

# Chapter 7

## Daoism and Altruism: A China–USA Perspective

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### 7.1 Introduction

Chinese Daoist beliefs are philosophically and psychologically complicated and far reaching (Lee, Yang, & Wang, 2009). One of the fundamental questions raised by Chinese Daoism is: “Where did its ideas come from?” To answer this question, we should first look at shamanism. Over 8,000 years ago, fundamental religious belief in China was a form of shamanism (Lee & Li, 2011; Lee & Wang, 2003; Xu, 1991; Yuan, 1988), a spiritual belief or practice in which a shaman can connect the inner world with the outer world, the body with the soul, and the living with the dead (Krippner, 2002; Meng, 2005; Seyin, 1998). As time went on, Daoism, Confucianism, and other fundamental Chinese religious and philosophical ideologies developed out of shamanism and affected Chinese behavior and thinking on an almost daily basis for thousands of years (see Chen & Lee, 2008; Hsu, 1981; Lee & Wang, 2003). In this chapter, we focus only on Daoism and altruism.

Because Chinese Daoist belief is closely related to altruism, we first address basic issues related to Laozi’s Daoism and philosophical aspects of human altruism. Although Daoism originated in China, its impact seems universal with regard to human beliefs and behaviors (see Lee & Haught, 2012). Our research indicates that there has been much research on Daoism and a moral sense of altruism (Chen, 2009; Hu & Ma, 2000; Xu & Lu, 2012), but little attention has been paid to Daoist

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altruism, except Kirkland's work, which dealt with altruism from the perspective of Daoist religion (Kirkland, 1986, 2002). Our chapter focuses on Daoism and altruism psychologically and philosophically. First, we will discuss the controversial debate on the nature of altruism from both Western and Eastern perspectives. Next, we discuss the Daoist water-like Big-Five model (which includes altruism) and review at great length the empirical results based on this model. Finally, the chapter concludes with a look at the implications of and prospects for this research.

## 7.2 Basic Controversies and Findings in the East and West: Altruism and Daoism

### 7.2.1 *Are Human Beings Altruistic? What Do We Mean by Altruism?*

In the eyes of certain people, human beings are basically kind and altruistic by nature. However, others believe that humans are selfish by nature. There has been a debate among Westerners on this issue (see Post, 2003, pp. 59–61) ever since Plato, who emphasized the primacy of reason in moral motivation, ethics, and/or morality, including altruism. Altruism serves as a lightning rod. Though scholars such as Thomas Hobbes, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Edwin O. Wilson, and Richard Dawkins saw human beings as selfish, others (e.g., Adam Smith, David Hume) tended to believe that altruistic motives do exist within the repertoire of human nature. Immanuel Kant was different from everyone named above because he had a neutral perspective on altruism (see Nagel, 1970) and argued that certain altruistic inclinations exist but are not to be trusted because they are unstable and unreliable. To Kant, altruistic behavior is possible but must be grounded in a categorical rational imperative (Nagel).

There was a similar debate on altruism and human nature among scholars in ancient China. For Mencius (371–289 BC), human beings are basically good and altruistic. Everyone should unconditionally do what he or she ought to do and “extend himself or herself so as to include others” (Fung, 1948, p. 69). Basically, people cannot bear to see the suffering of others. For example, if someone sees a child about to fall into a well, that person will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. Trying to rescue the child is an example of altruistic behavior or human goodness.

On the other hand, Xunzi, who lived at the same time of Mencius, held that the nature of man is evil and selfish. People are born with an inherent desire for profit and sensual pleasure (Fung, 1948, p. 145). However, in Kaozi's view (Fung), human beings can be either selfish or unselfish. Kaozi's argument was somewhat similar to Kant's.

In brief, altruism as part of human nature is controversial to both Westerners and Easterners. Though we cannot focus too much on human nature, altruism is worth further investigation. What is altruism? How do social scientists define it?

