

# TEILHARD PERSPECTIVE

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## Teilhard and the Interbeing of Cosmology and Community

### Reflections

*A Few Words from ATA President, John Grim*

So much happens during the course of a year, but the loss of dear friends of the Teilhard Association focuses all of us to see in new ways. The passing of Jim McPartlin and Robert Francoeur marks such a moment and the memorials below can only begin to sketch all that they have meant and given to this work. We dedicate this issue to them and their wonderful generosity, humor, and commitment..

While teaching a course titled "Religion, Ecology, and Cosmology" at Princeton this Fall

semester 2012, Mary Evelyn Tucker and I have been considering ways in which religious traditions address ecological challenges in the contexts of their cosmologies or stories about the meaning of the

world. For Teilhard, of course, the "human phenomenon" was more deeply understood in the context, or story as Thomas Berry would say, of evolution that the science community explores. This close relationship of



Apses of the basilica of [Sant'Apollinare](#) in Ravenna Italy.  
Photo courtesy of Berthold Werner, Wikimedia Commons

religion and cosmology appears in

striking ways in religious art. One religious tradition in which this close relationship of religion and cosmology is central is Greek Orthodox Christianity. One place in which Orthodoxy dramatically expresses the relationships of religion and cosmology is in the Basilica of St. Apollinare in Classe near the northern Italian city of Ravenna.

Ravenna is a city where the mosaics gleam with exquisite beauty. Their intricate patterns have been crafted and preserved in church ceilings and walls for centuries. These images are among the oldest Christian iconography and include a rich display of plant and animal life symbolizing the plenitude of creation. They provide a stunning array of biblical stories and saintly legends that still inspire down to the present day. In Ravenna the mosaics in the apse over the altar of the Basilica of St. Apollinare evoke a feeling for creation as a deep orientation toward and prefiguration of paradise. The insights into creation as a paradise are developed in Eastern Orthodox theology.

The imprint of Orthodox Christianity in this mosaic of paradise is evident in its cosmological orientation and grounding in an Edenic nature. This is also the first time an historical human figure is depicted in a Christian mosaic. It is St. Apollinare, the first bishop of Ravenna and also a martyr, whose relics used to rest under the altar of this Basilica. His suffering is likened to Christ on the cross and his luminous transformation corresponds to that of Christ in the Transfiguration. He is portrayed with hands raised to the cross above him, but he is fully ensconced in the natural world of paradise. Thus, a relationship is presented in which transcendence is wholly immanent in a world of living ecologies.

Deep green grasses hold the trees and the birds. Trees include: plane, olive, myrtle, and cypress along with doves, partridges, quails, and phoenix. The twelve lambs below represent the twelve disciples as well as the coming of the faithful. The three lambs under the cross represent Peter, James, and John at the Transfiguration. The cross in the center is decorated with jewels and glows against the background of the luminous blue vault of heaven streaming with stars. The unity of heavenly and earthly realms is depicted here. Above it all is the figure of Christ whose hand is raised in benediction, flanked by the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in animal forms.

This mosaic of the mythic Garden of Eden presents the powerful symbolic charge of paradise in all of Christianity. The question of the relationships of this mythic symbolism to the actual reality of animals, plants, waters, and minerals within Christianity has been a vexing one. While the historian, Lynn White, described Christianity as being anthropocentric and ultimately failing in its care for the natural world, his insights may apply more to religious values transmitted in aspects of other

Christian traditions. The Orthodox forms of Christianity, as the apse mosaic at St. Apollinare suggests, hold a stronger belief in the connection of the divine and material reality, even calling it a unity.

This unity of heaven and Earth is a fundamental cosmological orientation and grounding in Orthodox Christianity. Images of this unity in Orthodoxy emphasize the Incarnation as an affirmation of materiality. Through the mosaics themselves the luminosity of the cosmos is revealed as a religious modality. The precious materials and brilliant colors draw one into the chromatic spectrum of nature from which the stones originate. In addition, the luster of the materials brings the viewer into an intense experience of divine light illuminating all creation. Earth becomes an icon through which the radiance of the divine shines forth. The mosaics evoke many of the theological teachings of Orthodox Christianity, ones especially that the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, has sought to retrieve and reevaluate in his many symposiums on water. Bartholomew, also known as the “Green Patriarch” is the titular head of the Eastern Orthodox Church who has shown exceptional leadership regarding environmental issues especially focused on water.

**After many years of service,  
Arthur Fabel will be stepping  
down as editor of the *Teilhard  
Perspective*.**

**All of us at the American  
Teilhard Association wish to  
express our deep gratitude to  
Art for his hard work  
and dedication to the  
association.**

## James McPartlin 1929 – 2012



We sadly note the passing of a stalwart member of the American Teilhard Association. Jim, with his wife Jayne, was involved in Teilhardian activities for some 30 years. I (Arthur Fabel) remember attending with Jim and Jayne the 1981 Teilhard Centenary conference at Georgetown University, organized by the late Thomas King, SJ, and James Salmon, SJ.

Around 1993, when the ATA had need for someone to take over important Treasurer and other legal duties, at a meeting on Thomas Berry's porch in Riverdale, Jim agreed to fill this role. He and Jayne set up a "Teilhard" room for this purpose in their house in Syosset, Long Island. With help from friends Ron Swierski, his late wife, Lee, and others, they carefully managed our financial affairs.

With their Syosset group, they further contributed by setting up the tables and bringing beverages for Annual Meetings in New York City. An affable fellow, Jim would wear on vacations and travels a baseball cap with the name "Teilhard" embroidered on its front, sure to start interesting conversations.

We at the American Teilhard Association send our deepest condolences to Jim's devoted wife, Jayne Ann, and the rest of their family. He will be sorely missed

*What follows is the full text of Jim's obituary from the August 8, 2012 issue of Long Island Newsday.*

### **Syosset teacher James McPartlin, 83, dies**

It was life's larger questions that captivated James McPartlin.

A Syosset High School English teacher for 24 years, his engaging teaching style included a penchant for taking students to watch the morning sunrise and re-enacting scenes from the 1943 novella, "The Little Prince."

