

On “Moral Creativity” in Mou Zongsan’s Philosophy

Tingting Qiao

Department of Philosophy, Sun Yat-sen University

Address: No. 135, Xingangxi Rd., Haizhu Dist., Guangzhou City 510275,
Guangdong Province, P.R.China

E-mail: qiaott0524@163.com

Abstract

Mou Zongsan’s concept of “moral creativity” (道德創造) is relatively abstract and cryptic. As a model of the inevitable unity of morality and happiness, “moral creativity” has been associated with two problems: the first problem is why “moral creativity” with an existential dimension has to be interconnected with the concept of “thing-in-itself”; the second is what kind of practical effort is needed to realize “moral creativity.” In particular, among the debates about the first problem, there has always been a mutually exclusive relationship between the factual and valiative levels of the concept of “thing-in-itself.” However, turning back to Kant’s ethical

投稿日期：2025.4.18；接受刊登日期：2026.4.1

責任校對：莊涓翔、周孟平

DOI: 10.30393/TNCUP.202607_(56).0001

thought, which maintains that speculative reason is subordinate to practical reason in the necessary union, we have seen that the valuative level of “thing-in-itself” may have precedence over the factual level. Mou Zongsan’s “moral order” of “moral creativity” likewise entails the subordination of the factual level of “thing-in-itself.” Accordingly, it appears that the second will never be a pseudo-problem. Mou’s analysis effectively reduces the second problem to the issue of how “innate moral knowledge” (良知) governs the genesis of the universe and “manifests itself with the myriad things as one single body” (一體呈現). Since the manifestation as one body depends on the faculty of “intellectual intuition” (智的直覺) of innate moral knowledge and its self-manifestation upon humans, “moral creativity” for the myriad things also relies on “moral creativity” for humans, that is, the creation of humans’ character and destiny. This is a clear difference from Kant’s “God’s creativity” and manifestations of Buddhism or Taoism, and it inspires us to reflect on the possibility of the unity of morality and happiness.

Keywords: Moral Creativity, Thing-in-itself, Intellectual Intuition, Self-manifestation, Mou Zongsan

On “Moral Creativity” in Mou Zongsan’s Philosophy

1. Introduction

Most scholars think it is difficult to determine how the moral universe and moral beings come into being under the concept of “thing-in-itself,” one of the vital problems of Mou Zongsan’s conception of “moral creativity.” It is necessary, before we address this problem, to focus on the connotation of “moral creativity” in the philosophy of Mou Zongsan, which is the correlate of “thing-in-itself.” In general, “moral creativity” suggests the activity of imbuing natural life with moral value—for instance, a tree can become what it ought to be through our intellectual engagement with it—whereas “thing-in-itself,” a distinctly Kantian notion, refers to the most authentic kind of existence considered independently of human sensibility (e.g., the tree as it is in itself, apart from our cognitive experience) and is therefore distinct from value. Thus, “moral creativity,” relating to “thing-in-itself,” might bring about a paradox between the realist concept and the value concept. However, Mou Zongsan’s philosophy differs slightly: “moral creativity” is to build a new sort of existence that is concrete and the most real, epitomizing the positive aspect of “thing-in-itself” that Kant describes (Mou 2003b: 61, 255, 257). Yet it is equally possible that “thing-in-itself” is not a realist concept (Mou 2003c: 8), although the same paradox exists throughout the whole conception of “moral creativity.” In fact, even if it is an original term of Mou Zongsan, the Pre-Qin Confucianism had already articulated this basic idea, such as “all the ten thousand things are there in me” (萬物皆備於我矣) (*Mencius*, 7A4), “a

gentleman transforms where he is passing through, and works wonders where he abides. He is in the same stream as Heaven above and Earth below” (君子所過者化，所存者神，上下與天地同流) (*Mencius*, 7A13), “[only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity] is able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth” (贊天地之化育) (*Doctrine of the Mean*, Chap. 22). By comparison, scholars appear more skeptical of Mou Zongsan’s idea of “moral creativity.” Mou argues that the effect of “moral creativity” is precisely what enables the unity of morality and happiness, and that happiness is the blessing of “the kingdom of nature” rather than happiness as virtue (Mou 2003d: 323); conversely, some scholars think that “moral creativity” is just a spiritual “perfect goodness” (or what Kant terms “highest good”) rather than the real unification of morality and happiness (Yang 2018: 111).

Hence, my aim in this article is to draw on Kant’s position to better understand Mou’s thought on “moral creativity” and how it can overcome the conceptual challenges raised by these scholars, especially how “moral creativity” for the myriad things (whether living or inanimate) that have existed on this planet can be created. Part of my aim is to illuminate how a more detailed account of Mou’s “moral creativity” might conceptually enrich current work on the possibility of the unity of morality and happiness.

2. Mou on “Moral Order”: To Prevent Divergences Between the Factual and the Valuative Interpretation of “Thing-in-itself”

“Moral creativity” is now widely explored in Mou Zongsan’s philosophy. According to Mou’s late work, *On the Perfect Good*, it

possesses a more profound connotation: “It is not limited to moral creativity for humans, nor to the purely moral activities derived from it, but also encompasses the same creativity directed toward Heaven and Earth” (Mou 2003d: 137). In brief, there are precisely two types of “moral creativity.” One points to the agent’s cultivation of his own virtue, destiny, and personality that arise from the “original heart/mind having an aversion to degeneration” (不安於墮落的本心) shared among humans (Mou 2003e: 59), while the other poses numerous challenges for specific explication: How can the universe come into being through “moral creativity”? How can the “original heart/mind” (or “innate moral knowledge”¹) that belongs to humans make moral creativity for the universe possible? Are there any distinctions between the morally created universe and the existing one?² In addition, Mou emphasizes that two types of “moral creativity” are concerned with “thing-in-itself,” which is largely the focus of these issues.

We shall put other issues aside for now and focus first on one concerning “thing-in-itself.” Most scholars indicate that Mou’s “thing-in-itself” is not an epistemological concept but a positive one endowed with a

¹ The terms “original heart/mind” (本心) and “innate moral knowledge” (良知) are frequently employed in conjunction by Mou Zongsan in his late works, or sometimes “original heart/mind” and “constitutive benevolence” (仁體), or “constitutive authenticity” (誠體) in conjunction, due to Mou’s stance on the identification of heart/mind with principle (心即理). Therefore, the phrase “enlightenment of innate moral knowledge” (良知明覺) is synonymous with “clear-sightedness of constitutive knowledge” (知體明覺), all of which point to a faculty of “inter-affectation” (感通) that innate moral knowledge possesses, namely the “intellectual intuition.” I am indebted to Sébastien Billioud and N. Serina Chan for providing many insightful translations of these terms in their respective works, *Thinking through Confucian Modernity* and *The Thought of Mou Zongsan*, both of which have greatly improved the quality and clarity of my writing.

² See, for instance, Sébastien Billioud’s confusion, where he notes that “the main difficulty is in interpreting the dimension of thing-in-itself—and, at the same time, dimension of value— ascribed to concrete things and situations that we encounter in the course of our daily activities. It is all the more difficult to understand that the realm of the would-be thing-in-itself seems all-encompassing, even including trees and plants” (Billioud 2012: 109).

value dimension. According to Sébastien Billioud, Mou's interpretation of "thing-in-itself" is not only his creative appropriation, within a Kantian framework, of the concept that has been ascribed to "a sense of value," but also his interpretation of such a value concept from the perspective of Chinese philosophy (Billioud 2012: 96). On this basis, "moral creativity" that has been ascribed to "thing-in-itself" also refers to a form of creativity endowed with a dimension of value. To quote another scholar, Cheng Zhihua: "The process through which 'innate moral knowledge' achieves 'thing-in-itself' is also the process through which it imparts moral meaning to myriads of beings and thus simultaneously brings them into new 'creation.' This 'creation,' however, pertains solely to the creation with a sense of value rather than the creation of finite beings in an epistemological dimension" (Cheng 2009: 175).

