

## THE GOOD IS BEING IN PLACE (居善地 *JUSHANDI*): RECOVERING OUR SENSE OF PLACE TO GROUND AN ETHICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### *Global Environmental Crisis and Loss of Our Sense of Place*

Our home, planet Earth, is under threat from a host of environmental problems, one of which is global climate change. The reality of climate change is one that affects us all—it affects habitats and entire ecosystems.<sup>1</sup> The Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) unequivocally concludes that “[h]uman influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history. Recent climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems.”<sup>2</sup> The impacts of climate change are inescapably real for inhabitants in certain parts of the world. Yet, genuine concern for the natural environment remains rare, and marginal. Care for the natural environment does not seem to figure in our daily choices and decisions: our mode of transportation, the household chemicals we use, and the amount of solid waste that we generate. Why does the purported increase of awareness of the environmental crisis not translate to actions and choices, and what are the root causes for our failure to respond?

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the “period from 1983 to 2012 was likely the warmest 30-year period of the last 1400 years in the Northern Hemisphere, where such assessment is possible (medium confidence). The globally averaged combined land and ocean surface temperature data as calculated by a linear trend show a warming of 0.85 [0.65 to 1.06]°C over the period 1880 to 2012.” Scientific data is compelling and continues to support the argument that the rapid climate change that we have been experiencing over the past three decades is closely tied to anthropogenic causes. Rajendra K. Pachauri and Leo A. Meyer (eds.), *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report, Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Geneva, 2014), 2.

In a report released in January 2019, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reports that the past four years were the warmest on record in NOAA’s 139-year climate record, with 2018 being the fourth warmest after 2016, 2015 and 2017. The report points out that “[t]he years 2015–2017 each had a global temperature departure from average that was more than 1.0°C (1.8°F) above the 1880–1900 average, which is a period that is commonly used to represent the pre-industrial conditions. However, 2018 was just shy of reaching the 1.0°C (1.8°F) mark at 0.97°C (1.75°F).” NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, “Global Climate Report for Annual 2018,” last modified 2019, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/201813>.

<sup>2</sup> Pachauri and Meyer (eds.), *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report*, 2.

I venture an argument that the global environmental crisis and our general failure to respond to it is a symptom of a disconnectedness that has occurred between ourselves and the natural world, that is, we have lost our sense of place in the world.<sup>3</sup> At the heart of this loss of rootedness is a particular understanding of our place in the world. Place, as central experience of our rootedness and relationality, has been replaced with an experience and understanding of the world as space. There has been a shift from a qualitative lived experience of the world to a quantitative valuation of the world as acreage, reserve, or resource.<sup>4</sup> We need to overcome this profound disconnectedness and to rediscover—and recover—our sense of place in the world.<sup>5</sup> With this goal in mind, I turn to the Daoist text, *Daodejing*. The *Daodejing* presents an understanding of the world wherein the

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<sup>3</sup> There are a number of complex factors that have contributed to this loss of our sense of place: social and population pressures pushing people off their lands, economic hardships forcing people to migrate to foreign shores in search of a livelihood, modernization and urbanization turning farmland and the countryside into cities, the growth of a nomadic lifestyle with the development of air travel, industrialization leading to the growth of industrial towns and cities, and large-scale cash crop plantations such as oil palm estates leading to the clearing of wide swaths of forests and ancestral lands to name a few. The ever-present threat of human avarice leads to the commodification of the natural environment as we view nature as a resource that we can exploit to meet our wants. There are a number of commentators who have pointed to the modern turn and the growth of science and technology, which fueled the Industrial Revolution, as the main cause of this loss of our sense of place.

<sup>4</sup> Edward S. Casey presents a compelling case for a more expansive and historically fair view of the turn from place to space, pointing out that the fascination for space had been part of the intellectual tradition of the ancient Greek thinkers. The modern turn from place to space, for its part, follows on the pursuit of science for basic universal properties. The scientific mind has resolved that the genuinely real is what we can reduce to the simplest principles. Place, which is seen as limited by its particularity, is considered secondary to space, which is seen as universal. The loss of place can be traced in modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant, and it has contributed to the “assimilat[ion] of place to space under the common heading of relative position or situation.” In the modern period, place becomes “dissolved” into space. Place is seen as something of “limited consideration.” Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, ed. Edward S. Casey, 2d ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 361. Alexandre Koyré described this evolution of thinking about place and space has been described as a transformation from “the closed world to the infinite universe.” Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, Reprint. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958).

