

I Ching Vol. 1



Ch'ien Hexagram (乾): Ch'ien Trigram (乾)/Ch'ien Trigram (乾)

乾：元亨利贞。

Ch'ien Hexagram: Original, smooth, favorable and right.

【Annotation】

“Original, smooth, favorable and right” are the four virtues of Ch'ien Hexagram. The four virtues of this hexagram are all of pure yang attribute. Nature endows all created things with yang-qi to make them germinate, begin and grow in order to be original and smooth, thus prompting all created things to stay harmoniously with one another, live in their proper places and get their own benefits and prompting all created things to cling to the right Way in order to come to a perfect end. The sage should imitate this hexagram to pursue the good Way in order to nurture all created things, and that all created things can live is called “original”. He should also help all created things to attain their goals, gather all created things together and prompt them to proceed smoothly without hindrance in any place and at any time, which is called “smooth”. He should also reconcile all created things with morality and justice and prompt all created things to operate by adhering to their fixed patterns, which is called “favorable”. He should also unshakably cling to the right Way in doing things and prompt all created things to pursue their right Way respectively, which is called “right”. The sage imitates Ch'ien Hexagram and pursues these four virtues: “Original, smooth, favorable and right”.

初九：潜龙勿用。

Initial nine: The dragon is hiding in deep water as it is not time to take action.

(A person of talent and virtue should not take action and should bide his time instead.)

【Annotation】

Initial nine: It holds the first position, so called “initial”; it is also a yang line, so called “nine”. Initial nine should hide in deep water just like a dragon and should not show off its virtue and give full play to its talent. Heaven’s natural qi begins to rise from the *Chien Tzu* month (i.e. November of the lunar year), when yin-qi has just prevailed and yang-qi is hiding under the ground. Here the dragon refers to yang-qi (signified by the yang line). The sage simulates this natural phenomenon and elucidates that when the dragon is hiding in deep water, the mean man gains ground in pursuing the evil Way, and although the sage has his noble virtue, he can but hide his own virtue and cannot give full play to his own talent.

The yang line is called nine while the yin line is called six.

九二：见龙在田，利见大人。

Nine two: The dragon appears in the field. It is time for the man of great virtue (the sage) to emerge in the world.

【Annotation】

Nine two: The yang line holds the second position, so called “nine two”. The initial position and the second position are subject to the Way of Earth, and “in the field” means “on the ground”. Yang-qi appears on the ground, i.e. the dragon appears on the ground. That the dragon appears on the ground is a natural phenomenon. If we apply it to human affairs, we can see that the dragon appears on the ground just as the sage emerges in the world. Nine two stays impartially amid the lower trigram and it bestows favors on the world people; as a man of great virtue, it already holds the second position but not the throne (the fifth position), but it has its virtue as a monarch. Initial nine hides itself and does not

manifest itself, nine three is afraid and uneasy, nine four is uncertain and irresolute, and upper nine is excessively arrogant and conceited. As nine two has its virtue as a monarch, so when it emerges as a man of great virtue in the world, it will bestow favors on the world people.

When the ancient Confucians made each trigram overlap with the other (including with itself), they laid one trigram on the other (a hexagram comprises two trigrams), which consists of six positions, and six lines hold six positions in proper order. When we explain the meanings of the hexagram, the initial position and the fourth position correspond to each other; the second position and the fifth position correspond to each other; and the third position and the sixth position correspond to each other. Among the six positions, the initial position and the second position are subject to the Way of Earth, the third position and the fourth position are subject to the Way of man, and the fifth position and the upper position are subject to the Way of Heaven. The third position and the fifth position are odd numbers, so they are yang positions; the second position and the fourth position are even numbers, so they are yin positions; and the initial position and the upper position are neither yin positions nor yang positions.

九三：君子终日乾乾，夕惕若厉，无咎。

Nine three: The chüntzu is to exert himself constantly, work hard and give full play to his talent all day long. Besides, he is to keep himself vigilant from day to night as if something dangerous is about to happen in order to avoid any possible disaster.

【Annotation】

Nine three: Nine three holds the third position as a yang line, so called nine three; as nine three does not hold the middle position of the lower trigram, it is not called the man of great virtue (the sage); as it holds the yang position as a yang line, it is called the chüntzu. As nine three holds the top position of the lower trigram, stays under the upper trigram and does not hold the middle posi-

tion of the lower trigram, with the fourth position (above it) and the second position (below it) held by yang lines, it is in the dangerous place between the two yang lines. Neither does it hold the throne (the fifth position) so that it cannot hold the noble position at rest, nor does it stay on the ground (not holding the second position) so that it cannot live peacefully. If it purely practices the inferior Way to attend on the upper trigram, then as it already holds the top position of the lower trigram, its moral character will become decadent and withered, inasmuch as it is excessively modest and docile; if it purely practices the superior Way of the lower trigram and feels proud and conceited randomly, then as it already stays under the upper trigram, its etiquette is reduced to emptiness of contents. Therefore, the chüntzu works as hard as he can and exerts himself constantly all day long in the miserable and dangerous place. When night falls, he remains worried and frightened, just as he was worried and frightened in the day. He should not be proud and conceited when he holds the top position of the lower trigram and he should not be worried and frightened when he stays under the upper trigram; based on the actual circumstances at the time when he should be worried, he should be cautious and careful and grasp the signs of things; although he is in the miserable and dangerous place, he should work as hard as he can and exert himself constantly; only by so doing he is unlikely to commit any fault. Compared with upper nine, nine three holds the top position of the lower trigram, but the position it holds is still very humble, so it must give full play to its intelligence and exert itself in order to avoid any possible disaster; upper nine holds the top position of the upper trigram and the position it holds is very noble, and although it can give full play to its intelligence and exert itself constantly, it can hardly avoid being proud and conceited and thus can hardly avoid any possible disaster. From this it can be seen that holding a lower position can excel holding an upper position and holding a humble position can excel holding a noble position.

九四：或跃在渊，无咎。

Nine four: The dragon will probably rise over the deep water and thus it will

not commit any fault.

【Annotation】

Nine four: Nine four is away from the top position of the lower trigram and holds the lowest position of the upper trigram. It is time for Ch'ien Hexagram to change. Nine four moves up gradually as a yang line (yang-qi) as if the dragon is about to fly up but still feels confused; although it rises over the deep water, it has yet to fly up. Nine four is neither in the throne (the fifth position) nor on the ground (in the second position) nor suitable for people. It is not suitable for people because the third position and the fourth position are subject to the Way of man, and people are near Earth but away from Heaven. As nine five above it and nine three below it are both yang lines, nine four is in a dangerous place between the two yang lines; moreover, nine four holds the yin position as a yang line, and neither can it hold the fifth position nor can it hold the third position. It is indeed time for it to be in a dilemma. It looks as if the sage wants to hold the throne to push ahead with the Way of the sage, but he is compelled to respond to the pressure from below as the people do not allow him to do so, and even his aspiration cannot be achieved by himself. He wants the people to have a place to live in, but the people have yet to escape from the scourge and he should no doubt go to save them; therefore, as they cannot settle down, he is irresolute and hesitant and cannot make up his mind to strive for the throne for the time being. He really intends to eliminate the scourge in order to solve the crisis but not for himself; even if he seeks for progress, he is not selfish. If he takes this kind of irresolution as something that he has no choice but to do, then he will not commit any fault because of his daring and boldness.

九五：飞龙在天，利见大人。

Nine five: The dragon is flying in the sky. It is time for the man of great virtue (the sage) to emerge in the world.

【Annotation】