

Symbolism of Contrasting Hexagram Pairs

From Zhang Huang's *Symbolism in the Zhouyi* (Ming Dynasty)

Translated and annotated by Denis Mair

Part I

The Upper Canon



1. Qian

Heaven is the source of all beings. ‘Eternal amazement’ speaks of heaven’s mandate; ‘without sound or taste’ speaks of the heavenly medium. To know heaven is inherently difficult. Yet the “Treatise on Judgments” says, ‘Great indeed is the sublimity of Qian, to which all beings owe their beginning, and which governs heaven.’ This means that heaven is not [equivalent to] Qian, since Qian is what governs heaven. If even heaven is hard to know, how much harder it must be to know what governs heaven! The sage drew symbols to show people. ☰ is the symbol of heaven and ☷ is what receives heaven. And so the 64 hexagrams and 384 lines are all implicit in heaven. By knowing heaven we know the *Changes*. Primal yang pervades the natural world; yang’s brightness extends through the ages. The “Xici Treatise” says, ‘Qian knows the great beginning; Qian knows by change.’ The “Wenyan Treatise” at Third Yang says, ‘to know the ultimate beginning, to know the end of all endings.’ This is the Qian without form, which is recognized in meditation, which Fu Xi depicted as ☰. King Wen called it ‘sublime, prevalent, furthering, and constant.’ Duke Zhou said of it in All Nines: ‘There appears a flight of dragons with none at the head.’ Confucius said of it: ‘The action of heaven is full of power; thus the superior man makes himself steadfast and untiring.’ All of these can be grasped without explanation. Thus persons who model themselves after heaven are the worthy sons of heaven. Only if you have ‘self-knowledge through renewal,’ will knowing be uplifted; only if you emulate heaven will heaven’s way be with you. From the immanent to the transcendent you can ‘mount in stages toward heaven as if on six dragons.’ Is this not being a ‘great man of integrated virtues’? Thus the *Changes* were composed by the four sages, all of whom took heaven’s virtue as their own virtue. Even such a man as Fu Xi [painstakingly] surveyed the natural world above and below; King Wen [respected] the way of alliances and would not put himself forward; Duke Zhou’s workdays went far into the night; Confucius was so energized [by his studies] that he forgot to eat. Why was this? The way of Qian is infinite, and one who embodies the way of Qian has strength that will not allow him to give up. This is how to embody Qian well; this is how to use the *Changes* well. Yes indeed! The encompassing transformations of Qian hold to no fixed pattern above or below. Heaven can be seen in firmness, strength, centrality and correctness, and thus it is inherently

without form. The sage drew an image of it, and by viewing its image we grasp its formless meaning. It is basically without words, and the sage appended phrases to it. By turning the phrases over in our minds, we grasp its wordless essence. Even so, one may ask, ‘If one is not intelligent, sagelike and privy to heaven’s virtues, who can understand it?’ Actually, everyone shares this steadfastness of Qian; everyone shares its sublimity, prevalence, furtherance and constancy. One need only reflect and take a good look at oneself. In all our daily activities, how can we make great breakthroughs? It is because something is present that knows the beginning. By what can uprightness be furthered? It is because understanding and adaptability are present. This is what is meant by ‘the common people use it without knowing it.’ Right on the mark! [*Liang zai*] The presence of divinity in a man can be gauged by how he makes himself steadfast!



2. Kun

Kun does not have its own Kun-nature that is other than Qian’s nature. That is, heaven is yang and earth is yin; Qian is strong and Kun is devoted. ☰ and ☷ are the images of Qian and Kun, and ☰☷ is the old graph for Qian-and-Kun. Though the odd or even [ie., single or double] strokes are fixed for each figure, the virtues of simplicity and power support each other without contradiction. Thus the “Treatise on the Judgments” says ‘great indeed’ and ‘perfect indeed’; it says ‘owe their beginning’ and ‘owe their birth.’ All are put in parallel terms. There is no doubt that Kun is Qian’s counterpart. But in the even or odd [strokes of the] Qian and Kun figures, one becomes two, and two are made into one. Does anyone realize this? Why do I say so? Because the even [strokes] come from dividing the odd [ie., single, whole strokes]. Devotion is devotion to the strong. ‘Qian is great beyond limit,’ and Kun too is of ‘utmost greatness.’ Beings ‘owe their beginning’ to Qian, and Kun builds on this beginning to give ‘birth.’ Thus Qian is ‘sublime, prevailing, furthering and constant’; Kun shares sublimity and prevalence, but differs by ‘furthering with the constancy of a mare.’ That is, Kun makes a mate for Qian just as a mare, with yielding devotion, makes a worthy mate for firm strength. Thus King Wen set forth the additional image of a mare here at Kun. Why? If yielding devotion does not follow Qian, then there is no constancy, and clearly this does not further the yielding one. All the more when we consider the words of the “Treatise on Judgments,” the line statements, and the “Wenyan Treatise”: ‘It received the heavenly with devotion.’ ‘Its nature is in harmony with the boundless.’ ‘Holding patterns within, it can practice constancy.’ ‘If by chance it is in service to a king...’ ‘All Sixes have perpetual constancy which will come to a great end.’ ‘Later she finds guidance, having what endures.’ ‘Serving heaven and acting with the time.’ ‘The way of earth claims no accomplishment, but the work is completed in her stead.’ Everywhere in the words of this hexagram, putting it all together, it can be summed up by the phrase ‘Kun is devoted to Qian.’ Only if we realize this can we discuss Qian and Kun. Only thus can there be a basis in principle for the ‘perpetual constancy’ of All Sixes, the ‘straightness within’ of Second Yin, and the ‘rise to prominence’ of Fifth Yin. With this in mind, we can intuit the parallel, complimentary

meanings in the “Xici Treatise” passages: ‘Qian knows the great beginning; Kun brings things to completion.’ ‘Qian knows by creative change; Kun gets power from simplicity.’ ‘Knowledge is exalted to emulate heaven; ritual is humbled to pattern itself after earth.’ Otherwise if Kun is not devoted to Qian then ‘at first it loses its way.’ That is, it proceeds without knowing. This has been described as leading one’s life without having one’s actions out in the open, without examining one’s habits, without knowing what path one follows. All of this is not knowing Kun’s constancy. Therefore can one afford not to beware of ‘treading on ice,’ ‘lack of caution,’ ‘dragons doing battle,’ or ‘coming to the end of one’s road’? Thus one who studies the *Changes* turns around to look at himself. If one truly understands and emulates the creativity and simplicity of Qian and Kun, then in the fullness of All Sixes and All Nines one shares in the workings of heaven above and earth below. By no means should you suppose that pure Kun can be [a fit subject of] learning for the worthy person.