<sup>5</sup> Ecocentric environmental philosophers such as Aldo Leopold and J. Baird Callicott have opened the way for us to tread this path. Leopold makes a vital argument for the recognition of land community, an argument and a vision that Callicott has championed and developed, for instance in his ground-breaking work, *Earth Insights*. This vision of Leopold’s invites us to question the presuppositions of our views on the natural world and our place in relation to the “soils, waters, plants, and animals.” J. Baird Callicott, *Earth’s Insights: A Multicultural Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).

human person is intrinsically and inseparably part of the world.<sup>6</sup> Place is not just physical space; it is not simply quantifiable matter. Rather, place—as it relates to us—involves a sense of place. Sense of place, in turn, is “*ars contextualis*—the art of effectively contextualizing and coordinating the experience of the human being within the processes of nature in their effort to optimize the creative possibilities of the cosmos.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, the *Daodejing* views place and our place in the world as placemaking: it is a dialectic process in which the world is achieved by our constantly making our place. Our placemaking becomes effective when it is guided by and is directed towards a harmonious ongoing symbiosis (和 *he*).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> We find this throughout the Daoist text, *Daodejing*, as well as the first chapter of the *Huainanzi* entitled *Yuan Dao*. Cf. Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 2003); D. C. Lau and Roger T. Ames, *Yuan Dao: Tracing Dao to Its Source* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Roger T. Ames, “The Great Commentary (Dazhuan 大傳) and Chinese Natural Cosmology,” *International Communication of Chinese Culture* 2, no. 1 (2015): 5.

<sup>8</sup> The Chinese word 和 (*he*) is often rendered in English as harmony. The harmony that placemaking brings about, however, is not a simple harmony of a fixed end where there is no conflict or where parties come to an agreement about a particular matter. Rather, it is more akin to the harmony in music where different singers’ voices are perfectly balanced. A more appropriate rendering of *he* (和) would be harmonious ongoing symbiosis, a relationship that tells us of the whence, whither and wherefore of placemaking. This is beautifully expressed in the forty-second chapter of *Daodejing*: “*Dao* brings forth one, one brings forth two, two brings forth three, three brings forth the myriad things that are continually becoming. The myriad things that are continually becoming carry *yin* on their backs and embrace *yang* in their arms, blending *qi* harmoniously.” The Chinese text of this section of *Daodejing* 42 reads: “*Daodejing* 42: “道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽，中氣以為和。” Ames and Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*, 142. The Chinese text of the *Daodejing* is drawn from Ames and Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*. Subsequent citations will carry the abbreviation *DDJ* followed by the chapter number, for example, *DDJ* 25.

Throughout this paper, as a comparison, I refer to the translations of the *Daodejing* by Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, Robert G. Henricks, and D. C. Lau. Ames and Hall render this passage: “Way-making (*dao*) gives rise to continuity, continuity gives rise to difference, difference gives rise to plurality, and plurality gives rise to the manifold of everything that is happening (*wanwu*). Everything carries *yin* on its shoulders and *yang* in its arms and blends these vital energies (*qi*) together to make them harmonious (*he*).” *Ibid.*, 142–143. Henricks translates this: “The Way gave birth to the One; [t]he One gave birth to the Two; [t]he Two gave birth to the Three; and the Three gave birth to the ten thousand things. The ten thousand things carry *Yin* on their backs and wrap their arms around *Yang*. Through the blending of *ch’i* they arrive at a state of harmony.” Robert G. Henricks (trans.), *Te-Tao Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Mawangdui Texts* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 11. Lau translates this: “The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures. The myriad creatures carry on their backs the *yin* and embrace in their arms the *yang* and are the blending of the generative forces of the two.” D.C. Lau (trans.), *Tao Te Ching* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001), 63.

