

CHAPTER 2

Breathing Qi (Ch'i), Following Dao (Tao) *Transforming This Violence-Ridden World*

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The Human Presence Today

If we were to choose one word to describe the present state of the natural world, it would be *holocaust*; we are experiencing an apocalyptic moment on the planet. Humanity's twelve billion hands and six billion mouths are tearing apart the earth piece by piece—and devouring it. Eighty percent of the original forests of 200 years ago, which covered the earth like a protective and nourishing skin, have been ripped, burned, and torn off; the rivers and streams that course through the earth like arteries and veins are disturbed, ruptured, drained, and poisoned; the oceans are so depleted that they cannot sustain the presently remaining and struggling marine life forms; the thick layer of atmosphere protectively blanketing the entire planet has been thinned, punctured, and poisoned; the bowels of the earth are being gutted by oil and metal extraction; fresh water, the earth's vital fluid, has become so scarce through overconsumption that this situation may be the trigger that will start a chain reaction toward a

final shutdown. The list of environmental devastation goes on. To this list we must also add an equally appalling record of exploitation and violence toward fellow human beings, which although not exclusive to contemporary society has reached new heights of clinical precision and efficiency in recent history. Notwithstanding all the beauties and joys that we still can encounter everywhere on the planet, these horrific pictures of the human presence on earth we presented here are undeniable truths of our reality today.¹

How can present-day humanity be so reckless, destructive, cruel, and heedless? Responses vary to this question. Some postulate a "human nature" that is fallen and egregious. A variation of this is a genetic hypothesis that we have selfish and possibly cruel genes. Both of these explanations rely on reification, and therefore an essentialism, of what humanity is and neglect to consider the decisive contribution of the *metaphysical* ("beyond physical") dimension of culture, history, ideology, societal modes of production, and social organizations to humanity's anthropological self-concept. Human animals are psycho-conceptual beings subject to the metaphysical functions of beliefs, feelings, perceptions, desires, hopes, and dreams. For human beings, the physical or biophysiological and the metaphysical dimensions are bound up like the "two" sides of a möbius strip, seemingly distinct yet inseparable. In responding to why we are so damaging to the planet and to each other, it is not enough to point to allegedly innate biophysiological features like animal aggression and territoriality or to such physical conditions as overpopulation and resulting overcrowding in a world of scarce resources; we should also inquire into the historically and culturally established metaphysical views that shape the way we see and experience ourselves and the world.

This chapter begins with the recognition that a dualistic consciousness that categorically separates the self from the world and mind from matter is probably the deepest source of humans' environmental degradation and exploitation of each other.

Psychic Autism That Hears Not the World

David Loy, along with many other thinkers, has located the central problem of humanity's exploitive and rapacious behavior in the dualistic, hence, alienated consciousness. He states,

The ecological problem seems to be the perennial personal problem writ large, a consequence of the alienation between myself and the world I find myself

in. In both these dualisms, the self is understood to be the locus of awareness and therefore the source of meaning and value. This bifurcation devalues the objective world, including all of nature, reducing it to the sphere of activity wherein the self labors to fulfill itself. The alienated subject feels no responsibility for the objectified other and attempts to find satisfaction through exploitative projects that, in fact, usually increase the sense of alienation. (Loy, 2003, p. 172)

To experience the world in the frame of a dualistic consciousness is to see the world as other-than-self or not-self. In Buddhism—some of whose concepts and terminology we adopt in this essay, as well as those of Daoism—such consciousness is understood as constituting *ego* and is viewed as a self that sees itself as categorically separate from the world—what lies “out there” beyond one’s portal of consciousness. To the ego, the world is fundamentally alien or foreign. Ego consciousness defined in this way is categorically and substantively separate from the world. In particular, this fundamental separation and alienation includes person-to-person relationships. The self sees itself as the subject, in which case the other is, even if near and dear, objectified and seen as an object upon which the subject exercises and projects its will and desires. What the objectifying ego is not readily and amply capable of is intersubjectivity, the mode of being aptly characterized by Moustakas’s (1995) book title *Being-In, Being-For, Being-With*, explained as

Being-In oneself and *in* the world of others, *Being-For* oneself and *for* life, and *Being-With* others are ways of being open to the possibilities of creative life, being receptive to new rhythms, and finding ways of expressing individuality, wholeness, and essence. (pp. xx–xxi)

Moustakas’s use of these three prepositions combined with the word *Being* captures a holistic vision of intersubjectivity in the human realm and describes the antithesis of the ego consciousness, which, as we have described it above, is alien from other, whether human, nonhuman, or nonsensate.

