

Classical Daoism in an Age of Globalization:
From Abduction to *Ars Contextualis* in
Early Daoist Cosmology
全球化時代的古典道家思想：
從溯因推理到早期道家宇宙論中的語境化方法

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Abstract

Development generally and the global impact of China's own growth more specifically, is producing a range of changing economic and political patterns that are relatively easy to track. But what about cultural change? What difference does this dramatic reconfiguration of economic and political dominance make for an elite world cultural order that has long been dominated by a powerful liberalism? And what will be the role of traditional Chinese customs and values in the evolution of a newly emerging cultural order? When we look for the cultural resources necessary to respond to the global and national predicament described below as a perfect storm, we might anticipate the need for a shift in values, intentions, and practices. In this essay, I will explore classical Daoist cosmology as one human resource that might enable humanity to weather the perfect storm and to emerge from it on a halcyon sea.

摘要

說得籠統一點是「發展」，說得具體一點是特別是中國本身成長的全球性影響，據此產生的各種多變的經濟和政治型態其實很容易追溯。但文化變遷呢？這種經濟和文化主導權的戲劇性重構，對於長久以來受到強大的自由主義所主宰的菁英世界文化秩序，帶來了什麼樣的改變？同時在新興的文化秩序的演進中，傳統的中國習俗和價值觀將扮演什麼角色？當我們尋找必要的文化資源來因應前面被描述成完美暴風的全球與國家困境時，可能會預期必須在價值觀、意圖和行為上做出改變。本文要探討像經典道家宇宙觀這樣的人類資源，或許能使人類度過這場完美暴風，抵達寧靜海。

The Perfect Storm

It is the best of times and it is the worst of times. In the beginning decades of the twenty-first century, dramatic scientific and technological innovations have given human beings the opportunity to live lives of comfort and convenience never experienced before. At least in the developed world, we live longer and we live better than ever before. Indeed, the developed world is our own self-imposed boundary. As a species, we now have the science to clean the water and provide the food so that no child on the planet need go to bed sick and hungry. If we had the social intelligence and the political will, we could be embarking upon an epoch of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

At the same time, we are living in a moment of increasing urgency. A perfect storm of global proportions is gathering on the horizon that will immanently threaten our familiar ways of living if not ultimately the very survival of humanity as a species. Ours is a world beset by climate change, by extreme weather events, by an ever accelerating increase in population, by gross income inequities, by food and water shortages, by environmental degradation, by looming pandemics, by energy shortage, by international terrorism, by nuclear proliferation, by consumer waste, and by growing legions of the hopeless poor. Perhaps the most disturbing element in the overall picture is the nearly vertical trajectory in the galloping pace of precipitous change as it approaches a tipping point that takes us past any possibility of return.

In bringing some focus to just one among many of these problems, we might cite a range of statistical information that rehearses the growing economic inequities dividing the rich from the poor on a global and a national scale. In 1986 the wealthiest one percent of Americans owned eight percent of the wealth; a generation later they own twenty-five percent. And China is even worse, with

the top one percent holding thirty-three percent of the wealth with the bottom twenty-five percent of the people owning less than one percent. Simply put, in every sector and by any measure, there is an exponential increase in the holdings of the wealthy and a precipitous decline among those who are worst off. Indeed, the numbers in themselves provide a clear profile of the increasingly desperate conditions under which most people in the world live today.

There seem to be at least four underlying conditions that are defining this galloping predicament. First, human beings and our way of being in the world are complicit in some immediate way for the malaise. Secondly, this predicament does not recognize or respect national or social boundaries. Crises such as pandemics and global warming have a global reach and affect everyone regardless of nationality or status. Thirdly, there is an economic and ecological relationship that obtains among this set of pressing problems, rendering them zero-sum—all or nothing. This means of course that the problems cannot be addressed and solved seriatim by individual players. Rather, we are facing a largely human-precipitated predicament that can only be engaged wholesale by a world community acting in concert. In these pages I will argue that this increasingly dire situation can only be addressed and arrested by effecting a global-scale radical change in human intentions, values, and practices. And to our shame perhaps our best hope is that it will be necessity itself rather than any enlightened awareness on the part of the human community that will serve as the imperative for change.

While this perfect storm has been gathering both globally and locally, over the past several decades a dramatic reconfiguration of the world's economic and political order has been occurring that is now affecting us all in this age of global interdependence. Over this past generation, the rise of Asia, and particularly of China, has precipitated a sea change in the prevailing economic and political order. For example, in the quarter century since its founding in 1989, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) that now consists of twenty-one Asia-

Pacific nations with forty percent of the world's population has shifted world wealth and power from a beleaguered Europe to an increasingly thriving Asia. The GDP in the region has more than tripled and trade has increased by over 400%. For more than thirty years, the Chinese economy has been growing at an annual double-digit rate of ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen percent, enabling it to overtake Japan as the second largest economy in the world with the prediction that it will eclipse the American lead within a decade. In 2010, a G8 comprised of the world's strongest yet declining economies that could claim less than 50 percent of world production became the G20 with 90 percent of world output, and China as "the factory of the world" has taken up a place of privilege and influence squarely in the middle of these dominant nations.

Development generally and the global impact of China's own growth more specifically, is producing a range of changing economic and political patterns that are relatively easy to track. But what about cultural change? What difference does this dramatic reconfiguration of economic and political dominance make for an elite world cultural order that has long been dominated by a powerful liberalism? And what will be the role of traditional Chinese customs and values in the evolution of a newly emerging cultural order?

Within China, we have over the past decades witnessed a dramatic rise of "Schools of Canonical Learning" (*guoxueyuan* 國學院) across college campuses. And internationally at the best institutions of higher learning across America and the globe we have seen the proliferation of now more than four hundred Chinese government-funded "Confucius Institutes" (*Kongzi xueyuan* 孔子學院) that are committed to promoting literacy on traditional Chinese culture. It is clear that Chinese culture is being actively promoted both domestically and internationally by a collaboration of academic and political forces within China itself. And we know that Chinese culture celebrates the relational values of deference and interdependence. That is, relationally constituted persons are to be understood as embedded in and nurtured by unique, transactional patterns of relations, a

conception of person that contrasts rather starkly with the more familiar model of discrete, rational, self-determining, autonomous, and self-interested individuals that we have come to associate with liberal democracy. Will a Chinese ethic that locates moral conduct within a thick and richly textured pattern of family, community, and natural relations challenge and change the international culture? Will these family-centered values under the rapidly evolving conditions in evidence today precipitate a new cultural world order?

James P. Carse provides us with a distinction between finite and infinite games that might be useful in beginning to think through how Confucian values could make a difference in a newly emerging cultural order.¹ For Carse in formulating this distinction, "games" is really an analogy for the human experience broadly. The focus of finite games is on the agency of single actors who engage in a game played according to a finite set of rules that in a finite time guarantee a resolution—that is, a winner and a loser. Finite games thus have a finite beginning and end, and are played to win. The pervasiveness of what has become an ideology of individualism and the liberal values that attend it makes finite games a familiar model of the way in which we are inclined to think about our daily transactions as particular persons, as corporations, and as sovereign states, where such finite games seem relevant to most human activities that entail competition such as sports, business, education, foreign affairs, and so on.

Infinite games are different. There are no discernible beginnings or endings to infinite games. The focus is on strengthening relationships rather than competition among single actors, and the ultimate goal is simply human flourishing and the enjoyment of continuing to play. Further, infinite games are played according to rules that can be altered to serve the purpose of continuing the game when it appears that resolution is a possibility. The relationship among family members might be good example of the infinite games we play, where a mother is resolutely committed to continuing to strengthen the relationship she

1 James Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games* (New York: Ballantine, 1987).

has with her son so that together they can manage whatever increasingly complex problems their lives lived together might present. In the case of infinite games, the interdependence of relationships means that the success and prosperity of mother and son is coterminous and mutually entailing—they either succeed or fail together. Infinite games are always win-win or lose-lose.

