

The *I Ching*
and
Western Esotericism

by

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Introduction

The following monograph is an attempt to re-frame the system of the *I Ching* in a Western Esoteric framework. It is not meant to detract from or deny validity to the traditional understanding of the *I Ching* as it has developed over the last few thousand years in the East. In fact, in terms of offering a deep understanding of this native tradition, the following work will be almost useless. The reader is referred to the many fine works in English on the subject, many of which will be referenced here. The project of this work is to look at the *I Ching* through Western eyes, and to apply the formalisms of Western Occultism to the symbolic and mathematical formalisms of the *I Ching* in order to gain a perspective that is at once fresh and more familiar to the Western student of the Mysteries. This work will, it is hoped, provide a basis for completely re-interpreting the figures of the *I Ching* in a Western Esoteric framework (though, as will be demonstrated, many points of contact with the native tradition remain in the finished system). The value of such an enterprise can only be judged by the results obtained.

Few Western Esoteric theorists or practitioners have attempted to work with the *I Ching*. One notable exception is Aleister Crowley, who found the system to be of great value, both as a way of representing the Universe in its diversity, and as a method of divination. His thoughts on the system can be found in his 777, *Liber Trigrammaton Sub Figura XXVII*, and of course, in his *Liber CCXVI*, which is the *I Ching* itself (or rather, some of the *I Ching*, with Crowley's commentary). Crowley's system of adapting the *I Ching* stands on its own merits. Although this work differs substantially from the system that Crowley favored, it is not intended as a correction or improvement on that system. It is merely another method of doing what Crowley set out to do with the *I Ching*. The pitfalls of cross-cultural translation of symbol systems apply to any effort of this nature. Just as there can be more than one good translation of Plato's *Dialogues* into English, there can be more than one good translation of the *I Ching* into Western symbolism. Among systems that are more or less complete in their scope, the decision as to which translation is "best" depends as much on aesthetic sense as it does on accuracy.

Marcello Ramos Motta, a one-time student of Crowley's, also worked with the *I Ching*, producing his own system of correspondence with the Tree of Life. If obscurity and convolution are to be taken as hallmarks of true Esoteric wisdom, then Motta's system must be quite a gem. I must admit, however, that I find it so incomprehensible that I have not been able to make any use of it. Motta's system was at one time published in the *Societas Ordo Templi Orientis* periodical, *Equinox* volume VII number 2.

The genesis of this effort to fit the *I Ching* into a Western framework was the

observation of a simple symmetry in the structural features of the Hexagrams. It so happens that there are 20 hexagrams that contain an equal number of solid and broken lines, 22 that have more broken lines than solid, and 22 that have more solid lines than broken. This would give 2 hexagrams to each of the Sephiroth and Paths of the Tree of Life. This observation quite fascinated me, as it suggested that the simple iteration of binary division that results in the 64 Hexagrams also results in some of the same mathematical properties on which the Tree of Life is based. Other insights and correspondences followed quickly. Most of the central principles of this system were discovered in the course of one week, though assigning pairs of Hexagrams to the paths and Sephiroth took a bit longer. I suspect that there is a great deal more work to be done to really flesh out the system, and there are subtleties that were noticed, but not followed through in any formal manner during the writing of this text. I have tried to indicate areas where more thorough research might be done, but I encourage anyone who might be interested to seek further levels of possibility.

May the Gods be pleased.

Fra.: ~. q. j. ` .

1

The *I Ching's* true history is lost to the distant past. Current scholarly estimates suggest that the core text was composed in the period between 1100 and 800 BCE, although the lineal figures known as the hexagrams probably pre-existed the text by some time, and the commentaries and appendices were added more recently. If these estimates are to be trusted, then the I-Ching is one of the most ancient texts in existence, older than the Homeric epics and all the books of the Bible, and roughly contemporary with the Egyptian "Book of the Dead" and the Vedas. More precisely, the *I-Ching* seems to have been written toward the end of the Vedic age, and within a few hundred years of the introduction of papyrus texts in Egyptian burials. Certainly, in all these cases, an oral history stretches back some time before we are able to document the texts in written form or by citation in other works.

What, then, is the *I Ching*? In its earliest form, it is clearly a system of divination, descended perhaps from earlier forms of Chinese divination that utilized tortoise shells cooked in a fire until they cracked. The cracks in the shells were then interpreted to give a brief judgment of the situation in question. Some authors have suggested that the Hexagrams of the *I-Ching* are stylized representations of the pattern of cracks that one might expect to encounter in a scorched tortoise shell. In any case, in its native context, and from a very early date, the *I-Ching* has been considered far more than a system of fortune telling. Like most forms of divination, to those who are initiated into their use, the *I-Ching* is considered a treatise on the nature of the universe of which it seeks to provide an understanding. Throughout the millennia, the core text of the I-Ching has attracted the commentary of religious sages of various traditions, including Taoism, Confucianism, and Tantric Buddhism. It is considered one of the "Five Classics" of ancient Chinese literature, which form the bedrock of traditional Chinese culture. It is treated as a holy book, often with as much reverence as a Moslem might show toward the Koran, or a Jew toward the Torah. It is read as wisdom literature as often, if not more often, than it is used as a divinatory tool.

The *I Ching*, therefore, is in general terms a compendium of wisdom concerning the Universe of which we are a part, and a means of accessing that

wisdom for a variety of practical, esoteric, and meditative purposes. The same might be said of Western divinatory systems such as Tarot and Astrology. If we accept that all of these systems strive to represent the Universe in its entirety, then it is logical to assume that we might find definite correspondences between them. Analysis of such correspondences has been an area of great activity within the Western esoteric tradition, as any survey of the classic works such as the *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* by Cornelius Agrippa will amply demonstrate. In fact, one might almost say that syncretism is one of the hallmarks of Western occult and esoteric systems. Less common is a search for common points of contact between Western systems and systems from other cultures, including those of the Far East.

The most basic element of the *I Ching* as a symbolic system is the division of the universe into two polar energies or qualities known as *Yin* and *Yang*. *Yin* and *Yang* energies emerge from an even more primordial whole that incorporates both of them without contradiction or conflict. This primordial whole is known as the *Tao*. The *Tao* is incapable of being adequately symbolized since it transcends any particular distinction that we can apply to it using language. The *Tao*, *Yin*, and *Yang* therefore form a dynamic triad. Although opposites, *Yin* and *Yang* are not irreconcilable, since they both have their ground in the *Tao*.

This same essential distinction is also at the root of Western esoteric philosophy. The clearest example of this can be found in the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, where the Supernal Triad of Kether, Binah, and Chokmah bear the same relation to one another. Kether is the highest state of Union, in which opposites are completely reconciled, and words and concepts become inadequate, much like the *Tao*. From Kether, as *Yin* and *Yang* emerge from the *Tao*, the masculine Sephiroth of Chesed and the feminine Sephiroth of Binah emerge. These two form a polarity or tension that results in the formation of the Universe through the process of flowing into the lower Sephiroth. Similarly, once *Yin* and *Yang* emerge from the *Tao*, their further relations and combinations form the manifest Universe that we are familiar with. This constant combination and recombination of *Yin* and *Yang* are the basis of every phenomenon we observe in the world, whether in the material, moral, intellectual, or spiritual spheres. The tension between *Yin* and *Yang* produces a constant turbulent state of change that we observe everywhere we care to look; this is in fact the origin of the name of the *I Ching* itself, which means "Classic of Changes."

Yin energy is "feminine" in nature; it is associated with darkness, receptivity, moisture, and passivity. *Yang* energy is "masculine" in nature; it is associated with light, assertiveness, dryness, and activity. In the process of obtaining a figure to be read or meditated upon within the system of the *I Ching*, *Yin* energy is symbolized by a broken line and *Yang* energy by a solid line. A complete figure is built up one line at a time from bottom to top until six lines are obtained, resulting in what is called a Hexagram (it is not, of course, a geometrical hexagram). The precise process by

which this is done can be found in almost any competent book on the *I Ching*, but what concerns us here is that the process must be random.¹ If, as the *I Ching* itself postulates, the whole of manifest existence at a particular time results from the combination of *Yin* and *Yang* energies, the state of the universe in terms of *Yin* and *Yang* ought to be discoverable within the context of any observable phenomenon. This, in fact, is the ultimate aim of many Chinese divinatory systems, such as *Feng Shui*, which is a method of analyzing land forms, structures, and spaces in terms of the energies they embody. Since the balance of *Yin* and *Yang* energies is constantly changing, an *I Ching* Hexagram is like a snapshot of these energies at a particular time and place. The formalism of the *I Ching* merely imposes a structure on the modifications of *Yin* and *Yang* so that they are more easily read than, say, cloud formations, the flight of birds, or the behavior of animals. As an example, the Hexagram #40, *Hsieh*, or “Deliverance” is printed below.



