

The American Teilhard Association

Art Fabel

So much could be written about my friendship with Thomas Berry and the many ways he has touched us all. I will first gloss some anecdotes, and then offer an example of Tom's practical and perspicacious wisdom over the years. I remember Tom's age at the time, 75, when we went to his favorite diner on Broadway in Riverdale, the Bronx. Tom mused about the large hamburger he ordered saying in so many words that cholesterol levels were not his problem. "If I still have work to do here," he said, "that should well be taken care of." And do we ever, some two decades on, need his unique insight and counsel going forward into the 21st century!

On occasion, sometimes before the American Teilhard Association (ATA) first Sunday of October, November, December, February and March Lecture Series that he hosted at his Riverdale Center on the Hudson River, we would break hard bread around his kitchen table, often with Brother Conrad, Ken DuPuy and others. Once Tom mentioned that when he was a U. S. Army chaplain in Germany, circa 1947, the soldiers would let off steam by way of constant brawls in the base canteen. At which point we said "Oh, you were like a Father Mulchay." Which, it seemed from his answer and demeanor, was a comparison Tom was not particularly amused by.

With regard to the Teilhard society, of such endeavors in other countries, and for societies like these in general, the American group has enjoyed a rare constant coherence for over four decades. In addition to being hosted at his Riverdale Center for some 15 years, many of Tom's students, from Fordham University and beyond, such as John Grim, Mary Evelyn Tucker, Brian Brown, Marilyn Nichols, SSJ, Donald Gray, Brian Swimme, and others, have steadily taken leading roles in its facilitation and advance. The semi-annual Teilhard Studies pamphlet that Tom initiated in 1975 has been published more or less on schedule to this day. I edited it for some years, and if I managed to get myself in a sticky situation with an author, Tom would step in and nicely resolve. In his copious essays Thomas Berry often expanded on Pierre Teilhard's vision, both to clarify a choice of language and terms and to explore its relevance to environmental concerns. Several Studies, from his initial classic *The New Story* to No. 48 in 2004: *Alienation in a Universe of Presence*, carefully did so. This apropos ATA mission statement which he composed then appears on the back cover:

THE AMERICAN TEILHARD ASSOCIATION is dedicated to these objectives:

1. A future worthy of the planet Earth in the full splendor of its evolutionary emergence.
2. A future worthy of the human community as a high expression and a mode of fulfillment of the earth's evolutionary process.
3. A future worthy of the generations that will succeed us.

For many years, Arthur Fabel's day engineering job was in industrial R & D in the fields of materials science and environmental technology. He edited the Teilhard Studies series of the American Teilhard Association from 1981 to 1991. Along with Donald St. John, he edited *Teilhard in the 21st Century* (Orbis Books). Presently Arthur enjoys editing the *Teilhard Perspective* newsletter of the ATA. His retirement is also kept busy by maintaining the *Natural Genesis* website, which is an annotated bibliography of scientific frontiers that presage a more Teilhardian and Berryian ecological universe.

Guided by the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Association seeks to bring an encompassing perspective to this great task of shaping the well-being of the entire Earth community at a time when so many crises threaten it. Teilhard's vision of the sequential evolution of the universe from its origin to the human phenomenon can provide a firm and inspiring basis upon which to proceed. Now, for the first time, humanity is converging to a new unity in diversity that needs to be understood and facilitated. To help in this work, the Association, since its foundation in 1967, has sponsored annual conferences, a monthly lecture series, study groups, and a variety of publications.