When we look for the cultural resources necessary to respond to the global and national predicament described above as a perfect storm, we might anticipate the need for a shift in values, intentions, and practices that takes us from the preponderance of finite games played among self-interested, single actors to a pattern of infinite games played through the strengthening of relationships within families, communities, corporations, and polities necessary to overcome what are the shared problems of our day. And it is a common place that Chinese culture broadly—Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism as well—begin from values, intentions, and conduct that is grounded in a recognition of the primacy of vital relationships that is the hallmark of infinite games. In this essay, I will explore classical Daoist cosmology as one human resource that might enable humanity to weather the perfect storm and to emerge from it on a halcyon sea.

Correlative Thinking

Marcel Granet (1884-1940) makes the claim that early Chinese cosmology broadly offers us a distinctive way of thinking—what some sinologists and comparative philosophers have come to call "correlative," "analogical," "associative," or "coordinative" thinking. I cite Joseph Needham (1900-1995) here at some length to provide a starting point for our reflection on what this notion of "correlative thinking" might entail:

A number of modern students—H. Wilhelm, Eberhard, Jablonski, and above all, Granet—have named the kind of thinking with which we have here to do, "coordinative thinking" or "associative thinking." This intuitive-associative system has its own causality and its own logic. It is not either superstition or primitive superstition, but a characteristic thought-form of its own. H. Wilhelm contrasts it with the "subordinative" thinking characteristic of European science, which laid such emphasis on external causation. In coordinative thinking, conceptions are not subsumed under one another, but placed side by side in a pattern, and things influence one another not by acts of mechanical causation, but by a kind of "inductance." [.....] The key-word in Chinese thought is *Order* and above all *Pattern* (and if I may whisper it for the first time, *Organism*). The symbolic correlations or correspondences all formed part of one colossal pattern. Things behaved in particular ways not necessarily because of prior actions or impulses of other things, but because their position in the ever-moving cyclical universe was such that they were endowed with intrinsic natures which made their behaviour inevitable for them. If they did not behave in those particular ways they would lose their relational position in the whole (which made them what they were), and turn into something other than themselves. They were thus parts in existential dependence upon the whole world-organism. And they reacted upon one another not so much by mechanical impulsion or causation as by a kind of mysterious resonance.²

Needham describes this correlative thinking with "its own causality and its own logic" as "a characteristic thought-form of its own," and invites us like Alice down a portal that would take us to the other side of the looking glass to share

² See his *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 280-281.

with us his encounter with a wonky, wobbly world that has left the reassuring stability of our own rational structures and logic behind.

In this essay, I want on the one hand to try to temper Granet and Needham's claim, and in so doing, to demystify this putatively other world by building on the notion of "abductive reasoning" as a more familiar form of correlative thinking that was developed by Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914), the reputed founder of American pragmatism. On the other hand, I also want to explain why David Hall and I in our interpretive studies of Chinese philosophy needed to introduce the neologism, *ars contextualis*, to give a sufficiently capacious account of the ontological force of "correlative thinking" as it functions in early Chinese cosmology. Indeed, I will argue that it is our human capacity for *ars contextualis*—for engaging in "the art of contextualizing"—that gives consummate persons the important generative and normative role they have in early Daoist cosmology. Indeed, it is this human responsibility for collaboration in cosmic meaning-making that I would take to be a Daoist version of "role ethics." As my Daoist source of textual corroboration, I will rely primarily on the cosmology as it is expressed in the *Daodejing* 道德經—indeed, a process cosmology that, while certainly changing in time, is both antique and persistent.³

I use the term Daoist "cosmology," but in classical Greek philosophy, cosmology grounded in *kosmos* is associated with a cluster of terms, including

3 Although Needham takes Marcel Granet's *La pensée chinoise* to be "a work of genius," he criticizes Granet along with other major commentators on Chinese cosmology such as Alfred Forke (1867-1944) and H. G. Creel (1905-1994) for having "the serious defect of assuming that the cosmism and phenomenalism of the Han was ancient." The scientist Needham chooses instead to attribute the emergence of this correlative worldview to the School of Naturalists—Zou Yan 鄒衍 (305-240 BCE) and the Yinyangjia 陰陽家—thinkers who had the marked advantage of having "a mind trained in the natural sciences." See his *Science and Civilisation*, Vol. 2, pp. 216-217. On this matter, I side with David Keightley in his many publications where he ascribes correlative thinking to intellectuals as far back as the Shang dynasty. See for example his essay "Late Shang Divination" The Magico-Religious Legacy" in Henry Rosemont Jr. (ed.), *These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China* (Albany, New York: State University of New York, 2014). I make this argument most recently in *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (Hong Kong and Honolulu: Chinese University Press and University of Hawai'i Press joint publication, 2011).

arche (origin, source, principle), *logos* (account, structure), *theoria* (contemplation), *nomos* (law), *nous* (mind, rational agency), and *theos* (divinity), and references a single-ordered, divinely sanctioned "uni"-verse that has little relevance for Daoist philosophy. Indeed, arguing that the myriad things (*wanwu* 萬物) in Daoism constitute a *kosmoi* rather than a *kosmos*—a "pluri-verse" rather than a single-ordered world—David Hall and I have in the past opted to describe Daoism rather awkwardly as an "acosmotic" cosmology. I have also resisted using the term Daoist "metaphysics" because, if metaphysics is to be understood in the classical Greek sense as knowledge of the ultimate, self-sufficient, and unchanging character of "being" *per se*, then given the primacy of vital relationality and the absence of anything that could be construed as either independent or unchanging in a Daoist cosmos, Daoist philosophy is resolutely ametaphysical (dare we say "ametaphysic").⁴

Perhaps an acceptable alternative and more inclusive understanding of cosmology or metaphysics consistent with our own present philosophical temperament might be something both as simple and as complex as "experience in its broadest perspective." As Wilfrid Sellars (1912-1989) has observed about the function of philosophy in general:

The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term. Under "things in the broadest possible sense" I include such radically different items as not only "cabbages and kings," but numbers and duties, possibilities and finger snaps, aesthetic experience and death. To achieve success in Philosophy would be, to use a contemporary turn of phrase, to "know one's way around" with respect to all these things, not in that unreflective way in

4 I have recently contributed an article, "Reading the *Zhongyong* 'Metaphysically'," in Chenyang Li and Franklin Perkins (eds.), *Chinese Metaphysics and Its Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 85-104.

which the centipede of the story knew its way around before it faced the question, "how do I walk?", but in that reflective way which means that no intellectual holds are barred.⁵

As we will see below, for Daoist "cosmology" the goal of our philosophical inquiry like Sellars will be to come to know our "way" around (*zhidao* 知道) "the myriad of things" (*wanwu* 萬物) in the broadest possible sense of the term "things." But given that Daoist cosmology begins from the primacy of vital relationality and the doctrine of internal, constitutive relations that follows from it, the real challenge for us lies in understanding that in Daoist cosmology, "knowing" is not limited to a cognitive and theoretical grasp of the real world; it is to acquire the wisdom to fund the practical activity of realizing a world in the sense of making an optimally desirable world real. And "the myriad things" are not discrete "things," but in fact reference the interdependent, dynamic events that constitute our shared experience, including the narratives of sagacious human beings who, as active collaborators with the heavens and the earth, occupy a prominent role in the realizing of this meaningful world.

Corollary to this primacy of vital relationality is that Daoist cosmology is an aestheticism in which the quality achieved is always *sui generis* in the relations (*de* 德) that constitute the contents of experience registered in the totality of the effect, or *dao* 道. As Needham has tried to say above, the unique identity and insistence of any particular thing is a function of what it means for the full, unbounded complement of other things that give it context.

