

Confucian Philosophy of Education in Hexagram “Meng” (Shrouded) of *Yijing*

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1, Introduction A: The Genre of Confucian Study of *Yijing*

Because *Yijing* (The Classic of Change) was traditionally crowned as the supreme classic among classics in Confucianism, the fact that there is an *ad hoc* hexagram, “Meng” (蒙, Shrouded), which is dedicated to the issue of education, deserves special attention from scholars who are interested in Confucian educational thought and the philosophy of education in general. In order to decipher the implied Confucian philosophy of education and to use it to reflect on contemporary Chinese and American education, I provide in this paper an approachable English commentary of Hexagram Meng in the genre of traditional Confucian commentary of *Yijing*.

The question what is this genre must be addressed before proceeding. Traditionally, there are two ways to name the text related to *Yijing*. It is either called “*Zhouyi*” (周易, The Zhou Book of Change), or “*Yijing*” (易经, The Classic of Change). The different names represent the historical changes gone through by both the text itself and people’s reception of the text. It is called *Zhouyi* because it was once a book of divination written and used in the Zhou Dynasty (around 11st century B.C.E to 256 B.C.E). As one Confucian classic which purports to provide a record of the bureaucratic establishments and political institutions in the Zhou Dynasty, *Zhouli*(周礼, The Zhou Book of Rites), says: “The official Great Diviner (大卜) masters three codes of change; one is called *Lianshan* (连山, Connected to Mountains), the second is called *Guizang* (归藏, Returned to Storehouse), and the third is called *Zhouyi*. The basic trigrams in these three books are all eight, and the extra hexagrams are all sixty-four.”¹ The other two books mentioned here in addition to *Zhouyi* were both nation-wide used reference books for divination. A popular opinion among scholars thinks that *Lianshan* was written and used during the Xia dynasty (around 21st to 16th century B.C.E), and *Guizang* during the Shang Dynasty (Around 16th to 11th century B.C.E). But because most or all of these texts have been lost, it is really hard to discern any details within them². What we can discern is the fact that *Zhouyi* was usually

¹ “大卜掌三易之法，一曰连山，二曰归藏，三曰周易”(《周礼·春官宗伯·大卜》). See Zheng Xuan, Jia Gongyan 郑玄, 贾公彦, 周礼注疏 (Commentary on *The Zhou Book of Rites*), in 《十三经注疏》(Commentary of Thirteen Classics), edited by Li, Xueqin (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1999), 635-638.

² Nevertheless, Some new excavated materials in China reignited scholars’ enthusiasm about them, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes, Recently Discovered Manuscripts of the Yijing and Related Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014) 172-182, Kindle.

addressed together with *Lianshan* and *Guizang* in early Zhou Dynasty illustrates that people understood and used it mainly as a reference book for divination. This fact can also be discerned from its own text. The original text of *Zhouyi* as shown in the received version of *Yijing*³ is made up of sixty-four hexagrams, each one having its own statement of hexagram (卦辞), and each line of hexagram, which is called *Yao* (爻, Imitation), having its own statement of *yao* (爻辞). So the layout seems perfect for divination. If you divine, ask your question, divide a bunch of yarrow stalks at will for six times, draw out a hexagram according to the resulting number of stalks after each division, and then search for the corresponding hexagram or *yao* in *Zhouyi* accordingly, the statement of that hexagram or that *yao* will be the answer.

It is only after Confucius (551-479 B.C.E) that *Zhouyi* was compiled and retitled as *Yijing*. When Confucius returned to his home state in his old age and concentrated upon writing and teaching, Confucius reportedly liked to read *Zhouyi* so much that he broke the throngs to tie up the bamboo slips where *Zhouyi* was copied three times⁴. Such diligent studying, together with his disciples' effort and help, led Confucius to write a series of commentaries of *Zhouyi*⁵. Some of the commentaries addresses *Zhouyi* in general, like *Xici* (系辞, Appended Text, also traditionally known as "Yidazhuan", 易大传, Great Treatise), which is well-acknowledged among Confucian scholars as the most systematic and profound enunciation of Confucian philosophy in its classical period. Some of the commentaries are on specific hexagrams, like *Wenyan* (文言, Words To Embellish), which provides a detailed interpretation of the two most important hexagrams among all the sixty-four, *Qian* (乾, the Creative) and *Kun* (坤, the Receptive). There is also a commentary dedicated to explaining the order of hexagrams, *Xugua* (序卦, Order of Hexagrams), and another one to laying out all the main symbolic meanings of each trigram, *Shuogua* (说卦, Speech of Trigrams). *Tuanzhuan* (彖传, Commentary of Judgement) interprets the meaning of the statement of hexagram, *Xiaoxiang* (小象, Small Image) interprets the meaning of the statement of *yao*, and *Daxiang* (大象, Great Image) gives practical advice for virtuous persons' self-cultivation according to the instruction of each

³ The received version of *Zhouyi* was due to the compilation of Confucian scholars in East Han (25-220 C.E), and after it is used in the commentary of Wang Bi and finally complied into *Zhou Yi Zheng Yi* (周易正义) in Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E), this version became a standard one for later scholarship in Yixue

⁴ See Si Maqian 司马迁, "Kong Zi Shi Jia" (孔子世家, Aristocratic Family of Confucius), in *Shi Ji* (史记, Historical Records), [Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju (中华书局), 1956], 1937.

⁵ There are still debates about the authorship and the time of these commentaries, but in general it will not be erroneous to say the compilation is due to Confucius and his disciples in the period of classical Confucianism (from Confucius to Han Dynasty, i.e., from around 551 B.C.E - 220 C.E). In the following text, if we have to name the author of *Yijing*, we will follow the mainstream of Confucian tradition to take it to be King Wen and Confucius.

hexagram. Together, these ten commentaries have two titles. They are either called “Ten Wings” (十翼) , purporting to help the individual soar into the otherwise unfathomable text of *Zhouyi*, or are quite simply called the “Commentary of Change” (易传) . Therefore, the received version of *Yijing* after Confucius is in fact made up of two parts: one is the original text of *Zhouyi* (周易本经) , and the other one is the “Commentary of Change” or “Ten Wings”.

The fact that *Yijing* is a combined work with both the original text of *Zhouyi* and its Confucian interpretation shows that *Yijing* is in fact a *sui generis* work of Confucianism. In other words, insofar as *Yijing* is an interpretive work upon an ancient text that already existed for a long time before the interpretation, it is distinct from all the other approaches of the study of *Zhouyi* by its specific Confucian “genre”. What is key to our understanding of this genre is that, only a small portion of *Ten Wings* is directly dedicated to divination instruction⁶. Most if not all of the other sections expound on the history of the composition of *Zhouyi*, interpret the meaning of the text, illustrate the principle of changes in both natural and human areas, and urge people to live a virtuous life under the guidance of the revealed principles. It seems that when Confucius and his disciples studied and compiled *Zhouyi* into *Yijing*, what they really cared about was general philosophical principles, rather than the actual result of any specific divination.

This shift on the interpretive focus of *Zhouyi* constitutes the rationale for why the original text of *Zhouyi* and its interpretive *Commentary of Change* can be named together as *Yijing*⁷. From an etymological perspective, the original meaning of “Jing” (经) is the warp used for weaving a piece of cloth. This can be told from its character in traditional Chinese, 經, especially the part 《》. As the warp is the one basic element needed to form a whole piece of cloth, if a book is titled as a *Jing*, a classic, it means that it contains the most basic principles of reality that the book intends to elaborate. Furthermore, the original meaning of “经” could also be extended and used as a verb. Because the warp is all the vertical threads that are used to weave, together with the weft, it determines the pattern of the whole piece of cloth. So “经” could also refer to the action to determine, to organize, to regulate, or to give a form to something, as the moral function of *Junzi* (君子, virtuous person) in Confucian tradition is conceived as “regulating a myriad of things under Heaven like the warp and the silk ribbon” (经

⁶ That is Chapter Nine of Part One in *Great Treatise*, which introduces the divinatory method called “Great Deduction” (大衍筮法).

⁷ A specific clarification is needed: in a word, in the intellectual history of the study of *Zhouyi*, the name of “Zhou Yi” could either refer to the original text of *Zhouyi*, which is made up of the sixty-four hexagrams, or to the compiled new text which consists of both the original text and its Confucian commentary, but the name of “Yi Jing” always refers to the latter.

纶天下)⁸. Therefore, if a book is honored as a *Jing*, it doesn't only mean that it contains basic principles of a given area of reality, but it also urges that people use the book as a source of wisdom to deal with concrete issues and to guide their actual lives. As a result, if *Zhouyi*, The Zhou Book of Change, is compiled and titled as *Yijing*, The Classic of Change, it implies such a transition of attitude in the Confucian reception of the text: based upon the text of *Zhouyi*, which is mainly used as a reference book of divination in Zhou Dynasty, the first generation of Confucians re-edit, comment and compile it as *Yijing*, one supreme classic among classics; it would contain the basic principles of changes in the world and we humans should learn all these principles to enable us to react appropriately to the changes.

Understood as such, *The Commentary of Change* was in fact an initiating work for what is named as the school of meaning and principle (义理派) in later Chinese intellectual history of Yixue (易学, the study of *Zhouyi*) . As illustrated by Confucius himself, scholars in this school prioritize philology and philosophy over divination. They try to decipher the literal meaning of each character in the text, refusing to treat them occultly and thus trying to make them approachable in a rational way. Furthermore, they try to learn the wisdom that is instructed by the text and then try to understand the principles of changes in the world. The ultimate goal of their study of *Zhouyi* is to construct a philosophy about the most basic features of cosmic and human realities so as to enable themselves to act morally and appropriately in ordinary life. Compared with approaches to *Zhouyi* that focus on divination, the school of meaning and principle is one of naturalism and humanism. The supernatural mechanism that is involved in the process of divination is downplayed and the specific human responsibility and human agency in learning and realizing the principles of change within human society is in contrast emphasized. With the naturalist humanists' efforts, the study of *Zhouyi* will become an integral part of the liberal arts, as for them it makes a person freer with a more enlightened mind⁹.

⁸ The silk ribbon “纶” is used to bind and to organize, and sometimes also marks the rank of an official when it is used on an official robe; therefore, it has the same extensive meaning “to regulate” as the warp “经”. There are several places in Confucian classics where we can find this idiom, such as *Zhongyong* (中庸, commonality and centrality): “唯天下至诚，为能经纶天下之大经。”[“only those who are absolutely sincere can order and adjust the great relations of mankind”, this translation is from Wing-tsit Chan, trans. and ed. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 112] and The Comment of *Great Image* (大象传) of Hexagram *Zhun* (屯, sprouting) in *Yijing*: “云雷屯，君子以经纶。”[“Clouds and Thunder: this constitutes the image of Hexagram Sprouting. In the same way, the virtuous person weaves the fabric of government”, this translation is adapted from John Lynn trans., *The Classic of Changes: a New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 153].

⁹ I wrote a more detailed introduction on the Confucian genre of the study of *Zhouyi* for my master's thesis “Confucian Sacred Canopy in *Yijing*”. It addresses the difference between magic and science, Confucius' attitude about divination as expressed in newly excavated Confucian texts, the history of the study of *Zhouyi* in China and the other issues. This thesis is forthcoming for publication.

It is in this school of meaning and principle of Yixue that the bulk of Confucian scholarship on the study of *Yijing* is located. Therefore, when we try to make clear what Confucian philosophy of education is implied in Hexagram Meng of *Yijing*, we must stand firmly within the Confucian tradition of the study of *Zhouyi*. That means I will treat *Yijing* as a *sui generis* Confucian classic. I will comment both the original text of *Zhouyi* and its Confucian interpretation in *The Commentary of Change*; as explained above, these two parts forms the received text of *Yijing*. And I will take both the synchronic works such as *Analects*, *Mencius*, *Xunzi* and *The Classic of Rites*, etc., and the diachronic Confucian commentaries of *Yijing* such as Wang Bi's, Kong Yingda's, Cheng Yi's and Zhu Xi's¹⁰ into consideration in order to decipher the implied Confucian philosophy of education. The ultimate goal of my commentary of this specific hexagram is that which I explained above: to clarify the meaning of the text, to understand the principle of education, and to ingest new energy into educational practice here and now.

Introduction B: The Architectonics of Hexagram in *Yijing*

According to a prevalent opinion in the Confucian tradition of commentaries of *Yijing*, it was King Wen (文王), the father of the founder of Zhou Dynasty, who composed the original text of *Zhouyi*. It is said that when King Wen was imprisoned by the ruthless dictator of Shang Dynasty, Zhou (纣), into Youli (羑里), he put the previous eight trigrams which are said to be invented by an ancient sage king named “Fu Xi” (伏羲) on top of each other and formed therefore sixty-four new hexagrams. Furthermore, King Wen gave a name for each hexagram (卦名), wrote a statement for each hexagram, wrote a statement for each yao, and then put the hexagrams in a certain order, so the original text of *Zhouyi* have been composed as such.

No matter whether this authorship is veritable, the frequency with which the tradition tells this story indicates a very important piece of information for our understanding of the text: however abstruse the text seem to be, it must have been written by someone. It doesn't come from nothing, neither does it come from divine revelation. It comes from one or several sagacious human beings¹¹ efforts to understand and express the principle of changes in reality in

¹⁰ In the following commentary, it is impossible to quote and footnote every thought that I learn from these commentarial master of *Yijing*. I will list all the main Confucian commentaries of *Yijing* that is used for my own commentary in the bibliography.

