



TEILHARD PERSPECTIVE

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President's Corner

John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker, January 2019

Teilhard and Thomas Berry Adapted from *Thomas Berry: A Biography*

Thomas Berry regarded the influence from Teilhard as integral to his thought. They were both concerned with the value and beauty of the universe as well as a commitment to the deeper implications of matter in understanding the human spiritual journey. This stands in sharp contrast to otherworldly values and forms of redemption out of a fallen material world. Quite pointedly, Teilhard argued for a "zeal for creation" [Teilhard, "The Sense of Man," *Toward the Future*, 32]. Both Berry and Teilhard struggled to rethink the roles of traditional religious cosmologies in light of the scientific story of an evolving universe. They rethought the Christian position of a separate creation of the human by a transcendent Creator. They also realized that their positions went contrary to most natural scientists who favored a strictly materialist interpretation of evolution.

Scientists positioned the human, by virtue of rational consciousness, as anomalous to the mainstream of evolution. In this reductive view, often found among scientists, philosophers, and religious thinkers, subjectivity resides only in the human.

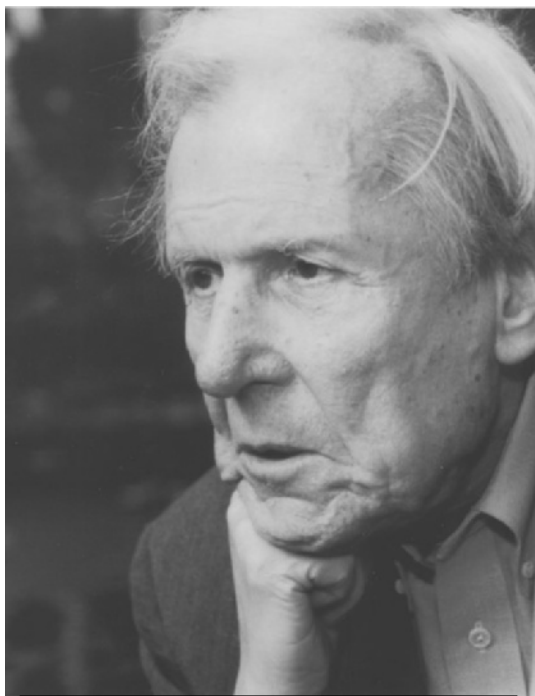


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Teilhard's Influence on Thomas Berry

Berry first learned of Teilhard from John Cooper at Catholic University during his graduate studies in the 1940s. However, he did not have a chance to really absorb Teilhard's thought until his writings became available in English in the 1960s. Berry writes:

"At the time I was moving from theories of history such as those of Giambattista Vico through the efforts at a universal history in the late 19th century to comparative history such as that of Arnold Toynbee and to that of the philosophy of history of Eric Voegelin. The acquaintance with Teilhard de Chardin made possible my moving into the realm of cosmology as history and human history as an extension of cosmology." [*Goldenrod*, Thomas Berry's unpublished autobiography, 64.]

Berry had been more overtly attentive to cultural history and religious cosmologies, just as Teilhard

had focused on his disciplines of geology and paleontology. As Berry writes:

Teilhard was a person of immense significance for interpreting the vast amount of data gathered by scientific research into the geological structure and the sequence of living forms that occupied the planet over the millennia, especially as these occurred in the Cenozoic period, the period leading up to the appearance of the human. Of special importance was Teilhard's understanding of the earlier phases of human types that had existed during the past three thousand years [Ibid., 60].

Teilhard catalyzed a new understanding for Berry regarding the significance of cultural history. Berry had expanded his approach from nation-state histories towards richer cultural complexities. Through Teilhard, Berry now realized that the universe is the ultimate context shaping human life and the dynamics of culture. Thomas describes Teilhard's central work, *The Human Phenomenon* in this way:

This was the first great work that put together in a single narrative the story of the universe from its primordial origins until the present. It established the physical and the spiritual as two dimensions of the single reality of the universe from the beginning. The story of the universe is the account of the movement from the less complex to the more complex, from the lesser to the greater manifestation of consciousness, from lesser to greater freedom of expression. The long Cartesian separation of the physical and the psychic dimensions of the universe was ended. Mind was once again understood as a pervasive reality [Teilhard, *The Human Phenomenon*, 61].