Unlike Cheng, Mou believes that "moral creativity" is not "all endowment of moral rationality for the myriad things" (Mou 2003d: 131).³ Rather, he thinks that it has the potential to enhance human life as well as to bring about the tangible and substantial transformation of the myriad things, such as plants and trees, into the perfect state where morality and happiness are inextricably linked. On the one hand, the moral subject with the original heart/mind, in this case, can establish "heavenly principles" (天

³ A similar disagreement has emerged between Mou Zongsan and Lao Sze-kwang. Lao maintains a dualistic stance that separates value from fact—or morality from existence—whereas Mou argues for the unity of moral value and existence within the framework of his "practical ontology" (實踐的存有論). This divergence is epitomized by their conflicting interpretations of Mencius's proposition that "the myriad things are there in me." Lao argues that the principle of the myriad things—that is, value alone—is in me, and that innate moral knowledge only possesses moral significance (Lao 2015: 146-147). Mou, however, counters Lao's interpretation by asserting that the myriad things are there in my original heart/mind as constitutive authenticity that involves both value and existence. Consequently, for Mou, innate moral knowledge possesses the ontological power that unifies moral value and existence, thereby generating the myriad things (Mou 2003g: 11-14).

理) as its legislator and thereby act consciously in accordance with it, which indicates that moral creativity for humans is analogous to activities within a “Kingdom of Ends” where all people have the virtue and must always be treated as ends in themselves. On the other hand, moral creativity for the universe can make it possible for the myriad things—which should have belonged to a world of happiness, or what Kant called the “Kingdom of Nature”—to have a state of actuality, tranquility, and value, when we have unveiled the original heart/mind that thus will itself possess intellectual intuition and extend itself to the myriad things. It is through “moral creativity” that the “Kingdom of Ends” and “Kingdom of Nature” can coincide with each other, allowing for the unification of morality and happiness (Mou 2003d: 323). What is at stake in this discussion is that, for Mou, the happiness from “moral creativity” is understood as a concrete and real one that humans are able to attain and enjoy; and clearly differentiated from a purely moral one where each subject remains untarnished and negative, or from a supposed one ascribed to God (Mou 2003d: 321). In brief, “moral creativity” has been endowed with a dimension of fact, notwithstanding its transcendental bias. Therefore, we can say that, if “thing-in-itself” in Mou’s philosophy is understood as a term endowed entirely with a value dimension, then Mou’s interpretation of “moral creativity” relating to “thing-in-itself” must be in conflict. Of course, some scholars reject precisely the former and emphasize that no clear arguments have proved that “thing-in-itself” is not a realist concept.⁴

⁴ See, for instance, Yang Zebo, “Why Does Mou Zongsan Believe that Kant’s Thing Itself is not A Concept of Fact?” 31-36; and “Questioning Mou Zongsan’s Explanation of Kant’s Thing-in-itself Concept,” 22-34; Deng Xiaomang, “Listing Main Points of Mou Zongsan’s Misreading to Kant (The third)—Concerning ‘Self of Matter’,” 1-6; Tang Wenming, *Secret Subversion: Mou Zongsan, Kant, and Originary Confucianity*, 195-199. These scholars, who all maintain that the “thing-in-itself” is indeed a realist/factual concept, share a common reason for questioning Mou Zongsan’s understanding of “thing-in-itself”: the

In fact, the interpretation of “thing-in-itself” is not only being debated in Mou’s thought, but has also long been the subject of divergent opinions in Kant’s philosophy. The debate concerns whether it refers to a concept equipped with an epistemological dimension or one endowed with a sense of value. However, we know precisely that, in Mou’s thought, “moral creativity” concerning “thing-in-itself” is a type of moral performance with a concrete and true meaning (Mou 2003c: 462) that has both factual and valuative dimensions. If we hold the view that the factual and valuative levels of “thing-in-itself” are always mutually exclusive, whatever sense is ascribed to it, that view must contradict the notion of “moral creativity,” which maintains both the value of morality and the practical significance of its implementation. Therefore, beyond the mutually exclusive debates on the interpretation of “thing-in-itself,” the true challenge for us when discussing “moral creativity” is to clarify the relationship between its factual dimension and sense of value.

To address this relationship, we can introduce the notion of “moral order” (道德秩序) in Mou’s philosophy. Mou has a famous saying that “the cosmic order is the moral order, and vice versa” (宇宙秩序就是道德秩序，反之亦然) (Mou 2003d: 135). Mou argues that a unified state in which moral order and cosmic order coexist can be considered and verified through “moral creativity”; in Mou’s own words: “the moral order, which is based on the incessant decree of Heaven, can be verified by the moral creativity caused by the heart/mind and nature” (心性之道德創造性所體證之天命不已之道德秩序) (Mou 2003d: 135). The original meaning of “cosmic order” is associated with a way or process in which the Way or decree of Heaven somehow creates the myriad things. But not until we

discrepancy between Mou Zongsan’s and Kant’s understandings thereof stems from Mou’s misinterpretation and lack of comprehension.

consider Mou’s further interpretations⁵ could we understand clearly that the creative capacity of the Way or decree of Heaven relies on “moral creativity” of the original heart/mind and nature, and that the latter determines and verifies the former. Therefore, this point is of special importance given his emphasis on the capacity or process of “moral creativity” possessed by the heart/mind and nature for the myriad things, which is translated by Mou Zongsan into the sublime meaning of “cosmic order,” and further, this is the fundamental implication of “moral creativity.” Furthermore, as the quotation states, the moral order means that “all perceptual motivations are subordinate to the motivation of respecting the moral law” (Mou 2003d: 121); similarly, the cosmic order implies that the capacity of the Way or decree of Heaven is also subordinate to that of “moral creativity.” Thus, a complete account of why “cosmic order is the moral order and vice versa” suggests the following simple line of argument:

1. The creation of the heart/mind and nature determines and verifies the generating process of Heaven.
2. (1) is both the moral order and cosmic order.
3. Moral order involves a subordination X.
4. Cosmic order involves a subordination Y. (From 2 and 3)
5. $X = Y = (1)$. (From 1 and 2)

⁵ Mou Zongsan also explains that “In modern terms, the way in which the meaning of the ‘Way’ (天道) or ‘decree of Heaven’ (天命) can be illustrated and determined by the ‘reverence for virtue’ and ‘manifestation of virtue’ is a moral order...The decree of Heaven falls vertically down, layer by layer, to the people, which is epitomized by a moral order. It is through the reverence for virtue and manifestation of virtue that people are able to take the meaning of the Way or decree of Heaven seriously and affirm it. And in doing so, the meaning of the Way or decree of Heaven is reflected not only in humans’ ‘function of reverence,’ but also in their ‘substance’ (本體). Consequently, this moral order is also referred to as the ‘cosmic order’” (Mou 2003e: 17-18).

Due to (5), it is necessary to highlight that such a capacity of the Way or Heaven and its significance have not been abolished; they also persist within the moral order, underlying “all perceptual motivations,” and pertains to the factual dimension of “moral creativity” concerning “thing-in-itself.” Accordingly, the factual dimension of “moral creativity” concerning “thing-in-itself” has not vanished, nor has it been transformed into a sense of pure value. Rather, there is a hierarchical relationship between the factual and the valuative dimensions of “thing-in-itself”—which is synonymous with X and Y—wherein the factual is subordinate to and governed by the valuative.

