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***Zheng* (征) as *Zheng* (正)? A Daoist Challenge to Punitive Expeditions**

Ellen Y. Zhang

Defining Punitive Expeditions

In ancient China, war was one of the major concerns for all politico-philosophical schools, particularly during the Warring States period (475–221 BCE). In Pre-Qin philosophical writings of different schools traditionally known as “Masters literature” we find numerous discussions related to warfare and its ethico-political implications, ranging from Laozi (6th century BCE) of the Daoist School (*Daojia*), Mozi (470–391 BCE) of the Mohist School (*Mojia*), Confucius (551–479 BCE), Mencius (372–289 BCE), and Xunzi (312–230 BCE) of the Confucian School (*Rujia*), to Hanfeizi (280–233 BCE) of the Legalist School (*Fajia*) as well as various eclectics of the time.

Generally speaking, Confucianism is very critical about war and the notion of “rule *qua* military power” held by Legalism, yet its political ideal of “rule *qua* moral power” does not completely rule out an acceptance of preemptive wars against “barbarians” (i.e., enemies of civilization) and punitive expeditions if deemed necessary. While opposing the idea of aggressive wars, the Mohist School recognizes the need of a punitive expedition for the purpose of protection when a weak state is attacked by a strong one. The Daoist views on war are more complicated in that Laozi and Zhuangzi (369–298 BCE) held a more pacifist-oriented position while the *Huang-Lao* School subscribed to a more militarist-oriented position. In this chapter I focus my discussion on the Daoist position as represented by Laozi and Zhuangzi.

A punitive expedition was often viewed in Pre-Qin China as a special kind of military operation distinguished from other forms of war, such as a war for territorial expansion and a conflict due to cultural clashes. The ancient Chinese expression for a “punitive expedition” is *zheng* 征 or *zhengfa* 征伐 which connotes “conquest and subjugation.” *Zheng* also implies the notion of “going across state borders” or “a war in a remote area.” According to early military and philosophical literatures, a punitive expedition is often waged for the following reasons:

1. To prevent tyranny and restore social order/peace (*Wuzi Bingfa*)
2. To punish the tyrant and prevent injustice (*Weiliaozi*)
3. To prevent tyranny and remove evil/injustice (*Xunzi*)
4. To stop tyranny and rescue a suffering population (*Lüshi Chunqiu*)
(Ryden 1998, 56–57)

The reasons listed above can be summarized in three categories, or what I call three “R”s: (1) Rectifying and removing injustice by punishing an evil tyrant, (2) Restoring social order; and (3) Rescuing a suffering people. In fact, these three reasons are often interrelated to justify initiating a war, and as such, the war is not only morally *permissible* but also morally *obligatory*. Let us discuss each of these three “R”s.

First, a punitive expedition aims at rectification by punishing an evil tyrant so as to remove injustice. The word for “rectification” in Chinese (*zheng* 正) implies the idea of “correction,” indicating the notion of setting proper behavioral rules for those whose moral characters are lacking or inferior. Rectification in terms of “correction” connotes ethical implications, and it is also synonymous with the notion of “proper governance” (*zheng* 政). Hence, one would not be surprised to see that ritual practice in terms of *liyue* (rites and music) and warfare such as *zhengfa* (a punitive expedition) are put together as recorded the *Liji* [*The Book of Rites*]. Here, the idea of ritual practice not only suggests the rules of proper conduct required in war (*ius in bello*) but also connotes the idea of a rightful person and a rightful purpose for initiating a war (*ius ad bellum*) in the first place. For Confucians, if self-cultivation fails for a state ruler, a rectifying means is needed. That is to say, the use of force can be justifiable if the ruler of another state is considered as morally depraved or the state is viewed as a failed one.¹ This is part of the reason Mencius makes a distinction between “punishment” (*tao* 討) and “attack” (*fa* 伐), as the word “attack” suggests the idea of aggression or aggressiveness while “punishment” indicates a sanctioned action against someone who is viewed as unjust.² Xunzi goes even further by saying that a punitive expedition by a superior against an inferior should not be viewed as war but rather a form of punishment.³ Mozi accepts the idea of a punitive military operation while criticizing offensive wars in his writings about condemning offensive warfare, contending that the wars initiated by three sages (namely Yu, Tang, and Wu) in the past are not to be called “attacks” (*gong* 攻) but “punishments” (*zhu* 誅).⁴ In so doing, a clear line is drawn between “aggressive attack” and “offensive punishment” and this distinction was embraced by many philosophers of the Pre-Qin and Han periods of China.

In his essay “The Just War in Early China,” Mark E. Lewis observes that in ancient China “war was justifiable primarily as the highest form of punishment through which the ruler could suppress large-scale deviance or criminality and thereby bring peace and harmony to the people and to the world” (Lewis 2006, 185). For example, the *Huangdi Sijing* 黃帝四經 (*Four Books of the Yellow Emperor*), a text influenced by

Huang-Lao thought, identifies “punishment and attack” (*zhujin* 誅禁) as an effective means to “stop war” or “halt the violation” (Peerenboom 1993).