He died July 31 at age 83 of congestive heart failure in a Port Washington hospice.

Teens from many different religious denominations once crowded into a small room at St. Edward The Confessor School in Syosset to discuss spirituality with McPartlin, who taught catechism at the Roman Catholic school in the 1970s. "When the kids found out about it, you know, the word spread and his class grew, and they would just all cram into this closet and discuss the big questions of life," said Jayne Ann McPartlin, of Syosset, his wife of 43 years and a former student.

Born Jan. 28, 1929, to James and Elizabeth McPartlin, McPartlin grew up in Mineola and attended Corpus Christi School in Mineola and Bishop Loughlin High School in Brooklyn. After graduation, he served two tours as a Marine in the Korean War. Jim, as friends called him, came home in 1955 and followed his father's path, working for five years as a Wall Street order clerk. With financial assistance from the G.I. Bill, McPartlin also took night courses at Hofstra University.

Halfway through his undergraduate studies in English, he had a revelation, his wife said. Her husband had decided to become an English teacher and the school's dean, Hyman Lichenstein, helped him pursue his dream, Jayne McPartlin said. "Teaching was a tremendous part of my husband's life." While a teacher at Syosset High School from 1960 to 1984, McPartlin "made books come alive," said former student Jim Klurfeld, a Stony Brook visiting professor and former Newsday editorial pages editor.

"You know that film, 'Dead Poets Society'?" son Peter of Santa Monica, Calif., said. "Well, a lot of people thought that was based on my dad. Standing on desks and stuff, that was him. He was energetic, interactive."

Former Syosset High teacher Gus Franza met Jim when he began teaching, and said Jim's love of storytelling made him stand out as a teacher. "The Old Irish gift for gab, that's what he had," Franza, of Moriches, said. "Except it wasn't really gab, it was pure storytelling. . . . And of course the kids loved him."

He kept in touch with students after he retired, his wife said. "He had a great belief in the future and he saw students as carrying things forward."

## Robert T. Francoeur 1931-2012

We also sadly report the passing of another dedicated Teilhardian, Robert T. Francoeur. Bob Francoeur was one of the earliest scholars of Teilhard's work in the United States. In 1959 he published *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: His Thought*, the first English translation of Teilhard's work ever to appear in the U.S., and he was instrumental in the founding of the ATA and served as its first president in 1967. For further information on Robert Francoeur's importance to the ATA, go to the "History of the Association" section of our website found at <http://teilharddechardin.org/index.php/preface>

We honor Dr. Francoeur's tremendous contribution and send our deepest condolences to his children and grandchildren. What follows are excerpts from his obituary.



**Robert T. (Bob) Francoeur, Ph.D., A.C.S.**, of Rockaway, NJ, died early Monday morning, October 15, 2012. Cause of death was complications of Parkinson's. On October 17<sup>th</sup> he was laid to rest in the natural burial section at Maryrest Cemetery in Mahwah, NJ. Father

Joseph Farias of St. Thomas More Church, Convent Station, NJ, officiated at the grave site before a gathering of family and close friends.

Dr. Francoeur was born on October 18, 1931, in Detroit, Michigan, to George Antoine Francoeur and Julia Russell. He is survived by his wife, Anna (Kotlarchyk) of Rockaway, NJ, his daughters Nicole Francoeur of Sparta, NJ, and Danielle and son-in-law Joseph Murray of Newark, Delaware. He also leaves behind two young grandchildren, Aeryn Noelle and Nicholas Brisco Murray. In addition he is also survived by his brother, George Russell Francoeur of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. An ordained Catholic

priest, Robert received permission to marry Anna in 1967 without being laicized.

Dr. Francoeur received a B.A. in philosophy and English at Sacred Heart College; an M.A. in Catholic theology at Saint Vincent College; an M.S. in biology at the University of Detroit; a Ph.D. in experimental embryology at the University of Delaware; and the A.C.S. (American College of Sexologists) certification in sexology at the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality (IASHS).

Dr. Francoeur's main work was to synthesize and integrate the findings of primary sexological researchers. He was the author of 22 books, contributor to 78 textbooks, handbooks, and encyclopedias, author of 58 technical papers on various aspects of sexuality, and editor-in-chief of *The Complete Dictionary of Sexology* (1991, 1995). He considered his last work, the award-winning *Continuum Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality* (2004), which he edited with Ray Noonan, to be his legacy that would live on.

He is also credited with helping to introduce and popularize French philosopher and Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, to American audiences. He wrote the foreword to the first English translation of Teilhard's writing, *The Appearance of Man*, in 1965. He founded The American Teilhard de Chardin Association in 1964, and served as its first president.

He was Professor Emeritus of human sexuality at Fairleigh Dickinson University where he taught from 1971 to 1998 in the Biology and Allied Health Sciences department. He was also Adjunct Professor in the doctoral Program in Human Sexuality at New York University and Professor in the New York University "Sexuality in Two Cultures" program in Copenhagen, Denmark. Dr. Francoeur was honored with numerous accolades throughout his career.

Dr. Francoeur was a teacher who believed the unfettered inquiry and decimation of knowledge related to human sexuality. With that knowledge came the potential for full individual development.





## **Pierre Teilhard, SJ and Walter Ong, SJ**

### **Affinities of their Interests and Thought**

Thomas J. Farrell

The readers of this newsletter are familiar with the life and thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. (1885-1955). The life of Walter J. Ong, S.J. (1912-2003) intersected Teilhard's in the early 1950s, when Ong had a room in the Jesuit residence in Paris where Teilhard had a room. At that time Ong became familiar with Teilhard's thought. He then became one of the first American authors to write about Teilhard's thought for an American audience. Over his long and productive life, he never tired of referring to Teilhard, as we can see in these selections from a 1967 article by Walter Ong specifically on his friendship with and appreciations of Teilhard. It was published in *The Jesuit Bulletin* of the Missouri Province, volume 46, number 1. February 1967. Here are a few excerpts from **"I Remember Pere Teilhard"** by Walter J. Ong, S.J.:

"Teilhard is important enough to warrant the recording of even random reflections from those who knew him. I am happy to be among those who did. When in mid-November, 1950, I moved from London to the Jesuit house in Paris at 15 rue Monsieur (generally known as *Etudes* from the monthly magazine published there). I found my self assigned a room across the corridor from Pere Teilhard. Thus began my first knowledge of him and his work. We lived across from one another until he left for the United States via Africa in the summer of 1951.