Indeed, such a subordination was already well anchored in Kant’s work, *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant recognizes that pure speculative and pure practical reason are not equally ranked within their a priori and necessary union: speculative reason is subordinate to practical reason, which serves as the order of the ultimately practical and necessary world (Kant 2015: 98). Could this not be regarded as another discourse delineating the concept of Mou’s aforementioned moral order? Mou Zongsan distinguishes “be thing-in-itself” (物之在其自己) from “a subjective phenomenon [from the perspective of] a finite heart/mind” (Mou 2003d: 338-342). The latter is where speculative reason operates, while the former is ascribed to pure practical reason. Given that speculative reason is subordinate to practical reason in their a priori and necessary union, the phenomenal world must similarly be subordinate to the realm of “thing-in-itself” as long as it is under the control of “moral creativity” of the heart/mind and nature—the possibility of the “highest good” or the unity of morality and happiness (Mou 2003d: 344-346). Hence, Kant’s subordination resonates deeply with Mou’s moral order. Meanwhile, this point is congruent with Kant’s argument presented in the section preceding

“on the primacy of the pure practical reason in its connection with speculative reason” in *Critique of Practical Reason*: “Only with this subordination is the highest good the whole object of pure practical reason, which must necessarily represent it as possible since it commands us to contribute everything possible to its production” (Kant 2015: 96). And this argument, in Mou’s work, *On the Perfect Good*, had been translated into a Chinese version and annotated to convey a more positive tone regarding our moral capacity. In brief, the realization of “moral creativity” arises from the necessary connection of practical and speculative reason, namely, the moral order with the same subordination.

Here, invoking a “moral order” (or the aforementioned “subordination”) boils down to emphasizing that “moral creativity” is neither in the realm of pure intellect and value nor in the phenomenal world, and surpasses an epistemological limitation but does not depart from the factual world. It is precisely because of this emphasis that the state of “thing-in-itself” in “moral creativity” pertains to neither a concept with an epistemological dimension nor a value concept. Similarly, it has both factual and valuative dimensions, with the latter taking precedence over the former, as Chan Wing-cheuk puts it: “in terms of the moral creativity, nature and morals can be unified” (Chan 2006: 130).

Although Mou has repeatedly stressed that “be thing-in-itself” is a concept with a sense of value rather than a realist one (Mou 2003c: 8), there are two points worth noting: on the one hand, his approval of the “concept with a sense of value” aims at a sense of value rather than values, in order to distinguish it from value concepts discussed by the value school of thought (Billioud 2012: 102). At this point, Sébastien Billioud has revealed, in the vein of Mou’s, that “the sense of value ascribed to thing-in-itself

indeed points to an interrelation between the ‘profane’ realm of ordinary reality and the ‘sacred’ realm of values” (Billioud 2012: 108). On the other hand, Mou’s denial of the “realist concept” refers only to the “original aspect of a reality” (事實上的原樣) within epistemology, without implying a complete absence of the factual dimension of beings regarding “moral creativity.” In other words, while the “original aspect of a reality” refers to “thing-in-itself,” it specifically denotes the “purely objective and external thing itself,” that is, the cognitive object that remains unaltered by our perceptual and intellectual faculties, and distinguishes itself from the phenomenon (Mou 2003c: 7). Mou has firmly rejected the “thing-in-itself” with an epistemological dimension, or the so-called “thing-in-itself” as “the purely objective and external thing,” because it fails to align with the faculty of practical reason and prevents practical reason from extending its boundaries over everything. Thus, Mou not only tends to regard “thing-in-itself” as the “original aspect of a sense of high value” (高度的價值意味的原樣), but also retains the phrase “original aspect” (原樣) (Mou 2003c: 7). Importantly, “thing-in-itself” without epistemological dimension still exists in reality and retains a factual dimension, which has been supported by Chan Wing-cheuk’s interpretation of Mou’s and Kant’s thoughts, according to which “Mou Zongsan, however, does not mean to deny the ‘reality’ of things-in-themselves...Although Mou Zongsan’s formulation is not precise, his point is that ‘thing-in-itself’ is not a notion of a ‘real thing’ in the ontical sense, but rather that of a ‘real thing’ in the axiological sense” (Chan 2006: 129).

According to another phrase, “a sense of high value,” we know that “thing-in-itself” is not a purely objective thing disconnected from practical reason; instead, it is always so strongly associated with practical reason that the “original aspect” of everything might be actualized, as denoted by

Mou’s concept of a “free infinite mind” (自由無限心) or a “free and autonomous infinite mind” (自由自律的無限心). In this respect, there is no doubt that Mou Zongsan certainly goes beyond the thought of Kant, who fully denies this association of “thing-in-itself” with practical reason or a moral self: “if we attempt to extend it (practical reason) to a theoretical cognition we find an understanding that does not think but intuit, a will that is directed to objects upon the existence of which its satisfaction does not in the least depend (not to mention a magnitude of existence, i.e., duration, which, however, is not in time, the only possible means we have of representing existence as magnitude)” (Kant 2015: 110).

Consequently, Kant and Mou’s perspectives on “moral creativity” also differ. For Mou, “moral creativity” encompasses both humans’ presentation of it and its presentation by the myriad things and all life. In contrast, Kant would only acknowledge the former—moral creativity for humans—because he believes that the latter is unachievable, as the practical reason is restricted to the practice of the moral law and cannot, therefore, indefinitely extend over the myriad things and all life (Kant 2015: 108-113). Such a divergence has already been acknowledged by Chan Wing-cheuk as well and, in his eyes, even signifies a firm ground for the difference between Kant’s moral theology and Mou’s moral metaphysics: “while moral theology ‘is a conviction of the existence of a supreme being—a conviction which bases itself on moral laws,’ moral metaphysics aims to disclose the ultimate reality of the cosmos via moral activity. There is a superiority of moral metaphysics over moral theology, for it grants intellectual intuition to human beings” (Chan 2006: 130). This intellectual intuition is synonymous with the extending capacity of practical reason, which should have been developed by Kant himself.

Furthermore, it was because of these differences that Mou's interpretation of "thing-in-itself" became the subject of divergent opinions again. In Sébastien Billioud's opinion, Mou's interpretation of "thing-in-itself" is his creative appropriation, within a Kantian framework, of this concept (Billioud 2012: 96). And Zheng Jiadong (鄭家棟) makes a similar point: "instead of saying that it is an interpretation of the concept of 'thing-in-itself,' we could posit instead that it is a complete change in meaning" (Zheng 2001: 110). Yang Zebo (楊澤波) also asserts that there is a lack of homogeneity between Mou and Kant's interpretation of "thing-in-itself," which begs the question of whether the existence produced by "moral creativity" would qualify as "thing-in-itself" (Yang 2018: 93-94). But there is something in Lee Ming-huei's (李明輝) arguments that protests these opinions; he dedicates himself to legitimating some key insights of Mou Zongsan that constitute a critical appropriation of Kantism. For instance, Lee stresses that the sense of value of "thing-in-itself" was already well anchored in Kant's philosophy (Lee 2001: 33, 44), and Kant has alluded to the ethical significance of "thing-in-itself" when discussing the antinomy between freedom and nature (Lee 2021: 80). In brief, regardless of the interconnection between Mou and Kant's interpretations of "thing-in-itself," we have a clear understanding of Mou's perspective: the concept of "thing-in-itself" has both factual and valuative dimensions, with the former being subordinate to the latter, thus demonstrating its own initiative and authenticity as well. In other words, "thing-in-itself" linked to "moral creativity" entails a subordination, which comes to embody the moral order; that is the ultimate, comprehensive, and true meaning of "thing-in-itself." At this point, the dispute about the factual and valuative dimensions of Mou's interpretation of "thing-in-itself" has now been resolved. Only by depending on this perspective of "thing-in-itself" could "moral creativity" and its achievement of due correspondence between virtue and happiness

be affirmed to be positive and genuine.

