

# **The Way of Living Change**

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## **I**

### **Landscapes of Living Change**

The tradition or Way of the Classic of Change is like a great stream of images or symbols flowing back and forth through the present moment to connect the wisdom of ancient times with whatever the future may be. It is a kind of language that everything speaks; through it everything is always talking to everything else. Things are constantly vanishing and coming into being, a continual process of creation that becomes knowable or readable at the intersection points embodied in its symbols. Without this language our world shrinks and we are left in a deaf and dumb wasteland, forever outside of things.

#### **Opening the Gates** (17 x 13in.)

Most of us first encounter our destiny at a critical moment when a life-changing decision must be made. These critical moments are the nooses and snares of Fate. How we recognize and react to these fateful moments can open a dialogue with our destiny that defines the shape or flow of our lives. It can open the kind of imaginal dialogue that puts us in touch with what the old sages saw as the Bright Omen that Heaven gives us as we enter the world of the Ten Thousand Things, an omen of who we are meant to be.

Opening the Gates portrays that critical moment when we must choose which way we will go.



As you focus on the portal opened by the yellow light of the center two symbols appear. These are the most basic signs in the Way of Change. They condense all the play of the opposites into two signs that point at what opens the Way and what closes the Way. At the center of the yellow light is the sign for what opens the Way:



This graph is made up of a mouth and the sign for potency, a weapon or a phallus. These are sage words, wise words that open the heart, potent symbols, a good moon and expanding awareness.

This opening is surrounded by the ghosts of our past, images of a mind paralyzed by fear and pain, cut off from the sources of spirit and connection.



But as we enter the circle of protection the wise words offer, something happens. The great ancestral images begin to move in the Ghost River of our pain and sorrow and the shen, the bright spirits are called down to illuminate the shadow land in which we are living. The process of converting what Blake called the “mind-forged manacles” begins.



**The Field of Change** (24 x 18in)



The first step in the transformation the way of Change seeks to work in us is the opening of an inner field where a new center of awareness can be created.



The symbol of Change at the top literally shows the rays of the sun (or moon) emerging from the storm clouds, a profound change of weather brought about by a new connection with ancestral energies. Its meanings include all forms of change and transformation, but particularly what we might call trouble - destabilizing change. The trouble it brings links the quality of change in the world and the creative energy of change in the psyche with its symbolizing power. Here that deconstructive power manifests as the Tiger's Mouth, a ferocious purifying energy that clears the yin channels in the body through which spirit flows by devouring the fixed clusters of pain and rage that are passed to us through what we might call our family histories. A new center of the personality emerges, the Realizing Person, seen here as a mouth, an ax and the mysterious sign of new birth that is both young and old. This is who Change will talk to.

The signs of the subtle beginnings of all things emerge from the Ghost River to surround this new awareness in an ongoing dance of feedback and iteration that opens pathways in the imagination to the source of transformation.



The hidden trigger of transformation called the *Ji* emerges deep in the psyche, in the space between all things, slowly gathering the radical energy of change.



*Ji* is the source of the movement and the repose of the Way, the opening and closing of the gates of Heaven and Earth, coming and going, living and dying, condensing and dispersing. It is the Mysterious Female, the Valley Spirit, the Dark Animal Goddess, the source and spring of transformation where all movement originates. It is the infinitely small moment of equilibrium, the change between having and losing, rising and descending. It acts without being born; it dies without dying. All the Ten Thousand Things emerge from this single opening. The roots of ten thousand affairs issue from this single door. It is the door of all marvels and mysteries. It is the place of emergence and the hole in the world, the celestial music situated at the heart of reality.

**Filling the Vessel** (27 x 18in.)



We are now deep in the Ji, the moment between all things. Movement stops. Our normal awareness fades and everything is invested in the fertile darkness.



This deep inner center is imaged as a temple where two “bamboo shamans” - the diviners or spirit-intermediaries who worked with the Way of Change - face each other. The active energies of the Two Powers are suspended, a prayer for enlightening energy offered to each. A deep dialogue between the opposites - light and dark, male and female, life and death, begins, secured by the Great Yin Protector. As the great symbols talk with each other through this divinatory dialogue magic plants appear above the temple. These “sprouts of power and virtue (De)”, of ancestral potential, are activated in the heart-mind.

This deep devotion to the great symbols of Change is a spiritual practice, a habit of mind that constantly pulls experience in, de-literalizes it and links it to the great engines of change. This practice orders and clarifies the heart-mind. We become a medium or agent of this symbolic language that can put the world back together again, manifesting the change in and through our own being, filling the vessel to overflowing.