#40 *Hsieh*

It can easily be seen that the *I Ching* is a binary system. Since there are two possible states for each line (solid *Yang* or broken *Yin*), the number of permutations of x lines varies as 2^x . Therefore, two lines have four permutations, three lines have eight permutations, four lines have 16 permutations, and so on. There are therefore 64 possible figures of six lines, and these form the basis of the text of the *I Ching*. The rest of the work consists of commentaries upon each hexagram that delineate its meaning, and brief treatises on the system as a whole.

It is entirely reasonable to ask why one should need to stop with six lines. Why not use figures of seven lines for a total of 128 figures, or eight lines for a total of 256 figures? The simplest and most mundane explanation is that with an increasing number of figures, the system becomes more and more unwieldy and impractical. Perhaps the ancient sages who developed the *I Ching* simply tired of writing commentaries. The *Shuo Kua* or “Discussion of the Trigrams” of the *I Ching* gives a more esoteric (if equally arbitrary) explanation. It states that within each Trigram, or figure of three lines, the top line corresponds with Heaven, the Middle line to Man, and the bottom line to Earth. Here again, we see the theme of the dynamic triad, in which Man is seen as the mediator between Heaven and Earth. In

¹My personal preference for important questions is the ancient “yarrow stalk” method, due to its highly ritualized and laborious form. The three-coins method is also quite suitable.

this case, the synthesis is a lower one, so that in a sense, Man is the product of Heaven and Earth, whereas Heaven and Earth themselves are products of the higher synthesis of the *Tao*.² The *Shuo Kua* goes on to explain “They combined these three fundamental powers and doubled them; therefore in the Book of Changes a sign is always formed by six lines.”¹ This explanation was probably imposed after the fact, and the mysterious “doubling” of the triad is left unexplained.









Although the binary division into *Yin* and *Yang* is the most basic in the *I Ching*, for reasons that should be clear from the paragraph above, the Trigram, or figure of three lines, is also considered a basic element of the system. In the commentaries on the Hexagrams, many of the interpretations are based entirely on the two Trigrams that make up the Hexagram and their position relative to one another (that is, on which is above and which below). Other than the individual solid and broken lines and the Hexagrams themselves, the Trigrams are the only entities that are extensively delineated within the *I Ching*. In the next section, I will attempt to fit the Trigrams into the Western Esoteric framework. This, then, as in the *I Ching* itself, will form the basis for the delineation of the Hexagrams based on Western symbolism.

²This esoteric formula, perhaps more than any other concealed within the *I Ching*, convinces us of its great wisdom. For further explication on this theme, one may study *Liber AL vel Legis* and Aleister Crowley’s writings on the “0=2” formula.

2

Reproduced in the table below are the eight Trigrams of the *I Ching*, along with their names and traditional attributions.

The Trigrams

Chinese Name	Ch'ien	Sun	Ken	Li	Chen	Tui	K'an	K'un
Chinese attribution	The Creative, untiring strength, power.	The Gentle, flexibility, penetration.	Keeping Still, Resting, the act of arresting.	The Clinging, Brightness, elegance.	The Arousing, moving, exciting power.	The Joyous, pleasure, complacent satisfaction.	The Abysmal, peril, difficulty.	The Receptive, openness, submission.
Chinese element	Heaven, Sky	The wind, wood	Mountain	Fire, Lightning	Thunder	Water, marsh, lake	Water, rain, clouds	The Earth
Trigram								

It should be noted that the “Chinese Element” in the table is not to be understood as elements are understood in the Western tradition. Although there is a very well-elaborated five element system in the Chinese tradition, scholars are virtually unanimous in the opinion that this elemental system was nonexistent at the time that the *I Ching* was originally developed. Although later writers have attempted to integrate the five element system with the *I Ching* — with great success — the original elements listed in the text are a mixture of elemental forces (Fire, Earth, Air, and Water) and natural phenomena (lightning, mountain, lake, etc.). In fact, James Legge, one of the first translators of the *I Ching* into English, said that “it is impossible to believe that the several objects were assigned to the several figures on any principles of science, for there is no indication of science in the matter: it is difficult even to suppose that they were assigned on any comprehensive scheme of thought.”²

That Mr. Legge was approaching the I-Ching as a translator and scholar rather

than as an Initiate of the Mysteries is rather evident from his translation of the text.³ The attributions, though superficially diverse, do indeed have an underlying rationale that permits us to correlate the Trigrams with the Western elemental system rather nicely, as will be demonstrated below.

The “Chinese attribution” in the table above will be an indispensable aid to fitting the Trigrams to the Western system. The appendices of the *I Ching* give a great number of attributions for each Trigram, both in abstract and concrete terms. For example, for Ch’ien, “The Creative,” the *Shuo Kua* states that “The Creative is heaven. It is round, it is the prince, the father, jade, metal, cold, ice; it is deep red, a good horse, an old horse, a lean horse, a wild horse, tree fruit.” It also says that God “battles in the sign of the Creative,” that “The Creative brings about rulership,” and “manifests itself in the head.” However, in fitting the Trigrams to Western symbols, I will rely on those attributions that are most stable; that is, those which are listed in the table above and are most commonly used in the delineation of the Hexagrams. The problem of correct attribution is complex even within traditions, let alone in comparing traditions. Within the Western tradition, the association between gold and the Sun is nearly universal, but its association with the Hebrew letter *Resh* is not. Musulman associated the Sun with the letter *Samekh*, and Kircher associated it with the letter *Beth*. The *Sepher Yetzirah* itself associates the Sun with the letter *Kaph* — or to *Daleth*, depending on which version one consults. We are on firmer ground if we pay attention to the attributions that are more frequent and more central to the way a symbol is used in actual practice — in this case, the way that the Trigram attributes are used to delineate the Hexagrams. Although the *Shuo Kua* attributes *Ch’ien* to ice, this attribution is not used in delineating the meaning of any Hexagram in the rest of the *I Ching*. Little meaning will be lost, therefore, if we disregard this attribution in finding a Western symbol to ascribe to *Ch’ien*.













In the text associated with each Hexagram, there is a paragraph devoted to what is called “the Image,” or the attributions of the Trigrams in relation to one another. For example, the Image for Hexagram #40, *Hsieh*, which was printed as an example in the first section, states: “Thunder and rain sets in: the image of DELIVERANCE, thus the superior man pardons mistakes and forgives misdeeds.” By consulting the table above, we can see that “thunder and rain” refers to the “elements” of the two Trigrams that make up *Hsieh*, which are *Chen* and *K’an*. It is here that we find the attributes of the Trigrams most commonly referred to.

A close examination of the elements in the table above reveals what I believe is rather clearly a doubling of the traditional Western elements fire, air, water and earth,

³ In the opinion of the Author, the translation of Richard Wilhelm is far superior. It might be noted that Aleister Crowley based his reworking of the *I Ching* on Legge’s translation; Wilhelm’s was not available until 1950, after Crowley had been dead for nearly three years.

into active and passive modes (or *Yang* and *Yin*, respectively), yielding eight elemental symbols. This is most obvious in the case of the water Trigrams, *Tui* and *K'an*. In *Tui*, we find water in a passive state, in which it is collected, as in a lake or a marsh, while in *K'an*, we find water in an active, moving, or volatile state, as in rain or streams. The other six Trigrams can be classified in the same way, as shown in the table below.

