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# THE *YIJING* AND THE CRISIS OF WESTERN TRADITION

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УДК 221:130.2(1-15)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.22182/spm.specijal2019.7>

Оригинални научни рад

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Resume

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In the article author follows a view that although rational thinking can be found in all literate societies around the globe, differences between cultures develop to a certain degree also from basic distinctions between philosophical ways of thinking. In this sense, the *Yijing*, or *The Book of Changes*, classical text not only characterizes the basic mode of Chinese philosophical thinking, but also influences past and present Chinese culture. The *Yijing*, however, did not only influence Chinese contexts, but from the 18<sup>th</sup> century on, its impact was felt also in the West. To Jesuit translators, Leibniz and C. G. Jung, and even to 20<sup>th</sup> century physicists, artists or musicians, this ancient text had always something relevant to say. The more so in times of crisis, when it became evident that it is better to escape one's own culture and to look for answers elsewhere; in a wholly different tradition. It seems, however, that the reception of the *Yijing* in the West went full circle; from being an exotic and mystical text from an unknown and foreign practice, to an important corrective of a Western tradition that found itself

in crisis during the twentieth century, to the global culture industry.

**Keywords:** Book of Changes (Yijing), Western Culture, Cultural Crisis, Chinese Philosophy, East-West

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marx remarks somewhere that men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please. This is, of course, not only a remark, but actually one of the most famous passages from Karl Marx's *oeuvre*, and it continues as follows:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language.<sup>1</sup>

What Marx has in mind here, is above all a political revolution, but as his examples show, it can also be a religious one – “Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul”<sup>2</sup> and one can go even further and include revolutions in philosophy or in thinking in general as well. Even though the aforementioned Marx's claim is not without problems, it seems to be quite in place in case of Western philosophical tradition, or even broader, in case of Western culture or civilization as a whole.

It has been stated frequently that Western civilization stands on three pillars: Judeo-Christian religion, the Roman law, and last

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1 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Mondial, New York and Berlin 2005, 1.

2 Ibid.

but not least, Greek philosophy. It may be that the place of religion within society has changed and that it does not play so important a role as it was a case in the past. Law, on the other hand, is of the utmost importance and its students still have to know the Roman version very well. Western philosophy is no exception here. Not only its scholars know the tradition of Greek philosophy by heart and regularly draw from it, but sometimes also use it, as Marx has commented, in epochs of revolutionary crisis.

“The safest general characterization of European philosophical tradition,” writes Alfred North Whitehead, “is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. [...] I allude to the wealth of general ideas scattered through them (Whitehead, 1978, 39).” Even authors who try to find a proper interpretation of contemporary media, from film to internet, regularly draw ideas from Plato’s works such as *The Republic* or *Phaedrus*. Not all of them, of course, find Plato’s ideas progressive or even suitable to be used in contexts of contemporary society. For some, among them notably Jacques Rancière, Plato represents the beginning of inequality within society, and therefore his ideas should be abandoned. Due to the same reason, some turn to Aristotle when it comes to questions of politics, but also art. Others, e.g. Martin Heidegger, go even further back in time and use Pre-Socratic thinkers and their concepts to rewrite Western philosophy in the twentieth century.

If Greek philosophy may be regarded as one of the sources of Western culture, then its influence obviously cannot be found only within the field of philosophy, but also in other broader aspects of culture and society – from popular culture to everyday life. Nevertheless, not always is a solution to be found in a proper tradition. Sometimes the tradition finds itself in a crisis, and to cite from Marx again, it “cannot take its poetry from past but only from future”<sup>3</sup>. The twentieth century unfortunately showed that the future can very easily be turned from utopia to dystopia and hope can simply turn to fear<sup>4</sup>. Sometimes it seems to be better to escape his or her own tradition, not to count on the future, but to look for answers elsewhere; in a wholly different tradition.

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3 Ibid., 3.

