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The Irrelevance of euro-christian Dichotomies for Indigenous Peoples

Beyond Nonviolence to a Vision of Cosmic Balance

Tink Tinker

The idea of Indians as members of a "martial race," although not among the initial perceptions of native people articulated by [e]uropean colonists, is older than the United States itself.

Tom Holm

[As] to pre-Columbian warfare we know almost nothing, and what little we do know suggests that where wars took place, they were infrequent, short, and mild: in fact "war" ... seems a misnomer for the kinds of [fighting that took] place, in which some act of bravery or retribution rather than death, say, or territory, would have been the object, and two "war parties" might skirmish without [lethal] effect on either one and none at all on home villages. Early European settlers often made a mockery of Indian warfare ... John Underhill wrote of the Pequots that their wars were more for pastime than to conquer and subdue their enemies, and Henry Spelman, who lived among the Powhatans, said that "they might fight seven years and not kill seven men..." Organized violence, in short, was not an attribute of traditional Indian societies, certainly not as compared with their [e]uropean contemporaries, and on the basis of this imperfect record what is most remarkable about them is their apparent lack of conflict and discord.

Kirkpatrick Sale

Each morning these days I take my 5-year-old granddaughter out for an early morning walk to give her grandma a few minutes longer to sleep. "Good morning, cousin," she calls out to a rabbit. *wichozpa* walks (or navigates her scooter) very carefully down the sidewalks, every now and then asking me to carefully circumvent an ant or roly-poly bug. She would not want her granddad to hurt any of our relatives. In learning to relate to the world around her in this way, our little Osage *wichozpa* is learning and internalizing values that course through indigenous cultures on every continent.[1] At the same time, as we will discover later in this essay, traditional Indian folk find it a logical impossibility to affirm the philosophical position of nonviolence simply because eating a meal requires certain acts of violence against our relatives, whether four-legged or vegetative.

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Religion

In terms of this volume it is important first of all to note that American Indian cultural traditions have never been included in euro-christian category of "world religions," for racialized reasons that assigned all Native Peoples to the realm of the primitive, savage, and uncivilized. In one important sense, excluding Native traditions from the category of world religions is actually correct, since whatever it is Indian Peoples do traditionally is inherently both local and cosmic in orientation rather than globally or universally metacosmic – to use Aloysius Pieris' distinction (Cruz 2004). Pieris, a sri lankan jesuit scholar, uses the term metacosmic to name so-called "world" religions as religions that are not rooted in specific locals or places but, rather, have inherently globalizing aspirations.[2] By local and cosmic, we mean to say that Indian folk experience their own place as the center of a cosmic whole, but that their experience of the cosmos is not an experience they would be in any way tempted to impose on peoples who experience the cosmos in other local places. To that extent, Indian communities were never evangelistic or proselytizing.

It will also be helpful to acknowledge from the outset that American Indian religious traditions have never fitted into and dare not be retroactively reduced to the more general modern euro-christian category called *religion*, never mind that more discrete category of world religions. Indeed traditional elders in all Indian communities have been clear over many generations now that our communities never had a traditional category called religion at all (see my entry in the *Encyclopedia of the American Indian* from a couple of decades ago).[3] In other words, the category itself is a colonialist imposition that cannot work with any accuracy for Indian folk in the final analysis.

We can say this much: The phenomena collectively called American Indian religious traditions encompass a wide variety of culturally discrete customs, behaviors, and practices that derive from the particularity of different national communities. While there certainly are deep structure similarities, the surface structure expressions can vary widely from one community to another. Plains Indian traditions are quite different from those of the new mexican Pueblos. And the traditions of the northeast are equally distinct from both, as again are the traditions of the northwest or the southeast. The first thing all of these have in

Figure 7.1 Native American dancers. Source: Osage News. Photo by Benny Polacca

common, of course, is that each is indigenous to the land, that is, to a particular geographical place, something that provides a sharp distinction between American Indians and the nomadic euro-christian commodification of land. But what does it mean to suggest a rootedness in place as a common denominator among such different American Indian communities? How does "place" serve as some deep structure connectivity?

The ultimate difference between American Indians and our euro-christian conquerors is one that can be classified as worldview, a notion to which we will return later in this essay. The American Indian framing of life around issues of place or spatiality is just the opposite of the euro-christian emphasis on framing life around issues of time and temporality and the broad-based temporal/progress oriented value system embraced by these colonial invaders. We should remember here that theological notions of redemption and eschatology are certainly temporal concerns. Thus, abandoning one's homeland in favor of invading and occupying another land is framed at its earliest in terms of a new temporal elite, that is, in terms of a new "chosen people" conquering a new "promised land" under divine guidance.[4] In contrast, the most life-affirming metaphors in all Indian communities are images of relationship, and particularly relationship to place, where place is not merely geographical location but is relational in terms of personhood and personality.

So then we might immediately enquire as to what other cognitive experiences these Indian traditions do have in common. One of the first identifiers that comes to mind is the pervasive notion of cosmic/holistic harmony and balance as the ultimate ideal or goal of all human activity – rather than an ideal of competitive achievement (which presumes various kinds of violence) at one end of the

euro-christian spectrum, or notions of combating violence with nonviolence at the other end. Moreover, balance requires a community-ist relational perspective rather than the individualist ideology of euro-christian cultures. Balance is the key goal, for instance, rather than some notion of personal salvation or redemption. This notion is pervasive in Indian cultures, in the traditional stories people tell, in the very memory of human beginnings.

Balance is conceived in ways that pertain to each person, each family, each clan, whole villages, and ultimately to the cosmos surrounding a people. It is community-ist in the sense that personal balance can only be constituted in the relational context of the community whole. The balance of the community and the person's relationship to the community whole has to be the foundational concern of every person. More than that, a community's balance is predicated on the cosmic balance of our relatives in the cosmic whole around us.

Both as an ongoing daily personal practice and as a larger community-wide special event, ceremony is an important means for maintaining and restoring balance. Ceremony requires dedicated time, thought, and intentionality. Each day was marked by numerous personal ceremonial acts, beginning, for instance, with the personal song recited by each Osage upon arising in the morning. At the community level, some Osage ceremonies took several days to complete. Thus, ceremony was an important category for all Native Peoples in north America, yet we need to insist that ceremony is not a category of religion, per se, and especially not a category that can be simplistically reduced to euro-christian notions of worship and doctrine.[5]

Rather, ceremony is about structured ways of building and maintaining relationships, particularly those relationships we might classify as cosmic relationships. That is, we are maintaining and restoring relationships of balance with all our relations, including human and other-than-human relatives and those relatives that live in that other plane of existence we loosely call (in English) the spirit world (Hat 2012). Ceremony can involve action at the personal level as well as the whole community. Some are mandated by one's place in the community: among the two divisions of an Osage village, for instance, *hunka* (earth folk) are required to privilege right-sidedness; *tzisho* (sky folk), to the contrary, sleep on the left side and dress left-side first, putting on the left moccasin before the right. These are ceremonial acts that remind Osage folk of their place in a relationship to the cosmic whole. If *hunka* sleep on their right side, they are facing their *tzisho* relatives from opposite sides of the east–west road that divides the village; thus the two hold themselves in unity even as they are divided by a road. Sky and earth are thus held in a balance of reciprocal dualism even within the physical architectural structure of the village. In many other cases, personal ceremony was mandated solely for the person by virtue of some vision or dream. Others would never think to criticize or naively copy someone else's response to spiritual communication from the other side. At the same time in a traditional community context, everyone would understand implicitly that even their personal ceremonies function "so that the People might live."

Balance as Reciprocal Dualism

The collective worldview of American Indians across the continent, then, is one of reciprocal dualism, a dualism that is very different from the euro-christian oppositional/manichaean dualism of good versus evil. If we do not identify the enemy as evil, it is much harder to wipe them out, to kill them indiscriminately. Yet, our histories and traditions, even our stories, have been "euro-formed" by scholars and missionaries, to use Seneca scholar Barbara Mann's useful phrase, so that the colonized reflect back to the colonizer precisely the colonizers' own christian worldview of good vs. evil (Mann 1998). Since this struggle of good vs. evil was always perceived as a universal by euro-christian invaders, they reasoned that Indians must have divided the world likewise. Thus, the invaders proceeded to impose their perception of reality willy-nilly on each Indian nation they encountered. So the Iroquoian twins, key figures in the Seneca (*et al.*) creation stories, have been persistently cast in euro-christian interpretation as one good and one evil (Mann 2004).