3. From “Inter-affectation”⁶ to “Manifestation as One Body that Innate Moral Knowledge and All Beings Constitute”

As we have seen, moral practices and beings, through “moral creativity,” in the vein of Mou’s philosophy, are thought of as “thing-in-itself within practices” (實踐中物自身義的物) (Mou 2003d: 310), incorporating factual and valiative dimensions. It is possible to speak further about how “thing-in-itself” comes into existence through “moral creativity,” as long as we recognize its own subordination and its relation to “moral creativity.” However, this issue of existence has become another abstract and perplexing challenge, as Mou Zongsan articulates that moral creativity for humans can be actualized through self-cultivation, such as the “practice of vigilance in solitude” (慎獨工夫) (Mou 2003f: 436), but he does not specify the requisite practices for moral creativity for the universe.⁷ Indeed, Mou places great emphasis on elucidating the

⁶ I borrow this translation of *gantong* (感通) from Sébastien Billioud, along with the following translation of *juerun* (覺潤). Apart from Billioud’s translation, there are two alternative interpretations of the word *gantong*: the “resonance” that Jason Clower describes, and the “pervasive empathetic feelings” that N. Serina Chan proposes. Chan’s and Clower’s translations, in my opinion, have not yet fully captured the fundamental dimension of *gantong* that Mou Zongsan inherited—that is, the same constitutive nature that humans and other beings share. Although this dimension plays a part in Clower’s interpretation of “oneness (or one body),” it is not solely a result of *gantong*; rather, it is also a metaphysical presumption of *gantong*. (See Billioud, *Thinking through Confucian Modernity: A Study of Mou Zongsan’s Moral Metaphysics*, 183–186; Clower, *Late Works of Mou Zongsan: Selected Essays on Chinese Philosophy*, 150; Chan, *The Thought of Mou Zongsan*, 186).

⁷ On this point, the reader may refer to the assertions made by Yang Zebo and Cai Xiangyuan in their articles. For example, Yang posits that “it is worthwhile to discuss in detail how the transcendental Heaven is able to endow humans with moral goodness, thereby participating in the concrete process of creating moral beings, imbuing mountains, rivers, lands, and trees

significance of “thing-in-itself” produced by “moral creativity.” Yet he provides relatively limited insights into the process itself, as evidenced by only two relevant passages in *On the Perfect Good* and in *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy*.⁸

Mou’s insights seem to reveal two sorts of practices of moral creativity for the universe: the fertility of the “infinite reason,” also called “infinite heart of wisdom” (無限的智心), that would permeate everything (Mou 2003d: 298) and the “inter-affectation of a heart/mind characterized by benevolence” (仁心之感通無外) (Mou 2003b: 256). However, we can see that these two practices simply point to the same aspect of “moral creativity,” that is, the intellectual intuition, “sagacious clear-sightedness of a heart/mind characterized by benevolence” (仁心之明覺活動), or the function of “infinite heart of wisdom,” when discussing how “to give insight into something is to fertilize it, and to fertilize something is also to create it” (覺之即潤之，潤之即生之) (Mou 2003b: 256). This being said, the word “is” (即) in the sentence “the fertility is also the operation of creativity” not only suggests a relevance of correspondence, but also alludes to a latent and simultaneous causality. This causality means that the state of things being fertile arises of their own accord as the insight into things occurs, and ultimately, the myriad things are all created and assimilated into the constitutive manifestation, as shown by what the

with value and significance. However, Mou Zongsan lacks a detailed analysis of these problems” (Yang 2018: 83). Cai also indicates that “Mou Zongsan’s reinterpretation of the ‘infinite generation’ (生生) deliberately incorporated the ontological perspective of Western philosophy. Still, it failed to truly resolve the issue of how Being and Activity become one single body. The argument about this issue, so far, focuses merely on a conceptual framework of the ontological creativity without showing its possibility; as a result, its central ideas are termed ‘wondrous formation [of the myriad things]’ (妙運), ‘transformation being in an efficacious way’ (神化).” (Cai 2021: 127)

⁸ See Mou Zongsan, *On the Perfect Good*, 298; *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy*, 256.

Doctrine of the Mean refers to by saying that “let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout Heaven and Earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish” (致中和，天地位焉，萬物育焉) (*Doctrine of the Mean*, Chap. 1). In brief, it is the intellectual intuition that serves as the fundamental faculty for promoting moral creativity for the universe. It is therefore unsurprising that Mou Zongsan states, in another work, that “intuiting it (a thing) corresponds to creating it (a thing)” (直覺它（一物）就創造它（一物）) (Mou 2003f: 117).

Although “intellectual intuition” is conceived of as a fundamental faculty for “moral creativity” by Mou Zongsan, this is by no means the whole process of actualizing “moral creativity,” as Mou also emphasizes the significance of “fertility” (潤澤) and “infinity” (無方) as horizons that one must reach through the use of the intellectual intuition. In other words, even if the intellectual intuition, as the faculty of the original heart/mind (constitutive benevolence), could bring about moral practices and deeds compliant with practical reason, it is insufficient to assume that this intuition and “moral creativity” are inextricably linked in the absence of “fertility” and “infinity,” two ultimate horizons that fully crystallize and guarantee the actualization of moral creativity for the universe. Expounding on the contextual framework of the concept of “inter-affectation,” Huang Kuan-Min (黃冠閔) commented that “it is the fertility building on inter-affectation that enables moral creativity for all myriad things to be true” (Huang 2009: 80).

Let us introduce a few important points about “fertility” and “infinity.” “Fertility” is thought of as the efficacy of “intellectual intuition,” in the vein of “moral creativity” that Mou describes, signifying a “renewed

appearance upon the myriad things including human beings, that is, the emergence of an ought dimension that pertains to existing beings” that transforms them into “axiological and authentic reality” (Mou 2003d: 137). In other words, if we borrow the aforementioned Kantian terminology, the myriad things experiencing the fertility of reason can be understood as “thing-in-itself” within the union of pure speculative and pure practical reason. As a result, pure practical reason plays a pivotal role in the myriad things: the way things ought to be is no longer a postulate or a component of phenomena to which it is attached, but becomes a manifestation of itself.

“Infinity” refers to the boundless expansion of “inter-affectation,” which includes “not only the amplification of spiritual experiences but also an unceasing process thereof” (Mou 2003e: 32). Such an infinite expansion extends the value of the original heart/mind (constitutive benevolence) to the whole life of individuals, to one objective thing, and eventually to the myriad things, culminating in the emergence—as one single body—of the benevolent man, Heaven, Earth, and all beings. Mou Zongsan describes this state by saying that “moral creativity [of the sage] and generation/transformation of the universe are one; it means that they emerge as one body in the course of arousal and response of clear-sightedness” (Mou 2003c: 460). In this respect, Mou’s understanding of the expansion of the original heart/mind might directly echo Kant’s conception of pure practical reason: “it (practical reason) would extend its boundaries over everything and, when its need required, would try to include speculative reason within them” (Kant 2015: 98). Additionally, it is important to note that the emergence of the benevolent man, Heaven, Earth, and all beings, as one single body, not only points to the ultimate experience of “inter-affectation,” but also refers to the eventual horizon of fertilizing—what Mou Zongsan means by “pervasive fertility” (遍潤) in his work *On*

the Perfect Good. Furthermore, Mou Zongsan also sums up in one sentence: “the benevolence [of man] considers the inter-affectation as a constitution, and the fertility as a function” (仁以感通為性，以潤物為用) (Mou 2003d: 254; 2003e: 32), which is largely in line with the insights of orthodox Confucianism and thus can be referred to as a system that is “vertical in content as well as in discourse” (縱者縱講). Indeed, without the unceasing and infinite faculty stemming from “inter-affectation,” one can only engage in sporadic acts of “moral creativity,” thus not paving the way for an ultimate “horizon of the universe’s unceasing generation/transformation” (宇宙生化而至生生不息之境) (Mou 2003d: 137, 299). The same thing would happen in the other way around: if devoid of “fertility,” one’s inter-affectation would be so “horizontal” (橫者) that it falls into an abstract situation of Buddhism or Taoism, termed “to preserve everything” (成全一切) and “to maintain everything” (保住一切), in which one would perform a creation in terms of realistic purposes rather than the Confucian self-dominant heart /mind (Mou 2003d: 194,320).