Qian and Kun being established, they are followed by Difficulty and Unknowing. This is the atmosphere of a primordial world in which heaven and earth have just opened up; it is when a young person first leaves mother’s arms and swaddling clothes; it is the early hours of morning leading up to dawn. One who understands Waiting finds contentment in food, drink, and conviviality. But one who goes counter to Waiting will bring about Conflict and Armies.



3. Difficulty



4. Unknowing

[Youthful Folly]

Chaos first breaks open, and heaven and earth have their positions. Humans and other beings are conceived together in a difficult, unknowing time. This is the time of Difficulty and Unknowing, because the ten thousand forms emerge amid scenes of blockage and ignorance. In the hexagrams for Difficulty and Unknowing, which are counterparts of each other, the three yang trigrams of Zhen, Kan, and Gen come into play. Thus, viewed as clouds over thunder, they make an image of the heavens. Viewed as a wellspring beneath a mountain, they make an earthly image of unknowing. Divided, the hexagrams distinguish difficulty and unknowing, but being taken from one figure, they have the same numbers of odd and even lines. The two hexagrams differ in vertical orientation. As for types based on images of difficulty and unknowing, whether we turn our gaze upwards or downwards, where do we fail to see such images? And where does heaven fail to show its utmost teaching? Seeing this the sage put ‘set up fiefdoms’ under the image of Difficulty, to establish the ruler’s way. He put ‘nourishing what is right’ under the image of Unknowing, to advance the teacher’s way. Thus the ruler has success. In Difficulty the social fabric is woven to establish governance. Both hexagrams are to set right what is wrong. Thus we take a cue from the movement of First Yang. Line One says that that ‘it furthers one to remain constant’ since ‘the aim is carrying out what is right.’ That is to say, even if we could gain the world by killing one innocent person or doing one unrighteous thing, we would not do it. If movement within

danger be like this, what difficulty will remain unremedied? A teacher edifies the ignorant; he resolutely fosters [virtue] to establish his teachings, in all cases using centrality to nurture what is unbalanced. Here we draw on the centrality of Second Yang. Line Two says ‘to bear with fools brings good fortune; to take a wife brings good fortune.’ That is to say, let people come and go as they will. If one takes this attitude and accepts what comes, if one’s intention ‘successfully finds the center in a timely way,’ then what folly will remain unedified? Basically, all 64 hexagrams have ruling lines, and firmness is crucial for the way of both teacher and ruler. Thus the ruling line of Difficulty is One, and the ruling line of Unknowing is Two. So a person of quality who lowers himself will win the people’s hearts; one who responds to firmness at the center learns to be sagely. Clearly, the words of King Wen, Duke Zhou, and Confucius all illuminate the truth about Fu Xi’s figures. Thus by looking up at thunderclouds we learn about the measures taken by King Tang and King Wu, and then turmoil can be put in order. Looking down at mountain springs, we learn something of how Confucius and Mencius cultivated themselves, and then ignorance can be enlightened. What is more, since Zhen is the oldest son, he is suited to ‘setting up fiefdoms’; Kan is the middle son, so he is suited to ‘take charge of a household’; Gen is the smallest son, so ‘childlike folly brings good fortune’. The first 30 lines, proceeding from Qian and Kun, have ruler and teacher in the right positions to make the way of ruling and teaching apparent.(1) Thus comes success in Difficulty and insight for the Unknowing, for future generations to draw upon.

Line statements differ in the two hexagrams. For instance, Line Two of Difficulty: ‘The maiden is chaste, she does not pledge herself.’ Line Two of Unknowing: ‘The son is capable of taking charge of a household.’ Here the difference is between male and female. Line Four of Difficulty: ‘Strive for union, to go forth brings good fortune.’ Line Three of Unknowing: ‘Take not the maiden.’ Here the difference is of furthering and not furthering. Insights can be found in these connections, of which there are too many instances to list exhaustively. The point is to get the main idea.



5. Waiting



6. Conflict

Difficulty and Unknowing are followed by Waiting and Conflict, the pair in which Qian first meets with Kan. Difficulty and Unknowing are both composed of four yin and two yang lines. Waiting and Conflict are composed of two yin and four yang lines. Also, in Difficulty there is danger above, so there is reason for Waiting. In Unknowing there is danger within, so disagreements frequently cause Conflict. This is human nature. In Waiting, the clouds are high in the sky. In Conflict, rivers flow in one direction and the heavens move in another. Conflict is thus the counterpart of Waiting. The difference lies in which trigram is placed above which. Thus the “Treatise on Judgments” says that in Waiting, ‘firmness and strength are not entrapped’; although there is danger it is not sufficient to entrap people. When danger precedes firmness this is Conflict; though one may have Qian’s firmness, it is only sufficient to bring harm on oneself. Here the difference lies in whether danger or firmness come into play, and in the quality of danger involved. Furthermore, we can savor the words in light of the image. Both hexagrams have the solid center of Kan as their ruling lines. In Waiting, with Kan at the top, there is ‘sincerity’ and ‘light.’ In Conflict, with Kan below, there is ‘obstruction’ and [need for] ‘caution.’ In Waiting, with Qian below Kan, ‘it furthers one to cross the great water.’ In Conflict, with Qian above Kan, ‘it does not further to cross.’ Clearly, if they place reliance on each other, even northern and southern barbarians can cross in the same boat, and ‘the work is accomplished.’ If there is a standoff, then even kinfolk turn into enemies who push each other into murky waters. Thus it is said, ‘Waiting means to hold back; Conflict means to go on attack’ But who says that the two hexagrams are contradictory, or that they cannot function in tandem? When there is Waiting, there is trouble to be dealt with. When there is Conflict, there is something to discuss. Those who deal well with Waiting allow each other space and let go of arguments. Those who face their inner Conflicts can get along without making trouble. So Line Two of Waiting says ‘there is some slight rebuke,’ and Line One of Waiting says ‘one does not perpetuate the affair.’ The two lines shed light on each other. The superior man learns from these images: in daily life he bides his time in ordinary ways, ‘taking nourishment and being of good cheer.’ In all his transactions, he ‘considers the beginning.’ He gives honor where due and suffers no loss; he returns and submits to fate, thus finding peace in constancy. Waiting furthers and brings him good fortune, whereas Conflict would not further, and would bring misfortune in the end. Moreover, the top line of Waiting has ‘three guests coming’: if one honors them, ‘in the end there will be good fortune’. In the top line of Conflict, one ‘receives an insignia three times’ [from a fickle superior], but this is not [worth calling] honor. It is best to wait well and avoid conflict. One must honor others and have caution. Failure to wait brings conflict, and prolonged conflict sets armies marching. The sage cannot dispense with weapons and punishments if he is to govern the world. But when there is a worthy ruler above, ruler and subjects will have Closeness. Then instruments of punishment will be dulled and weapons will be cleared away. Only then can civil virtues come into being.



