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Temporality and the Fabric of Space-Time in Early Chinese Thought

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Nearly fifty years ago Joseph Needham published a celebrated essay, "Time and Knowledge in China and the West," in which he surveyed Chinese ideas about time and temporality. In his magisterial overview, Needham left virtually no realm untouched in discussing time in Chinese philosophy and natural philosophy; time, chronology, and historiography; time measurement; biological change in time; concepts of social evolution and devolution; recognition of technological development over time; science and knowledge as cooperative cumulative enterprises, and more.

The subject is vast, particularly in view of the historical scope of Needham's account, which carries the story from the first historical dynasty up to the modern era. Indeed, each of the topics Needham discusses merits a monograph. My objective here is briefly to draw attention to a few of the general issues raised by Needham's conclusion concerning the position of Chinese civilization in the contrast between linear irreversible time and cyclical, recurring patterns, and then to focus on a uniquely Chinese perspective on temporality and causality.

When it comes to Chinese civilization, Needham (1981) wrote,

> Broadly speaking, and in spite of anything that has been said above, linearity . . . dominated. The apocalyptic, almost the messianic, often the evolutionary and (in its own way) the progressive, certainly the temporally linear, these elements were there, spontaneously and independently developing since the time of the Shang kingdom [1554–1046 BCE], and in spite of all that the Chinese found out or imagined about cycles, celestial or terrestrial, these were the elements that dominated the thought of Confucian scholars and the Taoist peasant-farmers. Strange as it may seem to those who still think in terms of the "timeless Orient," on the whole China was a culture more of the Irano-Judaeo-Christian type than the Indo-Hellenic. (133, 135)

One of the most important indicators leading to Needham's conclusion, though only implicit in the rationale quoted here, is his conviction, echoing the early French sinologist Marcel Granet, that the Chinese possessed a more highly developed historical sense than any other civilization (Needham and Wang 1956:289). Needham's essay generalized about the entire sweep of Chinese history. Had he restricted his discussion to the ancient period, that is, taking the Han dynasty at the beginning of the CE as his upper limit, it is unlikely he would have concluded that linearity dominated Chinese thinking about time. For example, Derk Bodde, in contrast to Needham, after exploring the same question of cyclical versus linear time in China, concludes: "Naturally, the evidence pro and con cannot be quantitatively weighed. Nonetheless, on the cyclical side, the evidence appears to me quite sufficient in quantity and clarity to justify the conclusion that, until quite recently, Chinese cyclical thinking was considerably more widespread and influential than was Chinese linear thinking" (Bodde 1991:133; see also Sivin 1966).

Of particular interest in the Chinese case, as Needham notes in discussing historical causation in the early imperial period, is "the conviction that the universe and each of the wholes composing it have a cyclical nature, undergoing alternations, so dominated [Chinese] thought that the idea of succession was always subordinated to that of interdependence. Thus retrospective explanations were not felt to involve any difficulty. 'Such and such a lord, in his lifetime, was not able to obtain the hegemony, because, after his death, human victims were sacrificed to him.' Both facts were simply part of one timeless pattern" (Needham and Wang 1956:289). Clearly, what is implicated here is hardly a conventional notion of causality, much less "historical sense" in any ordinary sense of the term, as Needham points out (Needham and Wang 1956:97).

Lawrence Fagg, like Derk Bodde, is less inclined to declare in favor of the dominance of continuous, linear time in China:

> Certainly, if only because the Chinese were such accomplished historians, they must have had a sense of linear time. This is apparent in their records of social relations and events, and is particularly evident in astronomical calculations . . . at the same time, curiously, there was a component of cyclicality in the Chinese view of political history, the successive dynasties exhibiting a periodicity in their rise and fall. There was a cyclical view also that arose from the Chinese perception of nature and the functions of the human body . . . strongly supported by Taoist concepts. It is almost as if this mixture of linear and cyclical concepts of time is another expression of the primal *yin-yang* principle, with *yang* representing linear time and *yin* cyclical time. (Fagg 1985:97)