Howard and Piliavin (2000) defined altruism as helping others in the absence of psychological rewards that benefit the agents. In psychology, they also held that altruistic behavior should exclude any material motive (Post, 2003, p. 59). Harvard sociologist Sorokin (2002/1954) defined altruism as the five-dimensional universe of psychosocial love (i.e., intensity, extensity, duration, purity, and adequacy). For example, the intensity of love (or altruistic behavior) tends to decrease with an increase of duration. The intensity, purity, and adequacy of love are somewhat more frequently associated positively than negatively or not at all. Adequate love is likely to last longer than inadequate love (also see Post, 2003).

In social psychology, Moghaddam (1998) defined altruism as a “behavior intended to help another, without regard for benefit to oneself” (p. 297). Batson (1991) defined altruism as a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another’s welfare. Batson also pointed out that altruism does not necessarily involve self-sacrifice, although it is inherently self-sacrificial. Thus, we argue that altruism is more effective if it involves self-sacrifice, which is consistent with Chinese Daoism/Taoism. This brings us to the relationship between culture, altruism, and Daoism/Taoism.

### ***7.2.2 Cultural Research on Self-sacrificing Altruism***

There is a difference between Easterners and Westerners with regard to generosity and unselfishness, which are implicitly related to altruism (Lee & Seligman, 1997; Tang, Furnham, & Davis, 2002; Yik & Bond, 1993; Zhang, Lee, Liu, & McCauley, 1999). For example, in developmental psychology, Ma and her colleagues (Ma, 1992, 2003; Ma & Leung, 1991) employed the Child Altruism Inventory which they developed and found that Hong Kong Chinese children’s altruistic behavior was directly related to a positive family environment and positive peer influence.

From a perspective of self-sacrifice, these researchers found that people with high moral judgment were more willing than people with low moral judgment to sacrifice their lives for any recipient and to rescue a stranger (Ma, 1992). Further, by interviewing 37 Chinese in Hong Kong who had donated bone marrow to an unrelated recipient, Holroyd and Molassioitis (2000) found that this type of Chinese altruism or donation was more of a self-fulfilling act (i.e., yielding self-satisfaction or self-growth) than a social act, with very little familial or social recognition being accorded in the public world, which is totally different from Western culture.

### ***7.2.3 Connections Between Taoism/Daoism and Altruism: Dao, De, and Shui (or Water)***

Lee (2003) noted that Laozi, who has been recognized as the founder of Daoism (or Taoism), contended that the best qualities or personalities are like water because all species and organisms depend on water (which is to be discussed in greater length below). These “wateristic” personality attributes, Lee argues, affect Chinese

notions of altruism. In traditional Chinese beliefs, people with a good Taoist personality should be as altruistic as water. Philosophically, water is modest and humble. It always goes to the lowest place. Since it always remains in the lowest position and does not compete, it is not only helpful and beneficial to all things but also implies self-sacrifice, which is psychologically very satisfying to any Taoist.

Further, we can see connections between Taoism and altruism when examining Laozi's *Dao* and *De* (Sima, 1994). *Dao* can mean a road, a path, the way it is, the way of nature, the way of ultimate reality, and the rules and laws of nature. According to Blankney (1955), in the eyes of Chinese, *Dao* refers not only to the way the whole world of nature operates but also signifies the original undifferentiated Reality from which the universe evolved. *De* means humanistic behavior/virtues, character, influence, or moral force. The character *De* consists of three parts: (1) an ideographic meaning "to go"; (2) another, meaning "straight"; and (3) a pictograph meaning "the heart." Put together, these imply motivation by inward rectitude (Blakney, p. 38).

