

# The *Book of Changes* as a Counselling Tool

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'The universe is change; our life is what our thoughts make it.' Marcus Aurelius

In one way or another, most situations in which people seek philosophical advice involve change.<sup>1</sup> Life's situations are constantly in flux, and so people are perpetually on the lookout for ways of understanding and dealing constructively with change. Change happens whether we wish for it or not. It also happens in contrast with its complement, constancy - that which does not change - for if all things changed all the time, the universe as we know it could not exist, and we would be unable to make sense of the world around us. We need constancy of physical, chemical and other natural laws to provide a backdrop to change. We also need regular, cyclical changes in nature - like the seasons - to provide a context for irregular, acyclical changes in the human world.

As embodied beings, we change whether we will it or not. We are born, grow, mature, age and die. We can participate in the shape of our change, by eating better or worse foods, by learning better or worse lessons, by making better or worse of our circumstances, by adopting better or worse principles to govern the conduct our lives. But we cannot change the direction of change itself, which progresses as inexorably as time, and cannot be cancelled or reversed - even if it can sometimes be diverted, accelerated or slowed. The things that remain unchanging and impervious to time exist in a dimension outside of time: your inner spirit, your intrinsic beauty, your great ideas, your true love, your legacy to others and, outside yourself, the forces that sustain these things and the dimension of eternity that preserves them.

People seek philosophical guidance when they are experiencing dis-ease derived from change: either circumstances are changing from better to worse, or they have already worsened and are not getting better. Perhaps a relationship or career is in crisis; a friend or family member is ill; a natural or man-made disaster has struck.

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<sup>1</sup> Most of this text, and all the cases that follow, are excerpted from Lou Marinoff, *The Big Questions: How Philosophy Can Change Your Life*. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2003 - reproduced herein by permission of the author and publisher. I wish to thank Tim LeBon for inviting me to submit an article, and I also thank the referee(s) for making useful suggestions for its improvement.

Or perhaps there's injury, divorce, bankruptcy, a shattered dream, or some other unpleasant situation confronting them. And at the end every life, no matter how smoothly or turbulently lived, there comes an inevitable change called 'death'.

When devastating change occurs, or when change brings about a devastating state that does not seem to change, those caught up in such circumstances may need many kinds of assistance: medical, psychological, theological, social, legal or other services - not to mention emotional support from loved ones. Ultimately, however, what is often required at bedrock is to make sense of changing (or unchanging) situations in order to regain the inner harmony or balance that change so often upsets. Philosophy can help a lot with that. While ideas alone cannot change change itself, they can vitally change the way one responds to change. Good ideas, in a pragmatic sense, help our clients interpret present changes in their most favourable light. By doing this they not only improve their present prospects but also enhance their future ones.

## The Book of Changes

Chinese philosophy provides an exceptionally wise set of answers to the perennial question of when to resist change, when to acquiesce, and how to tell whether a given change is for better or worse. These answers are contained in a book called *I Ching*. Literally, the title means 'The Book of Changes'. This great anonymous work, practical and sublime, heavily influenced both classical schools of Chinese thought, Taoism and Confucianism alike.

The basic premise of the *I Ching* is simplicity itself: In every life situation, you can choose either a better or a worse move. The game of life does not resemble chess, in which there's always a best move. Rather, life is a sequence of much fuzzier and more complex situations, about which one has partial but never perfect knowledge. There may not always be a single 'best' move - or if there is, there may be no sure-fire way of finding it. So the *I Ching* makes a simpler (but in this context more useful) distinction: in each life situation, you can make a better or a worse choice. If you're wise, you'll choose the better way; if foolish, the worse one.

Your present situation is influenced, but not completely determined, by past ones. Your future situation is partly

determined by your present situation, inherited from the past, and partly determined by what you decide to do with the present - your future legacy to yourself. While you may be affected by circumstances beyond your control, you still make vital decisions, independent of circumstance. You are free to choose actions in light of the principles you live by, and in anticipation of the ends you seek. The *I Ching* helps you identify better and worse actions, principles and outcomes, and leaves the choice to you.

