

## CHAPTER 1

# Introducing the *Yijing* (易经)

## Six Stages of Development and Six Topics of the *Yijing*

Based on my best understanding from what we know from the history on the formation of the *Yijing* tradition, I will give a theoretical reconstruction of the origin and formation of the book known as *Yijing* 易经 (*Book of Changes*), which has been acknowledged as the leading classic among all the Confucian classics (variously known as *Six Classics* or *Five Classics*) since the Han Dynasty of the first to second century BCE when a chair for *Yijing* was established in the Academy of the Court.<sup>1</sup> A theoretical reconstruction is a projected characterization of the content of the book with regard to what reality it is intended to represent and what truth it will bring to bear on life. It will also cover a process of development from a source in experience. It will show a point of view or a perspective aiming at reasonable understanding that addresses a vision of value and some issue of life. It will also endeavor to preserve coherence and consistency of thinking with a sense of reality.<sup>2</sup>

First, it must be made clear: we are dealing with a received text of the *Yijing* that has its own history after it was historically composed and formed. It was handed down to us from the Han Period. Without going into archaeological, historical, and linguistic details, the present version of the *Yijing* includes sixty-four six-line *gua* 卦 (hexagrams) as doubled from the eight three-line *gua* (*bagua* 八卦 trigrams) and their interpretations in the form of divinatory judgments. As we shall see, the line in a hexagram or trigram is called a *yao* 爻 (a line of movement). The

movement is designated as either *yin* 阴 or *yang* 阳, indicating motion or rest. As there are six lines, the possibilities of combining *yin* and *yang* on each line lead to a number of 2 to the 6th power, which comes exactly to sixty-four hexagrams. Looked at this way, the sixty-four hexagrams are just a sequence of sixty-four combinations of *yin* and *yang* movements, and these movements are meant to represent the movements of change in things in the world. As to where the sixty-four hexagrams come from, we can see that the hexagrams are developed from eight trigrams by way of doubling the trigrams, as indicated in the calculation of eight trigrams multiplied by eight trigrams. This would be a natural process to take place in history as early as before the Zhou (circa 1200 BCE–771 BCE) in light of the fact that the judgments for some of the hexagrams could be dated back to even earlier times before the Zhou. Nevertheless, the system of sixty-four hexagrams with their appended judgments is reputed to be composed or edited in the hands of King Wen (文王) of the Zhou (in approximately the early twelfth century BCE). It is therefore known as *Zhouyi* 周易, or *Yi* of the Zhou, to distinguish it from the *Yi* of Shang and the *Yi* of Xia, the names of two earlier dynasties recorded in the *Liji* 礼记 (*Book of Rites*).

Apparently, the *Yijing* book (now also referred to as *Zhouyi* in the form it has come to from King Wen) is based on sixty-four types of divination represented by sixty-four hexagrams. This indicates a long tradition of divination (*bushi* 卜筮)<sup>3</sup> that gives rise to the symbolic representation of the divination in a system of symbols. Without archaeological, historical, and linguistic details, it suffices to say that after exploring excavated bronze utensils and silk and bamboo inscriptions, little doubt remains that the practice of divination is well rooted in the beginning of agriculture in early China.<sup>4</sup> That it could begin at that juncture is because people had reached a settled form of life and thus could acquire a system of symbols through learning that would be adequate for representing human situations together with a background understanding of how things originate and relate in processes of development as well as in an experienced actuality of world. It is a matter of constructing a useful system of cosmology with cosmogony and cosmography that would serve the purpose of promoting and enhancing agricultural land-farming according to knowledge of seasons of time. Besides, people have also developed a method of making fair composition of a representation (namely *gua*) of the human situation and a method of applicable interpretation models for the symbolic representation of human situations.

In light of recent textual research and archaeological findings, the antiquity of the *Yijing* is not to be doubted. The pertinent question is in which way the practice of divination is conducted and how prediction and interpretation are to be made before the book is formed and how early the book can be said to have been first developed. To answer this question, one must first understand how the book is organized.

The original text of the *Yijing*, known as the *jing* 经, is comprised of a system of sixty-four symbols, hexagrams analyzable in eight times eight (8 x 8) combinations of subsymbols (*gua*, trigrams), each of which has a name describing or indicating what the symbol stands for. Each symbol, called an iconic-indexical symbol, is to be attached to a judgment (*ci* 辞) as result of general prognosis and valuation for a given situation to which the symbol applies, and which is determined by divination. Each line of the hexagrammatic symbol is further numerically named and given an individual prognosis and valuation for action. All else in the form of comments and explanations on either the whole symbol or lines of the symbol are called commentaries (*zhuan* 传). These commentaries are traditionally known as the *Yi Commentaries* (*Yizhuan* 易传) or “Ten Wings” (*Shiyi* 十翼), and are composed of the “*Tuan* 象 Commentaries” (two parts), the “*Xiang* 象 Commentaries” (two parts), the “*Wenyan* 文言 Commentary,” the “*Xici* 系辞 Commentaries” (two parts, entitled “*Xici Shang* 系辞上” and “*Xici Xia* 系辞下”), the “*Shuo* 说 Commentary” (also known as the “*Shuogua* 说卦”), the “*Xu* 序 Commentary,” and “*Za* 杂 Commentary.” They are generally regarded as composed by Confucius or his first-generation disciples.