¹¹ Some scholars think Duke Zhou (周公), one son of King Wen, is the co-author of *Zhouyi*, and some scholars also think *Zhouyi* is a collective work due to multiple authorship, while the ascription of the authorship to King Wen is made by Si Maqian in his “太史公自序”(a preface by the court historian himself) in *Shiji* (史记, Historical Records): “Duke Xi (ie., King Wen) was once detained in Youli, where he wrote *Zhouyi*”(“昔西伯拘羑里, 演周易”, see Si Maqian, *Shi ji*, 3300) and then this becomes a popular view in Chinese intellectual history of the study of *Zhouyi*.

the form of a symbolic system for divination: we must use everything “natural” and “human” to decipher its meaning. Why is there such a name for such a hexagram? What is the rationale for the composition of a piece of statement for a specific hexagram or a specific yao? Is there any reason to put this hexagram after another one? From the very first beginning of the Confucian commentary tradition of *Yijing*, the commentators’ minds were preoccupied by these kind of questions. They thought that in order to understand the text, apart from the possible literal meanings of each character, we must know how the characters in the text are correlated with the hexagram. In other words, we need to know the architectonics of hexagram as a primer of *Zhouyi* to understand its text. But very unfortunately, when King Wen (if he did) composed the text, he didn’t write such a primer. Later commentators needed to rely upon their own reconstruction, sometimes quite hypothetical and even far-fetched. But generally speaking, there were at least three questions which had to be answered before any hermeneutics of the text could be started: how a hexagram is formed from a single solid or broken line (– or ..) , what is the relationship between different yao in a hexagram, and what is the basic symbolic meaning for each trigram. Most of these questions were addressed by the first generation of Confucian commentators, i.e, by *Ten Wings*, but we still need later scholars’ works to complement them. In the context of the commentary of Hexagram Meng, we will introduce a minimum knowledge of the architectonics of hexagram as following¹²:

Formation of Trigrams

There are two lines, one solid and one broken, which represent the two most basic forms of being, Yang (阳) and Yin (阴), in the metaphysics of *Yijing*. In the inscription on oracle bones,

“阳” is written as  . The left part represents a mountain, the upper right is the sun, and the lower is the sunshine. So the original meaning of Yang relates to geography—the sunny side of a mountain, which is in China the southern side of a mountain, and the northern side of a river that flows in front of the mountain¹³. “阴” is the opposite side of “阳”. It is composed of the northern mountain and the southern river, where there is no sunshine. These original meanings of Yin and

¹² A fairly accessible version of the introduction of the architectonics of hexagram in contemporary scholarship could be found in Huang Shouqi, Zhang Shanwen 黄寿祺, 张善文, “读易要例” (a summary of the exemplary rules to read *Zhouyi*), in 周易译注 (translation and commentary of *Zhouyi*) (Shanghai: Shang Hai Gu Ji Chu Ban She, 2007), 460-479. For English readers, Joseph A. Adler’s excellent translation of Zhu Xi’s *Introduction to the Study of the Classic of Change* (易学启蒙) is quite helpful in this regard.

¹³ All etymological discussions are based upon *Shuowenjiezi* (《说文解字》, see footnote 43) , and other relevant contemporary researches, either in print or online. As all similar discussions in philosophical reasoning, they are tentative rather than definitive, which intend to make both the literal meaning and the philosophical implication of each character more correlative to each other, and thus more impressive.

Yang are implicit in their extensive metaphysical denotations. In *Yijing* cosmology, Yin and Yang represents the contractive and expansive matter-energy (气, Qi). The mixture and interaction of them constitutes everything-in-change. More importantly, Yin and Yang also ontologically refer. They represent two most generic features of reality, making them capable of characterizing the corresponding aspect of anything. Yang is male, strong, vigorous, regulative, explorative, aggressive, impetuous, violent, ruthless, etc. Yin is female, weak, stagnant, obedient, defensive, careful, peaceful, tolerant, supportive, etc. In the vocabulary of *Yijing*, none of these denotations could be tagged to Yang and Yin once for all. What Yang and Yin refer to in a concrete case heavily relies upon its context. These different meanings are related to each other under the same category of Yang or Yin just in the way Wittgenstein characterizes “similarity among family members”. These relationships are usually very metaphysical and analogical. This is perhaps the first challenge that western readers will face when they want to have a basic understanding of *Yijing*. They must change their mindset from hardwired in the logic of “concept” to the one of “metaphor” (象). Given the primary reality that *Yijing* intends to elaborate is change, and the primary cause that *Yijing* intends to serve is to inspire people’s moral consciousness and raise their virtue through the revealed principles of change, I would generalize that Yang and Yin are a prototypical pair of symbols to probe into the principles of things-in-change, to explain the mechanism of the process, and to stimulate human absorption of these principles into their own moral behavior.

How are the eight trigrams formed from the two lines of Yin and Yang? There are three units of cosmos (三才) which have different capacities but are intimately related to each other in *Yijing*’s cosmological view: Heaven, Earth and Human¹⁴. The sublimity of heaven and earth consists in creation: they create together a myriad of things under heaven; while heaven is granting and explorative, earth is receptive and supportive during the process. Human beings are also created from this process. This means that human nature combines the virtues of both heaven and earth. Being as such, it is quintessential for human beings to strive for both their own being and the being of the others. If they can balance these two aspects of human existence—the explorative and the supportive—they will fulfill their humanity (仁). It is a specific responsibility for human beings to realize the innate good human nature which is bestowed on them from heaven and earth, and to co-create and nurture a humane world.

Of course, the terms in this *Yijing* trinity are all metaphorical and symbolical. The fact that the trinity puts humans in parallel with heaven and earth and thinks therewith the whole cosmos

¹⁴ See Wang Bi, 周易正义[Justified Commentary on *Zhouyi*], 318.

is made up of these three parts doesn't mean that the system is anthropocentric. It is actually a reconfiguration of the view of cosmos from a human perspective. Only the perspective is human, not the content. Ultimately, human beings are still absolutely dependent upon the permeative creative power of heaven and earth, since we are creatures too. The real thrust of this *Yijing* trinity is to serve a correlative mode of thinking¹⁵ that tries to capture the cosmos as a whole—to understand humanity in continuity with its background cosmic reality.

Corresponding to the trinity, there are three positions from bottom up to symbolize these three cosmic units: the upper one belongs to heaven, the bottom one to earth, and the middle to humans. Either one of the prototypical pair of symbols which represent the two most basic forms of being, Yin and Yang, in these three prototypical positions one by one, yields eight trigrams. Since these trigrams are meant to symbolize the most generic features of a myriad of things in the cosmos, their symbolic meanings are extensive and profuse. They are thought to symbolize eight most basic natural objects: heaven, earth, thunder, water, mountain, wind, fire and marsh. They are also thought to symbolize eight basic qualities that are attributed to either natural or to human reality: strength, obedience, movement, danger, abeyance, penetration, attachment and comfort. As I indicated above, among *Ten Wings* there is a specific one named “*Shuogua*” (说卦, Speech of Trigrams) which intends to provide all the main symbolic meanings of each trigram. When reading the text of *Zhouyi*, we can take *Shuogua* as a dictionary to look for what symbolic meaning of each trigram is referred to by the statements of hexagram and yao. *Shuogua* is actually a generalization made by the first generation of Confucian commentators of *Zhouyi* on the referential relationship between the statements and the symbolic meanings of trigrams. It tries to provide a rationale why a piece of statement is attached to a specific hexagram or yao. This will be understood through the example of my commentary of Hexagram Meng later.

The order of these eight trigrams can be explained by the root metaphor that underlies all the conceptions in the cosmology of *Yijing*: procreation. Trigram Qian (乾) ☰, has three yang yao in each of the three positions of a trigram. It symbolizes the most powerful creative energy in the cosmos, and is thus considered the “father” among the family of trigrams.

Correspondingly, Trigram Kun (坤) ☷, has three yin yao in the same way as Qian, so it symbolizes the most supportive power that mediates the creation of Qian. It is the “mother” among the trigrammatical family. All the other six trigrams are their sons and daughters. According to the principle that the most salient yao determines the essence of a trigram, the

¹⁵ “Correlative thinking” is a term used by Roger T. Ames to categorize the general mode of thinking in Confucian cosmology, see Roger T. Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press and Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 41-48.

gender of the yao which is different from the others determines the gender of a trigram. So the six siblings are procreated as such: The father of Trigram Qian gives one yang yao to the bottom position of the mother of Trigram Kun, then the eldest son, Trigram Zhen (震) ䷲, is born. In similar way, the middle son is Trigram Kan (坎) ䷜, and the youngest one is Trigram Gen (艮) ䷳. Why is the bottom one counted as the eldest son? It is relevant to divination. When you divine, you need to draw a hexagram from bottom up according to the resulting number of each operation by yarrow stalks. Therefore, the yao in the bottom position is always the first one to be generated, and correspondingly, Trigram Zhen (震) which has a yang yao in its bottom is the eldest son. In the same way, Trigram Kun gives one yin yao to each position of Trigram Qian, then their three daughters are procreated: the eldest daughter of Trigram Xun (巽) ䷸, the middle one of Trigram Li (离) ䷬, and the youngest one of Trigram Dui (兑) ䷹¹⁶. As indicated above, Yin and Yang are two basic forms of matter-energy that is prevalent in the cosmos; their mixture and interaction constitute everything-in-change in the world. And heaven and earth as the most explorative and supportive units of the cosmos create together a myriad of things in the cosmos. We have also expounded that trigrams symbolize the most basic features of a myriad of things, and that their symbolic meanings are thus extensive and profuse. So the order of trigrams as implied in the procreative process makes quite clear basic *Yijing* facts: things in the world are created by some ultimate reality, they are constantly changing, and their changes display patterns and principles that can be captured by *Zhouyi* symbols.

Formation of Hexagrams.

Put any two of the eight trigrams on top of each other, and you will have the sixty-four hexagrams. They were invented by King Wen to increase the complexity of the symbolic system of *Zhouyi*, to reveal more patterns of things-in-change, and thus to address an even more complex situation in his time¹⁷. Because hexagrams are deduced from trigrams as such, the eight trigrams are also called as “basic” (经卦) and the hexagrams as “extra” (别卦) ¹⁸.

¹⁶ This process of procreation among trigrams is described in *Shuogua*, in Wang, Bi, Han Kangbo and Kong Yingda 王弼, 韩康伯, 孔颖达, 周易正义[Justified Commentary on *Zhou Yi*], in 《十三经注疏》[Commentary of Thirteen Classics], ed. by Li, Xueqin (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1999), 330. This is the standard version for all the texts of *Yijing* I quote in this paper.

¹⁷ King Wen lives in a period of transition and turmoil between two dynasties, so *Great Treatise* speculates the authorship of *Zhouyi* as “Did not the writers of *Zhouyi* become concerned about calamities?” (Lynn, *The Classics of Changes*, 87)

¹⁸ See footnote 1.

Each hexagram is thus made up of two trigrams, one below (下卦) and one above (上挂) . As we expounded before, every trigram has basic symbolic meanings. If you read a hexagram from top down or from bottom up, you get different combinations of the symbolic meanings of the two basic trigrams. Then you will capture the whole symbolic meaning of the hexagram in a certain sense. For example, as for Hexagram Meng (蒙, Shrouded) ,  , its trigram above is Gen (艮)  , which symbolizes mountain and abeyance¹⁹; its trigram below is Kan (坎)  , symbolizing water and danger²⁰. Reading from top down, you will get the combined symbolic meaning for the whole hexagram as: spring water flows from within a mountain. Because the land within a mountain is bumpy and rugged, full of thorns and thistles, a spring flowing from within must be hindered and thwarted at the very beginning. It is just like a naive and ignorant child. Before she or he finds a teacher and gets an education, she or he doesn't know how to deal with her or his life, especially how to live in a society. So the name of the hexagram is “Shrouded”. It means to be shrouded by anything that could hinder someone's growth or something's movement. However: water is bound to flow downwards. That is its nature. Even if a spring is thwarted by the bumpy rocks in a mountain at the very beginning, as long as time passes and conditions are appropriate, it will eventually flow out of the mountain, maybe converging with other springs to form a huge and vigorous river. By the same token, no matter how shrouded and limited a person's intelligence was when she or he was young, after sufficient education, the shroud will be removed and she or he will be finally enlightened, capable of being a human in a society. So the future of “being shrouded” is to be “unshrouded” (启蒙). In Chinese, “unshrouded” also means enlightenment and education. The pattern of things-in-change that Hexagram Meng intends to address is rightly about how an ignorant person is enlightened during the process of education.

¹⁹ These basic symbolizations are not without reason. There is one yang yao on top of the other two yin yao in Trigram Gen; according to the correlative and contextual thinking as we expounded above, yang is high and yin is low just as yang is strong and yin is weak; so from the shape of this trigram you can tell it could represent that something very high stands far above the other things. Then  is a mountain: “Gen is a mountain” (see *Shuogua*, in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 333) Because all the yao in a trigram are generated from bottom up during the process of divination, within a trigram there is a dynamic cause of every yao striving move from bottom up (this rule also applies in hexagram). But if a very high thing like a mountain stands in front of you, your movement must be stopped by it. So the other basic symbolic meaning of Trigram Gen is abeyance: “Gen symbolizes abeyance” (see *Shuogua*, in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 329)

²⁰ The midstream of a river is usually much stronger than its side streams, so a trigram with a yang yao in the middle and two yin yao in both sides symbolizes water: “Kan is water” (see *Shuogua*, in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 332). A river sinks in the field. For ancient people who have no advanced means of transportation, to cross a river is usually extremely dangerous. So Trigram Kan is also symbolic of sinking and being trapped in danger: “Kan is sinking and being trapped”. (see *Shuogua*, in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 329).

