Journey to the West
C. G. Jung and the Classic of Change

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The I Ching or Book of Changes, the Richard Wilhelm translation\(^1\) rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes first published in 1950, introduced the divinatory book and tradition called Change to the Western world. Though there were previous translations, from the partial Latin translations of the seventeenth century Jesuits to James Legge’s version in the Sacred Books of the East, Wilhelm was the first to make what Arthur Waley called a spiritual translation. He treated the book not as simply an historical text or an incoherent collection of magic spells but as a living spiritual document.

This was C. G. Jung’s I Ching and its Dao or Way became an important part of Jungian practice.\(^2\) Yet Cary Baynes was able to buy the English rights for only two hundred and fifty dollars and, when her translation was finished twenty-six years after the book’s appearance, only three thousand of its original German press run of five thousand had been sold. The English translation was another matter. First published in 1950, by 1965 sales were over a half million. It remains the largest selling university press book in history, translated into over forty languages, and was an enduring part of the American counterculture. It was Change’s window on the West. An important part of it, which gave us a way to think about Change, was the forward by C. G. Jung. It is arguably Jung’s most well-known work.

Jung himself was passionate about Change. He saw it as a way to connect with Dao, which he saw as the goal and process of his psychology and the origin of synchronicity. It gave access to a new center of personality that mediated between conscious and unconscious and was a way to a living religious experience. He actively used the book and its divinatory
way with friends, colleagues and analysands, calling it “a formidable psychological system that endeavors to organize a play of the archetypes … so that a ‘reading’ becomes possible” (CW 14, § 401). It was an intuitive technique “for grasping a situation as a whole and thus placing it against a cosmic background” (CW 8, § 863) which could make the hidden qualities of the moment readable. This mysterious book was an answer to the West’s spiritual needs, for its sixty-four polysemous symbols “represent the course of the valley spirit, Tao, winding like a dragon or water” (CW 14, § 636n [312]).

Jung realized that Change does not just tell people what to do. It establishes a creative relationship with the unconscious by constellating a mysterious center of personality he called Dao. It is not an example of synchronicity; it creates synchronicity by giving its users access to the place where time and space become relative. For Jung, this was a psychological and spiritual phenomenon of the first order, and it led him to make a rather enormous statement. He insisted that “psychology in the stricter sense is bound up with the whole practical use of the I Ching.” 3

There are two readings or consultations at the center of Jung’s Foreword, readings through which he ostensibly asked about the future of the book in the West. The way Jung matched the symbols to the situation has proved to be in some ways quite accurate. But there was a dimension that Jung left out or, perhaps, deliberately obscured. By looking at the way in which these famous answers were read, we can expand on the Change’s Journey to the West.4

**An Encounter with the Oracle**

Jung says that he “made an experiment strictly in accordance with the Chinese conception: I personified the book in a sense, asking its judgment about its present situation, i.e., my intention to introduce it to the English-speaking public” (CW 11, § 975). He had already discussed his theory of synchronicity, the “peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as well as with subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers” as the key to understanding Change (CW 11, § 972). However he remarked that:
My argument as outlined above has of course never entered a Chinese mind. On the contrary, according to the old tradition, it is “spiritual agencies,” acting in a mysterious way, that make the yarrow-stalks give a meaningful answer. These powers form, as it were, the living soul of the book. As the latter is thus a sort of animated being, the tradition assumes that one can put questions to the *I Ching* and expect to receive intelligent answers (*CW 11*, § 975).

This is what Jung proceeds to do: he animates the book through his projection,\(^5\) poses the question, uses the coin method to generate the Figures and matches the answers to his situation. He remarks that “although this procedure is well within the premises of Taoist philosophy, it appears exceedingly odd to us.” However, it allows the reader to watch “a psychological procedure that has been carried out time and time again throughout the millennia of Chinese civilization, “a supreme expression of spiritual authority and a philosophical enigma” (*CW 11*, § 976).

As answer to his question about his intention to present Change to the English-speaking public, Jung received Hexagram 50 Vessel as the Primary Figure, with Transforming Lines in the Second and Third place that generate Hexagram 35 Prospering as the Relating Figure. The Primary Figure describes the present situation and its potentials for change. The Relating Figure suggests how the inquirer is related to the situation. It can describe a goal, a feeling tone, an experience, a desire, or a possible outcome.\(^6\)

Jung maintained that Change was the speaking person: “the *I Ching* is here testifying concerning itself” (*CW 11*, § 978), describing itself as a *Ding* or Sacred Vessel holding spiritual nourishment. He quoted Wilhelm on the *Ding*:

> The *ting*, as a utensil pertaining to a refined civilization, suggests the fostering and nourishing of able men, which redounded to the benefit of the state. Here we see civilization as it reaches its culmination in religion. The *ting* serves in offering sacrifice to God. The supreme revelation of God appears in prophets and holy men. To venerate them is true veneration of God. The will of God, as revealed through them, should be accepted in humility (*CW 11*, § 977).

This may be, but he leaves something important out, something he would certainly be aware of as a highly intuitive psychologist who had worked with Change for over twenty-
five years. He invited Change to comment on his “intention” and it is that intention that
carries the affect. The book may be the Ding, but here Jung is invited to put his intention
into the Vessel to be cooked. The imperative would be: Contain it! Look into it!
Transform it! So we have two stories being constructed, matching the symbols to two
different situations. The overt or outer story deals with Change’s future in the Western
book market, while the covert or inner story deals with the nature of Jung’s intention.

Here is a translation of the name and image of Hexagram 50, Vessel, from the Eranos
translation along with the texts that surround it.7

50 Vessel/Ding
Transformation, reach to the spiritual level; found, establish; contain, imagine.

Name
Vessel: cast bronze cauldron with three feet and two ears, a sacred vessel for
cooking offerings and ritual meals; symbol of a family or dynasty; hold, contain,
transform, transmute; connect with the spirits; establish, secure, foundation;
precious. The ancient ideogram showed questioning the spirits.

Image
Vessel. The Way to the Source is open.
Success.