On Subjectivity, Consciousness, Interiority in the Universe

Both Teilhard and Thomas Berry had a different view of subjectivity or interiority, namely, as a dimension of the entire evolutionary process. It was this affirmation of the human as integral with

the whole of cosmic emergence that gave Teilhard and Berry a common sense of vision and purpose. For with this comprehensive vision came an appreciation of the zest for life for building a viable future for both humans and the larger Earth community. They called this the Great Work.

Ursula King has described this kind of zest as “a certain dynamic energy and movement, an aliveness that spurs us on, nourishes and sustains human attitudes, inspiring further action, growth and development, or it is simply understood as an alignment with the flow of life” [“The Zest for Life,” in *From Teilhard to Omega*, 2014, 7]. This alignment of human and Earth creativity is what Teilhard and Berry sought to encourage for the benefit of the Earth community.

Teilhard's Interiority and Thomas Berry's Subjectivity

Throughout his writings, Teilhard describes evolution as both a physical and psychic process; matter has its physical without and its psychic within [“Teilhard's Vision of Evolution,” *Teilhard Studies* #50, Spring 2005]. This is what Teilhard called interiority and Berry called subjectivity—as in his well-known phrase on the universe as “a communion of subjects” [Berry, “The Meadow Across the Creek,” in *The Great Work*, 1999, 16]. Their justification for such a view of inwardness in matter lies in inductive observation, namely if interiority exists at one point (as in human consciousness) it must exist throughout the evolutionary process. This becomes evident in the increase in complexity and consciousness over the arc of evolutionary time. In this sense, human consciousness is not situated as an aberration or addendum, but as arising from out of the evolutionary process. Teilhard asserts:

...deep within ourselves, through a rent or tear, an “interior” appears at the heart of beings. This is enough to establish the existence of this interior in some degree or other everywhere forever in nature. Since the stuff of the universe has an internal face at one point in itself, its structure is necessarily bifacial; that is, in every region of time and space, as well, for example, as being granular [material], coextensive with

its outside, everything has an inside [spiritual] [*The Human Phenomenon*, 24].

Teilhard saw the physical and psychic dimension of evolution as matter and spirit, differentiated yet intertwined aspects of reality. For Teilhard, “spirit” was the “within” of all existence in the universe, inseparable from the visible, material “without.”

In Teilhard’s perspective, the elements of the universe are entangled in the process of evolution pulled forward by the “within” of dynamic spirit. Teilhard describes this interior energy as drawing matter forward into patterns that result in greater complexity and consciousness. Teilhard observes that there are self-organizing principles or tendencies evident in matter that give rise to more intricate systems.

From the first flaring forth of radiant particles to its present configuration, the universe has had a quantum of spirit—an interiority—that evolved inexorably towards a point that Teilhard named *omega*. For Teilhard, *omega* has two distinct usages: first, *omega* is definitely a central idea within the evolutionary process analogous to his usage of “spirit.” Second, *omega* is also a transcendent term for the culminating convergence beyond evolution [*The Human Phenomenon*, 192-193]. Another phrase that Teilhard used for this universe process as it manifested on our planet was “the Spirit of the Earth” [Teilhard, “The Spirit of the Earth,” *Human Energy*, 1969, 19-47]. Berry affirmed and expanded this insight saying, “The spirituality of the Earth refers to a quality of the Earth itself, not a human spirituality with special reference to the planet Earth....The human and the Earth are totally implicated, each in the other. If there is no spirituality in Earth, then there is no spirituality in us” [Berry, “The Spirituality of the Earth,” in *The Sacred Universe*, 2009, 69].

Teilhard’s perspective conveyed to Thomas Berry a deepened sense of evolutionary history as diversified, having interiority, and wholly interconnected. This is what Berry would later articulate in “The New Story” as differentiation, subjectivity, and communion. The interconnections of the human in this process changed forever the role of the human for Teilhard and for Thomas. The human could no longer be

seen as something “created” apart from the whole of evolution. As Thomas would often say, echoing Teilhard and Julian Huxley, who supported Teilhard’s thought, “The human is that being in whom the universe reflects back upon itself in conscious self-awareness” [See this citation: “The human discovers that, in the striking words of Julian Huxley, *we are nothing else other than evolution become conscious of itself.*” *The Human Phenomenon*, 154].

For Thomas Berry the implications for such an encompassing planetary consciousness and a commitment to ecological awareness were clear. They constitute an ontological and ethical imperative for human understanding and action. Teilhard realized that the collective human consciousness, emerging in what he called the *noosphere*, has enormous potential for creating a planetary community. Thus, he sees increasing centration and unification within the universe at the planetary dimension of the Earth.