Meanwhile, if you read the hexagram from bottom up, you will get a different combined symbolic meaning that could enrich its instruction on the core topic of education from different perspective. As we expounded above, the six yaos in a hexagram are generated one by one from bottom up during the process of divination, so there is a dynamics within a hexagram to make every yao strive for moving upwards. If we read Hexagram Meng from bottom up, the meanings of “danger” and “abeyance” of Trigram Kan and Trigram Gen will be combined as: to run into a danger when moving forward, and then to have to be stopped. This meaning is analogical to the prior one read from top down and also to the name of the hexagram, “shrouded”. The difference is that it points out one negative aftermath if a person doesn’t get educated but still wants to move forward: he will be trapped in danger and will have to be stopped. As we will show in our commentary of Hexagram Meng, the most important content for Confucian education is ritual, and to be educated in this sense is to be ritualized. We can find many statements in Classical Confucianism to describe the “danger” of a person or a society who has not been rightly ritualized, which can confirm this symbolic meaning of Hexagram Meng read from bottom up, such as: “Confucius said: ‘if you don’t know Li (ritual), you cannot have any place to stand upon’”²¹ and “Ritual provides the footing men tread on. When men lose this footing, they stumble and fall, sink and down. When observance of small matters is neglected, the disorder that results is great. Such is ritual.”²²

Furthermore, a hexagram is not only made up of two trigrams, it is also made up of six yaos. If we zoom in on the yaos in different positions of a hexagram, more details of its architectonics will be revealed.

There are six positions in a hexagram that a yin or yang yao fills: initial (初), second, third, fourth, fifth, and top (上). These six yaos represent six stages or six statuses during the event-process that a hexagram intends to address as a pattern of things-in-change. The initial one usually represents the earliest stage as the event emerges, and the top one usually refers to a over-mature and thus overdone status when the event passes all its necessary stages and is about to change into another one. For example, in Hexagram Meng, the statement of the initial yao describes how a little kid as a fresh student can be educated, and the top one describes how a stubborn thug who always refuses to be educated could also be “educated” in some sense.

²¹ Analects, 20.3, translation adapted from Robert Eno, trans., *The Analects of Confucius: An Online Teaching Translation*, 111, [http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_\(Eno-2012\).pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2012).pdf), Accessed April 9, 2014.

²² Xunzi, 27.40, translated in *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, trans. John Knoblock (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988), Vol. III, 216.

Because every hexagram is made up of two trigrams, these six positions are naturally divided into two sets. It implies that the whole event will experience a transitional period, or a jump, between the third and the fourth positions. Under the third, the event is still in the stage which the trigram below addresses, while above the fourth, it has already jumped into a more advanced stage which the trigram above deals with. For example, in Hexagram Meng, the third yao describes how to treat a stubborn person who refuses to be educated. But in the trigram below, the represented person is not so uneducated and obstinate that she or he must be punished violently. The statement of the third yao is therefore only for a mediocre or normal case when a person refuses to be educated. But in the trigram above, the yao resonant to the third is the top one²³. As a result of the transition that the whole hexagram experiences between the third and the fourth positions, the uneducated person represented by the third yao in the trigram below has already grown into such a fearless and ruthless thug in the top position of the trigram above, so the only way used by the educator represented by the top yao is to “hit” the folly thug in a justified violent way! Such a trigrammatical jump that happens between the third and the fourth positions also entails that the situations in these two positions are usually very shaky and risky. For the third, some big change is about to happen; and for the fourth, it just finished a great change so that everything has not yet been settled down. So the prognostication is usually not so auspicious for any yao which occupies these two positions, as *Great Treatise* generalized: “The fourth is usually full of fear...The third usually has misfortune”²⁴. This can also be exemplified by Hexagram Meng. Among all its statements of yao, the third and the fourth ones are the only two whose prognostications are not beneficial (不利) at all.

Compared with these four positions, initial, top, third and top, the second and the fifth are the best ones that are usually conducive to an auspicious prognostication. This is because these positions are central: the second position is the central one among the three in the trigram below, while the fifth is the same in the trigram above. “Centrality” (中) is an ideal situation for things-in-becoming in Confucian philosophy. It implies that a status of being of one thing is appropriate, balanced, and harmonious in terms of its relationship with its surroundings. This can be best illustrated by the first paragraph of *Zhongyong* (中庸, Centrality and Commonality), one especially spiritual text among the Confucian Four Books, when it talks about how a person’s emotions could be cultivated: “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy are aroused

²³ We will explain later what is the relationship of “resonance” between two yaos.

²⁴ Translation adapted from Lynn, 93 and Richard Wilhelm, trans., *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, trans. into English by Cary F. Baynes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 8136, Kindle.

it is called equilibrium (中, centrality, mean). When these feelings are aroused and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony(和) . Equilibrium is the great foundation of the world, and harmony is its universal path. When equilibrium and harmony are realized to the highest degree, heaven and earth will attain their proper order and all things will flourish.”²⁵ Therefore, if a yao stands upon the second or the fifth position in a hexagram, it will be in a vantage-point in contrast with the others to be more steerable, more powerful and thus more amenable to an auspicious prognostication. In the metaphoric language about bureaucratic establishment that is frequently used in the text of *Zhouyi*, the fifth position is reserved for a monarch, and the second one could be for a virtuous person who has no official position (because she or he is still in the trigram below and thus has not been promoted into the higher positions in the trigram above) but still could have great influence upon her or his surroundings due to her or his knowledge and virtue. Therefore, if a yang yao occupies the second position and a yin yao takes the fifth, that means a humble monarch would like to come down and learn from a virtuous teacher who has not yet any official position. Power succumbs to knowledge, and humility receives virtuosity. This is an example of the most opportune moment when a good education could occur, to which the statement of Hexagram Meng and its corresponding statements of the second and fifth yaos give a graphic description. In fact, the successful educator represented by the second yao in Hexagram Meng could refer to Confucius himself. As indicated above, Confucius in his old age returns to his home state and concentrates upon writing and teaching. Although he is not a monarch, his teachings have great influences upon Chinese politics through his disciples and generations of literati in later history. So people honored Confucius as a “white King” (素王) . It means he teaches kings and acts as a king although he is actually not a king. It is just like the white silk canvas used for painting:the white silk has no color, but without it any color would have nowhere to be attached and thus no way to manifest itself²⁶. In Hexagram Meng, the second yao as a respected and virtuoso teacher educates a humble monarch who is eager to learn in the fifth position. This is a perfect profile for what Confucius tried to do in his career and what Confucianism intends to achieve as a philosophy of education.

In regard to the relation between a yao and its position in a hexagram, apart from whether it is “central”, there is another criterion to judge whether it is an auspicious one, which is whether it is “upright” (正) . According to the principle that an odd number is a yang number

²⁵ Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book*, 98

²⁶ The story about “painting comes after plain silk” (绘事后素) is from *Analects* 3.8, in Eno, 16.

and an even number is a yin²⁷, among the six positions in a hexagram, the initial, third and fifth are all yang positions, while the second, fourth and top are all yin ones. If a yang yao occupies a yang position, or a yin yao occupies a yin position, then it is upright; otherwise, if a yao occupies a position whose gender is different, it is not upright. For example, in Hexagram Meng ☰, the only upright yao is the fourth one, which is a yin yao occupying a yin position. The character “正” is made up of two parts, “止” and “一”. “止”(zhi) means to stop, to stick to, and to persist in. And “一” (yi) means “one”. In a philosophical sense, one is the principle, and many are the cases to be regulated by the principle. So being upright means to be able to stick to a principle. If a yao occupies a position that has the same gender, it sticks to its principle. Moreover, if a yao is upright, the person represented by it will also be upright and trustworthy. She or he would carefully follow recognizable rules of behavior and behave in a moral way. Otherwise, a person represented by a non-upright yao will be very likely to draw back from her or his moral stance and thus have no grit to carry out a moral principle. For example, in the statement of hexagram of Meng, after describing how the situation of the second yao as a teacher and the fifth yao as a student could represent the most opportune moment when a good education could occur, it warns that it is “beneficial to persevere” ²⁸(利贞) . The original meaning of “贞” is to divine by a holy tripod²⁹. But in the context of *Zhouyi*, to divine is to search for a principle that regulates the action of a confused and hesitant person, so the extensive meaning of “贞” is rightly “正”, to be upright, to persevere in a principle. The reason why there is such a warning word (戒辞) in the statement of Hexagram Meng is that neither the second nor the fifth yao is upright. The second one is a yang yao which occupies a yin position, and the fifth is a yin yao which occupies a yang position. It implies that although from a structural point of view the situation in these two yao could represent the principle of good education, but the persons represented by them are liable to lose their grit to carry out the principle because they are not quite upright and trustworthy. As a result, the only way to correct this character flaw of either the second as a teacher or the fifth as a student and thus make the educational activities beneficial is to warn them “to persevere”. Therefore, “being upright” is a very important aspect of yao, and in this sense, if a yao is upright, it is accordingly more liable to an auspicious prognostication. Nevertheless, since “being central” and “being upright” are both elements that enable a yao to be of an auspicious

²⁷ The rationale may be the priority of an odd number upon an even one when they are counted, like 1 is prior to 2.

²⁸ Translation adapted from Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes*, 3128 and Wilhelm, *I Ching*, 21.

²⁹ See Shaughnessy, *Unearthing the Changes*, 1557-1580.

prognostication, there could be a multiple combination of these two credits: a yao could be central but not upright, upright but not central, neither central nor upright, and both central and upright. How should these different combinations be evaluated in regard to the degree of their credit? Obviously, to be both central and upright is the most auspicious, such as the fifth yang yao in Hexagram Qian (乾, Creative). Its statement is “A flying dragon is in the sky. It is beneficial to see (or to be) a great person”³⁰, describing how a great person could succeed to exert her or his moral influence in the most efficient way. To be neither central nor upright is the most ominous, such as the third yin yao in Hexagram Meng as we partially interpreted above. It is the most stubborn thug who always refuses to be educated, and the end of her or his life is to be “hit” and punished violently by a judicious and determined educator. So the only conundrum seems to be the other two options: central but not upright, or upright but not central. As expounded above, “centrality” is a great ideal for Confucian moral philosophy. It is the principle itself, so compared with “uprightness”, it has more credit to enable a yao to be of auspicious prognostication. That is the reason why the second yang and the fifth yin yaos in Hexagram Meng could represent the best case of education, although they are not upright and need a further warning to have them persevere in the right way of education.

Nomenclature and Relationship of Yaos

There is a characteristic way to name different yaos in *Yijing*. After every operation by yarrow stalks in a divination, there are four possible resulting numbers of stalks: six, seven, eight and nine³¹. According to the principle that the odd is yang and the even is yin, six and eight are yin numbers, and seven and nine are yang numbers. Between the yin numbers, what is smaller is more yin, since yin symbolizes weakness and obedience. Between the yang numbers, what is bigger is more yang, since yang symbolizes strength and dominance. Therefore the nomenclature of yaos in *Yijing* will take 6 as the representative number of yin yao and 9 as the one of yang yao. In combination with the position that a yao occupies, we have the exact locating number for each yao. For example, in Hexagram Meng ☰, the yao at the bottom is a yin yao which occupies the initial position, so it will be called the yao of “initial six”. By the same token, the next one will be called “nine second”, and the followings are “six third”, “six fourth”, “six fifth”, and “top ninth”. It is important to pay attention to the order of the two numbers: the positional codes “initial” and “top” are always prior, while in the other cases, the positional codes come after.

³⁰ Translation adapted from Lynn137 and Wilhelm 9.

³¹ A detailed introduction of the divinatory method of “Great Deduction” can be found in Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, 19-20.

What is extremely important to our understanding of the architectonics of hexagram is the relationship among yaos. As we mentioned above, Confucian metaphysics demands dynamic, correlative and contextual thinking. It means that if any being which is represented by a yao in a hexagram intends to have right reaction to its surroundings and thus to develop itself well, it must pay attention to various correlative factors: its own character and capability, the stage of its development in the whole process of life-events which is addressed by the hexagram, and the relationship with its neighbors—the different yaos. These three factors are to a large degree represented respectively by its gender, its position and its relationship with other yaos.

There are four kinds of relationships among the six yaos in a hexagram: carrying (承) , riding (乘) , proximity (比) and resonance (应) . If a yao occupies a position that is immediately lower than another one, it carries the latter; if a yao occupies a position that is immediately higher than another one, it rides the latter. So these two types of relationships are reciprocal: if yao A carries yao B, then yao B rides yao A. For example, in Hexagram Meng ☰, the yao of Nine Second is riding the yao of Initial Six. Reciprocally, Initial Six carries Nine Second. A rule of thumb is that riding a yang yao (乘刚) is very bad. That is because every yao strives for a further development, to occupies a higher position in a hexagram. But comparatively, a yang yao has greater power to realize this promotion. So if you ride atop a yang yao in a hexagram, that means it covets your position and is making its best effort to replace you. That is apparently very dangerous. On the other hand, carrying a yang yao (承刚) is not necessarily a bad thing. If you are a yang yao and carry a yang yao in the meantime, that means even if you strive for occupying a higher position, the person in that position is too powerful to be replaced, so it will be very difficult for you to get this promotion. In contrast, if you are a yin yao and carry a yang yao, because one of the virtues of yin is to be obedient and supportive, you are not only able to obey and support your superiors, but you as a weaker agent can also benefit from the reliance upon them. Thus it is only for a yang yao that to carry a yang yao is bad. Of course, all of these are just rules of thumb. Whether it is really bad to ride or carry a yang yao depends upon different contexts in different hexagrams where a yao is located.