This symbol - the hand offering sacrifice and devotion and the wine jug filling with spirit - is one of the oldest images of transformation. As the jar fills, the hidden voices of things are released and the Dream Fox, sign of the shape-shifter who can free us from the prisons of literal - moves in our hearts to link us with the Way, the ongoing process of the real. A new awareness of the whole of life and its magical interrelations leaps forth, like a fish, a treasure hidden in the flow of life.



When we use the Change this way we are imitating those early spirit-intermediaries who could see and hear what is hidden, giving the bright spirits and the dark ghosts what is due to them. This imaginative generosity causes a radiant spirit to descend.

**Actualizing Dao** (26 x 15in.)



The process of encountering Change turns us away from logical thought to the underworld of the psychic image, to the ghosts and spirits that, in Jung's words, are the living units of the unconscious psyche, the architects of our dreams. The purpose of our dialogue with this unseen world is not to learn something but to experience something and be set right.

At a certain point in this deconstructive process the shape of things shifts. A carrying wave of energy emerges from an unknown center and begins to reassemble our being in a strange new way. This carrying wave is a spontaneous blessing, a connection to the spirits that will carry you through.



To create this carrying wave the animal powers of the psyche - the gods or spirits in their ancestral form - raise the inner temperature, drumming up the inner heat. The sage mind within us looks deep into this old hidden mirror. What emerges is perhaps the oldest form of the character for Dao or Way - the animal mask of the ancestor.

We put this mask on like a ritual dancer, seeing through its eyes and walking its way - one yin, one yang, that's Dao. Walking this way, one foot in the realizing power of the Earth and the Mothers, one foot in the inspiring force of Heaven, the Dragon and the Fathers, releases the innate visionary power of the heart-mind.



We come to a crossroads where the four directions and the hidden winds that enter the world through them join. It is as if the whole of life can be held in this living moment. This crossroads with an eye at its center is called De or Actualizing Dao, the capacity to live the Way in and through your own person.



The tree of the great enterprise of life grows from this center. This is the task of the Realizing Person: to raise Change into awareness, reconstituting the deep thought of the heart and releasing the soul from its literalizing prisons, and set it out for the people to use.

**Burning Water** (18in x 26in)



Burning Water is the landscape of Change as seen through the eyes of the Realizing Person. This Burning Water is the prima materia of Change, its mode of transformation and its final product, the very stuff of life, eternally renewing itself. It flows between life and death, inner and outer, past and future.

The dynamic of Burning Water is expressed in the old term for the passage of the generations: *wanglai*, going-coming. The Burning Water animates the great dictionary of symbols that is the Way of Change: All the possible patterns of generation, transformation and return of the Myriad Creatures as they are born, live out the stories of their lives and return to the source.

At the center of the Burning Water is a character, *jing*, that embodies the essence energy of all things and the process of perfecting that essence, of distilling the flow of life, turning it into symbolic awareness.



This essence-energy is continually expressing itself as the stories of our lives, a telling and retelling of the myths and symbols that continually recharges our lives with meaning. This center is surrounded by the words of a magic formula, *yuan heng li zhen* that encapsulates the round of the seasons, the directions, the winds and evolution in time of all things. Here at the center we see the vertical axis: Summer above, seen as the field altar and the ripening fruits, cooking through symbolizing, the brightening of the eye and the ear. Below is Winter, the sacred vessel and high divination that finds the hidden seed or pearl, putting things to the trial and inspiring the perseverance needed to follow the advice of the spirits.

In the lower corner is the sign for Going, the exorcism of the past, of all that has become fixed, and the sign for causes of sorrow, the entanglements that

trap the heart in remorse and compulsion. Above it is the sign for Fall and harvest, gathering in the insights, reaping the crop.



In the upper corner is the sign for Coming, the seeds and symbols of the new that flow into the center as the sufferings of the past dissolve.



Flanking it are the signs for the light of the spirits and the destiny they reveal, flowing from the Source, the eternal return, and carried into the world on the winds of Change. This is the promise of the Way of Change, that life and being are never exhausted and that the truth of the opened to the spirits will always see us through.

## II

### **The Characters of Living Change**

For thousands of years the Chinese have seen living a long and happy life as the highest good. We, too, aim at happiness and success in our lives but we seldom stop to ask ourselves what that happiness or success really is. Is it wealth, reputation, position, renown, accomplishments? Is it being a good parent? Is it becoming enlightened? When exactly are we happy and successful? The sages who created the wisdom tradition of *I Ching* or Change answered this question by saying: You are happy and successful when you are living in accord with the Way or Dao, no matter what you are literally doing.