A rough framework regarding Mou’s reference to the generating process of moral creativity for the universe has now been introduced. But, in the end, there are still two points that need to be emphasized: firstly, the ultimate horizon of “pervasive fertility” represents an accomplishment of all “moral creativity”; secondly, the Earth, Heaven, and the myriad things generated through “moral creativity” are identified as the so-called “what it ought to be” (Mou 2003d: 254) manifesting their inherent vitality and dynamism, which is irrelevant to the birth of natural life (Mou 2003b: 61). More specifically, the unity of morality and happiness (or the “perfect good” life)—where “original heart/mind or constitutive benevolence and its cosmic generation always become one,” or, in other words, “they are

supposed to constitute one single body” (本若是其與天地萬物為一體) (Mou 2003b: 18)—would be reestablished when an action is motivated by one’s original heart/mind or innate moral knowledge, truly devoid of any realist purpose or consideration. Therefore, Mou Zongsan asserts that “to present it is to actualize it, meaning generating it” (呈現之即實現之，即創生之) (Mou 2003c: 103). Beyond this, it is epitomized in his interpretation of Wang Yangming’s (王陽明) thought—“a thing is where clear-sightedness is aroused and responds” (明覺感應為物).

Compared with the preceding statement that “the sagacious clear-sightedness of a heart/mind characterized by benevolence fertilizes everything,” what Mou means here by “the creativity of innate moral knowledge” and “a thing is where clear-sightedness is aroused and responds” are much more specific. In his eyes, it is through “a thing is where clear-sightedness is aroused and responds” that the disassociation between the creativity of innate moral knowledge and the generation of the myriad things could be ended, resulting in “a sudden and complete fusion between the significances of creativity and manifestation as one body [pertaining to the myriad things]” (創生的意義和一體呈現的意義完全頓時融在一起) (Mou 2003f: 123). The reason why innate moral knowledge can bring what it ought to be to life and, therefore, reach the horizon where all things participate in one single body—a situation in which the significances of creativity and manifestation as one body pertaining to the myriad things are completely and immediately fused together—boils down to the inter-affectation of an original heart/mind or innate moral knowledge. In this sense, innate moral knowledge is, on the one hand, independent and transcendental as “the creative entity for morality”; on the other hand, active and autonomous as a subject of “moral creativity” (Mou 2003f: 123). That said, there is still a vital question to answer: what

concrete experience or state could be described by Mou Zongsan as the horizon of oneness, if not in a tautological utterance?

Indeed, Mou Zongsan perpetuates a tradition in which an ultimate horizon attained through self-cultivation is ascribed to the experience of sagehood, and celebrates the ultimate meaning of Wang Longxi’s (王龍溪) Four Negations (四無論), that is, heart/mind (心), intention (意), knowledge (知), and all existing things (物) which point in the end to one single horizon of sagehood (Mou 2003d: 344-346). As such, it suffices to say that the ultimate horizon of oneness is attained by a sage whose innate moral knowledge has persistently manifested itself. At the same time, existing things are “in themselves,” in other words, devoid of any physical barriers and realistic consideration by means of perceptual intentions, as they emerge along with the deployment of moral knowledge, and their transformation is presided over by innate moral knowledge, which precisely corresponds to the famous formula “a thing is where clear-sightedness is aroused and responds,” and the meaning of “thing-in-itself” within “moral creativity.” In the same vein, Fabian Heubel also characterizes the moralization of creativity as an unimpeded operating process and proposes that “barrier-free creativity refers to moral creativity” (Heubel 2008: 66), even though he does not invoke the concept of “thing-in-itself.” While the state of being “unimpeded” serves as a hallmark of the myriad things through moral creativity of innate moral knowledge, it inevitably invites critical scrutiny. Fung Yiu-ming (馮耀明), for instance, challenges both the unimpeded state and the necessity of innate moral knowledge: (1) The myriad things are already inherently self-existent and possess their own vitality; why should they require an additional endowment of unimpeded, non-instrumental significance from innate moral knowledge? (2) Even granting the necessity of innate moral

knowledge, it merely serves to manifest a pre-existing moral significance rather than to create it. If this is the case, the attribution of “creativity” to this process becomes fundamentally untenable (Fung 2003: 132-133).

Regarding the first question, while it is undeniable that everything is inherently self-existent and independent, this sense of “thing-in-itself” remains strictly epistemological—a Kantian position rather than Mou’s—and is thus radically separated from moral significance. In brief, such a “thing-in-itself” fails to ground Mencius’s proposition that “the myriad things are there in me.” It can be argued that the vitality understood solely from an epistemological perspective is ultimately hollow, as it remains subject to the cycles of birth and decay, failing to achieve true non-obstruction. In contrast, the creativity that innate moral knowledge bestows upon everything must be an unceasing, inexhaustible impetus or vitality; hence even trees and plants are “fertilized” well by this vitality. Though a tree may be cut down and lose its foliage, such ephemeral damage does not diminish its vitality from innate moral knowledge; as long as this vitality persists, so does the “happiness” of the tree, allowing lost foliage to regenerate. Similarly, temporary setbacks in humans do not equate to a lack of happiness. As long as the impetus for moral deeds remains, happiness persists—just as the childhood loss of parental care can “regenerate” that happiness and find fulfillment by becoming a parent and raising their own children with love. In sum, the self-existence of the myriad things must be understood through the distinction between existence constrained by the fact-value dichotomy and that achieved within the unity of value and fact—an order characterized by the primacy of value over fact.⁹ Only the latter

⁹ Scholarship has also addressed this same issue by distinguishing between different types of existence (also referred to as the “thing-in-itself”). Ng Kai-chiu (吳啟超), for instance, differentiates between general existence and moral existence (Ng 2016: 60-62); similarly,

truly qualifies as the fruit of Mou’s moral creativity.

As for the second question, the “transcendental but immanent” characteristic that contemporary Confucians have celebrated, in the vein of Mou’s philosophy, is epitomized in the assimilation between creativity and manifestation as one body pertaining to the myriad things. Mou’s departure point is an emphasis on Confucian moral creativity with this assimilation, in order to distinguish it sharply from those creativities for natural life that God possesses or that biologists and litterateurs celebrate. Thus he stresses: “the preaching should not be conducted horizontally in terms of epistemology, but rather vertically in a straight line from the top down, symbolizing the creativity of the Way” (Mou 2003f: 103). At the same time, due to being embedded in such vertical moral creativity, the “manifestation as one body” of Confucianism serves Mou’s attempt to go beyond that of Buddhism or Taoism. However, Mou Zongsan posits that the use of the word “creativity” is deemed an expedient way to distinguish between functions of epistemology and his “Detached Ontology” (無執的存有論) that focuses on innate moral knowledge: the former points to the horizontal perspective, while the latter refers to the vertical one (Mou 2003f: 103). At this point, Lee Ming-huei states more bluntly: “actually, it doesn’t matter if it is necessary to term creativity; even if necessary, it is [for Mou Zongsan] nothing more than an emphasis on the self-activity of the moral subject. But it is within this self-activity that the heart/mind and things manifest as one single body, in which, basically, there is no difference, on the one hand, between the heart/mind and things and, on the

Chou Yung-Sheng (周詠盛) distinguishes between existence as pure form and existence with concrete substantive content (Chou 2019: 170-173). Both scholars posit that, in Mou’s framework, moral activity transforms existence from the former type into the latter. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for pointing out essential literature and for helping to clarify several terminological ambiguities.

other hand, between subject and object” (Lee 2021: 98).