As we can see, what makes Daoist cosmology an aesthetic order in this Whiteheadian sense is that it is holistic rather than reductionistic. All things without exception not only collaborate in the production of the dynamic, patterned order of the cosmos in which no single privileged order predominates

5 Wilfrid Sellars, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963), p. 1.

among things, but also collaborate in the production of any particular thing. *Dao* as an "appellative" or "courtesy" name (*zi* 字) for this complex, anarchic order—a "style" name that reflects its provisional, contingent, and speculative nature—is ever provisional and emergent, and accrues enhanced resolution from the narratives of those persons whose realization is such that they are able to bring a peculiarly intense foci of meaning and value to a particular time and place. Such consummate persons have a determining influence on the direction that *dao* takes as an aggregating and unfolding way forward in the human experience.

Needham again draws on Granet to provide what is a vivid description of the unfamiliar cosmological vision we will need as our interpretive context for reading the *Daodejing*—that is, a vision of not only what this Daoist cosmology is, but perhaps more importantly, of what it is not:

Social and world order rested, not on an ideal of authority, but on a conception of rotational responsibility. The Tao [*dao*] was the all-inclusive name for this order, an efficacious sum-total, a reactive neural medium; it was not a creator, for nothing is created in the world, and the world was not created. The sum of wisdom consisted in adding to the number of intuited analogical correspondences in the repertory of correlations. Chinese ideals involved neither God nor Law. The uncreated universal organism, whose every part, by a compulsion internal to itself and arising out of its own nature, willingly performed its functions in the cyclical recurrences of the whole, was mirrored in human society by a universal ideal of mutual good understanding, a supple regime of interdependences and solidarities which could never be based on unconditional ordinances, in other words, on laws. [.....] Thus the mechanical and the quantitative, the forced and the externally

imposed, were all absent. The notion of Order excluded the notion of Law.⁶

To clarify what Needham means here by "rotational responsibility" with each thing having "a compulsion internal to itself" and with the "efficacious sum-total" being "a reactive neural medium" we will have to first explore Daoism's doctrine of internal relations and its alternative holistic "causality" that brings with it an understanding of creativity as a continuing *in situ* or "situated" increase in meaning that would defy any separation between creator and creature. Marcel Granet uses the language of "aspect" to express the way in which erstwhile things are in fact dynamic matrices of relations that constitute continuous, extended events:

Instead of observing successions of phenomena, the Chinese registered alternations of aspects. If two aspects seemed to them to be connected, it was not by means of a cause and effect relationship, but rather "paired" like the obverse and converse of something, or to use a metaphor from the *Book of Changes*, like echo and sound, or shadow and light.⁷

Granet is here reflecting on the resonant "pairing" among alternations of aspect defining of events that is denoted by the vocabulary of *yinyang* 陰陽, *youwu* 有無, *biantong* 變通, *tiandi* 天地, *tianren* 天人, *tiyong* 體用, *liyue* 禮樂, *xinshen* 心神, *jingshen* 精神, *renyi* 仁義, *daode* 道德, and so on. Both "determinacy" and "indeterminacy" (有無), for example, are nonanalytic "aspects" that we must appeal to in giving a fair account of any of the things and events that come to constitute the human experience. We will now turn to an examination of the basic terms of art, *dao* 道 and *de* 德 as aspectual and thus mutual entailing field and focus respectively.

⁶ Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 2, p. 290.

⁷ Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

"How Things Hang Together:" A Doctrine of Internal, Constitutive Relations

The primacy of vital relationality in this Daoist cosmology means that any understanding of it must begin from the doctrine of internal relations that follows from such an assumption. This doctrine of constitutive relations will shed light on what Needham is referring to here as "the universal uncreated organism" with "its own causality and its own logic." We might cite Peter Hershock who offers a rather straightforward and uncontested account of these internal, constitutive relations in diagnosing the persistent problem that we have in seeing the world as being comprised of discrete "things:"

Autonomous subjects and objects are, finally, only artifacts of abstraction. [.....] What we refer to as "things"—whether mountains, human beings, or complex phenomena like histories—are simply the experienced results of having established relatively constant horizons of value or relevance ("things"). They are not, as common sense insists, natural occurring realities or [things]. Indeed, what we take to be *objects* existing independently of ourselves are, in actuality, simply a function of habitual patterns of relationships.⁸

Peter Hershock offers us a perceptual cure that allows us to see "through the conceit that relations are second-order realities contingent upon pre-existing actors." A doctrine of constitutive relations requires a different common sense:

This amounts to an ontological gestalt shift from taking independent and dependent actors to be first order realities and relations among them as second order, to seeing relationality as first order (or ultimate) reality and

⁸ Peter D. Hershock, *Buddhism in the Public Sphere: Reorienting Global Interdependence* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 140.

all individual actors as (conventionally) abstracted or derived from them.⁹

Indeed, for Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) the very assumption that there is a world comprised of deracinated individuals who are perceiving discrete things wherein all such persons and things are defined by external relations is a prime and prominent example of what he calls the "Fallacy of Simple Location:" that is, the familiar and yet fallacious assumption that isolating, decontextualizing, and analyzing "things" as simple particulars is the best way to understand the content of our experience. Whitehead rejects a world of "objects" as being mere retrospective, second order abstractions from our continuous experience, and argues the fundamental realities of both experience and nature itself are best understood as irreducibly extended and transitory events. For Whitehead, the notion of the discrete individual is a specific and persistent example of what he has called elsewhere "misplaced concreteness." This second, closely related fallacy is to regard abstracted entities presumed to have a simple location as being "more real" than their "transitivity," that is, than their field of dynamic, extended relations and all of the untidy transitions and conjunctions that constitute the genuine content of the human experience.¹⁰

Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) elaborates upon this concern of Whitehead's, problematizing our common sense understanding of our ostensive "inner" and "outer" domains by insisting on the mutual implication and interpenetration of persons in their relations with others that follows from this doctrine of internal, constitutive relations (although the notion of *dao* as "unsummed totality" will have to do the work here of Whitehead's "God"):

⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

¹⁰ Alfred North Whitehead in *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Donald Sherbourne (corrected ed.) (New York: Free Press, 1979), p. 137 observes: "This presupposition of individual independence is what I have elsewhere called, the 'fallacy of simple location.'"

[A]s Whitehead has most clearly seen—individuals generally are not simply outside each other (the fallacy of "simple location") but in each other, and God's inclusion of all things is merely the extreme or super-case of the social relativity or mutual immanence of individuals.¹¹

In classical Daoist cosmology, the animating, transforming *qi* 氣 is conceptualized in terms of what in modern parlance we might call a "vital energy field" in which "things" are sometimes more and sometimes less persistent, vital perturbations or foci that, once having arisen, continue in the fullness of time to transform into other things. This field is not only pervasive as a condition of all things, but is also Needham's "neural," existential medium through which all things come to constitute what they have become, whether it is the appearance of cabbages and kings or the aspirated energy of finger snaps. There is neither animating *qi* without form nor form without *qi*. Indeed, "form" and "animating *qi*" are two nonanalytic aspects of the same transforming reality, where "transitivity" and "form" are both implicit ways of understanding the transformative "functioning and forming" (*tiyong* 體用) process. By nonanalytic aspects, I mean that form and animation are simply two ways of looking at the same phenomenon, and that they are separable only through abstraction by foregrounding one as opposed to the other. As such, "animating *qi*" and the various ways of saying "forming" are an explanatory rather than an ontological vocabulary; we need to reference both terms to give an adequate account of what we experience.

11 Charles Hartshorne, "Panpsychism," in Vergilius Ferm (ed.), *A History of Philosophical Systems* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p. 443.

