

Articles 【研究論著】

**Collaterality in Early Chinese Cosmology:
An Argument for Confucian Harmony (*he* 和)
as Creatio In Situ**

早期中國宇宙論中的關連性：
論儒家的「和」作為「崇有創造」論

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Abstract

One important benefit of the Guodian and Shanghai Museum strips is the new insights they are providing in our understanding of the early intellectual evolution of both Confucianism and Daoism. Beyond what is new in these documents, 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.” 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. 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 both the metaphysical reality/appearance distinction and the plethora of dualistic categories that arise from such a worldview.

The philosophical implications of this seemingly off-hand 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.

摘要

上海和郭店博物館中的楚簡所提供的新線索，得以讓我們重新認識早期儒家和道家的形成過程。除了新的資料之外，與現有文獻相同的資料亦可以用來補強、佐證和重申一些舊有但卻未受到足夠重視的說法。我們對早期中國的認知很多都是建築在對這些文本的詮釋語境當中。有一個重要的例子是法國傑出漢學家 Marcel Granet 先生的觀察，他曾經深刻地提出：「中國的智慧不需要上帝這個觀念」。東西方傑出的漢學家已經反覆地以不同的形式論述過這個中國古典哲學的特色。的確，所有中國古典哲學最佳的詮釋者，都很明顯地否認了中國宇宙論源起於一個獨立的、超驗的原則，也因此沒有真實與表象分化的預設立場，以及隨著這種宇宙觀而來的諸種二元對立範疇。

這個近乎當下的觀察所帶來的哲學意涵是基本而普遍的。我們以這個觀點切入中國的宇宙論問題，藉由把希臘古典宇宙論的假設從中國古典世界觀的討論中辨識出來，可以讓我們釐清中國古典哲學中許多屬於自身所有的核心字彙，因而消解先前的語焉不詳。我們會發現中國宇宙論裡「上帝」的缺席，必然導引我們去尋找不一樣的語彙，來進行關於源起、世界意義源頭和創造本質等的思索。

One important benefit of the Guodian and Shanghai Museum strips is the new insights they are providing in our understanding of the early intellectual evolution of both Confucianism and Daoism. The emergence of “feelings” or “affectivity” (*qing* 情) as a key Zisizi terminology, for example, requires not only a careful study of the newly acquired documents themselves, particularly the two versions of *Xingzimingchu* 性自命出 (*Xingqing* 性情), but in fact a re-reading of all of the classical Confucian and Daoist texts to reinstate this important sensibility. Now that we know more, we can, for example, better appreciate the central role of concrete family feeling as the very ground (*nei* 内) of classical Confucian moral philosophy.¹

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.”² 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. 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 both the metaphysical reality/appearance distinction and the plethora of dualistic categories that arise from such a worldview.³

¹ The *Analects* 1.2 comes immediately to mind:

It is a rare thing for someone who has a sense of familial 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 familial and fraternal deference, it is, I suspect, the root of authoritative conduct (*ren* 仁).

² Marcel Granet, *La Pensee Chinoise* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1934), p. 478.

³ See Tang Junyi 唐君毅, “Zhongguo Zhexuezhong Ziranyuzhouguan zhi tezhi” 中國哲學中自然宇宙觀之特質 [The Distinctive Features of Natural Cosmology in Chinese Philosophy], in *Zhongxi Zhexue Sixiang Zhi Bigiao Lunwenji* 中西哲學思想之比較論文集 [Collected Essays on the Comparison Between Chinese and Western Philosophical Thought] (Taipei: Xuesheng

The philosophical implications of this seemingly off-hand 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: 1) what is distinctive about classical Chinese cosmogony and its notion of origins, 2) what is the Chinese alternative to the assumptions about our own familiar *creatio ex nihilo* source of meaning, and 3) 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 argue grounded early Chinese cosmology, I want to suggest that early Confucianism and early Daoism are best understood in their relationship to one another. To illustrate this point, I begin from the cosmology made explicit in the Guodian Daoist materials—a cosmology that I suggest has immediate relevance for both early Daoism and Confucianism as a largely shared commonsense—and then I demonstrate the relevance of this cosmology to Confucianism by locating the central Confucian notion of harmony (*he* 和) within this prevailing worldview.

