

**Peace Studies and Secular Ethics:  
Towards a Multidimensional Model of Health and Flourishing**

For some time now, scholars and practitioners across a range of disciplines have sought to explore a concept of health that goes beyond the mere absence of physical or mental disease. One of the challenges to such an approach is that it requires robust conceptualizations of “positive health,” which are currently either entirely lacking or which remain at the level of abstractions (“optimal performance,” “optimal functioning,” “flourishing”) that are hard to define concretely. Moreover, the relationship between individual health and collective or social health, in positive terms, remains murky.

This article constitutes part of a larger project at Life University that aims to draw together research from a wide variety of disciplines and areas of research, including psychology, sociology, philosophy, religious studies, neuroscience, public health, and others, to present and critically examine a multidimensional model of positive health. According to the Life model, positive health is best understood as a complex, dynamic construct that involves physical, emotional, intellectual, social, environmental, and spiritual dimensions. Positive health, understood in this multidimensional sense, is the fullest expression of individual and collective flourishing. The aim of this project is to examine these individual yet highly interdependent dimensions, how they relate to each other, and how they contribute to individual and collective flourishing in order to achieve a more concrete and practical understanding of positive health that moves beyond abstractions into concrete possibilities for practical change. The research dimension of this project is understood from the beginning as existing within the context of active programs related to compassion, reconciliation, and flourishing in communities both within the United States and in other countries through the work of Life University’s Center for Compassion, Peace and Secular Ethics in collaboration with local and international partners, including Emory University and the UK charity Children in Crossfire.

The present article therefore specifically looks at the social dimension of health through the lens of research in peace studies, conflict resolution studies, conflict transformation studies, peace education, and development education. Rather than attempt a review or overview of these areas of study, which can be found elsewhere, the article connects these disciplines with the idea of secular ethics, namely the cultivation of universal human values such as compassion. By drawing out this connection, it can be clearly seen firstly that social health is an underlying concern of peace studies, conflict transformation and resolution studies, and development education; secondly that spiritual health is a central concern for secular ethics; and thirdly that these two dimensions of health—social and spiritual—are highly interdependent and co-constituting. The contribution, dependence, and relation of social and spiritual health to other dimensions of health—physical, intellectual, emotional and environmental—can then be understood more clearly.

The article presents the key principles of secular ethics as presented by the Dalai Lama and correlates these to key principles within Peace Studies. It then makes concrete connections and recommendations for academic programs that seek to integrate secular ethics with peace studies, outlining some strengths and challenges that arise from such an approach.

## I. Peace Studies Overview and Definitions

### *Peace*

As a concept, peace is certainly not new. The academic field studying peace acknowledges how its focus has varied throughout history and from civilization to civilization. Whether from ancient religious traditions, eastern imperial dynasties, or Greek, Roman and later European philosophical and political traditions expressed through such thinkers as Erasmus or Immanuel Kant, “peace” as a concept, vision, and goal has meant different things to different civilizations. An evolving concept, it has meant such things as: inner enlightenment, union with the divine or proper relationship with God, subservience to an emperor, moral virtue and social order, colonialism, international agreements and stability (internationalism), balance of power, cooperative alliances, industrialism, free trade and monetary balance, pacifism, disarmament, and much more.<sup>1</sup>

The modern era has produced its own conceptions of peace. Peace Studies arose largely after World War II, and especially in the 1960’s when peace movements reached a height across Europe and North America. At its most basic level, the definitions of peace that arose during this time developed in the face of the threat of a third global war and nuclear annihilation. Thus, 1960’s definitions of peace were generally construed as the mere absence of war. This was later expanded to include “the absence of systematic, large scale collective violence, accompanied by a sense of security that such violence is improbable.”<sup>2</sup> This conception became commonly known as *negative peace*, and it became clear that the mere absence of war or the immediate threat thereof was not sufficient as a concept or goal of society. Additional conceptualizations were needed to buttress a more stable and enduring concept of peace. Peace scholar Johan Galtung is credited with developing the concept of *positive peace*, which included not only the absence of war and organized violence between groups, but also the presence of “cooperation or harmonious living between groups.”<sup>3</sup>

In the 1960’s the evolution of thought associated with positive peace grew to include such concepts of an “orderly and just society...*orderly* being protected against the violence or extortion of aggressors, and *just* in being defended against exploitation and abuse by the more powerful.”<sup>4</sup> There then began to emerge conceptions of *stable peace*, and *unqualified peace*, whereby the “probability of war is so small that it does not really enter into the calculations of any of the people involved, and which usually encompasses perceptions of justice among its members,” and which also implies the “the absence of violence and a pattern of lasting cooperation.”<sup>5</sup> Other major categories of analysis in relation to violence and peace emerged. Throughout the decades, the question that drove peace researchers and peace study scholars was, “What does it mean to have humans live harmoniously and achieve a ‘stable’ peace?”

### *Peace Research*

The question posed above is representative of the inquiry and analysis driving social science definitions and conceptions of peace. These rubrics can be thought to fall within the scope and definition of *peace*

<sup>1</sup> For two extremely comprehensive analyses of the evolution of “peace” as a concept, see Antony A. Adolf, *Peace: A World History* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2009), see also David Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), cf also, Ho-Won Jeong, *Peace and Conflict Studies: An Introduction* (Burlington: Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, 2000), 7-29.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in “Carolyn M. Stephenson, “Peace Studies, Overview.” In *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, ed. Lester R. Kurtz. Vol. 2. (Austin: Academic Press, 1999), 811-812.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 812.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*, 6 (emphasis added)

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Stephenson, “Peace Studies, Overview,” 809, and Anatol Rapport, “Peace, Definitions and Conceptions of,” *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, Vol 2., p. 669.

*research*, which is the “systematic research on the causes of war and violence, and the conditions of peace, and the possible relationship between them.” It can include qualitative or quantitative data analysis.<sup>6</sup> Within peace research, existing categories expanded and new categories emerged. Expanded definitions of violence emerged such as *direct violence*, which relates not only to physical harm including killing and beating, but also verbal and psychological abuse.<sup>7</sup>

A major offshoot of the concept of direct violence was that of *structural violence*, which was proposed to describe “situations of negative peace that have violent or unjust consequences.”<sup>8</sup> Specifically then structural violence refers to “inegalitarian and discriminatory practices [that] can be imposed on individuals or groups in systematic and organized ways by political institutions.”<sup>9</sup> In a broader sense structural violence refers to those institutions that facilitate various forms human suffering, misery, and alienation, such as: poverty; hunger; repression of free speech, belief, or association; denial of educational and economic opportunities; inequitable distribution of resources or “unequal decision-making power;” and all other forms of societal structures associated with fostering “uneven life chances,” and those institutions that “erode human values” and shorten life spans.<sup>10</sup> These institutions can be political, economic, military, religious, or cultural. Examples of structural violence include slavery, servitude, denial of human rights, discriminatory laws, corrupt political, legal or economic systems, and the like.

The recent Academy Award-winning film *Twelve Years a Slave* illustrates the nature of structural violence and the importance of thinking on a structural level when it comes to violence. In the climactic scene of the film, the protagonist, a free man from the American North who was kidnapped and sold into slavery in the South, is ordered by his slave owner to whip a female slave repeatedly while the slave owner’s wife goads and incites the slave owner to insist upon more brutality, and while other slaves look on. The protagonist is clearly extremely troubled by what he is doing, but he executes the whipping as instructed, and the female slave even begs him to whip her, saying she would rather he do it than the slave owner. Despite the fact that it is the protagonist who is directly inflicting harm on the young woman, few viewers watching would stop their analysis of the violence there and blame the protagonist. Yet while many would be inclined to blame the slave owner, one can also see that it is the very institution of slavery that allows such violence to take place, as well as the underlying misguided cultural values of racism, hatred, oppression and exploitation. In a society where racism was not tolerated, and slavery did not exist, the slave owner would not be able to instigate such violence without fear of repercussions.

