

CONSTANCY IN CHANGE
A COMPARISON OF JAMES LEGGE'S AND RICHARD WILHELM'S
INTERPRETATIONS OF THE *YIJING*

TZE-KI HON 韓子奇

Contents

Legge's Encounter with the <i>Yijing</i>	316
Separating the Text from its Commentarial Materials	318
<i>Yijing</i> as a Historical Document	320
Limits to Legge's Historical Reading	323
A Different Missionary-cum-Scholar	326
<i>Yijing</i> and Post-War Europe	327
The Philosophy of Change	329
Hexagram as a Field of Action	332
The "Book of Wisdom" Approach	334
Chinese Abstract	335

Since the seventeenth century, the *Yijing* 易經 (or *I Ching*, Book of Changes)¹ has been studied in the West to understand China. But for a long time, due to its link to divination, the Chinese classic was considered a mysterious text beyond the comprehension of the European mind. This image of the *Yijing* persisted until James Legge (1814–1897) and Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930) published their translations of the classic. By translating the *Yijing* into English and German respectively, Legge and Wilhelm showed that the *Yijing* was a book of wisdom offering profound insights into human life. They presented the classic in such a manner that it might have originated from China, but it spoke to everyone, Chinese and non-Chinese.²

In this article, to examine the transformation of the *Yijing* from a mysterious text to a book of wisdom, I compare James Legge's and Richard Wilhelm's translations. The purpose of my comparison is not to ascertain the accuracy of the two translators in rendering the Chinese classic. Rather, it is to highlight their ingenu-

¹ For the sake of consistency and to avoid unnecessary confusion, except for the original book titles, I use *Hanyu pinyin* to transliterate Chinese characters.

² For a summary of the Western studies of the *Yijing*, see Iulian K. Shchutskii, *Researches on the I Ching* (London 1980), pp. 13-55; Hellmut Wilhelm, *The Book of Changes in the Western Tradition: A Selective Bibliography* (Seattle 1975); Richard Rutt, *The Book of Changes (Zhouyi)* (New York 2002), pp. 60-82.

ity and creativity in interpreting the Chinese classic for Western readers. To achieve this goal, I will discuss the two translators' similar backgrounds: their missionary experiences in China, their collaboration with Chinese scholars to translate Chinese texts, and their struggles to bring a more accurate picture of China to the West. Following that, I will examine their differences, particularly their differing readings of the hexagrams and the *Ten Wings* (*shiyi* 十翼) of the *Yijing*. Their similarities and differences show that it may be simplistic to say: "Legge translated what the text said, while Wilhelm translated what the text meant."³ As translators, both Legge and Wilhelm attempted to give a coherent interpretation of the *Yijing* to address the issues of their times. Their differences in reading the Chinese classic had to do with the times in which they lived (i.e., the Victorian England for Legge and the Weimar Germany for Wilhelm), rather than the absence or presence of interpretation. As a first step to assess the contributions of these two translators, this comparison calls attention to their roles in re-inventing the *Yijing* for Western readers.

Legge's Encounter with the *Yijing*

In James Legge's long career as a translator of the Chinese classics, the *Yijing* caused him the biggest problem. In the 1882 preface to *The Yi King*, he recalled the decades of hard labor that he had spent in coming to grips with this extraordinary Chinese classic.⁴ He tells us that he completed a translation of the *Yijing* in 1855 while he was a young missionary in Hong Kong. But at that time he was hesitant to publish it because he felt he had inadequate knowledge of "the scope and the method of the book." He laid his translation aside with the hope that some day he would find a way to comprehend this "mysterious classic." Then, disaster occurred. In 1870, his manuscript was soaked in the water of the Red Sea while en route to Europe. The manuscript was recovered miraculously and after restoration, it was still partially legible. However, when James Legge finally found his way back to his manuscript in 1874, he discovered that his "toil of twenty years before was of no service at all." He had developed a different understanding of the *Yijing* that he was ready to discard his previous translation and to start all over again.

Hence, James Legge's *Yijing* translation that we have today is a re-translation. More importantly, he re-translated the *Yijing* while he was turning a new page of his life. After serving thirty some years as a missionary associated with the London Missionary Society, he assumed in 1876 his post as the Professor of Chinese at the University of Oxford. This change of job resulted in a change of perspec-

³ Gerald W. Swanson, "Introduction to the English Edition" in Iulian K. Shchutskii, *Researches on the I Ching*, pp. xi-xii.

⁴ James Legge, *The Yi King*, volume sixteen of *The Sacred Books of the East* (London 1899, reprint 1963), pp. xiii-xiv. See also Helen Edith Legge, *James Legge: Missionary and Scholar* (London 1905), pp. 27-46; Wong Man Kong, *James Legge: A Pioneer at Crossroads of East and West* (Hong Kong 1996), pp. 114-126.

tive. Previously, as a Christian missionary, Legge translated the Chinese classics to convert the Chinese to Christianity. In his translation, he searched for parallels between Protestantism and Confucianism so that “the more [the missionaries] avoid driving their carriages rudely over the Master [Kong’s] grave, the more likely are they soon to see Jesus enthroned in His room in the hearts of the people.”⁵ Now, as an Oxford don specializing in cultural comparison, he turned his attention to the uniqueness of Chinese culture. His goal in translating the Chinese classics was to demonstrate the co-existence of different cultural systems on the face of this earth. Collaborating with Max Müller, he set out to prove that “there are other worlds besides our own.”⁶

After eight years of work, he completed his new translation of the *Yijing*. When *The Yi King* was published in 1882 as volume sixteen of Max Müller’s series of “The Sacred Books of the East,” Legge proudly announced that his new translation of the *Yijing* was entirely a product of his labor. Although Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897), his Chinese assistant in translation, had prepared for him elaborate notes on the *Yijing* in the late 1860s, he tells us that he did not have “the help of able native scholars which saved time and was otherwise valuable when [he] was working in the East on other classics.”⁷ Drawing a clear distinction between his new work done at Oxford and his previous works completed as a missionary, he stressed that the lack of help from Chinese scholars was “more than compensated” by his own study of Chinese texts, such as the *Rijiang yijing jieyi* 日講易經解義 (1683) and the *Zhouyi zhezong* 周易折中 (1715).⁸ In Legge’s mind, his new translation of the *Yijing* symbolized the coming of age of a new scholarship. It represented the achievement of a professional scholar who saw China as a subject of academic research rather than as a land for religious conversion. Knowingly or unknowingly, after spending decades to translate and

⁵ Helen Edith Legge, *James Legge: Missionary and Scholar*, pp. 37-38.

⁶ Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge’s Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley 2002), pp. 120-183.

