I Ching—A Chance for a New Life

At this time in history it seems to many that the entire world is in revolt. Almost everywhere man is searching to supply himself with the things in which he has discovered himself to be deficient. To others, this pursuit for change and supplementation at a new and heightened pace is cause for alarm. There is a near frenzied furor to arrest the onward march. A frantic attempt by some, covertly and overtly, is being made to “return to the good old days.” At the same time, others are blatantly or clandestinely seeking for the good old days by grasping after a kind of primeval simplicity and animalistic primitivism. Each camp summons supporters with the rallying slogan that they alone hold the key to the preservation of mankind and human society as it is meant to be. And there is the rub.

One group laments that we are deficient in moral purity. The other charges that we are overburdened with moral hypocrisy. One side calls for a return to individual freedom through an economy of uncontrolled capitalistic competition. The other side demands freedom from want, exploitation and ignorance for each individual through increased socialization and controls of the economy, business and labor. Of these two most articulate voices, one cries for a moratorium on change, while the other carols for easy acceptance. The situation is well described by Alvin Toffler:

...there is danger that those who treasure the status quo may seize upon the concept of future shock as an excuse to argue for a moratorium on change. Not only would any such attempt to suppress change fail, triggering even bigger, bloodier and more unmanageable changes than any we have seen, it would be moral lunacy as well. By any set of human standards, certain radical social changes are already desperately overdue. The answer to future shock is not non-change, but a different kind of change.28

I Ching offers us one of the ways for making that different kind of change. Toffler writes that the only way to maintain a semblance of equilibrium during this period of turmoil is “to meet
invention with invention—to design new personal and social change-regulators. . . . The individual needs new principles for pacing and planning his life along with a dramatically new kind of education.” I believe that the philosophy and psychology of I Ching qualifies it as one of these “new kinds of education.” 29 If this is so, then I Ching is truly a chance for a new life. Its wisdom offers modern man a new concept of his relationship with his environment. Psychologically, involvement with I Ching structures new personal behavior patterns which serve to regulate the individual’s ability to mesh smoothly with the social changes of the times. While the principle of yin and yang is older than civilization, for this time it constitutes a new principle for man to use in “pacing and planning his life.”

There is a great deal of merit to this recommendation. The statement will certainly mean different things to different people. One meaning, from an I Ching perspective, is to develop an ability that creatively meets every external technical and societally sys-

Tortoise shell with two of three coins showing: traditionally used by I Ching seers.
temic invention with a correspondingly equal inner invention of
developed attitude, fresh emotional focus, a restructured intel-
lectual evaluation and a new dimension of spiritual orientation. It
will be by changing the inward structures to match the changed
outward structures that we will successfully design the “new per-
sonal and social change-regulators” as harmonizing components
of the “new kind of education” Toffler suggests.

The six lines, broken and unbroken, of any kua can serve as a
key to discovering what the inner inventions should be and how
they should be used in order to retain the total self in a harmoni-
ous balance with the environment without. Granted that the un-
derstanding of I Ching that will enable one to do this cannot be
“instantized” verbally. It will take considerable time and much
study to develop this depth of understanding. The excitement to
be gained from studying I Ching are not for those who are satis-
fied with the flavor of instant coffee, or those who can relish the
quality of a microwave-heated frozen dinner. But let us take a
glimpse at what the potential is.

In the traditional literature, much is made of the fact that the
sixty-four kua symbolically embrace the totality of the universe
of beingness that is or can be known to the consciousness and ex-
periencing of man. Yet nothing is mentioned of the fact that each
kua contains within itself the possibility of every other kua in the
system of I Ching. As we grasp an understanding of how the par-
ticulars of this possibility work, we shall strengthen our ability to
change our inward structures to match and regulate the changing
outward structures, which while external, are nevertheless at-
tached to us.

Upon reviewing the ancient literature we learn that the Chi-
nese, at one time, conceived of the universe as a cube. This does
not mean that they visualized it as a gigantic die. It meant that the
universe could be explained in terms of forces graphically related
to each other by being assigned to the six sides of a cube. Some
elementary exercises and diagrams will be found in a fascinating
and secret-laden volume dealing with this and other correspond-
ences of I Ching, entitled The Symbols of Yi King, by Z. D. Sung.
In the following diagram, consider that the three surfaces constituting corners numbered 1 = Ch’ien, 2 = Tui, 3 = Li, 4 = Chên, 5 = Sun, 6 = K’an, 7 = Kên and 8 = K’un. Those assignments derived from the top left side and facing surfaces are yang, and the

P = Positive (Yao, or Unbroken line)
N = Negative (Yao, or Broken line)
Yao = Line (or Elementary form of Yi Symbols)
1 = 1st (or Lower Yao position)
2 = 2nd (or Middle Yao position)
3 = 3rd (or Upper Yao position)

*The Universal Expressed as a Cube of Eight Forces. (The original of this diagram appears in the book The Symbols of Yi King, by D. Sung.*)
bottom, rear and right side surfaces are yin. The top gives the middle line, the left side gives the bottom line, the front face gives the top line for yang. The bottom gives the middle line, the right side gives the bottom line, the rear side gives the top line for yin. This illustrates how by taking any of the eight corners where three surfaces meet, and assigning it the proper linear image, all of the basic eight kua are contained on the cube.

In considering the individual six-line kua, visualize it as a cube. Study it. Begin by tossing three coins to build a kua with which to demonstrate some interesting points. More exciting discoveries await anyone who seriously turns to the study of the I. As an example for your independent study, I will now toss three coins and structure a kua-cube which we will study together. Here are the results of the tosses:

Toss 1
\[ \begin{array}{ccc}
2 & 2 & 3 = 7 \\
\end{array} \]

Toss 2
\[ \begin{array}{ccc}
3 & 2 & 2 = 7 \\
\end{array} \]

Toss 3
\[ \begin{array}{ccc}
3 & 2 & 3 = 8 \\
\end{array} \]

Toss 4
\[ \begin{array}{ccc}
2 & 2 & 3 = 7 \\
\end{array} \]

Toss 5
\[ \begin{array}{ccc}
2 & 2 & 3 = 7 \\
\end{array} \]

Toss 6
\[ \begin{array}{ccc}
2 & 3 & 3 = 8 \\
\end{array} \]

The kua thrown is Tui—"The Joyous."
The results of the tossing is Tui over Tui, with no moving lines. In order to build a kua-cube, I have invented an I Ching study device. It consists of twenty-four wooden tiles, measuring two-and-one-quarter inches square, and three-sixteenths of an inch thick. In the center of each is an eighth-inch hole. There are three basic patterns, and there are six pieces of each pattern. A fifteen-thirty-second inch square of yellow is in the center of each of eighteen of the tiles. The remaining six are solid yellow. Of the eighteen tiles, six are solid black, six are solid red and six are one-half black and one-half red. Below are sketches of the three patterns:
The solid red tile has the value of 7, solid black is 8, the red half of the bi-colored tile is 9, while the black half is 6. Keep this information in mind when building and studying a kua-cube, which looks like the following diagram.
At the present we will be concerned only with observing that theoretically the linear structure of any kua has in itself the necessary potential for becoming any of the other sixty-three kua. By inverting, it becomes Sun over Sun. Changing the third and sixth lines it becomes Ch’ien over Ch’ien. A change of the first, second, fourth and fifth lines produces K’un over K’un. When all of the lines are changed into their opposite it results in Kên over Kên. By changing the first and fourth lines it becomes K’an over K’an. The changing of the second, third, fifth and sixth lines into their opposites gives us Li over Li. Then by a series of combinations of these changes all other kua can be structured. This is a simple graphic illustration of the principle of ‘unity in diversity’, and, incidentally, the significance of the term “religion,” which means “to tie back to the one.”

In addition to this very elementary example, there are avenues for studying these kua-cubes which awaken a deeper understanding. I will not here explore at any length any of these avenues. But when one goes in this direction one must at all times be mindful that the lines and the names symbolize a relationship of forces at play. These forces culminate in the actualization of the things being experienced. For example: each place in the kua has a number of references. The fifth place most often holds the ruling line. In those kua where this is so, the line represents the character of authority. As an example, the fourth place expresses the character of the minister. The second place symbolizes the makeup of the official. Remember, these are forces of intelligence and energy we are dealing with. I have already used the coins to set up the kua. In reading the value for each throw of the three coins (using Tui over Tui), we have the ruling line structured by 2+2+3=7. This may be interpreted that in the situation concerned, where authority must react or be exercised, it should do so gently at first, but it should be prepared when necessary to be harsh. The action, energywise, is yin, yin, yang.

Had the coins been arranged or read differently; e.g., 2+3+2=7, then the authoritative action in the situation should open gently, followed by a display of unquestioned ability to be harsh, then ease off to allow for reaction and compliance.
Another concept pictured by a kua, according to the traditions of *I Ching*, is that the lines in the first and second place represent the earth. The lines of the third and fourth place picture man. Those topmost lines in the fifth and sixth place represent heaven. Feeling these as symbolizing forces, another content is discovered.

It is in retraining our thinking, constantly observing our behavior and reactions to situations, discovering the motivation for these, and holding the results next to the image *I Ching* gives us of the same event, that we shall gradually find our way to a new and easier self-assurance. *I Ching* is an instrument that can be helpful to enable us to see ourselves as others see us. The study and application of the wisdom of *I Ching* will bring us closer to an objective understanding and recognition of ourselves. *I Ching* is a discipline that can effectively succeed in subjectively bringing us into an objective self-relationship.