Shi 勢: An Aesthetic Alternative to Essence and Causality

We might appeal to the notion of the relationship between "things" and their "contextualizing circumstances" (*shi* 勢) as one concrete way in which *ars contextualis* has come to be expressed to illustrate how this Daoist understanding of the production of order among erstwhile "things" entails "its own causality and its own logic." We see the cosmology described by Granet and Needham above quite literally spring to life in chapter 51 of the *Daodejing*:

故道生之，德畜之；長之育之；亭之毒之；養之覆之。生而不有，為而不恃，長而不宰，是謂玄德。

Way-making (*dao*) brings things to life,
 Their virtuosity (*de*) provides them with nourishment,
 Environing things shape them,
 And their contextualizing circumstances (*shi*) usher them to completion.
 It is thus that all things revere *dao* and esteem *de*.
 As for this reverence and esteem,
 It just arises spontaneously without anything decreeing it to be so.

Way-making brings things to life,
 And their virtuosity provides them with nourishment;
 It rears and develops them,
 Brings them to fruition and maturation,
 Nurtures and guards over them.

Way-making brings things to life
 Yet does not manage them.
 It assists them

Yet makes no claim upon them.

It rears them

Yet does not lord it over them.

It is this that is called the profound virtuosity of things.

Shi 勢 is a generic term that expresses the complex, holistic dynamics of the process of "trans-form-ing" (*tiyong* 體用) as it occurs within the evolution and consummation of any particular situation. First, there is the element of cultivation and enhancement that is captured in the etymology of the term as "sowing and cultivating" (*yi* 藝) and in its cognate term, the "performing arts" (*yi* 藝). Situations do not just happen; they emerge in their complexity as a growing pattern of changing relations that are vital, and display the possibilities of incremental design as well as an achieved, aesthetic virtuosity. Situations by definition also have a morphology or "habituated" aspect—a localized place with its insistent particularity and its own persistent yet always changing configuration. But as Hershock has observed above, we must see the "relationality as first order (or ultimate) reality and all individual actors as (conventionally) abstracted or derived from them."

Putative "things" are horizons, and thus only convenient abstractions from persistent and continuous matrices of interdependent relations. And these relations do not terminate anywhere, but reach out to the furthest limits of the cosmos. Any particular "thing" or situation emerges at the pleasure of every other situation, and is thus at once a cause and an effect. Another way of capturing this relationship between particular focus and unbounded field would be *ziran* 自然 or "self-so-ing." *Ziran* means that all of a thing's relations that come to constitute it as its "self" (*zi* 自) conspire to give life to its unique nature (*ran* 然) that makes it insistently so.

We might be initially overwhelmed when we rehearse and examine what is in fact a non-exhaustive list of the possible English translations for this term *shi*

勢 that is revealing of its broad compass of meaning. But there is a logic internal to these seemingly disparate meanings. The complex significance of *shi* can be subsumed under the following glossary of terms:

Relationality: leverage, differential, advantage, purchase

Vitality: potential, momentum, timing, tendency, propensity

Virtuosity: influence, power, force, style, dignity, status

Embodiment: terrain, configuration, situation, circumstances, disposition, shape, appearance

In lifting coherence out of this pattern of seemingly disjunctive associations that are in different contexts used to translate *shi*, we must begin from the relations that constitute any particular situation and register the vital and thus changing pattern or structure that emerges from them. And this structure—from its relationality and vitality to its achieved virtuosity and embodiment—can be drawn upon to answer some of our basic cosmological questions.

First, this reflection on *shi* provides an alternative vocabulary for thinking through the dynamics of continuing experience and the multiplicity of its content. *Shi* provides a centered, "from-field-to-focus" conception of the principle of how we come to individuate and set horizons on things. That is, beginning from the wholeness of experience, we divide up, conceptualize, foreground, and thus make determinate a "thing" within an otherwise continuous flow by bringing focus and meaningful resolution to its horizons as it is entertained from one perspective or another. The primacy of vital relations means that situation will always have priority over agency, and that nothing does anything by itself.

An ostensive "thing" is first a specific focus or matrix—a particular configuration—within an expansive context of always changing, constitutive relations. But importantly, it can achieve insistent focus and resolution, and further be cultivated and shaped in its interdependent relations with the "other"

things that constitute it. The dynamics of *shi* explains what it means for something that is at once unique and yet continuous with other things to act and to move, and to be acted upon and to be moved, where the shaping and being shaped is one continuous process. *Shi* as one and many—as foci and their fields—provides some insight into what the logic of an alternative sense of unity and diversity and of inner and outer might actually mean. Indeed, the inseparability of unity and diversity guarantees the uniqueness of each situation, and means at the very least that there can be no single dominant order, but only many interdependent and interpenetrating sites of order. And the reversibility of inner and outer means that in searching inwardly for a unique, lived identity we are in fact exploring the web of outward relations that make us who we are. And in projecting outward to register the unbounded web of relations that give us context we are discovering our innermost selves.

When *shi* is used to reflect on the human condition specifically, it explains the emerging individuality of unique "persons" situated within the evolving circumstances of their extended families and communities, and within the changing conditions of their natural environments. Persons are irreducibly transactional, ingesting and embodying their environs as a focused field of selves. The cultivated distinctiveness of these persons is not exclusive of relationships, but rather by virtue of the quality achieved in them. To the extent that we are able to thrive within productive relations, we can emerge as distinctive and sometimes even distinguished persons, thereby bringing distinction to the nexus of relations to which we belong. *Shi* suggests how persisting habits and specific habitudes that constitute identities are shaped from original impulses—the 勢源 (potential source)—into definite and significant activities of unique persons.

The somatic and vital aspects of *shi*, and the interpenetration of all things as focus and field brings clarity to the claim in *Daodejing* 13 that:

故貴以身為天下，若可寄天下；愛以身為天下，若可託天下。

Those who esteem their own persons as much as the world
 Can be entrusted with its governance,
 And those who love their own persons as much as the world
 Can take it as their charge.

The point here is focus and field: Since the entire world is implicated within each of us as persons, it is only appropriate that we regard ourselves with the same esteem that we would extend to the world. Or said more simply, to love ourselves is to love the world. It is only those who fully realize this interpenetration between world and things, and among things themselves, who can "grasp and cherish the 'three treasures' (*sanbao* 三寶)" enumerated in the *Daodejing* as compassion (*ci* 慈), frugality (*jian* 儉), and deference (*bugan wei tianxia xian* 不敢為天下先). And these three treasures are necessary to extend oneself to the full compass of experience as a precondition for exercising influence over it.¹² It is in this way—through deference to all things—that consummate human beings have a vital role in expediting the creative possibilities that experience has to offer.

12 *Daodejing* 67: 我有三寶，持而保之。一曰慈，二曰儉，三曰不敢為天下先。[……] 天將救之，以慈衛之。 "When *tian* is going to rescue something, it surrounds it with compassion." The last phrase in the Mawangdui version has: 天將建之，如以慈垣之。 "When *tian* establishes anything, it is as though it fortifies it with a wall of compassion."