4 Ernest Ženko, “Mapping the unmappable: Dichotomies of utopianism”, *Filozofski vestnik*, 38(1), 2017.

## 2. INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY

Rational or *analytic* understanding of the world in the broadest sense is something that can be found in all literate and even many nonliterate societies, and some interpreters relate it to a seemingly natural development of societies. In different societies some quite difficult questions are asked and discussed – about the fundamental nature of reality, about what is to be a human, what constitutes a good life, about a nature of beauty, and so on – and there are both commonalities and intercultural differences to be found in the answers.<sup>5</sup>

The most curious common tendency, however, is to “believe that one’s own culture is the only one in which philosophical thought has or even could emerge”<sup>6</sup>. This tendency was and to a certain extent still is present in Western philosophical context, however, “there have been times when non-Chinese ideas were regarded as barbarian in China, and philosophy in India was taken to be exhausted by the six great systems”<sup>7</sup>. The widespread prejudice regarding the unique ability of one’s own culture to develop philosophical thought was usually related to the view of philosophy as culturally unique to one particular culture and therefore culturally sealed.

Such views are today seen as naïve and misguided, since there is no doubt that the history of philosophy is actually a long history of intercultural influence. For example, “early European philosophy owes much to Islamic philosophy, as it does to Roman and Greek philosophy, traditions in turn influenced by Persia and India”<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, however, there are differences between cultures and there are differences in philosophies that reflect and strive to interpret those cultures.

Even if one assumes the idea of eternal philosophy, or, *philosophia perrenis*, as Karl Jaspers once put it, “which produces a commonality through even those furthest from one another are connected – the Chinese with the countries of the Occident,

5 W. Edelglass, Garfield J. L. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2011, 17.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

the philosophers of 2500 years ago with those of the present,”<sup>9</sup> differences among them still cannot be neglected. The reception of the *Yijing* in the West in the twentieth century can be interpreted in the context of these differences, even though both philosophical traditions begin with the development of theoretical concepts to formulate their understanding of the world.

In ancient Chinese philosophy these concepts include *tian* (Heaven), *de* (virtue), *dao* (the Way), *ming* (the unavoidable, mandate), *qi* (energy, vital force), *yin* and *yang*, *zhong* (centrality), and *he* (harmony). “With these concepts, ancient Chinese philosophers not only developed their views of human society, nature, and the beyond, but also articulated their visions of the good life”<sup>10</sup>. Some of these concepts are close to those, developed by ancient Greek philosophers, other are incommensurable or cannot even be compared. It is often claimed that the *Yijing* way of thinking characterizes the basic mode of Chinese philosophical thinking, and in the following we are going to follow the process of reception of this classical text in the West, and above all the reasons for its popularity in certain contexts.

### 3. THE *YIJING* AND THE WEST

#### 3.1 Bouvet and Leibniz – Looking for an analogy

*The Book of Changes* traveled to the West, i.e. to Europe and Americas, together with Buddhism and Daoism, and in each case the most important role in the process has been played by Western missionaries. The book traveled in a similar way also to East Asian countries, such as Korea, Japan or Vietnam; however, if in these cases local elites were completely comfortable with the classical Chinese script, in the West *Yijing* required translation. As it turned out, this was one of the major issues regarding the reception of the book in the West.

As pointed out by Richard J. Smith, “the westward movement of the *Yijing* began with the eastward movement of the West”<sup>11</sup>.

9 Jaspers Karl, *Weltgeschichte der Philosophie*, Munich, 1982, 52.

10 C. Li, “Chinese Philosophy”, in: *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (eds. Edelglass, W., Garfield J.L.), Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2011, 21.

