Daoism and Peacebuilding: Toward an Agenda for Research and Practice

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[Sung Chien and Yin Wen] *accepted difference as given. They discoursed upon the nature of the heart and they sought a unity proceeding from the heart. By such concerns they sought to unite everyone in joyfulness and to harmonize all within the boundaries of the oceans. Their greatest desire was to see this achieved everywhere, by their efforts. They could face insults and not be disturbed; they struggled to save the people from warfare; they aimed to prevent aggression and to silence arms and thus to deliver future generations from violence. In pursuit of such ideals, they walked across the whole world, advising the high and teaching the low, and even though the world would not listen, they just continued even more strongly and would not give up. So it is said that high and low were tired of seeing them, but they never gave up putting themselves forward.*
Martin Palmer, *The Book of Chuang Tzu*

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ABSTRACT
The ancient wisdom of Daoism could make a significant contribution towards peace-building, and conflict transformation.

There are profound but underexplored connections between Daoism and peacebuilding. The Yin-Yang symbol represents the dynamic unity of distinct yet interrelated forces. This is a recognition of difference, within a broader understanding of complementarity. Daoism recognizes the inevitability, and the need for management and transformation, of conflict and change. The classics of Daoist literature have much to say about warfare, both in principle and practice. Peace is a key concept in Daoist philosophy - not a static harmony but rather a vibrant and living balance. This article offers some tentative perspectives from which the Daoism-peacebuilding nexus might be explored, including an examination of "Just War" theory in the Daoist classics; a preliminary exploration of Daoist contributions to conflict prevention; an examination of Daoist alchemical practices and possible contributions towards conflict transformation; and some comments on Daoist contributions to Chinese peace-building doctrine. The article sketches a proposed agenda for research and practice. It will be of interest to peacebuilding practitioners and theorists, scholars of Daoist philosophy and practice, and Chinese scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers.

Keywords
Peacebuilding, Daoism, conflict transformation, Just War theory, China

Introduction[2]

There are profound, yet underexplored, connections between Daoism and peacebuilding. The yin-yang symbol (the Tai Chi double helix, shown above) represents the dynamic unity of distinct yet interrelated forces; the borders between yin and yang are fluid and, at certain points in cycles of energy, interchangeable.[3] This is a recognition of difference, within a broader understanding of complementarity. Yin-yang theory recognizes the inevitability of change and the need for skillful management and transformation of conflicts. Peace is a key concept in Daoist philosophy—not a static harmony but rather a vibrant and living balance. The classics of Daoist literature (see below) have much to say about warfare, both in principle and in practice.

There are some striking similarities and interesting comparisons between the rich tradition of Daoist practices and philosophy (and political theory), and literatures and applications in the field of peacebuilding, as developed in the context of peace studies and international relations in Western academia and by aid agencies (nongovernmental organizations, the UN, etc.). These connections have not previously been analyzed beyond general comments. This article offers some tentative perspectives from which the Daoism-peacebuilding nexus might be explored, and sketches elements of a proposed agenda for research and practice.[4]

Key Concepts

Daoism (or "Taoism"[5]) is understood here as a spiritual philosophy and practice that also has a popular religious component (Watts & Huang, 1975). Together with Confucianism and arguably Buddhism—with both of which traditions it has elements in common—Daoism is one of the great the cultural currents of China. Unlike Christianity, Islam, and Judaism ("religions of the book"), Daoism is not monotheistic. There is no central set of orthodox revealed beliefs but rather a plethora of doctrines, documents, and practices, stretching back into the prehistory of China for some five thousand years (Watts & Huang, 1975). Unlike in the monotheistic religions, followers of which often believe themselves to have access to an exclusive truth and vehicle of salvation, there is no such thing as "Daoist fundamentalism." Indeed, it is arguable whether Daoism should even be regarded as a religion, at least in the Western sense. Belief in metaphysical concepts is not required; rather, this is an empirical path of practice and reflection (Watts & Huang, 1975, p. 119).[6] Nevertheless, Daoist practitioners often avail themselves of mythic explanations and tropes, which predominate in the popular Daoism of temples and festivals.

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[2] Many thanks for help and suggestions to my Tai Chi Chuan teacher, Keith Lorenz; to Professor John Rudy; and to my dear friends and teachers, Mark Raudva and Caroline Ross. Thanks also to Michael Woods and Norman Ware for help with manuscript copyediting.