Pere Teilhard was only five months younger than my father, and indeed one of the older men in the community. He had suffered a heart attack only a few

years before. He seemed, however, as young as any of us, physically spry, alert in mind, in touch with everything.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin has done great service to the theology of our time. He has helped us to become aware of the spiritual climate of our era. He has enabled us to deepen our understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption in the framework of modern cosmology. He has drawn up a new formulation of holiness and has contributed to the emergence of a new type of Christian.

By 1953, the focus of his interest in human beginnings had shifted from China to Africa. He told me that he himself had been instrumental in convincing the Wenner-Gren Foundation that it should concentrate more on Africa as almost certainly the cradle of the human race.

Teilhard's own works bear testimony to his deep spirituality. One of the qualities of Teilhardian spirituality is that it can be introduced readily into a good deal of twentieth-century conversation. All Teilhard's thought was close to discourse. Like some other vigorous thinkers, he himself liked to talk and developed his thinking largely in the process of communicating it.

Father Teilhard has little interest in the politics of ideas compared to his interest in ideas themselves. He had a deep faith in the Church and in her commitment to truth. On the other hand, he never appeared to think that he had a vision of the truth so sure that the Church could be counted on to see things immediately or even eventually just the way he saw them. My impression always was that his thinking was alive, insightful, daring, but generally somewhat tentative and subject to future adjustment. He had a vision which he had to struggle to articulate. It was perfectly clear that in all things he submitted his own judgment to Christ in his Church. He lived for his Catholic faith and took the achievements and setbacks in his life alike as integral to his own spiritual development."

This essay will unfold in two parts. First, I survey Ong's life and work. Next, I expand on John A. Grim's work on indigenous traditions, borrowing the subtitle of his book to be my second subheading and the theme for the second part of the essay about Ong's contribution.

## A Survey of Walter J. Ong's Life and Work

Walter Jackson Ong, Jr., was born on November 30, 1912, in Kansas City, Missouri, to Walter Jackson Ong, Sr. (1880-1954), a Protestant who was born in New Orleans, and his wife Blanche Eugenia Mense Ong (1883-1956), a Catholic who was born in Kansas City, Missouri. The Ong family name is English; for centuries the family name was spelled "Onge"; it is probably related to the English name "Yonge." The first Onge (sic) family members came from East Anglia to Massachusetts Bay Colony on the same ship that brought Roger Williams here in 1631. Walter Sr. and Walter Jr. have the middle name "Jackson" to commemorate the family's relative President Andrew Jackson.

Walter Jr. and his younger brother Richard Mense Ong (1915-1992) attended Catholic schools, including Rockhurst High School and Rockhurst College (now Rockhurst University), both Jesuit educational institutions. Nevertheless, later in life Father Ong vigorously insisted that he did not grow up in what Catholic sociologists have styled the "Catholic ghetto," or subculture. After all, his father's side of the family was Protestant and he received his PhD at Harvard.

Armed with three graduate degrees that he had earned as part of his Jesuit training (in English, philosophy, and theology, all from Saint Louis University), the recently ordained Jesuit priest Father Ong advanced to Harvard University to undertake doctoral studies there in English. Beforehand, he had determined to undertake to do his doctoral dissertation on the French logician and educational reformer and Protestant martyr Peter Ramus (1515-1572). Earlier, Perry Miller in English at Harvard had written about Ramus's thought to the best of his ability in his book *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Harvard University Press, 1939). Miller reports that among the college-educated people in New England in the seventeenth century, he found only one self-described Aristotelian – everybody else was a self-described Ramist, a follower of Ramus's logic. The self-described Ramists in New England in the seventeenth century were educated at Cambridge University in East Anglia, where Ramist logic found a home. The most famous person trained in Ramist logic at Cambridge University is probably John Milton (1608-1674), who later in his life wrote a logic textbook in Latin based on Ramus's logic: *Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio, ad Petri Rami Methodum Concinnata*, translated as *A Fuller Course in the Art of*

*Logic Conformed to the Method of Peter Ramus* by Ong and Charles J. Ermatinger in volume eight of Yale's *Complete Prose Works of John Milton: 1666-1682* (1982, pages 206-407, with an historical introduction by Ong, pages 139-205). However that may be, toward the end of Miller's 1939 book, he called for a fuller study of Ramus's thought. About a decade later, Ong stepped forward to undertake such a study, with Miller serving as the director.

With the financial assistance of two Guggenheim fellowships, Ong was able to live abroad for about four years, including three full years in Paris (from November 17, 1950 to November 16, 1953). Ong worked in more than 100 libraries in the British Isles and Continental Europe tracking down the more than 750 volumes that he describes briefly in *Ramus and Talon Inventory* (Harvard University Press, 1958). Ong dedicates *Ramus and Talon Inventory* to Herbert Marshall McLuhan "who started all this," meaning McLuhan had started Ong's interest in Ramus's work. McLuhan (1911-1980) had encountered Ramus's work in connection with his 1943 Cambridge University doctoral dissertation on Thomas Nashe (1567-1601) and the verbal arts. When Ong was studying philosophy at Saint Louis University as part of his Jesuit training, he also worked on a Master's in English, which is how he came to know McLuhan. Who taught English there from 1937 to 1944. McLuhan served as the director of Ong's 1941 Master's thesis on sprung rhythm in the poetry of the Victorian Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins.

