

## COLLATERALITY IN EARLY CHINESE COSMOLOGY: AN ARGUMENT FOR CONFUCIAN HARMONY (*HE* 和) AS *CREATIO IN SITU*

Roger T. Ames\*

### Abstract

One important benefit of the Guodian and Shanghai Museum slips is the new insights they are providing in our understanding of the early intellectual evolution of classical Chinese philosophy. But there is a second important opportunity that the newly recovered documents provide. Beyond what is new in them, these same materials can be used to qualify, corroborate, and reiterate perhaps old but still undervalued insights into the interpretive context within which we construct our understanding of early China. Indeed, our best interpreters of classical Chinese philosophy are explicit in rejecting the idea that Chinese cosmology begins from some independent, transcendent principle and entails the metaphysical reality/appearance distinction and the plethora of dualistic categories that arise from such a world-view. In fact, the recently recovered Guodian materials provide us with both the resources and the occasion to revisit three related cosmological issues: What is distinctive about classical Chinese cosmogony and its notion of origins? What is the Chinese alternative to the assumptions about our own familiar *creatio ex nihilo* source of meaning? And how is “creativity” expressed in the Chinese philosophical vocabulary?

One important benefit of the Guodian 郭店 and Shanghai Museum slips is the new insights they are providing in our understanding of the early intellectual evolution of classical Chinese philosophy. The emergence of “feelings” or “affectivity” (*qing* 情) as a key term in the philosophical literature associated with the name Zisizi 子思子, for example, requires not only a careful study of the newly acquired documents themselves, particularly the two versions of *Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出 (*Xingqing lun* 性情論), but in fact a re-reading of all of the classical Confucian and Daoist texts

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\* Roger T. Ames, 安樂哲, University of Hawai'i, USA; email: [rtames@hawaii.edu](mailto:rtames@hawaii.edu).

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to reinstate this important sensibility.<sup>1</sup> Now that we know more, we can, for example, better appreciate the central role of concrete family feeling as the very ground (*nei* 內) of classical Confucian moral philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

But there is a second important opportunity that the newly recovered documents provide. Beyond what is new in them, these same materials can be used to qualify, corroborate, and reiterate perhaps old but still undervalued insights into the interpretive context within which we construct our understanding of early China. One hugely important example is when the distinguished French sinologist Marcel Granet observes rather starkly that “Chinese wisdom has no need of the idea of God.”<sup>3</sup> This characterization of classical Chinese philosophy has had many iterations, albeit in different formulations, by many of our most prominent sinologists both Chinese and Western alike. Indeed, our best interpreters of classical Chinese philosophy are explicit in rejecting the idea that Chinese cosmology begins from some independent, transcendent principle and entails the metaphysical reality/appearance distinction and the plethora of dualistic categories that arise from such a worldview.<sup>4</sup>

1. Guodian Chumu zhujian 郭店楚墓竹簡, ed. Jingmenshi bowuguan 荊門市博物館 (Peking: Wenwu chubanshe, 1994), 179–84 and *Shanghai bowuguan cang zhangguo Chuzhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書, ed. Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), vol. 1, 217–79.

2. The passage in *Analects* 1.2 comes immediately to mind: 其為人孝弟，而好犯上者，鮮矣；不好犯上，而好作亂者，未之有也。君子務本，本立而道生。孝弟也者，其為仁之本與。 “It is a rare thing for someone who has a sense of family reverence and fraternal deference (*xiaoti* 孝悌) to have a taste for defying authority. And it is unheard of for those who have no taste for defying authority to be keen on initiating rebellion. Exemplary persons concentrate their efforts on the root, for the root having taken hold, the proper way will grow therefrom. As for family reverence and fraternal deference, it is, I suspect, the root of consummate conduct (*ren* 仁).” Adapted from Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr., trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 1998) that includes the critical text from *Lun yu zhuzi suoyin* 論語逐字索引, A Concordance to the *Lun yu*: The ICS Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995).

3. Marcel Granet, *La pensée chinoise* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1934), 478.

4. See Tang Junyi 唐君毅, “Zhongguo zhexuezhong ziran yuzhouguan zhi tezhi” 中國哲學中自然宇宙觀之特質, in his *Zhongxi zhixue sixiang zhi bijiao lunwenji* 中西哲學思想之比較論文集 (Taipei: Xuesheng, 1988), 100–103; Xiong Shili 熊十力, *Mingxin pian* 明心篇 (Taipei: Xuesheng, 1977), 180–91; Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀, *Zhishi yu wenhua: Zhang Dongsun wenhua lunzhu jiyao* 知識與文化：張東蓀文化論著輯要, ed. Zhang Yaonan 張耀南 (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi, 1995), 271–72; Angus C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), 22; Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), vol. 2, 290; Nathan Sivin, *Medicine, Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China: Researches and Reflections* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1995), 3; Chad Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 215; Norman J. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: The Theme of Chaos (Hun-tun)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 64.

The philosophical implications of this seemingly offhand observation are fundamental and pervasive. One consequence of taking this insight into Chinese cosmology seriously is that it enables us to disambiguate some of the central philosophical vocabulary of classical Chinese philosophy by identifying equivocations that emerge when we elide classical Greek cosmological assumptions with those indigenous to the classical Chinese worldview. We will find that an important corollary to the absence of “God” in Chinese cosmology is the need for a different language in thinking about issues as basic as cosmic origins, the source of meaning in the world, and the nature of creativity itself. In fact, the recently recovered Guodian materials provide us with both the resources and the occasion to revisit three related cosmological issues: What is distinctive about classical Chinese cosmology and its notion of origins? What is the Chinese alternative to the assumptions about our own familiar *creatio ex nihilo* source of meaning? And how is “creativity” expressed in the Chinese philosophical vocabulary?

I want to pursue a second thesis in this essay. On the basis of the resolutely correlative and collateral assumptions that I will argue ground early Chinese cosmology, I want to suggest that classical philosophical texts are best understood when their resonances with one another are taken into account. To illustrate this point, I will begin from the cosmology made explicit in the Guodian *Daode jing* 道德經 materials—a cosmology that I will suggest has immediate relevance for the early texts as a largely shared commonsense—and then try to demonstrate the relevance of this cosmology to the evolving Confucian tradition by locating the central Confucian notion of harmony (*he* 和) within this prevailing worldview.

Further, as important as the answers to these questions might be for clarifying the vocabulary of classical Chinese cosmology, Granet’s observation that there is no transcendentalism in the classical Chinese assumptions about cosmic order pays an even greater philosophical dividend. Beyond alerting us to the need for a fundamentally different interpretive context as a precondition for taking the Chinese philosophical vocabulary on its own terms, this insight speaks to the more basic question of why Chinese philosophy might at this particular historical moment provide a salutary intervention in the Western philosophical narrative. That is, in this classical Chinese worldview there is an alternative nuanced and sophisticated processual way of thinking about cosmology that can respond, at least in degree, to the internal critique of transcendentalism that is taking place within the still Eurocentric discipline of philosophy itself as described below. Simply put, with the present surge of interest in A.N. Whitehead and particularly the American pragmatists, this newly emerging Western version of process philosophy as

it matures within our own philosophical culture can with profit draw sustenance and critique from a tradition that has been doing a form of process philosophy since the beginning of its recorded history.