Mann insists to the contrary that the twins represent something far more balanced than the tensive opposites of good and evil. Rather, they represent male creator personalities (balanced in prior stories by two female creator figures) who try, on the part of one, to make the world easy and comfortable for the two-leggeds; and for the other (the so-called *evil* twin in the euro-christian interpretation) to provide natural challenges to give people reasons for living. So mountains, tornadoes, earthquakes, storms, floods, and so on, are not created by an "evil" twin, but are simply created by the other twin as challenges to make life interesting and to balance the comfort and ease created by his brother. In this way, balance is marked as a crucial value from the very beginning of life.

This never-ending quest for establishing and maintaining balance in the cosmos then affected the particularities of the responsibilities of each of our clans. Each had its own discrete part to play in maintaining the whole. Just one example: while my immediate family is eagle clan, I have two sons who are also adopted members of the buffalo bull clan, a clan that also includes my granddaughter. So close to our buffalo siblings are members of this clan that they are proscribed from eating buffalo meat, since their spiritual responsibility is to protect the sacred relationship between the buffalo nation and the whole of the Osage community who historically have relied on buffalo meat for protein.

Warfare

In order to make my case for traditional Indian ideologies of harmony and balance, we will need to diffuse and refute some long-standing colonialist euro-formed misconceptions about Indian Peoples of this continent that surface persistently in colonialist historical rhetoric. White euro-christian scholars, along with other colonialist voices (missionaries, government functionaries, etc.), have done a great injustice to

Indian people in their interpretations of what they perceive to be Indian war-making habits. Indians are, to name the stereotypes, war-like, bloodthirsty, barbaric savages who have no respect for human life. So deeply embedded are these colonialist misconceptions, from Hollywood portrayals to university classrooms, that it is clear to most fourth graders on this continent yet today that Indian people were savages who live, even now, as warrior cultures. Little white lies, except there is nothing trivial or benign about these tenaciously determined and demeaning prevarications, no matter how "professional" they might seem in academic texts – with all their claim to "objectivity." While this lie about Indian Peoples is utterly self-serving on the part of the christian conqueror, it is so tightly imbricated with the psychological and theological need to justify and validate their own violent history of murder and land theft that the lie has become the well-rehearsed, common-sense truth on this continent, a deeply embedded part of the american narrative.[6]

We should never forget, for instance, that just as the euro-christian word-smithing and military machinery began its invasion of north America (Episcopalians, pilgrims, Puritans), christian folk on the european continent (and in England) were killing each other by the millions (1618–1648) to determine which particular interpretation of the salvific death of Jesus would rule the continent. In the light of the euro-christian history of warring and violence, we should *ipso facto* resist any euro-christian historical description of people native to north America as warlike, savage, or hostile. All descriptions of Indians in terms of bad Indians and good Indians, hostiles and nonhostiles, serve explicitly to legitimize euro-christian intentions to steal Native lands – even as they implicitly depict the invading euro-christian hordes as righteous and innocent.[7]

Given this euro-christian colonialist landscape – in academia and in the public imaginary, fueled by Hollywood representations and television – we need to deal forthrightly with this imputed American Indian proclivity for violence. On the contrary, it seems actually self-evident that Indian Peoples across the continent valued a peaceful and balanced state of being, even as they kept up skills and a ready vigilance for protecting their communities.[8] We get a hint of this truth in the research already reported by American Indian scholars. *Ojibwa-Cree* author, D'Arcy McNickle, demonstrated nearly eight decades ago (1936) that at least 70% of pre-contact Indian societies practiced no form of warfare (Halsey 1992). And my own work would suggest that even this surprising number is a very low estimate, arguing that even those that have been purported to have words for war actually do not. At least there was no word for "war" until colonialist missionaries and government functionaries came along and picked a word in each language to function in ways that made sense to their own euro-christian war-making/warrior culture sensibilities. From our Native perspective, the euro-christian warrior cultures and their persistent war-making savagery has left the whole world in radical imbalance for more than five centuries.

Francis La Flesche, an Omaha ethnographer engaged in research among the Osage, reported that defensive military action was always honored much more

highly among the Osage than offensive battle. The highest tribal honors were always reserved for those who demonstrated heroism in the defense of an Osage town and of women and children in particular. In a wonderful chapter in his monograph on American Indian veterans of the US war against Vietnam, Cherokee scholar Tom Holm (himself a Vietnam veteran) demonstrates the dramatic differences between tribal peoples' practice of "war" and the massively destructive forms of warfare that have emerged in the euro-west (1996). In the course of his description, he reiterates the relatively nonviolent nature of Indian warfare. Warfare in north America showed little interest in conquest, the total destruction of an enemy, or even the subjugation of an enemy prior to the invasion of european peoples. In fact, he refers to traditional Indian warfare as "relatively bloodless encounters" (Holm 1996). Armed conflict in Indian cultures was nearly always limited to skirmishes over territorial boundaries and was limited in its perpetration of violence. If a single member of a military contingent was lost in a battle, it caused considerable uproar in an Osage town.

Likewise, the numbers of those killed in battle in Sioux history prior to the devastating military outbreak of war with the United States was very minimal indeed. One or two deaths every three to four years, with frequent ambiguity as to the cause of death, are the sorts of numbers recorded in the winter counts. Thus, the euro-western war-making with its thousands of deaths (e.g., Roman, Goth, Vandal conflicts) and then millions of deaths (from the 30 Years War to World War I and World War II) is mind-boggling and appalling to Indian folk. Yet it seems that euro-western folk are left somewhat insensate to war death, numbed by the historical numbers.

While early conflicts between Indian communities almost always involved hunting territories, the resulting casualties were extremely low until euro-christian conquest pressed Indian communities to respond in ways that were counterintuitive to their traditional cultural values. Extant Lakota winter-counts, for example, recall minuscule numbers of military deaths or campaigns prior to the 1854 aggression of the US military in killing an important *wazhazhe* Lakota leader.[9] In the century prior to 1854 the number of people killed is almost always countable on one hand and usually with one finger. After the Euro-Christian murder of *wazhazhe* headman Conquering Bear, all bets were off. The *wazhazhe* were forced in an act of self-defense to kill the entire platoon of 29 men commanded by a rash, utterly racist, and inexcusably over-confident lieutenant intent on punishing this Lakota band for killing a lame, abandoned cow for food. In retaliation for Lt Grattan's death a year later, William Harney, an army colonel called "Woman Killer" by the Lakota, led US army troops to slaughter an entirely different band of Lakota People (*Brule Sicangu* people who were uninvolved at the murder of Conquering Bear) at the massacre of Bluewater Creek, murdering and abducting an inordinate number of women and children. About 40% of Little Thunder's band were killed in this vicious and premeditated pre-emptive attack.

While La Flesche reminds us that defensive commitments dominated traditional Osage military involvement, his recording of the actual ceremony is most instructive. The so-called Osage "war" ceremony (like other Indian languages, the Osage language has no word for war, per se) bore the less assuming name *washábe athi" watsi* (the making charcoal dance). It was performed in preparation for the military defense of a village and was in all its aspects identical to the ceremony performed before hunting buffalo. Both ceremonies, then, were very complex and all-encompassing. The Osage Council of Elders (*nó"ho"zhi"ga*) had to make a carefully considered decision that military action was called for in the situation at hand. A decision to engage in military defense called for a lengthy and costly resource-consuming community ceremony of preparation. In every case one of these elders needed to step forward and agree to become the spiritual leader of the military contingent, requiring that elder to engage in serious fasting before and even during the arduous journey with the military contingent (La Flesche 1939). For this defense of the village ceremony to continue toward fruition, we should also remember that the ceremony required that the designated *nó"ho"zhi"ga* from each clan had to be in attendance with the appropriate ceremonial components in order for the ceremony to proceed. This complex necessity was insurance that the consensus of the whole was intact before the military action was irreversibly engaged.

Even after such serious and costly ceremonial preparation, conflicts were quite often resolved without loss of life on either side. On the other hand, any Osage loss of life required a careful explanation to the Council of Elders when the military contingent returned to the village. That is, the utter gravity of warfare for Osage peoples can be seen in their ceremonial reaction to the loss of a single combatant's life. Any Osage combat unit that returns home having lost one of their members is not allowed to reenter the village or the special ceremonial house of *wako"* until the elders ascertain responsibility for the loss of life and certain ceremonies have been conducted by those elders (La Flesche 1939). That is to say, the loss of one human life was considered a terrible price to pay for having engaged in battle with an enemy, however necessary that battle may have been.

