



About the cosmos

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From the oldest times, Zheng Zi said, the seer traced the *ba guas*: Dao of the Great Triad was now completed.

The eight *guas* are:



Qian¹
(heaven)



Kan
(water)



Dui
(marsh)



Xun
(wind)



Li
(fire)



Gen
(mountain)



Zhen²
(thunderbolt)



Kun³
(earth)

¹ Qian symbolizes pure activity, without action (*wei wu-wei*). The Qian ideogram seems to depict the sun's invisible activity upon a plant and the seed of life sheltered in non-manifestation; but we have to consider also the dragon's journey and the interaction between Earth (where the possibilities of manifestation are dormant) and Heaven (the sun rising and leaving *Axis Mundi*); the ideogram also suggests the vapours' elevation caused by sun's invisible activity, illustrating Heaven's attraction.

² We notice in the Zhen ideogram the superior horizontal line (Heaven) and the vertical line (thunderbolt, spiritual influence) in the middle of rain; the semicircle represents the cloud but also Heaven that covers. We also observe the one-foot and a bent man, who can see only the Principle's footprint.

³ The Kun ideogram shows two hands and a middle vertical cord, which symbolize, from a viewpoint, Heaven's attraction (see Matgioi, **La Voie métaphysique**, chapter VI); the left side describes the production of the universal manifestation (symbolized by a plant), as a result of the celestial activity upon Earth (we have to consider, as usually, the interaction Heaven-Earth); the middle vertical line is sometimes considered the thunderbolt.

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If we meditate upon these simple eight trigrams (*ba guas*), we understand how perfect and total they are. The elements appointed to the eight trigrams permit us to express symbolically, for our human comprehension, everything.

The eight *guas* correspond to “the rose of the winds” and, therefore, govern the whole manifestation, in which case the universal Existence could have four pairs of contraries as a spinal column, made of the eight trigrams and underlining the duality: Qian-Kun, Kan-Li, Dui-Gen, Xun-Zhen, couples that take into consideration the reverse analogy of the *guas*’ traits. These four pairs are hexagrams and in a similar mode others can be formed, up to sixty-four of them. The sixty-four hexagrams could be placed in a circle, a celestial figure representing “the circle of the rotary changes,” or in a square, a terrestrial figure designating terrestrial modifications, an analogy of celestial modifications. The square with the hexagrams is an equivalent to the chess board, with its white and black tiles, the generation of the hexagrams reproducing the chess board geography: if we place the eight *guas* along the vertical and horizontal sides of the square, starting with Qian and ending with Kun, the first tile of the chess board will be the combination Qian-Qian, that is, the hexagram Qian, and the last tile will be the combination Kun-Kun, that is, the hexagram Kun; between them the other sixty-two perfect *guas* name the other tiles.

Each tile of the chess board, that is, each hexagram, white or black, will signify a state of universal manifestation, or, in particular, a modification of the world. “The words Qian and Kun designate, in a very precise mode, the mysterious essence of **Yi Jing**, and Kun determines the order of the situations, and the change (*yi*) that occurs between these two. Qian and Kun destroyed; there would not be any change [the illusory duality having been destroyed]. (...) Heaven and Earth determine the situations, the mountain and the marsh mix freely their influences; the thunderbolt and the wind hit each other and make contact; the water and the fire don’t annihilate each other; the eight simple *guas* combine together.”

Various elements of the manifestation are ascribed to each of the eight *guas*, stressing the fact that they are the fundament of the universal Existence. For example, the sun, the round shape, the precious stone, the prince, the gold, the stallion, etc. correspond to Qian. Some traditional texts were even more categorical, stating that the trigrams generated all the elements of a traditional civilization. For example: the hexagram Sui taught men horseback riding and the use of oxen for transportation; the hexagram Guai gave birth to the art of writing; the art of masonry and architecture were a result of the hexagram Da Zhuang.

