell, they bind us together into a cohesive society.

We have seen unprecedented cultural change in our time, our time being less than the thickness of a bacterium on top of the World Trade Center. It is impossible to argue otherwise. But accelerating change toward what?

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Tay-yard Du Shardan), who we can now label as that mid-twentieth century prophet of globalization, declared the world's emerging telecommunications infrastructure "a generalized nervous system" that was giving the human species an "organic unity". Increasingly, humankind constituted a "super-brain," a "brain of brains." The more tightly people were woven into this cerebral tissue, the closer they come to humanities' divinely appointed destiny, "Point Omega".

OK. Point Omega, a universal love blob. This is the “we are one” perspective -- so no more war, love one another, and we all work for the benefit of the whole as many parts of a single being. What did he imagine beyond this bit of vaguery? Hard to say. Teilhard’s (Tay-yard’s) philosophical writings are notable about equally for their poetry and their obscurity. Are we indeed being guided in what might be termed an ever more civilizing direction? Are their directional trail markers? Let’s take a look at the three drivers of civilization: economics (getting us fed, clothed, and improving our standard of living); war and government (the battles over power as to who gets to tell other people what to do); and religion (the competition for the opportunity to comfort and guide people along the “right” path).

Let’s start with war using the words of our UU District namesake, Thomas Jefferson. You probably remember that I’m a TJ fan. Here’s Tom:

By the original Laws of Nations, war and extirpation were the punishment of injury. (He’s talking about the “kill ‘em all” fighting of early history.) Humanizing by degrees, it admitted slavery instead of death. (Let’s take some of ‘em home, especially the pretty ones). A further step was the exchange of prisoners

instead of slavery. Another, to respect more the property of private persons under conquest, and be content with acquired dominion. Why should not this law of nations go on improving? Ages have intervened between its several steps; but as knowledge of late increases rapidly, why should not those steps be quickened? –Thomas Jefferson

The span of this change is many thousands of years. Remember the children of Israel were not killed but taken to Egypt in slavery.

Generally we don't kill all the men and carry away the women any more. Jefferson was right back in the early 1800's about the accelerating rate of change when the most common interactions between cultures were frequently less than pleasant. As to organized aggression, smart bombs and other techniques utilized by Third Wave countries severely reduce civilian casualties with further improvements, and possibly even non-lethal weapons, on the way. Alvin and Heidi Toeffler in *War and Anti-War* claim the future of war will be much more civilized if we stay on the current path, especially as First Wave and Second Wave cultures grow into Third Wave, knowledge based societies. At the Tielhard's (Tay-yard's) "Omega Point", war becomes a historic relic. Sounds like we're moving in Tielhard's direction if governments give up killing and the threat to kill

in order to force people to do whatever it is they think best. God tracks? Maybe.

Next of the influence triumvirate is Economics. Time span: withing the last 100 years. We'll save religion for last.

There are two categories active at this accelerating leading edge of the economic picture, the private sector and the public sector.

In the private sector are the multi-nationals, corporations like Unilever, whose 500 sub-companies operate in 75 countries, or any other of a bunch of familiar and unfamiliar names. The United Nations describes 35,000 firms as transnational corporations. These companies have among them 150,000 affiliates. So extensive has this network become that an estimated one quarter of all world trade now consists of sales between subsidiaries of the same firms. This growing, collective organism, no longer strongly tethered to the nation-state, represents a crucial element in tomorrow's global system. Typically these multinationals have the capital and motivation to bring work into the countries and regions of countries where work is most needed. As the most sophisticated nations with

the highest standards of living progress from Second Wave manufacturers to Third Wave technologists, the multinationals assist the countries just emerging from First Wave agriculture and subsistence living to enter their next era, their own industrial age.

The result of this accelerating leap into the more modern world, with its accompanying increase in quality of life, health, pride, ecological consciousness, and economic confidence in such countries as Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Indonesia plus portions of Central and South America, has moved whole societies forward.

There is no comparison between the China of today with the China of Tianemen Square where the most popular car brand is once again a Buick. Is a mile-marker toward an Omega Point a Chevrolet Equinox, sold by John Bowditch, owner of McInnes Chevrolet in Kilmarnock, designed in Detroit, assembled in Canada with an engine from China, a transmission from Korea, and components made by citizens of many countries speaking many languages all cooperating to deliver that vehicle to you in your favorite shade of green? Interweaving vested interests into this world-wide neurological network seems consistent with Tielhard's (Tay-yard's) vision. But it's hard to see any God Tracks here.