[3] The ultimate reality of Dao is one (*wu-wei*), but there is little we can know or say about this; phenomenal reality begins with dualism (*tai chi*—the concept, not the martial art of Tai Chi Chuan) and proceeds toward multiplicity (the ten thousand things: *Dao De Ching*, chapters 1, 42).

[4] An example of the 'plural integration' of (ancient) Chinese and (modern) Western political theory is provided by Alex Karmazin (2016).

[5] In this article, I have not striven to render Chinese terms using a consistent series of romanization. Not being a linguist, I have adopted various transliterations (both the Pinyin and Wade-Giles systems), depending on the sources used.

[6] According to Watts, "the scientist and the mystic both make experiments in which what has been written is always subordinate to the observation of what is."

This exploratory essay focuses on Daoism as expressed in the classics, particularly The *Dao De Ching* and the writings of Chuang Tzu (2006), and *The Art of War*—arguably (but not exclusively) also a Daoist text. The earliest text of the *Dao De Ching* dates to around 500 BCE (Chuang Tzu, 2006, p. xxvi; Watts & Huang, 1975, p. xxii). Attributed to the great sage Lao Tzu, it was likely based on an older tradition of esoteric knowledge, passed on from teacher to student among circles of adepts. These classic texts of Daoism often employ seemingly obscure language and tropes to convey profound truths.

Already I have gone astray, as "The Dao that can be named is not eternal [or true] Dao" (Lao-Tsu, 1989, verse 1). An exercise in defining and analyzing the Dao is clearly foolish—even preposterous. My only excuse is one of respectful playfulness, and the hope that a dialogue between Daoism and peacebuilding can be fruitful, or at least interesting; at least it can do no harm.

Peace is as an "essentially contested concept,"[7] which means different things to different actors. "Peace" looks rather different to a villager in a war zone, to a refugee, to a government—or rebel—soldier, to a businessperson looking to invest, to an NGO aid worker, or to an international diplomat.[8] Definitions of peace often include notions of tranquility and calm; a more limited definition, and the primary one adopted here, is the idea of peace as the absence of violence—peace does not imply lack of conflict but, rather, the nonviolent management (and potential resolution) of differences.

For the purposes of this essay, "peacemaking" is taken as aiming to reduce and control levels of violence without necessarily addressing its root causes. "Peacebuilding" goes beyond conflict management to address the underlying issues and inequalities that structure conflicts.[9]

Peacebuilding Theory and Practice

Peacebuilding activities generally involve a commitment to transformative action, on the understanding that conflict is caused not only by direct violence but also by underlying systems of "structural violence." These terms were first developed in the 1970s by the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, who argued that peacebuilders must address the root causes of conflict by building capacities for conflict management/resolution and transformation among other strategies. Galtung developed an increasingly radical agenda, aimed at transforming unjust social and political structures, in order to build equitable peace.[10]

Another key founder of peacebuilding as an academic enterprise and (very importantly) as a field of practice is another sociologist, John Paul Lederach. For Lederach, peacebuilding needs to engage both with political elites and with midranking and grassroots actors, including (but not limited to) NGOs and other

[7] "Essentially contested concepts" reveal different meanings, with different implications, for different actors; see Gallie (1962, pp. 121–80). On different nations of peace from a multicultural perspective, see Dietrich et al. (2011).

[8] On the historical development of different understandings and practices of peace, see Richmond (2007).

[9] In 2007, the UN secretary-general's Policy Committee defined peacebuilding as "a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and sustainable development" (*Peacebuilding and the United Nations*, UN Peacebuilding Support Office).

[10] See, for example, Galtung (1996).

civil society groups. This bottom-up, grassroots approach likewise recognizes the need for transformation but is less politically radical than Galtung's. Lederach introduced the concept of "conflict transformation," holding that conflict is a natural and normal part of life and that these energies can be transformed in positive ways (in the personal, relational, structural and deep cultural dimensions).[11]

More recent developments in the field of peacebuilding are beyond the scope of this article. Over the past two decades, the field has become diverse and somewhat professionalized.[12]

Concepts and practices of peacebuilding have become prevalent in the international community over the past two decades—although the approach (which has become highly diverse) is not without its sometimes strident critics (Richmond, 2007). International acknowledgment (or co-optation) of the peacebuilding agenda owes much to the advocacy of UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace*, which defined postconflict peacebuilding as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict."

Peacebuilding and Religion

There is broad agreement, and extensive scholarly exploration, regarding how religious ideas and practice can contribute positively toward peacebuilding (Dietrich et al., 2011). There is also a good deal of historical and contemporary evidence indicating that religion can create, exacerbate, and drive violent conflicts. This seems to be particularly—although not exclusively—true for the exclusionary/fundamentalist elements of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic faiths.