The greatest mysteries, from an individual point of view, regard the production of the manifestation from non-manifestation, how the human form was generated, how the crafts and the arts were invented, all the traditional doctrines giving symbolic answers, concentrated in the following assertion: all that exist on earth have their archetypes and paradigms in heaven. Each métier, for example, has its archetype in heaven, the Principle being architect and peasant and fisherman. The **Yi Jing** offers hexagrams as explanation; these ones, of divine origin, contain the universal wisdom and they are the archetypes that have allowed the world to function. For the Jewish tradition, these archetypes were letters; for Pythagoras, they were the numbers; for the Hindu tradition, Purusha’s parts. The “civilizational hero,” the “emperor” (like Fu Xi), or the “solar hero,” activated the archetypes. The determinative formulas of *gua* no. 31, Xian, illustrate very well the correspondence hexagram-microcosm.



gua Xian

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They say: “The first line, broken; to influence the big toe. The second line, broken; to influence the calves of the legs. The third line, continuous; to influence the thighs. The fourth line, continuous; to influence the heart. The fifth line, continuous; to influence the muscles of the spine. The superior line, broken; to influence the jaws, cheeks, and tongue.” Or: “Qian is the head, Kun the stomach, Zhen the legs, Xun the thigh, Kan the ear, Li the eye, Gen the hand, and Dui the mouth.” We note, among many other things, that Li, the fire (light), is related to the eye, and Qian and Kun correspond to the head and stomach; Coomaraswamy stressed that, in the Hindu tradition, the beheading of the dragon means to transform the head into the sun (that is, Qian as Principle), while the dragon’s body becomes man’s intestines.

But there is also a correspondence hexagram-macrocosm: “A commentator says: Here are the locations of the eight *guas*, following Fu Xi’s teachings: Qian at South, Kun at North, Li at East, Kan at West, Dui at South-East, Zhen at North-East, Xun at South-West, Gen at North-West. Consequently, the combinations of the eight simple *guas* are generated, forming the 64 perfect *guas* or, what is called the study of « what precedes heaven. »”

Combining the eight simple *guas*, in pairs, in order to encompass all the modifications of the Universe, the perfect *guas* of six traits were obtained, like the perfect *gua* Qian, for example, which was born by duplicating the simple *gua* Qian. Qian expresses Heaven (Tian), and also Qian is the activity *qian*; the activity without rest and pause is called Qian, Zheng Zi explained. When we consider Heaven (Tian) in an absolute mode, then we refer to Dao. The full trait, Zheng Zi added, is called *ji*, unity; and it is the number of “positivity.” Fu Xi looked at the Heaven, then lowered his eyes to the Earth, observing its details: he saw that negativity and positivity⁴ have duality and unity as numbers. Fu Xi traced the simple line to symbolize positivity and a double (broken) line to symbolize negativity. He noticed that pure activity is the inner nature of positivity and its most grandiose expression is Heaven; therefore, the *gua* composed of three simple traits was called Qian and it was accredited to Heaven. And Zheng Zi concluded: “The initial cause, liberty, good, and perfection are what are called the four virtues. The first, expressed by the word *yuan*, is the beginning of all ten thousand beings⁵; the second, expressed by the character *heng*, means the development of all ten thousand beings; the third, expressed by the character *li*, is the faculty to satisfy the needs of each being, in conformity with its nature; the fourth, expressed by the word *cheng*, means the normal and perfect fulfillment of all.”