The notion of “proximity” is highly relevant to Hexagram Meng. Any yao occupying a position that is close to another yao is proximate to the latter. For example, in Hexagram Meng ☰, both Initial Six and Six Third are proximate to Nine Second, and both Nine Second and Six Fourth are proximate to Six Third, and so on. As is well known, it is very important for a student to find a good teacher to be properly educated, which means she or he must be in a position that is close to that teacher. Xunzi once had a very good piece of advice on this point: “The *Rituals*

and *Music* present models but do not offer explanation; the *Odes* and *Documents* present matters of antiquity but are not always applicable to today; the *Annals* are laconic, while their import cannot be quickly grasped³². But if you can learn from a man of learning who studies and practices the teachings of the virtuous person(君子之说) , then you can be honored for your comprehensive knowledge and for your universal acquaintance with the affairs of the world. Therefore in learning, no method is more advantageous than to be close to a man of learning.”³³ In Hexagram Meng, the man of learning whom all the students should learn from and should thus be close to is Nine Second. It is a yang yao occupying a central position, not only being talented in education but also having the right position to exert its talent. In contrast, all the other four yin yaos are students who are obligated to find this good teacher to be well educated. Among these four students, Initial Six and Six Third are proximate to Nine Second, and Six Fifth is resonant to Nine second³⁴; thus they all have advantageous positions to learn from this man of learning and to get good educations as long as they can match their own good will to learn. The statements of these yaos indicate that they all succeed at getting a good education appropriate to their different stages of personal growth, except for Six Third. As indicated above, the yao of Six Third is neither central nor upright, so it is very liable to violate a principle and act immorally. It cannot match its will to learn with its advantageous position, and therefore its end is described as being punished violently by Top Nine. Compared with these three students, the only yin yao that has no position to learn from Nine Second is Six Fourth. The yao of Six Fourth is neither proximate nor resonant to Nine Second. It is trapped in the middle of yin yaos and thus has no possibility to be close to the teacher. It is indeed a very deplorable situation for Six Fourth to be deprived of any opportunity to get good education. Therefore its statement of yao tells “Six Fourth is trapped in the shroud³⁵. This will bring humiliation”. Confucius explains this statement in the commentary of *Small Image* as “the humiliation brought by the fact that Six Fourth is trapped in the shroud and thus remains uneducated is because Six Fourth is the only yao which is

³² The five books mentioned here are all Confucian classics that are said to be compiled and written by Confucius.

³³ Xunzi 1:11, translation adapted from Knoblock, Vol 1, 140.

³⁴ The relationship of “resonance” will be introduced later.

³⁵ It means that Six Fourth thus remains uneducated.

remote from the solid³⁶.³⁷ The statement of Six Fourth and Confucius' commentary about it reflects a deep Confucian sympathy with uneducated people due to the lack of educational resources and a strong Confucian emphasis upon the necessity of universal education. In the 1980s, the Chinese government launched “the project of hope” (希望工程) which aims to establish elementary schools and improve educational facilities in poor areas of China, such as in mountain areas, remote villages, and slums in the suburban districts. This is a genuine Confucian educational project, as it provides more opportunities of education for otherwise illiterate and impoverished people. It is also a great attempt to improve and contribution to the quality of Chinese citizenship.

The last relationship among yao needed to be introduced is resonance. As indicated above, there are three positions in a trigram, symbolizing respectively Heaven, Earth, and Human. Meanwhile, every hexagram is made up of two trigrams, which entails each position in one trigram with its counterpart in the other. The initial position corresponds to the fourth, because they are both positions of earth. Similarly, the second corresponds to the fifth, and the third corresponds to the top. If two yao occupying the corresponding positions are of different gender, they are resonant. For example, in Hexagram Meng ☰, Nine Second and Six Fifth are two yao of different gender that occupy two corresponding positions of the second and the fifth, so they are resonant. By the same way, Six Third and Top Nine are also resonant, but Initial Six and Six fourth are not resonant since they are both yin. Being in the relationship of resonance is usually a credit for the related yao. It means someone among your superiors or inferiors gives you special support. For example, Six Fifth in Hexagram Meng is a humble monarch who is eager to learn; its resonant yao in the trigram below is Nine Second, the respected and virtuoso teacher who has a leading role in all the educational activities addressed by the hexagram. Since these yao are resonant, they support each other. Furthermore, they are also both central, which means they are both in an ideal position to have appropriate reactions to the life-event they are pursuing. As a result of these credits, these yao can cooperate together to make happen the most opportune moment when a good education could occur. But not all the relationships of resonance can lead to an auspicious prognostication. Apart from support, resonance also means attraction. If a yao is attracted by another one towards whom it should not be attracted, that is still impertinent. For example, Six Third is the most disgraced yao in Hexagram Meng. It is not central, not upright.

³⁶ “The solid” refers to the yao of Nine Second. It is a yang yao, so the line representing it is solid.

³⁷ Translation adapted from multiple resources as listed in the bibliography, and the original Chinese text is in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 40-41.

Seated proximate to Nine Second, it nevertheless refuses to find its teacher and get education. One reason that makes it drop out is that Top Nine is resonant to it. In this relationship of resonance, Six Third is attracted by Top Nine who is not a right teacher since Top Nine is not central, occupies too high a position that usually makes everything overdone, and thus is not as qualified an educator as Nine Second. Therefore whether a relationship of resonance could be advantageous to the related yao is as case-by-case as the applicability of all the other rules in the architectonics of hexagram that we have expounded so far.

All in all, there is a kaleidoscope of relationships dependent upon where a yao is located in a hexagram. It can be central or not, upright or not, which depends upon the relationship between a yao and its position. It can carry another one rightly or not, ride another one rightly or not, be proximate to another one rightly or not, and be resonant to another one rightly or not, depending upon the different relationships between yaos. All of these entail that the relationship between one yao and the whole hexagram is different. There must be one yao (sometimes two) among all the six that has the most appropriate character, the most suitable capacity and the rightest position so that it can represent the most ideal status or the most characteristic respect of the life-event that a hexagram intends to address as a pattern of things-in-change. This yao is considered as the main yao (主爻, or 卦主) in a hexagram. To discern a main yao from the other ones is quite helpful for understanding the whole Hexagram, because usually all the statements of the other yaos are composed according to their relationship to the main one. In Hexagram Meng



, it could be discerned from our previous exposition that Nine Second is the main yao. It is yang, central, resonant with the ruler, having the right character, capacity and position, so that it can symbolize a respected and virtuoso teacher who has a leading role in all the educational activities which this hexagram addresses. Every other yao is described as graced or disgraced in its statement according to its relationship with Nine Second, ie., according to whether it can find its teacher and get good education. One rule of thumb to distinguish a main yao is whether there is a correlation between the statement of hexagram with the one of yao. As is told, the statement of hexagram is composed to explain the meaning of the whole hexagram, while the statement of yao is for the meaning of a specific yao. If there is a correlation between each other, it indicates the situation and character of that yao can represent the one of the whole hexagram, and then it could be judged as the main yao. This rule applies in Hexagram Meng. In the statement of hexagram, “the young shrouded”(童蒙, a kid yet to be educated) and “I” are depicted as a student and a teacher, while the phrase “the young shrouded” also appears in the statement of Six Fifth, so there is a correlation between these two statements, which indicates the young kid

having yet to be educated described in the statement of Hexagram Meng refers to the yao of Six Fifth. And then its resonant yao Nine Second must be her or his teacher who corresponds to the word of “I” in the statement of hexagram. Therefore we can know that Nine Second is the main yao which symbolizes the leading teacher in this hexagram³⁸. The fact that Nine Second in Hexagram Meng is treated as the main yao implies that in Confucian philosophy of education, the teacher is considered as the pivot figure for all educational activities. It is the teacher, not politicians (Six Fifth is a monarch though quite humble) , not businessmen, not students’ parents, not even global market economy--not any of these external factors--that is responsible for making the final decision about all pedagogy and implement it. If a nation or a society wants its citizens or members to get good educations, the most important and urgent things are to have a group of excellent teachers, to put them in the key positions of educational administration, and then learn from them. This teacher-centric philosophy of education implied in Hexagram Meng is echoed by “The Record of Education” (学记) , one core text on education in *Liji* (礼记, The Classic of Rites), which is another Confucian classic which was compiled in the same period of classical Confucianism as *The Commentary of Change*. It says, “In pursuing the Dao of education, the difficulty is in securing the proper reverence for the teacher. When the teacher is revered, the Dao (which he inculcates) is regarded with honor. When the Dao is regarded with honor, the people know how to respect education. Thus there are two cases when a ruler doesn’t treat his subjects as subjects. When one is personating the ruler’s ancestor in a funeral, he doesn’t treat him as a subject, nor does he treat his teacher as such. According to the ritual of Great Learning (大学) , the teacher, though being communicated of anything by the Son of Heaven (ie., the emperor), did not stand with his face to the north³⁹. This is the way a teacher gets respected.”⁴⁰ One caveat must be added that in Hexagram Meng, Sixth Fifth is also a ruler. His coming down and learning from Nine Second like an active, naive and humble young kid (童蒙, “the young shrouded”) is a perfect instance when a ruler doesn’t treat a teacher as a subject.

Interlaced Trigram (互卦)

³⁸ About the statement of hexagram and the statement of Six Fifth, please see the text of Yijing as marked by 4.1-4.3 and 4.28 in the following commentarial part.

³⁹ The appropriate gesture for an emperor is to sit in the north and to face the south when he or she talks with he or her subjects. It symbolizes that an emperor is like the Pole Star around which every other star spins in the celestial sphere.

⁴⁰ Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda 郑玄, 孔颖达, 礼记正义 [Justified Commentary on *Li Ji*], in 《十三经注疏》 [Commentary of Thirteen Classics], edited by Li Xueqin (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1999), 1066. Translation adapted from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/xue-ji>, accessed 08/26/2014.

Another resource for the composition of a statement of yao is the interlaced trigram where a yao is located. As we have known, every hexagram is made up of two trigrams, one above and one below. Because of the superimposing of one trigram upon another, some new trigrams are engendered. For example, in Hexagram Meng , apart from the basic trigrams Gen in the above and Kan in the below, the yaos of Nine Second, Six Third and Six Fourth form a new trigram “Zhen” (震) , and the yaos of Six Third, Six Fourth and Six Fifth forms the other new trigram “Kun” (坤) . The formation of these two trigrams is due to the interlacing of part of the trigram below and part of the trigram above, so they are called “interlaced trigrams”. Obviously, there can only be two interlaced trigrams for each hexagram, which are respectively made up of the second, third and the fourth yaos and of the third, fourth and fifth yaos. Because of the profuse symbolic meanings of each trigram, the interlaced trigram is a great resource for the composition of a statement of yao. For example, in Hexagram Meng, the last clause in the statement of Nine Second is “A son is capable of taking charge of the household”⁴¹. The imagery of “son” is elicited from the interlaced trigram Zhen where Nine Second is located. As we explored above, Trigram Zhen symbolizes the eldest son in the families of trigrams. The fact that Nine Second could act as a respected and virtuoso teacher to instruct his superior like Six Fifth is analogical to the eldest son could instruct his parents and thus take charge of the whole household when his parents are not so good at caring the family. This is another layer of meaning implied by the specific situation between Nine Second and Six Fifth, and as we will explain later, this also reveals another respect of Confucian philosophy of education which is usually deplorably overlooked: an inferior like a son can and must teach a superior like a father if it is required by the situation and conforms to some principle even higher than the one of filial piety (孝) .

2, Commentary of Hexagram Meng

The Image and Name of Hexagram

The first step for the commentary of a hexagram is to figure out why its name corresponds to its image. We have done this when we illustrate how to read the combined symbolic meanings of hexagram from its basic trigrams⁴². Now we only need to conduct etymological analysis to enhance our understanding in this respect.

According to *Shuowenjiezi* (说文解字, To Explain and Analyze Characters), one of the earliest Chinese dictionary compiled by Xu Shen (around 58-147 C.E) in East Han and its

⁴¹ Translation adapted from Wilhelm, 22.

⁴² Part I, “Formation of Hexagrams”.

commentator Duan Yucai (1735-1815), the original character of “蒙” is “彖”. “彖” is ideographic: the top radical “—” means “to cover”, a short line “—” reemphasizes this meaning, and “彖” is a pictographic character to represent a pig⁴³. A pig is covered, therefore heading nowhere, this is the original meaning of “蒙”; so we translate it as “shrouded”. Its import is resonant with the imagery of Hexagram Meng that is elicited from the combined symbolic meanings of its two basic trigrams: a spring flows from within a mountain and is thwarted at the beginning, and something or someone encounters a danger when it moves forward and thus has to stop. So to be educated in this sense is to be “unshrouded” --- to remove the obstacle and to recover the innate good human nature which destined to be free and thrive like a spring which is bound to flow down a mountain. The most famous first sentence in *Zhongyong* (中庸, Centrality and Commonality) enunciates this cornerstone of Confucian philosophy of education quite accurately: “What Heaven (天, Nature) bestows is called nature. To follow the nature is called the Way (Dao). To build up the Way is called education.”⁴⁴ No matter it is a pig, a spring or a human, to be shrouded is to lose its way, so only through a process of unshrouding the way could be rebuilt up. For humans, it is through education.

Order of Hexagram

In the received version of *Yijing*, the first five hexagrams are Qian (乾, Creative), Kun (坤, Receptive), Zhun (屯, Sprouting), Meng (蒙, Shrouded) and Xu (需, Waiting). This order can be best understood in the form of the root metaphor upon which the worldview of *Yijing* is built: the procreation, growth and changes of life. Qian and Kun symbolize Yang and Yin, heaven and earth, father and mother. With these two most basic constitutive forms of being, a life could thus be born and grow, so Qian and Kun are the first two hexagrams among all the sixty-four. Hexagram Zhun says that when a seed is sprouting, it is bound to come across the soil as an obstacle to its growth. Consequently, it must accumulate its efforts, struggle to cleave a feasible way, and then gradually break through the soil to finish the first stage of its growth. It is like the birth of a new nation. The people in the nation must accumulate their efforts, establish a basic set of rules to consolidate their community, and then gradually develop themselves in various areas to make a prosperous country⁴⁵. Therefore Hexagram Zhun is to instruct how to organize the first stage of life in the face of disorder and difficulty that an emerging life experiences. Hexagram

⁴³ See Xu Shen, Duan Yucai, 許慎, 段玉裁, 說文解字注 (Commentary on *To Explain and Analyze Characters*) (Shanghai: Shang Hai Gu Ji Chu Ban She, 1981), 100, 637.

⁴⁴ Translation adapted from Wing Tsit-Chan, *A Source Book*, 98.

⁴⁵ See the commentary of *Great Image* of Hexagram Zhun.