### Magic or Mirror?

Some people view the *I Ching* as an oracle, and consult it for prophecy about the future, but I see it as a metaphorical mirror that reveals what is in one's heart and mind at a given time, affording one a perspective on one's innermost sentiments and thoughts. There are undeniably strange phenomena in this world that await explanation, but I see no need to consider the *Book of Changes* part of the oracular or parapsychological realm. Anyone can reap its clear and sage advice about the better and worse consequences that flow from better and worse choices, its deep insights about social and political relations, and its wisdom about the cyclical nature of change. To attain the best possible outcome in a time of crisis, one must act with insight, integrity and authenticity. The *I Ching* is an unerring revealer of one's own principles, purposes and aspirations. Viewed from one perspective, it resembles a philosophical Rorschach test, a textual ink blot in which you conceptualise your virtues and vices alike. (This metaphor also gives rise to a possible paradox, which we defer until the end.)

I have drawn both applause and criticism for recommending the *I Ching*. The most common complaints I hear are from rationalists, who don't trust the *I Ching's* intuitive approach. They tend to object to the method by which we access the *I Ching's* wisdom: typically by tossing coins to construct a 'hexagram' - a six-line binary function that maps you to a particular reading, one out of sixty-four ( $2^6$ ) possible readings in the book. Because the text you end up consulting appears to have been arrived at by chance, rationalists think the method is irrational, and so some foolishly disparage the book on this basis alone.

Throwing coins is actually more rational than, say, opening the book at random. If you did that, you'd be more likely to encounter the middle hexagrams more often, and the earlier and later ones less often, just as when you cut a deck of cards. The coins ensure you have an equal chance of finding any given passage - all passages are equally accessible to you. Technically, this is known as ergodicity: the methodological assurance that every state

of a finite probability space is accessed with equal odds, thus ensuring probabilistically that every possible state will be attained sooner or later.

Beyond that, it is important to remember that many rationalists also suppose that worthwhile things *can* happen by chance: including the creation of the universe, according to many cosmologists, and the origin of life, according to many biologists. Come to that, we are each a product of very long odds indeed, in that our conception depended on a sperm fertilising an egg. The odds of any given sperm reaching that egg first, and becoming you, were one in hundreds of millions. Does this mean that your life isn't meaningful, just because its conception depended partly on chance? And aren't the secrets of the universe and the mysteries of life interesting and worthy of our understanding whether they came about by chance or by design? And shouldn't good advice be sought for the sake of goodness, even if we sometimes find it by tossing coins? For me, these questions are rhetorical.

It is also possible that there's no such thing as 'chance', in the sense of 'random accident'. Even things that appear random may have been produced by the opposite of chance, as when a computer generates sequences of 'pseudo-random' numbers that in fact are produced by deterministic instructions. In a holistic or Gestalt interpretation of events, each instant is a unique manifestation of an assembly of interconnected processes. In this view, throwing a set of coins to obtain a certain result is interdependent with your situation and state of mind at the time. Jung famously called this 'synchronicity':

Synchronicity takes the coincidence of events in space and time as meaning something more than mere chance, namely, a peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as well as with subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers.<sup>2</sup>

And the consummate sceptic, David Hume, who disbelieved in every kind of mysticism and religion, also disbelieved in chance itself, which he called a synonym for our ignorance.

Though there be no such thing as *chance* in the world, our ignorance of the real cause of any event has the same influence on the understanding and begets a like species of belief or opinion.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Carl Jung, Foreword to the *I Ching*, Wilhelm-Baynes translation, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1967, p.xxiv.

<sup>3</sup> David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955, Section VI (Of

All the great rationalists, including Plato, Descartes, Leibniz and Kant, admitted that our reason does have its limitations, and that reason alone cannot and does not answer all our questions. They recognised, if reluctantly, that understanding, revelation, insight and intuition can also be legitimate ways of furthering our knowledge and attaining wisdom. Leibniz himself was astounded when he received from Jesuits returning from China a copy of Shao Yung's binary cycle of 'yin' and 'yang' lines used to generate the hexagrams. Until this revelation, Leibniz thought he had invented the binary system himself, and was astonished at having been 'scooped' by the ancient Chinese.<sup>4</sup> Had he been able to read the *I Ching's* texts as well, he might well have found in them further support for his monadology. In any case, it's obvious to anyone who reads the book that it is full of wise advice. No rational person could deny the merits of a system that helps us reliably identify our 'better' moves.

At the same time, there are nowadays a great many translations available, and they differ widely in their sense and reference alike. I have read several of them, but use only the classic Helmut Wilhelm translation (retranslated into English by Carey Baynes), published in the USA by Princeton University Press; in the UK, by Routledge and Kegan Paul. The Wilhelm edition also contains a delightful Foreword by Jung who, in trepidation of his deficiencies as a Sinologist, asked the book itself what he should say, and insightfully analysed the hexagram he obtained.