Western Elements and the Trigrams

Elements	Active	Passive
		
		
		
		

Comparison with the first table should make these associations more or less self-evident. Both *Chen* (“the wind”) and *Sun* (“thunder”) are associated with Airy phenomena, the last of which is clearly more volatile. *K'un* (“the Earth”) and *Ken* (“Mountain”) are associated with Earthy phenomena, where the mountain is a figure representing the force of earth actively thrusting up, forming a barrier. A more difficult case is that of *Li* and *Ch'ien*. With *Li*, the association with fire is explicit, but with *Ch'ien*, this is not the case. In fact, the attributes of *Ch'ien* seem more appropriate to the element spirit, or Akasha, but remember that in the Western system of the Tree of Life, Fire and Spirit share the path of *Shin*. In addition, creativity is often associated with the element of fire, and *Ch'ien* is called “The

Creative.” *Ch’ien* is also “the father,” the *Yod* of Tetragrammaton, which represents the element Fire, and the color associated with *Ch’ien* is a deep red. It is not difficult to find contradictory symbols (such as “ice”), but the preponderance of associations points to *Ch’ien* being of fiery nature. It may seem odd that *Li* should be a passive influence when it represents such an energetic phenomenon as lightning, but remember that we are talking about passive *Fire*, which is a primarily active, masculine element, so it is passive only in relation to *Ch’ien*. The relatively passive nature of *Li* is indicated by one of its titles, “The Clinging,” which the *Shuo Kua* says “means dependence.”

The correctness of this scheme finds further proof in the structural properties of the Trigrams themselves. Notice that in each active Trigram, there is either one solid line, or that all of them are solid, and that in each passive Trigram, there is either one broken line, or that all of them are broken. Those readers who are familiar with the three-coin method of casting Hexagrams will know intuitively why this is so. In the three coin method, three coins are cast for each line in the Hexagram. When all three coins show the *Yang* (usually “heads”) side, the line is solid, as is the case when two of the coins show the *Yin* (usually “tails”) side, and one coin the *Yang* side. The converse is true when the line determined is broken. The more general principle is that “the few rule the many,” or that the overall character of a Trigram or Hexagram as *Yin* or *Yang* is largely determined by the type of line that occurs least often.³ Those figures that are made up entirely of solid lines or of broken lines are the purest expression of *Yang* or *Yin*, respectively. In the scheme of attributions developed by King Wen (a more recent attribution than that represented in the first table), the Trigrams denoted above as passive are attributed to female family members (“Mother,” “Eldest Daughter,” “Middle Daughter,” “Youngest Daughter”), while those denoted as active are attributed to male family members (“Father,” “Eldest Son,” “Middle Son,” “Youngest Son”). This again provides proof of the “2 (active/passive) x 4 (Fire/Air/Water/Earth)” arrangement of the Trigrams. These dimensions as they apply to the Hexagrams will be instrumental in the process of determining which ones are attributable to the Paths and which to the Sephirah on the Tree of Life.

In addition to the elemental attributions of the Trigrams, there is evidence that we should be able to find planetary attributions for the eight Trigrams. The *Shuo Kua* attributes three of the Trigrams to planetary influences. *Li* is attributed to the Sun, *K’an* to the Moon, and *K’un* to the Earth. These attributions alone raise an interesting question. In the Western tradition, there are seven classical Planets to which attributions are given (excluding the planets that have been discovered in the common era, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto), yet there are eight Trigrams. The fact that *K’un* is attributed to the Earth itself leads us to believe that the Earth is considered as a planet along with the seven classical planets. This suggestive clue

becomes important in the consideration of sequence in the Trigrams, which will be taken up below. For now, it is sufficient to note that we have five more Trigrams for which no planetary attribution is given within the *I Ching* itself.

For the remaining Fire Trigram, *Ch'ien*, we can reasonably assert that Mars is the appropriate planetary attribution. Remember the statement from the *Shuo Kua* that God “battles in the sign of the Creative,” that its primary color is deep red, and that *Ch'ien* “manifests itself in the head” (in Western astrology, the sign Aries, which is ruled by Mars, represents the head). It may be argued that Mars is the purest expression of masculinity among the planets (the symbol for Mars is often used to denote “male”), and *Ch'ien* is the purest expression of masculine *Yang* energy.

Among the Air Trigrams, *Chen* represents the restless, quicksilver energy of Mercury. *Sun*, the passive Trigram of Air, is a more difficult attribution, but a good case can be made for Jupiter. Jupiter (like his Greek counterpart Zeus) was a god of the sky and weather phenomena. One of the attributions of *Sun* is “wood,” and the planet Jupiter in the Chinese tradition represents the element wood. The *Shuo Kua* states that *Sun* “means those close to gain, so that in the market they get threefold value,” and gain and prosperity are attributes of Jupiter. In the Chinese five element system, wood represents expansive growth, which is also associated with Jupiter. As final confirmation, in the Tibetan astrological system, Jupiter is symbolized by the *phurba*, or ritual knife, which is the magical weapon associated with Air in the Western tradition. ⁴

















Among the Water Trigrams, *K'an* is already associated with the Moon, and *Tui* can be associated with Venus. *Tui* represents joy and pleasure, which are aspects of Venus. The icon for Venus is a mirror, the reflecting surface of which calls to mind a still pool like that into which Narcissus gazed in fascination (Echo, the nymph that pined for Narcissus, is a portrayal of the same principle of reflection in sound or hearing as opposed to light or vision), and of course, *Tui* represents still water. *Tui* is associated with the Autumnal Equinox in the *Shuo Kua*, and the Sun enters into Libra, a Venus ruled sign, at this time of year.

Finally, among the Earth Trigrams, *K'un* is already associated with the Earth, and so we can make a case for *Ken* representing Saturn. *Ken*, like Saturn, is associated with blockages and the arresting of movement. The *Shuo Kua* states that *Ken* represents “eunuchs and watchmen.” The symbol for Saturn is the scythe that Saturn used to castrate his father Uranus, and as the outermost classical planet, Saturn fills the role of “watchman” of the Solar system. A more subtle association with Saturn can be found in the *Shuo Kua*, where *Ken* is related to trees that are “firm and gnarled.” In this connection, see Crowley's *Liber A'ash vel Capricorni Pneumatici sub figura CCCLXX*.

All of these planetary associations are summarized in the table on the next page. These attributions will primarily be used to fine-tune associations between the

Hexagrams and the paths on the Tree of Life as they relate to astrological symbols (planets and signs of the Zodiac). Some may consider it odd that the Trigrams

Western Planetary Attributions of the Trigrams

should have both elemental and planetary attributions, but this is not at all unorthodox in the Western tradition. For example, each Minor Arcana Tarot card has an elemental attribution (its suit), as well as an attribution to one of the decans of the Zodiac.

A final note on the planetary attributions of the Trigrams relates to their proper sequence. In the traditional *I Ching* lore on the Trigrams, there are two recognized sequences in which the Trigrams change from one to the other. Remember that the *I Ching* is fundamentally concerned with changes over time in the relationship between *Yin* and *Yang* energies; the Trigrams and Hexagrams are like stop-motion frames that capture the essence of this relationship at the particular time that they are cast. The two sequences in which the Trigrams flow are referred to as the “Earlier Heaven” (literally “before the world”) sequence and the “Later Heaven” (literally “inner world”) sequence. These two sequences are depicted below.

Earlier Heaven:

Ch'ien———*Tui*———*Li*———*Chen*———*Sun*———*K'an*———*Ken*———*K'un*

Later Heaven:

Li———*Sun*———*Chen*———*Ken*———*K'an*———*Ch'ien*———*Tui*———*K'un*

These sequences are seen as cyclical in that they “wrap around” when the end of the sequence is reached. The “Earlier Heaven” sequence is said to represent the

process of change prior to manifestation in the world⁴, whereas the “Later Heaven” sequence is said to represent the process of change in the manifest world. Might there be another sequence that uses systematic principles of change, and that is more appropriate to a Western understanding of the *I Ching*? Note that the literal translations of the names of these two sequences denote that process that is prior to manifestation (“before the world”), and that process that is manifest in some *inner*, perhaps subjective, sense in manifest existence (“inner world”). It is not patently absurd, at least, to propose that we might be able to find an “outer world” arrangement that depicts change as it occurs objectively in manifest existence.