To rehearse the recent breakthrough in our own philosophical tradition, in the wake of Charles Darwin's own great cultural revolution,<sup>5</sup> John Dewey regarded an uncritical commitment to transcendentalism in any of its various forms to be one bit of faulty reasoning that has been so persistently exercised by the philosophical elite that he dubbed this particular *deformation professionnelle* "the philosophical fallacy."<sup>6</sup> Simply put, the philosophical fallacy is committed whenever the outcome of a process is presumed to be antecedent to that process. Dewey from early on saw as "the most pervasive fallacy of philosophical thinking" the error of ignoring the historical, developmental, and contextualizing aspects of experience. The methodological problem as he saw it is "the abstracting of some one element from the organism which gives it meaning, and setting it up as absolute" and then proceeding to revere this one element "as the cause and ground of all reality and knowledge."<sup>7</sup> Such a problem arises in any and all of the many variations on the One-behind-the-many metaphysics—the many different names for "God"—in which some ostensive "principle" is identified, isolated, and abstracted from the flow of experience, and is then used anachronistically and reduplicatively to rationalize an always emergent history. Suffice to say that the philosophical fallacy is encountered anytime the *terminus ad quem* is placed before the *terminus a quo*—that is, whenever the outcome of a process is presumed to be antecedent to that process. Dewey's point is that philosophers, empiricists and rationalists alike, have long been asking the ahistorical question: "Why I wonder were so many civil war battles fought in national parks?"

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5. Daniel C. Dennett in his *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 21–22, is categorical in his evaluation of the power of Darwin's idea, not only for the discipline of philosophy, but both constructively and deconstructively, for Western culture in its broadest possible terms: "Let me lay my cards on the table. If I were to give an award for the single best idea anyone has ever had, I'd give it to Darwin, ahead of Newton and Einstein and everyone else. In a single stroke, the idea of evolution by natural selection unifies the realm of life, meaning, and purpose with the realm of space and time, cause and effect, mechanism and physical law. But it is not just a wonderful scientific idea. It is a dangerous idea.... There are many more magnificent ideas that are also jeopardized, it seems, by Darwin's idea, and they, too, may need protection."

6. John Dewey, *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882–1898*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston, 5 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1969–72), vol. 1, 162. For the history, development, and the context of "the philosophical fallacy," see James Tiles, *Dewey* (London: Routledge, 1988), 19–24.

7. Dewey, *Early Works*, vol. 1, 162.

As on almost every other issue, of course, philosophers are likely to disagree as to precisely when the conditions leading to the commission of *the* philosophical fallacy obtain. A strong ontological disposition, sustained by a distinction between the orders of knowing and of being, will suggest that it is always appropriate to place “Being” before the beings of the world through which it is made manifest. The Thomist teleologist might find in some “far off Divine event” the ground as well as the goal of understanding, while the Millsean liberal might perhaps anticipate the perfectibility of the “ready-made” human being in the actualization of a given individuated potential.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, we philosophers are urged by the responsibilities of our office to warn against all fallacious forms of reasoning. But like the preacher who, come Monday morning, commits the very sins he railed against the day before, we are ourselves rarely delivered from the idols of the mind. Sometimes this fallacy is overlooked by polite conspiracy—as when we allow the author of a book to call the last pages to be written the “Preface,” or when we give the name “Presocratic philosophers” to those who in some seemingly necessary way anticipated the questions that would preoccupy the agora’s barefoot philosopher. In such cases, the fallacy seems both innocent and harmless.

Moreover, given the extreme difficulty of avoiding this fallacious bit of reasoning, we may even find some justification in overlooking it, for, as William James observes: “We live forwards, a Danish thinker has said, but we understand backwards.”<sup>9</sup> Still, one of the more pernicious of the many instances of *the* philosophical fallacy involves the kind of anachronism that reads history narrowly backwards from a given theoretical construct, finding at the origins of an historical narrative what in fact is merely one of the reflective fruits of that narrative. Such are the prejudices of teleological historiographies: Marxist, Hegelian, Christian, and indeed Scientific. This is not only one of the more damaging forms taken by this fallacy, it is also one of the most

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8. Even human nature is not exempt from process. John Dewey, *The Political Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1933), 223–24, in presenting his understanding of human nature uses John Stuart Mill’s individualism as his foil. He cites Mill at length, who claims that “all phenomena of society are phenomena of human nature”; that is, “human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from and may be resolved into the laws of the nature of individual man.” For Dewey, discussion of the fixed structure of human nature independent of particular social conditions is a non-starter because it “does not explain in the least the differences that mark off one tribe, family, people, from another—which is to say that in and of itself it explains no state of society whatever.”

9. William James cites Søren Kierkegaard in *Pragmatism and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 98.

difficult to avoid. After all, if one is to achieve any coherence in the construction of an historical narrative, one must appeal to some pattern of meanings, and to then ascribe necessity to that pattern can elevate it to become the worthy object of systematic knowledge.

In any event, what Dewey long ago termed *the* philosophical fallacy has indeed become the philosophical issue of our day. The internal critique continues to be waged against *the* philosophical fallacy within professional Western philosophy under the many banners of hermeneutics, neo-pragmatism, neo-Marxism, deconstructionism, post-modernism, feminist philosophy, and so on, that take as a shared target what Robert Solomon has called “the transcendental pretense”—*the* philosophical fallacy expressed as idealism, objectivism, rationalism, materialism, volitionalism, teleology, empiricism, absolutism, logocentrism, the master narrative, the myth of the given—so many of the familiar reductionistic “isms” that have been the putatively novel choices in switching horses on the merry-go-round of systematic philosophy.

When we ask what is at risk in perpetuating *the* philosophical fallacy, there is much more at stake than the misinterpretation of the classical Chinese philosophical tradition. Threatened is the notion of process itself—development, education, creativity, particularity, temporality, history—what Henry Rosemont would call “the real hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, ideas, and attitudes of flesh-and-blood human beings.”<sup>10</sup> For Darwin, Dewey, and for Rosemont too, the human being is a social achievement, an adaptive success made possible through the applications of social intelligence. Given the reality of change, this success is always provisional, leaving us as incomplete, interim creatures with the always new challenge of contingent circumstances. And yet this success is progressive and programmatic. “We *use* our past experiences to construct new and better ones in the future.”<sup>11</sup> The danger recognized by both Dewey and Rosemont is that the selection and privileging of one factor out of many to rationalize the human experience is usually not innocent. In fact, it is often the concealed weapon of some form of intellectual, political, or religious hegemony attempting to exercise its superiority over other possible claims.

The crux of this rather lengthy preamble is that in spite of a conscious awareness of the inappropriateness of insinuating “God” into our understanding of ancient Chinese philosophy, we still willy-nilly proceed to do

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10. Henry Rosemont Jr., ed., *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1991), 62–63.

11. John Dewey, *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899–1924*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston, 15 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976–83), vol. 12, 134.

just that. Given the entrenched status of *the* philosophical fallacy in our own cosmology and the absence of any clear articulated alternative to it, we quickly lose sight of what is distinctive about classical Chinese cosmology and its sense of “origins,” and revert to old ways of thinking. Said another way, this transcendentalism—the appeal to some ultimate, independent, self-contained, absolute source—has not only been influential as a cultural dominant in the way in which we are inclined to think about our own origins, but has quite naturally colored our best readings of those cultural traditions that we would interpret, including classical China. Particularly, with the responsibility of interpreting Daoist notions of cosmogony for the Western academy, if we fail to make it clear that we are *not* ascribing a metaphysical *creatio ex nihilo* understanding of cosmogony to this tradition by providing guidance to some alternative reading, I expect that many, if not most of our students and readers will tacitly default to this understanding.