Shuju, 1988, pp. 100-103; Xiong Shili 熊十力, *Mingzhipian* 明心篇 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1977), pp. 180-191; Zhang Dongsun 周東蓀, *Zhishi Yu Wenhua: Zhang Dongsun Wenhua Lunzhu Jiyao* 知識與文化: 孫東蓀文化著輯要, editd by Zhang Yaonan 張耀南 (Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe, 1995), pp. 271-272; Angus C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (Chicago: Open Court, 1989), p. 22; Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1956), p. 290; Nathan Sivin, *Medicine, Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China: Researches and Reflections* (Aldershot, HANTS: Variorum, 1995), p. 3; Chad Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1992), pp. 215; Norman J. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: The Theme of Chaos (Hun-tu)* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983), p. 64.

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. Simply put, with the present surge of interest in Whitehead and particularly the American pragmatists, this newly emerging Western version of process philosophy, as it matures within our own philosophical culture, can profitably draw sustenance and critique from a tradition of process philosophy that has been active since the beginning of China's recorded history.

To rehearse the recent breakthrough in our own philosophical tradition, in the wake of Darwin's own great cultural revolution,⁴ 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." Simply put, *the* philosophical fallacy is committed whenever the outcome of a process is presumed to be antecedent to that process. Dewey from

⁴ Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (NY: Simon and Shuster, 1995), pp. 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.

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.”⁵ 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.” 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?” Suffice to say that *the philosophical fallacy* is encountered anytime the *terminus ad quem* is placed before the *terminus a quo*.

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, suggests that placing “Being” before the beings of the world through which “Being” is made manifest is always appropriate. The Thomist teleologist might find in some “far off Divine event” the ground as well as the goal of understanding, while the Millsean liberal will perhaps anticipate the perfectibility of the “ready-made” human being in the actualization of a given individuated potential.⁶

⁵ John Dewey, *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882-1898*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston, 5 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1969-1972), vol. 1, p. 162. For the history, development, and the context of “*the philosophical fallacy*,” see James Tiles, *Dewey* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 19-24.

⁶ Even human nature is not exempt from process. John Dewey, *The Political Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), pp. 223-224 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.”

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 says: “We live forward but we think backward.” And Jorge Luis Borges reinforces this wisdom when he remarks: “All life is anachronistic, and every man is born at the wrong time.”

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 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, where natural necessity can elevate that pattern 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, post-modernism, neo-pragmatism, neo-Marxism, deconstructionism, feminist philosophy, and so on, that takes 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, and so on.—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, etc.—what Henry Rosemont would call “the real hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, ideas, and attitudes of flesh-and-blood human beings.”⁷ 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, provisional 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.”⁸ 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 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

⁷ Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Chinese Mirror* (Chicago: Open Court, 1991), pp. 62-63.

⁸ 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, p. 134.

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 order to reinstate the process sensibility assist in clarifying Chinese cosmology? In the 1993 Guodian find, a partial *Laozi* in 71 strips was found in three distinct bundles. The document that has been titled from its opening phrase *Taiyi shengshui* 太一生水, *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*, comprises 14 of these strips. Physically, in the length of the bamboo strips, in the cord markings, in general appearance, and in calligraphic style, these strips are indistinguishable from the other strips in the *Laozi* C bundle. Although these strips 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 *Daodejing* as a principle of exclusion. These same scholars allow that, as a material artifact, it is an integral part of *Laozi* C.

We can ask, then, what is the relationship between *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* and *Laozi* C? Particularly interesting is the fact 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.....能輔万物之自然而弗敢為

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

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. 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 Daodejing*, 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.....能輔万物之自然而弗能為

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

This version of the text is problematic, and most commentators take it to be obviously corrupt. 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 *Daodejing* 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 *Daodejing* 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 recently completed and 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.⁹ One intriguing suggestion that Allan again takes up in this essay is that the “focal meaning” and “root metaphor” of *dao* is waterway rather than roadway, with roadway being a more derivative meaning. There is much indeed to be found in her article.

My small contribution here is to synoptically look at how *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* enables us to understand Daoist cosmogony

⁹ Sarah Allan, “The Great One, Water, and the Laozi: New Light from Guodian,” in *T'oung Pao* (2004).