Let us probe a little deeper into the affective consequences of the ego consciousness and its dualistic ways of being. A certain spectrum of affective experiences is available to the ego consciousness, all the way from fear and hostility at one end to greed and domination at the other, with indifference somewhere in the middle. In more primal, visceral terms, the ego, because of its categorical separateness, can only experience the other in the form of threats of being swallowed and eaten (ego annihilation) or the desire to swallow and eat the other (ego domination). Indifference, the attitude and experience of “I

don't care," or "it doesn't matter to me," is what the ego experiences when it is momentarily free from the threats of annihilation or the desire for possession and domination.²

Given the logic of unbridgeable separateness between self and other, what is not readily and abundantly available to the ego self are intersubjective experiences of being able to partake, empathetically, in others' experiences. The other's joys and sorrows become one's own. The Buddhist notion of the "heavenly abode" (*brahma-viharas*) refers to such intersubjective experiences and includes sympathetic joy (*mudita* in Pali), compassion (*karuna*), and loving kindness (*metta*).³ Being able to experience intersubjectivity is also celebrated by Confucians and is given the name *humanity* or *humaneness* (仁). In Chinese thought, psychic and affective resonance that facilitates intersubjectivity is called *kan-ying* (感應: literally, affect and response). *Kan-ying* is a function of human sensitivity and receptivity whose workings depend on an ontological sense of continuation of being between the self and the other (Tu, 1989). The alienated consciousness of the ego self is not readily capable of being more than superficially touched and moved by the other. Proper sensitivity and receptivity are lacking.

Thomas Berry, a contemporary ecotheologian, likens the dualistic consciousness's compromised function of being touched and moved by the other to psychic "autism" (1996, pp. 410–414). Noting our psychic autism toward the natural world after the Cartesian coup de grace of radically severing the ontological tie between the order of mind and the order of matter,⁴ he writes, "The thousandfold voices of the natural world suddenly became inaudible to the human. The mountains and rivers and the wind and the sea all became mute insofar as humans were concerned (p. 410)."

When the world we encounter is objectified—that is, rendered a "collection of objects" (Berry, 1996)—it does not have the *power* to release in us feelings and perceptions of resonance. The world objectified is mute, dumb, and numb to us; we therefore do not hear, see, or feel it. The trees do not speak; the wind does not sing; the mountains do not call. We do not hear the trees and the wind; we do not hear the mountains. When we do run into people who are capable of hearing trees and mountains, we see them as primitive animists in need of further cognitive development toward scientific rationalism. Worse, we may see them as crazy and suspect that something is wrong with their brains. This kind of rationalism inhabits an *objectified* consciousness—that is, a consciousness that sees the world as inanimate, a mere "collection of objects," and thus treats it as such. The objectified is there to be taken and used but not held

sacred and befriended. We can do whatever we want with it, including destroying it. It is only made up of things—mere *stuff*. Do we have to wonder why we have a throw-away economy, and a society of conspicuous consumption?

Breathing Qi (氣)

If we acculturate and educate people in this mold of dualistic, objectified—hence, alienated—consciousness, which naturally results in their turning the world into a source of exploitation and a dumping ground, and then we turn around and tell people not to do that, where is the logic? What use is there in telling people, however urgently, not to be disrespectful and destructive toward aliens, enemies, things, and “stuff”? Such moralistic injunctions only exhibit ignorance about human psychology. Intrinsic respect for people and things, or *reverence for life*, as Albert Schweitzer called it, comes out of a mode of understanding and perception, and not just an espoused belief or doctrine that this universe and all its inhabitants are “alive” and sacred. Thus, the task for us engaged in promoting the well-being of the planet and humanity is not to deliver moralistic injunctions and threats, but to introduce views and practices that will help people to inhabit a nondualistic, intersubjective consciousness. In this essay, we introduce the reader to the Daoist *qi* philosophy and practice as a way of understanding experientially these ideas. We hasten to note and emphasize here that there are, even to our limited exposure, many other world philosophies and ways of being that proffer essentially the same or similar ideas about sacred aliveness. The *qi* philosophy is only one of them.

Now, before we even get started on our exploration of the consciousness change through *qi* practice, a few words of caution are due to the reader who is, we suspect, like ourselves: keen to adopt new ways and see results. Skeptics and enthusiasts alike, please be warned. Babies and little children learn to see the world and inhabit a certain corresponding consciousness naturally, with little conscious effort and with utmost ease just by the fact of being immersed in the given cultural environment, but to change an older person's established way of seeing and doing is a difficult and time-consuming effort, and often a struggle. (We would also add that we do not wish to romanticize the mind of the child, which, while delightful to witness and partake in, usually does not have to any substantial degree the witnessing and self-reflective capacity of adult consciousness.) Part of an adult's difficulty lies in the peculiarity of the task: to shift and change one's consciousness while inhabiting the same consciousness. This may sound like a mission impossible. Not quite. The key

is that we do not think of the task as a discontinuous change in which one thing is replaced by another en masse. We think of it as a slow and gradual process of change during which small parts are transformed continually, bit by bit, over time, and there is awareness that these small parts are connected to the whole, which is also affected by these ongoing changes. It is very much like renovating a house room by room while one is living in it. In the case of consciousness change through qi practice, “room by room” becomes “breath by breath.” Needless to say, this kind of change of consciousness takes a strong commitment to practice and immense patience with the process—commitment and patience we often lack in our fast-food and quick-fix culture.⁵

The qi ontology is an excellent example of a nondualistic worldview, and, most important for us, it comes with a whole range of embodied practices, from martial arts to brush painting. The qi philosophy posits that the whole universe, both what we in the modern West conventionally divide into animate and inanimate, or mental and material, is made up of qi. What is qi? Zhang Dainian, the author of *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy* (1989/2002), explains,