11 Richard J. Smith, *The I Ching: A Biography*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford,

From the late sixteenth century on, Jesuit missionaries traveled to China, and attempted to assimilate themselves there by studying Chinese language, customs, religious traditions and philosophy. Their goal was, of course, to evangelize, and in order to win converts they tried to underscore affinities between the Bible and the Chinese, e.g. Confucian classics. The *Yijing* played the crucial role in the process that was actually twofold. On the one hand their primary duty was to bring Christianity to China, and to make the Bible familiar to the Chinese, but on the other hand, they had to make Chinese works such as the *Yijing* reasonable and familiar to Europeans.<sup>12</sup>

The first important protagonists in this process were French Jesuits Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730) and Jean-François Fouquet (1665-1741), who were both members of the Figurist movement. The Figurists analyzed letters, words, persons and events to discover a hidden “inner” meaning of the text behind its literal “outer” meaning, and through the former tried to find the evidence of the coming of Christ. Within the Chinese context this meant that they put a lot of effort to find figures of the biblical patriarchs and examples of biblical revelation in the Chinese classics themselves. Among other things they used the *Yijing* and they found all kinds of hidden messages in its trigrams and hexagrams, but also in Chinese writing itself.

As a simple example can show, their approach was straightforward and rather naïve: “Dissection of the Chinese character for Heaven (天) into the number two (二) and the word for Man (人) indicated a prophecy of the second Adam, Jesus Christ”<sup>13</sup>. In a similar vein they related the character for boat (船) to the Noah’s ark and the eight members of Noah’s family.

In Figurist approaches the *Yijing* served as a mediating tool, which enabled them to relate or even equate Chinese philosophical concepts with the Christian conception of God. For example, “the three solid lines of the Qian trigram (‘Heaven,’ number 1) represented an early awareness of the Trinity; the hexagram Xu (‘Waiting,’ number 5), [...] indicated ‘the glorious ascent of the

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2012, 207.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 209.

Savior’; and, of course, the Qian hexagram (number 1) referred to Creation itself<sup>14</sup>.

Bouvet went even further and tried to demonstrate that there exists a relationship between the numbers and diagrams of the *Yijing* and the systems of Pythagoras, the neo-Platonists, and the kabbala. His ultimate goal is a single mathematical “grand synthesis” which comprises “everything”. The fate of the Figurist enterprise in China was, however, unhappy, and it soon fell victim to severe criticisms from Chinese scholars on the one hand and to vigorous attacks from Christian community. In the end all Bouvet’s Figurist writings have been forbidden and he was not allowed to promulgate his ideas among the Chinese<sup>15</sup>.

The end of Figurist movement in China, nevertheless, did not mean that the interest in the *Yijing* in the West was lost. Bouvet had an interesting correspondence with one of the prominent European intellectuals of the time, namely the well-known German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). Leibniz saw in the *Yijing* a cross-cultural confirmation of his own invention – the binary system.

Bouvet sent Leibniz a copy of a diagram, entitled the *Former Heaven Chart*, attributed to Fuxi and produced by Shao Yong (1011-1077), one of the great systems builders of the Song period. Shao draw circular and square configurations of the sixty-four hexagrams that show a progression of the line changes. Leibniz believed in existence of a “primitive language” (one that existed before the Flood) that would make the act of thinking a reflection of the binary structure of nature itself, and recognized in Shao’s diagram the formal features of his binary system. In Leibniz’s interpretation this system denoted the idea that God (represented by the number one) had created everything out of nothing (number zero).

There are, however, several problems regarding the analogy between the binary system and Shao’s interpretation of the *Yijing*. In all his calculations Shao used the decimal system, as did all the commentators of the *Yijing*, and did not refer to the binary system at all. Actually, it seems that Shao was not interested in the binary structure as such. Besides, to Shao all experience was

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., 214.

cyclical – the unbroken line changes to broken line and broken line changes to unbroken line and so on. Leibniz, on the other hand, optimistically believed in linear progress – from zero (nothing) to the creation (one), but not vice versa. *Yin* and *yang*, broken and unbroken lines, form a relation of complement; nothing and creation form an opposition.

Not all of the Western philosophers, who learned about the *Yijing* were equally enthusiastic. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel criticized Leibniz and proclaimed that both binary system and Chinese characters were “empty forms” that could not articulate spoken words with the clarity of the Western alphabet.<sup>16</sup> In Hegel’s view, the *Yijing* hexagrams and Chinese characters were conflated into a single foreign idea, therefore confirming his Eurocentric views on universal world history.

