

The Enlightenment of *Tai Chi* Philosophical World View on Human Peace

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This paper discusses the worldview of classical Chinese Tai Chi philosophy: the holistic view, the view of Yin and Yang, view of change, view of no change, and view of harmony and their enlightenment to human peace. The holistic view inspires people to look at human society from the height of the whole earth, and consider not only national interests, but also the interests of all mankind. The view of yin-yang tells people that when analyzing problems, they should look at the two aspects of yin-yang integration, not only to consider their own national interests, but also the interests of other countries, not only to see the contradictions and conflicts between countries, but also to see mutual benefits, to develop positive factors and to overcome negative factors; The view of change tells people that national leaders should adjust their foreign relations according to the changes of the times and the situation on the premise of abiding by objective laws; The view of no change tells us to act in accordance with the laws of nature and society, and that countries should respect each other, benefit each other, and cooperate for win-win results. The view of harmony enlightens us that in international relations, we should advocate the idea of living in harmony, harmony in diversity and harmonious coexistence, and oppose hegemonism and power politics.

Keyword: Taiji philosophy, the worldview, the enlightenment, positive significance, human peace

Introduction

At present, the Russia-Ukraine war, Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and Red Sea crisis are still ongoing. These continued wars and conflicts have aroused us to think deeply: Why cannot the conflicts and wars between these countries be stopped? Why cannot human society step out of the vicious circle of conflicts, struggles, and even wars? Can international community only solve problems with the use of strong fists, powerful strength, and even the nuclear weapons? If countries continue to fight each other to the death, where will the human society go? Can human society never head towards peace and harmony?

In fact, people from all over the world long for peace and harmony. The major religions of the world, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, and Chinese Confucianism, all have the idea of teaching people to be good and advocating love, peace, and harmony. It is precisely these shining thoughts that prevent humanity from self-destruction. In the current situation where the conflict in the Middle East is intensifying, the Russia-Ukraine war is ongoing, and the world is facing the threat of nuclear war, we should seriously consider the major issues of human peace and harmony.

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In this paper, I'd like to analyze these major issues by Tai Chi philosophical world view in traditional Chinese culture, in order to gain thought-provoking enlightenment.

Tai Chi philosophy is a learning used by ancient Chinese thinkers to study the origin, development, and evolution of the universe. By long-time observation of the cosmic starry sky, Lao-Tzu, the ancient sage of China, discussed the origin of the universe in his book *Tao Te Ching*. He wrote, "The Dao produces the One, the One produces the Two, the Two produce the Three, and the Three produce the ten thousand things. All things carry Yin and embrace Yang; they achieve harmony by combining these forces." (Xu & Liu, 1990, pp. 70-71). He believed that the universe originated from the Dao, namely the Cosmic law, and the universe runs in accordance with the law, thus producing all things. In the universe, a mass of chaotic matter moves violently and forms two kinds of matter of Yin-Yang interweaving, which move and change in time and space, thus producing all things. Therefore, the universe is derived from Yin-Yang movement change of things, and Tai Chi is Yin and Yang.

The philosophy of Tai Chi is contained in ancient Chinese classic books, including *The Book of Changes*, *Tao Te Ching*, and *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*. Tai Chi philosophy is called the philosophy of harmony by some Chinese scholars. In order to stress characteristics of Yin-Yang movement and change of Tai Chi, the concept of Tai Chi philosophy will be adopted to express my ideas. I have refined the Tai Chi philosophical world view from ancient Chinese scriptures, including the holistic view, view of Yin and Yang, view of change, view of no change, and view of harmony. I will use the five-world view of Tai Chi philosophy to analyze and answer the questions raised above.

Holistic View

Tai Chi philosophy believes that the universe is a dynamic whole, and anything and phase in the universe is a dynamic whole. There are parts in the whole, and the parts constitute the whole. The whole can change and affect parts, and parts also have the power to change and affect the whole. The interdependence of the whole and the parts is the interdependence of everything.

The holistic view tells us that we should view human society from the perspective of the earth as a whole. Individuals should consider not only their own interests, but also the interests of the group. National leaders should consider not only the interests of their own countries, but also the interests of all humanity.