Let me first propose some characteristics that might be desirable in such a sequence. First, it should have some systematic correspondence with the elemental and planetary attributions I have already proposed. Leaving aside the question of planetary correspondences for the moment, we might at least propose that the active and passive elements should proceed in alternating fashion, beginning with an active Trigram, and ending with a passive one. Since *Ch'ien* is the purest expression of active *Yang* energy, and *K'un* the purest expression of passive *Yin* energy, I propose that the sequence should begin with *Ch'ien* and end with *K'un*. Second, the sequence, since it is to depict an objective — one might almost say scientific — progression of change, the principle that dictates change from one Trigram to the next should be absolutely systematic and lawful. This lawful principle should be rather simple, and based in the traditional lore of the *I Ching* rather than being imposed entirely from without. It should also, by its very nature, remove any aspect of choice or intuition from the process of moving from one Trigram to the next.

Traditionally, change in a Trigram or Hexagram moves from the bottom to the top. This is reflected in the fact that when a Hexagram is cast, it is built up from the bottom line to the top line. This provides our objective, absolutely lawful principle. *In moving from Ch'ien to K'un, we should always change the lowermost line possible, so long as we do not, by the change, duplicate a Trigram that has already been produced by this process earlier in the sequence.* The provision that Trigrams that arise earlier in the sequence should not be reproduced simply insures that the sequence will be as efficient as possible, including all of the Trigrams only once. Only one line will be changed at each step, from solid to broken, or vice-versa.

Let us begin with *Ch'ien*. Since all of its lines are solid, we must break one line to obtain the next Trigram. Following the above stated rule, this must be the bottom line. We therefore come next in the sequence to *Sun*, which is passive in nature, satisfying the requirement that we alternate active and passive Trigrams. As you will see, this alternation is preserved at each step of the process. Moving from *Sun*, we must break another line, because to make the broken line solid again would only

⁴It has the interesting property of being a countdown, in binary numbers, from 7 to zero.

reproduce *Ch'ien*. We therefore must break the middle line, to obtain *Ken*. The next change must affect the broken line at the bottom of *Ken*, since we must, so far as possible, always change the lowermost line that does not reproduce a previous Trigram. Changing the bottom line in *Ken* to a solid line gives us *Li*. The next step is to break the top line of *Li* to obtain *Chen*. The rest of the changes should by now be self-evident. *Chen* changes to *Tui*, and *Tui* to *K'an*. Finally, *K'an* changes to *K'un*, and we have reached our goal. The sequence should be considered cyclical like the two traditional sequences, although strictly speaking, we must violate our rule to make it so. If we consider it a precondition that the sequence be cyclical, however, this final change makes sense. No single line of *K'un* can be changed without reproducing one of the other Trigrams, but if we make all of them solid, we return to the beginning. This also follows a good Taoist principle that once an extreme condition is reached in the process of change, the condition changes to its opposite.⁵ The observant reader will have noticed that this sequence is that in which the Trigrams were placed in the first table on page 9.

Now, what about the planetary attributions; how do they fit into this sequence? We find, at the end of our labors, that the planetary attributions placed into this sequence have a remarkable quality. If we start with the Trigram representing the Sun (*Li*), and follow the sequence until we reach Saturn (*Ken*), we find that it precisely represents the heliocentric positions of the planets of our solar system.⁶ As I have shown, the sequence was lawfully determined, and the internal coherence of the result provides further evidence for the correctness of the attributions made thus far.

The sequence has additional interesting qualities; for example, the first four Trigrams represent influences that are above the Veil of Paroketh, and the last four represent influences that are below. This itself may explain why the sequence begins with *Ch'ien*. It obviously loses this symmetry if the sequence is considered to begin with *Li* (which in any case is a passive Trigram, and therefore ineligible for beginning the sequence according to the ground rules). As a challenge to motivated readers, it may be observed that if we begin the sequence "backward" with *K'un*, using the same immutable law to govern changes, we end up with an entirely different sequence that retains the symmetry of division. The working out of this sequence, its additional properties, and its importance to the system is beyond the scope of the present work,

⁵See the Tao Te Ching, Chapter 9.

⁶If the *I Ching* is understood to depict a heliocentric system, we can make sense of the fact that there are eight planetary influences rather than the classical seven. That is, the inclusion of *K'un*, "the Earth" can only be understood if the Earth is not excluded from the system by virtue of the fact that it is the basis of our observations, as it is in geocentric Western astrology.

and is left to those who would examine it further.

Armed with the Western elemental and planetary attributions of the Trigrams, we may move on to the Hexagrams. In the next section, I will begin to examine the structural and symbolic properties of the Hexagrams that will allow their placement on the Tree of Life.

3

As explained in the Introduction, the genesis of this work followed closely on the observation that among the 64 Hexagrams, 20 have an equal number of solid and broken lines, while the remaining 44 have an unequal number of both solid and broken lines. It is clear, then, that for each Sephirah, and each Path, there will be two Hexagrams that will be assigned — the “balanced” Hexagrams to the Sephiroth, and the “unbalanced” to the Paths. The rationale for this doubling of associations will be discussed later in this section, but it will suffice at this point to remark that the first problem in fitting the Hexagrams to entities on the Tree of Life involves pairing the Hexagrams together. Once this problem is solved, our task becomes easier since we will have 32 pairs rather than 64 individual Hexagrams to assign. There are at least two methods by which this can be done.⁷

First, each individual line in half of the Hexagrams can be reversed (solid lines becoming broken lines and vice-versa) to obtain their corresponding “negatives,” which will complete the set of 64. Second, Hexagrams that are composed of the same pair of Trigrams, though reversed in their positions, may be paired together. From a structural standpoint, both methods seem perfectly rational and sound. It may well be that both methods will achieve good results under different arrangements, but I have chosen the latter method. In examining pairs formed by both methods, I have observed that pairs formed by the first method are often opposed in their traditional meanings, while those formed by the latter method tend to be complementary. For example, using the first method, Hexagram #34, “The Power of the Great,” is paired with #20, “Contemplation.” Even a superficial comparison shows these to be almost diametrically opposed symbols. Hexagram #34 is active, powerful, and vigorous, while #20 is passive, restive, and quiet. Using the method of Trigrams, we find that #34 is paired with #25, “Innocence.” The meanings of these two are far more complementary. A full tabulation of the results of both methods can be found in the Appendix.

Before moving on to the task of making assignments of the Hexagrams, it should be explained that there need not be a perfect correspondence between the elemental and planetary correspondences of the Trigrams and the final Hexagrams that they compose. First, there is the problem of overdetermination — that, for

⁷There are actually any number of methods that might be acceptable, but these two are the simplest and most direct. The enterprising reader would do well to attempt many different methods before deciding which works best.

example, *Ken*, the Trigram assigned to active Earth and Saturn, will occur in 16 of the Hexagrams, whereas Earth and Saturn occur in one path on the Tree, and Saturn also in the Sephirah of Binah. The Trigram for Saturn or active Earth will thus occur in 12 places on the Tree (within various Hexagrams) where Saturn and Earth are not generally ascribed. Second, there is the fact that each Hexagram pair, although we may correlate it with a sign of the zodiac, a planet, a Hebrew letter, and so on, is none of these. It retains its own unique character as a Hexagram of the *I Ching*, and it is no more proper to expect there to be a perfect consonance between the Hexagram associated with a path or Sephirah and the other symbols ascribed thereto than it is to expect a perfect consonance between the Tarot card “The Lovers” and the astrological Gemini.

What is of primary importance in assigning the Hexagrams to the Tree is that we can make a case for the Hexagrams representing the function that is symbolized by that part of the tree where they are placed. Without comprehensively reviewing the modern philosophy of symbolization, it can be stated with confidence that there is no necessary or precise relationship between a symbol and what it represents. The profusion of symbols we use to describe the various parts of the Tree individually aim imperfectly at the requisite meanings, but considered in cooperation with the other symbols and entities, they come closer to the mark.