The meanings associated with the two central terms indicate a fortunate trend that is
accessed when you use the qualities of the field around Vessel: founding, securing,
imagining, containing, offering spiritual nourishment and transforming your ideas. “The
Way to the Source is open” suggests there is a quality here that can fundamentally change
things by opening a connection to the spirit. It is a source or origin, the generating power
that causes plants to grow in the spring and thoughts to burst forth in the mind. This
quality matches to both Change presenting itself as a Vessel and to Jung’s intention, which
should be put into the Vessel and cooked. This is what brings success: a pervading ripeness
and fruition as enjoyable, vigorous, and effective as the summer sun that ripens the fruits
and grains. He can help Change mature in the West just as the Change can help him
mature his ideas and intentions. The Way is open. It leads to the experience of meaning or Dao.OTHER

Other parts of the Figure, taken from the analysis of the diagrams (gua) and from the Ten Wings, amplify the message. All can be matched to both Change’s journey and to Jung’s intention.

**Inner and Outer**: Penetrating and Radiance.
Inner penetration feeds and spreads the growing light of awareness.

This is based on an analysis of the relation between the qualities associated with the two trigrams (bagua) or three-line diagrams. According to this, Change can penetrate the soul of the West and spread illumination. The further Jung can see into his intention to help it, the further its influence will spread.

**Hidden Possibility**: 43 Deciding and Parting from the Past.
You can act clearly and decisively.

This is the Nuclear Figure found in the four central lines of each hexagram. Deciding and Parting, the Name of this Nuclear Figure, shows there is the possibility to act decisively in order to part from past mistakes. It links being resolute and making a decisive choice with parting, cutting something off, separating into two parts or streams. Further, it states that this is a critical moment, a moment to decisively break through the obstacles. This, too, can be matched to both areas in question including the Vessel itself.

**Sequence**

Skinning beings means absolutely nothing like a Vessel.
Accepting this lets you use the energy of the Vessel.

This text from the Ten Wings puts the action associated with the Vessel into a necessary sequence with a priori action. Before you can make use of the Vessel to transform things, you have to “skin” them. You must discard the old, overthrow what has grown oppressive. It is time for a change, a time for radical revolution. Change can act this way on Western consciousness. Often seen as frightening or threatening, it strips away surface rationalizations so the flow of the Dao can be felt. The question is: What does it have to
“skin” in itself, and what does Jung have to “skin” in his intention before the vessel can truly be used?

**Paired Definitions**

The Vessel means grasping renewal.

This is another text from the *Ten Wings*. If “skinning” allows you to use the Vessel, this indicates that the use of the Vessel opens the possibility of “grasping” personal and cultural renewal. Change can effect this by making us discard outworn ideas of rationality and cause and effect. It opens another kind of spirituality that we can grasp or understand through the Vessel and that can, in turn, grasp us. How does this effect Jung’s intention and the renewal of the Vessel itself?

**Symbol**

Above Wood there is Fire. The Vessel.

The Realizing Person corrects his situation to solidify his fate.

This text from the *Ten Wings* talks about correcting a situation: rectify one-sidedness, be straight and balanced, model oneself on what is real and true. The character translated as “fate” actually has two meanings. As Fate it indicates individual destiny: the limits of birth and death, character, potentials, major events, and meetings. We usually cannot see this fate for it is buried in the body and the unconscious. Mandate, the second meaning, indicates a clear command from on high, ultimately from *Tian* or Heaven, that lets you speak with authority, the voice of the gods, an indwelling part of each of us. Thus there is a transformation inherent in the word fate that turns an individual life into a mandate from Heaven. Correcting what is one-sided allows our fate to appear and be realized. The individual experience of Change can certainly help correct the lopsided rationalism of our culture. But what of the other stories, the renovation of the Vessel and of Jung’s intention?

The Image and the field of meanings around it emphatically point out two themes: spiritual transformation and nourishment, and the necessity for renewal by breaking away from old habits and thoughts. This involves both Change itself, its “future in the West,” and Jung’s intention to “present it to the English-speaking public.” As the center of the actual question,
Jung’s intention is the focal point. So how must Jung’s intention be corrected? Here the first part of the reading ends.

These texts are all associated with the Image (Tuan). They show the atmosphere and themes of the inquiry and the archetypal moment (shi) that links inner and outer. We find specific answers to the questions they have raised in another kind of text (yao) associated with the Transforming Lines. As Jung remarked,

> When any of the lines of a given hexagram have the value of six or nine, it means they are specially emphasized and hence important in the interpretation. In my hexagram the “spiritual agencies” have given the emphasis of a nine to the lines in the second and in the third place (CW 11, §979).

Here is the text of the first Transforming Line:

**Nine at Second**

There is something real in the Vessel.
My companion is afflicted but cannot approach me.
The Way is open.

Again Jung maintained that this was Yijing speaking of itself:

> “I contain (spiritual) nourishment.” Since a share in something great always arouses envy, the chorus of the envious is part of the picture. The envious want to rob the I Ching of its great possession, that is, they seek to rob it of meaning, or to destroy its meaning. But their enmity is in vain. Its richness of meaning is assured; that is, it is convinced of its positive achievements, which no one can take away (CW 11, §980).

Considering the lengths to which Western philosophers, academicians, and clinicians have gone to suppress the sort of meaning it creates, this outer story has a definite ring of truth about it. But the pronoun Wo “I, me, my” used in this text is not just referring to the Vessel. It puts a very strong emphasis on the subjective experience of the inquirer. Further, the outer story says nothing about Jung’s intention, and the Line image itself is very much concerned with a sort of emotional politics. This concern revolves around the word “companion,” mistranslated, in my opinion, by Wilhelm/Baynes as the plural “comrades.”
Chou. companion: Equal, spouse, unite, join in marriage, play
with, opponent, rival, enemy; contradict, play against.

There is a profound ambivalence in this word and the experience it represents. It indicates someone or something that is closely tied to one through bonds of real affection yet is, on the other hand, a rival or enemy who seeks to harm you.

Here the companion is “afflicted,” not just sick but full of anger, resentment and the desire to do harm that can strike suddenly, like a dart or an arrow.

Ji, afflict: Sickness, disorder, defect; sudden calamity, injurious, intense pressure and consequent anger, hate, rage, dislike. The ideogram shows sickness and a dart or arrow, a sudden affliction of negative emotion.

