

# *The Looms of Change*

## ***Daodejing***

Classic of the Way and its Power



## ***Yijing***

Classic of Change

Stephen Karcher Ph.D.





## The Looms of Change

The *Dao De Jing* and the Classic of Change (*Yijing*)

### **When the Two were One**

The *Daodejing* or Classic of the Way and its Power and the *Yijing* or Classic of Change are the Mother and Father of the ancient spiritual path of the East. Both grew out of oral, visual and divinatory traditions that flow from the late Paleolithic and began to differentiate as written language and historical awareness began. Indeed, the Chinese written language was developed specifically to record the answers given by Ancestors and Spirits when questions were posed to them and the first versions of what became *Yijing* or the Classic of Change were China's first books. Though the texts of what became *Daodejing* were recorded much later, in the Warring States period that also saw a complete revolution in the way the Change was seen and used, they quite possibly accompanied the development of the Way of Change as an inner teaching, transmitted orally from master to student.

The split between these two traditions really came with the Confucian moral reinterpretation of both the Change and the divinatory traditions of the *Dao* and the *De* in the Han Dynasty (c.220BCE- 200CE). This split is exemplified by the radical division of the divinatory and interpretive practices associated with the tradition of Change into the *i-li* or Moral Principle School that focused on the words and the *xiang-shu* or Image-Number school that focused on the diagrams and visual symbols. The words were taken over by the Confucians and made into a learned school of moral and social philosophy; the diagrams and images became the property of the old *Wu* or spirit-intermediaries whose

“Daoist magic” was pushed down into the lower classes. This moral and social dichotomy became an integral part of imperial culture.

### **Recasting the Vessel**

I’ve spent most of my adult life trying to rescue the old Way of Change from the mind-forged manacles this moral and social dichotomy imposed upon it. I was first inspired to do this by both the words of C.G. Jung and a series of dreams and visions in which I felt Change was communicating with me and directing my focus. Jung felt that the Classic of Change was a way to connect with *Dao*, the “on-going process of the Real” which he saw as the process and goal of his psychology. Change was a way to a living religious experience, “a formidable psychological system that organizes the play of the archetypes so that a reading becomes possible” (CW14, §401, 1954). This mysterious book was an answer to the West's spiritual needs, he maintained, for its 64 symbols “traced the course of the valley spirit, the *tao*, winding like a dragon or a river” (CW14, §636n, 1954).

For Jung, Change was a psychological and spiritual phenomenon of the first order, and his experience with it led him to insist that “psychology in the stricter sense is bound up with the *whole practical use* of the *I Ching*”. It is “our mirror,” he said, and if we take the time to translate our experience into its language rather than turning it into another item in our spiritual supermarkets it can transform the way we experience ourselves and the world we live in. Rather than feeling ourselves the victims of the unknowable changes that are going on all around us, we begin to participate in a dialogue with the forces that are producing those changes. In a word, the world around us comes to life again.

### **The Two Traditions**

As I began to work with the hidden tradition of Change, I described it like this:

I Ching or Change, as it is usually called, is a book, a technique for using the book, and a spiritual practice or Way that grows out of the technique that has been treasured in the East for thousands of years as a guide to navigating the voyage of life. It effects a transformation of what the old Chinese sages called the heart-mind, a transformation that dissolves our fixed patterns of thought and inspires imaginative mobility.

All this time, like many of my generation, I also carried *Daodejing* along with me on my journeys. Now for Westerners, *Daodejing* is also fenced in by thick thorn-hedges of interpretation, but of a different kind. Its texts, deeply embedded in the mystical language and alchemical tradition of “teaching without words,” are surrounded by the enormous and, for us, virtually impenetrable interpretive traditions of the latter-day Celestial Masters School. And though there are literally scores of English translations to start from, virtually all of them are taken either directly from the work of the late Han dynasty scholar Wang Bi, who turned *Daodejing*’s mysterious language of images into conceptual-philosophical morality, or drowned by our sentimental humanism and New Age drivel. Thus the mysterious language of *Daodejing* no longer has an embodied poetic voice that can sponsor what I have called the performative linguistic act of imaginative transformation.

But as I began another rescue operation on *Dazhuan*, the Great Treatise or Great Tradition that explains how we can use the mysterious “attached words” of the Change, I began to see just how close the language of Change and the language of the *Daodejing* were. Take this, for instance:

Change is without conscious thought and acts without purpose.

Like the Dao, it is still and unmoving.

If you stimulate it by asking a question,

it penetrates the causes of everything in the world we live in.

Change enabled the Sage People  
to penetrate the extreme depths  
of what is hidden in the profound.

They thoroughly understood  
the infinitely subtle beginnings of Change.

It is only through what is deep

that we can penetrate the purposes of the world we live in.

It is only through what is subtle

that we can complete the workings of the world we live in.

It is only through our helping spirit

that we can hurry without haste  
and arrive at our goal without going.

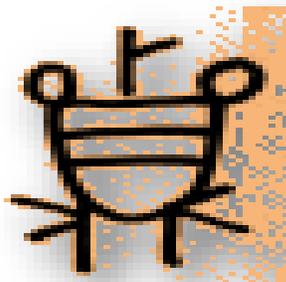
When the Master said,

“Change has the fourfold Dao of the Sage-Mind in it,”  
this is what he meant.

*Dazhuan*, I.11, my translation.

Aha! I began to see that the language of *both* traditions was actually meant to turn our mind inside-out like, in Yeats’ words, “a great egg that turns itself inside out without breaking its shell”. And both, again in Yeats’ words, “refuse to use a logic that will not cut its own throat”.

But how does this kind of language work? How does it effect change? This sort of inquiry brings up the question of “divination,” denigrated by both Confucians and Celestial Masters as fortune-telling or prophecy. But a very basic word or symbol in the tradition of Change, *trial/zhen*, refers directly to the central importance of divination in the process of Change, the way to find the hidden seed or kernel of a situation, the pearl of true insight. It insists that the only Way to find what is proven and true is by submitting our aims, desires and problems to the judgment of the spirits through divination.



ZHEN/trial shows a sacred vessel with the sign for a successful divination rising from it. It means consulting the Change and receiving a true and trustworthy answer. It also symbolizes the perseverance needed to follow the Way of the spirit, giving the answer that is offered an enduring place in your heart.

It has been said that the divinatory tradition of Change, its language as opposed to the later moral/social philosophy that was created from it, is a vast latent network of symbols and connections that have the ability to create real significance. However, this network empowers something to signify or release meaning *only* when it is activated by the divinatory charge given by an inquirer's question and the emotional and individual need to know behind it.

Change makes the Way visible.  
It shows spirit in action  
and helps you accumulate the power  
to become who you are meant to be.  
Those who *use* Change receive aid.  
They acquire a helping spirit  
like the shamans and spirit-intermediaries in ancient times  
who were protected by the bright spirits.  
The Master asked one day:  
“If you know the Way of Change and the Transformations,  
Won't you know how spirit acts?”

