

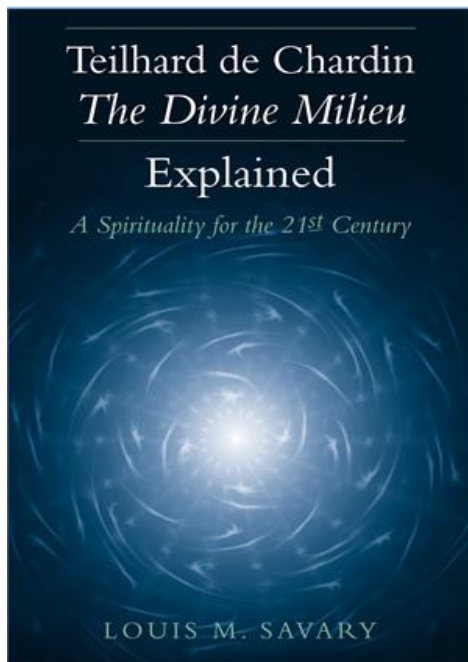
TEILHARD PERSPECTIVE

Volume 41, Number 2

Fall 2008

Teilhard de Chardin: The Divine Milieu Explained

by Louis Savary Wins 2008 Spirituality Book of the Year Award



After years literally on the shelf, a publishing renaissance is underway of significant, award winning Teilhardian editions. We first noted this Paulist Press volume by the mathematician and theologian in the last Perspective. The luminous work has now won for 2008 the best paperback spirituality book from the Catholic Press Association. This is the same award that our *Teilhard in the 21st Century* (Orbis Books), a select collection of Teilhard Studies, won in 2003. We next offer excerpts from the Author's Foreword, a review by Dr. Kathleen Duffy, and the CPA award statement (Google for website).

From the Author's Foreword

At about the same time as Salvador Dali was becoming well known as a Surrealist painter in Europe during the 1920s, a young Jesuit priest-scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, in quasi-exile from Europe, was working in China as a geologist and paleontologist. In his spare time, he began putting together his ideas about a spirituality that would bring together all the discoveries being made in science and integrate them with what he knew about God, especially what God was trying to accomplish in the world. He called his manuscript *The Divine Milieu*.

The Divine Milieu is a revolutionary book of Christian spirituality. So revolutionary, in fact, that his religious superiors refused to let him have it published. Though Teilhard, as everyone called him, finished writing it around the year 1929, it was never brought to light until after his death, in French in 1957 and in English translation in 1960. Even today, half a century later, few understand it and many are suspicious of it, because it appears to fly in the face of traditional Christian piety. But, while it is still utterly contemporary and revolutionary—different from any

American Teilhard Association 2009 Annual Meeting

Save this date, Saturday, April 4 for our yearly get together to be again held at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Thomas King, SJ will be our speaker on "Teilhard: The Anthropic Principle and Intelligent Design." A full announcement will be mailed to all members.

other spiritual book you ever read—it is Christian in its roots and to its core. It is joyful, hopeful, and full of enthusiasm, as any Christian spirituality should be. It expresses a love for nature, a delight in scientific discoveries, a rejoicing in human progress, and an underlying almost childlike trust in a benevolent universe evolving in the unconditional love of a benevolent and all-forgiving God. In fact, this book offers to us perhaps the only integrative spirituality that can truly satisfy our 21st Century experience.

... I am hoping to take you through the paragraphs and sections of *The Divine Milieu*, following exactly its original outline and structure, and to help reveal some of the riches hidden there. After almost every section, I suggest a simple spiritual reflection that should help personalize and concretize the ideas and insights Teilhard has presented.

Almost 400 years before Teilhard wrote *The Divine Milieu*, St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order, the Society of Jesus, designed a powerfully transformative system of spiritual practices, called *The Spiritual Exercises*. Ever since then, and even today, people seeking spiritual growth have been, as the Jesuits say, “making the Exercises.” Everyone agrees it can be a life-changing event.

If you were to “make” the Exercises, your culminating experience would be the “Contemplation for Attaining the Love of God” (*Contemplatio ad Amorem*). In this almost mystical exercise, Ignatius hopes you will be graced with the “eyes to see” that it is within God, whose name is Love, that we live and move and have our existence. Living in God is like living in the air we breathe. God is the atmosphere, the environment, the divine milieu in which we spend our lives.

The *Spiritual Exercises* were a transforming experience for Teilhard, too. His purpose in writing *The Divine Milieu* was to share with us how he, as a Jesuit and as a dedicated scientist, learned to use the new eyes that Ignatius gave him in order to see spiritual reality today—in the world contemporary men and women live in, thoroughly informed and transformed by science and technology. (ix-xi)

Teilhard was a part of some of the scientific discoveries of the past century. He realized that humans would continue—as we have done—to make more and more discoveries like these about our world. And these discoveries I mentioned don’t even include those that have been made—and are being made daily—in the fields of physics, chemistry, psychology,

anthropology, neurobiology, and brain research, to name just a few.

Teilhard realized we needed a radically new kind of spirituality—an understanding of God and creation and our part in it—that could welcome and easily integrate all these important scientific facts of our existence into itself.

Most contemporary spiritualities, following tradition, usually put these scientific facts aside, assuming they have little to do with our spiritual lives. But in fact they permeate our very existence. They are part of the way we think today. We cannot put them aside. And Teilhard doesn’t, because, for him, everything we learn about creation is something we are learning about the Body of Christ—the Christ that lives today, the Christ who is as big as the cosmos. (xiii)

The Cosmic Christ

In *The Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius taught Teilhard how to dig deeply into the mind and heart of Jesus of Nazareth and how to be transformed by his suffering, death, and resurrection. In the sixteenth century when Ignatius lived, he knew nothing of the many scientific facts that are simply part of our daily assumptions about reality. For most people then, the flat earth was the center of God’s creation, and God lived up in the sky. And his traditional spirituality reflects those beliefs.

In *The Divine Milieu*, Teilhard the scientist takes us many centuries further in the life of Christ. He invites us to learn to see, as he does, not only the Christ of 2,000 years ago, but also the magnificent Being that the Risen Christ with his Total Body has developed into during two millennia. He also invites us to glimpse into Christ’s future, to identify the goal toward which that Total Body of Christ has been constantly evolving.

For Teilhard, Christ today is not just Jesus of Nazareth risen from the dead, but rather a huge, continually evolving Being as big as the universe. In this colossal, almost unimaginable Being each of us lives and develops in consciousness, like living cells in a huge organism. At various times, theologians have described this great Being as the Total Christ, the Cosmic Christ, the Whole Christ, the Universal Christ or the Mystical Body of Christ.

With the help of all the human sciences as well as the scriptures, Teilhard shows how we—the cells and members of the Body of Christ—can participate in and nurture the life of the Total Christ. He also shows, thanks to the continuing discoveries of science, how

we can begin to glimpse where that great Being is headed and how we can help promote its fulfillment.