The Centrality of Human Sagacity in the Optimizing of the *Daode* 道德 Experience



Before turning to a reflection on Peirce's abductive reasoning and on our notion of *ars contextualis* as an effort to appreciate, clarify, and extend Peirce, I want to first register the centrality of the human being in the key terms of art that are defining of "*Dao-de*-ism." And it is perhaps better to refer to "Daoism" as "*dao-de*-ism" because it is the correlative, field-and-focus relationship between these two reversible terms, *dao* and *de*, that provides us real insight into early Daoist cosmological and axiological thinking. In fact, Sima Tan 司馬談 (165-110 BCE) in his "Preface of the Grand Historian 太史公自序" uses the expression *daode* in his first reference to Daoism as a "lineage" (*jia* 家). And of course the title of Daoism's seminal text is not the "*Dao-jing*," but as "*Daodejing*" remembers the fact that both of the early Mawangdui 馬王堆 manuscripts dating to 168 BCE are explicitly a combination of a *de-jing* and a *dao-jing*.¹³

I want to argue that the sagacious human being as portrayed in the *Daodejing* has cosmic stature. There is in this text a much elevated and amplified expectation of human participation in the emergence of a micro and macrocosmic order that in its own time challenged the more narrowly defined views of Confucianism found in texts such as the *Analects* 論語—what John Berthrong has called early Confucianism's "meso-" or "in between" view of the cosmos. And it would seem to be this Daoist challenge that occasioned a response by the evolving Confucian tradition in producing self-consciously hyperbolic texts such

13 See Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145/135-ca. 90/87 BCE), *The Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1959), pp. 3288-3289. This *de* and *dao* division is not respected in the three Guodian bundles of text dating to about 300 BCE wherein chapters from the *de* and *dao* sections in the Mawangdui manuscripts are mixed together in each of the groupings.

as the *Daxue* and *Zhongyong* that rise up to celebrate the cosmic reach of personal cultivation.¹⁴

I would begin by reflecting on what seem to be certain suppressed premises in the cosmological and normative language of *dao* 道 and *de* 德 that gives the *Daodejing* its title. It is significant that the character for *dao* found on the bronzes  is not simply a road—"the Way" as it is conventionally translated—but is reflexive in including within it a clear graphic representation of walking-and-seeing persons journeying resolutely ahead on their way forward, including both where they have come from and where they are going. Simply put, *dao* is not *the* way; it is *our* human way. With an appropriate awareness of the fact that the etymology of "world" as *w (e) oruld* (Old English) is derived from a Germanic compound of *wer* (man) and *eld* (age), and thus means quite explicitly, "the age or the life of man," this specific reference to the human sojourn might allow for an alternative translation of *dao* as "world-making" or indeed, as a human-centered cosmogony.

On the oracle bones, *de* that is conventionally rendered nominally as "virtue" or "excellence," appears as  and is similar to the graph for *dao* in again depicting persons walking deliberately forward with eyes focused on the road ahead.¹⁵ There is this immediate graphic resonance between *dao* as a resolutely and specifically human understanding of forging our way forward in the world, and its dyadic correlate *de* that denotes human flourishing within the context of their world of experience. Indeed, on the bronzes, the heartmind (*xin* 心) signific is added as an additional element in the *de* character , underscoring both the intellectual and the affective dimensions integral to the life experience as we cultivate and accrue the virtuosity needed to extend our way

14 See John H. Berthrong, *Expanding Process: Exploring Philosophical and Theological Transformations in China and the West* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), pp. 60-61.

15 See Kwan Tze-wan's "Multi-function Chinese Character Database" 殷墟文字甲編 2304.

forward effectively in the world.¹⁶ Reinforcing this understanding of *de* as a kind of "conatus," or what Needham above has described as "a compulsion internal to itself and arising out of its own nature,"—that is, a deliberate effort to strive forward and excel in the life experience—is the fact that in several of the recently recovered archaeological texts, the character *de* 德 is written using the variant graph, 惓. This graphic alternative has a heartmind radical *xin* 心 placed underneath the character *zhi* 直 that itself means "moving straight ahead." There is clearly a cognate relationship between these two variants for *de*—德 and 惓—on the one hand, and the character *zhi* 直 meaning "moving straight ahead" on the other. In the archaic language the latter occasionally appears as a loan character for the former, and they are markedly similar in archaic pronunciation.

When we parse this notion of "straight" and consider the normative qualities of action that would follow from it, we have a gloss of true, direct, candid, authentic, rightly positioned, immediate, undiluted, deliberate, resolute, intense, and so on. Such conduct in sum is the meaning of "virtuosity:" that is, to be resolute in optimizing those resources and their creative possibilities that allow us to find the most efficient, productive, and expedient way forward.

This clear interpenetration and complementarity of *dao* and *de* reinforces the assumption that Daoist cosmology is really a generalized sociology in the sense that it is a phenomenology of the possibilities of the human experience. It is an account that is not simply descriptive of human flourishing, but is also prescriptive in advocating a way of pursuing it, and is exhortative in recommending that we get on with it. The *daode* dyad with each component having "human" and "right way forward" implicated within them defines human virtuosity as an optimization of the relations that constitute our interpenetrating focus and field narratives as we journey forth within our natural, social, and cultural contexts.

16 See Kwan Tze-wan's "Multi-function Chinese Character Database" [西周早期] CHANT: 2837.

Another way of thinking about this quest for virtuosic relationality is to remember that *dao* can also be parsed as "speaking," and the quality of *dao* is in important measure dependent upon the productivity of the continuing human discourse. The graph suggests that the sages "hear" (*er* 耳) what is valuable to hear, and on that basis are effective in "making manifest" (*cheng* 呈) and communicating their vision of what will be. Sages (*shengren* 聖人) then, are virtuoso communicators of cosmic and epochal proportions. Two expressions frequently associated with sages in the tradition broadly is a kind of prescience that enables them to see what is still inchoate (*ji* 幾), and on that basis, to take the initiative (*zuo* 作) in guiding the unfolding propensity of things in a positive direction.

Given that in this cosmology, persons are constituted by their relationships, we must register the fact that implicated within the sages are the inspired worlds they have raised to higher levels. Indeed, they do not lead their people; they embody the heights that the people themselves have achieved in defining and integrating the communities of the past, and of the future as well. This enhanced awareness of the sages gives them the capacity to go beyond the particular time and place in which they live, effecting a continuity not only with their contemporaries, but with those who have preceded them, and with those who are yet to come. And their sagacity is measured by their success in orchestrating and embodying in themselves the efforts of the people to realize their shared project, and as such, they themselves through their deference to the full content of their experience are camouflaged and remain imperceptible as a collaborative source of influence.

The metaphors used to describe the sages are cosmic and celestial, and the culture that finds its focus in these rare persons elevates the human experience to heights of profound aesthetic and religious refinement, making the human being a worthy partner with the heavens and the earth. The model of the sage shines across generations and across geographical boundaries as a light that not only

stabilizes and secures the human world, but that also serves humankind as a source of cultural nourishment and inspiration. It is the sages who collaborate with the ways of the world (*tiandao* 天道) and through deference extend the way of becoming consummately human (*rendao* 人道) into its more certain future.

Sageliness as the Qualitative Transformation of the *Tianren* Relationship

As we have seen, what differentiates the *Daodejing* from a text such as the *Analects* is that, whereas the *Analects* focuses its attention on the human way (*rendao* 人道) to the extent of being self-consciously exclusive of the way of the world (*tiandao* 天道), the *Daodejing* is concerned with a productive symbiosis of the "two" ways.¹⁷ We might ask, then: What in the *Daodejing* is the perceived relationship between *tian* 天 and *ren* 人—between the numinous context and the human drama?

As we read in *Daodejing* 42, because all things are one and many at the same time, the unsummed complexity of *dao* comes first as neither one nor many, and individuation and enumeration is second order:

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。
萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。

Way-making (*dao*) gives rise to one,
One to two,
Two to three,
And three to everything that is happening.
Everything that is happening carries *yin* on its shoulders and *yang* in its

¹⁷ See *Analects* 5.13 and 9.4, for example.

arms

And blends these vital energies together to make them harmonious.

And in *Daodejing* 25, it is "returning" (*fan* 反) that is the inevitable outcome of achieved particularity in this reflexive process of transformation:¹⁸

有物混成，先天地生。寂兮寥兮，獨立不改，周行而不殆，
可以為天下母。吾不知其名，字之曰道，強為之名曰大。大
曰逝，逝曰遠，遠曰反。

There was some process that formed spontaneously

Emerging prior to the heavens and the earth.

Silent and empty,

Standing alone as all that is, it does not suffer alteration.