From Paris, Ong dispatched a lengthy review essay about McLuhan's 1951 book *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* that was published in the new journal *Social Order*, volume 2, number 2 (February 1952): pages 79-85, published out of Saint Louis University, the Jesuit university in St. Louis, Missouri, from which Ong had received three graduate degrees and in which he would subsequently teach English from 1954 to 1984, when he retired. In one subsection captioned "Three Spheres of Being" (page 84), Ong calls attention to Teilhard's thought:

For some time now in France, a favorite way of conceiving the earth engages it in spheres once more [echoing the ancient harmony of the spheres that Ong has discussed earlier]. There was first the earth's surface, a "cosmosphere," a surface devoid of life, unified by mere continuity. Then this was slowly infiltrated by a self-perpetuating network of

living organisms, with an interlaced dependence on one another, to form a more highly unified surface than before, the “biosphere.” In a third stage, slowly, man, with human intelligence, has made his way over the surface of the earth into all its parts, and now in our own day – with the whole world alerted simultaneously every day to goings-on in Washington, Paris, London, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, and (with reservations) Moscow – human consciousness has succeeded in enveloping the entire globe in a third and still more perfect kind of sphere, the sphere of intelligence, the “noosphere,” as it has been styled by Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. Begun in the noosphere before it was the complete envelope it is today, the work of Redemption continues in this same noosphere[,] through it involving all lower creation, for the “spheres” interpenetrate and react on one another.

Through this passage Ong became one of the first American writers to write about Teilhard’s thought and call Teilhard’s thought to the attention of American Catholics. In his first book, *Frontiers in American Catholicism: Essays on Ideology and Culture* (Macmillan, 1957), which does not have an index, Ong mentions Teilhard on pages 1, 37, and 92. Over his lifetime, as mentioned, Ong never tired of referring to Teilhard. Fortunately, Ong’s other books contain indexes, so interested readers can use the indexes to locate specific places where Ong discusses Teilhard.

As a cultural historian, from the early 1950s onward, Ong developed a sweeping phenomenological account of cultural history, emphasizing what he styles “noetics.” I would suggest that Ong’s sweeping phenomenological account of cultural history from oral tradition in oral cultures down to our present time can be understood to be in effect a phenomenological history of the noosphere. In the 1950s and 1960s, Ong adumbrated his emerging sweeping account in four collections of his own essays and in two book-length studies. The four collections of his essays, all published by Macmillan, are (1) *Frontiers in American Catholicism* (1957), mentioned above, (2) *American Catholic Crossroads: Religious-Secular Encounters in the Modern World* (1959), (3) *The Barbarian Within: And Other Fugitive Essays and Studies* (1962), and (4) *In the Human Grain: Further Explorations of Contemporary Culture* (1967). Teilhard students would probably find Ong’s three essays about evolutionary thought in *In the*

*Human Grain* (pages 61-82, 83-98, and 99-126) most interesting.

Ong’s massively researched doctoral dissertation about Ramus and Ramism was published in two volumes by Harvard University Press in 1958: (1) *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (2) *Ramus and Talon Inventory*, mentioned above. In *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, Ong works with the aural-visual contrast that he credits (page 338, note 54) the French philosopher Louis Lavelle (1883-1951) with developing. For his services to French culture, the French government knighted Ong in 1963, an honor rarely conferred on anyone who is not a French citizen.

In the spring of 1964, Ong delivered the Terry Lectures at Yale University, the expanded version of which Yale University Press published as *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (1967). This accessible book is arguably one of the most intellectual ambitious books published in the twentieth century, as is Teilhard’s book *The Human Phenomenon* (1999).

In the 1970s, Cornell University Press published two 350-page collections of studies by Ong: (1) *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (1971) and (2) *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (1977). Ong’s use of the term “evolution” in the subtitle shows that he himself aligns his own sweeping phenomenological culture history with the larger paradigm of cosmic evolution.

For readers who are not familiar with Ong’s thought, I should point out that Ong published three accessible short books in the 1980s, each of which is summative in nature, summing up themes in Ong’s earlier books and essays: (1) *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* (Cornell University Press, 1981), which is the published version of Ong’s 1979 Messenger Lectures at Cornell University; (2) *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (Methuen, 1982), which has gone through more than thirty printings in English and has been translated into eleven other languages; and (3) *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (University of Toronto Press, 1986), which is the published version of Ong’s 1981 Alexander Lectures at the University of Toronto. I would recommend that you start your reading of Ong by reading *Hopkins, the Self, and God*.

## The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community

John A. Grim, the president of the American Teilhard Association, has devoted his scholarly life to studying indigenous traditions in the world. For example, Grim has edited and contributed to the 750-page collection *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community* (Harvard Divinity School Center for the Study of World Religions, 2001; distributed by Harvard University Press). In Ong's terminology, indigenous cultures are oral cultures. In connection with studying indigenous traditions, I would like to mention Ong's thought-provoking essay "World as View, World as Event" in the *American Anthropologist*, volume 71, number 4 (August 1969): pages 634-647. Indigenous traditions exemplify the world-as-event sense of life. So the interbeing of cosmology and community is an expression of the world-as-event sense of life. But can Teilhard students today recover the sense of the interbeing of cosmology and community the indigenous traditions expressed? If not, why not?

In connection with the interbeing of cosmology and community, I would like to discuss Ong's culminating essay in *Frontiers in American Catholicism* (1957): "The Faith, the Intellectual, and the Perimeters" (pages 104-125). In it Ong sets forth certain observations and outlines certain suggestions for a Christian mystique, or spirituality.

*From pages 120-121:* "American Catholic thought need not necessarily concern itself specifically with dinosaurs or pterodactyls [in the history of evolution], but it seems unlikely that it can mature until it succeeds in dealing with America itself and America's particular place along the irreversible trajectory which history is describing. This is not a call to chauvinism or for a specialization in 'Americanology' based on the belief that this country is called by God to lead the rest of a benighted world to salvation. In fact, one of the difficulties facing the Catholic sensibility in the United States is precisely the tendency of many Catholics to let their understanding of the United States be defined by something like jingoism. The need for a Catholic appreciation of America in its historical setting arises not from the demands of patriotism but from the fact that one's intellectual maturity today is tied up with one's insight into and acceptance of one's own history in relation to the whole of history."

*From pages 121-122:* "If Catholic thought is to move further along these lines of contact with the American reality, what it needs is to envision a real Christian *mystique* of technology and science. That is, it needs to develop a real spiritual insight into technology and science which at least attempts to discover and discuss the philosophical and theological meaning of the technological and scientific trend which marks our age. It is certain that a mature understanding of this trend can never be arrived at until the American sensibility can transcend the impoverished frames of thought which can discern in post-Renaissance, or even in all postmedieval, developments nothing more than progressive secularization and materialization of society" (Ong's emphasis).