Second, a punitive expedition aims to restore social order. From a Confucian moral perspective, a tyrant with a tyrannical ruling points to a ruler who is “not humane” (*bu ren*) not only to his own people but also to the neighboring states. The School of *Huang-Lao* is more radical on the issue when it employs the example of Huangdi 黃帝, the legendary Yellow Emperor who invented weapons and initiated the very first punitive military campaign in history, to argue for the necessity of using war to stop war and tyrannical ruling.⁵ In fact, the Chinese word *wu* 武, the martial, force of arms, entails two components, that is, *zhi* 止 (meaning stop) and *ge* 戈 (meaning weapons). The word thus means “stopping war or weapons through war and weapons.” It clearly points to the idea that a punitive expedition is a legitimate and viable means to stop evil doings and injustice.

According to *Shuowen jiezi* 《說文解字》 (*Explaining and Analyzing Chinese Characters*), the word *zheng* 征 (a punitive expedition) also means *zheng* 正 (correction or rectification).⁶ That is to say, a punitive military campaign is a way of correcting a disorder that is perceived as a form of chaos (*luan*). Meanwhile, being corrective means “rectification” since the Confucian tradition generally believes that social disorder or disharmony stemmed from the failure to perceive, understand, and deal with reality in a proper/moral way, and as such military punishment is, if not a necessarily a morally good thing in itself, at least a way to “correct the wrongs.” To follow this line of thinking, a punitive expedition is instrumental and contributory. Because of this, James A. Stobbe observes that although Confucianism downplays the roles of Tang and Wu, the founders of the Shang and Zhou dynasties due to their active involvement in warfare, it acknowledges their respective roles in history as “the new originators of a new order” (Stobbe 1998, 173). This notion was later reinforced by the Legalist School, the School of *Huang-Lao*, and Han eclectics with a Confucian bent.

Third, a punitive expedition aims to rescue the suffering people. In the *Lüshi Chunqiu* (*Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*, LSCQ, compiled by the end of 241 BCE), a text that is syncretistic in nature, we find two phrases that are used side by side, namely, “punishing the tyrant” and “rescuing the suffering people.” It is exactly against these two notions that the author of the LSCQ speaks of a debate between *yibing* 義兵 (meaning “initiating a just war”) and *yanbing* 偃兵 (meaning “avoiding wars”). Here, we have a key concept in ancient China concerning the

discourse of war, that is, *yibing*. The word *yi* in Chinese can be rendered in English as “just”, “rightful”, “appropriate”, and “fitting.” The LSCQ sees *yibing* as a rightful way of protecting the people, and thus criticizes the Moist position of non-aggression and avoidance of military expeditions, claiming that the ancient sage-kings are all for *yibing* and against *yanbing*:

The army that is sincere and appropriate is fighting for the purpose of punishing the tyranny and rescuing the suffering people. The [rescued] people are happy about it. They see the army as if a filial son sees his compassionate parents and a long-starved person see delicious food (Lin 1991, 45).

The passage cited above intends to show that the effectiveness of a military intervention is linked to the support from the oppressed people under a tyrannical ruler. As matter of a fact, the idea of “a support from people” is articulated by virtually all military texts like the *Sima Fa* (*Sima’s Art of War*) and eclectic texts like the LSCQ as a way of making a sound argument on punitive intervention. This argument leads to the notion that “One can attack the state, but love its people” (Ryden, 1998, pp.58-6).⁷ With this cultural context in mind, let us turn to the Daoist view on war in general and punitive expedition in particular.

Whose *Yi* and Which *Yi* Theory: A Daoist Challenge

Among Pre-Qin politico-philosophical schools, the Daoist philosophy of Laozi and Zhuangzi exhibits a very different point of view from all other schools because of its emphasis on softness, weakness, passiveness, and femininity. Nevertheless, the position shown in the *Daodejing* (hereafter DDJ; also known as the *Laozi*) indicates that to identify Daoist philosophy with pacifism does not completely square with the complex dimensions of the Daoist thought, especially given the fact that the DDJ has been viewed as a military text or, at the very least, a military-oriented text throughout the Chinese history.⁸ Many sections in the DDJ make it clear that the author takes a realistic view concerning the inevitability of war by engaging in warfare, reducing damage to a minimum, and paying attention to appropriate conduct during and after war. This complex dimension of Daoism should also be taken into consideration when we look at the Daoist position on punitive expeditions. On the one hand, Daoists condemn the glorification of war and military prowess—a view shared by Confucians and Moists—while on the other hand, Daoists accept the need for self-defense in certain situations. Yet it seems that Daoism refuses to put punitive expeditions into the category of self-defense, as it does have problems with proactive or preemptive

self-defense.

In fact, the DDJ does not directly spell out the Daoist view on punitive expeditions *per se*. What I have shown here is my reconstruction of the possible Daoist position on the issue based upon Daoist philosophy and its discourse on war and peace. It is my contention that the Daoist challenge to the moral justification for punitive expeditions is directly linked to its critique of the Confucian notion of authority, the unitary empire, and the hierarchical structures of interstate relationships, since the DDJ advocates a political philosophy that is decidedly different from Confucianism regarding governance, political power, interstate relations, and harmonious society. If we say that Mencius emphasizes the difference between a war initiated by a sage-king (as punishment) and one by a hegemon (as attacks), Laozi, however, would find such a distinction problematic.⁹ There is nothing in the DDJ that implies a justification of a military intervention no matter who the authority is and what purpose it aims to accomplish. Since the DDJ was compiled at a time when military campaigns, warfare, territorial expansion, and conquest occurred frequently due to political leaders' unrestrained appetite for wealth, power, and glory. The DDJ tries to emphasize the need to curb a ruler's desires to be the ruler of the world/empire. This is why we find so many terms in the DDJ that directly address the problem of the proliferation of desire and self-aggrandizement.