(All pervading, it does not pause.)

It can be thought of as the mother of the heavens and the earth.

I do not yet know its name.

If I were to style it,

I would call it way-making (*dao*).

And if forced to give it a name,

I would call it grand.

Being grand, it is described as flowing out,

Flowing out, it is described as distancing.

Distancing, it described as returning.

18 See also the cosmology described in Chapter 40 in which the indeterminate is prior to the determinate, and the operations of the procreative process are weakening and returning:

反者道之動；弱者道之用。天下萬物生於有，有生於無。

"Returning" is how way-making moves,

And "weakening" is how it operates.

The events of the world arise from the determinate,

And the determinate arises from the indeterminate.

In binomial expressions such as *yinyang* 陰陽, *zhixing* 知行, and *tianren* 天人, primacy is given to vital relationality and the continuity assumed by it. Since relationships come first, the two distinctive aspects are second order abstractions from these constitutive relations. It is the deepening of the horizon of constitutive, internal relationships that transforms the two aspects qualitatively into harmonics (*he* 和) for *yinyang*, acting wisely (*zhi* 智) for *zhixing*, and sagacity (*sheng* 聖) for *tianren*. In each instance, the two aspects themselves are simply conceptual abstractions from a complex relational process. The proper and effective measure (*du* 度) sought in this Confucian cosmology is not the combination of either more or less of two distinct things—two erstwhile independent bits of experience. Taking mind and body as our example, *du* is not the combination or integration of two things, but rather a qualitative and transformative change that occurs within the "lived bodyheartminding" experience itself.

We can use the opening chapter of the recently recovered document, "Five Modes of Proper Conduct" (*Wuxingpian* 五行篇), to make this argument. This chapter explains how a person's actions become habituated "within" as characteristic, identity-forming patterns of virtuosic conduct. According to this text, this achieved quality of human conduct produces "efficacy" (*shan* 善) in our human relations (善，人道也) and then culminates in a world-changing virtuosity (*de* 德) in the quality of the *tianren* experience (德，天道也):¹⁹

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

19 Two versions of this text belonging to the Zisizi-Mengzi lineage (SiMengpai 思孟派) have been recovered in archaeological finds, first on a silk text at Mawangdui recovered in 1973 dating to 168 BCE, and then the Guodian text recovered in 1993 on bamboo strips dating from c. 300 BCE. The fact that redactions of the same text have been found at such a temporal and physical distance speaks to the perceived importance of the document.

德之行，不形於內謂之行。德之行五，和謂之德，四行和謂之善。善，人道也，德，天道也。

Consummatory conduct (*ren* 仁) taking shape within is called moral virtuosity (*de* 德); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed consummate. Appropriate acting (*yi* 義) taking shape within is called moral virtuosity (*de*); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed appropriate. A sense of ritual propriety (*li* 禮) taking shape within is called moral virtuosity (*de*); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed proper. Acting wisely (*zhi* 智) taking shape within is called moral virtuosity (*de*); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed wise. Acting in a sagely way (*sheng* 聖) taking shape within is called moral virtuosity (*de*); where it does not take shape within, it is called merely doing what is deemed sagacious. When harmony (*he* 和) is achieved among these five modes of proper conduct, it is called moral virtuosity (*de*). Achieving harmony among the first four of these modes of proper conduct is called efficacy (*shan* 善). Efficacy is the human way (*rendao* 人道); moral virtuosity is the way of the world (*tiandao* 天道).

The "focus-field" conception of agency that is pervasive in the *Daodejing* enables us to understand the inclusive nature of the distinction being made between "the human way" (*rendao*) and "the way of the world" (*tiandao*) described at the end of this *Wuxingpian* passage. As is the case with the interpenetrating and reversible inner life and the outer world, we must resist the assumption that "the way of the world" and "the human way" designate two exclusive domains. Rather, this human way/way of the world (*tianren*) experience is an emergent, increasingly inspired way of living that is revealing of both a human and a numinous aspect. In *Wuxingpian*, "achieving harmony among the first four of

these modes of proper conduct" references an efficacious harmony made possible by the "four inklings" (*siduan* 四端) that define the kinds of relations characteristic of the initial human condition as we are born into family and community—that is, because of these relations we are disposed to "efficacy" (*shan* 善). Of course this is a familiar assertion in the *Mencius's* claim that the four inklings characteristic of our initial human condition incline us to efficacious action (*renxingshan* 人性善).

Harmony among all five modes of proper conduct—a harmony that adds the sagacious (*sheng* 聖) to efficacy in the four inklings—is certainly the moral virtuosity we would associate with the way of the world (*tian*), that is, "virtuosity" (*de* 德). This moral virtuosity (*de* 德) is manifested in the world as the consummate expression of the operations of human beings within their contextualizing world. Indeed, we have seen throughout this passage that such moral virtuosity (*de*) is also characteristic of human conduct as it is habituated "within," thereby giving such conduct sway in the world without. In a word, sagacity describes the quality of the human experience as it extends to the reach and influence of *tian*, and the deepening of the numinous *tian* as it is enhanced by an aggregating human sagacity. Sagacity is the proper measure (*du*) of a qualitative and transformative change that occurs within the "lived *tianren*" experience itself.

***Daode* as Focus-field Holography**

We have seen that the focus-field notion of person assumed in this *daode* and *qi* cosmology stands in stark contrast to a metaphysical realist conception of an inner, private domain and a shared outer world. It begins from this doctrine of internal, constitutive relations and requires a fundamentally different understanding of persons in which their particular identities and the unsummed totality—their

foregrounded focus and its field—are two holographic and thus mutually entailing ways of perceiving the same phenomenon. 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. Just as each live note in a symphony has implicated within it the entire performance, so persons as live focal events have implicated within them their entire field of experience. And just as the symphony is the complex totality of the effect as it is construed from the perspective of each unique note without the privileging of any particular one among them, so persons are anarchic in construing the entire field of experience from their own unique perspective without the regulation of some invisible hand.

William James (1842-1910) provides us with a helpful image. In the *Pluralistic Universe*, James uses a phenomenology of consciousness to reflect on and to give a rather vivid picture of what he calls "the pulse of inner life," a pulsation that, in being both holistic and vitally specific at the same time, requires that we abandon any notion of "inner" and "outer" as exclusive domains. As we will see below in exploring the notion of *xin*, we must reconceive the relationship between inner and outer in focus-field, holographic terms where they are simply two ways of foregrounding and emphasizing different aspects of the same phenomenon:

In the pulse of inner life immediately present now in each of us is a little past, a little future, a little awareness of our own body, of each other's persons, of these sublimities we are trying to talk about, of the earth's geography and the direction of history, of truth and error, of good and bad, and of who knows how much more? Feeling, however dimly and subconsciously, all these things, your pulse of inner life is continuous with them, belongs to them and they to it. [.....] The real units of our

immediately felt life are unlike the units that intellectualist logic holds to and makes its calculations with. They are not separate from their own others, and you have to take them at widely separated dates to find any two of them that seem unblent. [.....] my present field of consciousness is a centre surrounded by a fringe that shades insensibly into a subconscious more. [.....] Which part of it properly is in my consciousness, which out? If I name what is out, it already has come in. The centre works in one way while the margins work in another, and presently overpower the centre and are central themselves. What we conceptually identify ourselves with and say we are thinking of at any time is the centre; but our full self is the whole field, with all those indefinitely radiating subconscious possibilities of increase.²⁰

The following *Daodejing* 49 passage with its holographic understanding of persons and their fields of experience, is explicit in calling into question our familiar distinction between an inner self and an outer world:

聖人恆無心，以百姓心為心。〔……〕聖人在天下，歛歛為天下渾其心，百姓皆注其耳目，聖人皆孩之。

Sages are ever without thoughts and feelings (*xin*)

In taking the thoughts and feelings of the common people as their own.²¹

[.....]