*Comment:* In the nearly 900-page book *A Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007), the Canadian Catholic author Charles Taylor has delineated in detail the trend toward the secular. But Ong's proposed Christian mystique, or spirituality, is designed to be the antidote to the secularization trends that Taylor details. Taylor uses the term that Max Weber helped popularize: the disenchantment of the world. In effect, Ong is exhorting American Catholics as individual persons to re-enchant the world, as it were, by sacramentalizing the world through their individual personal spirituality and by finding God in all things.

*From page 122:* "[T]his age," Ong writes in 1957, "is the age of victory over the tyranny of matter greater than the world has ever known before. Our present *concern* over becoming materialistic is something, after all, not only new but long overdue, and in this sense a real spiritual achievement of the twentieth century. In a similar way, this age, so often denounced as impersonal, has paid more explicit attention to the person than any other age in history. The philosophic movement known as personalism is a distinctive twentieth century movement" (Ong's emphasis).

*Comment:* Ong regularly characterized his own work as phenomenological and personalist in cast. Ong's framework here is philosophy. However, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, certain American Protestant theologians pioneered the theological movement of personalism. See, for example, Rufus Burrow's *Personalism: A Critical Introduction* (Chalice Press, 1999) and Burrow's *God and Human Dignity: The Personalism, Theology, and*



*Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). Dr. King's personalist spirituality is the kind of personalist spirituality that Ong urges his fellow American Catholics to cultivate.

*From pages 123-124:* "As a foundation for their own intellectual self-possession, Catholics in the United States need a *mystique* of more than technology and science. They need also a Christian *mystique* of such things as sports and lunch clubs . . . and indeed a *mystique* of the whole social surface which is a property of life in the United States. This social surface is maintained in great part by the arts of communication in the peculiar and highly developed conditions in which these arts exist in the United States. Here what the ancient world knew as 'rhetoric' or 'oratory' – the art of swaying other men, conceived as more or less the crown of all education – long ago migrated from the faculties of languages into the university course in commerce and finance, where it is taught under labels such as 'advertising,' or 'copy writing,' or 'merchandizing' and 'marketing' and 'salesmanship.' This twentieth century rhetoric, like all rhetoric, has a strong personalist torque – it has ultimately to face the problem of dealing with the individual as an individual – and has given rise to the American stress on personal relations and personnel problems and adjustments which has appeared as one of the great, and not entirely unsuccessful, compensatory efforts of a mechanistic civilization, grown self-conscious, to deal with its own peculiar shortcomings. American Catholics need a *mystique* of this peculiar American personalism, too."

*From page 124:* "Catholics in the United States could well do with a *mystique*, too, of American optimism, which they have by now assimilated perhaps more thoroughly than their Protestant neighbors, the originators of the optimism. This American optimism is psychologically linked with the hopeful facing into the future which so far has marked the American mind."

*From page 125:* "There was a time at the turn of the [twentieth] century when the Catholic consciousness in America seemed on the point of taking explicit intellectual cognizance of the forward-looking habits endemic in the American state of mind. . . . [T]he American Catholic has lived the myth of America, but he has hardly dared to speculate as to its meaning in relation to his faith, or to the spiritual, interior life which this faith demands of him."

*Comment:* For an excellent recent account of the American myth, as Ong terms it, see Sacvan Bercovitch's discussion of the American epic, as he terms it, in his lengthy preface to the 2011 edition of his classic 1975 work in American studies *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (Yale University Press, pages ix-xliii). As mentioned, Ong's multivariate cultural theory is epic in its sweep and scope, but for understandable scholarly reasons he does not explicitly use imagery from any epics, or imagery from any myths. However, he was an American Catholic. It is hard for me to imagine that somebody other than an American Catholic could have constructed the multivariate cultural theory that Ong constructed.

Ong did not succeed in his efforts to set his fellow American Catholics on fire in the 1950s with his suggestions about a Christian mystique, or spirituality. Even today his suggestions may be too visionary even for American Catholics who are seriously interested in spirituality. Nevertheless, his suggestions for a Christian mystique might serve to provoke further thought about spirituality today about how to find God in all things, which is the goal of Jesuit spirituality. I would point out that two of Ong's fellow Jesuits managed to work out in their own idiosyncratic ways the basic spirit of what Ong styles a Christian mystique, or spirituality: Gerard Manley Hopkins and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Not surprisingly, Ong never tired of referring to Hopkins and Teilhard. Ong brings his long-standing interest in these two fellow Jesuits together with his long-standing interest in Jesuit spirituality in his last book, *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (1986).

In conclusion, my book *Walter Ong's Contributions to Cultural Studies: The Phenomenology of the Word and I-Thou Communication*, revised edition (Hampton Press, 2012) offers a reader's guide to eleven of Ong's books and selected essays, plus a biographical sketch of his life and education. The late Thomas M. Walsh has compiled the definitive bibliography of Ong's publications, including information about translations and reprintings of his work. Walsh's bibliography of Ong's publications is included in the collection *Language, Culture, and Identity: The Legacy of Walter J. Ong, S.J.*, edited by Sara van den Berg and Walsh (Hampton Press, 2011, pages 185-245).

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## Teilhard and Turing

Arthur Fabel

The seemingly disparate, iconic 20<sup>th</sup> century personages of Pierre Teilhard (1881-1955), priest and paleontologist, and Alan Turing (1912-1954), computer pioneer, may yet be found to have a deep affinity. This note occurs in the Turing Centenary year, with many conferences and publications. Teilhard has become the archetype exemplar of a modern convergence of religion and science. But this requires that the novel genesis universe from matter to spirit he envisioned be accredited with and suffused by a creative “within of things.”



Alan Turing was a British “mathematician, logician, cryptanalyst, and computer scientist.” In the 1930s and 1940s, he worked out the principles of algorithmic computation which today are a basis for our worldwide generation. During WWII, at a British installation, he famously broke the German encryption with his Enigma machine, most critical to the Allies victory. His theories went on to informational programs that generate chemical and biological morphogenesis. A good entry would be *Turing’s Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe* by George Dyson (Pantheon, 2012). As a legacy, Alan Turing is now seen as representing a computational cosmos of dual software and hardware, broadly imagined. The Information Computation Turn section of the bibliographic Natural Genesis website has many references.