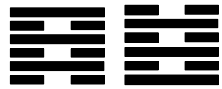
A final note before moving on pertains to the significance of the position of Trigrams within their respective Hexagrams. Trigrams that are in the lower position within a Hexagram are considered to represent what is inside, below, or behind the Trigram above, whereas Trigrams in the upper position are on the surface, above, or in front of the Trigram below. These relations are important to understanding how two Hexagrams composed of the same two Trigrams differ in their meanings. Because we have chosen to pair Hexagrams that share the same Trigrams, the meanings derived will represent the interaction of the forces of the component Trigrams in two different relationships to one another. It is the belief of the author that one relationship obtains as one moves up the Tree from Malkuth, while the other obtains as one moves down the Tree from Kether. This justifies the presence of two Hexagrams for each path and Sephirah; the path of *Qoph* runs between Netzach and Malkuth whether one is moving up or down the Tree, but one’s experience of the path will be rather different depending on the direction of movement. The viability of this argument depends in large part on the evidence of individual exploration of the paths through skrying or traveling on the planes as much as on logical debate. The reader is encouraged to pursue this possibility; the experimentation of the author is so far confirmatory.

Now that we have established a few first principles in understanding the Hexagrams, we are ready to begin placing them on the Tree of Life. We will begin with the Hexagrams to be assigned to the Sephiroth, since the group of Hexagrams to

be assigned has already been clearly established. These are the Hexagrams that have an equal number of solid and broken lines.

The Hexagrams of the Sephiroth

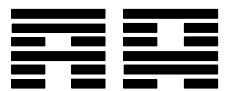
In addition to these Hexagrams being balanced with respect to the number of *Yin* and *Yang* lines, we may notice that they are also balanced in the sense that each is made up of one active and one passive hexagram.⁸ This characteristic supports their selection as figures of the Sephiroth, since as fully equilibrated symbols, they can be said to be more stable or fixed in their natures. The pair of Hexagrams assigned to each Sephirah is listed below. They are presented with a minimum of commentary for the sake of brevity, but the reader is encouraged to look more deeply into the assignments by making reference to the text of the *I Ching*, to try alternate arrangements, and so on. Summary interpretations for each pair of Hexagrams based on the traditional *I Ching* can be found in the Appendix; only comments relating to the placement of the Hexagrams in the Sephiroth are included here.



1. **Kether** These are Hexagrams #63 and #64 in the traditional *I Ching*. Note that the component Trigrams are the Sun and Moon. The union of Sun and Moon is often used to symbolize the completion of the Great Work in Alchemical symbolism. Note also that so far as it is possible, *Yin* and *Yang* are perfectly intermixed.



2. **Chokmah** These are Hexagrams #32 and #42 in the traditional *I Ching*. The component Trigrams are those for active Air and passive Air. This is the air that speaks the *Logos*, the Word of God that initiates the act of creation. Note also the presence of the Trigram for Mercury; one of the Gods attributed to Chokmah is Thoth, who is also ascribed to Mercury. We have the exciting, arousing energy of *Chen* combined with the expansive, disseminating energy of *Sun*.



3. **Binah** These are Hexagrams #53 and #18 in the traditional *I Ching*. The component Trigrams indicate the slow, deliberate growth that characterizes Binah as the womb wherein the *Logos* is deposited and grows to birth in Chesed. They also indicate the sorrowful aspect of Binah, in which the pure energy of Chokmah is blocked and trapped in structure. Notice also

⁸As we shall see, this is also true of the Hexagrams selected as analogues of the planets as they are ascribed to the paths, but these do not have a balance of *Yin* and *Yang* lines.

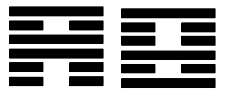
that one of the component Trigrams is that representing Saturn, which is traditionally ascribed to Binah.



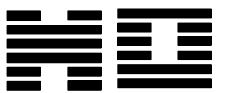
4. **Chesed** These are Hexagrams #17 and #54 in the traditional *I Ching*. They imply the ideas of hierarchy and service to hierarchy which are implied in Chesed. We also find implied the ideas of social convention and of taking the attitude toward convention that will further one's ends without upsetting that structure. As a figure of Higher Love, Chesed pertains to the devotion of Bhakti Yoga, and this idea is also figured in these Hexagrams. Although the Hexagrams do not contain the Trigram assigned to Jupiter, in their combination, they represent the expansive action of beneficence that Chesed represents.



5. **Geburah** These are Hexagrams #55 and #21 in the traditional *I Ching*. They contain the ideas of swift, courageous action, as well as those of justice and of severing unnecessary attachments that are inherent to Geburah. "Might," Geburah, and "Justice," Din, are titles of this Sephirah, but might as well serve as titles for these Hexagrams, respectively. Again, we do not find the Trigram for Mars included in these Hexagrams, but the arousing, exciting energy of *Chen* combined with the relatively passive Trigram of Fire approximates the energy of active Fire, which is *Ch'ien*, or Mars.



6. **Tiphareth** These are Hexagrams #56 and #22 in the traditional *I Ching*. The first Hexagram, #56 is "The Wanderer," and here we see an intimation of Tiphareth as it is approached from below; it is an image of the searcher traveling the earth trying to catch a glimpse of his Angel. Fire on the Mountain suggests communication with the Divine, as in the story of the burning bush, or Moses' sojourn on Mt. Sinai. The second Hexagram is titled "Grace," and represents the balanced experience of Beauty that is Tiphareth known in full. Both Hexagrams contain the possibility of superficiality because balance is always a transitory phenomenon. Far from being an experience of peace and quietude, balance demands constant tension and vigilance lest one become unbalanced. Christ did not weep blood for the sake of the poor sinners of the world, but from the strain of maintaining his resolve to walk the narrow path that he knew led to the tomb and Hell. Unlike the previous two Hexagram pairs, we find again in this one that the Trigram for the Sephirah in question — in this case, the Sun — is present.



7. **Netzach** These are Hexagrams #31 and #41 in the traditional *I Ching*. They represent the principles of attraction and inner joy that we find in Netzach. This is attraction of a particularly sexual kind, but

also the attraction that binds particular things and attributes together, in accordance with the placement of this Sefirah on the Pillar of Mercy. Notice that the second Hexagram includes the idea of simplicity, in contrast to the diversity and profusion of forms that we find in the opposite Sefirah, Hod. At times, outer austerity, symbolized by the upper Trigram representing Saturn, is conducive to cultivating an inner joy that is a more reliable guide to structuring outer forms than an empty sensuality that does not look inward.



8. **Hod** These are Hexagrams #60 and #47 in the traditional *I Ching*. They represent the function of intellect, which establishes limits for conceptual entities. It is often not recognized fully that Hod lies on the Pillar of Severity, but its energy is concerned with binding the motive force of Netzach in precise forms and symbols. It is a restrictive force in the sense that it makes distinctions and analyzes rather than synthesizes, and only an expansive influence in the sense that this process results in a diversity of distinct entities. The second Hexagram is titled “Oppression.” This refers to the fact that unrestrained intellect will eventually drain the living energy out of any set of symbols. This is symbolized by the water of the Lake, above, draining into the Abyss below. This is an unusual attribution because we find the sphere of Mercury figured entirely by feminine symbols, namely, the Moon and Venus. Of course, these are also the Trigrams of active and passive water, and Hod is given Water as an elemental association in the Golden Dawn system.



9. **Yesod** These are Hexagrams #48 and #59 in the traditional *I Ching*. The first is “The Well,” and the second is “Dissolution.” The first represents that source of “inner truth” that must be continually returned to to sustain a satisfying life. It is also a figure representing that which is stable in life, like a well that remains stationary as the town around it shifts and changes. The second Hexagram represents the dissolution of what has become rigid and isolative. Together, they symbolize the magical formula of Yesod quite well, which is “change is stability and stability is change.” This formula harmonizes the structuring, limit imposing function of Hod with the pulsating vitality of Netzach.



10. **Malkuth** These are Hexagrams #11 and #12 in the traditional *I Ching*. The first represents “Heaven on Earth,” the spirit of God among Men called the Shekinah in Hebrew Kabbalah. It is also a figure for the metaphorical Garden of Eden, masculine and feminine forces balanced in such a way that they produce fecundity and harmony. The second Hexagram emphasizes the division of Earth from Heaven, the state denoted by Christian philosophers as Sin and Hell. It is stagnation, sorrow, and sterility. Note that in this

final Sephirah, we again find *Yin* and *Yang* in their pure forms balanced against one another, as in Kether, but after a different manner.