In another translation (see Addiss & Lombardo, 1993), *Dao* means a "way" in both the literal ("road") and metaphysical ("spiritual path") sense. More rarely, it can also mean "to say," "to express," or "to tell." According to Burton Watson (see Addiss & Lombardo, p. xiii), *Dao* literally is a "way" or "path" and is used by other schools of Chinese philosophy to refer to a particular calling or mode of conduct. However, in Daoistic writing, it has a far more comprehensive meaning, referring rather to a metaphysical first principle that embraces and underlies all beings, a vast Oneness that precedes and in some mysterious manner generates the endlessly diverse forms of the world. Thus, *Dao* lies beyond the power of language to describe. Burton Watson (see Addiss & Lombardo, p. xiii) defined *De* as the moral virtue or power that one acquires through being in accord with the *Dao*, what one gets from *Dao*.

The best is like water (*shang shan ruo shui*)—this is what we call the Daoist/Taoist model of "wateristic" or water-like personality (Lee, 2003, 2004; Watts, 1975) which includes five essential components: (1) altruism, (2) modesty/humility (or humbleness), (3) flexibility, (4) transparency and honesty, and (5) gentleness with perseverance. These are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

## 7.3 Research on the Daoist Water-Like Big-Five Model and Altruism: A Theoretical and Empirical Perspective

### 7.3.1 Daoism and the Water-Like Daoist Big-Five Model with Altruism

One of the most important components of Daoist beliefs can be summarized as "the best is like water" (i.e., "*Shang Shan Ruo Shui*" in Chinese) by Laozi. In other words, a great individual must act like water in five ways. Based on the narrative and exploratory discussion by Lee and colleagues (see Lee, Han, Bryron, & Fan, 2008; Lee & Haught, 2013; Lee, Yang, et al., 2009), Daoist Big-Five or water-like personality is summarized as follows.

### 7.3.1.1 Water Is Altruistic

All species and organisms depend on water. Without water, none of them can survive. What does water get from us? It gets almost nothing. Accordingly, Daoist individuals should be as altruistic as water, which is very helpful and beneficial to all things.

The highest value (or the best) is like water,  
 The value in water benefits All Things  
 And yet it does not contend,  
 It stays in places that others despise,  
 And therefore is close to *Dao*. (*Laozi*: Chap. 8; see Wing, 1986)

Daoism recognizes that the ultimate goal of sages or cultivated individuals is to serve their people without the desire for personal benefit or gratitude. Laozi stated that, “The best are like water, good at benefiting all things without competing for gaining” (*Laozi*: Chap. 8). This entails selflessness as an essential attribute of a sage, which is realized by accepting other people’s aspirations as one’s own. “The sage does not have aspirations but adopts those of the people as his own” (*Laozi*: Chap. 49). Only when an individual does not have his own ambitions can he truly serve his people instead of competing with them.

### 7.3.1.2 Water Is Very Modest and Humble

Do we not always see water go to the lowest place? As we can see from the above quotation (i.e., *Laozi*: Chap. 8), although water benefits all things, it does not contend with anything and always stays in the lowest places that others despise. While many Westerners often value and enjoy a sense of authority, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and competitiveness, Laozi encouraged people to have a water-like characteristic—that is, to maintain a low profile, to be humble and modest, especially in the face of the *Dao* or nature, and to be very helpful and/or beneficial to others.

To Laozi, modesty or humbleness, willingness to help and benefit others, and the ability to maintain a low profile (just like water) are qualities essential to an individual or sage who wants to influence others:

The rivers and seas lead the hundred streams  
 Because they are skillful at staying low.  
 Thus they are able to lead the hundred streams. (*Laozi*: Chap. 66)

In Laozi’s opinion, people who are humble and modest not only exist in good harmony with others but are also effective leaders, just like the rivers and seas.

The sea, for instance, can govern a hundred rivers because it has mastered being lower. Being humble is important for individuals because it enables them to accept people’s goals as their own and to attract and unite people around themselves. Laozi said, “He/She who knows how to motivate people acts humble. This is the virtue of no rival and uses the strength of others” (*Laozi*: Chap. 68).