But it was coming across a 1967 book, from a citation in Dyson that drew their paths together. The volume, *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution* (Wistar Institute Press), is the proceedings from a Wistar Institute on Anatomy and Biology, Philadelphia, symposium on the subject. With premier mathematicians and biologists such as Stanislaw Ulam, Murray Eden, Ernst Mayr, Richard Lewontin, and especially Nils Barricelli, worth a chapter in

Dyson, it sought to offset at that stage an evolutionary theory seen as taking off in a wrong direction by a support for random selection as the only mechanism, sans any prior, formative forces.

Now Teilhard, quite respected for his archeological work, would not be in evidence except for initial intemperate remarks by the conference chair Peter Medawar. In 1961 Sir Peter, you may recall, wrote in the journal *Mind* a sarcastic denunciation of *The Phenomenon of Man*, which said more about the reviewer than the book. Teilhard’s opus has gone on to be chosen by Harper & Row as the leading spiritual book of the 20th century. But Medawar announced from the podium “Many of you will have read with incredulous horror the kind of pious bunk written by Teilhard de Chardin on this subject...”

However the next keynote speaker was the esteemed anthropologist and author Loren Eiseley, who took umbrage at this attack. “I would merely add one other comment here before we turn to the problems of the Symposium. I did know Father Teilhard. I knew him as a very great gentleman, I do not happen to agree with all of his ideas. On the other hand I have a high respect for him as a man. I would like to add in this connection that I think we forget at times that even almost to the end, Charles Darwin was also troubled, I suspect, in the back of his mind by some of these very (theological) problems that still concern us.”

A typical chapter going on might be “Algorithms and the Neo-Darwinian Theory of Evolution” by Marcel Schutzenberger of the University of Paris. The common theme of Alan Turing and Pierre Teilhard, from different approaches, was to appreciate, as a central feature, such a doubleness of original creative code, from which arises life’s emergent complexity. For Turing, and the digital view, notably Stephen Wolfram’s cellular automata, (see Sr. Kathleen Duffy’s *Teilhard Study* “The Texture of the Evolutionary Cosmos: Matter and Spirit in Teilhard de Chardin”) cosmic nature seems to somehow run mathematical programs that generate temporal and spatial patterns from galaxies to civilizations.

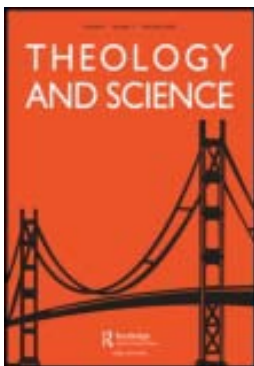
At the same time from 1968 to 1970 the renowned geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky became president of the American Teilhard Association when Pierre Dansereau returned to Canada. He similarly saw Teilhard, as Julian Huxley and others, to represent a long standing sense of an oriented procreative evolution, back to Darwin and earlier. But as it

turned out, from Jacques Monod in 1970, Stephen Jay Gould and others in the 80s and 90s, lately Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Jerry Coyne, and others that random selection alone now rules. Enshrined in biology textbooks, it is a one-sided reading of life's inherent development that has contributed to recent cultural arguments.

In retrospect, might these past decades of evolutionary study be seen as trying to explain animal bodily phenotypes without reference to a prohibited, excluded informative genotype. Teilhard passed away shortly after the finding of DNA molecules as the double helix vehicle. His conviction of a greater natural creation as a "cosmogensis," as "someone in gestation," was founded upon and required such an immaterial, internal agency as its motive origin. Might the algorithmic drive of Alan Turing's computational realm, in its 21<sup>st</sup> century versions, by a simple shift of metaphor, be appreciated as an intrinsic (parents to children) genetic code? And that would be a fine convergence of these prescient visionaries.

## Notable Books and Articles

Delio, Iliia, OSF. **Transhumanism or Ultrahumanism? Teilhard de Chardin on Technology, Religion and Evolution.** *Theology and Science*. 10/2, 2012.



Iliia Delio, a Franciscan sister with dual doctorates in pharmacology and historical theology, is currently at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University. She is the author of *Teilhard Study No. 60 Is the "World" a Problem?*, and most recently *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe* (Orbis Books, 2011).

As the Abstract next states, many technological schemes nowadays rework or alter human beings, especially as Ray Kurzweil's "singularity" version (search Natural Genesis), and are in much need of a leavening humanist and spiritual vision. It is then

proposed that no one has contributed better, more organic, spiritual guidance than Teilhard.

But a discernment of his writings is merited. His avocations in the 1940s and early 1950s of the technical promise of the day, and his prediction of a worldwide electronic noosphere, Teilhard is sometimes taken as a mentor. At the outset, Sr. Iliia notes philosopher Eric Steinhart for his 2008 paper "Teilhard de Chardin and Transhumanism" online in the *Journal of Evolution and Technology* (Vol. 20 Issue 1, December 2008 – p. 1-22. Full text available at: <http://jetpress.org/v20/steinhart.htm>)

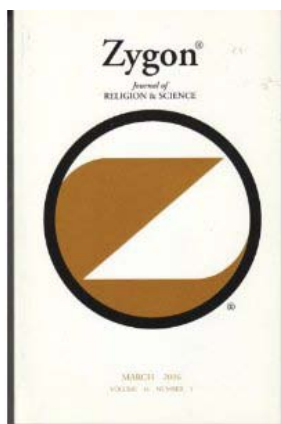
But Teilhard abides in a quite different cosmic gestation of rising biological intricacy, knowing sentience, and most of all creative union via love energy. Such increasing personalization in its human phase and phenomenon breaks through to commence a "Christogenesis." Aided by a planetary psycho-social convergence, in accord with and flowing from a viable biosphere, this earth and local community actually serves to empower individual persons.

