

2023-2024 Eastern Michigan University Philosophy Speaker Series

# EMERGENCE, SPONTANEITY, AND VOLITION: A NEW INTERPRETATION OF WUWEI

Sponsored by the Department of History & Philosophy



This talk is based on chapter 5 of my new book manuscript on the collective character of agency, tentatively titled *All Entities Have Consequences*. In this chapter, I approach the phenomenon of reversal (*fan* 反) through the angle of by-product states: optimal states that can only come about as the by-product of actions undertaken for other ends. In the contemporary philosophical literature, spontaneity is one such paradigmatic by-product state, but, according to the *Daodejing*, so are power, strength, beauty, virtue, efficacy, excellence, and, crucially, social order. None of these sought-out states can be achieved through the direct application of individual willpower for, I'll suggest, they *emerge* out of the non-centralized, collective action of complex and extended systems, namely, by relying on what I call *swarm agency*.

Mercedes Valmisa  
Gettysburg College



Wednesday, March 27  
5-6:30 pm, Halle 300