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 focus on the centrality of particularity, temporality, collateral relationality, and productive indeterminacy as persistent defining features of Daoist cosmology. I argue that by taking these features seriously, we are 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 available. Not only is important light shed on other brief and suggestive cosmogonic allusions that we find in the received *Daodejing* (especially chapters 25, 39, 42, 51, and 52), but also, at least in part, *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* resonates rather explicitly with the language of these same chapters.

In *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*, the Ancestral One 太一 is identified as the first among the defining terms in the Daoist cosmology, and many if not most commentators follow the *Lushi chunqiu* in taking 太一 to be a euphemism for *dao*:¹⁰ the unsummed totality of emerging experience, including the limitless and as yet indeterminate possibilities it entails. In this cosmology, the Ancestral One is followed by the heavens and the earth, the spiritual and the numinous, the *yin* and the *yang qi*, 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 does give birth to the waters, it also lies hidden in them, and these same waters colaterally assist it in giving birth to the heavens and the earth. This irreducible collaterality—water and Taiyi together producing the heavens and the heavens and Taiyi together producing the earth, and so on—has been emphasized by Li Ling, Pang Pu, and others in their inter-

¹⁰ *Lushi chunqiu* “Dayue.”

pretations of this text.¹¹ Pang Pu in explaining *sheng* 生 makes a fundamental distinction between “*paisheng* 派生” in 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. There is an important contrast here. In the *paisheng* sensibility, the egg becomes another hen, and the acorn becomes an oak tree; whereas, in the *huasheng* sensibility, the egg becomes breakfast and the acorn becomes a squirrel. 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*.

In making this distinction, Pang Pu is alerting us to a further refinement in our understanding of the notion of “ancestor.” While we might be inclined to understand this progenitor/progeny relationship as a series in which there is an independence of the latter from the former, early Chinese cosmology on reflection clearly takes the progenitor as proliferating and living on in the progeny.

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 is denied.

Sarah Allan rehearses Zheng Xuan’s association between *taiyi* and the Pole Star.¹² *Taiyi* as the Pole Star constitutes the fixed centerpiece on what Steve Field has termed “the cosmograph (*shi* 式),” a popular mantic board that pro-

¹¹ Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams ed., *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998* (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China, 2000), p. 165. See Pang Pu 龐朴, 〈一種有機的宇宙生成圖式: 介紹楚簡太一生水〉, 《道家文化研究》, 17 (1999), p. 303.

¹² Li Xueqin 李學勤, 〈太一生水的數術解釋〉, 《道家文化研究》, 17 (1999), pp. 298-299.

vides 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.”¹³ 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* 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.¹⁴ 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).”¹⁵ 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).¹⁶ But relative to their community, those deemed the wisest serve as a regulative beacon and 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 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:

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

¹³ Christopher Cullen, *Astronomy and Mathematics in Ancient China: The Zhou Bi Suan Jing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), p. 44.

¹⁴ *Analects* 2.1:

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.

¹⁵ *Analects* 17.3. According to the *Shuowen yi* 移 means “to move” in the sense of “being moved through the transfer of movement,” as in a field of grain.

¹⁶ *Analects* 6.23.

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.¹⁷

But why according to the *Zhuangzi* should one not wish to bring order out of *hundun*?¹⁸ A reasonable question, indeed, if *hundun* is the confusion and disarray—the formless surds—that other cosmogonies describe as 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 attending novelty. Important here is that *hundun* is a partner in the continuing production of significance rather than some independent primordial source. The collaboration of *hundun* as Spontaneity with Swift and Sudden makes the life-experience hospitable, deliciously uncertain, and in degree, unpredictable. To enforce any given design—any particular teleology—is simply selecting one of a myriad candidates for order and privileging that one design over the others. Swift and Sudden have, to the world's and their own detriment, transformed the unsummed and causally noncoherent *dao* into a single-ordered world. In fact, not only have they killed Lord Hundun, but they have also, for all intents and purposes, committed suicide.

Instead of invoking the language of initial beginnings and some independent efficient cause, in a way consistent with the *Daodejing* broadly and with its

¹⁷ *Zhuangzi* 21/7/33; compare Angus C. Graham, "Reflections and Replies," in H. Rosemont, Jr., ed., *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1991), pp. 98-99; Burton Watson trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (NY: Columbia University, 1968), p. 97.