The DDJ does not mention the concept of *ren* (humaneness or benevolence), the key ethical code in Confucian moral teachings, except those chapters which directly critique it (e.g., chapters 5, 18, and 19. Chan 1984). Yet this does not mean that Daoism completely abandons the concept of *ren*. Instead, the Daoist understanding of *ren* is different from and wider than that of the Confucian tradition in that it is not merely dependent upon morality but also upon the onto-cosmological order. The following two passages from the DDJ describe a Daoist view that stands in marked contrast with the Confucian teaching:

Heaven and Earth are not humane (*ren*);
They treat the myriad creature as straw dogs.
Sages are not humane (*ren*);
They treat the people as straw dogs (DDJ 5).

When Dao is lost, then arises the doctrine of virtue (*de*);
When the doctrine of virtue is lost, then arises
the doctrine of humaneness (*ren*);

When the doctrine of humaneness is lost, then arises
the doctrine of justice (*yi*);
When the doctrine of justice is lost, then arises
the doctrine of rituals (*li*).
The doctrine of rituals is the merest husk of
the doctrine of loyalty (*zhong*)
and the doctrine of fidelity (*xiao*),
It is the beginning of all disorder (*luan*) (DDJ 38).

The DDJ perceives the spontaneous order of the universe as one that goes beyond the moral language of good and evil. It should be noted that Laozi uses the word *luan* (disorder, chaos), a word usually associated with the word *zhan* (war), to speak of his worry about social disorder in the last line of Chapter 38. From the perspective of spontaneous transformations of the Dao, or the “way of heaven” as Zhuangzi calls it, all moral dichotomies, if dogmatized, can be vicious rather than virtuous. The method of negation in the passage above thus offers a structure of a “systemic decline” of a society from the most natural order (*Dao*) to the most cultivated yet artificial order (rituals) which, as Laozi sees it, marks the beginning of all disorder. This is why Laozi insists that “The highest virtue is that there is no virtue” (DDJ 38). Nevertheless, the Daoist negation of Confucian virtues should not be understood simply as moral nihilism in the sense of abolishing the distinction of right and wrong but a warning that moral language is a double-edged sword that can operate in two opposite directions. If there is an implied concept of *ren* in the DDJ, it means that the best way to be benevolent and humane to people is to give all people chances to choose and grow naturally rather than regulating people according to a specific pattern of practice. Laozi calls this kind of *ren* “compassion” (*ci*), one of the virtues held by the Daoist sage-king. For Daoists, compassion is not a fixed moral principle, nor is it a value based upon a utilitarian calculation.

Another Daoist teaching that departs from Confucianism is the idea of “not daring to be the first in the world.” It is quite different from the Confucian vision of the “active role” a sage-ruler should play since the negative expression “not daring” clearly denotes an attitude of yieldingness and passivity. As a matter of fact, the DDJ is full of terms with a “negative” (e.g., “no”-form) expression, such as non-action, non-interference, no-contentiousness, no-fight, no-glory, etc., and the claim that “Daring to act means death; not daring to act means life” (DDJ 73). All of these are supposed to be advice given to the sage-ruler. On this issue, P. J. Ivanhoe rightly observes that

Confucians strongly believed in the power of Virtue [*de*]. The example of the good person was thought to have a magnetic, motivating, and uplifting effect. It draws people to the sage-ruler and inspires them to be good—like the sage. Daoists believed in a very different concept of *de*. For them the sage’s Virtue had a therapeutic effect on those around him. The force of the sage’s Virtue was more centripetal; it allows people to settle down and be comfortable where they are and find peace and contentment in their individual lives. (See Ivanhoe 2011, 38)

According to Ivanhoe’s understanding, the Daoist ideal of a sage-ruler is more “centripetal,” allowing more freedom for people to find the “Dao” in their own ways. It follows that the political leader *à la* the Confucian model is one who draws people “upward” through the excellence of his moral charisma “like a polar star.” The political leader *à la* the Daoist model is one who puts himself in a low and humble position “like a valley” that is more nourishing and accommodating, thus allowing people to focus on their own spontaneous tendencies which, in turn, lead them to live in a greater harmony and peace. The “polar star” and “valley” metaphors best illustrate the two ways of the art of ruling. This explains why Laozi advocates the idea of “not daring to be the first,” and seldom talks about the role of a “father-like” or “sage-like” king envisioned by Mencius. Therefore, a sage-ruler by a Daoist definition rests in non-action (*wuwei*) and practices the principle of non-interference. In this sense we say that Daoist philosophy prefers a “laissez faire” model to a paternalistic Confucian model. While the Confucian makes an effort to persuade feudal lords to unify China to actualize his “ideal unitary empire,” the Daoist feels more comfortable with his vision of “a small state with less population.” In a way, the DDJ concurs with Hanfeizi’s legalistic concern about relying upon the moral character of the ruler, even though the Daoist is more positive than the Legalist regarding the possibility of individual moral cultivation, as well as the influence of the ruler’s the moral character may have to attain great peace.¹⁰