In sum, the fact that Mou treats “moral creativity” and “manifestation as one body” as synonymous has gone hand in hand with another assertion that the function of inter-affectation and self-manifestation of innate moral knowledge are identical, according to which “the intellectual intuition would simultaneously emerge [and work] when the original heart/mind (constitutive benevolence) is in motion at any time and has its concrete manifestation” (Mou 2003b: 250). Hence, instead of obsessing over how moral creativity for the universe is possible, it would be more fruitful to explore the enigma surrounding manifestation as one body that innate moral knowledge and all things constitute.

4. Moral Creativity for the Universe: Stemming from Moral Creativity for Humans

As we have seen, the challenge of moral creativity for the universe can be translated into the problem of how the joint manifestation as one body that innate moral knowledge and the myriad things constitute is possible. The former will be taken care of right away if the latter has been resolved. We have already noted that such a joint manifestation relies on innate moral knowledge; in other words, only by manifesting itself and then gaining insight vertically into Heaven, Earth, and things could innate moral knowledge give rise to this manifestation as one body. In terms of these two steps of innate moral knowledge, Mou Zongsan believes that there is an inherent practical sequence in which its self-manifestation precedes the vertical extension to all things.

Firstly, Mou believes that Confucius’ (孔子) “benevolence” (仁) and

Mencius’s “nature” (性) are universal qualities that are thought of as common characteristics between humans and the myriad things rather than “differentia” (差)—historically associated with Aristotle’s definition—used to distinguish humans from other things (Mou 2003f: 432-433). This implies that humans and the myriad things all share the same “benevolence” or “nature,” not as if there are numerous instances of “benevolence” or “nature” in Heaven and Earth. Secondly, according to Mou’s interpretation: “Once ‘nature’ manifests itself, it will get rid of limitations imposed by humans and acquire absolute universality, which has been considered a distinctive characteristic emphasized in Confucian discourse on nature” (Mou 2003f: 432-433), there can be only one “nature” since, initially, “nature” only pertains to humans and manifests itself through the experiences of humans, particularly those of sagehood; however, later on, it may expand itself beyond humans to include things and tasks. In this sense, it is worth noting here that the terms “benevolence” and “nature” are respectively abbreviations for “constitutive benevolence” (仁體) and “constitutive nature” (性體), all of which are the objective designations of the original heart/mind or innate moral knowledge. Finally, in a similar vein, innate moral knowledge is neither exclusive to humans nor a genus concept. A genus concept operates as an objective criterion to classify species; for instance, “reason” serves as a genus concept that demarcates humans from the rest of the biological world. Mou also identifies this as the “principle of formation” (形成之理). Conversely, he characterizes innate moral knowledge as the “principle of actualization” (實現之理) (Mou 2003h: 159-163). Unlike the restrictive nature of a genus, innate moral knowledge, in its ontological reach, extends to the myriad things, serving as a common characteristic or universal practical motivation shared by humans and the myriad things. In humans, it manifests as the

capacity to know good and evil and to carry out moral deeds; when extended to the myriad things, it functions as the foundational creative impetus that enables every existing thing to be “thing-in-itself.”

The only way for innate moral knowledge to expand its reach and permeate all existing things is exactly the original step of presenting itself within humans. This step is a great breakthrough that would allow innate moral knowledge, on the one hand, to truly become infinite and universal and, on the other hand, to bring about true fertility for all things. Most importantly, such fertility for all things lies less in a latent innate moral knowledge than in a real one equipped with infinity that corresponds, no doubt, to what Mou means by “infinite heart of wisdom,” an original concept that occurs frequently in *On the Perfect Good*. For example, Mou’s association of the infinite heart of wisdom with constitutive benevolence (later known as innate moral knowledge) appears in the following excerpt: “the infinite heart of wisdom is unveiled through Confucius’s benevolence. The reason why the benevolence can unfold into the infinite heart of wisdom lies in the unique, fundamental character of benevolence that Confucius coins” (Mou 2003d: 249).

Nonetheless, the infinite heart of wisdom still pertains to innate moral knowledge and, as such, is endowed with the faculty of intellectual intuition as well. More than that, it maintains an infinite expansibility and an inner motivation grounded in innate moral knowledge (constitutive benevolence) to ensure the operation of intellectual intuition and the ultimate actualization of manifestation as one body. Mou Zongsan alludes to the significance of the infinite heart of wisdom especially in this excerpt: “the infinite heart of wisdom is a strong foundation of Confucian deeds; its establishment alone is adequate in preserving both purity from ‘the pure

and unceasing capacity to generate moral deeds' (德之純亦不已) and necessity of 'the harmonious coexistence, of all myriad things and this heart, with morality' (天地萬物之存在以及其存在之諧和於德). Hence, it becomes the most pivotal element that would explore the possibility of the unity of morality and happiness" (Mou 2003d: 256). In brief, Mou believes that the infinite heart of wisdom is able to bridge the gap between natural and moral orders, thus establishing a continuity between these two orders (or the two Kantian kingdoms), between the creativity at work in the universe and in the sage's moral life. Consequently, the unity of morality and happiness, as well as manifestation as one body, will all take place. The continuity is apodictic in this sense, and it is synonymous with the above-mentioned inherent practical sequence between the self-manifestation of innate moral knowledge and its vertical extension to the myriad things. In Mou's opinion, such a continuity might echo, and yet go beyond Kant's "special causality," namely, "causality of freedom," because the former refers to both our consciousness of innate moral knowledge and realistic self-cultivation rather than postulates (of free will, the existence of God, etc.) that the latter always requires (Mou 2003b: 258). In sum, the infinite heart of wisdom and its debut (namely, the self-manifestation of innate moral knowledge within humans) are so pivotal that they serve as our departure point for self-cultivation.

Noteworthy for us here is Mou's emphasis that the manifestation of innate moral knowledge in humans is rooted at the subjective level, which can be understood from an objective ontological perspective as moral creativity for humans (Mou 2003d: 138). This means that the apodictic continuity that connects the self-manifestation of innate moral knowledge and its vertical extension to the myriad things is totally applicable to the association between moral creativities for humans and for the universe,

which can be precisely verified in the following quote from *On the Perfect Good*: “the moral creation for humans, along with the pure and unceasing capacity to generate moral deeds, all mirror [the creative power responsible for] the creation of Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things. And the first creation is what is distinguished from the second as the quintessence [of innate moral knowledge]” (其可以創生天地萬物之創生乃即由其於人處所特顯的道德創造、德行之純亦不已而透映出來，而於人處所特顯的道德創造乃即其精英也) (Mou 2003d: 137). More specifically, the pure and unceasing capacity to generate moral deeds refers to “an *élan* such that nothing can stop it” (沛然莫之能禦) inherited from Mencius (Mou 2003a: vol 6, 402), which represents the debut of the infinite heart of wisdom. Similarly, moral creativity for humans has a kind of plentiful creative power to inspire moral creativity for the universe, since the first is both an essence and the beginning of the second. As such, moral creativity for humans is identical to the debut of the infinite heart of wisdom, also playing the same role in the association between moral creativities for humans and for the universe: the first serves as a necessary and sufficient departure point for the second. In conclusion, the core solution to those problems about “moral creativity” can be reduced to the inquiry of how innate moral knowledge can effectively manifest itself within humans and truly develop into the infinite heart of wisdom, this being a common topic in Confucianism that is usually attributed to the theory of self-cultivation.

