

I was inspired to jump in with email thoughts after reading the first seven entries of Pema and Stim's dialogues titled 'Roots, Not Fruits: Reflections on Play as Being' –

http://playasbeing.wik.is/PaB_Books/..._Play_as_Being

Stim asked during the September 10th Ways of Knowing session for a summary of the gist of the message, and so the following is an edited version of the email. Please note that the context of the message is how wu wei can be reflected in Play as Being discussions.

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Wu wei is a Chinese term, and anything relating to Chinese philosophy may reliably be expected to involve yin and yang and change (bedrock elements of Chinese philosophy.) Gia Fu Feng's translation of Tao Te Ching verse 42 begins this way:

The Tao begot one.
One begot two.
Two begot three.
And three begot the ten thousand things.
The ten thousand things carry yin and embrace yang.
They achieve harmony by combining these forces.

It is of course not necessary to include the Chinese terms yin and yang, or the concept of ten thousand things, when the idea of Being is used in a context as quintessential as Tao. Just as a few steps away from Tao one finds the ten thousand things, there may be similar ideas that are proximate to Being. Finding those ideas may be facilitated by adding the next ingredient: change.

Gia Fu's translation of Tao Te Ching verse 5 includes this: "The space between heaven and Earth is like a bellows. The shape changes but not the form." Steven Mitchell interprets verse 74 with this phrase: "If you realize that all things change, there is nothing you will try to hold on to." Chinese philosophy sometimes refers to 'the way of change' (or 'dao of i'): it is self-evident things change, and including the idea in philosophy therefore makes sense. I think the Hegelian dialectic's categories of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis are a valuable related Western reference point. This is Gia Fu's translation of verse 29:

Do you think you can take over the universe and improve it?
I do not believe it can be done.
The universe is sacred.
You cannot improve it.
If you try to change it, you will ruin it.
If you try to hold it, you will lose it.

So sometimes things are ahead and sometimes they are behind;
Sometimes breathing is hard, sometimes it comes easily;
Sometimes there is strength and sometimes weakness;

Sometimes one is up and sometimes down.

Therefore the sage avoids extremes, excesses, and complacency.

Change is intrinsic in nature, but trying to change nature is imprudent. Instead of trying to influence things, the verse above proposes an enduring presence in the natural state of things. Wu wei suggests a modest, harmonious relationship with natural change.

In Chinese philosophy, the way of change is connected with a yin/yang dynamic. The natural flux of change posits individuals as inextricably part of archetypal change, all equally part of the cosmic condition. The concept defies brief description, it really is better seen than told. However, instilling wu wei into a PaB framework has merit -- with a caveat that, like many concepts from complex philosophies that are found in PaB discussions, this discussion also must necessarily remain incomplete.

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In the Ways of Knowing discussion, Stim went on to say that points relating to “yin and yang as lead-ins to wu-wei raise some difficult issues for my little chat here on codependent arising ... I've basically been saying we don't appreciate things well at all, don't really live very fully and directly and that codependent arising can help us break through the ice, the frozen structures of habitual framings ... but in fact, the very training in seeing everything as codependently given can itself cause problems along the same lines it can turn everything into codependently arising posits.” Dao then observed, “the hard thing for me about habitual framings is that sometimes it's ALL framings and so I get stuck on trying to overthrow a framing with another framing” and Stim agreed, “the teaching can become a trap and if we fall into that, we don't get a chance to appreciate, for instance, yin and yang ... insight needs to go pretty far to be free of its own side effects ... seeing needs, eventually, to be life, being ... not seeing something *about* life and being.”

Stim said his interest in the point about wu wei and yin and yang was its naturalness. Later Eliza asked if wu-wei questions should be included for next week and Stim replied, “sure, wu-wei too ... as long as I don't have to explain how you develop it. I'm trying to avoid that.”

Here is Gia Fu's translation of verse 48:

In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired.
 In the pursuit of Tao, every day something is dropped.
 Less and less is done
 Until non-action is achieved.
 When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.
 The world is ruled by letting things take their course.
 It cannot be ruled by interfering.