How can reflecting on the newly excavated texts in such a way as to reinstate the process sensibility assist in clarifying Chinese cosmology? In the 1993 Guodian find, a partial *Laozi* 老子 in 71 slips was found in three distinct bundles. The document that has been titled *Taiyi shengshui* 太一生水 (*The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*) from its opening phrase comprises 14 of these slips. Physically, in the length of the bamboo slips, in the cord markings, in general appearance, and in calligraphic style, these slips are indistinguishable from the other slips in the *Laozi* C bundle. Although these slips have been treated as a separate document by the editors initially responsible for the reconstruction of the Guodian texts, this has been done solely on the basis of content, using the extant *Daode jing* as a principle of exclusion. These same scholars allow that, as a material artifact, it is an integral part of *Laozi* C.<sup>12</sup>

We can ask, then, what is the relationship between *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* and *Laozi* C? It is particularly interesting that this document in the present sequencing of the seven units that constitute *Laozi* C follows immediately on a version of the second half of chapter 64 that contains the phrase:

是以聖人……能輔萬物之自然而弗敢為。

Therefore the sages ... are quite capable of helping things follow their own course, but they would not presume to do so.

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12. *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998*, edited by Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams (Berkeley: The Institute of East Asian Studies, 2000), 247–57.



This phrase allows that in Daoist cosmology, even though the wisest and most accomplished human beings are able to assist in the way in which the myriad of events unfold, they would not think of interfering with the spontaneous emergence of things.

First, as D.C. Lau has pointed out, a familiar signal of textual coherence in the classical corpus is the repetition of characters.<sup>13</sup> In fact, we can link up all of the seven units of *Laozi C* by appealing to this method of character association. In particular, the character *fu* 輔 (“to help”) that appears in the chapter 64 phrase cited above occurs eight times in the opening paragraph of *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*.

Further, this second half of chapter 64 is significant as the only piece of text that appears twice in the recovered Guodian *Daode jing*, once in bundle A and again in bundle C. The two versions of this portion of chapter 64 are markedly different, and in fact, one key point of divergence is that the phrase describing the reticence of the sages to override cosmic spontaneity cited above appears in the *Laozi A* as:

是以聖人……能輔萬物之自然而弗能為。

Therefore the sages ... are quite capable of helping things follow their own course, but *they are not able to do so*.

This version of the text is problematic. The idea found in the *Laozi C* version that the sages would not presume to interfere in the natural processes (*fuganwei* 弗敢為) is more consistent with the general tenor of the *Daode jing* than the unprecedented claim that they are unable to do so (*funengwei* 弗能為). We can speculate then that if *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* is not an integral part of the *Daode jing* at this point in its evolution, it is at the very least an explanatory commentary on a revised and improved version of chapter 64.

Sarah Allan has published a summary interpretive article of researches into *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* that brings together and evaluates the best historical and textual commentary of both Chinese and Western scholars, and that offers many of her own original insights into how we should read this difficult fragment.<sup>14</sup> One intriguing suggestion that Allan takes up once again in this essay is that the “focal meaning” and “root metaphor” of *dao* 道 is waterway rather than roadway, with roadway being a more derivative meaning.

13. D.C. Lau, *Chinese Classics: Tao Te Ching* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1982), 135.

14. Sarah Allan, “The Great One, Water, and the *Laozi*: New Light from Guodian,” in *T'oung Pao* 89 (2003), 237–85.



My small contribution here is to take a synoptic look at how *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* enables us to understand Daoist cosmogony broadly, and to try to make explicit what this cosmogony is, and what it is not. Within the wholeness of lived experience called *dao*, I will focus on the centrality of particularity, temporality, collateral relationality, and productive indeterminacy as persistent defining features of Daoist cosmology. I will argue that by taking these features seriously, we will be able to avoid a common equivocation between “One” in the familiar sense of God, and the “One that is both one and many” that is *dao*.

We can fairly say that *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* is now the earliest record of Chinese cosmogony that we have. It not only sheds important light on other brief and suggestive cosmogonic allusions that we find in the received *Daode jing* (especially chapters 25, 39, 42, 51, and 52), but at least in part resonates rather explicitly with the language of these same chapters.

In *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*, the Ancestral One (*taiyi* 太一) is identified as the first among the defining terms in the Daoist cosmology, and many if not most commentators follow the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 in taking it to be a euphemism for *dao*.<sup>15</sup> the unsummed totality of emerging experience, including the limitless and as yet indeterminate possibilities entailed by it. In this cosmology, the Ancestral One is followed by the heavens and the earth, the spiritual and the numinous, the *yin* 陰 and the *yang* 陽, the four seasons, the hot and the cold, the wet and the dry, and finally and importantly, culminates in the annual cycle. In the continuing emergence of the world, all of these correlated elements constituting the cosmos collaborate to produce each other and the totality.

The Ancestral One, far from being a transcendent, ordering principle—a single source—that stands independent of the world it produces, is described as being coterminous with this world, is hidden within it, and circulates everywhere throughout it. While the Ancestral One gives birth to the waters, it also lies hidden in them, and these same waters collaterally assist it in giving birth to the heavens and the earth. This irreducible collaterality—water and the Ancestral One together producing the heavens, and the heavens and the Ancestral One together producing the earth, and so on—has been emphasized by Li Ling, Pang Pu, and others in their interpretations of this text.<sup>16</sup>

The contemporary philosopher Pang Pu, in explaining “procreating” *sheng* 生, makes an illuminating distinction between “*paisheng*” 派生 in

15. *Lüshi chunqiu* (Zhuzi jicheng 諸子集成 ed.), 5.46 (“Da yue”).

16. Allan and Williams, *Guodian Laozi*, 165.

the sense of one thing giving birth to an independent existent, like a hen producing an egg or an oak tree producing an acorn, and “*huasheng*” 化生 as one thing transforming into something else, like summer becoming autumn.<sup>17</sup> In a strict *paisheng* “derivation” sensibility, the egg goes on to become another hen, and the acorn to become another oak tree, whereas when combined with the *huasheng* “transmutation” sensibility, most eggs become omelets and most acorns, squirrels. Pang Pu goes on to say:

After *taiyi* gives birth to the waters, neither are the waters something external to *taiyi* nor *taiyi* to the waters. *Taiyi* is thus hidden away in the waters, and the waters are the continuity of the life of *taiyi*.<sup>18</sup>

Both of these senses of “procreating” are relevant to Daoist cosmology. Importantly, the discreteness and independence entailed by *paisheng* is qualified by the processual and contextual assumptions of *huasheng*, and the processual continuity of *huasheng* is punctuated as unique “events” by the consummatory nature of *paisheng*. Neither uniqueness nor continuity will yield to the other. The notion of intrinsic relationality that allows for the uniqueness and distinctiveness of particular things on the one hand, and for the continuity that obtains among them on the other, disqualifies part-whole analysis and requires instead a gestalt shift to focus-field thinking in which “part” and “totality” are two non-analytic foregrounding and backgrounding perspectives on the same phenomenon.<sup>19</sup>

In pursuing this distinction between “derivation” and “transformation,” Pang Pu is alerting us to a further refinement in our understanding of the relationship between what comes before and what follows in the ongoing process. While we might be inclined to understand the progenitor/progeny genealogy as a series in which there is an independence of the latter from the former, early Chinese cosmology on reflection is clearly a combination of both *paisheng* and *huasheng*, taking the progenitor as giving way to *this* unique progeny, but at the same time, as having the same progenitor proliferating and living on within its progeny. Indeed, there seems to be a stronger sense of the

17. Pang Pu 龐樸, “Yizhong youji de yuzhou shengcheng tushi: Jieshao Chu jian Taiyi shengshui” 一種有機的宇宙生成圖式: 介紹楚簡《太一生水》, *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 道家文化研究 17 (1999), 303.