It is no doubt a truism that no civilization has proceeded from dominantly linear to dominantly cyclical conceptions of time, rather than the other way round. Still, as Bodde's and Needham's

opposing conclusions illustrate, it is no easy matter to pin down how and why a transition from the one to the other may have occurred or, more precisely, how and when the situation of relative dominance might have shifted from the one to the other of these complementary modes of experiencing time. In China, a significant factor may have been the consolidation of the imperial institution during the two centuries before the Common Era, and especially its union of convenience with Confucianism. The ascendancy of the latter, with its deep commitment to social and political history, assured that ancient and more subtle Taoist and Naturalist conceptions of pattern and phenomenological connectedness would be relegated to specialized pursuits, and with them their intense interest in timeliness, "returning" as the movement of the Tao, and especially "ideas of causality distinctly different from the Indian or Western atomistic picture in which the prior impact of one thing is the cause of the motion of another" (Needham 1981:97). In other words, the devaluation of the correlative cosmology of the Naturalists and of Taoist intuitive attunement with the timeless patterns of the cosmos meant that the synthesis of these concepts of causality and temporality, which were, strictly speaking, neither cyclical nor linear, would never be fully elaborated (see Huang and Zürcher 1995).

A famous passage from the 4th century BCE narrative history *Zuo zhuan*, now preserved as a commentary on the canonical *Spring and Autumn Annals*, offers a taste of the time-sense in the mid-1st millennium BCE.

> In the 2nd month, on day *guiwei* [20], the [dowager] marchioness Dao of Jin entertained all the men who had been engaged in the walling of Qi. A childless old man from the District of Jiang went and took his place at the feast. Some participants were dubious about his age and would have him tell it. He said, "I am a lowly person and do not know how to keep track of the years (*bu zhi ji nian*). Since the year of my birth, on day *jiazi* [1], the day of the new moon in the

> first month, there have elapsed 445 *jiazi* days, and finally until today one-third of the cycle [of 60]." The officiants [of the feast] ran to the court to ask about it. Music-master Kuang said, "It was the year when Shuzhong Hui Bo of Lu had a meeting with Xi Chengzi in Chengkuang. In that year, the Di invaded Lu, and Shusun Zhuangshu defeated them at Xian, capturing their elders Qiaoru, Hui, and Pao, after all of whom he named his sons. [Hence,] it is 73 years." (Legge IX:556, modified)

Several things are noteworthy in this passage. First, more sophisticated time-keeping methods than counting the cycles of 60 are inaccessible to the free man commoner, and probably only slightly less so to other nonspecialist participants at the feast. (Note that the old man uses *ji nian*, literally "string the years," to mean "correlate the sequence of years with a record of political events/states of the world.") Second, the specialist who is in charge of record keeping at court, who is also music-master and very likely diviner as well, in the first instance places the timing of the man's birth situationally, almost as if quoting an annalistic record, and then secondarily, only after an arithmetic operation relating the continuously repeating sexagenary cycle to the civil years, is he able to fix the event chronologically.

This account is probably fairly representative and gives a good indication of the relative value attached to different kinds of temporal awareness in daily life. It also points up a central problem at the heart of temporal consciousness to which the *Book of Changes* seemed to offer a solution, as we shall see; that is, how to systematically relate subjective mental states or states of the world with an often contradictory description of the world in terms of events happening, or the "unreality of time" (Davies 2002:42).

Here is another, elite perspective on attunement as a vital concern of the ruler who aspired to achieve universal harmony and hegemony, lest his negligence or ineptitude provoke disasters. The

admonition is attributed to the chief minister of the first Hegemon, Duke Huan of the state of Qi, in the 7th century BCE:

> Since mankind is one entity within nature, the one who establishes the laws must also make a study of "heavenly timeliness and earthly advantages" as a basis for devising his laws. Kuan Tzu said: "Commands have their proper times . . . the Sage King strives to adjust to time, and to relate his governmental measures to it." Spring, summer, autumn, and winter each has its activities which should be done at those times. "When man and heaven are in accord, only then can the perfection of heaven and earth come into being." When commands and orders are not appropriate to the season, then "things undertaken will not get accomplished, and there is sure to be a great calamity." (Hsiao 1979:337)

During the last few centuries before the beginning of the present era old traditions and new speculations about the connectedness of all things were increasingly systematized and elaborated, not least by Yin-Yang correlative cosmologists, the School of Naturalists, and propounders of Taoist-inspired Lao-Huang theories of rulership. These ideas drew on ancient roots in divination methods deriving from microcosmic-macrocosmic analogies, numerology, cosmo-political theories of cyclical dominance by the five elemental agents — wood, metal, fire, water, and earth — coupled with a highly developed sensitivity to phenomenological correspondences perceived to exist in nature. The historical sense displayed a strong bias in favor of cyclical time and historical events seen not as historical instances of human actions and motives *per se*, but in their timeless, emblematic aspect, as examples of admirable or dishonorable motives, or adherence to protocol and tradition-bound propriety. This quality of annalistic history, the beginnings of which are already discernible during Shang and Zhou a millennium earlier, is attributable to the origins of historical record keeping in the context of div-

ination and ritualistic reporting of temporal goings-on to the ancestors.