The *Daodejing* provides a robust foundation for re-discovering our sense of place, and with it, an enduring ethics of the environment. In proposing such a sense of place to guide an enduring ethics of the environment, I will make the argument that sense of place in the *Daodejing* involves placemaking, which is an ongoing act of participation in the harmonious ongoing symbiosis of the natural world. Placemaking, I will show, is experienced and expressed in four ways: (1) as harmonious ongoing symbiosis (*he* 和), (2) as continuity and multiplicity, (3) as *ziran* (自然), and (4) knowing how to dwell rightly.

### ***Placemaking as Harmonious Ongoing Symbiosis (he 和)***

Chapter 42 of the *Daodejing* points out that the world functions as an ongoing achievement of symbiosis (*he* 和), which expresses a continuity of negotiation of the multiplicity. The chapter begins with the following lines:

*Dao* brings forth one, one brings forth two, two brings forth three, three brings forth the myriad things that are continually becoming. The myriad things that are continually becoming carry *yin* on their backs and embrace *yang* in their arms, blending *qi* harmoniously.<sup>9</sup>

What this implies for our understanding of place is that when we think of place, we do not think of it as mere location—something simply there and unchanging. Rather, place is constantly taking place. Place is a dynamic ongoing symbiosis of myriad elements through which place is made. Thus, it would be more appropriate to speak of place as placemaking. The *Daodejing* speaks of placemaking as dynamic and harmonious ongoing symbiosis (*he* 和) consisting of elements that continually interact and work together to maintain a balance in the totality. *Daodejing* 7 states:

The heavens and the earth are long-lasting.

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<sup>9</sup> *DDJ* 42: “道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽，中氣以為和。” Ames and Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*, 142. Refer to Footnote 8 for a comparison with the translations by Ames and Hall; Henricks; and Lau.

The reason the heavens and the earth are long-lasting,  
Is because they do not live for themselves,  
Thus are able to live long.  
It is for this reason that the sages withdraw themselves yet find themselves ahead;  
Put themselves out of mind yet remain cared for.  
Is it not because they are not concerned with themselves? Thus, they are able to achieve their needs.<sup>10</sup>

This is evident in the way an ecosystem sustains itself. Each element acts not for itself but, within the workings of the natural environment, each one—wherever it sits on the food chain—plays a part in the sustenance of the entire ecosystem. Within the ecosystem itself, each part or element plays a role in the sustenance and health of the totality.<sup>11</sup> Evidence in the natural world, wherein the constant interactions among species brings about an ongoing, delicate balance exhibits

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<sup>10</sup> *DDJ 7*: “天長地久。天地之所以能長且久者，以其不自生也，故能長生。是以聖人退其身而身先；外其身而身存。不以其無私與？故能成其私。” *Ibid.*, 86. Ames and Hall translate it: “The heavens are lasting and the earth enduring. The reason the world is able to be lasting and enduring [i]s because it does not live for itself. Thus it is able to be long-lived. It is on this model that the sages withdraw their persons from contention yet find themselves out in front, [p]ut their own persons out of mind yet find themselves taken care of. Isn’t it simply because they are unselfish that they can satisfy their own needs?” *Ibid.* Henricks translates it: “Heaven endures; Earth lasts a long time. The reason why Heaven and Earth can endure and last a long time—Is that they do not live for themselves. Therefore they can long endure. Therefore the Sage: Puts himself in the background yet finds himself in the foreground; Puts self-concern out of his mind, yet finds that his self-concern is preserved. Is it not because he has no self-interest, [t]hat he is therefore able to realize his self-interest?” Henricks (trans.), *Te-Tao Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Mawangdui Texts*, 59. Lau translates it: “Heaven and earth are enduring. The reason why heaven and earth can be enduring is that they do not give themselves life. Hence they are able to be long-lived. Therefore the sage puts his person last and it comes first, [t]reats it as extraneous to himself and it is preserved. Is it not because he is without thought of self that he is able to accomplish his private ends?” Lau (trans.), *Tao Te Ching*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Take, for example, the positive effects that the reintroduction of the gray wolf has had on the ecosystem of the Yellowstone National Park, or the importance of beaver dams to the formation of alluvial valleys. For further information, refer to the following studies: Julie S. Mao et al., “Habitat Selection by Elk Before and After Wolf Reintroduction in Yellowstone National Park,” *The Journal of Wildlife Management* 69, no. 4 (October 1, 2005): 1691–1707, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.2193/0022-541X%282005%2969%5B1691%3AHSBEB%5D2.0.CO%3B2>; C. J. Westbrook, D. J. Cooper, and B. W. Baker, “Beaver Assisted River Valley Formation,” *River Research and Applications* 27, no. 2 (February 1, 2011): 247–256, accessed August 21, 2018, <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1002/rra.1359>.