Teilhard's spirituality identifies many ways we can help accomplish the Total Christ's divine destiny. It is Christ's divine task as well as ours to turn this fragmented world, through love of it in all of its visible and invisible dimensions, into one immense shining Being, the Body of Christ, glowing with divine energy. Christ the Lord, the head of this Body, has promised to be with us and guide us, from start to finish. He said, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:20)

At present, many of the cells of this Christ Body are unaware of their divine calling, unaware of how special they are in the eyes of God, and unconscious of the fact that they are already living their lives as part of this Cosmic Body. For Teilhard, this Cosmic Body is meant to become fully conscious of itself in every cell of its being in such a way that every cell is also conscious of the whole Body's magnificent destiny. When this Christ Body realizes itself as the divine reality it has always been meant to be, that moment will be what Teilhard calls the Omega Point. (See Rev 1:8)

It sounds like very heady stuff. That's because it is. (xiii-xv)

A Book Review by Kathleen Duffy

The spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin is a gift of grace for today - broad enough to incorporate cosmic and biological evolution and deep enough to provide access to the very atmosphere of God. It is a spirituality born out of his deep prayer and his effort to make sense of the Mystery of Christ in light of the theory of evolution. Many people shy away from reading his work, however, because the language that he uses-and sometimes even creates-seems hard to understand. Again, some of the English translations from the original French are not completely accurate. However, many of those who do read Teilhard, even when they fail to understand his words completely, are mesmerized by his poetic language and by the novelty of his synthesis. What we need are spiritual mentors to guide us through these works and to make them practical for today's seeker.

This is exactly what Louis Savary is doing in his latest book, Teilhard de Chardin: The Divine Milieu Explained: A Spirituality for the 21st Century. Winner of the 2008 Catholic Press Association award for the best soft cover book in Spirituality, this book is a must-read for anyone who would begin to understand Teilhard's spirituality. The Divine Milieu Explained

grew out of Savary's own experience of facilitating workshops and study groups on Teilhard's thought and spirituality. Thus he is familiar with the difficulties that new readers of Teilhard experience.

In this book, Savary follows the text of *The Divine Milieu* line by line. He works carefully through each page explaining unfamiliar language, providing useful down-to-earth examples of what each section might mean in today's world as well as simple stories that ground the text. To help the reader acquire a deeper sense of Teilhard's spirituality, Savary also suggests ways of praying with Teilhard. Short spiritual exercises and discussion questions interspersed throughout allow the reader to deepen the insights gained. These exercises and questions would be particularly useful if the book were used by a study group. Another feature that enhances the text is the boxed-off areas containing background material in the form of diagrams, definitions of Teilhard's esoteric terminology, and quotations from scripture and other relevant sources. While reading Savary's book, however, it is important to have a copy of *The Divine Milieu* at hand so that Teilhard's poetic presentation, an integral component of Teilhard's message, is not lost.

Savary's familiarity with Jesuit spirituality, and in particular with the Exercises of St. Ignatius, gives him special insight into the dynamic behind Teilhard's spirituality. The culminating experience of the Exercises, the Contemplation to Obtain God's Love, serves as the focal point of Teilhard's *The Divine Milieu* and as the motivating factor for full participation with Christ in the transformation of the world. It is this grace of finding God present in all things-in our diminishments as well as in our activities, in our sorrows as well as in our joys-and this deep engagement in the work of Christ who is transforming the world that Teilhard experienced so deeply and understood so well. In The Divine Milieu Explained, Savary helps us to understand Teilhard's experience of the divine milieu, assuring us that the mystical life is possible not only for trained mystics but for ordinary people as well.

Catholic Press Association Award Statement

"Stating that most traditional spiritualities are based on an image of the earth as flat, Savary points out that the past century has seen paradigm shifts in our understanding of ourselves and of the world in which we live. Teilhard realized that these new understandings necessitate a radically new spirituality that could integrate the important scientific facts of

our existence into itself. Savary explains the thoughts of Teilhard and includes practical spiritual exercises that aid the reader to put into practice the spiritual insights of Teilhard. Those who read this book, which is written in an engaging style, will be rewarded with a deeper understanding of the spirituality of Teilhard and a strong mandate to apply this spirituality to their lives. Savary has made a major contribution to the appreciation of a spirituality that encompasses the cosmos.”

The book is available from Amazon at some 30% discount. And on the book’s Amazon page, one could find: Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought:

Teilhard’s Mass: Approaches to “The Mass on the World.” By Thomas M. King, SJ.

The Phenomenon of Man. By Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Pierre Teilhard De Chardin: Writings. Selected and Introduced by Ursula King.

Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Teilhard De Chardin. By Ursula King.

Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology. By Elizabeth A. Johnson.

Teilhard in the 21st Century: The Emerging Spirit of Earth. Arthur Fabel and Donald St. John, editors.

2009 Annual Meeting Speaker Thomas King, SJ

As mentioned on the first page, the title of Fr. King’s talk is “Teilhard, the Anthropic Principle, and Intelligent Design.” This abstract and biographical sketch has also been provided.

Abstract: The Anthropic Principle and Intelligent Design are two somewhat recent developments in cosmological thinking. "Anthropic Principle" pertains to a universe whose parameters seem fine tuned so the human phenomenon can arise, while "Intelligent Design" contends that the intense complexity of aspects of creation implies a Divine Creator. These are current and contentious issues, and Teilhard did not consider either directly. But he developed his own understanding of the dynamic workings of evolution that touched on these realms. The talk will consider Teilhard’s understanding of a creative evolution and

speculate on what he would say concerning these contemporary issues.

Thomas M. King, SJ is originally from Pittsburgh, PA. He did undergraduate work at the University of Pittsburgh and has a doctorate in Theology from the University of Strasbourg (France). As a Jesuit priest he has been teaching Theology at Georgetown University for many years, and there he has regularly taught a course on Teilhard and directed the Teilhard Study Center (Georgetown has a collection of over 500 original letters of Teilhard). Fr. King has written or edited five books on Teilhard, most recently *Teilhard’s Mass*, (Paulist Press, 2005).

International Vatican Conferences on Science, Evolution, and Faith.

Within our Teilhardian compass we wish to report on two historic meetings held in Rome. Many thanks to Fabio Montavani, former president of the Italian Teilhard Association, for notifying me about both these extraordinary events.

The first was convened on October 31 – November 4, 2008 by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences with the title: **Scientific Insights into the Evolution of the Universe and of Life.** An online, extensive Brochure is available at this address: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdscien/2008/Booklet_38.pdf.

The closed-door, invitation only convocation featured world class scientists and scholars such as Stephen Hawking, Martin Rees, Werner Arber, Michael Heller, Vera Rubin, and David Baltimore. A number of Nobel Laureates weighed in. The full program along with paper abstracts can be accessed at the above website.

But the august, well-intentioned meeting got mixed reviews as it became clear that the theological position and Darwinian theories were not in accord, and in need of much clarification. A note in the November 14 issue of *Science* magazine “Vatican Science Conference Offers an Ambiguous Message” is a typical summary.

Pope Benedict XVI opened the Plenary Assembly with remarks that can be accessed via keywords at Google. Of interest is his placement of the Book of Nature as the central interpretative metaphor, even for evolution, as the next quote conveys.