Other examples of structural violence are the economic, political and social inequalities across the globe. A recent study by Oxfam, entitled “Working for the Few,” notes that the richest 85 people in the world own as much as the bottom half of the world’s population, about 3.5 billion people.<sup>11</sup> The wealthiest 1 per cent of the world’s population owns 65 times as much as the bottom half. The report acknowledges, “Some economic inequality is essential to drive growth and progress, rewarding those with talent, hard earned skills, and the ambition to innovate and take entrepreneurial risks. However, the extreme levels of wealth concentration occurring today threaten to exclude hundreds of millions of people from realizing the benefits of their talents and hard work.” It also concurs with the assessment of the World Economic Forum that inequality is “impacting social stability within countries and threatening security on a global scale.”

<sup>6</sup> Stephenson, “Peace Studies, Overview,” 809-810.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Jeong, 19-20.

<sup>8</sup> Cortright, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Jeong, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Jeong, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Oxfam Briefing Paper, “Working for the Few: Political Capture and Economic Inequality,” 20 January 2014.

A deeper level of analysis takes us to the vehicle through which structural violence operates: *cultural violence*. The structures of inequality, discrimination, and political subjugation that enable violence are themselves made possible due to the values of individuals and societies. Cultural violence is “the source of other types of violence through its production of hatred, fear, and suspicion.”<sup>12</sup> Propagated through ideology, religion, art, science, commercial relations, or any “symbolic sphere of our existence,” cultural violence can take on physical manifestations in the form of depictions, flags, inflammatory speeches, and the like, but ultimately exists on the level of cultural values and the practices that reinforce them.<sup>13</sup> Cultural violence changes when culture changes: when a society shifts its values and perceptions away from beliefs justifying and accepting discrimination, oppression and other forms of violence towards a position that sees such things as unjustifiable and ethically and morally wrong. The United State’s history of slavery and segregation and the period of the Third Reich in Germany illustrate that as long as people accept a racist ideology, for example, the political, economic and social structures will take shape in ways that promote and allow violence; yet they also show that cultural values can change over time in ways that limit violence and promote peace. The cultural values that permit global poverty and economic inequality, for example, may gradually be replaced by ones that are in the service of peace.

This leads finally to the necessary conditions of “positive peace.” What conditions lead to harmonious relationships and individual and collective human flourishing in realistic and sustainable ways? Thus, the antithesis of structural violence began to be articulated and pursued in notions of positive peace that included: meeting basic human needs; access to education; human rights; elimination of all forms of oppression, discrimination, and social inequity; access to medical treatment; stable and free democratic institutions promoting freedom of speech, economic opportunities, and legal institutions for resolving conflict non-violently. Positive peace has also evolved to include larger arenas that look at ecological and environmental threats to human survival.<sup>14</sup> Key questions then focused on how individuals could foster the very institutions that mitigate those factors and conditions that give rise to structural and cultural violence, and create those institutions that promote *positive peace* in all of its facets.

#### *Peace Studies*

Peace Studies is closely related to peace research and peace education. As can be seen from the various facets associated with *structural* and *cultural violence*, as well as *positive peace*, this has come to include every facet of human existence. It would follow then that the field itself must be interdisciplinary as it attempts to explore and analyze these diverse facets and conditions. In its most technical form then:

Peace Studies is an interdisciplinary field encompassing systematic research and teaching on the causes of war and the conditions of peace. It focuses on the causes of increases and decreases in violence, the conditions associated with those changes, and the processes by which those changes happen.<sup>15</sup>

Peace studies largely arose as a formal discipline in higher education after World War Two. It often has a geopolitical focus, and is normally undertaken in colleges and universities, tends to focus on the causes of war and ethnic conflicts and seeks to find preventive means and alternatives to war. It analyzes human conflicts in order to “find the most peaceful (negatively peaceful) ways to turn unjust relationships into more just (positively peaceful) [ones]”. It might be considered to have a “more narrower focus than the

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<sup>12</sup> Jeong, 23

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 25-27.

<sup>15</sup> Stevenson, 809.

broader field of peace education” and may be seen as “one kind of peace education (i.e., that practiced in settings of higher education) and also ‘the study of peace’ as a concept.”<sup>16</sup>

### *Peace Education*

At its most fundamental level peace education “names problems of violence and then provides non-violent alternatives to address those problems.”<sup>17</sup> However, more specifically and comprehensively, we can say that peace education

is considered both a philosophy and a process involving skills, including listening, reflection, problems-solving, cooperation and conflict resolution. The process involves empowering people with skills, attitudes, and knowledge to create a safe world and build a sustainable environment. The philosophy teaches nonviolence, love, compassion and reverence for all life.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, in addition to understanding the causes of violence and war, part of the process of teaching skills and empowering students through peace education is to analyze and teach pupils *strategies* to achieve peace that usually take the direction of violence prevention that includes conflict resolution programs that use “peacemaking techniques to manage conflicts,” non-violence, reconciliation practices, and the use of treaties and international agreements. Thus, educators teach about these different peace strategies to “help their students evaluate what are the best strategies to use in particular circumstances.”<sup>19</sup>

Peace education in universities has traditionally been carried out in peace studies programs, “usually housed in political science or international relations departments.”<sup>20</sup> However, peace education has grown in schools of education as programs attempt to equip teachers to develop international education, and foster programs emphasizing world citizenship.<sup>21</sup> With the rise of in-school violence including bullying and school shootings, much peace education directed toward youth focuses on non-violent strategies and youth conflict resolution skills.

Peace education refers to teaching about peace—what peace is, the conditions for peace and its absence, and how to achieve it. The term “teachers” does not necessarily refer to professionals, but can refer to activists or others educated in peace work. Peace educators explain the roots of violence and teach alternatives to violence using varying concepts “according to the form of violence addressed and the cultural context of the educational setting.”<sup>22</sup> In terms of general contrasts to peace studies and research, peace education can be considered more “generic” than peace studies because it attempts to “draw out of people their natural inclinations to live in peace.” Peace educators “are interested in all different aspects of violence from the interpersonal to the geopolitical.”<sup>23</sup> Finally, *peace researchers* “identify processes that promote peace; whereas peace educators, educating people about those processes, use teaching skills to build a peace culture.”<sup>24</sup> It must be stressed and cannot be understated that within *all* of the above

<sup>16</sup> Harris and Morrison, *Peace Education*, 80.

<sup>17</sup> See, Ian M. Harris, “Peace Education: Colleges and Universities,” *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, Vol 2., 679, See also, Ian M. Harris and Mary Lee Morrison, *Peace Education, Second Edition* (Jefferson North Carolina: McFarland & Co Inc.: 2003), 26.

<sup>18</sup> Ian M. Harris and Mary Lee Morrison, *Peace Education, Second Edition*, 9

<sup>19</sup> Ian M. Harris, “Peace Education: Colleges and Universities”, 679. See also, Ian M. Harris and Mary Lee Morrison, *Peace Education*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Ian M. Harris, “Peace Education: Colleges and Universities”, 679

<sup>21</sup> See, *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

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conceptions and definitions, there is an inherent ideological assumption that analyzing, understanding, pursuing, and promoting “peace” is a *moral value* that is a desirable “good” for individuals and society.

Finally, on a more expansive yet integral level, peace education is concerned with transformation of consciousness and society. Renown peace educator Betty Reardon states most eloquently that the essential goal of peace education is to “promote the development of an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing the social structures and the patterns of thought that have created it.” For Reardon, comprehensive peace education takes place at every level, “and in every subject area of formal education.”<sup>25</sup> This conception is closely related to the vision of another pillar of peace education, the late Elise Boulding, who as an educator and futurist, championed the implementation of peace education to help create “cultures of peace” – which implies “a cluster of relational and institutional characteristics that enable a society to respond peacefully and creatively to difference and conflict.”<sup>26</sup> Boulding articulated educational strategies for teaching about and through peace cultures.