Even though the real substance in the Vessel cannot be harmed by this, the obvious question in the process of matching (dang) symbol and situation is this: What person, idea or imago in Jung’s intention, in his psychological and imaginative experience of the oracle, could be this close and this ambivalent? Assuming this is the oracle’s image of Jung’s inner attitude, there is only one possible answer: Richard Wilhelm and his translation.

If we remember the deep feeling about Wilhelm and his work Jung showed in the Eulogy he gave at Wilhelm’s memorial service in 1930, we can see that this match of symbol and situation is devastating. And being the psychologist he was there is a good chance that Jung was aware of this match to his psychic situation. But to really understand this opposition, we must understand a bit more of the history of Change, for the split is part of the Vessel itself.

Wilhelm’s translation was a landmark. It was readable and usable. It took the book seriously as a spiritual document and a psychological tool. Wilhelm gave his life to this work, which he saw as crucially important. It seemed to accord well with Jung’s psychology and there was a deep bond between the two men. However, for all his dedication and sincerety, we know now that Wilhelm did not translate Change as such; he translated a very particular version
of it taught him by his teacher Lai Niu Hsüan, a Neo-Confucian scholar and official. Wilhelm gave us the Confucian Change, complete with its hierarchical vision of morality, spirituality and social philosophy. The Confucian Change, albeit highly opinionated, is one version of Change, but it is not the version Jung seems to be talking about when he speculates on the Dao of the book or pays homage to its depth and understanding. Jung, in line with his lifelong preoccupation, seems to be talking about a Daoist Book of Changes, whereas Wilhelm translated a Confucian one.

Confucianism and Daoism were the two poles of traditional Chinese culture. The fundamental texts of both schools originated in the Warring States period (400-226 BCE), a time of widespread social breakdown and great creativity. Confucianism, an intensely conservative, moralistic and hierarchical teaching, went on to become the official philosophy of Imperial China. It defined a political and cultural elite who identified the Way or Dao with the internalization of a particular set of social relations. Daoism, on the other hand, mocked social values and established power alike. An intensely individual teaching, it developed methods of dis-identifying with social institutions and commonly held motivations. Its central value was wu wei, not-doing, a practice whereby the ego is emptied so that the Dao may fill the soul. Daoists valued freedom, imagination and unconventionality, laughing most heartily at the Confucian concern for “face.” For them, Dao was the great mystery at the heart of all.10

Confucius and Confucianism

Confucius or Kungfuzi (551-479 BCE) was the first of China’s philosophers. He had little impact in his own day, but the philosophy that his followers developed out of his thought went on to dominate political, social and family life. As soon as they acquired power in the Han Dynasty, Confucians prohibited or reinterpreted all other forms of thought. The first of these reinterpretations was the Classic of Change which became a Confucian text. Their version of its words and images became part of the Imperial Civil Service examinations.
The Confucian reinterpretation of Change began in the early Han period (150 BCE). In the late Han Dynasty (c. 150 BCE) Dung Zhung Shu, a prominent Confucian bureaucrat, designed a cosmology and a method of analysis to contain and fix the multiplicity of meaning in Change, using yin-yang and Five Process theory. About 250 CE Wang Bi rearranged the words of Change to fit this philosophy, writing the first complete interpretation of the images and lines based on Confucian morality. The Classic of Change became the first of the Five Confucian Classics, commented on and pondered for one thousand seven hundred years.

What did Confucians believe? What made them so eager to suppress all other meanings but their own? The answer lies in the personality and position of Confucius. Profoundly conservative, he came from an aristocratic family that had dwindled, become poor and unimportant. He lived his life in the middle of radical social change and fragmentation which he despised. He felt that something great was being lost in this change, a source of ultimate value. It was the world of his hero, the Duke of Zhou.

Confucius deeply idealized the feudal aristocracy of the Eastern Zhou (1111-840 BCE). For him the Zhou kings were sages whose moral perfection connected them to Heaven. They had received Heaven’s Mandate and its power flowed through them. This let them clarify and externally fix the proper relation between people of all ranks. These relations were divinely sanctioned in ritual and propriety (li). Rituals and codes (li) defined behavior on every possible occasion. As long as people kept to them, made them a part of their inner life, the favor of Heaven would continue to flow. Confucianism is above all a moral and social philosophy. Confucius insisted on evaluating all things according to their moral worth. His work was education and his school was open to all. Its goal was the creation of gentlemen who could advise people in power to rule the state as the Duke of Zhou might rule it. Confucian thinkers described the goal of this education as the transformation of the Personal Mind (ren xin) into the Dao Mind (dao xin).
The basic task is cheng or “rectification.” The world is in great disorder. To help we must start by recognizing our own character and rectifying our own conduct. When we wholeheartedly set foot on the road to self-rectification, we join the ranks of the Junzi, the new nobility, a new ruling class based on moral perfection. The Junzi “takes humanity (ren) as his burden.” He is the moral vanguard of the society, dedicated to bringing back the Golden Age of the Duke of Zhou.

The Junzi’s first step is embracing xiao or Filial Piety. This is the cornerstone of moral excellence and the model for all relationship. Filial Piety consists in interjecting the image of the patriarchal family as the model of all relations. The family is the source of life and the model for the family is the cosmos. As Heaven and Earth have a strict order and a hierarchical relation, so must the members of a family: the wife is subject to the husband, children are subject to parents, and younger siblings are subject to older. Relations are governed by elaborate ritual. You must internalize the rites, responsibilities, and ritual behaviors that govern these relations and apply them in all things.

The overall goal of the Junzi is Ren: humanity, benevolence or fellow feeling. It is expressed through virtues like liberality, diligence, truthfulness, steadiness, earnestness, and the willingness to reflect on things at hand. Ren has two sides: Loyalty (chung) to your own moral nature, and treating others as you treat yourself (shu). The man of Ren is a man of virtue. The price he pays is a constant watchfulness over his thoughts and feelings.