⁷ James Legge, *The Yi King*, p. xx. There is no consensus as to Wang Tao’s role in James Legge’s translation of the Chinese classics. At one end of the spectrum, Lauren F. Pfister sees Wang Tao playing minor role in Legge’s translation. See Pfister, “Wang Tao yu Li Yage dui xin rujia youhuan yishi de huiying” 王韜與理雅各對新儒家憂患意識的回應, in Lin Qiyan 林啓彥 and Wang Wenjiang 王文江 (eds.), *Wang Tao yu jindai shijie* 王韜與近代世界 (Hong Kong 2000), pp. 117-147. At the other end of the spectrum, Li Qifang (Chi-fang Lee) 李齊芳 considers Wang Tao’s elaborate notes on the Chinese classics as the foundation of Legge’s translation. See Li, “Wang Tao de wenxue yu jingxue” 王韜的文學與經學, in Lin Qiyan and Wang Wenjiang (eds.), *Wang Tao yu jindai shijie*, pp. 190-217. In the article, Li discusses Wang Tao’s notes on the *Yijing* that he found in the New York Public Library. For a longer version of Li’s argument, see Chi-fang Lee, “Wang T’ao (1828–1897): His Life, Thought, Scholarship, and Literary Achievement” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1973). For a more balanced view on Wang Tao’s contribution to Legge’s translation of the Chinese classics, see Paul Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T’ao and Reform in Late Ch’ing China* (Cambridge, MA 1974), pp. 59-61.

⁸ James Legge, *The Yi King*, p. xx.

re-translate the *Yijing*, Legge personified the emergence of what Norman Girardot calls “the Victorian translation of China.”⁹

Separating the Text from its Commentarial Materials

Keeping in mind of how little China was known to the West at the time, it is not surprising for James Legge to have spent decades to translate the *Yijing*. First, the Chinese classic had long been known in the West as a mysterious text because of its relation to divination. Unlike the *Shujing* 書經 (Book of Documents), the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Poetry), and the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (The Spring and Autumn Annals), all of which James Legge translated in the 1860s and 1870s, the *Yijing* was not a record of historical events. Instead, it consisted of sixty-four hexagrams (diagrams of six divided or undivided lines) accompanied by statements explaining what the hexagrams and their lines meant. These hexagrams, we are told, were originated from the legendary Chinese cultural heroes such as Fu Xi 伏羲 and Shen Nong 神農, who used them to describe the pattern of the universe and to give advice to political leaders.¹⁰ Added to this divinatory mystique of the *Yijing* was its language. The classic was full of such terms as *ji* 吉 (auspicious), *xiong* 凶 (inauspicious), *jiu* 咎 (remorse), and *wujiu* 無咎 (without remorse) that indicated its origin as a manual of divination. No wonder, for centuries, fortune-tellers in China used the *Yijing* to develop methods of divination.¹¹

Christian missionaries who came to China before James Legge took for granted the divinatory nature of the *Yijing*. Earlier Western translators of the classic, such as Rev. Canon McClatchie (1814–1885), were interested in tracing the classic to ancient Mesopotamia based on its divinatory elements. To achieve their missionary goals, they viewed the *Yijing* as a pagan religious text dated back to the dispersion of the sons of Noah. By stressing the *Yijing*'s link to ancient Mesopotamia, they hoped to draw China closer to the world of the Old Testament.¹² Apparently, this approach to link the *Yijing* to Mesopotamia was still predominant during James Legge's time. As Legge was re-translating the *Yijing* at Oxford, Terrien de Lacouperie was completing his translation of the classic. In his *The Oldest Book of the Chinese: The Yih King and Its Authors* (1892), Lacouperie described the *Yijing* as a disguised Babylonian dictionary brought to China by the “people of Bak origin.”¹³ Like McClatchie, Lacouperie saw the divinatory ele-

⁹ Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China*, pp. 1-16.

¹⁰ See the *Xici* 繫辭, Part 2, chapter 2. For a translation of this chapter, see Legge, *The I Ching*, pp. 382-385.

¹¹ For a discussion of how widespread the *Yijing* had been used in traditional China for divination, see Richard J. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers: Divination in Traditional Chinese Society* (Boulder 1991), pp. 13-130.

¹² For a discussion of how the missionaries before James Legge rendered the *Yijing*, see Shchutskii, *Researches on the I Ching*, pp. 16-27; Rutt, *The Book of Changes*, pp. 60-68.

¹³ Iulian Shchutskii is critical of Lacouperie's approach. For his review of Lacouperie's translation, see Shchutskii, *Researches on the I Ching*, pp. 24-26.

ments of the *Yijing* as proofs of its link to Mesopotamia. This pagan mysticism surrounding the *Yijing* was so widely accepted in late nineteenth-century Europe that it prompted Legge's daughter, Helen Edith Legge, to wonder why her well-educated father had spent so much energy on such a strange text. Reflecting the Western perception of the *Yijing* of the time, she commended: "Even a glance at the mysterious hexagrams, and their still more bewildering arrangement, shows how useless it is for anyone but a scholar to attempt to give an account of the book."¹⁴

Compared to this prevailing image of the *Yijing*, James Legge's translation was unique. In the preface to *The Yi King*, Legge pinpointed two features of his translation that distinguished it from others. First, he employed a different technique of translation. Instead of the word-for-word translation practiced by previous translators such as P. Jean-Baptiste Regis (1663–1738), he adopted an idiomatic approach which allowed him to focus on translating the meaning of the text rather than the meaning of a single word. The goal of this idiomatic approach was to achieve what Legge called "the seeing of mind to mind" between the author and the translator.¹⁵ In practice, it gave the translator the poetic license to render the text intelligibly by adding words, or even sentences, into the text. Indicated by parenthesis, these added words or sentences filled lacunae or missing links that the translator found in the text. These additions were, in Legge's words, "what the mind of the [*Yijing*] writer supplied for itself."¹⁶ With this poetic license, he was able to downplay aspects of the *Yijing* that he deemed unimportant, and to highlight those that he thought were essential.

This "mind-to-mind" translation allowed Legge to do something that previous translators could never have done – separating the *Yijing* text from its commentarial materials. In the received text of the *Yijing*, three commentarial materials (i.e., the *Tuan* 象, the *Xiang* 象, the *Wenyan* 文言) were included into the textual body of the *Yijing*. As part of a group of commentarial materials known collectively as the *Ten Wings*, these three pieces of writing were divided up and inserted into the sixty-four hexagrams, rather than listed (as others did) at the end of the classic.¹⁷ For Legge, this mixing of the original text with its commentarial materials had misled both the Chinese commentators and the Western translators to read the *Yijing* as a divinatory text. In actuality, he argued, the original *Yijing*

¹⁴ Helen Edith Legge, *James Legge*, p. 34.

¹⁵ Legge, *The I Ching*, p. xv.

¹⁶ Legge, *The I Ching*, p. xvi.

¹⁷ The *Ten Wings* are considered to be commentarial materials elaborating on the meanings of the sixty-four hexagrams. They consist of the following pieces of writings: *Tuan* 象 Parts 1 and 2, *Xiang* 象 Parts 1 and 2, *Xici* Parts 1 and 2, *Wenyan* 文言, *Shuogua* 說卦, *Xugua* 序卦, *Zagua* 雜卦. In the received text of the *Yijing* dated back to the 300s C.E., the *Tuan* (Part 1 and 2), the *Xiang* (Part 1 and 2), and the *Wenyan* are included in the *Yijing* text. Hence, the parts of the *Tuan*, the *Xiang*, and *Wenyan* that dealt with "Qian" 乾 (Hexagram #1, the Creative) appeared under "Qian." By the same token, the parts of the *Tuan* and the *Xiang* that concerned with "Kun" 坤 (Hexagram #2, the Yielding) appeared under "Kun."