#### *(Integral) Conflict Resolution*

*Conflict Resolution* is a tool and one of the goals of the peacemaking process that involves the “resolution of disputes to the satisfaction of all parties.”<sup>27</sup> It may or may not involve a third party and usually involves dialogue, negotiation, or compromise. Conflict resolution focuses on problem-solving and generating mutually acceptable options. However, this focus may or may not involve varying degrees of compromise, which may involve asymmetrical degrees of “satisfaction” in order to “resolve” the problem. Its focus is on resolution of the problem or contradiction, not moral or personal transformation of the parties and their inter-personal relationships with each other.

#### *Conflict Transformation*

This term has come to be distinguished from conflict resolution. *Conflict Transformation* refers to the fundamental and enduring change *away* from a protracted or destructive struggle between adversaries *toward* a constructive accommodation between them. In other words, the conflict itself provides a constructive condition and indeed serves as the vehicle whereby the relationship between the two parties is changed or transformed.<sup>28</sup> Renowned peace scholar and practitioner, John Paul Lederach articulates this difference straightforwardly. He distinguishes these two terms by stating that conflict resolution asks, “How do we end something that is not desired?” while conflict transformation asks, “How do we end something that is not desired and build something we do desire?” Lederach’s whole project is therefore building something new in interpersonal relationships, structures, culture, and individuals.<sup>29</sup> *Conflict transformation* and *peacebuilding* are oftentimes linked together because conflict transformation is a primary vehicle in peacebuilding and a longer-term project focusing primarily on relationships. *Conflict transformation* processes usually include intervention modes such as mediation, facilitation, conflict resolution training, or reconciliation work. They also include as a goal not only transforming relationships, but also unjust structures as well.<sup>30</sup>

#### *Peacemaking, Peacebuilding and Nonviolence*

<sup>25</sup> Cited in, Karuna Maddava, *Peace Studies: Toward a Transformative Perspective* (DeKalb II: LEPS Press, 1994), 48.

<sup>26</sup> Elise Boulding, “Peace Culture”, in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, Vol 2., 653.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Clough Daffern, “Peacemaking and Peacebuilding,” in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, Vol. 2., 755.

<sup>28</sup> See Louis Kriesberg, “Conflict Transformation,” in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, Vol.1, 413

<sup>29</sup> See John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (Intercourse: Good Books, 2003), 29-33.

<sup>30</sup> Kriesberg, “Conflict Transformation,” pp. 413-425.

Peacemaking means “the active process of reconciliation in specific instances of immediate conflict, undertaken in various ways by various actors, depending on the situation and the temperament of those in the dispute.”<sup>31</sup>

Peacebuilding is similar to conflict resolution except that it takes a more long term and holistic view “which requires more deeper and lasting interventions and which similarly utilize different specific strategies depending on the conflict in question.”<sup>32</sup> Peacebuilding draws heavily upon such disciplines as psychology, sociology, group dynamics, peace research, anthropology, and the like. It includes transforming conflicts in all of their dimensions. It is a broad concept that includes monitoring, humanitarian aid, development, conflict resolution, and conflict transformation. However, it goes beyond this. “The term peacebuilding refers to all of the efforts required on the way to the creation of a sustainable peace zone: imagining a peaceful future, conducting an overall needs assessment, developing a coherent peace plan, and designing an effective implementation of the plan.”<sup>33</sup>

Nonviolence is another critical term, which can be defined as “a practice of doing no harm, physical or mental, to others. When practiced in social change movements, nonviolence calls for a strategy of noncooperation. Non violent conflict resolution emphasizes cooperative problem solving that meets the needs of all people.”<sup>34</sup>

## II. Secular Ethics

*What is Secular Ethics?*

In two works, *Ethics for the New Millennium* (1999) and *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World* (2011), H.H. the XIV Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, makes the case for “secular ethics,” which presents both a theoretical and practical approach to an ethics based on compassion and contemplative practices as a solution to various challenges facing humanity today. The Dalai Lama uses the term “secular” to denote that a robust ethical system is possible independent of religious orientation and values, but he does not use the term to denigrate religion. Secular ethics can and does, in his view, overlap with religious values and practices, but it is not dependent upon them in the way that religious ethics is. The key value for the Dalai Lama within a secular ethics is compassion, but other values include patience, tolerance, forgiveness, humility, discernment, self-control, a sense of responsibility, and love.

The Dalai Lama calls these principles “spirituality,” because they are innate within the human spirit independent of religion and religion’s particular faith claims to salvation, acceptance of certain metaphysical or supernatural realities, teachings, dogmas, or rituals.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the Dalai Lama contends, these values do not contradict the ethical teachings of the world’s major religions. The Dalai Lama sees “no reason that humans can’t develop them with or without religion” and further asserts that while religion is something we can do without, “we cannot do without these basic spiritual qualities.”<sup>36</sup> In

<sup>31</sup> Daffern, “Peacemaking and Peacebuilding,” in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, ed. Lester R. Kurtz (Austin: Academic Press, 1999), 2:755.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Luc Reyckler and Thania Paffenholz, eds., *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), ix, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Elise Boulding, “Peace Culture”, 653.

<sup>35</sup> *Ethics for a New Millennium*, 22, 61.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 22

this sense, the Dalai Lama presents his works as treatises on the nature and constituents of spiritual health, and methods for cultivating and fully realizing spiritual health.

On the topic of the relationship between secular ethics and religion, the Dalai Lama provides a straightforward analogy of the relationship of water and tea. Tea needs water, but water does not need tea. We cannot survive without water (basic human values), but we can survive without tea (religion). Tea does have additional leaves, spices or herbs that are flavorful and even add nutrition that is lacking in water (like the unique contributions of religious ethics), but *the* necessary ingredient of tea is *water* (humanity cannot survive without these basic human values).<sup>37</sup>

The Dalai Lama's contribution here to an understanding of spiritual health is presented through the use of an analogy from everyday life and may therefore appear simple or even simplistic, yet it is of profound importance. Contemporary understandings of health either completely lack the dimension of spiritual health, concentrating solely on physical, mental or environmental factors in health, or else relegate the role of spiritual health to an ancillary position. For example, considerable research has been devoted to understanding how spiritual beliefs and practices, or membership in a spiritual or religious community, can contribute to or hinder health outcomes.<sup>38</sup> The Dalai Lama's argument, however, is not that spiritual health is optional and can play a supplemental role alongside other dimensions of health. On the contrary, he contends that humanity cannot survive without spiritual health, because if humanity were to lose the fundamental values of compassion, forgiveness, discernment, humility and so on, which constitute core spirituality, humanity would cease to exist. Health is meaningless without survival, so placing spirituality and ethics at the core of our understanding of survival and health represents an important and bold move that can have significant consequences for our understanding of health and its promotion more generally.

One may argue that our societies are lacking in compassion, forgiveness and other core values. The Dalai Lama's argument cannot be understood as a black and white scenario, however. It is not that compassion and other values exist in perfect form or else do not exist at all. Rather, the Dalai Lama appears to understand these values as skills that can be individually and collectively cultivated, and therefore as existing along a continuum. If we had no compassion at all, our society would not exist, because parents or other caregivers would not even care for infants sufficiently to bring them to self-sufficiency. Yet the central importance that the Dalai Lama places on compassion does not mean that one should expect perfect compassion to appear just from wanting it or recognizing its importance. The Dalai Lama's goals, at least in the short term, appear much more modest than that. The cultivation and promotion of compassion and other basic human values will allow humanity that allow to co-exist peacefully and achieve a greater level of basic human happiness. The values associated with religion, which often promote ethics leading to such concepts as union with God, salvation, or eternal life, or spiritual levels of enlightenment, liberation, or transcendence may lead to a more "maximal" ethics for religious believers, but they are not necessarily desired or pursued by everyone. Secular ethics therefore represents a more minimal, realistic, and attainable version of peace and peaceful co-existence. We must, in his view, focus our energies on those values, ethics, and principles that are common to *all* of humanity, and which are

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<sup>37</sup> *Beyond Religion*, 16.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Brendan Ozawa-de Silva, "Religion, Spirituality, and Mental Health: Towards a Preventive Model Based on the Cultivation of Basic Human Values." In Ellen Idler, ed., *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*, Oxford University Press, 2014.



attainable. The Dalai Lama does not say that cultivating these types spiritual values could or would solve all our problems, but that without addressing the spiritual dimensions, “there is no hope at all to achieve lasting solutions [to world problems].”<sup>39</sup>

Throughout both of his major works on secular ethics, the Dalai Lama operates out of several key assumptions and principles. He makes clear that there are many bases for ethics, and acknowledges that religion is a legitimate basis for ethics. Yet it is problematic in that religious belief is no guarantee of moral integrity, and even more problematic when posing the question of *which* religion boasts the “best” ethical system. Religion can’t give answers for every ethical dilemma that would apply to everyone. He also believes that we need to have principles that are morally binding, yet avoid the two extremes of “crude absolutism” and “trivial relativism.”<sup>40</sup> The premises and operating assumptions for his proposed ethic are straightforward, and I believe there are three foundational assumptions in relation to their implications for peace studies.