The *Yijing*'s complex organization supports a finding that the book is the result of a process of evolution from the very beginning of the use of cosmic symbols for understanding and participating in natural processes to the final abstract and abstruse formulation of a comprehensive system of cosmology, culture, and ethics. The final formulation would have taken place in a later era when philosophical minds and reflective reason became most active. As such, the *Yijing* book probably went through six stages of development with regard to its being interpreted by human researchers.

### Stage 1: Comprehensive Observation and Natural Cosmology

The first stage of development of the *Yijing* is that of the Comprehensive Observation (*guan* 观) of the natural world or natural cosmology.<sup>5</sup> This

stage likely began during the late Neolithic period (6000 BCE–2000 BCE),<sup>6</sup> during the time of the domestication of sheep. Legend has it that the first of the great noble emperors, Fuxi 伏羲 (2952–2386 BCE), used *guan* to observe and to understand the world. The *guan* stage probably continued until the founding of the first Chinese dynasty, the Xia Dynasty, which arose from a succession of sage-kings and ultimately was founded by the Great Yu. According to legend, this dynasty began around 2100–2000 BCE and continued until 1600 BCE.

During this time, early ancestors of Chinese people, having spread out over the central plains along the Yellow River, experienced climate changes and seasonal changes in different geographical locations. It may not escape from the sagely among them that climate and terrain may make tremendous differences to the lives of people. The right combination of climate and land could mean harvesting and flourishing of life, whereas a weather disaster such as drought and flood could cause famine and destruction despite efforts made by man to survive. The world was a totality and seen as a whole, with human beings an essential and vital part of it. *Guan* was the panoramic overview or comprehensive observation of the entire natural world. So, for example, the people of this time would see the evening sky as a whole. However, in addition to seeing the totality of the world, the ancient Chinese also became aware that changes take place over a span of time. However, changes did not occur over the same period of time for all objects. Some changes may be so small that the naked eye could not observe the actual changing event. Some changes may be so large and take place over such a long period that, similarly, the naked eye could not observe the actual change. Nevertheless, the ancient Chinese were aware that changes occurred and that these changes followed patterns or cycles. As a result, the people began to formulate cycles of years, days, and even day and night to reflect the changes observed in nature. Thus, the *guan* showed people that change of all types—changes of forms of life, changes of time, changes of life, and changes of habits of growth—happen over differing periods of time.

## Stage 2: Relating Present to Future and Making Divination

By the time of the Huangdi 黄帝 (Yellow Emperor) (2697 BCE–2598 BCE), it may be conjectured that an early civilization, complete with agriculture, settlements, and political organization had arisen. With these

developments came the need to think about, plan for, and act with an eye toward the future. However, action with regard to the future requires knowledge in order to be successful. In the absence of observable knowledge about the future gleaned through the use of *guan*, one must make predictions. The method used to glean information about the future was called divination.

The practice of divination requires one to read burned cracks in the tortoise shell or oxen bone as signs signifying a certain message emanating from the objective situation in nature with reference to the situation at hand. Such a reading requires a background reference in which the signs can be described as messages and as advice. Divination practices allowed the diviner to interpret knowledge from what he knew about a good or fortunate omen and what he knew about a bad or misfortunate omen. As such, the original good and bad must be understood in terms of fortune (*ji* 吉) and misfortune (*xiong* 凶), disaster (*huo* 祸), blessing (*fu* 福), danger (*li* 厉), blame (*jiu* 咎), and regret (*lin* 吝). The valuation system of divination gradually developed into a general theory of good and bad according to which, whatever leads to fortune, security, praise, and hope for more of the same is considered good, namely that which is to be desired, whereas whatever leads to misfortune, danger, blame, and regret is considered bad, namely that which is to be avoided.

This association of human feelings and desires with events and actions reflects and reveals how the ancient human came not only to discover the world as relating to his human personal self but also to discover the human personal self as relating to the world around him. This theory further leads to the presumption and understanding or belief as to how good and bad could be based on abilities and mental dispositions, which could in general generate those things that are called good and those that are called bad. Those abilities and dispositions formed or given are then regarded as virtues 善德 and vices 恶德 relative to social and political relationships established and developed in a community.<sup>7</sup> Necessary action required to achieve the good and to avoid the bad would be called the duty, or what ought to be done. As a result, the moral development of the community presupposes a moral sense of what is good and bad in reference to fortunes and misfortunes. The use of fortune words and misfortune words and the like reflects an early development of the human community in which the individual person comes to have a moral relevance of fortunes and misfortunes and hence to reflect on what to do in terms of virtues and duties.

This was the period of *buci* 卜辭 (divination statements), in which advice and admonitions on what needed to be done to secure the good (the fortune) and avoid the bad (the misfortune) were given in concise phrases and sentences, or even records, engraved on the tortoise back shells or oxen shoulders. In this period, the results of interpreting or judging signs regarding their factual meanings and moral requirements for action were known as *buci* 卜辭, or divinatory judgments. These judgments were recorded in oracle bones from 2000 BCE to 1200 BCE. The *buci* likely lasted at least until the Zhou Dynasty.