text was much shorter, consisting of the sixty-four hexagrams, their hexagram statements, and their line statements. As a whole, the shortened *Yijing* was a historical document written in the tenth century B.C.E. by two outstanding leaders of the Western Zhou Period, King Wen and the Duke of Zhou. In writing the original *Yijing*, Legge asserted, the two Western Zhou leaders outlined their visions of a strong feudal state and their plans for building a new social and political system.¹⁸

It should be pointed out that Legge was not the first one to separate the *Yijing* text from its commentarial materials. He might very well be, as Girardot describes, “the first Western scholar to produce an intelligible rendition of the complete work [of the *Yijing*], clearly disentangling the ancient core Text ... and the later, symbolically interpretative Appendixes.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, what he did was similar to Li Guangdi’s 李光地 (1642–1718) *Zhouyi zhezhong* 周易折中. In this 1715 *Yijing* commentary sponsored by the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662–1722), Li Guangdi presented the *Yijing* in such a manner that it began with the original *Yijing* (i.e., the sixty-four hexagrams, their hexagram statements and their line statements), and followed by the *Ten Wings*. To justify what he did, Li reminded his readers that in ancient times the original *Yijing* was separated from the *Ten Wings*, and it was only until the Western Han Period (221 B.C.E. – 8 C.E.) that the commentator Fei Zhi 費直 mixed them together. According to Li, later commentators such as Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) followed in Fei Zhi’s footsteps and created a tradition of mixing the original *Yijing* with its commentarial materials. To help readers better understand the original *Yijing*, Li found it necessary to produce a text that clearly distinguished the original *Yijing* from its commentarial materials.²⁰ Considering the fact that Legge had consulted the *Zhouyi zhezhong* in translating the *Yijing* and that he cited the *Zhouyi zhezhong* several times to support his separation of the *Yijing* from its commentarial materials,²¹ it is apparent that he drew inspiration from Li Guangdi in his attempt to recover the original *Yijing*.

Yijing as a Historical Document

In separating the original *Yijing* from its commentarial materials and consigning the commentarial materials to the “Appendixes,” Legge admitted that he cut the *Yijing*’s link with the legendary cultural figure Fu Xi. Many references to Fu Xi being an author of the classic were now excluded from the original *Yijing*. Consequently, it would demote the *Yijing* from being the oldest classic in China to being the third oldest text following the *Shujing* and the *Shijing*. Legge conceded

¹⁸ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 1-6.

¹⁹ Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China*, p. 366.

²⁰ Li Guangdi, *Zhouyi zhezhong* (Beijing 2002), “Fanli” 凡例, p. 1.

²¹ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. xiii-xiv, xxi. For a discussion of the popularity of the *Zhouyi zhezhong* among the nineteenth-century missionaries, see Shchutskii, *Researches on the I Ching*, p. 28.

that this demotion would be significant because Western scholars of his time valued the *Yijing* because of its reputation of being the oldest text in China. However, he believed that the demotion was well compensated by recovering the historical significance of the *Yijing*.²²

To see how Legge transformed the *Yijing* from a divinatory text into a historical document, let us turn to his translation of the first ten hexagrams. For many Chinese commentators, the first ten hexagrams – “Qian” 乾 (The Creative), “Kun” 坤 (The Reception), “Tun” 屯 (Difficulty at the Beginning), “Meng” 蒙 (Youthful Folly), “Xu” 需 (Waiting), “Song” 訟 (Conflict), “Shi” 師 (The Army), “Bi” 比 (Holding Together), “Xiaoxu” 小畜 (Taming Power of the Small), and “Lü” 履 (Treading”) – represented the evolution of the universe after the mixing of the *yin* and *yang* natural forces. The story went like this: the mixing of *yin* (“Kun”) and *yang* (“Qian”) created a universe with the multitude of beings in need of guidance (“Tun” and “Meng”), and after a period of difficult time in which conflicts occurred (“Xu,” “Song,” “Shi,” and “Bi”), order was established in the universe as well as in human society (“Xiaoxu” and “Lü”).²³

For Legge, however, while the ten hexagrams might very well be a story about the evolution of the universe, they were originally historical records of King Wen and the Duke of Zhou to construct a new socio-political order in ancient China. The hexagrams were written at a time when the Shang dynasty (c. 1600 – 1050 B.C.E.) had fallen, and a new political order was yet to emerge to replace it. Take “Tun” (Youthful Folly, hexagram #3) as an example. In Legge’s remarks on the hexagram, he called attention to the critical historical juncture when King Wen was on his way to topple the Shang.

The character called [“Tun”] is pictorial, and was intended to show us how a plant struggles with difficulty out of the earth, rising gradually above the surface. This difficulty, marking the first stages in the growth of a plant, is used to symbolise the struggles that mark the rise of a state out of a condition of disorder, consequent on a great revolution. ... King [Wen] and his son wrote, as they did in every hexagram, with reference to a particular state of affairs which had in mind. ... [Wen] saw the social and political world around him in great disorder, had to be remedied. But he had faith in himself and the destinies of his House. Let there be prudence and caution, with unswerving adherence to the right; let the government of the different states be entrusted to good and able men: — then all would be well.²⁴

As a hexagram following the mixing of “Qian” and “Kun,” Legge read “Tun” as representing the disorder in China prior to the rise of the Zhou. At this critical juncture in history, King Wen wrote “Tun” to express his aspiration for leading the country. He first summoned the people of his feudal state to take the challenge of restoring order to the country. And then, he called upon people of other feudal states to follow his lead to build a new social and political system.

²² Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 6-7.

²³ See *Xugua* lines 1-11. For a translation, see Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 433-434.

²⁴ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 63.

In similar fashion, Legge historicized “Meng” (Youthful Folly, hexagram #4) and “Xu” (Waiting, hexagram #5). First, similar to what he did to “Tun,” he explained the literal meaning of “Meng.” He told us: “As [“Tun”] shows us plants struggling from beneath the surface, [“Meng”] suggests to us the small and undeveloped appearance which they then present; and hence it came to be the symbol of youthful inexperience and ignorance.”²⁵ As a symbol of “youthful inexperience and ignorance,” Legge took “Meng” to mean King Wen’s call for a new political order in China. The disorder after the collapse of the Shang had caused so much damage to China that something had to be done to restore order to the country. “The object of the hexagram,” he wrote, “is to show how such a condition should be dealt with by the parent and ruler, whose authority and duty are represented by the second and sixth [lines in this hexagram], the two undivided lines.”²⁶ Consequently, King Wen’s determination to restore order in “Meng” led to his action in “Xu.” Again, similar to previous hexagrams, Legge saw both a literal and a historical meaning in “Xu.” Literally “Xu” meant waiting. Legge spoke of the possibility of confrontation when two armies were engaged in battle, and thus “it takes the wiser plan of waiting till success is sure.” For him, this literal meaning of “Xu” referred to a specific historical event in King Wen’s life, namely, his waiting to cross the Yellow River to attack the Shang imperial court. To make his point, he concentrated on the hexagram statement in “Xu” which said: “It will be advantageous to cross the great stream.” For him, “the great stream” meant the Yellow River “which the lords of [Zhou] must cross in a revolutionary movement against the dynasty of Yin [Shang] and its tyrant.”²⁷

Naturally for Legge, “Song” (Conflict, hexagram #6) and “Shi” (Army, hexagram #7) meant military action after a period of rising tension between the Shang imperial court and the Zhou feudal house. For him, the two hexagrams were King Wen’s description of his military expeditions against the Shang when the Shang imperial court refused to give up its power. With five divided lines and one undivided line in the second place, hexagram “Shi” was particularly important to Legge. First, it depicted a situation in which a general (the undivided line) leading columns of soldiers in battle. “It is easy to see,” Legge told us, “how the undivided line in the second place should be interpreted of the general, who is responded to by the divided line in the fifth and royal place.”²⁸ Although King Wen wrote the hexagram thousands of years ago, Legge suggested his readers to associate it with England where “every man was regimented somewhere.”²⁹ Despite the fact they were separated by thousands of years, Legge saw a resemblance of the Western Zhou system in Victorian England. Second, the hexagram did not talk about war alone, it also discussed how to maintain order and preserve moral

²⁵ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 66.