### 3.2 Translating the *Yijing*

Leibniz actually never knew the *Yijing*, because he died before the first Latin translation was completed only in 1723. The translators were three Jesuit scholars, who did not share the Figurist convictions, and were actually very critical of the allegorical approach adopted by Bouvet. Even more, they denied that *The Book of Changes* contained any truths of the Christian faith.

A long tradition of translations of the *Yijing* in Western languages followed after a longer break that lasted from 1830 to 1876. During the last part of the nineteenth century several translations appeared, from Thomas McClatchie, Angelo Zottoli to James Legge. Their translations had different backgrounds and fates. McClatchie believed the work reflected a form of pagan materialism, and that it had been carried to China by one of the sons of Noah after the Deluge. Legge believed that the book was compatible with Christian beliefs, however, he had “no love of China and no respect for the *Yijing*”.<sup>17</sup> As several examples show, almost as a rule, every new translation described former translations as unsatisfactory and unintelligible. Consequently, none of these translations enjoyed much popularity in the late nineteenth and

16 Eric C. Nelson, “The *Yijing* and Philosophy: From Leibniz to Derrida”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. 38(3), 2011, 377-396, 381.

17 Richard J. Smith, *The I Ching: A Biography*, op. cit., 223.

early twentieth centuries. The *Yijing* did not appeal to a broader public readership of the time.

The situation changed dramatically after 1924, when the missionary-scholar Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930) published a German translation of the *Yijing* titled *I Ging, Das Buch der Wandlungen*. The book became bestseller after 1950 when it was translated into English, Dutch and Italian within the same year, and soon after that into other European languages. Wilhelm's translation was produced with assistance from a Chinese scholar Lao Naixuan and was heavily annotated. It was a work of a person who not only was in love with China, but also believed that the *Yijing* had something to say to all humankind. For Wilhelm the book was a global property and a work of timeless wisdom, but also a solely Chinese document, with no links to the ancient West. Moreover, Wilhelm tried demystify and rationalize the text in order to fit the general climate of rational academic discourse in the early-twentieth-century Europe.

Not all of the approaches, however, went into this direction. Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), an influential British Theosophist who traveled to China during the first decade of the twentieth century, adopted a self-consciously mystical approach to the *Yijing*, and in a sense showed a way to countercultural enthusiasm for the book that would peak in the 1960s and 1970s. Crowley interpreted the *Yijing* as mathematical and philosophical form and structure that is related to Kabbala, and tried to relate its various aspects to Kabbalistic elements. In his view, the eight trigrams represent, for example, the male and female reproductive organs, the sun and the moon, and the four Greek elements – earth, water, air and fire. Crowley in this sense not only anticipated the role of *The Book of Changes* within the counterculture movement, but also a great many approaches that attempted to relate the *Yijing* with Judaism or Christianity.

### 3.3 C. G. Jung and the concept of synchronicity

One of those who contributed significantly to the recognition and popularity of the *Yijing* in the West was a Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, who also wrote a foreword to the English translation of the Wilhelm version of the book. Jung's name is primarily

connected to analytical psychology, a psychological model and a set of ideas that in many respects is at variance with the embedded assumptions of mainstream Western culture. As pointed out by Roderick Main:

With its concepts of collective unconscious, universal archetypes, the teleological process of individuation, the transpersonal self, and the epistemological priority of psychic over physical reality, Jung's model champions notions that are not easily squared with the materialistic, reductive, naturalistic, and causal emphases of modern western culture.<sup>18</sup>

Analytical psychology in this sense provides a perspective from which it is possible to effectively criticize and relativize Western cultural assumptions, even though Jung himself, and later Jungians, did not want to be a part of counterculture, and have actually worked hard to be acceptable to mainstream culture and science.<sup>19</sup>

Jung in his Foreword<sup>20</sup> admitted that he did not read Chinese and have never been to China, however, he used the *Yijing* as an oracle and a method of exploring the unconscious for more than thirty years. Through the usage and research of the book that he names a monument of Chinese thought, he realized that this thought "departs so completely from our ways of thinking".<sup>21</sup> For Jung the key difference between Western and Chinese way of thinking is mainly related to the question of causality, and to fully grasp it one has to cast off certain prejudices of the Western mind. "Our science," claims Jung, "is based upon the principle of causality, and causality is considered to be an axiomatic truth".<sup>22</sup> Jung's critique of causality was not a mere critique of Western scientific and philosophical tradition, but also an attempt to relate new theories, developed in physics, such as quantum mechanics, to the ancient Chinese philosophy and above all to the *Yijing*.

