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Between Artificiality and Natural Patterns: The Use of Measures (*fa*) in the *Han Feizi*

One critical feature of Chinese philosophy is correlative thinking. Thinking of the world as sustained and moved by opposing forces is not only a cosmological and cognitive idea but a deeply political one. In this article, I focus on the pattern of correlative thinking in the *Han Feizi* text by reference to the key idea of measures (*fa* 法) in governance. I argue that the use of measures, a key concept in the *Han Feizi*, is sustained by alternations between the correlative forces of artificiality and the natural patterns of the cosmos. What is missing is any tolerance for what FA Hayek and Michael Polanyi call “spontaneous order,” a form of order formed by humans’ collaborative efforts over time but not the result of any deliberate central design. I use the strong pursuit of militarism in the *Han Feizi* as a case of its blindness to spontaneous order. The opposing forces of natural and artificial orders render the *Han Feizi* blind to the possibility and value of spontaneous order for the state edifice, and how it may ultimately accord with the natural patterns it valorizes, which has lasting consequences for Chinese political culture.