It now remains to assign Hexagrams to the paths of the Tree, as we have done for the Sephiroth. At this point, further exploration of the structural features of the Hexagrams is necessary to indicate the proper course; we have remaining 22 pairs of Hexagrams and three classes of entities to parallel — the Elements, the signs of the Zodiac, and the Planets. Of course, we could discard these classifications on the basis of their being irrelevant to the Hexagrams, but since the decision to assign the former Hexagrams to the Sephiroth was made on the basis of structural features (specifically, that all of them had an equal number of solid and broken lines), it is at least worth exploring further structural relationships to see what insights might be gained.

We will begin with the elements, since they present the most straightforward case. There are eight Hexagrams that are composed of a single Trigram doubled. This means that they do not form symmetrical pairs by Trigram reversal; each Hexagram thus formed is its own mate. Since we have already assigned elemental attributions to the Trigrams, we have a basis for forming four pairs of Hexagrams by pairing Hexagrams composed of doubled Trigrams of the same element as has been done below.

Hexagrams of the Elements



1. The Hexagrams representing Fire in its active and passive modes, respectively. (#1 and #30 in the traditional *I Ching*.)



2. The Hexagrams representing Air in its active and passive modes, respectively. (#51 and #57 in the traditional *I Ching*.)



3. The Hexagrams representing Water in its active and passive modes, respectively. (#58 and #29 in the traditional *I Ching*.)



4. The Hexagrams representing Earth in its active and passive modes, respectively. (#52 and #2 in the traditional *I Ching*.)

Further explication of these assignments is not necessary. The traditional meanings of these Hexagrams is largely the same as their component Trigrams, which have been explained above. Their meanings can also be found summarized in the Appendix.

We now have remaining 18 pairs of Hexagrams to assign. Twelve of these remaining 18 pairs are made up of Hexagrams composed entirely of active or passive Trigrams. Six of the remaining 18 are made up of active Trigrams combined with passive Trigrams. This, then, provides the structural principle underlying the distinction between the Zodiacal signs and Planets. Although it would seem that there are too few Hexagrams to assign to all seven classical Planets, we shall deal with this difficulty after assigning the Zodiacal signs. In most cases, the planetary attributions of the Trigrams are consonant with the signs to which the Hexagrams have been assigned. In all but one case, the planetary attributions of the component Trigrams are the ruling planet or the planet exalted in the sign to which the Hexagrams are assigned.

Hexagrams of the Zodiacal Signs



1. **Aries** These are Hexagrams #34 and #25 in the traditional *I Ching*. They are one of the most vigorous pairs of Hexagrams in the *I Ching*, and suitable to characterize Cardinal Fire. Both emphasize the exercise of Will, and it should be kept in mind that the corresponding Tarot Trump is the Emperor.



2. **Taurus** These are Hexagrams #19 and #45 in the traditional *I Ching*. The component Trigrams are those of passive Earth and Venus, suitable to Taurus, which is an Earth sign ruled by Venus. The meanings reflect the welling up from within of joy, and gathering together with others to share that joy. In accordance with the Tarot trump of Taurus, the Hierophant, there is also the idea of making one's self open to joy, which is initiation.

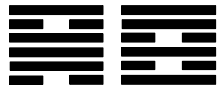


3. **Gemini** These are Hexagrams #3 and #40 in the traditional *I Ching*. They reflect the ideas of confusion and disorder of a mind that is undisciplined, but also the liberation that comes from setting the mind in order. Here, the Trigram for the Moon represents mutability, and of course, Mercury is the ruler of Gemini.

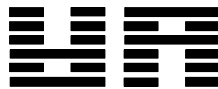


4. **Cancer** These are Hexagrams #39 and #4 in the traditional *I Ching*. The might be best understood in contrast to the opposite sign of Capricorn. In that sign, energy is projected outward, representing ambition and status. Here, energy is directed inward, a fact represented by the image of the crab, which protects itself with a hard shell (Hexagram #39 shows something hard and solid beneath the water). Hexagram #4 is titled "Youthful Folly," and

Cancer is the sign representing childhood and early experience which prepares one for adult life. In this connection also, it may be remarked that the corresponding Tarot trump, the Chariot, shows Parsifal, the “Pure Fool” wielding the grail.



5. **Leo** These are Hexagrams #50 and #37 in the traditional *I Ching*. They suggest the ideas of nourishment and fervent, burning desire, one might almost say “lust.” The concept of nourishment in connection with the path of Leo or *Teth* is particularly interesting. In the Book of Thoth, Crowley writes concerning the Tarot trump for this path that the cup of Babalon contains “the sacrament of the Aeon.” Teth is the “Lion-Serpent” which is taken in in the sacrament of the Gnostic Mass. Hexagram #37 is titled “the Family,” and Leo is generally considered to represent children and reproduction.



6. **Virgo** These are Hexagrams #36 and #35 in the traditional *I Ching*. This is a difficult attribution, as it is the only one that does not include the Trigram of the sign’s ruler. Its significance is primarily to be understood in relation to the Tarot trump associated with the path of Virgo, that is, the Hermit. The Hexagrams concern both the hiding and unveiling of light. The Hermit carries the lamp of the Gnosis, which is lit by the secret fire, actually the Sun. The Hermit accompanies the soul as it travels symbolically “below the Earth;” this journey is suggested by these Hexagrams since the Sun is represented as going under the Earth and coming up again. Virgo also represents, according to Crowley, “the most receptive, the most feminine form of Earth,” indicated by the presence of *K’un*. Further meditation upon this attribution is quite instructive.

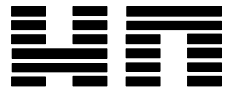


7. **Libra** These are Hexagrams #49 and #38 in the traditional *I Ching*. Their meanings emphasize the restoration of harmony by removing corruption and maintaining independence in social interactions. These meanings are quite consonant with the ideas represented by Libra, which governs contractual social relationships and maintaining harmony. “Revolution,” which is the title of Hexagram #49, may seem an odd signification to attach to Libra, but it should be evident that the just aim of political revolution is the restoration of balance to a society that has infringed unjustly on the freedoms and rights of its individual citizens.

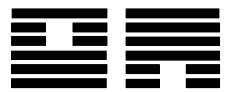


8. **Scorpio** These are Hexagrams #5 and #6 in the traditional *I Ching*. This is, again, a rather difficult attribution. The component symbols are appropriate enough--Mars, which rules Scorpio, and Water, which is the elemental nature of Scorpio. The traditional meanings of the Hexagrams, however, emphasize waiting for the right time to act, and the politics of

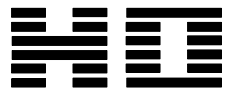
conflict. There is some indication of the guile and intrigue usually associated with Scorpio, but on the whole the association is tenuous. The commentary on the individual lines of Hexagram #5 relates to death and regeneration, however, as we would expect of this attribution.



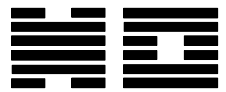
9. **Sagittarius** These are Hexagrams #46 and #20 in the traditional *I Ching*. Like the symbol for Sagittarius, Hexagram #46 indicates upward progress, like a seed that is sprouting and breaking through the Earth. Hexagram #20 connotes contemplation and meditation. Together, they provide a formula for spiritual ascension leading to the “breakthrough” of crossing the veil of Paroketh.



10. **Capricorn** These are Hexagrams #26 and #33 in the traditional *I Ching*. They are especially potent symbols for Capricorn, since they are composed of the Trigrams of Saturn, which rules Capricorn, and Mars, which is exalted in Capricorn. The associated meanings are entirely harmonious. In #26, we find the idea of storing up great power and creative energy. In #33, we find the idea of rising above weakness and dross into mountainous, desolate regions in order to refine and preserve this power.



11. **Aquarius** These are Hexagrams #62 and #27 in the traditional *I Ching*. The traditional meanings emphasize modesty, acceptance of conditions as they are and acting accordingly, and focusing on what one truly needs for sustenance rather than indulging every whim. Acceptance and clarity of vision are commonly identified virtues of this path on the Tree. It is the power to discern what is truly essential and necessary. There is also a connection with the Tarot trump the Star, in that the cups held by the nude female figure are sometimes considered to be breasts, which of course provide nourishment to the soul.