A survey of the literature reveals little on the relationship between peacemaking/building (in its various manifestations and conceptualizations) and Daoism, beyond some discussion on the importance of understanding local contexts and the valuable resource that religion in general can be toward resolving conflicts and building peace. For example, the excellent *Palgrave International Handbook of Peace Studies: A Cultural Perspective* explores the notion of "trans-rational peace," in which non-Western ideas and influences are deployed to extend and deepen the meaning and practice/experience of "peace," moving the concept toward a more spiritual, postmodern dimension. Despite a passing reference to the Dao (Dietrich et al., 2011, p. 13), the emphasis is on other religions and traditions.[13] Similarly, the Wikipedia discussion of religion and peacebuilding[14] includes subsections for Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Baha'i, and Buddhism[15] but nothing on Chinese religions or cultural traditions (Daoism, Confucianism).

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[11] Lederach focuses on change as a circular, or spiral, process; see, e.g., Lederach (2003).

[12] For an overview of peacebuilding theory and practice, see Jeong (2000).

[13] On including Confucianism, see Yu (2011).

[14] "Religion and Peacebuilding," Wikipedia, at https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_and_peacebuilding, accessed October 24, 2016.

[15] Of the other major world religions, Buddhism has most in common with Daoism, both historically and in spiritual-philosophical terms. Buddhism spread from India to China in the first centuries CE and had a profound influence on the development of Chinese religious, spiritual, political, and cultural practices (including the development of Chan, predecessor of Zen, combining elements of Daoism and Buddhism). In the present age, activist scholars such as Sulak Sivaraksa have developed philosophies of Buddhism and peace within a radical framework of spiritual and social transition; see Sulak (1992). Sulak distinguishes between "priestly," conservative aspects of religion and the visionary "prophetic" tradition, with its emphasis on universal love and altruism (57). In *The*

Although peace studies literature occasionally references Daoism as a body of religion that can be mobilized to support peacebuilding, there are seemingly no case studies exploring these issues in depth. It is my assumption that some individuals, groups, and networks are engaged in "Daoist peacebuilding"—but this work appears not to be in the public domain. The project sketched here aims to explore such activities by cultivating the researcher's extensive network of contacts. It will be important to respect confidentiality and privacy, particularly in the context of an esoteric tradition such as Daoism, and the need to protect delicate peacemaking and peacebuilding activities in conflict-affected areas. Nevertheless, it should be possible to develop a body of analysis and some guiding principles. As an initial contribution, this essay sketches some parameters of what the study of Daoism and peacebuilding might look like.

Daoism and Peacebuilding

According to the Daoist classics (see below), the sage cultivates "virtue" (*te*): historically in Chinese culture, the quintessence of positive characteristics; a combination of refined personal traits and skilful abilities. The sage is characterized by an ability to identify phenomena, including potential conflicts, at an early stage of manifestation, making limited and strategic interventions in order to guide developments in a fruitful manner and direction rather than waiting until disaster has struck or fruit has already overripened. The cultivation of skillful perception regarding the deep causes, dynamics, and unfolding of events may be likened to conflict sensitivity and analysis in the field of peacebuilding.[16] Only a careful and well-informed reading of contexts and conditions (at the local level in particular, but also nationally and globally) can produce an analysis sufficiently attuned to the possibilities of emerging conflict. As a body of practice and reflection, the Daoist approach fits well with peacebuilding, understood as a multifaceted and flexible art rather than just a toolkit of techniques.[17]

Peacebuilding interventions must be carefully timed. There are times and places in which intervention is unlikely to produce a successful outcome and may expose would-be peacebuilders to harm (even physical danger); skillful interventions need to be timed and targeted, depending on the dynamics of conflict and peace. In some contexts, a realistic assessment may lead to the conclusion that no positive intervention is possible; rather, it is necessary to wait for the right circumstances and the best location. It is far better, therefore, to intervene early, at the first signs of trouble, rather than wait until large-scale violence and conflict have already attracted media and political (diplomatic) attention, by which time violent conflicts may be far more intractable and difficult to resolve.[18]

Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century (2009), Sulak argues that the transformation of unjust social relations "requires personal and spiritual change first, or at least simultaneously. … Valuing the spiritual dimension gives voice to humanity's depth. All descriptions of religious experience come down to being less selfish" (89).

[16] Conflict sensitivity involves understanding the context and dynamics in which violence plays out and in which external interventions operate. See Handschin, Abitbol, and Alluri (2016).