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18 Roderick Main, *The Rupture of Time: Synchronicity and Jung's Critique of Modern Western Culture*, Brunner-Routledge, Hove and New York, 2004, 1.

19 Ibid.

20 Carl Gustav Jung, "Foreword", *I Ching or Book of changes*, The Richard Wilhelm translation, Arkana, London, 1989, xxii.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

What Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* failed to do, is being accomplished by modern physics. The axioms of causality are being shaken to their foundations: we know now that what we term natural laws are merely statistical truths and thus must necessarily allow for exceptions. [...] If we leave things to nature, we see a very different picture: every process is partially or totally interfered with by chance, so much so that under natural circumstances a course of events absolutely conforming to specific laws is almost an exception.

The Chinese mind, as I see it at work in the *I Ching*, seems to be exclusively preoccupied with the chance aspect of events.<sup>23</sup>

In Jung's view, the way in which the *Yijing* tends to look upon reality disfavors causality, and a completely different principle has to be introduced in order to interpret it, and moreover, a fundamental revision of the prevalent scientific, religious, and commonsense views of the world.

In Jung's words: "This assumption involves a certain curious principle that I have termed synchronicity, a concept that formulates a point of view diametrically opposed to that of causality"<sup>24</sup>. Synchronicity is a principle that goes beyond causal understanding of the world. Causality in Jung's interpretation is a merely statistical truth and not absolute, therefore only a working hypothesis of how events evolve one out of another, whereas synchronicity is more than mere chance – "a peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as well as with the subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers"<sup>25</sup>.

The principle of synchronicity which was further elaborated into the theory mostly depends on understanding of the following concepts: meaning, probability, causality (or better, acausality), and time. Jung sometimes defines synchronicity in terms of simultaneity, and actually derives the concept from Greek words for 'together' (*syn*) and 'time' (*chronos*). The connection between synchronicity and simultaneity can be, however, also misleading, because it has to be understood in the context of psychic relativity of space and time: the notion of the psychic relativity of space and

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23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., xxiv.

25 Ibid.

time accounts for coincidences in which the component events are simultaneously present in the observer's field of perception as well as for coincidences involving events that are widely separated in time and space".<sup>26</sup>

There are several different traditions from which Jung draw ideas that culminated in the principle of synchronicity and the notion of psychic relativity. One is the theory of relativity, another seems to be related to parapsychology and the research of Joseph Banks Rhine. The third source, however, is related to the *Yijing* as a practical methodological tool and also to Dao as characterized by Richard Wilhelm as "a non-spatial and non-temporal unity"<sup>27</sup>. Even though Jung's views on synchronicity as well as his interpretations of the *Yijing* and modern physics have been often criticized lately, it is still possible to claim that his influence regarding the acceptance of the *Yijing* in the West was crucial. It also seems that his synthesis of East and West, physics and psychology, was something that people in modern materialist and fragmented Western world were looking for; among them were not only layman, but also scientists themselves.

Two important theories revolutionized the field of Western physics and natural sciences in general: Albert Einstein's theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. Both came to being during the first decades of the twentieth century and brought with them some very important changes in understanding of space, time and causality. Special and general theories of relativity showed that contrary to the accepted understanding, space and time do not form an absolute background of all phenomena, but are relative and depend on the position and speed of the observer. Quantum physics was even harder to grasp, because some of its principles went directly against everyday experience and common sense. Among other things, it showed that the nature of light and matter was much more complex than expected, since both showed a dual character – they could be interpreted either as waves or particles, but never both at the same time.