Zhuangzi’s Daoism, compared to that of Laozi, tends to be more idiosyncratic and less political. Nevertheless, in the chapter *Xuwugui* 徐無鬼 of the Miscellaneous Chapters in the *Zhuangzi*, there is a dialogue between Duke Wu of Wen and Xu, a fictitious Daoist hermit in which Duke Wu asks for advice on how to be a good ruler. He says: “I think that I am a good ruler since I love my people and stop warfare because of *yi*. Don’t you think that I have done enough?” Xu replies, “By no means. To love people is the first step to injure them, and to stop warfare for the sake of *yi* is the root of creating wars. If you govern the state like this, you are bound to fail.” Xu

then continues:

To cherish the people is to open the way to harming them! To practice righteousness and lay down your weapons is to sow the seeds for more weapon-wielding! If you go at it this way, I'm afraid you will never succeed. All attempts to create something admirable are the weapons of evil. You may think you are practicing benevolence and righteousness, but in effect you will be creating a kind of artificiality. Where a model exists, copies will be made of it; where success has been gained, boasting follows; where debate exists, there will be outbreaks of hostility. On the other hand, it will not do, my lord, to have files of marching soldiers filling the whole area within your fortress towers, or ranks of cavalry drawn up before the Palace of the Black Altar. Do not store in your heart what is contrary to your interests. Do not try to outdo others in skill. Do not try to overcome others by stratagems. Do not try to conquer others in battle. If you kill the officials and people of another ruler and annex his lands, using them to nourish your personal desires and your spirit, then I cannot say which contender is the better fighter, and to which the real victory belongs! If you must do something, cultivate the sincerity which is in your breast and use it to respond without opposition to the true form of Heaven and earth. Then the people will have won their reprieve from death. What need will there be for you to resort to this “laying down of weapons”? (*Zhuangzi*, 24, qtd. from Watson 1968, 264)

Although the target of the critique here is aggressive war in general rather than a punitive expedition, *Zhuangzi*, like *Laozi*, holds a skeptical view about use of force even if it is used in the name of humaneness (*ren*), justice, or righteousness (*yi*). Therefore, *Zhuangzi* suggests that the only way to stop the violence and disorder is to purge the world of its root causes, namely, of all the artifice, including virtues and good names — what the Confucians take as the “cultural/civilized way” (*wen*) — that keeps state politicians in competitive and aggressive strife. This argument is also connected to the Daoist philosophical distrust of the Confucian notion of sovereign rulers and humane governance. In fact, *Laozi* questions the “paternalistic model” of Confucian governance and its doctrine of “the way of ancient kings,” and thus advocates the idea of following a “spontaneous order” (*ziran*). Thus the *DDJ* insists,

Of the best of all rulers,
People will only know that he exists.
The next best is the one they will love and praise.

The next is the one they will fear.
And the worst is the one they will disparage . . .
When the work is accomplished and the job completed,
People all say: “We have done it naturally (*ziran*)” (DDJ 17)

However, how can we apply the Daoist notion of non-interference to punitive expeditions in dire situations? One can easily argue that “protecting the suffering people” seems so obvious that the position of non-action or non-interference in this context would strike one as ridiculous and confused, if not totally immoral. Although the DDJ is silent on this issue, there are at least three possible reasons for Laozi’s skeptical position: (1) the ambiguity in terms of the line between protection and destruction in wars; (2) the ambiguity in terms of the line between punishment and vengeance; and (3) the euphemistic tone implied in the language of “being just and righteous” characterized sometimes by a gesture of self-glorification.

First, from a Daoist point of view, there is always the possibility that protection in lieu of an intervening action could turn out to be destructive, especially when a military operation is conducted on a massive scale and in an organized fashion. Thus the DDJ shows more awareness of widespread damage and devastation brought about by war despite the good intention for initiating it. For Daoists, the conception of *wuwei* challenges any action that is coercive, purposive, and egocentric, and perhaps, nothing is more coercive, purposive, and egocentric than violent force. As Michael LaFargue puts it, In Daoism, “heavy-handed intrusion can throw everything out of balance, stirring up even the ghosts of the dead to roam around to do mischief...Violence is the extreme case of something extraneous imposed on given reality from without” (LaFargue 1994, 491–493). Although a punitive expedition suggests a kind of a preemptive military strike, usually seen as an act of prevention, the intention implied in such preventive acts can be changed during the operation due to uncertain factors in war.