By centration, Teilhard means the intensification of reflexive consciousness. In general, centration is the tendency of matter to organize itself around a center, a process that at the human level takes the form of the intensification of the central nervous system that gives rise to reflexive consciousness. By unification, Teilhard signals awareness of an inherent creativity and differentiation flowing from the unity of the universe. It is this insight that Teilhard sought to communicate in one of his cherished phrases, “union differentiates.” Teilhard observed, “Whatever the domain—whether it be the cells of the body, the members of society, or the elements of a spiritual synthesis—‘*union differentiates.*’ In every organized whole the parts perfect and fulfill themselves” [*The Human Phenomenon*, 186]. This feeling for the whole of the cosmos manifest in particular forms of existence informs Thomas Berry’s emphasis on differentiation in universe evolution.

A Final Turn

In aligning with the unity of the universe, Teilhard affirms the need to overcome the divisive limits of political, economic, and cultural boundaries. In this spirit, he was committed to the post World War II efforts towards international cooperation.

Indeed, his ideas influenced those active in founding the United Nations. Thomas Berry, in turn, reflected on the evolution of human societies toward greater awareness beyond the limits of the nation state, and a more insightful sense of convergence of the community of life on Earth. This led to his appreciation of the World Charter for Nature ratified by the United Nations in 1982, and later, the Earth Charter that was launched in 2000. Thus, both Teilhard and Berry were committed to issues that are still alive in the present—ecology, justice, and peace.

Featured Excerpt from *Thomas Berry: A Biography*

Taken from “Introduction: Thomas Berry and the Arc of History” from the forthcoming volume Thomas Berry: A Biography by Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and Andrew Angyal, Columbia University Press, 2019.

Thomas Berry and the Arc of History

"The account of how I became increasingly aware of the cosmological and biological dimensions of existence is the story of my life. My quest for understanding this larger context of things conditioned all the decisions I made about my life. I saw life within its larger context, eventually within the context of the universe itself. I was immersed in the mystery of things, in the mysterious powers expressed in natural phenomena. The various living beings I experienced as integral with my own existence. "

Thomas Berry

In the autumn of 1994, Thomas Berry turned eighty. Still in good health, he was planning to move from New York City back to his birthplace in Greensboro, North Carolina. As Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim were helping him pack up and distribute his library, they would pause at the end of the day and share a meal and a glass of wine together. While the sun set over the ancient rock cliffs of the Palisades across the Hudson River, they sensed the transition of a life lived in the depths of time—biological and geological. As they began to reflect together on the

best approach to his biography, Thomas would invariably say: “Tell my story in the context of the times.”

That repeated refrain was a guiding mantra in preparing his biography within the arc of history. It was a formidable task as Thomas Berry’s long life (1914-2009) spanned the major events of the twentieth century, from the First World War at the time of his birth to significant climate and ecological disruption around the planet in his later years. Moreover, his intellectual breadth and spiritual depth defy adequate description. He was widely read in world history and religions and spent his early years within the contemplative rhythms of monastic life.

He lived immersed in the narratives of time that were continually expanding—from human history, to Earth history, to universe history. He sought a way to be grounded in the great vessel of life, the cosmos itself. He evoked this with the power of story. He could tell stories that would capture a room and would leave the audience clamoring for more. He did this with a profound attention to the past in his passion for history and with a comprehensive compassion for the present with its multifaceted challenges. These sensibilities were grounded in the “mysterious powers expressed in natural phenomena,” which elevated the voices of bird song and migrations, revered the living forests and ancient mountains, evoked the roaring power of oceans and rivers. All of this was woven together with a remarkable affinity for the cosmos that made one feel the power of star birth or galaxy formation.

He spoke from a place of erudition mingled with an engaging poetic rhetoric. His presence was one of laughter and luminosity; his words penetrated the soul and enlivened the mind. Indeed, his lucid language broke out of scholarly constraints to bring fresh rays of hope into the eyes of young and old alike. There are few people who have grappled for so long and so steadfastly with bringing forth a healing vision for the Earth community.

What motivated him in this task? Thomas lived through some of the most remarkable and rapid changes in recorded history—from electrical energy to solar energy, from community phone lines to personal cell phones and computers, from

horse and buggy travel to placing a man on the moon. He sought throughout his life to make sense of these changes. His constant question was: "What is progress and what is its real cost?" He intuited at a very early age that something was being lost—not just in the agrarian life of the South, where he was raised, but also in the depths of the integral functioning of the planet itself with the race to industrialize and modernize. Toxic chemicals seeped into soils and streams while greenhouse gases in the atmosphere caused massive climate change. He would spend his life trying to respond to the loss of ecosystem health and biodiversity diminishment with an encompassing and enlivening vision for humans. He began where the environmentalist John Muir ended. Indeed, Thomas came into the world in 1914, the same year Muir died. They shared a love of wilderness and consternation at its destruction due to unregulated logging, overgrazing by pastoralists, and relentless extractive industries.