If we analyze economic globalization from the perspective of the holistic view, it can be seen that worldwide countries are now closely linked in the economy, and the economic and trade exchanges of many countries are highly complementary. For example, China's high-quality and inexpensive daily-use consumer goods, light industrial products, and other products are sold well in various countries; and meanwhile, the resource products, specialty products, and technological products from various countries are exported to China, enriching the lives of Chinese people and people from other countries, and enhancing cultural exchanges among people of various countries. Therefore, the economic globalization has closely linked the humanity on the earth inseparably. Closing a country to exclude foreign contact, anti-globalization and counter-globalization arguments not only go against the overall interests of human society's development, but also go against the trend of the times and the law of history. Arguments of "setting up barriers" and "disrupting supply chains" in the trade of various countries are contrary to the trend of economic globalization and informatization, but also go against the fundamental interests of people of all countries.

After World War II, there were no winners in nuclear war; the humanity on the earth will be destroyed once a nuclear war breaks out, and this "nuclear terror" has aroused the vigilance of all humanity; and therefore, all

the countries in the world are against nuclear war. This shows that people have subconsciously accepted the holistic view of human society while facing the threat of nuclear war to all humanity.

At present, the Russia-Ukraine war is in a dangerous situation, with the United States and NATO supporting Ukraine in using the weapons they have provided to attack the Russian territory, which has aroused great anger from Russia. Russia claims that it will use tactical nuclear weapons in response, the two sides continue to escalate the situation. In this way, the danger of nuclear war is approaching step by step. As we all know, there is no winner in a nuclear war. If the two sides can consider the overall interests of humanity and their own people, take a step back, and solve the problem through political negotiations, perhaps the outbreak of nuclear war endangering mankind on Earth will be avoided. It is the so-called "Take a step backward and see the big picture".

Therefore, the holistic view warns humanity not to fight to death, and problems shouldn't be solved through wars or even nuclear war; and the humanity should unite sincerely, help each other, and coexist with peace. By understanding international relations with the holistic view, people can be inspired to properly handle relations between countries from a global perspective.

View of Yin and Yang

The view of Yin and Yang of Tai Chi philosophy believes that Tai Chi contains Yin and Yang, and the combination of Yin and Yang forms Tai Chi. Tai Chi contains countless matter formed by Yin and Yang. The Yin and Yang movements and changes of things create all things in the universe. Therefore, everything in the universe contains *Yin* and *Yang*, and there is *Yin* and *Yang* in each of *Yin* and *Yang*, which can be infinitely divided. Changes of everything in the universe are reflected in the change of Yin and Yang, such as day and night, sun and moon, front and back, inside and outside, up and down, left and right, big and small, more and less, virtual and real, existence and non-existence, rigidity and flexibility, movement and stillness, and strength and weakness, etc.

The movements and changes of Yin and Yang in things have the relationship of mutually reinforcing and neutralizing each other. In other words, Yin and Yang have the side of mutual promoting growth, supplementation, infiltration, transformation, coordination, and balance, as well as the side of mutual restraint, opposition, conflict, struggle, and "one falling when the other rising". The balance of Yin and Yang leads to harmony, while the imbalance of Yin and Yang leads to conflict.

The view of Yin and Yang of Tai Chi philosophy tells us that we must analyze the problem by seeing the one body with two sides of the Yin and Yang in things, and at the same time, we must see the constant movement and change between *Yin* and *Yang*. In terms of international relations, national leaders should consider not only the interests of their own countries, but also the interests of other countries. They should not only focus on contradictions and conflicts between countries, but also pay attention to mutual benefits. Positive factors should be fully developed, while negative factors should be overcome. The peaceful coexistence between countries should be achieved through mutual benefit, reciprocity, and win-win cooperation. If national leaders bully, suppress, and endanger other countries for the interest of their own ruling clique of their own country, sow discord and create disturbance in other countries, try to split and dismember other countries, and even wage wars to invade other countries, it will inevitably intensify contradictions, lead to strong hatred and resistance from other countries, and thus cause serious opposition, conflicts, and even wars between countries. Therefore, the concept of "binary opposition" that a country only emphasizes its own interests as the top priority or prioritizes its own

interests, constantly seeks competitors or adversaries, fears that other countries will become stronger than itself, and even suppresses emerging powers harms both other countries and itself. Many contradictions and conflicts in the international community are caused by the fixed pattern of thinking and ideas of this struggle philosophy. Therefore, we should get rid of the thinking methods and ideas that do not conform to laws of the universe, and establish the ideas of peace and harmony that conform to the laws of the universe.

Therefore, the ideology of power politics, hegemonism, insatiable greed, and self-interest at the expense of others is detrimental to human society. This consciousness lacks Yin and Yang thinking, considering only their own interests and not those of others, and considering only the interests of their own group and not those of humankind. Such ideologies are not only harmful to others and humankind, but even more harmful to themselves.