*Dazhuan*, 1.9, my translation

This Way of knowing is a survival of ancient paradigms of thought that reflect the deep human capacity, shared with animals, to access information not directly available to normal consciousness. The numinous and paradoxical images we see in the mirror of Change lead us into terra incognita. They are a challenge to live life truthfully, a Way of Knowing specifically designed to connect us to the Dao, the on-going process of the Real. One of the things that completely re-activated my deep interest in translating *Daodejing* was the recent scholarship that suggests access to its texts came not through a cognitive reading process but by using a divinatory method that allowed the book itself to select the particular texts that give voice to what the inquirer needs to experience in his or her particular situation.

Now, I had said that:

... as a book Change consists of 64 hexagrams or six-line diagrams that are arranged in thematic pairs. Each hexagram has a name and a

number. Each is made up of six whole (*yang*) or opened (*yin*) lines that have the capacity to turn into their opposites. This means that when activated by divination any hexagram can turn into any other hexagram and we can trace the path of these changes. All of the hexagrams carry deeply evocative words and phrases that call up endless chains of mythic association. The interaction of the diagrams, the words and their mythic associations creates a matrix, a set of symbols that embodies all the possible changes and transformations we go through in the voyage of our lives.

In the words of *Dazhuan*, this comes out as:

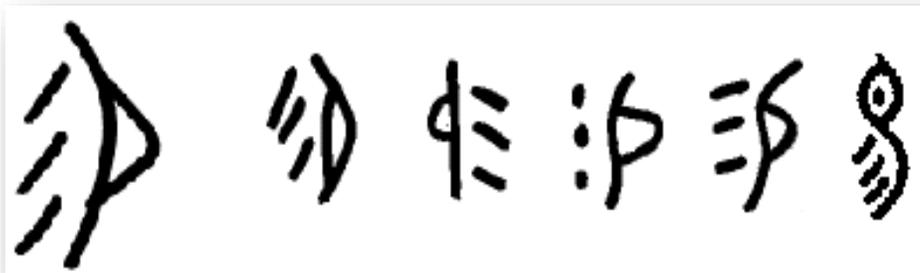
One day the Master said: Is not Change above all things?  
Sages used the Change to exalt their realizing power  
to include the power of Heaven.  
They broadened their field of understanding  
to include the strength and expanse of Earth.  
The intuition of Heaven raises us up.  
The things that connect us with others humble us.  
Through exaltation we follow Heaven.  
Through connection we follow Earth.  
Give Heaven and Earth their fixed places within you.  
Then the transformation can take place between them.  
This is what will complete your nature.  
It will sustain you and let you endure.  
It is the Gate of the Way.  
It fixes the heart-mind and frees you from compulsion.

*Dazhuan*, I.7, my translation

We can examine the process of transformation at the heart of this Way of Change by looking at some of the words it uses to describe itself and give voice to the world it opens. These words are part of a common language of symbols shared by both Change and *Daodejing*.

### **The Name of the Book**

The most important word in the tradition of the Classic of Change is its name: *I* or *Yi* (pronounced “yee”), usually translated as Change or changes. It seems to mirror the words *Dao-De*, the name of the *Daodejing* or Way-Power Classic.



YI/change, shows the sun or moon with its rays emerging from behind a cloud. It is used to indicate a change of weather or time brought about by the ancestor spirits.

The character at right was also seen as a chameleon.

Philosophically, this *yi* is primordial change, the mutations or transformations that initiate the process of generation and transformation in all the Myriad Beings, the *Wanwu*. It is inscribed in the actual order of things, in the on-going process of the Real or *Dao*, offering the seeds and symbols through which life and spirit transmit and extend themselves.

The various meanings of this word include making a gift, healing a sickness, calming and tranquilizing the spirit, pulling up weeds and cultivating a field. It is the sun appearing after a storm, thanks to the intervention of an ancestor. It is the name of a frontier region and suggests borderline and liminal states. The character in its various forms contains the graphs for sun and moon and for a lizard or chameleon.

Though it contains models of orderly change (*hua*), such as the round of the seasons and the stages of life, and models of transformation (*bian*) like ice becoming water or life turning into death, *yi* is first of all experienced as destabilizing change, a challenge to all that is fixed, overdeveloped, oppressive or outmoded. It evokes sudden storms, the times when the stable becomes fluid and structures fail. It is also the response to this kind of situation: openness, versatility and imaginative mobility. It suggests a fluid personal identity and a variety of imaginative stances that reconnect us with the deep

flow of the Dao or Way. *Dazhuan* or *The Great Treatise* gives us a way to understand both the nature of this Change and the way we can connect with it:

Change is a tradition you cannot push away.  
Its Way is always shifting.  
Transforming and moving, never resting,  
it circles and flows through the six empty places.  
Rising and falling, never fixed,  
the strong and the supple transform each other.  
Rules cannot confine this, for it follows only Change.  
It issues forth and re-enters in a stately dance  
illuminating the causes of trouble,  
teaching caution within and without.  
It is not a spiritual master or an army sent to save you.  
It is as if your beloved parents draw near.  
First follow the words and feel their places in your heart mind.  
Suddenly the Way arises  
and you have charge of the omens and the symbols.  
If you are unwilling to do this,  
the Way cannot open to you.

*Dazhuan* II.7, my translation

Both Change and *Daodejing* aim at adding something crucial to our awareness, something that can make us aware of the now, the present moment and what is truly at play in the inner world – what *Daodejing* calls “This-here” - and how it shapes the events of our lives and their social context - “That-there”.

One dark (*yin*), one light (*yang*) – this is the Way.  
To follow this tells you what is good.  
To identify with it shows you what is essential.  
If you want to be benevolent, call it benevolence.  
If you want to be wise, call it wisdom.  
People use this every day without knowing it.  
Using the Way to realize yourself is what is rare.  
It is the gift of life concealed in everything you do.  
It rouses the Myriad Beings to live and act.  
Its realizing power is complete.  
Its greatness possesses all things.  
Through its great Realizing Power and innate virtue (*de*)  
it renews life every day.

*Dazhuan* I.5, my translation

A very important term in both *Change* and *Daodejing* is the Ancient Sage, Sage Person or Sage-Mind (*sheng ren*). The Ancient Sages are the source of all wisdom and culture; a Sage Person is not only realized but has passed into ways of understanding usually unavailable to humans. In the old thought, a Sage was a spirit-medium who had obtained the aid of a powerful helping spirit or *shen*.



SHENG, sage, shows an ear, a mouth and a carrying pole, which is also the name of the Ninth Heavenly Stem. Another version shows a man standing on the earth from which he has grown. This character is now written as REN, person, people or humanity. The expression suggests a sage, saint, emperor, genius and is used to mean holy, sacred, august, imperial, and eminent.

Everything that is of worth in our world was generally seen as descending from the *shengren*, the Sage People or Sage Mind, that lived in a time before history began. This Sage Mind exists both inside and outside the flow of time. For Chinese, the Ancient Sages may or may not have been literal people, but the mind that made them sage exists now as well as then. This Sage Mind is seen as identical with *Change* and with the workings of *Dao-De*. The emergence of *Change* is a product of the Sage-Mind working through the mediums and diviners who set it forth. Given the central importance of the Ear in this character, I've chosen to translate it as *the One who Hears* in *Daodejing*.