### Guiding Principles in Secular Ethics

The Dalai Lama’s primary assumption and starting point for a secular ethic is that *all people desire happiness and seek to avoid suffering*, a claim that is not unique to him, but has been stated by thinkers including Aristotle and St. Augustine. This principle becomes a powerful criteria for how humans can discriminate between right and wrong and take into account other’s feelings of suffering.<sup>41</sup> This accounting includes our own desire for happiness and account of our own suffering.<sup>42</sup>

Retaining a focus on human suffering and well-being, the Dalai Lama goes on to describe three levels of ethics: an ethics of restraint, an ethics of cultivating virtues, and an ethic of altruism. To address the first two of these levels, we must find ways to *cultivate* and promote the positive spiritual inner values (including states of mind, emotions, and behaviors), while at the same time, *restrain* those which are negative. In *Beyond Religion*, the Dalai Lama cites scientific and health research to make the correlation between the benefits of cultivating positive values (compassion, caring, peace of mind, other-focused) with positive health, and negative values (self-centeredness, anger, resentment, bitterness, and the like) with negative health.<sup>43</sup> He also focuses heavily upon the practice of *compassion* as a foundational virtue that contributes to wellbeing in many dimensions of life including robust relationships with others and reduction of distrust and disconnection, self-confidence, service and self-giving; he even notes that it has the potential to change our DNA.<sup>44</sup> The central focus in the second half of *Beyond Religion* is to teach meditative practices that work toward cultivating the positive spiritual values that form the foundation of secular ethics. Without the cultivation of these positive values, the attainment of the highest level of ethics, the ethics of altruism, is not possible.

The Dalai Lama makes clear that ethical restraint – taking deliberate thought and action to avoid harming another—is necessary as an ethic. We might correlate *ethical restraint* to our previous description of *negative peace* as the absence of violence or war. As mentioned earlier, negative peace is necessary, but

<sup>39</sup> *Ethics for a New Millennium*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>42</sup> Of course, the basis for this type of ethic could be argued against as completely subjective in terms of contrasting or competing individual conceptions of happiness or suffering. The Dalai Lama would probably lump this into trivial relativism but it is non-the-less an issue to pursue.

<sup>43</sup> *Beyond Religion*, 46-47.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-47. He also makes strong reference to the practice of varying degrees of innate compassion in the animal kingdom. See pp. 41-45.

not sufficient to achieving lasting and sustainable peace, must less harmonious relations and the transformation of thought patterns and structures leading to positive change. The Dalai Lama also advocates a dedicated effort to *cultivating* basic spiritual / inner values through practice as *the* necessary component to achieving a greater sense of inner peace, happiness, compassion, connection, and more peaceful relations with others. This of course translates into conceptions of *positive peace* that aim to build structures of peace within relations, as well as political and social institutions. The *ethical restraint* and *cultivating inner* values are like to two sides of the same (peace) coin.

The Dalai Lama explicitly mentions the Indian religious and philosophical traditions from which he draws, and it is worth noting that the term for nonviolence in Sanskrit, and employed by Buddhists, Jains and Hindus, is *ahimsā*. Although *ahimsā* literally means means “non-harming” or “non-injuring,” it can also be understood positively and more expansively, and it was in this sense that Gandhi used the term, claiming that it could be applied to all spheres of life, including the political. Albert Schweitzer also studied the concept of *ahimsā* and came to the conclusion that it should be understood positively to mean not only non-harming but also actively helping those who are harmed. From this we can see that *ahimsā* encompasses both negative and positive peace, and is intimately related to compassion.<sup>45</sup>

The language that the Dalai Lama employs in relation to spiritual values or secular ethics, in contrast to “religious” values and ethics, correlates with what has been labeled *first* and *second order* language by R. Scott Appleby. Appleby, a leading scholar in the field of religion and violence, defines “first order language” as that which belongs to, and is articulated *within*, a particular religious and faith tradition. It might include doctrines of faith, principles, or practices commonly held and esteemed by a particular religious community. It is, by default, exclusionary language to outsiders—and can even be considered “inherently inimical to outsiders.” It is not the language of pluralism and tolerance.<sup>46</sup>

By contrast, “second order language” can be defined as religious discourse that is accessible to those both across and outside of any particular religious tradition. It does not attempt to use discourse that assumes that all religions are saying the same things or making the same claims to important doctrines, but rather it uses a “common cross cultural vocabulary that facilitates dialogue while remaining true to the primary theological claims of each participating community.”<sup>47</sup> In this sense it can be considered the language of pluralism. An example of second order language might be found in United Nations Human Rights language that uses terms like the dignity of the person, inherent equality, respect, tolerance, and other universally accessible language. In this sense we can assert that second order language is that which is universally accessible (maybe not necessarily *acceptable*, but nevertheless *accessible*). Thus by the foregoing definition, we can make the general correlation and assertion that the language of Secular Ethics as presented by the Dalai Lama most closely resembles a robust type of “second order” language. Thus a simple corollary template representing points made in relation to positive and negative peace, as well as first and second order language might look like the following.

<b>Secular Ethics</b>	<b>Peace Studies</b>
Ethical Restraint	← → Negative Peace
Cultivation of inner values	← → Positive Peace

<sup>45</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development* (London, 1956).

<sup>46</sup> R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), 151.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

1<sup>st</sup> Order Language = specific to a particular population  
Or Religion (theological, religious)

Spiritual principles

← → 2<sup>nd</sup> order language = more universal, appealing  
to basic human values (human rights, dignity, respect)

### Human Nature

A second major premise from the Dalai Lama's perspective regards our basic constitution as human beings. He upholds the innate or what he calls the "basic goodness" of humanity and nature. From this premise he maintains that the basic thrust of nature and humanity is toward kindness and compassion. This is demonstrated in that fact that all people have an inclination and pull toward affection and connection (even animals) starting from birth. He cites the importance of a mother's early affection (breastfeeding, cuddling, and the like) to a newborn human or other mammal. He therefore asserts that all people have the innate desire and capacity to *respond* to this (affection and connection) no matter how bad or evil we might label them. It is for this reason that the Dalai Lama can suggest that what is needed is not a list of "Do's and Don't's" but rather the cultivation of basic human values. He appears to suggest that if basic human values such as compassion, discernment and self-discipline increase, then people will naturally make decisions and take actions that are more ethical (in that they are relatively more conducive for individual and social well-being). For this reason, some have considered the Dalai Lama's version of secular ethics to be a variety of "virtue ethics," although it should be noted that there are also significant differences between the Dalai Lama's approach and western varieties of virtue ethics.<sup>48</sup>