Sr. Iliia Delio thus provides a rare, necessary check upon and helpful pathway for this excessive, machine, dehumanizing emphasis. And this is of real concern. I heard a presentation this spring at Hampshire College by a resident neuroscientist that in the coming "post-singularity" the student of the future will be a "cyborg." So Delio's luminous paper concludes: "Teilhard thought wide and deep, much more broadly than prolonging human brain power or overcoming disease. His was a cosmic vision, an evolution of religious spirit towards the fullness of union in love. We are still in Christogenesis, he proclaimed, and technology enables a new genesis of Christ who continues to evolve."

"Transhumanism is a term used to describe the enhancement of human life through technology, seeking to overcome biological limits. Teilhard de Chardin has been described as a transhumanist, but a closer examination of his ideas reveals his distinction of ultrahumanism, a deepening of the whole evolutionary process in and through the human person. This paper examines ultrahumanism and Teilhard's vision of technology in the evolution of religion." (Abstract)

Hefner, Philip. **A Fuller Concept of Evolution – Big Bang to Spirit.** *Zygon*. 47/2, 2012.

A wondrous synoptic vista from cosmos to children is achieved in this “Think Piece” by the emeritus University of Chicago professor of systematic theology. Phil Hefner has been for decades an advocate of Teilhard and friend of the Association. An early work, for example, was his *The Promise of Teilhard: The Meaning of the Twentieth century in the*



*Christian Perspective* (Lippincott, 1970). He was for many years the editor of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, from which, by his kind permission, a number of *Teilhard Studies* were reprinted.

An intention here is to move beyond current evolution debates by way of an overarching unitary vision. This involves some five “Acts:”

1. A Cosmic stage of physics and chemistry
2. A Biological emergence
3. Ontogeny – each of us is an evolutionary process
4. Bioculture becomes morality and
5. Enter spirituality.

We are thus invited to read God’s second book of works via its domains or essences of Matter, Transformation, Creativity, and Human Nature.

In this regard, human beings can be rightly appreciated as “Created Co-Creators,” continuing a theme in his 2003 work *Technology and Human Becoming*. This insight is expressed in the latter quotes, and here can be found, it is advised, the plot and point of the vast phenomenal narrative.

“The concept of evolution challenges us to an ongoing effort to interpret its significance. The challenge has several dimensions: (1) to calm the debate that divides Americans in arguing whether evolution is at odds with biblical traditions; (2) to integrate evolution into one’s personal philosophy of life or religious faith; (3) to note the importance of the story form for rendering evolution; and (4) to evaluate evolution as a creation story. Evolution is

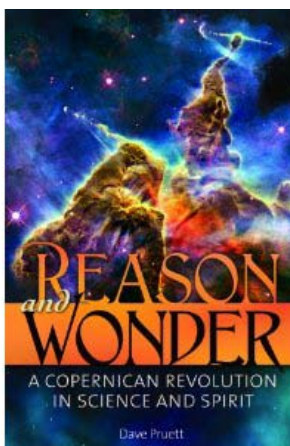
portrayed as a drama in five acts: cosmic, biological, cultural, moral, and spiritual. The discussion concludes with reflection on humans as co-creators whose task is to become the storytellers of evolution. The author presents this interpretation as a fuller concept of evolution.” (Abstract, 298)

“Let me elaborate on this idea of the created co-creator. The twentieth century French Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said that humans are “evolution become aware of itself.” That’s a good place to start for understanding the created co-creator. Consciousness and self-awareness have emerged in the development of the human brain, and we know of no other creature that is as complexly self-aware as are.” (305)

“We did not create ourselves as imaginers and creators, we were created by something greater than ourselves, by evolution, and the Epic of Evolution is our story. We are *created*. We do our creating on behalf of that which has created us, we do it for the sake of the creation itself and its evolution. We have a destiny, a vocation. Those who believe in a creator God will believe that we create for the sake of God’s will. Both those whose belief systems do not include a God and those that do can understand that we are created co-creators and evolution’s co-creators.” (305-306)

Pruett, Dave. **Reason and Wonder: A Copernican Revolution in Science and Spirit.** New York: Praeger, 2012.

Many thanks to Ursula King, emeritus University of Bristol theologian, UK, premier Teilhard scholar and author, for advising of this special volume. A former NASA scientist, Dave Pruett is an emeritus James



Madison University professor of mathematics. His interest in this vital endeavor began a decade ago when he innovated an honors course “From Black Elk to Black Holes: Shaping a Myth for a New Millennium.” A big hit with students, it garnered a Science-Religion



Course Award from the Templeton Foundation.

As one of the most astute, insightful editions of its kind, the work proceeds through three historic expansions of human understanding: its explorations across cosmological reaches and depths of space and time, life's emergent evolution from hydrogen to humankind, and thirdly in our day, the rise of psychic, noosphere consciousness, with its promise to "redefine the spiritual place of humans in the cosmic order."

Teilhard is seen to be of such central, unique importance as to merit a full chapter "A World Aflame." In so doing, it begins with a fine biographical survey with the subtitle A God of Iron. Young Pierre, it is noted, took to the earth sciences, but not much interested in catechism training. His later studies and thought is engaged in the section The Within and the Without.

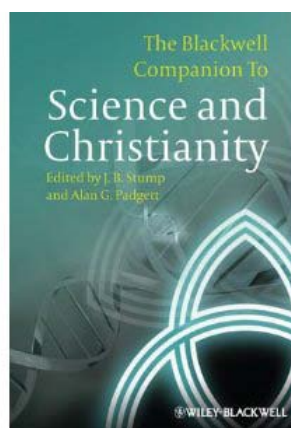
"Defining a moment in human self-awareness four centuries in the making, Reason and Wonder: A Copernican Revolution in Science and Spirit offers a way to move beyond the either/or choice of reason versus intuition—a dichotomy that ultimately leaves either the mind or the heart wanting. An outgrowth of his breakthrough undergraduate honors course, "From Black Elk to Black Holes: Shaping Myth for a New Millennium," Reason and Wonder embraces the insights of modern science and the wisdom of spiritual traditions to "re-enchant the universe." The new "myth of meaning" unfolds as the story of three successive "Copernican revolutions" — cosmological, biological, and spiritual — to offer an expansive, revolutionary view of human potential." (Publisher)