Second, Daoist may argue that it is difficult to distinguish rectification from revenge and retaliation. Instead of a “remedy” to “correct” the evil and the corrupted one, punishment can create the evil it is supposed to remedy. A military operation for the purpose of punishment is likely to generate negative reactions, thus producing a chain of negative consequences which will transform into “a vicious cycle.” There are several places in the DDJ where Laozi contends that “those who are coercive and violent will end their life in the same way” (DDJ 30). This is why the DDJ keeps reminding the sage-ruler that any forced or coercive success is always short-lived and

that whoever seeks military adventures for self-benefit will perish in them. It should be noted that the DDJ speaks of “repaying ill will with kindness” (DDJ 63) in contrast to the statement “repaying kindness with kindness, but ill with uprightness or justice (*zhi* 直)” in the Confucian tradition (*Analects*, 14:34) where the word *zhi* implies the idea of justice *via* correcting the wrong doing. This does not mean, however, that Daoism categorically renounces the retaliatory use of force, but reminds us of the damage done by endless revenge when it is viewed as something just and necessary.

Third, the DDJ cautions against war rhetoric which, I think, is the most important reason that makes Daoists worry about applying moral language to justify and embellish war. Those who are skeptical about the just war tradition in the West today are likely to raise questions such as whose justice and which justice theory. In pre-Qin China, the DDJ asks a similar question. Given that Laozi was a historian who was highly aware of all the damages caused by war in the name of a noble cause, he worried about any use of moral language being applied to warfare because it could lead to a self-referential, self-glorifying, and self-righteous rhetoric. The notion of “being just” in war can easily be employed as a rhetorical tool to serve the state or person who uses it.¹¹ This is why the DDJ insists that there is nothing to be glorified even if one has won the war. For both Laozi and Zhuangzi, any moral language, if not used properly, has a tendency to be self-ideologized and self-dogmatized. Such worries explain the DDJ’s reservation on punitive expeditions. Moreover, history tells us that states may initiate war for political, economic, or ethical reason, so to single out the ethical one is likely to be considered suspicious. For instance, Yuan-kang Wang, in *Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics*, describes how the Ming Empire, behind the Confucian façade of harmony and humaneness, “lays the iron fist of military force”:

The Ming invasion of Vietnam was carried out in the name of upholding the Confucian values associated with the tribute system, but the subsequent expansion of war aims to annex Vietnam cannot be explained by Confucian pacifism. As the regional hegemon, Ming China dispatched seven maritime expeditions to project power and spread the tribute system. (Wang 2011, 179)

Wang further argues that the Confucian ideology helps to explain “a particular type of Chinese expansionism—spread the tribute system. According to Confucianism, when domestic governance is virtuous and [humane], foreign states will naturally come to pay tribute the sage king. Hence, the number of tributary embassies to the imperial court served as an important indicator of the virtue and legitimacy of the

Chinese throne” (Wang 2011, 180). What Wang has disclosed is how the Confucian Ming ruler employed a *wen* (civilized and cultural method) to engage in political expediency and territorial expansion.

It is well-known that Confucianism prefers *wen* (cultured, civilized) to *wu* (military, force of arms), as the expression “stopping the *wu* and cultivating the *wen*” goes. Yet Daoism points out that a civilized and cultural method can be hypocritical and false. In the view of Daoism, military might (*wu*) could lead to killing directly while codified moral power or ideology (*wen*) could lead to killing indirectly through imposing accumulating prejudices and bias against people in the name of morality.¹² What Daoism tries to promote is a non-dogmatic attitude, with an understanding that warfare is a much more complicated business that sometime requires softness, flexibility, and resilience.

Peace: Two Models of Harmony and Harmonization

I argue that the differences between Confucianism and Daoism with regard to their political views and positions on war and peace can be approached from two related yet different models of “harmony” (*he*) in early Chinese philosophy, namely, the music model and the culinary model. These two models point to two different ways of understanding what constitutes harmony and harmonization.¹³

(1) The Music Model:

According to *Shuowen Jiezi* [*Explaining and Analyzing Chinese Characters*], the word *he* 和 is defined as “mutual responsiveness of various sounds.” The key term here is “mutual responsiveness” (相應) that creates “harmonization.” The *Guoyu* 國語 [*Discourses of the States*], a classic text written during the Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE), states that “when sounds correspond and mutually foster (*bao* 保) one another it is called *he*.” The word *bao* has several meanings such as “to protect”, “to nourish”, “to sustain” and “to support” (Li 2006, 584). In this sense, the notion of “mutual responsiveness” also implies the idea of “mutual enhancement.” Here are more examples from early classics that use a music analogy:

“The male and female phoenixes fly together and their sounds harmonize each other with vigor.” (*Zuozhuan*)

“A crane sings in the woods and its young child responds (*he*) to it.” (*Yijing*)

“[People] use the golden chun [an ancient musical instrument] to respond (*he*) to drums.” (*Zhouli*)

“When Kongzi sang with others and saw someone did well, he always made the person repeat the song before he harmonized (*he*).” (*Lunyu*)
(Qtd. from Li 2006, 583)

With the exception of the first in the examples above, *he* (with the fourth tone in Chinese) is used as a verb, meaning responding to/harmonizing with a major sound or scale. In Western music, “harmony” is a technique utilizing simultaneous pitches (tones, notes), or chords. In this case, harmony is often said to refer to the “vertical” aspect of music, as distinguished from melodic line or the “horizontal” aspect. Nevertheless, in both cases, there exists the principle of a centripetal connection that governs different sounds. Chengyang Li argues that what is essential for harmony is a relationship between the elements such that the various sounds mutually promote each other by complementing or compensating one another or by “balancing the opposites into an organic whole” (See Li 2006, 583–603). On the other hand, however, the structure of ancient Chinese music is such that once a particular musical scale is chosen, if certain pitches (tones, notes) cannot be harmonized with the other musical elements, they have to be done away with for harmony to be preserved.

