

Introduction



As the title indicates, this book about love is drawn from principles found in the *I Ching*. That I have found such principles embedded in this ancient Chinese book of wisdom may come as a surprise, since love, as I have written about it in this book, has hardly achieved cultural recognition in China, even today. There is still an implicit taboo on thinking in terms of such love.

This contradiction exists because the *I Ching*, as an oracle system, is known to be about 5000 years old, yet its greatest influence occurred during the Confucian era of 2500 years ago, when it became the centerpiece of Confucian philosophy. Held in high esteem by Confucius and his followers, the *I Ching* came to be used officially to train mandarins in the ruling of the country, and to enable the ruler to harmonize his edicts and actions with the “way of heaven.” Despite this sanctioned official use of the *I Ching*, street-corner “sages,” skilled in its use as an oracle, were frequently consulted over love and relationship problems. Nor was love entirely suppressed by the culture. Despite the prevalent social taboo on love, Cyril Birch stated, in his anthology *Chinese Literature from Early Times to the 14th Century* (Grove Press, N.Y. 1965), that love was a recurring theme, “ranging from the pristine freshness of courtship in the *Book of Songs*, to the laments for love unrequited or betrayed in the tz’u poets.” He adds, “Given the social demands of marriage among the educated class, one would not expect to find much celebration of conjugal love, though Yüan Chen’s moving memorial to his wife...is a notable exception to this observation.”

The *I Ching*, in fact, speaks very much of love, and in its common use today it is frequently consulted about love relationship

problems. Even though it mentions the word love only three times, and even then only in the commentary texts (twice in Hex. 1, in the commentary on The Judgment, and once in Hex. 37, Line 5), this fact speaks more about the *I Ching's* modesty than about a lack in its content. That is to say, it is entirely about love, but rarely uses the word. For example, in consulting it over time, one is struck by the fact that the *I Ching* always counsels to keep one's mind open in regard to others, to hold to their potential to do the right thing, and to not allow oneself to become impatient and alienated. This, it says, gives people the necessary time and space to return to what is true and good within themselves. This sort of counsel implies a high and beautiful kind of love.

The *I Ching*, of course, can be applied to every kind of relationship and situation. Most of the great Chinese commentaries on the *I Ching* repeat the view that it is complete in its ability to give counsel for every circumstance. In my experience, its counsel is chiefly to be applied to loving, not only in the broadest sense of keeping an open mind and heart, but also in the most personal, earthy, intimate sense of loving. It is my further view that the chief use and purpose of the *I Ching* is to help us reawaken our awareness of the ever-present Cosmic intelligence that expresses itself constantly through feelings of love, and that this awakening occurs and is maintained through our experience of personal love. Implied in "The Judgment" of Hexagram 1, *The Creative*, is the concept that we exist in, or are an emanation and continuation of, the greater Cosmic principle of love. The very first words of this section proclaim: "The Creative works sublime success..." Confucius says of this, "Great indeed is the generating power of the Creative; all beings owe their beginning to it. This power permeates all heaven." The word "success" that occurs so often in the declarations of good fortune throughout the *I Ching*, means that unity (with another, with the Cosmos, with one's true nature, etc.) has been achieved.

The first two hexagrams of the *I Ching* represent the two primal forces of the Creative and the Receptive. They are said, through their interaction, to "give rise to all things," and are called the "yang" and

“yin” forces. They are represented in the classic yang-yin symbol as interlocked, as if in embrace, within the Cosmic circle or unity called “Tai Chi,” which denotes wholeness. Not only are they interlocked, yang and yin are wholly equal, interdependent and interactive. As polarities they are not in opposition but are complementary to each other. The various interrelationships of these two primal forces make up the whole of the *I Ching’s* 64 hexagrams, or chapters.

Hexagram 3, *Difficulty at the Beginning*, Line 4, counsels those who receive it, to “strive for union.” The image is that of a horse and wagon being unhitched. The hitched and thus operative horse and wagon represent elements, such as two partners, who are meant to work together to achieve something worthwhile for the welfare of the whole. The attainment of unity and harmony between people is regarded throughout the many lines of the *I Ching* as the goal of one’s endeavors.