From this perspective connecting with the Way or Dao is how you can live a long and happy life, not so much as a goal in itself but as the way you can fulfill your innate destiny by becoming who you are meant to be. It separates you from collective judgments and stereotypes, giving you a sense of making a real contribution to the world around you in and through becoming what you truly are meant to be. Life becomes discovery and fulfillment, a process of transforming the snares of your fate into bright omens of your true destiny.

#### **Destiny/ *Ming*** (23in x 12in)



The old character for Destiny shows the graphs for Heaven and the One, a person kneeling person and a mouth that gives Heaven a voice. Destiny is nature written into time, an investiture given by Heaven and a long and happy life that enables you to

fulfill the mandate that is bestowed upon you when you enter the world. It is the gift of Heaven, innate qualities and circumstances that are written into your being. It is your duty it is to accomplish the task Heaven gives you, to discover, develop and express it through focused effort over time. The character means to proclaim an order, obligations and commands, to inform or warn, to fix, determine, instruct, teach and clarify. As *Tian Ming*, it is the Mandate of Heaven given to a ruling family, which can be withdrawn if the family line fails to live up to its responsibilities to care for the people and nourish the ancestors.

Our Destiny is the Bright Omen that Heaven gives us as we enter this world, the All-Under-Heaven. It is our connection to the process of time and it is our task to discover and realize the ancestral potential it contains. Most of us first encounter our destiny at a critical moment when a life-changing decision must be made. These critical moments are the nooses and snares of Fate. How we recognize and react to these fateful moments can open a dialogue with our destiny that defines the shape of our lives. It is critical that we understand just what is at stake in our encounters with fate and how we can open the kind of imaginal dialogue that puts us in touch with what the old sages saw as the Bright Omen that Heaven gives us as we enter the world of the Ten Thousand Things, an omen of who we are meant to be.

If the yang power of Heaven gives us our destiny, the power of Earth gives us our Character, the yin of our inner being that determines our personal fate.

**Character/*Xing*** (20in x 15in)



The old graph for character is made up of the sign for heart and the sign for birth. This is the yin of fate, inner nature and disposition, the nature given by heaven that determines personal fate. It is natural law as it is expressed in an individual: gender, sexuality, passions, behavior patterns, social class, virtues and qualities, the family name or line. Character is written in the being. It is outside of time, hidden behind all exterior manifestations, an enduring inner image like the path of the moon.

And it gives us our Passions, drives and desires woven deeply into our personal being.

### **Passions/ *Qing* (20in x 13in)**



The old graph for passions is made up of the sign for heart and the sign for the deep blue-green color of growing plants, of Wood and the Liver orbit. This is the yang of the inner life, written in the being, outside of time. It is all the intimate emotions, passions, drives and desires, appetites, profound tendencies, sentimental attachments and passionate loves, whatever we prefer through innate nature. If these predilections become passions they perturb and corrupt the functioning of the entire system. If they are taken into the heart mind, they can free us from enslavement to outer circumstances and desires, revealing the realities of things and bringing inner peace and harmony.

### **The Language of Change**

The Way of Change aims at adding something crucial to our awareness that can connect us to what the old sages called the *Dao*, the on-going process of the Real. The tradition is a stream of images or symbols flowing back and forth through the present moment to connect the wisdom of ancient times with whatever the future may be. Its job is really to make us deeply aware of the

now, the present moment and what is at play in the everyday events of our lives.

This symbolic world is like a language that everything speaks; through it everything is always talking to everything else. Things are constantly vanishing and coming into being, a continual process of creation that becomes knowable or readable at the intersection points represented by the symbols. The old sages felt that this language establishes order and harmony in the world. Without it, our world shrinks and we are left in a deaf and dumb wasteland, forever outside of things.

Understanding this kind of symbolic meaning is possible because of a deep symbolic community, a sort of inner thesaurus of meanings within each of us. To open this inner thesaurus, we must let the symbols inform and transform our imagination so that their meanings can arise. This kind of direct experience lets the symbols break through the conceptual structures of what the old sages call our Monkey-mind, a group of chattering voices within us that is always creating fictional pasts and futures.