When the gray wolves were completely wiped out from Yellowstone Park, the loss of a natural predator, which was an essential part of the ecosystem, led to a serious imbalance in the system. With the elimination of their natural predator, the elk population increased, and their grazing of aspen and cottonwood saplings affected the plants’ growth, which also had a negative effect on other species, for example, the beaver and bison populations. However, with the reintroduction of the gray wolf to the national park, researchers have observed a gradual restoring of the natural balance in the park’s ecosystem. William J. Ripple and Robert L. Beschta, “Trophic Cascades in Yellowstone: The First 15 Years after Wolf Reintroduction,” *Biological Conservation* 145, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 205–213, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320711004046>.

placemaking in the world. Each member of the ecological community is reliant on others and contributes, for its part, to others and to the totality. We human beings are members—not the prime or most important members—of the ecological community. Thus, our role in placemaking is to contribute to the ongoing symbiosis of the natural world. Ames and Hall note in their commentary to *Daodejing* 7<sup>12</sup>:

The sages in emulation of the natural processes are impartial and inclusive. Their concerns, on the model of nature itself, emerge out of the manifold of foci that are implicated within them.<sup>13</sup>

In the *Daodejing*, the sage is an exemplar, the person who gets it right. To get it right in relation to the natural environment is to first be cognizant of its unfolding. *Daodejing* 52 assures those who are cognizant of the unfolding of experience that they will live “free from danger or harm” if they are able to live in harmony with the natural unfolding of the world. *Daodejing* 52 states:

The world has its beginning, which can be considered the mother of the world. Having attained the mother, then you will understand its child, having understood its child, you return to protect its mother, and to the end of your life you will be free from danger.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *DDJ* 7. Ames and Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*, 86.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–87.

<sup>14</sup> *DDJ* 52: “天下有始，以為天下母。既得其母，以知其子，既知其子，復守其母，沒身不殆。” *Ibid.*, 157. Ames and Hall translate this: “The world has its fetal beginning that can be considered the mother of the world. You have to have gotten to this mother, before you can understand her progeny, if you go back and safeguard the mother, you will live to the end of your days without danger.” *Ibid.*, 158. Henricks translates this: “The world had a beginning, [w]hich can be considered the mother of the world. Having attained the mother, in order to understand her children, [i]f you return and hold on to the mother, till the end of your life you’ll suffer no harm.” Henricks (trans.), *Te-Tao Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Mawangdui Texts*, 21. Lau translates this: “The world had a beginning [a]nd this beginning could be the mother of the world. When you know the mother [g]o on to know the child. After you have known the child [g]o back to holding fast to the mother, [a]nd to the end of your days you will not meet with danger.” Lau (trans.), *Tao Te Ching*, 75.

The sage is respectful of the placemaking (*dao* 道) of the world, and acts in the world without overdoing (*wu* 無).<sup>15</sup> Acting in the world without overdoing (*wu* 無) is expressed in the passage above as “protect[ing] its mother.” In the example of the eradication of the gray wolf at Yellowstone, we can see how human overdoing or acting without proper understanding by intervening in an ecosystem can lead to a malfunctioning of the system.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Placemaking as Continuity and Multiplicity (yiduobufen 一多不分)***