18. Pang Pu (1999), 303.

19. For a discussion of this focus-field model, see David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Anticipating China: Thinking through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 242–44, 268–78 and *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), 23–78.

genealogical continuity where the progeny is to be understood as the foregrounding of this particular and unique focus in a continuing stream of procreation. One's family surname is the first and continuing source of identity, while one's given name (*ming* 名) proliferates with assumed style names (*zi* 字), sobriquets (*hao* 號), and a web of specific family designations even in the course of one's lifetime, and posthumous titles (*shi* 諡) after it—a reflection of the unique contribution one endeavors to make to family and community.

Importantly, in this transformative process, time is inseparable from the emerging world. Indeed, time is the very propensity of the world to transform itself. And self-transformation is made possible by the penumbra of indeterminacy that always surrounds and qualifies *dao* as all that is, *wanwu* 萬物. We shall see that *dao*, far from being understood as some ultimate, determinate One, is by virtue of this indeterminacy, one and many at the same time. In this cosmology, neither time nor relationality will be denied.

Allan rehearses Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 association between *taiyi* and the Pole Star.<sup>20</sup> *Taiyi* as the Pole Star constitutes the fixed centerpiece on the cosmograph (*shi* 式), a popular mantic board that provides the diviner with an idealized cosmology. Allan cites Chris Cullen who insists that this cosmograph is "primarily concerned with the heavens as the source of a series of events ordered in time rather than as a spatially integrated whole."<sup>21</sup> This means I think that any sense of the *taiyi* as "fixed" has to be qualified by its irrevocable relationality and temporality. For example, if we appeal as Allan does to the *Analects* 論語 2.1 in our attempt to understand this kind of fixity, the point of this passage is not that the Pole Star is itself unmoving, but rather that in its relation to the other stars, it provides a relatively stationary bearing for their movement.<sup>22</sup> This same point is also made when Confucius observes that "only the wisest and the most stupid do not move" 唯上知與下愚不移.<sup>23</sup> It is certainly not the case that the wisest do not continue to learn and grow—indeed, we have to remember that it is the wise that enjoy the vitality of water 知者樂水.<sup>24</sup> But relative to their community,

20. Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Taiyi sheng shui de shushu jieshi" 太一生水的數術解釋, in *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 道家文化研究 17 (1999), 298–99.

21. Christopher Cullen, *Astronomy and Mathematics in Ancient China: The Zhou bi suan jing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 44.

22. *Analects* 2.1: 為政以德，譬如北辰。居其所，而眾星共之。 "Governing with excellence can be compared to being the North Star: the North Star dwells in its place, and the multitude of stars pay it tribute."

23. *Analects* 17.3.

24. *Analects* 6.23.

those deemed the wisest serve as a constant, regulative beacon that provides a bearing for the conduct of others.

In fact, taking this omnipresent correlativity one step further, we must appreciate the importance of the indeterminate, transformative aspect of *dao*. Daoist cosmogony does not entail the kind of radical initial beginning from a single source we associate with those metaphysical cosmogonies that describe the triumph of Order over Chaos. In fact, the *Zhuangzi*'s 莊子 well-known account of the death of Lord Hundun 混沌—often translated unfortunately as Lord Chaos, but perhaps better rendered positively as Lord Spontaneity—provides a rather strong Daoist objection to such a “One-behind-the-many” reading:

北海之帝為忽，南海之帝為儻，中央之帝為渾沌。儻與忽時相遇於混沌之地，渾沌待之甚善。儻與忽謀報渾沌之德，曰：人皆有七竅，以視聽食息。此獨無有。嘗試鑿之。日鑿一竅，七日而混沌死。

The ruler of the North Sea was “Swift,” the ruler of the South Sea was “Sudden,” and the ruler of the Center was “Hundun, or Spontaneity.” Lords Swift and Sudden had on several occasions encountered each other in the territory of Lord Spontaneity, and Spontaneity had treated them with great hospitality. Swift and Sudden, devising a way to repay Spontaneity's generosity, remarked that: “Everyone has seven orifices through which they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. Spontaneity alone is without them.” They then attempted to bore holes in Spontaneity, each day boring one hole. On the seventh day, Spontaneity died.<sup>25</sup>

But why according to the *Zhuangzi* should one not wish to bring order out of *hundun*?<sup>26</sup> A reasonable question, indeed, if *hundun* is the confusion and disarray—the formless surds—that other cosmogonies describe as a primordial Chaos. But if on the contrary *hundun* is the integral indeterminacy necessary for the spontaneous emergence of novelty that honeycombs all construals of order in a continuing present, then the imposition of order upon it means the death of self-reconstrual and the novelty that attends it. Important here is that *hundun* is a partner in the continuing production of significance rather than some independent primordial source. And it is the collaboration of *hundun* as Spontaneity with Swift and Sudden that makes the life-experience hospitable,

25. *Zhuangzi* 21.7.33; cf. Angus C. Graham, trans., *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 98–99, and Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 97.

26. In fact, in the commentary that the translator James Legge appends to his early English translation of the *Zhuangzi*, he opines: “But surely it is better that Chaos should give place to another state. ‘Heedless’ and ‘Sudden’ did not do a bad work.” See Legge, *The Texts of Taoism, Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1891), 267.

deliciously uncertain and in degree, unpredictable. To privilege any given design—any particular teleology—is simply selecting one of a myriad candidates for order and enforcing that one design over the rest. Swift and Sudden have, to the world's and their own detriment, transformed the unsummed and causally non-coherent *dao* into a single-ordered world. In fact, not only have they killed Lord Hundun, they have for all intents and purposes, committed suicide.

Instead of invoking the language of initial beginnings and some independent efficient cause, *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*, in a way consistent with the *Daode jing* broadly with its pervasive mothering and birthing metaphors, describes natal beginnings in an ongoing cycle of autogenerative reproduction. *Taiyi*, as “the mother (*mu* 母) of all things,” is in one sense “female,” but neither “female” as opposed to “male” nor “mother” as opposed to “offspring.” Instead, *Taiyi* is the impregnated and thus fecund female: the convergence of male and female described in *Daode jing* 28: “Know the male yet safeguard the female and be a river gorge to the world” 知其雄守其雌為天下谿。And the child is the living continuation of the parents as implicated in the mother. It is because of this natal sensibility that I have followed Allan's suggestion that *taiyi* as *dayi* 大一 entails a strong sense of progenitor, and have thus translated it as “the Ancestral One.” This genealogical cycle of reproduction is defined in terms of the mutuality of opposites: rising and then falling, advancing and then returning, waxing full and then waning empty. In this cycle, the workings of the world favor the transformation into new life as the process brings existing growth to culmination and closure.<sup>27</sup>

Where the account of these beginnings looks least like our own classical cosmogony is that the combination of temporality and the spontaneous emergence of novelty make any rational structures that we have available for naming or explaining experience always provisional, and eventually, obsolete. Process requires an ongoing reformulation of our terms of understanding. This point is made in slips 10–13, a problematic passage that invokes a difference between “proper name” (*ming* 名) and “style name” (*zi* 字). Like everyone else, I have my own reading of this probably corrupt passage, but on the basis of this familiar distinction between name as *ming* and *zi*, and as *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* explains, there is an important reason for why the “style

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27. Li Ling 李零, Sarah Allan, Xing Wen 邢文, and others in the discussion of *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* at the 1998 Dartmouth Conference made much of the cyclical nature of the creative process. See Allan and Williams, *Guodian Laozi*, 162–71.

name" *dao* is used rather than the more familiar conventional "names" such as "soil" and "air."