7. Army



8. Closeness

Waiting and Conflict are followed by Army and Closeness [*Holding Together*]. Qian and Kan interchangeably occupying the top and bottom positions result in Waiting and Conflict. Kun and Kan interchangeably occupying the top and bottom positions will result in Army and Closeness. Also, after there is Conflict, the Army is set marching, and while there is Waiting, the ruler is close [with his people]. This is an inevitable principle [of the hexagrams]. When there is water within the earth, this is Army, in which is found an image of the well-field system.(2) When staying in place, this is [composed of] linked households, wards, lodges, and sodalities; when going forth it becomes platoons, squads, companies, and troops. Thus the ‘people are cherished and the multitude is fostered,’ which makes for a legitimate militia. When water is on the earth this is Closeness, in which is found an image of feudal domains. These are demarcated by mountains, streams, and farmsteads; they are connected by tours of inspection and reports made at court. Thus ‘states were set up as fiefs and close ties were kept with feudal lords,’ to maintain relations between ruler and subject. Looking at the structure of the hexagrams, both are ruled by a firm, central line. When it is above it is leader over all yin lines---an image of the ruler. Army has the single yang below as commander over all yin lines---an image of an army. Clearly these are a single yang line: above it is ruler and below it is commander. When above, ‘closeness is manifest, and the king drives prey on three sides’; when below it is ‘in the midst of the army, and the king bestows a mandate three times.’ Putting these together and pondering them, one grasps the meaning built into the image and expressed in the words. Ah my! With the enlightened ruler at the fifth place of Closeness to cement relations below and above, provided he ‘prayerfully seeks answers with sublime lasting constancy,’ then he will be fortunate in holding together, both inwardly and outwardly. With the strong man at the second place of Army who can merge the military and agrarian systems, though he may impose a harsh cure on the land the people will follow him, and they will naturally be spared the misfortunes of ‘idle garrisons’ [lit. ‘being stationed off to the side’] and ‘wagonloads of corpses’. The long-lasting rule of the Three Eras was owing to this way. Moreover, the fifth line of Army says, ‘there is game in the field’; the fifth line of Closeness says ‘he foregoes the game [that runs off] in front.’ The justice of using the Army and the humaneness of showing Closeness work in parallel without contradiction. As for the first line of Army, it is the top line of closeness. The beginning of Army says, ‘if order is not good, misfortune threatens.’ The top [of Closeness] says, ‘no head for holding together: misfortune.’ Both [places] share the same yin line. This makes a rigorous statement of caution at the beginning and foresight toward the end.

After The Creative and The Receptive, six hexagrams are combinations with water. Clearly the space between heaven and earth is filled mostly with dangerous Kan. Thus, even with the virtues of Qian or Kun taking a place above or below Kan, one must take care to be aligned with the Way. Ah my! With change one knows danger, and with simplicity one is capable(3) of [handling] danger! Principles of change and simplicity are realized, and they take positions therein. Once again the knowing of Qian presides.

In the series of hexagrams up to this point, as one views the images and ponders words to get their meanings, it is clear the sage is describing the world's inevitable transformations and showing them to people. Yet people do not [always] discern this.



9. Lesser Taming
[Domestication]



10. Treading
[Conduct]

Army and Closeness are followed by Lesser Taming and Treading, in which Xun and Dui first join with Qian; the older and younger daughters first come into play. In Army and Closeness, five yins are led by one yang; in Lesser Taming and Treading, a single yin responds to five yangs. When the one yin is above, the wind moves over the heavens [which is *Lesser Taming*]; when the one yin is below, then heaven is above the marsh, which is Treading. In this we can view [ritual] propriety [of the hexagram pair]. 'To refine civil virtue' means that within yang firmness(4), something that operates is present. For all its reserved manner, its beauty cannot be covered up--this is yin containment of beauty. 'Discriminating high and low to steady the will of the people' means that within yang firmness something with a sense of proportion is lodged. In its orderliness the gradations cannot be conveyed [in so many words]: this is [ritual] propriety disciplined by yin. Clearly this is the same yin. Lesser Taming says, 'the yielding takes its proper place, and those above and below respond to it'; Treading says, 'the yielding treads on the firm, joyfully responding to Qian.' Thus Lesser Taming has a yin line controlling yang, and the tamed one is Line Three; Treading has yin treading behind yang, and the one being tread after is Four. Moreover, with Xun taming Qian and Dui treading after Qian, both have 'prevalence,' which means the firm and yielding assist each other. Thus with the firm responding to the yielding, then civil virtues are highlighted; with the yielding treading on the firm, then [ritual] propriety is rigorously applied. These are not separate meanings. In sum, there is yin within yang, and the yielding is within the firm. It is only due to [yin being at] the third or fourth place that the names differ. Actually, civil virtues and [ritual] propriety come from the same source; breadth of civil virtue and simplicity of ritual is not a forced juxtaposition. As for First Yang reading 'return to the way' when yin is at the fourth place, and Top Yang reading 'look to your conduct(5) and weigh the signs' when yin is at the third place, this is a difference in whether the positions are correct. However, Lesser Taming says 'dense clouds no rain' for the whole hexagram, and the Top Yang line says, 'rain comes, and there is rest.' Treading says 'treading at the tiger's tail, it does not bite the man, success' for the whole hexagram, but Third Yin says 'treading at the tiger's tail, the tiger bites the man, misfortune.' How can we exhaust the symbolism of firm and yielding traits in lines and hexagrams!