20 William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), pp. 286-288.

21 The received text of *Daodejing* 49 has 聖人無常心: "Sages are without constant thoughts and feelings." On the basis of a Mawangdui text A variant that has 聖人恆無心, Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢 uses received commentaries to argue for the cogency of this alternative: "Sages are ever without thoughts and feelings." See his *Laozi Past and Present* 老子古今 (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2006), Vol. 1, p. 487. I read the *wuxin* 無心 here as an additional *wu* 無—form that expresses a sedimented habit of engagement: an unmediated "thinking and feeling," or "thinking and feeling immediately." Like *wuwei* 無為, *wuxin* describes an optimal pattern of deferential relationality rather than the absence of activity.

As for the presence of sages in the world,
 In their efforts to draw things together they make of the world one
 muddled mind.
 The common people all fix their eyes and ears on the sages,
 And the sages treat them as so many children.

Xin 心 has conventionally been translated as "heartmind" to challenge the familiar separation of the cognitive and the affective, connoting as *xin* does both thinking and feeling. But in addition to resisting the cognition-affect dualism, *xin* also precludes the familiar mind-body, inner-outer, subject-object, and agent-action dichotomies, and might be better read gerundively (if ungrammatically) as "lived bodyheartminding." In this *Daodejing* passage, implicated in the narratives of the sages are the lives of the common people. The ordinary people certainly look to these sages for direction in finding their bearings, but they also retain the spontaneity (*ziran* 自然) needed to live their own diverse lives in a way that retains the indeterminacy of so many children, with everyone being given the space to create their own unique narrative in the world. Without any specific regimen being imposed upon them, the world around them is simply the unsummed totality of many different orders, allowing everyone to enjoy the diversity of participating whole-heartedly and like-mindedly in a happily muddled *xin* in which their differences make a difference for each other, and for the sage as well.

In order to make sense of this passage—a passage that is reminiscent of the Mencian claim that "the myriad happenings of the world are all implicated here in me"²²—we need to invoke an alternative to our common sense understanding of the "inner" and "outer" as two separate domains. Most obviously, as noted

22 Mencius 7A4: 孟子曰：「萬物皆備於我矣。反身而誠，樂莫大焉。強恕而行，求仁莫近焉。」 Mengzi said, "Is there any enjoyment greater than, with the myriad happenings of the world all implicated here in me, to turn personally inward and to thus find resolution with these happenings? Is there any way of seeking to become consummate in my person more immediate than making every effort to act empathetically by extending myself into the places of others?"

above, it is a commonplace that *xin* does the work of both cognizing and feeling in a life experience that includes both felt thoughts and cognitively informed feelings. And further, there is no strict dichotomy between intellection and sensation, between body and mind, between structure and function, between thinking and doing, between center and context, between nature and culture. These aspectual distinctions are nonanalytic and mutually entailing; they do not serve to separate and isolate different components within "lived bodyheartminding" nor fragment the activities that are defining of it.

Taking our cue from Chinese medicine as a practical application of this cosmology, we have to avoid the formalism that comes with a doctrine of external relations by acknowledging the inseparability of physiology and anatomy, of the function and structure of the life experience. As medical anthropologist Judith Farquhar observes in her attempt to make sense of this early Chinese *qi* 氣 cosmology:

Qi is both structural and functional, a unification of material and temporal forms that loses all coherence when reduced to one or the other "aspect."²³

Indeed, it is because traditional Chinese medicine has a dynamic, symbiotic understanding of the coterminous relationship between structure and function often captured in the expression "forming and functioning" (*tiyong* 體用)—or put more simply, "trans-*form*-ing"—that it can provide us with a significantly different way of understanding the lives of the common people that are implicated in the life of the sage. Systemic physiological functions have parity if not privilege over the more persistent, localized anatomical structures in

23 Judith Farquhar, *Knowing Practice: The Clinical Encounter of Chinese Medicine* (Boulder: Westview, 1994), p. 34.

traditional Chinese medical sensibilities, requiring that explanations be holistic and inclusive rather than being overly specific and thus exclusive.

The term *zhenmai* 診脈, for example, is certainly localized as "taking this pulse," but more importantly it is using one's tactile sensitivity to feel and interpret the visceral dynamics of the living body holistically, and as such, has synoptic reference not only to the organism itself as experience from within, but also to the organic, lived relationship this organism has with its external landscape. In "taking this pulse," the medical practitioner is ultimately feeling the pulse of the living cosmos.

The familiar dualistic separation of inner and outer domains follows from a doctrine of external relations and brings with it "introspection," where introspection is usually understood as turning from a normal outward orientation to a reflective examination of one's own internal mental states and feelings. Inspired by this Daoist understanding of "lived bodyheartminding," however, we might want to challenge this description of what takes place when we look inward by inventing an alternative term—"intra-spection." Such a neologism would signal the fact that the process of "*looking into* our own lived bodyheartminding" is at the same time a *looking outward* into the quality of the coalescence our "lived bodyheartminding" has achieved with its contextualizing world. When the sages go "inward" to "intraspect" they are in fact surveying the quality they have been able to achieve in their relations with the common people. Indeed, such "intraspection" as a looking "into" the productive connectivity of our lived bodyheartminding with the "outer" world is both inner and outer at the same time. Similarly, for the sages to be "prospective" is again to go "outward" only to survey the relations that are constitutive of their own unique identities—again, inward and outward at the same time. These functions are inner and outer in the sense of having a felt, existential character as well as a more objective mien. The point is that lived bodyheartminding is holographic, and indeed, since "everything is here in me," in making the most of our bodyheartminding, we are

literally bringing the entire cosmos into more meaningful focus and resolution from our own unique perspectives, and more completely adumbrating its whole within the events of our own lives. In so doing, we thus come to function most productively and influentially in our relations with what is happening in the world around us.

C. S. Peirce and Abductive Reasoning: Step One in Focal Resolution

How do we achieve the quality of resolution and its quantum of meaning needed to live sagaciously? If, as Needham has said above, "the sum of wisdom" is a deliberate increase in "the number of intuited analogical correspondences in the repertory of correlations," how do we get more wisdom?

In trying to explain the process of human reasoning, Peirce found it necessary to develop the concept of "abductive" or "explanatory" or "presumptive" reasoning as a necessary supplement to the more familiar deductive and inductive reasoning. Peirce wanted from reasoning the capacity to produce new ideas—to go beyond what is already stated in the premises to contribute additional information and content. Deduction cannot possibly do this, and while enumerative induction is content-increasing by generalizing a sample to a population, the extra content is not new but rather a generalization of the content of the premises. Deductive and inductive reasoning are thus used for justificatory purposes to confirm the validity of a given hypothesis, and are a source of security in our thinking. Abductive reasoning on the other hand is not only ampliative (amplifying the content as induction does) but is also distinctively generative (producing of new ideas). It is the process of surveying facts and coming up with a theory that can explain them often captured in the description "inference to the best explanation."

Abduction has the function not of justifying hypotheses, but belongs to that phase of inquiry in which a theory is formulated in the first place. The more conservative interpretation is that it is a form of sleuthing or diagnostics that produces an educated guess as to the best explanation that is then available for further testing. While abductive reasoning is short on security in having to rely upon deductive or inductive reasoning to confirm its conclusions, it is nonetheless taken to be strong on uberty: it is fruitful, a source of copiousness.²⁴ But the perceived strength of abduction is also its weakness. On this reading, abduction allows reasoning to be a source of new information and ideas, but it is still a logic of discovery rather than a source of real creative advance. What it makes "newly available" is information about an existing world rather than precipitating the spontaneous emergence of true novelty.