We can see the energies embodied in the language of Change at work in the people around us and in ourselves. In fact, each of us is a dynamic mixture of these energies and the ever-changing interaction of this mixture defines who we are. The basic lesson is that we are not one but a collection of different energies, each with its own style, characteristics and way of knowing and seeing things. Our task is to try to include all the parts of ourselves and learn from them, rather than try to control them, to include the mysterious quality of change in our lives, what mathematicians see as the quality of an irrational number, a problem that can never be solved. It is precisely in this magic moment, right on the edge or borderline between yes and no, life and death, that we *experience* the Way.

It is said that the language of Change reaches the depths and penetrates the wills of all creatures Under Heaven. Its symbols (*xiang*) teach us about our

innate nature (*xing* and *qing*) and letting us accumulate the power to become who we are meant to be (*ming*).

Change does this by “pairing”, holding the opposites in one thought, a meditative practice that allows enlightening spirit to enter and inform the heart-mind. This pairing reflects a basic mytheme in eastern thought, an underlying understanding about the nature of reality: Nothing stands alone; each thing can only truly exist when held in tension with its opposite. A basic way of imagining these pairings is as a set of spindles on which an unbroken thread is wound back and forth like a Möbius strip, or as a great egg that turns itself inside out without breaking its shell. The thread is the thread of life itself as it passes back and forth between the two powers at every level of our lives.

One dark (yin), one light (yang), that’s the Way.  
To follow this tells you what is good.  
To completely identify with it shows you the essence.  
If you want to be benevolent, see it as benevolence.  
If you want to be wise, see it as wisdom.  
People use this every day without knowing it.  
Using it as a Realizing Person is what is rare.  
It is the gift of life concealed in everything you do.  
It does not share the philosopher’s anxiety about imperfection.

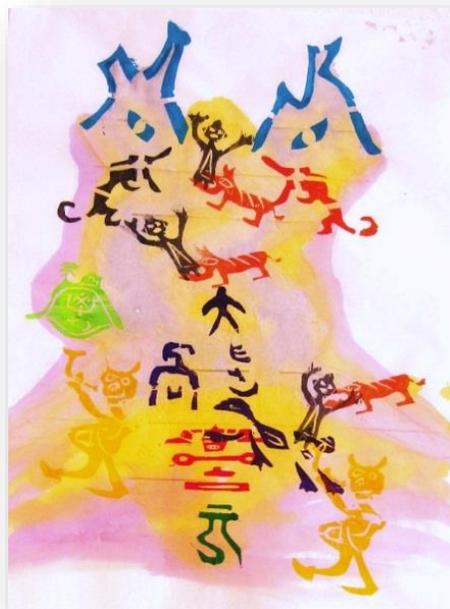
Pairing establishes a pattern of interconnected opposites that permeates the oldest layers of Change, seen in the many sets of paired words that turn “either-or” into “both-and”. All the changes in the world we live in are produced by the mysterious doubling embodied in the Pairs. They hold the two Primal Powers in a single effective image. Tradition says that the fractal systems of pairs in Change contain the wordless secret of the Dao.

### **Strange Attractors**

The linguistic pairing in Change attaches a strange double set of meanings to its words. This contradictory set of meanings transforms key terms into *hundun* words, a Daoist term that indicates the presence of Old Mr. Hundun,

the primal chaos at the center of the Four Directions and the cosmos itself, the source of all.

The experience of what a *hundun* word represents enfolds us in the strangely compelling mystery of a deconstruction of our name and our civilized identity. It acts as a Strange Attractor, a centrifugal configuration of virtual space like an inner whirlpool that pulls all the seeming oppositions in our experience down into the turbulent chaos below. We are bothered or haunted by things we do not quite understand; strange rippling chains of mythic associations move through our imagination, destabilizing our normal identity until a critical point is reached and we go into a kind of crisis. The separate systems composing our identity disperse and dissolve, dropping us deeper into turbulence, drawing everything in our experience down the magic rabbit hole. This means the death or end of the stable system's existence. It is the precise point at which our logic cuts its own throat.



*Strange Attractor/Tiger's Mouth (27)* shows the initiation ordeal that renews the sources of literal and spiritual nourishment through contact with the Tiger who devours the corruption of the past.

This Strange Attractor repeats at all levels of our lives, precisely mirroring the *hole* or lack in our lives, the missing information that connects us to the *(w)hole*. It opens a Gate in the heart-mind or imagination, a dragon hole or openings in the web of life where our destiny can be connected with our fate.

**Gateway/*Men*** (19in x 12in)



The old character for gateway shows a double door, the two-leafed gate of Change that controls the alternation of the two primal powers. It is the gate of an ancestral temple, a way to access originating energy, a door, entrance, access, orifice or opening. It is the ways and means, a school of thought, a portal point. This is the Gate of the Four Directions or Seasons through which the hidden winds blow from the lands outside of human experience.

