

Self-improvement and Social Commitment

on artistic charm of The Book of Changes

Hua Feng

School of Art and Design
Huanghe Science and Technology College
Zhengzhou, Henan, 45000

Abstract—*The Book of Changes* is the essence of Chinese traditional culture with a tremendous artistic charm, which is a star never falling, a shining pearl, and a masterpiece. This book, as the first of collected classics and the source of Chinese culture, is a monumental masterpiece to elaborate Chinese humanism and the beginning of hundreds of various schools. And knowledge of Lao Zi and Confucius comes from it. Besides, it is the valuable book to unlock the password of universe and life, and its endless spirit of self-discipline and social commitment, will spread through the ages.

Keywords—*The Book of Changes; masterpiece; self-discipline; social commitment*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Book of Changes is the essence of Chinese traditional culture, with a tremendous artistic charm, which is a star never falling, a shining pearl, and a masterpiece. This book, as the first of collected classics and the source of Chinese culture, is a monumental masterpiece to elaborate Chinese humanism and the beginning of hundreds of various schools. And knowledge of Lao Zi and Confucius comes from it.

Besides, it is the valuable book to unlock the password of universe and life, and its endless spirit of self-discipline and social commitment, will spread through the ages. The self-discipline and social commitment in the sentence “As heaven maintains vigor through movement, the gentleman should constantly strive for self-perfection” and “As the vehemence of the earth is thick and actually amiable, the gentleman should increase thick virtue and permit to carry creation” which are the hexagram-records of Diagram Qian and Diagram Kun in *The Book of Changes*, has become the major spiritual connotation of the Chinese nation, and is considered as the school motto of Tsinghua University.

Self-discipline and social commitment is the cultural heritage of the Chinese nation, is the essence of Chinese culture, and our precious spiritual wealth with great wisdom, and great realm, which includes two very important character traits. The gentle man should not only be resolute and strong, and motivational, but also should increase thick virtue and permit to carry creation.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

A. *The effect of The Book of Changes*

All the documents recorded: *The Book of Changes* is in the first place of collected classics, and the beginning of collected classics, for it is the source of Chinese culture, and the beginning of hundreds of various schools. When the First Emperor of Qin gave an order to burn books and bury Confucian scholars alive, he ordered to burn The Four Books and Five Classics, but only left The Book of Changes unburned. Because the book is considered to be a divine book, so the book is kept intact until now. “Diligentinone’s Studies” is about the story that Confucius at his old age studies The Book of Changes tirelessly.

If the Chinese culture is a towering tree, then *The Book of Changes* is the root of the tree, which is growing in Youli City. A few years ago, a Taiwan scholar saw “Youli City” from books. He would like to see whether there was such “City” on earth or not, so he came to Tangyin in Henan. When he saw Youli City, he was unknowingly filled with tears, and he said: “I thought it was just a legend, just a dream. It is unexpected.”

The popular binary of the computer all over the world comes from *The Book of Changes*. And now *The Book of Changes* has more than 3,000 kinds, which has already spread throughout Japan, Korea and Singapore. Japan’s reign title “Taisho” was taken from *The Book of Changes*. South Korea’s national flag is also known as Tai Chi flag and its pattern is the Chinese Eight Diagrams. Logo on the planes of Singapore Air Force is a Tai Chi Figure. The emblem of the 24th Olympic Games which was held in Seoul, South Korea on September 1988, is the Chinese Tai Chi Figure. The Tai Chi Figure implies harmony, symmetry, balance, circulation, endless creation, stability and other theories, which represents the nation’s reflection and exploration of the universe and life. Chiang Kai-shek’s name came from the Liu’er line of Diagram Yu of the sixty-four hexagrams in The Book of Changes “integrity as the stone, no all day enjoyment, stick to the right path, thus get good luck”. Tuan, a part of *The Book of Changes*, says “no all day enjoyment, stick to the right path, thus get good luck”, thus he took Zhongzheng as his name.

Yan Jingsong, a researcher of Sinology, said:

The knowledge of Lao Zi comes from *The Book of Changes*, advocating the earth. As the vehemence of the earth is thick and actually amiable, the gentleman should increase

thick virtue and permit to carry creation. It speaks of amiability with the priority of Kun.