Qi is the life principle but is also the stuff of inanimate objects. As a philosophical category *qi* originally referred to the existence of whatever is of a nature to change. This meaning is then expanded to encompass all phenomena, both physical and spiritual. It is energy that has the capacity to become material objects while remaining what it is. (pp. 45-46)

The first significance of qi for us is that it is psychophysical, meaning that it encompasses both the psychical (mind) and the physical (matter). This integration is etymologically reflected in the Chinese character for qi, 氣,⁶ as it is composed of two parts: steam (气) rising from rice (米) as it cooks. Perhaps there are alchemical allusions of transformation and creation in this etymology. Through the cooking of hard-to-digest rice grains, they become nourishing food that vitalizes the one who eats them. This line of interpretation shows a connection, made in human *experience*, between matter and vital energy. Zhang (2002) posits that “the best translation of the Chinese word *qi* is provided by Einstein’s equation, $e=mc^2$ ” (p. 45). It may indeed be that there is an empirical scientific basis to qi as matter energy. We support the notion of people doing scientific research on qi; however, in this essay, we are not pursuing the cause of scientific verifiability. We take the stance that qi is foremost a philosophical understanding that human beings can entertain *and* an experiential phenomenon that human beings sense and feel. We are creatures of psychophysical phenomena, meaning that in our experience, the mental/spiritual

is not separate from the physical. This is a radically different philosophical perspective from the Western one that draws a categorical divide between mind/spirit and matter.⁷ For example, classical Chinese thought is based on and centralizes human experience (Ames & Hall, 2003). In this worldview, we cannot separate what is mental from what is physical. Characteristically, classical Chinese thought insists on the standpoint of experience. We will return to this important point later.

In common usage, qi means both “air or breath” and “energy.” As a philosophical understanding, qi is the basic “substance” of the entire cosmos, including human beings. The mental/spiritual and the material, or the animate and the inanimate, are all manifestations of qi. To quote Tu Wei-ming, a contemporary leading authority on Chinese philosophy (Tu, 1989), “Mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, animals, and human beings are all modalities of energy-matter [qi], symbolizing that the creative transformation of the Tao is forever present” (p. 72).

Here, however, a point of clarification, or perhaps a correction, is necessary in reading Tu’s comment. Mountains and rivers being modalities of energy matter do not just *symbolize* qi’s transformative power. They are, as far as our experience is concerned, qi’s concrete manifestations. Thus, in this way of understanding, what there is (ontology) coincides with what we experience (phenomenology). This, we should note, is very different from the classical Western philosophical paradigm that dualistically separates ontology (reality) from phenomenology (appearance). In this paradigm, reality (*noumena*) is always hidden behind appearance (*phenomena*).⁸ From the nondualistic perspective of qi philosophy, it makes little sense to draw the kind of categorical distinction that we in the West conventionally draw between mental and physical, animate and inanimate.

In saying and accepting, collectively and individually, that something is an inanimate object we are prescribing to ourselves how to experience and relate to this object—namely, without the evocation and involvement of feelings and personal regard for it. If we were to be cued into experiencing these so-called inanimate things in terms of the flow of qi that animates everything we perceive, it is altogether possible to feel the pulsating energies in all things and see them in their inner vividness. It goes without saying that this cue must have immanent personal meaning that is constituted by integrated thought-feeling. This kind of vividness and vital energy is potently present in what are known as “enlightenment poems” by Chinese and Japanese masters. As we move toward enlightenment—that is, a way of being that is characterized by

nondualistic consciousness, the charge and vibrancy of life becomes more and more apparent.

Qi Practice and Consanguinity

From the perspective of qi perception, plants and rocks, animals and streams, have something very fundamental in common with human beings in that we all share and manifest the vital breath of the cosmos. All beings are, to repeat Tu Wei-ming's phrase, "modalities of energy-matter [qi]." In this interpretive seeing, a great sense of "continuity of being" or consanguinity, with "the ten thousand things" (to borrow the Chinese expression for the "phenomenal world") may arise. Humans are distinct—but not radically separate—from other beings such as mountains and forests, animals and flowers, for everything is a qi manifestation. When we can truly perceive and feel, not just intellectually understand, the qi in all beings and things, the resulting sense of universal interconnectedness would be strong enough to overcome the usual sense of the categorical otherness about human and nonhuman others. The neo-Confucian philosopher Chang Tsai (1020–1077) feels consanguinity and companionability with all beings: "Heaven is my father and earth is my mother, and even such a small being as I finds an intimate place in their midst ... all people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions" (as quoted in Tu, 1989, pp. 73–74).

Philosophically, qi is the principle of life; phenomenologically or experientially, qi is vital energy that enlivens our perception so that all that is phenomenologically presented to us comes alive to our senses and sacred to our moral sensibility. Thus, when we say that qi is the principle of life, what we mean is that qi has the transformative power to turn our alienated perception of the objectivist consciousness (seeing things merely as objects) into animated perceptions that see the whole world as being suffused by a vital and sacred life force. We do not mean to suggest a causal linkage here. What we are saying is that awareness of qi is synonymous with this altered and unified consciousness. This perception is the ethical basis of the emerging and deepening consanguinity that one feels with the whole phenomenal world. The following passage from Ch'eng Hao (1032–1085) well illustrates the ethical implication of the qi philosophy (Tu, 1989):

A book on medicine describes paralysis of the four limbs as absence of humanity (*pu-jen*). This is an excellent description. The man of humanity regards

heaven and earth and all things as one body. To him there is nothing that is not himself. Since he has recognized all things as himself, can there be any limit to his humanity? If things are not part of the self, naturally they have nothing to do with it. As in the case of paralysis of the four limbs, the vital force (*ch'i*) no longer penetrates them, and therefore they are no longer parts of the self. (pp. 75–76)

Qi is not simply a life principle; it is a *universal* life principle in that, when qi is the experiential basis of each moment of perception, one feels interconnected with everything and every being on the planet and in the universe.