²⁶ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 66.

²⁷ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 68.

²⁸ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 72.

²⁹ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 22.

integrity in war. In the top line of the hexagram, Legge found that King Wen pondered about how to reward his officers and soldiers fairly. Legge told us that while King Wen was eager to reward his officers generously to show his appreciation of their bravery, he was worried about rewarding the wrong persons. Thus, King Wen came to the conclusion that he needed to match the rewards with the moral characters of the recipients. "Small men, of ordinary or less than ordinary character, may be rewarded with riches and certain honours," Legge explained, "but land and the welfare of its population should not be given into the hands of any who are not equal to the responsibility of such a trust."³⁰ In this way, Legge found that King Wen laid the foundation of his future government which emphasized trust and moral deeds.

With the success of military expeditions came the birth of the Zhou Dynasty. For Legge, hexagrams "Bi" (Holding Together, #8), "Xiaoxu" (Taming Power of the Small, #9), and "Lü" (Treading, #10) were the records of King Wen and his son, the Duke of Zhou, in establishing a new government. Part of the new Zhou system was a unity of differences – allowing different feudal states to exist so long as they submitted to the rule of the Zhou king. For Legge, this structure of Zhou feudalism was expressed clearly in "Bi." With five divided lines and one undivided line in the fifth place, "Bi" symbolized "the harmony of union" in which the subjects were ready to submit to one sovereign authority.³¹

Thus, by rendering the hexagrams as records of the rise of the Zhou feudal house, Legge gave the *Yijing* a new image. It was no longer a manual of divination but a collection of short historical essays which Legge described as "enigmatically and symbolically expressed, on important themes, mostly of a moral, social, and political character."³² Interpreting the *Yijing* in this way, he cleared the veneer of mysticism that had associated it for a long time. Rather than continuing to look for its link to the world of the Old Testament, he called upon his readers "to gird up their loins for the mastery of the book instead of talking about it as mysterious and all but inexplicable."³³ In highlighting the historical significance of the *Yijing*, he invited his readers to understand the history of China on its own terms.

Limits to Legge's Historical Reading

Despite Legge's success in turning the first ten hexagrams into historical records of the rise of the Zhou, there were limits to his historical reading of the *Yijing*. First, as he worked his way through the classic, he found increasing difficulty in relating the hexagrams to the Western Zhou history. Unlike the first ten hexagrams, other hexagrams do not readily lend themselves to history. For instance,

³⁰ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 25.

³¹ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 75-76.

³² Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 10.

³³ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 25-26.

“Tai” 泰 (Peace, #11), “Pi” 否 (Obstruction, #12), “Tongren” 同人 (Fellowship #13) and “Dayou” 大有 (Great Holdings, #14) suggest abstract ideas rather than historical events. For these hexagrams, Legge was hard pressed to find historical relevance in them. In his remarks, he limited himself to explaining the literal meanings of these hexagrams, without discussing how they might have been related to the history of the early Zhou.³⁴

To remedy the situation, Legge sometimes turned the hexagrams into King Wen’s advice to rulers, something similar to what Niccolò Machiavelli had done in *Il Principe* (The Prince). Take, for instance, “Jing” 井 (Well, #48) and “Ding” 鼎 (The Cauldron, #50). Realizing that the two hexagrams had little to do with the Western Zhou history, Legge focused his remarks on their symbolism. He told his readers that “Jing” and “Ding” were the only two hexagrams “named from things in ordinary use with men,” and yet they were “both descriptive of the government’s work of nourishing.”³⁵ For Legge, “Jing” stood for the function of a well in supplying humans with water. It symbolized a good government which nourished its people by improving the agricultural production through redistributing land.³⁶ In the same vein, “Ding” represented a cooking utensil for food preparation. It symbolized a good government which cultivated its people’s moral character through education.³⁷ In cases like “Jing” and “Ding,” when a historical reading did not work, Legge shifted to an ethical-philosophical reading.

Worse still, Legge found even more problems in historicizing the *Yijing* when he came to the *Ten Wings*. As the “Appendixes,” the *Ten Wings* appeared after Legge’s translation of the sixty-four hexagrams. But even as the “Appendixes,” the *Ten Wings* were at odds with the way that Legge read the hexagrams. First, some of the *Ten Wings* are clearly ahistorical. For instance, the *Xugua* 序卦 (Sequence of the Hexagrams) and the *Zagua* 雜卦 (Miscellaneous Notes on the Hexagrams) are about the order of the hexagrams and their possible relations. There is no way one can read history into it, let alone the history of the Western Zhou. Of these two “Appendixes,” Legge offered only a word-for-word translation – something that he scorned and tried very hard to avoid.³⁸ Second, other parts of the *Ten Wings* are full of cosmological discussion. It is particularly true of the *Xici* 繫辭 (The Appended Statements) and the *Shuogua* 說卦 (Explaining the Meaning of the Hexagrams) where there are numerous passages explaining the creation and the functioning of the universe. As a former Christian missionary, Legge was particularly sensitive to these cosmological discussions. In them,

³⁴ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 81-90.

³⁵ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 171.

³⁶ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 166-167. In his comments, Legge discussed the Zhou’s well-field system.

³⁷ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 171-173.

³⁸ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 433-444.

he sensed that the Chinese did not accept the idea that the universe was created by an omnipotent creator. For this reason, he criticized the author of the *Xici* for committing "the error of putting the last first." "Neither creation nor cosmogony," he complained, "was before the mind of the author whose work I am analysing."³⁹ Similarly, he had mixed feelings about the author of the *Shuogua*. On the one hand, he found that in some occasions the author of the *Shuogua* had risen "to a height of thought reached nowhere else in these treatises." He called readers' attention to paragraphs eight to ten of the *Shuogua*, where he found an explicit discussion of the existence of God comparable to Paul's Roman Letters and Thomson's Hymn on the Seasons.⁴⁰ On the other hand, to Legge's dismay, the author of the *Shuogua* only did half of his job. In many parts of the *Shuogua*, he found the author engaged in "silly and trivial" discussions with no reference to the omnipotent God.⁴¹

Legge's unkind comments on the *Xici* and the *Shuogua* reveal his limitations as a missionary-cum-scholar. Being a transitional figure in the "Victorian translation of China," he was in part a missionary who looked for parallels between Christianity and Confucianism, and in part a professional academician who studied China as a member of the community of nations. Certainly, by all accounts, Legge was quite successful in making the transition from a missionary to a professional academician. He was a lot more open-minded than his fellow missionaries in finding values in Chinese thoughts. Rather than considering the Chinese classics as worthless in spreading the Gospel like many other missionaries did, Legge saw the importance of understanding the Chinese mind before converting them to Christianity. As a result, as Norman Girardot has pointed out, Legge was more effective as "a transformer of Westerners to a vision of a classical China" than as "a converter of Chinese to the Christian gospel."⁴² Nevertheless, even after he became an Oxford don, Legge still could not help but read the Chinese classics through the lens of a Christian missionary. As he removed the veneer of mysticism from the *Yijing* hexagrams by turning them into historical documents, he introduced the Christian question of the existence of God into the Appendixes. Still shaped by his Christian view, he was unable to accept the Confucian vision of the universe as a "spontaneously self-generating life process" that did not require the preexistence of the Creator.⁴³ In the final analysis, being a "hyphenated missionary-scholar,"⁴⁴ Legge remains a transitional figure. In offering a new reading of the *Yijing* hexagrams, he was instrumental in the change from the mis-

³⁹ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 53-54.

