

Teilhard, Taoism, and Western Thought

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The present study is a condensation of a Masters Thesis, recently completed, for the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Leeds, under the supervision of Dr. Ursula King. Its formal title is *A Comparison of Some Major Aspects of Western Thought, Taoist Philosophy and Teilhard de Chardin*. Allerd Stikker's thesis is an expansion of part of his recent book *Taoism, Teilhard and Western Thinking*, published in the Netherlands, (Elsevier, 1986). An English edition is being planned.

These selections are intended to convey both the breadth and depth of the work and to illustrate the many parallels of Teilhard's vision with Taoist philosophy. Each section is generally divided into three parts: Western thought, especially in a historical context, Taoism, and Teilhard's views. We welcome this opportunity to introduce Allerd Stikker's vision to the English speaking peoples of the earth community.

Introduction

In this study an attempt is made to detect parallels and complementary aspects between some of the major insights of Taoist philosophy and Teilhard's thought, against the background of western thinking.

The Chinese Taoist philosophers had very profound views on life and the universe based on intuitive, spontaneous, and original thinking. The western world lost much of the intuition, spontaneity, and originality concerning these questions as Christian and scientific attitudes increasingly alienated the human being from nature. Teilhard de Chardin was one of the first western thinkers to restore an effective unity in this regard within the unity and dynamics of the evolutionary process.

Marie Ina Bergeron has made a deep study of relationships between Taoist and Teilhardian thought, presented in 1976 in her book *La Chine et Teilhard*¹ with an emphasis on the spiritual and religious aspects. Joseph Needham, a great expert on both Taoism and Teilhard, mentions Teilhard in his monograph, *Three Masks of the Tao*.² Various experts in physics, psychology, and philosophy refer to Taoist philosophy and Teilhardian insights independently in their writings. However, no studies are available that offer a coherent picture of the multi-disciplinary elements involved in comparing western thinking, Taoism, and Teilhard and the opportunities such an approach offers for a better view of the world and its future.

The present study attempts to show how western thinking has developed and has just now opened to new dimensions through which the alienation between man, nature, and the universe, can be reversed and how this process can benefit from Taoist and Teilhardian insights whereby both its universal and its human nature become more evident