Joining and Harmonizing Qi: Aikido

Earlier we indicated that in order to experience the world in the modality of qi, it is not enough to only theoretically adopt its philosophy. For the former to happen, the concept or philosophy we are adopting has to become embodied, meaning that the practitioner has to actually see, sense, and feel in certain ways pertaining to the concept. As noted earlier, that the process of embodiment takes time and dedicated effort—daily, with body, mind, heart, and spirit (in the sense of the felt “charge” and “sparks” of energy)—as part of the living of life is a given. In the entire process of embodiment, however, the most important guide is the “sensing-feeling”: Do I sense-feel some sensations of energy, in the form of tingling or heat or vibrations in the fingertips? Do I sense-feel this “bright” yang energy of the sun (“heaven”)?⁹ Do I sense-feel this “surging” qi while I breathe like this?¹⁰ Do I feel the stagnation and blockage lifting as I stand firm on the ground, my toes spread wide and in contact with the soil, and breathe deep down into my belly and sense-feel “vast” qi moving through my entire body?¹¹ The practitioner becomes able to identify certain sensations, perceptions, and feelings as dynamic phenomena of qi. Further, the practitioner has to be able to become sensitized to the ever shifting ebbs and flows of qi, and the nuances of shifts that can be described as increasing, decreasing, turning, sending, receiving, integrating, harmonizing, and so on. This is no weekend practice, and overnight results are rare. Without this kind of embodied work, however, qi remains merely a philosophical concept. With this point about embodiment in mind, we turn to the exemplary practice of *aikido*, a modern Japanese martial art first devised by O-Sensei, Ueshiba Morihei (1883–1969).

In Far Eastern traditions, many practical arts have been developed as ways of embodying and working with qi. From martial arts to calligraphy, working

with the flow of qi is the central objective of learning. In this section we will explore the example of aikido to learn more deeply about working with qi. We choose aikido as an example for three reasons:

1. Aikido is a qi practice that specifically aims at restoring peace to ourselves and to the world. As we may recall, the concern that has brought us to write this essay is, precisely, today's "violence-ridden world" of conflict and malaise. Our quest is to find an exemplary philosophy and practice that may help us to transform the way we think, perceive, and act.
2. Aikido provides clear and concrete illustrations of what it is like to work with qi.
3. One of us has been a student of aikido and can speak about working with qi from experience.

The core of aikido and of what we are trying to convey here is an idea, formulated by Ueshiba, that our goal is not to defeat an opponent but to change our opponent's heart. A further delineation of the basis of qi—or, as the Japanese say it, *ki*—is captured in Ueshiba's *The Art of Peace*:

Morihei was asked if his miraculous powers were due to spirit possession. "No," the master replied. "The divine spirit is always present within me—and you too, if you delve deeply inside—so I am just obeying its commands and letting the awesome power of nature flow through me." (M. Ueshiba, 2002, p. 25)

There is much of interest in this brief quote. Of particular interest is the idea that the divine spirit, *ki* (qi), is always present. The divine spirit as qi is not something transcendental that lies outside humanity and its earthly context. That never is the meaning of "divine" in the context of Daoism or, for that matter, Buddhism or Confucianism. In these philosophies the divine is the mundane and the mundane is the divine. Qi is never *not* there, but—and this is, in our view, crucial—how well we can manifest it in ourselves and in our lives is a matter of our own cultivation. To this end, first of all, we must delve deeply inside, into our psychophysiology, into the depth of our mind-body-heart-spirit. We must do our "inner work" (Cohen, 2002, 2005), the self-reflective and self-embodying practice that explores who one is and removes barriers to its integrity and authenticity.

The goal of aikido is harmony or peace, as the literal meaning of the three Chinese characters show: *ai* (合; "converging, bringing together, harmonizing"); *ki* (氣; qi); *do*' (道; "the way, the path, the art"). Ueshiba wanted

to develop a martial art whose goal was achieving peace rather than fighting and winning battles. In Morihei Ueshiba's understanding, people get into battle situations precisely because they are lacking *aikido*, the art of bringing together and harmonizing ki (qi) in the body/self in connection with the universe, and thus his aikido is about teaching people how to practice this art. His son Ueshiba Kisshomaru notes,

This body is the concrete unification of the physical and spiritual created by the universe. It breathes the subtle essence of the universe and becomes one body with it, so training is training in the path of human life. In training the first task is to continually discipline the spirit, sharpen the power of nen [awareness or consciousness or spirit], and unify body and mind. ... Nen is never concerned with winning or losing, and it grows by becoming properly connected to the ki of the universe. When that happens, nen becomes a supernatural power that sees clearly all things in the world, even the smallest movement of hand or foot. (K. Ueshiba, 1984, p. 36)