12. **Pisces** These are Hexagrams #28 and #61 in the traditional *I Ching*. The first Hexagram indicates a situation in which one is threatened with drowning beneath watery indolence and inattention. The second Hexagram indicates an experience of inner truth and potential, waiting to burst into manifestation under the right conditions. These symbols are quite consonant with the Tarot trump the Moon, which is associated with Pisces.

The final attributions to be made are those for the Planets as they are found on the paths. The task is both simple and difficult — simple in the sense that we only have six more pairs of Hexagrams to work with, but difficult in the sense that these remaining Hexagrams do not provide us with a very wide range of meanings to select

from. Of course, if our method of identifying these Hexagrams as planetary in nature is justified, then we should find that the attributions considered as a group are no more inadequate than any of the others. The reader may judge for herself whether this is the case.

Each of these Hexagrams is composed of an active and a passive Trigram. It is interesting that as an unintended consequence of our method of sorting the Hexagrams by structural features, the remaining Hexagrams are distinguished by having only one solid or broken line each, with the remaining five lines being entirely broken or entirely solid, respectively. This fact, though unexplored, may have some import for understanding changing lines, discussed in the next section.

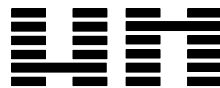
Hexagrams for the Planets



1. **Sun** These are the Hexagrams #14 and #13 in the traditional *I Ching*. They emphasize the spreading of light and life, the force of brotherhood, and strength used with clarity and purpose. These are all clearly solar attributes. In addition, the Trigrams of active and passive fire (the Sun, *Li*) are both present.



2. **Moon** These are Hexagrams #24 and #16 in the traditional *I Ching*. They both indicate a cycle of energy that waxes and wanes. The first, #24, represents strength returning, but in a rather latent state, as in the New Moon. The second, #16, represents the return of energy after a time of rest and quietude. Also emphasized in the necessity of inner stillness and receptivity to inner development.



3. **Mercury** These are Hexagrams #7 and #8 in the traditional *I Ching*. Perhaps a difficult attribution, but accurate mostly in terms of its relation to the path of *Beth* on the Tree, and the Tarot trump the Magician. The relevant meanings relate to channeling forces effectively, and to the underlying principles that unite phenomena. This is the Mercury of the Supernals, and as Crowley wrote in *The Vision and the Voice*, "...below the Abyss, contradiction is division; but above the Abyss, contradiction is Unity."⁵ See the Hexagrams of Hod for further elaboration on this theme.

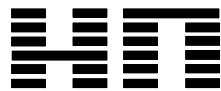


4. **Venus** These are Hexagrams #9 and #44 in the traditional *I Ching*. They refer to the power of subtlety and gentleness to overcome

brute force. Hexagram #44 is titled “Coming to Meet,” and represents the strength of the feminine. It refers to the path of *Daleth* which mediates the Union of Chokmah and Binah. Hexagram #9, by its shape, represents a seed in the womb, and refers to the ability of the feminine to contain the volatile masculine principle and give it form.



5. **Mars** These are Hexagrams #43 and #10 in the traditional *I Ching*. The meanings pertain to the accumulation and release of energy. Hexagram #43 rather explicitly refers to orgasm, and is titled “Break-through.” Hexagram #10 refers to the care with which energy must be built up to avoid destructive or dangerous results. It is a curiosity that in situations where the *I Ching* explicitly symbolizes sexual interactions, it considers the figure in which the feminine element is above more appropriate. See *Liber A’Ash* for an expansion on this theme.



6. **Jupiter** These are Hexagrams #15 and #23 in the traditional *I Ching*. They refer to the proper balance necessary for maintaining strength. In #15, strength is maintained by tempering extremes, and in #23, false stability collapses due to pride and disintegrating influences. This cycle of stability and disintegration is connected to the ideas expressed in the Tarot trump the Wheel of Fortune, which is ascribed to the same path.

It is immediately apparent that these planetary Hexagrams do not include Saturn. This is probably a weakness in the system, but one that is shared with the Tree of Life, which does not really have a place for the Earth element. However, both Saturn and the Earth element are considered to share the path of *Tav* on the Tree of Life, and so the Hexagrams of Earth must stand in for Saturn in the same way that Saturn stands in for the Earth element in the Western system. The Hexagrams of Earth contain the Trigram for Saturn in any case, and the influences are similar.

This brings the assignment of Hexagrams to the Tree of Life to an end. For the reader who has simply read through the attributions, it would be prudent to look up each pair of Hexagrams in a copy of the *I Ching* and work out the reasoning behind the attributions. This is a useful exercise for the purpose of understanding the comprehensiveness of the *I Ching* itself, but it will also reveal the biases of the author in making the attributions favored here and potentially suggest refinements of the system and other directions for exploration. The next section touches on some unresolved issues in the process of fitting the *I Ching* system to Western use, and suggests some practical uses of the system proposed in this work.

4

The most striking absence in this work for those familiar with the traditional *I Ching* system is the use of moving lines. As explained in the first section, Hexagrams are considered “snapshots” of the modifications of *Yin* and *Yang* energies over time. When a figure is obtained by any of the methods of casting the *I Ching*, one or more of the lines obtained may be considered “old,” or in the process of moving toward its opposite, while the others are considered “young” and stable. These moving lines are used in two ways in the process of interpreting the figure obtained. First, the line or lines that are moving indicate an emphasis on a particular aspect of the process or principle represented by the Hexagram as a whole. Each line of each Hexagram has its own text that is intended to only be read if the line in question is a moving line. This provides additional texture and refinement to the judgment of the Hexagram as a whole. Second, when all of the moving lines are changed to their opposites, a new Hexagram is obtained that can be interpreted as a later development of the first figure.

The system of moving lines is sometimes discarded; Crowley seems to have done so in his reworking of Legge’s translation. The reasons for this probably relate to the system’s complexity. Not every Hexagram cast will contain moving lines, yet others will contain several moving lines that give contradictory or incompatible judgments. Even modern Chinese have begun to use a system of casting the *I Ching* that guarantees that one and only one line in the figure will be moving. This development, of course, simplifies the use of moving lines, but there is little evidence for any other reason for making the change. Another complication is that the system of moving lines is based on a complicated system in which individual lines “rule” the Hexagram, which seems to have been applied rather inconsistently. Of course, anyone using the Western symbols proposed in this work may continue to use the system of moving lines in the *I Ching* as it stands, without applying any Western parallels except to the second, derived Hexagram, but this seems unsatisfactory.

Although the question of how to use moving lines has not been directly addressed in this work, I think it is important that it be examined eventually since the principle of change that it represents is so central to the *I Ching* in its native context. In the above section on the planetary Hexagrams, I suggested that they might be useful to developing a Western understanding of moving lines. Allow me to suggest how such a development might begin.

It was pointed out above that each planetary Hexagram has but a single moving or broken line, with the rest countercharged. This suggests to me that within

any particular Hexagram, a line that is moving can be understood in terms of how it is highlighted in the planetary Hexagrams. For example, the first or bottom line stands out in both the second Hexagram of Venus and the First Hexagram of the Moon. This may give the first line a “Moon / Venus” connotation that is somehow activated when the line is changing. I am not in a position to elaborate on how this “activation” might modify the judgment of the Hexagram as a whole, or how such individual attributions of the lines might be integrated into a workable system. Doubtless, an enterprising student might take up the task. Quite frankly, the prospect of doing so is daunting to the author, and seems likely to lead to the situation depicted in Hexagram #47. In any case, the attributions thus derived are depicted below.

1st line:	Moon / Venus
2nd line:	Mercury / Sun
3rd line:	Mars / Jupiter
4th line:	Moon / Venus
5th line:	Mercury / Sun
6th line:	Mars / Jupiter

There are several ways of using the system as it stands. First, it may be useful to the student simply to apply the Western system of attributions as an aid to understanding the results of an *I Ching* reading. One of the most common complaints by Westerners using the *I Ching* is that the symbols are unfamiliar and largely meaningless outside their native Chinese context. Having Western symbolic “anchors” may help resolve this difficulty somewhat. Having Western attributions for the Hexagrams and Trigrams also helps the Westerner to use these figures more easily in ritual workings such as skrying, travelling on the planes, and sigil magick.