The goal in human character development represented by this term might be best expressed through the Daoist formula *wu-wei* or not-acting. It represents a suspension of the rational power drive that leads to focused, directed, planned action (*wei*), opening a space in the heart-mind (*xin*) for the symbols

(*xiang*) and spirits (*shen*) of the Way to emerge, shaping our lives and our interaction with the world.



WEI (12164/87), act or activate, shows a hand leading an elephant, sign for the symbols that approach on the stream of time. It suggests forceful, planned, directed action to reach a clear goal.

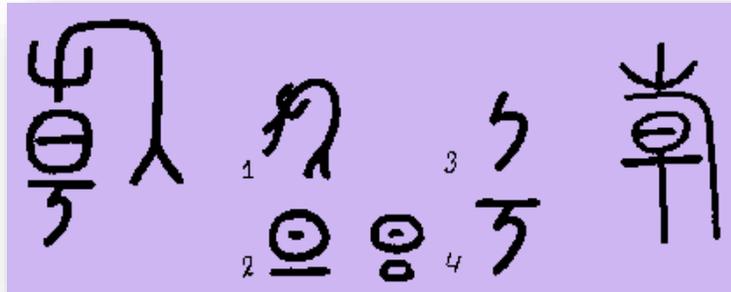


WU (12363), without, is a very strong negative, meaning does not possess or completely lacking. The character shows a person dancing with ox-tails in his/her hands, having, as it were, killed the force and drive of the bull. This may allude to the spring sacrifice of the Red Bull that opens the fields.

### **Gates of Change**

The act of putting our ideas to the trial/*zhen*, in essence cooking them in the Sacred Vessel, opens the Gates of Change. These Gates are symbolized as Dragon/Heaven/*Qian* and Earth/Field/Dark Animal Goddess/*Kun*. These are the two Primal Powers that are the basis of all Eastern thought. Everything that exists in the world we live in is created through the interaction of these Two Powers, called *yin* and *yang* in later terminology. They are the Two-Leafed Gate of Change through which everything enters and leaves the world.

**Inspiring Force/Dragon, Qian** signifies spirit, creative energy, active transforming power and inspiration, the male sexual organ and masculine drive. It activates, animates, commands and guides, strong, tenacious, untiring and firm.



QIAN is composed of YAN, lush hanging vegetation, jungle (1); DAN, dawn, the sun just above the horizon (2); and YI: animating vapors or breath that spread to nourish the All Under Heaven, the world we live in (3, 4).

The Dragon is the rainmaker, the yang force awakening life. Mythically, he suggests the abysmal waters where the suns are born each day and the world tree from which they fly. He is gate to the unseen world of spirit, the dark bird who is the ancestor of dynasties, the origin of the Myriad Beings.

**Field/Dark Animal Goddess, Kun** is the earth, the world, space, concrete existence, moon, mother, wife, servants, ministers; all that is supple, adaptable, receptive, yielding and fertile.



KUN is composed of 1: TU, earth (1) and SHEN, spirit power and the primordial waters, the rhythm of birth and death (2).

These Gates of Change establish a pattern of interconnected opposites that permeates the matrix. It is seen in construction of the Pairs and in the many sets of paired words in the language of Change that transform “either-or” into “both-and.” All the powers and changes in the world we live in - dark (*yin*) and light (*yang*), Great and Small, strong and supple, sun and moon, transformation and continuity, above and below, inside and outside, me and you - are a product of the mysterious process of doubling embodied in Change through its participation in these two primal powers. This fractal pairing is the basis of all structures and ways of knowing in Change:

Now listen very carefully:  
As the birth of all births, this Way is called Change.  
Change is made of symbols.  
What moves and completes the symbols is called Dragon/Heaven.  
What unfolds them into patterns of life is called Earth/Field.  
What shows our fate through these symbols is called divination.  
Penetrating the transformations is called the work.  
What we cannot understand in terms of light and dark is called spirit.  
As we do the work, the spirit arrives.

*Dazhuan*, I.5, my translation

### **The Way or Dao**

Within this cosmos, each being follows its individual path in a great interconnected dance. *Dao* is that way or path. In its oldest uses it indicates a road, a step on the road and the way or life of the various kinds of beings: a carpenter's *dao*, a wife's *dao*, a warrior's *dao*, a king's *dao*, a sage's *dao*. *Dao/Way* is the on-going process of the Real that traces a path for the entire universe and, at the same time, for each individual being in that universe. It is the fundamental term in Eastern thought.

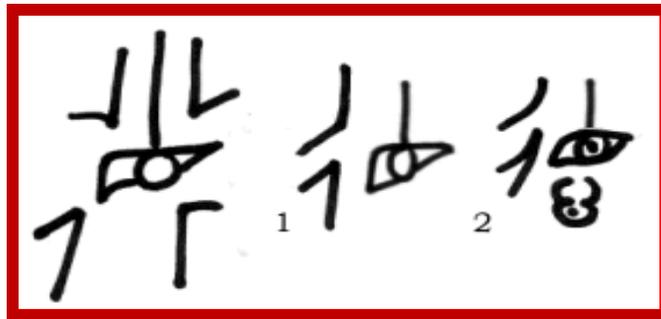


DAO, way, is a crossroads with a head and a foot at its center, suggesting the central choice that connects the mind with the act of going or walking. The oldest form of the graph was an animal mask, the beast face of the ancestors and their paradise time.

To be “in” this Way or *Dao* is to be connected to the source of meaning and value, a religious experience of a high order that brings joy, spontaneity, peace, creativity and compassion. To be cut off from *Dao* is to fall into the trap of isolation, danger, premature withering and death.

**Potency, Power and Virtue**

When we walk the Way of Change, following the Dao, we accumulate *De*, a Realizing Power or inner potency. *De* is a kind of power and virtue that can be accumulated in the heart; it helps you to fully exist, to actualize the Way in and through your person and become what you are meant to be.



DE/Realizing Power or Actualizing Dao shows an eye (insight) with a line indicating straightening at a crossroads on the path or Way (1). With the heart radical added it suggests becoming what you are meant to be (2).

Using Change is a way to accumulate *De*. Someone full of *De* is numinous because they have the power to realize the Way in and through their own

person. By accumulating and refining *De* you can become Great, able to lead your own life and be of inspiration and service to others.

### **Symbols and Symbolizing**

The Way of Change works through symbols (*xiang*) and the act of symbolizing. A symbol is an image that has the power to connect the visible world of our problems or difficulties with the invisible world of the spirit. It is a magic spell, a figure or likeness of what is profound and mysterious that provides a pattern or model to imitate. *Daodejing* uses this term many times to describe the “appearances without form or substance” that somehow mediate between us and the Way.



XIANG, symbol/symbolizing is the sign for an elephant and the Elephant Mind, the great repository of all possible symbols. It is the summer fire sacrifice and the winter offering to the underworld waters.