The most enthusiastic approbation I have received for my recommendation of the *I Ching* is from an eclectic Australian psychotherapist (Paul Gibney) who holds both Jungian and Chinese philosophy in high regard, and is happy to see a philosopher embrace them. His response also supports my larger view that philosophy and psychology have both become impoverished by their century-old bifurcation, and that philosophical practice offers some prospects for their re-synthesis. The most

Probability).

<sup>4</sup> See Helmut Wilhelm, *The Wilhelm Lectures on the Book of Changes*, translated by Carey Baynes, in *Understanding the I Ching*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1955), 1<sup>st</sup> paperback edition 1995, p.119: 'To Leibniz, the key to the problems before him was number; to Shao Yung, it was the hexagram. And the intellectual means by which these two kindred spirits tackled their problems took on the same form in both. For a long time Leibniz had been trying to validate spiritual truths in mathematical terms, thus making them, as he thought, irrefutable. It is easy to imagine the enthusiasm aroused in him by the discovery of this correspondence.'

irrational opprobrium I have received comes from a Dutch reviewer of *Plato Not Prozac* (in which I also cite the *I Ching*), who claims that since I recommend the *Book of Changes* I cannot possibly be a philosopher. I was previously unaware that a 'philosopher' is defined by virtue of recommending some books but not others, and was moreover ignorant that anyone possessed the definitive book-list itself. I urge that reviewer to read Cicero (probably not a philosopher either), who nonetheless wrote 'There is nothing so absurd but some philosopher has said it.'<sup>5</sup>

### Building the Hexagram

It is easy to use coins to arrive at a particular passage in the *I Ching*. Toss three pennies onto a flat surface. Count each head as 2, and each tail as 3, and add them up. The total (which will always be 6, 7, 8 or 9) will tell you whether you have a 'yin line' or a 'yang line', and whether it is 'changing' or 'unchanging'. This table summarises all four possible outcomes of your coin toss:

Coin configuration	Value of outcome:	Type and name of line:
3 heads	2 +2+2=6	-- yin (or broken) line, changing
2 heads and 1 tail	2+2+3=7	— yang (or unbroken) line, unchanging
1 head and 2 tails	2+3+3=8	-- yin (or broken) line, unchanging
3 tails	3+3+3=9	— yang (or unbroken) line, changing

Repeat this process six times, placing the results one on top of the other, from the bottom up. That is, the first number you obtain - the first line - goes on the bottom; the sixth is the top line. This is your hexagram. The corresponding passage in the book refers to your current situation. If you obtained all unchanging lines, the advice pertains indefinitely. But if you obtained any 6s or 9s, further advice awaits you. This being Chinese philosophy, the changing lines change into their complements: yin to yang, yang to yin, changing to unchanging. Special commentary in the text addresses each hexagram with changing lines. After you read your hexagram and the special commentary, then change the changing lines to get a new hexagram. The wisdom therein is meant to pertain to your next situation, offering advice about the future.

<sup>5</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Divinatione*, Book 2, Section 58: 'Sed nescio quo modo nihil tam absurde dici potest quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum.'

### Martha's Case: Progress through Conflict

Martha, a 40-year-old lawyer who was both highly rational and deeply intuitive, consulted the *I Ching* when her reason alone was unequal to resolving her issues with changing circumstances in her marriage and career.

Martha had moved to the East Coast, where she married a successful businessman and took a position with a prestigious Boston corporate law firm, in order to be with him and also pursue her career. But now, a couple of years later, there were tensions in both her marriage and her career. Her husband Sam wanted her to use her legal expertise to further his own business. And so she had - a favour for the man she loved - but he was pressing her to spend more and more of her energy that way. At the same time, her firm was placing increasing amounts of pressure on her, and her case load was as large as she could possibly manage.

An over-achiever by nature, Martha took on each case as it came up, without a second thought. But now she was saddled with so much work she felt she had no life outside her career. Martha was over-committed and sleep-deprived. Her asthma was acting up, she'd put on weight, and she suffered from mild depression. But she was also strong-willed, determined both to make her marriage succeed and to make partner in the firm.

Then her life was really thrown out of kilter when Sam suddenly announced he wanted a divorce. (Turns out he was having an affair.) Moving on with her life without Sam resolved half of the quandary she felt she was in, but a burning question still remained: should she keep her pressure-cooker of a job? If she stuck it out even for another couple of years, her professional reputation would be made, and her contacts could really begin to pay off. And she'd never been a quitter. On the other hand, the job was stressing her so much that she began to hate it. As well, her parents and married siblings lived on the West Coast, and were having various problems she could help with if she didn't live so far away.