### Stage 3: Formation of the Trigrams and Hexagrams on the Basis of Number Theory

In the later part of the divination period, probably during the projected period of 1200–1100 BCE, in the Zhou dynasty, the *bagua* 八卦 system arose. This systemization was based on a cosmology formed around the notions of *yin* and *yang* and resulted in the production of sixty-four hexagrams with correlating names and judgments. Diviners began to organize the results of cracks into groups and assign to them either the number three or six. The number three appears to have been used because it correlates to the observed relationship of heaven, earth, and man. The number six was used because it doubles the cosmology of the three. Thus, the *bagua* system was based, in part, on an elaboration of and systemization of the diviner's cosmic symbols (heaven, earth, and man) in correlation with the divination judgments. Use of an odd and even number likely refers to *yin* and *yang*, with the odd number referring to the sign standing for *yang* and the even number referring to the sign standing for *yin*. The distinction of *yin* and *yang* appears to be the natural result of *guan*, for as one observes, one comes to see how the natural and cosmic changes always have the alternation or succession or combination of the *yin* and *yang*, that is, the shady and the lighted, the soft and the firm, the rest and the movement.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, odd numbers likely corresponded to straight, solid signs or lines and even seemed to correspond to broken or crooked signs or lines on the bones. The reason appears to lie in the natural working of the mental association of the broken line as signifying a twoness and the solid line as signifying a oneness.<sup>9</sup> Of course, other explanations are possible, be they historical or theoretical. But one cannot ignore that

there is a natural simplicity in associating a solid line with a primary odd number, which is oneness, and in associating a broken line with a primary even number, which is twoness. Hence, the so-called *shuzigua* 数字卦 hides a reference to seen forms or shapes of cracks of the divination on the bones; it also implicitly introduces a principle of correlation of the numbers to the shapes.<sup>10</sup>

The *bagua* system arose in part because of the increasing complexity of human relationships and human actions as culture and knowledge required a more sophisticated representation of the human situation in the human lifeworld. Yet, this more sophisticated system of human situations was still thought to be derived from natural situations of the trigrams. This thinking provides an insight into the nature of human development and the natural evolution of the world, as explained below.

#### Stage 4: Reflection on Human Life and Discovering the Human Situation

Legend has it that in the twelfth century BCE, King Wen of Zhou (周) was imprisoned by the tyrant King Zhou (纣) of the Shang Dynasty (1600–1100 BCE). King Zhou (纣) believed that King Wen was building his own fiefdom into a large power that would threaten the central rule of Shang. During his imprisonment, King Wen developed an extended cosmology of sixty-four *gua* based on the *bagua* system, but this system was a more abstract system of signs that could be only partially interpreted by or correlated with what is observed in nature.

In the categorization of the life activities, typical incidents with their evaluations based on history or experience have been sorted into six levels or sorts. Each level was to be later assigned to the six lines of the *gua*: some with obvious justification, some without obvious justification. The line judgment can be assumed to give both explanation and justification of the line meaning. But more often than not, the line judgment is assumed to derive its judgment of meaning and hence interpretation from the meaning of the line as perceived in the context of the whole *gua* and in reference to a given situation as identified or to be identified.

The above leads to the realization that we should sort out our social lives according to their importance and values in order to be represented, not in a simple system of cosmology but in an extended system built on this cosmology. We will call this later system a “cosmo-humanological

system.” It is actually intended as the sixty-four hexagrams (*zhonggua* 重卦). If one were to analyze the sixty-four names of the sixty-four *gua* for the understanding of the important items of basic human situations that also embodies the basic values of life and action such as indicated in the names of the sixty-four hexagrams (*Tun* 屯, *Meng* 蒙, *Shi* 师, etc.), one would find no order to them; instead, they form arbitrarily selected categories of the natural world of the trigrams. But this natural world is meaningful because it can form resonance with human needs and respond to human actions; thus, it requires understanding and evaluation. It may yield an emergent picture of what people were most concerned with when making divinations. They are the categories of potential action and potential decision.

### Stage 5: Exploring Meaning of Change and Human Virtue through Confucius

From the time of King Wen’s imprisonment (approximately twelfth century BCE) until the end of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), Chinese scholars continued to expand on King Wen’s system incorporating the cosmo-humanological system. During the sixth century BCE to the fourth century BCE, the *Yi Commentaries* (*Yizhuan* 易传), or *Ten Wings*, were produced. The *Ten Wings* focused on the basic alignment of meanings and relations of meanings that interpretation of the symbols and judgments achieved through a dynamic and yet close consistency with an underlying cosmic picture or image. Yang Xiong 杨雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), working during the Han Dynasty, later attempted to create a system that reflected a well-constructed understanding with self-conscious and explicit principles of construction. The driving force behind his work was to reconcile the name-image of the *gua* with the cosmic basic meanings of the *gua*. Indeed, this effort to sort out, to classify and organize, relative to given images is still the most tantalizing and challenging work of the *Yi* scholar today.