The symbols were created by sages and shamans through symbolizing their imaginative experience. In the same way, we can use Change to “symbolize” our experiences and problems, making the connection between the invisible world of the spirit and the visible world of our lives by imitating the symbols, acting through them as we engage the world around us.

By using the symbols,  
Sage People saw all the spirit forces in the world we live in.  
The symbols determine forms and appearances  
and connect all things.  
That is why they are called symbols.  
The Sage People were able  
to see and group

all the movements in the world we live in.  
 They examined how things met and stimulated each other,  
 tracing the ways that endure.  
 They attached words to distinguish  
 when the Way is open and when it is closed.  
 These mysterious words call out to you.  
 The underlying mysteries, the numinous situations  
 that run through everything in the world we live in,  
 are completely presented in the symbols.  
 Everything that stimulates movement  
 in the world we live in exists in the words.  
 How things transform and the shapes they take  
 exist in the transforming lines.  
 The forces that set these things in motion  
 exist in the continuing lines.  
 The light of the spirit exists in the people  
 who set out Change and in the Change they used,  
 silently completing the Way of Heaven.  
 It is an unspoken trust that carries and supports us  
 as we strive for the power and virtue  
 to become who we are meant to be.

*Dazhuan*, I.12.4, my translation

### **Heart-Mind**

Heart or heart-mind, *xin*, is where the symbols work. In Eastern thought the heart is the center of our being, the seat of images, drives, intentions and will.



XIN/heart-mind shows a heart, the circulation of spirit energy through the heart meridians and a crossing where Heaven and Earth connect.

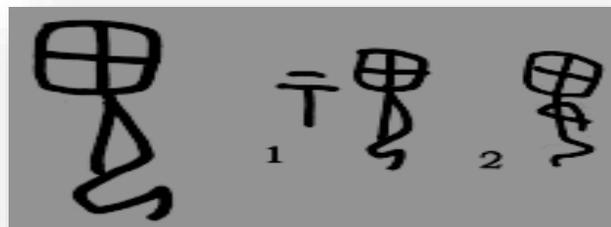
Acted upon by the symbols/*xiang*, the heart spontaneously produces empowering images that re-shape our desire and intent. A major goal of the both the Way of Change and the *Daodejing* is to train the heart-mind, to still

the passions and strip away old patterns of compulsive behavior. This wakes the heart's latent imaginative powers, the ancestral potential or sprouts of virtue that lurk in its depths.

### **Ghosts and Spirits**

The transformative process or change of heart embodied in the Way of Change acts on and through what the old world called the *Guishen*, the Ghosts and Spirits. These Ghosts and Spirits are the the two basic kinds of imaginal forces or beings that act on and in the heart-mind. Seen in *Daodejing* as the Corpse Spirits or Mortal Spots and the Bright Spirits, they are related to the Two Primal Powers or Gates. They form the two kinds of souls that unite to shape a human being: the *bo*-soul that is our passion body or body of fate and the *hun*-soul or bright spirit that carries our destiny.

*Gui* or ghosts are spirits of the past, traumas hidden in the problems we confront that prevent us from acting directly, creatively and spontaneously. Metaphysically they are the passion bodies or bodies of fate of departed beings that cannot find release. They are attached to living out their rage, their passions and pain, their hungers and their unresolved needs.

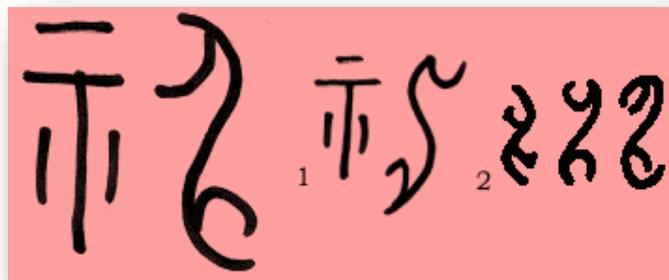


GUI/ ghost, shows a person (male or female) with a fearsome or demonic head, someone who is possessed.

Ghosts are intensely personal. They represent frozen emotions that can easily poison a situation, causing a paralysis of the personality. On a moral or

collective level they represent a deep and fixed negativity, an embodied memory of fear, pain and rage that we must come to grips with.

*Shen* or Bright Spirits are spirits of the future. They are transformative, potent and mobile forces of nature that confer intensity, clarity and depth on the soul. In the oldest thought, *shen* existed entirely outside the individual. Sages went through elaborate ceremonies to induce the *shen* to take up residence in their bodies. Through this in-dwelling they acquired a helping-spirit or inner guide.



SHEN/spirit or spirits shows an altar and the sign for the One Above (1) and a lightning bolt of sudden enlightenment (2).

Bright Spirits carry the symbolic energy that creates meaning. They make Change work and are conjured directly by its numbers. The Way of Change focuses the bright spirit of these *shen* directly into the heart of the dark, bound ghosts. By doing so Change offers the tangled knots of pain and compulsion a chance to be mirrored into the symbolic order by bringing to light what is hidden. When they are conjured and focused by Change, the Bright Spirits transform the roots of a problem, releasing us from our deep compulsive emotions so that the process of living can go on.

Working directly with the Ghosts and Spirits in this Way reconnects Change with the powerful imaginative practice of the old *Wu*, the archaic spirit-intermediaries, healers and exorcists, diviners and traveling magicians. The

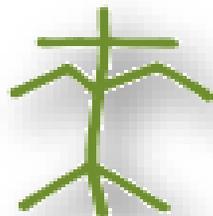
collision between the tradition of the Wu and the activity of the Confucian scholar/bureaucrats who emerged in the Han Dynasty (c. 200 BCE-220 CE) represents a continuing conflict in the Way of Change, a conflict between morality and imperial politics on the one hand and individual imaginative experience on the other. My own opinion on this this ever-present conflict, East and West, is best expressed by the comments of a Warring States philosopher, Mo-zi:

One day Wu Ma-zi asked Mo-zi: Which are wiser, the Ghosts and Spirits (*guishen*) or the Sages so loved by Confucians. Mo-zi said: The Ghosts and Spirits are wiser than the Sages by as much as the sharp-eared and keen-sighted surpass the deaf and blind.

### **Going and Coming: The River of Time**

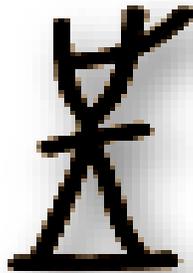
Working with the Ghosts and Spirits connects us with the great river of time, that boundary of life and death that we continually cross and re-cross. In Chinese thought this stream of time is a great round expressed as *wang lai*, “going-and-coming”. It is the incessant movement on the stream of time that flows from the future into the past and from the past into the future. The subtle beginnings of all things, seeds and symbols, flow toward us on this river.

Coming, *lai*, is the stream as it flows towards us, carrying the symbols that will unfold into events. It is what is arriving from the future, what comes from Heaven and the High Lord. It is the Tree on the Earth Altar. It gives us the seeds and spirits (*shen*) that power transformation and the symbols (*xiang*) through which they unfold into events.



LAI/coming, shows a wheat plant and the sign for the One Above. It suggests growing, hope for the future and a good omen.