"In the human, evolution has reached a tipping point. We are the first species endowed with the ability to piece together the story of our origins. And what a story it is: the story of cosmogenesis. As the pieces to the cosmic puzzle fall into place, the picture that emerges is awesome to behold, nothing less than a new myth of creation that remains faithful to science's facts and to religion's values. Cosmogenesis bespeaks a universe that dynamically unfolds for an apparent purpose: the emergence of higher consciousness. (xxiii) Among the seers of the third Copernican revolution are the aforementioned French paleontologist priest Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) who coined the term cosmogenesis and about whom much more will be said in later chapters." (xxiii)

"Reading this book has given me immense intellectual satisfaction and filled me with great

wonder. Pruet's masterly account offers a breathtaking, awe-inspiring insight into the complex history of modern science with its successive revolutions in our understanding of space, time, matter, energy, and now spirit. The author is an accomplished story teller in command of an impressive range of facts, figures and events. A truly dazzling achievement. Following this intriguing tale opens up a vision of true audacity and grandeur that will change your thinking forever." **Ursula King**

Stump, J. B. and Alan Padgett, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.



At the outset, many thanks to James Salmon, SJ, metallurgist, Teilhardian scholar, and friend for many years, for advising of this significant volume. It is distinguished by 54 chapters in nine sections:

Historical Episodes; Methodology; Natural Theology; Cosmology & Physics; Evolution; The Human Sciences; Christian Bioethics; Metaphysical Implications; The Mind; Theology; Significant Figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Full contents are on the publisher's site.

And of especial note is "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin" by James Salmon, in collaboration with Nicole Schmitz-Moormann. This succinct entry to Teilhard is achieved via an Introduction to his life and vision, Cosmic Life, the essay he wrote during WWI sets the scenario.

"Ecology and the Environment" by Lisa Sideris, professor of religious studies at Indiana University, engages this issue of religion and sustainability. At the outset, she notes that a new universe is called for, no longer mechanical but a "self-organizing, spontaneous relationality." In regard is advised a "Storied Nature" by turns from Pierre Teilhard, John Haught, Holmes Rolston, and of course Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. An excerpt appears below.



*Lisa Sideris*: “A movement gaining great momentum within ecotheology, and with the scientifically literate public, is the Universe Story. Some offshoots of this movement go by the name Epic of Evolution, and its proponents range from atheists to religious naturalists to more or less traditional Christians. The central figure in this movement is Thomas Berry, a Roman Catholic priest who was strongly influenced by Teilhard’s work, as well as Eastern philosophy and religion, Native American religions, and the science of cosmology. Berry characterized himself as a “geologist” – historian of the earth and earth processes. The New Story tells the scientific narrative of the universe – the whole, unfolding cosmogenesis – in mythopoetic form. We find ourselves in a new “ecozoic age” in which the universe, in the form of humans, has become conscious of itself. This story allows us to know our place in the universe, to experience profound kinship with all life, and to discern our obligations to safeguard the future unfolding of the great story. Each of our lives comprises a personal evolution embedded within the great cosmic unfolding. The Universe Story thus confers meaning to individual lives while reminding us that, from the grand perspective of the cosmos it makes little sense to think of our species having dominion over earth.

Since Berry’s death in 2009 at age 94, his work has been carried forward most notably by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, historians of religion with expertise in Confucianism and Indigenous Traditions and founders of the Forum on Religion and Ecology. Tucker and Grim teamed up with Brian Swimme to create a documentary film called *Journey of the Universe* that “draws together scientific discoveries in astronomy, geology, biology, ecology, and biodiversity with humanistic insights concerning the nature of the universe... to inspire a new and closer relationship with Earth in a period of growing environmental and social crisis.” (412-413)

The American Teilhard  
Association

## **Annual Meeting**

will be held on

**Saturday May 11, 2013**

at Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway at 121st St.  
New York City, NY

Lunch 12:00 pm

Talk 1:30pm

Mary Evelyn Tucker will be  
speaking on

### **"The Teilhardian Roots of *Journey of the Universe*"**

*Mary Evelyn Tucker is the Vice  
President of the American Teilhard  
Association, co- director of the Yale  
Forum on Religion and Ecology, and  
one of the writers and executive  
producers of the Emmy award winning  
film Journey of the Universe*

Lunch and lecture \$25.00

Lecture only \$10.00

For more information on the event and  
to register go to the Events listings at:  
**teilharddechardin.org**

## **American Teilhard Association, Thomas Berry, and Journey of the Universe Websites**

At the new ATA site [www.teilharddechardin.org](http://www.teilharddechardin.org) can be found a Biography, List of Writings, Pictures and Quotes, Life Timeline, ATA Events, Teilhard Studies with first page, recent full Teilhard Perspectives, Membership info, Links, and a Brian Swimme interview on Teilhard.

The Thomas Berry site [www.thomasberry.org](http://www.thomasberry.org) offers a Biography by Mary Evelyn Tucker, a John Grim essay: "Time, History, Historians in Thomas Berry's Vision," Writings by Thomas Berry, comments on his *The Great Work*, Films about or inspired by, and a List of Books.

A new site [www.journeyoftheuniverse.org](http://www.journeyoftheuniverse.org) introduces this title film, book and educational series by Brian Swimme, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and an advisory board to carry forward in multimedia fashion the inspiration of Pierre Teilhard and Thomas Berry.

## **Teilhard Perspective**

TEILHARD PERSPECTIVE is published by the American Teilhard Association, a non-profit organization whose goals are to explore philosophical, scientific, religious, social and environmental concerns in light of Teilhard's vision and to clarify the role of the human phenomenon in this emerging understanding of the cosmos.

We welcome suggestions of relevant ideas, books, news, events and contributions of articles for this newsletter. The editor is Tara Trapani, Yale University. The *Teilhard Perspective* newsletter along with the biannual *Teilhard Studies* pamphlet and Annual Meeting notices are available through membership. Please contact us at: American Teilhard Association, c/o John Grim, 29 Spoke Drive, Woodbridge, CT 06525. Annual membership is \$35.

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