In the system, some correlations are well made, such as *Qian* 乾 for *tian* 天 (heaven), *Kun* 坤 for *di* 地 (earth), *fengdi* 风地 for *Guan* 观, *dilei* 地雷 for *Fu* 复, whereby the natural forces of the trigrams form to give rise to the meanings of the human situations. By combining the forces of nature’s purposive activities with the actions of human persons, this system appears to make the natural forces conscious. Thus, all the



hexagrams have obvious “human” meanings achieved in terms of the basic meanings of the cosmic “natural” symbols of the *bagua* 八卦. The basic meanings I here refer to are a retrospective insight in the *Shuogua* 说卦 of the *Yizhuan*: the *dong-jing* 动静, *gang-rou* 刚柔, *yin-yang* 阴阳 observation on the phenomenal level. But there are also *gua*, which are not so well interpreted and appear to be randomly associated (for example: *Huoshan* 火山 ䷗ for Travel (*Lü* 旅), *Leize* 雷泽 ䷑ for Return of the Maid (*Guimei* 归妹), *Shuilei* 水雷 ䷗ for Difficult Beginning (*Tun* 屯), *Shanlei* 山雷 ䷳ for Nourishment (*Yi* 颐), and *Shanfeng* 山风 ䷗ for Clearing Ills (*Gu* 蛊). Some others, such as *Tianfeng* 天风 ䷗ for Encounter (*Gou* 姤) and *Zehuo* 泽火 ䷔ for Reform (*Ge* 革), may also appear ambiguous.

### Stage 6: Deepening Insight into the Onto-Cosmological in Philosophy of the Dao

The final period of the development of the *Yijing*, which follows the periods of systemization and correlation, occurred when, having established the *bagua* system, the users critically reflected on the system. This was a time of analysis, adjustment, correction, and totalistic interpretation. This was a time when the relationships among man and heaven and earth become explicitly articulated and exhibited, argued and discussed. As such, our traditional notion of philosophy, as it related to the *Yijing* specifically, occurred primarily at this time. In addition to a period of philosophical analysis and interpretation, one also may see this as a period of standardization of texts and elaboration of symbolic and numerological meanings. Standardization coincided with the beginning of Han Dynasty in the second century BCE to the later Han period in the third century.

During this period, the lines of each *gua* are individually and collectively commented on. In doing so, it became clear that certain principles must be followed during the divination process. For example, the fifth position is better, and the third position is not so good.<sup>11</sup> Hence, a later observation from the *Xici*: a line that occupies a third position tends to signify misfortune over fortune, whereas a line that occupies a fifth position tends to signify a higher degree of success and a lesser degree of failure.

In addition, necessary adjustments and corrections were made in order to achieve consistency and efficiency (so the *Yijing* could be used

as a divination book). Meanwhile, the symbolism of the *gua* and its lines become more clearly projected and articulated in meaning relative to the *yin-yang* theory of cosmic force. The *yin-yang* system was capable of assigning meanings of the five powers (metal, wood, water, fire, earth) and their associated qualities regarding generation and destruction or balancing to each *gua* relative to other *gua* and to each line of the *gua* relative to the lines of the same *gua* and sometimes to relevant lines of other relevant *gua* in the system of *gua*.

Against these six stages of the development of the basic philosophy of the *Yijing*, we see that the *Yijing* is not simply any text invested with personal understanding but has received significance and funds of meaning from both the sagely and the common. The commonness of the meaning in the classic text is well described by the *Zhongyong* 中庸: “common people have used them and yet may know them.” “For the ordinary things the common people all know them, but for the most profound even the sagely may not know.” It is important that we move to certain important aspects of the theory and practice of the *Yijing* as we have generally described above. And these aspects that would contribute to a philosophical understanding of the *Yijing* is that with which this book has been engaged. They cover nine topics that represent nine aspects of the philosophy of *Yijing*: namely, the interpretive in understanding the *Yi* symbolic use and the reality as conveyed by such symbols. Then we can speak of the methodology of *guan* as a source and foundation for making possible such interpretive or hermeneutical approach. Then we have to see how a system of things could function as a system of communication so that we understand how the system bridges over the gap between the objective and the subjective. After the observational methodology, we must examine how hexagrams as natural symbols stand to natural forms on the one hand, and how they stand to overall meaning of harmonization on the other hand. Then we can see the system when accordingly understood stands to present three more unities and harmonizations that confront human beings and human culture, the position of location or space, and the use of time. Through these we come to see how the *Yijing* have developed its philosophical theory of positions and timeliness as two essential activities of man that carry both moral and political meanings. With this understanding, the traditional schism between form and number approach and the onto-generative approach of meaning and reason can be reconciled. Finally, we come to the unity

of *li* and *qi* as two constitutive elements of ontological foundations of *li* and *qi* and principle or being and nonbeing.

### Six Topics in *Yijing* Primary Philosophy

Corresponding to the six stages of development, we shall discuss the following six topics: (1) comprehensive observation as a way to conceive of the cosmology of changes; (2) the logic of divination and the philosophical and ethical foundation of the practical; (3) transformation of the *Yijing* into a philosophical treatise; (4) *Yijing* interpretation as a basis for decision making and action; (5) Confucius and *Yijing* in Confucianism; and (6) the *Yijing* and Daoism, Buddhism, folklore, and the modern sciences.