“To “evolve” literally means “to unroll a scroll”, that is, to read a book. The imagery of nature as a

book has its roots in Christianity and has been held dear by many scientists. Galileo saw nature as a book whose author is God in the same way that Scripture has God as its author. It is a book whose history, whose evolution, whose “writing” and meaning, we “read” according to the different approaches of the sciences, while all the time presupposing the foundational presence of the author who has wished to reveal himself therein. This image also helps us to understand that the world, far from originating out of chaos, resembles an ordered book; it is a cosmos.

Notwithstanding elements of the irrational, chaotic and the destructive in the long processes of change in the cosmos, matter as such is “legible”. It has an inbuilt “mathematics”. The human mind therefore can engage not only in a “cosmography” studying measurable phenomena but also in a “cosmology” discerning the visible inner logic of the cosmos.”

Biological Evolution: Facts and Theories is the name of the second conference, to be held at the Pontifical Gregorian University, March 3 – 7, 2009. An inspiration for this event is the 200th Anniversary year of Charles Darwin’s birth, and the 150th year after the publication of his *The Origin of Species*. Again an international panel has been assembled, but in contrast to the Pontifical Academy meeting above with many emeritus speakers, a good number of active researchers and theorists such as Simon Conway Morris, Stuart Kauffman, Lynn Margulis, Francisco Ayala, Robert Ulanowicz, and David Sloan Wilson are slated to attend. A website along with a program and speaker bios can best be reached by Googling venue and title keywords.

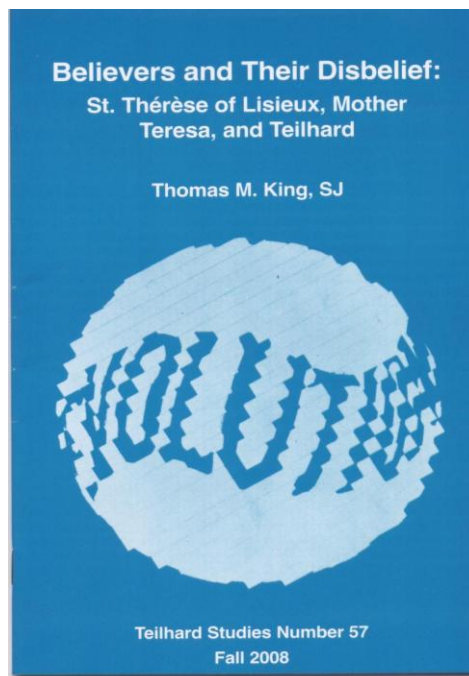
It is notable that Teilhard is well represented among the presentations. Anthropologist Dr. Anne Dambricourt Malasse, Secretary General of the Teilhard de Chardin Foundation (Paris), will speak on “Some Paleontological Attempts at Defining Humanity.” In addition, Teilhardian scholar and Professor of Biology at the University of Pisa, Ludovico Galleni, will address “Moving Toward Humankind?,” while Georges Chantraine, SJ, will offer the “Theological Vision of Evolution by Teilhard de Chardin.”

Although probably not planned this way, the 2009 Gregorian conference might well serve to engage some of the problematic issues of the 2008 Academy event. Its themes of a broadened, more purposeful, 21st century Darwinism might be broached by these paragraphs from the “Aims” page on the website:

“These last few years have seen the growth of several intense, and at times heated, debates on

Evolution that have involved scientists, philosophers and theologians. The repercussions of those debates have been heard on several occasions in the mass media and have involved the public as well. Frequently it appeared that the debates were the expression of true ideological positions: on the one hand, an antireligious metaphysical evolutionism; on the other hand, fundamentalist conceptions leading to a misconstrued “creationism” or to the so-called “Intelligent Design.”

Thanks to recent discoveries, we can reconsider the problem of evolution within a broader perspective than traditional neo-darwinism. In particular, we refer to the role of epigenetical mechanisms in evolution as well as to new developments produced by the theory of complexity and by the study of incidence on the environment of living species, especially in regards to the value and significance of intelligent behaviour. In this context, which witnesses the intertwining of several fields of knowledge, an appropriate consideration is needed more than ever before.”



Believers and Their Disbelief: St. Therese of Lisieux, Mother Teresa, and Teilhard

Our latest *Teilhard Study*, edited by Kathleen Duffy, is by our 2009 Annual Meeting speaker, **Thomas King, S.J.** It originally appeared in the journal of science and religion *Zygon* in its September 2007 (42/4) issue and was reprinted with kind

permission. Of profound depth and insight, this Abstract can only but introduce it. This is followed by a collection of quotations from the back cover.

Abstract. Several modern-day Christians who were known for their devotion have left accounts of their troubled faith. I consider three of these: St. Therese of Lisieux, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Then I tell of the troubled atheism of Jean-Paul Sartre. Finally, I use texts of Sartre and Teilhard to understand the unsettled nature of belief.

“Is there, in fact, a Universal Christ, is there a Divine Milieu? Or am I, after all, simply the dupe of a mirage in my own mind? I often ask myself that question.” Teilhard, *The Heart of Matter*.

“Every time I want to tell the truth – “that I have no faith” – the words just do not come – my mouth remains closed – and yet I keep on smiling at God and all.” Mother Teresa, *Joy in Darkness*.

“Even if one does not believe in God, there are elements of the idea of God which remain in us and cause us to see the world with divine aspects.” Jean-Paul Sartre, *La ceremonie des adieux*.

“In reality, the groan within us is the groan of something greater than us. The voice we then hear is the voice of the single soul of the ages to come, weeping us for its Multitude. And it is the breath, again, of this nascent Soul that passes into us, in the fundamental, obstinate, incurable yearning for total union, the union which gives life to all poetry, all pantheism, all holiness.” Teilhard, *Writings in Time of War*.

Rediscovering Teilhard's Fire

We are pleased to place this initial announcement that a book with this title, edited by Kathleen Duffy, SSJ, has been accepted for publication by St. Joseph University Press of Philadelphia, PA. The volume will contain selected papers from the extraordinary range of presentations made at the Chestnut Hill College conference that Prof. Duffy organized, also by the same name, in November 2005.

The Teilhard Perspective will do a cover story when the book is published, which is another sign of a renaissance in and vital relevance of Teilhard's cosmic and Christic vision.

Annual Meeting

12–16 February 2009 • Chicago



Toward the Science and Ethics of a Culture of Sustainability

This is the title of a Session organized by ATA vice-president Mary Evelyn Tucker, and Paul Reitan, University of Buffalo, at which ATA president John Grim will also present, for the 2009 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Meeting held in Chicago on February 12 to 16. The full program for this premier scientific conference of the year can be accessed at: www.aaas.org/meetings. The abstract for the session itself is cited first, followed by the abstracts for Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, Paul Reitan, and Holmes Rolston. Ursula Goodenough, and Robert Costanza will also speak at this significant event.

Abstract: The natural sciences inform us about threats to a sustainable future for the world's societies, about the anthropogenic impacts on the critical zone (the near surface zone where the coupled chemical, biological, physical, and geological systems that support human existence interact), and about changes societies will need to make to realize long-term well-being. Mounting costs owing to ongoing damages to ecosystem support systems and loss of resources provide evidence of the need for immediate and near-term as well as long-term changes. What policy emphases are consistent with the geobiophysical and economic constraints on future sustainable human societies? Is the majesty of the biological and geological legacy we have inherited sufficiently appreciated to provide motivation to support stewardship? What visions of a sustainable and desirable future can inspire willingness to change? Altruism and concern for intergenerational equity support change. Additionally, what ethics should define our goals and inform the processes of transition toward behaviors that are sustainable? What characterizes the commonly held values, understandings, and accepted rules of behavior of a culture or cultures of sustainability? Questions of this kind need broad discussion to guide transitions toward geobiophysically sustainable, equitable, and peaceful societies.