[17] Thanks to Jon Rudy for this insight (personal communication, October 27, 2016).

[18] On the level of interpersonal relations (intersubjective psychology), disputes are better resolved after one or both parties' emotional force has been somewhat spent, rather than trying to engage head-on with a torrent of feeling during the height of arousal. In the words of my Tai Chi Chuan teacher, Keith, "we empty behind the forcible opponent, letting that force spend itself; then very little effort is needed to lead the opponent" (or, if necessary, to send him or her tumbling).

Daoism is sometimes called the "watercourse way."[19] Like water, the Dao flows through the courses of least resistance. Energy (*chi* or *qi*, in its various forms) can be dammed or pent-up, but this is generally considered unhealthy, and the application of direct force creates resistance—or a way is found around, possibly leading to the unleashing of destructive energies. Rather than encountering confrontation, energy wants to be led by the skillful sage (or politician) and directed toward more creative channels. Daoist techniques—including forms of meditation, Tai Chi Chuan and some other martial arts, *chi kung* (Daoist yoga), acupuncture, and *feng shui* and other energy-oriented practices—are tools for guiding or leading energy toward healthy dynamics (the unobstructed flow of *chi*); more advanced practices (including the tradition and practice of alchemical meditation, and some internal martial arts) go further, seeking to transform energies—including the refinement of base impulses into higher spiritual currents and the transformation of pain and hatred into creative love.[20]

I propose that this body of theory and practice (praxis), developed and elaborated more than five thousand years ago in China (and, more recently, elsewhere), can be applied to the management and transformation of violent conflicts. My assumption is that such an approach is already richly distributed throughout the cultural-historical tradition in China and beyond, including symbolic and metaphorical references in some texts and (ritual/religious) practices. However, the Daoism of peacebuilding has not been clearly articulated, and these notions and approaches have rarely been explicitly associated with theories and practices developed within the (primarily Western-originated and oriented) field of peacebuilding.

Daoist alchemy[21] studies and practices the transformation of energies (e.g., from hatred to love, from pain to joy), and by extension the transformation of values, identities, and interests (changing hearts and minds).[22] The literature and practice focuses mostly on transformation of the personal (and interpersonal/intersubjective, in the case of couples); less well explored at the alchemical level is the application to politics and social structures—although this is a major concern of Daoist philosophical texts such as the *Dao De Ching*. Thus, Daoist philosophy and practice are also relevant to the study—and arguably the transformation—of societies, through wise leadership, the cultivation of virtue, and the avoidance of distractions/desires (see below).

As a holistic philosophy, Daoism eschews monocausal explanations, working with complexity in a manner compatible with modern systems theory.[23] This

[19] This phrase was used by Lao Tsu and is the title of Alan Watts's 1975 classic.

[20] Wolfgang Dietrich explores notions of "energetic peacebuilding," which go beyond—and, historically, precede—Western-dominated, moral-ethical and political approaches to peacebuilding; see Dietrich et al. (2011, pp. xxii, 598–99).

[21] Chan (1986); see also the multifarious works of Grandmaster Mantak Chia, for example *Healing Light of the Tao: Foundational Practices to Awaken Chi Energy* (2008).

[22] Thanks to Walter Kellenberger for this insight.

[23] Complex systems are characterized by self-organization, chaotic behavior, fat-tailed events (with relatively infrequent but often profound impacts), and adaptive interactions leading to "emergent" system characteristics (the whole being more than the sum of the parts); cf. Daoist concepts of nonlinearity. The principle of correspondence explains linkages between different levels in a complex system ("as above, so below"). It can be used to relate issues and developments at the micro-level to those at the macro, and vice versa. The project will explore pattern replication at different levels of a system in fractal science, and how such analysis can help to explain and act on patterns of conflict and potentials for peacebuilding.

includes identifying timely junctures for action and finding opportunities to reframe narratives. Such analysis and activities would conceivably form part of the larger project, envisioned to explore the connections between Daoism and peacebuilding.

Daoist peacebuilding should not be about the suppression of conflict and the imposition of a particular view of peace, but rather the skillful and nonviolent management of differences. Daoist approaches would recognize and work with politics and contention rather than seek to redefine contested sites and issues as technocratic problems.[24] As such, the emphasis would presumably be on identifying and working with (and upon) underlying causes rather than being distracted by surface phenomena. This would be in line with "deep" approaches to peacebuilding (as per Galtung), seeking to address structures and cultures of violence, rather than surface-level attempts to stop fighting (crude peacemaking).