Once through the Gateway, the process of symbolizing begins, turning us from the worlds of cause and effect to the magical language of the imaginal world.

**Symbolizing/*Xiang*** (20in x 12in)



The old character for symbol portrays an elephant and the elephant mind where all the great symbols reside. A symbol is an image that has the power to connect things, to connect the visible world of your problems to the invisible world of the spirit. Change works through these symbols, created by the sages and shamans through a kind of imaginative induction that is also called *xiang*. A symbol is a magic spell, a figure or likeness that provides a pattern or model. We make the connection between the invisible world of the spirit and the visible world of our lives by playing with the symbols, by imitating them and acting them out.

These symbols that arise in the heart-mind act as accumulators of the energy called *De* or the power to actualize the Way in and through our own person. This energy will let link with our destiny and fulfill our ancestral potential, becoming who we are meant to be.

**Accumulating/Chu** (17in x 11in)



The old character shows interconnected silk bundles and a planted field. It suggests lush deep green pastures and means to nourish, raise, tame, train, amass, accept, tolerate, reunite and retain, to follow, to be in accord with, to love or be pleased with. It is a protective shell and protection in the womb. The top part of the old character is *xuan*, the dark mystery, subtle and all pervading, that embraces the universe.

When we consciously embrace the symbols and the actualizing power that they accumulate, they become guides on the voyage of life, letting us endure and renew ourselves and our connection to the Way each day.

**Persevering/ *Heng*** (18in x 11in)



The old character for persevering is made up of the graphs for heart and for the spiral path of the waxing moon. Persevering means to create an enduring form for the gifts of the spirit, to make power and virtue endure in the heart, to endure and constantly renew the Way, to continue in what is right. It is constant, consistent, durable, self-renewing, regular, perpetual and universal, the image of a stable married couple whose relation is renewed each day.

Setting our feet on the enduring Way brings us the capacity to realize things, to effect transformation in the world around us through synchronistic rather than literal power.

**Ability/Enabling/ *Neng*** (19in x 10in)

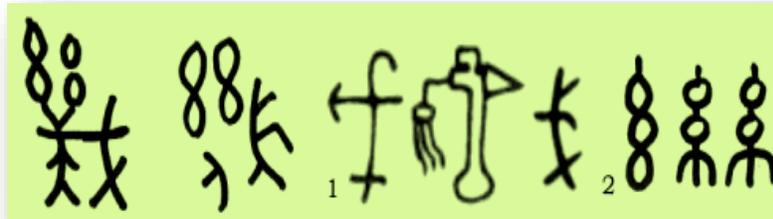


The old character is the image of a bear and the strength, power and capacity of the bear shaman. It is the name of the stars of the Great Bear asterism and the three legged turtle that points at the power of the trigrams. It represents shamanic power: capable, qualified, competent, enabling, powerful and daring.

### The Hidden Triggers of Change

This enabling process points at an ongoing imaginal induction, an ongoing dance of feedback and iteration that opens pathways in the imagination that lead to and from what the sages called the “subtle beginnings”.

**Subtle beginnings Ji** show where transformation first appears in the stream of time. They are a sign, a warning and a strategy, indicating a symbolic reversal is about to manifest.



Ji, subtle beginnings shows 1) a frontier guard with an emblem ax, sign of power, and 2) linked grains of rice or silk cocoons.

We find the Hidden Triggers of Change contained within these subtle beginnings:



**Ji/hidden trigger**, with the Wood radical, denotes the trigger of a crossbow, a declenching mechanism; it is a machine, motor, organism, organ; it is the craft and practice of weaving or cross-breeding, mettissage; it is a trap for an animal, a strategy, an artifice or ingenious invention; it is ability, talent, the decisive or opportune moment; it represents changes of fortune, vicissitudes of destiny, the cause or motive of events and to become mobile and fluid, a mobile and fluid identity. Buddhists used this word to describe the profound nature that is capable of responding to a spiritual impulse, the dynamic principle of the human being. Daoists saw it as the source and motive principle of being in the world, the favorable moment for a reconnection to the Source. The *tian ji* was the “source of heaven”, a star in the important constellation we call the Great Bear through which blessings flowed. It is the threshold of a door, the first indications, the forerunner and is a synonym for what is strange, bizarre, coming from the borders.