### 7.3.1.3 Water Is Very Adaptable and Flexible

It can stay in a container of any shape. This flexibility and fluidity lend it a great deal of wisdom to influence others. Good individuals or sages can adjust themselves to any environment and situation just as water does to any container. Maintaining flexibility and adapting to the dynamics of change, like water following its path, are probably the best options for a leader.

### 7.3.1.4 Water Is Transparent and Clear

People should be honest and transparent to those around them. The most honorable individuals (not only leaders) are usually honest and transparent like water. Though Western Machiavellian or other deceptive approaches might work temporarily, being honest and transparent is one of the big ethical concerns in modern management. Water itself is very clear and transparent if you do not make it muddy. In Chap. 15, Laozi stated, “Who can (make) the muddy water clear? Let it be still, and it will gradually become clear.” Metaphorically, human beings by nature are naive and honest. Social environment and competition (like muddiness) make them unclear. Water’s clarity, transparency, and honesty are most appreciated by Laozi.

### 7.3.1.5 Water Is Very Soft and Gentle But Also Very Persistent and Powerful

If drops of water keep pounding at a rock for years, even the hardest rock will yield. Over time, water can cut through the hardest rock, forming valleys and canyons. The style of sages or individuals should be similarly gentle and soft but persistent and powerful. Here is an example of what we could learn from water:

Nothing in the world  
Is as yielding and receptive as water;  
Yet in attacking the firm and inflexible,  
Nothing triumphs so well. (*Laozi*: Chap. 78)

Because there is nothing softer than water, yet nothing better for attacking hard and strong things, there is no substitute for it. Its softness enables it to tolerate all kinds of environments, gathering strength without wearing out at an early stage. The resolution and perseverance of water help it to cut a path through hard rocks and wear away mountains. It is very important for a leader to know this dialectical relationship and to acquire the resolute and persevering characteristics of water.

### 7.3.1.6 Summary

Water has five features that are essential to all individuals, from sages to regular people. This is what we call the Daoist/Taoist model of “wateristic” personality

(Lee, 2003, 2004; Lee, Norasakkunkit, Li, Zhang, & Zhou, 2008; Watts, 1961, 1975) which includes five essential components: (1) altruism, (2) modesty/humility (or humbleness), (3) flexibility, (4) transparency and honesty, and (5) gentleness with perseverance (Lee, 2003, 2004; Lee & Haught, 2013; Lee, Norasakkunkit, et al., 2008). This model is summarized in Fig. 7.1.

Altruism is one of the most essential components in this model. We now review certain empirical data that are related to altruism in the Daoist Big-Five model.

### ***7.3.2 Empirical Results of Daoist Altruism Across Cultures***

In the following section, we review how altruism is seen in two empirical USA–China studies of the Daoist Big-Five model. The first study was reported by Lee, Norasakkunkit et al. (2008). The second one was reported in 2012 (Lee & Haught, 2013).

#### **7.3.2.1 Study 1: Comparing Chinese and American Altruism**

A total of 228 college students participated in this study. There were 122 Chinese students from a university in North China and 106 students from a university in the Midwest. One hundred and forty-one participants were women, and the mean age of the group was 20.39 years.

To measure altruism, we create various scenarios (helping a person with a chronic disease, or HIV/AIDS, a war victim, and a victim of catastrophe) as follows:

Scenario 1: Suppose one day you see a person who cannot move and is lying on the ground. You are informed that the person has a chronic disease (e.g., hepatitis or tuberculosis) which is probably contagious. The person pleads for help.

Scenario 2: Suppose one day you see a person who has collapsed and is lying on the ground. You are informed that the person has HIV/AIDS which is probably contagious. The person pleads for help.

Scenario 3: Human beings sometimes cannot avoid conflict or violence. War is part of human conflict or violence. Suppose one day you are in a situation where you see a group of people fighting or killing another group. Though you do not know which group is the aggressor or which one is the victim, you notice many people injured or killed. If you plan to rescue or help one of the victims, you may bring danger to yourself (injury or death). One person pleads for help.

