



BOEK

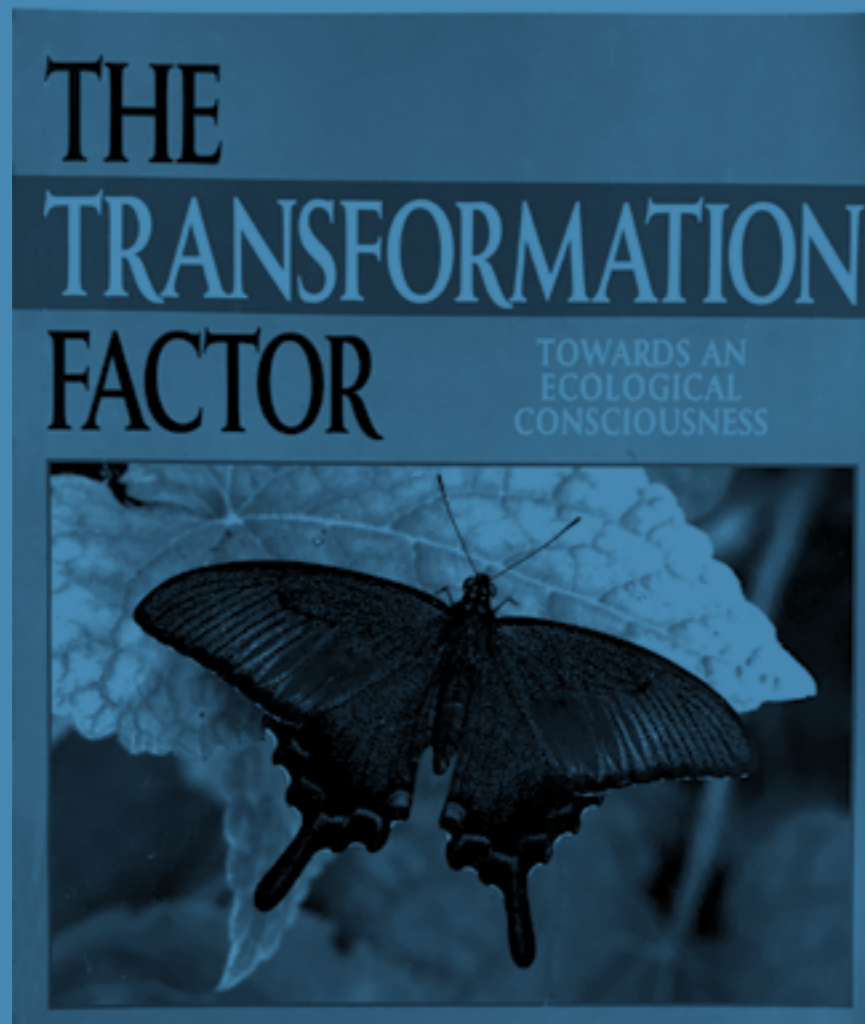
LEVENS-  
BESCHOUWING

ECOLOGIE

# The Transformation Factor

## Towards ecological consciousness

1992, uitgeverij Element Books



"fascinating... Allerd Stikker has done  
an excellent service to the world."  
Joseph Needham

Allerd Stikker

### Information about the book

This work draws on both Chinese spirituality and the work of Teilhard de Chardin as the basis for a new worldview, which integrates science, world religions and interdisciplinary views of reality. Already a bestselling book in Europe, it offers a vision of a new and harmonious relationship with nature, and is a new and valuable guide for the ecology movement. Stikker bridges the gap between religion, philosophy and science. He relates this new synthesis to the latest trends in Western thinking and translates this into practical conclusions and actions for today's world. This book leads us to new understandings of human values and morality and their possible application to science, engineering, politics, economics, art and architecture.

### The Author

Allerd Stikker was born in Holland. He graduated in chemical engineering and fulfilled several executive functions in chemical and mechanical engineering. He is now studying decision-making processes that influence the evolution on our planet with respect to the relationship between economy and ecology. He recently initiated a study of Taiwan, exploring the effect of its economic policies on the quality of life and on nature in that country.

**Uitgever:** U.S.A.: Element Books, Inc.

Great Britain: Element Books Limited

Australia: Element Books Ltd for Jacaranda  
Wiley Ltd

**ISBN:** 1-85230-271-2

**Jaartal:** 1992

**Nederlandse titel:** Tao, Teilhard en Westers Denken

**Cover design:** Barbara McGavin

**Text design:** Roger Lightfoot

**Typeset:** BP Integraphics

**Printed in the U.S.A.:** Edwards Bros

### Preface

It may be useful for the reader of this book to know how I came to write on this subject and what I expect to achieve with it.

I grew up in a family with wise, hard working and pragmatic parents. We had no formal connection with any religious institution and, although I lived in a society where Christianity was the cultural history, I never received any instruction in Christian belief. My formal education began with secondary school at the Barlaeus Gymnasium in Amsterdam, during World War II. After the war, I studied chemical engineering at The Delft Institute of Technology in Holland. I chose this training because I was interested in industrial activity. During my secondary education I also had become fascinated with chemistry and with the discovery that matter could be transformed from one type, shape and color into another type, shape and color, just by mixing in the right proportions at the right temperature and pressure and with the right catalyst. It aroused in me the awareness that there was a fundamental dynamic aspect in our physical surroundings.