The knowledge of Confucius comes from *The Book of Changes*, advocating the heaven. As heaven maintains vigor through movement, the gentleman should constantly strive for self-perfection. It speaks of vigor with the priority of Qian.

Zeng Shiqiang of Taiwan Normal University said in the *Mystery of The Book of Changes* of the Lecture Room: if you finish reading this book, then you will suddenly understand that *The Book of Changes* is a valuable book to unlock the password of universe and life. *The Book of Changes* has three keys: 1. the Eight Diagrams of Fuxi; 2. King Wen of Zhou; 3. Confucius's Ten Wings. Confucius hoped that *The Book of Changes* can fly, which means One World—Global Village.

The *Book of Changes* has totally 64 diagrams, and 384 trigrams. Legend has it that Fuxi created Eight Diagrams, King Wen deduced sixty-four hexagrams, and Confucius wrote *The Book of Changes*. The Eight Diagrams of Fuxi reveals natural laws of the universe, King Wen's deduction of *The Book of Changes* has natural laws applied for all things, and Confucius wrote this book, which makes *The Book of Changes* rise to the height of philosophy, and makes the book full of the endless spirit, that is self-discipline and social commitment.

B. The essence of The Book of Changes

Zeng Shiqiang said in the *Mystery of The Book of Changes*: the Eight Diagrams is a set of very beautiful and very neat symbol system. Fuxi created the Eight Diagrams. King Wen of Zhou developed the Eight Diagrams into the sixty-four hexagrams, which has been used for generations, and is the great wisdom of the Chinese nation. The above of his three divinatory symbols means heaven, the below means earth, and the middle represents man who play a very important role in the universe. The Eight Diagrams of Fuxi tells us a basic secret of the universe: Yin (--) and Yang(—). Yin and Yang are the most basic elements to make up everything in the universe, and the change of the universe is the change of Yin and Yang.

The Book of Changes observes Yin and Yang, and it believes that everything in the world is either Yin or Yang, the master is Yang, the slave is Yin, and Yin is attached to Yang.

It has been detailedly elaborated in the Chapter 31 of *A Dream of Red Mansions*: Shi Xiangyun, a forthright and easy woman, not only is enthusiastically fond of poetry and of teaching others, but also has a good knowledge of *The Book of Changes*. The maidservant Cuilü one day asked her what are the Yin and Yang, and Xiangyun explained: "The heavens, for instance, are Yang, and the earth is Yin; water is Yin and fire is Yang; the sun is Yang and the moon is Yin. Even the leaves of that tree are distinguished by Yin and Yang. The side, which looks up and faces the sun, is called Yang; while that in the shade and looking downwards, is called Yin. For fans we're holding, the front side is Yang and the reverse side is Yin." "That you, Miss, are Yang, and that I'm Yin," answered Cuilü. Xiangyun produced her handkerchief, and, while screening her mouth with it, burst out into a loud fit of laughter. "What I say must be right for you to laugh in this way," Cuilü observed. "People say," continued Cuilü, "that masters are Yang, and

that servant-girls are Yin; don't I even apprehend this primary principle?" The essence of Yin and Yang can be learned from their conversation — the master is Yang, the slave is Yin, and Yin is attached to Yang. So amazing! Which book has ever interpreted the two words Yin and Yang in such popular and easy-to-understand way?

Mr. Zeng Shiqiang has also mentioned Yin and Yang once on the program Lecture Room, and gave a vivid expression of Yin-Yang relationship: The day is Yang and the night is Yin; heaven is Yang and earth is Yin; male is Yang and female is Yin; sprout is Yang and leaves are Yin; head is Yang and foot is Yin; the palm is Yang and the back of the hand is Yin; the thumb is Yang and the other four fingers are Yin; odd number is Yang and even number is Yin. The thumb has two joints while each of the other four fingers has three joints. This is called "Yang contains Yin, so is the way around". The relationship between Yin and Yang is: Yang is in the Yin and Yin is in the Yang, so there is vitality. All things in the universe are true or fake; genuine or sham, true or false, also is Yin and Yang. It will be more wonderful if further understood. One hand has 14 joints and two is 28 joints; then all stars in the heaven will be in your grasp. As the saying goes: "Intellectuals stay inside, while they know everything outside.", called 'Heaven and Earth in the Sleeve'.

