

The Magic of the I Ching

The magic of the I Ching, as with any great spiritual system, lies in its simplicity. Simplicity engenders versatility and diversity by providing clarity and stability. At the heart of the I Ching is the Yin/Yang duality, which is the simplest thought-form available to the mind. Unity is simpler yet, but unity takes us beyond the mind. The I Ching is designed for the mind, but is also a portal beyond the mind, into the heart.

With the traditional I Ching, we are primarily concerned with the poetic resonance between images and ideas. Images become archetypes which allow us to simplify situations. Understanding leads to detachment and peace. Action born from peace and stillness carries the quality of harmony and reveals the harmony everywhere at work.

The simplest images we have to work with are the pure forms of geometry. These forms are alien because they are so abstract, but also familiar in their pure simplicity. Yang and yin are represented as lines—yang is solid, yin is broken.

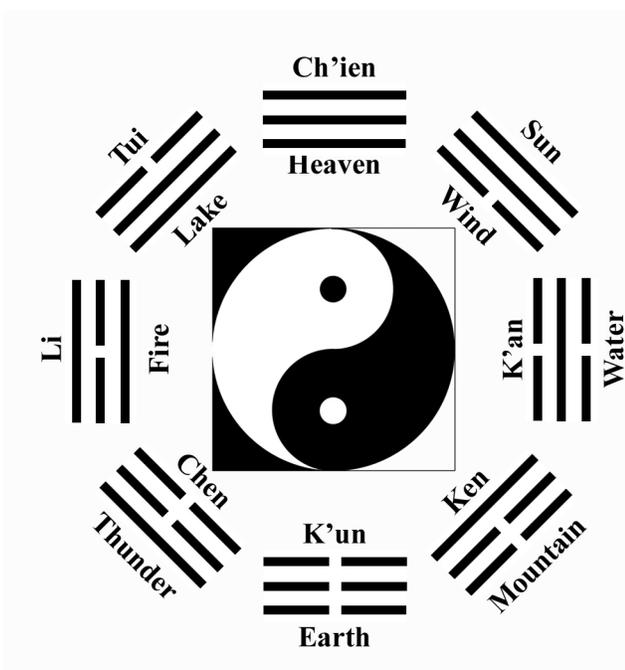
Yang represents the masculine—action, penetration, stability and substance. Yin represents the feminine—receptivity, openness, silence... The yin line has an opening which can receive the yang line.

This trinity is crucial—we only divide so that we can unite. We only take the toys apart so we can learn to make them ourselves. Division is in service to

union here.

When we combine duality and trinity, we arrive at the next level of complexity—the trigrams. At this level, yin and yang lines are arranged in triplets to form eight distinct forms. These eight archetypes are the foundation of the traditional I Ching, and understanding their unique qualities and associations is the key to understanding the mysteries of the I Ching.

In this diagram, the trigrams are arranged with opposites across from one another. Heaven and Earth are perhaps the simplest, made up of



only yang and only yin lines, respectively. Heaven is the sun and the rain, which descend to nourish the receptive Earth.

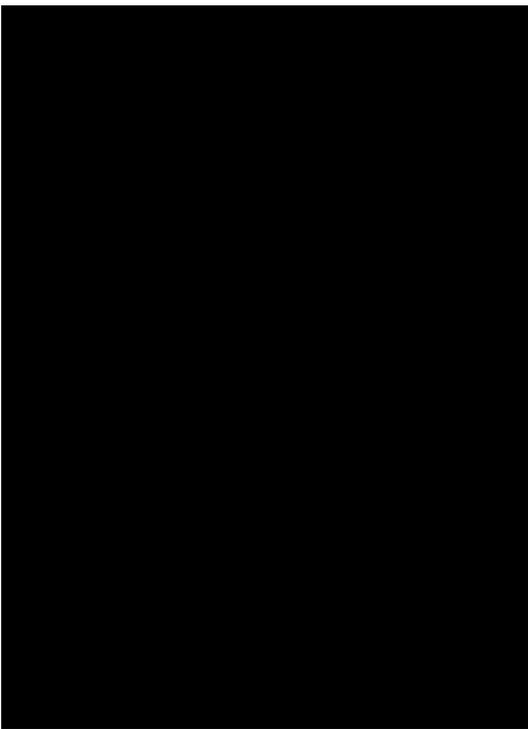
The trigrams can also be divided into masculine and feminine archetypes. Any trigram which has an odd number of yin lines is feminine, and any trigram which has an even number of yin lines is masculine. Earth is the prime feminine archetype, accompanied by Water, Wind, and the Lake. These images all carry associations of peace, ease, non-resistance, and grace. They contain other forms, but in themselves do not have a very solid form.

Heaven is the prime masculine archetype, accompanied by Fire, Thunder, and the Mountain. Fire is paired with Water, Thunder with Wind, and the Mountain with the Lake. Fire carries the heat and intensity of passion and creativity, Thunder provides the sound of bold action and perseverance, and the Mountain calls to mind stoic immovability, stability and security.

Trinity and duality are combined once again to form hexagrams, pairs of trigrams coming together to make 64 distinct forms. The hexagrams are made of six lines. Shown on the right are the Prime Yang and Prime Yin hexagrams, the simplest forms to introduce us to this new level.

One important thing to note is that hexagrams are always read from the bottom up. In the traditional I Ching, a hexagram is read as two trigrams, the lower trigram and the upper trigram. The lower trigram represents what is inside or below, and the upper trigram represents what is outside or above. The simplest interpretation of this division is that the lower trigram symbolizes our subjective experience and the upper trigram shows us the objective environment within which this experience is occurring.