During my studies at Delft, I began to feel uncomfortable with the basic principles of physics and mathematics necessary to integrate chemistry into an engineering science. Although I could follow and apply intellectually the methods and exercises to formulate mathematical and mechanical relationships, I became mentally opposed to the notion that everything can be calculated, measured, predicted and controlled. I could not believe that there were no other influences governing the course of events in this world.

In 1949 I came across a book by Lecomte du Noüy called, *Human Destiny*; I still have the copy I read at that time. It completely revolutionized my thinking. My eyes were opened to the fact that the universe, the earth and humankind are involved in a dynamic process of continuous transformation, not only materially and biologically, but also spiritually.

I learned that this process follows a pattern, that there is a basic universality in the building blocks throughout all of nature, that there is a direction and that there were and are, in the process, leaps of discontinuity. I became aware of a dynamic unfolding of the total universe and of the place of our planet and humanity in this universal process. This new dimension of consciousness and its broad scope could accommodate all of the various religions, philosophies and scientific explanations that confront us today. This new dimension also accommodates mysticism as the process includes both rational and irrational elements. There is unity in diversity at a higher level. This new unity evokes the feeling of unknown forces in a universal interdependence of everything that happens. How can this process be translated into a coherent vision for humanity today?

The fact that I was never confronted with a specific philosophy of life or a specific religious doctrine in my youth enabled me to be open and unbiased to new thinking. On the other hand, I think that my personal

development and that of my contemporaries would have benefited greatly from more education in the history of religious and scientific thinking. Such education needs to emphasize contemporary cultural and political developments, with awareness of the philosophical implications throughout specific periods in time.

In 1963, I read for the first time *The Phenomenon of Man*, the English translation of *Le Phénomène Humain*, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. I was struck by the inspiring message that humanity and our planet are engaged in a huge and dynamic process of evolution, with a direction and a purpose. The brilliant synthesis by the Jesuit priest Teilhard of religion, philosophy and science within a historical and futuristic perspective was, for me, a revelation.

During my international business travels, I came across a third 'revelation': the philosophical works of the early Taoists in China. I was mentally and emotionally impressed by the remarkable insight and foresight they developed about the human being, the earth and the universe. There were also intriguing relationships between Taoists' philosophy and Teilhard de Chardin's vision, although from a different perspective in time and knowledge. It is remarkable that Teilhard, who spent twenty-three years in China as a paleontologist, did not tap directly from this vast reservoir of ancient wisdom and originality.

I became convinced that a combination of the spontaneous and intuitive visions of the Taoist philosophers and the constructive, unifying and evolutionary visions of Teilhard could give today's world citizen a wealth of new and refreshing ideas on the moral, philosophical and religious approach of the world today. It had become clear to me that a fundamental philosophy is lacking in the approach by individuals to living, by politicians to governing, by managers to leading, by teachers to educating and by religions to guiding the life of citizens on this earth.

Many people, old and young, have unsatisfactory feelings about their visions of life. However, they have (and take) no time to think about that vision, even though they find the way the subject is presented by the church or by science or philosophy complicated, confusing and inadequate. Deep in their hearts, however, they yearn for inspiring guidance as they search for fulfillment during this passage on earth. I decided to make a 'progress report' (or should it be process report?) on impressions about where we stand today in the Western world, primarily to satisfy my personal need for guidance and possibly to provide some directions to readers of this study. I am convinced that humanity is heading for a new major leap in the evolutionary process. A thorough understanding of what the Taoists, Teilhard de Chardin and the latest visions in physics and ecology are telling us will help us to become aware of this process. The scientific, political, industrial, economic, religious and educational institutions of human society are hardly aware of a new transformation, yet they will be involved in the next leap, so they had better be prepared.

During the preparation for this book, I received, on the subjects of Taoism and Teilhard, very valuable advice and encouragement from Soeur Marie Ina Bergeron, Ph.D., in Paris, Father Thomas Berry, Ph.D. and Prof. Ewert H. Cousins, Ph.D., in New York, Dr. Frits Böttcher in Holland, Dr. Ursula King in Leeds, Dr. Joseph Needham in Cambridge and Father Yves Raguin, S.J., in Taipei.

I would like to thank my family who contributed so much to my development and who endured the consequences of my restless search along the road of discovery. This holds also for my closest and true friends.

## Introduction

With this book, I would like to reach people who are not necessarily specialists in the subjects of religion, philosophy or science. It contains an attempt to give the reader food for thought on the simple question most human beings put to themselves from time to time: Who am I and what am I doing here? The old Chinese Taoist philosophers had some very interesting responses to this question, based on intuitive, spontaneous and original thinking. The Western world lost much of the intuition, spontaneity, and originality concerning this question because Christian and scientific attitudes increasingly alienated the human being from nature. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was the first Western thinker to restore an effective unity in the diverging forces that are influencing Western humanity. He reconciled the diversity of forces within the unity and dynamics of the evolutionary process.