Thomas was born into a recently expanded Union and a newly initiated world war. Two years earlier, in 1912, Arizona and New Mexico joined the Union, thus completing the forty-eight states of the United States mainland. The westward expansion of the prior hundred years was over and joyful celebrations were held. However, as Thomas understood later, this "Union" came at the expense of Native Americans who were subsumed into a new republic that had long suppressed their traditional cultures and lifeways. Similarly, while slavery was legally outlawed, full participation of African Americans in educational or economic opportunities was still unrealized. An economy and politics of inclusion was struggling to emerge across the country and throughout his lifetime. He lamented that this aspiration toward broader inclusion was still not realized at the time of his death.

Ethnic, political, and economic tensions were not restricted to the United States but were a worldwide phenomenon of the twentieth century. In July 1914, just four months before Thomas was born, World War I broke out in Europe with the unpredictable assassination of Archduke Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist. By the end of the war, four great empires had collapsed: German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman. The

Russian Revolution had taken place in 1917. A new world order was coming into being with the Armistice in 1919 and the formation of the League of Nations in 1920. Its goal was to promote peace and disarmament through negotiations and arbitration. But President Woodrow Wilson could not persuade the United States to join, due to the strength of the isolationist lobby. Moreover, various international conflicts could not be resolved as the League had no military power. For these reasons, the League faltered, and the peace did not last. It would take the Depression of the 1930s and another World War for the United Nations to be founded in 1945 and the European Union to emerge in the post-war period. These international and regional institutions also faced upheavals of ethnic differences and political conflicts. A continuing challenge was the growing ideology of nationalism that led to tensions on the international scene as well as within nation states. Indeed, European historian, Carlton J. H. Hayes, who was an important influence on Berry, titled his last book, *Nationalism: A Religion*.

All of this was part of the world into which Thomas Berry was born, grew up, and to which he eventually responded. He was searching for a way beyond such divisions, towards a story that could draw the human community together into a larger whole than the nation state. He created the term "Earth community" to indicate our shared sense of belonging to something greater—humans and nature in continuity. Against all odds, and in the midst of endless conflicts, he persisted in his quest to understand how such an enlivening narrative could emerge from the upheavals of modern history and rapid technological change. He experienced these upheavals in China with the Maoist revolution and in Germany with the Cold War. He had to leave China in 1948 as Mao's troops moved into Peking. He lived for three years in the 1950s with American troops in Germany divided between a Communist East and democratic West. And in the 1960s he witnessed demonstrations on American campuses against the Vietnam War and for civil rights. He, like President Dwight Eisenhower, grew wary of the power of the "military-industrial complex."

The post-World War II economic boom brought growth and prosperity to various parts of

the world, but at immense cost to the environment and to social equity. As the human community exploded from two billion, when he was born, to seven billion, three years after he died, these environmental and social problems became increasingly exacerbated. Thus, it would require two United Nations conferences (in Stockholm in 1972 and Rio in 1992) to call the nations of the world to address the escalating tensions of economic development and environmental protection.

In the decade between these conferences, the World Charter for Nature was written and endorsed in 1982 by all members of the United Nations except the United States. Thomas held this Charter in high esteem for its eloquent recognition of nature as the basis of all life. The leaders of the Rio Earth Summit expanded on this by calling for an Earth Charter in 1992. This initiated many years of careful drafting by an international committee led by Steven Rockefeller, a professor of religion at Middlebury College. The Earth Charter was completed at the end of the twentieth century, a decade before Thomas died. The document is a comprehensive vision of the interconnections of cosmology, ecology, justice, and peace. It has been called a Declaration of Interdependence for a shared planetary future. The preamble includes Thomas' view that: "Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life."

Thomas spent his life navigating between forces of nationalism and internationalism and between the tensions of ecological conservation and economic growth. All the while, he was broadening the concept of a new inclusive framework for humans and nature, eventually articulating a comprehensive ecological sense of the Earth community. From this perspective, humans are seen not simply as political or economic entities, but as bio-cultural beings amidst the vast diversity of life systems and species. This viewpoint, he felt, changes everything. Thus, Thomas Berry expanded his life quest to articulate an engaging evolutionary narrative that would respond effectively to the overwhelming ecological and social crises facing the human community.