By the early imperial period, the responsibilities of the Astrologer Royal, the official post which had evolved out of the diviners of old, encompassed everything from divination to portentology (including astrology and the interpretation of anomalous events and prodigies), to calendar making and advising on the relevance of historical precedent to current events. Rulership demanded mastery of the complex pattern of events and motives, both human and natural, in order to successfully manage their harmonization with the inchoate and constantly changing complexion of the times (Nienhauser 1994:165). Take, for example, the characterization of this enterprise by the philosopher Jia Yi, in the early 2nd century BCE:

> A popular maxim has it: "Prior events, not forgotten, teach about events to come." For this reason, in ordering the state the accomplished ruler observes the events of antiquity, tests them against the present, matches them with human affairs, examines into the principles of flourishing and decline, and looks for what is appropriate according to expediency and tendencies. In this way, discarding and adopting measures have their proper sequence, adapting and transforming their due seasons. Thus, his reign is untroubled and enduring, and his altars to the soil and grain are safeguarded. (Sima Qian 1959:6.278)

Here is the historical sense in the service of statecraft, and statecraft according to a cosmic paradigm in which the very cycles of the cosmos and the movements of Yin-Yang and the five phases are all implicated. In this world view, disturbance or disharmony at any point in the fabric of space-time or human affairs could reverberate throughout the whole, with unpredictable consequences — and not merely prospectively, but perhaps even retrospectively as we saw

above. A pervasive early metaphor employed in this connection is that of a mirror, the aspiring ruler of men being enjoined to seek guidance in the image of his deeds and motives as reflected in the mirror of previous reigns as well as in the lives of his own subjects.

In attempting to grasp what this world view was like, we need to eschew conventional ideas of causality. Even words like "reverberate" or "propagate" above tend to call to mind conventional ideas of action and reaction and to invoke a presentist perspective. Rather, what is implicated here is a kind of "acausal orderedness," in which, as Needham says, the "idea of correspondence has great significance and replaces the idea of causality, for things are *connected* rather than caused." Or, in Needham's inimitable phrase, "in such a system causality is reticular and hierarchically fluctuating, not particulate and singly catenarian" (Needham and Wang 1956:289). In explaining Granet's interpretation, Needham remarks, "if two objects seemed to them to be connected, it was not by means of a cause and effect relationship, but rather 'paired' like the obverse and reverse of something, or to use a metaphor from the *Book of Changes*, like echo and sound, or shadow and light" (1956:290–91). "What Granet had in mind were *patterns simultaneously appearing in a vast field of force*, the dynamic structure of which we do not yet understand. . . . The parts, in their organizational relations, whether of a living body or of the universe, were sufficient to account, by a kind of harmony of wills, for the observed phenomena" (1956:302).

Number, too, plays a crucial role in this conception:

> In China numbers were used as qualitative instruments of order. According to Granet, the Chinese did not use numbers as quantities but as polyvalent emblems or symbols which served to express the quality of certain clusters of facts and their intrinsic hierarchical orderedness. Numbers, in their view, possess a descriptive power and thus serve as an ordering fact for "clusters of concrete objects, which they

> seem to qualify merely by positioning them in space and time." In Chinese thought there is an equivalence between the essence of a thing and its position in space-time. (Needham and Wang 1956:229)

This idealized role of number achieves its highest expression in the elaborate system of the *Book of Changes* in which the 64 individual hexagrams give graphic shape to the symbolic descriptive power of numerical relations, while at the same time embodying, in their dynamic relations, the infinite changeability and creative potential of the cosmos. According to C. G. Jung:

> Number . . . is a more primitive mental element than concept. Psychologically we could define number as *an archetype of order which has become conscious*. . . . the unconscious often uses number as an ordering factor much in the same way as consciousness does. Thus numerical orders, like all other archetypal structures, can be pre-existent to consciousness and then they rather condition than are conditioned by it. Number forms an ideal *tertium comparationis* between what we usually call psyche and matter, for countable quantity is a characteristic of material phenomena *and* an irreducible *idée force* behind our mathematical reasoning. The latter consists of the "indisputability" which we experience when contemplating arrangements based on natural numbers. Thus number is a basic element in our thought processes, on the one side, and, on the other, it appears as the objective "quantity" of material objects which seem to exist independently outside our psyche." (Jung 1969:870)

Needham, the materialist, in contrast, saw the Chinese tendency to rest content with the apparent explanatory power of number as the chief impediment to further development in the philosophy of the *Book of Changes*.

As Lawrence Fagg observed: "The *I Ching (Book of Changes)* tells us that each moment can be denoted by a number indicative of the quality of that moment. Therefore, while there is in a real sense a value placed on the moments of Chinese linear time, it is not obviously goal-directed or influenced. Hence, this time also may not be easily identified with the physical world's historical arrow" (1985:155). In this regard it is also worth mentioning that some days in the cycle of 60 day-dates in continuous use since Shang times were more auspicious than others, often because of punning associations with homophones having lucky significance. Remarkably, the identity of this set of favorable and unfavorable terms persisted largely unchanged throughout the pre-imperial period from Shang through the Han. In discussing this aspect of the day-dates divined about in the late 2nd millennium BCE Shang oracle bones, David Keightley (2000) cites Clifford Geertz's observation that the Balinese "don't tell you what time it is, they tell you what kind of time it is" (33, n.55).

An illustration of the intersection of timeless pattern and dynamism in the *Book of Changes* shows how this distillation of early Chinese thinking about change and timeliness can enlighten us about views of temporality and causation as well as about certain other prefigurative metaphors in ancient Chinese thought. In the *Book of Changes*, where the tenor of the moment is a function of position, and vice versa, the concept of the right timeliness of every action is especially prominent and repeatedly stressed (Lin 1995:98). Small wonder, then, that a preoccupation with not encountering receptive times or meeting with unfavorable circumstances, seemingly preordained to frustrate one's ambitions, should have loomed large in the minds of Chinese thinkers in the late Warring States and Han periods, especially given the troubling precedent of Confucius's own failure to achieve due recognition in his day. At one point in a famous *fu* or prose poem on the theme of "Gentlemen of Integrity Unappreciated in their Time," the most influential Confucian thinker of the former Han dynasty, Dong Zhongshu (ca. 179–104 BCE), was

deeply influenced by the *Book of Changes*:

> Alas, the whole world goes along with perversity! I grieve that we cannot join together in turning back.
> What else can I do but return to the constant task, and not let myself be cast about by the times.
> Though all profit be gained by violating the true self, still it is better to straighten the mind and cleave to the good.
> If only the buffeting of urgency causes me to be moved, surely I cannot be said to have an intemperate nature?
> Clearly manifesting "*Fellowship with Men*" means "*Possession in Great Measure.*"
> And to brightly show forth the "radiance of modesty," means to further the cause. (Pankenier 1990:440)

"*Tong ren*" ("Fellowship with Men") and "*Da you*" ("Possession in Great Measure") are hexagrams thirteen and fourteen in the received text of the *Book of Changes*. Their pivotal importance in the Han Confucian interpretation of the *Changes* is second only to the first two, "Qian" ("The Creative") and "Kun" ("The Receptive"), in that they symbolize, at one and the same time, the means (humanism and self-cultivation) and the end (political unity and social harmony) of the Confucian social and political agenda. In terms of their structure, there was thought to obtain an intrinsically dynamic relationship among the central ideas and images embodied in these two hexagrams, a relationship that is represented graphically in their configuration. These are two of the very few hexagrams that have a complementary pair of *Yin* and *Yang* lines occupying the two central, mutually interacting and supremely important positions in the hexagram — the second and fifth lines. Traditionally, the second line is associated with the concept "subordinate" and the fifth line with that of "superior" or "ruler." In both cases, then, we have a representation

of the ideal situation in which a yielding, or receptive line and an assertive, or creative line finds its counterpart in precisely the right location. Both hexagrams therefore symbolize the ideal relationship of wise ruler paired with a sage advisor, but in two different aspects.