When Martha threw the coins, she obtained hexagram #6, *Conflict*, with changing lines in the second and fifth places. It advised, among other things: 'If a person is involved in a conflict, her only salvation lies in being so clear-headed and inwardly strong that she is always ready to come to terms by meeting the opponent halfway ... In times of strife, crossing the great water is to be avoided, that is, dangerous enterprises are not to be begun, because in

order to be successful they require concerted unity of forces.' Another passage stated: 'If rights and duties are exactly defined, or if, in a group, the spiritual trends of the individuals harmonise, the cause of conflict is removed in advance.'

The changing line in the second place added this commentary: 'One cannot engage in conflict. One returns home, gives way ... Timely withdrawal prevents bad consequences. If, out of a false sense of honour, a woman allowed herself to be tempted into an unequal conflict, she would be drawing down disaster upon herself. In such a case a wise and conciliatory attitude benefits the whole community.'

To Martha, the hexagram was clearly saying that she should not continue her quest for partnership in the firm because her personal life was too strife-ridden at this time for her to concentrate her efforts. Just as importantly, her bosses had deluged her with duties to the firm, but had never properly defined her rights, and her overwork there had partially blinded her to her own troubled marriage. Her better choice, she felt, was moving to her family's area, helping them out, and accepting a standing job offer with a less prestigious but more convivial law firm in the vicinity.

When Martha changed both of her changing lines to their complements, the hexagram became #35, *Progress*, which presents very optimistic circumstances. That's exactly what anyone making their better choices should encounter.

### Jonathan's Case: An End that Endures

Jonathan, too, found worthy guidance in the *I Ching*. A successful physician in his late forties, he had been faithful to his wife, Yvonne, for the first 12 years of their marriage. But during the past few years, their relationship had soured as Yvonne gradually withdrew from him, and their mutual interests, until it seemed they led essentially separate existences. Yvonne came home late from work every evening, had her own circle of friends, assumed no household responsibilities, and simply wasn't there for him or their marital partnership. So Jonathan strayed into an affair with Megan.

Megan was a medical resident in her early thirties, and she admired and looked up to Jonathan. Eventually Jonathan and Yvonne legally separated, but as these things sometimes go, Jonathan and Megan soon ran into trouble. Though they'd been together through the last year of his marriage, Megan broke up with him within a few months of his separation from Yvonne. She confessed to have been seeing other people in spite of their mutual attraction. In

the midst of that drama, Yvonne sought to reconcile with Jonathan, having realised with time apart how her apathy and neglect had doomed the relationship.

Confused by his pleasurable but stormy interlude with Megan and perplexed by Yvonne's desire to make amends, Jonathan looked to the *I Ching* for guidance in making sense of it all. He couldn't have obtained a more illuminating hexagram if he had somehow rigged the coin toss. Number 54, *The Marrying Maiden*, said, in part, 'Undertaking brings misfortune. Nothing that would further. A girl who is taken into the family, but not as the chief wife, must behave with special caution and reserve. She must not take it upon herself to supplant the mistress of the house, for that would mean disorder and lead to untenable relationships.'

In ancient China, a husband had but one official wife. These marriages were often arranged for political rather than romantic reasons, so it became part of the wife's 'gracious duty' to help her husband satisfy his personal inclinations by bringing a young girl into the household. The marital relationship could become 'beautiful and open,' although the *I Ching* cautions that 'it is a most difficult and delicate matter, requiring tact on the part of all concerned.' (This too is from hexagram #54).

Megan had indeed behaved tactlessly, and having made every effort to 'supplant the mistress of the house,' and this had led swiftly to disorder between her and Jonathan, and to an untenable relationship between them. Of course Jonathan had also invited this disorder, perhaps to facilitate his separation from Yvonne, and certainly in response to his sense of homelessness with her.

Another portion of the hexagram offered, 'Thus the superior man understands the transitory in the light of the eternity of the end ... every relationship between individuals bears within it the danger that wrong turns may be taken, leading to endless misunderstandings and disagreements ... If on the other hand a man fixes his mind on an end that endures, he will succeed in avoiding the reefs that confront the closer relationships of people.'

But just what is 'an end that endures' in the flux of constant change? This is an enduring philosophical question that Jonathan had to consider, just as countless thinkers (and lovers) had before him. What is an end that endures? If he could answer that, Jonathan would know how and where to invest his capacity for love. This is a question not just for Jonathan, but for everyone.