11. Peace



12. Stagnation

Lesser Domestication and Treading are followed by Peace and Stagnation. Here Qian and Kun meet with each other. Notice that in #7-#8 and #9-#10 we have seen single yin and single yang lines next to each other [in adjacent figures]. What is more, up to this point we have seen 30 yang lines and 30 yin lines. At this point [three yang and three yin lines are juxtaposed for the first time, and] Peace and Stagnation are distinguished. The symmetry has been preserved. Thus when the small depart and the great approach, then earth and heaven unite in Peace. When the great depart and the small approach, then heaven and earth cannot unite and there is Stagnation. The distinction lies in whether or not there is an interchange. Actually, it is based on the ebb and flow of the superior man compared to lowly men. But from Qian and Kun it takes ten changes to arrive at Peace. What an arduous process! Going from Peace to Stagnation takes only one change. How easily Stagnation comes! Thus in Peace, though the superior man's way is ascendant, Third Yang warns of the need for 'constancy in face of hardship.' Though the lowly man's way is ascendant in Stagnation, Second Yin tells us that 'lowly men bear and endure' and 'the great man facing stagnation will prevail.' Though the advance of three yin and three yang lines is according to kind, in both cases, 'when ribbon grass is pulled up, the sod comes with it.' In Peace this line says 'undertakings bring good fortune'; in Stagnation it says 'constancy brings success.' Such are the subtle meanings the sage put into a single word. Stagnation is the counterpart of Peace, so Line Four says 'those of like mind partake of blessings' and at the same time Line Three says 'no plain not followed by a slope.' Here we see the sage's deep wish to preserve Peace and reverse Stagnation. If the latter can be reversed, then 'first standstill and later good fortune.' If the former is not preserved, then 'the city wall falls back into the moat.' Such is the critical point on which order and chaos turn. Thus Peace emphasizes the capacity to 'bear with the uncouth in gentleness,' while the "Treatise on the Image" speaks of 'fitting the measure' [of heaven and earth's course] and 'helping to promote' [the gifts of heaven and earth]. In Stagnation there is the steadiness of a 'tying it to a cluster of mulberries,' (6) while the "Treatise on the Image" speaks of 'falling back on inner worth to escape difficulties.' Why is this? Peace and Stagnation come from the rhythm of creation, yet the judgment of Stagnation says 'the wrong people do not further the constancy of a superior man.' Thus, the causes of Stagnation are attributed solely to the human way. Obviously it is the lowly man who makes difficulties the superior man escapes from. And it is the ruler who employs the lowly man in ways that cause Stagnation. If the ruler can influence these people so as to protect Peace, then Stagnation will give way for good, and what difficulties will there be for the superior man to escape from? However, lack of interaction between yin and yang is Stagnation of destiny; lack of interaction between low and high ranks is social Stagnation. Humans have heaven and earth in their original mind, and its elusive latent qualities are the source of Peace and Stagnation. By letting material desires go and preserving [heavenly] principle, we can turn Stagnation to Peace. When it comes to making [proper] positions for heaven and earth and to fostering the ten thousand beings, who can be absolved of responsibility?



13. Fellowship



14. Great Possession

Peace and Stagnation are followed by Fellowship and Great Possession. In Peace and Stagnation, yin and yang are combined in equal numbers, but in both Fellowship and Great Possession, a single yin possesses five yang lines. To overcome Stagnation, only Fellowship and Great Possession will do so. Also, prior to Peace, the Kan trigram has appeared in six hexagrams. After Stagnation, the Li trigram is first met with here. The yin within Li is a radiant emptiness. When its single yin line dwells in the second place, and the five yangs above and below desire to be its companions, this hexagram is called Fellowship. When the single yin line dwells at the fifth place, it has possession of the five yangs above and below, which gives us Great Possession. Both hexagrams take the yin within Li as their presiding line. The difference in images lies in the second and fifth lines. However, the brightness of Li at Two is found in tough, humble circumstances: it is on the way to brightness. Thus clans need to be grouped and distinctions made before one can have the success of 'being in the open'. Brightness of Li at the fifth place has attained a high place: its Way is being actualized. The first needs to be uplifted and the other needs to look downward before they can follow in resonance with the time. Thus Fellowship says, 'The yielding finds the middle place, and the Creative corresponds with it.' Great Possession says, 'The yielding receives the honored place in the great middle, and upper and lower correspond with it.' Differences can also be seen in the "Treatise on Images." Thus the "Miscellaneous Treatise" says, 'Great Possession is a multitude; Fellowship means familiar ties.' These images are based on position in a hexagram. If we extend this to trigram interactions, we have the strength of Qian and the brightness of Li. With strength there is untiring steadfastness. With brightness there is numinous clarity. Once strength and brightness are united, then we have cultured brightness in conditions of strength. Is this not 'inner illumination with reverence'? With firm strength under cultured brightness, does this not become 'inner reverence with illumination'? Otherwise, one who merely relies on a central yin for 'clan fellowship' will get attached to 'factional' patterns. Without keeping an 'auspicious dignity', one can hardly avoid being 'careless and unprepared'. By viewing the image and turning the words over in our minds, we get the idea.