That is not all, however, because the two hexagrams are also mirror images of each other, denoted by the term *zong*. [Figure 6.1] Deriving from the craft of weaving, this term originally referred to the tying of the longitudinal threads to the harnesses that alternately raise and lower the warp threads in different configurations to create the patterns in the weave. What this means in the case of *Tong ren* and *Da you* is that the one is immanent in the other, the one simultaneously *is* the other. Through the dynamics of their unique relationship the *Yin* line in the second place in "Fellowship with Men" advances to the ruling place in "Possession in Great Measure." In terms of the *Changes*, therefore, in a very real sense, "Possession in Great Measure" is immanent in "Fellowship with Men." Though portrayed graphically in linear fashion, and elaborated sequentially, in reality the elements and number symbolism of the one are the mirror image of the other.

In his prose poem Dong Zhongshu expressed this dynamic relationship linguistically by linking the two emblematic hexagrams by means of the coordinating conjunction *er*, thereby displaying the reciprocal dynamics embodied in the two hexagrams by means of a linear *verbal* representation. In this way Dong was able to convey immanence and complementarity syntactically. In other words, implicit in achieving "Fellowship with Men" is the realization of "Possession in Great Measure," which here refers to ascendancy to rulership of the empire. The "yielding" virtue of the superior man in a subordinate position rises to occupy the central and ruling place by virtue of his ability to expand the principles of Fellowship from the few to the many. In the language of the commentary, "the yielding finds its place, finds the middle, and the Creative corresponds with it; this means Fellowship with Men. . . . Only the superior man is able to unite the wills of all under heaven" (Wilhelm 1981:452).

The term *zong* for the mirror-image relationship between the two hexagrams "Unifying Men" and "Possession in Great Measure," like many of the most important metaphors in ancient Chinese philosophy relating to time and order, is drawn from cordage and the art of weaving. Other terms include *ji gang* ("fixed positions and motions with regard to other things in the web of Nature's relationships") (Needham and Wang 1956:555). This term is made up of *ji* ("leading thread, put in order" and by extension "keep time, chronicle of years, annals, period of years, 12-year cycle"); and *gang* ("cord forming the selvedge of a net; regulate; maintain in order; direct"). More concretely, the two terms are suggestive of an ancient record-keeping device structured like the Inka *quippu* which was said to have preceded the invention of writing in China. Defining *ji* as it applies to time, Michael Loewe stresses a linear view: "the term *chi*, or thread, suggests the line that is formed by a series of successive incidents or segments" (Loewe 1995:312). However, *ji* is equally frequently used to refer to constant periodicities such as those of the planets, especially Jupiter, or basic recurring cycles in calendrical calculations.

By far the most important of these terms from the weaver's craft are *ching* and *wei*. *Jing* is "the warp of a piece of woven goods," by extension "constant, order-giving principles; canonical text," and in our own day "meridian of longitude." *Wei* in contrast, are the "weft threads of a piece of woven goods," "the visible planets" which shuttle back and forth across the sky in opposition to the apparent east to west motion of the stars, "apocryphal, unorthodox commentaries on the Confucian canon," and in modern times "parallel of latitude." In the present context, *zong* is evocative of a *fabric of relationships*, made up of warp and weft, *sequentially linear though recursive in the making* (not unlike the hexagrams themselves and the numerical manipulations employed to derive them), but whose full composition and import can only be grasped in the totality of their complex patterning. The fabric of relations and philosophical ideals evoked exhibits a complementarity of principle and pattern, any segment of which is

capable of invoking the whole tapestry. Again, it is not that the two hexagrams are linked as *cause and effect*, or that one brings the other into being. Rather, the one is simultaneously the other like the front and back of silk brocade.

With this in mind, consider the following explanation of dynastic prosperity and decline by the late Han scholar and iconoclast Wang Chong: "When the mandate of heaven [*tian ming*] is about to be launched, and a Sage-King is on the point of emerging, the material forces (*qi*), *before and after the event*, give proofs which will be radiantly manifest" (Hsiao 1979:594). Compare this with Dong Zhongshu's view a century and a half earlier: "Your servant has heard that in heaven's great conferring of responsibilities on the king there is something that human powers of themselves could not achieve, but that comes of itself. This is the sign that the Mandate [*ming*] has been granted. The people of the empire with one heart all turn to him as they would turn to their fathers and mothers. Thus it is that heaven's auspicious signs respond to [the people's] sincerity and come forth." Even in Wang Chong's time, the principle of causality invoked here in relation to auspicious portents tended to be understood simplistically by "mere prognosticators" in terms of cause and effect: "The errors of the School of Prognosticators are not in acknowledging the occurrences of calamities and auspicious happenings, but lie in their erroneous belief that the successes and failings of government bear a cause and effect relationship to those."