¹⁸ In fact, in the commentary that the translator James Legge, "The Texts of Taoism," in *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Oxford U, 1891), p. 267 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."

pervasive mothering and birthing metaphors, *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters* 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 *Daodejing* 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. Because of this natal sensibility, I have followed Sarah 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, or 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.¹⁹

Where the account of these beginnings looks most 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 is demonstrated in strips 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 name” *dao* is used rather than the more familiar “proper 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 fa-

¹⁹ Li Ling, Sarah Allan, Xing Wen, 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 Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams ed., *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College* (May 1998), pp. 162-171.

miliar names we have for describing the life-experience that goes on around us. Such names are referential and specific, and clearly communicate a communally shared meaning. They are the names by means of which a determinate past lives. But instead on occasion we follow the sages in using *dao*, a more tentative and even obscure “style name.” Why?

A “style name” is self-selected, projective, and self-defining. 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 *dao*. 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. In this sense *dao* does not have a proper name. With its attendant indeterminacy, it brings the assumption that we are trying with imagination to think outside the box. We are probing a realm beyond our present categories which as yet has no theoretical or conceptual limits. Thus, the very vagueness, indeterminacy, and openness of *dao* 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? Let’s apply what we learn from this document to an explanation of *Daodejing* 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. *Daodejing* 42 states:

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 notion of an ontological parity of finitude that give all things an equal claim on being real, what we might alternatively term “a realistic pluralism.”²⁰ 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 to read this passage.

Synchronically this 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. 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 any persistent category or species as a general kind of thing—humankind, for example—moves toward consummation, dispersal, and transformation. And *Daodejing* 42 can also be read holistically as a description of the consummatory, phasal progress of the totality in which all things participate over their careers. I 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 in which one cycle culminates only to give birth to a new one.

One way of justifying a *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:²¹ “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).”²² 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

²⁰ A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (NY: Columbia University, 1933), p. 356.

²¹ Tang Junyi 唐君毅, “Zhongguo Zhexuezhong Ziranyuzhouguan zhi tezhi,” p. 9 defines this processual cosmology as “ceaselessly prolific (*shengsheng buxi* 生生不息).”

²² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

its dynamic continuities and its manifold multiplicity, as both a procesual 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 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 *Daodejing* passage as:

Way-making (*dao*) gives rise to the notions of continuity and determinacy,
Continuity and determinacy give rise to the notions of difference and contrast,
Difference and contrast give rise to the notion of plurality,
And plurality 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 the disjunction of determinacy and continuity. Persons, for example, are “one” both in their unique individuality and in the unbroken continuity they have with their environing others, and yet they are a divided and sometimes conflicted “multiplicity” in the field of selves through which their many personas are manifested: someone’s parent and someone else’s child, someone’s colleague and someone’s else’s adversary, someone’s teacher and someone else’s lover, someone’s benefactor and someone else’s judge. And the entire field of experience with all of its plurality is focused uniquely as it is construed from each particular perspective. This complex nature of relatedness—at once one and many—that is expressed in this passage when read “cosmologically.” An account of the generic features of how things hang together in lived experience is given, rather than providing a derivative “One-behind-the-many” cosmogony.

But cosmogony albeit of a *Creatio In Situ* kind also has a role in this cosmological reading. 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. And as a species, in the fullness of time, as the spontaneous emergence of novelty in a continuing present overwhelms any rational strategies we might have for understanding and explaining the process, the past becomes increasingly indeterminate, 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 of our interpretive categories. In the emergence of the human experience, there is a fluidity among the animal, the human, and the inspired cultural hero, the sage, who over time challenges the very meaning of what it is to be human.

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 explicitly as fecund mother (*mu* 母)²³ and inseminating sire (*fu* 父).²⁴ Beginnings 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

²³ See *Daodejing* 1, 20, 25, 52.

²⁴ See *Daodejing* 21.

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 the Chinese philosophical vocabulary. I suggest that “creativity” parallels “rhetoric” in both its importance and in its paronomasic mode of expression in the Chinese language. That is, the fact that the rhetorical and the philosophical are not dichotomized in the Chinese tradition has led some scholars to claim that China does not have a rhetorical tradition—a theme that has been so prominent within our own cultural narrative. At the same time, it has led others such as Carine Defoort to argue for a reconsideration of the power of language itself.²⁵ Indeed, a persistent theme in the Chinese philosophical corpus, that gives the lie to the claim that there is no rhetorical tradition, 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 into being. The fertility of language like the fertility of *dao* lies in the indeterminacy that allows for *ars contextualis*: the art of recontextualizing. *Zhengming*—properly understood as paronomasia rather than as “the rectification of names”—is the ongoing redefining of our terms of explanation through semantic and phonetic associations.