The development in physics was beyond doubt a part of the development within Western philosophy and science, however, it

26 Roderick Main, *The Rupture of Time: Synchronicity and Jung's Critique of Modern Western Culture*, Brunner-Routledge, Hove and New York, 2004, 52.

27 Ibid.

also brought a sense of crisis. New discoveries needed new interpretations, but the Western tradition itself was not always ready to offer a suitable one. Consequently, some researchers started to look for interpretations outside of their own tradition, either philosophical or scientific. When Danish physicist Niels Bohr was awarded Denmark's highest honor and the opportunity to create a family coat of arms, he chose a Latin motto – *contraria sunt complementa* (opposites are complementary) – and the *yin-yang* symbol.

Another influential author was Fritjof Capra, who's book entitled *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (1975) was extremely well accepted and enormously influential. It even received a highly favorable review in *Physics Today* from a physicist and astronomer Victor Mansfield, who himself tried to connect physics to Buddhism and Jungian psychology in various papers and books, and wrote also on synchronicity. Capra's idea was that there exists a close relation between quantum mechanics and various Asian philosophies. The *Yijing* played a special role in this sense, since it provides an excellent example of quantum field theory, S-matrix theory in particular, and in Capra's words, "the dynamic aspect of all phenomena".<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, what counts in physics from Galileo Galilei onwards is experiment and empirical confirmation. The discovery of the so called Psi particle undermined the version of quantum mechanics that Capra was relating to *Yijing*, and the reviews of his book became far less charitable.

Capra's book popularized not only quantum physics, but also the *Yijing*. The problem with the latter was that Wilhelm's translation, but others as well, have been too demanding for a layman, and consequently its popularity was limited. In 1965, however, John Blofeld published a short and easy-to-read version of the *Yijing*, "for those who wish to live in harmonious accord with nature's decrees but who naturally find them too inscrutable to be gathered from direct experience".<sup>29</sup> The Blofeld translation contributed significantly to the public interest in the *Yijing*.

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28 Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration or the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*, Shambala Publications, 1975, 108.

29 John Blofeld, *I Ching, the Book of Change*, Penguin, London 1991.

### 3.4 The *Yijing* and Western counterculture

Among those who showed this interest were to a larger degree also the members of Western counterculture that appeared in different centers during 1960s and 1970s. Different members of this movement related the book to different aspects of counterculture, and some of them related it, for example, to the drug culture. Terrence McKenna and Dennis McKenna wrote a book entitled *The Invisible Landscape: Mind, Hallucinogens, and the I Ching*, and with it tried to explain, how different chemical waves, characteristic of life are reflected in the patterns of trigrams and hexagrams in the *Yijing*.<sup>30</sup>

The *Yijing* also became very popular among poets, musicians and writers, as several well-known examples undoubtedly demonstrate. On November 27, 1965, Bob Dylan (a Nobel laureate for 2017) gave an interview that was published in *Chicago Daily News*. In this interview he described the *Yijing* as “the only thing that is amazingly true, period.” And then he added: “besides being a great book to believe in it’s also very fantastic poetry.”<sup>31</sup> The founding father of the Beat generation, Allen Ginsberg, and *The Beatles* member John Lennon also used the *Yijing* and wrote poems about it.

Nevertheless, the most well-known example of an early literary work inspired and even constructed by the *Yijing* is probably Philip K. Dick’s novel *The Man in the High Castle* from 1962. The role of the novel to the reception of the *Yijing* in the West is twofold: on the one hand it reflected the cultural importance of the *Book of Changes* at the time of crisis and contributed substantially to it. Dick’s novel itself characterizes a search for an alternative, since it is a book about an alternative history, in which Nazi Germany and Japan defeated and occupied the United States. In the alternative America of the early sixties slavery is legal, anti-Semitism is rampant, and as Dick puts it “the *I Ching* is as common as the Yellow Pages.” Almost every character in the book uses the *Yijing* and consults it, however, not only characters in the book, but also its author, who used Wilhelm’s translation in devising the plot and integrating it directly into the text.