Kisshomaru Ueshiba, successor to his father in becoming chairman of the Aikikai Foundation, elaborates the relationship between nen and ki:

Nen, the single-hearted concentration seeking the unity of the order in the universe and the principle of change, becomes the wellspring of the subtle working of ki. When this subtle working, rooted in nen, is manifested in the heart and mind of a practitioner, he becomes free and open, and his insight becomes penetrating. When it works through the body, the result is spirited, dynamic movement in circular and spherical rotation. In short, nen is the line that connects ki-mind-body and the universal ki. (p. 37)

Morihei Ueshiba himself left the following poem that speaks of his connection to ki:

Standing amidst heaven and earth
 Connected to all things with ki,
 My [mind-heart] is set
 On the path of echoing all things. (K. Ueshiba, 1984, p. 39)

all time heart
 resonance

In the following we have reconstructed a short narrative to illustrate phenomenologically what it is like to work with qi, or ki, in aikido practice:

"Watch" the following: I am standing on a tatami mat wearing my *gi* (traditional practice uniform). My opponent moves toward me with his right arm upraised and his hand over his head, with the knife hand¹² edge facing me and

coming down toward the top of my head. I am standing sideways with my right foot forward. I am standing with my weight equally distributed. I feel light and inwardly still. I am alert and capable of moving in any way at any moment. I can feel the ki within me, pulsing. It can be described as a sense of anticipation in the moment, with no idea that anything has to happen. As he comes close and his knife hand descends, I step slightly toward the right side of his body and just slightly to one side. I detect a feeling and "see" a small light stream that seems to be leading his next move that will be toward me. I move in such a way as to join with the light and its direction. I initiate a turning motion to the left. As his hand comes down I complete my turn. With one motion that is directed by the inner feeling of ki, which I experience as heat and a sense of being simultaneously pushed and led by something, my left hand comes over top of his descending arm near his wrist and joins with his movement. I am now moving with my opponent. I feel a sense of oneness within myself and with my partner, who now no longer seems like an opponent. I can feel the joining of his ki and mine. In a singular and swift motion I grasp his wrist and, going with his movement, continue his downward motion with him while simultaneously moving my right hand into position under his elbow. I feel a slight push within from my ki and I accelerate his movement, lock his elbow and in a flash he is turning in the air and landing on the mat on his back. As he is descending I have a firm hold on his arm that transcends the physical. I maintain the physical connection, which is based in the connection of ki. I am able to slow his descent sufficiently so that he will not be injured by the landing. I maintain my hold on his wrist with both hands. I continue the move until he is immobilized. The action is effortless. I hold him on the mat. The wristlock that I have now applied is firm and held with only sufficient pressure to ensure his immobility. The pressure is equal only to any resistance that comes from him. I feel the profound ki-based connection between us. I have inflicted no injury. I have turned an attack move into a joining and care-full experience. I am not injured, nor is he.

Being in the flow of ki, it seems as if I have not *done* anything. The ki itself has flowed in such a way to bring things to the right place. I have looked after both myself and my opponent. I have allowed this to happen by being in touch with the movements and intent of my opponent in this corner of the universe. Throughout the experience my breath has coincided with my movements. I have gathered my ki in my hara.¹³ I have exhaled in concert with my movements to join with and make safe my opponent. I have unified my breath with my body and joined with his energy. I am at one with my experience, which includes my opponent and the environment. The experience has been guided by the ki that I was experiencing in the moment. I have learned to step aside and allow ki to pursue its natural path. It is effortless, as I am not doing anything. I have allowed ki to work through me.

Qi (氣) Is Superabundant in Dao (道)

model & reality

Peace reigns when we can fully participate in “the vitality that sustains all life” (M. Ueshiba, 2002, p. 49). For too long a time humanity has been living according to a model of life that says that we have to compete with, dominate, exploit, and devour each other because there is a dearth of resources. It is scarcity, not abundance, that we picture as the model of reality. And it is deficit that characterizes the human consciousness said to be unavoidably dualistic and objectifying. Again, we are not disputing that the world is running out of fresh water, clean air, petroleum, arable land, forests, fish, and the list goes on. Nor are we disputing that most of us are operating out of a dualistic consciousness most of the time. But, let us be careful about what conclusions we draw based on these events. It is fallacious reasoning to confuse a symptom with a cause. If the world is being depleted and we are running out of vital resources, which is by all accounts factually correct, could it be that this is because humanity has been operating with a model of scarcity and deficit? The latter is said to be the original condition of human life, “the state of nature,” as Hobbes (1651/1969) pictured it for us: “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (p. 85). In the state of nature we conduct ourselves in the manner of “every man, against every man” (p. 84). Violence becomes the chief method for securing what we need. We suggest that the world of depletion we are facing is at this point both result and cause of the scarcity and deficit mentality. Had the model of abundance and fulfillment for reality and human consciousness prevailed and more people lived by this model, then we would be living a very different existence. While the deficit model is dominant, both models exist in the field of human consciousness, and there is an unresolved tension between them, which itself is indication of a lack of awareness about what exists in the field. We suggest that qi philosophy transformed into practice conduces an awareness of the state of the world and that this awareness allows the possibility of a change, individually and collectively, toward a deep feeling of humanity that will obviate the need for violence.

