

## **RAPID GEOLOGICAL CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY AND ANCIENT CHINA**

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Floods and tsunamis, eruptions, earthquakes, landslides, and other rapid geological changes are essential components of the evolving environment. Yet much current writing on environmental philosophy seems to ignore the dynamics of earth processes, to the disadvantage of a balanced view of the way nature evolves and functions. Indeed, the pervasive attitude today seems to be that virtually all rapid environmental change results from bad human actions, despite the publicity given to natural disasters. No complete concept of nature can bypass the disharmonious and the unstable character of a universe that experiences black holes, supernovae, cometary impacts, mass extinctions, earthquakes, floods, cyclones, plagues and wildfires. Any useful environmental ethic should incorporate the reality of natural change and its harmful effects. Ancient China with its holistic vision of a harmonious world is often considered to hold insights for today's environmental crises. The theme of change is integral to classic Chinese philosophy, in which the vision of nature was one of an overall impersonal cosmic harmony, with no temporal beginning, no contemplated closure. Yet even here, there appears to be a blank spot in acknowledging natural events that harm humans, despite the long and careful Chinese historical record of natural events in a geologically dynamic landscape.

The heart of the matter is the appeal of harmony and equilibrium as portrayed in classic Chinese thought and which is echoed in deep ecology today. It is a view that ignores what the ancients experienced but did not acknowledge in their philosophies - that nature's harmony is frequently disrupted and that rapid change is a fundamental character of the cosmos. It is a belief that does not fit with the massive evidence of the dark side of nature.