(1) The Culinary Model

In *Zuozhuan* 《左傳》 (*The General Zuo's Commentary*), there is well-known account of the concept of *he* through the cooking analogy:

Harmony/harmonization is like making broth (*hegeng* 和羹) in which one needs water, fire, vinegar, and plum to cook fish and meat. One needs to cook them with firewood, blend (*he*) them together in order to balance the taste. One also needs to compensate for deficiencies and reduces excessiveness. (Li 2004, 1104)¹⁴

The concept of “a harmonized broth” (*hegeng*) appears in the early text where it is stated that a harmonized broth is a good one used to offer gods as well as to balance (*ping* 平) humanity. According to the culinary model, blending different ingredients and flavors to make a tasty soup or dish is a pivotal task. Harmony or harmonization as such also means balance or balancing, another key notion in ancient cooking. Thus the combination of harmony (*he*) and balance (*ping*) becomes an essential feature of

Chinese cooking, and the combination of these two words, *heping* (和平) means “peace” in modern Chinese. The culinary model emphasizes that harmony and harmonization is achieved by “understanding the properties of the different elements and how they play their unique roles in creating and sustaining a rich and balanced whole” (Chan 2011, 41, 37–62). Thus through knowledge of the ingredients involved, a skillful cook is able to make full use of each ingredient’s strength to achieve the optimum result. In the broth-making metaphor therefore, it is critical to understand how much of each element and flavor to add or reduce so as to achieve harmony and harmonization.

Although both models suggest the idea of blending and fitting together, there is a subtle difference between the two. Bearing in mind that harmonization involves managing diversity and difference, because the two models—music and culinary—imply two different methods of managing diversity and difference, Chan argues that two models developed separately as contested metaphors of harmony. In other words, music harmony requires a hierarchical ordering of the elements whereas culinary harmony is non-hierarchical. I think Chan’s observation can be adopted for us to look at the different approaches to *he* between Confucianism and Daoism in order to understand how this difference explains their views on punitive expeditions and military interference. Since Daoist philosophy esteems emptiness, nothingness, and responding to change in a *wuwei* mode, the culinary model fits the Daoist mode better.

Nevertheless, an emphasis on a hierarchical and centripetal ordering in the Confucian ideal of harmony and harmonization does not always mean that Confucianism seeks sameness (*tong* 同) at the expenses of difference. As Confucius puts it in the *Analects*, “A gentleman harmonizes but does not seek sameness whereas a petty person seeks sameness but does not harmonize,” (*Analects*, 13:23). Nevertheless, as the music model indicates, the Confucian harmony is a centered harmony and unification with a strictly hierarchical structure characterized by authority which determines fine-tuning (*shuntiao* 順調), that is, correcting the wrong pitches and discordant elements. P. J. Ivanhoe argues that although Mencius and Xunzi are more flexible than Confucius in terms of including people from various vocations in society, “neither Mencius nor Xunzi had much tolerance for those who dissent or whose teachings muddle the order and harmony they sought” (Ivanhoe 2011, 33). This explains why Xunzi criticizes Laozi by saying that that “he had insight into crouching down but lacked insight into stretching out... if there is crouching down but no stretching out, the noble and base cannot be distinguished” (*Xunzi*, 17b).

The music model helps to explain how punitive expeditions are interpreted by the Confucians, since for them, “punishing subordinates” is indeed *not* an act of war, but an act of fine-tuning for the sake of “harmony under the heaven.” Meanwhile, the Confucians believe that it is necessary to have regulations and rules to prevent discordant elements from arising. This model of harmony and harmonization requires compliance and yielding to a higher authority. It is equally important for a state to maintain social harmony in order to win the trust of other states. Thus the *Mencius* claims that “If a state is harmonious domestically then its army, in spite of being weak, will be victorious over strong enemies.” As a matter of fact, the Confucian argument on a strong, unitary state is in line with the Legalist argument that domestic unity is the key to interstate competitiveness, a kind of position also held by the Chinese government today (Yan 2011, 115; Hui 2012, 125–141).

The culinary model describes a de-centered harmony in which there is no hierarchical order. This model fits more with the Daoist idea of harmony and harmonization that aims to create and sustain a rich and balanced whole. At the same time, the culinary model puts more emphasis on accommodating and complementing. In order to accomplish harmonization, it is important to prevent the dominance of a particular party with too much power. The best known culinary model employed by Laozi in the DDJ is the statement that “governing a large state is like cooking/grilling a small fish” (chapter 60). What matters is the ingredients used not the aggressive action of the cook. This cooking analogy represents the Daoist political philosophy of *wuwei*, or minimal government. According to the principle of *wuwei*, the best of ruler is a Daoist one who “reigns without ruling.” The second best is a Confucian ruler who is benevolent to his people, and receives love and praise from them. The third best is a Legalist ruler whose strict laws and punishments make people fearful. The worst kind of ruler is a tyrant. Therefore, Laozi maintains that a sage-ruler helps all things remain natural (*ziran*) and self-transforming (*zihua*). The suggestion here is that social harmony or political order emerges from the bottom up and proceeds in accordance with its own internal rhythms without external, top-down, or coercive action. Therefore, in the DDJ we have the following statement:

The natural *dao* does not do anything
yet it leaves nothing undone . . .
All things will be self-transforming,
And self-transforming, should their desires stirred...
In not desiring, they would be at peace.
and the world would be self-ordering/self-correcting (DDJ 37).