The Contributions of the Earth Charter Toward an Ethics of Sustainability

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Yale University

The Earth Charter emerged from the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992. The promise of the Charter is an integrated vision with key components: ecological integrity; social and economic justice; democracy, nonviolence, and peace. The Charter relies on contemporary science and international law as its basis, along with policy reports from UN conferences held in the 1990s and it draws on the ethical traditions of the world's religions. It has been endorsed by international agencies and by national organizations. It is considered an important complement to the UN Declaration of Human Rights that values human freedom and independence. Modern sciences such as ecology and conservation biology have helped us to recognize the intricate interdependence of life. This is what the Earth Charter highlights in its encompassing call to "respect and care for the community of life."

Cultural Sources of Environmental Ethics

John Grim, Yale University

In the study of religion and ecology, environmental ethics are seen as arising from cosmological narratives, worldview values, social practices (habitus), and lived experiences. This presentation will explore such diverse sources as ways of knowing in selected indigenous cultures. As forms of indigenous knowledge embedded in a single lifeway, they constitute philosophical and ethical relationships with the natural world.

The Emergence of Problems in the Anthropocene

Paul H. Reitan, University at Buffalo

The Anthropocene is the name given the geologic time period in which humans are recognized to be a dominant geologic agent influencing terrestrial, marine, and atmospheric environments. Toward the end of the 20th century the holistic sciences had documented that human impacts on the near surface zone - where coupled chemical, biological, physical, and geological processes interact and support life - had become not only the dominant geologic agent but also so damaging and disruptive as to threaten long-term success of human societies. This dominance was made possible by human control of large amounts of energy enabling humans to avoid or overwhelm

previous constraints that limited their impact. We may ask: "are we, *Homo sapiens*, so smart that we can be a 'boom' species but so unable to control ourselves that we will be a 'bust'?" If humans are to have a successfully sustainable future, they must now constrain their own exuberance - their encroachment upon and destruction of terrestrial and marine ecological systems, their transformation of the atmosphere, their disruption of the hydrologic cycle, their rapid depletion of non-renewable and slowly-renewable resources, and their own reproductive prowess. But this will require a cultural transformation - new commonly held values, understandings, and accepted and rewarded behaviors. Human societies must envision and find and embrace ethical values that help define goals and direct societies toward geobiophysically sustainable, equitable and peaceful world communities. Are we able to do that?

Sustainable Development versus Sustainable Biosphere

Holmes Rolston, Colorado State University

In sustainability debates, there are two poles, complements yet opposites. Economy can be prioritized, with the environment contributory to economics at the center. This is sustainable development, widely advocated, including statements by the United Nations. At the other pole, the environment is prioritized. A sustainable biosphere model demands a baseline quality of environment, respect for the integrity of natural systems. The economy must be worked out within such quality of life in a quality environment. This is advocated by the Ecological Society of America. Neither economics nor ecology is well equipped to analyze the issue ethically.

American Teilhard Association Member News

We are pleased to have received these three thoughtful items from ATA members DeEtta Clark Cunningham, Mary Ann Carrico-Mitchell, and John Perry. Each convey how Teilhard's spirit can touch and move us. Please see also John Haught's recollections in the book section.

From Kane, Pennsylvania, **DeEtta Clark Cunningham** advises of her recent inspired writings: *The Second Coming: Journey into the Great Incarnation of Christ*. (Pittsburgh: Rose Dog Books,

2005). DeEtta has also provided a 2007 pamphlet *The Rosary of the Great Coming*, with a version each for Catholics, and for Protestants. (Her email is: roydeecc@verizon.net) And the book is available on Amazon. We quote next from the author's bio from the book's back cover.

"With a bachelor of science from Cornell, DeEtta Clark Cunningham analyzed plants and soils for trace elements in a federal laboratory before starting a family. Later in life, she pursued course work in religious studies and philosophy. Now she and her husband have seven children, six of whom are adopted. People used to refer to her family as a little United Nations because of its racial and ethnic diversity."

Mary Ann Carrico-Mitchell of Campbellsburg, Kentucky was so intrigued by the Amir Aczel piece in the previous Perspective where he told of his initial encounter with Teilhard, that she wished to retell her own fascinating path, excerpts of which we are offered next.

"I am seventy-one years old and when approximately the age of ten, while reading our local newspaper, *The Courier-Journal* of Louisville, I would see notices that Teilhard de Chardin was visiting the USA. I was taken by his name spelling, and would ask my family who this man was, and why his visit was so important to make our local paper. I learned these notices were from a *Chicago Tribune* wire service. In the 1950s I saw that he was buried in New York, which I thought a little strange, as by then I knew that he was a priest from France, but had fallen into some disrepute with the Vatican.

In the early 1960s I was a scholarship student at the University of Colorado and engaged to a young man who was not Catholic. He wished to take "instructions" so I contacted Regis University in Denver and asked if there was a Jesuit there who could advise my fiancé. When I mentioned my interest in Teilhard, they were quite happy to assist.

Later in the sixties, my now husband and I moved to Florida and went to a local Catholic church with another couple. The priest asked us if we knew of Teilhard and we answered in the affirmative. We went on to attend weekly meetings where he taught from carbonized sheets about Teilhard's novel thought. The priest indicated that these materials were of a somewhat "underground" nature, so I kept the news mostly to myself.

My friend Norma did share Teilhard with her older children, mine being 6, 5, and 4 at the time. In the

1970s her oldest son, Jonathan, went off to a college in Boston. In a computer class, he noticed that a girl with an accent was having trouble reading the textbook, so he offered to help. When he asked her name, she replied Marie Louise de Chardin. Jonathon asked could she possibly be related to the Teilhard he was familiar with. Indeed she was, for he was her grandfather's brother. Needless to say they fell in love, got married and now have six children.

I spend much of my time now trying to inform folks of the Teilhard Association, and to spread his grand wisdom. Now that my children are all grown, I have time to read at leisure and understand his writings. My grandchildren are in high school and I am trying to inspire their interest in Teilhard, so vital to their lifetimes ahead."

Mary Ann goes on to inquire if there are any renditions of Teilhard's life and thought especially for teenagers. Her email is: macmky@aol.com. She also mentioned her work as a secretary in the 1970s to James Horigan, the author of the 1979 book **Chance or Design?**. (Philosophical Library) When I wrote back to her, I noted that the last Perspective led off with Cardinal Schonborn's **Chance or Purpose?**, and that this question persists as a vital task, which, of course, Teilhard affirmed in the positive.

We are similarly pleased to publish this sonnet sent to us by **John Perry**, a retired business consultant living in Connecticut, and an active Quaker. John also included an excerpt from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* on Teilhard, and a notable line on Teilhard by author Karen Armstrong.