Thomas' journey has shaped the structure of this biography where the first eight chapters focus on the chronological unfolding of his life, and the final four chapters elaborate his thought. He began his life in Greensboro, North Carolina, entered the monastery, did graduate studies in history, went to China, then to Germany, and returned to the United States to begin teaching. He built a History of Religions program at Fordham and the Riverdale Center for Religious Research along the Hudson River. Even in his retirement back to Greensboro he inspired programs in education, law, religion, and agriculture.

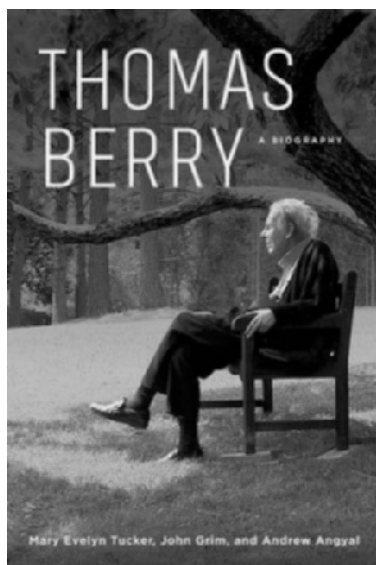
From his beginnings as a cultural and intellectual historian, Berry became a historian of the Earth. While some described him as a theologian, as he taught in a theology department at Fordham, Berry preferred to describe himself as a "geologist." The movement from human history to Earth history was a necessary progression for Berry. He witnessed in his own lifetime the emergence of a multi-cultural planetary civilization as cultures came in contact around the globe, often for the first time. But he wanted to place this in the larger arc of Earth history and the evolution of the universe. He saw humans as arising out of the journey of the universe, unfolding over billions of years of dynamic evolution. He recognized the power of an evolutionary story to engage humans in the great questions: where have we come from, how do we belong, why are we here?

This is what led to his signature essay "The New Story" in 1978. A new universe story, he felt, could help humans become mutually enhancing participants in the life community. He worked for over a decade to write *The Universe Story* with Brian Thomas Swimme. This was the grounding for the transformations that he saw were needed for a new period in human history, one he called the Ecozoic era. Inspired by creative thinkers in ecological forms of economics, politics, education, law, and religion, Berry believed that such a period was not only possible, but already emerging. This is the promise of Berry's perspective. It is one that adds fresh energy to what he called the "Great Work," namely, what each person and community can contribute to a flourishing future. As he would say, "This work is for the future generations of all

species.” It is in this context of a great story inspiring great work that he saw the arc of history unfolding.

Notable Books & Publications

Tucker, Mary Evelyn, John Grim, and Andrew Angyal. *Thomas Berry: A Biography*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019 (forthcoming).



This spring, the first biography of Thomas Berry, former longtime president of the ATA, will be published by Columbia University Press. Thomas Berry (1914–2009) was one of the 20th century’s most prescient and profound thinkers. As a cultural

historian, he sought a broader perspective on humanity’s relationship to Earth in order to respond to the ecological and social challenges of our times. The first biography of Berry, this book illuminates his remarkable vision and its continuing relevance for achieving transformative social change and environmental renewal. Drawing on his explorations of history, he came to see the evolutionary process as a story that could help restore the continuity of humans with the natural world. He sought to replace the modern alienation from nature with a sense of intimacy and responsibility. At a time of growing environmental crisis, this biography shows the ongoing significance of Berry’s conception of human interdependence with Earth within the unfolding journey of the universe.

On May 4, the ATA will celebrate the release of the book at our Annual Meeting in NYC.

Please see the annual meeting announcement at the end of this newsletter for more information.

Agustín Fuentes. *The Creative Spark: How Imagination Made Humans Exceptional*. New York: Dutton, 2017.

*Review by Joshua Canzona,
Wake Forest University*

In *The Creative Spark*, Agustín Fuentes promises to tell readers the secret of what makes humans exceptional—creativity. Or, more specifically, a level of creativity enabling us to make tools, develop sophisticated social arrangements, and construct



a worldwide niche. This is the spark of creativity that allowed our ancestors of two million years ago to not only survive but ultimately flourish amidst a hostile landscape. In a Teilhardian turn of phrase, Fuentes calls this the spark that “has grown and burns brightly across the planet (292).”