#### Topic 1: Comprehensive Origins of the *Yijing* and Cosmography of *Yi*

How do we conceive *Yi* (change)? I suggest the approach of “comprehensive observation” (*guan*), which consists of observing things and their changes, distant and near, up and down, left and right, on both macroscopic and microscopic levels, over a long period of time, and in a comprehensive and integrative manner. Why this approach? I suggest that *Yi* is a comprehensive phenomenon pervading all our experiences of nature, our lives, and our selves. What we can observe is a myriad of things in change and a myriad of relationships of things in change. But we need to observe their hidden dimensions and their underlying unity and source in change. Hence the *Xici Commentary* speaks of “*guan qihuitong* 观其汇通 (observation of [their] meeting together and interpenetration)” (*Xici Shang* 12). If we are confined to what we see, we can speak of “observing the forms [of things]” (*guan xiang*), and we can also speak of “observing the motions and movements of things” (*guanbian* 观变).

We could distinguish between perception and observation of what we experience as large and small, and outer and inner. We could distinguish what we observe as what other people could all observe from which each person merely perceives without the understanding or ground for assuming that other people must have the same perception.<sup>12</sup> Even as an outer experience, *Yi* differs from our experience of pure physical motions

of microscopic objects or physical movements of macroscopic objects. Yi focuses on both absolute (self-oriented) and relative (relation-oriented) qualitative change of one state to another, not simply the change of space and time in the motion (*dong*) of an object. The change of space and time in the motion of an object, however, is to be explained as a consequence or a part of the phenomenon of qualitative change, whether on the macroscopic level or on the microscopic level. To observe qualitative change on the macroscopic level is called “observation of large changes” (*guanbian*), which leads to “penetrating understanding of large changes” (*tongbian*). This is explained in terms of the dynamics of the dark and the bright (*yin-yang*). In the *Shuogua Commentary* it is said: “Observe changes (*guanbian*) amidst *yin-yang* and establish *gua* (visible forms of change-situations) therefrom” (section 1).

To closely observe qualitative change on the microscopic level is called “*qiongshen zhihua*” 穷神知化 (i.e., by close observation of subtle changes one comprehends transformations) (*Xici Xia* 5). The so-called subtle changes (*shen* 神) are the unpredictable and creative changes from being to nonbeing and vice versa, and this leads to “knowledge of the minute inceptions of things” (*zhiji* 知几) (*Xici Xia* 5). One can come to this comprehension by way of observing visible changes (*guanbian*) in nature and the world and pondering over small changes. Hence, the combined terms “*bianhua* 变化” and “*zhihua* 知化” suggest a comprehensive notion of changes inclusive of large and small, visible and invisible, and movements and transformations, all in a framework of interrelation and integration of things and events.

The notion of Yi no doubt includes reference to changes in an inner sense of self-motivation and in a sense related to human life situated in the life world of humanity and nature; hence, it is related to human feelings and human evaluations as motivations. This is largely reflected in the naming of sixty-four hexagrams developed from the eight trigrams. For illustration, if one considers and analyzes the meanings and significations (denotation, extension, connotation, intension, intentionality, and significance) of any of the following hexagrams by its name: *Meng* 蒙 ䷃ (Obscuration), *Song* 讼 ䷅ (Litigation), *Wuwang* 无妄 ䷘ (Unexpectedness), *Xian* 咸 ䷞ (Feeling), *Jiaren* 家人 ䷤ (Family), *Kui* 睽 ䷥ (Separation), *Jian* 蹇 ䷦ (Difficulty), *Jie* 解 ䷧ (Resolution), *Sun* 损 ䷨ (Decreasing), *Yi* 益 ䷩ (Increasing), *Gou* 姤 ䷫ (Meeting), *Jing* 井 ䷯ (Well), *Ding* 鼎 ䷱ (Tripot), *Ge* 革 ䷰ (Reform), *Guimei* 归妹 ䷵ (Marrying Maid), *Lü* 旅 ䷷ (Travel), *Jie* 节 ䷻ (Restraint), *Zhongfu* 中孚 ䷛ (Inner Faith), *Jiji* 既济 ䷾ (Completion), and *Weiji* 未济 ䷿ (Incompletion), one can easily

see how observations of large and small things in nature could be conceived as a whole, with an inner core and an outer shell, each of which is represented by a trigram. Together, they form a hexagram where one could grasp the relevance of the constituent trigrams for the formation of the hexagram as indicated by its name. On the other hand, the name for the hexagram is given in view of the emergent quality of the complex of natural events and the forces they represent in certain combinations, which lead to observations and identification of large and small things in human life and human situations. Consider the hexagram *Xian* 咸 ䷞ (feeling), which is composed of a lake above and a mountain below. One may see the lake as representing the natural feeling of joy and the mountain as representing the natural feeling of stillness. The resultant combined sign gives the image of joy in stillness that is a feeling emerging from the harmony of the lake and the mountain or extending the notion to a human situation, the inner harmony of the young maid with the young lad when they are together. One may use one's natural and yet free play of imagination to construe the meaning of the other hexagrams, which are given here for the vivacity of images that they generate.