Only the *guas* Qian and Kun have these four virtues; in all the other hexagrams they change, in accord with the subject. Matgioi called these “virtues” integrant qualities and we have to take into account for the future that Wen Wang’s “virtues” are in fact essential and determinative “tendencies” and “attributes.” The four “virtues” or “tendencies” render Dao explicit, with regard to the universal manifestation, and they are related to Lao Zi’s De. Guénon wrote: “De, which we prefer to translate as Rectitude rather than Virtue (as it is sometimes translated), because we don’t want to give it a moral interpretation, which is in total disaccord with Daoism; De, we said, is what we could call a «specification» of Dao with respect to a particularized being, as, for example, the human being: it is the direction this being has to follow in order to have its existence

⁴ We have to be very cautious when we use words like “negative” and “positive,” since the real meaning of what is translated here has nothing to do with philosophical concepts or modern ones. The positive, from one of many points of view, is equivalent to plenitude, the mountain and the masculine; the negative is emptiness, the valley and the feminine. In the Oglala Sioux’s tradition, the women that “lament” for a divine vision “go up on a hill in a valley, for they are women and need protection.” The men who “lament,” they “go up to the high mountain” (Black Elk, **The Sacred Pipe**, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1989, pp. 46, 56).

⁵ In the Hindu tradition, the initial cause is *kârana-sharîra*, the *principal* or causal form, non-manifested, Ishwara’s residence. “That omniscient, omnipotent cause from which proceed the origin, subsistence, and dissolution of this world, that cause, we say, is Brahma” (**Vedânta-Sûtras**, I Adhyâya, I Pâda, 2, Shankarâchârya’s commentaries).

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(in this state in which the being was born) in concert with Dao, or, in other words, its existence to be in conformity with the Principle” (**Taoïsme**, p. 113). “All things are produced by the Dao, and nourished by De. They receive their forms according to the nature of each, and are completed according to the circumstances of their condition. Therefore all ten thousand beings without exception honour the Dao, and exalt De. (...) Thus it is that the Dao produces (all things), nourishes them, brings them to their full growth, nurses them, completes them, matures them, maintains them, and overspreads them. It produces them and makes no claim to the possession of them; it carries them through their processes and does not vaunt its ability in doing so; it brings them to maturity and exercises no control over them; this is called its mysterious «virtue,» De.” (**Lao-zi, Dao De Jing**, LI).

We may note that, for Matgioi, this apothegm above is “the great formula of Daoism. It is the direct explanation of Wen Wang’s tetragram, the key of the **Yi Jing**. We can see again how Daoism came to light directly from the primordial Tradition. (...) Dao produces: it is the principle of activity; it is the Non-Being willing to be Being; it is One, the positive determination of Zero. (...) The Two, passive and feminine principle, came out of De, the Rectitude.” The Virtue, or rather the Rectitude, De, is the reflected image of the Principle, Dao, carrying various aspects into the world, all in compliance with Dao. “If Dao is cultivated in the individual, then his virtue will become genuine. If it is cultivated in your family, then virtue in your family will be great. If it is cultivated in your community, then virtue will go a long way. If it is cultivated in your empire, then virtue will be splendid. If it is cultivated in the world, then virtue will be with everyone” (**Lao-zi, Dao De Jing**, LIV). “He who is filled with (Rectitude) Virtue is like a newborn child. Wasps and serpents will not sting him; Wild beasts will not pounce upon him; He will not be attacked by birds of prey” (**Dao De Jing**, LV); the genuine Rectitude, De, as rectitude of Dao, means with respect to the world a total compliance with the Law (the Hindu Dharma) or Rule,⁶ it means the childhood of humanity, that is, the Golden Age, when everything was done with rectitude (“correctly”).

The four “virtues” represent, of course, the *arcanes* of Wen Wang’s formula, in the proper sense of the Arabic word *el-arkân*, as the determinative attributes of the Principle, but we also have to stress the correspondence between the celestial and terrestrial virtues, in full concordance with the *Tabula Smaragdina*, and thus, we could picture a double spiral from a celestial viewpoint and a double spiral from a terrestrial point of view, in the first case the dragon being noticeable, and in the second case the mare replacing the dragon.

⁶ We envisage here the Rule as the Latin *norma*, meaning “principle, rule, paradigm.” It seems that *norma* derived from Greek *gnomon*, related to the name of the instrument used to measure the field; this instrument is directly related to Fu Xi’s square.