Meng shares part of its imageries with Hexagram Zhun. As discussed above, a spring flows within a mountain like a seed sprouting underneath the earth. They both encounter obstacles to their growth from the very first beginning. But Hexagram Meng gives further instruction about “unshrouding” and education. There must be a way for the hindered life to rediscover its way. For human beings, that is through education. So if a nation with its basic political and social framework wants to become stronger and stronger, its people must continue to get good education. That is the reason why *The Record of Education* says: “The jade uncut will not form a vessel for use; and if men do not learn, they do not know the way (in which they should go). On this account the ancient kings, when establishing states and governing the people, made education a primary enterprise!”⁴⁶ Nevertheless, a specific period of education is usually mainly addressed to the intellectual growth of a person. But the growth of personality is definitely more than intellectual. After a person’s intellectual shroud is removed and thus she or he knows what to do and how to do, she or he must take his or her time to make use of kinds of means to absorb the teachings from a mental level to a physical level. That means apart from a specific period of education, a person must commit him or herself to continuous self-cultivation, to nurture his or her character, to strengthen his or her body, and then gradually make the knowledge she or he once received from education grounded unto practice and reality. That is the teaching of Hexagram Xu, on waiting, and on how to take time to gradually achieve one’s goal.

Understood as such, it is also quite intelligible why *Xugua* (序卦, Order of Hexagrams) explains the order of the first five hexagrams as “Heaven and earth exist; then a myriad of things are created. The space between heaven and earth is filled with these myriad things: therefore Zhun comes next. Zhun means ‘filling up’. Zhun is the beginning of things being created, and newly created things are bound to be immature: therefore Meng comes next. Meng is the immaturity of things newly born or formed. Things newly born need to be nurtured: therefore Xu comes next. Xu is the *of eating and drinking.”⁴⁷*

From this order of hexagrams, we know that in Confucian view, education is of paramount importance for the growth of either a person or a society. After a person has grown up to a basic mental and physical level, and after a society has been established under a basic set of social rules, the primary enterprise they must dedicate themselves to pursue is education. Otherwise, they will lose their way. And we also know that education for Confucianism is not a one-time

⁴⁶ Zhengxuan, 礼记正义, 1051; translation adapted from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/xue-ji>, accessed 08/26/2014.

⁴⁷ Translation adapted from Richard Rutt, trans., *The Book of Changes (Zhouyi)* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 8752, Kindle.

deal. Heaven and earth continue to create, and the myriad things thus created are succumb to constant changes. Human beings must commit themselves to a life-long process of self-cultivation, to always enable themselves to have appropriate reactions to these constantly changing cosmic and human realities, to act as Confucius himself constantly did: “To stay silent and mark what has been learned in the mind, to study without fatigue and to instruct others without fatigue - did I succeed to do one of these things?”⁴⁸

Statement of Hexagram

“4.1 The Hexagram of Shrouded leads to unshrouding. 4.2 It should not be I who seek the young shrouded but the young shrouded who seeks me. 4.3 A diviner should tell the result of the first divination, but a second or a third divination about the same thing would result in blasphemy; if there were such blasphemy against divination, the diviner should not inform of anything. 4.4 Beneficial to persevere.”⁴⁹

As discussed above, the statement of hexagram(卦辭) presumably written by King Wen is to explain the meaning of a hexagram as a whole. In the context of divination, it also prognosticates the process of a life-event that a hexagram intends to address.

The statement of Hexagram Meng is made up of three parts. The first one, which is 4.1 in our translation, prognosticates the result of the life-event that Hexagram Meng intends to address. The second one, which includes 4.2 - 4.3 in our translation, prescribes the condition under which the prognosticated result could come true. The third one gives a warning to make sure that the prescribed conditions must be conformed to. Let’s interpret these three parts one by one. And please remember that one most important respect of Confucian interpretation of *Yijing* is to figure out how the text in the statements corresponds to the architectonics of hexagram, the illustration of which have occupied most of this paper’s introduction.



“亨” in 4.1, whose Xiao Zhuan is , is a pictographic character. It represents a utensil for sacrifice; the upper is the cap, the below are the leg and the vessel, and the middle two piled-up boxes represent the numerous rarities to be sacrificed. Therefore its original meaning is to be rich or prosperous, which is further extended into “to go smoothly”, penetration, permeation, etc. In the context of Hexagram Meng, it means that given the right condition, the obstacle to an emerging life will be finally removed, as the life is bound to be free and thriving by its nature. For the changes gone through by the growth of the life, being shrouded would lead to being

⁴⁸ Analects 7.2, translation adapted from Eno 30.

⁴⁹ Translation adapted from multiple resources. The original text is from Wang Bi, 周易正义, 37.

unshrouded, so we translate “亨” as “unshrouding” in conformity with the topic and name of this hexagram. It also implies when you divine about a concerned thing, you will be frustrated at its beginning, but given right reaction from each side of the involved agents, you will be finally successful.

The condition for an emerging life to be unshrouded is prescribed in 4.2-4.3. These two sentences are a phenomenological description about what the best education could be. As we discussed above⁵⁰, both Nine Second and Six Fifth are central; they are resonant to each other; and Nine Second is the main yao. All these factors lead to the fact that they could cooperate to realize a good education at the right moment. So what does the good education look like?

“The young shrouded” in 4.2 (童蒙, or an uneducated kid) refers to Six Fifth. It is “young” because Six Fifth is in the trigram above Gen ☰, while Trigram Gen symbolizes the youngest son in the family of trigrams. Meanwhile, Six Fifth is in Hexagram Meng, being shrouded and thwarted in its initial development. With the combination of these two imageries, the statement depicts Six Fifth as “a young shrouded” accordingly. The character “童” (Tong, childish, juvenile, or young) denotes both the ignorance and the purity of the mind of Six Fifth as an earnest student. It is ignorant so it must seek for a teacher to get education, as Six Fifth as a yin yao is resonant with Nine Second and thus must treat this central and yang yao as its teacher. It is pure so it can be humble and active in the seeking whether it has a higher official position or not. In Hexagram Meng, Six Fifth occupies the position of a monarch, while Nine Second has a lower one and thus ought to be counted as one of Six Fifth’s subjects. The fact that Six fifth is in contrast eager and active to seek for Nine Second as its teacher is a perfect example of the humility and purity of a good student. In relation to the gender and position of Six Fifth, this mental status which is perfect for learning could be depicted as “void and central” (虚中) . It is void because it is yin, enabling itself to be receptive of the teachings from the outside; it is central because it occupies the fifth position, enabling itself to have right (humble and active) reaction to the education that it is eager to receive from Nine Second. Based upon these credits, the statement of Six Fifth is as simple as “4.28 The young shrouded; auspicious”, and Confucius interprets this statement in the commentary of *Small image* as “4.29 The good fortune of the young shrouded comes from its compliance and obedience.” Please pay attention to the fact that Six Fifth is also the top yao in the interlaced trigram Kun ☰, which is made up of Six Third, Six

⁵⁰ On Part I, “Formation of hexagrams”, we take Nine Second and Six Fifth as examples of what mean to be a central yao. The same examples are taken on Part I, “Nomenclature and Relationship of Yaos”, about the main yao and the relationship of resonance between two yaos.

Fourth and Six Fifth. Trigram Kun Symbolizes “obedience”⁵¹, while being on the top of Trigram Kun symbolizes being extremely obedient. This is the reason why Confucius uses two characters which have basically the same meaning to describe the behavior and mentality of Six Fifth: “順” (compliance) and “巽” (obedience). As indicated above, the fact that Six Fifth is a monarch but eager and active to learn from its subject is a graphic illustration of this “compliant and obedient” mentality. Among Confucius’ disciples, Yan Hui (颜回) was praised by Confucius as the one who was the most eager to learn and who had achieved the highest virtue⁵². His schoolmate, Zeng Zi (曾子) , once described the studiousness of Yanhui as such: “Gifted with ability, and yet asking advice of those who are not able; possessed of much, and yet asking advice of those who possessed of little; having, as though he had not; full, and yet counting himself as empty...in the past time, I had a friend who pursued this style of life.”⁵³ This extreme humility and eagerness of “having as having not, full yet counting as empty” of Yan Hui is also a perfect example of the compliance and obedience of Six Fifth in Hexagram Meng. Therefore in Confucian view of education, being humble and thus eager to learn in the student’s side is the first prerequisite of a good education.

“I” in 4.2 refers to the young shrouded’s teacher, Nine Second. As indicated above, the six yaos making up a hexagram are drawn one by one from bottom up during a divination. It entails that the trigram below is the first one to get formed and thus closer to the diviner in comparison with the trigram above. In this sense, the trigram below is also considered the inner trigram (内卦) , and the trigram above is the outer one (外卦) . The behavior of Six Fifth as a central yin yao in the trigram above to come down and learn from Second Nine, his teacher as a central yang yao in the trigram below, could also be thought of as a movement from outside to inside. So Nine Second is represented as “I”, seated in the inner trigram and waiting for his students.

The appropriate sequence in the initiative of seeking described in 4.2 , which corresponds to the relationship of resonance between Six Fifth and Nine second as illustrated above, both emphasizes the respect for the teacher and indicates a deep pedagogical rationale. It is a special Confucian idea of education that although being close to a good teacher is a determinative factor for a student to be well educated⁵⁴, it is the obligation of the student to find his or her teacher to

⁵¹ “坤， 顺也”， in *Shuogua*, in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 329.

⁵² See Analects 6.3, 11.3.

⁵³ Analects 8.5, Tranlation adapted from Eno 37 and Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/analects/tai-bo>, accessed on 08/26/2014 .

⁵⁴ See our explanation about the relationship of “proximity” in Part I, “Nomenclature and Relationship of Yaos”.

make happen the expected education, not vice versa, as the “Summary of Rituals” (《曲礼》) in *The Classic of Rites* says : “It is heard that it is in accordance with the rules of propriety that students are coming to learn; it is never heard that the teacher is supposed to go to teach.”⁵⁵ The primary rationale for this advocacy is to show respect for the teacher. If a teacher takes his or her initiative to teach regardless of the will and receptive ability of the student, the teachings will be obtained too easily, they would not thus be respected, and the relevant educational activities could not be set in order either. Meanwhile, in order that a specific round of question-and-answer between a student and a teacher be a really efficient process of education which is able to transform the intelligence and personality of the student, the student him or herself must take his or her full initiative to try to figure out what is the answer even before the questioning. It is just like that in order to remove the obstacle of a spring flowing within a mountain and help it to find its way to flow down, it is better to overview the whole itinerary and then find the most obstructive point to finally give the spring water a releasing prompt. Therefore the best pedagogy is heuristic: the teacher can discern what is really needed by the student from his or her *initiative* learning behaviors, and then inspire the student to find the answer by him or herself on the basis of the teacher’s comprehensive knowledge. This heuristic pedagogy is illustrated by Confucius’ own teaching method: “If a student is not thwarted in the process of finding an answer by himself, I would not give him a clue; If a student does not stammer in expressing himself, I would not provide a help. When I have presented one corner of a subject but do not receive the other three in response⁵⁶, I teach no further.”⁵⁷ Nevertheless, this heuristic pedagogy will have nowhere to be applied if the student doesn’t take his or her initiative. This is another reason why 4.2 emphasizes the initiative of the young shrouded to find his or her teacher.

From this emphasis on heuristic pedagogy we also know that the respect for the teacher is not ultimately for the sake of the teacher. It is for the transmission of the teachings and for the transformation of the student. In the most metaphorical term, we would say it is to fulfill a specific human responsibility to help Heaven and Earth to co-create and nurture a myriad of things under Heaven⁵⁸. Or, simply, we could say it is for the sake of Dao. The existence of this third, transcendent and luring element endows educational activities with a specific glamour of

⁵⁵ Zheng Xuan, 礼记正义, 13. Translation are adapted from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/lijiqu-li-i>, accessed on 08/26/2014.

⁵⁶ There are all together four corners in a house. Confucius likens the complete understanding of a subject to a four-corner comprehension of it.

⁵⁷ *Analects* 7.8. Translation are mainly adapted from Eno 30.

⁵⁸ See Part I, “Formation of Trigrams”, about the three cosmic units in Confucian metaphysics.

holiness and mystique. In King Wen's time, nothing was more religious and educational than divination. So following 4.2, 4.3 uses the imagery of divination to foreground the holiness of education and reemphasize the pedagogical correlation between the student and the teacher.

There is an unwritten rule for divination in Chinese people's daily religious practice: if someone is not sincere, do not divine (不诚不占) ⁵⁹. It implies that if anyone wants to ask a diviner to do divination for him or her, he or she must be fully prepared to accept any result and thus sincerely believe in what the diviner will say even before the divination. Otherwise, because the result for a divination could be either good or bad, auspicious or ominous, if the person dislikes a bad result and asks the diviner to do the divination about the same thing again and again until a good result comes, that will be devastating to divination. This is the reason why 4.3 says a second and third divination about the same thing will be a blasphemy and warns the diviner not to tell anything in this case. In relation to education, the instruction in 4.3 in the form of divination poses special requirements for both the student as the questioner and the teacher as the answerer in order to make happen the most opportune moment of education. As already instructed in 4.2, the student must be humble and take initiative. He or she must know exactly what he or she needs and thus asks a question concise and definite enough to accommodate a pertinent answer. Meanwhile, what 4.2 has not instructed and 4.3 emphasizes in contrast is that the teacher must also deliberately think about whether and how to answer the question. If the content of question is off-the-point too much, or the method of questioning doesn't comply with the rule of propriety, perhaps showing irreverence for both the teacher and the Dao that the teacher try to inculcate, the teacher ought not to answer. Furthermore, the answer of the teacher ought to be succinct, adequate and resolute enough to target the weakest point of a student's acquired knowledge. This point may be very easy, or it may be the most profound one for the relevant subject. Regardless, the teacher's answer ought to be so pertinent as to be both in line with the receptive ability of the student and meanwhile inspire him. The most desirable result is to have the student find his or her own way to have a comprehensive grasp of the subject on the basis of the teacher's pertinent answer. In *Analects*, Confucius gives different answers about the meanings of Humanity (仁), which is the virtue of virtues in Confucian moral philosophy, in regard to different personalities and different situations of his students who ask the same question. He refuses to answer an inappropriate question which is posed by a non-virtuous monarch who is more interested in winning a war against other states than bringing peace and

⁵⁹ See Fu Peirong, 傅佩榮, 易想天開看人生 (To See Human Life through *Yijing*) (Taiwan: Shi Bao Chu Ban, 2010), 24.

humanity to his own society through the practice of ritual⁶⁰. All of these are examples of the best question-and-answer method instructed by 4.2 and 4.3 in the statement of Hexagram Meng. *The Record of Education* summarizes this method furthermore as “The skillful questioner is like a workman addressing himself to deal with a hard tree. First he attacks the easy parts, and then the knotty. After a long time, the student and teacher come together to talk of it, and then the puzzle is solved with satisfaction from both sides. The unskillful questioner takes the opposite course. The teacher who skillfully treats the questioning pupil, may be compared to a bell when it is struck. Struck with a light stroke, it gives a small sound. Struck with a heavy one, it gives a great sound. But only when it is struck leisurely and properly does it give out all the sounds of which it is capable. He who is not skillful in replying to questions is opposite to this.”⁶¹ These observations demonstrate that Confucian philosophy of education is a mode of correlative thinking from the very beginning. Both the student and the teacher have indispensable roles in co-creating the most opportune moment for a good education. As indicated above, in Hexagram Meng, Six Fifth and Nine Second are both central and resonant; one is humble, receptive and initiative, and the other is firm, erudite and circumspect; these two are the qualified yaos that can make the best education happen. As a result, everyone who is eager to learn should take these two yaos in the context of Hexagram Meng as a model to facilitate specific adaption for their own educational situation. This is also exactly what *Yijing* as interpreted in the Confucian tradition intends to do: to develop people’s morality under the enlightenment of the principles of things-in-change in the world.