The single most characteristic word in a Confucian education, however, is Li: rites, ritual behavior, codes of behavior and, above all, propriety. Confucius was an expert on ritual. He felt that the rites – the way that people behaved in the time of the Duke of Zhou – must be scrupulously and meticulously reenacted in public and in private. Our behavior and our most intimate thoughts and feelings should be in accord with these gifts from the golden age. “To repress yourself and return to the rites is ren,” Confucius said. Another saying refers to his punctiliousness: “If the mat is not straight, the Master will not sit on it.”
This need to force the present into the ideal of the past is the source on the Confucian’s need to eliminate anything that he cannot fit into his moral pattern. Confucianism has often been called a rational or humanist philosophy, but at its base it is as magical as the ways of thought it condemns as superstitious. Even in its most refined manifestations, the core of Confucian philosophy is the need to bring back the Golden Age through a transformation of language and behavior. Magical thinking is really not the question. The real question is: Which age is golden? 11

Daoism and the Dao

If Confucianism is the harsh, stern father of the Chinese world, Daoism is its accepting and yielding mother. Its mood is joyful and irreverent. It is open to the occult and metaphysical side of experience that Confucians keep at a distance. Daoist ritual permeates popular culture. It is part of a religious tradition that includes trance, spirit mediums and spirit journeys, alchemy, exorcism and psychic transformation.

The philosophical side of Taoism rests on two books, the Laozi or Daodejing and the Zhuangzi, both composed in the Warring States period. Each contains deliberate and often hilarious attacks on Confucian morality and heroic egotism. But Daoism is more than a reaction. It is a spiritual affirmation of chaos, spontaneous creativity, and the central importance of wu wei, “doing nothing” or, rather, not acting through the ego and its drives. The Laozi, the old Daoist classic that Jung referred to so enthusiastically in Psychological Types, began as a book for rulers. It suggested that a ruler can rule through Dao rather than violence and exploitation. When the ruler loves quietude and acts by not-acting (wu wei), his people will spontaneously follow the straight path and prosper. His genuine simplicity makes them passionless and still. He does not disturb their peace with analysis, give speeches about virtue, or stir up their ambition. He knows that when you rely on the rational mind, the great lies begin; when you disturb families, dutiful sons arise; when you have confused everything with your silly plans, loyal subjects appear. All these things have no Dao.
Daoism condemned the ideals of Confucian morality – its virtue, its laws, its love of ritual and its hierarchical view of the family. Most of all it despised the act of giving things Names (ming) that subsume and fix the individual in a category. By naming what you desire and taking the name for the reality, you split the opposites and call up its nemesis. It is by striving to do good that we bring evil into the world.

So what can we do? Daoism extols the way of nature: unanalyzed, uncivilized and unassertive. The way to act in the world is to take on the woman’s role – weak, flexible and clinging. There are many images for this way of being: flowing water, the uncarved block, child, female, mother, valley spirit, dark door, empty vessel. It is the womb of creation. The person of Dao opens this space within. Through it he or she returns to the source of all things. Dao, the mysterious highest good, can then manifest itself in spontaneous, non-aggressive behavior.

Zhuangzi is the first text in Chinese history to present a way of wisdom for the individual in private life. Every educated Confucian in early China wanted to become the counselor to a Prince. Zhuangzi depicts these would-be politicians as well-fed oxen being led to the slaughter at the altar while he, a happy piglet or an old turtle, blissfully plays in the mad. Everything in Zhuangzi is designed to teach the relativity of conventional values and to help us dis-identify with conventional ideas. It is also the first appearance of a special kind of spiritualized being, the xien or Immortals who have so freed themselves from mundane existence that they have left the turbulent world. Their effortless existence, freedom of movement, natural spontaneity and unpredictability became an image of the Daoist self.

The basic principle of Daoist education is emptiness. The person of Dao creates a void or empty space in the heart by freeing himself from compulsive naming, greedy passions and collective values. This opens the spontaneous action of the Way. Things begin to happen of their own accord without the busy intervention of the ego.
Return is another basic principle. Return is the movement of the Way. Let everything return to its starting point. Having created a void within, the person of Dao can return to nature’s source and wander freely, watching the coming and going of the Myriad Beings. He returns to the time before the cosmos was created and history began. He can watch the Dao shaping the universe out of chaos, while jin and yang transform it. When he grasps this, his whole identity becomes fluid. He becomes like a spirit, a shen. The central practice, however, is wu wei, not-acting. It is an idea, a meditation technique and a way of being in the world. Not-acting is not inaction: the person of Dao never acts, but there is nothing left undone. It is ceasing to act through the ego and the greedy personal will and beginning to act through the spirit and the Way. There is no true achievement without this practice. Using force will sooner or later turn your results into the opposite of what you intend. Disaster and failure await.

A Dialogue While Cooking in the Vessel

Let us imagine a brief dialogue between a Confucian and a Daoist on the subject of Change. Let’s begin with the Confucian. This is the fellow responsible for turning Change into an officially enshrined text. Although it is anachronistic, I want to introduce Chuzi (1130-1200 CE), the key figure in Neoconfucian thought, as the representative of the Confucians. Chuzi, with whom Wilhelm was well acquainted, represents a way of mind that includes systematic moral values and duty to parents, elders and the state. He wrote a moral interpretation of each sentence of Change and articulated a stunningly patriarchal attitude towards it that lasted well into the twentieth century.

Chuzi sees Change as entirely moral and political. He finds talk of spirits and souls completely beside the point. Each person, he tells us, has two kinds of mind, a “person-mind” (ren xin) and a “dao-mind” (dao xin). Most people remain stuck in the person-mind, frozen in selfish desire. That is why the dao is lost, times are bad and the state is in such trouble. “It is our social responsibility to activate and cling to the dao-mind through submitting each action to Change in its moral interpretation,” he proclaims. “Our Change
is a direct copy of the mind of Heaven and Earth. Using it will rectify and clarify your person-mind. This moral transformation is the necessary foundation for the regeneration of the individual and the state. It has nothing to do with souls and spirits; it has everything to do with correct moral principles. You will learn these in our Change.”

Chuzi’s principle is the proper hierarchical relation between things. This is what he wrote into the Change. This hierarchical relation reflects the will of Heaven. The Golden Age is the time when these relationships were clear, the time of the early Sage-Kings who civilized the people by introducing feudal order.