According to *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*, we could just as well call these ongoing processes "soil and air," or "the world," or use other familiar conventional names we have for describing the life-experience that goes on around us. Such names are referential and specific, and communicate a communally shared meaning. They are the names by means of which a determinate past lives on. But instead on occasion we follow the sages in using *dao*, a more tentative and even obscure "style name." Why?

A "style name" is anticipatory, prospective, programmatic, and self-defining—it is revealing of what I want to become. Those sages who have been successful in the past have invoked this term *dao* in framing their own best efforts, and have associated their persons and their accomplishments with it. And those who would aspire to accord with *dao* as defined by the sages have no choice but to follow suit. They must proceed "in the 'name' of *dao*"—a way of being in the world made articulate by these cultural heroes. Other language that is too familiar and well established does not evoke the necessary sense of venturing beyond our known world that is required for creative advance. We might say that the name (*ming* 名) looks backward, while the style name (*zi* 字) looks forward. It is in this sense that *dao* does not have a proper name. With its attendant indeterminacy, it brings with it the assumption that we are trying with imagination to think outside the box (*fangwai* 方外). We are probing a realm beyond our present categories which as yet has no theoretical or conceptual limits. Thus, it is the very vagueness, indeterminacy, and openness of *dao* that recommends it as a term of art.

How does this reading of *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* assist in clarifying classical Daoist cosmogony? We might apply what we learn from this document to an explanation of *Daode jing* 42. In fact, interpretations of passages in the classical Chinese canons like this one abound that either assume or ascribe explicitly a "One-source-behind-the-many" origin to the cosmos, construing it as a rather clear case of our familiar *creatio ex nihilo* cosmogony. *Daode jing* 42 states:

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。

*Dao* engenders one,  
One, two,  
Two, three,  
And three, the myriad things.

I would suggest that any purely cosmogonic interpretation of this passage that offends against its process sensibility is impoverishing of its profundity. We must begin from what Whitehead calls “the Ontological principle”—the complex notion of an ontological parity of finitude that gives all things an equal claim on being real—that we might alternatively term “a realistic pluralism.”<sup>28</sup> This principle is an affirmation of the reality of any thing as it is constituted by the harmony of its constitutive relations, whether it be each and every thing, each and every kind of thing, or the unsummed totality of things. This assumption then provides at least three different perspectives from which this passage can be read.

Synchronically this *Daode jing* 42 passage can be understood particularistically as a polysemous way of looking at and describing each of the unique and persistent events (*wanwu*) that are occurring in a continuing present by reference to a radial range of correlations. Mary is a daughter, a teacher, an American, a human being, a sentient being, a cosmic entity. That is, any particular thing or event has many interpretations, depending upon the relationship and perspective of the interpreter. Diachronically, the passage can also be read as a way of looking at the emergence of any persistent particular thing. The growth of anything is the movement from what is at first an inchoate beginning to a proliferating manifold of relationships with relevance to an expanding radius of other things. Similarly, any category or species as a general kind of thing—humankind, for example—moves from its initial beginning toward consummation, dispersal, and transformation.

And *Daode jing* 42 can also be read in reverse and holistically as a description of the emerging consummatory, phasal awareness of the unsummed totality in which all things participate over their careers. Each of the myriad of things gives rise to three—an awareness of their past, present, and future, or their here, there, and beyond—that in turn gives rise to two—an awareness of their focal selves and their contextualizing field, or their determinate and indeterminate aspects—that in turn gives rise to one—an awareness of the oneness of cosmic continuity and belonging—to *dao*—an awareness of ontological parity of the uniqueness and of the plurality of each interpenetrating and unbounded particular.

I want to insist that all of these descriptions are necessarily entertained from a perspective internal to the process itself, and thus entail *creatio in situ* rather than *ex nihilo* sensibilities—a situated and relational creative advance rather than the creation of an independent something out of

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28. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 356.



nothing. One cycle of growth, complexity, and transformation culminates only to give birth to a new one. A newborn child is constituted by a unique and complex locus of both intimate and increasingly distant relations that reach back and out as a continuing family lineage. And in the fullness of time, this child of his progenitors will both become uniquely who is and will become someone else in the faces of his own progeny.

One way of justifying this *creatio in situ* reading of the unique and persistent particular is to appeal to what Tang Junyi takes as a generic feature of the Chinese processual cosmology:<sup>29</sup> “the inseparability of the one and the many, of uniqueness and multivalence, of continuity and multiplicity, of integrity and integration” (*yiduo bufenguan* 一多不分觀).<sup>30</sup> What Tang Junyi means by this expression is that if we begin our reflection on the emergence of cosmic order from the wholeness of lived experience, we can view this experience in terms of both its dynamic continuities and its manifold multiplicity, as both a processual flow and as distinct consummatory events. It is one more example of the mutual implication of opposites that characterizes all phenomena in the natural world—in this case, particularity and the totality. That is, any particular phenomenon in our field of experience can be focused in as many different ways: on the one hand, it is a unique and persistent particular, and, on the other, it has the entire cosmos and all that is happening implicated within its own particular pattern of relationships. To capture this cosmological insight we might translate this same *Daode jing* passage as:

Way-making (*dao*) gives rise to the notion of one: continuity, determinacy, and uniqueness,  
 Continuity, determinacy, and uniqueness (one) gives rise to the notion of two: contrast, indeterminacy, and correlation,  
 Contrast, indeterminacy, and correlation (two) gives rise to the notion of three: plurality and diversity,  
 And plurality and diversity (three) gives rise to the notion of a proliferation of everything that is happening (*wanwu*).

Key to this passage is the priority of *dao* to the very ambiguous notion of “one”—which means at once a disjunctive determinacy and a conjunctive continuity. Persons, for example, are “one” both in their unique individuality and in the unbroken continuity they have with their environing others, and yet their unique individuality is constituted by a divided and sometimes conflicted “multiplicity” of relations—a

29. Tang Junyi, “Zhongguo yuzhouguan,” 9 defines this processual cosmology as “ceaselessly proliferating” (*shengsheng buxi* 生生不息).

30. Tang Junyi “Zhongguo yuzhouguan,” 16.

field of selves—through which their many personas are manifested: someone's parent and someone else's child, someone's colleague and someone else's stranger, someone's teacher and someone else's student, someone's lover and someone else's adversary. And the entire field of experience in all of its plurality is focused uniquely as it is construed from each particular perspective. It is this complex nature of relatedness—at once one and many—that is expressed in this passage when it is read "cosmologically." It gives an account of the generic features of how things hang together in the process of lived experience rather than providing a more familiar, derivative "One-behind-the-many" cosmogony.

But cosmogony, albeit of a *creatio in situ* kind, also has a role in this cosmological reading itself. First, from the perspective of any particular thing or any particular kind of thing, the process is punctuated and consummatory. We each individually live the seasons of our lives. But the spontaneous emergence of novelty in the fullness of time will overwhelm any rational strategies we might have as individuals and as a species for understanding and explaining the process. Hence, as we try to understand the human past by applying our present interpretive categories, this past becomes increasingly indeterminate the further back we go, gradually taking on the amorphous character that we have generally associated with accounts of initial beginnings. Here, however, such indeterminacy is not revealing of "initial" beginnings, but rather of the limitations engendered by the anachronism of our present interpretive categories.