What this diagram is showing is that, at the level of hexagrams, we enter the third dimension. Every hexagram has a partner, which is found by turning every yang line into a yin line and vice versa. Further, the six lines of a hexagram can be arranged in three dimensional space to form a tetrahedron, the simplest polyhedron possible. A tetrahedron, as shown is a pyramid with a triangular base. Depending on the hexagram, some of the sides of the tetrahedron will be solid and others will have an opening. This allows the tetrahedron to merge with its partner, with all six pairs of yin and yang lines unifying to form a three-dimensional Star of David. This last form, also known as the Merkaba, is a very important and beautiful sacred image that represents the union of yin and yang in its simplest possible three-



dimensional form.

The magic of the I Ching is an invitation, not a destination. In the traditional western world-view, learning is a journey of linear progress toward a clear goal. The goal is more important than the process of learning itself, which is seen more as a necessary evil. The I Ching inverts this perspective because it starts at the destination, which is unity. In this understanding, unity, harmony, love, peace, and simplicity are all synonymous. The forms, geometries, and images of the I Ching only exist to illustrate the unity which must be experienced through the heart.

These forms are not abstract fantasies that carry the mind away from the real world—they lie at the very heart of nature and reality. In contemplating these forms, we realize that there are no divisions between life, nature, and the human mind. These are all manifestations of one system that operates from a foundation of unity and simplicity to create a diversity of perfectly unique forms. Unfortunately, this insight lies just outside the grasp of most people because it requires the union of reason and intuition, it requires that reason relax its grasp on reality to allow a space of not-knowing and trust.

Evidence that these geometries are at the heart of creation is found in the most obvious place: the code of all life, DNA! Where the 64 hexagrams of the I Ching are combinations of two trigrams, the 64 codons of DNA are combinations of three *base pairs*. The same duality-trinity structure found in the I Ching is found in DNA. In the language of DNA, four molecular letters come together in three-letter words to write the story of all life. This is the secret of Tao: the way of the universe is to operate through simplicity, non-resistance and effortlessness. It is only the human mind that takes complexity as its start and destination. From the perspective of Tao, complexity is only an appearance, behind it is always simplicity. This is truly the meeting place of science and spirituality—which are simply the objective and subjective paths of understanding simplicity! A simple life is a good life, and understanding simplicity is wisdom.

The fact that there is a direct connection between the hexagrams of the I Ching and the codons of DNA suggests a wonderful truth: we can use the archetypes of the I Ching to awaken aspects of our DNA! Because these archetypal codes are so simple and make up the bedrock of life, we can communicate them easily to our minds and bodies, resonating whatever aspect of our being we choose to focus on. In this understanding there is no division between a physical process of genetic activation and a spiritual process of growth or awakening. There is only life awakening to its own true nature.

There are many ways to imbibe these codes or archetypes. The I Ching has been primarily



focused on a visual and poetic transmission, however, it is also possible to express these archetypes as sound patterns and movements. One of the simplest ways to do this is to interpret yang lines as single steps and yin lines as double steps. Now each trigram and hexagram becomes a distinct rhythm. The trigram for Wind, for instance, yin-yang-yang, becomes the repeating pattern ☯☯☯. Each trigram becomes a bar in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. To get used to these rhythms, we can repeat them on a drum allowing our style of playing to be influenced by the image associated with the rhythm. The way we play Fire should be different from the way we play Water, and so on.

From this simple rhythmic foundation limitless possibilities open up. As we move into hexagrams, we can resonate certain archetypes into being within and around us. If we would like to feel very calm within but simultaneously “turn up the heat” in our environment, we could drum the hexagram Lake-Fire. If we would like to take the rhythmic entrainment a step further, we can find ways to dance the hexagrams. All sorts of movements are possible here, and a good place to start is moving the feet to the whole steps and double steps.

Another exciting possibility is to start making merkabas of sound and movement. This means not just drumming or moving to a particular hexagram, but invoking that hexagram as well as its partner. For the sake of simplicity, this will probably involve at least two people. If one person drums a hexagram and another drums its partner, there will be a hypnotic entrainment that happens as each quarter note meets two eighth notes and vice versa. Now a sense of harmony and unity emerges that speaks to the body's innate knowing.

Another avenue for exploration is opened in works that have outlined the correspondence between the I Ching and DNA. One phenomenal text is *Gene Keys*, a book written by spiritual teacher and poet Richard Rudd. Not only is every hexagram explored in all its spiritual and psychological implications, there is also an astrological system behind this book that allows us to see which hexagrams have a prominent place in our DNA. This really gives us the key to activating our own genetics in order to tap into our divine blueprint.

These suggestions contain many seeds. This is a blue-print for learning and education, an avenue of exploring the world that begins with the recognition that we are not separate from it. We begin at a place where geometry, mathematics, music, art, poetry, spirituality and psychology are not separate. Then we explore these various disciplines from this foundation, just as life does—not toward some end, but as the infinite creative manifestations of the perfection which simply is.

There is also a framework here for a healing setting, where we are working from a place of wounded-ness toward a place of unity, by using sound, movement and geometry as our guides. If we

can cultivate the awareness that unity is the true nature of reality as well as our own, we will be empowered to heal any wounds we may have gathered on this journey.

There is also a lot of fun to be had here! There is music to be made and games to be played. We've only touched on the rhythmic translation of the hexagrams here, but harmony and melody will not be far behind. The magic of the I Ching is the magic of people coming together in trust, kindness, equality and freedom, and allowing beauty to flow. True beauty goes much deeper than superficial appearances, because recognizing true beauty entails recognizing the source of true beauty: unity, harmony, completeness, wholeness. It's possible to study the I Ching and only approach its truths intellectually. It's much harder to listen to a piece of music that comes from a place of true harmony and shield your heart from its infectious love.

The magic of the I Ching is that it leads us through the mind beyond the mind. May this blessing be available for all beings, as we return to the perfection that was always there.