To support his argument about basic goodness, the Dalai Lama cites scientific studies of the positive developmental effects of either early affection or the negative effects of the lack thereof, and its implications regarding aggressive or asocial behavior.<sup>49</sup> Certainly these conclusions are well documented in the scientific community. We must also stress that through his own experiences and observations, the Dalai Lama is not ignorant or blind to the realities of human cruelty, exploitation, and victimization. He does acknowledge that he is often "mystified" by the capacity and reality of human cruelty and barbarity. However, when pressed about his assumption about basic human goodness and its apparent lack in many humans, he maintains that people don't come out of the womb that way, but are "always part of society." Furthermore, he believes this kind of destructive behavior can arise when a negative imagination is unleashed toward fulfilling a goal, and we are completely disconnected from basic human feeling.<sup>50</sup>

From a *peace studies* and *peace education* standpoint, this assumption about basic human constitution is relevant. It also contains an implicit explanation for understanding the root causes of violence. As previously mentioned, peace studies and peace research are interdisciplinary endeavors seeking to understand the root causes of violence, war, and conditions for peace. From an anthropological perspective, peace researchers have speculated different theories on origins of human aggression and violence. The major issue seeks to determine whether these tendencies are inherent (rooted) within human nature or whether they are learned and acquired? This is the pervasive "nature versus nurture" debate. The literature in the field is replete with theories. Major areas of research have revolved around aggression studies (focusing on differences in gender), frustration hypotheses, and various forms of social

<sup>48</sup> Explain this.

<sup>49</sup> *Ethics for a New Millennium*, 68-71.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

conditioning theories. Not surprisingly, theories of violence and aggression on both human and animal levels are also connected to studies on violence prediction and altruism.<sup>51</sup>

From a peace studies perspective, this notion of understanding the basic constitution of the human being as either genetically “wired” toward violence and war, or socially conditioned to it, is of major concern. Depending on the determination, certain assumptions about human limitations or non-limitations influence strategies toward peace. For instance, a commonly invoked pronouncement often cited by peace researchers is the Seville Statement on Violence (1986), which convened an international meeting of scientists to explore the notion of whether organized human violence was (and is) biologically determined. The gathering was in response to the United Nations sponsored International Year of Peace and its follow up, and contained the latest scientific evidence. The panel rejected the conclusion that violence and war is an inevitable component of our biology. It gave five core propositions. UNESCO adopted the statement, along with its propositions in 1989. However, even before and certainly since this “determination,” many evolutionary biologists and psychologists have contradicted this conclusion presenting their own scientific evidence for biological roots of aggression, violence, and war.<sup>52</sup>

The issue is one of ongoing debate and of central importance to peace studies. From a Secular Ethics perspective however, it seems clear that the Dalai Lama’s view of human constitution falls more within the socially constructed arena than innately biologically driven. This is reflected in his view of justice where he believes that regardless of what we might label as “bad” behavior, or a “bad” person, *all* people have the capacity to change. This is a major reason that he does not believe in the death penalty. Pursuing this would lead us to examine the relationship between innate human nature, justice and forgiveness, an important topic but one that will not be explored here.<sup>53</sup>

### Two Pillars of Secular Ethics

The third major premise of secular ethics for the Dalai Lama consists of what he calls the “two pillars” of secular ethics: 1) our *shared humanity* (which includes shared aspiration to happiness and avoidance of suffering), and 2) our *interdependence*, which is a “key feature of reality,” including our biological reality as social animals. This interdependence pertains both to the human and natural world. The point the Dalai Lama stresses is that from “these two principles we can learn to appreciate the inextricable connection between our own well-being and that of others, and we can develop genuine concern for others’ welfare.”<sup>54</sup>

The entirety of the secular ethics approach presented so far is developed from within these “two pillars.” They are the anchor points for allowing one to better understand and *connect* with the humanity of the other, as well as engage in the *practice* of interdependence. Again, these practices are not dependent upon one’s religious or lack of religious belief. The secular ethics program involving sophisticated principles and meditative practices leading to the cultivation of compassion, empathy, discernment,

<sup>51</sup> See Ian Harris, *Peace Education*, 117-120. See also, Ira Heilveil, “Violence Prediction”, *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, Vol. 3, 675-687. See also Douglas P. Fry, “Aggression and Altruism” in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, Vol. 1, pp. 17-33.

<sup>52</sup> The five core principles are as follows: “1) It is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors.” 2) “It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our human nature.” 3) “It is scientifically incorrect to say that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behavior more than for other kinds of behavior.” 4) “It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a ‘violent brain’.” 5) “It is scientifically incorrect to say that war is caused by ‘instinct’ or any single motivation.” See the Seville Statement at <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/seville.pdf>. See also Ian Harris, *Peace Education*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>53</sup> *Beyond Religion*, 62-63.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

internal reflection, and resilience are the *concrete* components of the twin pillars. However, for our purposes, I wish to highlight few additional principles SE principles that relate powerfully to peace studies.

The Dalai Lama offers a complex yet straightforward discussion on *compassion*. He describes two basic levels, which include 1) biological compassion (a “seed” from which unbiased compassion can grow), and 2) extended compassion (where we take the innate capacity for warm-heartedness and use intelligence and conviction to expand it).<sup>55</sup> He then makes sophisticated distinctions between *compassion* and *empathy* and prescriptions for both cultivating and expanding our capacities for emotional resonance and attunement toward the sufferings of others.<sup>56</sup>

As we saw earlier, added to the two ethical approaches involving *ethical restraint* and the *cultivation* of positive inner values, the Dalai Lama sees an ethics of *altruism* as the pinnacle of ethical development. The approach is comprehensive in addressing thoughts, intentions, words, and behaviors. All three levels of ethics require the practice and cultivation of very concrete skills, and the Dalai Lama gives a useful threefold template of *heedfulness*, *mindfulness*, and *introspective awareness* as the specific mental or spiritual filters necessary for both restraint and positive cultivation.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, the secular ethics approach offers an extremely well developed analysis of the role of emotion, and what the Dalai Lama calls “afflictive” emotions and mental states. Essentially, “afflictive” emotions, which include anger, lust, greed, pride, envy, and hatred, are sources of unethical conduct. We can act destructively “under the influence” of these emotions (that can destroy our critical faculties) just as we can act destructively under the influence of a drug. In this sense, we have to have tools and practices that allow us to understand the truly destructive nature of acting on these emotions and mental states. This contributes to ethical restraint.<sup>58</sup>

On the positive side, as previously mentioned, the Dalai Lama offers detailed rationale for cultivating compassion, empathy, and altruism and other “ethical disciplines.” The disciplines help connect us to the humanity of the other and include both emotional and cognitive components. In this sense, the sustained “reflection and familiarization” with something like *compassion* can serve as a type of “rehearsal and practice” that one does to develop and cultivate their *innate* capacity to connect with others.<sup>59</sup> The Dalai Lama emphatically stresses the notion of cultivating our capacity to see others as more like ourselves, and to be moved by their suffering.

### Values as Skills

The fourth premise of secular ethics is the belief that values can be cultivated as skills. Although we are born with an innate capacity for responding to compassion, the Dalai Lama contends, this compassion may remain limited to those near and dear to us. What is required is an intentional cultivation of compassion as a skill. Similarly, the Dalai Lama believes that other values—such as discernment, self-control, and what he calls “ethical mindfulness”—can be cultivated as skills. The idea that values and emotions like compassion can be considered trainable skills is an interesting one. Implicit in this view is the idea that it will not be enough to promote values in society and education, but rather that concrete methods for cultivating values must be taught as tools that individuals can then employ for self-development.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 50-51, *Ethics for a New Millennium*, 73.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 52-57.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 103-107.

<sup>58</sup> *Ethics for a New Millennium*, 81-87.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 74-77

The Dalai Lama devotes the entire second half of his book *Beyond Religion* to examining the specific skills that he believes should be cultivated for spiritual development and what the authors of this article would call spiritual health. These include ethical mindfulness, compassion, discernment, heedfulness and self-discipline. Up until recently, it might have been more controversial to suggest that such qualities could be intentionally cultivated as skills, but recent studies in contemplative science (the interdisciplinary and scientific study of contemplative practices such as meditation) suggest very strongly that such cultivation is in fact possible and practical. Moreover, developments in our understanding of the brain—such as neuroplasticity and neurogenesis—have cast the door wide open for research in this area.<sup>60</sup>

(One paragraph overview of a few studies, esp. compassion)

Note Foucault “technologies of the self” – also note neuroplasticity and meditation research supporting this idea.