Further, the emergent totality itself as a particular observed from within the process is also of a phasal and consummatory nature, moving forward like the four seasons from the inchoate stirrings in the undifferentiated darkness of winter to the burgeoning profusion of spring to the golden ripeness of autumn, then retreating back again into a seemingly hibernating suspension of determinacy, only to begin again: growth, consummation, dispersal, transformation. Significantly, the account of *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* giving birth to the world concludes with the culminating of the yearly cycle. Rather than a doctrine of initial beginnings, *dao* is a never-ending story of cosmic cycles in which living "beginnings" express the potent energy of transformation that emerges from within. As suggested above, the language of beginning is natal, as is reflected in the notion *shi* 始, comprised as it is of woman and womb, or even more explicitly as fecund mother (*mu* 母)<sup>31</sup> and inseminating sire (*fu* 父).<sup>32</sup> Beginnings

31. See *Daode jing* chapters 1, 20, 25, 52.

32. See *Daode jing* chapter 21.

are articulatory with *chu* 初, denoting the cutting and styling of clothes as they are tailored and emerge out of whole cloth, or are organic, as in the *sheng* 生 of *shengsheng buxi* 生生不息, meaning not only “birth” but irrepressible “life” and “growth.” Beginnings are not discrete “origins” per se, but situated beginnings that produce meaning out of the proliferation of consummating particulars and by the productive relationships that are entailed by this increased differentiation.

*The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*—particularly in its exposition on *dao*—provides us with an insight into how “creativity” is expressed in this early Chinese philosophical vocabulary. A failure to realize the fact that the rhetorical and the philosophical are not dichotomized in the classical Chinese tradition has in degree obscured its assumption that language changes the world, leading Carine Defoort to argue for a reconsideration of the perceived force of language in prompting a desired outcome.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, a persistent theme in the Chinese philosophical corpus that gives any assumption that it lacks a rhetorical tradition the lie, is the assumed “ontology” of language itself—a sustained exhortation that language must be constantly adjusted (*zhengming* 正名) and used circumspectly because the way we “name” (*ming* 名) things “commands” (*ming* 命) a world so-named into being. The fertility of language, like the fertility of *dao* as “speaking,” lies in the indeterminacy that attends it, allowing as it does for *ars contextualis*: the art of recontextualizing. *Zhengming* is the ongoing redefining of our terms of explanation through semantic and phonetic associations. This process is more productively understood as “paranomasia”—a prospective reconstruing of the contextualizing conditions of any situation to produce additional meaning that would allow us to also call something by “another name.” This liquid is certainly “water” that irrigates plants and produces life, but it is also a resource that with ingenuity has become “fuel” for our engines. This process certainly begins from a careful mapping out of names as they have been used—that is, a retrospective “rectification of names”—but it also requires the imagination to use language effectively in an ever-changing world.

In our translation of the *Zhongyong* 中庸, David Hall and I have made explicit what the commentarial tradition on this text suggests in arguing that *cheng* 誠 in certain contexts in this text and in the *Mencius* too can be appropriately parsed as “creativity.”<sup>34</sup> Not only *cheng*, but the

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33. Carine Defoort, *The Pheasant Cap Master: A Rhetorical Reading* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

34. See Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press,

*footnote continued on next page*

gerundive language that is used to describe the unfolding of the human narrative more generally shares in this creative dimension. *Dao* 道, for example, is not only simply the “way,” but is “way-making” (*dao* 導). As the *Zhuangzi* says so elegantly, “The way is made in the walking” 道行之而成.<sup>35</sup>

How are these features of early Daoist cosmology, then, specifically relevant to the Confucian sensibilities? As I said at the outset, I want to try to demonstrate the relevance of this Daoist cosmology to the evolving Confucian tradition by locating the central Confucian notion of harmony (*he*) within this prevailing worldview. As we can see, the Confucian philosophical vocabulary also entails a sense of creativity that can be described in terms of particularity, temporality, collateral relationality, and productive indeterminacy. In Pang Pu’s first study on *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*, he cites a passage from the *Book of Ritual Propriety* (*Liji* 禮記) as the basis for his claim that there is an explicit relationship between *dayi* 大一 or *taiyi* as described in *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*, and the key Confucian notion of ritual propriety (*li* 禮):

是故夫禮，必本於大一，分而為天地，轉而為陰陽，變而為四時，列而為鬼神。

Hence, as for ritual propriety, it certainly has its roots in the Ancestral One. Dividing, it becomes the heavens and the earth, turning it becomes *yin* and *yang*, changing it becomes the four seasons, separating it becomes the ghosts and spirits.<sup>36</sup>

And as we learn from the *Analects* 1.12 禮之用，和為貴, “the achieving of harmony is the most valuable function of observing ritual propriety.”

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2001), 30–35, for our justification for translating *cheng* as “creativity” along with the commentarial evidence that supports such a rendering. Commentators late and soon have repeatedly defined *cheng* as “ceaselessness” and “continuity itself,” and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) in *Sishu jizhu* 四書集註 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1969), 19, glosses it as “what is true and real” 真實. Wing-tsit Chan, in his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 96, puts these two aspects of *cheng* together, insisting that *cheng* is “an active force that is always transforming things and completing things, drawing man and Heaven together in the same current.” Tu Weiming, in his *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 81–82, concludes explicitly that *cheng* “can be conceived as a form of creativity” and that it “is simultaneously a self-subsistent and self-fulfilling process of creation that produces life unceasingly.”

35. *Zhuangzi* 4.2.33; cf. Graham, *Chuang-tzu*, 53, and Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, 40.

36. Pang Pu 龐樸, “Yizhong youji de yuzhou shengcheng tushi: Jieshao Chu jian *Taiyi shengshui*,” 301–5. *Liji* 禮記 逐字索引 | A Concordance to the *Liji*: The ICS Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1992), 9.31.

Here I would like to focus on the creative dimension of this other key term in the Zisizi vocabulary, harmony (*he* 和), and argue that the same features of particularity, temporality, collateral relationality, and productive indeterminacy are also defining characteristics of this idea when found in a Confucian context.

We might begin with particularity. Whitehead identifies the more pernicious forms of what Dewey has called *the* philosophical fallacy with taking the formally abstracted to be what is real and concrete. In this guise, he describes *the* philosophical fallacy as the fallacy of “misplaced concreteness.”<sup>37</sup> Whitehead rehearses the history of this “fatal virus” that has compromised our understanding of the intrinsic, constitutive, and productive nature of relatedness. He accuses Epicurus, Plato, and Aristotle as being “unaware of the perils of abstraction” that render knowledge closed and complete. According to Whitehead, “the history of thought” that he associates with these great men

... is a tragic mixture of vibrant disclosure and of deadening closure. The sense of penetration is lost in the certainty of completed knowledge. This dogmatism is the antichrist of learning. In the full concrete connection of things, the characters of the things connected enter into the character of the connectivity which joins them.<sup>38</sup>

What Whitehead means by “the sense of penetration” is productive continuity and creative advance: the spontaneous emergence of novelty in a continuing present. He uses “friendship” as an example of a relationship that is constituted by the characters of the two persons involved, where the continuity of a real meaningful friendship is a matter of vibrant disclosure in which two persons “appreciate” each other in the most literal sense of this term. Importantly, the realization of this vital relationship is not at the expense of their personal uniqueness and integrity, but indeed a consequence of it. Integrity means both the persistent particularity of each friend, and the becoming one together that is both the substance of real friendship and a source of cosmic meaning. This relationship is what Whitehead means by “aesthetic” in the sense that it is the disclosure of the particular details in the totality of the effect.