This *ji* character is a key term in all Daoist mysteries, meditations and divinatory practices. Whenever we are pulled back or infolded into the mystery of the Source we encounter the *ji*, the hidden triggers and wellsprings of deep transformation.

The Ten Thousand Things issue from and return to the *Ji*, the source of the Way, the spring of Heaven and Earth. They surge from the *Ji* into life, entering the transformations of yin and yang.

Let us open the obscure *Ji*, the spring of the source. *Ji* is the source of the movement and the repose of the Way, the opening and closing of the gates of Heaven and Earth, coming and going, living and dying, condensing and dispersing. It is the Mysterious Female, the Valley Spirit, the Dark Animal Goddess. It is the source and spring of the transformations called *Yi* or Change, where all movement originates. It is the infinitely small moment of equilibrium, the change between having and losing, rising and descending. It acts without being born; it dies without dying. It puts Heaven and Earth into movement, sprouting, intertwining and connecting, the movement and the source of movement.

All the Ten Thousand Things emerge from this single opening. The roots of ten thousand affairs issue from this single door. It is the door of all marvels and mysteries. It is the place of emergence and the hole in the world, the celestial music, situated at the heart of reality.

When it is acted upon by the symbols, our heart-mind is triggered into action, spontaneously producing empowering images that re-shape our desire and intent. This is a major goal of the Way of Change: to train the heart, still the passions and strip away old patterns of compulsive behavior. It wakes the

heart's latent imaginative powers, the ancestral potential or sprouts of virtue that lurk in its depths.

When we then fix (*heng*) the symbols that arise in these trigger moments, giving them an enduring place in the heart-mind, they act as accumulators of a wisdom and insight that activates what the alchemists called true imagination as opposed to wish-fulfilling fantasy.

### **The Playing Field of Life**

The deep structure of Change organizes these symbols that enact imaginal operations into a model of the ideal cultural life-span. Change thus becomes a Portable Altar, used in the ancient world to give shape and meaning to individual experience by locating it in relation to the ritual progression of the Symbolic Life.



The Matrix of Change that organizes and displays the symbols is made up of a series of Decades, sequences of ten hexagrams or five Pairs of hexagrams that are based on an old far-Eastern age-grade system that marked the stages of life and the passages between these stages. The Decades portray the ideal shape of

the Symbolic Life as a process of ritual education in which ancestral knowledge or wisdom that represents our future flows backwards on the stream of time to pull up or educate us as we move through the forward stream of our lives.

The Decades represent a continual symbolic birth, death and re-birth process that enables us to connect our identity to the ancestral foundation of life and thus accumulate the power and virtue (*de*) to become who we are meant to be. Each Decade is at once a personal experience, a reorganization of intelligence and the nervous system, a step in the evolution of culture and the expression of the continuous creation of life and spirit.

Locating yourself in the Decades creates a water mirror of Heaven-Earth, the dreaming of the Myriad Beings that opens a portal to Heaven.



*5 Dreaming in the Stream* shows dreaming in the temple hidden in the Burning Water, with a spirit visitor arriving who opens the gates to the spirit.

This is where the World Tree grows. It is an *axis mundi* or zone of absolute reality where there is perfect access to the spirit world, a place where the dead rest in peace and receive the great offerings. Both the Sacred Mountain and the Sacred Vessel were felt to reflect the shape of the human heart (*xin*). The Gate to the ritual enacted through them appears in the heart any time the high ritual and divination is performed.

### **The Friendship of the Spirit**

The act of moving from concepts to the psycho-active symbols behind them opens a potent, mysterious yet knowable world, a personal way of transformation allied to early practices of talking to spirits. The experience of this helping spirit can make you sage: clear-seeing, knowing death and birth, feeling the friendship of the spirit and compassion for fellow humans. It is the ground of the symbolic life; it reclaims the reality of the psyche.

The inner chapters of an early Daoist text (c. 400 BCE) give us a sense of this practice:

When your life-energy is put on the Way,  
it vitalizes you.  
When you are vitalized, you can imagine.  
When you imagine, you truly know.  
When you know, you stop.  
The hearts of all beings are shaped like this.  
If your thirst for knowing seeks to go farther,  
you will kill them.

There is a limit to knowing in the true sense and that limit is imagination. Change puts you on the Way, vitalizes your imagining, opens your heart and that is enough.

Look, there is a spirit within your person.  
Now it goes, now it comes.  
No one can capture it,  
but if you reverently clean its abode  
it will return of itself.  
You will recover your own true nature,  
fixed in you once for all.