"The Diaphany of the Divine"

Reflections on Teilhard de Chardin's Experience

"Luminous", enfolding glow - this vision
of the mystic Teilhard seems impossible to share.
And yet I'm drawn to wonder: "Could I dare
To sink into such love where no division
Calls out mind and matter, no incision
Comes 'tween soul and breath?" He makes us care,
But something moves through lucent air
That fears the scope of his description:
Throughout his life, "in every moment lived,
the world has been becoming fire and light."
"Dawn's purple shift" has, in his sight,
"Now faded to a golden spirit gift."

This holy incandescent universe
Absorbs each self. All souls in One immerse.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: Jesuit priest, philosopher and paleontologist. "... known particularly for his theory that [human kind] is presently evolving, mentally and socially, towards a final spiritual unity. Blending science and Christianity, he declared that the human epic resembles 'nothing so much as a way of the Cross.'"

Encyclopedia Britannica 15th edition, 1979

"He (Teilhard) saw the whole evolutionary struggle as a divine force which propelled the universe from matter to spirit to personality and, finally, beyond personality to God."

Karen Armstrong "*A History of God*"

Book Review

Delio, Iliia. *Christ in Evolution*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008.

By Kathleen Duffy, PhD, SSJ.

"Every age," Iliia Delio, O.S.F., writes, "must discover Christ anew." In her latest book, *Christ in Evolution*, she suggests how we might proceed on the road that leads to just that discovery in our own time. Scientific theories, especially the theory of evolution, often pose difficult challenges for Christian believers. With so much new information about the structure of matter and the mechanisms by which the cosmos has evolved, science can now tell the fascinating story of how we emerged from stardust to life to thought. The story's apparent coherence sometimes leaves believers wondering how God, much less the person of Jesus Christ, fits into this picture. Some have asked: Is the Christ of the gospels large enough to encompass this kind of Universe? And, if so, how do we understand the mystery that is Christ in a multi-religious world? Grounded in the tradition of St. Bonaventure, who already in the 13th century portrayed the Incarnation as dynamic and closely connected with creation, and in the company of several contemporary mystics and theologians, Delio takes on these important challenges.

Delio, who is professor and chair of Spirituality studies at Washington Theological Union, sets the stage for this task with a brief portrayal of the evolutionary picture of the cosmos and with a short history of Christology. Although most Christians consider doctrine regarding Christ as fixed, in fact, our understanding of the meaning of Christ has not been static. It has developed significantly over the years, enriched by the questions of each age and often

influenced by forces from outside the church. The mystical tradition has also had a role in developing Christology, tending to interpret Christ's role in the world in a more dynamic way than the traditional systematic theology has done.

Delio compares our present age to the first axial age, that period between 800 and 200 B.C. during which humanity experienced a radical shift in consciousness and, at the same time, established the foundations of the great religions. She claims that we are in the midst of another critical period in history, a second axial age, when humanity must take another major step, one that again requires a more complex religious consciousness. Key to this forward movement, according to Delio, is an understanding of the person of Christ and Christ's action in today's world that is capable of transcending cultural differences.

But the intellectual, abstract, and privatized approach of Western Christology makes this difficult. Because of it, Delio insists, the theologian who wishes to achieve a deeper understanding of the person of Christ must be first and foremost a contemplative. Only a mystical mind, she says, will be able to break through to the core of the mystery of Christ, to experience the one who transcends the historical Jesus of the gospels. Only by immersion in the paschal mystery can we experience the fullness of Christ.

Many present-day mystics are pointing the way to this more vibrant and relevant Christology. Rather than opting for a "post Christian" stance or a superficial religious syncretism that blurs the distinctions between religions, they are broadening our understanding of Christ in new and interesting ways. Delio chooses four dialogue partners to illustrate her point: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Raimon Panikkar, Thomas Merton, and Bede Griffiths.

Each of these contemporary mystics reveals something of the cosmic and transcultural nature of Christ. For Teilhard, Christ is the unifying principle of the universe, the one who draws all things together into himself and gives meaning and direction to the cosmos. He is the form of the universe, the force of love bursting into the cosmic milieu to set it on fire. For Panikkar, Christ is the central symbol of all reality, the one whose power is discovered by experiencing the deep inner center of each human person. Panikkar rejects a one-size-fits-all Christology, encouraging instead diversity in our ways of understanding Christ. Merton focuses on the transcultural nature of Christ, who is incarnate in each person and who, in the Resurrection, has become the finally integrated person. Finally, Griffiths views the

Christ event in the context of our present understanding of a larger dynamic and interrelated world and experiences Christ as the self of redeemed humankind.

Each mystic also names the implications of such a Christology. Teilhard asserts that, as co-creators, we are responsible for participating in the ongoing evolution of humanity. Confronting the problem of religious pluralism, Panikkar promotes open conversation with those who think differently. Instead of discussions about doctrine though, he recommends an exchange of religious experience as more fruitful. Merton encourages a trans-cultural consciousness that, once having discovered the “true self,” is capable of entering into solidarity with the one perceived as other. Griffiths calls for interreligious dialogue which he considers a form of mystical experience, and challenges us to rediscover the power of the feminine, that unconscious intuitive dimension of the self that is nurtured by contemplation. All emphasize as essential participation in the mystery of Christ.

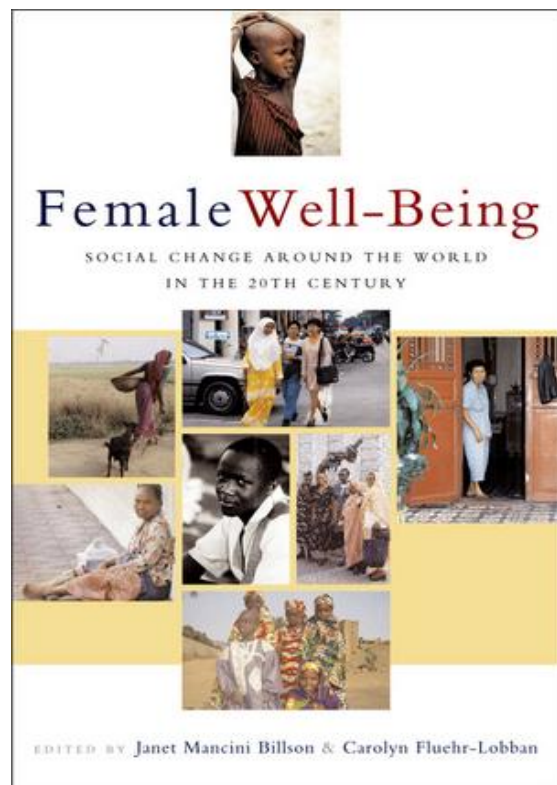
Delio also explores what recent developments in artificial intelligence say about humans and about our participation in the Christian mystery. A two-edged sword, technology arises out of the very freedom of imagination that allows us to transcend ourselves and to evolve, yet it also bolsters the individualism so prevalent in today’s world. There are plenty of areas for theologizing here: reconsidering the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus in light of technology’s striving for immortality, and rethinking the meaning for today of the human as *imago Dei*, to mention only two. The search for self-conscious life on other planets throughout the universe also provokes us to question the form that incarnation might take in these places if, in truth, there is life in other parts of the universe. Perhaps, as Teilhard once suggested, the human Christ might be simply one “face” of the cosmic Christ.