⁴⁰ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 48-52.

⁴¹ Legge, *The Yi King*, pp. 25-26.

⁴² Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China*, pp. 13-14.

⁴³ For a discussion of the Chinese cosmology, see Frederic W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (New York 1989), pp. 9-25; Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany 1985), pp. 35-50.

⁴⁴ The term is Norman Girardot's. See *The Victorian Translation of China*, p. 15.

sionary encounter with China to the professional sinological studies of China. But limited by his earlier experiences, his reading of the *Ten Wings* still carried the legacy of the missionaries' search for parallels between Christianity and Confucianism.

A Different Missionary-cum-Scholar

Forty-two years after the appearance of James Legge's *The Yi King*, in 1924 Richard Wilhelm published his *Yijing* translation, *I Ging: Das Buch der Wandlungen*. In many respects, the two translators had a lot in common. Like Legge, Wilhelm spent his early life as a missionary in China. He came to Qingdao, Shandong, in 1899, shortly after the city became a German colony. Associated with the Allgemeiner Protestantischer Missionsverein, he lived there for twenty-two years. During that time, he mastered the Chinese language, became acquainted with many Chinese friends, and translated a number of Confucian and Daoist texts.⁴⁵ Reminiscent of Legge's relation with Wang Tao, Wilhelm collaborated with a Chinese scholar, Lao Naixuan 勞乃宣 (1843–1921), in translating the Chinese texts. A former high-level Qing official, Lao came to Qingdao after the 1911 Revolution along with other Qing loyalists. During much of the 1910s, he worked with Wilhelm on translating the *Yijing*.⁴⁶ Also similar to Legge, Wilhelm eventually dropped his missionary work and became a professional scholar. After serving briefly as the first attaché to the German Embassy in Beijing in the early 1920s, he went back to Germany in 1924 to assume the sinological chair at the University of Frankfurt. As a professional scholar, he devoted himself to promoting the study of China in Germany. He established the China Institute at the University of Frankfurt, published the journal *Sinica*, and traveled widely within Germany to lecture on the *Yijing*.⁴⁷

Despite his similarities with Legge, Wilhelm was a different missionary-cum-scholar. First was the difference in time. When Legge was a missionary in Hong Kong, the Victorian England was on her way to rule the world. The power and the glory of Pax Britannica convinced Legge that the Europeans were on a mission to civilize the world. In contrast, Wilhelm witnessed the European powers engaged in devastating wars. Even in Qingdao, far away from the major spheres of action of the First World War, Wilhelm saw the European technological ad-

⁴⁵ Wilhelm gave a lively record of his life in Qingdao in *The Soul of China* translated by John Holroyd Reece (London 1928). For his acquaintance with Chinese friends and his translation of the Chinese texts, see pp. 166-202. See also Salome Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm: Der geistige Mittler zwischen China und Europa* (Düsseldorf – Köln 1956), pp. 204-217; Paul Pelliot, "Richard Wilhelm," *T'oung Pao* 27 (1930), pp. 237-239.

⁴⁶ For Lao Naixuan's biography, see his *Ren'an laoren ziding nianpu* 韜庵老人自訂年譜 (Taipei 1966).

⁴⁷ Some of Wilhelm's lectures appear in his *Lectures on the I Ching: Constancy and Change*, translated from the German by Irene Eber (Princeton 1979). For a discussion of Wilhelm's intellectual life in Germany, see Irene Eber's introduction to *Lectures on the I Ching*.

vancements being used to destroy civilization.⁴⁸ This difference in experience led the two translators to look at the world differently. Seeing Victorian England as the symbol of modernity, Legge was confident that the West had something to offer to the East, such as its Christian theology and rational thinking. On the contrary, struck by the massive destruction of the Western powers, Wilhelm thought that the Chinese wisdom was “the cure and salvation of modern Europe.”⁴⁹ Instead of focusing on material growth and technological progress as in the West, he found the Chinese had developed over centuries “a spirit of innocence” emerged from “the deepest depths of being, there where the springs of life well up.”⁵⁰ As the ultimate “other” of the West, he believed the Chinese offered an alternative vision of life that all Europeans should consider.

Because he believed that the Chinese wisdom was a cure of modern Europe, Wilhelm valued his collaboration with Lao Naixuan. Contrary to Legge who treated Wang Tao purely as an assistant whose main job was to collect information, Wilhelm saw Lao as his teacher. He felt “indebted” to Lao for opening his mind to “the wonders of the Book of Changes.”⁵¹ To pay his respects to Lao, he introduced him to his readers as follows: “His family was closely related to the descendents of Confucius. He owned a bundle of the holy *milfoil poles* from the tomb of Confucius, and he still knew of the art which had also become almost unknown in China of working out an oracle by their aid.”⁵² For Wilhelm, Lao was not merely an *Yijing* scholar; he was an embodiment of the living tradition of Confucianism. To preserve this living tradition, Wilhelm adopted the method of “double translation” in rendering the *Yijing* into German. First, he translated the text into German after listening to Lao’s explanation. Then, he checked the accuracy of his German translation by re-translating it into Chinese. He asked Lao to review his re-translation and only after Lao approved it, did he go back to his German translation to improve its style.⁵³ Throughout this laborious process of translating the *Yijing* back and forth in German and Chinese, Lao was involved in every step and his view greatly shaped the translation.

***Yijing* and Post-War Europe**

To some, Wilhelm was a bit extreme in honoring the Chinese wisdom. For instance, George and Annina Danton, the two translators of Wilhelm’s *Confucius and Confucianism*, advised their English-speaking readers of the 1930s to be cau-

⁴⁸ Wilhelm remained in Qingdao throughout World War I, including the siege of the city by the Japanese. For his remembrance of his wartime experience, see *The Soul of China*, pp. 166-220. See also Salome Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm*, pp. 218-256.

⁴⁹ Wilhelm, *The Soul of China*, p. 363.

⁵⁰ Wilhelm, *The Soul of China*, p. 363.

⁵¹ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, translated by Cary F. Baynes (Princeton 1950), p. xlv.

⁵² Wilhelm, *The Soul of China*, p. 181.