Classical Chinese thought describes a model of reality, *Dao* (道), which is likened to an “empty vessel” that never depletes:

The Dao is like an empty vessel,
but its use is inexhaustible.

Oh, unfathomable source of the myriad beings!

—*Dao De Jing*, chapter 4

attachment issue !!

Nei gong. go together !!

Hobbesian
attach-
ment
worry

Dao is usually translated as “Way” or “Path.” The Chinese character for it, 道, is composed of two parts: “head” (首) and “foot” (足). Together, they signify the processual reality in which humans can be endlessly creative. It is the infinite field—the cosmological playground—of creativity for all beings, human and otherwise. Humans, as bipedal beings—with their heads pointing to “heaven” and receiving the heavenly *yang qi* and their feet touching the ground and drawing the earthly *yin qi*—are joyous and fulfilled. This is a very different model of human reality from the one given to us by thinkers like Hobbes.

In his provocative essay on the historical significance of *Dao De Jing* in terms of the evolution of consciousness, William Irwin Thompson (1996) alludes to the contrast between the Hobbesian model and the Daoist model of reality. He contrasts the masculine, fixed, rigid, geometric, dominating, expansionistic, territorial, possessive, and militaristic mind-set with the flexible, fluid, chaos dynamic, process-oriented feminine mindset of Daoism. In picturing what a Daoist society is like, Thompson states,

/// This is not a vision of capital-intensive economies of scale and state transport systems but rather of autonomous individual villages saturated with a sense of the larger process of circularity of the Tao [Dao]. And what empowers the release of possessions and possessiveness is the practice of a yoga that enables the completely autonomous individual to connect directly with the Tao. (p. 256)

Dao, the path of *qi*, is a road to superabundance, open to individuals who practice the art of gathering and harmonizing *qi*. When individuals find their source of abundance, they are content and peaceful inside and outside. They do not see the world as a battlefield of competition, struggle, exploitation, and rapacious consumption. According to the *qi* philosophy, the world is a place of abundant creativity and an unfailing source of wonder and mystery. However, unless and until individuals directly access, connect with, and work with *qi* in the field of *Dao*, all this is a theory, and a utopian discourse. Fortunately, what we are presented with is not just theory but praxis: methods of how we may turn theory into living practice. The key to this translation is the practice of working with *qi*.

Chapter 10 of the *Dao De Jing* reads:

- Cultivating and embracing the unity of spirit and matter,
- Can you prevent their separation?
- Concentrating vital energy,
- Can you make it soft like the newborn’s suppleness?
- Wiping and cleansing your inner mirror,
- Can you make it free of blemish?

Governing common people in your kingdom through love,
 Can you reach *wu-wei* (无为)?
 When the gateway to Heaven opens and closes,
 Can you hold on to femaleness?
 Understanding everything throughout the four corners of the world,
 Can you comprehend it without conscious effort?
 (The leader does not dominate and control people. Such, then, describes the mysterious and profound power of virtue.)

To elaborate, we quote Ames and Hall's accompanying commentary to the above chapter:

Early Daoist [Taoist] cultivation certainly involved a meditative regimen that seems to be the central issue here. In fact, much of the *Dao De Jing* [Tao Te Ching] can be read as a metaphor for breathing exercises. It is the thorough integration of the physical and spiritual aspects of our experience in the concentration of our *qi* that enables us to maximize our potency and invigorates our minds. Penetrating insight is not inspired by some instrumental, enabling, "tried and true" wisdom, but is rather an immediate and fundamentally creative activity out of which fresh and efficacious intelligence arises to guide the way. ... The dynamic field of experience is the locus in which the stream of phenomena is animated and achieves consummation, but all of this pageantry occurs without the presence of some controlling hand. The energy of transformation lies within the process itself rather than in some external agency. It is the very nature of the world to transform. (pp. 90-91)

As Ames and Hall point out, breathing exercise or meditation is key to the transformative practice of *qi*. Each breath is like a brush stroke that captures and articulates *qi*. Each breath delicately shapes and colors consciousness, to the form and hue of the nondual, animated consciousness. Breath by breath we dissolve dualistic thinking and perception, and transform consciousness.¹⁴

The human body need not be a rapacious organism that devours the world. The human psyche need not be starved and malnourished, suffering from insatiable hunger and thirst. The human body-psyche becomes the site for manifesting a superabundance of joy, ecstasy, love, and peace. We cite once again Morihei Ueshiba (2002) for what he has to say about the importance of individuals connecting with *qi*:

The Art of Peace functions everywhere on earth, in realms ranging from the vastness of space down to the tiniest plants and animals. The life force is all-pervasive and its strength boundless. The Art of Peace allows us to perceive and tap into that tremendous reserve of universal energy. (p. 47)

For Thompson (1996), too, individuals' connecting with qi is not simply an act of individual salvation, important as such is; connecting with qi has colossal significance for the shape and destiny of our civilization:

Over two thousand years ago, humanity chose the militarist and hierarchical path at the fork in the road. Now here we are again, and I, of course, hope that the road not taken 2000 years ago will be the road we take this time for this axial shift of the year 2002. (p. 262)

Civilization is in crisis—at a fork in the road. In one direction, a broad, multilane superfast highway that we have been on for recent millennia leads to violence and destruction; in the other direction—somewhat hidden and, some might even say, esoteric, but nonetheless an unmistakable path—leads to a Daoist vision of the world where “the unique individual, through the immediacy of his or her own breath and awareness, can connect to the universal *Tao* and the Zen of their original nature” (Thompson, 1996, p. 262).