In our recent translation of the *Zhongyong*, David Hall and I make explicit what the commentarial tradition on this text suggests in arguing that *cheng* 誠 in certain contexts can be appropriately parsed as “creativity.”²⁶ Not only *cheng*,

²⁵ Carine Defoort, *The Pheasant cap master: A Rhetorical Reading* (Albany: State University of NY, 1997), *passim*.

²⁶ See Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Translation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2001), pp. 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 glosses it as “what is true and real.” Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1963) p. 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, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness* (Albany: State University of NY, 1989), pp. 81-82 concludes explicitly that *cheng* “can be conceived as a form of

but the gerundive language that is used to describe the unfolding of the human narrative generally has 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.”²⁷

How are these features of Daoist cosmology, then, specifically relevant to the Confucian sensibilities? 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 run at *The Ancestral One Gives Birth to the Waters*, he cites a passage from the *Book of Ritual Propriety* as the basis for the claim that there is an explicit relationship between *dayi* 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, ritual propriety certainly has its roots in the Ancestral One. Dividing, ritual propriety 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.²⁸

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

Let’s begin with particularity. A.N. Whitehead identifies the more pernicious forms of what Dewey has called *the philosophical fallacy with taking the*

creativity” and that it “is simultaneously a self-subsistent and self-fulfilling process of creation that produces life unceasingly.”

²⁷ *Zhuangzi* 4/2/33; compare Angus C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 53 and Burton Watson trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, p. 40.

²⁸ *Liji* “liyun.”

formally abstracted to be what is real and concrete. In this guise, he describes *the* philosophical fallacy as the fallacy of “misplaced concreteness.”²⁹ 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.³⁰

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 as 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.

²⁹ See A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (NY: Macmillan, 1929), p. 10.

³⁰ A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (NY: Macmillan, 1938), p. 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.³¹

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.³²

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. The only kind of creativity is co-creativity.

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

³¹ Ibid, p. 62.

³² Ibid, p. 62.

Authoritativeness (*ren* 仁) taking shape within is called the forming of character (*de* 德);³³ where it does not take shape within it is simply called proper conduct. Appropriateness (*yi* 義) taking shape within is called the forming of character; where it does not take shape within it is simply called proper conduct. Observing ritual propriety (*li* 禮) taking shape within is called the forming of character; where it does not take shape within it is simply called proper conduct.³⁴ Wisdom (*zhi* 知) taking shape within is called the forming of character; where it does not take shape within it is simply called proper conduct. Sagacity (*sheng* 聖) taking shape within is called the forming of character; where it does not take shape within it is simply called proper conduct.³⁵ There are five ways of forming of character, where harmony (*he* 和) among them is called character. Harmony among the four kinds of conduct is called felicity (*shan* 善). Felicity is the human way (*rendao* 人道); character is the way of *tian* (*tiandao* 天道).³⁶

³³ The inseparability of formation and function (*tiyong* 體用) would suggest that habitual conduct is the formation of character.

³⁴ The Mawangdui version has “wisdom” before “ritual propriety,” while the Guodian text has the reverse order. These “Five Kinds of Proper Conduct” 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.

³⁵ *Zhouli* HY 4/6b-7a states that “the court tutor instructs the crown prince in the three aspects of character (*sande* 三德) and the three kinds of conduct (*sanxing* 三行).” The Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 commentary observes: “The expression ‘the formation of character (*dexing* 德行)’ refers to the inner and outer, where that which is in the heart-mind is character, and the performance of it is conduct.”

³⁶ The *Analects* 7.23 states “*Tian* has given life to and nourished character in me.” And it is also the formation of human character that gives articulation to the way of *tian*. In *Mencius* 6B6 it states that “what one has within will necessarily give shape to what is external.” This first passage might be the source of a distinction that is made in *Mencius* 4B19:

人之所以異於禽獸者幾希，庶民去之。舜明於庶物，察於人倫，由仁義行，非行仁義也。

Mencius said: “What distinguishes the human being from the brutes is ever so slight, and where the common run of people are apt to lose it, the exemplary person preserves it. Shun was wise to the way of all things and had insight into human relationships. He acted upon authoritativeness and appropriateness rather than simply doing what was authoritative and appropriate.”