In this study, an attempt is made to detect common denominators in Chinese and Teilhardian thinking, portrayed against the background of Western thinking as it developed over the last two thousand years. This will be done on the basis of major issues, selected by the author, confronting humanity. Preliminary conclusions result from this approach, submitting a coherent but open-ended view with respect to earth, the human being and the universe today. The viewpoint I present can be helpful for individual contemplation and development as well as for collective actions and strategies. There is an abrupt transition from the contemplative nature of the first part of the study to the hard facts of our world of today as presented in the second part. The object of the study is to show that there is a clear relationship between our philosophical, cultural, scientific and religious history and the present state of the world. The present state of the world is illustrated by factual selections from global reports on the social, economic, industrial and political developments of the 1980s and projections for the year 2000. The mentality and format of decision-making by the major institutions today are inadequate to cope with emerging problems of imbalance created by innovative technological and organizational developments in the West. These have led to improved material standards of living, but also to the growing alienation of humanity from nature. This course could lead to the destruction

of our planet. My study attempts to show how the Western world arrived on this course, how our present position relates to the past and how the alienation can be reversed by applying Taoist and Teilhardian visions to our Western culture.

The explorations of the past and the present then will be linked to ideas and visions that have been developed recently in the United States and Europe. The 'new thinking' is based on the sophisticated awareness of the potentiality of an imminent major transformation in the evolutionary process of our planet within fifty years, and upon the need to recognize the necessary conditions for such a transformation: restoring individual harmony and the dynamic balance of humanity's relationship with nature on a local and global scale.

The object of the study is to show that there is a coherence between Taoist, Teilhardian and new Western thinking, and that humanity is capable of progressing on a clear path towards a new transformation. Individual involvement and collective responsibilities greatly influence the direction and the quality of the path and the transformation. It is therefore necessary for as many people as possible to have access to and awareness of the knowledge we have developed collectively through the ages concerning our role on earth and in the universe.

Western society has been highly creative and innovative culturally, scientifically and technologically. It must not regress, but the degree of saturation of its present state of development with increasingly undesirable side effects, and thus the need for change, provides an opening for incorporating essential Taoist and Teilhardian thinking in the creation of a new story, a new order, built on the achievements of the past and oriented toward a higher level of coordination and harmony.

The material used for the analysis of Taoist and Teilhardian thinking is predominantly of a specialized kind. Not only are the contents sometimes complicated, but the language requires much re-reading and the words used are often rare in common language. I have no knowledge of Chinese characters and speech, and have only read English and French translations of the Chinese texts. However, it is still possible to grasp the main ideas of the specialized literature without being or becoming an expert.

The reader of this book does not need any knowledge of Taoist philosophy or Teilhard de Chardin's work. The simplified approach of this study will undoubtedly raise some eyebrows because it condenses whole chapters in history that played a vital role in reaching present levels of knowledge and understanding. The aim is to make the main thoughts and their interconnections available to the layperson; it is regrettable and unnecessary that so much of the experience that has been acquired and written in humanity's history remains inaccessible in the majority because of language difficulties. I have tried to avoid the use of language often found in literature of this kind; in many cases the issues can be treated in a common language, without having to resort to technical or scholarly words that are only understood by a small circle.

Where developments in science and specifically physics are introduced in the text, the use of some technical terms is unavoidable. This should not discourage the nontechnical reader.

The Chinese philosophy has been extracted from works of Chinese philosophers from the period 500 B.C. and A.D. 1200 such as Kung Fu Tzu (circa 500 B.C.), Lao Tzu (circa 400 B.C.), Chuang Tzu (circa 350 B.C.), Huai Nan Tzu (circa 150 B.C.), Lieh Tzu (circa 50 B.C.), Wang Pi (circa A.D. 250) and Chu Hsi (circa A.D. 1150).

The Teilhardian vision is mostly derived from his basic works, such as *Phenomenon of Man* and *The Divine Milieu*, published after his death in 1955, and partly from works by various authors on Teilhard's thought, and later publications of Teilhard's essays and letters. The information on the current state of the world has been gathered from reports of the early 1980s by the World Bank, the Brandt Commission, OECD, United Nations and United States government agencies, and the World Watch Institute.

New ideas and visions of today have been found in publications by Marilyn Ferguson, Hazel Henderson, Barbara Marx Hubbard, Jean Houston, Thomas Berry, Fritjof Capra, Willis H. Harman, Robert Muller, Peter Russell and others.

In addition to these new ideas and visions, humanitarian consequences of important issues in new physics and related theories of very recent date are touched upon and are derived from the works of David Bohm, Ilya Prigogine and Rupert Sheldrake.

Information and opinions on decision-making in major institutions are based partly on personal experience and observation and partly on publications by corporations and consultants.

From the information and analysis presented, I have attempted to draw conclusions leading to a new view on the world and its future, and to offer options for reaching this future.

The study is relatively short and concise, I leave it to the reader to separately consult more extensive literature which is abundantly available in all the fields covered.