The scope of this essay, and my very limited expertise, preclude an examination of Daoist political philosophies. In passing, it should be observed that reflection on and adherence to the principle of *wu-wei*—understood as the primordial and undifferentiated ground of being—requires the state (the emperor) to indulge in minimal involvement in governance. The spiritual philosopher and popularizer of Eastern religions Alan Watts, in his final book (*Tao: The Watercourse Way*), argued that, whenever possible, the Daoist ruler should delegate authority and administrative duties to the lowest possible level of government—the principle of "subsidiarity" in (Western) constitutional theory (Watts & Huang, 1975, p. 78).[25] Taoist philosophers are much exercised with the folly of ambition and political power. As Watts notes, "Lao-tzu [*Dao De Ching*, chapter 60] advises the ruler to govern a state as one cooks the small fish—that is, don't turn it so often in the pan that it disintegrates"; he sees the ideal state as village sized (Watts & Huang, 1975, p. 79). This laissez-faire (arguably free-market and certainly unstatist) attitude to government is quite neoliberal, if not libertarian.[26] Such digressions point toward the comparative literature on Chinese and Western statecraft (Jacques, 2009).

Returning to the subject of violence and its management, Watts writes:

> [T]he Taoists are saying, then, that seen as a whole the universe is a harmony or symbiosis of patterns which cannot exist each without the other. However, when it is looked at section by section we find conflict. The biological world is a mutual eating society in which every species is to prey of another. But if there were any species not preyed upon by another, it would increase and multiply in its own self-strangulation, as human beings, through their skill in defeating other species (such as bacteria), are in danger of disrupting the whole biological order (Watts & Huang, 1975, pp. 51–52).[27]

[24] James Ferguson, in *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (1990), argues that development assistance tends to depoliticize contentious issues by reframing them as amenable to technical solutions implemented by government in partnership with aid professionals, rather than as sites of political struggle, as is often the reality experienced by local communities.

[25] This principle holds that the central government should only perform tasks that cannot be undertaken at a more local, subsidiary level (UN Development Report, 1999).

[26] A view corroborated by reading the Chinese masters as translated by Thomas Cleary (1992, e.g., p. 4).

[27] Citing the *Dao De Che*, verse 29.

In part, Watts is claiming Daoist endorsement for the notion that some forms of violence (often quite painful for those involved—especially the victims) may be inevitable, in order for ecological systems to be balanced. Failure to recognize this and act accordingly would block the natural development (or working out) of energies and potentially cause more harm than good (for example, in the form of an overflow of potentially violent energies). Watts invokes the Daoist principle of *hsiang sheng* ("mutual arising"): "[T]he Taoist view of nature was not sentimental. It recognised that violence had sometimes to be used, but always with regret" (Watts & Huang, 1975, pp. 53, 82). Furthermore, evil and suffering can only be known because of their opposites (*Dao De Ching*, chapter 2).

Daoism and "Just War"

What does Daoism have to say about the causes and conduct of armed conflict?[28] The subject can be approached through an examination of "Just War theory" (Jeong, 2000, pp. 62–64), a doctrine of military ethics developed initially by Western medieval (and arguably earlier) theologians. The doctrine seeks to ensure that wars are initiated and conducted in an ethically defensible manner. While the horror of war is acknowledged, Just War theory regards this as potentially the lesser of two evils under certain circumstances (i.e., in order to prevent even worse suffering such as massive human rights abuses) and thus becomes a rationale for liberal interventionism. The doctrine consists of two sets of criteria: *jus ad bellum* (the right to go to war) and *jus in bello* (right conduct within war).

The criteria for just cause include: that the primary reason for going to war must be just (obviously arguable, depending on how the terms are defined—it might be argued that war is always unavoidable); that innocents must be in imminent danger and can be helped by military intervention; that the injustice suffered by one party must be significantly outweighed by the suffering of the other (comparative justice); that only duly constituted authorities may wage war (competent authority); that force may be not be used for subsidiary (unjust) reasons (right intention); that the likelihood of a successful outcome must outweigh the suffering caused (probability of success); that force may be used only after all peaceful and viable alternatives have been tried and exhausted, or assessed as unworkable (the principle of last resort); and that anticipated benefits are proportionate to the endeavor's expected evils or harms (the principle of proportionality). The criteria for just conduct of war include: that acts of war should be directed toward enemy combatants and not at civilians (distinction); that combatants must ensure that any harm caused to civilians or their property is not excessive in relation to anticipated military advantages (proportionality); that an action must be intended to help in the defeat of the enemy (military necessity); that aggression must be launched against a legitimate military objective; that the fair treatment of prisoners of war and civilians is ensured; and that combatants may not use such vile methods or weapons as rape or weapons of mass destruction.

