

HEXAGRAM I¹

CH'IEN² THE CREATIVE PRINCIPLE



Component trigrams:

Below: CH'IEN,³ heaven, male, active, etc.

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TEXT The Creative Principle. Sublime Success! Persistence in a righteous course brings reward. 9 for the bottom place: the concealed dragon avoids action. 9 for the second place: the dragon is perceived in an open space; it is advantageous to visit a great man. 9 for the third place: the Superior Man busies himself the whole day through and evening finds him thoroughly alert. Disaster threatens—no error! 9 for the fourth place: leaping about on the brink of a chasm—no error! 9 for the fifth place: the dragon wings across the sky; it is advantageous to visit a great man. 9 for the top place: a wilful dragon—cause for regret! 9 for all six places: a brood of headless dragons—good fortune!³

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT Vast indeed is the sublime Creative Principle, the Source of All, co-extensive with the heavens! It causes the clouds to come forth, the rain to bestow its bounty and all objects to flow into their respective forms. Its dazzling brilliance permeates all things from first to last; its activities symbolized by the component lines, reach full completion, each at the proper time. (The Superior Man), mounting them when the time is ripe, is carried heavenwards as though six dragons were his steeds! The Creative Principle functions through Change; accordingly, when we rectify our way of life by conjoining it with the universal harmony, our firm persistence is richly rewarded. The ruler, towering above the multitudes, brings peace to all the countries of the world.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes the power of the celestial forces in motion, wherewith the Superior Man labours unceasingly to strengthen his own character.

[Here follow some references to the individual lines; these have been inserted under the lines concerned.]

THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT The sublime is above all, that which is imbued with virtue. Success implies the advent of everything auspicious. Reward refers to the bringing together of all that favours righteousness. Persistence in a righteous course is the proper way of ordering our affairs. The Superior Man fits himself for leadership by becoming the embodiment of human kindness. The advent of everything auspicious renders him capable of perfect conduct. His success in acquiring material satisfactions enables him to act with justice. His righteous persistence makes him fully capable of attaining his ends. The Superior Man never ceases to exercise these four virtues.⁴ Hence it may be said of him: 'The Creative Principle ensures his sublime success; his persistence in a righteous course brings him reward.'

FURTHER COMMENTARIES Whatever it undertakes, the Creative Principle invariably carries to a successful conclusion. It possesses the inherent characteristic of rewarding right persistence.

From the very first, the Creative Principle has exercised its power of bestowing upon all under heaven the gift of beauty, while never boasting of benefits bestowed—what magnanimity!

Great indeed is the Creative Principle—firm, filled with power, unbiased, righteous, pure, sublime! Its six component lines, when properly expounded, lead to an understanding of every aspect of creation. Leaping upon them when the time is ripe, we ride heavenwards upon the backs of six dragons. The clouds come forth; the rain bestows its bounty and the whole world is filled with peace!

The Lines

9 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE The concealed dragon refrains from action. What does this signify? **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** According to the Master,⁵ this symbolizes someone dragon-like in his virtues who conceals his light, avoids all compromise with the world, makes no name for himself, withdraws from worldly life without regret, cares not that no one seeks him out, does what pleases him and avoids whatever he might rue. Firm as a rock, he can by no means be uprooted. Such a man may well be called a concealed dragon!

FURTHER COMMENTARIES (a) The concealed dragon refraining

from action implies that the life-sustaining force is still submerged. (b) This is indicated by the position of the line at the bottom of the hexagram. (c) A celestial dragon refraining from activity implies that the life-sustaining force lies hidden in the earth. (d) The activity of the Superior Man consists in accomplishing deeds of virtue. All day long he can be seen at work. Concealed means that his light is not yet seen, as his conduct has still to be perfected. That is his reason for refraining from activity.⁶

9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE The dragon is perceived in an open space; it is advantageous to visit a great man. What does this signify?

THE WÈN YEN COMMENTARY According to the Master,⁵ this signifies someone dragon-like in his virtue who rightly stands at the centre of things. In speech sincere, in action cautious, he holds evil at a distance and preserves his integrity. He does the world much good, but makes no show of it. His virtue is ample to endow him with great influence. Indeed, this passage concerning a dragon in the open and a great man refers to one so greatly endowed with virtue as to be worthy of exercising supreme sovereignty.

FURTHER COMMENTARIES (a) The concept of a dragon appearing in the open suggests that the great man's deeds are everywhere distributed. (b) This passage indicates that the time for action has arrived.⁶ (c) It also means that the whole world is civilized by the Superior Man's power. (d) The Superior Man studies in order to assemble facts, questions others to gain discrimination, makes forgiveness his life's motto and kindness the essence of his conduct. The passage about the dragon in the open and about going to see a great man was inspired by the virtues of such people.

9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE The superior man busies himself the whole day through and evening finds him thoroughly alert. Trouble threatens, but he is not at fault. What does this signify? **THE WÈN YEN COMMENTARY**

According to the Master,⁵ the superior man progresses in virtue and takes great pains with his work. By progressing in virtue, he achieves loyalty and integrity. By guarding his speech, he makes himself sincere and is thus able to ensure that his work will endure. Knowing what should be done, he does it and thereby fulfils the highest expectations. Understanding how to bring his tasks to fruition, he does so without departing from righteous conduct. Hence,

neither can a high position puff him up nor a low one cause him to repine. That is why he labours and labours, remaining thoroughly alert when circumstances so require. Thus, though danger may threaten, he is by no means at fault. **FURTHER COMMENTARIES** (a) Busying himself all day long implies that he goes over his work again and again. (b) It is said with reference to affairs of importance. (c) It also implies that he harmonizes his work with the needs of the times. (d) This line is a strong one, but not central (to a trigram). It is not high enough to correspond with heaven, nor low enough to correspond with earth; so hard work is required of him and alertness where necessary.⁶ The danger in the current position involves no blame.