### Correlation with Psychodynamic Peace Studies

This major premise within the Secular Ethics approach has significant resonance with a branch of peace studies, research, and education that focuses on attitudes and emotions towards the “other,” outsiders, or even enemies (and how we come to perceive and construct enemies). The theoretical and empirical literature on this subject is immense and overlaps into the fields of peace psychology, group relations, anthropology, sociology, psychodynamics of violence, and other areas.

Nearly every conflict analysis and violence studies approach looks at emotional dynamics in understanding the roots of disconnection between humans, and the origins of negative perceptions of the other that often progress toward negative actions toward others. Many formal and informal peace programs of inter-religious or inter-ethnic dialogue seek to bring people together in order to discover and explore their common humanity. Of course there is usually great resistance to these processes as parties *want* to retain their perceptions of the other that feed into their negative views of the other, and themselves as separate or superior to their “enemies.”

This concept of perceptual separateness and disconnection from the “other” is a foundational concept in violence studies and peace research. It is often placed within a continuum of attitudes that often progress further in negative directions and is a helpful tool in plotting destructive trajectories among parties. It also helps analysts in *predicting* the probability of further negative attitudes and behaviors if certain points along the continuum are present. A basic example might look like the following:

*Separation → stereotyping → superiority → dehumanization → scapegoating → demonization.*

Certain other attributes can be expanded depending upon the specific scenarios under analysis. Therefore, another example coming from analyses of mass killing and genocide might look like the following

*Devaluation → marginalization → discrimination → resentment and aggression → hostility → dehumanization → elimination (extermination)<sup>61</sup>*

<sup>60</sup> For an introduction to this topic, see Sharon Begley, *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain: How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves* (Ballantine Books, 2007).

<sup>61</sup> This continuum was constructed largely off of analysis of the work of Ervin Staub in *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). It was discussed at length in, Thomas V. Flores, “The Continuum of Violence and Peace: Applying a Contemplative Framework for

These continua also work in the opposite direction of positive or benevolent attitudes and actions toward outsiders. Again, this varies dependent upon the specific scenario or context of analysis. An example in this regard might look like:

*Indifference* → *opening up* → *acceptance (respect, dignity,)* → *empathy* → *caring (service)* → *connection* → *community* → *love (increasingly outward)* → *peace*.

These types of negative and positive continua (with subtle variations) reflect interdisciplinary approaches, whether from psychology, political science, religious studies, anthropology, or any other kind of humanistic form of inquiry. These continua represent processes that reflect the interrelationship of emotion, mental states (frames), and actions that reveal degrees of human disconnection or connection. Exploring these continua and in relation to violence and peacebuilding should be interdisciplinary, and initial research in this area has already been undertaken.<sup>62</sup>

The correlation with secular ethics is that processes inherent within these continua reflect the Dalai Lama's foundational principles of shared humanity, inter-dependence, compassion, empathy, altruism, along with the potential destructiveness of afflictive emotions that promote disconnection, harm, anger, resentment, or hatred of the other. Depending on which "virtue" one seeks to cultivate, these provide the "seeds" for one or another direction along the continua.<sup>63</sup> The Dalai Lama offers a well-developed and almost scientific toolbox for cultivating these seeds along a positive direction.

Related to emotions and attitudes of connection or disconnection, shared humanity, and even what was previously referred to as a "rehearsal and practice" of compassion and empathy, another correlation can be made. Studies in altruism, and the examination of the characteristics of those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust, reveal stunning implications for understanding the impulse toward, or lack of, altruism in the face of unprecedented and extraordinary circumstances. Sociologist and Holocaust survivor, Samuel P. Oliner conducted the most extensive study ever undertaken in order to examine personality and circumstantial factors that contributed to what he called an "altruistic personality" compelling people to act positively to rescue Jews during the Nazi regime. His project was to examine whether those who acted to rescue Jews had particular backgrounds or personality traits that influenced their behavior. Examining the altruistic personality was useful in contrast to "bystanders" who did nothing, or even refused to rescue Jews. What kind of factors influenced *their* "negative" behavior?<sup>64</sup> The main premise for the study was that if one could identify those factors or characteristics that made for an altruistic personality, and replicate and promote them in society, then we could focus our attention on creating structures that could help cultivate and promote these factors in *every* human being. The study was extensive in exploring family backgrounds, pre-existing ties to Jews, parental discipline techniques, negative or positive family messaging about Jews and strangers in general, exposure to religious, philosophical, or ethical perspectives, and many other factors. In addition, vigorous personality assessment tools were used attempting to measure empathy response. Was it an altruistic personality, or was it primarily *circumstances* that determined peoples' actions?

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Turning the Problem into the Solution," *Practical Matters*, Journal of Practical Theology. May 2012, Emory University. <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/issue/5/practicing-matters/the-continuum-of-violence-and-peace>

<sup>62</sup> See, Thomas V. Flores, *Encountering the Other through Interfaith Dialogue: A Constructive Look at a Praxis of Religious Identity and the Promotion of Peace* (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2006) for a somewhat extensive literature review and substantive connections. For a more focused discussion on continuum analysis and its relation to violence and contemplative peacebuilding practices, See also, Thomas V. Flores, "The Continuum of Violence and Peace: Applying a Contemplative Framework for Turning the Problem into the Solution."

<sup>63</sup> This has been explicitly examined in, Thomas V. Flores, "The Continuum of Violence and Peace: Applying a Contemplative Framework for Turning the Problem into the Solution."

<sup>64</sup> *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

Oliner formed a type of “composite” altruistic personality defined by certain markers. Essentially, the study found that the rescuers’ sense of altruism and connection to others was shaped early in life by family relations, parental models of tolerance, as well as relations with Jews and others who appeared to be “different.” A prevalent theme throughout was the inculcation of strong values that included a robust sense of shared humanity with others. Non-Jewish rescuers commented on the fact that their sense of moral obligation to rescue was heavily influenced by the notion that no matter how different others might *appear*, they saw Jews as *people*, similar to themselves, a message that was heavily communicated by their parents. In other words, the more they saw themselves as similar in their humanity to other Jews, the more inclined they were to take action on their behalf.

With regard to empathy studies, rescuers also showed a marked difference from non-rescuers and bystanders to be *moved* by the pain and suffering of another. As a by-product of the study then, Oliner compiled a basic altruistic personality “composite” in contrast to those who refused to act – what he called a “constricted personality.” He lists many traits, but essentially the altruistic personality is one who has strong early and evolving connection with others, is other-centered, more tolerant, with a greater sense of efficacy (in the actions of one person), empathetic, feels a sense of similarity with others and a moral responsibility to act to alleviate unjust suffering, is principled with a strong sense of equity, fairness, and caring inculcated through parental, religious, or ethical influences, and for the most part, has been raised by parents who model discipline in humane ways and refuse to convey negative messaging about others to their children. Before and after the Holocaust, rescuers were more likely to be involved in various kinds of giving and service to others.

By contrast, the “constricted personality” is largely *opposite* of the foregoing, demonstrating self-centeredness, lack of early connection with parents and others, weak family attachments, helplessness, weak sense of shared humanity with others and moral obligation to look after another’s welfare, lack of experience and openness to diversity, and the tendency to experience parental discipline as violent and gratuitous, thus modeling skewed pictures of authority of the strong over the weak.<sup>65</sup>

The central conclusion that Oliner advances is built around two concepts: *extensivity* and *predisposition*. Altruistic persons had models of extensivity and therefore were able to demonstrate the ability to extend levels of love, attachment, giving, empathy and compassion beyond what we might consider “normal” family attachments. They extended these virtues to *strangers*, most often at great risk to themselves, their families, often with tremendous social and financial costs, and for the majority of cases, extended periods of time (more than half for 2-5 years). By contrast, the constricted personality either was not capable of this kind of extensivity or refused.