The *Dao De Ching* (chapters 30–31) admonishes:

> Counsel [the ruler] not to use force to conquer the universe
> For this would only cause resistance.
> Thorn bushes spring up wherever the army has passed.
> Lean years follow in the wake of a great war.
> […]

[28] For a discussion of Confucian ethics of and in warfare, see Yu (2011, pp. 251–54).

> Weapons are instruments of fear;
> They are not a wise man's tools.
> He uses them only when he has no choice …
> If you rejoice in victory, then you delight in telling; if you delight in killing you cannot fulfill yourself …
> That is why victory must be observed like a funeral.

The Art of War (attributed to Sun Tzu) is regarded as a classic of the Daoist canon, and together with the *Dao De Ching* and the *I-Ching* (*Book of Changes*) is probably the most frequently translated and widely quoted book of Chinese literature. It is also required reading for students at many military colleges. In the introduction to his translation, Thomas Cleary argues that "in Sun Tzu's philosophy the efficiency of knowledge and strategy is to make conflict altogether unnecessary. … The Superior militarist foils enemies' plots; next best is to ruin their alliances; next after that is to attack their Armed Forces; worse is to besiege their cities" (Sun Tzu, 1991, p. xi). Again, according to Cleary, "*The Art of War* wars against war. … It infiltrates the enemy lines, uncovers the enemy's secrets, and changes the hearts of the enemy's troops" (xiv). Strategies of deception (e.g., chapter 2) are regarded as the utmost strategic wisdom on the part of Chinese generals (although secrecy may be antithetical to peacebuilding practitioners' agenda of transparency and openness).

In introducing the alchemical *The Inner Teachings of Taoism* (Chan, 1986, pp. vii–ix), Cleary provides a near characterization of Daoist Just War theory:

> Taoism is not sentimental and has always recognized the reality of war. Rather than simply make moralistic pronouncements against war, Taoism approaches this problem realistically, using two basic strategies. The first of these is preventative, minimising the causes of war existing in the human psyche; the second is palliative, minimising the trauma of war when it actually does take place.

As a classic of Chinese literature, *The Art of War* has attracted numerous commentaries, many of which have themselves achieved classic status. Among these, Sun Bin's *Art of War* states that "war must be pondered carefully. The man who takes pleasure in war will perish. … War is not a thing to be enjoyed" (Sun Bin, 2003, chapter 2).[29]

The Art of War and its commentaries regard warfare as a great evil, often producing appalling suffering (particularly on the part of women and children, who usually constitute the majority of victims). Nevertheless, like much of the Daoist (and broader Chinese) canon, the approach is pragmatic: war may be terrible, and everything should be done to reduce suffering to a minimum. But sometimes armed conflict might be seen as the lesser of two evils. Refraining from war can allow injustice (up to and including mass atrocities) to prevail, potentially entailing far greater suffering than the limited ("collateral"—shudder) damage caused by a quick and "surgical strike" (another euphemism). The *art* of war thus lies in achieving legitimate military-political objectives while causing minimal suffering. Sun Tzu's approach is in line with other forms of Daoist philosophy and practice, such as Tai Chi Chuan, a martial art (consisting of diverse schools and masters), which (at least in some forms) uses softness and subtlety to deflect and

[29] Similarly, from chapter 31, "The Way and Its Power": "[T]he true gentleman … [uses weapons] only as a last resort, esteeming instead peace and tranquility. He sees no beauty in victory, to see beauty in victory is to rejoice in the killing of others."

defeat the force of an enemy.[30] This conception of warfare echoes the importance in Just War theory of armed conflict having a just cause and being undertaken only as a last resort (*jus ad bellum*), and advocating the right conduct within war, which should be undertaken in a way that minimizes suffering (*jus in bello*).[31]

In the case of just cause, there remain important political questions regarding who determines this, how, and why. It could be argued that most wars are quite unjust (both causally and in practice) and launched for less than honorable reasons. Nevertheless, a high threshold is required to argue that this would be the case for *all* conflicts (World War II against Nazi Germany is often held up as an example of a just war against an evil tyranny).