Sitting directly across from Chuzi, making rude noises at the most serious parts of his diatribe, is a Daoist. His is a way of the heart and individual experience. Where the Confucian is dressed in ceremonial robes and wears an elaborate badge of office, this fellow is a wanderer, monk or recluse. He has no official face. His subversive wit mocks and deconstructs the Confucian’s seriousness. For him paradise is the chaos-time before the culture heroes Chuzi so esteems messed everything up with their self-righteous meddling.

Here are two famous passages from Daodejing that we can imagine him proclaiming with glee:

When the Dao is lost, then your so-called virtue arises.
When virtue is lost, then your so-called benevolence arises.
When righteousness is lost, then your so-called doctrine of propriety arises.
Now this propriety of yours is nothing but the empty husk of loyalty and faithfulness.
It is the beginning of all confusion and doubt.

Exterminate that sage, throw away those wise officials
And people benefit a hundred times over.
Exterminate your benevolence, throw away your rectitude
And people will love their relatives again.
Exterminate that ingenuity, throw away your greed for profit,
And thieves and bandits will disappear.
The word “propriety” (li) is a key Confucian term of highest value, so this was quite insulting. It undermines the meanings of all the Confucian’s words. Zhuangzi, another disreputable Daoist, mutters: “When the sage is born, a great thief appears!”

This sort of dialogue went on in China for many years. It was a battle fought for the meaning of the culture’s key texts. Daoists realized that when you create an ideal, you split off its opposite. It falls into the unconscious where it becomes a center of attraction, necessitating a constant heroic effort to maintain the repression. So internalizing Confucian ideals involves you in the endless repression of undesirable psychic contents and of the people on whom they are projected.

These are the issues at stake as the two characters cook in the Vessel. Daoism might be identified with the “real substance” in the Vessel, Confucianism with the “companion,” a system of interpretation that, while seemingly befriending it, seeks to do it harm. This antagonism also matches Jung and Wilhelm. The real worth of Change is secure, but the system of interpretation that confines it must go. Only if it is skinned away through a decisive choice and resolute action can the nourishment in the Vessel be made available again. For Jung, who loved Richard Wilhelm, this would be a painful realization. It may account for the elaborate screen he put up in commenting on all the lines of the hexagram and turning them into a narrative that, while credible, drew attention away from the inside story.12

Taking Hold

The second Transforming Line in Jung’s answer reads thus:

**Nine at Third**
The Vessel’s ears are being skinned.
Its movement is hindered.
The pheasant juice is not eaten.
Rain comes on all sides and lessons your sorrows.
Completing this action opens the way.

Jung comments:
The handle [German, *Griff*] is the part by which the *ting* can be grasped [*gegriffen*]. Thus it signifies the concept [Begriff] one has of the *I Ching* (the *ting*). In the course of time this concept has apparently changed, so that today we can no longer grasp [*begreifen*] the *I Ching*. Thus “one is impeded in his way of life.” We are no longer supported by the wise counsel and deep insight of the oracle; therefore we no longer find our way through the mazes of fate and the obscurities of our own natures. The fat of the pheasant, that is, the best and richest part of a good dish, is no longer eaten. But when the thirsty earth finally receives rain again, that is, when this state of want has been overcome, “remorse,” that is, sorrow over the loss of wisdom, is ended, then comes the longed-for opportunity. … The *I Ching* is complaining, as it were, that its excellent qualities go unrecognized and hence lie fallow. It comforts itself with the hope that it is about to regain recognition (*CW 11*, § 981).

Again, though this interpretation perfectly matches Change’s external situation, it says nothing about the inner story, the conflict between Daoist and Confucian that ultimately involves Jung. This is partially due to a mistranslation. The word translated in the Wilhelm/Baynes text as “altered” - the handle (literally, “ear”) of the *ting* is altered - is actually the name of the previous Figure, 49 Skinning, a term we saw in the Sequence.

**49 Skinning/Revolution **

Radical change; your own day; strip away the old and let new life emerge; overthrow, revolt, renew; molting, melting the metals, animal transformation dances; site of creative transformation.

This implies that the “ear,” that is, the way we grasp and use the *Ding*, is going through a radical change and renewal of form. This is a step forward out of the conflict. As Chinese words can be any part of speech, any person or tense of a verb, this is also an imperative: “Skin the ears of the *Ding*! Take off the old skin! Change how you grasp and understand it!”

The thing that is *Sai*, “hindered” (i.e., obstructed, blocked up, clogged, made dull and hard to understand) is an intelligence native to the oracle, a kind of *lumen naturae*. “Pheasant” here is not just a tasty morsel; it is a symbol associated with *Li*, Radiance, the Bright Omens of Change itself, the light and awareness we cannot get at until skinning has renewed our hold on the *Ding*. This imperative falls fast and furious, like a deluge; there is
nowhere to escape from it. But when this work is over our dissatisfaction with the past and our shame and confusion at having lost the way (Dao) will soon diminish. We can complete the old cycle and begin a new one, skinning away what covers up the real understanding of the Vessel. Jung remarks:

"Anyone with a little common sense can understand the meaning of the answer; it is the answer of one who has a good opinion of himself, but whose value is neither generally recognized nor even widely known. The answering subject has an interesting notion of itself: it looks upon itself as a vessel in which sacrificial offerings are brought to the gods, ritual food for their nourishment. It conceives of itself as a cult utensil serving to provide spiritual nourishment for the unconscious elements or forces ("spiritual agencies")… to give those forces the attention they need in order to play their part in the life of the individual. Indeed this is the original meaning of the word religio – a careful observation and taking account of (from relegare) the numinous (CW 11, §982, 1949)."

Jung’s comments are to the point, but again they ignore the inner story and the challenge to him to peel away the Confucian veil that is obscuring the power and the value of the Vessel. For Jung, that would mean confronting the inner figure of his friend Richard Wilhelm. It would mean realizing that, for all the good he did, Wilhelm colluded in a repression inimical to the spirit of the Dao.

In many ways Jung gave us the Classic of Change, opening a window through which it could enter Western culture. But he also passed on the task he failed to do – to peel away the Confucian morality overlaying the spirit of Dao within the Vessel, for he failed to realize how deeply he was implicated in the moment. So that work is left to us. As we do it, the Vessel becomes truly usable again, its lumen naturae available once more to aid people on their fate-filled journey in life.

The task has begun over the past fifty years and a new Vessel is emerging, a new book which is very old and has its starting point in that troubled yet sincere translation that Jung introduced to the world. But Wilhelm’s Confucian source is not the only thing that haunts Jung’s reading. Later in his Foreword Jung tells us that he did another reading after
he had written about the Vessel, inviting the oracle to comment directly on his action. The answer was 29 Repeating the Gorge, with a Transforming Line in the Third place.

**Six at Third**

Gorge after gorge is coming at you.
Soften your desire to venture into this danger.
You will be trapped in the pit in the Gorge.

Jung observed:

K’an is definitely one of the less agreeable hexagrams. It describes a situation in which the subject seems in grave danger of being caught in all sorts of pitfalls. I have found that K’an often turned up with patients who were too much under the sway of the unconscious (water)… …it expresses the undeniable feeling of uncertainty and risk present in my mind. If one ventures upon such uncertain ground, it is easy to come dangerously under the influence of the unconscious without knowing it (CW II, § 1005)

The word Kan or “gorge” actually combines two meanings: danger, an abyss, a snare, a precipice, a ravine full of dark rushing water; and the moment of truth, the crucial time when you must risk everything without holding back. The Transforming Line helps you understand which of these predominates in any given case.

Jung’s case indicates danger combined with a desire to press on that could prove overwhelming. Dangerous situations are coming at him without pause. He could be trapped in the Gorge, caught in a recess at the bottom of the swirling waters, swallowed by a complex. So the oracle advises him to let go, to relax and “soften” his desire to plunge into the swirling waters.

What is at stake here? One thing is simply his desire to write more about Yijing. Jung speaks of his situation after he had encountered the contents of the Vessel: “Could there be a more uncomfortable position intellectually than that of floating in the thin air of unproven possibilities, not knowing whether what one sees is truth or illusion? This is the dreamlike atmosphere of the I Ching, and in it one has nothing to rely upon except one’s own so fallible subjective judgment.” He is “in the midst of the dangers of limitless and uncritical speculation,” afraid that he will lose the way in the darkness (CW II, § 1003).
After his refusal to engage the specter of Wilhelm, it is possible his judgment is failing. We also find that he originally had “the more ambitious project of writing a psychological commentary on the whole book” (CW 11, § 1006), creating yet another sort of interpretive veil over the images. This matches Jung’s psychic situation quite precisely. Given his long involvement, deep feelings, and essential confusion, if he went any further into the “dreamlike world of the I Ching” as reflected in his own conflicted psyche, the figures he encountered could prove overwhelming. He could be trapped in the Gorge and drown in the turbid waters.

When the Transforming Line in the Third place changes into its opposite, it produces the second or Relating Figure. As Jung states: “This yin line of mounting tension changes into a yang line and thus produces a new hexagram showing a new possibility or tendency” (CW 11, § 1011). This new figure is hexagram 48 Well, a symbol that turns the dangerous rushing water into something life-giving. As Jung observes, this is an image of the oracle as a source of life water open to all. True, but it is also an image of a commonly held conscious organization in contrast to the lonely venturing of Gorge. The advice is to get out of the unconscious, to renounce intellectual ambition and be content with things that people hold in common. Jung’s idiosyncratic technique of analyzing all the lines of a Figure is particularly confusing here and disguises the heart of his dialogue with the oracle. He is looking for a closure that simply does not exist.

However there is a Figure that does carry a certain finality in this encounter with the oracle, produced when the two Transforming Lines of 50, Vessel, change to create a new figure, 35 Prospering. Following divinatory procedure we read only the Name and Image:

**35 Prospering**
- Emerge into the light; advance and be noticed, receive gifts; spread prosperity, the dawn of a new day.

**Name**
- Prosper: be noticed and recognized, advance, increase, progress; receive gifts; grow and flourish, as young plants in the sun; rise, be promoted; permeate, impregnate. The ideogram shows birds taking flight at dawn.
Image
Prospering like beautiful Prince Kang.
You acquire and bestow gifts of horses
That multiply in multitudes.
In one day you are received three times.

Jung remarked:

Since we have in our hexagram two yang lines stressed by the numerical value nine, we are in a position to find out what sort of prognosis the I Ching makes for itself. Through this change we obtain in the present instance hexagram 35, Chin, Progress. The subject of this hexagram is someone who meets with all sorts of vicissitudes of fortune in his climb upward. The I Ching is in the same situation: it rises like the sun and declares itself, but it is rebuffed and finds no confidence (CW 11, § 996-97).

Jung goes on to concoct a story from pieces of all the different lines that might be interesting in itself but has nothing to do with the actual question and answer. He has been unable to be insightful or incisive since he refused the challenge of skinning the Vessel’s “ears.”

For this Figure is an image of the sun at dawn, calmly beginning its journey. It is reflected in the person of Prince Kang, epitome of calm, confident strength, stability, peace joy, and delight. Just as the sun rises effortlessly, the Prince is invited to an audience with the higher powers three times in one day. He receives and bestows the gift of invigorating strength (literally he mates horses) that redounds to the benefit of all. If this is Change prognosticating about its own future, that future seems assured. It will slowly and surely rise from obscurity and confinement, spreading light, warmth and joy, a real friend to those it contacts. We can see this as the culmination of the inner story as the real Change rises from the obscuring veil of interpretation that confines it and the image of the Vessel in the Jungian psyche shakes off the shadows of the past and emerges into the light. All of these are still occurring.

At the end of his Foreword Jung summed up the results of his readings:
I submitted two questions to the method of chance represented by the coin oracle, the second question being put after I had written my analysis of the answer to the first. The first question was directed, as it were, to the *I Ching*: what had it to say about my intention to write the foreword? The second question concerned my own action, or rather the situation in which I was the acting subject who had discussed the first hexagram. To the first question the *I Ching* replied by comparing itself to a cauldron, a ritual vessel in need of renovation, a vessel that was finding only doubtful favor with the public. To the second question the reply was that I had fallen into difficulty, for the *I Ching* represented a deep and dangerous water-hole in which one might easily be bogged down. However, the water-hole proved to be an old well that needed only to be renovated in order to be put to useful purposes once more (*CW 11*, § 1015).

I believe what Change is saying here is that the Vessel needs to be renovated by stripping away the moralistic veil of interpretation that had been imposed on it. It challenged Jung to help, but he was unable to respond. To the second question the reply was that Jung had fallen into a difficulty. Change had become a deep and dangerous abyss for him in which he was in great danger of being trapped. If Jung relaxed and ceased his efforts to master it, it would once again become the source of living water from which all could draw. The overall prognosis shows *Yijing* slowly but surely rising from obscurity and moralism to a position where it could be of great help to the people who used it.

**The Friendship of the Spirit**

Almost fifty years since the publication of the Wilhelm/Baynes translation, the Confucian interpretations have been stripped away from Change revealing something different beneath. This view, most clearly seen through *Dazhuan*, the *Great Treatise* on divination and spirituality that accompanies the *Classic of Change* opens a potent, mysterious yet knowable world. It gives access to a bright spirit that protects while encouraging us to act out of the best parts of our nature, our deep self.

This kind of spirituality was repressed or marginalized in China just as pagan and Gnostic spirituality was repressed by the Church in Western cultures. The history has been
repeated again in the almost exclusive clinical and sociological concerns of a new generation of post-Jungians. It is a personal way to the spirit, a way of transformation allied to early practices of mediums and spirit possession. The experience of the helping spirit or deep self it brings can make one a sage – clear-seeing, knowing death and birth, feeling the friendship of spirit and compassion for fellow humans.

A group of early Daoist practitioners probably originated the practice of using Change as a way of spiritual transformation about 400 BCE. This was a radical reinvention of the oldest practices of talking with the spirits and it occurred in a dangerous time. It offered a way to protection, peace, insight and self-realization that responded directly to individual concerns. This way of the spirit is the most powerful and perennial appeal of Change, the thing that has drawn people to it for at least two thousand years. So the substance in the Vessel that is now being uncovered might be one of those early spirit-mediums, the women and men who were wu.14 This kind of person can “see and hear what is occulted.” She or he gives to those above (shen, “the spirits”) and those below (gui, “the dark ghosts”) what is due them. This power of discrimination causes a luminous spirit (shen ming) to descend. As this spirit takes up its home within, one can become “daimonic and clear-seeing,” connected to the invisible world. Here are two statements from the inner or psychic chapters of the Guanzi,15 an old Daoist text, that give a sense of this practice:

When your ji (life energy) is on the Way,
It vitalizes you.
When you are vitalized, you imagine.
When you imagine, you know.
When you know imaginatively, you stop.
The hearts of all beings are shaped like this.
If your knowing seeks to go farther,
You will kill them.

This figure says there is a limit to knowing and that limit is imagination. Change can put you on the way, vitalize your imagining with its symbols, open your heart, and that is enough.

Look, there is a shen (spirit) within your person.
Now it goes, now it comes.
No one can imagine it…

But if you reverently clean its abode
It will come of itself.
You will recover your own true nature,
Fixed in you once for all.

This is the kind of figure whose teachings went into the Dazhuan and its New Way of using Change. This Way proposes that we, too, can be like the sage-mediums of old. We can use Change to refashion our imagination. We can call on a shen, a bright spirit, to take a place in our heart. And as we go on with the work, day by day, hopefully that spirit will arrive.

**Notes**


NB: I am (now) using Pinyin transliteration in the body of this article and Wade-Giles romanization of Chinese characters in the quotation and notes to accord with Jung and Wilhelm’s practice.

2. See for example Gerhard Adler, “Aspects of Jung’s Personality and Work.” *Harvest* 21, 1-11: “I have long considered the *I Ching* the most expressive symbol for the profoundest content of analytical psychology…whenever one consults the oracle one commits, knowingly or unknowingly, a metaphysical act of the greatest significance.”

3. Letter to Olga Fröbe-Kaptn, 29 January 1934. There is a mistranslation of this phrase in the English *Letters*. In German Jung differentiates between *zuweil ostliches wissen* or “academic
sinology” and psychology, a road no one takes until be idem alle anderen Seitenwege versagt haben, that is, “until all the other ways have betrayed him.” He then states that this psychological traveler must confront the I Ching for zu der psychologie im engeren Sinne gehört aber der ganz praktische Gebrauch des I Ging, that is, “however, part of psychology in the stricter sense is the whole practical use [ganz praktische Gebrauch] of the I Ching” (my emphasis). See C. G. Jung, Briefe: Ersta Band, 1906-1945, Aniele Jaffé und Gerhard Adler, Hersg. (Olten und Freiburg im Briesgau: Walter-Verlag, 1972), 182-83.

4. The Journey to the West is an important event in Chinese religious history, when monks traveled from China to India to bring back the scriptures of Buddhism about 650 CE. When opened on the return, however, the precious scriptures turn out to be blank. Journey to the West is the theme of a famous seventeenth century novel, an extravaganza of myth and magic that results in the transformation of all that took part in it. Arthur Waley translated parts of it as Monkey; A. C. Yu translated all of it (4 Vols.) as Journey to the West (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

5. At the end of the Foreword, Jung remarked: “…any person of clever and versatile mind can turn the whole thing around and show how I have projected my subjective contents into the symbolism of the hexagrams. Such a critique, though catastrophic from the standpoint of Western rationality, does no harm to the function of the I Ching. On the contrary, the Chinese sage would smilingly tell me: Don’t you see how useful the I Ching is in making you project your hitherto unrealized thoughts into its abstruse symbolism? You could have written your foreword without ever realizing what an avalanche of misunderstanding might be released by it.” (CW 11, § 1016).

Far from being a catastrophe, what Jung called projection freely entered into seems to play a key part in the relation between oracle and inquirer. Jung defined projection as the transfer of a subjective process onto an object that is based on an “archaic identity” of that subject and object. It can be passive, that is unconscious, or active, a “feeling into” that “brings the object into an intimate relation with the subject.” The object is “animated” by the transference and related to the subjective sphere (CW 6, § 742-3). It creates a numinous aura around the answers and sets up a field in which synchronous events are likely to occur (CW 8, § 394/841/912). This field, “a source of synchronicity,” possesses qualities of a parapsychological nature. “It relativizes space and time and behaves as though it were not localized in one person” (CW 10, § 849-50). I would suggest that the synchronistic meaning or tao created in a dialogue with the oracle comes from the emotional field around this projected archetype (CW 18, § 1190). The divination searches for the meaning of the situation, the connection between outer situation and inner affect (CW 8, § 863/912). It therapeutically mirrors the inquirer’s situation and identity, working itself out in a “matching” (dang) that fits symbol and situation together, “arranging collateral and coincidental facts, which represent suitable expressions of the underlying archetype.” This parallels the makeup of “the psychic arrangement in general, which is based on synchronicity.” It is an intuitive, not a rational phenomenon (CW 18, § 128).

6. This process of interpretation is described in detail in the Introduction to my How to Use the I Ching (Shaftesbury; Element, 1997). On the origin of the techniques of dang or “matching” that elaborate the oracle’s answers, see Kidder Smith, “Zhouyi Interpretation from the Accounts in the Zuozhuan.” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 49/2, 1998.
7. Translations throughout are my own, adapted from *How to Use the I Ching*.

8. The first time we meet *tao* in Jung’s writing is in *Psychological Types* described through a series of quotations from the *Tao te ching*, the fifth century BCE classic of philosophical Taoism (CW 6, § 359-369). *Tao*, according to Jung, is elusive. Westerners have translated it as way, method, principle, life force, process of nature, idea of the world, primal cause, the right, the good, the moral order, or God. A good modern translation is “the on-going process of the Real,” introduced by Willard Peterson in “Making Connections: Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations of the *Book of Change*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 2/2, 1992, 67-112.

   According to Jung, *tao* is images without substance that depend on nothing, the mother of all things. If you can be without desire, you can see it. “The soul can be emptied and it is *tao* that fills the emptiness. You have insight and have no need of intellectual knowledge” (CW 8, § 917ff). It signifies the emergence of a new center of the personality, a point halfway between conscious and unconscious. It is a new equilibrium, a new center, a new and more solid foundation. It is individual human fate. (CW 7, § 327/365). It is the restoration of the world, the union of *yin* and *yang*, the *unio mentalis* and the substance of Heaven (CW 14, § 711). This undiscovered vein within us is a living part of the psyche, a flow of life-water that moves irresistibly toward its goal. “To rest in Tao means fulfillment, wholeness, one’s destination reached, one’s mission done; the beginning, end, and perfection of the meaning of existence innate in all things. Personality is Tao” (CW 17, § 323). Belinda S .L. Khong and Norman L Thompson, “Jung and Taoism: A Comparative Analysis of Jung’s Psychology and Taoist Philosophy,” *Harvest* 43/2, (London), 1997, 86-105, conclude that Jung’s use of *tao* in psychology is “as much a watershed as Freud’s introduction of the notion of infantile sexuality.”

9. In May 1930 Jung gave the eulogy at a memorial service in Münich for Richard Wilhelm, who had died in March. He was moved by Wilhelm’s premature death, and he exposed his feelings in a totally uncharacteristic way. His address (CW 15, § 74-96) may give a sense of the emotional intensity of their relationship and its historical referents. Jung said that Wilhelm kindled a light that was one of the most significant events of his life. He gave the West the precious heritage of a culture thousands of years old, perhaps destined to die forever. With no trace of Christian resentment or European arrogance, Wilhelm was like a receptive and fruitful womb, giving us the living spirit of Chinese civilization and making us one with those who know the way (*tao*). He “inoculated us with the living germ of the Chinese spirit and we found ourselves partaking of the spirit of the East as we experience the living power of the *I Ching*. It is capable of working a profound transformation of our thought.”

   Today, Jung stated, we have a Gnostic movement that spread throughout the ancient world nineteen hundred years ago when “solitary wanderers spun the spiritual threads from Europe to Asia.” He saw Wilhelm as one of those great Gnostic intermediaries “who brought the Hellenic spirit into contact with the cultural heritage of the East and thereby caused a new world to rise out of the ruins.” This experience of the “living spirit of the East,” is embodied in the *I Ching*. Wilhelm’s work with the *I Ching* was of such immense importance to him personally because it confirmed what he had been seeking in his efforts to alleviate the psychic suffering of Europeans. “I heard from him in clear language the things I had dimly divined in the confusion of the European subconscious. I received more from him than from any other man.”


12. *CW 11*, § 986-94, 1006-1010; this irregular practice is contrary to normal divinatory procedure as Jung, who worked with the oracle for at least twenty-five years, would know quite well. We are left to wonder why he did this, but the desire to deflect attention from one story to another, one more comfortable, is a possibility. Both stories are true, but the inside story is much more demanding.

13. *Ta chuan* began about 400 BCE as a set if Taoist oral teachings on the use of *Change*. Written down about 175 BCE, it formed the central part of the *Ten Wings*, the commentary added to *Change* in the Han Dynasty. *Ta chuan* was the most important spiritual document in post-Han China. Through its re-imagining of the practices of the mediums, it turned *Change* into a way of spiritual transformation. See Karcher, *Ta chuan: The Great Treatise* (New York: St. Martin’s Press); the *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Divination* (Shaftesbury: Element Books, 1997), and “Divination, Synchronicity and Fate,” *Journal of Religion and Health, 37/3*, Fall 1988, 215-228.

14. On Chinese spirit-mediums or *wu*, see Jonathon Paper, *The Spirits are Drunk: Comparative Approaches to Chinese Religion* (Albany: SUNY, 1995), and Julia Ching, “Who were the Ancient

First published in 1592, The Journey to the West, volume I, comprises the first twenty-five chapters of Anthony C. Yu's four-volume translation of Hsi-yu Chi, one of the most beloved classics of Chinese literature. The fantastic tale recounts the sixteen-year pilgrimage of the monk Hsüan-tsang (596-664), one of China's most illustrious religious heroes, who journeyed to...