At the same time any enemy loss of life became a time for the Osage People to gather with respect for that fallen enemy. First of all, the killing of an enemy required Osages to engage in a soul-releasing ceremony on behalf of that enemy casualty upon return to the village. Second, crying for the fallen enemy became also an important part of the ceremony to end the cycle of violence. Even while still in the field, an Osage military battalion was called upon to shed tears for those they had killed in battle. As J. O. Dorsey reports:

> After mourning over their own dead, they will mourn for the foe just as if he was a friend. At certain intervals (answering to every two or three hours, as we reckon time), the standard bearers tell the captains to command the warriors to mourn. (Dorsey 1884).

When the military excursion was of the "mourning" variety, there was a much lengthier ceremony that needed to be completed in order to mark the community's return to peace and balance. It includes a much more remarkable act of mourning for the slain enemy. The ceremonial (spiritual) leader of the mourning combat brigade is constrained to shed tears in a formal manner for the enemy who was killed. More importantly, he is obligated to make the same rite of vigil for the slain enemy that he had made before the military excursion for an Osage who had died and had been the initial cause of the military outing. That is, the ceremonial leader (the aforementioned elder) would immediately leave the village behind to engage in a wilderness fast for a period of seven days of crying, thirst, and hunger.[10]

These two acts, I want to argue, are certainly inconsistent with the sort of blood-thirst that euro-christian scholars (including an orthodox jewish historian) have projected back on these ancient Osages. Further, all of this was part of restoring the balance that had been necessarily disrupted with the resort to the military defense of the people. And I would be remiss by not recounting that what I have described here for the Osage People worked its way out in similar ceremonial structures in every north American Indian community. Ceremonial particularities would invariably be different; the underlying (deep structure) meanings would be very much the same.

Figure 7.2 Seal of the Osage Nation. Source: Reproduced by permission of the Licensing Agent, Osage Nation

Nonviolence as Incompatible

Nonviolence is a contemporary euro-christian cultural signifier that is too easily presumed by the "liberal colonizer" as some sort of universal that all people should automatically affirm. Indeed, given Osage and other Native Peoples' hesitancy to engage in reckless and wanton killing, one might think that affirming a philosophy of nonviolence might be almost automatic. Yet this is far from the reality. In actuality, in a traditional Indian context this language of nonviolence makes no sense and should not be used to describe the cultural practices of Indian Peoples. To begin with, nonviolence as the contemporary liberal/radical euro-christian/Gandhian (and increasingly global) ideal for achieving peace has always framed violence as something perpetrated by humans on other humans. That is, affirming this notion of nonviolence seems automatically to impose euro-christian notions of anthropocentrism on anyone using the category. Indian peoples could never limit the category of violence only to acts perpetrated on other human beings, which means that the category itself simply fails to compute within Indian culture. Nonviolence is a logical and, more importantly, practical impossibility.

We have already pointed to one aspect of the problem: We need to eat in order to live. In order to eat, we must necessarily perpetrate acts of violence against our close relatives. For instance, the traditional Osage village depended both on the "three sisters" (corn, beans, and squash) and on our sibling the buffalo for survival – which means taking their lives in the process and thus perpetrating violence against relatives and disturbing cosmic balance, constantly requiring ceremonial acts to restore balance. Whether it is our three sisters or our buffalo siblings or any other living thing that we take for our own subsistence, we are committing a violent act that must somehow be mitigated in order to bring the world back into balance. Among the Osage, this principle was manifest in the ceremony of "Mourning for the Slain Enemy" – something that could hardly be imagined occurring in the dominant euro-christian culture that so decidedly structures modern life. Similarly, while clear-cutting forests has been the status quo for industrialized euro-western societies, cutting a tree down for the (sacred) sun dance ceremony has never been a simple thing for Native Peoples. It has always involved its own complex ceremony accompanied by deep spiritual conversation with the tree relative whose life is to be taken and replete with (sacred) offerings given back to the "tree nation" for the life of this one tree relative.

Contemporary nonviolence theories and practices, always implying euro-christian modernity's notion of anthropocentrism as a concern for intra-human violence, focus invariably on the wellbeing of human persons involved in conflictive encounters with one another. Even in the contemporary call for environmental protection, the persistently expressed anxiety is whether the planet will be

able to provide for the continuing existence of human beings. Or, as conservative Denver radio pundit Mike Rosen stated so succinctly:

> Call me human-centric if you like, but in the final analysis, the only reason to preserve the balance of nature is to sustain human life. In the absence of humans, what would it matter if the Earth existed?" (Rosen 2006)

In this light, nonviolence seems invariably intended to speak to intra-species, human-on-human violence, something that would immediately preclude an American Indian worldview perspective. I was asked a couple of years ago to speak on American Indian notions of nonviolence to a national gathering of the Christian Peacemaking Teams organization (CPT). After acknowledging CPT's highly respectable history of "peace" intervention, I began that talk by insisting that I have never been committed to a philosophy of nonviolence – and somewhat facetiously suggested that CPT (a classic non-violence activist organization) also lacked that philosophical commitment. I pointed to a long table in the back of the room that they had set up for our supper buffet at the completion of my talk and said, "If we are going to eat, none of us can really profess nonviolence, since our very eating is predicated on the perpetration of violence against our relatives."

For Indian people, the term relationship never signaled merely human relationships, but has always been inclusive of all "people," from humans to animals, birds, trees, mountains, and even rocks.[11] So when we pray, "For all my relatives" (e.g., the common Lakota prayer, *mitakuye ouyasin*), we mean to include all of life and not just next of kin within our own species.

Needless to say, then, an American Indian must approach the topic of violence from a very different perspective than most contemporary social justice writers. On the other hand, the notion of balance or harmony does fit all traditional Native communities. Instead of nonviolence, the American Indian goal is always and at all times to "restore" balance in the world and to disrupt it as little as is necessary. Indeed the ideal of cosmic balance is played out at levels from the personal to the community to the immediate world around us.

World Incommensurability: the Dissimilitude of Otherness

At this point it becomes imperative that I emphasize more explicitly the enormous and immutable worldview differences that impede any easy Indian appropriation of contemporary euro-christian (and Gandhian) notions of nonviolence. That is, the American Indian worldview is in most respects the polar opposite of the euro-christian worldview. This difference, argues Deloria, is the "fundamental factor that keeps Indians and non-Indians from communicating." They are, says

Deloria, "speaking about two entirely different perceptions of the world" (Deloria [1979] 2012). The worldview of these two disparate human communities, that is, the deep structure realities of euro-christian culture and American Indian cultures are inherently in opposition to one another. Or as Barbara Mann puts it in *Iroquois Women*, "[I]n the [e]uropean/Iroquoian instance, none of the metanarratives of the two cultures coincide," where metanarrative (a word that can function as a parallel to worldview) signals the fundamental underlying structures of thought that shape the way that a community of people think (Mann 2004). In other writings I have tried to highlight key worldview differences between these two cultures: radical individualism in the euro-christian west vs. communitysism; manichaean monism vs. Indian reciprocal dualism;[12] foundational temporality (e.g., "time is money") vs. Indian foundational perceptions of spatiality, place, and land. And most notably I have pointed to the up–down image schema in the christian west resulting in clear hierarchies in all aspects of world perception vs. what I have described as the American Indian egalitarian–collateral image schema that results in a perception of the world that puts humans on the same plane as all other living nonhuman persons (Tinker 2013).

We have already noted the absence of the typical euro-christian notion of anthropocentrism in the Native worldview. In the list of metanarrative or worldview differences we might point to, this distinction is absolutely essential. While many liberal euro-christian folk today presume that they are challenging the deeply embedded anthropocentrism in their tradition, they still, almost necessarily, live anthropocentric lives. If there is a bug infestation problem in the house, they still exterminate – maybe looking for bug sprays that are less toxic for human beings (and their pets). Even those committed to environmental justice have a strong tendency in most cases to argue the survival of other species is important to the survival of the human species first of all. For Indian folk a view that we might call distinctly nonanthropocentric runs very deep in the basic traditional values of every community and comes to mind in nearly every moment. As any culturally intact Indian will be quick to recite, we are all relatives, human and nonhuman – or rather, other-than-human persons (Wildcat 2013).