In that respect, Mou emphasizes the practical inevitability of innate moral knowledge’s manifestation within humans, as well as its visible effects. His emphasis is typically inherited from the celebrated formula of the school of heart/mind, “heart/mind is principle” (心即理). It follows that the original heart/mind not only serves as the fundamental yet abstract principle underlying the moral code, but also provides an inexhaustible

source of motivation for humans to manifest their innate moral knowledge and participate in the joint manifestation as one body. This is the reason that the so-called “original heart/mind or innate moral knowledge is attributed to authentic beings more than an abstract principle” (Mou 2003d: 158). In other words, such innate moral knowledge is intrinsic to humans, which exactly explains why self-manifestation of innate moral knowledge begins with its manifestation in humans. Additionally, Mou posits that this type of manifestation in humans is so concrete and visible that it is crystallized in humans’ bodies and faces more than in their deeds or behavior. Specifically, the circulation of innate moral knowledge throughout a human’s body results in a “warm and sleek appearance” (生色), described by Mencius, rejuvenating and renewing one’s disposition, life, and destiny, which also refers to the phrase “virtue adorns the person, the mind is expanded, and the body is at ease” (德潤身，心寬體胖) from the *Great Learning*. Suffice it to say here that the pursuit of moral deeds and appearance corresponds to what Mencius means by “what is sought is within oneself” (求在我者); in other words, the quest for self-manifestation of innate moral knowledge rests entirely on a conscious agent who is seeking, not on anything outside of oneself. This shows that there is an apodictic correlation within the initial manifestation of innate moral knowledge in humans, apart from the aforementioned continuity belonging to the infinite heart of wisdom—that is, the identity between an agent’s mind and the heart/mind of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. Therefore, Mou asserts that such self-manifestation is what everyone ought to and could do (Mou 2003d: 158). Indeed, everyone might achieve it, as long as one is dedicated to conducting self-cultivation practices of vigilance in solitude.

It should be noted that the practice of vigilance in solitude as the

paradigmatic mode of self-cultivation stems from its dual role in Mou's philosophy. For Mou, vigilance in solitude transcends a practice of self-restraint characterized by introspection and apprehension in which one alone knows what even others do not know. Rather, it signifies the autonomous and self-conscious manifestation of innate moral knowledge. Discussing the latter role, Mou mainly invokes the manifestation of constitutive nature: "How can one manifest one's constitutive nature? In relying on [the practice of] vigilance in solitude. Consequently, a teaching focused on the subject precisely develops self-cultivation practices of vigilance in solitude" (開主體之門就是開慎獨的工夫) (Mou 2003f: 436). Thus, the practice of vigilance in solitude serves as both the primordial locus and the pivotal nexus for all moral creativities, especially for moral creativity for humans.¹⁰

Ultimately, the manifestation of all things and their joint manifestation as one body depend on an agent's self-cultivation, since self-manifestation of innate moral knowledge within humans—as the most decisive and sufficient element that directly influences all things to present them as they ought to be—relies on one's self-cultivation. In other words, the inter-

¹⁰ Compared to the "extension of innate moral knowledge" (致良知), vigilance in solitude represents the most sincere and down-to-earth stage of self-cultivation; at the step of moral creativity for humans, it is functionally equivalent to the practice of extending innate moral knowledge. But in relation to vigilance in solitude, the extension of innate moral knowledge denotes a holistic cultivation process wherein innate moral knowledge first manifests itself and then culminates in the joint manifestation with the myriad things as one body. Mou explains clearly: "Vigilance in solitude is of paramount importance. Even Wang Yangming's doctrine of extending innate moral knowledge was derived from the practice of vigilance in solitude. Discussing 'innate moral knowledge' only in the abstract obscures its subjectivity; hence it is necessary to 'extend it.' Innate moral knowledge is the solitary substance (獨體) itself. Thus it is said: 'Without sound and without smell and known by one alone, this is the foundation for Qian and Kun and the myriad things'" (Mou 2003f: 81). I borrow some translations of Mou's excerpts from Sébastien Billioud and N. Serina Chan. Billioud, *Thinking through Confucian Modernity*, 28; Chan, *The Thought of Mou Zongsan*, 184.

affectation of innate moral knowledge cannot function properly apart from an agent’s self-cultivation practices. Rethinking the relevance of these “manifestations” to “moral creativity” established by Mou Zongsan, it should be acknowledged that moral creativity for humans relies on self-cultivation practices, also serving as the most vital element of moral creativity for the universe. How is moral creativity for the universe possible? It is through the faculty of “infinite-heart-of-wisdom-inspired” inter-affectation, used in conjunction with the self-cultivation practices of agents.

5. Conclusion

The aforementioned discussion has given answers to two main problems: whether “moral creativity” with the meaning of “thing-in-itself” is somewhat paradoxical, and what specific practices are necessary for moral creativity for the universe. At the same time, it has made clear that a negative answer to the first is a prerequisite for answering the second. Moreover, invoking self-cultivation practices of vigilance in solitude to resolve the second, in the end, boils down to returning to orthodox Confucian discourse and experience, which reflects Mou Zongsan’s latent aspiration for the revival of excellent Confucian tradition in the field of morality.

Finally, it is important here to focus on the relevance of “moral creativity” to the unity of morality and happiness, in that the former sets an example for the realization of the latter. Such relevance, on the one hand, contributes to refuting the point that Mou’s perfect good is solely the spiritual unity of morality and happiness (Yang 2018: 111) and, on the other hand, further substantiates the claim that the original heart/mind or

innate moral knowledge resembles but surpasses pure practical reason. Of course, the unity achieved through “moral creativity” is not yet fully the proper correspondence between morality and happiness as commonly understood in everyday language or Kant’s philosophy, in which morality and happiness are independent of each other, and their union is just contingent and conditional. Rather, it signifies an unconditional union where “happiness” is determined and constrained by principles of “morality” that have the pure and unceasing capacity to generate moral deeds. This unity of morality and happiness celebrated by Mou, on the one hand, corresponds to the conception of moral order whose factual dimension is determined by its sense of value and, on the other hand, also resonates with Kant’s assumption of a union of pure speculative and pure practical reason where the latter has primacy, even though this assumption could do nothing other than exist in one’s cognition.

With all that said, I believe that it is easy to gain insight into the concept of “moral creativity,” at least logically; yet in real, everyday life, its realization entails a great deal of hard and longstanding self-cultivation practices on the part of individuals.

參考文獻

中文：

蔡祥元 CAI Xiangyuan, 2021, 〈從內在超越到感通——從牟宗三「內在超越」說起〉 *Cong neizaichaoyue dao gantong—cong mouzongsan neizaichaoyue shuoqi* (From the Immanent Transcendence to Inter-affectation—To Start with Mou Zongsan’s Thought of “Immanent Transcendence”), 《中國哲學史》 *History of Chinese Philosophy*, 5: 120-128。

程志華 CHENG Zhihua, 2009, 《牟宗三哲學研究——道德的形上學之可能》 *Mouzongsan zhexue yanjiu—daodedexingshangxue zhi keneng* (A Study of Mou Zongsan’s Philosophy—The Possibility of Moral Metaphysics), 北京 [Beijing]: 人民出版社 [People’s Publishing House]。

周詠盛 CHOU Yung-Sheng, 2019, 《論當代儒學重構之問題與方法：以牟宗三與勞思光為例》 *On the Question and Method of Contemporary Reconstruction of Confucianism: A Reflection on Mou Zong-San and Lao Sze-Kwang*, 台北 [Taipei]: 花木蘭文化事業有限公司 [Huamulan Culture Press Co., Ltd.]。

鄧曉芒 DENG Xiaomang, 2006, 〈牟宗三對康德之誤讀舉要（之三）——關於「物自身」〉 Listing Main Points of Mou Zongsan’s Misreading to Kant (The third)—Concerning “Self of Matter”, 《學習與探索》 *Study & Exploration*, 6: 1-6。

馮耀明 FUNG Yiu-ming, 2003, 《「超越內在」的迷思：從分析哲學觀點看當代新儒家》 *The Myth of “Transcendent Immanence”: A Perspective of Analytic Philosophy on Contemporary New Confucianism*, 香港 [Hong Kong]: 香港中文大學出版社 [The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press]。