Another of Cleary's wonderful translations, *The Book of Leadership and Strategy: Lessons of the Chinese Masters*, distills Daoist wisdom from two thousand to three thousand years ago. In his introduction, Cleary argues that "warfare is one of the paradoxical symbols of ancient Taoism, being the epitome of conflict and violence but also representing a way of ending violence. … [The Taoists'] conceptions of just and unjust wars [are] parallel with their comparisons between balanced and exaggerated individuals" (pp. ix–x). Among the pithy statements recorded are that:

> a degenerate society is characterised by expansion as imperialism. … [K]illing innocent people … is not what armies are really for. A militia is supposed to put down violence, not cause violence. (pp. 26–27)

Furthermore, the "Sage's use of arms is like combing hair or thinning sprouts: a few are removed for the benefit of the many" (p. 59).[32] Echoing *The Art of War* (and Tai Chi Chuan practice), Cleary's ancient masters argue that "the supreme attainment of a just military action is to finish its mission without fighting" (p. 61)—an achievement that requires "unfashionable wisdom and an unfailing Way" (Tao) (p. 64). In their writings "On Peace," the Masters observe the importance of what modern-day humanitarians might call "resilience": "[I]f you are modest, frugal, and disciplined, that will produce wealth for you" (p. 77). Throughout this and other Daoist classics, wisdom—and not being overly damaged by conflict—is repeatedly stressed as coming from the elimination of desire and escape from attachments and anxieties (e.g., pp. 79–81; nonattachment is also a key concept in Buddhism). As noted above, the sage (or wise ruler) is characterized by sensitive attention to developing phenomena, so that problems can be headed off, or positive developments cultivated, before they reach the

[30] "A force of four ounces deflects a thousand pounds"; see Wang (1985, p. 37). Another important concept in Tai Chi Chuan is that if energy is resisted, it tends to push back. "The softest thing in the universe / Overcomes the hardest thing in the universe" (*Dao De Ching*, chapter 42; see also chapter 76). In the words of my Tai Chi Chuan teacher, Keith: "Energy prefers to be led, rather than forced" (personal communications, April and September 2016).

[31] There is, of course, ample evidence for other traditions in China (as throughout the world), where concern for humanitarian suffering is less evident.

[32] An argument for liberal/humanitarian interventionism might be: "[W]hen they hear that a neighbouring nation oppresses its people, they [effective leaders] raise armies and go to the border, accusing that nation of injustice. … The coming of the armies is to oust the unjust and restore the virtuous. … The conquering of the nation does not extend to its people; it removes the leadership and changes to government, honouring excellent knights" (p. 61). However, a note of somewhat cynical realism is also apparent: "When large groups attack small groups, that is considered bellicose; but when large nations annex small nations, that is considered smart" (p. 88).

critical level: "refinement of attention means to consider problems before they arise, to prepare against calamities before they happen, to guard against faults" (p. 106)[33]—doctrines that may be compared to notions of preventative diplomacy, or early warning of emerging conflict.[34]

Conflict Transformation

The conflict transformation approach can be explored through the two peace processes with which I am most familiar: Mindanao (southern Philippines) and Myanmar.[35] In both countries, Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) have long struggled for self-determination against states that are experienced by ethnic minority communities as culturally alien, and economically and politically dominant. EAOs in both contexts are characterized by complex combinations of "greed" and "grievance" factors but nevertheless enjoy significant (albeit contested) political legitimacy among the communities they seek to represent, on the basis of the grievances and political aspirations they articulate. In both contexts, EAOs face significant challenges moving from insurgency to reinvent themselves as credible political actors and governance authorities. (The peace process between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front represents a rare example of a Muslim minority pursuing its political objectives through structured dialogue.) Also, in both contexts, peace processes underwent significant setbacks in 2015–2016.

In the Philippines, there was a failure to translate a political settlement to decades of armed conflict into necessary enabling legislation. As well as unfortunate incidents on the ground, lack of support for the legislation among legislators also reflected the Filipino public's unfamiliarity with the Moro cause and an absence of understanding and sympathy for it. The history of Mindanao is not covered sufficiently in history textbooks or the mainstream media, and Moro figures are mostly written out of historical narratives of the Filipino nationalist movement. Most Filipinos, particularly outside Mindanao, do not appreciate the historical injustice and struggle of the Moro people and the legitimacy—and reasonableness—of their political claims. The establishment of the Bangsamoro autonomous region and a sustainable solution to the armed conflict will only be possible with a significant attitude change in the hearts and minds of the Filipino majority.