Educating Humanity

Through Daoist qi philosophy and practice, or other differently named philosophies and practices that integrate the self with the universe, mind with matter, and intellect with feelings, individuals *can* enter into a process of movement toward *existential* security and fulfillment. As individuals become increasingly ensconced in this process they will tend to feel increasingly peaceful and loving toward the world. No amount of moralizing talk and imposition of rules and principles, threats of punishment and losing out, or even promises of survival and gain, can turn us into truly peaceful and loving human beings, free from rapaciousness. Nothing less than a thorough transformation of human consciousness will bring substantial and enduring peace on earth; it is a transformation wherein “individuals live in a supersaturated solution in which they all have access to an interior yoga through which they can connect with the cosmos” (Thompson, 1996, p. 261). True, population control, pollution control, and all manners of conservation measures will be helpful, just as eyedrops soothe eyes that are red and sore from lack of sleep. But let us not confuse a remedy with a cure, a symptom with the cause of a disease process.

Education today faces a most critical challenge: to either become germane to the solution and cure or continue to be part of the problem and disease. Education that is premised in the worldview and practices of dualism of self and other, mind and matter, intellect and affect sponsors the continuance of

human alienation and existential insecurity, which in turn educes in varying degrees of severity the inhumanity of exploitation and violence that is manifest in rapacious behavior. Educationally, too, then, we are at a turning point. If we want a world of peace, love, compassion, caring, and joy in life, then the project of education is to educe, evoke, and provoke learners toward nondualistic, intersubjective consciousness. To this end, education has to design and develop institutions that offer learners three kinds of empowerment: First of all, it enables them to undertake a critical examination of dualistic worldviews and practices as reflected and embodied in their own everyday lives and the world around them (criticism); second, it enables them to entertain and inhabit different ways of being and living in the world (creativity); and third, it enables them to function nondualistically and intersubjectively in a world that is dualistic and objectified, thereby becoming practitioners and models of the art of peace (ethics). In this chapter we have described these three empowerments. We have critiqued the damaging works of the dualistic consciousness, explored the alternative worldview of Dao and qi, and through aikido presented an example of practice that facilitates the practitioner to successfully intersect with the dualistic world in a way that is potentially transformative for the practitioner and the world.

In terms of curriculum and pedagogy, we conceive of classroom practice at any level as enacting the above three empowerments: criticism, creativity, and ethics. The intellectual component of the curriculum is supported especially, but not exclusively, by criticism, while the creative component is especially supported by a wide range of arts, crafts, and practices that are contemplative, aesthetic, psychological, somatic, and intersubjective. In this context, we recommend particularly that schools include various forms of contemplative arts, including meditative practices, yoga, prayer, Zen drawing (Franck, 1993), or journal writing, to name a few possibilities. But possibilities are limitless, and creativity knows no bounds. Finally, we would like to see education as a process of empowerment wherein students learn to meet the world of instrumentalism with the courage and creativity of nondual and intersubjective consciousness.

There are a few last thoughts to share. Objectified—that is, dualistic—consciousness is always into trying to do things *to* the world, *to* the other. Even “doing good” falls into this mode. The objectified consciousness of the educator does the same, always working on learners by telling them what to do, how to be, how to improve; “teaching” them how to fix their problems; fixing students who are seen as problems; and so on. Educators embodying the nondual, intersubjective consciousness take a different approach. First, they

teach others by being an authentic and living embodiment of what they deem to be valuable and potentially meaningful to learners. They realize that teaching is not merely a matter of telling, however persuasively and urgently, and that it is crucial to be a model in one's own being and one's own life. We echo Mahatma Gandhi's beautiful line, "My life is my message," and add to it, with all due respect, *moment to moment to moment*. Second, teaching from the mode of nondual consciousness is *participation* in the learning process of students. When the usual duality between teaching and learning, being a teacher and being a learner is overcome, teaching and learning become dynamically and seamlessly interconnected, and thus become a mutual process of transformation by participation. Chapter 17 of the *Dao De Jing* speaks of such teachers (leaders) and their effect on the learners (the governed): "Indeed, the sage-ruler, relaxed and retiring, seldom issuing orders. When affairs of state are completed, the people all say: 'We are like this naturally.'"