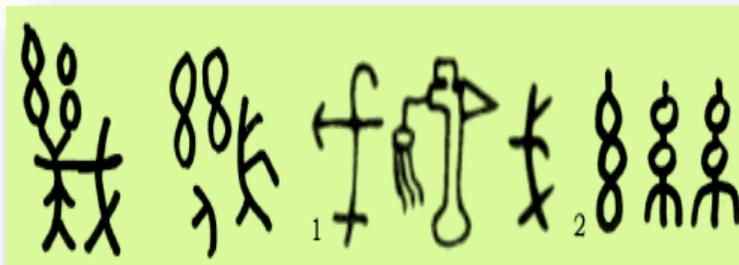
Going, *wang*, represents what is leaving the field of awareness. It is the stream as it flows away from us, carrying away what is finished. It suggests the past, the dead and the waters of the dead. It means leave, flee, as well as go in the direction of, and is reflected in the *wang*-sacrifice, an exorcism of noxious influences.



WANG/going, shows the graphs for king (below) and for footstep (above). It suggests dissolving the fixations of the past and proceeding on through the guidance of Heaven.

### **The Hidden Triggers of Change**

The Subtle Beginnings (*ji*) that flow towards us on this river of time/space contain the Hidden Triggers (*ji*) of all change and transformation. They are where transformation first appears in this stream of time, a sign, a warning and a strategy to deal with the symbolic reversal that is about to manifest.



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

In Daoist thought, the *Ji* is the source of the movement and the repose of the Way, opening and closing of the gates of Heaven and Earth. It is the Mysterious Female, the source and spring of the transformations called Change (*Yi*) 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. It is the door of all marvels and mysteries, the opening of the way, the celestial music situated at the heart of reality. 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.



JI/hidden trigger shows a low wooden altar, a sprout pushing through the earth and two lightning bolts.

The character for the hidden trigger (*Ji*) concealed within the subtle beginnings (*ji*) shows the trigger of a crossbow, a de-clenching mechanism or motor. It suggests the craft of weaving and cross-breeding, a trap for animals, a strategy, artifice or ingenious invention, ability and talent, the decisive or opportune moment. It represents changes of fortune, vicissitudes of destiny, the cause or motive of events and 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. It is the threshold of a door, the first indications and the forerunner and is a synonym for what is strange, bizarre, coming from the borders. Arranged and carried by the Matrix, all the words or symbols in the *Classic of Change* act as hidden triggers. They connect the process of Change in the cosmos and in the world with your inner power of Change, your creative imagination - if you choose to use them.

### **The Dream Animals and the Way-Power Classic**



15:16 *The Grey Rat and the Elephant Mind* shows the omen animals who control the flow of energy in the unconscious world and release the power of ancestral images. The Grey Rat activates the deep animal powers of the psyche and the Elephant opens the mind of the great symbols. The images reveal numinous things that release us from old fixations and liberate our creative energy from the dark rivers of past pain.

The question here is: What about the *Daodejing*? Why do we need another translation of this seemingly well-known work? And the answer is simple. Using the words and symbols of the magical language of Change can connect your creative imagination directly to the Way and its Power (*Dao-De*). But this connection and the illumination that results depends on your ability to follow the words and symbols as they move in and through your heart mind. You

cannot do this unless you have a *direct poetic or imaginative experience* of the words and their language, the way they interact. Only then can the symbols speak to your heart-mind and articulate the voice of the Way within, giving you a deep, spontaneous and embodied awareness of how it is creating the realities you experience. As *Dazhuan* says: If you are unwilling (or unable) to do this, the Way cannot open to you.

The language of Change is used to dealing with our conceptualizing, greedy monkey-mind; it has been doing it for centuries in the *Yijing*, the *Chuang-tzu*, the *Daodejing*, the traditions of Daoist Inner Alchemy and the *Koan* traditions of both Chan and Zen Buddhism. But in order for this language to work you must have direct non-conceptual access to its poetic power, to what I call the dream-animals and the magic spells their voices can weave into the embodied imagination, the dream-body. Unfortunately, I cannot find a contemporary English translation of *Daodejing* that can give us something of this direct poetic experience and link it to the great Way of Change. Rather we are presented time and time again with a set of moral, conceptual and philosophical terms that have been abstracted from the heart-mind. William Blake described this process of abstraction in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

The ancient poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged and numerous senses could perceive ... placing its Genius under its mental deity. Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of and enslaved the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects. Thus began Priesthood – choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. And at last they pronounced that the Gods had ordered such things. Thus men forgot that all deities reside in the human breast.

In old China the two abstracting priesthoods that *Daodejing* set out to deconstruct were called Legalism or Realism – a system of political control focused on war and state power much like contemporary American policies – and Confucianism, a patriarchal, conservative and misogynist social and moral

philosophy that has much in common with the more pompous and elitist forms of American protestant Christianity. When I asked, this is what *Daodejing* had to say said about this process of abstracting moral/conceptual values and the sorts of translations that it produces:

**18** *When the Great Way is forgotten*



Thunder above Earth, a time to collect the energy and resources you need to meet the future joyously. Arouse people's delight and honor real power and virtue. Inner devotion brings you a liberating awareness of the whole.

*When the Great Way is forgotten,  
humanity and morality appear.  
When intellect and erudition appear,  
the Great Fraud begins.  
When the families of men can no longer live in harmony,  
duty, devotion and parental love appear.  
When the nation is completely benighted,  
loyalty and patriotism appear  
and we hear of those  
who "serve with devotion."*

The Pair 15:16 *Humbling and Providing For* is the Encounter with the Centers of Power in the Second Decade of the Symbolic Life, when we must confront sexuality and personal destiny. The images reveal numinous things, linking social identity with a great change in culture.

The old language of Change was gathered from oral traditions that cluster words around sounds or seed-syllables in order to turn them into *xiang* or spirit-symbols. This is a sort of borderline activity that can open a sacred space in written language where different worlds of meaning come together to become an omen that passes from mouth to mouth through the text and is embellished with each re-performance – “teaching without words” as the Daoists say. Drawn on and read out time after time, the mythic circles of meaning evoked

by the symbols become a continuum that is a great seedbed of human culture. Patterns that link the cosmic, human, moral and supernatural rise up from this interaction, making manifest what we overlook – the “hole that reveals the (w)hole.”

*Duet for a Chair and a Table*

The sound of words as they fall away from our mouths

Nothing

Is less important

And yet that chair

          this table

                  named

Assume identities

                  Take their places

Almost as a kind of music.

Words make things name

                  themselves

Makes the table grumble

                  I

In the symphony of God am a table

Makes the chair sing

A little song about the people that will never be sitting on it

And we

Who in the same music

Are almost as easily shifted as furniture

We

Can learn our names from our mouths

Name our names

In the middle of the same music.

