

Xici shang 系辞上

Translation according to Wing-tsit Chan

(1) 天尊地卑，乾坤定矣。卑高以陈，贵贱位矣。动静有常，刚柔断矣。方以类聚，物以群分，吉凶生矣。在天成象，在地成形，变化见矣。

是故，刚柔相摩，八卦相荡。鼓之以雷霆，润之以风雨，日月运行，一寒一暑，乾道成男，坤道成女。乾知大始，坤作成物。乾以易知，坤以简能。

易则易知，简则易从。易知则有亲，易从则有功。有亲则可久，有功则可大。可久则贤人之德，可大则贤人之业。易简，而天下之理得矣；天下之理得，而成位乎其中矣。

Heaven is high, the earth is low, and thus qian and kun are fixed. As high and low are thus made clear, the honorable and the humble have their places accordingly. As activity and tranquility have their constancy, the strong and the weak are thus differentiated. Ways come together according to their kind, and things are divided according to their classes. Hence good fortune and evil fortune emerge. In heaven forms appear and on earth shapes occur. In them change and transformation can be seen.

Therefore, the strong and the weak can interact and the Eight Trigrams activate each other. Things are stimulated by thunder and lightning and enriched by the influence of wind and rain. Sun and moon revolve on their course and cold and hot seasons take their turn. The way of qian constitutes the male, while the way of kun constitutes the female. Qian knows the great beginning and kun acts to bring things to completion. Qian knows through the easy and kun accomplishes through the simple.

Change can easily be known and simplicity easily be followed. Easy knowing brings about familiarity and easy following brings about effect. Familiarity means the ability to last and effectfulness means the ability to become big. Being able to last is the virtue of the holy man and being able to become big is the achievement of the holy man. Ease and simplicity will realize the structures of the world. When the structures of the world are realized then you can take up your position amidst it.

(4) 易与天地准，故能弥纶天地之道。仰以观于天文，俯以察于地理，是故知幽明之故。原始反终，故知死生之说。精气为物，游魂为变，是故知鬼神之情状。与天地相似，故不违。知周乎万物，而道济天下，故不过。旁行而不流，乐天知命，故不愆。安土敦乎仁，故能爱。范围天地之化而不过，曲成万物而不遗，通乎昼夜之道而知，故神无方而易无体。

The system of change is tantamount to heaven and earth and therefore can always handle and adjust the way of heaven and earth. Looking up, we observe the pattern of the heavens, looking down we examine the structures of the earth. Thus we know the causes of what is hidden and what is manifest. If we investigate the cycle of things, we shall understand the concepts of life and death. Essence and material force are combined to become things. The wandering away of spiritual force becomes change. From this we know that the characteristics of conditions of spiritual beings are similar to those of heaven and earth and therefore there is no disagreement between them. The knowledge of it embraces all things and its way helps all under heaven and therefore there is no mistake. It operates freely and does not go off course. It rejoices in heaven and understands mandate. Therefore, there is no worry. As (things) are contented in their positions and earnest in practicing humaneness, there can be love. It molds and encompasses all transformations of heaven and earth without mistake and it stoops to bring things into completion without missing any. It penetrates to a knowledge of the course of day and night. Therefore, spirit has no spatial restriction and change has no physical form.

(5)一阴一阳之谓道，继之者善也，成之者性也。仁者见之谓之仁，知者见之谓之知。百姓日用而不知，故君子之道鲜矣。显诸仁，藏诸用，鼓万物而不与圣人同愆，盛德大业至矣哉。富有之谓大业，日新之谓盛德。生生之谓易，成象之谓乾，效法之为坤，极数知来之谓占，通变之谓事，阴阳不测之谓神。

The alternations of Yin and Yang constitute the way. What issues from it is good and what completes it is the nature. The man of humanity sees it and calls it humanity; the man of knowledge sees it and calls it knowledge. And the common people act to it daily without knowing it. In this way the way of the superior man is fully realized. It is manifest in humanity and concealed in its functioning. It promotes all things without sharing the anxiety

of the sage. How perfect is its eminent virtue and great achievement! Its achievement is great because it possesses everything and its virtue is abundant because it renovates things every day. Constant reproduction is called change, the completion of forms is called qian and the modeling after them makes kun. To go to the utmost of the natural course of events in order to know the future is called divination. To adapt and transform (accordingly) is called affairs. That Yin and Yang cannot be measured is called spiritual.