With succinct and readable analysis that pairs nicely with much of Teilhard’s thought, Fuentes assesses distinctive human traits by recounting the major events of the last eight-to-eleven-million years of evolution. He examines brain growth (what Teilhard called “cerebralization”), apprenticeship toolmaking as an indicator of the basis for language, and the spread of *Homo sapiens sapiens* across the globe (“planetization” in Teilhardian terminology) as the “last hominin standing (25).” A major contention of this book is that violence is not the predominant trait in the success of our species. This means that hunting was not the key turning point in human

development and the practice shows up later in our evolutionary trajectory than previously believed. This is contrary to Raymond Dart's argument that a natural lust for violence in humanity was activated by hunting animals, the so-called "killer ape theory." It also stands in opposition to Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson's *Demonic Males* and Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of our Nature*; two books which argue for a significant aggressive tendency in the human species forging a blood-soaked path to the Anthropocene. Fuentes focuses instead on our capacity for compassion and collaboration; note that one of his chapters is titled "The Beauty of Standing in Line." Violence, therefore, is not as deeply rooted as it might seem. It is the shadow side of innovation and community, the imaginative othering and dehumanization of those we call "the enemy."

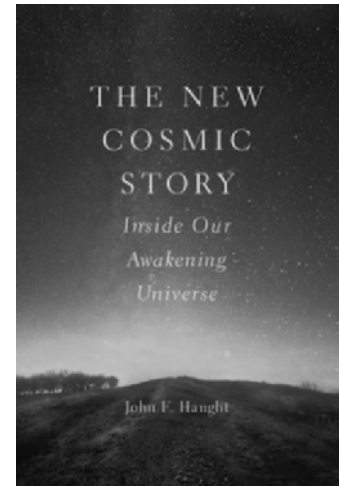
By emphasizing the human tendency toward innovation and collaboration, I believe *The Creative Spark* bears significant resonance with Teilhard's two laws of attraction and complexity-consciousness. In many ways this book is a significant and much-needed update to Teilhard since it provides a solid overview of relevant discoveries and insights concerning early human evolution. Dealing with religion, art, and science in the last portion of the book, these themes are carried further still. Fuentes posits that "wishing" and "hope" is at the heart of the human "investment in the transcendent" and connects such tendencies to our striving for outcomes seemingly beyond our capacities (197). While he cannot or chooses not to follow Teilhard toward the Omega Point, Fuentes does write sympathetically of faith and religion. Most importantly, he invokes the sense of wonder and mystery driving humanity toward greater achievements in art and science. His final chapter, "The Beat of Your Creative Life," exhorts the reader to explore and grow. If not a divinization of our activities, it is, without question, a moving and well-argued affirmation. I believe this book will be of interest to anyone with a passion for Teilhard's work and recommend it without reservation to my friends in the American Teilhard Association.

Haught, John H. *The New Cosmic Story: Inside our Awakening Universe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

Review by Herman Greene

As is often the case, when you come across something profound, you say to yourself, "I knew that, I just didn't quite have the words to describe it." There's another name for this and that is "self-evidence." Contrary to what we often imagine philosophy to be about, Alfred North Whitehead wrote that self-evidence is the primary test for good philosophy. Self-evidence means that you really find something to be true in your own experience, and it helps you to organize your understanding of the world. This is what *The New Cosmic Story* did for me.

In the book, Haught writes about the rise of subjectivity in the universe. There is an outside story of the universe (its physical dimensions) and an inside story in which the universe is developing subjectivity and narrative meaning and seeking fulfillment in what is unfinished. This inner dimension expanded greatly with the birth of the human, and within the human journey it expanded greatly again when the spiritual foundations of humanity arose during what Karl Jaspers called the "Axial Age" of 800-300 BCE. Haught calls what occurred in the axial period an "awakening to a sense of rightness." This sense of rightness came to be understood as transcendent, indestructible, fulfilling, and liberating. This rightness was idealized in some traditions as a unifying principle (or process) called God, and all-that-is came to be understood as a meaningful *uni*-verse. Read religiously, what the universe was/is about was/is awakening to the dawning of rightness. This awakening did not and does not deny the long shadows in the cosmic journey, rather it gave and



gives a sense that the universe is still emerging and that the human journey is not over.

As I read this book, I discovered things I knew and were important to me, but that I had neglected in my work. These things have to do with subjectivity, the universe being unfinished and in a state of becoming, and the universe being lured forward by an incorruptible, indestructible rightness. Put another way, I have neglected telling the story of the promise that is present in the growth of subjectivity and sense of rightness in the universe, and the importance of faith. Faith is the belief beyond all appearances that the universe is not finished and is moving towards greater justice, beauty, truth, and goodness.