Anthropocentric thinking, first of all, derives from the basic hierarchical structures of the euro-christian worldview, what I have called a foundational up–down image schema (following the lead of cognitive linguistic theorists). Euro-christian folk have long imagined themselves in a hierarchical relationship with all of creation and with all species categorized as "lower" than human – just as women and femininity have been structured traditionally in the christian west as lower on the human scale than men or masculinity. In the euro-christian worldview, the earth was created explicitly for human beings at the top of the creational hierarchy – who were empowered to name, classify, and categorize into taxonomies, before exercising their privilege and status to use up the rest of the world. We should note here that the more progressive euro-christian theological move to supplant the Hebrew Bible's notion of "dominion" (Genesis 1) with a more responsible notion

of stewardship certainly fails to change the hierarchical relationship embedded in euro-christian thinking. This new theological perspective still has humans at the top exercising control (now responsibility) over lesser life forms. More to the point, hierarchy (the up–down image schema) always puts someone in authority to pass judgment on the worth of someone or even everyone else, and ultimately it is that judgment that allows for one people to exercise violence on another. Yet we must add that hierarchy and the up–down image schema – along with its collateral Manichaean division of the world into good and evil – is ultimately flat and unidirectional, almost limited to a two-direction dichotomy.

The American Indian egalitarian–collateral image schema expands those dimensions exponentially and significantly changes the conceptual terrain. When we talk about relatives (e.g., the invocation "For all my relatives"), our horizons are immediately expanded to include those persons other-than-human. Thus, "my relatives" include much more than my immediate family or even all two-legged folk of the world. Indeed it necessarily includes all of life on our planet: the four-legged persons; the flying persons (from birds to butterflies, and even flies); and all those people called the living-moving ones (that is, the mountains and rivers; the trees and the rocks; corn, beans, and squash; the fish in the lakes and the ocean. Only then can we begin to appreciate the moral ethic involved in concern for *all our relatives* – including especially those other-than-human relatives.[13] Ultimately our understanding of our relationship with all that lives in the world around us is an understanding of a shared earth. When Indian people take from the earth we always feel a need to return something of value back to the earth. So, for instance, we might need cedar leaves to use ceremonially as a medicine; we would use the smoke of the cedar to purify or might use a cedar tea for a variety of medicinal purposes. Yet before we can take these cedar leaves for our use, we would always offer something, perhaps tobacco, back to the cedar tree persons as a way thanking the cedar trees and doing our part to maintain harmony and balance. And yes, before picking the tobacco some offering would be made back to the tobacco plant persons to thank them for their gift.

Whatever we humans take requires some reciprocal act of giving back to our cosmic relatives in order to repair any disruption of cosmic balance. It becomes all the more important to remember how to perform those ceremonies needed, on a daily as well as a periodic basis, to restore balance in the cosmos and to maintain balance in our relationships with those other-than-human people around us. Thus in our balancing of the world around us there is much more at stake than just one's own village or a community's national wellbeing. If we act recklessly and thoughtlessly we could easily put the whole cosmos out of balance – for others as well as for ourselves.[14] In most Indian national communities there was an annual ceremony that functioned more generally to restore balance. Ceremonies like the Plains Indian sun dance or the southeastern Green Corn Dance were concerned for the renewed balance of the whole cosmos. In most Indian national community contexts, the killing of any one (human or other-than-human) was not allowed in the vicinity of the ceremony because of the nature of the ceremony itself.[15]

Relationship = Less Extraneous Violence

As Cherokee legal scholar Steve Russell reports, "According to our traditions, much human sickness comes from humans mistreating other animals. Therefore, we apologize when we kill for food, and express our gratitude" (Russell 2013). If we live with a sense that we cannot hurt any person (human or nonhuman) without both a clear purpose and some ceremonial act, if we cannot disturb medicine persons like sage or cedar or tobacco without ceremonial acts of giving back, then it should stand to reason that we certainly cannot recklessly hurt any other human person. Thus I must argue that we should be negotiating a massive shift away from the dominant euro-christian worldview with its implications of hierarchy, away from modern euro-christian cultures, toward a worldview of interrelationship. The mitigation of violence (not a commitment to nonviolence) that historically and traditionally characterized Native communities in north America ought to be very attractive to liberal euro-christian folk who share the traditional Indian revulsion with the history of euro-christian violence that has swallowed up our land and increasingly the whole world during the past 500 years, the history of christian violence that seems to be perpetuated in US foreign policy decisions even today.

Perhaps Barack Obama should have engaged in a 12- or 13-day ceremony before deploying any murderous drone attack in Afghanistan or Pakistan. Perhaps there is a ceremony we have not yet discovered to protect the earth from leaking crude oil from intercontinental pipelines, a ceremony known only to Keystone XL, Enbridge, or other pipeline mega-corporate structures – which are persons only by the spiritual magic of some invented and imaginary "rule of law." If Suncor Energy and other extractive mega-corporations functioning in the tar sands had performed religious ceremonies prior to clear-cutting Alberta's boreal forest, if they had spoken to the trees as relatives explaining why their death was necessary, and if they had returned something of value back to the forest, we might be constrained to be more lenient in our criticisms. Even this, of course, can never make right the devastation of the aboriginal peoples of those lands who have been thoroughly adversely affected and displaced – culturally as well as physically – not to mention their close relatives (fish, game, forests, etc.) who have been utterly destroyed. Instead, we have extraction industries that return hazardous waste to the environment in the form of naphthenic acid, trace metals such as methyl mercury and other pollutants into the watershed sickening human communities (e.g., increasing cancer death rates, poisoned food supplies) as well as destroying the habitats of so many of our other-than-human relatives. Here, both the earth and Indigenous Peoples are crying out for a cessation of violence to which nonviolence advocates certainly should respond!

My argument would suggest that American Indian Peoples, the aboriginal *owners* of north America,[16] have much to teach the colonial-christian settlers who have conquered our lands. We might all begin with personal commitments to

balance and the mitigation of violence in our everyday lives. While it seems strange to think of doing ceremony before buying a pound of ground hamburger (there is no hunting ceremony for that!), perhaps we could at least learn to make a small food offering (a personal ceremonial act) to the ancestral spirits to include them in our lives. *wichozpa* (my granddaughter) makes a small plate before every meal, taking some of everything prepared for the meal, to offer it and to invite our relatives in the spirit world to share with us – always remembering the spirits of those plants and animals that provide for us in that meal.

If we can begin to recognize our appropriate place in the world in a concern for all our relatives in the cosmos, human and other-than-human, then notions of justice and peace would flow naturally from that spiritual center. If I know empirically that I am related to all these persons in the world, then it becomes more difficult for me to hurt any one of these persons, human or other-than-human. It becomes more difficult to engage in any war to destroy one's enemy when we understand the enemy as our relatives. Then eventually living in balance becomes a real possibility for the social/political whole.

Questions for Discussion

1. How can peoples with conflicting worldviews begin to communicate with one another without one perpetrating violence on the other? This question is especially acute when one people exercises an almost complete hegemony (read hierarchy again) over the other.
2. How can folk who are culturally euro-christian begin to grapple with the indigenous cultural other on this continent in ways that might change the hierarchical nature of the relationship between these two groups of people: euro-christian colonizer/conqueror and the conquered aboriginal *owners* of the land? The concept of "owning," of course, is already a violent cultural imposition on the worldview of Indigenous Peoples.
3. If euro-christian culture were to begin to correct the anthropocentrism in its cultural foundation, how would euro-christian folk then begin to change its relationship to the rest of creation?
4. Nonviolence is a great idea, perhaps a great starting point. But how do we account for the daily perpetration of violence inherently involved with eating lunch? What happens when euro-christian folk expand their notion of nonviolence to include other-than-human persons?
5. How would an ideal of balance and harmony affect notions of violence and nonviolence? How might a deeply and culturally embedded ideal of balance offer different kinds of solutions within US foreign policy? And how might it change the behaviors of young people on the streets of our cities?
6. How is the Indigenous understanding of the land different from the euro-christian conqueror's understanding?

Notes

1 The Osage Nation, or *wazhazhe*, once resided in a territory that included the modern state of Missouri and small bits of Kansas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. After the political and legal subterfuges of the US government, the Osages were removed from their homes to a small corner of their traditional territory in what is today northeastern Oklahoma. Since *wazhazhe* was always an oral language, I resist imposing any further englishizing colonial spelling conventions on the language. Hence, words at the beginning of a sentence remain uncapitalized.