We have interpreted 4.4 in relation to the nature of “uprightness” of a yao in Part I, so we will skip it here.

Commentary of Judgment

Because the divinatory function of the statement of hexagram is to help a diviner to judge the consequence of a going-on life-event to which the divination is addressed, it is also called “the statement of judgment” (彖辞) ⁶². *The Commentary of Judgment* (彖传) was presumably written by Confucius in an attempt to interpret the meaning of the statement of a hexagram. As one of *Ten Wings*, the *Commentary of Judgment* is in fact the first layer of hermeneutical foil that is attached to the original *Zhouyi* text in the Confucian commentary tradition of *Yijing*.

⁶⁰ Analects 15.1.

⁶¹ Zheng Xuan, 礼记正义, 1067; translation adapted from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/xue-ji>, accessed 08/26/2014.

⁶² See Chapter Four of Part One of *Great Treatise*, in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 264.

Consequently, every later Confucian commentator of *Yijing* is obligated to have his or her own interpretation of this first layer of foil to mark off his or her Confucian stance in the study of *Zhouyi*. Since I am deliberately standing within this tradition, it is very natural for me to have a commentary upon *The Commentary of Judgement*, too. In the previous section, I already conducted a detailed commentary of the statement of Hexagram Meng on the basis of the Confucian commentary tradition which is ultimately based upon *The Commentary of Judgement*. So my commentary of this *Commentary* will be very concise, and conducted only to foreground the elements that have not been fully emphasized in our previous commentary.

“4.5 Hexagram Meng symbolizes there is a danger at the foot of a mountain, so someone will encounter a danger and then have to stop while moving forward; this is the meaning of Meng, to be shrouded. 4.6 ‘4.1 The Hexagram of Shrouded leads to unshrouding’: the reason why the shrouded could be unshrouded in this hexagram is that they can move forward in the right time. 4.7 ‘4.2 It should not be I who seek the young shrouded but the young shrouded who seeks me’: this is because Six Fifth and Nine Second are resonant. 4.8 ‘4.3 A diviner should tell the result of the first divination’, this is because Nine Second is firm and central. 4.9 ‘4.3 A second or a third divination about the same thing would result in blasphemy; if there were such blasphemy against divination, the diviner should not inform of anything’: this blasphemy against divination is also a blasphemy against education, and then the shrouded will be hurt and stay uneducated. 4.10 To unshroud the shrouded and nurture rectitude in them is the meritorious task of the sage.”⁶³

As we indicated above, reading a hexagram from top down or bottom up could engender different combined symbolic meanings. In this way, Confucius tries to understand the general imagery of Hexagram Meng in 4.5, especially how the image of the hexagram could corresponds to its name. The basic symbolic reference of Trigram Gen is mountain and abeyance, and the one of Trigram Kan is water and danger. From top town, Hexagram Meng means there is a danger at the foot of a mountain; from bottom up, it means to encounter a danger and have to stop while moving forward. These two interrelated combined symbolic meanings of Hexagram Meng provide the rationale for why it could be named as “Meng”, the shrouded.

In 4.6, Confucius broached a very important concept “时中” (a literal translation could be “in the centrality of time”) to explain how a good education could happen. Time in *Yijing* is never a purely physical one as if it can flow from the past to the future indifferently, as if it can be measured by the regular movement of a natural object and thus totally detached from anything

⁶³ Translation adapted from multiple resources. The original text is in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 38-39.

that stands within it and is calibrated by it. Time in *Yijing* is made up of moments of life. It is co-created and co-constituted by various participants, either natural or human ones, of a life-event to help realize the ever-going creation of the whole cosmos in a specific context. In Hexagram Meng, the principle of good education is illustrated by 4.2 and 4.3, while the most opportune moment when this principle could be fleshed out is constituted by Six Fifth and Nine Second, by the perfect confluences of their different genders, characters, capabilities, positions, situations, etc. It is only after all of these conditions are satisfied and matched by each other that the time for a good education could emerge. As expounded above, “Centrality” is such an important ideal for Confucian moral philosophy that the most opportune moment which can harmonize and push a life-event forward in the right direction could be best described as “in the centrality of time”. Therefore what Confucius means in 4.6 is not only that it is education that unshrouds the shrouded, but also that a good education must be pursued in the right time. This is illustrated by the cooperative activity of Six Fifth and Nine Second in Hexagram Meng.

4.7-4.9 are quite easy to understand on the basis of our own commentary. Confucius here is trying to interpret how the best moment of education as illustrated in the statement of hexagram can correspond to the architectonics of hexagram. We will skip 4.7-4.9.

There are two points made on Confucian pedagogy in 4.10. The first is about the goal of education. As quoted above⁶⁴, Confucianism believes that there is an innate good human nature which is bestowed by Heaven. This good human nature is conducive to human activities that are modeled upon the grandest cosmic creation of Heaven. It makes individuals try their best to co-create and to nurture a myriad of things under Heaven during the process of self-cultivation and self-development. But when people are young, their mentality is usually so immature as to be distracted by kinds of elements from outside: inborn temperaments, family, social media, natural environment, etc. As a result, this innate human nature which would have otherwise made them bound to be free and thriving together with the whole cohort of their cosmic fellow beings is covered and lost. So the goal of education is not to add anything upon them. It is to discover, rediscover and nurture. If any individual could find his or her unique way through education to re-establish the intimate relationship between his or her activities and the grandest range of cosmic realities, know how to harmonize and push forward the development of this relationship, and then be determined to do so, *that* will be a successful education. As we indicated above, “贞” in 4.4 means “正” (uprightness)⁶⁵, where uprightness is a moral credit of a yao to persevere with

⁶⁴ See Footnote 44.

⁶⁵ See Part I, “Formation of Hexagrams”, on the nature of “uprightness” of a yao.

the right principle. For human moral behaviors, there is no bigger principle than the good human nature and the Heavenly creation where this nature comes from. Therefore, Confucius determines the goal of education to be “to unshroud the shrouded and nurture rectitude in them”. He thinks this is a meritorious task for the sage.

The second point is about the pedagogy of a special kind of learning in Confucianism: elementary learning. As described above, when people are young, their mentality is too naive to enable themselves rediscover their innate good human nature and find their way. So education must be pursued with the right timing. It must be received in a very early age, given that a person is mentally and physically normal. Otherwise, people’s behaviors will be continuously influenced by inappropriate environmental elements and their own habit. They will form and be trapped in an inflexible style of life which conflicts with their good human nature. Thus it will be very hard to accept any further education, as *The Record of Education* says: “Prohibition of evil after it has been manifested will meet with great resistance, and will not be successful. Learning after the right time will be done with toil and carried out with difficulty, so it will be very hard to achieve anything.”⁶⁶ In this sense, a specific type of pedagogy is needed to address the earliest stage of education. It is supposed to target the immaturity and naivety of beginners, help to nurture their innate good human nature, and have them exempted from bad influences. This type of pedagogy is called “elementary learning” (小学) or “learning of young kids” (蒙学) . Its goal is expounded by Confucius in 4.10, while its method will be described in the statement of the first yao, Initial Six, in Hexagram Meng.

Commentary of Great Image

The Commentary of Great Image (大象传) gives practical advice for virtuous persons’ self-cultivation according to the instruction of each hexagram. The rationale to name this commentary as one of “great image” is that the instruction according to which it gives the advice is specifically elicited from the combined symbolic meanings, i.e. the combined imageries, of two constitutive trigrams in a hexagram. Correspondingly, the commentary made upon a statement of a yao in a hexagram is called *The Commentary of Small Image* (小象传) , which is an interpretation of the imagery implied in the statement of yao. In the Confucian commentary tradition of *Yijing*, *The Commentary of Small Image*, due to its extreme brevity, is usually put together with its corresponding statement of yao as a packed text for further commentary, as we will do in the following paragraphs. In contrast, *The Commentary of Great Image* targets the whole hexagram and usually includes a strong emphasis upon the virtuous person’s self-

⁶⁶ Zheng Xuan, 礼记正义, 1062; translation adapted from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/xue-ji>, accessed 08/26/2014

cultivation in the background of a very profound Confucian reflection about the relationship between Heaven and humans, so it is necessary to have an independent commentary upon it.

“4.11 Below a mountain emerges a spring: this constitutes the image of Shrouded. In the same way, the virtuous person should take resolute actions and cultivate his or her virtues”

The practical advice 4.11 gives to people’s self-cultivation according to the combined imagery of Hexagram Meng is fairly straightforward. Spring water is bound to flow down, so if it emerges from within a mountain and is thwarted by the bumpy rocks at its very beginning, it will be urgent for it to discover a right way to overcome the obstacle and continue moving downwards. Otherwise, to be trapped and stay stagnant will violate its own nature. In the same way, human nature is bestowed by the constantly creative Heaven, and it is bound to be free, thriving and loving, full of passion and compassion. If someone can’t find a right way for his or her life, feeling unfree, inactive, bored, deprived of love, etc., it will be no less urgent for him or her to search for enlightenment and rediscover his or her true self. A virtuous person would never hesitate to learn, to cultivate his or her virtue, and to nurture and nourish his or her innate good human nature through education.

Statements of yao and Commentaries of Small Image

Initial Six

“4.12 Initial Six begins to lift the shroud. 4.13 In order to remove the shackles and fetters, it is favorable to establish the rule and apply punishment. 4.14 Nevertheless, this method can be barely applicable in the long run.”

“4.15 ‘It is favorable to establish the rule and apply punishment’, this is to set up the right norm.”⁶⁷

In 4.10, Confucius gives the rationale for elementary learning: education must happen in an early age in order to prohibit evil before it is manifested and thus nurture people’s rectitude in keeping their innate good human nature. In contrast, what the statement and the commentary of Initial Six describe is the method of this type of learning.

Initial Six is a yin yao which sits at the bottom of Hexagram Meng. This implies that it is the youngest among all the shrouded (the four yin yaos, Initial Six, Six Three, Six Four and Six Fifth) who strive for seeking Nine Second to get good education. It is a beginner in the school, the most ignorant, immature, and also the most undisciplined in his or her behaviors. 4.12 affirms that Initial Six will get a good education that is appropriate for its situation. As indicated

⁶⁷ Translation adapted from multiple resources; the original text is in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 39.

by our enunciation of the relationship of proximity between yaos⁶⁸, whether a yin yao in Hexagram Meng is proximate to Nine Second and it can accordingly match its good will to learn are the determinative factors for whether it could get good education. Initial Six is proximate to Nine Second; it is not resonant to any other yang yao; and it is a yin yao which occupies the basest position in the hexagram. These points mean that Initial Six could quite easily find its teacher and also be quite willing and obedient to be educated. Nevertheless, because Initial Six is the youngest and most ignorant student, even if it can get good education that is suitable for its specific situation at this initial stage, the shroud which covers its mentality and physicality cannot be totally removed. After finishing this elementary learning, it must adapt to a new set of pedagogical rules and continue to be educated and self-cultivate. Therefore 4.12 describes the result of Initial Six's education as “begins to lift the shroud”. For divination, it means the process of the concerned life-event is taking its first steps to a good result as long as the right actions as described in 4.13-4.14 are taken by the concerned agents.

4.13-4.15 give the method that is taken by Nine Second to teach Initial Six, a specific pedagogy targeting beginners and elementary learning.

Initial Six is in Trigram Kan . As indicated above⁶⁹, one basic symbolic meaning of Kan is “sinking and being trapped” (陷), because the only yang yao is trapped in the middle of two yin yaos⁷⁰ and Kan also symbolizes water, which by nature sinks in the earth like a river. “Shackles and fetters” always trap, and to “establish the rule and apply punishment” is also another way to restrict; both of these imageries are extended from the fact that Initial Six sits in Trigram Kan. Therefore what 4.12 says is that Nine Second as a teacher uses the pedagogical method of “establishing the rule and applying punishment” to remove the “shackles and fetters” of Initial Six as a student. These shackles and fetters are in fact a set of very weak mental and physical conditions which make people in their young age extremely vulnerable to negative influences from outside.

This method is definitely different from the one of heuristic learning (4.2-4.3) which is applied between Nine Second and Six Fifth: there, the student is humble and initiative, knowing what is really needed and how to ask, and the teacher is firm, erudite and circumspect, knowing how to answer, inspire, and transform. Compared with this best opportune moment of education

⁶⁸ See Part I, “Nomenclature and Relationships of Yaos”.