Things can be important to you, but they may lie beneath awareness until someone calls them to your attention. Faith has been important to me, and I have been sustained by an awareness of the promise of the growth of subjectivity, truth, beauty, and goodness. Yet in speaking to others, and even in my self-talk, I have emphasized effort against all odds in an uncertain universe. This is something of a hangover from my years as a student in the 1960s when I took in the message of existentialism: we live in an absurd world, we must create our own meaning, and life doesn't have a goal other than what we decide today.

I haven't lived in existential despair, and I have modified the message of existentialism as it applies to me, nonetheless there it lay in my being. From this place, the Great Work was our responsibility, even my (overwhelming) responsibility, and the success of the Great Work rested just on our decisions and my decision. While I have always been religious, somehow my religious understanding shifted as I read Haught's words about the persistent working in an unfinished universe of an incorruptible, indestructible rightness.

Haught wrote, "Running silently through the heart of matter, a series of events that would flower into 'subjectivity' has been a part of the universe from the start" (15). He said attempting to understand the universe by its physical laws is like trying to understand literature by the rules of grammar. These rules of grammar make possible meaningful writing and reading but do not in themselves provide for either. Likewise, the

materiality and physical laws of the universe make possible its inner journey but are not the inner journey itself. The inner journey of the universe is one of meaning, beauty, purpose, goodness, and anticipation. This inner journey is as much a part of the universe story as the laws of physics. I know this is true because this is my experience. I am the subject (one of many) that the universe labored for billions of years to bring into being.

What human would not say that the growth of meaning, beauty, purpose, goodness, and anticipation are part of the universe? Only high abstraction of thought would deny this because it is evident in our own experience, and thus demands inclusion, even if an immediate perfection or immediate realization is not possible. Life is a journey, the universe is a journey...a long (and longing) journey—a difficult one only to be redeemed by beauty.

Haught gives three ways of relating to this inner dimension of the journey of the universe. In scientific materialism, it is simply denied. The universe is composed of inert matter in motion moved strangely, on the one hand, only by antecedent deterministic causes that go back to its beginning, and, on the other hand, by accident or chance, such as in random mutation of genes or the accident of why we have this universe at all. The deepest reality of the universe are the particles and forces identified in physics. In scientific materialism our human senses of freedom and purpose are illusory. The universe is meaningless, though we may find (an illusory sense of) meaning in our own lives. This materialist understanding is baffling to our own experience; what we consider to be our humanity cannot be accounted for in it. Yet it is the philosophical ground of modern secular thought and the institutions it has given rise to including, without limitation, our academies of learning.

The second approach, which Haught calls "analogical," has been and is dominant in the classical religious traditions and in the humanistic teachings and cultural manifestations of those religions (as well as in contemporary spiritualities that claim to be spiritual but not religious). The analogical recognizes meaning and goodness but places them outside the physical universe. There is an eternal realm of perfection we come into

contact with, and to which we belong, but it is not in the physical world. In some traditions, the soul that communicates with this realm is a stranger to the human body that houses the soul.

In the analogical understanding, the plan of the universe was established in the beginning. We look backward to a primordial goodness and forward to an other-worldly, already divinely realized goodness to come. Our earthly life is a school for souls, the universe is a backdrop for the drama of human redemption. The physical universe dwells in the presence of eternity and analogy's practice calls for presence to the unchanging ideal of eternity (the eternal present). Things that change do not participate in the divine.

Haught acknowledges the significance of the analogical for the inner life and that its language and practice has enduring importance now and in the future. It recognizes the transcendent and the inner life and calls people to a higher plane of being and action. His criticism is that it has not appropriated what science has disclosed about the universe—the universe is still coming into being, it is unfinished and develops narrative meaning over long stretches of time. As Haught puts it, analogy ignores “the unfinished cosmic story and the painful uncertainty of its still-coming-to-birth” (198). In so doing it fails to offer humans the deepest awareness, sensitivity, and spiritual journey. Further when analogical religion sacralizes a rigid ideal, it may give rise to dogmatism, exclusivism, and unbending moral codes.

The third approach, which Haught advocates, he calls “anticipation.” In this approach, the beginning of the universe was just that, the beginning. It was the beginning of a cosmic journey in which the divine and the subjects of the universe have been and are engaged in realizing greater truth, beauty, and goodness. The cosmic journey is the locus of the divine. The divine raises up new possibilities in the ever-changing journey and acts as a lure for creative participation in the future. The experience of the divine is not so much with being, as becoming.