Understanding the world and working of nature as placemaking echoes what contemporary Chinese philosopher, Tang Junyi, calls *yiduobufen* (一多不分), “the inseparability of one and many, of continuity and multiplicity.”<sup>17</sup> Tang makes use of the phrase *yiduobufen* (一多不分) to describe Chinese natural cosmology.<sup>18</sup> Chapter 39 of the *Daodejing* is particularly helpful here as it describes the “attaining of oneness” (*deyi* 得一). Attaining oneness involves acting with a proper understanding of the continuity of the myriad elements within our sphere of life. This insight ties in

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<sup>15</sup> *Wu* 無: Ames and Hall render *wu* (無) as noncoercive or noncoerciveness to express a “deferential” sensibility in Daoist philosophy. I translate *wu* (無) as “not overdoing” be it in terms of acting (*wuwei* 無為)—acting without overdoing, knowing (*wuzhi* 無知)—knowing without limiting that which we seek to understand, or desiring (*wuyu* 無欲)—desiring without being controlling. *Wu* (無) is a disposition or an attitude of being aware that we are not in total control of what goes on in the natural world, and that the most efficacious way to respond to any situation is by first learning how the myriad elements or circumstances make up what is going on, and then to act accordingly. The sage is said to be *wuwei* (無為), *wuzhi* (無知), and *wuyu* (無欲), in that the sage acts, knows/understands and desires without wanting to control but does so in a deferential manner.

<sup>16</sup> This resonates with Aldo Leopold’s argument in his Land Ethic for human beings to change our roles from conqueror to plain community members: “[A] land ethic changes the role of *Homo Sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.” Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 204.

<sup>17</sup> *Yiduo bufenguan* 一多不分觀. Junyi Tang, “Zhongguo Zhexue Zhong 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 Bijiao 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 shuju, 1988).

<sup>18</sup> Ames and Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*, 138–139, 143–144.

with the other chapters that we have encountered from the *Daodejing* that discuss the continuity of experience.<sup>19</sup> Chapter 39 adds an important point to the discussion by highlighting the efficacy of realizing the continuity of all things. The opening lines of *Daodejing* 39 read:

Formerly those who attained oneness: the heavens attained oneness and became clear; the earth attained oneness and became stable; the spirits attained oneness and became divine; the valleys attained oneness and became full; the lords and kings attained oneness and brought order to the world.<sup>20</sup>

By realizing, or attaining, oneness, we gain an understanding into the world as placemaking, wherein particularity and totality interact within a harmonious ongoing symbiosis (*he* 和). In the passage, the lords and kings (representing those worthy of taking on responsibility in the world) attained oneness and were able to bring order to the world. For us to attain oneness, in the light of Tang's assertion of continuity and multiplicity of all things (*yiduobufen* 一多不分), is to understand that the world as *wanwu* (萬物; the myriad things that are continually becoming) is composed of a continuity of myriad elements (multiplicity). Thus, just as the heavens, the earth, the spirits, and the valleys operate in the continuity of multiplicity and thus function efficaciously, the

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<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, *DDJ* 7, 42, 51.

<sup>20</sup> *DDJ* 39: “昔之得一者：天得一以清；地得一以寧；神得一以靈；谷得一以盈；侯王得一以為天下正。” Ames and Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*, 137. Ames and Hall render this passage thus: “Of old there were certain things that realized oneness: The heavens in realizing oneness became clear; the earth in realizing oneness became stable; the numinous in realizing oneness became animated; the river valleys in realizing oneness became full; the lords and kings in realizing oneness brought proper order to the world.” *Ibid.*, 137–138. There are variants of this passage. For instance, the Wangbi text has this passage read: “昔之得一者：天得一以清；地得一以寧；神得一以靈；谷得一以盈；萬物得一以生；侯王得一以為天下貞。” Lau (trans.), *Tao Te Ching*, 58. Lau translates it: “Of old, these came to be in possession of the One; Heaven in virtue of the One is limpid; Earth in virtue of the One is settled; Gods in virtue of the One have their potencies; [t]he valley in virtue of the One is full; [t]he myriad creatures in virtue of the One are alive; Lords and princes in virtue of the One become leaders in the empire.” *Ibid.*, 59. Henricks works from the Mawangdui Texts A and B, with Text B being the same as the text that Ames and Hall consulted for their translation. Henricks translates it: “Of those in the past that attained the One—Heaven, by attaining the One became clear; Earth, by attaining the One became stable; Gods, by attaining the One became divine; Valleys, by attaining the One became full; Marquises and kings, by attaining the One made the whole land ordered and secure.” Henricks (trans.), *Te-Tao Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Mawangdui Texts*, 8.