Scenario 4: Human beings are sometimes so vulnerable and weak that they cannot control natural disasters or catastrophes (earthquake, flood, or fire). Suppose one day you encounter victims of such disasters and one of the victims pleads for help.

All participants were informed that the purpose of this study was to investigate “how individuals make personal decisions when facing various challenging situations” and were asked to answer each question based on the Likert scale from 1 (least likely) to 7 (most likely) with regard to the five issues that make up our

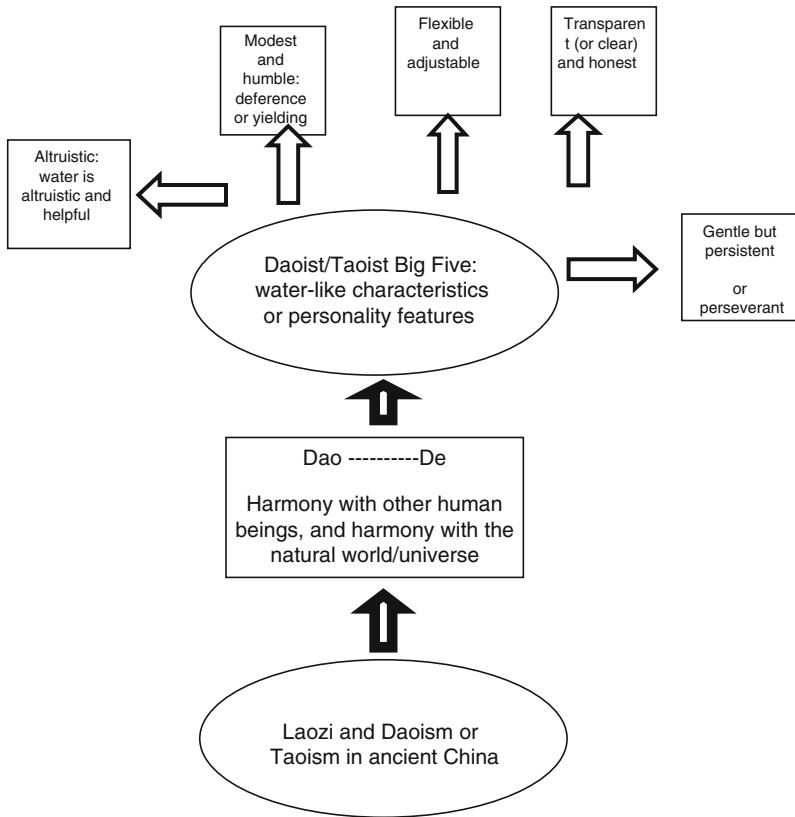


Fig. 7.1 The Daoist/Taoist model of wateristic personality (Taoist Big Five)

dependent measures (helping at the cost of one’s health, helping at the cost of one’s life, blood donation, time donation, and money donation):

How likely are you to rescue/help the person directly if it were to put your *health* at risk?

How likely are you to rescue/help the person directly if it were to put your *life* at risk?

How likely are you to donate your blood to that person if it is called for?

How likely are you to donate your time (2 weeks) to the person if it is called for?

How likely are you to donate your money (about \$500) to that person if it is called for?

(A note about the value of money: Instead of \$500, Chinese participants were asked to donate 2,000 Renminbi [or 2,000 Yuan], which is psychologically and culturally equivalent to the dollar amount but not economically.)