15. Modesty



16. Enthusiasm

Fellowship and Great Possession are followed by Modesty and Enthusiasm. Fellowship-Possession was composed of a single yin [with five yangs], and Modesty-Enthusiasm is composed of a single yang [with five yins]. When one has fellowship with others and possesses great things, it is natural to be humble and pleasant. Thus when one yang stays quietly beneath Kun-yin, this is modesty. When one yang moves forth over Kun-yin, this is enthusiasm. Clearly the yang is one and the same, but the difference lies in movement and rest. The *Book of Rites* says, “Yin composes music, and yang performs it.” Viewing the lines, it is not just ‘diligent modesty’ [of the gentleman] that ‘wins people’s hearts,’ for none between heaven and earth, whether men or spirits, find it anything but fitting.(7) It is not just the ‘source of enthusiasm that achieves great things,’ for it is suitable for sages anywhere between heaven and earth. Both movement and quiet have goodness. Why is this? One yang dwells within receptive Kun, and in stillness its ritual bearing is humble. Ritual bearing is a matter of emptying, so this is Modesty. In movement its music is harmonious. Music is a matter of fullness, so this is Enthusiasm. Otherwise we have the Top Yin’s ‘modesty expressing itself’ with its ‘purpose not yet attained’; we have First Yin’s ‘enthusiasm expressing itself’ that ‘unfortunately has its purpose obstructed.’ As for the “Treatise on the Image,” it seems to be different [for the two hexagrams], but getting to the heart of it, ritual is an emptying, so there is ‘reduction’; music is fullness, so there is ‘honoring.’ Since excess is reduced and lack is augmented, since ‘things are weighed and given evenly,’ then all beings attain their own principle. Thus ‘music is made to honor merit, and offered in splendor to the Deity, with ancestors invited to be present.’ Thus men and spirits assist in the harmony. This is what Zhou Dunyi meant by saying ‘all beings attain their principles to make harmony.’ Also, reduction, augmenting, and even-handed giving belong to good governance. Offering to the Deity and inviting ancestors belong to fulfilled virtue. Thus there is a saying: “Seeing their ritual we know their governance; hearing their music we know their virtue.” In sum, ritual propriety comes first, and then comes music. Modesty and Enthusiasm are inseparable in their need for each other. Only when modesty has enthusiasm can it naturally be in line with propriety without turning self-righteous. Only enthusiasm based on modesty finds self-contentment without turning indulgent. All this is present in the actual structure of the hexagram images: it is not a parable.



17. Following



18. Spoilage

Modesty and Enthusiasm are followed by Following and Spoilage. In Modesty and Enthusiasm we saw Gen and Zhen combining with Kun. Now Following has Zhen below Dui, and Spoilage has Gen over Xun. Only with Modesty and Enthusiasm can there be good Following [of worthy guidance], and Spoilage misses out on this goodness. Why is this? Steady enthusiasm means that one moves in joy; excessive modesty brings gentleness to a standstill. The validity of this causal relation can be seen in the hexagram structure: with the oldest son and the youngest daughter there is movement in [conditions of] joy, which make Following. The virtue of Following is stated as ‘great success and perseverance’ to advance in a time of Following, wherein lies its goodness. With the oldest daughter and the youngest son there is gentleness under [conditions of] keeping still, which makes Spoilage. The virtue of Spoilage is stated as ‘a new beginning comes after the end,’ to seek a path that remedies Spoilage, and goodness comes of this. Thus the “Treatise on the Judgment” of Following emphasizes following the time, and the “Treatise on the Image” says ‘with approach of nightfall [the superior man] goes indoors to rest and recuperate.’ This is also a matter of following the time. In Spoilage the “Treatise on the Judgment” emphasizes remedying spoilage, and the “Treatise on the Image” speaks of ‘stirring the people and strengthening their spirit,’ which is also a remedy for spoilage. Those who move with the times should hew to correctness and centrality to ‘have trust in the finest things.’ Those who take matters in hand need to ‘be open to what virtue is there’ so they can ‘meet with praise.’ Again the best lines attain the center. Even so, it can be difficult at the center. ‘One who follows catches prey. Perseverance brings misfortune.’ ‘Setting right what has been spoiled by the mother, one must not be too persevering.’ So persevering is especially difficult. Thus the *Changes* are a path of transformation, and one must not become mired in a single explanation. At a time of movement-in-joy it is fitting to follow, for this means to follow a prompting. Though thunder may sound in the quiet abyss, the [underlying] stillness is never gone, thus as nightfall approaches it is time to rest and recuperate. This is when rest is taken [by immersing movement] in stillness.(8) The [tough] situation of gentleness-at-a-standstill makes Spoilage, for things here get spoiled in stillness. In Spoilage the wind of transforming influence never [really] stops moving, so the situation calls for ‘stirring the people and fostering their spirit.’(9) This stirring is done by wind’s motion. What is more, looking at them in tandem, isn’t Line One of Following none other than Top Yang of Spoilage? At Line One it is ‘one’s self-control is able to change course; to go out the door in company brings good deeds.’ At Top Yang it is ‘he does not serve kings and princes, but deals with higher goals.’ To put it briefly, the statements are right [for their places]. Indeed we can say that the Way is not separate from the time and situation. At all times we must deal with the situation at hand: this is the hallmark of goodness.