It is worth noticing that according to the Mawangdui edition, this passage is the final chapter of the entire DDJ, and thus functions as a kind of concluding chapter. In this context, the notions of self-transforming (*zihua*), self-correcting (*zizheng* 自正), and self-ordering (*zizheng* 自政) are derived from the key concept of self-unfolding naturalness. The idea of *wuwei* could also be interpreted as the Daoist way of governing in contrast to the Confucian/kingly way of governing that emphasizes the motivating and uplifting effects of its ruler. For the Daoist, harmonization should not be a process of coercive harmonization by clinging to fixed doctrines and practice, or by being forcibly harmonized by a powerful authority. Being harmonized by a coercive ruler, according to Daoism, must be considered as a kind of “unjust peace.”

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to reappraise early Chinese ideas, especially the Daoist one, on punitive expeditions with the intention that those ethical debates can be revisited to look at just war discourse and the discussion on world order in the twenty-first century.¹⁵ Although contemporary ethics, to some extent, defines the parameters for application of the term “just war” (or “just peace”), it should not preclude attempts to explore the Daoist arguments within its own context and tradition, and to locate classical Chinese thinking in the matrix of contemporary debate.

One of the contested issues within the framework of contemporary just war theory is “humanitarian intervention.” Yet to connect punitive expeditions in ancient China to contemporary humanitarian intervention requires a careful scrutiny since punitive expeditions presented in ancient China involved many things that are no longer appropriate in the contemporary context. Moreover, neither the Confucian notion of *ren* (humaneness) nor the Daoist concept of *ci* (compassion) is sufficient enough for legitimizing a military intervention given the indisputable fallibility of human beings and the great danger of the killing weaponry of their making today.

Obviously, discussions of humanitarian interventions in the context of the contemporary West are based upon the notion of human rights at both moral and legal levels (See Chapter 5). The justification for a humanitarian operation involves the scrutinizing of many aspects, including the “right intention” of the intervening state(s) (e.g., protection of human life).¹⁶ Many questions need to be taken into consideration before resorting to military means. For instance, what constitutes a massive and

systematic violation of basic human rights committed by the authority of one state such that other states are required to intervene to halt the violation? How should we interpret the idea of responsibility to protect and who should be in charge? Despite the fact that both the Confucian *ren* and the Daoist *ci* entail the idea of respect of human life, neither of them has sophisticated notions of human rights as defined today.

Those who are skeptical about humanitarian intervention today tend to worry about ambiguities at the practical level between the moral language of “for humanity” implied in the word of “humanitarian” and the “political or economic will” of the politicians of the intervening state(s) that may go beyond an altruistic intent of protection of human life (such as the benefits from oil contracts and reconstruction deals). How can we make sure that R2P (Responsibility to Protect) does not turn into R4P (Resources for Profits)?

Nonetheless, being skeptical alone would not be the best solution if a crime against humanity such as genocide or ethnic cleansing came to be a reality. Under supreme humanitarian emergencies, I do not think a Daoist would say “no-action” absolutely because such a position would be un-Daoist too. The natural philosophy of Daoism defies any dogmatic doctrines (including pacifist doctrines) but embraces the idea of “proper responsiveness” (*ying 應*) which requires appropriate actions in certain specific situations. Responsiveness emphasizes the ability of adjusting to the shifting flow of things in the world. Thus, despite the fact that Daoism sees engaging in state-on-state war to be something unnatural, it also suggests that not dealing with violence in dire situations such as genocide and ethnic cleansing can be equally unnatural. For Daoists, pacifism is a guiding idea rather than a fixed principle.¹⁷

If we have to use forcible action—action arising to the level of military intervention as justified defense—there are at least three things that we can learn from Daoism: First, an intervention should be operated only for the purpose of protection of human life of the intervened state instead of other purposes such as converting people to one’s religious faith or demanding people to adopt one’s own lifestyle. Second, the Daoist culinary model of harmonization challenges the logic of domination in realpolitik where international relations become power politics, and survival of the strongest means elimination of states that do not adhere to one’s own policies or principles. Military interventions, if absolutely necessary in supreme emergencies, should always be done with caution and the support of global communities. Third, the Daoist virtue of humility is particularly important for the “intervening army” or the “intervening state” because any gesture of moral superiority could lead to the

mind-set that “You cannot take care of yourselves” which could be officious and assertive of authority in a domineering way. It follows that even though one accepts that the responsibility to protect might be the right thing to do, a sense of moral superiority could eventually go to the opposite direction of what one intends to accomplish.