Jack Spicer, *Book of Music*

A major goal of the both the Way of Change and the *Daodejing* is to train the heart-mind by stilling the passions and stripping away old patterns of compulsive behavior. Acted upon by the symbols/*xiang* of Change and the Way, our heart-mind spontaneously produces empowering images that re-shape our awareness, our desire and our intent. This wakes the heart’s latent imaginative powers, the ancestral potential or sprouts of virtue that lurk in its

depths. Here we see another kind of time, a time made up of unique moments called dragon holes we can use to intervene and change the flow of our awareness. Through the dragon holes the divinatory symbols provide, we reach back to a mythic time when humans lived happily and freely with spirits and allow that primal energy to flow into the present from the source of time and the mystery of the Way:

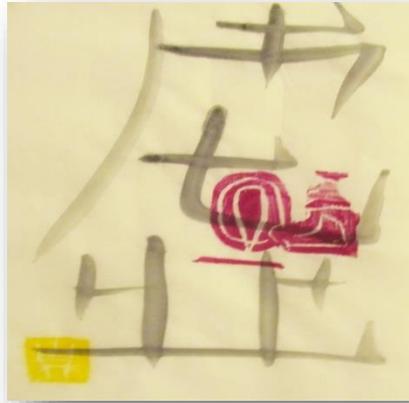
First follow the words and feel their places in your heart mind.

Suddenly the Way will arise  
and give you charge of the omens and the symbols.

If you are unwilling to do this,  
the Way cannot open to you.

*Dazhuan, (?) I.12.4, my translation*

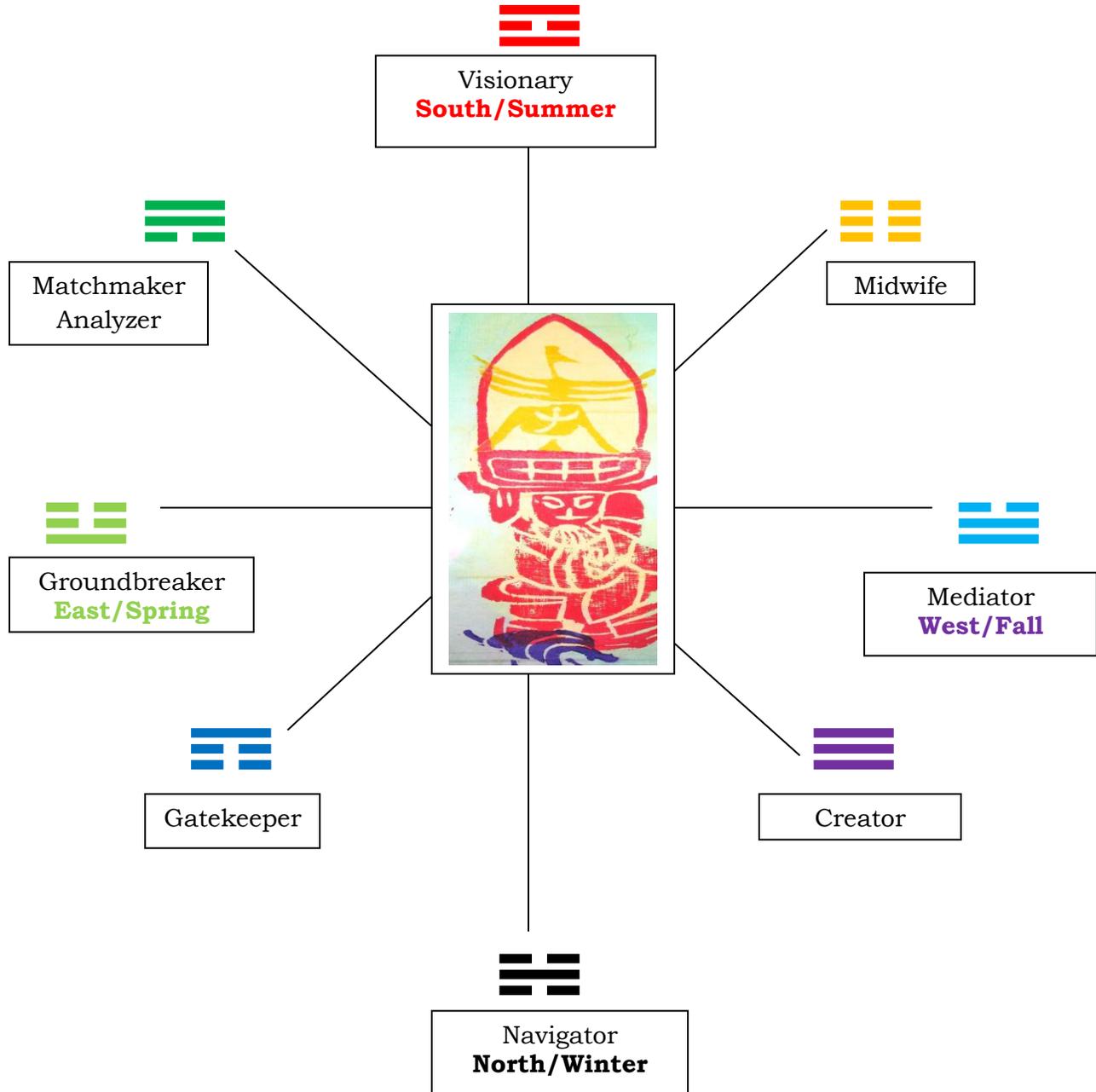
## Finding the Zero



Long ago and far away, in the Warring States court of *Kuai Nan-zi*, a great Daoist ruler and scholar, there was convened a gathering of sages, diviners, traveling magicians and cosmologists called the Gathering in the White Tiger Hall. These sages and diviners were gathered to solve, amongst other things, the perennial problem in Chinese cosmological systems: How can you reconcile the Five, the Five Elements or Processes, with the Four and the Eight - the Four Directions, Seasons and Hidden Winds and the Eight Trigrams or Spirit Helpers that, in the old thought, were the powers that activate the 10,000 Things?

The solution to this dilemma of odds and evens, yangs and yins, was a stroke of genius that gave birth to all later cosmologies: You simply create a great circle and put one of the Five Processes in the center, with the Four Directions/Seasons and the Eight Trigrams revolving around it. This new Center would also act, the sages postulated, like spokes in the wheel, a transition from any one of the Eight to the one that follows it that shows how all change must first return to the empty Center. So the Four Seasons, the Eight Trigrams and the Directions were arranged on the vertical and horizontal

axes of the circle. The product was the first Trigram Cycle, called the Ken Wen or Later Heaven arrangement. The element chosen for the Center was Earth.



### **One Odd, one Even – that’s Dao**

The traditional Matrix of the Classic of Change is 8 x 8; it relies on the Two (the Two Powers or Gates), the Four Seasons/Directions and the Eight Trigrams to create the 64 interconnected six-line Hexagrams. However, when I started working seriously with this Matrix I discovered several things: First, the sequence was actually made of 32 Pairs of hexagrams, not 64 individual ones. Second, certain of these Pairs were deliberately shifted from their logical positions in the sequence based on yin-yang dynamics to fracture the symmetry of the Matrix in such a way that it could not be reduced to a formula. It was deliberately built to contain both symmetry and asymmetry in a manner characteristic of a chaos system. And third, an old age-grade system of the stages of the Symbolic Life based on Ten (2 Powers x 5 Elements) played through the matrix of individuals, creating even more fertile disharmony. Thus the Matrix as a process duplicate of a chaos system, situates or frames each hexagram, creating a rich context for the omens and symbols set on the diagram and relating it in many different ways to all other hexagrams.