If we trace the Russian-Ukrainian war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Red Sea crisis back to their roots, we can see the dangers of power politics and hegemony, which only take into account their own interests and do not consider the interests of others.

View of Change

The view of Change of Tai Chi philosophy believes that everything in the universe is in an endless state of change, and the universe constantly creates all things in the process of movement and change of all things, so that all things can keep continuous reproduction and breeding in an endless succession. *The Book of Change* described that, as the Universe always changes, this change occurs in the three-dimensional space all around, up and down.

The view of Change of Tai Chi philosophy thinks that there is unity in diversity in the Universe. The diversity dose not exactly equal to the contradictions, sometimes the diversity may evolve into conflicts, but sometimes it is a necessary condition for a harmony, there are a number of examples in nature and human society and the different things that work in close cooperation to cause new things can be created. The diverse in unifies in Universe is the basis for generating new things. It had been the Taiji philosophy to accommodate different point of views. So human being should respect cultural diversity, ideological diversity, and system diversity in the society.

The view of change of Tai Chi philosophy tells us that we need to move with the times according to the changes of the times and the changing situation while abiding by laws of the universe. We should do the right thing at the right time, suit our measures to local conditions, and deal with specific issues on a case-by-case basis.

The changes in China-US relations reflect this law of change. In the 1950s, relations between China and the United States were strained and even a war broke out on the Korean battlefield. However, in the 1970s, change of Sino-US-Soviet relations and President Nixon's visit to China started the new chapter of Sino-US relations. China adjusted its policy towards the United States in a timely manner according to the changes in the situation, and actively developed relations with the US. In January 1979, China and the United States established diplomatic relations. After China's reform and opening up, the economic and trade relations between China and the United States have developed rapidly, and cultural exchanges have become increasingly close, thus benefiting both sides greatly. However, after Trump took office in 2016, he launched a trade war with China, imposing high tariffs on Chinese products. China was forced to respond and also imposed tariffs on American products, leading to a sharp decline in Sino-US relations. After Biden took office, he continued to regard China as the biggest competitor or

even enemy, and comprehensively suppressed China. Therefore, China has to counter the United States, and China-US relations have entered a state of both communication and struggle. It can be seen that the relations between countries change with the changing situation. If we understand this truth, we will be able to follow the situation and respond flexibly in the complex and unpredictable international community.

View of No Change

The view of no change of Tai Chi philosophy believes that the invariable “*Dao*” exists in the process of constant movement and change of the universe, which is the law of the universe and nature. Lao-Tzu puts forward “*Dao* follows nature” in his book *Tao Te Ching*, believing that “*Dao*” is the fundamental law of the universe, and *Dao* is invisible, has no phase, exists independently, and has extraordinary creative power. Everything in the universe has the relatively stable nature in the process of movement, change, and development. In other words, behind the constant changes of all things in the universe, there is a *Dao* of no change. That is, the fundamental laws of the origin, development, evolution, and extinction of the universe to repeat this process in endless cycles, as well as the laws of the emergence, development, and evolution of all things.

Lao Tzu believes that the *Dao* and *De* are the laws that humans should follow in social relations. *Dao* produces all things, and *De* nurtures all things. All things respect the *Dao* and cherish *De*. The reason why *Dao* is respected and *De* is cherished is because *Dao* and *De* produce and nurture all things but do not take forcible possession of all things, and generate all things without being arrogant or dictatorial. Lao Tzu warned the world: “*Dao* exerts effect on everybody impartially but gives a favor to those in accord with it.” (Xu & Liu, 1990, p. 217).