Delio’s approach to Christology is refreshing and optimistic. With Karl Rahner, she not only believes that Christology must “make sense on the basis of our experience of ourselves and of our world,” but also demonstrates how this might be achieved. In *Christ in Evolution*, she weaves together the Christological threads that present-day mystics are spinning with those of the tradition in a way that is accessible to the nontheologian, challenging to the Biblical literalist and encouraging for all those who wish to participate in the reintegration of the Christ figure into a relevant cosmological vision.

This review is reprinted from *America* magazine, October 13, 2008, with the kind permission of America Press, Inc., © 2008. All rights reserved. For subscription information, please call 1-800-627-9533 or visit their website at: www.americamagazine.org.

Kathleen Duffy, SSJ is professor of physics at Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia.

Select Books and Articles



Billson, Janet Mancini and Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, eds. *Female Well-Being: Toward a Global Theory of Social Change*. London: Zed Books, 2005.

Billson is Director of Group Dimensions International, Rhode Island, and Fluehr-Lobban is Professor of Anthropology and Women's Studies at Rhode Island College. We choose this volume for its content and to again note that a deep aberration of human civilization remains its denigration, both physically and mentally, of the equal place and contribution of women. We cite the publisher's synopsis and a quote in the book from John Stuart Mill in the 18th century, just as true today.

“This global survey starts from the belief that the significant transformations in women’s lives need to be fully documented and interpreted. It illustrates the critical challenges faced by women in the 20th century

using original data from countries in every world region. The case studies are written by teams of scholars, educators, and policy analysts in Canada, the United States, Colombia, Iceland, the United Kingdom, Croatia, Japan, Bangladesh, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, and Kenya. The catalysts for change in female well-being are identified from trends from 1900 to 2000 in infant mortality, maternal mortality, literacy, life expectancy, education, work, income, family structure, and political power. Trends are analyzed in the light of the century's major events, legislative initiatives, social policies, and leadership, to illustrate the processes that enhance, sustain, or detract from the female condition." (Zed website)

"The principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement...it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, no disability on the other." (John Stuart Mill, 392)

Conway Morris, Simon, ed. *The Deep Structure of Biology: Is Convergence Sufficiently Ubiquitous to Give a Directional Signal?* West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008.

Twelve papers across the biological sciences from evolutionary morphology and plant intelligence to corvid (blue jay), cetacean, and primate sociality affirm an innate natural propensity to converge over and over upon the same somatic form, cognitive faculty, and behaviors. This is really no longer in question. The problem arises because the reigning Darwinianism of winnowing selection as the only agency or drive, sans any intrinsic pathway, cannot assimilate these results. As further beset by postmodern academia which denies any greater reality, as Conway Morris notes, the work going forward is to conceive a new 'metaphysic' of life's phenomenal development toward human-like personage. To do so would revive a 'teleology,' but in the sense of an embryonic gestation. The full list of authors conveys the volume's import: scientists Richard Lenski, George McGhee, Karl Niklas, Anthony Trewavas, Nigel Franks, Nicola Clayton, Nathan Emery, Hal Whitehead, Robert Foley, and Simon Conway Morris, complemented by theologians Celia Dean-Drummond, John Haught, and Michael Ruse.

De Boer, Lauren. *Where It Comes From*. Oakland, CA: TerraVita Books, 2008.

For ten years, Lauren edited the quarterly magazine of spiritual ecology *EarthLight*, a luminous portal for our hopefully nascent "Lite" and Light Age. Presently he has just published a volume of his poems, which draw from an abiding natural wisdom. We quote from their www.terravita.net website,

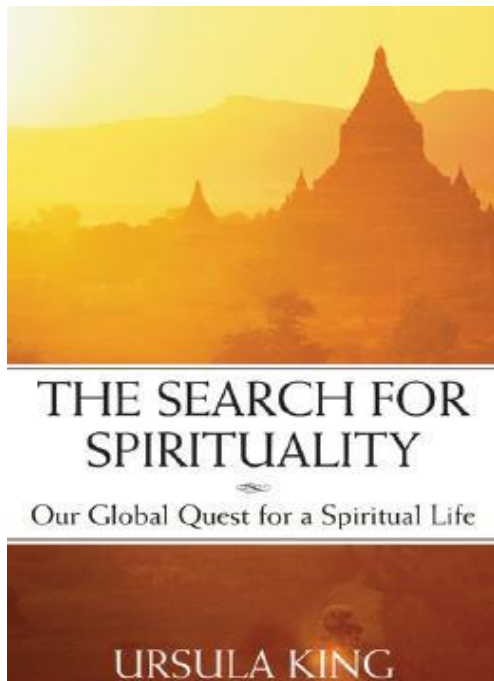
"A collection of 95 of my poems is now available in a single volume. Most of these poems were composed over the past five years and they range from the sublime to the humorous, from the contemplative to the playful. A common thread runs through them all—a celebration of the natural world and the human spirit as an integral reality. I hope you'll find some inspiration and hope in this first collection of my poetic work."

Lauren de Boer writes that he is a core faculty member for a Masters in Education program in Integrative Learning offered through the Institute for Educational Studies at Endicott College. This endeavor in "Nature, Creativity, & Identity" can also be accessed from the TerraVita website, from which a brief quote next. One can go direct to the www.ties-edu.org course site for more information.

"The aim of the program is to explore our role in the Great Work as articulated by Thomas Berry and others. The Great Work is the creation of "mutually enhancing relations" (Berry's phrase) among all members of the Earth community and to create a vibrant, ecologically sustainable world for future generations of all species.

The program is an exciting opportunity for professionals wanting to integrate an M.Ed. with their chosen work within an eco-cosmological context, or for those who are not yet established in their life's work, but who want to engage in deeper inquiry toward that end. Coursework draws on my ten years as editor of *EarthLight Magazine* and on a combination of the thought of Thomas Berry, Elizabeth Sahtouris, David Whyte, Brian Swimme, Meg Wheatley, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Loren Eiseley, Paul Shepard, Lynn Margulis, and others.

The online campus uses a type of dialogue based on David Bohm's work that facilitates a practice of reflective listening and response, encouraging the emergence of shared meaning. You can capture and print your own comments and those of your classmates for further reflection when the coursework is complete."



King, Ursula. *The Search for Spirituality: Our Global Quest for a Spiritual Life*. New York: BlueBridge Books, 2008.

Our members and readers surely have a sense of spirituality as an essence along with its daily exercise. But it is often difficult and elusive to define and appreciate. Ursula King contributes one of the most insightful and comprehensive guides in this regard. To do full justice, we reprint the publisher's description, and her credits from the book jacket.

“Full of vision, hope, and inspiration, this profound and passionate manifesto provides a fascinating overview of the incredibly rich and diverse spiritual landscapes of our world—feeding a deep longing for a life of wholeness and meaning and a society of greater peace and justice. Drawing from a wide variety of faiths and secular traditions, this book looks at cultural diversity and religious pluralism; clarifies the meaning of spirituality in different languages, faiths, and societies; and shows how numerous new approaches to spirituality have emerged. Also explored are the spiritual dimensions of nature, science, and technology; the transcending experiences of art and spirit; and the powerful expressions of ecological spirituality found around the world. New insights are provided that highlight the major differences that exist between spiritualities while also pointing out the various parallels and points of convergence.”