According to Wang, however,

> The accession of a worthy ruler happens to occur in an age that is going to be well governed; his virtues are self-evident above, and the people are automatically good below. The world is at peace and the people are secure. Auspicious signs all display themselves and the age speaks of those as induced by the worthy ruler. The immoral ruler happens to be born at a time when chaos is to exist; the empire is thrown into

> troubles and the people's ways become disorderly, with unending disasters and calamities, leading to the fall of the state, the death of the ruler, and the displacement of his successors. The world all refers to that as having been induced by his evils. Such observations are clear about the external appearance of good and evil, but fail to perceive the internal reality of good and bad fortune. (Hsiao 1979:594)

In this view all the actions of an individual or an undertaking which is about to flourish will spontaneously accord with the timely factors of fate or *ming* (same term as *ming* "mandate" above). In the case of an emerging Sage King: "Followers will come to him unsummoned, and auspicious objects will come to him unsignaled. Invisibly moved, they will all arrive in concert as if sent" (Hsiao 1979:595). This is what Granet was referring to when he spoke of "patterns simultaneously appearing in a vast field of force," and Jung (1969) too, who stressed that the Chinese world-outlook involved a causality principle quite unlike that of Galilean-Newtonian science, which he denoted "synchronistic."

In linguistic terms, classical Chinese is tenseless, so temporal relations are somewhat fluid and typically marked contextually by the use of aspect particles and explicit time words. Indeed, aspect is one of the most difficult features of Chinese for the non-native speaker to master. Taken together, the two factors seem to militate in favor of a relative devaluation of precision when it comes to temporal indications, in favor of relational or situational content. This characteristic, like the account of the aged commoner at the feast, and Clifford Geertz's remark about "what kind of time it is" in Bali, brings to mind another suggestive parallel from the anthropological literature, an account of the cognitive devaluation of linear time among the Trobriand islanders first documented by Jacob Malinowski. Consider the following description of Trobriand concepts of time and temporality:

> There is no boundary between past Trobriand experience and the present; he can indicate that an action is completed, but this does not mean that the action is past; it may be completed and present or timeless. Where we would say "Many years ago" and use the past tense, the Trobriander would say, "In my father's childhood" and use non-temporal verbs; he places the event situationally, not temporally. Past, present, and future are presented linguistically as the same, are present in his existence, and sameness with what we call the past and with myth, represents value to the Trobriander. . . . Temporality is meaningless . . . no tenses, no linguistic distinction between past or present. . . no arrangement of activities or events into means and ends, no causal or teleologic relationships. What we consider a causal relationship in a sequence of connected events, is to the Trobriander an ingredient of a patterned whole. . . .
>
> There is organization or rather coherence in their acts because Trobriand activity is patterned activity. One act within this pattern brings into existence a pre-ordained cluster of acts. Perhaps one might find a parallel in our culture in the making of a sweater. When I embark on knitting one, the ribbing at the bottom does not *cause* the making of the neckline, nor of the sleeves or the armholes; and it is not part of a lineal series of acts. Rather it is an indispensable part of a patterned activity which includes all these other acts. . . . Trobriand islanders experience reality in nonlinear pattern because this is the valued reality. (Lee 1979:132, 135–36)

While the Trobriand islands are not China, one cannot help but be struck by the anthropologist's account of the Trobriander's valuation of a particular kind of reality and the homely knitting analogy. Perhaps in this description of the cultural devaluation of tempo-

rally structured narrative in favor of patterned relations and activity, we can gain an inkling of the cultural predisposition that prefigured the Chinese metaphorical recourse to the art of weaving. To the extent this is so, the early Chinese synthesis of the complementary aspects of time into an all-embracing fabric of acausal, patterned orderedness, far from being a metaphysical innovation of the immediate pre-imperial period, like many down-to-earth images in the *Book of Changes*, owes much to conceptual predispositions that hark back to China's archaic past.

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