### **Jane's Case: We Must Be the Change we Wish to See in the World**

Jane, a professional Protestant woman, sought philosophical guidance because her son Rick was marrying Abigail, a Jewish woman, while her daughter Kelly was marrying Ibrahim, a Muslim man. Jane feared conflict in the family, and with good reason.

Jane's question, however, was not whether these marriages *should* or *should not* take place. Her question was how to keep the family intact once they *did* take place. Having been raised in a tolerant Protestant tradition, which celebrates individual freedom of choice and responsibility for choice, Jane assumed that romantic love takes precedence over inherited beliefs. She also viewed herself and her family as inhabitants of the global village and, as such, she hoped that religious and other cultural differences would become less important as villagers became more unified - or at least more considerate of one another as neighbours. Needless to say, Jane is both an optimist and an idealist.

At the same time, increasing tensions in the Middle East were reflected in her own children's relations, both with each other and with her family. Rick began to absorb Jewish culture and values from Abigail and his family - her future in-laws - which included strong support for Israel's existence and security. Kelly also began to absorb Muslim culture and values from Ibrahim's family - his future in-laws - which lately included strong anti-Israeli and anti-American sentiments. This cross-cultural absorption was less natural in Kelly's case, because Ibrahim's family opposed the marriage. Abigail's family was far more accustomed to the phenomenon of Jewish assimilation into Christianity, so they didn't resist. They also wanted love to triumph over religious difference, and sought only an understanding of Judaism from their Protestant in-laws. But Ibrahim's parents were the immigrant generation, and so their son was far more assimilated to American culture than they were. Even though they sent him to a good liberal arts college, they had not anticipated the extent of Ibrahim's self-conception as a liberated westerner. They didn't want him to marry out of their faith (which was a way of life to them) but, seeing his love for Kelly and his determination to marry her, and fearing to lose him, they decided to woo Kelly as much as possible toward Islamic culture.

Meanwhile, back at Jane's place, family barbecues were getting out of hand. Abigail didn't insist on Glatt kosher food, but she wouldn't eat ham or pork; while Ibrahim would only eat Halal chicken or beef. Neither of them ate hot-dogs or shrimp. Rick and Kelly argued incessantly over Middle-Eastern politics, while Abigail and Ibrahim exchanged pleasantries but often glared at one another across the table. Jane began to despair at thoughts of

wedding parties. She had seen posters of restored Jerusalem hanging in Abigail's apartment, and posters celebrating the Intifada hanging in Ibrahim's apartment.

Jane also wondered about the religious status of her hypothetical grandchildren. According to Jewish law of matrilineal descent, children born to Abigail and Rick would automatically be considered Jewish by Jews, but could be raised in any religion (or none). There would normally be no pressure from liberal Jews to convert the husband, and little pressure to convert the children. Then again, according to Islamic law, children born of Kelly and Ibrahim would have to be raised as Muslims, whether Kelly converted or not. And under Islamic law, which is assumed by Muslims to take precedence over State laws, Kelly would have few rights as a wife, whether she converted or not.

Needless to say, these scenarios were troublesome to Jane, who simply wanted - as most parents do - to see their children happily married, to love their grandchildren a lot, and perhaps to spoil them a little. Jane really had two philosophical questions. First, why had her family become a potential battleground for one of the world's most difficult political quarrels? And second, what should she do about it?

In answer to Jane's first question, I reminded her that since she considered herself a tolerant person, perhaps her tolerance was being tested in order to be strengthened. We live in an age in which the world's most horrific conflicts are being played out on the stages of its most humble citizens. This may yet lead to progress, since simplicity and humility can succeed where complexity and belligerence have failed. Jane didn't ask to raise a 'poster family' for the global village, but the global village nonetheless needs such families to point the way. She didn't volunteer explicitly for that job, but she implicitly prepared her family for it by encouraging tolerance, open-mindedness and individuality in her children. Moreover, sometimes one's duty is foisted on one without one volunteering for it explicitly. Jane was being asked to fight for the peace, by holding her kin together. If the village cannot function at Jane's level, it cannot function at all. As Mohandas Gandhi finely said: 'We must be the change we wish to see in the world.'