human being is called upon to attain oneness and to act accordingly by contributing to the harmony of ongoing symbiosis (*he* 和). The natural world as harmonious ongoing symbiosis (*he* 和) is not a thing, but an achievement. Harmony in the natural world is an “ongoing co-functioning” of many elements, which comprise an ecosystem such as the changing of the seasons.<sup>21</sup> Realizing oneness involves acting with a proper understanding of the continuity of the myriad elements within our sphere of life.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Placemaking as Ziran (自然)***

The world as placemaking—as an ongoing process of achievement—is *ziran* (自然; that which is naturally so). But what is *ziran* (自然) in relation to our discussion of the natural environment? From the foregoing, we have seen that the world is placemaking as an ongoing symbiosis. Thus, what is naturally so is that the world is an ongoing, never-finished achievement that involves all of its constitutive elements. The human being is a part of that which is naturally so. Everything is defined and understood within the context of and in virtue of the quality of their place within the totality. We see in the *Daodejing* that the world is a co-creation in an ecological sense, wherein the functioning of the whole is the result of a coming-together of each member of that

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<sup>21</sup> The changing of the seasons is another example of harmony as an ongoing process of achievement. The change from one season to the next—from hot to cold and back to hot—involves the naturally so (*ziran* 自然) functioning of many parts of the natural world (from the movement of the earth around the sun changing the angle of the sun’s radiation upon the northern or southern hemispheres, which increases or decreases the temperatures in either hemisphere). With the gradual rising or falling temperature, the members of an ecosystem respond accordingly. Some species migrate to warmer places in the winter; others, having evolved and adapted to withstand the colder temperatures, are able to remain in their habitats during the winter months. It is a wonder to observe the changing of seasons in a temperate country and see how the flora and fauna adapt and interact with one another throughout the year. At no point does the continual interaction of elements cease or stagnate. Even in the midst of the coldest points of winter, the apparent stillness of the world that we observe outside our window hides all that is going on around us.

<sup>22</sup> This insight ties in with the other chapters in the *Daodejing* that discuss the continuity of experience. See, for instance, *DDJ* 7, 42, 51.

ecological environment or community.<sup>23</sup> This resonates with Aldo Leopold’s land ethic, which was based on his conviction that an “individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts.”<sup>24</sup> To this assertion of Leopold’s I add the *Daodejing*’s contribution of the role of each of the members of such a community as well as the nature of the world as placemaking. The human being’s role in the placemaking of the natural world involves acting in a manner that is naturally so (*ziran* 自然), which involves knowing how to dwell rightly. As a guide to an ethics of the environment, placemaking points us toward *weiziran* (為自然), that is, an ethics of acting with (*wei* 為) and for the sake of (*wei* 為) the ongoing symbiosis that is the natural environment (*ziran* 自然).<sup>25</sup>

### ***Placemaking Involves Knowing How to Dwell Rightly***

The highest good is like water. Water benefits the myriad things that are continually becoming yet dwells in places that the multitude dislike, and thus is close to *dao*. In dwelling, the good is being in place; in thinking and feeling, the good is in depth; in giving, the good is being like the heavens; in speaking, the good is being sincere; in governing, the good is in

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<sup>23</sup> We find this in *DDJ* 25: “有物混成，先天地生。寂呵寥呵，獨立而不改，[周行而不殆，]可以為天地母。吾未知其名，字之曰道，強為之名曰大。大曰逝，逝曰遠，遠曰反。” Ames and Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*, 115. I render this: “There was something that is continually becoming that formed out of chaos, coming forth before the heavens and earth. Silent and empty, standing alone it does not change. [Surrounding all, it does not endanger], it can be considered the mother of the heavens and the earth. I do not yet know its name, I style it *dao*. Forced to name it, I would call it great. Great, it can be called passing; passing, it can be called far away; far away, it can be called returning.”