The other main conclusion was that of predisposition. The overwhelming conclusion was that people who rescued Jews did so because their personalities were in a sense groomed for this type of action. Their behavior wasn’t determined by circumstances but by their own personal qualities. Chance provided some opportunities – but it was values learned from their parents that prompted and sustained their involvement.<sup>66</sup> Concern was not enough. Many non-rescuers expressed the same concern for Jews as did rescuers. However, it was values, moral virtues, and all of the previous factors mentioned in the altruistic composite that set the rescuers apart. Thus, they already had a high sense of moral obligation and so when the opportunity that challenged their highest values and virtues presented itself, it was less of a decision than it was for non-rescuers. Many rescuers simply said that “they had no choice.”<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 249-252.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 187; 221-22.



Oliner used the Holocaust as an opportunity to study altruism under the most extreme and unprecedented circumstances not for the purposes of advocating that all people become “rescuers” of some sort, but to show how basic human influences can shape a personality to be *compelled* make such decisions and take such actions in the face of such uncertainty. As a relevant matter of data and related to the Dalai Lama’s claims about religion and the case for secular ethics, only about *one quarter* of the rescuers said that religion or religious values was their main motivation to rescue Jews. As additional point of fact, Oliner extended his inquiry into the altruistic composite to interview over five hundred “Carnegie Heroes” in the United States, and found similar composites among these people whereby the predisposition was *already* in place, and they simply acted in accordance with their disposition when the opportunity presented itself (often within an instance).<sup>68</sup>

Obviously, the foregoing has strong resonance with the SE approach, especially the emphasis on interdependence and shared humanity. The Dalai Lama’s emphasis on sustained reflection and familiarization with secular ethics virtues as a form of “rehearsal and practice” has strong resonance with Oliner’s conclusion regarding “predisposition.” Rescuers – by virtue of their upbringing, attachments, morals and values, and feelings of empathy, were in a sense “groomed” to do what they did (though it was not an exact predictor). Early attachments with parents exhibiting love and affection provided *the* strong foundation to show love, affection, caring, compassion, and empathy to others – even oppressed strangers under attack. Here we see in history, the implications for society when these virtues are highlighted, cultivated, and put into action. However, we also know that during the Holocaust, history shows not only individuals, but villages, cities and even countries acting altruistically on behalf of Jews.<sup>69</sup> This does not diminish the power of secular ethics, but rather shows the power of these virtues when acted upon *collectively*.

Thus far, we have correlated three major principles of secular ethics with peace studies. These connections include: 1) Ethical restraint and cultivation of virtues and contemplative practice with “negative” and “positive” peace, as well as the language of secular ethics as a type of accessible and universal “second order” language, 2) the assumption of basic human goodness in secular ethics in relation to peace studies, and its social science theories of innate versus socially constructed aggression and violence, and peace strategies that would follow based upon acceptance of one theory or another, and 3) secular ethics’ two pillars of our shared humanity and interdependence as related to the more psychosocial aspects of peace studies, especially in relation to positive or negative attitudes toward the other, and concrete implications (and actions) of empathy and altruism based upon those attitudes. Each of these areas carries profound conceptual and practical implications for studying and fostering peace, and can be studied in greater depth. We now turn to a more broad yet necessary connection in locating the above areas and others yet to be explored within the spectrum of peace studies broadly construed. We do this in order to think concretely and strategically about the positive potential of integrating these two overlapping fields.

### **Where Secular Ethics Falls within the Map of Peace Research, Studies, Education, and Peacebuilding**

Any academic or semi-academic program that seeks to incorporate secular ethics into its curriculum might do well to reflect upon where it falls within the spectrum of either peace research, peace studies,

<sup>68</sup> See, *Do Unto Others: Extraordinary Acts of Ordinary People* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003).

<sup>69</sup> I am thinking of the village of LeChambon in France, or Denmark’s courageous efforts on behalf of Jews.

peace education, or peace building – or all. According to our previous definition, SE can legitimately be considered a type of *peace research*. It truly does present a particular approach to the “systematic research on the causes of war and violence, and the conditions of peace, and the possible relationship between them.” SE also falls within the rubric of *Peace Studies* in that again, according to our definition, it also “focuses on the causes of increases and decreases in violence, the conditions associated with those changes, and the processes by which those changes happen.” Within peace studies, the SE approach appears to have unique strengths in analysis of human dynamics of emotion and cognitive functions. In this sense, it resonates strongly with peace studies fields that deal specifically with peace psychology, inter-group conflict, and psychodynamics of violence. The meditative and contemplative aspect of the approach also has strength and resonance with psychology and neurological studies linking wellbeing and happiness to peace. It does not attempt to delve into international relations conflicts with quantitative data, but makes general observations about the nature of conflict that is exercised collectively between and among nations.

From an academic perspective, I believe that secular ethics falls most closely within the scope of *peace education*. Recall that peace education at its most fundamental level, attempts to name “problems of violence and then provides non-violent alternatives to address those problems.” Clearly secular ethics does name problems of violence and provides non-violent alternatives to address those problems. It also includes specific concepts to expose roots of violence along with principles and practices to counteract those roots. Clearly the Dalai Lama’s project of presenting SE concepts and practices to the world is as a peace educator. He has used his forum through books, lectures, and teachings effectively to educate the public about the approach, its rationale, and potential benefit to all humanity.

As mentioned previously, the universe of *peacebuilding* is extensive, covering many different facets of life. The academic field has identified many peacebuilding arenas and is most associated with the term *strategic peacebuilding*. This is meant to signify concerted effort within specific avenues in which to pursue building peace within social and cultural structures of society. Thus strategic peacebuilding “maps” have been devised in order to illustrate these avenues. Some are more extensive than others. For instance, a strategic peacebuilding “map” can include: Restorative Justice; Law; Dealing with Transnational Global Threats; Humanitarian Action; Government and Multilateral Efforts; Nonviolent Social Change; Dialogue and Conflict Resolution Strategies; Education; Development; Trauma Healing; and Transitional Justice. Each category can have many specific subfields.<sup>70</sup> The goal within strategic peacebuilding is to develop frameworks that can be applied over the long term that are meant to affect structures at every level of society (social, cultural, political, legal, environmental, and the like) in building peace, justice, and equity in the world. These frameworks are strategic in that they are often meant to influence outcomes in society and influence either creation of changes in government policies toward the better.<sup>71</sup>

Other maps can be more simplified. A good example is that map of strategic peacebuilding that includes 1) Waging conflict nonviolently, 2) Reducing Direct Violence, 3) Building Capacity, and 4) Transforming Relationships.<sup>72</sup> Again, within each of these major areas, we find subfields. Clearly the SE approach advocates Waging Conflict (advocating for justice) nonviolently. By its very nature, it also attempts to Reduce Direct Violence. However, I believe the greatest strength of the SE program is in Building Capacity. It does this through categories consonant with strategic peacebuilding such as “education and training” and “research and evaluation.” This is where I believe that SE can make its greatest

<sup>70</sup> Map originally taken from the Kroc Institute for Peace Studies at Notre Dame.  
<http://kroc.nd.edu/research/strategic-peacebuilding>

<sup>71</sup> See: <http://kroc.nd.edu/about-us/what-peace-studies/what-strategic-peacebuilding>

<sup>72</sup> Lisa Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding: A Vision and Framework for Peace with Justice* (Intercourse PA: Good Books, 2004).

contribution to the strategic peacebuilding arena. As a by-product, this would have great implications for the fourth area: Transforming Relationships, maybe not at the level of “governance and policymaking,” but at other levels that could affect governance and policymaking. In this sense, the SE complies to the accepted definition of *conflict transformation* as transforming relationships between people in or potentially in conflict.