Similarly in Myanmar, as a consequence of decades of military rule, many people have little understanding of the history and situation of ethnic communities, particularly those in the conflict regions. Most members of the Bama majority community have been denied opportunities to learn about the struggle and suffering of their ethnic brethren. Myanmar has already suffered intercommunal conflict in relation to widespread discrimination against the Muslim community. There is potential for cynical and populist politicians to mobilize prejudice against the "other" in relation to the Muslim community, and also potentially in opposition to ethnic nationality demands for self-determination,

[33] "Sages do things while they are still small and thus can overturn the great" (p. 115); "The beginnings of fortune and calamity are subtle, so people are heedless of them. Only sages see the beginning and know the end" (p. 117).

[34] As envisioned in UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's 1992 *Agenda for Peace* (Jeong, 2000, p. 197); on early warning systems, see Jeong (2000, pp. 202–3).

[35] For a comparative overview of these two conflicts and peace processes, see South and Joll (2016).

including federalism. There is therefore a need in Myanmar to educate the Bama majority regarding the grievances and aspirations of ethnic nationality communities to preclude potential populist and divisive efforts to undermine a political settlement.

In both contexts, deep, equitable, and lasting peace requires a transformation of individual and intercommunal relationships, including a reimagination of state-society relations and changes in basic attitude ("hearts and minds"). This type of peacebuilding will have to go beyond elite-level political negotiations, toward transformations of identity and interest and a rechanneling of psychosocial energies.

How would the sage add value in such contexts? Under propitious circumstances, he or she might advise the prince (whether a sovereign government, insurgent commander, community leader, or humanitarian diplomat). Timely and practical advice may be invaluable.[36] On other occasions, it may be appropriate to "let them fight it out" (Luttwak, 1999), and so the sage might head up into the mountains and wander in the mists, leaving the world to its own devices.

Ultimately, the sage follows his or her heart (*hsin*, or heart-mind). In *The Book of Chuang Tzu*, Chaung Tsu, Sung Chien, and Yin Wen

> accepted difference as given. They discoursed upon the nature of the heart and they sought a unity proceeding from the heart. By such concerns they sought to unite everyone in joyfulness and to harmonise all within the boundaries of the oceans. Their greatest desire was to see this achieved everywhere, by their efforts. They could face insults and not be disturbed; they struggled to save the people from warfare; they aimed to prevent aggression and to silence arms and thus to deliver future generations from violence. In pursuit of such ideals, they walked across the whole world, advising the high and teaching the low, and even though the world would not listen, they just continued even more strongly and would not give up. So it is said that high and low were tired of seeing them, but they never gave up putting themselves forward. (Chuang Tzu, 2006, p. 300)

In Lieu of a Conclusion, Toward an Agenda for Research and Practice

This essay aims to contribute initial and preliminary thoughts toward developing a research agenda and body of practice and theory, as contributions to peacebuilding theory and practice, and a modest commentary on Daoist wisdom and ethics. It is offered in the knowledge that the person who knows rarely tells, and vice versa. Next steps might include collecting concrete examples of "Daoist peacebuilding" in practice—including activities and interventions that could be so characterized, without necessarily being framed explicitly in these terms. The approach sketched here would be interdisciplinary in academic terms, with relevance hopefully to historians and political scientists, and scholars of Asian studies, religious studies, and peacebuilding.

This project may be of particular interest to Chinese scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. The rise of China has seen renewed interest in the soft power embodied in five thousand years of cultural history and wisdom (Jacques, 2009). Chinese (in particular state) actors have mobilized elements of Confucianism and other cultural traditions to enrich and empower China's doctrines and practice, including in the field of international engagement. The Daoist tradition has much to contribute toward a distinctly Chinese theory and practice of transformative

[36]"To escalate conflict is easy, to de-escalate, rare": Mark Raudva, December 9, 2016 (personal communication).

peacebuilding. This may be particularly relevant as China begins to engage more in multilateral forums in the field of peacebuilding (e.g., in Afghanistan and Myanmar).[37]

Daoist literature and practices cultivate and express a deep connection to the natural world. The project conceptualizes the earth as a living being (or holistic system), and often an object of violence, and will explore Daoist approaches to environmental sustainability, healing, and justice.

There is an urgent need to find ways of managing conflicts with love and compassion during a period of potentially violent readjustment in the context of widespread geo/political upheavals (including the rise of populist nationalism around the world, the growing impacts of climate change, and widespread migration crises). As a Christian, I find the threaded pearls of Daoist wisdom both inspiring and instructive, in stumbling merrily and with many errors along the Way.

[37] Confidential, personal communications from a senior international peacebuilding source (November 3, 2016).

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