9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE Leaping about on the brink of a chasm, he is not at fault. What does this signify? **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** According to the Master,⁵ neither rising nor falling endures for long; what matters is to avoid committing evil. Neither advance nor retreat can go on indefinitely; what matters is not to desert the others. The Superior Man progresses in virtue and takes pains with his work so that what he seeks to accomplish will reach fruition in good time—no blame to him. **FURTHER COMMENTARIES** (a) Though he be leaping about on the brink of a chasm, for him to advance would involve no fault. (b) This passage means that he is testing his powers. (c) It also means that the way followed by the Creative Principle is leading towards one of its great transformations. (d) The line is a strong one, but not central (to a trigram); it is not high enough to correspond with heaven or low enough to correspond with earth nor, despite its relatively central position (in the hexagram), central enough to correspond with man. Hence it suggests uncertainty and implies a situation of which the outcome is doubtful⁶—that is why he is not at fault.

9 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE The dragon wings across the sky; it is advantageous to visit a great man. What does this signify? **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** According to the Master,⁵ musical instruments which emit identical notes vibrate in response to each other. People of the same disposition seek each other out. Water flows where wetness lies; fire burns where things are parched. Like clouds trailing behind dragons and the wind which follows in a tiger's wake, all creatures follow with their gaze the advent of a holy sage. Whatever is of celestial origin feels affinity with what lies above; things of

terrestrial origin feel their affinity with what lies below. Thus all things follow their own kind. **FURTHER COMMENTARIES** (a) This passage presages the emergence of a being who is truly great. (b) It also symbolizes the supreme position of the ruler. (c) It exemplifies accord with heaven's virtue. (d) The Superior Man (or 'great man' of the text) is one whose virtues bring him into accord with heaven and earth; his clarity of mind resembles that of the sun and moon; his actions are as well-ordered as the unfolding of the seasons; his joys and sorrows make him the equal of gods and demons. When he acts in advance of heaven's decree, heaven will surely support his action; if he awaits that decree and then acts, he follows the heaven-ordained sequence.⁶ Yes, even heaven grants him full support—then how much more so men and how very much more so gods and demons!

9 FOR THE TOP PLACE A wilful dragon has cause for regret. What does this signify? **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** According to the Master,⁵ a man of the highest capability who lacks a suitable appointment or who is granted a high post but with no people under his control, or one whose excellent assistants nevertheless fail to support him, can do nothing that will not cause him regret. **FURTHER COMMENTARIES** (a) This signifies that not for long will his cup be full.⁷ (b) It suggests the approach of overpowering calamities. (c) It also implies that sooner or later all things reach their end. (d) Wilful suggests that he is one who knows how to advance but not how to retreat, how to amass but not how to relinquish, how to win but not how to lose.⁶ Only a holy sage can know how to do all these things with perfect integrity—yes, only a holy sage!

9 FOR ALL SIX PLACES (No text appears here. The commentaries refer to the last words of the main text: 'A brood of headless dragons appears; good fortune.') **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** Nil. **FURTHER COMMENTARIES** (a) None of the Creative Principle's virtues can form a head.⁸ (b) This hexagram, when all its component lines are moving lines, presages rule over the entire world. (c) These six moving lines indicate a breadth of understanding which embraces the whole pattern of the universe!

NOTES (1) The treatment given to the hexagram is in some ways unique, though hexagram 2 shares one of its peculiarities. It is the only hexagram for which details of the individual lines appear in the body of the main text. Moreover, the Wén Yen Commentary and several of the other commentaries appear only in connection with Hexagrams 1 and 2.

THE BOOK OF CHANGE

I have somewhat altered the order of the Chinese original, so that all that pertains to the main text is brought together and all that pertains to each line appears close to the line concerned. The rather haphazard order of the original is scarcely astonishing in view of the book's enormous antiquity. Quite possibly, parts of the complete Wén Yen and other commentaries were lost and the remnants attached to the appropriate hexagrams, namely 1 and 2. What is remarkable is the perfect order and relative completeness of surviving texts and commentaries throughout the whole of the rest of the book; there are relatively few obviously corrupt passages. (2) Ch'ien appears both as the name of a hexagram and as the name of a trigram, but I have translated it somewhat differently in each case. (3) These enigmatic references to dragons and so on are fully explained under the heading 'THE LINES'. In China, the dragon has always been regarded as a highly admirable creature of celestial origin. Dragons provide rain, make rivers run and rule the ocean. The European dragon is clearly of another species. (4) The four virtues are human kindness, perfect conduct, justice and wisdom. The first three are mentioned by name above; the fourth is implicit in 'fully capable of attaining his ends'. (5) Confucius. (6) From the point of view of divination, it is this sentence which best serves as a guide to action. (7) His cup of happiness and success. (8) Can take precedence over the others—see Note (4), in which the virtues are enumerated.