Notes

1. We are well aware that many readers might find our characterization of the natural and human world today as "holocaust" unreasonable and even untrue, pointing out that there is just as much cause to celebrate humanity and nature as there is to grieve over human mistakes, destruction, and loss. Fair enough. The authors of this paper feel in fact quite privileged to enjoy relatively clean air and water where we live, and live in modest comfort and security. We enjoy our lives, are grateful for our lot, and feel tremendous responsibility to use our privilege well toward healing the earth and ourselves. However, personal circumstance and good fortune aside, the fact remains that countless lives in the world, including in our own neighborhoods, but especially in the so-called underdeveloped nations, suffer from compromised and abject lives in environmentally devastated and socially unstable regions. As well, extensive and increasing environmental devastation is an undisputable state of the world in which we are all, privileged and underprivileged alike, mired. Let anyone who thinks that we are exaggerating our claims about the environmental devastation read well-documented books and reports, such as the annual publication *State of the World* from the Worldwatch Institute.
2. It is of more than passing interest to us that the foregoing description in the context of developmental processes places a person at the level of, approximately, a three-year-old (or younger). To the extent that our child-rearing practices do not nurture and facilitate development toward and into the capacity for empathy (understanding of the other's experience in a way that does not consume the empathizer, provides a meaningful sense of the other's experience, and facilitates a fitting response, which includes appropriate emotion), to that extent we must and will draw very simple lines between what *I* need and what *the other* has. The primary issues then becomes, Can *I* get what *I* want, or defend against what is threatening?
3. The fourth brahma-viharas is equanimity (*upekha*), which is said to be the foundation for the other three in the sense that it supports their unimpeded workings. Without equanimity or enlightened state of "disinterest" or "impersonality," it is hard to be loving and kind

toward all sentient beings, for we can become jealous of others and thus ill-willed. Without equanimity, we also find it difficult to be compassionate or sympathetically rejoicing, for we may get too distressed about—and then recoil from—others' suffering.

4. Thomas Berry attributes the decisive turn to this kind of psychic autism to René Descartes's philosophy of dualism that divided reality into mind and matter and reduced the order of matter strictly to the property of extension in space. Accordingly, the only qualification for matter is that it occupies space and can therefore be measured. This way of seeing, of course, de-animates Nature and objects.
5. To give an idea about what this change of consciousness looks like, consider the following example of intersubjective consciousness that can emerge through dialogue (again, we emphasize that the emergence of such consciousness takes time and practice through substantial inner work):
 - A: I am sad. You are happy.
 - B: I am happy. You are sad? Hmmm. ... I feel both happy and sad now. I feel happiness and sadness flowing back and forth between us. Both your happiness and my original sadness pervade me, and I feel like I'm more than one person.
 - A: Yes, I do, too, now. It is as though the solid and rigid sense of who I am, separate from who you are, has dissolved, and I have become more of a fluid point of view than a solid entity. Now, exchanging a visual metaphor for an auditory one, I feel as though I am a flute through which air moves in and out, this way and that way, creating different sounds and melodies. I hear the happy song; I hear the sad song. I can hear all songs.
6. In this essay we have adopted the Pinyin system of Chinese character spelling. Thus 氣 is *qi* (Pinyin) rather than *ch'i* (Wade-Giles). We shall also note that the same character, 氣, is written and pronounced *ki* in Japanese and Korean. Also, 氣 is translated in a variety of ways, as "vital energy," "energy-matter," "vital power," and "vital force," among others.
7. The Western tradition of thought is decisively dualistic in ontology. To wit, look at just about all of the major thinkers in classical Western thought, from Plato to Descartes. It is only during the modern times, mainly starting with Friedrich Nietzsche, that this dualistic ontology is called into question and critiqued.
8. The separation of the phenomenal (appearance) and the noumenal (reality) began with ancient Greek philosophy and reached the crowning perfection in Immanuel Kant's philosophy that made the noumenal (*Ding-an-sich*, the "thing-in-itself") completely inaccessible and unknowable to human beings.
9. In this essay we will not, because of space and focus, get into the *yin-yang* (陰陽) theory that is central to *qi* philosophy. *Qi* can be classified into two types: *yin qi* and *yang qi*. Roughly speaking, *yin* (陰) is the quality of darkness, moistness, coolness, and expansiveness; *yang* (陽) is the quality of brightness, dryness, warmth, and concentratedness. See the section on *Qi* in Zhang's (2002, pp. 45–63) for more details on *yin* and *yang*.
10. The reference to "surging *qi*" comes from Mencius (in Zhang 2002, p. 47).
11. This is Mencius's terminology (in Ames and Hall, 2003, p. 19).
12. *Knife hand* is a term used in martial arts to describe a technique where the strike attempt is made with the side of the hand and not a closed fist.
13. *Hara* is the Japanese term for "center," and refers to a point located two fingers below the navel and midway between the belly surface and the back, from which the experienced and accomplished martial artist moves and is moved by *ki*.
14. Here we give a small example of a "breath-by-breath" *qi* meditation in action—that is, each moment as a lived meditation:

I am sitting still and quietly at my computer. My attention is focused and yet relaxed. I am not seeking any particular experience. I am attending to what crosses my consciousness. I am aware of a thought: "What should I write here?" Then, "Who writes? Who thinks?" I feel my feet touching the ground. I feel very relaxed. I hear a sound outside, a truck driving by. I am inhaling. I am exhaling. I am aware of the center in my belly. I feel a small energy, qi, that is like a tight little ball in my hara. I feel the electricity-like energy spreading. I hear silence. I am aware of being bigger than I am. My consciousness is extending and expanding. My qi is extending and expanding. I am me, who is everything (every thing) and nothing (no thing). I am complete and a part of everything.

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