The “nutrition” that is mentioned in Hexagrams 5 and 27, refers to love. Hexagrams 8 and 13 reassure us that love is the legitimate goal to be sought after, and that we will achieve this goal if we will relate properly. By this is meant that the essential conditions of any fellowship—what is Cosmically fair and just—must be met for relationships to find an enduring basis. Hexagrams 34, 7, and 9, in calling us to rid ourselves of decadent habits of mind which create disunity in relationships, apply to the love relationship. They apply, as well, to our relationship with the Cosmos. Hexs. 26 and 62 guide us through crises of misunderstanding that occur in relationships. Hexagram 31, is subtitled “wooing,” and concerns how the love relationship can be manifested. Hexagram 37 concerns the loving relationships that exist within the family. It applies to any relationship in which two individuals have inner ties, as well. These ties are seen to exist between those who have a natural affinity, one with the other. Hexagram 54 points out the dangers to relationships that come from temptations of the wrong sort, and to the importance of holding to our values. Hexagram 44 is similar, spelling out the essential principles of “coming to meet another halfway.” This phrase describes the equal reciprocity that

is fundamental to successful relationships. The *I Ching*, then, it can be fairly said, is truly about love.

All these references point to the Cosmos as operating on principles different from those commonly thought. We can compare the Cosmic reality to a hidden picture within another, obvious picture. The hidden picture is the Cosmic Order that is presented throughout the *I Ching* as the system of harmony that underlies and ultimately determines all things. This is quite the opposite of the picture of the Cosmos and its workings that has been presented by the historical world. The historical “reality,” which has been shaped by human ideas, has also shaped our thinking to conform to it, rather than to what the *I Ching* refers to as our inner sense of truth, which is a feeling sense. The effect has been to divorce our thinking from our feelings, and thus to lose contact with our inner sense of truth. Inasmuch as we relate to other people from institutionalized human *morés*, we isolate ourselves from our natural feeling relationship with them. The *I Ching* makes us aware that by acknowledging the value of our feelings, we are enabled to return to harmony with our true selves and thereby to reconnect with the torrent of blessings the Cosmos is always ready to give to the true self. The usefulness of the *I Ching* is in showing us how to return to this self, and how doing so makes our relationships meaningful. Once this hidden picture of the Cosmic reality comes into view, the superficiality of the obvious picture presented as historical reality turns out to be obviously false. This picture is replaced by the gleaming beauty of the Cosmic reality.

To understand and see this inner picture, it is helpful to understand the historical process by which the outer picture developed. A question which emerged during the writing of this book was: how have we departed so far from our true selves, and why is it so difficult to understand our true natures? Books from three different areas of research provided keys to this question, one archeological, one historical, and one historical/psychological. Maria Gimbuta’s archeological research from digs all over Europe (see *The Civilization of the Goddess*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1991)

showed that artifacts from the current 2,500 year long patriarchal era have depicted mainly war and strife, while the artifacts of the preceding 30,000 year long matriarchal era have depicted a mainly peaceful coexistence between people. Heide Göttner-Abendroth's historical research on ancient matriarchal cultures (see *The Goddess and Her Heros*, Anthony Publishing Company, 1995) demonstrated that because of the distorting effects upon the personalities of men and women caused by the patriarchal view of life, it is impossible for us to know today what constitutes our true natures as men and women. That is to say, our attitudes about masculinity and femininity need to be seen as the result of this historical process, and not, as we may have assumed, as the way we really are. Jutta Voss, cleric and Jungian psychotherapist, wrote that the competition which now exists between the sexes is the result of this history, and contrary to our biological natures (see *Das Schwarzmund-Tabu*, Kreuz Verlag, 1988).

In the intervening years since 1993, when this book was first written, I learned that what psychoanalyst Karen Horney described as the "neurotic pride system," is nearly identical to the ego as I have come to understand it through working with the *I Ching*. Her observations coincide with mine especially as she sees this pride system not as an part of the person's true nature, but something that is the result of societal conditioning. (See her book, *The Struggle Toward Self-Realization, Neurosis and Human Growth*, W.W. Norton & Co., 1950.) These views, it needs also to be noted, coincide with those of Lao Tzu (see *Tao Te Ching*, trans. by Dr. John C. H. Wu., Shambala.)

More and more, since 1993, I have come to see the aberrations caused by patriarchy to be secondary to the much larger mindset that created it, and its vertical hierarchical thinking: the feudal mindset that has dominated most of the world for the last 3,000 years. If we think this mindset is limited to ancient cultures, which are mirrored in parts of the classic *I Ching* text and commentaries, we are mistaken. We do not shake off so easily its many presumptions that pervade our thinking. The system by which the

individual's authorization of his own existence is mirrored in every social institution of our democratic societies, too. We are born in that matrix and we never think to question that it might be the principle reason why our most loving relationships fail.

Insofar as the institutionalized ideas damage the love relationship, they are mentioned in this book. To free ourselves from their damaging effects, we need to understand how they work against our true natures. The *I Ching*, with its patriarchal overlay, on the one hand, and its ability to call us back to our true natures, on the other, was the means by which these two pictures were made visible.