All is not so love-bloppy in other legs of this globalization business. UNESCO's first Director-General Julian Huxley declared in 1946 "The task before UNESCO...is to help the emergence of a single world culture, with its own philosophy of ideas, and with its own broad purposes." He wrote "of the transfer of full sovereignty from separate nations to a world organization." By 1974, they proposed licensing journalists world-wide for control of political support of various socialist causes, had developed an inconceivably bloated budget supplied 25% by the United States, the funds of which went primarily to fund those socialist causes and into the pockets of the then Director-General Mahtar M'Bow and his cronies. The U.S. withdrew from UNESCO saying the agency "extraneously politicized virtually every subject it deals with. It has exhibited a hostility toward basic institutions of a free society, especially a free market and a free press." At this point we would expect the always outspoken George Bernard Shaw to chime in with, "Under socialism, you would not be allowed to be poor. You would be forcibly fed, clothed, lodged, taught, and employed whether you liked it or not. If it were discovered that you had not character and industry enough to be

worth all the trouble, you might possibly be executed in a kindly manner; but whilst you were permitted to live, you would have to live well.” Not to be outdone in the category of phraseology, Shaw’s contemporary, Winston Churchill, adds, ““The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of the blessings. The inherent blessing of socialism is the equal sharing of misery.”

UNESCO went over the top with its willing silent support of the killing of infant girls in China by families wishing a boy under the “one child” policy. UNESCO itself estimates the death rate at over a million female infants per year. We would have to tag that a love-blob stumble. Not what one likes to see from the seeds of a global economics promoter. As to a UN-driven Global government? Now there’s an area that **needs** God Tracks.

A positive trail marker is the emergence of a true European Union, put together by committees rather than by combatants, but nevertheless a heroic achievement albeit struggling with the burdens of its socialistic past. What General Charles de Gaulle said of his native France is ever more applicable to economic challenges before

Europe today : “My friend, you can’t expect to unify overnight a country that boasts 257 varieties of cheese.”

Matathia and Salzman in *Next, Trends of the Near Future*, point out that the new generations of Europeans have grown up in times of peace and plenty, eating the same fast food, drinking many of the same soft drinks, and driving similar cars. Compared to their parents, they’re much more focused on the here and now, on themselves and on their own futures. They are much less interested in where they are from and much more concerned with where they are going. Their willingness to speak several languages, and to work in whatever country offers them the best quality of life and the fattest paycheck, makes them unique. To paraphrase Francis Fukuyama (author of *The End of History*), we might well be witnessing something akin to the end of history in Europe – or at least the beginning of the end of Europe’s obsession with history. Tielhard (Tay-yard) would be pleased. Maybe not a coming together of lovers, but certainly a massive coming together.

He certainly is cheering on a program at Philips Electronics where plans are in the works to introduce a “singles chip” that’s designed to unite compatible lovers. The chip, which is small enough to be concealed in an earring or tie pin, can be programmed with information such as likes, dislikes, and personality traits, to be used in singles bar, nightclub, or other social arenas. The chip is designed to scan the room for other chips and beep if it locates a compatible chip. To the lost and desperate single, heaven may just be around the corner. I wonder if there are chips for diplomats in the offing signaling governmental compatibility?

The third cultural force, alongside economics and the power issues of war and government, is religion. Can science and an examination of the facts show measurable trends toward an “Omega Point” there as well? Does religion have the potential as a unifying power?

The “World Christian encyclopedia” reports that of the earth’s 6.1 billion humans, fully 5.1 billion of them, or 84 percent, declare themselves believers who belong to some form of organized religion. Christians dominate at just a shade under two billion adherents

(Catholics count for half of those), with Muslims at 1.1 billion, Hindus at around 800 million, Buddhists about half that. Ethnic religions (animists and others in Asia and Africa primarily) accounting for most of the remaining couple hundred million. There are, in fact, 10,000 distinct religions of 10 general varieties, each one can be further subdivided and classified. For example, Christians may be found among 33,820 different denominations. In that crowd, does even an expert God tracker have a chance?

Although the daily rate of Muslim increase compared to Christians is about 2:1, the global convert/defector ratio, adjusted for births and deaths, indicates that the sphere of Christian evangelism continues to expand into non-Christian belief space.