⁵³ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. xlv.

tious about Wilhelm's extremism. They told them that Wilhelm's view was "to an extent rare even among the radically minded, in the right of the Chinese to intellectual, political, aesthetic, and social self-determination."⁵⁴ To others, however, Wilhelm's view was a prime example of "an all-embracing humanness." In his memorial address at Wilhelm's funeral, Carl G. Jung commended him for his "greatness of heart" which allowed him to "open himself without reservation to a profoundly foreign spirit."⁵⁵ To further make his point, Jung said: "Reaching beyond all Christian *ressentiment*, beyond all European presumptions, his comprehending devotion is in itself witness of a rarely great spirit."⁵⁶

An extremist or not, Wilhelm had in mind the devastation of post-World War I Europe when he paid tribute to the Chinese wisdom. For instance, in the 1923 preface to his *Yijing* translation, Wilhelm used the occasion to urge his readers to look beyond the dark present. He reminded them that he completed his *Yijing* translation in the horror of the First World War. Part of his translation, he told them, was done in the midst of ruthless killing and indiscriminate destruction during the Japanese siege of Qingdao. As a classic about the constancy in change and finding hope amidst adversity, the *Yijing* gave him courage to live through the darkest moments of his life.⁵⁷ After returning to Europe in the early 1920s, he found his experience in Qingdao had taught him a great deal about the relevancy of the *Yijing* to the war-torn Europe. "In Germany," he said, "I seemed to be as far removed as possible from ancient Chinese wisdom, although in Europe also many a word of counsel from the mysterious book has here and there fallen on fertile soil."⁵⁸

By "a word of counsel," Wilhelm meant the main theme of the *Yijing*: the optimism about life and the refusal to give up. At a time when things appeared to be hopeless in the war-torn Europe, he believed the Europeans and particularly the Germans had much to learn from this Chinese classic. In his lecture entitled "Constancy in Change" delivered in the 1920s, Wilhelm made clear how the Europeans could benefit from the *Yijing*. To set the tone for his lecture, he began with a reference to post-war Europe. "Humankind has experienced much," he said, "and I might say that my life, as well as life generally, appears to be suffused with difficulty."⁵⁹ Having painted a gloomy picture of the present, he reminded his audience that hardship in life should not deter them from taking actions to build a better future. Summarizing the *Yijing* in simple terms, he said: "Life is an inexhaustible spring; it does not decrease and does not increase, and is

⁵⁴ Richard Wilhelm, *Confucius and Confucianism*, translated into English by George H. Danton and Annina Periam Danton (New York 1931), p. iii.

⁵⁵ Carl G. Jung, "In Memory of Richard Wilhelm," in Richard Wilhelm, *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life* (New York 1962), p. 138.

⁵⁶ Carl G. Jung, "In Memory of Richard Wilhelm," p. 138.

⁵⁷ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, pp. xlv-xlvi.

⁵⁸ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, pp. xlvi.

⁵⁹ Wilhelm, *Lectures on the I Ching*, p. 83.

at everybody's disposal."⁶⁰ He urged his audience to adopt this Chinese view of life and to make sacrifice in re-building the war-torn Europe. "No matter how painful," he said, "we must prepare to move forward into the new time, together with old remnants that tradition has given us – unsentimentally, bravely, and hopefully."⁶¹ Because of his promotion of Chinese culture as a cure to post-World War I Europe, Wilhelm is known to some as a "sinicized German translator."⁶²

The Philosophy of Change

Understanding the *Yijing* from the perspective of post-World War I Europe, Wilhelm rendered the Chinese classic quite different from Legge. In the introduction to his *Yijing* translation, he acknowledged that the Chinese classic was originally a "book of oracles" and had been widely used in China as a manual of divination. Also, he gave credit to King Wen and the Duke of Zhou for changing the nature of the *Yijing* by adding remarks to the hexagrams and the hexagram lines. However, unlike Legge, he considered Confucius more important than King Wen and the Duke of Zhou in transforming the *Yijing* from a book of oracles into a book of wisdom. "The Book of Changes as edited and annotated by Confucius," he proclaimed, "is the version that has come down to our time."⁶³

This difference between Legge and Wilhelm is revealing when considering the fact that both translators based their translations on Li Guangdi's *Zhouyi zhezong*. As mentioned earlier, in this 1715 commentary the original *Yijing* text (i.e., the sixty-four hexagrams and their lines) was separated from the *Ten Wings*. Following in Li's footsteps, in their translations Legge and Wilhelm separated the text from its commentarial materials. But the two translators had different views on the relative importance of these two parts of the *Yijing*. For Legge, the separation of the text from the commentarial materials gave him the reason to focus his attention on the sixty-four hexagrams as historical documents of the early Zhou. In contrast, for Wilhelm, the separation of the text from commentarial materials allowed him to concentrate on the *Ten Wings* as the repository of Confucius' profound reflections on life. In other words, what used to be the "Appendixes" in Legge's translation took the center stage in Wilhelm's discussion of Confucian moral philosophy.

According to Wilhelm, there are three main ideas in the *Ten Wings* that make the *Yijing* a world classic.⁶⁴ First is the idea of change. For him, the *Yijing* is concerned with the interaction of two natural forces, the *yin* 陰 (the receptive)

⁶⁰ Wilhelm, *Lectures on the I Ching*, p. 93.

⁶¹ Wilhelm, *Lectures on the I Ching*, p. 112.

⁶² See Michael Lackner, "Richard Wilhelm, a 'sinicized' German translator," in *De l'un au multiple: Traductions du chinois vers les langues européennes*, ed. by Viviane Alleton and Michael Lackner (Paris 1999), pp. 85-98.

⁶³ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. liv.

⁶⁴ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, pp. liv-lvii.

and the *yang* 陽 (the creative). As the *yin* turns into the *yang* and the *yang* transforms into the *yin*, they give rise to the myriad things and trigger changes in this universe. Contrary to the Christian idea of God's creation of the universe, this interaction of the *yin* and the *yang* leads the Chinese to believe that "the world of being arises out of their change and interplay." It also allows them to see change as continuous, cyclical, and purposeful. Second is the idea of representation. Wilhelm considers the sixty-four hexagrams as "images" rather than historical records. As symbols, they do not have specific references but representing the "unfolding of conditions *in statu nascendi*." They direct our attention from our immediate surroundings to the process of change in this universe, so that we can see "the seeds of things to come." Third is the idea of human agency. Through the symbolism of the hexagrams and its oracle language, the *Yijing* describes a world full of hope and opportunity. Even in a seemingly bleak situation, the *Yijing* offers suggestions to turn things around. For Wilhelm, this optimism about life is the greatest contribution of the *Yijing*, because it encourages the readers to take charge of their life and to become "independent of the tyranny of events."

In highlighting these three ideas in the *Ten Wings*, Wilhelm shows that he was more a scholar than a missionary. Despite serving as a missionary in Qingdao for more than two decades, he was ready to distance himself from such Christian tenets as the preexistence of the Creator and the salvation through grace. Of course, he never claimed that he translated the *Yijing* to counter Christianity. But his ability to "reach beyond all Christian *ressentiment*," using Carl Jung's terms, gave him insights into the Chinese cosmology that were not available to missionaries. A case in point is his understanding of the *yin* and the *yang*. Unlike Legge who was ill at ease when he came upon the discussion of the *yin* and the *yang* in the *Xici* (Appendix III in *The Yi King*),⁶⁵ Wilhelm not only understood their importance but also explained their meaning clearly to his readers. Part of the complexity in understanding the *yin* and the *yang* is their "unity of opposite." That is, on the one hand, the *yin* and the *yang* are complete opposite – yielding versus aggressive, shadow versus light, soft versus firm, feminine versus masculine and so on. On the other hand, they work in tandem like two partners in a dance. To explain this unique relationship of the *yin* and the *yang*, Wilhelm wrote:

In the last analysis, [the *Creative* and the *Receptive*] cannot be called a dualism. The two principles are united by a relation based on homogeneity; they do not combat but complement each other. The difference in level creates a potential, as it were, by virtue of which movement and living expression of energy becomes possible.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ In commenting on the *Xici*, Legge confined his comments on "the phenomena of external nature" and avoided discussing the Chinese cosmology. At times, Legge found his approach inadequate to render the *Xici* intelligibly and complained about it being "an amusement of the folly." See *The Yi King*, pp. 349-352.