Whitehead again criticizes the classical Greek tradition for losing sight of the balance needed between the particular details and the achieved harmony.

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37. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 10.

38. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 58.

The enjoyment of Greek art is always haunted by a longing for the details to exhibit some rugged independence apart from the oppressive harmony. In the greatest examples of any form of art, a miraculous balance is achieved. The whole displays its component parts, each with its own value enhanced; and the parts lead up to a whole, which is beyond themselves, yet not destructive of themselves.<sup>39</sup>

When applied to the human experience, disclosure in our relationships is what makes them meaningful, or said more dynamically, is what makes them a situated case of meaning making. Any understanding of harmony that emphasizes conformity at the expense of disclosing particularity precludes the possibility of the spontaneous emergence of novelty in the continuing present and is thus life-threatening. As Whitehead observes,

Our lives are passed in the experience of disclosure. As we lose this sense of disclosure, we are shedding that mode of functioning which is the soul. We are descending to mere conformity with the average of the past. Complete conformity means the loss of life. There remains the barren existence of inorganic nature.<sup>40</sup>

The point that Whitehead is making here is that productive harmony is always going to be collateral rather than unilateral, correlative rather than univocal, concrete and situated rather than abstract, a case of disclosure rather than closure. Indeed, the only kind of creativity is a *creatio in situ* co-creativity.

It is this sense of productive harmony as co-creativity that is being advanced in the Guodian texts. In *Five Modes of Proper Conduct* (*Wuxing* 五行), the cultivation of one's own character in community as virtuous habits of the heart and mind expressed in one's conduct is described as harmony:

仁形於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之行。義形於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之行。禮形於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之[行。智形]於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之行。聖形於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之德之行。德之行五，和謂之德，四行和謂之善。善，人道也。德，天道也。<sup>41</sup>

The habit of consummatory conduct (*ren* 仁) taking shape within is called acting upon moral virtuosity (*de* 德); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed consummate. The habit of appropriate conduct

39. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 62.

40. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 62.

41. I am using the reconstructed transcription of the text found in Guodian Chumu zhujian 郭店楚墓竹簡, ed. Jingmenshi bowuguan 荊門市博物館 (Peking: Wenwu chubanshe, 1994), 149.

(*yi* 義) taking shape within is called acting upon moral virtuosity (*de*); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed appropriate. The habit of acting with ritual propriety (*li* 禮) taking shape within is called acting upon moral virtuosity (*de*); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed proper.<sup>42</sup> The habit of acting wisely (*zhi* 智) taking shape within is called acting on moral virtuosity (*de*); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed wise. The habit of acting in a sagely way (*sheng* 聖) taking shape within is called acting upon moral virtuosity (*de*); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed sagacious.<sup>43</sup> There are five kinds of moral virtuosity, and where harmony (*he* 和) is achieved among them is called excellence. Achieving harmony among the four kinds of habits is called efficacy (*shan* 善). Efficacy is the human way (*rendao* 人道); excellence in one's habits is the way of *tian* (*tiandao* 天道).<sup>44</sup>

And as described in the first passage of the *Zhongyong* 中庸, this attainment of human character has cosmic implications:

喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和。中也者，天下之大本也；和也者，天下之達道也。致中和，天地位焉，萬物育焉。

The moment at which joy and anger, grief and pleasure, have yet to arise is called a nascent equilibrium; once the emotions have arisen, that they are all brought into proper focus (*zhong*) is called harmony. This notion of equilibrium and focus (*zhong*) is the great root of the world; harmony then is the advancing of the proper way in the world.<sup>45</sup> When equilibrium and focus

42. The Mawangdui version has “wisdom” before “ritual propriety,” while the Guodian text has the reverse order. The “Five Kinds of Proper Conduct” (*wuxing* 五行) are the “four shoots” (*siduan* 四端) of *Mencius* plus “sagacity” (*sheng* 聖). The “four shoots” in the *Mencius* 2A6, 6A6, and 7A21 occur in the same order as the Guodian text: 仁義禮智.

43. *Zhou li* HY 4/6b–7a states that “the court tutor instructs the crown prince in the three kinds of excellent habits (*sande* 三德) and the three kinds of proper conduct (*sanxing* 三行).” The Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 commentary on this passage observes: “The expression ‘acting on excellent habits’ (*dexing* 德行) refers to the inner and outer, where that which is in the heart-mind is excellent habits, and the performance of it is conduct.”

44. In *Mencius* 6B6 it states that “what one has within will necessarily give shape to what is external” 有諸內必行諸外. The *Mencius* 2B2 has the expression “acting on productive habits” *dexing* 德行 and 2A3 has the passage “those who act consummately by virtue of their excellent habits are true kings” 以德行仁者王.

45. Bernhard Karlgren's *Grammata Serica Recensa*, in *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 29 (1957), 271, defines the term *da* 達 in *dadao* 達道 as “break through (as growing grain).” This notion of the advancing pathway recalls *Analekts* 15:29: “It is the person who is able to broaden the way, not the way that broadens the person” 人能弘道，非道弘人.



are sustained and harmony is fully realized, the heavens and earth maintain their proper places and all things flourish in the world.<sup>46</sup>

This radically situated co-creative process is described explicitly in the *Zhongyong* proposition:

誠者，自成也；而道，自道也。誠者，物之終始。不誠無物。是故君子誠之為貴。誠者，非自成已而已也。所以成物也。成已，仁也。成物，知也。性之德也。合外內之道也。故時措之宜也。

Creativity (*cheng* 誠) is self-consummating (*zicheng* 自成), and its way (*dao* 道) is self-advancing (*zidao* 自道). “Creativity” references anything (*wu* 物) taken from its beginning to its end, and without this creativity, there are no things or events. It is thus that, for exemplary persons (*junzi* 君子), it is creativity that is prized. But creativity is not simply the self-consummating of one’s own person; it is what consummates other things. Consummating oneself is becoming consummate in one’s conduct (*ren* 仁); consummating other things is exercising wisdom in realizing one’s world (*zhi* 知).<sup>47</sup> It is achieved excellence (*de* 德) in one’s natural tendencies (*xing* 性) and is the way of integrating what is more internal and what is more external.<sup>48</sup> Thus, when and wherever one applies such excellence, the result is fitting.<sup>49</sup>

This sense of radically situated creativity is lost when we understand *sheng* 生 as simply “birth” rather than “birth, growth, life,” and when we understand *xing* 性 as simply “natural endowment” rather than initial conditions together with what Angus Graham describes as the “spontaneous process with the direction continually modified by the effects on it of deliberate action.”<sup>50</sup>

46. *Liji* 禮記 逐字索引 A Concordance to the *Liji*, 32.1.

47. This passage is reminiscent of *Analects* 6.23:

The Master said, “The wise (*zhi* 知) enjoy water; those authoritative in their conduct (*ren* 仁) enjoy mountains. The wise are active; authoritative persons are still. The wise find enjoyment; authoritative persons are long-enduring.”

Wisdom entails appropriateness to context (see *Analects* 6.22). Thus, in realizing oneself, one necessarily brings realization to one’s situation.

48. Importantly, the internal/external *neiwai* 內外 distinction is a correlative notion like *yinyang* 陰陽, and hence means “more or less.” Character and conduct cannot be treated as exclusive demarcations.