The *Mencius* 2B2 has the expression “acting on character (*dexing* 德行).”

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

The moment at which joy and anger, grief and pleasure, have yet to arise is called a nascent equilibrium (*zhong* 中); once the emotions have arisen, that they are all brought into proper focus (*zhong*) is called harmony (*he* 和). This notion of equilibrium and focus (*zhong*) is the great root of the world; harmony then is the advancing of the proper way (*dadao* 達道) in the world.³⁷ When equilibrium and focus are sustained and harmony is fully realized, the heavens and earth maintain their proper places and all things flourish in the world.

This radically situated co-creative process is described explicitly in the *Zhongyong* 25 proposition:

Creativity (*cheng* 誠) is self-consummating (*zicheng* 自成), and its way (*dao* 道) is self-advancing (*zidao* 自道). Creativity references a process (*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 also what consummates other things and events. Consummating oneself is becoming authoritative in one's conduct (*ren* 仁); while consummating other things and events is realizing the world (*zhi* 知). 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. Thus, when and wherever one applies such excellence, it is fitting.

³⁷ Karlgren's *GRS271* defines the term *da* 達 in *dadao* 達道 as "break through (as growing grain)" (Bernhard Karlgren and Grammata Serica Recensa, *Stockholm: Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, 1950). This notion of the advancing pathway recalls *Analects* 15.29:

人能弘道，非道弘人。

It is the person who is able to broaden the way, not the way that broadens the person.

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.”³⁸

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. Hellmut Wilhelm was remarking upon this collateral nature of creativity, when he observed that “the division of the creative process into two aspects is an idea frequently found in early Chinese writings.”³⁹ Since creativity is thus resolutely transactional, it always entails responsibility. Effective communication is the chief means of sustaining and re-

³⁸ Angus Graham rejects any essentialistic interpretation of Mencius. In Graham’s own words (“Reflections and Replies”, 1991), p. 287, 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.” In setting aside this possible misunderstanding, Angus C. Graham, “Reflections and Replies,” pp. 289-290 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.” 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 world view that David Hall and I have argued at length elsewhere, is most appropriate for understanding classical Confucianism.

³⁹ Hellmut Wilhelm, *Heaven, Earth, and Man in the Book of Changes* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1977), p. 37.

constituting the flourishing human community, and an intimate communion with nature is the chief means of inhabiting a world with sensitivity and receptivity.

Second, *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, as its source of value, on the ongoing productivity of its applications in the continuing present rather than on its origins. In fact, to the extent that creativity would be limited to an isolated and independent agent, it would quickly wither in its meaningfulness. As Herb Fingarette has said rather succinctly, “For Confucius, unless there are at least two human beings, there can be no human beings.”⁴⁰

Third, *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. Thus the vocabulary of personal excellence (*de* 德) in Chinese philosophy is defined paronomastically as “getting (*de* 得),” “spirituality (*shen* 神)” is “stretching and extending (*shen* 伸),” becoming human (*ren* 人) is to become “human together (*ren* 仁), and so on.

Fourth, 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.⁴¹ And as noted above, the dynamic nature of experience

⁴⁰ Herbert Fingarette, “The Music of Humanity in the Conversations of Confucius,” in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* (1983), p. 217.

⁴¹ William James, *The Essential Writings*, edited by Bruce W. Wilshire (Albany: State University of NY, 1984), pp. 178-183. James once announced that every sentence should end with an “and...”

requires appeal to the consequences of action as well as its antecedents, and to its possibilities as well as its precedents. This forward propensity of experience 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 (*yu* 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).⁴²

Thus that understanding Daoist cosmology as entailing particularity, temporality, collateral relationality, and productive indeterminacy provides us with a language for understanding more clearly the Confucian sense of harmony (*he*) as *Creatio In Situ*.

⁴² Illustrative of this *in situ* notion of creativity, most canonical Chinese texts—the *Yijing*, the *Analects*, the *Zhongyong*, the *Daodejing*, 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. 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.