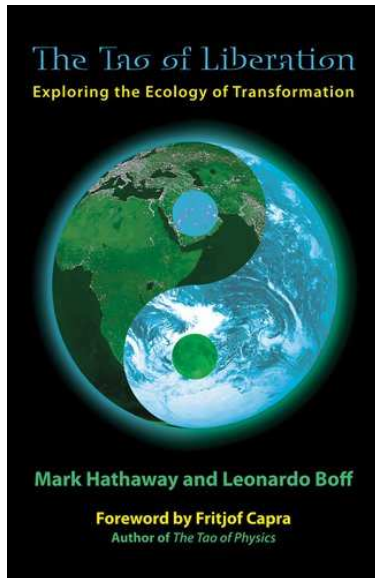


## BOOK REVIEW

**Hathaway, Mark and Leonardo Boff. *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009.**



Today we may be standing at the most important crossroads in the history of humanity, and indeed of the earth itself. Deepening poverty and accelerating ecological degradation challenge us to act with insight and maturity. How can we move toward a future where meaning, hope and beauty can truly flourish?

*The Tao of Liberation* is a search for this path, for the wisdom needed to effect profound transformations in our world. Hathaway and Boff describe this wisdom using the ancient Chinese word "Tao", meaning a way or path leading to harmony, peace and right relationship. The Tao can also be understood as the wisdom that lies at the very heart of the flowing structure of the universe, encapsulating the essence of its purpose.

The book begins by asking: how does transformation occur? Or, perhaps more precisely: why is it so difficult to effect the changes so urgently needed to save the living Earth community? It then embarks on a journey of exploration, combining social, political, economic, ecological, emotional and spiritual approaches in an analysis of the current crises which are rooted in the unsustainability of global capitalism, and have resulted in rising social inequality, exclusion, a collapse of democracy, deterioration of the environment, and growing poverty.

Boff and Hathaway further claim that all current hazards are symptoms of a more profound cultural and spiritual sickness; the great challenge for the twenty-first century will be to effect a fundamental shift in our attitude to nature, and within our value systems.

This book takes a new approach to sustainability - which is traditionally seen in terms of limits and restrictions - and offers a conception of sustainability as liberation, both in the personal sense of spiritual realization, and in the collective sense of people seeking their freedom from oppression. The use of the ancient Chinese word "Tao" refers to both an individual spiritual path and to the way the universe works. Hence, the authors posit, spiritual realization will only be achieved when humans move away from the current destructive path and act in harmony with nature, a way leading to ever-greater communion, diversity and creativity.

This is a serious, well-referenced work, with an extensive bibliography and a comprehensive index.

Leonardo Boff is a well-known Brazilian theologian, whose works focus on liberation theology, ecology and spirituality. Mark Hathaway is an educator, researcher and activist in the fields of ecology, economics, social justice, spirituality and cosmology.

For more information on *The Tao of Liberation* visit <http://www.taofliberation.com/>