To observe the inner world of human life, one must consider the activities and functions of *gan* (feeling) and *tong* (penetrative understanding). The activity and function of feeling is clearly reflected in the thirty-first hexagram, *Xian* ䷞, and the activity and function of observation of outer nature is clearly reflected in the twenty-first hexagram of *guan*. I have argued that *gan* and *guan* are two aspects of the methodology of "comprehensive observation" and that the resulting activities and functions of such activities is "interpenetrative and comprehensive understanding" (*tong* 通). The latter is composed of understanding both the outer world of things (*tong tianxia zhigu* 通天下之故) and understanding the inner world of the human mind (*tong tianxia zhizhi* 通天下之志) (see section 10 of *Xici Shang*). When a person is able to do this, the person is a sage (*shengren* 圣人). The *shengren* is a perfectly virtuous person capable of listening to people and articulating and acting on what good way of life should be followed. He has both intellectual and moral wisdom and thus is capable of guiding people for their well-being. The concept of the *shengren* is often used as an ideal model or standard for emulation and aspiration.

Regarding the first stage of *Yijing's* development: although question remains as to whether there existed a legendary culture hero named Fuxi who invented the system of *gua* or Yi-symbols on the basis of his observations of nature and things in nature, there is no doubt that the eight

basic symbols known as *bagua* are significant symbols for some of the most notable natural phenomena a human being would normally come across and observe in nature. These phenomena are heaven and earth, fire and water, lake and hill, and wind and thunder. Persons would further observe how these natural phenomena are powers and processes of change and transformation, which would account for the creation and destruction of things and life forms.

These natural phenomena can be then conceived in a form or framework in which all things are to be located, and all changes are to take place. Finally, the person would observe that these things and life forms found in nature are governed in some sense. They participate in some sense in the basic processes of nature. Hence, insofar as persons can experience these processes and powers in certain correlated ways, all things far and near (including cultural, technological inventions and human activities) could be related to these basic processes and powers.

Clearly, it would take a long time to make these observations, which are assumedly comprehensive in scope and insightful in depth. These observations would lead to an understanding of the world with a unity of vision—a totality of scope—to be seen also in a network of linkages and relations as well as a multitude of relevant concrete references and identifications. This would be the end of achieving understanding of the world as it is given to us. This observational process is called “*guan*” (comprehensive and contemplative observation) in the *Xici*, and the resulting vision of the world is a cosmography of well-placed and well-related powers and processes, namely a dynamical picture of the natural world in which things are to be situated.

One may ask questions about the nature of *guan* in relation to the formation of the early symbolic system of cosmography of the *Yijing*. It is safe to say that *guan* is both a process of observation and a method used for observation in order to achieve a totalistic, holistic, relational, and perspective oriented understanding of the whole of nature. As a process of observation, it accompanies a mentality of detachment and an attitude of mind, described as tranquility and receptivity. *Guan* is a naturalistic attitude of seeking understanding and learning things without forcing a prior theoretical model on nature and without letting one’s emotions and desires stand in the way of understanding the world.

It is not quite phenomenology of the conscientious “bracketing-off” in a Husserlian sense, nor is it an objectivist methodology of attempting to capture the essences of objects in exclusion of the feeling and perceiving

mind. *Guan* perhaps can be described as a natural attitude of seeing the natural world in terms of their overt and minute changes and relationships on the basis of our general experiences of nature. Hence, the resulting cosmic image, view, or vision, also known as *guan* (outlook or view), is both globally dynamical and individually rich in meaning. This allows for possible correlations and analogizing with other observations of things including human and cultural matters. We may thus call the *guan* a natural phenomenological observation versus rational scientific observation.

The natural and cosmic system of *gua* constitutes and provides such a background reference that can be called the “cosmic map” against which one could check on the location and relationships a given sign has signified. It can be conjectured that the cosmic map of the *gua* becomes the divinatory reference manual in a period from the beginning

With regard to the question of how a number comes to be written as it was originally written or is now written, one must answer by pointing to the power of free play of imagination as a human faculty that gives to many inventions and that allows to escape absolute and full determination and control of nature. Eventually there was a mix of forms and numbers, and the new signs for *yin* and *yang* were born.

Historically speaking, the method of *guan* has been well cultivated in both the Confucian and Daoist traditions. Chinese Buddhists even adopted *guan* in a merger of meanings between comprehensive observation and inner meditation, as conveyed by the Sanskrit terms *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. But *guan* as a way of reaching for deep and complete understanding of reality originates in the *Yijing*. In the text of the *Yijing* one even could identify and name the twenty-first hexagram of wind above and earth below as a special symbol of *guan*. As this symbol iconically and indexically suggests, one must maintain an upright and central position in order to overview or observe the world. Given a background of comprehensive observation and reflection on experience one has including one’s understanding, one may easily see how the system of symbols as the cosmographical picture of the world is constructed on the basis of a comprehensive observation of an observer who does not suffer from his preconceptions or biases.

