

Mistakes of Western Civilisation

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Opinion

All those who want to live more easily experience that a decisive criterion is being able to let go. And that attachments and clinging make life difficult, that they may even create a burden in the sense of karma. This is a topic of the present. However, some contemporaries also know that this topic is only new in Western, so-called Christian society, while it has been present in Eastern cultures for almost 5,000 years. It should not be concealed that since the decline of their own heritage and the adoption of Western ideas, the principle of performance and profit has displaced much of the good traditions and knowledge there. East Asia is repeating the mistakes that have produced situations in Europe and America from which the earth suffers so unbearably. Capitalism needs constant quantitative growth rates for its existence; a dynamic equilibrium as in nature brings it crashing down. And when the growth rate in China drops to only 6%, there is great unease on the stock exchanges. An absurd situation, since continuous growth causes an exponential development, which mathematically must end in infinity, i.e. in a catastrophe. Logic is absent. The fixation on growth goes so far that equilibrium is called zero growth.

China has apparently forgotten a large part of its spiritual heritage, be it Daoism, Buddhism or Confucianism. Many results are precarious: enormous environmental pollution, a spread of civilisation diseases like diabetes and cancer. The Western pharmaceutical industry cheers, however contrary to all ethics this may be. Lao Dse seems to have foreseen this 2,400 years ago, and he recommended solutions to this problem and an underlying attitude. Unfortunately, it has to be said that many people have learned nothing during this period. However, a study of the Dao de King is of continuing importance, especially today, when it is no longer just the fate of individuals that is affected, but that of humanity. Let us take a few quotations from the original text of the Dao de King [1], which suddenly illuminate what is wrong today and what would be right.

“The called one dwells in action without action, he does not produce and possess, he works and does not retain. When the work is done, he does not remain in it. Because he wants nothing of his

own, his own is completed. Supreme goodness is like water. The goodness of water is to benefit all beings without strife. In moving, goodness shows itself in due time. He who does not assert himself remains free from blame precisely because of this. Wanting to hold on to something and overflowing it in the process is not worth the effort. No one can protect a hall filled with gold and precious stones. To be rich and noble, and to be haughty, is to attract misfortune of its own accord. He who makes his soul simple and humble may become like a child. To produce and not to possess: to work and not to keep, to increase and not to dominate: That is secret life. Out of the nothingness in the wheel rests the usefulness of the chariot. From the nothingness in the vessel rests its usefulness. Out of the nothingness in the house comes its usefulness. Therefore: Being gives possession, non-being gives usefulness. Wanting to conquer the world through action; I have experienced that this fails. The world is a spiritual thing that must not be treated. He who acts spoils it. He who holds on loses it. Where one wants to take, one must first give properly. The soft triumphs over the hard. The weak triumphs over the strong.

The high life does not seek its life, therefore it has life. The low life does not seek to lose its life, so it has no life. The high life is without action and without intention. The lower life acts and has intentions. There is no greater guilt than approval of desires. There is no greater evil than not being satisfied. There is no worse evil than the addiction to gain. He who walks in enquiry increases daily. He who walks in sense decreases daily. He decreases his doing and decreases it more and more until he arrives at doing nothing. In doing nothing, nothing remains undone. To the good I am good, and to the non-good I am also good; for life is goodness. Sense generates. Life nourishes. The being shapes. The power perfects. Generating and not possessing, acting and not retaining, multiplying and not dominating: This is secret life. If one is restrained and hesitant in ruling, the people are honest and simple. If, in ruling, one wants to investigate and trace everything, the people show only defects and faults. In the management of people, in the service of heaven, there is nothing better than limitation.

For only limitation leads to timely yielding. Through it one gathers rich treasures of life. A great empire must keep itself below, so it becomes the unifying point of the world. It is the feminine of the world. The feminine triumphs over the masculine through its silence. He who asks, receives. Whoever has sins, they are forgiven. A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. He who acts spoils it. He who holds on loses it. People go about their business: And always, when they are almost done, they spoil it. I have three treasures: love, frugality and humility. Love makes you brave, frugality makes you generous, humility makes you able to rule. For love conquers in battle, is firm in defence. He who is able to defeat the enemy does not fight with him. To know that one knows nothing is the highest. To regard ignorance as knowledge is suffering. Only he who suffers from his suffering becomes free from suffering. Everyone on earth knows that the weak conquers the strong and the soft conquers the hard, but no one is able to act accordingly. True words are like the other way round. The one who is called does not accumulate possessions. The more he does for others, the more he possesses. The more he gives to others, the more he has."

The similarities to Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount are striking. In both cases the content contradicts the usual, the "normal" logic, in both cases the statements appear paradoxical. In any case, this is how it appears in the world we have lived in so far, which was and unfortunately still is characterised by dualism. Dualism always involves "against", the struggle of opposites, defeating, winning, wanting to assert oneself, even if by force. This world and the worlds of Lao Dse and Christ are completely different: the hard masculine quantities in our world are consistently wrong, the soft feminine qualities of togetherness instead of competition are the more correct ones. The Piscean age of macho rule, which failed and brought the world within a hair's breadth of ruin, is a thing of the past. Matriarchy at the beginning of the Aquarian Age will replace it. Dualism will be replaced by polarity, the coexistence of apparent opposites, the paradox of values. What counts for much in the material reality of illusions counts for little in the spiritual, the real world, and vice versa.

Profit and return thinking have led to the fact that the earth is suffering, that it has been exploited, abused and polluted, that despite the enormously increased wealth of a few, the majority of people have to live at subsistence level and even starve. Wars, which were considered absurd after the end of the Second World War, be-

came socially acceptable again. There is talk of a Third World War, as if this were not doom. We all know that when you die you leave the earth as you found it, without anything material. Yet we live as if the accumulation of money and possessions is the meaning of life, as if Lao Dse and Jesus the Christ had never lived. But if two value systems coming from very different cultures are so much in agreement, what is the probability that their contents are correct, that they reflect cosmic laws? This is where left-brain logic has its place for once: it is a probability bordering on certainty. But since, according to cosmic laws, cultures and civilisations that stood on such feet of clay regularly perished, this is also to be expected for the so-called "Christian Occident" including its off shoots.

Christians all over the world hope that they will be protected by Jesus and/or Mary. This is most expected by the fundamentalists, who, however, astonishingly advocate arming all citizens, especially in the USA. This can at best be justified from the Old Testament, but not from the New. If one assesses how much of the teachings of Jesus Christ are implemented in Christian countries, one comes to the conclusion that these nations do not deserve the designation "Christian". Oswald Spengler with his book "The Decline of the Occident" was ahead of his time. However, it caught up with him. As is also the case with George Orwell's "1984", the contents of which are implemented with hard-hitting consistency. And it is not a subject of discussion that "Das Kapital" by Karl Marx is being phenomenally translated into reality in our present day. Another reformer would probably be necessary and to be hoped for, preferably a woman. The curious thing now days is that materialism seems to have prevailed. It was always attributed to the communist states, which indulge in atheism. However, since 1990, these states have turned to previous religions, while the West knows only one God: money, profit, and the exploitation of the earth and those people who are too weak to assert themselves. All this is inhumane and a big mistake that will take its revenge, unfortunately.

However, it is part of the teachings of Lao Dse and Jesus the Christ: never give up hope. The mills of God grind slowly, but they work, surely.

References

1. Lao Tzu - Tao te King (2004) The ancient book of meaning and life. Translated by Richard Wilhelm. Atmosphären-Verlag, Munich, USA.



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