2 My use of the lower case for such adjectives as "euro," "christian," "jesuit," "sri lankan," etc., is intentional. While nouns naming religious groups might be capitalized out of respect for each Christian – as for each Muslim or Buddhist – using the lower case "christian" or "european" for adjectives allows readers to avoid unnecessary normativizing or universalizing of the principal institutional religious and political quotients of the euro-west. Likewise, I avoid capitalizing such national or regional adjectives as american, amer-european, european, euro-western, etc. I also refer to north America. It is important to my argument that people recognize the historical artificiality of modern regional and nation-state social constructions. For instance, who decides where the "continent" of Europe ends and that of Asia begins? Similarly, who designates the western half of north America as a separate continent clearly divided by the Mississippi River, or alternatively the Rocky Mountains? My initial reasoning extends to other adjectival categories and even some nominal categories, such as euro, and political designations like the right and the left and regional designations like the west. Quite paradoxically, I know, I insist on capitalizing White (adjective or noun) to indicate a clear cultural pattern invested in Whiteness that is all too often overlooked or even denied by american Whites. Moreover, this brings parity to the insistence of African Americans on the capitalization of the word Black in reference to their own community (in contra-distinction to the *New York Times* usage). Likewise, I always capitalize Indian, American Indian, and Native American.

3 See Tinker (1996).

4 See the fine analytical treatment in terms of cognitive linguistics by Steve Newcomb in his groundbreaking legal text: *Savages in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (Newcomb 2008); in particular, see chapter 3, "The Conqueror Model," pp. 23ff. And here too one should read Robert Warrior's 1989 essay, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and liberation in Theology Today." reprinted in several anthologies (Warrior [1989] 1995).

5 Since we are discussing characteristically oral cultures, there are also no "texts" or sacred texts to consider. Indeed, most of what is written about these Native traditions is not very helpful for understanding the actualities of what takes place in any community.

6 Mel Gibson's movie "Apocalypto" (2006). A full-blown racist imagination embodying a catholic version of the american narrative.

7 For the appellation of righteousness, we should note the title of Martin Marty's text, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (Dial Press, 1970). In the case of the Osage People, a classic example of such a self-serving euro-christian colonialist history is the pernicious volume by Gilbert C. Din and Abraham Phineas Nasatir, *The Imperial Osages: Spanish-Indian Diplomacy in the Mississippi Valley* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1983).

8 The comment of Cherokee legal scholar Steve Russell (2013) is to the point: "Traditionally, we separated war leadership from peace leadership because we believed that the skillsets for governing a free people differ from those for making successful war." And we will leave open here what the Cherokee word translated as war actually means.

9 For an accessible Sioux winter count, see the detailed example of the "No Ears" winter count included in Walker (1982). For the first 94 years of the No Ears winter count (up to 1854), there appears to have been a stunningly low rate of combat related fatalities for this *sicangu lakota* band.
The terrorist murder of wazhazhe chief Conquering Bear is usually spoken of in euro-christian historical accounts as the Grattan Affair, named after the offending US Army lieutenant who brashly led his platoon into Conquering Bear's village issuing threats and eventually killing the chief.

10 La Flesche describes the intensity of the ceremonial requirement:

> The difficulty of complying with this requirement was not so much in the physical hardship it entailed on the ceremonial mourner as in the mental effort he must make in order to bring himself into sympathetic touch with the slain strangers. When mourning for the deceased member of the tribe he had shed tears of heartfelt sorrow, having brought himself into close sympathy with the chief mourner by meditating upon the cause of his grief, upon the kindly deeds of the deceased that had won for him the affection of his people, and upon those tribal ties that unite all the people and make them as one; whereas between himself and the strangers whom he was credited with slaying there existed no personal intimacy, no common ties of sentiment that could stir his heart, there was nothing but the naked, common bond of human sympathy that could save him from making a mockery of this final ceremony; nevertheless, the man, without any show of reluctance, always went forth again to fast and to suffer the pangs of hunger and thirst for a period of seven days during the ceremony of Mourning for the Slain Enemy. (War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony, 138–139)

11 See my essay (Tinker 2004), where I argue an Indian understanding of the consciousness of rocks, rocks as relatives. Also, Vine Deloria, Jr (1999).

12 As Barbara Mann argues in *Iroquoian Women*, the number one is dysfunctional. See also Mann (2010, 2011) and Tinker 2013, pp. 167–179.

13 Here we can begin to see that interrelationship has to do with something much more important than allowing or inviting White New Age relatives to invade the private intimacy of our ceremonies.

14 This, of course, is precisely what we are experiencing globally today in this eco-crisis of global warming. For an example of an American Indian sense of disrupting and restoring cosmic balance, see Leslie Silko's remarkable novel, *Ceremony* (Penguin), 1977.

15 Food was prepared, of course, to feed nonfasting community participants, but the harvesting acts had to be performed off-site unless it was integral to the ceremony itself. Three times in four days at one Lakota sun dance I attended a stray rattle snake crept up out of the canyon next to the arbor and entered the arbor itself. At the first instance, some White visitors ran to get something to use to kill the snake and had to be restrained and told that they were acting inappropriately. Each time two fire keepers carefully carried the snake out of the arbor and down to the bottom of the canyon and left it there with offerings of tobacco and gentle words asking the snake to stay away until the ceremony was over. At another sun dance the cooks had to be asked to remove the flypaper they had posted to catch flies and keep the flies out of their food preparation. Killing flies was not an option; rather, they had to be tolerated and allowed to take their share of the food.

16 Ownership, of course, is an inherently euro-christian word and finds no counterpart in any Native American Indian language. I use it here merely as a cross-cultural metaphor, one that ultimately fails. Rather than owners of the land, Indian peoples are those who have historically had a close *relationship* to the lands of north America. Cross-cultural communication is inherently problematic, especially in colonial relationships of imbalance.

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Further Reading

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Deloria, Jr, Vine. 1999. *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr, Reader*. Edited by Barbara Deloria and Sam Scinta. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing. Barbara Deloria helped bring this fine collection of Deloria essays together. They cover a large waterfront of issues signaled early on in his work *God is Red*.

Deloria, Jr, Vine. 2003. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. 30th Anniversary Edition. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing. Deloria's monumental piece makes an analytical comparison between the Indian worldview and with the worldview and values of the Euro-Christian colonizer. He revised it two decades after the original publication in 1973. It is still the gold standard among American Indian folk.

Holm, Tom. 1996. *Strong Hearts, Wounded Souls: Native American Veterans of the Vietnam War*. Austin, TX: University of Texas. Tom Holm is Muskogee and Cherokee and a veteran of US military service in Vietnam. His study of Indian veterans is nuanced and very useful for understanding Indian cultural issues around military conflict. He has one essay in particular on Indian war-making that is very useful for clarifying the difference between Indian and Euro-Christian values and understandings of violence.

Mann, Barbara. 2006. *Iroquois Women: The Gantowisas*. New York: Peter Lang. Euro-Christian war-making is inordinately gendered around maleness. Mann demonstrates the realities of Native matriarchal social structures that deal with war and violence very differently.

Tinker, Tink. 1996. "Religion." *The Encyclopedia of the North American Indian*. Edited by Frederick E. Hoxie, 537–541. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. A short encyclopedia entry, this advances the argument that religion is a category entirely lacking in traditional Indian communities. Rather, Indian peoples have a way of life, a cultural whole that includes ceremonial structures that White observers persistently want to identify as religion.

Tinker, Tink. 2004. "'The Stones Shall Cry Out': Consciousness, Rocks and Indians." *Wicazo Sa Review* 19 (Fall): 105–125. This is an early Tinker essay that sets the stage for the more cognitive analytical approaches in his later essays. It underscores the interrelationship of all life where even stones are relatives.

Tinker, Tink. 2013. "American Indians and Ecotheology: Alterity and Worldview." In *Eco-Lutheranism*. Edited by Karla Bohmbach and Shauna Hannon, 69–83. Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press. The interrelationship of all living things is underscored in this essay around a clear articulation of Native worldview. The collateral–egalitarian social structure of the Native world, including all other life forms, means that violence is clearly boundaried around survival needs like eating.

Tinker, Tink. 2013. "Why I Don't Believe in a Creator." In *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*. Edited by Steve Heinrichs, 167–179. Kitchener: Herald Press. The attempt here is also to differentiate the Native collateral–egalitarian worldview from the hierarchical worldview of euro-christianity and its up–down image schema. Tinker uses a cognitive linguistic analysis to advance the argument.

White Hat, Albert. 2012. *Life's Journey – Zuya: Oral Teachings from Rosebud*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah. Published just before White Hat's passing, *Zuya* is perhaps the clearest and richest articulation of a particular community's experience of the world.