⁶⁹ See footnote 20.

⁷⁰ In Chinese, the character “Yang” (阳) has a special connotation that a person is good and righteous, while “Yin” (阴) could imply a person is evil and crafty.

to which the initiative learning of student contributes a lot, this method (4.13) can't be said to occur without coercion. Because the mentality of young kids in their initial stages of education are too immature to understand the rationale behind what they are taught, it is ridiculous to expect them to have a command of the teachings beyond the level of rote imitation. Meanwhile, also because these young kids are too immature, they are quite susceptible to negative influences from outside, and thus quite easy to form bad habits which will be difficult to rectify if they are not corrected in their emerging moment. Therefore the only viable way to educate beginners is to establish the rule, have them know what is the right norm (4.15) by rote, and do what is right by imitation. If someone “knows” and does well, he or she will be rewarded; if not, he or she will be punished. This quite utilitarian and authoritarian pedagogy specifically targets the first stage of education, which can correct beginners’ wrong behaviors, prepare them for higher level of learning, and meanwhile doesn’t elevate the level of discourse beyond what their mentality could accommodate. Definitely, it can’t be applied in the long run as said in 4.14. Humans are bound to be curious, explorative and creative, so that in the long run only that kind of pedagogy described in 4.2-4.3 can be viable, which makes use of and nurtures, rather than blocks, human nature. Compared with this heuristic pedagogy which aims to inspire people’s moral consciousness and transform their behaviors by their own will, the one symbolized by Initial Six can only be counted as “elementary learning”.

In Confucian philosophy of education, “elementary learning” (小学) and “great learning” (大学) don’t only address two different periods of learning, they are also two levels of learning. Confucian philosophy says that if anyone intends to learn anything in any age, he or she will be responsible to upgrade his or her learning from an elementary level to a great one. In the context of *Yijing*, there are two venues where these two kinds of learning are best illustrated and contrasted. They are the commentaries of *Great Image* of Hexagram Xiaoxu (小畜, lesser domestication) and Hexagram Daxu (大畜, great domestication) . The core topic for both these two hexagrams is self-cultivation. The *Great Image* of Hexagram Lesser Domestication defines the content of lesser self-cultivation as “The virtuous person refines his or her virtue of culture from outward”⁷¹. The *Great Image* of Hexagram Great Domestication defines the content of great self-cultivation as “The virtuous person comprehends lots of what has been said and done in the past in order to nurture his or her own virtue”⁷². The wisdom implied in *Yijing* is that human beings are born with a power to self-aggrandize, which is symbolized by the line of yang

⁷¹ Translation adapted from Wilhelm, 432.

⁷² Translation adapted from multiple resources. The Chinese text is in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 120.

and is analogical to *libido* in Freud and the will to power in Nietzsche. This power makes humans always aspire to mark their own existence upon their surroundings and thus thrust themselves into an insatiable process of self-aggrandizing. If this power is not tamed and facilitated by another one, the supportive and receptive Yin power which is always caring for the being of the others during the process of someone's self-realization, it will lead to unmanageable conflict and disharmony which is akin to the "war of everyone against everyone" in Thomas Hobbes. So the curriculum of lesser self-cultivation suggested by the *Great Image* of Hexagram Lesser Domestication is to "refine the virtue of culture from outward". It means to provide some disciplines, such as literature, music, sport, ritual, etc., to help to constrict and tame the ever-aggrandizing Yang power within human nature, to channel and mix it gradually into the compassionate Yin power which is also indispensable to human nature, and thus prepare a human to be a fully autonomous and civil being after a long run of self-cultivation. Because the self-cultivation which happens in this stage stays in the level of art and technique, the people who are able to perform these arts of civilization well by imitation and repetition can embellish their behaviors outwardly and thus appear cultured, but they can't fully comprehend the rationale, the Dao, which underlies these arts. As a result, they can't correlate these rationales as the principle of reality with every details of their ordinary life and then creatively transform things which are in bad need of transformation into better ones. Therefore this curriculum of self-cultivation could only refine people's "virtue of culture from outward", and is indeed of a lesser and minor type. Correspondingly, the pedagogy of elementary learning addressed in Initial Six of Hexagram Meng belongs to this type of self-cultivation. It can't be expected that learning through rote and imitation, and motivating through rewards and punishments could inspire and nurture students' creativity. That is also the reason why 4.14 is quite explicitly against the application of this pedagogy in the long run. In contrast, what the great self-cultivation requires in the *Great Image* of Hexagram Great Domestication is a full comprehension from within the depth of heart of what has been said and done in human history. The virtuous person committed to such a great self-cultivation seeks to master the principles of reality revealed in the rich heritage of human culture, tries to flesh them out in practice, and thus contributes to transforming the world into the best one, as what *Great Learning* (大学) , one of the Confucian Four Books which lays out a systematic curriculum for the virtuous person's self-cultivation, says in its opening chapter: "The Way (Dao) of great learning consists in rediscovering and manifesting the innately bright human virtue, loving and renewing the people, and in achieving and abiding in the highest good."⁷³ As

⁷³ Translation adapted from Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book*, 86.

an example, the heuristic method of question-and-answer addressed in the statement of Hexagram Meng ought to be subsumed into the pedagogy of this great self-cultivation and great learning.

Understood as such, it can be discerned from above how this differentiation between the pedagogies of elementary and great learning is of paramount importance for Confucian philosophy of education. In fact, in the millennia long history of Confucian education, generations of Confucian educators quite consciously maintain this differentiation and try to address these two different levels of education through designing and implementing different curricula and pedagogies⁷⁴. The ultimate goal of Confucian education is always about transformation and creativity, either of human beings or of the world, upon which all the other minor details of Confucian pedagogy pivots. I believe contemporary educators are still obligatory to design their own methods for realizing this Confucian ideal of education, if in a way that accommodates the technology and realities of the modern age.

Nine Second

“4.16 Nine Second wraps the shrouded; auspicious. 4.17 For bringing home a wife, auspicious. 4.18 A son is capable of taking charge of the household.”

“4.19 ‘A son is capable of taking charge of the household’, this is because the firm (Nine Second) and the yielding (Six Fifth) coordinate with each other.”⁷⁵

As is said above, Nine Second is the main yao of Hexagram Meng. It is yang, central and supported by the monarch. At the time of education that Hexagram Meng intends to address, Nine Second is the most qualified educator that every student is supposed to seek. 4.16 describes how successful the education of which Nine Second is in charge could be. In the hexagram, Nine Second is surrounded by all the yin yaos, as a teacher is surrounded by students. That Nine Second could “wrap the shrouded” means as long as a student is eager to learn, Nine Second would not refuse him or her. It could design different pedagogies to target students of different ages and situations, but it would not discriminate against any student or any group of students by denying their right to receive an education. In Chinese history of education, Confucius is well-recognized as the first and most important educationalist. He proposed the principle “There is

⁷⁴ These articles on this topic could be taken into reference: M. Theresa Kelleher, “Back to Basics: Chu Hsi’s *Elementary Learning*(Hsiao-hsueh)” and Pei-yi Wu, “Education of Children in the Sung”. Both are in Wm. Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee, ed, *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 219-251, 307-324.

⁷⁵ Translation adapted from multiple resources; the original text is in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 40.

education, where there is no discrimination”(有教无类) ⁷⁶. Confucius launched a private school and thus put into practice the expansion of education from aristocracy to the common people. Thus the magnanimity of Nine Second to “wrap the shrouded” is also a fit profile for Confucius. Together with the statement of Six Fourth⁷⁷, 4.16 highlights the universal human right of education. In divination, everything asked will be of an auspicious prognostication, since Nine Second has the most appropriate character, position and time in this hexagram.

The statement of hexagram 4.2-4.3 has already demonstrated the best method that is used by Nine Second to teach and transform his students. 4.13 also describes the special pedagogy addressed to the beginners. As we analyzed before, one is for the great learning, and the other is for the elementary learning. Therefore there is no need in the statement of Nine Second to propose any other principles for the method of teaching. In line with the emphasis upon the universality of education in 4.16, 4.17-4.18 focus on the insight that education doesn’t only happen in the school, but in the family, society, nation, and potentially everywhere that a special harmony among human affairs is needed and thus human beings need to exert their creativity to realize the harmony.

As described above, Nine Second is surrounded by all the yin yao in Hexagram Meng. As the only central yang yao, it is especially resonant with the only central yin yao, Six Fifth. Therefore another imagery is elicited to depict this special situation: marriage. The reason why 4.18 prognosticates such a marriage between Nine Second and Six Fifth is auspicious is that it conforms to the principle of good marriage endorsed in *Yijing*. As explained above, in the symbolic system of *Yijing*, the line of Yang symbolizes being strong and leading, while Yin is weak and supportive. Thus the inborn or natural position for Yang is thought to be upper, while Yin is low, as heaven is naturally above the head, while earth is naturally under the foot. If there could be any affectivity and communication between these two basic forms of being in Chinese cosmology, they must reverse their inborn positions: yin becomes upper while yang stays below. It is as if in order to create the myriad of things under heaven, the yang matter-energy (Qi, 氣) which originates from heaven must descend and the yin matter-energy which comes from earth must ascend, and then the affectivity and intercourse between them could occur. Therefore in the architectonics of *Yijing*, there is only one situation which symbolizes a right marriage: the yin is upper, while the yang is below, which symbolizes that the weak and supportive female is respected and cherished, while the strong and leading male is humble and caring. This principle

⁷⁶ Analects 15.39, translation adapted from Eno 87.

⁷⁷ See 4.25-4.26 in the following commentary and Part I, “Nomenclature and Relationship of Yaos”.

could be best illustrated in an *ad hoc* hexagram which is specifically addressed to the issue of marriage: Hexagram Xian (咸, affectivity),  Hexagram Xian is made up of the above Trigram Dui (兑) , symbolizing the youngest daughter, a maiden, and the lower Trigram Gen , the youngest son. Young men and young women are persons full of emotion and affection. The young woman staying in the above position is happy⁷⁸, demure, captivating and waiting for the young man's wooing, while the young man is firm, sincere⁷⁹, staying humble in the below and tries to bring home a lovable wife in conformity with right ritual and principle. All of these are perfect for a good marriage according to the philosophy of affectivity between yin and yang in *Yijing*. So the statement of Hexagram Xian is as simple as "Prosperity. Beneficial to be righteous and persevere. For marrying a maiden, auspicious."⁸⁰ The same principle of affectivity could also be illustrated in the ceremony of wedding. According to relevant chapters in *The Classics of Rites*, in the period of classical Confucianism, a family member of the bridegroom must go back and forth between the household of the bride and his own six times to finish all the necessary rites before bringing the bride home. These rites include presenting gifts, asking names, pinpointing the date, sacrificing to the ancestors, etc., but every round of rites are all monitored by the principle that it is the family of bridegroom that offers the suggestions and then it is the one of the bride who makes final decisions whether to approve them or not. This is designed to show the humbleness of the bridegroom and his respect towards his future wife. Especially, in the last parade to bring the bride home, the groom must drive a carriage for the bride by himself until its wheel has turned three times. Only then he can come back to another carriage and be driven to his home before the arrival of his wife⁸¹. Such a graphic illustration of the ritualized and principled role of a husband in the wedding! Correspondingly, in Hexagram Meng, Nine Second is yang, central, staying in the below, and Six Fifth is yin, central, staying in the above, and they are resonant to each other; all of these completely comply with the principle of affectivity and good marriage endorsed by the *Yijing* philosophy and the Confucian view of ritual. There is no other word to prognosticate such a marriage in 4.17 except for "auspicious". But what is the implication of 4.17 for education? Because the imagery of marriage also appears in the statement of Six Fourth and Top Nine, and they illustrate together the importance of the

⁷⁸ One basic symbolic meaning of Trigram Dui is Happiness, an unsurprising characterization of the youngest daughter in a family. See *Shuogua*, in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 329.

⁷⁹ All these imageries are connected to the basic symbolic meaning of Gen, a mountain.

⁸⁰ Translation adapted from multiple resources; the original text is in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 139.

⁸¹ See "The Significance of Marriage Ceremony" (昏义) , in Zheng Xuan, 礼记正义, 1617-1625.

study of ritual in Confucianism, we can and will talk of their educational implications until all these statements are properly interpreted.

In relation to the explanation of the interlaced trigram⁸², we have shown why 4.18 could be a fit portrayal of Nine Second. It says that in necessary situations, an inferior must teach an superior, as a subject teaches his or her monarch and a son teaches his father.

In *Analects*, there is a special passage dedicated to this issue:

“Confucius said: ‘In serving his parents, a son may remonstrate with them, but gently; when he sees that they do not incline to follow his advice, he shows an increased degree of reverence, but doesn’t go against his will; and if this process brings toil and pains, he bears no complaint.’”⁸³

In Neo-Confucian commentary of this passage, Zhu Xi interprets the key clause “doesn’t go against his will” (不违) as “On the one hand, the son should not go against his will to remonstrate gently lest an abrupt and rude way would make his parents angry. On the other hand, the son should not go against his will to remonstrate; he must try his best to rectify their parents and make them clear of any wrongdoing.”⁸⁴

Together with 4.18, these texts show quite clearly that to remonstrate with one’s parents and to try one’s best to make them clear of wrongdoings is an indispensable dimension of the virtue of “filial piety”, which is usually thought as the root of the highest virtue, humanity, in Confucianism⁸⁵. But humanity is all about creativity. As the most famous first paragraph in *Zhongyong* shows⁸⁶, the virtue of humanity as an essential expression of human nature is bestowed by Heaven and makes humans try their very best to realize the status of vibrant harmony in every occasion when the field of ever-changing cosmic realities is focused and granularized into some specific human affairs. In this view, there are higher principles far above the one of filial piety that a healthy relationship between children and their parents must obey, as *Xunzi*, following Confucius’ instruction as quoted above, has generalized in regard to how to be a good son: “Inside the home to be filial towards one’s parents and outside the home to be properly courteous towards one’s elders constitute the lowest standard of human conduct. To be obedient to superiors and to be reliable in one’s dealing with inferiors constitute a mediocre standard of

⁸² See Part I, “Interlaced Trigram”.