Ursula King is an internationally renowned scholar on spirituality, interfaith dialogue, women and religion, and the French thinker Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. She is professor emerita of theology and religious studies at the University of Bristol in England, where she chaired the religion department and directed the Centre for Comparative Studies in Religion and Gender. The author and editor of numerous books, including *Christian Mystics and Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin*, she also lectures widely throughout the world.

Low, Albert. *The Origin of Human Nature: A Zen Buddhist Looks at Evolution*. Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2008.

Dr. Albert Low, the author of many insightful works, is founder and director of the Montreal Zen Center. By drawing upon a vista of Eastern and perennial insights, an alternative, beneficial view of universe and human creativity can accrue. Rather than a material machine as touted by Richard Dawkins, bereft of plan or purpose, the unitary cosmos is alive and suffused from its origin with intention and intelligence. As Hwa Yen Buddhism's vision of Indra's Net conveys so well, each parcel or entity at once reflects and contains the encompassing numinous cosmos. Human beings are the latest phenomenal manifestation of its grand, yet fraught, task unto awakening, knowing awareness. The above publisher also brought out in 1999 Sarah Appleton Weber's grand new translation of Teilhard's masterwork entitled *The Human Phenomenon*.

McFague, Sallie. *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

A lifetime advocate of respectful care for a living, sacred earth, Dr. McFague is now Distinguished Theologian in Residence at Vanderbilt University, where she taught for many years. She observes that we are lately bent on an environmental catastrophe due to vested, inappropriate models of both divine presence and material consumption. In an unfinished universe of divine love and human freedom, we rightly need a sense of the world as God's body, which then ought to be experienced both in cities and the countryside, in an organically sustainable manner.

Norberg, Jon and Graeme Cumming, eds. *Complexity Theory for a Sustainable Future*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

A Stockholm University systems ecologist and University of Cape Town conservation biologist, inspired by the nonlinear thinking of ecologists C. S. Holling and Simon Levin, edit a collection that reevaluates ecosystem maintenance in terms of its intrinsic complex adaptive system attributes. By this perspective, especial notice can be made of natural resilience, diversity, nested networks, information processes, structural modularity, and so on. As a result, insights may be gained into a human social mindfulness of our environmental milieu. All this is fine, but the necessary step to connect and root such ubiquitous properties as a manifestation of an appropriately conducive genesis universe is not yet imagined.

rejects any sense of an innate plan or purpose. But as expressed in his influential work: *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, by a shift of perspective and persuasion, as Teilhard evinced so well, a counter vista may be opened. A dynamic creativity then becomes evident, whose upward arc and arrow, while an admittedly tragic struggle, may yet imply and reveal its Divine origin and continuing sustenance.

“I was in the seminary during the procedures of the Second Vatican Council, and all along we had hints of renewal,” Haught recalled a little later as we sat under the generous shade of a local tree. “But it was still a very otherworldly type of spirituality that was emphasized. I left because I was beginning to become discontented with that, and by that time, I had read the writings of Teilhard de Chardin. Now the teachers themselves couldn’t teach his work in class, but my more forward-looking professors would encourage us to read his ideas. And especially after reading Teilhard, I saw a possibility of another way of looking at things.

For Haught and other theologians caught up in the spirit of the times, Teilhard’s work represented a break with an older form of Christianity, one in which the context of theology was classical philosophy, largely influenced by Plato. For Plato and much of new-Platonic thought, the material world was seen as imperfect because it exists in a state of unpredictable flux and change. It is highly contingent, subject to chance, and essentially unruly, the shadow side of the transcendent order of the “Kosmos.” The idea of becoming, of process, of development, was disparaged in this Platonic outlook as being antithetical to the unchanging order and perfection of god. We should not look to the untrustworthy fickleness of the world as our model for divine contemplation but upward toward the “fixity of the heavens.” While the ongoing march of knowledge has certainly required a few major upgrades to this ancient model, it was Teilhard, according to Haught, who saw the need for a complete theological overhaul.

Teilhard was one of the first scientists in the twentieth century to become aware that the universe is a story,” Haught explained to me, his voice rising a little. “It’s not just a place of imperfection, what Galileo called ‘the sink of all dull refuse,’ caricaturing the Platonic view. No, the universe is place of creativity and becoming, a place of becoming *more*. Teilhard knew astronomy and he knew some physics and he knew the history of science and he knew what the Galilean revolution implied. It meant that we could no longer look spatially somewhere else to find



Phipps, Carter. **A Theologian of Renewal.** *EnlightenNext Magazine*. December 2008.

What is Enlightenment? magazine has now been renamed *EnlightenNext*, and in this feature article, its executive editor highlights by way of an interview the life and work of Georgetown University Teilhardian scholar and prolific author John Haught. One of the most forward thinkers today on the long path to a synthesis of religion and science, of faith and reason, Haught is aware of the many cross currents involved. A major impediment both to cosmological and evolutionary theory is a “scientific naturalism” which

the perfection that we're looking for. We have to look toward the future. The future became for Teilhard the place where we lift up our eyes and our hearts to have something to aspire to." (62-63)

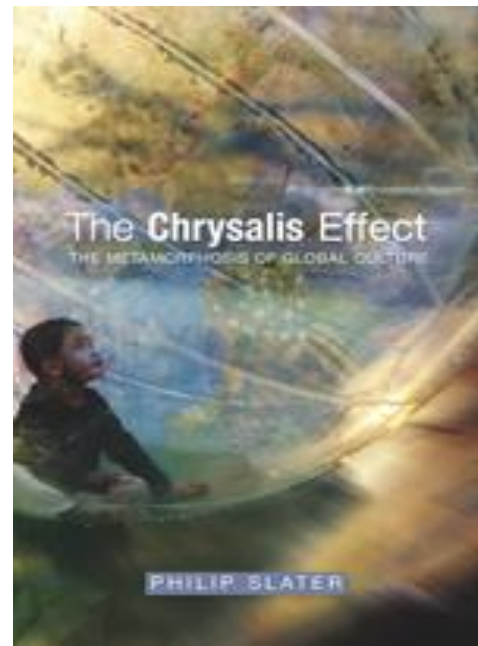
Poole, Robert. *Earthrise*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

The University of Cumbria historian recounts the past decades of human achievement, most notably the 1968 Apollo 11 mission, of the actual visual perception of our home planet in its biosphere blueness in dark space. The world is most of all round, a rarest cellular, neuronal, and even ovular abode of reflective consciousness in the galactic cosmos. By this image, the current environmental endeavors could much be about the attainment, or setting, of an equivalent "98.6" degrees metabolic homeostasis for the earth. The revolution we need is far more than bailouts and hybrid cars. It is indispensable that we come to know ourselves as both earthling and ethnic, and strive to create a viable, peaceable earth community.