It does not seem that the Dalai Lama has employed terms such as *Direct*, *Structural*, or *Cultural Violence*. He does not use academic peace studies terms nor attempt to categorize his approach within the field. Upon analysis, it appears that the Dalai Lama’s presentation of secular ethics to the world cannot be neatly categorized and appears to overlap with *all four categories* of peace research, studies, building, and education. When he speaks about world peace depending upon peace in the hearts of individuals, and the resolution of internal conflicts, or that because of our interdependence, the only meaningful peace to speak of is “world peace,” he appears to be speaking as a peace studies scholar, researcher, and educator.<sup>73</sup> When he asserts that “afflictive emotion is the oxygen of conflict,” or that “war is like fire and its fuel is living people,” and that the only hope for external disarmament is “internal disarmament” while providing tools for such disarmament, he is not only attempting to name a problem, but also to identify relationships, and provide alternatives and means.<sup>74</sup> He is thus simultaneously, a peace studies scholar, researcher, educator, and strategic peace builder.

### A Transformative Approach

Finally, as stated earlier, it appears that the secular ethics falls strongly within peace education. However, we can also identify it as a *type* of peace studies and research, as well as a robust arena of peacebuilding related to education, training, and capacity building. In identifying where the SE approach falls within the spectrum of the academic understanding of peace studies broadly construed, we can assert that SE can be labeled as a “transformational” or “transformationist” approach. This approach makes more sense when placed within the context of contrasting labels.

Within the field of peace studies, what has been called the *Liberal* approach (marked mostly by economic capitalism) focuses more on political reform that seeks gradual small-scale reforms within the framework of an existing political system. Its hallmark is affecting reform very much *within* the system. The *Liberationist* approach (marked mostly by Marxism and Socialism) within peace studies focuses very much on immediate large-scale reform and material critique *of* the system to be replaced by new structures. It largely excludes aesthetics and mysticism as a tool of social change and focused very much on the nation-state. However, what has been called the “transformational” approach is quite different.

Essentially it moves well beyond the nation-state and aims at “profound cultural change through a transformation of consciousness.” It also “imagines a new future, defining world problems as human caused, and the increasing delegitimization of war. It is a more encompassing approach in that it focuses theories on what it means to be human, “including mysticism, spirituality, and aesthetics in the discussion.”<sup>75</sup> The foundational assumption of a transformational approach is that war is a human construction and that humans have the power to stop it. In the broader picture, it realizes that in order to change society, humans must change.<sup>76</sup>

This conception is very much in line with an established trajectory within peace education that has been called by different labels. I earlier made reference to Boudling’s phrase “cultures of peace” and to the idea

<sup>73</sup> *Ethics for a New Millennium*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-207

<sup>75</sup> Karuna Maddava, *Peace Studies: Toward a Transformative Perspective*, pp. 21-30; 52-53.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

of a comprehensive peace education that seeks a transformation of consciousness with regard to violence, war, nonviolence, and peace. That version of comprehensive peace education, addressing “patterns of thought” or exploring facets that “create cultures of peace,” is what educators have called the development of a *peace consciousness*. Any educator or practitioner that works to correct the faulty images and assumptions of violence systems and imagines, and focuses on the positive nature of non-violent alternatives to bring about peaceful relations themselves is a vehicle to help foster this consciousness. The goal of peace education is to use all available tools and methods to help students develop this consciousness for themselves.<sup>77</sup> Of course not only academics, but world leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and of course the Dalai Lama, *and many others*, on many levels of society have undertaken this task.

The Dalai Lama in his secular ethics approach speaks clearly and emphatically about the “unrealistic” nature of violence and war to resolve contemporary global problems. He also refers to the empirical observations of unpredictable outcomes produced by strategies involving violence. Therefore using means of violence and war to achieve peace, he states, are clearly obsolete and destructive.<sup>78</sup> He is clearly making the case to invite a transformation of consciousness through better, more logical, and ultimately sustainable vehicles to peace and happiness. Yet, his project is comprehensive in also addressing *structures* and *cultural* practices associated with the violence industry such as the weapons industry and the media. Through a “marriage” so to speak of restraining and cultivating positive emotions and mental states with spiritual values, transformation on many levels may be possible.

### Conclusion

Clearly the secular ethics approach has promising potential to intersect with any formal or informal peace studies curriculum. It has several strengths, as it:

- 1) Offers a universal language
- 2) Employs a non-sectarian approach
- 3) Has strong resonance with peace research involving the relationship to meditation and cultivation of positive inner values such as compassion and empathy with both violence reduction and biological functioning in immune, and neuro-systems, based on research that is well underway.
- 4) Offers strong theoretical and methodological instruction contributing to prosocial and altruistic capacities with profound implications, especially with profound implications for youth and families
- 5) Offers a strong and robust psycho-social emphasis within the peace studies field involving examination of continuum dynamics and / or studies of altruism and empathy.
- 6) Offers a spiritual lens to peace research and education, especially in relation to the psychological arena of peace research, in proposing relationships among affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes.
- 7) Although primarily focused upon individual practice and transformation, has implications for multiple levels of effectiveness (micro, mezzo, and macro).

<sup>77</sup> See, Ian M. Harris, “Peace Education: Colleges and Universities,” 687.

<sup>78</sup> *Beyond Religion*, 86-88.

- 8) Functions simultaneously as peace education, peace research, peace studies, and peace building, while at the same time serving as a spiritual discipline.
- 9) Is consistent with and supports the emerging field of *positive psychology* focusing on the innate capacities for tapping into and cultivating positive inner values, and can support a psychology-based program, attracting practitioners who want to integrate a SE approach as a robust form of both peace building and peace education in society. This might include counselors, life coaches, educators, and therapists.
- 10) Is consistent with the pursuit of human *well-being* and inner *happiness* as conducive to peaceful disposition and action (happy, well-adjusted people don't usually commit violence upon others).

It also, however, has drawbacks and challenges that must also be considered, mostly because this is a new and not yet established approach. As such, it:

- 1) Is difficult to place within an academic program that offers traditional peace studies focus of international / inter-ethnic conflicts and political systems, or may lack established credibility in today's academic field of peace studies;
- 2) Lacks clear translatability and monetization in today's job market, although it may serve as a good preparation for careers in social work, caring professions, psychology, teaching, coaching, mediation, contemplative studies, public policy and leadership;
- 3) Is not directly aimed at immediately influencing global or political policies, although this is retained as a long-term goal and can be combined with this approach;
- 4) Is focused primarily on individuals rather than groups or nations.
- 5) Does not appear to address destructive or traumatizing family backgrounds and systems directly, although the intent of secular ethics is to minimize the conditions for future trauma and destructive systems;
- 6) Advocates a disciplined method of meditation and reflection requiring time that may not be available to many people, although the point of introducing it into education is to create space and time for young people to engage in these practices and learn these concepts, thereby building habits that continue throughout life.

Taking a step back and looking at health from a broader perspective allows us to see the deeper connections. Healthcare is not just about the immediate eradication of disease and the immediate treatment of suffering. It must also be about changing the underlying conditions that lead to suffering. An analysis of the causes of suffering shows that it is caused not only by direct harm, but also by the structures that allow harm, and those structures are enabled by cultural values. Emotional and physical health, therefore, are directly affected by social health—positive social relations that are conducive to well-being—and spiritual health.

Those who work to bolster spiritual health by transforming the underlying values of a society, for example by promoting and teaching compassion, engaging in peace education, or engaging in development education, should be considered just as much “healthcare” workers as doctors, nurses, psychologists, psychotherapists, chiropractors, acupuncturists and others whom we generally consider to be in the healthcare profession. If we recognize that humanity cannot survive as a species without basic human values such as compassion, and if we further recognize that it is a lack of these values that enables the establishment and perpetuation of social structures that are inherently violent and that are vehicles of

violence, then we must take spiritual health seriously, and we must value its promotion in education and society.