⁶⁶ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, pp. 281-282.

This “bipolar complementarity” of the *yin* and the *yang*, as Andrew H. Plaks calls it,⁶⁷ was one of the laws of change that Wilhelm wanted his readers to remember when reading the *Yijing*. Strange as it was to a Western mind, this law explains why the world could be self-generative and self-renewing. More importantly, it drew attention to the vitality of life and the possibility of change. To underscore this point, Wilhelm discussed the meaning of life and death. To him, birth was “the coming forth into the world of the visible” and death was “the return into the regions of the invisible.”⁶⁸ They were manifestations of the interaction of the *yin* and the *yang*, such that “[n]either of these signifies an absolute beginning nor an absolute ending, any more than do the changes of the seasons within the year.”⁶⁹

In the same vein, Wilhelm used the *yin* and the *yang* to explain the Chinese cosmogony. In the *Xici* I, chapter 11, there is a passage describing the generation of the universe. It describes a process of creation which includes the Great Primal Beginning (*Taiji* 太極), the two primary forces (*liangyi* 兩儀), the four images (*sixiang* 四象), and the eight trigrams (*bagua* 八卦). This process is said to trigger the creation of the myriad things in the universe.⁷⁰ For Legge, being preoccupied with God’s creation of the universe, this *Xici* passage did not make sense. First, he wondered what “the Great Primal Beginning” meant and how it was related to God. Second, he did not know “how was the first step taken in the formation of the two elementary lines.”⁷¹ Worse still, since the twelfth-century, this *Xici* passage was associated with the Diagram of the Great Primal Beginning (*Taiji tu* 太極圖) of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073), in which an empty circle was used to represent the Great Primal Beginning.⁷² Legge had no idea how the universe could be created from emptiness. “I fail myself to understand,” he said, “how there can be generated from a circle the undivided and the broken line.”⁷³ Turning to Wilhelm, the *Xici* passage was about the creation of the universe based on the interaction of the *yin* and the *yang*. Whereas the circle symbolized the working in tandem of the *yin* and the *yang*, the straight and broken lines represented the opposite nature of the two forces. Reminding his readers about this “bipolar complementarity” of the *yin* and the *yang*, he commented:

The Great Primal Beginning, *taiji*, plays an important role in later Chinese natural philosophy. Originally *ji* is the ridgepole – a simple line symbolizing the positing of oneness (—). This positing of oneness implies also a positing of duality, an

⁶⁷ Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton 1976), pp. 43-53.

⁶⁸ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 294.

⁶⁹ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 294.

⁷⁰ For a translation of the *Xici* chapter, see Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, pp. 318-319.

⁷¹ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 375.

⁷² A copy of the *Diagram of the Great Primal Beginning* can be found in Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, translated by Derk Bodde (Princeton 1953), p. 436.

⁷³ Legge, *The Yi King*, p. 375.

above and a below. The conditioning element is further designated as an undivided line, while the conditioned element is represented by means of a divided line (--). These are the two polar primary forces later designated as *yang*, the bright principle, and *yin*, the dark.⁷⁴

For Wilhelm, the “bipolar complementarity” of the *yin* and the *yang* explains how the universe creates and sustains itself. It describes how things change in accordance with different combination of the *yin* force and the *yang* force. The optimism about life is, to Wilhelm, the greatest contribution of the *Yijing* to the world.

Hexagram as a Field of Action

Reading the *Yijing* from an ethical-philosophical perspective, Wilhelm interpreted the sixty-four hexagrams differently. Unlike Legge who considered the hexagrams as historical documents detailing the story of the establishment of the Zhou Dynasty, Wilhelm saw them as philosophical treatises on how to perfect one’s life. For Legge, as historical documents, the sixty-four hexagrams had to be read in the order they were presented in the *Yijing*. In contrast, for Wilhelm, the sixty-four hexagrams could be read in any order so long as the readers used them to reflect on life. This difference affected the ways in which the two translators presented the sixty-four hexagrams. In *The Yi King*, Legge put emphasis on the relationship of one hexagram with another hexagram. For instance, “Tun” (Difficulty at the Beginning, #3) and “Meng” (Youthful Folly, #4) had to follow “Qian” (The Creative, #1) and “Kun” (The Yielding, #2) because they were records of King Wen’s attempt to challenge the Shang imperial court. In *I Ging*, Wilhelm treated each hexagram as an independent entity embodying the principles of change in the *Yijing*. Doing this did not imply that Wilhelm encouraged his readers to skip reading some of the hexagrams. Rather, he wanted his readers to immerse in hexagrams that happened to attract their attention, and drew lessons from them. Being “one of the most important books in the world’s literature,” Wilhelm believed that the *Yijing* offered a wide variety of resources to people of different cultures and backgrounds.⁷⁵

Take, for instance, Wilhelm’s interpretation of the first four hexagrams. Regarding the first hexagram “Qian” (The Creative), besides equating it to the *yang* natural force, he discusses the hexagram as a symbol of time. He focuses on the four attributes of “Qian”: sublime, success, furthering, and perseverance.⁷⁶ To him, these four attributes indicate the importance of patience and holding fast to one’s principle. He says: “Here it is shown that the way to success lies in apprehending and giving actuality to the way of the universe [tao], which, as a law running through end and beginning, brings about all phenomena in time. Thus

⁷⁴ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, pp. 318-319.

⁷⁵ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. xlvi.

⁷⁶ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 4.

each step attained forthwith becomes a preparation for the next. Time is no longer a hindrance but the means of making actual what is potential.”⁷⁷ Turning “Qian” into a discussion of taking the time to fulfill one’s goal, Wilhelm makes the hexagram appeal to a wide audience, who may seek advice for their lives rather than the knowledge of China.

In a similar fashion, he interprets “Kun” (The Receptive, #2) as a philosophical treatise on devotion. Again, he discusses the four attributes of the hexagram: sublime, success, furthering, and the perseverance of a mare. Focusing on the main difference between the attributes of “Qian” and those of “Kun,” he comments at length on the “perseverance of a mare.” First, he reminds his readers that a mare combines “the strength and swiftness of the horse with the gentleness and devotion of the cow.”⁷⁸ Then, he relates the symbolism of a mare to personal ethics:

Applied to human affairs, therefore, what the hexagram indicates is action in conformity with the situation. The person in question is not in an independent position, but is acting as an assistant. This means that he must achieve something. It is not his task to try to lead – that would only make him lose the way – but to let himself be led. If he knows to meet fate with an attitude of acceptance, he is sure to find the right guidance.⁷⁹

Thus, by turning “Kun” into a discussion of passive activism, he transforms the hexagram into a guide for life.