A key insight that *Daodejing* 25 emphasizes is that Daoist cosmology describes the natural world as an ongoing process. Daoist cosmology, as with early Chinese natural cosmology, is akin to process cosmology. Ames and Hall observe that “[i]n early Chinese natural cosmology, there is no appeal to some substratum or independent metaphysical origin, no ‘One’ behind the many.” Instead, they argue that early Chinese natural cosmology was more akin to a process worldview in which “the particular and its context are at once continuous and distinct.” *Ibid.*, 116–117.

<sup>24</sup> Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, 203–204.

<sup>25</sup> A word about 為自然 (*weiziran*): 為自然 is a creative term that reflects my appropriation of one of the central themes in Daoist texts, namely, 道法自然 (*dao fa ziran*). We find this term, for instance, in *Daodejing* 25. I owe the idea for this creative appropriation, 為自然 (*weiziran*), to the essay by David L. Hall, “On Seeking a Change of Environment,” in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 99–112. In this essay, Hall makes an argument for *ziran* (自然) as ethical imperative for Daoist philosophy. The word (為) here takes on both the meaning of “to act” and “for the sake of.” Thus, 為自然 is an ethical norm to act with (為) and for the sake of (為) *ziran* (自然).

being orderly; in serving, the good is in being capable; in acting, the good is in being timely. Because it does not content, it is without fault.<sup>26</sup>

This passage from *Daodejing* 8 highlights the importance of dwelling (*ju* 居) by drawing on the image of water, which benefits all things in the world while occupying the lowest of places (since water always flows downwards). Flowing downwards to the “lowest places” water carries with it nutrients and thus makes the valleys and the deltas fertile. We can extend this image to reflect on the question of dwelling (*ju* 居). The passage points out that “in dwelling, the good is being in place” (*jushandi* 居善地). Heidegger points out that being human is inextricably tied to dwelling. “To be is to dwell.”<sup>27</sup> *Daodejing* 8 provides an added insight into our manner of dwelling on the earth: our dwelling reaches its highest efficacy when we consider that dwelling involves being in place—knowing where the right place is. Dwelling is placemaking. But more than the act of searching for a right location, knowing where the right place is, involves a *making-right* of the

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<sup>26</sup> DDJ 8: “上善似水。水善利萬物而又爭居衆人之所惡，故幾於道矣。居善地，心善淵，予善天，言善信，政善治，事善能，動善時。夫唯不爭，故無尤。” Ames and Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*, 87. Ames and Hall render this: “The highest efficacy is like water. It is because water benefits everything (*wanwu*) [y]et vies to dwell in places loathed by the crowd [t]hat it comes nearest to proper way-making. In dwelling, the question is where is the right place. In thinking and feeling, it is how deeply. In giving, it is how much like nature’s bounty. In speaking, it is how credibly. In governing, it is how effectively. In serving, it is how capably. In acting, it is how timely. It is only because there is no contentiousness in proper way-making [t]hat it incurs no blame.” Ibid. Henricks translates this: “The highest good is like water; [w]ater is good at benefitting the ten thousand things and yet it does not compete with them. It dwells in places that masses of people detest, [t]herefore it is close to the Way. In dwelling, the good thing is the land; [i]n the mind, the good thing is depth; [i]n giving, the good thing is being like Heaven; [i]n speaking, the good thing is sincerity; [i]n governing, the good thing is order; [i]n affairs, the good thing is ability; [i]n activity, the good thing is timeliness. It is only because it does not compete, that therefore it is without fault.” Henricks (trans.), *Te-Tao Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Mawangdui Texts*, 60. The Wangbi text differs in some places: “上善若水。水善利萬物而不爭，處衆人之所惡，故幾於道。居善地，心善淵，與善仁，言善信，正善治，事善能，動善時。夫唯不爭，故無尤。” Lau translates this: “Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefitting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way. In a home it is the site that matters; [i]n quality of mind it is depth that matters; [i]n an ally it is benevolence that matters; [i]n speech it is good faith that matters; [i]n government it is order that matters; [i]n affairs it is ability that matters; [i]n action it is timeliness that matters. It is because it does not contend that it is never at fault.” Lau (trans.), *Tao Te Ching*, 10–11.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger writes in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” that: “To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.” Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” in *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 349.