Waziyatawin (Dakota). 2013. "A Serpent in the Garden: An Unholy Worldview on Sacred Land." In *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*. Edited by Steve Heinrichs, 210–224. Kitchener: Herald Press. Waziyatawin is a persistent post-colonialist Indian voice, arguing for a discrete understanding of Indian cultures and their worldview.

Wildcat, Daniel R. 2013. "Just Creation: Enhancing Life in a World of Relatives." In *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*. Edited by Steve Heinrichs, 295–309. Kitchener: Herald Press. Wildcat advances Deloria's distinction between space and time along with a coherent description of the Indian experience of the interrelationship of all life.

7.1

A Confucian Response

Sin Yee Chan

Tink Tinker's chapter portrays a fascinating worldview that is complex, enlightening, and refreshing. As he puts it so aptly, the American Indian worldview is beyond the dualism of violence and nonviolence and is anchored in cosmic harmony and equality. All creatures – including humans, animals, birds – are our relatives, and even trees, mountains, and rocks are also connected to sentient creatures. Actions that we take to ensure our own survival necessarily involve violence to something that is valuable and connected to us – the food that we eat, the natural resources that we use to keep us warm, hydrated, and sheltered, all involve acts of violence. In this way, violence is an inevitable part of this cosmic pattern and human existence, and it is the assumption of anthropocentrism that allows us to think mistakenly that humans can and should live a life of nonviolence. However, the inevitability of violence does not mean that harmony and peace cannot be attained. It only means that violence must be a part of the conception of harmony and peace, which is the thought embodied in the American Indian conception of "balance." Through the performance of ceremonies as well as actions that express concern, respect, and/or bring benefits to the "people" of the cosmos, we perform the "reciprocal act of giving back to our cosmic relatives in order to repair any disruption of cosmic balance." While acts of violence are inevitable, we also need to be responsible and be extremely wary in inflicting them. Hence "war" as a word is nonexistent in the American Indian language and we need to mourn for the enemy that we kill.

The American Indian vision of cosmic unity and equality is shared by the Chinese philosophical school of Taoism. Taoism also rejects anthropocentrism and sees humans as an insignificant part of nature as a whole. One expression of this idea can be seen in Chinese landscape painting, which reflects strong Taoist influence. Humans often only occupy a tiny part of the whole painting.

However, I see important differences between Taoism and the American Indian worldview. For example, Taoism believes that as long as humans follow their nature

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instead of artificial desires and conceptions, they are following the *dao*, the cosmic principle that explains and supports the cosmic harmony. No action is required to restore balance because harmony already prevails in situations in which each creature follows its own natural desire to survive, enjoy, and live its life in a particular way. There is no "violence" and "nonviolence," for these are only man-made conceptions. The *dao* consists of incessant changes and transformation. Death, being eaten, and being used are a part of the natural change. As humans, we will eventually die and get transformed into some other form of existence and will take our turn to be eaten and used. Hence, whilst humans live, they just need to follow their nature and be free and happy wanderers following the *dao*.

Confucianism and Native American views share the following ideas: cosmic unity, harmony, and rituals. I shall briefly focus on the comparison of these three ideas and raise questions.

Cosmic Unity

Like American Indian culture, Confucianism speaks of cosmic unity: humans are unified with everything else in this world. "All the ten thousand things are there in me" (Mencius 7A:4). Moreover, the role of a deity is insignificant in the idea of cosmic unity of both traditions. On the other hand, there are two important differences between the Confucian idea and that of the American Indian culture. First, the Confucian cosmic unity has a moral nature. As I explain in my chapter, the flood-like *qi* (vapor energy) that is presumed to fill up between Heaven and Earth has a moral dimension. It can only be accumulated by a person who has virtue and not by someone who sporadically does a morally right act. Second, in talking about the trinity of Heaven, Earth and humans, Confucianism does subscribe to anthropocentrism. Within this trinity, a person should "revere what lies within his power and does not long for what lies with Heaven" (Xunzi 17:8). "How can glorifying Heaven and contemplating it, be as good as tending its creatures and regulating them? How can obeying Heaven and singing it hymns of praise be better than regulating what Heaven has mandated and using it?" (Xunzi 17:13). Humans can be seen as the "agent" of Heaven in that they actively tend, regulate, and use the animals and resources created by Heaven. It is by exercising the abilities naturally endowed by Heaven that humans can achieve an orderly government based on virtues; a distinctive accomplishment of humans.

In light of these two points about the moral dimension and the human-centeredness aspect of cosmic unity, I would like to raise the following questions for Tinker:

1. My first question concerns the roles of morality and virtues in the American Indian concept of cosmic unity, especially in the concept of balance. Does one need to be moral in order to achieve cosmic unity? Put differently, is "balance"

considered a moral good? Or is it just a natural good, or just something natural? What are the criteria for deciding whether a person is moral or not? Are those criteria related to the concept of balance, or some other values, such as filial piety, benevolence, loyalty, moral courage, etc.? How are the common human moral values such as loyalty, honesty, and so on related to the idea of balance? Can an amoral person, that is, someone who is not moved by moral or immoral motives, still attain personal balance?

2. My second question is this. I am wondering whether the American Indian worldview still expresses a form of anthropocentrism, though a very, very mild form. For example, according to the American Indian culture, are not a person's duties toward other humans such as his/her family and community still more stringent and more significant than his/her duties toward other nonhumans in the world? Tinker's chapter does seem to suggest that priority or more significant values are indeed accorded to humans. For example, he vividly and sensitively portrays how the American Indians mourn for the death of a human, even an enemy, and what a serious matter it is to launch a "war" and kill in a war. But I do not expect – nor is there any evidence – that American Indians are giving the exact same treatment to the animals that they kill and eat. The fact that we humans are consuming more food than is necessary for survival shows that self-defense is not an adequate ground to justify our current treatment of animals. Above all, if the idea of all equality is assumed, a gruesome and terrible implication will be that we can kill or treat another human in a violent way against his/her consent as long as we perform some ceremonies to express our respect and gratitude, just as we do to animals.

Harmony

The American Indian ideal of harmony can be seen as embodied in the idea of "balance." Tinker writes that "personal balance can only be constituted in the context of the community whole. … A community's balance is predicated on the cosmic balance of our relatives in the cosmic whole around us." Balance is achieved when things achieve a certain kind of coordination. Acts of violence, for example, need to be followed by ceremonies or acts with benefits that "restore the balance." The Confucian idea of harmony as I have explained in my chapter does not include the idea of balance. Instead, harmony is constituted by different things responding to and interacting with each other in a positive way that produces favorable results. Later Confucianism, which was developed after the classical period (i.e. after 220 B.C.E.), does have the idea of harmony as the balancing of the two cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang*. But the two forces take turns to become dominant so that the balance point between them is never static.

Three differences can be observed then, between the Confucian and the American Indian account of harmony. First, in both Confucian accounts of harmony, there is no suggestion of a "middle" position as the American Indian idea of "balance" seems to imply. Second, the American Indian notion of balance requires conscious efforts of reckoning and coordinating each act; something similar to the acts of balancing one's accounts. Such conscious acts are absent in Confucianism. Third, in Confucianism acts to restore a harmony consist of removing the disruptive force, as in the punitive expedition, rather than undertaking a compensatory act as suggested by the Native American notion of balance.

One interesting question that can be raised about the American Indian notion of harmony, then, is whether there is any difference between justifiable acts of violence, such as killing for food, and unjustifiable acts of violence, such as killing for greed, if both are seen as acts upsetting balance and requiring acts of restoration of balance. (This harks back to the earlier question of how morality is related to the idea of cosmic unity and also balance.) Another related question is whether the notion of balance is primarily about retribution or about compensation, or both, or neither. Is there some underlying principle or rationale behind the acts of balancing? If there is, is it similar to the Buddhist idea of *karma* in which one needs eventually to "repay" for the evil deeds that one has done previously? And is the repayment in the form of accumulating positive credits which can cancel out the negative liability, rather than repaying in the form of suffering, as in Buddhism?

Ceremonies/Rituals

Both Confucianism and Native American culture prize rituals and ceremonies. Confucianism believes that rituals can help to achieve social harmony as well as one's moral cultivation. American Indian culture relies heavily on ceremonies to restore balance. Both seem to value the function of rituals to express, channel, and nurture one's emotions and wills with regard to certain significant actions such as mourning and killing. In the Native American culture, ceremonies sometimes seem to be seen as having nonempirical efficacy. For example, in restoring cosmic balance, ceremonies are sometimes performed in the absence of other acts that have concrete compensatory effect.