(11) 是以，明於天之道，而察於民之故，是興神物以前民用。聖人以此齊戒，以神明其德夫！是故，闔戶謂之坤；闢戶謂之乾；一闔一闢謂之變；往來不窮謂之通；見乃謂之象；形乃謂之器；制而用之，謂之法；利用出入，民咸用之，謂之神。

Therefore (those sages), fully understanding the way of Heaven, and having clearly ascertained the experience of the people, instituted (the employment of) these spirit-like things, as a provision for the use of the people. The sages went about the employment of them (moreover) by purifying their hearts and with reverent caution, thereby giving (more) spirituality and intelligence to their virtue. Therefore, kun means closing and qian means opening. The succession of closing and opening constitutes transformation. The alternate going of coming is called penetration. What is manifested is called form. What has taken physical form is called a vessel. To control and use things is called method. And (when they are used) to advantage, either in this or in that way, so all people utilize them, that is called spiritual. ...

是故，易有太極，是生兩儀，兩儀生四象，四象生八卦，八卦定吉凶，吉凶生大業。是故，法象莫大乎天地，變通莫大乎四時，懸象著明莫大乎日月，崇高莫大乎富貴；備物致用，立成器以為天下利，莫大乎聖人；探賾索隱，鈎深致遠，以定天下之吉凶，成天下之亹亹者，莫大乎蓍龜。

Therefore, change has its great ultimate that generates the two modes. The two modes generate the four forms and the four forms generate the eight trigrams. The eight trigrams determine good and evil fortune and good and evil fortune generate achievement. Therefore of all things that furnish models and visible figures there are none greater than heaven and earth; of things that change and extend an influence (on others) there are none greater than the four seasons; of things suspended (in the sky) with their figures displayed

clear and bright, there are none greater than the sun and moon; of the honoured and exalted there are none greater than he who is the rich and noble (one); in preparing things for practical use, and inventing and making instruments for the benefit of all under the sky, there are none greater than the sages; to explore what is complex, search out what is hidden, to hook up what lies deep, and reach to what is distant, thereby determining (the issues) for good or ill of all events under the sky, and making all men under heaven full of strenuous endeavours, there are no (agencies) greater than those of the stalks and the tortoise-shell.

是故，天生神物，聖人則之；天地變化，聖人效之；天垂象，見吉凶，聖人象之。河出圖，洛出書，聖人則之。易有四象，所以示也。繫辭焉，所以告也。定之以吉凶，所以斷也。

Therefore Heaven produced the spirit-like things, and the sages took advantage of them. (The operations of) heaven and earth are marked by (so many) changes and transformations; and the sages imitated them (by means of the Yi). Heaven hangs out its (brilliant) figures from which are seen good fortune and bad, and the sages made their emblematic interpretations accordingly. The He gave forth the map, and the Lo the writing, of (both of) which the sages took advantage. In the (scheme of the) Yi there are the four symbolic figures by which they inform men (in divining of the lines making up the diagrams); the explanations appended to them convey the significance (of the diagrams and lines); and the determination (of the divination) as fortunate or the reverse, to settle the doubts (of men).

(12) ... 子曰：「書不盡言，言不盡意。然則聖人之意，其不可見乎。」子曰：「聖人立象以盡意，設卦以盡情偽，繫辭以盡其言，變而通之以盡利，鼓之舞之以盡神。」

乾坤其易之緼邪？乾坤成列，而易立乎其中矣。乾坤毀，則无以見易，易不可見，則乾坤或幾乎息矣。是故，形而上者謂之道，形而下者謂之器。化而裁之謂之變，推而行之謂之通，舉而錯之天下之民，謂之事業。

... The master said: 'Writing does not exhaust words and words do not exhaust the meaning.' Can thus the meaning of the sage men not be seen? The master said: 'The sage men established the forms in order to exhaust the meaning, they set up the trigrams in order to exhaust what is correct and fake and they added judgments to them in order to exhaust their words. They transformed and penetrated in order to exhaust the advantages and they

encouraged and performed in order to exhaust spiritual power.' Are qian and kun intermingled with the change? The system of change is indeed intermingled with the operations of qian and kun. As qian and kun take their respective positions, the system of change is established in their midst. If qian and kun are obliterated, there would be no means of seeing change. If change cannot be seen, then qian and kun would almost cease to operate. Therefore, what exists before physical form is called the way and what exists after physical form is called vessel. That which transforms things and controls them is called change. That which extends their operations is called penetration. To take them and apply them to the people of the world is called the affairs of achievements. ...