## Topic 2: Logic of Divination and Ethical Foundation of the Practical

Much in vogue is the view that the *Yijing* began as a book of divination, and should be seen essentially as a book that one may consult in terms of its divinatory judgments and symbolism. There is no denial that *Zhouyi*

has been used as a book of divination, as alluded to in the divinatory practices recorded in *Zuozhuan*.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, Zhu Xi (1130–1200), the well-known Chinese neo-Confucian scholar, is correct in identifying the book as formed from the practice of divination. But, on the other hand, one must recognize that if there is no underlying cosmic map to which diviners could refer for constituting or deriving meanings, how could it be used as a book of divination? Zhu Xi recognized that before King Wen, Fuxi observed the universe and added his insights to the interpretations in the *Zhouyi*. King Wen followed Fuxi, making divinations based on Fuxi's observations. In this sense, in order to be meaningful and fruitful as a guidebook in making practical decisions toward beneficial results and avoidance of harm, we have to recognize that divination must presuppose formation of a cosmic map.

There is no denial that divination has been practiced since the Shang Dynasty (1600 BCE–1100 BCE),<sup>14</sup> and it was common practice until the late Spring-Autumn Period (800 BCE–300 BCE). The question is not simply whether one divines, but why one divines and how one understands or interprets the results of divination. In general, the reason for the practice of divination is that people are worried about the future and cannot or do not know what the future holds; therefore, they cannot determine what action to take. Divination allows people to glimpse the future, thus providing a guide for present action.

Based on the rich materials of oracle inscriptions and the twenty-two recorded divination cases found in the *Zhouyi*, one can see the following: (1) one should not divine if one does not have a momentous or urgent problem at hand; (2) one divines after one has exhausted all one's knowledge and still cannot decide what to do; (3) one divines for the purpose of relating a historical precedent to the present situation or for the purpose of identifying one's position in the scheme of things; (4) a reasonable interpretation has to be given for the recommended action or actions; and (5) one has to make a choice or a decision in light of acceptable interpretations. Hence, divination neither implies determinism nor fatalism; instead, it presupposes the co-determining abilities of the human person for the future, which is significant for the person. We may call this understanding of divination "co-determinism by human interpretation and human choice."

Thus, divination is one type of use to which the *Zhouyi* is put, but the *Zhouyi* cannot be seen merely as a book of divination. Its rich and hidden cosmological significances not only make it possible to be



rediscovered or reconstructed metaphysically in the *Yizhuan*, but these significances also allow the book to be used for other pursuits of life and in various fields of study, including medicine and military strategies. This explains why by the time of Confucius (551 BCE–479 BCE) and Xunzi (300 BCE–230 BCE) one need not divine to make moral or practical judgments or decisions on the basis of the understanding of the *Zhouyi*, because one had, or could have, sufficient knowledge base for making both rational and intuitive judgments. The rational judgment is one derived by virtue of some conceptual or empirical connection, whereas the intuitive judgment involves a mental grasp of a whole situation and thus leads to an image of a situation and its potential transformations. The book of *Yijing* is henceforth read and interpreted as a book of profound wisdom and cosmic and ethical insights.

As a matter of common sense, we can assume that the future is uncertain and holds many possibilities, such as one sees in weather changes. On the other hand, common sense also tells us that there are certain established trends and tendencies governing certain future events. This also means that those future events concern us because they are important to us and relate to serious purposes we wish to attain or to serious situations we want to avoid. Hence, we value some future events as beneficial (*ji* 吉) and others as harmful (*xiong* 凶), and obtaining a particular result often depends on which actions we choose. If there is no other way to know or assess a future event relative to one's purpose at hand, divination becomes important because it provides a certain (albeit randomly chosen) representation and articulation of actuality and implicit reference to a history and a future for one's given concern. Moreover, divination also provides an occasion to reflect and deliberate over one's future and one's action regarding the future with one's insight into the present situation. In other words, divination provides a means by which we can assess and understand our concern. That divination relies on a method that would provide a form of randomness as well as use of certain meaningful rules means that the result of the divination must be related to a given situation, or to a given purpose, in order to yield an understanding of both the present situation and the future event. This is why interpretation of the resulting *gua* (hexagrams or trigrams) is required and experience and expertise are needed. In short, divination can be seen as a method of anchoring the future in the present so that one clearly understands existing alternatives and assesses their consequential values before taking appropriate action.

Given the above analysis of the need and justification of divination, we can appreciate both the significance and the limitation of divination and understand why divination as a practice would wither out in the light of the philosophical understanding of the system of the *gua*. We also can understand how the very logic and process of divination would in a way contribute to the rise of the elaboration of the hidden cosmology and its application by understanding the system of *gua* by way of philosophical reflection and interpretation.

Divination is not philosophy, but there is an underlying philosophy or logic to divination. The underlying logic of divination is that one should see divination as underscoring both the limitation of the human condition and the freedom of human decision for action. On the one hand, a person is limited by his situation and even by his own purpose, and the future is not dictated by his wishes; on the other hand, a person can seek knowledge of the future or a way of understanding the possibilities of the future and thus make his own decisions. Divination provides a way of revealing one's limitations in one's lifeworld; at the same time, it provides a way of changing one's situation by acting on it appropriately.