In her essay “Just War and Humanitarian Intervention” Jean Bethke Elshtain, a Christian ethicist who intends to defend just war theory in the Western tradition, admits, “Approaching humanitarian intervention through a just war lens means that they, or their possibility, must be subjected to intense scrutiny and cannot be played out simply by appealing to compassion or to doing the ‘right thing.’” (Elshtain 2001, 3). Daoism would certainly agree with this position.

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Notes

- ¹ The argument here is similar to the modern notion of “failed states” by Robert I. Rotberg, in which interference is morally justifiable. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Rotberg, 2004.
- ² In the view of Mencius, “the Emperor [Son of Heaven] punishes but does not attack, while a feudal lord attacks but does not punish” (*Mencius*, VI. B: 7). For a detailed discussion of Mencius’ argument, see chapter 5, “Classical Confucianism, Punitive Expeditions, and Humanitarian Intervention” by Sumner B. Twiss and Jonathan Chan.
- ³ See chapter 4, “The Classical Confucian Position on the Legitimate Use of Military Force” by Sumner B. Twiss and Jonathan Chan.
- ⁴ See *The Mozi* 2010, 192–193. Mozi makes it clear that attacks on small states should be seen as a case of theft or murder, whereas a war that aimed at preventing small states from being attacked by bigger states is viewed as appropriate and just.
- ⁵ Reference to Huangdi as a victorious warrior who unifies the first empire through military force can be traced back to the *Zuozhuan* [*Zuo’s Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*] and the *Guoyu* [*Discourses of the States*]. In terms of the *Huang-Lao* literature, a detailed account of violence during the tribal wars between the Huangdi and Chi You is recorded in the in the *Huangdi Sijing*. In Pre-Han literatures, Huangdi was portrayed as the first sage-ruler who brought peace to the world by a war against his enemy who was viewed as a “public evil.” The image of Huangdi employing military force to ensure peace and stability has been well illustrated in many texts.
- ⁶ *Shuowen jiezi* is a lexicon by Xu Shen 許慎 (30-124 CE) of the Eastern Han period. See Shen 2004.
- ⁷ The *Sima fa* means the “Sima’s Art of War” is a text written during the Warring States period with its major theme focusing on state policies, military organization, military administration, and military strategies. The text promotes the view that war is an unfortunate necessary for peace but stresses that the only justification for warfare is the assistance of the common people. See Ryden, 1998.
- ⁸ See my argument of this issue in the previous chapter “‘Weapons Are Nothing but Ominous Instruments’: The *Daodejing’s* View on War and Peace.”
- ⁹ For Mencius’ argument on legitimate moral authority, see chapter 5 by Twiss and Chan.
- ¹⁰ Ivanhoe contends that Laozi differs from Hanfeizi regarding leadership in that the former talks about discarding desires whereas the latter speaks of “not showing or revealing desires” for pure practical reasons. See Ivanhoe 2011, 37.

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- ¹¹ Moeller offers a pretty hash comment on just war theory, claiming that “[It] is merely an academic issue for professional moralists; it is typically applied as a rhetorical device, as a rhetorical weapon, in war. It represents one of the most dangerous uses of morality as a communications tool. War typically goes along not only with material explosions but also with explosion of morality, detonations of moral discourse. Just war theory is the most explosive ethics of all.” See Moeller 2009, 162.
- ¹² The notion that Confucian moral teachings are deadly weapons was also expressed by liberal intellectuals such as Lu Xun (1881–1936 CE) and Qian Xuantong (1887–1939 CE) during the “New Culture Movement” in China. See my review article, “Nietzsche in China” (Zhang 2008, 329–333).
- ¹³ There is disagreement among scholars as to whether these two models of harmony have evolved into a single unified model or into two separate and distinct models that share the same name. Li Chenyang, for instance, argues that the two notions of *he* as blending and mutual corresponsiveness were used interchangeably in ancient time. In other words, the various pre-Qin Chinese thinkers starting from Confucius, actually used the two notions interchangeably without making a clear distinction between the two models. For detailed discussions on this topic, see Li 2008, 81–98 and 2006, 583–603. Alan K. L. Chan, however, contends that the two models developed separately into very distinct notions of harmony. See Chan 2011, 37–62.
- ¹⁴ See Li 2006, p. 585. Also see Li 2008, pp. 81–98 for the discussion on the Confucian idea of harmony.
- ¹⁵ Some comparative studies in relevant issues have been done in the past decade by scholars in the West such as Mark E. Lewis, P.J. Ivanhoe, and Daniel A. Bell, and Sumner B. Twiss. Some of them deal with the issue of humanitarian intervention. For example, Ivanhoe 2004, 270–276; Bell 2006, 23–51; Twiss and Chan, “Classical Confucianism, Punitive Expeditions, and Humanitarian Intervention” (Chapter 5 of this book).
- ¹⁶ Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse list twelve framework principles to justify humanitarian intervention. All these principles are formulated in the light of United Nations’ operations and are clearly not the same as that found in ancient China (Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1996, 226).
- ¹⁷ If we have to give Daoist philosophy a label, I think that “contingent pacifism” rather than “absolute (or principled) pacifism” fits Daoism better.