This is framing is what *Daodejing* seemingly lacks. Though it is divided into two “books” at poem 38, the interconnections of its 9 x 9 matrix of 81 poems remains completely baffling, completely asymmetrical. This leaves the words floating in a kind of contextual vacuum, at the mercy of the paragons of learning the texts so thoroughly castigate. And it seems to go against the practice of the writing itself, creating symmetry then fracturing it, leaving a well-articulated uncertainty. To paraphrase Yeats once again – to see how a logic cuts its own throat, you first have to see the logic. So, my Inner Daimon said to me – get busy! Limp to be whole! This sort of framing matrix is the kind of gift the Change can offer to *Daodejing*, a way the Two can become One again without reducing them to the same thing. What emerged from this very Chinese way of proceeding was a sort of magic square that connects the 64

hexagrams and 8 trigrams of Change to the 81 poems of the *Daodejing* without reducing any of them through analysis or allegory.

<b>1</b> <i>1</i>	<b>2</b> <i>2</i>	<b>3</b> <i>3</i>	<b>4</b> <i>4</i>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> <i>5</i>	<b>7</b> <i>6</i>	<b>8</b> <i>7</i>	<b>9</b> <i>8</i>
<b>10</b> <i>9</i>	<b>11</b> <i>10</i>	<b>12</b> <i>11</i>	<b>13</b> <i>12</i>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> <i>13</i>	<b>16</b> <i>14</i>	<b>17</b> <i>15</i>	<b>18</b> <i>16</i>
<b>19</b> <i>17</i>	<b>20</b> <i>18</i>	<b>21</b> <i>19</i>	<b>22</b> <i>20</i>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> <i>21</i>	<b>25</b> <i>22</i>	<b>26</b> <i>23</i>	<b>27</b> <i>24</i>
<b>28</b> <i>25</i>	<b>29</b> <i>26</i>	<b>30</b> <i>27</i>	<b>31</b> <i>28</i>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b> <i>29</i>	<b>34</b> <i>30</i>	<b>35</b> <i>31</i>	<b>36</b> <i>32</i>
<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>46</b> <i>33</i>	<b>47</b> <i>34</i>	<b>48</b> <i>35</i>	<b>49</b> <i>36</i>	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b> <i>37</i>	<b>52</b> <i>38</i>	<b>53</b> <i>39</i>	<b>54</b> <i>40</i>
<b>55</b> <i>41</i>	<b>56</b> <i>42</i>	<b>57</b> <i>43</i>	<b>58</b> <i>44</i>	<b>59</b>	<b>60</b> <i>45</i>	<b>61</b> <i>46</i>	<b>62</b> <i>47</i>	<b>63</b> <i>48</i>
<b>64</b> <i>49</i>	<b>65</b> <i>50</i>	<b>66</b> <i>51</i>	<b>67</b> <i>52</i>	<b>68</b>	<b>69</b> <i>53</i>	<b>70</b> <i>54</i>	<b>71</b> <i>55</i>	<b>72</b> <i>56</i>
<b>73</b> <i>57</i>	<b>74</b> <i>58</i>	<b>75</b> <i>59</i>	<b>76</b> <i>60</i>	<b>77</b>	<b>78</b> <i>61</i>	<b>79</b> <i>62</i>	<b>80</b> <i>63</i>	<b>81</b> <i>64</i>

Here the **Bold Blue** numbers indicate the poems of *Daodejing*. The *Black Italic* numbers indicate hexagrams of Change. The **Bold Red** numbers show empty spaces occupied by the Eight Trigrams in the King Wen or process sequence

that drives the world of appearance. These form the South-North and East-West axes of the system that produce the transformations of the Seasons, the Directions and the Hidden Winds that enter the human world and the human body through them. The single **Bold Yellow** number represents the central void or empty space around which everything revolves, the Zero (no-thing) that holds the One (unity) in tension to create the Ten (1/0) that means all things, being and non-being, the place where all logics cut their own throat.

As I proceeded to set up these contexts from Change, adding them to the images I had made for the hexagrams as I worked on the *Guideways* translations, I was astounded at the rich and wonderfully inexplicable fields of meaning they created. I hope you will have the same experience as you read through them and equally that you will not try to analyze them. In *Daodejing's* words (I, 6):

The Valley Spirit never dies.  
Call it the Dark Animal Goddess.  
Call the Gate of the Dark Animal Goddess  
the source of Heaven-and-Earth.  
Unceasing! Enduring!  
at the brink of existence.  
Use her  
  
but never try.

### **Using the Matrix: The Sticks of Fate**

I've always maintained that you do not "learn" Change by reading it from beginning to end as you would a textbook or a scripture. Change creates individual meaning through the divinatory process, taking you through an individual process of reading the book as you use it. By entering the book through the divinatory process, you allow Change to choose the hexagrams it wants you to see in the order it wants you to see them. Thus each reader enters the world of Change as an individual and the long term effect of this process transforms the shape of your heart-mind in a quite unique way. But

Change has specific divinatory procedures associated with its practice that are not applicable to *Daodejing*. There is, however, an age-old divinatory procedure practiced both East and West that is – the *sortes*. In this procedure, you simply concentrate on whatever concerns you and open the book. Whatever page or passage comes up is your answer.

Now there is a specific variation of this procedure that was used in old China called the Sticks of Fate, a procedure that is used to this day in the Temple Oracles of popular religion. I used this procedure in my translation of *The Kuan Yin Oracle*. It uses a wooden cylinder that contains 100 thin bamboo slats that correspond to the 100 verses of her Oracle book. The inquirer offers a few copper cash, lights a stick of incense then shakes the cylinder until one of the sticks pops out. The number on the bottom of the stick keys the specific passage in the book that Kuan Yin wants to use to speak with you.

I am convinced that this procedure was used at one point or another with the *Daodejing*, using a set of 81 sticks to key the 81 poems or chapters of the texts. Such a procedure completely bypasses the “learned” approach to dealing with the poems in some systematic way. So, I conducted an experiment. I used the set of 81 Sticks I developed to ask *Daodejing* for its opinion of using this technique to “read” it, what it felt the effects of this divinatory procedure would be on the user or reader.

This is the answer that came up:

**20** *Banish learning, no more grief*



**18 Corruption/Renovating GU**



Wind/Wood below Mountain, a time to rid yourself of inner and outer corruption. Rouse the common people to nurture your actualizing power. Inner self cultivation reveals the patterns that mark real ends and beginnings.