The rationale for each path and Sephirah having two Hexagrams also requires further conceptual refinement. As stated above, it is the author’s belief that one hexagram applies more appropriately as one moves up the Tree and the other as one moves down. This intuition has not been worked out in the majority of cases, however, and it would be inappropriate to try and do so here. It has also occurred to me that the Hexagrams — at least those for the paths — might function as “doors” into and out of the Sephiroth at the end of each path. This is an intuition even more tenuous than the first, and little more than undisciplined fantasy without the requisite effort to work it out. This is a difficulty not to be taken lightly. It almost seems Qliphotic, for example, for Kether to have more than one Hexagram attributed to it, nay, to have even one! Crowley attributed the dimensionless point to Kether, and this seems far more satisfactory at the most abstract philosophical level.

Setting the system of the *I Ching* into a Thelemic worldview is also a difficulty.

Liber Trigrammaton sub figura XXVII, a class A document, would seem to put the exclusive use solid and broken lines into question. If the system were expanded to Hexagrams using the solid and broken lines as well as the point, however, we would have 729 figures to find attributions for; a curse of Satan, and a task that even that sage of Choronzon Marcella Ramos Motta would balk at. It is notable, however, from a Thelemic viewpoint, that the Trigram for “Heaven,” *Ch’ien*, is attributed to Mars, the ruling planet of the Lord of the Aeon, Horus.

Appendix

The following pairings show the affinities between hexagrams. Each Hexagram is denoted by a number that denotes the Trigrams from which it is constructed, such that *Ch'ien* is zero, *Sun* is one, *Ken* is two, *Li* is three, *Chen* is four, *Tui* is five, *K'an* is six, and *K'un* is seven. These numbers were selected purely for the sake of convenience in constructing the lists. They denote nothing more than the sequence of the Trigrams already established in the second section. The numbers in parentheses refer to the numbers traditionally given to the hexagrams, allowing the reader to reference the full text in any copy of the *I Ching*. The key phrases and words describing each hexagram were chosen by the author, but represent the central theme of each Hexagram as it is traditionally interpreted. These lists allow the comparison of two methods of pairing the hexagrams with one another, that of reversing the order of the component Trigrams, and that of changing each line to its opposite.

I. Pairing by Trigrams

- | | |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01 (9) | Great effort yields small effect. Gentleness restrains a powerful force. |
| 10 (44) | Great strength expressed harmoniously. Subtlety can overwhelm brute force. |
| 02 (26) | Storing up great power. Accumulating creative energy. |
| 20 (33) | Retreating from the weak in order to preserve and maintain strength. |
| 03 (14) | Altruism, radiating light and life, distributing wealth |
| 30 (13) | Brotherhood, strength informed by clarity and purpose |
| 04 (34) | Swift, powerful action, the lightning bolt, decisive exercise of Will |
| 40 (25) | Pure, effortless exercise of True Will; action delivered from lust of result. |
| 05 (43) | Orgasm, a release of energy and a resolution of tensions that have accumulated. |
| 50 (10) | Accumulation of tension requires discipline so that energy is not wasted. |

- 06 (5) Labor of preparation, waiting for the right time to act.
60 (6) Action undertaken prematurely, inner and outer strife, wasted energy.
- 07 (11) Fecundity, Eden, propagation, perfect balance of forces leading to peace.
70 (12) Stagnation, division, segregation of dark and light energies.
- 12 (18) Decay, blocked growth, recombination without creativity.
21 (53) Development, elaboration, growth in secret, slow, steady building up.
- 13 (50) Nourishment, devotion, fervent desire for ascension.
31 (37) Expansion, nurturance, and expression of inner light.
- 14 (32) Diversity of action, but in accordance with one Truth.
41 (42) Arousal of growth and expansion, increase.
- 15 (28) Complacency that threatens to become debauch.
51 (61) Gentle acceptance of inner truth, inner joy.
- 16 (48) The Well, drawing on inner truth to sustain growth.
61 (59) Intimation of truth that disperses ignorance, rigidity, and empty habit.
- 17 (46) Breaking through by steady effort, first fruits of inner development.
71 (20) Contemplation, meditation, looking inward, becoming receptive.
- 23 (56) Searching for stability and balance, but without fulfillment; wandering.
32 (22) Disciplined expression of beauty, grace, but perhaps superficial.
- 24 (62) Restraint of energy in favor of practical concerns. Reigning in exuberance.
42 (27) Energy directed toward obtaining stability and substance, assimilation.
- 25 (31) Attraction, arousal, joy, but disciplined and directed rather than diffuse.
52 (41) Outer austerity and simplicity for the purpose of cultivating inner joy.
- 26 (39) Obstruction, impasse, immobility; pressure directed inward.
62 (4) Folly, the need for thorough training and preparation before outward action.
- 27 (15) Tempering extremes, modesty, resting in one's strength.
72 (23) Pride leading to a fall, false stability collapses; resting on one's laurels.

- 34 (55) Flashing fire, abundance, courage; swift, lusty action.
 43 (21) Justice administered through punishment; “strike low, strike hard!”
- 35 (49) Revolution, energetically opposing the inharmonious and restoring harmony.
 53 (38) Maintaining individuality in the face of interacting with others. Opposition.
- 36 (63) Completion, perfect balance and order, but requiring caution to maintain.
 63 (64) The final step, but caution is needed to avoid error in the final stages of action.
- 37 (36) Light withdrawn, hidden. Abandoning a hopeless situation.
 73 (35) Light unveiled, dawn, birth and progress. Radiance and inner equanimity.
- 45 (17) Joyful service, discerning that to which it is proper to devote one’s self.
 54 (54) Subordinating one’s self to the proper end.
- 46 (3) Chaos, confusion, and difficulty, out of which order must be made.
 64 (40) Escape from difficulty and obscurity, cleansing, setting free.
- 47 (24) Returning strength, recuperation, passivity that facilitates inner development.
 74 (16) Enthusiasm, energy bursting forth after a time of quietude.
- 56 (60) Discriminating, setting limits, establishing boundaries, restriction.
 65 (47) Exhaustion, oppression, emptiness, blind dispersal of energy, depression.
- 57 (19) Welling up of joy, the “joy of man upon earth,” shared with others.
 75 (45) Gathering together with others in strength and joy, openness to receiving joy.
- 67 (7) Power in numbers, the need for good leadership, channeling forces effectively.
 76 (8) The tendency of all things to unity, the underlying principle that unites all things.

- 00 (1) The Creative, creative energy, strength, power.
 33 (30) Brightness, illumination, rising, ascension.
- 11 (57) Gentleness, penetration, growth, dissemination.
 44 (51) Shock, Arousal, energy bursting forth, swiftness.
- 22 (52) Stillness, resolve, holding back, restraint, solidity.
 77 (2) Receptivity, quiet perseverance, passivity.
- 55 (58) Joy, mirth, refreshment, vitality, ebullience.
 66 (29) Churning, danger, depth, difficulty.

II. Pairing by Inversion

- 01 (9) Great effort yields small effect. Gentleness restrains a powerful force.
 74 (16) Enthusiasm, energy bursting forth after a time of quietude.
- 10 (44) Great strength expressed harmoniously. Subtlety can overwhelm brute force.
 47 (24) Returning strength, recuperation, passivity that facilitates inner development.
- 02 (26) Storing up great power. Accumulating creative energy.
 75 (45) Gathering together with others in strength and joy, openness to receiving joy.
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- 41 (42) Arousal of growth and expansion, increase.
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Endnotes

1. From the Wilhelm/Baynes translation of the *I Ching*, Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 264. All quotes from the *I Ching*, unless otherwise specified, are from this edition.
2. From the Legge translation of the *I Ching*, Grammercy Press, 1996, p. 33.
3. This principle and many other intricacies of the *I Ching* are explained in the superb *Astrology of I Ching* by W.K. Chu and W.A. Sherrill, Weiser, 1976, particularly pp. 61-64.
4. See Phillipe Cornu's *Tibetan Astrology*, Shambhala, 1997, p. 144.
5. The Equinox, Volume I (5), Weiser, 1998, p. 136.