何乏筆 Fabien HEUBEL, 2008, 〈何謂「兼體無累」的工夫——論牟宗三與創造性的問題化〉 *Hewei “jiantiwulei” de gongfu—lun mouzongsan yu chuangzaoxing de wentihua* (What is the Cultivation of “Jian Ti Wu Lei”?—On Mou Zongsan and the problematization of the Creativity), 載於《儒學的氣論與工夫論》 *Ruxue de qilun yu gongfulun*, 楊儒賓、祝平次編 Ed. by Yang Rur-bin & Chu Ping-tzu, 頁 55-71, 上海 [Shanghai]: 華東師範大學出版社 [East China Normal University Press]。

黃冠閔 HUANG Kuan-Min, 2009, 〈牟宗三的感通論：一個概念脈絡的梳理〉 *Mou Zongsan’s Theory of Gantong: A Conceptual Examination*, 《中國文哲研究通訊》 *Newsletter of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy*, 19(3): 65-87。

勞思光 LAO Sze-kwang, 1993, 《新編中國哲學史（一）》 *Xinbian zhongguo zhexueshi I* (A New History of Chinese Philosophy 1), 北京 [Beijing]: 三聯書店 [SDX Joint Publishing Company]。

李明輝 LEE Ming-huei, 2001, 《當代儒學的自我轉化》 *Self-transformation of Contemporary Confucianism*, 北京 [Beijing]: 中國社會科學出版社 [China Social Science Press]。

——, 2021, 《儒家與康德》 *Confucianism and Kant*, 桂林 [Guilin]: 廣西師範大學出版社 [Guangxi Normal University Press]。

牟宗三 MOU Zongsan, 2003a, 《心體與性體》 *Xinti yu xingti* (Mind-

heart as Reality and Human Nature as Reality), 《牟宗三先生全集》第 5-7 冊 *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji*, Vol. 5-7, 臺北 [Taipei]: 聯經出版公司 [Linking Publishing Company]。

——, 2003b, 《智的直覺與中國哲學》*Zhidezhijue yu zhongguozhexue (Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy)*, 《牟宗三先生全集》第 20 冊 *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji*, Vol. 20, 臺北 [Taipei]: 聯經出版公司 [Linking Publishing Company]。

——, 2003c, 《現象與物自身》*Xianxiang yu wuzishen (Appearance and Thing-in-itself)*, 《牟宗三先生全集》第 21 冊 *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji*, Vol. 21, 臺北 [Taipei]: 聯經出版公司 [Linking Publishing Company]。

——, 2003d, 《圓善論》*Yuanshan lun (On the Perfect Good)*, 《牟宗三先生全集》第 22 冊 *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji*, Vol. 22, 臺北 [Taipei]: 聯經出版公司 [Linking Publishing Company]。

——, 2003e, 《中國哲學的特質》*Zhongguozhexue de tezhi (Specificities of Chinese Philosophy)*, 《牟宗三先生全集》第 28 冊 *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji*, Vol. 28, 臺北 [Taipei]: 聯經出版公司 [Linking Publishing Company]。

——, 2003f, 《中國哲學十九講》*Zhongguozhexue shijiu jiang (Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy)*, 《牟宗三先生全集》第 29 冊 *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji*, Vol. 29, 臺北 [Taipei]: 聯經出版公司 [Linking Publishing Company]。

——, 2003g, 《中西哲學之會通十四講》*Zhongxizhexue zhi huitong shisi jiang (Fourteen Lectures on the “Cross-Understanding” Between Western and Chinese Philosophies)*, 《牟宗三先生全集》第 30 冊 *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji*, Vol. 30, 臺北 [Taipei]: 聯經出版

公司 [Linking Publishing Company]。

——，2003h，〈道德的理想主義〉*Daode de lixiang zhuyi (Moral idealism)*，
《牟宗三先生全集》第9冊 *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji*, Vol.
9，臺北 [Taipei]：聯經出版公司 [Linking Publishing Company]。

吳啟超 NG Kai-chiu，2016，〈儒家為何要對存在問題有所交代？再
論牟宗三的「道德的形上學」〉*Why Confucianism Should Address
the Issues of Existence? Further Discussion of Mou Zongsan's Moral
Metaphysics*，《國立政治大學哲學學報》*National Chengchi
University Philosophical Journal*，36：33-67。

唐文明 TANG Wenming，2012，〈隱秘的顛覆：牟宗三、康德與原始
儒家〉*Secret Subversion: Mou Zongsan, Kant, and Originary
Confucianity*，北京 [Beijing]：三聯書店 [SDX Joint Publishing
Company]。

楊澤波 YANG Zebo，2007，〈牟宗三何以認定康德的物自身不是一
個事實的概念？〉*Why Does Mou Zongsan Believe that Kant's Thing
Itself is not A Concept of Fact*，《哲學研究》*Philosophical Research*，
11：31-36。

——，2008，〈康德的物自身不是一個事實的概念嗎？——牟宗三關
於康德物自身概念之詮釋質疑〉*Questioning Mou Zongsan's
Explanation of Kant's Thing-in-itself Concept*，《雲南大學學報（社
會科學版）》*Journal of Yunnan University (Social Sciences Edition)*，
7(3)：22-34。

——，2018，〈走下神壇的牟宗三〉*Zouxia Shentan de Mou Zongsan
(Mou Zongsan Stepping Down from the Altar)*，北京 [Beijing]：中
國人民大學出版社 [The Renmin University Press]。

鄭家棟 ZHENG Jiadong，2001，〈斷裂中的傳統：信念與理性之間〉

Duanlie zhong de chuantong :xinnian yu lixing zhi jian (Tradition in a Time of Rupture: Between Belief and Reason) , 北京 [Beijing] : 中國社會科學出版社 [China Social Science Press] 。

西文：

- Billioud, Sébastien. 2012. *Thinking through Confucian Modernity: A Study of Mou Zongsan’s Moral Metaphysics*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Chan, N. Serina. 2011. *The Thought of Mou Zongsan*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Chan, Wing-cheuk. 2006. Mou Zongsan’s Transformation of Kant’s Philosophy. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 22 (1): 125-139.
- Confucius. 1971. *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and The Doctrine of the Mean*. Trans. by James Legge. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Kant, Immanuel. 2015. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mencius. 1984. *Mencius*. Trans. by Din Cheuk Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- Mou, Zongsan. 2014. *Late Works of Mou Zongsan: Selected Essays on Chinese Philosophy*. Trans. and ed. by Jason Clower. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.

論牟宗三的「道德創造」

喬婷婷

中山大學哲學系

地址：廣東省廣州市海珠區新港西路 135 號

E-mail: qiaott0524@163.com

摘要

「道德創造」是牟宗三哲學中一個比較抽象和玄妙的概念。當其作為德福間必然聯繫的典範，難免遭遇兩大問題的詰難：一是「道德創造」何以在存有層面具有物自身意義；二是「道德創造」之實現需要何種實踐工夫。尤其是問題一，物自身概念的事實意義與價值意義往往被視為一種非此即彼的互斥關係，然而回歸康德的物自身概念，價值意義統馭事實意義的隸屬關係得以呈現出來，此即牟宗三為「道德創造」世界所構建的道德秩序。問題二也由此成為一個真命題：「道德創造」的實現問題，本質上為良知何以駕馭宇宙本源並與天地萬物「一體呈現」的問題。由於「一體呈現」取決於良知的明覺感通之能及其在人身上的自我顯現，則創生萬物的「道德創造」亦依賴於人對自身品性和命運的「道德創造」。這正是牟宗三的「道德創造」區別於康德的「上帝創造」與佛老的創生義的顯著之處，亦對我們思考德福一致的可能性頗有啟發作用。

關鍵詞：道德創造、物自身、智的直覺、本心呈現、牟宗三