49. *Li ji* 禮記 逐字索引 A Concordance to the *Liji*, 32.23.

50. Angus Graham rejects any essentialistic interpretation of Mencius. In Graham’s own words, he cautions that “the translation of *xing* 性 by ‘nature’ predisposes us to mistake it for a transcendent origin, which in Mencian doctrine would also be a transcendent end.” See his “Reflections and Replies,” in Rosemont, ed., *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts*, 287. In setting aside this possible misunderstanding, Graham

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A consideration of harmony as this radically situated process of co-creativity establishes a sharp contrast with assumptions about the familiar *creatio ex nihilo* source of meaning. What is it about this *creatio ex nihilo* model of creativity that makes it inappropriate for interpreting both classical Chinese cosmology and the Confucian notion of harmony? First, *ex nihilo* is dependent upon discrete agency, distinguishing creator and creature. But in the processual *qi* cosmology of China, situation is always prior to agency, so that creator and creature are mutually implicated and continuous. Individuals as discrete agents are a conceptual abstraction from their concrete, constitutive relationships. Creativity is radically situated, where creativity and self-creativity are inseparable. It is this collateral nature of creativity that Hellmut Wilhelm was remarking upon when he observed that “the division of the creative process into two aspects is an idea frequently found in early Chinese writings.”<sup>51</sup> Since creativity is thus resolutely transactional, it always entails responsibility. We will find that effective communication is the chief means of sustaining and reconstituting the flourishing human community, and an intimate communion with nature the chief means of inhabiting a world with sensitivity and receptivity.

Secondly, *ex nihilo* focuses on originality as its source of value. *In situ* creativity, on the other hand, emphasizes enhanced significance over originality and novelty. Relationships that appreciate in meaning are the source of creativity as increased significance. *In situ* creativity is prospective in that it focuses on the ongoing productivity of its applications in the continuing present rather than on its origins as its source of value. In fact, to the extent that creativity would be limited to an isolated and independent agent, it would quickly wither in its meaningfulness. As Herbert Fingarette has said rather succinctly, “For Confucius, unless there are at least two human beings, there can be no human beings.”<sup>52</sup>

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suggests as an alternative reading that “*xing* is conceived in terms of spontaneous development in a certain direction rather than of its origin or goal,” and further, that “*xing* will be a spontaneous process with a direction continually modified by the effects on it of deliberate action”; see Graham, “Reflections and Replies,” pp. 289–90. If I might paraphrase Graham here, *xing* is a spontaneous process that is continually being altered through changing patterns of human conduct. Distinguishing this from an “essentialist” reading, Graham’s interpretation would make *xing* historicist, particularist, and genealogical. In other words, it would locate Mencius’ notion of *renxing* within the generic features of a process or “event” ontology, a worldview that David Hall and I have argued at length elsewhere is most appropriate for understanding classical Confucianism. See *Thinking from the Han*, 23–78.

51. Hellmut Wilhelm, *Heaven, Earth, and Man in the Book of Changes* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 37.

52. Herbert Fingarette, “The Music of Humanity in the Conversations of Chaos,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 10 (1983), 217.

Thirdly, *ex nihilo* is the bringing of “nothing” novel into existence in the sense that whatever creature is produced stands in absolute dependence upon its creative source. *Creatio in situ*, on the other hand, is the growth of the dynamic relationships that constitute things through the art of contextualization (*ars contextualis*), with the continuing emergence of something new and meaningful in those relations. It is thus that the vocabulary of personal excellence (*de* 德) in Chinese philosophy is defined paranomastically as “getting” (*de* 得), “spirituality” (*shen* 神) is “stretching and extending” (*shen* 伸), becoming human (*ren* 人) is “becoming human together” (*ren* 仁), and so on.

Fourthly, the *ex nihilo* model appeals to a source of novelty that denies history, development, and process. Scholars who talk this language evoke notions such as the “eternality” and “timelessness” of a non-temporal source of genesis. Such an appeal locates us outside of empirical experience and is in fact meaningless in the Chinese transformative cosmology. *In situ* creativity, on the other hand, is the very substance of history, development, and consummatory disclosure. In this model, in the language of William James, relations, transitions, and conjunctions are all real.<sup>53</sup> And, as noted above, the dynamic nature of experience requires appeal to the consequences of action as well as its antecedents, and its possibilities as well as its precedents. It is this forward propensity of experience that makes it consummatory. This *in situ* conception of creativity accounts for both cumulative products of particular experience (a kind of situational causality), and spontaneous variations that survive because of their consequent efficacy.

Finally, *ex nihilo* creativity appeals to a *nihil* or void beyond the wholeness of experience, whereas *in situ* creativity is wholly empirical, entailing the indeterminate “nothing” (*wu* 無) as the constant correlate of the determinate “something” (*you* 有) that together constitute an explanatory rather than ontological vocabulary for describing the ongoing process of experience. Whilst creativity is the spontaneous emergence of novelty in a continuing present, such emergence out of indeterminacy is radically contextualized. There is no notion of “void” but only a fecund receptivity in a tradition in which all beginnings are fetal beginnings (*shi* 始).<sup>54</sup>

53. William James, *The Essential Writings*, edited by Bruce W. Wilshire (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 178–83. James once announced that every sentence should end with an “and ....”

54. Illustrative of this *in situ* notion of creativity, most canonical Chinese texts—the *Yi jing* 易經, the *Analects*, the *Zhongyong*, the *Daode jing*, and the *Zhuangzi*, for example—are not single-authored but rather the work of many hands. Most texts borrow liberally and without attribution from contemporaneously existing works. They are composite documents, with their significance aggregating in lineages that stretch across generations.

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Thus it is that the understanding of Daoist cosmology as entailing particularity, temporality, collateral relationality, and productive indeterminacy that has been fortified by the recent archeological finds at Guodian and Mawangdui provides us with a language for understanding more clearly the Confucian sense of harmony (*he*) as *creatio in situ*.

## “境生”儒家之“和”中國早期宇宙論中的“協重” (COLLATERALITY) 思想

安樂哲

摘要

郭店與上博(上海博物館簡稱)簡帛文獻主要貢獻之一是為我們理解 儒道兩家早期知識演進皆提供了新洞識。不僅如此，新出土的文獻還為我們提供了另一重要機會：它們還可被用來證實、重申那些我們藉以認識古代中國的詮釋語境或許老却仍被輕視的洞識。確實，古典中國哲學最優秀的詮釋者顯然都反對這樣一種觀念，即中國宇宙論產生于某種獨立、超驗原理，且體現形而上學的實在/表象區分，以及該世界觀的餘緒：種種二元對立範疇。事實上，最近出土的郭店文獻，同時為我們提供了重溫三個相關宇宙論問題的材料和機會：古典中國宇宙發生論及其起源 觀念的獨特性何在？相對於我們自己所熟悉的“創生于虛無”(creatio ex nihilo) 觀念，中國人有怎樣的宇宙論假定？中國哲學語言如何表達“創造”？

**Keywords:** cosmogony, collaterality, creativity, *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*

宇宙論, 協重, 創造, 太一生水

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Redactions of canonical texts are passed on with the collaboration of succeeding generations appending their commentaries that add new meaning as they accrue across the centuries. And so it is with paintings. The masterpieces that today cover the museum walls are seldom an original composition, but the emergence of a distinctive version of a continuing composition to which poetic colophons and calligraphy and the red-chop signatures of connoisseurship are added as they are passed on over the centuries.