C. Sprits of The Book of Changes

Our forefathers said: you will be good at financial management with the knowledge of *The Great Learning*, good at pacifying the world with the knowledge of *Analects of Confucius*, good at talking with the knowledge of *The Book of Songs* and good at prediction with the knowledge of *The Book of Changes*.

Yan Jingsong, a researcher of the studies of Chinese ancient civilization, said: *The Book of Changes* is not for fortune telling but for virtue improvement and performance refinement, making the past serve the present. *The Book of Changes* is not mysterious, and it talks about the theory that man is an integral part of nature as well as the awareness of unexpected development.

The self-discipline and social commitment has become the crucial representation of Chinese national spirit and national character. It has been also adopted as the motto of Tsinghua University, fully demonstrating the unique spirit of world-renowned university.

In 1914, Liang Qichao gave a speech titled "A Man of Noble Character" at Tsinghua University, he used these words to encourage all of students, and the self-discipline and social commitment became the motto of Tsinghua School hereafter. The school song has further spoken of the admiration of Tsinghua people for the spirits of *The Book of Changes*: "Beside the green mountain on the west and vast sea on the east, our university is standing firmly in the center. With Oriental and Western cultures are gathered here, we are striving for great harmony. Large numbers of students are from different places to get good education in a happy environment. As Heaven's movement is ever vigorous, so must a gentleman ceaselessly strive along."

In the morning of May 11, 2005, James Soong from Taiwan gave a speech at Tsinghua University, and the entrance ticket for his lecture was designed by students from over 20 colleges of Tsinghua University: the background color is lavender; on the front side, it's the school badge of Tsinghua University and on the reverse side, it's said: strive constantly to seek peace and rejuvenate the country; be virtuous to increase creditability and promote the unification.

The self-discipline and social commitment is not only the motto of Tsinghua University but also the standard set for us. It's a conceptual realm of life.

What's the 'self-discipline'? Throughout the year, spring, summer, autumn and winter, these four seasons revolve without end. The wind, thunder, rain and lightning, sunrise and sunset, are all powerful and relentless. The movement of heaven (namely, the nature) is powerful and unyielding, so shall be the behavior of a man. A man of noble character shall be positive, resolute and steadfast, aspirant and driven, and even drifting from place to place homeless and miserable, even in trouble, he shall march forward courageously until succeed.

What's 'social commitment'? Mountains and rivers, birds and flowers, cordyceps and caterpillar fungus, venomous serpents and wild beasts, all things are plentiful and suitable, cheerful and generous. The vehemence of the earth is thick, actually amiable, and the gentleman shall have big heart and noble character, behaving like the earth, virtuous, magnanimous and kind to others.

III. CONCLUSION

Today, we shall still hold to the valuable spirit of "self-discipline and social commitment" which will help us succeed and tell us the principle 'Is beforehand the personhood': when being a man or dealing with people, we must be broad-minded, determined and aggressive, strict with ourselves and generous to others. In career, we shall behave like the heaven, self-disciplined and persistent; in life, we shall be like the earth, being nice, making ourselves better, being generous and accommodating others' shortcomings. We shall unceasingly enrich our knowledge, enhance our moral cultivation and capacity and possess a laudable tolerant spirit to embrace intolerable things. In this way, we can pay attention to the interests of the whole and assume great responsibilities. Since the generosity is a state of grace, the virtue of patience, a realm, a temperament and a demeanor, to get along well with colleagues, we shall be more understanding, generous, frank and open. Smile more, because smile is the tolerance, the open mind, the detachment, the scenery and the beauty. With a bit more sincerity, liberality, creativity and perspiration, graciously go your own way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] Zeng Zhiqiang, *Mystery of The Book of Changes* [M], Xi'an, Shaanxi Normal University Press, 2009.
- [2] Cao Xueqin, Gao E, *A Dream of Red Mansions* [M], Beijing, People's Literature Publishing House, 1995.
- [3] Feng Hua, *Appreciation and Analysis of Outstanding Literary Works* [M], Beijing, China Youth Publishing House, 2004.