So Jane consulted the *I Ching*, which offered her sagacious advice. In answer to the question 'What should she do?' she obtained hexagram 14: *Possession in Great Measure*. In this hexagram, one yin or female line, representing Jane, holds together and contains many unruly male or yang lines, representing the conflicting parties. How? 'It is done by virtue of unselfish modesty.' The text goes on to say

'The sun brings both good and evil into the light of day. Man must combat and curb the evil, and must favour and promote the good.' In this case, the good is the continuation and celebration of family life, and the evil is the constellation of political and religious conflicts that threaten to divide the family.

There was also a changing line in the third place. According to the *I Ching*, it means 'A noble person offers it (the possession in great measure) to the Son of Heaven. A petty person cannot do this. A magnanimous, liberal-minded person should not regard what he or she possesses as his or her exclusive personal property, but should place it at the disposal of the ruler or of the people at large. In so doing, he or she takes the right attitude toward this possession, which as private property can never endure.'

Applied to Jane's case, the meaning is transparent. The 'great possession' is of course her family: her husband, her children, and her hypothetical grandchildren. If she treats them as her 'exclusive personal property,' which means insulating them from conflicts of every kind and protecting them (even against their wills) from life's diseases, then they will not endure as a family. But by enlisting her liberalism and magnanimity, she both allows them to follow their own hearts, and makes a gift of the whole family to the global village. Through this gift, the universal goodness of humanity may triumph over the particular evils arising from cultural differentiation. And it is Jane's modesty in wanting good relations among her family, and not her ambition to solve the world's problems, that makes this possession so great in measure.

### Parting Paradox

As I mentioned earlier, the metaphor of the *I Ching*'s hexagrams as textual ink-blot gives rise to a question, if not a paradox. In the classic Rorschach test, each ink-blot is a random pattern (with one axis of symmetry) that presumably has no intrinsic meaning, but to which a meaning is attributed according to phenomena subsisting in the beholder's mind. Whatever 'likeness' the beholder projects onto an ink-blot is deemed to be a literal or symbolic manifestation of some psychologically significant state of affairs that persists in the beholder's psyche. The ink blot therefore catalyses the transformation of implicit ideas or emotions into explicit ones, fishing them out of the silent depths of mind and into the light of verbalisation, where they can be analysed or interpreted.

But does the *I Ching* perform an analogous function with respect to the subject's volitions, intentions and principles? The question is not at all a simple one. On the one hand, it appears that each hexagram - unlike each ink blot - has a

relatively fixed theme with an intrinsic meaning, on which it admits a number of possible variations. But if so, then how do we explain the consistently good correspondence obtained between clients' fixed questions and hexagrams' fixed themes in the foregoing case studies (among many others), except by recourse to Jungian synchronicity? I prefer to suppose that each hexagram's theme is not as fixed as it may seem. If one considers the deeper symbolisms in the nuclear trigrams (half-hexagrams) and the attributes of their two-fold mappings to objects in nature (e.g. lake, mountain, fire, etc.) and to social relations (eldest son, youngest daughter, liege lord, etc.), then each hexagram admits more flexibility of interpretation than meets the eye in the case studies presented herein. Given this fuller range of interpretation, and generous textual elaboration (at least in the Wilhem-Baynes edition), the client is almost bound to find a plausible correspondence with his or her situation somewhere, but not everywhere, in any hexagram. This argument supports the analogy with the Rorschach test. But that leads to a paradox.

For it can also be observed that ink blots have fixed conformations too. So if a given ink blot is not inherently suggestive, say, of a Sphinx, then it would presumably fail to evoke a Sphinx-like projection from a subject whose mindscape is uninhabited by Sphinx-like mentations. But if a given ink-blot were inherently representative of a Sphinx (if words can have intrinsic meanings, so can images), it might strongly suggest a Sphinx to a subject's mind, even though no Sphinx-like mentation was lurking until the ink blot was observed. No doubt it is empirically the case that some ink blots are more suggestive than others to a given subject, but the question of how to apportion the subject's attribution of meaning (on the one hand) with the ink blot's objective resemblance to something (on the other) is surely not a trivial matter, and may well be intractable. If this is true of ink blots, then it may be true of the *I Ching* as well, in which case we are bound to admit that synchronicity is as good an explanation of the *I Ching's* inner workings as any other. That is to say, we simply have no idea how it works, but clearly observe that it does.

### Conclusion

I hope this essay encourages the use of the *Book of Changes* among philosophical counsellors, and also that it helps change the minds of those who may have been misled into eschewing it.

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articles along with three books on philosophical practice, including the international best seller *Plato Not Prozac*, translated into twenty-one languages.