Additionally, we also used a scenario that involved encountering aliens. “Suppose 1 day you encounter a group of aliens. You do not understand what they are talking about and they do not understand what you are trying to say. From your intuitive



**Table 7.1** Mean (*SD*) altruism toward various types of “victims” as a function of culture

	USA ( <i>N</i> =106)	China ( <i>N</i> =122)	<i>F</i> -value ( <i>df</i> )
a. Patients with chronic diseases	4.69 (1.24)	3.70 (1.21)	36.67 (1,226)***
b. HIV and AIDS patients	4.61 (1.35)	3.52(1.56)	31.13 (1,226)***
c. War victims	4.44 (1.40)	3.44(1.41)	31.22 (1,226)***
d. Catastrophe victim	5.28 (1.28)	4.37 (1.23)	29.58 (1,226)***

Greater numbers mean more altruism

\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**Table 7.2** Mean (*SD*) altruism toward alleged victims across all situations as a function of culture

	USA ( <i>N</i> =106)	China ( <i>N</i> =122)	<i>F</i> -value
a. Help with health risk	4.74 (1.43)	3.68 (1.61)	26.91 (1,226)***
b. Help with life risk	4.12 (1.58)	2.71(1.48)	48.16(1,226)***
c. Donating blood	5.99 (1.33)	4.91(1.73)	27.54(1,226)***
d. Donating time	4.94 (1.46)	3.84 (1.55)	29.74(1,226)***
e. Donating money	3.75 (1.77)	3.41 (1.84)	1.91(1,226) ns

Greater numbers mean more altruism

\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

judgment, one of them seems to plea for help.” On the scale from 1 (least likely) to 7 (most likely), participants were asked about the following questions:

How likely are you to help that alien?

How likely are you to feel frightened of the aliens?

How likely are you to escape from the situation?

How likely are you just to observe and not take any action?

How likely are you to blow those aliens away if you have a power weapon?

Lee, Norasakkunkit et al. (2008) found that Americans were more altruistic than Chinese. With respect to altruism or self-sacrificial altruism, the reliability scores for dependent measures in Scenario 1 through 4 ranged from  $\alpha = 0.76$  to  $\alpha = 0.82$ . Americans were found to be more altruistic across all four situations, such as helping patients with chronic diseases, with HIV/AIDS, and the victims of war and catastrophe (see Table 7.1).

With regard to providing help that involves health risk, life risk, and blood and time donation, Americans were more altruistic than Chinese with the exception of money donation (where there was no significant difference)—see Table 7.2. This is also true with situations that involve helping victims of natural disasters or catastrophe (see Table 7.3), which may help us to better understand responses to the tsunami tragedy in South Asia.

Consistently, our regression analysis revealed that culture played an important role in altruistic behavior ( $\text{Beta} = 0.40$ ,  $t = 6.46$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In other words, overall Americans were more altruistic than Chinese.

**Table 7.3** Mean (*SD*) altruism toward an assumed victim in a hypothetical natural disaster as a function of culture

	USA ( <i>N</i> =106)	China ( <i>N</i> =122)	<i>F</i> -value
a. Help with health risk	5.50 (1.51)	4.31 (1.78)	29.08***
b. Help with life risk	5.02 (1.80)	3.42(1.90)	42.24***
c. Donating blood	6.19 (1.37)	5.41(1.70)	14.20***
d. Donating time	5.39 (1.76)	4.65 (1.81)	10.41**
e. Donating money	4.28 (2.05)	4.07 (2.10)	0.58 ns
Total	5.28 (1.28)	4.37 (1.23)	29.58***

Greater numbers mean more altruism

\*\**p*<0.01; \*\*\**p*<0.001

**Table 7.4** Mean (*SD*) attitudes toward aliens in various situations as a function of culture

	USA ( <i>N</i> =106)	China ( <i>N</i> =122)	<i>F</i> -value
a. Help the alien	4.25 (2.06)	5.16 (1.74)	13.03 (1,226)***
b. Feel frightened	5.00 (2.01)	4.06 (1.72)	14.59 (1,226)***
c. Escape	4.14 (1.85)	3.17 (1.59)	18.08 (1,226)***
d. No action	3.71 (1.93)	3.53 (1.68)	0.54 (1,226) ns
e. Blow them away	2.80 (2.10)	1.76 (1.12)	22.60 (1,226)***