30 Richard J. Smith, *The I Ching: A Biography*, op.cit, 244.

31 Ibid.

Other novelists and poets in Americas and Europe used the *Yijing* as well. French author Raymond Queneau, for example, but also Hermann Hesse, Jorge Luis Borges and Octavio Paz (another Nobel Prize winner) among others. The *Yijing* found its way to music and arts as well. The most famous case is probably that of the American composer John Cage.

Cage learned about the *Book of Changes* very early, probably already in 1936. He started to consult it during the 1940s, but it was not until 1950 that he began composing with it, and continued to do so until his death in 1992. As some commentators pointed out, Cage was actually “the foremost practitioner of *Yijing*-related music composition in the United States, with a global reputation and a worldwide network of followers”.<sup>32</sup> Cage did not use the *Yijing* only to generate random numbers, but asked it questions in the course of composing, and relied on it for supplying rhythm and timing. In *The Marrying Maiden: A Play of Changes* from 1960, he used the *Yijing* to produce musical score, but also to develop character and dialogue. Moreover, Cage used the book also to produce visual art.

Several artists and composers found inspiration in Cage’s work with the *Yijing*. Among them were Udo Kasemets and James Tenney, but also members of an international network of artists, composers, and designers, known as the Fluxus. Another famous artist influenced by Cage’s work was the dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham, who often used the *Yijing* to determine the sequence of his dances.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

During the last couple of decades, the reception of the *Yijing* in the West went through major change in which the book turned to a form of culture industry, if one borrows the expression from Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. Thousands of products, related to the *Yijing* appeared in the West, from books, reviews and articles to tapes, records, CDs, computer software, cards, kits and other devices. Not only in the West, but in all parts of the world, the *Book of Changes* has been heavily commercialized. The list of book titles today goes from interesting to truly bizarre; from *Embracing Change: Postmodern Interpretations of the I Ching*

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 250.

*from a Christian Perspective to The Golf Ching: Golf Guidance and Wisdom from the I Ching.*

It seems that the reception of the *Yijing* went full circle. From being an exotic and mystical text from an unknown and foreign tradition, to an important corrective of a Western tradition that found itself in crisis during the twentieth century, to the global culture industry. Yet, what one learns from the *Yijing* is exactly that contradictions should be seen as complementary, and that everything changes and nothing ever stays in place. The *Book of Changes* played an important role in understanding Chinese philosophical tradition from Western perspective and there is no reason that it should not continue to do so.

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Ернест Женко

*ЛИ ЂИНГ И КРИЗА ЗАПАДНЕ ТРАДИЦИЈЕ*

## Сажетак

У овом чланку аутор следи став да иако се рационално размишљање може наћи у свим писменим друштвима широм света, разлике између култура се у одређеној мери развијају и на бази разлика између филозофских начина размишљања. У том смислу, класични текст Ли Ђинг или Књига промена не само да карактерише основни начин кинеског филозофског мишљења, већ утиче и на прошлост и садашњост кинеске културе. Међутим, Ли Ђинг није само утицао на кинески контекст, већ је од 18. века његов утицај осетио и Запад. За језуитске преводиоце, Леибница и Ц. Г. Јунга, па чак и физичаре, уметнике или музичаре из 20. века, овај древни текст је увек имао нешто релевантно за рећи. Притом више у кризним временима, када је постало очигледно да је боље избећи сопствену културу и тражити одговоре негде другде; у потпуно другој традицији. Чини се, међутим, да је пријем Ли Ђинга на Западу обрнуо пун круг; од егзотичног и мистичног текста пореклом из непознате и стране праксе, до важног коректива Западне традиције која се нашла у кризи током двадесетог века, до глобалне културне индустрије.

**Кључне речи:** Књига промена (ЛиЂинг), Западна култура, културна криза, кинеска филозофија, исток-запад

\* Овај рад је примљен 28.05.2019. године, а прихваћен за објављивање 22.07.2019. године.