Wilhelm does the same for “Tun” (Difficulty at the Beginning, #3) and “Meng” (Youthful Folly, #4). In “Tun,” he finds advice for someone in a difficult situation. Speaking like a friend who is offering helpful suggestions, he tells his readers: “If a person encounters a hindrance at the beginning of an enterprise, he must not try to force advance but must pause and take thought. However, nothing should put him off his course; he must preserve and constantly keep the goal in sight.” Not only does Wilhelm offer suggestions as to how to handle oneself during a difficult time, he also gives practical advice for turning things around. “It is important to seek out the right assistants,” he says, “but he can find them only if he avoids arrogance and associates with his fellows in a spirit of humility.”⁸⁰ As for “Meng,” Wilhelm sees it as a discussion of teacher-student partnership in education. Looking at the hexagram as another manifestation of the “bipolar complementarity” of the *yin* and the *yang*, he emphasizes the importance of the meeting of the mind between teachers and students in bringing about a successful education. On the one hand, the student “must be conscious of his lack of experience.” He must realize that he was indeed “the young folly.” On the other hand, the teacher must “wait to be sought out instead of offering himself.”⁸¹ For

⁷⁷ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 5.

⁷⁸ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 11.

⁷⁹ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 12.

⁸⁰ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 17.

⁸¹ Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 21.

Wilhelm, time is the essence in education. He warns that a teacher is irresponsible if he offers assistance prematurely, or fails to take disciplinary action when necessary. Further broadening the appeal of this hexagram, Wilhelm reminds his readers that what is said in “Meng” can be applied to government as well. As in good education, good government involves the meeting of the mind between the leaders and the people.⁸² Thus, through philosophizing “Tun” and “Meng,” he achieves what he sets out to do—transforming the *Yijing* into a book of wisdom to provoke thought and to enrich people’s life.

The “Book of Wisdom” Approach

Of course, there are strengths and weaknesses in Wilhelm’s ethical-philosophical approach to the *Yijing*. On the positive side, he succeeded in turning the *Yijing* into a world classic. In his translation, he presented an image that the *Yijing* may have originated from China, but it is a book that speaks to everyone. For the blessed, it issues warning about the transience of success and the danger of hubris. For the downtrodden, it offers encouragement to make the best out of a given situation and to work for a better future. For the rest, it provides resources to anticipate, as Richard Gotshalk puts it, the “movement into the unknown and the uncertain.”⁸³ Precisely because Wilhelm’s *Yijing* transcends historical and cultural boundaries, it has been so popular in the West, especially after the publication of its English translation in 1950.

However, to his critics, Wilhelm’s “book of wisdom approach” may bring more harm than good. He is seen as giving a simplistic view of the *Yijing* by portraying it as the “trans-temporal and trans-cultural repository of unchanging wisdom.”⁸⁴ At a time when academicians are focusing their attention on recovering diverse, pluralistic, and marginal voices in the past, Wilhelm’s ethical-philosophical approach to the *Yijing* looks out-dated, resembling a reductionist’s attempt to simplify the past. Thus, the calls for change abound. Some scholars, such as Richard John Lynn, want to undo what Wilhelm has done by proving that

⁸² Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 24.

⁸³ In *Divination, Order and the Zhouyi* (Lanham, MD 1999), Richard Gotshalk offers a translation of the *Yijing* as a divination text of the Zhou Dynasty. In the “Introduction” of the book Gotshalk discusses how the *Yijing* provides the “knowledge of the future,” allowing one to have a sense of order in confronting with uncertainty of life. In a poetic manner, he describes the “knowledge of the future” of the *Yijing* as follows (p. 37): “Life – personal and collective – is inherently an affair of change. In its temporality it involves movement into the unknown and the uncertain. Given our natures we develop a capacity to anticipate what that movement is bringing, and because something is at stake for us in our participation in that movement, we desire to anticipate well what is coming and aided by that to share effectively in securing what is at stake as we encounter and interact with what we do.”

⁸⁴ Richard John Lynn’s review of Kidder Smith *et al.*, *Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching* (Princeton 1990), in *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 27 (1997), pp. 152-153. In his review, Richard John Lynn contrasts the approach of reading the *Yijing* in *Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching* with that of Wilhelm.

the *Yijing* “exists in so many versions as there are commentaries on it.”⁸⁵ Others, such as Kidder Smith, promote “the study of *Yijing* in history” that no longer focuses on the *Yijing* itself but on how it has been interpreted or appropriated in different times.⁸⁶

While this discussion of a change in approach is valuable and refreshing, one should not underestimate Wilhelm's contribution in making the *Yijing* accessible to the Western audience. A reductionist or not, there is no doubt that he broadens the appeal of the *Yijing* by rendering it into a book of wisdom transcending cultural and historical boundaries. In so doing, he makes the *Yijing* attractive not only to a small circle of Sinologists in ivory towers but to a larger audience who seeks inspirations on life. More importantly, in evaluating Wilhelm's contribution, we need to take into consideration his time. In the 1920s, the eminent Sinologist Lionel Giles observed that even in the “universal histories,” it was common that “China is either neglected altogether or dismissed in a chapter or two, the treatment accorded to her being necessary superficial and generally inaccurate.”⁸⁷ It was in this context of neglect and ignorance of anything about the East, that Wilhelm's *Yijing* translation was so valuable. In his writings, Wilhelm never came forward to address his contemporaries' Eurocentricism. But by rendering the *Yijing* as a book of wisdom, he proved that there was something the East could offer to the West, and that the West might benefit from learning from the East. Today, given our discussion of globalism and multiculturalism, we may be suspicious of Wilhelm's rigid East-West dichotomy. Nevertheless, at his time, the East-West dichotomy was an effective way to challenge Eurocentricism. And in showing that the Chinese had developed a sophisticated concept of change, he reminded his contemporaries that Europe was by no means the center of the world.

“生生之謂易”：比較理雅各與衛禮賢的《易經》翻譯

韓子奇

理雅各與尉禮賢乃近代著名的《易經》翻譯家，但一直以來，學者們只讚賞他們對經文翻譯的貢獻，卻忽略了他們對《易經》解讀的創意。因此本文將針對二人的時代背景，來探討他們對《易經》的看法。

⁸⁵ Richard John Lynn's review, p. 152.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of the “study of the *Yijing* in history,” see Kidder Smith's “Preface” to *Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching* (Princeton 1990), p. vii.

⁸⁷ Lionel Giles's introduction to Richard Wilhelm, *A Short History of Chinese Civilization*, translated by Joan Joshua (New York 1929), p. 9.

理雅各身處的時代與衛禮賢大不相同。他生於大英帝國蓬勃興旺之際，故他常以西方宗教和哲學的觀點來評論《易經》，用來顯示西方的威武強大。反觀衛禮賢，他目睹第一次世界大戰之後，歐洲滿目滄夷的景況，故闡釋《易經》“窮則變，變則通”的道理，來勉勵歐人奮發圖強，重整家園。

因時代背景之差異，兩人對《易經》的解讀亦有所分歧。理雅各視《易經》為西周文獻，只強調它的歷史價值。衛禮賢則醉心於儒家思想，把《易經》看作為孔子的傳世之作。雖然二者觀點角度各有不同，但他們的《易經》翻譯，對西方漢學的發展皆有重大貢獻。