In America, non-Christian believers are growing at about the same rate as membership drop in mainstream religions. “Southern Baptists” should be renamed “All Over Baptists” as they have indeed spread all over. Three quarters of the counties west of the Rockies now count the Mormons as one of their three largest denominations. Conservative pundits who proclaim that we need to return to the good old days when America was a Christian nation better look closely at

the historical data showing that church membership as a percentage of the U.S. population over the past century and a half has increased from 25 percent to 65 percent, a noteworthy acceleration. If America is going to hell in a handbasket, it is happening when church membership is at an all-time high, and a greater percentage of Americans (90-95 percent) proclaim belief in a God, more than ever before.

Richard Shermer in *How We Believe*, addresses the question, “Why do so many people believe and belong?” One answer is that it is good for us. Studies show that religious people live longer and healthier lives, recover from illness and disease faster, and report higher levels of happiness. While most of these effects are probably due to life style, diet, and exercise (e.g. , religious people drink and smoke less), there is something about having family, friends, and a community that enhances life and longevity. Whatever the reason, the percentage of believers vs. non-believers is accelerating.

But Tielhard’s (Tay-yard’s) “Omega Point” supposes not just belief but a higher state of consciousness, essentially shared by all. Is

there a highest state of consciousness? Mahayana Buddhism talks of Sahaj Samadhi, the recognition that ALL phenomena are merely consciousness in its various manifestation. Zen Buddhists speak of total non-duality. Hindu texts refer to the highest state of consciousness as unity with Brahman, a state in which one knows the source of all creation and all its levels of manifestation. The Christian mystics talk of oneness with God.

Whether or not these descriptions are referring to exactly the same state of consciousness is a question I will leave to those more qualified than I. Nevertheless, they would all seem to be pointing in the same direction: toward a personal evolutionary zenith.

Peter Russell in *Waking Up In Time*, asks, “What would happen if this (personal zenith) were to become a collective experience rather than a blessing bestowed on one in a hundred million?” Could it be that, in much the same way as the destiny of matter in a sufficiently massive star is to become a black hole in space, the destiny of a self-conscious species (should it be sufficiently intelligent) is a “spiritual supernova?” Is this the religious end toward which we are

accelerating? A moment when the light of inner awakening radiates throughout the world? A white hole in time? Throughout the world there are those who tie this spiritual supernova experience, whether brought on by meditation, incantation, or Sufi dancing, as God Tracks.

Now we're getting into the Ooo –Ooo part of religion, stretching the measures and definition of science. But that's OK. Maybe this isn't the business of science.

We've seen that the hard and soft sciences tend to support the acceleration theories in the three primary areas that influence the direction of the human condition. And reasonable arguments can be made that the direction of all three point toward a unification of society. A unification resulting from a myriad of decisions made in billions of heads as each of us makes our everyday choices moving toward a foggy future. My old co-hort from the late '80's, an avid fan of unification, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, "True Father" of the Unification Church, would be pleased – that's a story I'll have to tell you some day.

But what of God Tracks among all these trail markers indicating progress toward a World-wide love blob? Shermer again: Gods that live only in people's heads are far more powerful than those that live "somewhere out there" for the simple reason that (1) we can't be positive there are any of the latter variety around, and (2) the ones in our heads actually affect our lives and, of course, the lives of those we interact with and everything else we touch. What you have in your head begins to define what feelings you will have in any particular situation or, even more important, what actions you will take on behalf of those feelings. The fact is that you will have, indeed you must have, a belief system that has moral and ethical dimensions, while you may, or may not justify that belief system, implicitly or explicitly in terms of a God or gods. For those who believe that we created gods, not the other way around, that doesn't make God in some minds any less "real." Indeed, it makes God all the more powerful. So, yes, I believe in the existence of, and, maybe to some extent fear, the God in your head, and all the gods in the heads of others. They are real, omnipresent, and something approaching

omnipotent in many of the heads around us. And through those individuals, they definitely leave God tracks.

Ken Wilber offers an interesting perspective: “The distance between man and the gods is not all that much greater than the distance between beasts and man. We have already closed the latter gap, and there is no reason to suppose that we shall not eventually close the former.” If Wilber is right, we need to define our gods with care if that’s our destiny.

Once more let’s think of the World Trade Center towers as a metaphor for the acceleration of change. If the distance between first life and us is 83 floors and we’ve been “us” as a philosophical creature roughly from the Greeks to now, less than an inch, can we be far from these gods that occupy our heads? Maybe the important God tracks are those leading forward toward the horizon rather than ones over our shoulder from where we came.