Greater numbers mean more likelihood of behavior

\*\**p*<0.01; \*\*\**p*<0.001

However, Lee, Norasakkunkit, et al. (2008) found that Chinese seemed to be more sympathetic than Americans toward aliens. When they are asked to imagine encountering aliens, this measure focuses on people’s willingness to be altruistic toward out-group members whose intentions are uncertain. As can be seen in Table 7.4, Chinese participants (*M*=5.16) tended to be more willing to help aliens than their American counterparts (*M*=4.25), *F* (1,226)= 13.03. There were no significant differences regarding seeing aliens and taking no action. But Chinese people reported feeling less frightened by the aliens and were less likely to destroy them than their American participants. In other words, when compared with Chinese, Americans tended to act more aggressively toward out-group members whom they do not know and encounter in uncertain situations (see Table 7.4).

### 7.3.2.2 Study 2: How Was Daoist Altruism Measured Scientifically?

As described by Lee and Haught (2013), a total of 261 students from a US Midwestern research university participated in this study online via Psychdata, an online data collection platform. We had 96 males and 165 females with a mean age of 20.01 (*SD*=3.61). A majority of them were European–American students with Christian–Catholic background (*N*=211). The remainder practiced other religions.

**Table 7.5** Correlations between Daoist Big Five: Water-like leadership styles

Daoist Big Five	1	2	3	4	5
1. Altruism	–				
2. Modesty	0.40**	–			
3. Flexibility	0.12*	0.11	–		
4. Honesty	0.09	0.24**	0.07	–	
5. Gentleness and perseverance	0.46**	0.26**	0.25**	0.08	–

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

Questions that measured the Daoist Big-Five water-like leadership style were based primarily on the HEXACO measure developed by K. Lee and his colleagues (Ashton & Lee, 2008; Lee & Ashton, 2004; Lee, Ashton, Morrison, Cordery, & Dunlup, 2008; Lee, Ashton, et al., 2009) with regard to altruism, modesty, flexibility, honesty, and gentleness. Because the HEXACO scale did not measure perseverance or persistence, we added the GRIT scale (see Duckworth, Peterson, Mathews, & Kelly, 2007) to our measure. All the questions extracted from HEXACO and GRIT scales were measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Here is a list of those items (those marked with \* were reversed in scoring):

I have sympathy for people who are less fortunate than I am.

I try to give generously to those in need.

It wouldn't bother me to harm someone I didn't like.\*

People see me as a hard-hearted person.\*

In their study, Lee and Haught (2013) reported that their results had a very satisfactory internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.62$ ). Second, this Daoist altruistic scale was negatively correlated with the Machiavellian scale ( $r = -0.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) but positively correlated with the good human nature scale ( $r = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Third, they found that altruism was related to each dimension except for honesty (see Table 7.5). Finally, they found that female respondents ( $M = 3.80$ ) tended to be more altruistic than male students ( $M = 3.54$ ),  $t(259) = -2.33$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , two tailed.

## 7.4 Implications and Conclusion

The conceptual discussion and results reviewed above show that Chinese Daoism is broader and more meaningful scientifically and intellectually than one might think. As part of human nature, altruism is controversial both in the Eastern and Western cultures. However, we feel that focusing on Daoist altruism and investigating the Daoist water-like Big-Five model may help us to understand and appreciate both Chinese philosophy and human altruism cross-culturally and psychologically. As a religion, Daoism is linked to altruism (see Kirkland, 1986, 2002). However, and here we differ from Kirkland's research, our emphasis is not on its religion. Instead, we investigate Daoism more philosophically, psychologically, and scientifically.