19. Approach



20. Viewing

After Following and Spoilage come Approach and Viewing. In Following and Spoilage, Dui and Xun combine with Zhen and Gen. In Approach and Viewing, Approach is Dui under Kun, and Viewing is Xun over Kun. In Following and Spoilage, nothing is more important than the time and situation. When following the time and setting right the situation, what could be more important than governance and teaching? Thus two lines at the bottom make Approach, which relates to common people by virtue rather than by position. Hence as long as the superior man has a mandate, he can carry out his ‘will to teach and his tolerant protection’. With two yangs at the top this makes Viewing. Hence the superior man ‘visits the regions, contemplates the people, and provides [means of] instruction.’ Without taking the ‘grand view from above,’ as the former kings did, how could anyone carry this out? While both share these two yangs, Approach and Viewing are distinguished by having them above or below. The “Treatise on the Judgment” for Approach says, ‘The firm permeates and grows.’ The growth is from below upward, like a marsh beneath [an] earth [embankment]. It occupies a settled, unchanging place. Is this not an image of those below keeping to their post? The “Treatise on the Judgment” for Viewing says, ‘A great view is above.’ Like a wind blowing across the earth, its movement is pervasive and unbounded. Is this not an image of those above making a tour of inspection? Why is this? The earth contains the marsh, and its richness is spread all about; the wind moves over the earth, and the mores are transformed. Both are a matter of position. As for the line statements, there are points on which we should not be overly literal. For instance, Approach has ‘wise approach,’ which is to go forth and approach people; Viewing has ‘contemplation of my life,’ which is to go within and contemplate the self. In Approach the firm lines are below and the yielding Line Three rides on them, making the problematic ‘ingratiating[/sweet] approach.’ In Viewing the firm lines are above, with the yielding Line Four carrying them, which gives the furtherance of ‘contemplating the breadth [of the kingdom].’ Thus by integrating these perspectives, goodness can be found equally in self, other, above, and below. Otherwise in Approach ‘the eighth month brings misfortune,’ but Viewing shows the ‘divine way of heaven by which the seasons do not deviate from their order.’ Clearly the ebb and flow originates in heaven, but fortune and misfortune are tied to people’s own doings. Examining the text, ‘the eighth month brings misfortune’ means [the interval from] Approach to Retreat. Thus we can say that Approach is set at *chou* (10) in the Twelfth Month; Viewing is set at *you* in the Eighth Month. The two yangs in Approach are below, and firm yang grows toward [the misfortune of] the eighth month; the two yangs of Viewing are above, and yang is about to ebb. The ebb-and-flow workings of yin-yang work like a cycle. Looking at the images and pondering the statements, why need we look for [evidence of this] elsewhere? That being so, King Wen elaborated the *Changes* at the end of the Yin Dynasty. In [the figure that represents] Approach and Viewing we see the words ‘in the eighth month,’ so this is [in keeping with] the three orthodox dynasties not changing the months.(11) What doubt could there be?



21. Biting Through



22. Grace

Approach and Viewing are followed by Biting Through and Grace. In Approach and Viewing, two yangs and four yins are above or below each other. In Biting Through and Grace, the Li trigram joins with Zhen or Gen. Though they both have three yins and three yangs, they are actually bisected by single yang lines in the middle. In terms of shared meanings, moral teachings precede [in *Approach* and *Viewing*] and punishments follow. Punishments are clarified to take up where teaching leaves off. Biting Through and Grace are both ruled by Li. With bright Li above and Zhen to move it, brightness and authority work jointly and ‘set forth laws through clearly defined penalties.’ That which sets standards for severity and establishes procedures can only be effective [from] above. With bright Li below and Gen stopping it, brightness does not reach to a distance, so one ‘clears up civil affairs’ but ‘dares not to decide capital cases.’ This is the rightful lot of those in subordinate positions. Though brightness is clearly the same, there is a difference of moving and stopping. The judgment of Biting Through says ‘success, it is favorable to administer justice,’ and Grace says ‘success, in small matters it is favorable to undertake something.’ There is also a distinction here. Why? Considering the hexagram figures, in Biting Through the original Kun trigram gave up her first yielding line to occupy the fifth place, and the Qian trigram gave up his middle firm line to occupy the first place. Thus the “Treatise on Judgments” says ‘the firm and yielding divide from each other.’ In the lower half of Grace, one yin came from above to adorn the original Qian trigram and make it Li; as for the upper half, which was originally Kun, one yang detached upward to adorn the yielding and make Gen. Thus the “Treatise on Judgments” says, ‘The yielding comes and gives form to the firm...the firm detaches upward to adorn the yielding.’ Clearly the sage, when attaching phrases, always built on the firm and yielding to make his elucidations, and whatever he considers furthering has its basis. As for Fourth Yang and Third Yang in the two hexagrams, although a single yang is among the yin for both, in the upper trigram of Biting Through ‘it furthers to be mindful of difficulties and persevere—good fortune.’ In the lower trigram of Grace we see that ‘constant perseverance brings good fortune.’ Why is this? The third is a firm place, so it naturally fits to be lastingly correct; the fourth is a yielding place, so there is no good fortune without [enduring] hardship. Besides, when administering justice it is good to be yielding, [so] Fifth Yin says ‘perseveringly aware of danger, but no blame.’ For civil brilliance it is good to be at rest, so Top Yang says ‘plain grace, no blame.’ Thus one naturally conceives the idea of aversion to using harsh punishments and elaborate patterns.



23. Splitting



24. Renewal

Biting Through and Grace are followed by Splitting and Renewal. Biting Through and Grace have Gen stopping above Li or Zhen moving beneath Li. When Gen stops above Kun and Zhen moves below Kun, then we have Splitting and Renewal. As for the one yin in Li, does it not fit with the workings of Kun? [Here] there is one yang line [in both], which is the life-giving heart of heaven and earth. The First Yang of 'return from a distance' is none other than Top Yang of 'a large fruit still uneaten.' Only because this yang is above or below does it distinguish Splitting and Renewal. And owing to the ebb-and-flow principle of yin and yang, the "Treatise on Judgments" of both Splitting and Renewal speak of 'the course of heaven.' But in Splitting it says, 'devotion to the point of keeping still'; in Renewal it says 'movement and action through devotion.' In the ebb and flow of yin-yang, in no case will the superior man move an inch without devotion. Thus the 'generosity toward those below' in Splitting is intended to make Top Yang secure. 'Closing the passes' in Renewal is intended to foster the yang below. Both are the way of devotion. But in Splitting it does not further to proceed, because the lowly are growing; in Renewal it is fitting to have somewhere to go, for the firm is growing. This should be distinguished. Thus in Three one 'splits from it without blame'; in Five 'everything acts to further'; in Four one 'returns alone' and 'follows the Dao.' In the two structures, given that the humaneness of Renewal below lies in nearness and resonance of yang, it goes without saying that cultivation of self 'has sublime good fortune.' Otherwise, [it is a matter of] Splitting [, which] is the way of the lowly man. When Splitting proceeds without stopping, it ends up splitting its own house. Renewal is basically the superior man's way. But if one does 'repeated returns' without end, how can one avoid the misfortune of 'misled return'? Those who study the *Changes* look within themselves. Looking at the image of Splitting, we see that though a person's true heart is splitting away, it is not yet utterly obliterated. Looking at the image of Renewal, we see that though the true heart is sprouting back to life, the yin mass is not yet easy to dispel. The fact is that if yin *qi* does not exhaust its limits, yang *qi* will not sprout up. Without Splitting there can be no Renewal; there is not even a hair's breadth of a gap in such a mechanism. That being so, if only a particle of yin *qi* remains undissolved, there cannot be a pure yang body. What room is there to let up in one's steadfast, untiring discipline?