This means that the laws of nature have no preference for anyone, but always help those who are good at following natural laws. Therefore, if human beings want to survive and develop, they must abide by *Dao* and *De*. Whoever masters the great *Dao*, people from all over the world will turn to him. Lao Tzu placed humans in the *Dao*, Heaven, and Earth, and advocates that human should act according to the *Dao* of the heaven (the *Dao* of the universe), the *Dao* of the earth (the *Dao* of nature on the earth), and the *Dao* of humanity (the *Dao* of Human Society). If humans can follow *Dao* and uphold *De* the world can be in a state of peace; if humanity deviates from *Dao* and *De*, it will lead to alienation and fall into the quagmire of vying with each other. In Lao Tzu’s view, in human society, any behavior that does not conform to the principles of *Dao* and *De* is “ignorant and presumptuous”. Lao Tzu opposes the use of force and launching wars to solve problems between countries. He believes that war is a last resort and can only be carried out while defending national sovereignty and territory. The view of no change of Tai Chi philosophy teaches us that countries should make every effort to avoid war and act in accordance with the laws of the universe and nature. The mutual respect, mutual benefit, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation among countries are the extensions of *Dao* and *De*, and conform to the laws of the universe and nature. Hegemonism, power politics, bullying the small with the big, and bullying the weak with the strong are all acts of recklessness. This kind of behavior that goes against the *Dao* and *De* will eventually face intense resistance and backfire on oneself because of harming others to benefit oneself. There is a famous saying in Chinese Buddhism: “the good you do will eventually be reflected in you, and the evil you do will eventually be reflected in you”. As the saying goes, “persisting in evil brings about self-destruction”. “A kind-hearted family will surely have many blessings; whereas a wicked family is bound to have many disasters.”

View of Harmony

Harmony means “reasonable” and “appropriate”. “Reasonable” is to do things according to the law and truth. “Appropriate” is to make things right, well-proportioned, just right, things achieved coordination by incoordination, achieved symmetry by asymmetry, and achieved balance by imbalance. Harmony refers to the state in which things are in a balance of *Yin and Yang*, where they blend with each other in the continuous adaptation of the environment, coexisting harmoniously.

The view of harmony in Tai Chi philosophy believes that “harmony is the fundamental nature of all things in the universe, and it is also the most important and fundamental basis for the emergence, development, and change of all things in the universe” (Yang, 2013, p. 47). From the perspective of the generation, development, and evolution of the entire universe, the balanced and harmonious operation of galaxies and stars maintains the overall development and evolution of the universe. The collision between stars occurs occasionally, while the collision and condensation of nebulae and dust is a process and way to achieve higher levels of balance and harmony. In the process of the “endless growth” of all things in the universe, there are not only exclusion, opposition, and collision, but also mutual generation, balance, and harmony. And balance and harmony are the dominant aspects of the universe, and the main conditions and driving forces for “endless growth”. Although all things in the universe differ from each other in a thousand ways and have opposites and conflicts with each other, the universe has a self-repairing function to balance imbalances, and the Earth also has a self-repairing function. Therefore, the general direction of operation of the universe is towards harmony and unity.

The view of harmony pursues maintaining harmony between man and nature, between human beings and society, between people, and between the mind and soul. This dynamic manifests itself through the interaction of opposites. Conflict resolution requires abiding by the Tian Dao (the cosmic laws), Di Dao (the nature laws), and Ren Dao (the social laws) as well as by rational behavior.

The social ideals of the harmony thought is universal harmony in the world. Confucian classic *Book of Rites* told people: The future world will be public and universal harmony in the world.

The view of harmony in Tai Chi philosophy inspires us that in international relations, harmony begetting new things, harmony but not uniformity, and harmonious coexistence are the fundamental laws that human society should follow. If these ideas are applied to international community, it will advocate rational approach in dealing with international issues. Under normal circumstances, countries should apply co-ordination, consultation, balancing, cooperation, and mutual benefit approaches to the problem as much as possible; should not use the ways of extreme, one-sided dealing with problems, and still less should solve the problem by creating contradictions between countries, provoking conflicts or even wars.

Conclusion

Tai Chi philosophy world view enlightens us, in international relations, we should advocate mutual respect, mutually beneficial cooperation, and “win-win”, living in peace, coexisting in harmony among countries. As the saying goes, “It’s not just good for you, but also for me, for everyone.”

On the contrary, selfishness and greed, exalting only one’s own self, harming others to benefit oneself, and doing evil things to others and the actions of provoking conflicts, struggles, and wars in the international community go against the law of nature and society.

Taiji philosophy is the philosophical foundation of the harmonious thought system of traditional Chinese culture. Tai Chi philosophical worldview is fundamentally different from the “dichotomy” of the black-or-white, white-or-black philosophy of struggle. Taiji philosophy advocates the concepts of respect for the Tao and virtue, peaceful coexistence and harmonious coexistence, which are the exact opposite of hegemony and power politics. So, the holistic view, the view of Yin and Yang, view of change, view of no change, and view of harmony of Taiji philosophy have important enlightenment to us and far-reaching positive significance in reducing conflicts and wars between countries and guiding mankind towards peace and harmony.

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