My question is about the nature of ceremonies in the Native American culture. What are their functions and supposed effects? Do they help to achieve social harmony besides cosmic balance?

7.2

A Hindu Response

Kalpana Mohanty

I feel the power of nonviolence through the honesty, simplicity, and humility of the Native Americans. It is a matter of joy to know that a 5-year-old child calls out to a rabbit, "Good morning, cousin." This is a true example of a child learning to identify with the wider world around her. This is the first step toward nonviolence.

The pervasive notion of cosmic–holistic harmony and balance as the ultimate ideal or goal of all human activity is a crucial value from the very beginning of life, from the personal to the communal. It is similar to the Vedic thoughts in the Hindu Tradition. Ceremony and cosmic relationships with the cycle of nature and also with the spirit world are very similar to the religious practices in many tribal communities in India. The collective worldview of reciprocal dualism in which the Native Americans' refusal to consider their enemy as "evil" prohibits them from killing them is a true example of nonviolence. It is sad to know that the so-called civilized people considered Native Americans as "savages" and "warriors." In fact, the Euro-Christians' theft of native lands was an act of violence.

It is encouraging to know that 70% of Native American societies did not engage in any warfare, and preferred a peaceful and balanced state of being. It is very inspiring to know that the concept of a "relative" includes all living beings – from birds to butterflies and fish, the trees, and the rocks. This concept is similar to the teachings of Isha Upanishad in the Hindu tradition.

It was interesting to learn that Tink Tinker's granddaughter *wichozpa*, makes a small plate of food before every meal to offer relatives in the spirit world and also to plants and animals. This is very similar to the practice in the Hindu tradition of offering food to the crows before every meal. Hindus believe that ancestral spirits reside within the crows.

When the Osages killed an enemy, upon returning to the village they shed tears as part of a ceremony to end violence. The wilderness fast for a period of 7 days to mourn for the enemies they had killed is a true example of repenting for their sins. This can be considered a form of nonviolent practice because it is an attempt to

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clear the conscience. Traditional Native Americans argue that in their need for survival, for food, they inflict violence against their close relatives: corn, beans, squash, and buffalos. Later on they mourn for them. Should we not ask ourselves whether we feel that we are effecting violence when we consume food?

Native Americans do not use the word nonviolence; however, they emphasize restoring balance in the world and disrupting as little as possible. The major challenge before us is to understand the subtle difference between nonviolence and restoring balance. I feel that restoring balance in the earth is not possible unless one commits to nonviolence.

Tinker has beautifully explained that the notions of justice and peace must flow naturally from the spiritual center if we think of our "enemy" – and everyone in the world – as a relative. He has truly pointed the way toward discovering the essence of all religions. I am reminded of the opening of a poem:

> After a while you learn the subtle difference
> Between holding a hand and chaining a soul,
> And you learn that love does not mean leaning
> And company doesn't always mean security.
>
> (from a poem "Comes the Dawn," by Veronica A. Shoffstall,
> cited in Sharilyn A. Ross 2012, *The Spirit of Camp*,
> Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, p. 166)

Palestinians do not have land and sovereignty there will be no peace. Repair of the world must take concrete forms: land for peace and defense of Palestinian human rights. Israel's concrete peace initiative is not a matter of *giving up* land but of *giving back* land that belongs to the Palestinians as recognized by the international community. Michael Lerner, a Jewish American peace activist, calls for:

> a new form of discourse [recognizing that] we are presented with two peoples who are equally entitled and equally in error. With that foundation in place, we will be able to move to the next stage, requiring the Jewish people to recognize that it is our responsibility to take the most decisive step to rectify the current situation, not because we are more wrong but because we are more powerful. (Lerner 2000, 27)

The prophet Isaiah continues to speak to all the "peoples of the book." Certainly it is applicable to how Christians behave in the world, being righteous doers of justice or doomed for their injustices. But Isaiah's vision is timely today as Israel considers the urgency of peace. Isaiah speaks Yahweh's demand to Jerusalemites:

> Seek justice and rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. … Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. (Isaiah 1:15–17; 26–27)

To recognize and choose inclusiveness and to live justly are central elements of peacemaking within contemporary Judaism.

Reference

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3.2

A Native American Response

Tink Tinker

Joshua Ezra Burns has written a very engaging account of Judaism, tracing its roots from ancient israelite traditions. Since I spent considerable energies a half century ago trying to learn a little of the biblical hebrew language, reading Burns' text took me back to my own academic roots in no small measure.

The jewish emphasis on *shalom* as the key ingredient in spiritual existence is something that must necessarily touch every American Indian heart. My insistence that notions of balance and harmony are foundational for any American Indian cultural expression resonates with *shalom* in interesting ways. There is something else, however, in the jewish traditions as Burns outlines them that raises questions for any traditional American Indian, and perhaps my critique is endemic in the nature of any corporate expression that might merit the category appellation "world religion." Namely, it cannot, it seems, be escaped that these religious traditions called world religions change repeatedly through time. In the case of Judaism, Burns describes a dramatic shift, due to changing historical contexts, from an emergent ancient israelite ideology of a God who guides the people into repeated conquests that eventuate in the conquest of the lands held by the canaanite peoples,[1] situated generally where the modern state of Israel locates itself today. He then traces israelite and jewish trajectories of history through periods of conquest of Israel and then Judea that result in less aggressive and even pacifist periods of jewish religious theologies. Today, following the tragedy of the nazi holocaust perpetrated against jewish peoples in Europe, Burns notes the renewed theological investment in secular jewish notions of conquest related to the formation of the state of Israel in a territory wrested from palestinian peoples. If I might be allowed a simplistic mapping of these historical sequences, it seems the trajectory runs from historical periods of political/military ascendency to periods of historical change due to conquest and subjection, and back again to a position of some ascendency; each turn accompanied by somewhat predictable shifts in theological thinking.

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American Indian folk play things out quite differently, and the german "conceptual" historian, Reinhart Kosselleck, might be useful in spelling out the difference. Historical change in the world of the Middle East and Europe has tended to be much more global than shifts on the North American continent. There were no sweeping campaigns of conquest in north America (and we could argue the same for south America, although euro-christian interpretations of the Aztecs, Inca, and Maya make that a more complex project). Sure, peoples moved from one territory to another at times, but there are no stories of conquest, per se. Indeed, what we know about inter-community conflicts is that there was very little in the way of killing or bloodshed – despite christian colonialist tales of such.

On the one hand, modern folk tend to forget history and to presume that their "present" (Kosselleck) is the only reality; while at the same time, these same folk have become so accustomed to the constant flow of change in their world that they are nearly inured to change as the normal condition of their present. When *will* the newest iPhone be released? I recall one of my sons seeing his first "rotary dial" telephone a few years back and not knowing at all how to use it. Yet for traditional indigenous folk, for what Kosselleck helpfully calls nonmodern societies (rather than temporally constructed as "pre" modern), a slow rate of change allows for the passing on of expectations of the future more consistently from one "present" (or from one generation) to the next. This does not mean that no change occurred in these nonmodern societies, but rather that change occurred, Kosselleck argues, "slowly and in such a long-term fashion that the rent between the previous experience and an expectation to be newly discovered did not undermine the traditional world."[2] For American Indians, part of this slow rate of change is a direct result of our cultural investment in ideals of balance and harmony and the constant need (from daily to yearly need) to mitigate violence in all of its forms.

We should not assume, then, that all is well in Native America. Under the military imperialism of euro-christian colonialism, european modernity became a sudden eruption – as a total disruption – among each colonized indigenous peoples of the world. Indeed we American Indians are today suffering all the rough edges of progress, change, colonialism, and conquest, particularly missionary conquest. We have been dragged into modernity and its Westphalian-state hegemonic demonry, dragged into notions of progress and constant change, against our will. The toll of missionary pressure on Indian people is huge, measured in the US government–christian collusion evidenced in social engineering projects like the intentional destruction of Indian languages (the original english-only movement); imposing fee-simple private ownership of property; negating Indian self-governance and imposing US citizenship; the coerced conversion to Christianity; and particularly in the removal of children from their families to contexts of incarceration called boarding schools.[3] The community-wide incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder in every Indian community today is a direct result of genocidal practices such as these resulting in poverty, self-destruction, low self-esteem, and a host of self-defeating behaviors. As a result, we have, as Memmi so aptly describes it,

internalized our own colonialism to the point where we believe too much of what the colonizer taught us in those schools (Memmi 1991). Too many Indian young men and women are dressed in american uniforms, handling american weapons, killing the identified enemies of the US government, and counting them as their own enemies. And because they have some residual memory of the wrongness of what they are doing, they come home even more unbalanced than most other military returnees. It seems that they no longer (except for a few) remember where to turn for that ancient traditional ceremony that promotes healing after a conflictual military engagement with a neighboring people.