One issue that pertains to the relevance of divination and the rise of the *Zhouyi* is the discovery of the "numerical hexagrams" (*shuzi gua* 数字卦) recorded on bones, pottery, and bronze objects by way of using the odd numbers 1, 5, 7, 9 and even numbers 6, 8 in the shape of ancient Chinese numerals. This appears to indicate that *Zhouyi* arose as a matter of sorting out "numerical hexagrams." Logically speaking, however, the understanding of the *gua* as relevant for a given situation still requires reference to a map of the reality, which I have suggested earlier as the cosmography conveyed in the "*bagua*" system. Further, the evolution of the numerical hexagrams would converge to represent the *gua* as composed of the *yin-yang* lines, which surprisingly correspond to the even and odd numbers 1 and 8. This should suggest that numbers are substitutions for the lines of hexagrams, which convey the images of the odd and even numbers.

### Topic 3: *Yijing* as a Symbolic System of Interpretation

Methodologically speaking, in the historical evolution of the texts, four factors have contributed to the transformation of the *Yijing* into a philosophical treatise in the form of the commentaries. First, one must

reflect on the system of the symbols as a whole in order to see how it captures the world-reality as a field of changes and transformations. As I have explained, this system of symbols can be seen as precisely arising from an effort to understand world-reality in the first place. To understand the texts philosophically is to rediscover or disclose the underlying cosmography of world-reality by way of *guan*. To realize this is also to discover a method of understanding world-reality even as it is presented to us now. Hence, the second factor, or step, in philosophical transformation is to confront directly the world-reality of natural phenomena (and processes) so that one can have a meaningful grasp of possibilities for understanding and action.

The *Xici* says: “Consequently, the superior man in residing observes the (natural) images and contemplates the judgments attached to the symbols for these images, whereas in action he observes their changes and contemplates the divinatory processes” (*Xici Shang* 2). A “superior person” cannot read a *gua* without referencing an actual image of the world for which the *gua* stands. The superior person reflects on the whole system of symbols and how each and all stand for the world-reality of changes. It is in this way that profound insights arise in the representation, reformation, and theoretical elaboration of the cosmographical picture therein.

The third factor is more hermeneutical than onto-hermeneutical, yet it depends on the onto-hermeneutical interpretation. Here we refer to the reconciliation of the symbolic meanings of the hexagrams with meanings of the original judgments (*ci*) attached to them. In a sense, the judgments are the first or original individual interpretations of the symbols (or images of the symbols) apart from cosmographical meanings they derive from the underlying system of cosmography. That these judgments are attached is basically a matter of contingency for different cases of divination, even though we must allow the efforts of an early thinker such as King Wen to sort out those judgments by way of correlation and classification, which gives rise to the formulation of the first system as a whole.

Because of this contingency of correlation, there exists a tension between the symbols and the judgments. In order to resolve this tension, two primary schools of interpretative philosophies of the *Yijing* arose in the history of the development of the discourses on the *Yijing*: the Image-Number (*Xiangshu*) School and the Meaning-Principle (*Yili*) School. Each can be further divided into subschools, namely the Image

School and the Number School for the former, and the Meaning School and the Principle School for the latter. But we must note that in actuality no school is exactly occupied with one of the four dimensions (so we may call them) to the exclusion of the other dimensions. In fact, these individual schools are more reductionist than exclusionist in their interpretation of the symbols and judgments. That is, each school would establish principles of interpretation on the basis of one dimension and then interpret other dimensions by reducing them to the terms of the chosen dimension.

As an historical note, we might mention that in the early Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) we see the rise of Image-Number School (*Xiangshu* 象数) in scholars such as Meng Xi (50 BCE) and Jing Fang (79–37 BCE). In fact, the Image-Number School flourished (even over-flourished) during the entire Han Era, until Wang Bi (226–249 CE) of the Wei-Jin Period (220–420) undertook a Daoist metaphysical critique of the Image-Number School and gave rise to the *Yili* (Meaning-Principle) School. One sees that in Wang Bi the principle of the *dao* dominates the meanings of the language, and this no doubt led to the rise of the meaning and principle-oriented interpretation and commentary on the *Yijing* in Cheng Yi (1033–1107), one of the founders of the Neo-Confucianism in Northern Song period (960–1127). It is not until Zhu Xi (1130–1200) that we see a synthetic approach to the interpretation of the *Yijing* by admitting *Xiangshu* as an element of interpretation.

After Zhu Xi, there was a tendency to move over to the *Xiangshu* considerations, as many *Yijing* scholars in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912) did, and also a tendency to transcend *Xiangshu*, as one finds in Wang Yangming (1472–1529) and Jiao Xun (1763–1820). In modern times, there appear to have been many meaning-oriented studies, particularly in light of the 1973 discovered Mawangdui Silk Manuscripts of the *Zhouyi*. In stressing practical use for individual purposes, there also appears to have been a contemporary revival of the *Xiangshu* studies in both China and Taiwan. But the key problem is still how we can resolve the tension between *Xiangshu* and *Yili*, which actually exists in the original texts of the *Yijing* up to this day, and integrate them in a holistic theory of understanding of reality and its representation in a system of symbols.

It should be clear that a balanced and unified approach to the interpretation of the *Yijing* as exhibited in my work on *Yijing* and its underlying methodology of onto-hermeneutics is essential for understanding the philosophical deep structure of the *Yijing* text and the source of insights