place. We take this from the first stanza of the chapter, which discusses the manner in which water (*shui* 水) benefits everything that is continually becoming (*wanwu* 萬物). Seeking for one's place, and knowing one's place in dwelling is a coordinated effort between the human being and the world that one lives in. Water dwells in the lowly places (*juzhong renzhi suo* 居衆人之所惡 “dwells in places that the multitude dislike”), and by doing so “is close to *dao*” (*gu jiyu daoyu* 故幾於道矣). Human beings can learn by seeking out the role that supports and allows for the gathering of all that is good (a valley or low-lying body of water is where the nutrients and fertile soil flows into).

Further, to dwell is to be at home. D.C. Lau translates *ju* (居) as “a home.” One way to understand the meaning of home is to figure out in what manner *ju* (居) is used here. If we read *ju* (居), as Ames and Hall do, as a gerund<sup>28</sup>, we emphasize the point of participation, and of the ongoing symbiosis (*he* 和) that *dao* (道) makes in the world (*tiandi* 天地—the heavens and the earth, and *wanwu* [萬物]—the myriad things that are continually becoming). Thus *weiziran* (為自然) invites us to care for the natural environment, to dwell, to participate in the placemaking of the world. As a guide to an ethics of the environment, knowing how to dwell rightly points us toward *weiziran* (為自然), that is, an ethics of acting with (*wei* 為) and for the sake of (*wei* 為) the ongoing symbiosis that is the natural environment (*ziran* 自然). Thus, we are called upon to emulate *dao* (道).

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<sup>28</sup> In fact, they read each of the succeeding words (*xin* 心, *yu* 予, *yan* 言, *zheng* 政, *shi* 事, *dong* 動) as gerunds: thinking and feeling, giving, speaking, governing, serving, and acting, respectively.

## *Weiziran (為自然): Ethics of the Environment Grounded in Placemaking*

*Weiziran* (為自然), invites us to care for the natural environment, to dwell, to be placemakers. *Daodejing* 25 presents a vision of the human being's relation to the world that is rooted in an understanding of our place and in our role in placemaking.

*Dao* is great, the heavens are great, the earth is great, the king is also great. Within the realm, there are four greats, and the king dwells as one. Human beings emulate the earth, the earth emulates the heavens, the heavens emulate *dao*, *dao* emulates what is naturally so.<sup>29</sup>

*Weiziran* (為自然) calls on us to mirror and emulate the placemaking that we observe in the natural world. In the passage of the *Daodejing* above, the human person emulates the earth (*di* 地), which emulates the heavens (*tian* 天), which emulate *dao* (道).<sup>30</sup> From this we see that by emulating *dao* (道), heaven (*tian* 天), and earth (*di* 地) the human being (*ren* 人) attains *ziran* (自然). Thus, the ecological ethics of *weiziran* (為自然) reminds us that the Earth is our home, our dwelling place. Dwelling—as Heidegger says, and which the sense of place as placemaking in the *Daodejing* emphasizes—is an indispensable part of our identity as human beings. Our responsibility as dwellers is to participate efficaciously in the placemaking of the Earth. Thus, in our decisions and actions that affect the natural environment—whether it be in our neighborhood, city, region or beyond—I believe that we ought to be constantly aware of our role as placemakers. The world is a harmonious ongoing symbiosis, a dialectic process in which the world is achieved by our constantly making our place. Our challenge is to live this knowledge and understanding concretely. It should permeate every aspect of our lives as individuals, communities, nations, regions and global

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<sup>29</sup> *DDJ* 25. “道大，天大，地大，王亦大。國中有四大，而王居一焉。人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。” Ames and Hall (trans.), *Daodejing Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*, 115.

<sup>30</sup> *DDJ* 25. Ibid.

concerns. It should inform our consumption habits, public policies, development plans, engineering designs, and overarching goals as persons whose responsibility it is to dwell rightly.

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