A second, liberal and certainly more interesting reading of Peircean abduction is that it is the unbounded process of making productive correlations, generating new meaning, and taking as its boundaries only the limits of our imagination. Steve Coutinho describes this mode of thinking in the following terms:

Successful abduction requires accumulated knowledge, extensive experience and a lively imagination. We start with a mystery, a perception, a text; these provide the "evidence" consisting of a small number of clues, or traces. We then use our imagination, informed and constrained by our extensive experience, and accumulated knowledge to construct an explanation.²⁵

24 Igor Douven, "Abduction," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 Edition).

25 Steve Coutinho, *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy: Vagueness, Transformation and Paradox* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2004).

Such penumbral thinking is an attempt to exploit the always attendant indeterminacy that honeycombs determinate vocabularies as an open and bottomless source of increased meaning.

***Ars Contextualis:* Step Two in Focal Resolution**

The general vision of *ars contextualis* takes us beyond this second, more interesting interpretation of Peirce's abductive thinking and any theory/praxis dualism it might still suggest, to make it clear that Daoism requires of the human being nothing less than the ontological project of world-making itself. It takes us from reasoning about the world to the practical responsibility the human being is perceived to have in becoming a creative collaborator with the heavens and the earth. As Randy Peerenboom has asserted in his argument against a naturalist interpretation of Daoist philosophy:

Dao—both normatively, as the sanctioned way, and descriptively, as the order of the universe, the environment, the society, the person—emerges out of our contextual choices rather than as an instantiation of a predetermined blueprint. It is the result of a creative, active, participatory process. The kind of world we live in, in terms of our ethical as well as natural environment, depends in part on the choices we humans make.²⁶

Ars contextualis as a practical endeavor is a term that describes the peculiar art of contextualization that allows focal individuals to ally themselves with those contexts that they will constitute and that in turn will constitute them. There is no

26 R. P. Peerenboom, "Beyond Naturalism: A Reconstruction of Daoist Environmental Ethics," in J. Baird Callicott and James McRae (eds.), *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), p. 163.

One behind the many; there are, rather, many unique ones, many particular foci that construe and organize the fields about them. Since there is no one-many or part-whole model that serves as an overarching context determining the shape of other contexts, the world is an open-ended affair comprised of "thises" and "thats" construable from any number of distinct perspectives. The art of contextualization is an aesthetic project involving the production of harmonious correlations of the myriad of unique details that make up the world.

It is through patterns of deference and an achieved virtuosity in relations that persons extend themselves to encompass an increasingly wider range of the conative "presencing" or "arising" we have associated with *de*. In the early Confucian texts, one way of expressing this deferential activity is moral imagination—that is, the analogical and inclusive exercise of viewing a situation from the point of view of others (*shu* 恕) and "correlating a person's conduct with those near at hand."²⁷ We see in the *Zhongyong* 25 that becoming consummate in one's own person produces the virtuosity that simultaneously brings wisdom to one's world:

誠者，非自成己而已也。所以成物也。成己，仁也。成物，知也。性之德也。合外內之道也。故時措之宜也。

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). It is an achieved moral virtuosity (*de* 德) of 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 virtuosity, the result is fitting.

27 Cf. the *Mencius* 7A4 passage cited above. Also *Analects* 6.30.

In the *Daodejing*, such generative deference is achieved through the cultivation of the optimal disposition toward one's contextualizing others captured in the various *wu* 無-forms: "non-coerceive acting" (*wuwei* 無為), "objectless desiring" (*wuyu* 無欲), "unprincipled knowing" (*wuzhi* 無知), "non-interfering doing" (*wushi* 無事), and the (*wuxin* 無心) "unmediated thinking and feeling" we saw above as the sage defers to the child-like minds of the common people. Through patterns of deference, the creative possibilities of a person's conditions and the potency for self-construal are proportionately increased. When virtuosity (*de*) is cultivated and the reach and influence of such persons is extended efficaciously into their environments, the environments become increasingly adumbrated in the particular person. The distinction between *dao* and *de*—between focus and field—fades as the individuating capacity of *de* is transformed into its integrating capacity. That is to say, in the person of the sage, the enhanced, resolute focus of *de* extends without discontinuity to embrace the indeterminate field of its context. *De* is both particular (the sage) and its particular field (the common people as implicated in the sage). *De* is both *focus* and *focused field*.

The term "focus" originally referenced "domestic hearth" or "fireplace," and is thus metonymic of family and genealogy—the governing metaphor in Chinese cosmology. Focus has come to mean "place of divergence and convergence" within a "field" that also has domestic reference, but that I would use as the sphere of influence of particular foci. At any given moment, items available for *ars contextualis* can be characterized in terms of the focal point from and to which the lines of divergence and convergence attributable to them move and find resolution, and the field from which and to which those same lines proceed and have influence. To take Confucius himself as a concrete example, we would have to allow that he is corporate in the sense that the lines of divergence and convergence that constitute his focus and meaning move throughout the entire field of the Chinese cultural tradition. Confucius is both focus and Chinese culture as a focused field.

Conclusion: Getting Past the Ideology of Individualism

We began from a reflection on living in the best and in the worst of times. We confront a predicament of the perfect storm that is gathering on the human horizon, and the need for a profound change in human values, intentions, and practices. We need to move precipitously from the mentality of single actors and finite games to the recognition of the primacy of vital relationality that underlies the values of interdependence and diversity characteristic of infinite games. We need to address a major underlying and entrenched conceptual problem that is exacerbating our current malaise. There is a default individualism that is appealed to first in defining what it means to be a moral person, and thus, for this moral person to act justly. This foundational individualism with its roots deep in the Western philosophical narrative dilutes our sense of moral responsibility by allowing us to describe, analyze and evaluate individual persons—psychologically, politically, and morally—in isolation from others. The presupposition that defines persons ideally as free, autonomous, rational, and properly self-interested individuals is ubiquitous in much if not most of modern Western moral and political philosophy.

This putative foundational individual is not only an ontological fiction, but moreover, because this individual so defined provides the moral and political grounding for a libertarian economic system that can no longer be seen to be a cure for most of the world's ills, this fiction has become an insidious one. Indeed, it can be fairly argued that it is this same libertarian economic system justified as it is by appeal to individual liberty and autonomy that, far from being the cure for the world's ills, has come to aggravate and to exacerbate the disease itself.

The concept of the autonomous individual that underlies modern moral and political philosophy has at least two malevolent effects. First, it enables libertarian capitalists, growing in their numbers in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, to

claim moral purchase in justifying an unfettered human freedom as the basis and ultimate source of political justice, and on that basis, to then reject any conception of justice that retards such freedom as fundamentally immoral. The notion of the individual so defined thus continues to provide a moral basis for a more or less *laissez-faire* global free market capitalist economy that is compounding the gross inequities in human well-being within and between modern nation states. And as long as the conservatives, liberals, communitarians, and socialists alike continue to ground their objections to libertarianism in their own version of the same autonomous individual, the libertarian will always be able to counter their challenges and remain above moral reproach.

The second related reason that the concept of the autonomous individual is pernicious is its pervasiveness in the consciousness of Western intellectuals. The foundational individual is entrenched at a depth that makes it almost impossible for them to see any alternative to an individualism so defined except that of a more or less faceless collectivism in a decidedly post-Marxist era. Indeed, the assumption that the essential characteristics and actions of human beings are best understood by regarding them as fundamentally free, autonomous, and rational individuals has itself become a default, uncritical ideology.

We have seen that in Daoism the focus-field conception of person that grounds this classical cosmology provides a robust alternative to liberal individualism. And perhaps necessity itself will require that human beings turn to this alternative as a resource for changing our values, intentions, and practices to focus vital relationships that continue to encourage us to play infinite games for the engaged enjoyment of playing them. By embracing compassion, frugality, and deference, we can transform our values, intentions, and practices to prosper in harmony with nature and with each other.♦

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