Notes

1 It should not go without notice that the earliest english invaders of this continent used the ensuing metaphor of "promised land" to speak of themselves and their own mission of conquest. The pilgrim and then puritan invasion used the metaphor explicitly; Church of England preachers early in the Jamestown years used the metaphor as well to exonerate their own adventure of land theft. Since the puritan experience continues to fuel the emerican narrative, the metaphor finds continued use even in our own time. See Taylor Saito (2010).

2 See Kosselleck (1985). I was initially pointed to Kosselleck by reading Scott (2004).

3 See Churchill (2004), especially my preface to that volume: "Tracing a Contour of Colonialism: American Indians and the Trajectory of Educational Imperialism," pp. xiii–xli. Also note Prucha (1973).

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discrimination. Buddha who revolted against the Bramhanical tradition said: "A man does not become a *bramhana* (renunciant) by his plaited hair or birth: in whom there is truth and righteousness he is blessed and he is *bramhana*" (The Dhammapada 26:393). Gained through his experience, the Buddha delivered his message of compassion, love, and self-restraint. The challenge of Buddhism to the Vedic Hindu religion was a stimulating inspiration to the minds of Hindu thinkers who ventured along new paths of reasoning. The coming of Buddhism also diminished the importance of caste distinctions, which made the Buddhist sangha open its doors to all castes.

Another important effect of the Buddhist movement was that animal sacrifice was abandoned by many Hindus. Only the worshippers of Goddess Kali continued to observe them. Buddhism also exercised a great deal of influence on education, art, and architecture. That Buddhism spread far and wide in India is clear from the many remains of the Buddhist architectural achievements from that period.

A. T. Ariaratne, who pioneered the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka after being influenced by Mohandas Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave noted many similarities between the teachings of the Buddha and Hinduism. Sarvodaya means "welfare of all," which Ariaratne upheld as a principle. He also spoke about the method to put this principle into practice as *satyagraha* (insistence on truth), which is to fight in a nonviolent and disciplined way against an injustice while anchored in truth. Ariaratne also emphasized that the objective of satyagraha was to always oppose the wrong but not be against the wrongdoer. The doer of evil should not be abused by word, or thought, or molested physically, but should be made aware of the wrong and injustice caused by him or her. Today, we must ask the question how can Buddhism, which is a dominant religion in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, can be instrumental in bringing peace to all the people in those countries irrespective of their religion and ethnic background.

5.2

A Native American Response

Tink Tinker

Buddhism has always had a certain allure for me as an American Indian scholar, even though a superficial comparison of the two traditions would suggest extensive differences. A significant part of the allure is Buddhism's core nontheistic character. In this late postcolonial moment, it is no longer clear to most Indian folk that our experience of the world was always nontheistic. Indeed most Indians today will gladly recite the liberal euro-christian aphorism that we all worship the same God – if by different names. One of my mentors, Vine Deloria, Jr, asked me more than a decade before his death to publish an essay describing the lack of a God figure in Indian traditional cultural/religious understanding. Unfortunately, I failed to accomplish that assignment in time for him to use the essay as a footnote (his acknowledged intention), but I have recently published an essay titled "Why I Do Not Believe in a Creator" (Tinker 2013).

I would like to comment on a couple of cardinal differences that might place Buddhism and American Indian traditions somewhat at odds with one another. As a long-lived world religion, Buddhism indeed does work itself out differently diachronically, across spatial geographic regions, and through different traditions. It is clear, from reading Eleanor Rosch, that each of these treats peace and nonviolence somewhat differently. While American Indian cultural traditions vary markedly from one community to the next, each community is preserving a tradition that is hundreds of generations in the making – in each disparate community. We continue to preserve these differences yet today even as we show respect for one another across those community lines.

In terms of social contexts, one persistent difference between Buddhism and these American Indian traditions that seems to push itself to the fore is that of resources. American Indian communities are almost universally desperately poor.[1] Buddhist temples tend to have much more access to the wealth of the communities around them, something that can result in relatively opulent temple constructions. Our ceremonies, of course, do not require the construction of buildings for temples

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or churches, etc. Our meeting places tend to be either outdoors or in peoples' homes. As a result, the resources needed for a major ceremony like a green corn dance or a sun dance will require annually the intense involvement of physical labor to make sure that the annual temporary construction is in place – the building of large arbors for dances, lodges and small lodges for purification or "scratching" ceremonies, and the like – all constructed of materials gathered from the local landscape. The intense poverty of our communities, however, means that our key "interpreters" (so-called medicine men and women) are left in particular poverty – without having taken any vow of poverty. They are usually so busy with ceremonies helping people in their community that they could not possibly keep up with a 40-hour daytime job. One negative result of this dynamic is that they too often turn to euro-christian supplicants looking for a "neat" new Age experience. But the new-agers do have resources and can pay handsomely for their religious experiences. This takes our healers and spiritual leaders away from their communities and co-opts them in a euro-christian world of capital with its particular forms of bonding around the exchange of money.

Another difference is my clear sense from reading Rosch that Buddhism essentially works itself out as an inordinately individualist practice. American Indian traditions are equally nonindividualist but rather what I have called communityist. All of our cultures are oriented around maintaining the harmony and balance of the communal whole. While we do have ceremonies that put persons out from the immediate community for designated periods of fasting and communicating with the spirit realm, we always expect those people to return to the community within a few days – with new insights, new knowledge, new strength, and new skills to build up the harmony and balance of the community. Our strongest and most gifted spiritual people never enter into processes to gain spiritual power for themselves, but always in order to give back to the immediate community. This foundational ideal of balance is what caused the Colorado American Indian Movement (AIM) to persistently proclaim that its protests intended to be nonviolent – wherever possible (allowing for violence to be instigated by others that would call on AIM people to protect women and children).

And finally, Buddhist traditions play out in ways that are hierarchical. For instance, the relationship between a student and her or his teacher seems to be structured in formal hierarchies. Our American Indian world (at least prior to the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934) is non-hierarchical to the opposite end of the spectrum. As one contemporary spiritual and political elder recites persistently, "There are no bosses in the Indian world." This is a very complex statement and cannot be unpacked in just a few words. Essentially, however, it means that our communities traditionally were structured around a very different psycholinguistic model than are euro-christian cultures – and perhaps many others. In my essay disavowing any creator figure in our Indian traditional life, I describe the difference in terms of the distinction between an up–down (hierarchical) image schema and what I call an egalitarian–collateral image schema. While we

have expectations of one another in any Indian community (something others may call mores), there are few fixed norms in the final analysis.

The old traditional elders were and are reluctant to use english imperative verb forms. Instead, they tend to use modal forms that point to kinds of possibility. When I asked an old medicine man for ceremonial help a quarter-century ago, he responded by suggesting that I "could" go get a stick of red willow; that I could strip the bark off of it; that I could paint it red; and that I could tie a red tobacco offering onto its end. While he left the choice entirely up to me, I was clear that if I expected real ceremonial help that it would begin with my doing the things he suggested. It would have crossed a line, however, for him to have used the imperative, delimiting a hierarchical relationship between the two of us. This would have created imbalance in the relationship between us, hyper-empowering one over the other. In the final analysis, the crucial relationship was not between me and this ieska (interpreter) but rather between me and the spirit energies that worked with this man. For him to have acted with any sense of hierarchical superiority at all would have thwarted the possibility of my relationship (through him in ceremony, albeit) with those spirit helpers.

I was certainly heartened that so many contemporary traditions of Buddhism have generated peace and nonviolence institutions, agencies, and consortial efforts. As a large global movement, then, Buddhism ought to provide a significant impetus toward creating a more nonviolent world – and more so than the more disparate (and often heavily colonized/read christianized) American Indian traditions. And yet, our ceremonial traditions continue to strive for personal, community, and cosmic balance.

Note

1 Of course, all will point to the exceptions among the few casino-rich communities. Yet, it is these casino-rich communities that will almost invariably have lost their cultural moorings in favor of huge per capita payouts of casino wealth.

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(IAO) To Farah for her unfailing support

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