*Banish learning, no more grief.  
 Between "yes, sir" and "no, sir"  
 is there really that much difference?  
 Is it really the difference between good and evil?  
 That saying: What others fear, I must fear -  
 what a barren wilderness.  
 Alas, I fear it has not touched me.  
 All these people enjoying the great celebrations,  
 going up to the Spring Festival to see the sights.  
 I-alone anchors me,  
 like a baby who has not yet given a sign,  
 like a newborn who has not yet smiled.  
 Weary and exhausted with nowhere as home,  
 I-alone seems lost and left out.  
 Stupid man! Chaotic and Confused!  
 The world is full of bright people.  
 I-alone am Dark and Dim.  
 The world is full of clever people  
 I-alone am Dark and Dim,  
 drifting on unsettled seas,  
 blown by the restless winds  
 with no destination.  
 I-alone am different from the others.  
 I treasure only  
 the Mother's milk.*

The Pair 17:18 *Following and Corruption* is the Mission of the Second Decade of the Symbolic Life, when we confront sexuality and personal destiny. The images release stored energy into action that effects change, connecting the struggle with corruption with a vision of cultural renewal.

### **Fate, Destiny and the Helping Spirit**

When we take up the eastern wisdom traditions we involve ourselves with questions of fate, destiny, culture, spirit and time, ends and means and, perhaps most central, individuality. Who and what am I? Where am I going? What am I supposed to be? What path should I follow? Is there anything to life

besides the grinding banality of ambition, drive, profit and loss, success and failure, fame and disgrace? When we ask these sorts of questions, we are searching for an entrance to what Jung called the Symbolic Life, the divine drama at once universal and intensely personal where our dreams and our actions can somehow “make sense.”

Jung felt that this ability to create and recognize symbolic meaning is our most important possession as human beings. It is an *experience*, he maintained, not a belief or an ideology, an experience nothing can take away from us. This is where the marriage of Change and *Daodejing* enters our lives. Its puts together what has been torn apart, slowly and surely re-creating a space where the workings of the Dao expressed through its mysterious symbols can arise spontaneously in the heart. This is what *Daodejing* has to say about this inner place:

**56** *Those who know don't talk.*



**42 Augmenting Yi**



Wind/Wood over Thunder, a time to increase, expand and develop. Visualize improvement, shift your position and alter what is excessive. Accepting the shock of inner enlightenment lets you acquire a place where you can influence the world you live in.

*Those who know do not talk.  
Those who talk do not know.  
So block the passages,  
bar the gates,  
blunt the sharpened,  
loose the tangles,  
temper the glare,  
and blend with the dust.  
This is called identifying with the Mystery.  
It cannot be embraced.  
It cannot be harmed.*

*It cannot be helped.  
It cannot be hated.  
It cannot be won.  
It cannot be lost.  
It cannot be honored.  
It cannot be demeaned.  
Thus it is the treasure  
of the All-under-Heaven.*

The Pair 41:42 *Diminishing and Augmenting* is the Gate to the Fifth Decade of the Symbolic Life, emergence into higher levels of empowerment. The images vitalize the struggle to emerge into a greater vision, opening a new world and changing the orientation of the heart.

### **A Brief Note on the Translation**

There are literally hundreds of *Daodejing* translations in English, most of which, to my mind, are useless or worse than useless. Most are either influenced by the late Han scholar Wang Bi who turned its mysterious language into a conceptual-philosophical tome or drowned by sentimental humanism, over-erudition or New Age drivel. Though I'm sure I'm being grossly unfair, I don't really want to mention them any of them.

The books I would like to mention, however, are Arthur Waley's groundbreaking classic *The Way and its Power* (1934); Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo's *Tao Te Ching* (1993), which cuts through the frippery but loses most of the fluid elegance that is, to my mind, implicit in the original text; and Kristofer Schipper's magnificent recreation of the Daoist traditions, *Taoist Body* (1982, French), trans. Karen C. David (1993), that supplies heretofore ignored aspects of the key words and terms.

I've tried to keep as close as I can to what I sense as the incisive phrasing of the texts, reproducing the verticality of the original through centering the lines and using line breaks to suggest its dramatic use of repetition, its sudden

shifts in rhythm and its overall elegance. I've chosen to translate the words for Holy Person or Exalted Sage (*Shengren*) as the One who Hears, for the ear is the central part of the old Chinese character, and to make it gender feminine – she - for, as Schipper insists, Daoist Body is female. Finally, I have omitted four lines from section 25 *There is Something* that are very obviously a Confucian or Legalist insertion.

I hope you enjoy reading these poems (or *koans*, or whatever else you want to call them) as much as I did making them, for joy is a very important part of embracing the Way. To finish all this off, I'd like to leave you with a parable of the Dao, an experience that Richard Wilhelm had when he was traveling in Northern China.

### **The Rainmaker**

The story of the Rainmaker is based on an event experienced by Richard Wilhelm, the first significant translator of the Classic of Change. Wilhelm, who died in 1930, spent most of his life as a German Evangelical minister to China who was proud of the fact that he never converted a single Chinese. The event described occurred before the First World War, when Wilhelm was visiting a small village in Northern China. C. G. Jung, who saw Wilhelm as a great “maternal intellect” who “inoculated us with the true spirit of the East” took the story as a paradigm of the synchronistic power of inner work to effect change that ambition and aggression never could.

The village Wilhelm visited in July or August was experiencing a drought. In fact the village had received no rain in over five years. The situation was critical and the villagers were doing everything they could. The shamans lay naked in the sun to call the rain spirits, exorcists in bear masks set off firecrackers to drive away malevolent spirits and the local Catholics incessantly processed their idols through the village. But nothing worked.

The village elders came together in consternation. There was nothing else for it, they decided – they had to call a Rainmaker. They put a message on a small train headed up into the surrounding mountains. Three days later the train returned and a little man stepped out. The Elders clustered round to welcome him, offering him all the resources the village could muster- beautiful ritual robes, lots of firecrackers, all the money they had, the last reserves of their stored food and, most probably, their daughters.

“Make me a little hut at the edge of the village,” the little man replied. “Put my rice in front of the door three times each day.”

“Is that all?” the astonished elders asked.

“Yes, that is all.”

The hut was quickly assembled. The little man entered it and closed the door. The rice disappeared regularly but nothing happened. But three days later it started to rain. Then it snowed. Then it hailed. Five years’ worth of precipitation came down in the space of about 48 hours. When the skies cleared, the villagers were wild with joy, singing and celebrating. The little man emerged from the hut and headed for the train platform. But unlike the villagers, Wilhelm was watching him. He went up to the little man on the station platform and, after a very courteous bow, asked him: “Honored Sir, that was amazing. You made it rain! What did you do?”

“Nobody can make it rain,” the little man replied.

“But, the rain came – really, what did you do?”

“You know”, the little man replied, “it is very simple. Where I live, up on the mountain, we live in Dao. When we need sun, sun comes. When we need rain, rain comes. But these people here? They’re crazy! Totally out of Dao! When I

come here, I get crazy, just like them. So I go into the hut, put myself back in Dao, and of course rain comes. I didn't *do* it. It just happens."

Each time we take up the *Daodejing* we go into that little hut, burdened by collective insanity. Each time we give up our certainties and drives and simply open ourselves to the great Way of Change, letting its symbols reshape our hearts, we become that Rainmaker. And as we do the inner work, unconcerned about the outcome, magically, synchronistically – "of course the rain comes."