"Humankind now appears to be both the product and the custodian of the only island of intelligent life in the knowable universe. The astronauts' revelation that the Earth was the only point of life and colour in the infinite blackness of space now seems more significant than ever. Whether that vision has been timely enough, and powerful enough, for homo sapiens, the most successful of all invasive species, to reverse its own devouring impact on the Earth, will probably become apparent before too long." (189)

Schmalzer, Sigrid. *The People's Peking Man: Popular Science and Human Identity in Twentieth-Century China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

This work by a University of Massachusetts at Amherst historian offers Chinese views of human nature as heavily influenced by Marxist tenets. These include perceptions of Peking Man fossils as a validation that "labor makes humanity." Teilhard is mentioned in passing but with the observation that he was known, almost uniquely among foreign scientists engaged in excavation projects, for his sensitivity to Chinese cultural concerns and a willingness to work under Chinese supervision.



Slater, Philip. *The Chrysalis Effect: The Metamorphosis of Global Culture*. Eastbourne, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2009.

Slater, a sociologist and author argues that the precipitous ferment engulfing the world is actually an overdue revolution between a waning, competitive male "Control Culture," and a rising "Integrative Culture" that is democratic, egalitarian, nurturing, and cooperative in kind. As suggested by biologist Elisabet Sahtouris, a fitting metaphor might be the transformation from a prior, no longer appropriate, pupa stage into a butterfly. Chapter 3, for example, is titled "On Gender Concepts: Is Stupidity Masculine?" Chapter 8, "On Religion: Back to Nature" goes on to deplore so many rampant exploitations, and counsel an integral, respectful spirituality.

"Whereas Control Culture viewed the universe as a gigantic, clockwork machine controlled from above, Integrative culture see it as a self-generating organism – a world-view more consistent with the revolutions in science brought about Darwinian theory and quantum physics." (13)

"For Integrative culture is in its essence the fusing of a static but sustainable hunter-gather type of culture with the dynamism of our Western, linear, unsustainable one." (83)

Speth, James Gustave (Gus). *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

In his latest volume, the well-known Dean of Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental studies draws sharp relief between a material capitalism in collapse, precipitously since the book's March publication date, and an imperative call to a more human and earth-flourishing future. Speth begins by noting a two foot high stack of books in his study that chronicle our dire plight as consumptive markets, rapacious corporations, energy waste, and more insults ravage and imperil biospheric support systems. But an alternative path or span will take more than hybrid technologies. Rather, a societal awakening, a new worldview of epochal proportions is required. For sage guidance, he turns, among others, to David Korten, Thomas Berry, Mary Evelyn Tucker, and John Grim, along with an endorsement of the Earth Charter document.

"Two leading authorities on religion and ecology, **Mary Evelyn Tucker** and **John Grim**, believe that to meet the environmental crisis, "we are called to a new intergenerational consciousness and conscience" and that values and ethics, religion and spirituality" are important factors in "transforming human consciousness and behavior for a sustainable future." (201)

"The cultural historian **Thomas Berry** has described forging a new consciousness as our "Great Work." "The deepest cause of the present devastation is found in a mode of consciousness that has established a radical discontinuity between the human and other modes of being and the bestowal of all rights on the human... (Berry goes on) "Consistently we have difficulty in accepting the human as an integral part of the Earth Community. We see ourselves as a transcendent mode of being. We don't really belong here. But if we are here by some strange destiny then we are the source of all rights and all values. All other earthly beings are instruments to be used or resources to be exploited for human benefit.

Berry believes what is required is "a profound reversal in our perspective on ourselves and on the universe about us...What is demanded of us now is to change attitudes that are so deeply bound into our basic cultural patterns that they seem to us as an imperative of the very nature of our being." (202)

"**David Korten** in *The Great Turning* sees humanity at a turning point, a pivot in history, and puts new values front and center: "The Great Turning begins with a cultural and spiritual awakening – a turning in cultural values from money and material excess to life and spiritual fulfillment, from a belief in our limitations to a belief in our possibilities, and from fearing our differences to rejoicing in our diversity. It requires reframing the cultural stories by which we define our human nature, purpose, and possibilities... (Korten continues) "The values shift of the cultural turning leads us to redefine wealth – to measure it by the health of our families, communities, and natural environment. It leads us form policies that raise those at the top to policies that raise those at the bottom, from hoarding to sharing, from concentrated to distributed ownership, and from the rights of ownership to the responsibilities of stewardship." (206)

Steinhardt, Eric. **Teilhard de Chardin and Transhumanism**. *Journal of Evolution and Technology*. 20/1, December 2008.

I've been advised of this article by Fabio Mantovani just before going to press so can only reprint its Abstract. The author is a philosophy professor at William Patterson University, and it is posted on the online journal: <http://jetpress.org/v20/steinhart.htm>. This citation is not an endorsement, but to make notice of the expansive compass of Teilhard's vision.

"Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was among the first to give serious consideration to the future of human evolution. His work advocates both biotechnologies (e.g., genetic engineering) and intelligence technologies. He discusses the emergence of a global computation-communication system (and is said by some to have been the first to have envisioned the Internet). He advocates the development of a global society. Teilhard is almost surely the first to discuss the acceleration of technological progress to a Singularity in which human intelligence will become super-intelligence. He discusses the spread of human intelligence into the universe and its amplification into a cosmic intelligence. More recently, his work has been taken up by Barrow and Tipler; Tipler; Moravec; and Kurzweil. Of course, Teilhard's Omega Point Theory is deeply Christian, which may be difficult for secular transhumanists. But transhumanism cannot avoid a fateful engagement with Christianity. Christian institutions may support or oppose transhumanism. Since Christianity is an extremely

powerful cultural force in the West, it is imperative for transhumanism to engage it carefully. A serious study of Teilhard can help that engagement and will thus be rewarding to both communities.”

Waltner-Toews, David, et al, eds. *The Ecosystem Approach: Complexity, Uncertainty, and Management for Sustainability*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

Edited by Canadian naturalists, the work first introduces nonlinear theories, especially those of James Kay, on the far-from-equilibrium, self-organizing, complex adaptive systems that grace and distinguish environments of flora and fauna. With this in place, novel guidance can be provided for their practical application. Real local cases are described by a global array of authors. Topics range from

Agrosystem Health in the Central Highlands of Kenya, to Rehabilitation of the Cooum River in Chennai, India, and Food, Floods, and Farming in the Peruvian Amazon, which also draw on indigenous lore. For example, New Zealand ecologist Charlotte Helen Sunde shows how a view of the Whanganui River as a dynamic, intricate ecosystem accords with Maori traditions. Drawing on the insights of Raimon Panikkar, she goes on to propose a once and future indigenous “witness” or holistic continuity with fluid nature to counter the mechanical reductions of exploitative development.

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’s address is Arthur Fabel 11 Meadowbrook Dr., Hadley, MA 01035; email: artfabel@crocker.com. The *Teilhard Perspective* newsletter along with the biannual *Teilhard Studies* pamphlet and 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. The address for our expanded website is: www.teilharddechardin.org.

The Association President is Dr. John Grim, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University, 205 Prospect Street, New Haven CT 06520. Email john.grim@yale.edu. Vice Presidents are Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker, maryevelyn.tucker@yale.edu, and Dr. Brian Swimme, California Institute for Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. For Publications and Annual Meeting information, please email Tara Maguire at: tcmkfore@sbcglobal.net.