More specifically, in our empirical study of Daoist altruism and the water-like Big-Five model, several cross-cultural findings are worth summarizing and reiterating. First, according to Lee, Norasakkunkit et al. (2008), Americans were found to be more altruistic than Chinese in terms of specific self-sacrificial altruistic behaviors. But the Chinese had a more positive attitude toward aliens than Americans. This may be related to the fact that the post-9/11 environment in the USA could make Americans less willing to trust out-group members whose intentions are uncertain and therefore less willing to help them (Todd, 2003).

Second, Lee and Haught (2013) also recently found that Daoist altruism can be measured scientifically with high consistency and validity. Women were found to be more altruistic than men, which conforms to the stereotype and is consistent with other work (see Eagly & Crowley, 1986; Lee, 1995, 2000, 2011; Lee & Jussim, 2010; Lee & Ottati, 1993; Lee, Jussim, & McCauley, 1995, 2013; Lee & Ottati, 1993). However, more research will be needed before a definitive conclusion is reached.

Why should we study Daoist altruism and Daoism psychologically across cultures? Why are they important theoretically and practically? First, Taoism/Daoism and Laozi's philosophy focus on harmony (see Lee, 2003): (a) being humanistic and harmonious with other humans and (b) being harmonious with Mother Nature (or the universe). Based on Daoism and social sciences, a Taoist (or Daoist) Big-Five model of water-like (or wateristic) personality involving altruism, modesty, flexibility, transparency/honesty, and perseverance provides us with a new approach to understanding human behavior (see Fig. 7.1). Perhaps Daoism/Taoism, including altruism and modesty, could be something we see general across cultures.

Second, the water-like (or wateristic) personality, including altruistic tendencies, may lead to more peace and harmony. Our research could throw light onto solutions to major world problems (Lee, 2003; Lee, Bumgarner, Widner, & Luo, 2007; Lee, McCauley, & Draguns, 1999; Lee, McCauley, Moghaddam, & Worchel, 2004; Lee, Takaki, Ottati, & Yan, 2004). Natural resources cannot continue to be overexploited because oil, for instance, will be gone. An ethnocentric and narcissistic military strategy may work temporarily but only, at best, delay the problem for a while. A bigger conflict between more powerful nations fighting for rights to scarce resources available in small, helpless countries may escalate into another world war. If humans kill each other (with nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, cyber wars, or any other type of force) and continue damaging the environment, and thus continue overusing or overconsuming resources provided by Mother Nature or earth, can we survive? Originally, Daoism came from shamanism and totemism, which are very naturalistic and humanistic (Chen & Lee, 2008; Lee, Jussim, & McCauley, 1995, 2013; Lee & Wang, 2003; Triandis, 2001). We cannot survive too long if we oppose other humans and work against the natural or external world.

One more interesting question is if a much more powerful alien force were to make contact with us, would we hope that they were altruistic and yielding to our ways, as well as persistent about working with us toward a greater harmony? In brief, Daoist harmony is meaningful and necessary for all species, including aliens or other humans, to coexist.

Finally, consistent with the water-like (or wateristic) personality or the Daoist Big-Five model, other research suggests that leaders who displayed self-sacrificial altruistic behavior lead their followers more effectively than those without self-sacrificial altruism (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998, 1999; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). If self-sacrificial altruism is powerful in the field of management and leadership, it can surely play a beneficial role in other domains, such as in unlimited love for human beings (Post, 2003) and altruistic behavior toward children in Hong Kong (see Ma, 2003; Ma & Leung, 1991).

Where shall we go from here with regard to future research directions? First, though this research may shed both theoretical and empirical light on this topic, more research will be needed to test various aspects of the Daoist Big-Five model of wateristic (or water-like) personality (e.g., altruism, modesty, flexibility, honesty, and perseverance). Second, theoretically and cross-culturally, we will need to expound more specifically on how Chinese Daoism is related to totemism and shamanism and how it is related to other world philosophies and religions. Much more work is needed in these areas. Though the research here is far from perfect, “a journey of thousand miles begins with a single step” as is stated in Laozi’s *Tao De Jing* (Chap. 64).

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