25. Innocence



26. Great Taming

Splitting and Renewal are followed by Innocence and Great Taming. In Splitting and Renewal, Gen and Zhen combine with Kun. In Innocence and Great Taming, Gen and Zhen combine with Qian. Furthermore, by going from Splitting to Renewal, one's [impulsive] Innocence is turned to Great Taming. That being so, when Zhen moves beneath heaven, such movement is heaven's passion. 'The firm is in the center and finds resonance, great success through correctness.' This proceeds along the heavenly way. When Gen rests over heaven, something heavenly is tamed. 'Firm strength and well-grounded substance, in radiance he daily renews his virtue.' This is preserving heaven's virtue. The "Treatise on Judgments" in one says 'the command of heaven' and in the other says 'resonating with heaven.' It is one heaven, but Gen and Zhen make for variation. Only because it follows heaven's course can every moment and every being be abundantly fostered. Though it reaches outward from the center, it is actually a means to knit heaven and earth together. This is what the judgment means by saying 'sublime prevalence; constancy furthers.' Because it preserves heaven's virtue, there are no [past] sayings and deeds it is not acquainted with. Though the center is kept by the outside, one can move freely among [the lessons of] ancient and modern times, and 'not eating at home brings good fortune.' If not for such a person, who can bring about great taming? Clearly Great Taming is the way by which one tames his innocent virtue, and living things share in one's innocence. Would this be possible for one whose taming lacked greatness? What is more, First Yang of Innocence is none other than Top Yang of Great Taming. Thus at First 'to set out in innocence brings good fortune.' At the Top, 'how open is the thoroughfare of heaven! Prevalence!' Because in both cases it accords with heaven, in movement and rest it always has good fortune and prevalence. Otherwise, why do Innocence and Great Taming still work toward constancy that furthers? They must be able to 'hold strength back' and act with 'great correctness,' for 'if someone is not as he should be, he is undermined.' This would simply let the 'calamity' and 'illness' of innocent impulse take their course. Can one show the slightest negligence in 'binding the young bull's horns' or 'extracting the boar's tusk'?(12)



27. Nourishment

Innocence and Great Taming are followed by Nourishment. It is not just that Zhen's movement and Gen's stillness first join [/clamp!] together here in the context of heaven and earth. What we have is [Gen and Zhen] finally joining in one place after alternating through six hexagrams---Biting, Grace, Splitting, Renewal, Innocence, and Great Taming. But in terms of potencies of the six offspring-trigrams, is not Zhen the first yang [trigram] to issue [from Qian and Kun], and is not Gen the last? Since Gen and Zhen are joined in Nourishment, there is little to admire in a yang [line] that dwells on words like 'yours' and 'mine,' speaking with First Yang of 'letting go of yours' and 'looking at mine.' Thus the 'source of nourishment' is relegated to yang at the Top. This means it is fitting to keep still, not to move. But four yins are contained between the upper and lower yangs. With one yang moving and one keeping still, there is a way to strike the right balance of yin and yang, movement and stillness. So 'heaven and earth provide nourishment thereby for all beings,' and 'the sage thereby provides nourishment for men of worth and reaches the whole people.' This is what allows a person to nourish herself and others, to nourish virtues and living things---it is the way for all these. How true that 'the time of Nourishment is great.' Thus it says, 'If one provides nourishment for what is right, good fortune comes.' 'Pay heed to nourishment, that is, pay heed to what a man provides nourishment for.' 'He seeks something to fill his mouth, that is, pay heed to what he nourishes himself with.' Thus from what he nourishes we can [extend this and] pay heed to his self-nourishing, and 'if it is right, good fortune comes.' That which nourishes us well is [from] one [source]. The 'munching mouth' and 'nourishment on a hilltop' both can get out of balance. 'Turning away from nourishment' and 'going to the summit for nourishment' point to misfortune and good fortune respectively. Nourishing the larger body is nourishment for a great man; nourishing the lesser body means danger for the lowly man. It will not do to leave these undistinguished. In the "Treatise on the Image," we read 'careful of his words, and temperate in eating and drinking.' Which of these are not self-nourishment? In the "Treatise on the Hexagram Sequence" it says 'once living things are tamed they can be nourished.' If one is not mindful in speech, the broad knowledge in Great Taming is merely verbal encumbrance. If one is not temperate in eating and drinking, then the 'not eating at home' in Great Taming is nothing but an excuse for gluttony. If one can be careful and temperate in daily life, without 'giving up one's sacred tortoise,' then surely one's gaze will be 'sharp like a tiger's,' so that one has ability to nourish worthy men, nourish the people, and nourish living things. Thus the *Doctrine of the Mean* says, 'The Dao does not stay distant from people.' Mencius said, 'The Dao is nearby, but people seek it far away.'