This is experienced with varying levels of intensity as ecstatic awareness of possibility. There is appreciation for the journey that has occurred already and for what is occurring at this moment,

but in this approach, we, trusting in an indestructible goodness, live in excited anticipation of what is yet to be and give of ourselves to creative participation in its realization. We believe the feeling of meaning and purpose that we have is grounded in, and is a part of, the journey of a meaningful, purposeful universe. We and the divine live in an unfinished universe. The past is prelude for greater glory. “Ecological responsibility, therefore, has to do not only with past cosmic achievements and terrestrial ecosystems, but also with preparation for the augmentation of life and the emergence of more-being in the liberating expansiveness of what is yet to be” (141).

As I wrote earlier, reading Haught's book brought me to awareness of some of my own shortcomings. In speaking about global warming and ecological degradation, I have tended to focus on the outer (physical) journey of the universe and our response to it. Even though I have consistently held up Thomas Berry's statement that “the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects” as being Berry's most important statement, I have often failed to bring the inner dimension of the story of the universe into the picture. Likewise, I have often failed to bring into the picture this dawning of a sense of rightness and that the universe is guided by a transcendent, indestructible rightness.

Part of the power of Martin Luther King, Jr. was that he brought subjectivity and indestructible goodness into his work, as, for example, when he said, “The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

He spoke of anticipation when he declared, “I have been to the mountain top. I have seen the Promised Land!”

The inner journey of the universe is one of meaning, beauty, purpose, goodness, and anticipation.



American Teilhard Association

Saturday May 4, 2019

Lunch: 12:00 p.m.; Talk: 1:30 p.m.

In the **Synod House** at
Cathedral of St. John the Divine

1047 Amsterdam Ave. (enter at corner of 110th and Amsterdam), New York, NY

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim will be speaking and leading a discussion on:

"Thomas Berry: A Biography"

We will celebrate the 10th anniversary of Thomas Berry's passing with the publication of a new book from Columbia University Press: *Thomas Berry: A Biography*, by Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and Andrew Angyal. Special guest Paul Winter of the Paul Winter Consort will also play at the meeting, in honor of Thomas. Paul Winter has recorded more than 40 albums and won seven Grammy Awards. He has toured and recorded in 52 countries and six continents. Paul Winter will be presented with the Thomas Berry Award at the annual meeting, in honor of his years of dedication to the Great Work and the flourishing of the Earth Community.

Thomas Berry (1914–2009) was one of the 20th century's most prescient and profound thinkers. As a cultural historian, he sought a broader perspective on humanity's relationship to Earth in order to respond to the ecological and social challenges of our times. The first biography of Berry, this book illuminates his remarkable vision and its continuing relevance for achieving transformative social change and environmental renewal. Drawing on his explorations of history, he came to see the evolutionary process as a story that could help restore the continuity of humans with the natural world. He sought to replace the modern alienation from nature with a sense of intimacy and responsibility. At a time of growing environmental crisis, this biography shows the ongoing significance of Berry's conception of human interdependence with Earth within the unfolding journey of the universe.

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim teach at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and Yale Divinity School where they direct the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology. They worked closely with Thomas Berry for over thirty years as his students, editors, and literary executors and are the managing trustees of the Thomas Berry Foundation. John is the president of the ATA and Mary Evelyn is vice-president, alongside Brian Thomas Swimme.

American Teilhard Association Annual Meeting 2019

To pre-register, please complete the following form and mail with check or money order to:
American Teilhard Association c/o John Grim, 29 Spoke Drive, Woodbridge, CT 06525

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

I wish to reserve _____ places for the Luncheon and Talk @ \$30.00 ea \$ _____

I wish to reserve _____ places for the Talk only @ \$10.00 ea \$ _____

I enclose a contribution to the Hospitality Fund \$ _____

Or register and pay online at: <http://www.teilharddechardin.org/index.php/event>

Please note that no tickets will be sent; names will be held on the reservation list at the door.

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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. 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.

The Association President is Dr. John Grim, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University, 195 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 Thomas Swimme, California Institute for Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. For Publications and other information, please email Tara Trapani at: tcmk@aya.yale.edu.

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

At the ATA site 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 Thomas Swimme interview on Teilhard.

The Thomas Berry site 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 introduces this Emmy award-winning film, book, and educational series by Brian Thomas Swimme, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, to carry forward the inspiration of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry.