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THE FIRST NEO-CONFUCIANISM

AN INTRODUCTION TO

YANG HSIUNG'S "CANON OF SUPREME MYSTERY"

(*T'AI HSUAN CHING*, ca. 4 B.C.)

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Introduction

Confucius, Mencius, and Hsun-tzu were humanists; they believed achieving the good life was a matter of human interests and values. One's relation to the gods or to the cosmos was not a comparably urgent problem. Nevertheless, by 100 B.C. the first stable Chinese empire was supporting its claims to legitimacy with a Confucianism that, by a process not at all self-evident, had come to give the relation of man and Nature a place as conspicuous as that of man and man.

As new philosophic syntheses emerged from the late third century on, some of them aimed to form an orthodoxy (see Chap. I). The process can only be described as the first Neo-Confucianism, at least as great a shift in new directions as that of the Sung. The various systems drew on every contemporary current of thought, and wove them together so inextricably that it makes no sense to speak of Taoists or Legalists as specialized groups after the late second century. In these attempts at orthodoxy a single underlying pattern governed orderly change, whether in Nature, in the realm of social and political relationships, or in personal experience. Self-cultivation aimed to encompass all three of these spheres. Guided by the classics, its goal was sagehood. Only the power of sagely example could overcome social disorder and create a stable field for relationships. The monarch, as holder of the mandate bestowed by the natural order, was entitled *ex officio* to the dignity of a sage. It was the task of his advisors to guide and maintain him in sagehood. Such was the rationale of this state-centered Neo-Confucianism.

The genesis and original character of the Book of Changes (*Chou i* 周易 or *I ching* 易經) remain enigmas despite more than two millennia of intense study. By the first century B.C. the book had become not only a Confucian canon, its teaching sponsored by the state, but an infallible guide to foresight and self-discovery. A strong influence on this integration of cosmic and humanistic Confucianism was its Great Commentary (*Hsi tz'u ta chuan* 繫辭大傳), probably of the third or

second century. One of its central problems was that of timely conscientious action. Its method combined emulation of the sages with numerology and yin-yang cyclic analysis. Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–ca. 104 B.C.) shaped these themes into a theory of monarchic order justified by resonance with the order of Nature. Out of its symbols and ideology evolved the book that completed the elaboration of yin-yang and Five Phases cosmology, the Inner Canon of the Yellow Lord (*Huang-ti nei ching* 黃帝內經, probably first century B.C.).

Han Neo-Confucianism culminated in another sense in Yang Hsiung's 揚雄 (53 B.C.–A.D. 18) Canon of Supreme Mystery (*T'ai hsuan ching*). The book is a remarkable contribution to the tradition of the Changes, both as philosophy and as literature. Yang retained the metaphysical depth and psychological subtlety of the Changes in a work systematically constructed and poetically lucid. To let the reader judge whether Yang's Canon deserves more attention than it has had, we will discuss what justified it and how it is related to the Book of Changes; we will then explain and illustrate with excerpts what ideas it reflects, how it is organized, and how it uses language and imagery.

The Mystery was the most influential among the many meant to remedy inconsistencies in the Changes and to add to the old discourse current ideas about the cosmic order, the sagely life, and the beauty and precision that can be drawn from words.¹ Until the thirteenth century Yang's writings were considered central to the orthodox search for universal pattern, and thereafter were forgotten. The ruin of his reputation (see p. 10) has left the Mystery unread. Most modern histories of Chinese philosophy do not even mention it.

In referring to the Canon of the Supreme Mystery as "the Mystery" we follow the practice of Chinese authors from Yang Hsiung on. In citing it briefly as

1. For references to literature on the Book of Changes see Hellmut Wilhelm, *The Book of Changes in the Western Tradition. A Selective Bibliography* (Parerga, 2; Seattle, 1975). Later books in the *Chou i* tradition are listed (intermixed with treatises on divination) in *ch.* 108–110 of *Ssu k'u ch'üan shu tsung mu t'i yao* 四庫全書總目提要, and discussion with special reference to the *T'ai hsuan ching* in Suzuki Yoshijirô 鈴木由次郎, *Taigen'eki no kenkyû* 太玄易の研究 (Tokyo, 1964), pp. 26–41. Suzuki provides a complete Japanese translation of the Mystery, including Yang's commentaries. This translation is based on the views of early Chinese commentators rather than on a fresh reading of the text, but the book provides a systematic introduction. Suzuki's popular *Taigenkyô* 太玄經 (*Chûgoku koten shinsho*, 56; Tokyo, 1972) omits the Fathomings and Yang's commentaries, but the translation is sufficiently revised to be worth consulting. We are grateful for advice and help from Derk Bodde, David Cowhig, Michael Hearn, David Knechtges, Bernard Solomon, and Hellmut Wilhelm.

“*Hsuan* 玄” they echo the common use of “*I* 易” (“Changes”) for the *Chou i*.² “The Changes” and “the Mystery” preserve an important ambiguity in the early commentaries on the Changes and in Yang’s commentaries on his own book. Certain commentaries in both groups are meant to be read on two levels at once. On one level they describe the processes of change that constitute the Way. At the same time, statements in these commentaries about “change” or “mystery” often describe the *I* or the *Hsuan* itself. Each book, its annotators assure us, comprises the diversity of the Way, as well as its unchanging mystery. Here is a typical example from the Great Commentary to the Changes:

The Master said: The Changes in their perfection!
 Through the Changes the Sages exalted their virtue and broadened
 their achievement
 Exalted in wisdom, humble in ritual
 Exalted to emulate heaven
 Humble to exemplify earth
 Heaven and earth determining relations
 The Changes active between them
 Letting natures fully develop
 Preserving what exists:
 Gate of the Way and of Right.³

The Book of Changes in the Han

The archaic Book of Changes is a jumble of omens, rhymed proverbs, riddles and paradoxes, and snatches of song and story, drawn from popular lore and archaic traditions of divination. The so-called Ten Wings (*shih i* 十翼) remade the archaic text into a Confucian canon. They were actually a group of seven anonymous interpretations and commentaries, six of them from the third and second centuries B.C. To accomplish this revision, they ignored the simple and direct senses of most of these constituents.⁴ This was partly because significances had been lost as Chi-

2. Yang’s disciple Hou Pa 侯芭 apparently elevated the book to status of a canon (*ching*). On Hou see *Han shu pu chu* 漢書補注 (hereafter HS; Basic Sinological Series 國學基本叢書 ed., hereafter BSS), 87B: 5135.

3. *Chou i yin-te* 周易引得 (Peiping, 1935), 40/*Hsi tz’u*, A/5, end. For an analogous example from the Mystery, see p. 17 below.

4. Among the many studies that established this view of the pre-Confucian Changes, the most important are those by Li Ching-ch’ih 李鏡池 and others in *Ku shih pien* 古史辨, III, pt. 1 (Peiping, 1931). Li’s writings on the Changes have been gathered in *Chou i t’an yuan* 周易探源 (Beijing, 1978). Also important though faulty are Kao Heng’s 高亨

nese culture evolved, partly because the language changed, and mostly because the Wings read into the original text philosophical and social concepts that did not exist when the old text was written down late in the ninth century B.C.

Confucians by the middle of the Han were convinced that *Chou i* had originated in a set of cosmic emblems invented by the legendary sovereign Fu-hsi 伏羲 and elaborated by King Wen 文王 at the beginning of the Chou era, and that Confucius had diligently studied it. Thus it must coherently express a perfectly formed vision of sagehood. The most influential interpretation of the Changes, the Great Commentary, described it as an ordered account of the sage in society and in the universe, perfectly attuned to the springs of change that led without fail to timely and appropriate action. The scripture was a perfect mirror of the relations it described, its compilation an example of sagely action. But the order and system outlined in the Great Commentary obviously did not lie on the surface of the archaic text. Its *non sequiturs*, rustic frivolities, and archaic puzzles were never-quite-surmountable obstacles to the recovery of an inner meaning that had nothing to do with peasant lore or fortune-telling.

Frustrating though the diversity of the text was bound to be, the determined search for order found clear underlying principles in the sequence of the hexagrams and their internal structure. The sixty-four emblems, although not in a

attempts to reconstruct the original meaning in *Chou i ku ching chin chu* 周易古經今注 (Shanghai, 1947) and *Chou i ta chuan chin chu* 周易大傳今注 (Jinan, 1979), an expanded version. Gerhard Schmitt has studied several hexagrams with philological rigor in *Sprüche der "Wandlungen" auf ihrem geistesgeschichtlichen Hintergrund* (Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Institut für Orientforschung. Veröffentlichung, 76; Berlin, 1970). The problem of pre-philosophical meaning was introduced to the West by Arthur Waley in "The Book of Changes," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, Stockholm, 5 (1933), 121–142, drawing on the *Ku shih pien studies*, and then independently of both by Iulian K. Schutskii in a Russian dissertation completed in 1935, trans. into English as *Researches on the I Ching* (trans. W. L. MacDonald et al.; Bollingen Series, 62.2; Princeton, 1979). An important study of the early meaning of the Changes is Richard A. Kunst, "The Original *Yijing*: A Text, Phonetic Transcription, Translation, and Indexes, with Sample Glosses," Ph.D. diss., Oriental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1985. For a concise essay by Edward L. Shaughnessy on dating and the bibliography of the Changes see Michael Loewe (ed.), *Early Chinese Texts. A Bibliographical Guide* (Early China Special Monograph Series, 2; Berkeley, 1993 [publ. 1994]), pp. 216–228. Willard Peterson has studied the Great Commentary in "Making Connections: 'Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations' of the *Book of Change*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 42 (1982). 1: 67–116. Bent Nielsen, "The *Qian zuo du* 乾鑿度. A Late Han Dynasty (202 BC–AD 229) Study of the Book of Changes, *Yi jing* 易經" (Ph.D. diss., Sinology, University of Copenhagen, 1995), studies a book of the first century A.D.(?). Liao Ming-ch'un 廖名春 et al., *Chou i yen-chiu shih* 周易研究史 (Changsha, 1991), is a history of *I* studies.

regular order as they occur in the text, are at least in pairs, one member of which is the other turned upside down. The eight symmetrical hexagrams that inversion leaves unchanged are paired by changing each yin line to yang and vice versa.⁵

The Ten Wings carried this line of exploration further. Among other approaches, they interpreted the texts attached to the hexagrams (the "judgments," *t'uan tz'u* 象辭) and to their individual lines (*yao tz'u* or *hsiao tz'u* 爻辭) by examining the relations of lines to each other within the hexagram and by their yin-yang associations.

By the first century B.C. such analyses had satisfied most thinkers that the texts were not a motley set randomly attached to the hexagrams. Hidden within the words of each text must be an order identical with that of the corresponding hexagram. The logic of these sixfold binary symbols in some subtle way must determine the words of the judgments and line texts. Scholars became convinced that the complicated and ambiguous ideas in a text could eventually be resolved by careful analysis into simple images and concepts associated in a regular way with the six lines and two trigrams (intermediate three-line symbols) that make up the corresponding hexagram. The hexagrams, in other words, had become decipherable symbols of a manifold reality. The texts had become literary expressions of the truths that the hexagrams express more abstractly and emblematically.

The masters of the first century B.C., especially Meng Hsi 孟喜 (fl. 69) and Ching Fang 京房 (77-37), continued this research. They created an imposing new armamentarium of techniques to carry on established lines of inquiry and to explore the relations between the meaning of each hexagram's texts and the multifarious associations of the eight possible trigrams of which they were built.

Some modern historians have praised Han scholars of the Changes for their contributions to positive science, and others have blamed them for launching science down a dead-end road. Both evaluations grossly overestimate their influence on methods of scientific discovery, and ignore their aims and their actual effect in the history of thought.

The Han mutationists sought to understand the patterns underlying all process: in the external world, in the body, in the recesses of the human heart, in the conscientious action of the individual, and in the ceremonial of the empire. Well-ordered activity in any of these spheres was a manifestation of the one Way. In the fourth century, Mencius and Chuang-tzu did not agree on whether knowledge of these patterns must be ethical. In the Han, no judgment that flouted cosmic patterns could arrive at the Good, and no knowledge that disregarded the Good

5. Whether this was the pre-Han order is uncertain. See Nielsen 1995: chap. 3.

could be true. Meng Hsi, Ching Fang, and others like them can hardly be blamed for being men of their time rather than modern scientists.⁶

Their concern as men of their time was the ultimate issue in understanding change: how does all this infinite diversity of natural mutation in Nature, society, and the human psyche arise from the Way, which rests in mystery and does not change at all? What obscure paths do the Tao's "spiritual forces" (*shen* 神) travel to keep the cycles turning? The Han experts were reexamining the symbolic notation of the *I* to find regularities. They were not merely trying to narrow down the objective significance, even what they believed to be the objective moral significance, of the symbols. Their goal was a universal nexus of association and correlation, extending the meanings of traditional symbols to create an infinitely rich language they could use to relate everything that people observe, think, feel, contemplate, and imagine. What they valued in this vocabulary was scope, not rigorous definition. They did not see themselves as widening the ambit of the Changes, but as coming to grips with the universality that the Sages had given it. Their demonstration that endless wisdom was stored in the symbols of the Changes confirmed its status in the canon whose transmission was sponsored by, and in turn lent legitimacy to, the dynastic house of Han.

The Book of Changes no doubt originated as a manual of prognostication. Even today it remains a living force in Chinese civilization. As one intellectual in the People's Republic puts it, "Each loosening of political control in China has resulted in a debate involving both Confucius and the *Book of Changes*."⁷

Over the two and a half millennia in which the Changes has been studied as a key to the future as well as a revelation from the archaic past, forecasting remained only one of its roles. At the same time, suitably interpreted, it served as a philosophical summa and a pillar of orthodoxy. For its most dedicated students, since the time that the Ten Wings were written, the Changes was a model of the Way in all its aspects, to be mastered and contemplated as a guide through the complexity of experience, back to the hidden center in which all tensions and con-

6. The best introductions to Han studies of the Changes are Hsü Ch'in-t'ing 徐芹庭, *Liang Han shih-liu chia I chu ch'an wei* 兩漢十六家易注闡微 (Hong Kong, 1975), which collects and discusses the extant texts; Kao Huai-min 高懷民, *Liang Han I hsueh shih* 兩漢易學史 (Taipei, 1970); Ozawa Bunshirô 小澤文四郎, *Kandai Ekigaku no kenkyû* 漢代易學の研究 (Tokyo, 1970); and the first essay in Suzuki, *Kan Eki kenkyû* 漢易研究 (Tokyo, 1963). Ch'ü Wan-li 屈萬里, *Hsien Ch'in Han Wei I li shu p'ing* 先秦漢魏易例述評 (Taipei, 1970), gives a systematic account of techniques used to interpret hexagrams.

7. K'o Yun-lu, cited in GERMIE BARMÉ & LINDA JAIVIN, *New Ghosts, Old Dreams* (New York: Times Books, 1992), p. 376.

traditions are resolved, and all sound decisions imperceptibly set in motion.

In the Way, which was also Yang Hsiung's Mystery, science and ethics were one. This Han vision was not a reduction of science to subjectivity. Nature and human nature constitute a single order. As Yang argues in his "Evolution" commentary, "Now Heaven and Earth are placed; therefore, the noble and base are ranked. The four seasons proceed [in order]; therefore, the son inherits from the father. The pitchpipes and calendar are set forth; therefore, relations between ruler and subject are orderly."⁸ The good society reflects the cosmos, and vice versa, because both are part of the Way. The object of inquiry in this view of Nature differs fundamentally from that of modern physical science. Since historians have almost entirely ignored the methods and aims of the Tao-centered science of early China, few of their generalizations about its character are useful.

Yang Hsiung shared his predecessors' vision of an order that united the cosmos, the sphere of action, and the individual. This vision drew his attention, as it had theirs, to the one scripture in the canon that encompassed every aspect of that order. But Yang was unwilling to join those such as Meng and Ching who were willing to multiply techniques of interpretation until the non-philosophic assertions of the archaic Changes had been explained away. In the orthodoxy he sought, mystery and rational pattern were inseparable and complementary.

A generation before Yang, Chiao Kan 焦贛 had stepped outside the scholastic tradition when he compiled his Forest of the Changes (*I lin* 易林). Chiao rejected

8. *T'ai hsuan ching* (under the title *Tien k'an T'ai hsuan* 點勘太玄; Chu tzu chi p'ing 諸子集評 ed. of 1909; reprint, Taipei, 1970, hereafter T), 7: 7a (p. 1020). This edition contains annotations by Ssu-ma Kuang and others. For its use of earlier recensions see 10: 10b-11a (pp. 1041-1042). Nylan's complete translation is *The Canon of Supreme Mystery* (SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture; Albany, 1993, hereafter N), p. 432. Since Ssu-ma uses Fan Wang's 范望 commentary (ca. 265) sparingly, it is necessary to consult the full version in *T'ai hsuan ching* (Chung-kuo tzu hsueh ming chu chi ch'eng 中國子學名著集成 reprint of the 1524 ed.), cited below as F. Most late annotators add little to the explanations by Han and Six Dynasties scholars preserved in these two editions. Occasionally useful are the *T'ai hsuan pen chih* 太玄本旨 (preface dated 1368) of Yeh Tzu-ch'i 葉子奇, in *Ssu k'u ch'üan shu chen pen* 四庫全書珍本, 3rd collection, and *T'ai hsuan ch'an mi* 太玄闡秘 (pref. end of 1814 or early 1815) of Ch'en Pen-li 陳本禮, in *Ch'u hsueh hsuan ts'ung-shu* 初學軒叢書, 4th coll. Yeh is mainly concerned with cyclic correlations of the texts, and reads criticisms of Wang Mang into them. Ch'en also attempts to prove Yang did not support Wang's usurpation. Somewhat more than a mere curiosity is the Ch'ien-lung *Yang-tzu t'ai hsuan pieh hsun* 揚子太玄別訓 of Liu Ssu-tsu 劉思祖, which provides a commentary in the form of one or two rhymed tetrasyllabic quatrains for each Head, Appraisal, and Fathoming, and long prose colophons for each of Yang's commentaries.

as “incomplete” the prevalent analysis of hexagrams based on individual moving lines (see below, p. 25) and constituent trigrams. By changing moving lines in the original hexagram to their opposites, inquirers arrived at a new hexagram; but they then interpreted it using the same techniques as they applied to an original hexagram. To better elucidate the dynamic relation between original and derived hexagrams, Chiao provided 4,096 (64^2) rhymed texts. Each text gave meaning to a second-order hexagram. Sixty-four of these could be formed from each original by manipulating all possible combinations of moving lines, from one to six.⁹

Yang went much further. The Canon of Supreme Mystery is a completely new book that in its philosophical coherence and order, and in its overt correspondence of text and emblem, is everything that Yang’s predecessors had so laboriously sought to read into the Changes.

Political Background

Yang Hsiung’s books took authoritative earlier writings as their starting points, but were not mere imitations. The Mystery made considerable demands on its readers. The clarity of its structure was intentionally balanced by the complexity of language that strives above all for allusiveness. But its notorious difficulty was only one reason that the book came to be neglected while the study of other arcane scriptures flourished. Here is the explanation of Ssu-ma Kuang 司馬光 (1019–1086), the book’s most eminent enthusiast, who annotated it and at the end of his life wrote another book in the same tradition:¹⁰

9. Like the *T’ai hsuan ching*, the *I lin* is preserved in the *Cheng-t’ung Tao tsang* 政統道藏. The former is found in vols. 860–862 (hereafter TT; item 1183 in K. M. Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-tsang. Titres des ouvrages*, Paris, 1975, hereafter S), and the latter in TT 1101–1104 (S 1475). Chiao’s expansion carried further what Han scholars believed had been the expansion of the eight trigrams to 64 (8^2) hexagrams. On Chiao’s motivation see the preface attributed to Pi Chih 費直, a *Chou i* master of the late Western Han. For further discussion of the *I lin* see Suzuki 1963: 431–593, and Kao Huai-min 1970: 126–138. Chiao’s authorship has been questioned, but Suzuki confirms it in “Shô shi Ekirin no sakusha ni tsuite 焦氏易林の作者について,” in *Tôhō gakkai sôritsu nijūgo shūnen kinen Tôhōgaku ronshū* 東方學會創立二十五週年紀念東方學論集 (Tokyo, 1972), pp. 307–320.

10. From Ssu-ma’s prefatory essay to the *T’ai hsuan ching* entitled “On reading the Mystery” (*Tu Hsuan* 讀玄), in TT, prefaces, pp. 1a–3a. Ssu-ma takes the anecdote from HS, 87B: 5135–5137. Our first ellipsis indicates his omission. His own book in the *Chou i* tradition, greatly influenced by the *T’ai hsuan ching*, is *Ch’ien hsu* 潛虛 (Hidden and empty). The structure of its diagrams is decimal. See *Ssu k’u ch’üan shu tsung mu t’i yao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Kuang-tung shu-chü ed. of 1868), 108: 7a–8b, and Suzuki 1963: 38–41.

When I was a youngster I heard of the Mystery, but never succeeded in seeing it. I was able to read only Master Yang's autobiographical preface, which led me to acclaim the Mystery as a splendid work. When Pan Ku 班固 wrote Yang Hsiung's biography, he said,

"Liu Hsin 劉歆 (ca. 53 B.C.-A.D. 23) said [to Yang], 'You have troubled yourself for nothing. These days scholars can hold official position and reap its benefits without being able to understand the Changes. Where does that leave your Mystery? I fear that our successors will use it to cover their saucepots!' Yang laughed but did not reply. . . . Confucian scholars have sometimes derided Yang on the ground that, in composing a canon although he was not a sage, he was like the lords of Wu and Ch'u in the Spring and Autumn period, who usurped the title of King, a crime that merited executing them and terminating their family lines."

The fact that Pan Ku recorded these anecdotes indicates that although his attitude was more favorable than that of Liu Hsin, he still would not have said that the Mystery is as fine a book as Yang had claimed. I myself thought it strange that Master Yang, rather than contributing to the [study of the] Changes, wrote his own Mystery. The Way expounded in the Changes encompasses all the multiplicity of natural and human phenomena. What could Master Yang have had to add that justified writing a new book? Nor did I know how he meant it to be used. Thus I too was unable to acknowledge that Master Yang was right to compose the Mystery.

When I grew up, in studying the Changes I was greatly troubled by its abstruseness. It occurred to me that since the Mystery was the composition of a wise and compassionate man [rather than the revelation of the Sages], compared to the Changes its meanings should be less deep, and its style more accessible. . . . I thus wished it were possible to devote myself first to the Mystery, and thus gradually to advance far enough toward the Changes that I could hope, standing on tiptoe, to catch a distant glimpse [of its inner meaning]. From then on I sought [a copy of the Mystery] for years on end. Finally I was able to read it. At first I found it boundless and unfathomable, and could hardly tell where to begin. Then, studying it more closely, I changed my attitude. I set aside social obligations and read the book dozens of times, until finally it seemed that I had at least a limited understanding of its gist. Then I laid it aside and said to myself with a sigh: "What a great and good Confucian this man Yang must have been! Since Confucius' death, who if not Master Yang has comprehended the Way of the sages? Hsun-tzu, I fear, is hardly a model in that respect, much less the others." . . . Thus I realized that the Mystery *is* a contribution to the [study of the] Changes, and that Yang had not written a separate work in order to compete with it. How superficial was Liu Hsin's and Pan Ku's understanding of him; how profound the wrong they did him! . . .

If a scholar is able to study the Changes to the exclusion of all else, truly nothing more is needed. But the Changes is heaven, and the Mystery provides

what is needed to build a staircase up to it. Are *you* prepared to float up to heaven, leaving the staircase unused?

In this preface Ssu-ma Kuang addresses the major objections levelled against the *T'ai hsuan*.¹¹ The Mystery, like the Changes, was said to be hopelessly abstruse and of no practical benefit. Liu Hsin's famous jibe seems to have been directed not against Yang Hsiung but against the intellectual limitations of contemporary careerists. To say that the Mystery would not be read in an age that had no interest in the Changes is merely to state the obvious. Pan Ku was using this anecdote—among others—to suggest that Yang's self-esteem could not be threatened by a *bon mot*. But Ssu-ma Kuang redirects it to praise Yang, who was not a cynic like Liu. Liu could not understand that the opportunists' neglect of the Mystery proved its worthiness. Next, Ssu-ma acknowledges the opinion that Yang was presumptuous when he composed a work in canonical form rather than a commentary or a work in some other genre conventional in a post-classical age. Many wrote such imitations, but it was usual to attach the name of some ancient sage rather than to sign one's own. Yang's defender argues that the Mystery was a contribution, rather than a rival, to the study of the Changes.

The identification of intellectual arrogance with political usurpation brings to mind the most explosive issue of all. Yang served the usurper Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9–23), who, setting aside his fealty to the house of Han, assumed the throne as first emperor of the Hsin 新 dynasty in A.D. 9. Such service, tantamount to treason in the eyes of many historians, not only cast doubt on Yang's character and judgment but profoundly affected the repute of his writings. Possibly Ssu-ma, in claiming that Liu intentionally derided Yang, means to emphasize the difference between Yang and a man notoriously sympathetic to Wang Mang's ambitions.

The evidence that has survived about Yang's involvement with Wang is scant and ambiguous; we will review it in its setting.

Pan Ku avers that the Mystery was completed during the reign of the sickly young Sad Emperor (Ai-ti 哀帝, 7–1 B.C.), when the Ting 丁 and Fu 傅 imperial distaff clans were dominant in the court. Within three months of that emperor's accession, Dowager Empress Fu forced Wang Mang into retirement, awarding him, upon his departure in August, 7, special grants, honors, and an enlarged fief. Powerful opponents quickly neutralized the influence of his supporters, and within two years were speaking of him as "deserving public execution." Wang

11. For a typical contemporary attack see Su Hsun 蘇洵 (1009–1066), "*T'ai hsuan lun* 太玄論," in *Chia-yu chi* 嘉祐集 (BSS), 7: 61–72, and on Su's essay, George Hatch in Yves Hervouet (ed.), *A Sung Bibliography* (Hong Kong, 1978), pp. 388–389.

“shut his gates and preserved himself” on his estate.¹²

During this period, when Yang Hsiung was writing the *T'ai hsuan ching*, Wang's rise to highest power was anything but predictable. In 2 B.C., following the deaths of the dowager empresses Ting and Fu, his aunt the Empress Dowager Wang, on the pretext of an ominous solar eclipse, recalled him to court. After the fortuitous death of the Sad Emperor in 1 B.C., Wang Mang was well placed to influence the selection of the Tranquil Emperor (P'ing-ti 平帝, 1 B.C.-A.D. 6). Without significant rivals, Wang consolidated his position throughout the new reign. Upon the emperor's death, Wang, with his aunt's support, became Regent on behalf of Liu Ying 劉嬰, the new child-emperor (February, 6), Acting Emperor of the Han (July, 6) and finally Emperor of the Hsin (January, 9).

While this tumult was making a court career impossible, Yang Hsiung too was “preserving himself and remaining tranquil.” In Pan Ku's supportive biography, Yang's self-preservation was as much a matter of fostering spiritual integrity as of lying low.¹³

Yang Hsiung's feelings toward Wang Mang before and after Wang's rise to power are not clear from the record. As court poet, Yang was expected to write encomiums to his patron, and he did so. For example, he appended to his Model Sayings praise for the Duke who Gives Tranquillity to the Han, the title by which Wang was known from A.D. 1 to 4, when he was considered not a potential usurper but the last pillar of Han stability. As Wang, Liu, and others with whom Yang served were promoted again and again, Yang, according to Pan Ku, “did not change his post during three reigns.” He held only nominal office under Wang Mang, which suggests that he indeed held himself aloof from the sycophants who

12. HS, 99A: 5661, trans. Homer H. Dubs in *The History of the Former Han Dynasty* (3 vols., Baltimore, 1938-1955), III, 133-134. For basic information on Yang's relations with Wang, see 87B: 5133-5137. Attempts to show consistent enthusiasm for Wang in Yang's writing, countered by arguments that many allusions satirize or mock Wang, add up to a tidal wave of scholarship that has not yet abated. The most judicious detailed assessment we have seen is in an unpublished MS by Michael Barnett, “The Han Philosopher Yang Xiong: An Appeal for Unity in an Age of Discord.” For Yang's life, see Knechtges, *The Han Shu Biography of Yang Xiong (53 B.C.-A.D. 18)* (Occasional papers, Center for Asian Studies, Arizona State University; Tempe, 1983). See the important references in Knechtges, “Uncovering the Sauce Jar: A Literary Interpretation of Yang Hsiung's ‘Chü ch'in mei Hsin,’” in David T. Roy & Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, *Ancient China. Studies in Early Civilization* (Hong Kong, 1978), pp. 229-252, esp. pp. 232-234. Michael Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict in Han China* (London, 1974), esp. p. 301, discusses the political background.

13. HS, 87B: 5113. Yang uses the term on p. 5120. For what he meant, see p. 14.

were reaping rich benefits from Wang's favor. In 10, falsely implicated in a plot against Wang, he jumped from an upper-story window and nearly died of injuries. Roughly four years later, near the end of his life, he wrote a memorial (later misclassified as a "portent text") praising Wang's Hsin dynasty. A rhymed epigram, Pan tells us, circulated in the capital:

Wanting purity, stillness
He threw himself out of a tower;
Wanting solitude, quiet
He composed a portent text.

A glance at the quotation that ends the present essay will make the irony clear.¹⁴

Yang's writings and personal character did not appeal to the careerists of his time, but they won him the esteem of such eminent intellectuals as Huan T'an 桓譚 (43 B.C.–A.D. 28) and Wang Ch'ung 王充 (A.D. 27–97). Pan Ku's History of the Former Han Dynasty accorded him an exceptionally long biography. The bibliographies of the Standard Histories classified the Canon of Supreme Mystery not as a book of divination but as an orthodox writing of the Confucian tradition (*ju chia* 儒家). Literati often referred to its author as "Master Yang" (Yang-tzu 揚子), a form rarely applied to thinkers after the Chou period. Scholars of the Six Dynasties greatly respected his philosophical preoccupation with fundamental patterns of cyclic change rather than with fluctuation and chance. The Mystery provided inspiration as well as terminology for "studies of the mysteries" (*hsuan-hsueh* 玄學), a third-century philosophical revival much more eclectic than the orthodoxy of Yang's time.¹⁵

14. HS, 87B: 5134–5135. Fritz Jäger recognized the allusions to Yang's own writings; "Yang Hiung und Wang Mang," *Sinica-Sonderausgabe*, 1 (1937): 18n19. The memorial, entitled *Chü Ch'in mei Hsin* 劇秦美新, is preserved in *Wen hsuan* 文選, ch. 48, and discussed and translated in Knechtges 1978. At least part of it is spurious; see pp. 244–246.

15. For Yang's biography see HS, ch. 87A–87B. The term *hsuan-hsueh* suggests both the *T'ai hsuan ching* and the "Three Mysteries" (*san hsuan* 三玄) of the Chou, namely the *Lao-tzu*, *Chuang-tzu*, and *Chou i*. Yang, following his teacher Chuang Tsun 莊遵 (discussed below), was among the first to draw on the *Lao-tzu* and *Chuang-tzu* selectively along with the Changes. See Yang's *Fa Yen* (*Hsin pien chu tzu chi ch'eng* 新編諸子集成), 4: 10, 5: 13, 15–16. This unfashionable catholicity is perhaps one reason that Yang was ignored by so many of his contemporaries, a point acknowledged as a sign of worthiness by Huan T'an and other admirers. See Huan's *Hsin lun* 新論, ch. 13–15 of *Ch'üan Hou Han wen* 後漢文, in *Ch'üan shang-ku san tai Ch'in Han San-kuo Chin Nan-pei-ch'ao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (1894 reproduction of 1st ed.), esp. 15: 8a–8b, trans. Timoteus Pokora in *Hsin-lun (New Treatise) and Other Writings by Huan T'an (43 B.C.–A.D. 28)* (Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, 20; Ann Arbor, 1975), pp. 172–173, items

With the revival of a classicist Confucianism from the T'ang on, Yang's views regularly entered discussions of the moral nature of human beings and other central issues. Such pivotal figures as Han Yü 韓愈 (768–824), Wang An-shih 王安石 (1021–1086), and Su Shih 蘇軾 (1037–1101), considered his arguments alongside those of Mencius and Hsun-tzu. In the Northern Sung, as the civil service examination system and the rise of a new official class tied Confucianism more closely to the authority of the state, dynastic legitimacy became a sensitive issue.

Scholars asked afresh which rival regimes in the past had actually held the Mandate of Heaven. They greatly stressed the unwavering loyalty of officials toward the ruling house that had appointed them, an ideal that had not existed among the Western Han elite.¹⁶ Any association with Wang Mang—early or late, long or short—came to imply betrayal of the legitimate Han dynasty. Ideological judgments of this sort lowered the reputations and devalued the writings, not only of Yang Hsiung but of Liu Hsin and his father Hsiang 向 (B.C. 79–8), polymaths whose influence on later scholarship had been enormous. In the passage already quoted, Ssu-ma Kuang testifies to the obscurity into which the Canon of the Supreme Mystery had fallen in the eleventh century.

Chu Hsi 朱熹 (1130–1200) in his influential chronological survey of history recorded Yang's death in a way that any Sung reader would recognize as damning:

163–164 (slightly modified): "People desire what is close to them and admire what is far away. They saw for themselves Yang Tzu-yun's salary, position, and appearance, none of which were impressive, so they thought little of his writings."

In the Six Dynasties Yang's work played an important part in the teaching of the influential Ching-chou 荊州 school, founded by Sung Chung 宋衷 (or 忠, d. 219), famed for his interpretation of the Mystery. This school was the matrix in which *hsuan-hsueh* was formed. See T'ang Yang-t'ung, "Wang Pi's New Interpretation of the *I-ching* and *Lun-yü*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 10 (1947), 124–161, esp. pp. 129–132, and Yü Ying-shih, "Han Chin chih chi chih hsin tzu-chueh yu hsin ssu-ch'ao 漢晉之際之新白覺與新思潮," *Hsin Ya hsueh-pao* 新亞學報, 4 (1959), 1, 25–144, esp. pp. 86–91. For other evaluations of Yang by later writers, see Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody. A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung* . . . (Cambridge, England, 1976), pp. 109–110, and Alfred Forke, *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen chinesischen Philosophie* (Hamburg, 1934), pp. 78–90, which also discusses the *T'ai hsuan ching*. *T'ai hsuan ch'an mi*, "Wai pien 外編," collects essays in praise of the Mystery by eminent scholars over the centuries.

16. This important point was made by Hsu Fu-kuan 徐復觀 in *Liang Han ssu-hsiang shih* 兩漢思想史 (rev. ed., Taipei, 1976), II, 458–459. See Han Yü, "Tu Hsun 讀荀," in *Han Ch'ang-li chi* 韓昌黎集 (BSS), 3: 72–73; Su Shih, "Yang Hsiung lun 揚雄論," *Su Tung-p'o ying chao chi* 蘇東坡應詔集 (idem), *hsia*, 18: 70–71; and Wang An-shih, "Yang Meng 楊孟," *Wang An-shih ch'üan chi* 王安石全集 (Taipei, 1974), 39: 102–103. On the

“Wang Mang’s court grandee Yang Hsiung died.” In his informal talks with his disciples he goes much further: “Yang Hsiung is the most useless of all, a true rotten pedant. Whenever he gets excited he throws in his lot with the Yellow Lord and Lao-tzu. His judgment is unfailingly inferior and his writing dull in the extreme. He is most laughable.” Elsewhere in the same *chüan*, Chu cites Yang’s astronomical ideas and praises his personal depth and his ability to reason on such matters as the alternation of yin and yang. His main objection is that Yang uses an uncanonical threefold mode of analysis (based on heaven, earth, and man) rather than the classical dialectic mode. Inertia kept Yang among those worshipped in the state temples to Confucius long after Chu’s lifetime, but his contempt blasted Yang’s reputation among scholars.¹⁷

Yang saw his time as a time of chaos. Public life was often catastrophic not only for the individual but for his clan. The danger could be reduced either by currying favor with the clique in power—which could become a fatal liability if the order changed—or by withdrawal—which opportunists would see as failure. Yang chose the latter. He remained aware of the cost; in fact he wrote long and erudite essays to remind his detractors that his obscurity was voluntary.

But withdrawal was not just a matter of rational calculation. An aphorism of his teacher Chuang Tsun 莊子 (better known as Yen Chün-p’ing 嚴君平, late first century B.C.) comes to mind: “No matter how fast you walk you can’t escape your shadow; no matter how loud you speak you can’t drown out your echo. But in silence, keeping to the shade, you give no cause for shadow or echo.”¹⁸ Yang was no doubt influenced by his teacher, a diviner by occupation, when he chose “mystery” as his metonym for the Way. The obscurity that it implies is a proper attribute for a noble man whose time is out of joint. Yang’s essay “An Antidote for Ridicule” (*Chieh ch’ao* 解嘲) makes it clear that he saw renouncing politics not as failure but as fidelity to the Way. In his time “those who say anything unusual are suspected; those who do anything different are punished. . . . Doing what can be done in a time when things can be done results in success; doing what cannot

new alignment of ruler and officials see Vol. I, Chap. III, p. 3.

17. *Tzu chih t’ung chien kang-mu* 資治通鑑綱目 (1172, K’ang-hsi palace ed.), 8: 34a; *Chu-tzu yü lei ta ch’üan* 朱子語類大全 (1973 Kyoto reprint of 1668 Japanese xylograph), 137: 4b, 15a, 10a, pp. 6782, 6803, 6793. On Yang’s complex career as an object of official worship see Thomas A. Wilson, *Genealogy of the Way. The Construction and Uses of the Confucian Tradition in Late Imperial China* (Stanford University Press, 1995).

18. “Tso yu ming 座右銘,” in *Ch’üan Han wen*, 42: 13b, in *Ch’üan shang-ku san tai Ch’in Han San-kuo Chin Nan-pei-ch’ao wen*. “Yen” was used to avoid a later Han taboo on “Chuang.”

be done in a time when nothing can be done results in failure." Lacking opportunity to succeed, "silent and alone I keep to my Supreme Mystery."¹⁹

Yang was forced to make unpalatable choices. What political convictions underlay his allegiances and withdrawals?

The plain sense of his writings, as well as the veiled allusions and subtle ironies that commentators have judged so variously, indicate that Yang was above all a conservative critic of contemporary abuses, and saw himself as loyal to the Han. He was no dissident. He avoided political involvements "in an age that did not favor virtuous action." We believe that he favored the reform of Han rule rather than a new dynasty, even under a vigorous monarch, because he was consistently predisposed toward continuation rather than upheaval. He was concerned above all for the stability of fundamental social institutions and obligations. He saw the mutually beneficial subordination of subject to ruler as analogous to the dynamic relation of the myriad phenomena to the Supreme Mystery, the Way.²⁰

The fact remains that Yang publicly praised Wang Mang's *fait accompli*. But that was in Yang's old age, when he had just been restored to office after having been under vehement suspicion of disloyalty. This episode furnishes no warrant for rejecting the Mystery as the work of a toady. The many desperate recantations during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of what had until then been virtues inspire sober reflection on this issue.

Philosophical Background

"Hsuan" carries a range of meaning from "black" to "darkness" to "hidden" to "mystery." Its overtones are stillness, solitude, isolation, nondifferentiation, and inaccessibility by purely rational processes. In Chinese thought the ideas at the philosophical end of this range bear no unpleasant connotations. They express that aspect of experience that can be known only by quiet and deep contemplation, or by illumination. Yang Hsiung uses *hsuan* in his book's title and throughout to mean the profound darkness, silence, ambiguity, and indefiniteness out of

19. HS, 87B: 5119, 5122-5123, trans. Knechtges 1976: 97-101.

20. On Yang's despair about the politics of his time, see the HS biography, esp. 87B: 3584, 3587. He expresses his views on stability, for instance, in Heads 51, "Constancy," and 53, "Eternal" (N, 314, 323). Knechtges sees even Yang's notorious memorial in praise of the Hsin dynasty as apolitical in its thrust, and more complimentary than critical toward the Han. Its "major theme is not that . . . Hsin [is] especially virtuous, or even that the material achievements of Wang Mang are worthy of praise. All of these points of course are made, but they are secondary to the espousal of a kind of classicism, in which the classics . . . are viewed as the embodiment of all ethical principles" (1978: 251).

which creation comes. In cosmogony it is the undifferentiated state out of which yin-yang and eventually the myriad phenomena separate. In Nature as humans experience it, it is the latency out of which individual things are spontaneously born, and out of which events shape themselves. In the sage—that is, the human being as he should be, as the student of the Mystery is striving to be—it is the spiritual inwardness that precedes conscious decision and action and spontaneously accords them with natural process. It is, in other words, the creative aspect of the Way wherever it is manifested. It is described in the famous opening passage of the *Lao-tzu*, which we translate in accordance with the interpretation attributed to Yang's teacher Chuang Tsun:

The way that can be told is not the common way
 The name that can be named is not the common name
 What has no name is the beginning of heaven and earth
 What has a name is the mother of the myriad creatures
 Those without desires contemplate its secrets
 Those who have desires contemplate its periphery
 These two emerge together, but differ in name
 Being together, they are called Mystery
 Mystery upon mystery
 Gateway to the myriad secrets.

Although it would be unrealistic to expect general agreement on the meaning of this poem, most of those who take it seriously as philosophy discern the mystic Way in two aspects. One is the ineffable fountainhead, outside and prior to nature. The other is the immanent process that forms things and events. Compounding these two mysteries is that of their commonality, the never-broken connection between the change we see, the natural processes that produce orderly change, and the unchanging ground of all process. These lines, like the rest of the *Lao-tzu*, apply equally to the cosmos and the heart and mind of the sage.²¹

It is from Lao-tzu's Mystery that that of Yang derives, although his moral stance differs: "As for Lao-tzu's discussion of the Way and its power, I have drawn

21. Chuang Tsun apparently compiled two commentaries to the *Lao-tzu*. The second half of the longer one, *Lao-tzu chih kwei* 老子指歸, is preserved in the *Cheng-t'ung Tao tsang* (TT 376-377, S 693). We cite the reconstituted critical ed. of Chuang's whole *Lao-tzu* text in Shima Kunio's 島邦男 remarkable *Rôshi kôsei* 老子校正 (Tokyo, 1973), p. 55; see also N, 3. It is impossible to reconstruct entirely the text Chuang used. The surviving text differs slightly from the usual *Lao-tzu*, e.g., in the omission of *ch'ang* 常 from lines 5 and 6. Chuang's understanding of the first two lines is idiosyncratic but in keeping with his philosophy of withdrawal. Our translation is to some extent modelled on that of D. C. Lau, based on later commentary traditions: *Chinese Classics. Tao Te Ching* (Hong

upon it; but from his rejection of Good (*jen* 仁) and Right (*i* 義), his elimination of ritual and study, I have taken nothing."²²

The first lines of the "Evolution" commentary echo the ideas that begin the *Lao-tzu*:

The Mystery of which we speak in hidden places unfolds the myriad species without revealing a form of its own. It fashions the stuff of Emptiness and Formlessness, giving birth to the regulations. Tied to the gods in Heaven and the spirits on Earth, it fixes the models. It pervades and assimilates past and present, originating the categories. It unfolds and intersperses yin and yang, generating the *ch'i* 氣. Now severed, now conjoined [through the interaction of yin and yang *ch'i*, the various aspects of] Heaven-and-Earth are indeed fully provided!²³

Yang's Mystery, like that of Lao-tzu, bridges the gap (in both cosmos and consciousness) between the inexpressible and the concrete. The imagery of this passage is explained in the "Diagram" commentary: "The Way of Heaven is a perfect compass. The Way of Earth is a perfect carpenter's square. The compass in motion describes a complete circle through the sites. The square, unmoving, secures things [in their proper place]. Circling through the sites then makes divine light possible. Securing things then makes congregation by types possible. . . . Now the Mystery is the Way of Heaven, the Way of Earth, and the Way of Man."²⁴ The Mystery includes not only the yin matrix of creativity but its yang impetus toward form. This idea Yang has added (or at least made explicit), as he has added a typically Han concern with *ch'i*, the energy or vitality that shapes everything.

For the authors of the *Lao-tzu*, life is best lived by avoiding structures and obligations that impede access to the Way. In the ideal society individuals interact without demands or sentiment. It was only "when the Great Way declined that Good and Right arose." But Yang, in reply to a question about the archaic Golden Age that "was in good order without models or laws," speaks of the sage's abhor-

Kong, 1982), pp. 3, 267.

22. *Fa yen*, 4: 10. Ma Tsung's 馬總 (d. 823) collectanea *I lin yü yao* 意林語要 preserves a comment attributed to Yang in the lost Yü Fan 虞翻 (164-233) recension of the Mystery: "Confucius is a sufficient [guide] to human culture; Lord Lao [i.e., Lao-tzu] is a sufficient [guide] to the Mystery" (Ming Chia-ch'ing ed., microfilm of old National Peiping Library rare book collection, no. 248 (7), 3: 8b).

23. T, 7: 5b (p. 1018; N, 429).

24. T, 10: 1b (p. 1032; N, 458); see also the beginning of the "Revelation" commentary, 10: 3b (p. 1034; N, 461).

rence of great chaos.²⁵

In emphasizing the immanent and formative aspects of the Mystery, Yang has made a fundamental shift toward Confucian ideals. The Mystery can manifest itself only when society realizes the potentiality of individuals through distinctions in rank and function, reinforced by ritual precepts, sumptuary regulations, and a penal code. Yang not only upholds the need for the Five Constant Relationships (*wu ch'ang* 五常), but stresses those of father to son and ruler to subject, which the *Lao-tzu* condemns. In Yang's thought even the central notion of *wu wei* 無爲 (non-purposive activity which does not interfere with the Way) has come to mean "action suited to one's position in time."²⁶

Although the *Lao-tzu* provides Yang with most of his mystical images, the Confucian Five Canons is his inexhaustible font of cosmic and moral wisdom:

For discussing Heaven, there is no more discerning language (*pien* 辯) than that of the Changes. For discussing events, there is no more discerning language than that of the Documents. For discussing the embodiment of virtue, there is no more discerning language than that of the Rites. For discussing intent, there is no more discerning language than that of the Songs. For discussing inherent patterns (*li* 理), there is no more discerning language than that of the Spring and Autumn Annals. If these [scriptures] are excluded, discerning language is [wasted upon] petty subjects.

Yang similarly assimilates Confucius himself to the Mystery. The greatest of sages makes it possible for his disciples to "daily hear what cannot be heard, and see what cannot be seen."²⁷ One who has learned through the Master to appreciate the fundamental unity of the Way and the multiplicity of its manifestations is ready to become a full partner in the triad of heaven, earth, and man.

Yang departs from his Confucian models in ways that influenced contemporary trends. First, like most original thinkers of his time, he is openly eclectic, finding support for the canonical teachings in the "Hundred Schools" of Warring States thought, and drawing on the *Lao-tzu* and *Chuang-tzu* for orthodox purposes (see note 15 above). The eclecticism accelerated with the eclipse of Confucian orthodoxy in the Eastern Han and Six Dynasties. Second, he adapts to his philosophic discourses the rhythmic cadences, richly descriptive language, and multi-valent meanings peculiar to the Han prose-poem or rhapsody (*fu* 賦). Thus Head 44, "Stove" (*tsao* 竈), uses the image of an empty stove. By analogy with the

25. *Lao-tzu*, 18; *Fa yen*, 4: 10.

26. *Fa yen*, 4: 10-11, and *passim* there and in T.

27. *Fa yen*, 7: 19; 11: 33.

Changes hexagram 50, "Cauldron" (*ting* 鼎), this implies empty, i.e., undeserved, reputation. The stove lacks firewood (*hsin* 薪, a word the extended meaning of which is "official salary" and the synonym of which is *ts'ai* 材, meaning both "lumber" and "talent"). The complex beauty of the Mystery's language, no less than its philosophic power, insured its transmission for ten centuries, when it seems to have been used little if at all for divination.²⁸ Third, Yang systematically applies contemporary theories regarding the interplay of yin-yang and the Five Phases in his reinterpretation of the Changes, as we will show below.

Arrangement of the Book

The structure of the Canon of Supreme Mystery is best understood by comparing it with that of the Book of Changes. By the first century B.C. the latter consisted of a set of sixty-four texts, each associated with a six-line diagram in which, noting the result of a divination, each line might be solid or broken (considered yang if solid and yin if broken). Under each hexagram and its associated judgment text there are six associated texts. Each corresponds to one line, and is read if the polarity of the line is changing rather than stable. The Ten Wings relate these archaic texts to the moral, cosmological, and epistemological convictions of their authors, who were shaping a new orthodoxy around Confucianism.

In the Canon of Supreme Mystery the corresponding elements were created simultaneously by a single author. There are eighty-one four-line diagrams ("tetragrams"). Yang originated a method of divination with yarrow stalks (see the next section) in which manipulation of thirty-three sticks provides three possibilities for each line rather than the *I ching's* two. The three were recorded as an unbroken line, correlated with heaven, a line broken once like the yin line of the Changes, representing earth, and a line broken twice, symbolizing man in his triadic relationship with heaven and earth, intermediate between them. Four such lines—that is, four repetitions of the divination procedure—provide eighty-one (3^4) possibilities, a number of the same order of magnitude as the sixty-four (2^6) of the Changes (three lines would correlate with only twenty-seven texts, and five would require 243). Yang's four lines were read from top to bottom rather than from bottom to top as in the Changes. They were associated with a nest of divisions that are at the same time geographic and social:

28. It was used for divination in Yang's own time. See, for instance, the anecdote in which Wang Mang received similar oracles from the Changes and the Mystery; F, 8: 5a (p. 351). Some of those who studied it as philosophy also used it for divination, e.g., the learned southern statesman Lu K'ai 陸凱 (ca. 198–269); see his biography in *San kuo chih* 三國志, "Wu chih" 吳志, 61: 1400.

3 regions (*fang* 方) 27 departments (*pu* 部)
 9 provinces (*chou* 州) 81 families (*chia* 家)

The single Supreme Mystery stands for the cosmos as a whole. It occupies the center of the universe and the political realm, as the emperor does, where the three regions of heaven, man, and earth come together. Each of the three regions is divided into three provinces, to correspond to the ideal nine of the Han empire, and each of those into three departments, corresponding to the Han sub-provincial level. The ultimate eighty-one families stand for the multiplicity of individual phenomena in society and Nature.²⁹

Each tetragram is associated with a “Head text” (*shou* 首) set out in three parts, a title, an image that refers to yin-yang, and an image related to the “myriad phenomena” or “all things” (*wan wu* 萬物) of the natural order. The title of the tetragram, a single graph, names one aspect of the comprehensive Mystery, such as “Measure” (*tu* 度, Head 52), and “Eternal” (*yun* 永, Head 53), to which humans respond for good or ill. The next line describes in poetic language the evolution of yang or yin *ch'i* during that precise phase in the annual cycle. The remainder of each text describes the effect of that evolution upon the phenomena of Nature. Each Head (by which we mean tetragram and texts together) is associated with a stretch of four and a half days in the cycle of the year. The first forty-one texts, between the winter and summer solstices, speak either first or exclusively of the ascendant yang *ch'i*, while the last forty detail the waxing of the yin *ch'i*. Read in sequence, they provide a remarkable picture of the finely graded steps of cyclic change. Each of the eighty-one Heads is linked to one of the sixty-four hexagrams of the *Changes* (with some duplication, of course) to evoke the old meanings and associations.

For each Head Yang provides nine “Appraisals” (*tsan* 贊) loosely patterned upon the line texts of the *Changes*. The Appraisals differ from the line texts in ways that increase the flexibility of interpretation when the book is used for divining. In the *Changes*, as understood in the Han, each line text is tied to the shift in polarity of one line in a hexagram (see p. 25 below). For this fixed correspondence Yang substitutes the point-counterpoint relationship of all the Appraisals to the Head text, whose cosmological theme they link to changing situa-

29. The series 1-3-9-27-81 comes from *Li chi* 禮記, which speaks of the one Son of Heaven, the three dukes, the nine ministers, the twenty-seven counsellors, and the eighty-one attendants (5/10, repeated in 44/8, where the emperor is authorized wives and concubines of various classes in the same ratio; citations of this form refer to texts used in the Harvard-Yenching Sinological Index Series). Yang makes this derivation explicit in the “Illumination” commentary, 7: 8b (p. 1021; N, 435).

tions. By freeing the Appraisals from the individual lines of his tetragrams (which have their own protocols of interpretation), Yang directs the inquirer's attention to a more capacious relationship, the effect of eternal cosmic patterns upon the changing circumstances that prompted divination. The Appraisals bridge the dominion of fate and the fields of choice and achievement.

On the one hand, the Appraisals, like the Heads, are correlated with the year, with yin and yang, and with the Five Phases. Each Appraisal, as one-ninth of a Head, represents half a day, with alternating Appraisals designated day and night.³⁰ Two of the Appraisals are not assigned to a Head, but make up the deficiency of $\frac{1}{2}$ day between the $364\frac{1}{2}$ days of Yang's basic structure ($81 \text{ Heads} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ days) and the $365\frac{1}{2}$ days in the solar year. Through their association with night and day, Appraisals come to be considered yin (and in some sense inauspicious) and yang (and therefore auspicious) by turns, with the first Appraisal yang in odd-numbered Heads (which are said to belong to a yang family) and yin in even-numbered Heads. To each Appraisal is also assigned in turn a direction that aligns it with one of the Five Phases.

On the other hand, Yang links the Appraisals to the act of divination. One reads them, unlike the line texts of the Changes, according to what time of day one uses the book. Yang connects the Appraisals to the individual's situation in three additional ways. First, they pertain to successive stages in the situation. The first three Appraisals describe its commencement; Appraisals 4–6, its culmination, usually centered on the fifth; and Appraisals 7–9, its decline. Second, they mark stages in the inquirer's response to the situation, categorized as Reflection (*ssu* 思, the period that precedes action), Felicity (*fu* 福, fruitful activity), and Calamity (*huo* 禍, failure when action is taken too late to succeed), as in this schema:

RESPONSE		SIGNIFICANCE	
Reflection	1 = interior	2 = middle	3 = exterior
Felicity	4 = small	5 = medium	6 = great
Calamity	7 = nascent	8 = median	9 = maximum

30. Here we follow Ssu-ma Kuang rather than Fan Wang. Fan oddly reverses the yin/yang values assigned to the alternating Heads and Appraisals in *chüan* 3 and 4 only, identifying yang with even and yin with odd. The reversed yin-yang values are at odds with both the context and Yang's own statements in his "Evolution" commentary. The "Diagram" commentary, 10: 1b ff. (p. 1032; N, 459–460), sums up the numerological associations of the Appraisals. On the supernumerary appraisals, see note 42 below.

Third, they reflect a symmetric hierarchy of social ranks. The fifth Appraisal is reserved for the ruler, as in Han commentaries to the Changes. The flanking Appraisals, the fourth and sixth, carry implications for his ministerial attendants. The first and ninth Appraisals, those furthest from the son of Heaven, pertain to the “small man.”

These correspondences interact to determine which are pertinent to a given situation, and in what way. For example, the relation of yin-yang association to the time of divination determines the prospects for the short, middle, and long term of the situation queried. The criterion is whether the yin-yang characters of the Head and those of each of the three relevant Appraisals are the same (auspicious) or different (inauspicious). This schema shows these time-bound significances of the Appraisals; same is shown as +, and different as - :

TIME OF DIVINATION	FAMILY OF TETRAGRAM	LINES READ	COMMENCEMENT	CULMINATION	DECLINE
Morning	Yang	1, 5, 7	+	+	+
	Yin		-	-	-
Evening	Yang	3, 4, 8	+	-	-
	Yin		-	+	+
Median	Yang	2, 6, 9	-	-	+
	Yin		+	+	-

Consider a divination carried out in the evening, the result of which is an odd-numbered or yang Head. This result corresponds to the third line of the table.³¹ Appraisals 3, 4, and 8 would be read because of the time. The first is odd-numbered and thus yang. Its presence in a yang Head makes the outcome auspicious for “commencement,” with which the first of the three Appraisals is concerned. The same reasoning makes Appraisals 4 and 8 (yin because even-numbered) inauspicious. Considering them in sequence, the indication for the beginning of the situation is fortunate, and those for its culmination and decline unfortunate.

Good and bad tidings, like all yin-yang orientations, are relational, not abso-

31. Yang's “Numbers” commentary, esp. 8: 1b-2a (pp. 1023-1024; N, 438-445), gives the table's relationships in schematic form. The “Illumination” commentary, 7: 8a-9b (pp. 1021-1022; N, 434), outlines general principles. For a clear explanation see the *Shuo hsuan* 說玄 (809) of Wang Ya 王涯, appended to F, esp. sec. 4 (pp. 452-453; for the date of this work, p. 444). On the median period, see below, n. 37.

lute. In the value system of the Mystery, a yang affiliation is in principle auspicious. In practice one must evaluate it alongside other factors. A yang entity in conflict with a yin entity may be baleful, and two yin entities in accord may presage good fortune. Since no single factor such as a yin-yang orientation absolutely determines events, Yang made several Appraisals conflict with the relations in the table. What outweighs all else in the outcome of an uncertain situation is action based on individual integrity. "The noble man is inwardly upright, and outwardly compliant, always humbling himself before others. That is why the outcome of his actions is good fortune and not calamity."³² Yang Hsiung did not mean divination to be an objective science of forecasting. Combining subtle reasoning on cosmic trends with sensitivity toward social and individual circumstances—in other words, making a synthesis of heaven, earth, and man—is a highly skilled art.

In addition to the basic text—the eighty-one Heads and the seven hundred and thirty-one Appraisals—Yang provided ten commentaries analogous to the Ten Wings of the Changes. The "Fathomings" expand upon or explain one or more aspects of each Appraisal. Since the time of the scholiast Fan Wang 范望 (fl. ca. 265), the Fathomings, unlike the other commentaries, have been dispersed in the main text, each following the Appraisal to which it refers (the *Chou i's* corresponding Commentary on the Images had been similarly dispersed under each hexagram a little earlier).³³ The "Elaboration" commentary discusses only the First tetragram. Yang makes it, like the "Elaborated Teachings" (*Wen yen* 文言) commentary of the Changes, an epitome of the entire book. The remaining commentaries do not interpret individual texts, but assess or illuminate the canon as a whole. On the next page we list all ten in order, with the corresponding *Chou i* Wings.³⁴

32. Examples of Appraisals that do not accord with the table are Head 1, Appraisal 9, 6/6, 9/9, 20/5, and 23/7; see N, 94, 123, 139, 184, and 196. The exceptions in 1/9 and 9/9 are discussed by Wang Ya in *ibid.*, section 2 (pp. 449–450). The quotation is from the "Illumination" commentary, 7: 9b (p. 1022; N, 437).

33. Tang Yung-t'ung 1947: 135–138.

34. Ssu-ma Kuang notes correspondences between commentaries of the Changes and the Mystery in an introductory essay to the latter omitted from the 1909 edition; see the TT version, prefatory section, pp. 6b–7a. Yang defines the titles of his commentaries in "Representations," 9: 3a (p. 1030; N, 453–454).

COMMENTARY	TRANSLATION	CH.	TEN WINGS COMMENTARY
1. <i>Hsuan ts'e</i> 玄測	Fathomings		3-4. <i>Hsiang chuan</i> 象傳 (Images)
2. <i>Hsuan ch'ung</i> 玄衝	Polar Oppositions	7	9. <i>Hsu kua</i> 序卦 (Sequence)
3. <i>Hsuan ts'o</i> 玄錯	Evolution	7	10. <i>Tsa kua</i> 雜卦 (Interplay of opposites)
4. <i>Hsuan li</i> 玄攤	Evolutions	5-6	<i>Hsi tz'u</i> 繫辭 (appended judgments, "Great Commentary")
5. <i>Hsuan ying</i> 玄瑩	Illumination	5-6	Same
6. <i>Hsuan shu</i> 玄數	Numbers	8	8. <i>Shuo kua</i> 說卦 (discussion of the trigrams)
7. <i>Hsuan wen</i> 玄文	Elaboration	9	7. <i>Wen yen</i> 文言 (elaborated teachings)
8. <i>Hsuan i</i> 玄掇	Representation	9	5-6. <i>Hsi tz'u</i>
9. <i>Hsuan t'u</i> 玄圖	Diagram	10	Same
10. <i>Hsuan kao</i> 玄告	Revelation	10	8. <i>Shuo kua</i>

Method of Divination

The procedure described in the Numbers commentary is a point-by-point modification of that for the Changes as given in its Great Commentary. There are thirty-six yarrow stalks in the *T'ai hsuan* set, of which three are set aside. Yang does not explain clearly why this is so. Later students of the Mystery agree that the three supernumerary sticks correspond to the basic triad of Heaven, Earth, and Man, as the one stick set aside from the *Chou i* set of fifty represents cosmic unity. An additional stick is taken into the left hand, and the remaining thirty-two divided at random into two piles (in the *Chou i* method the one stick, which represents man, is taken up from the right-hand pile after the division). The left and then the right pile are counted off by threes (rather than fours as in the Changes), and the remainder (one, two, or three sticks) added to the stick in the left hand. Using the twenty-seven or thirty sticks that remain, the segregation of one

stick, division, and counting off are repeated. Twenty-seven, twenty-four, or twenty-one sticks will remain. Dividing by three, the result will be 9 (equivalent to the twice-broken line of Man), 8 (the divided line of Earth), or 7 (the solid line of Heaven). The first line of the tetragram has now been determined. Three repetitions of the entire procedure complete the tetragram, which directs the user to the appropriate Head text.³⁵

In the Changes a "mature" yin or yang line determined by the extreme numbers 6 or 9 (rather than 8 or 7) is considered moving—that is, about to change polarity. A particular divination may yield no such lines or as many as six. One reads the texts corresponding to moving lines and applies them to the question divined about. The diviner may also evaluate a new hexagram, with moving lines changed to their opposites.³⁶

Yang's approach, as we have noted in discussing the significance of the Appraisals, was quite different. If the act of divination is carried out in the morning, Appraisals 1, 5, and 7 of the given Head are read and considered; if in the evening, Appraisals 3, 4, and 8; if at "median times" (*chung* 中), Appraisals 2, 6, and 9.³⁷ Yang does not specify these periods of time more definitely. We do not know

35. Yang outlines the divination procedure in a form reminiscent of the Great Commentary to the Changes in the "Numbers" commentary, 8: 1a-1b (p. 1023). F. van der Blij demonstrated that the results of divination with the Book of Changes are not equi-probable: "Combinatorial Aspects of the Hexagrams in the Chinese Book of Changes," *Scripta mathematica*, XXVIII (1966), 37-49.

36. Such evaluations occur in texts dated as early as 661 B.C. (*Tso chuan* 左傳, Min 1/appendix), although it is unlikely they were recorded then. On early interpretations of the Changes see Hellmut Wilhelm, "I-ching Oracles in the *Tso-chuan* and the *Kuo-yü*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 79 (1959), 275-280; Li Ching-ch'ih, "*Tso Kuo chung* I shih chih yen-chiu 左國中易筮之研究," *Ku shih pien*, III, 171-187, reprinted in Li 1978: 407-421; and Kao Heng, "'Tso chuan' 'Kuo yü' ti 'Chou i' shuo t'ung chieh '左傳' '國語' 的 '周易' 說通解," pp. 70-110 in *Chou i tsai lun* 周易雜論 (Jinan, 1962; reprint, 1969). Shih-chuan Chen, "How to Form a Hexagram and Consult the I-ching," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 92 (1972), 237-249, covers similar ground; but cf. Kao, *Chou i ku ching t'ung shuo* 周易占經通說 (Beijing, 1958; reprint, Hong Kong, 1968), pp. 112-130.

37. It is likely that Yang meant one of the two median periods to correspond to what Han time reckoning designated *tung chung* 東中, *jih chung* 日中, and *hsi chung* 夕中 (roughly 9 A.M. to 3 P.M., between *tan* and *hsi*), and the other to the central three of the five night watches, the length of which varied through the year. This nomenclature was used at least from the time of the Martial Emperor of the Han to the beginning of the Eastern Han. See Ch'en Meng-chia 陳夢家, "Han chien nien-li piao hsu 漢簡年曆表

whether he meant by the median times the afternoon or the periods centered about noon and midnight. Early users of the book apparently were not consistent.

Like any other Chinese divination procedure, this one can succeed only if someone in the correct spiritual state carries it out. The inquirer's mind must be correctly oriented (*chen* 貞 or *cheng* 正). The yarrow stalks will yield no useful result if he lacks integrity (or sincerity, *ch'eng* 誠), the quality that unites the individual with the cosmic order.³⁸ Divination is essentially a communion, which the yarrow stalks can only facilitate.

According to the *T'ai hsuan* there are two prerequisites for communion with the transcendental Way. The first is a genuine will to approach the Mystery. The second is single-minded devotion to living its attributes.

Of the first prerequisite, Yang Hsiung writes in a passage reminiscent of the *Analects*, "Whoever would draw near to the Mystery, the Mystery for its part draws near to him." One emulates the cosmic Way, as a child its parents: "The Sage . . . would match his body with Heaven-and-Earth, aim for the numinosity of the gods, push his transformations to the limit with yin and yang, and participate in the integrity of the four seasons. Contemplating Heaven, he is Heaven; contemplating Earth, he is Earth; contemplating the divinities, he is divine; contemplating time, he is timely."³⁹

The Sage achieves identity with the cosmic Way by single-minded concentration (*ching* 精) on virtue—a discipline as much spiritual as intellectual.⁴⁰ "If the noble man daily strengthens what is deficient in him [i.e., the good], and eliminates what he possesses in surplus [i.e., the bad], then the Way of the Mystery is nearly approximated indeed!" He refines his innate powers until they are perfectly attuned to those of the creative Mystery: "When one divines with single-minded concentration, the gods prompt the changes [that reveal an answer to the inquiry]. When one deliberates [on this response] with single-minded concentration, one's plans are appropriate. When one establishes what is right with single-minded concentration, no one can overturn it. When one maintains [one's principles] with single-minded concentration, no one can snatch them away." Yang Hsiung's other requirements also emphasize the sacred character of the divination process: "The

敘," *K'ao-ku hsueh-pao* 考古學報, 2 (1965), 103-149, esp. pp. 117 ff.

38. On the notion of *ch'eng*, see Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, 1963), p. 96.

39. T, 7: 7b (p. 1020) and 9: 2b (p. 1029). The first quotation alludes to the *Lun yü*, 13/7/30. For translations of quotations in this paragraph and the next, see N, 29.

40. T, 7: 6a (p. 1019; N, 430), 8b (p. 1021; N, 435; cf. 10: 3b, p. 1034), and 8: 1a (p.

Way of divination consists in this: If you have not attained single-minded concentration, do not divine. If the issue is not in doubt, do not divine. If [your plan is] improper, do not divine. If you will not act in accordance with the outcome [of divination], it is exactly as if you had not divined."

Interpretation

Drawing upon the elaborate correspondence schemes of Han mutationists, Yang built a coherent and well-wrought system for determining meanings. As he put it in the "Numbers" commentary, "there are four ways to interpret the result of divination: through stars, times, numbers, and phrasing."

Yang does not explain what he means by these terms, merely remarking "if the result of divination is fortunate, [the inquirer] will meet with yang; times, numbers, and phrasing will be in accord. If unfortunate, [the inquirer] will meet with yin; stars, times, numbers, and phrasing will be in discord." If they are to include all the major components from which Yang has structured meaning, "times" must refer to the temporal associations of the Heads and Appraisals, and their relation to the time of divination; "numbers," to numerological significances, especially those of lines within the tetragrams; and "phrasing," to the verbal meanings and implications of the Head and Appraisal texts. "Stars" for a thinker of Yang's time would have meant an elaborate system of correspondences—astronomical, physical, even musical—that he fully incorporated in the Mystery and enumerated in the "Numbers" commentary.⁴¹

The correlation of Heads and Appraisals with stars (and to some extent with times and numbers) is based on the correspondence of the tetragrams and Head texts to equal divisions of the annual cycle. The beginning of the book corresponds to the Grand Inception (*t'ai ch'u* 太初) as defined in the calendar reform of the same name in 104 B.C.⁴² It amounts to a new beginning of time, a midnight

1023; N, 29).

41. T, 8: 1a-1b (p. 1023); *T'ai hsuan pen chih*, 8: 4a. See also F, 8: 1b-2a (pp. 344-345).

42. T, 6: 12a (p. 1013; N, 421). On the Grand Inception calendar reform see Vol. I, Chap. II, and Christopher Cullen, "Motivations for Scientific Change in Ancient China: Emperor Wu and the Grand Inception Astronomical Reforms of 104 B.C.," *Journal for the History of Astronomy*, 24 (1993), 185-203. Yang does not specify whether the 730th Appraisal, Deficit (*chi* 虧), or the 731st, Surplus (*ying* 贏) corresponds to the one-quarter day that makes up the total of 365½ days. Fan Wang does not state his opinion on this issue (F, 6: 24b-25a, pp. 300-301), Su-ma Kuang (in '1) takes Surplus as the Appraisal with the shortest time span (probably because it comes last), and Suzuki designates Deficit (probably because of its title; 1963: 83).

that simultaneously marks the winter solstice (the beginning of the tropical year), the conjunction of sun and moon (first day of the lunar month), and the beginning of the sixty-day cycle. Each of the tetragrams and its Head text represents four and a half days of the year counted off from this epoch (so that the forty-second is the summer solstice). All except one of the seven hundred and thirty-one Appraisals (nine per Head plus one of the two not associated with a head) is associated with half a day in the round of the year.

From this equipartition a great array of correspondences follows. At the winter solstice the sun was by convention located in the first degree of the lunar lodge Drawn Ox. Since there were $365\frac{1}{4}$ Chinese degrees (*tu* 度) in a circle, the sun moves one degree per day. Each Appraisal applies to an expanse of precisely half a degree, and each Head to four and a half degrees. The twenty-eight lodges are not of equal extent. The second lodge, Serving-maid, comes into play after the eight degrees of Drawn Ox have been assigned, namely at the eighth Appraisal of the second Head, Circuit (*chou* 周). Serving-maid, twelve degrees wide, is succeeded by Tumulus, ten degrees in width, at the fifth Appraisal of the fifth Head, Small (*shao* 少). These stellar correspondences, each with its astrological implications, continue in this way through the round of the sky and the length of the book. Analogously, since the first Head corresponds to the beginning of Drawn Ox at the northmost point of the celestial equator, all the associations of the phase Water and of extreme yin come into play. Another fund of metaphors associated with the annual cycle is the twelve-note gamut of mathematical harmonics, beginning with Yellow Bell (*huang chung* 黃鐘) at the winter solstice. The hours from midnight (*tzu* 子) on are similarly assigned to groups of tetragrams. The inquirer could thus call on a wealth of interconnected entities, each with its symbolic value, organically connected with every Head and Appraisal, and frequently alluded to in their texts. This rich matrix is what Yang means by "stars."

Wang Ya 王涯 (ca. 764–835) explains what Yang Hsiung must have meant by "times": "This refers to whether the time [associated with the result] of divination coincides with the time of year in which [the divination] takes place. For instance, if you divine on the winter solstice and the result corresponds to the tenth lunar month [which contains the solstice] or earlier, the Head is contrary; if it corresponds to a time after the winter solstice, the Head conforms." In other words, a Head whose time association falls after the month in which divination takes place is, all other things being equal, auspicious.⁴³

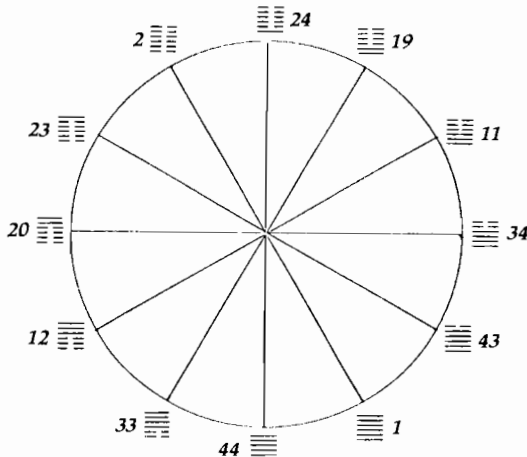
43. F, Appendix, sec. 4 (p. 455). Suzuki 1964: 74–83 reconstructs in a detailed table the temporal and stellar correlations of each Head and Appraisal.

Why is it better to divine early than late? The last paragraph of the “Evolution” commentary defines “what is near the Mystery” as “what advances, but has not yet culminated; what has departed, but has not yet arrived; what has been emptied, and has not yet been filled.” The user of the Mystery, if early, has time to adjust his conduct to the Way.

Structure

So many dimensions of meaning can converge on the inquirer’s question only if the images and associations of the book are rich enough, and if a well-articulated structure makes them accessible. The Great Commentary and the other Wings brilliantly but speciously read into the original Changes text the fundamental patterns that underlie the realms of heaven, earth, and man. Yang Hsiung, on the other hand, made them the actual structure of his canon. His book applies rigorously and reflects, in its texts and guides to interpretation, the basic seasonal rhythms, the fundamental social relationships, and the functions of yin-yang and the Five Phases that pervade the natural and human worlds. Here we outline how this is accomplished, with special attention to unique features of the Mystery.

Beginning of Eleventh Calendar Month



Beginning of Fifth Calendar Month

Figure 1. Ching Fang’s “waxing and waning” order for twelve hexagrams.
The figure is read clockwise.

In interpreting the results of divination with the Changes, the texts associated with the hexagram and moving lines were only one of several sources of meaning. It was also possible to reason from the associations of constituent trigrams and

lines, both individually and in relation to the structure of the hexagram that contained them.

Fruitful though such modes of analysis were, Han scholars preoccupied with the question of timeliness were frustrated. Neither the content of the *Chou i* texts nor the order of the hexagrams are explicitly related to temporal sequence. The structure of successive hexagrams does not change in a gradual, regular way that could be interpreted to imply a time cycle. Ching Fang was trying to overcome this difficulty when he proposed his *kua-ch'i* 卦氣 technique for associating hexagrams (*kua*) with the twenty-four solar periods (*ch'i*) that evenly divide the tropical year. In this schema four "standard hexagrams" (*cheng kua* 正卦) correspond to the solstices and equinoxes and thus to the four cardinal points on the sun's path. Twelve other hexagrams rule the lunar months (Figure 1). The latter, the "waxing and waning hexagrams" (*hsiao-hsi kua* 消息卦), begin with the pure yin hexagram The Receptive (*k'un* 坤, no. 2). It is assigned to the tenth civil month, which contains the winter solstice.

Month by month yang lines increase upward (Return, *fu* 復, no. 24, Approach, *lin* 臨, no. 19, and so on) until the pure yang hexagram The Creative (*ch'ien* 乾, no. 1) is formed in the fourth month to govern the summer solstice. Then yin lines multiply from the bottom upward (Coming to Meet, *kou* 姤, no. 44, Retreat, *tun* 遯, no. 33, and so on) until the pattern of The Receptive is restored at the end of the cycle. In pairs of hexagrams separated by six months (e.g., Approach and Retreat), if a given line's polarity is yang, the same line in its counterpart is yin, and vice versa. These twelve, and the remaining forty-eight, correspond to equal intervals of 6.0875 days (one sixtieth of 365 $\frac{1}{4}$). The four standard hexagrams, unlike the others, do not correspond to an interval, but rather to the most fundamental markpoints of the sun's annual round. Fixed by astronomical coordinates in space, they move back and forth in time. The sun may pass through one of them on whatever day of the lunar month the solstice or equinox occurs. In a given year each of these points and its standard hexagram may be associated with any one of five ordinary hexagrams whose intervals are distributed through the month. Despite this small inelegance, Ching's system was a workable solution to the problem of relating hexagram structure to time, as its popularity among students of the Changes demonstrates.⁴⁴

Yang Hsiung rendered Ching Fang's approach to symmetry obsolete in the cyclic structure he was creating afresh. Unproblematic symmetries appear both in the content of the texts (where a principle of structure was most conspicuously

44. Ch'ü Wan-li 1970: 82-98 gives a detailed account of the *kua-ch'i* technique.

missing in the Changes), and in the construction of the tetragrams. Yang achieves his complex structure, encompassing both text and tetragram, by a combination of gradual cyclic change and artfully distributed opposition.

Cyclic evolution

Heads. All of the Mystery's Heads are assigned to periods of four and a half days. Yang avoids the complication of Ching Fang's *I* schema, in which only sixty hexagrams are involved, by beginning the cycle with Head no. 1 at the winter solstice. That point, not Ching's new moon of the tenth civil month, marked for the Chinese astronomer the beginning of the tropical year. Each text describes the waxing and waning of yin and yang, and their effect on "all things"—the phenomenal world—during each Head's brief dominion. The Head texts, read in sequence, constitute a minute, abstract description of eighty-one phases in the annual cycle, a qualitative graph in the form of a metaphysical prose poem.

This becomes apparent if we simply peruse a series of Heads. Here, for instance, are the first seven:

- | | | |
|--|----------------|--------|
| 1. Center | <i>Chung</i> 中 | N, 84 |
| Yang <i>ch'i</i> , unseen, germinates in the Yellow Palace. Good Faith in every case resides at the center. | | |
| 2. Full Circle | <i>Chou</i> 周 | N, 95 |
| Yang <i>ch'i</i> comes full circle. Divine, it returns to the beginning. Things go on to become their kinds. | | |
| 3. Mired | <i>Hsien</i> 𨾏 | N, 102 |
| Yang <i>ch'i</i> stirs slightly. Though stirred, it is mired in yin. "Mired" refers to the difficulty attending the birth of things. | | |
| 4. Barrier | <i>Hsien</i> 閑 | N, 107 |
| Yang <i>ch'i</i> is barred by yin. Mired fast, all things are barred. | | |
| 5. Keeping Small | <i>Shao</i> 少 | N, 113 |
| Yang <i>ch'i</i> , rippling, spreads through the deep pool. Things like ripples in its wake can keep themselves very small. | | |
| 6. Contrariety | <i>Li</i> 戾 | N, 118 |
| Yang <i>ch'i</i> , newly hatched, is very small. Things, each diverging and separating, find their proper categories. | | |
| 7. Ascent | <i>Shang</i> 上 | N, 125 |
| Yang <i>ch'i</i> engenders things in a place below. All things shoot through the earth, climbing to a higher place. | | |

Even without pausing over the details, which Nylan's complete translation explains, it is obvious that Heads 1 through 7 represent step by step the hesitant

reawakening of yang energy against the opposition of yin. They alternate images of nascent activity (1, 3, 5?, 7) with reassertions of stasis (2, 4, 6). The phenomena, in the grip of yin, are not perceptibly affected until Head 6 subtly indicates that they have begun to respond to the push of yang. In Head 7 yang has begun to assert itself with unqualified force, which continues to grow until, after the spring equinox, it begins to wane, giving way to the growth of yin.

Looking at the whole sequence of eighty-one Heads, an overall principle of order becomes unmistakable: what Head texts half a year apart say is complementary, although never in a simple-minded way. This rule holds for all Heads, not only the especially significant ones considered above. In most cases the complementarity of language or image is explicit. Here, for instance, is the Head that governs the summer solstice, complementary to no. 1:

41. Response Ying 應 N, 266
 Yang *ch'i* culminates on high. Yin faithfully germinates below. High
 and low mutually respond.

In other instances the complementarity becomes clear when we consider each text in the flow of the series. The opposition is never that of static symbols, but rather of gradual, complex processes that the symbols evoke.

Appraisals. Ssu-ma Kuang's functional definitions of the Heads and Appraisals are parallel in form but significant in their differences:

It is the Heads that make plain how heaven and earth employ the yin and yang *ch'i* in putting forth and gathering in the myriad creatures, and reveal the laws and rules [underlying seasonal change] to those [who consult the Mystery] . . . It is the Appraisals that reveal how the Sage accords with the order of [change in] Nature as he cultivates his person and governs his state, and reveal good and bad fortune to those [who consult the Canon of Supreme Mystery].

The Heads are a qualitative model of cosmic process, which the Appraisals apply to individual and political action, as well as to thought about one's personal and public future. Kawahara Hideki 川原秀城 makes an equally pertinent contrast between the two types of text: the aspect of permanence is mainly embodied in the Heads, and that of transformation in the Appraisals.⁴⁵ From a literary viewpoint, the Heads reflect the ideal Han image of the Changes as the Sage's magisterial view of reality, while the Appraisals echo the actual heterogeneity of the

45. T, 1: 2a (p. 948); Kawahara, "Taigen no kôzôteki haaku 太玄の構造的把握," *Nihon Chûgoku Gakkai hô* 日本中國學會報, 30 (1978), 45-58, esp. pp. 55-57. "Putting forth and gathering in" (*fa lien* 發斂) is an astronomical term for various expansive and contractile effects of the seasonal yang and yin cycles on phenomena. These effects range from the cycle of vegetable growth to the anomalous motion of the sun.

archaic text. The Heads' formulaic, step-by-step snapshots of the state of yin and yang and the phenomena, described in language of relatively uniform poetic texture, provide a backdrop. Against it seven hundred and thirty-one gnomic images—fantastic or prosaic, patent or opaque, serene or allusive—succeed each other in every permutation of linkage. The images and language of the Appraisals often echo those of the Changes and other Confucian classics. Just as the Heads are designed to provide a framework for reflection on cosmic change, the Appraisals in their diversity, which suggests the multiplicity of human experience, constitute a vast repertory of metaphors as fruitful in divination as those of the *Chou i*.

So clear-cut a contrast cannot do justice to so sophisticated a book. In the Head texts, dynamic images are by no means rare. The Appraisals, like the Heads, embody stages of evolution and devolution, and reflect the alternation of yin and yang. Although cosmology is only one of their concerns, they make greater use of cosmic categories dependent on the Five Phases than do the Heads.

The composition of the Appraisals must have been a veritable Chinese puzzle. Not only do we find cycle fitted within cycle, but one clue after another ties the series of Appraisals to every microcosm and system of correspondence important in Han thought. In the first Head alone, the Fathoming of the first Appraisal asserts man's participation, alongside that of heaven and earth, in the Way. There are several reminders of the ages of man. The first Appraisal recalls the womb; the third, the entry of the young adult into an official career; the fifth, culminating accomplishment; the seventh, mature stability; and the ninth, natural death in old age. The symbology of administration appears in the apposition of punishment and virtue, and in allusions to attributes of the ruler (an exemplar in the fifth position) and his vassals (small men because they surround him in the fourth and sixth positions, which are yin). Correlates of Yin-yang and echoes of the Book of Changes abound. Images of darkness, moon, dragon, centering, and fire reflect the significance of each Appraisal in the succession of the Five Phases.

We have just seen that the text of the Mystery reflects directly the cyclic character of natural process (and of political and psychological process to the extent that they are "natural," that is, in accord with the Way). Yang's words describe an evolution, Head by Head and Appraisal by Appraisal. In doing so they reproduce the annual complementarities and symmetries of time and space.

Graphic counterparts of change

The sequence of tetragrams expresses the same evolution, and symbolizes the same oppositions, as the texts do. This conclusion emerges if we examine in order the eighty-one tetragrams. The unbroken line corresponding to heaven is determined when the result of divination is the number 7; the singly broken line correspond-

ing to earth, 8; and the doubly broken line corresponding to man, 9. For reasons that will shortly become clear, when Yang discusses these lines rather than the divination process, he in effect subtracts 6, and writes of them as 1, 2, and 3. For reasons that are Sinologically arbitrary but mathematically of the essence, we will subtract an additional 1 from each digit to yield 0, 1, and 2 respectively.

We transcribe the lines of the first seven tetragrams as 0000, 0001, 0002, 0010, 0011, 0012, and 0020. These are in fact the numbers to the base 3 that correspond to the decimal numbers 0 to 6 (or the ordinal numbers 1 to 7). The remainder of the tetragrams fall into the same sequence. Those that correspond to every tenth Head—0000, 0101, 0202, 1010, 1111, 1212, 2020, 2121, and 2222—correspond to the decimal numbers 0, 10, 20, . . . 80 or the ordinal numbers 1, 11, 21, . . . 81. The sequence of tetragrams is, in other words, simply the regular order of the integers 0 to 80, the first eighty-one numerals, written to the base 3. This is not a surprising conclusion, since the base n is determined by the 3 types of line, and the four lines per tetragram provide a total of n^4 (in this case, 81) possible values.

The tetragrams are thus, arithmetically speaking, a system of notation. They record an unbroken and regular progression, which the sequence of the hexagrams in the Changes does not. The latter, we have seen, fall into pairs the members of which are related by inversion, but the pairs do not follow a discernible order. The first six hexagrams, for instance, may be transcribed analogously in binary notation as 000000, 111111, 011101, 101110, 000101, and 101000, equivalent to decimal 0, 63, 29, 46, 5, and 40.⁴⁶ Ching Fang's "waxing and waning" order was a step in Yang's direction, but Ching systematically ordered only a portion of the hexagrams, and not in binary succession (Figure 1). The so-called "prior to the natural order" (*hsien t'ien* 先天) or Fu-hsi sequence rearranges all sixty-four in what can be considered the natural order of binary integers that correspond to decimal 0 to 63. It appeared long after Yang Hsiung's time, possibly as late as ca. 1080 (the date of the oldest extant version).⁴⁷ The origin of the Fu-hsi sequence is unknown,

46. Although the numbers 0 and 1 are often used by modern scholars wishing to relate the hexagram notation of the Changes to the binary system, the only numbers used by Chinese students of the *Chou i* to record the results of divination were 6, 7, 8, and 9. Use of 0 for notation would have been unthinkable, for it was not considered a yin or yang number; in fact thinkers before Yang Hsiung hesitated to use 1 in that way. See Bernard S. Solomon, "One is No Number' in China and the West," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XVIII (1954), 253-260.

47. The conventional wisdom asserts that this order first appears in Shao Yung's 邵雍 usually unread *Huang chi ching shih shu* 皇極經世書. The 12-ch. version in TT 705-718 (S 1040), generally considered the earliest form of Shao's work, does not include

but in principle it is merely a translation of the Mystery's much earlier base-3 sequence into what amounts to a binary, six-digit order for the *Chou i* hexagrams (Figures 2, 3). It did not become the basis for an arrangement of the text, nor was it used in divination.

Although the general conception of multiple systems of integers (scales) generated by different bases (radices) did not appear anywhere until the eighteenth century, Yang was aware that his tetragrams constituted a count. As he put it, "Those who study the Changes must peruse the diagram (*kua* 卦) in order to tell [which text to consult], but students of the Mystery determine [the text] by counting (*shu* 數) the lines. The reason that the [tetragram corresponding to] each Head in the Mystery is fourfold is that it is not a diagram but a number (*shu*)."⁴⁸ Counting implies a base-3 value for each line in the tetragram. Using the geographical divisions listed above (p. 20), Yang assigns the number 27 ($=3^3$) to the Region, the top line; 9 ($=3^2$) to the Province, the second line; 3 ($=3^1$) to the Department, the third line; and 1 ($=3^0$) to the Family, the bottom line. These are in fact the respective powers of 3 that would be written 1000, 100, 10, and 1 in base-3 notation.

Yang saw the lines of the tetragram, determined by the outcome of divination, as a count. In the "Numbers" commentary he explains how to calculate the number of the Head from the value of each line in the tetragram: "If the Family line [i.e., the bottom line of the tetragram] is 1 [i.e., unbroken], count 1; if 2 [e.g., singly broken], count 2; if 3 [i.e., doubly broken], count 3. If the Department line is 1, do not add anything; if 2, add 3, if 3, add 6. If the Province line is 1, do not add anything; if 2, add 9; if 3, add 18. If the Region line is 1, do not add anything; if 2, add 27; if 3, add 54."⁴⁹

The point of these instructions becomes clear if we apply them to an example.

a diagram showing the binary arrangement. One appears in the *Hsing li ta ch'üan* 性理大全 recension (1415), *ch.* 7, with a commentary by Shao's son Po-wen 伯溫 (1057–1134). Anne D. Birdwhistell, *Transition to Neo-Confucianism. Shao Yung on Knowledge and Symbols of Reality* (Stanford University Press, 1989), provides a general view of Shao and his work. For possible predecessors and other details see Kidder Smith, Jr., et al., *Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching* (Princeton, 1990), pp. 100–135. For a technical explanation of the "Fu-hsi" order see Martin Gardner, "Mathematical Games. The Combinatorial Basis of the 'I Ching,' the Chinese Book of Divination and Wisdom," *Scientific American*, Jan. 1974, 108–113. The silk MS *I ching* from Ma-wang-tui contains still another order, on which see Liu Dajun (trans. Edward Shaughnessy), "A Preliminary Investigation of the Silk Manuscript *Yijing*," *Zhouyi Network*, 1 (1986), 13–25.

48. HS, 87B: 5124. The first *shu* is verbal (read in the third tone), the second nominal.

49. T, 8: 5b (p. 1027; N, 28).

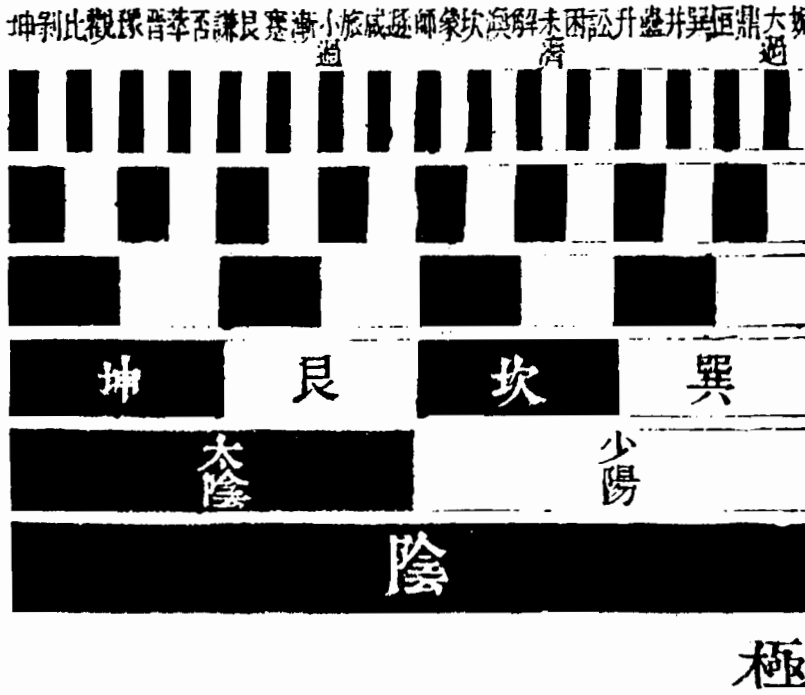
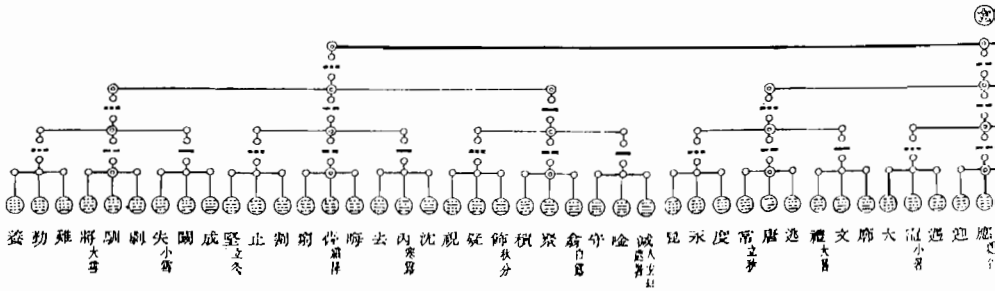
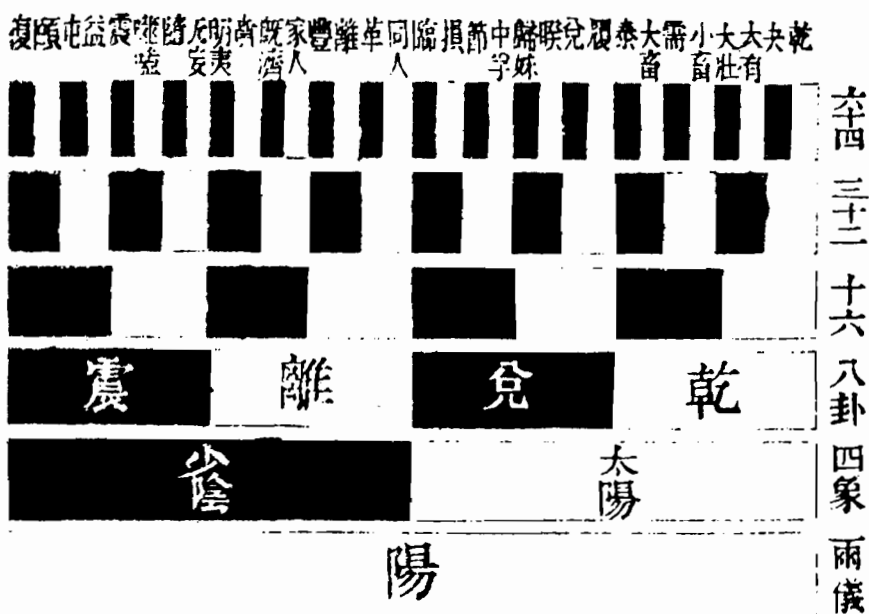
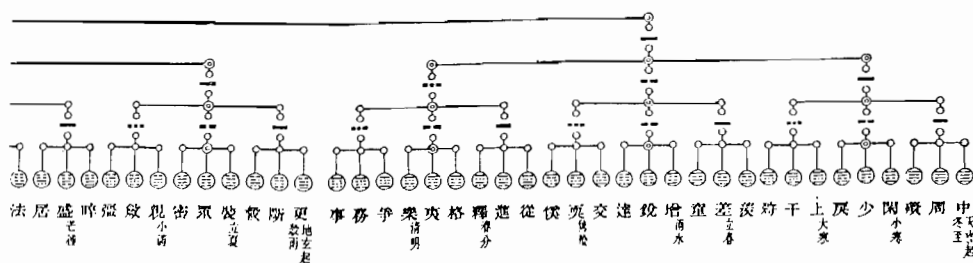


Figure 2 (above). Formation of the eighty-one *T'ai hsuan* tetragrams by a series of four trine divisions.

This diagram reads downward. The space above is labeled "Mystery." In each case the four lines (solid, singly broken, or doubly broken) that result from each threefold division combine to give the tetragram corresponding to each Head. Below each tetragram is given the name of the Head, and for each three hexagrams, the corresponding *ch'i* period of the calendar. From Ch'en Pen-li, *T'ai hsuan ch'an mi*, "Hsuan t'u," pp. 9a-13b.



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Figure 3 (below). Formation of the so-called Fu-hsi order of the sixty-four *Chou i* hexagrams by a series of six binary divisions, based on Shao Yung (ca. 1050).

This diagram reads upward. The white space at the bottom stands for the totality of the "supreme ultimate" (*t'ai chi* 太極). Reading each column of six blocks upward, taking white as 0 and black as 1, gives a binary number between 0 and 63 corresponding to the hexagram named in the uppermost block. From *I t'u ming pien* 易圖明辨 (1700, Shou Shan Ko Ts'ung-shu 守山閣叢書 ed.), 7: 10b-11a.

Head 48, "Ritual," would be read as "2 Region, 3 Province, 1 Department, 3 Family," or 2313. Since the Family line's value is 3, we begin with 3. Working upward, we add to this 0, 18, and 27. The result is 48. We see that Yang's code, 2313, corresponds to the base-3 number 1202, equivalent to decimal 47 or ordinal 48. The value of each line in the tetragram is simply 1 higher in each place than the modern base-3 notation. That is why Yang diminishes each value by 1 except that of the Family line. He reads the latter directly because he is interested in the ordinal number of the Head rather than in the modern mathematician's number in the series beginning with 0. It is odd that Yang's explicit manipulation of 3-base numbers two thousand years ago has been ignored while so much speculation has been lavished on the tacit binary ordering of *Chou i* hexagrams, unconnected with calculation or even the divination process, more than a millennium later.

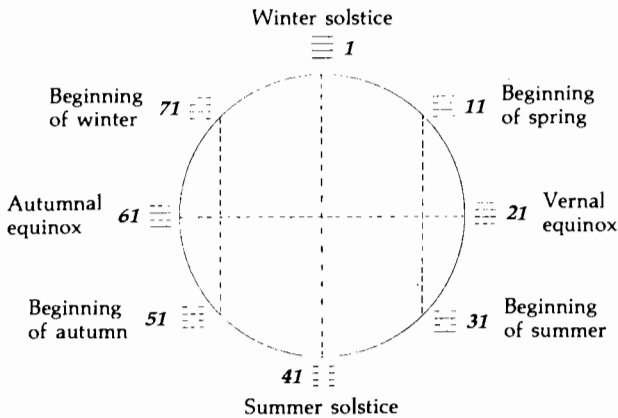


Figure 4. Tetragrams from the *T'ai hsuan ching* corresponding to eight major transitions of the solar year.

The tetragrams also exhibit seasonal symmetries analogous to those we have seen in the corresponding Head texts. In China the solstices and equinoxes are the midpoints, not the beginnings, of the seasons. The eight symbols that correspond to the beginnings of the four seasons and to the solstices and equinoxes are doublets (a two-line pattern repeated, e.g., 2121). This doubled form is significant to any student of the Changes, since it is analogous to the composition of eight especially important hexagrams (including Ching Fang's four standard hexagrams and two of the waxing and waning hexagrams), which are doubled versions of the trigrams that were given their names.

Figure 4 sets out relations of symmetry among the eight tetragrams. We see that the doublets fall into four pairs of tetragrams each of which is an inversion of the other: one pair corresponding to the solstices, one to the equinoxes, one to the beginnings of the yang seasons spring and summer, and one to the beginnings of the yin seasons autumn and winter (the members of each pair are connected by dotted lines in the figure).

Tetragrams half a year apart are related in that the value of each line in the later tetragram is 1 higher than the corresponding line in the earlier symbol. Thus --- pairs with --, and -- with —. That is because the ordinal difference between the tetragrams in each pair is 1111 in base 3, corresponding to 40 in base 10 notation. This line-by-line relationship does not hold for all eighty-one tetragrams. It fails in those pairs of which the earlier member contains a doubly broken line, since in base-3 notation $2 + 1 = 10$. The consistent pairing of lines in the eight doublets is significant because it is exceptional.

The Mystery asserts its most significant diagrammatic oppositions in the eight tetragrams that hold special meaning for stars, times, and numbers. It embodies point-by-point oppositions through all eighty-one divisions of the year in the texts. Both texts and tetragrams reflect from beginning to end the Head-by-Head continuity of cosmic process. This continuity manifests the Tao's Mystery.

Conclusion

This superficial survey of the *Tai hsuan ching* can only suggest the scope of Yang Hsiung's vision. The Great Commentary to the *Chou i* had claimed that the archaic scripture, despite the ragtag literary character that commentators did not acknowledge, encompassed every phenomenon in the realms of heaven, earth, and man. The Mystery's systematic internal structure and exquisite gradation of detail made real the Han's ideal conception of the Changes. It described change in the cosmos as manifested in the cyclic order of time. But the Mystery was more than a description; it was a model of natural process.

The Heads set out the alternating growth and attenuation of yin and yang through the round of the seasons, beginning and ending in the darkness and incipience of the winter solstice, a metaphor for the featureless chaos from which the universe ultimately separates. The two stages of differentiation—first into yin and yang, then into the phenomenal world—are analyzed Head by Head into eighty-one equally spaced phases. The development from one phase to the next is anything but mechanical. It hesitates and reverses, and is glimpsed from changing viewpoints. The outcome is not a static set of eighty-one classifications, but a synthetic picture of the fine texture of change. Each Head, like earlier concepts used to break down configurations and cycles into their parts—yin-yang, the Five Phases, the eight trigrams—holds a plethora of associations, metaphysical, temporal, spatial, astronomical, musical, and above all, political and moral.

Examining the temporal correlations, we have found them intricately linked in a way that suggests, not only the astronomers' objective time, but the multivalence of time in personal experience. Moments and stretches of time recapitulate each other. Heads half a year apart are related by language and metaphor.

Linkages between the four-line symbols complement the internal resonances of the texts. Special symmetries mark those that correspond to important annual points of transition. The tetragrams echo the concatenation of the Heads. Unlike the hexagrams of the Changes, Yang's symbols are by intent consecutive ordinal numbers. Even when simply scanned as a series of visual images, the flow from one tetragram to the next is unmistakable.

As the Heads and tetragrams set out a scheme of measured change in sky and earth, the seven hundred and thirty-one Appraisals explore the intimate space-time of humans in society moving from reflection to decision to action. The philosophic interest of Yang's Head texts lies in their intricate, nuanced picture of a grand cycle of change, his recognition of complexity within regular order. Conversely, his Appraisals are remarkable because, through highly figurative language and the interplay of cycles within cycles, Yang suggests regular patterns emerging from the inexhaustible variety and ambiguity of moral circumstances.

Each cycle of nine Appraisals related to a single Head can stand alone, whether it sets out the course of a career or a theory of literature. At the same time it is woven into the larger fabric. Allusions echo from one Head to another, artfully recalling images in the Book of Changes. Each set of Appraisals establishes its own rhythm of internal variation. Worked into this congeries of meaning in the sets of nine Appraisals are images related to yin-yang and the five Phases, each precisely placed according to Han numerological usage. Ambiguity of word and image give the texts of the Appraisals meaning not only for the development of the individual but for the fortunes of the state.

Despite the formidable literary and philosophical ingenuity that went into it, the Canon of Supreme Mystery is not art for art's sake. Yang was not inclined toward that European modernist fashion. He publicly renounced the poetic rhapsodies that had brought him literary fame and official rank when he became convinced that the moral content of the genre would not reform the emperor.⁵⁰ The *T'ai hsuan ching* became his effort to retrieve a desperate political situation.

To those whose only viewpoint is hindsight, it may seem ridiculous to think of a man nurtured on a philosophy of withdrawal, avoiding court intrigues to write a recondite imitation of the oldest Confucian canon, as politically committed. But the disengagement that Yang was insisting upon was at bottom the psychic distance that in a corrupt time keeps an intellectual's standards intact and his critical gaze steady. Some can keep their inner distance while rubbing elbows with hypocrites and opportunists. Yang found that he could not. Whether his work was a political statement does not depend on that, but on its content.

50. Knechtges 1976: 3-4.

Despite the superficiality of this essay, we have adduced more than enough evidence to illustrate Yang's aim in writing the *Mystery*: to instigate and guide the personal striving for integrity that is the only possible basis for a sound polity. This virtue is more than a matter of moral and psychic integration; it involves union with the Way of Nature and its Mystery. As the inquirer aligns his own decisions and actions with the cosmic course, he is able to promote harmony in every external sphere, renovating society on the pattern of the Tao.

Yang looked to the classics as revelations left by the ancient sages to aid the self-cultivation of those who hoped to follow in their footsteps. His own contribution was a guide to the most enigmatic of the orthodox revelations, the *Chou i*. He provided a structure to undergird its amorphousness, and set out in the poetic and philosophic language of the Han what was hidden deepest within it. Thus it was that the greatest poet-philosopher of his generation gave his attempt to inspire those who would reorder civilization the form of a book of fortunes.

The connection between fortune and integrity was for Yang and many other Han Confucians ethical. As his self-professed but posthumous disciple Ying Shao 應劭 (active 165–ca. 204) puts it, “Nothing can disturb the man who returns to integrity and bases himself on what is right, who ‘upon self-examination finds himself blameless.’ [For such a man] ill fortune changes to good.”⁵¹ Integrity and a passion for right determine whether a beginning portends fruition or failure.

That is the conviction that pervades Yang Hsiung's book of divination. It does not offer magical power over nature. It simply aids reflection on the eternal patterns that underlie every aspect of experience and action. Assimilating those patterns, Yang was convinced, could guide the renewal of human creativity and the eventual recovery of order.

Thus
 Knowing mystery, knowing silence
 Keeping to the middle way of the Tao
 Through purity, stillness
 Roaming the palaces of the gods
 Through solitude, quiet
 Guarding the mansions of virtue
 Times differ, circumstances change
 The Way of man never varies.⁵²

51. *Feng-su t'ung yi fu t'ung-chien* 風俗通義附通檢 (Centre Franco-chinois d'Etudes Sinologiques, Indexes, 3; Beijing, 1943), 9: 67, allusion to *Lun yü*, 22/12/4.

52. From “An Antidote to Ridicule”, HS, 87B: 5120; cf. Knechtges 1976: 101.

Retrospect

Michael Nylan took part in one of my seminars in 1978, when she was a graduate student. I quickly discovered that she shared my enthusiasm for the many dimensions of the Book of Changes, for its several forgotten successors, and in particular for the *T'ai hsuan ching*. This essay, originally for a volume offered to Derk Bodde in 1987, invited attention to a remarkable masterpiece of philosophic literature, comparable in its way to that of Lucretius. The greatest success of this introduction, I would say, was that it convinced Michael to translate the Mystery. Her English version (1993) makes available a book that is superior to the *I ching* for many of the uses to which Europeans have long put the latter, and that deserves to be known as a great work of literature as well as of philosophy. The translation respects Yang Hsiung's intent as well as his language, which few could read as accurately as she has done.

We are pleased that this volume gave us an opportunity to prepare a revised version. The main reason for doing so is that the University of Hong Kong Press gave us no opportunity to read proofs, and did not employ a competent proof-reader. The condition of the essay as originally published was an insult to the reader and an embarrassment to us. An additional reason is that, with a complete translation available, this can serve a new purpose as an introduction to it. We have brought the essay up to date, rewriting it, incorporating references to the translation, and removing a couple of sections that are now in effect part of Michael Nylan's book. We have left full references in footnotes.

One reviewer of the original version objected to our use of the term "Neo-Confucianism." We agree with alacrity that in conventional usage it lumps together intellectual themes best kept distinct, and ought to be abandoned. After an additional eight years, however, it is as ubiquitous a cliché as ever. That being the case, we still find it useful to point out that the new Confucianisms that formed from the T'ang were not the first consequential ones, and that studying their neglected predecessor is indispensable for anyone who hopes to understand the evolution of Chinese philosophy.

We are pleased that Derk Bodde remains in fine fettle, so that we can offer this report to him again.