

I Ching and Mediation (no, not meditation!)

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Recently, as I sat in a mediation room awaiting the arrival of lawyers and clients I did something I have often done for more than 20 years. I performed an ancient divination ritual. I cast the I Ching.

The I Ching is an ancient Chinese oracle dating back about 3,000 years. It has provided insight and inspiration to the worlds of religion, psychoanalysis, literature, and art. I have found it helpful in the world of conflict resolution as well.

The Hexagrams

At its core the I Ching is a set of 64 hexagrams – six stacked lines, broken or unbroken – said to represent every possible situation.

Traditionally the hexagram is constructed by the person consulting the oracle line by line by casting forty-nine stalks of the yarrow plant or three coins. Nowadays the internet provides more convenient options.

The hexagram, once complete, links to a message from the text. The best of the English translations of the I Ching, or Book of Changes is still that of Richard Wilhelm, translated from the German in 1950, with a foreword by C. G. Jung. Jung was in his 80s when he wrote the foreword which links the I Ching to his theories of archetypes, synchronicity and the limitations of the Western scientific principle of causality. It's well worth the read and can be found [here](#).

I consult the I Ching because I have found that it attunes me to influences (not the least those within me) that I need to be conscious of as I approach the mediation session. Let me share an example.

A Recent Consultation

The recent case I referred to was a multiple party professional negligence claim, involving numerous issues of fact and law and which had given rise to some bad blood among a few of the lawyers involved. I thought some guidance was in order.

The first step in consulting the I Ching is to formulate a question. I find it works best to frame a vague, open question such as, "What influences should I be aware of in today's mediation?" The particular online tool I use can be found [here](#). I type in the question and then I pause. I take deep breaths and concentrate on the question blocking out all distractions. In that state I hit the "cast" button. The hexagram appears immediately.

In the recent consultation the result was hexagram 32 – Heng / Duration:



THE JUDGMENT: DURATION. Success. No blame.
Perseverance furthers.
It furthers one to have somewhere to go.

THE IMAGE: Thunder and wind: the image of DURATION.

Thus the superior man stands firm
And does not change his direction.

Wilhelm's translation offers the following commentary: "Duration is a state whose movement is not worn down by hindrances. It is not a state of rest, for mere standstill is regression. Duration is rather the self-contained and therefore self-renewing movement of an organized, firmly integrated whole, taking place in accordance with immutable laws and beginning anew at every ending."

Now a key feature of each casting is that certain lines, due to the power they contain, change from a broken to unbroken line or the opposite. In this case the second and sixth line (from the bottom) changed and the text associated with the changing lines was as follows:

"Nine in the second place means: Remorse disappears."

"Six at the top means: Restlessness as an enduring condition brings misfortune."

The new hexagram resulting from the changing lines was 50. Ting / The Caldron:



THE JUDGMENT: THE CALDRON. Supreme good fortune. Success.

THE IMAGE: Fire over wood: The image of THE CALDRON.

Thus the superior man consolidates his fate
By making his position correct.

By the way, the full text of the Wilhelm translation of the I Ching can be found [here](#).

All of this caused me to mindfully reflect on the dynamics of the day: the case, the clients, the lawyers, myself.

The Result

No, the case did not settle at this mediation although everyone involved spent two hours in a joint session, without caucusing, during which important procedural agreements were reached which should hasten the ultimate resolution of the matter.

Did the I Ching play a role? Who can say? I consult it for the pragmatic reason that I have found it helps me.

I appreciate some readers of this blog will reject the notion of employing ancient Chinese divination in the context of modern commercial mediation out of hand. I would spend no time trying to persuade them otherwise. Jung acknowledged in his foreword that the I Ching is not for everyone. I can only say that for me it has proven efficacious and I will continue to consult the oracle.