28. Excess

[Preponderance of the Great/ Passing Great]

Nourishment is followed by Excess [*Preponderance of the Great*]. Thus only after there is means of nourishment can there be preponderance. But from the aspect of hexagram structure, Nourishment is composed of Gen and Zhen, so the yangs above and below contain four yins. Excess is composed of Dui and Xun, so the yins above and below contain four yangs. It is not just that the structures are different, they are perfect opposites. Furthermore, the current hexagram basically represents an excess of yang firmness. The “Treatise on Judgments” says, ‘the firm preponderates but keeps to the center; gentle and joyous in action.’ One must be like this to get things right in [a time of] excess. That being so, it is said that this hexagram represents an excess in events but not an excess in principle. But after all there are no events outside of principle and no principles outside of events. If principle in a time of excess should be a certain way, yet we want events to go differently, will that be possible? Some hold that in matters of excess, only the humility of [sage-rulers] Yao and Shun and the campaigns of King Tang and Wu can qualify. But after all, in the Tang-Yu era (13), and at the end of the Xia or Shang, events had to work out that way. From the viewpoint of Yao, Shun, Tang and Wu, were they not all abiding by the [golden] mean? Others say that the sage has minor excesses but no major excesses. This fails to recognize that when the time calls for major excess, he has major excess; when the time calls for minor excess, he has minor excess. Thus Mencius said, ‘In Master Zhou’s excess, wasn’t there something fitting?’ As for ‘standing alone without fear and withdrawing without resentment,’ [clearly we have gotten to a point where] only acts which far exceed the norm will do. Thus for a gentleman who encounters this situation, it is a necessary principle that ‘the firm preponderates and is central.’ How can we say that he is drawn to grandstanding and makes a point of extreme actions to startle conventional people? But looking at the six lines, we see that firm lines in firm places mostly bring misfortune, and firm lines in yielding places mostly bring good fortune. Thus Third Yang with its great firmness has a ‘sagging ridgepole,’ while Fourth Yang in its yielding place keeps [its ridgepole] erect. Clearly even in excess a middle path for firm virtue naturally exists. Ah, better to ‘lay down white rushes’ in an excess of carefulness than to ‘let water engulf your head’ through excess of pride. The same is true when occupying a yielding place. If one does not have acumen which exceeds others, how can he even discuss this?

Nourishment is a combination of Zhen and Gen, with yang containing yin. Excess is a combination of Xun and Dui, with yang exceeding yin. Though Nourishment has yang in the Top and First places while Excess has yin at Top and First, making them yin-yang opposites, actually the symbolism of both hexagrams emphasizes yang firmness. Thus they have a place in the Upper Canon, where Kan and Li are paired.(14) Kan is of course composed of yang trigrams, and the [central] yin lines of Li cling between yangs.



29. The Abysmal

[*Kan*]

Excess is followed by Xi-Kan [*the Abysmal*]. Two yangs are contained among four yins. Yang firmness has already been in excess, and in Kan it attains the center. Yang which keeps to the center is no longer in excess, but Kan is at root a yang figure. In Qian's union with Kun, yang has sunk down into the center of yin. Only in this one hexagram Kan does King Wen point out the image of heart-mind as a lesson. The center has substance and the outside is vacant, so the Judgment says, 'The Abysmal repeated, you are sincere.' The center is yang and the outside is yin, so the "Treatise on Judgments" says '...because the firm is centered.' Both phrases clarify the idea of 'keeping presence of mind to prevail.' But how can the heart-mind have prevalence? In the 64 hexagrams, only in Kan do [two] yang lines attain the center. Things that attain the center are at the root of all under heaven. This is what is meant by saying the people take from the world's center so they may live. Thus although yang is sunken into the middle of yin, by 'keeping presence of mind' it transcends the danger. Perfect sincerity can penetrate stone and metal; it can walk across fire and water. What calamity is worth getting frightened over? With loyalty and good faith you can make your way among barbarians or connect with ghosts and spirits. What displacement can make you feel afraid? Water naturally 'moves through dangers and never loses its dependability.' It is precisely in encountering dangers that the mind finds its level [temper]. The text says 'There is hope in what you do, and advancing brings achievements.' That is, one goes forth and acts according to this [self-composed] mind. This is what we call 'making virtue endure and carrying on the business of teaching.' It is on the basis of mind that we evolve and carry on. Clearly, though the mind is [only] a single yang presiding within, yet by standing first in what is great, the little cannot pull you down. Otherwise, even Second Yang says 'not yet out of the midst.' Even Fifth Yang says 'the middle is not yet great.' If people want this [self-present] mind to endure, let them not be engulfed like Top and First Yin to the unfortunate point of losing their Way. Can they not, through the image of the Abysmal, contemplate this within themselves?



30. The Clinging

Kan is followed by Li [*The Clinging*]. Kan has yang at the center, and Li has yin at the center. Actually, Kan and Li are not two different things. Yang amidst yin and yin amidst yang are both combinations of Qian and Kun that attain centrality with their [two] yin or yang lines. This is the significance of beginning the Upper Canon with Qian and Kun, and ending it with Kan and Li. Thus Kan ‘is sincere within’ and of course has yang solidity that allows it to give. But Li ‘takes care of a cow,’ which must mean that it receives by means of yin emptiness. Clearly Li with its cow is mated to Kan, and Kun with her mare is mated to Qian. Only thus can they be described as ‘furthering, constant and prevailing.’ Kun and Li share common features. What is more, with yin clinging to yang, the empty radiance shines forth fully. In heaven this is a brilliant mandate, on earth this is bright virtue. The numinous substance of the heart-mind was originally thus. In learning one must pursue and amplify this light, before one can return to that bright substance. One must make bright virtue clear under heaven before light can have sufficient quantity. Otherwise, those who take discrimination to be light will lose the inside; those who turn their light inward will lose the outside. Neither of these are the brightness of Li. Consider the “Treatise on Judgments,” which says, ‘Clarity upon clarity, clinging to what is right will transform and recreate the world.’ The “Treatise on the Image” says ‘The great man by perpetuating this brightness illuminates the four quarters of the world.’ Clearly light has no inside or outside. The message expressed by the sage is quite insightful. Moreover, this is why the “Treatise on Judgments” stresses how the yielding clings to the correct center, and the line statement stresses yellow [fire of] Li finding the central way. The Great Learning speaks of bright virtue; the Doctrine of the Mean speaks of bright goodness. Mencius speaks of innate knowledge. All are referring to this sense of Li. If one does not see it as soon as possible, if one does not hasten to return to it, one will incur the blame of ‘crisscrossed footsteps.’ How can he avoid the misfortune of ‘waning daylight’?

From the empty center light arises. This is the image and substance of Li. Having [inner] brilliance, the glow of one’s countenance must shine forth. This is the meaning and function of Li. Substance and function have one source; images and meaning reveal each other. This is plainly seen in the hexagram figure.