⁸³ *Analects*, 4.18, translation adapted from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/analects/li-ren>, accessed on 08/26/2014

⁸⁴ Li Jingde, 黎靖德, ed., 朱子语类 (Analects of Master Zhu) (Hunan: Yue Lu Shu She, 1997), Vol I, 632.

⁸⁵ See *Analects* 1.2.

⁸⁶ See footnote 44.

human conduct. But to follow the dictates of the Way (Dao) rather than those of one's lord and to follow the requirement of morality rather than the wishes of one's father constitute the greatest human conduct.”⁸⁷ Understood as such, filial piety is only a concrete manifestation of the highest virtue of humanity and the transcendent ideal of heavenly creation in the relationship between parents and their children. What 4.18 and the other relevant Confucian texts instruct is just how a son could manifest this virtue and this transcendent ideal in accordance with his specific relationship with parents. And they also constitute the rationale why education could be given by a son to his parents.

This is a brilliant way to emphasize the independence of personality in educational activities in Confucian moral philosophy. Only in reference to ultimate reality--the cosmic creation of Heaven--can people find their real identity; and only under the guidance of the transcendent ideal which is embodied in ultimate reality, the initiating, permeating, harmonizing and integrating creativity⁸⁸, can education towards each other among human fellow beings be ultimately justified. In fact, the seemingly reverse of the order of power as illustrated in 4.18 and in other Confucian instructions about remonstration can also be found in the classroom. Although Yan Hui is praised by Confucius as his most virtuous student who is always eager to learn⁸⁹, Confucius once laments that Yan Hui could't inspire him because he was not good at arguing with his teacher: “Confucius said: ‘Hui is of no help to me. There is nothing in my words that fails to please him.’”⁹⁰ As is generalized by *The Record of Education*: “Teaching and learning help each other, as it is said in *The Charge of Dui*⁹¹, ‘Teaching is half of learning’”⁹², the most opportune method for education as described in 4.2-4.3 also inspires the teacher. As long as both students and their teacher are attentive to the issue at hand--one knows how to ask and the other knows how to answer--the mysterious third element of education, the permeative cosmic power of Heaven to constantly create, will facilitate and inspire both of them to become more enlightened and more moral--far beyond their expectation.

⁸⁷*Xunzi* 29.1, translation adapted from Knoblock, Vol 3, 251.

⁸⁸ I attribute these four generic features to the creation of Heaven according to the statement of Hexagram Qian. In this regard, please see my master thesis “Confucian Sacred Canopy in *Yijing*”.

⁸⁹ See Note 53.

⁹⁰ Analects 11.4, translation from Eno 52.

⁹¹ A chapter in *The Classic of Documents* (《尚书》) .

⁹² Zheng Xuan, 礼记正义, 1052; translation adapted from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/xue-ji>, accessed on 08/26/2014.

In the contemporary context, political democracy, economic globalization and cultural pluralism are increasingly acknowledged by people all around the world as universal values. We think this ability of Confucian philosophy of education to foreground the independence of personality and the creativity of a person either as a student or a teacher, or as both, should be welded into its teachings on the divine nature of education and on the radical correlativity between various engaged educational agents, and thus play a far more important role in the contemporary world.

Six Third

“4.20 Don’t marry this woman. 4.21 She sees a man as strong and handsome as metal, and then loses possessions of herself. 4.23 Favorable for nothing.”

“ 4.24 ‘Don’t marry this woman’, this is because her conduct is not in accord with right norms.”⁹³

We have known some respects of the situation of Six Third in the hexagram⁹⁴. In 4.17, we also have known that the reason why the marriage between Nine Second and Six Fifth is blessed is that it complies with the principle of affectivity between yin and yang which can be embodied in marital rituals such as wedding. Compared with 4.17, the situation of Six Third is a complete twist.

Six Third is neither central nor upright. In relation to Top Nine which is resonant to it, it stands rightly below, which is squarely different from the mutual positions between Six Fifth and Nine Second. According to the principle of affectivity which is embodied in marital rituals as explained above, a maiden should stay at home and wait for her lover’s wooing. But given all the characters and positions which Six Third has, she is extremely liable to violate the principle and the ritual--to be so impetuous and rude as to woo a man first. In this situation, since Six Third is so ignorant of the right way to marry a man, she is supposed to get a good education before anything actually happens. In fact, since Six Third is proximate to Nine Second, she has quite an advantageous position to learn from a good teacher. But unfortunately, Six Third is resonant to Top Nine; the character of being neither central nor upright makes her refuse to learn from the right person from whom she should learn. She finally abandons the opportunity to get good education and woos a man first, which is an extremely non-ritualized and uncivilized conduct

⁹³ Wang Bi, 周易正义, 40; translation adapted from multiple resources.

⁹⁴ See Part I, about the formation of a hexagram, the relationship of “proximity” and the relationship of “resonance”.

according to the Confucian view implied in *Yijing*. What 4.20-4.23 describes is precisely this scenario.

Since Six Third is so ignorant of the right way to marry and refuses to get properly educated in this regard, to marry her must be a bad idea. Therefore 4.20 warns quite frankly not to have such a marriage at the beginning of the statement. 4.21 explains why men can't marry this woman through describing her rude behavior in the face of a handsome man. "A man as strong and handsome as metal" refers to Top Nine. Top Nine sits in Trigram Gen ䷃. As the only yang yao in this trigram, Top Nine represents the youngest son. He is resonant to Six Third furthermore, which means this young man is quite attractive to her. Thus 4.21 uses the imagery "metal" (金) to describe how alluring Top Nine seems to Six Third, which metaphor we can find is also used in other Confucian classics in the same period. "Loses possession of herself" refers firstly to the fact that Six Third woos Top Nine first and thus has such an impetuous and non-ritualized conduct. Secondly, as we analyzed above, a person who is ignorant of the right ritual in human affairs but still wants to move forward will trap him-or-herself in danger. Thus "loses possession of herself" (不有躬) refers to the intimate relationship between ritual and body as reflected by Confucianism⁹⁵: if Six Third doesn't comport herself according to the right ritual, she will endanger herself and hurt her body. This danger is illustrated in the statement of Top Nine, where the uneducated Six Third has already grown up to be such a ruthless and relentless thug that only a violent punishment could prevent her from doing wrong. Meanwhile, Six Third sits on the top of Trigram Kan ䷉. Trigram Kan symbolizes danger, while being seated on the top symbolizes being extremely dangerous. Thus according to the Confucian view, to refuse to get an education and remain ignorant of the right ritual to discipline one's body and behaviors is the most dangerous thing for someone's life. As the statement of Top Nine shows, the end result of Six Third is indeed the most dangerous one that she could receive as a human: to be hit and violently punished as a stubborn thug.

Given this situation, it is quite easy to understand why in 4.23 nothing is prognosticated as fitting for Six Third and why Confucius comments in 4.24 that her conduct is not justified. Because the whole story about Six Third, this obstinate and uneducated maiden, will be completed in the statement of Top Nine, we won't comment about its implication to Confucian philosophy of education until then.

Six Fourth

"4.25 Six Fourth is trapped in the shroud. 4.26 This will bring humiliation."

⁹⁵ See quote 21 and 22.

“4.27 The humiliation brought by the fact that Six Fourth is trapped in the shroud and thus remains uneducated is because Six Fourth is the only yao which is remote from the solid.”

Six Fifth

“4.28 The young shrouded; auspicious.”

“4.29 The good fortune of the young shrouded comes from its compliance and obedience.”

We have fully interpreted the meaning of both the statement and the commentary of *Small Image* of Six Fourth and Six Fifth in Part I, “Nomenclature and Relationship of Yao” and Part II, “Statement of Hexagram”, so we will skip them here.

Top Nine

“4.30 Top Nine hits the shrouded. 4.31 It is not favorable to become a thug; it is favorable to guard against a thug.”

“4.32 ‘It is favorable to guard against a thug’, this is because only this way could make the relationship between the above (Top Nine) and the below (Six Third) be in accordance with right norm.”⁹⁶

Top Nine is the second yang yao in this hexagram. Compared with the four yin yaos, it is also an educator. But it is not a normal educator. Top Nine lies in the top, which usually makes things overdone, and it is also resonant with Six Third, the most disgraced one who is ignorant of ritual, and who refuses to receive education, but is still bent on moving forward. As discussed above, from Six Third to Top Nine, Hexagram Meng has experienced a trigrammatical jump. It implies that in the position of Top Nine, because of the obstinateness of Six Third to refuse education, she has already grown up to be an evil and relentless thug who is quite difficult if not impossible to be “educated” in a peaceful way. If Top Nine teaches, it will be an educational extremist. It will use the extremest method to “hit” Six Third, to violently punish it and prevent it from any wrongdoing. The imagery “hit” comes from the fact that Top Nine is the top yao in Trigram Gen, while Trigram Gen symbolizes hand in human body⁹⁷.

Because Top Nine is not upright, lying in the top, it is also liable to lose its principle as all the other non-upright ones. Especially, since Top Nine is resonant to Six Third and is so attractive to Six Third as to get wooed first by her as stated in 4.21, Top Nine is also liable to be mesmerized by the wooing and finally accept Six Third, bringing that uneducated and uncivilized maiden home. But this is definitely wrong and extremely dangerous. 4.31 is thus a

⁹⁶ Translation adapted from Lynn 163.

⁹⁷ “Gen is the hand” (“艮为手”); that is because people use their hands to stop something, while the basic meaning of Gen is “stop” (止), see *Shuogua*, in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 330.

warning not to do this. Six Third lies in Trigram Kan, while Kan could symbolize a robber⁹⁸; Six Third lies in the top of Trigram Kan, which symbolizes furthermore that it could be the most dangerous robber, a thug. Therefore what 4.31 means is if Top Nine accepts Six Third's wooing and associates himself with all kinds of Six Third's wrongdoings, he will also become a thug. But if he can persevere with the right principle to deal with this case as stated in 4.30, to "hit" and defend against Six Third, that is supposed to be the right behavior. Confucius definitely agrees with the latter option, because he thinks only a resolute refusal and violent punishment could make the relationship between Top Nine and Six Third back in accordance with the principle of affectivity and interaction between yin and yang (4.32), which has already been violently violated by Six Third's impetuous conduct.

If we take all the relevant statements in Nine Second, Six Third and Top Nine about the marital ritual into consideration, we can see why Hexagram Meng uses so many (yes, indeed quite numerous compared with other cases!) words to narrate just one story: Nine Second as the good educator knows the right way to marry and marries as such; Six Third doesn't know it but refuses to learn about it meanwhile; finally, Top Nine treats the wooing maiden who is illiterate about right marriage as a thug, hitting her in order to re-effectuate the right norm. This indicates that the most important aspect of Confucian curriculum is ritual, as well as the principle of realities that underlies ritual. The marital ritual is just the most exemplary one among all the rituals, as is reflected in Confucian moral philosophy.

That the marital ritual is the most exemplary one in Confucian ritualism can be confirmed in multiple resources in Classical Confucianism. When Duke Ai (哀公) asks Confucius why the marital ritual is so important, Confucius answers: "Marriage is the union of two families with two different surnames in friendship and love, in order to continue the posterity of the former sages, and to appoint those who shall preside over the sacrifices to heaven and earth, over those in the ancestral temple, and over those at the altars to the deities of land and grain. If there were not the united action of heaven and earth, the myriad of things in the world would not grow. By means of the grand rite of marriage, the generations of human beings are continued through myriad ages. How can your lordship underestimate the ceremony of marriage to say that it is too great?"⁹⁹ Here, Confucius relates the marital ritual with the ultimate reality upon which Confucian metaphysics pivots: the united action of heaven and earth to create a myriad of things,

⁹⁸ "Kan is a robber" ("坎为盗"). Its rationale is that the basic symbolic meaning of Kan is sinking, trapped, and danger, while a robber always goes in secret and is dangerous. See *Shuogua*, in Wang Bi, 周易正义, 332

⁹⁹ Zheng Xuan, 礼记正义, 1376; translation adapted from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/ai-gong-wen>, accessed on 08/27/2014.

and thinks that only a *right* marital ritual could guarantee that human beings could engage with this ultimate reality correctly in human world. It is rightly in this sense that *Hunyi* (昏义, The Meaning of Marriage Ceremony) in *The Classics of Rites* says “The marital ritual is the root of the other rituals”¹⁰⁰. And *Zhongyong* also expounds the Dao that a virtuous person needs to cultivate as “has its simple beginnings in the relation between man and woman, but in its utmost reaches, it is clearly seen in heaven and earth.”¹⁰¹ In this view, the marital ritual which could lead to a vibrantly harmonious relationship between man and woman is so important that only an unmistakeable practice of it could ensure that human beings accomplish the ultimate goal of self-cultivation as defined in Confucian moral philosophy: to be in a trinity with heaven and earth and to co-create and nurture a myriad of things under heaven. Understood as such, there is no surprise that the marital ritual becomes such an important topic in Hexagram Meng whose thrust is to address education as a pattern of things-in-change, and in Confucian commentary tradition of *Yijing* as well as the related Confucian moral philosophy, the marital ritual is valued so much as to occupy such an important position.

Since there is such a grand cosmic reality that Confucian ritual is intended to engage with, the connotation of “ritual” as it is conceived in Confucianism is actually far broader than what the word seems to signify. In the time of Confucius, rite, music, archery, driving, calligraphy and arithmetic, were thought to be a set of basic skills for a virtuous person’s sociality and were thus taken to be the main curriculum for Confucian education. In the broadest sense they can all be counted as ritual. In the ultimate analysis, the ritual in Confucianism doesn’t only refer to religious rite, social etiquette, and life skills, but it also denotes political institution, economic policy, scientific technology¹⁰², etc.--virtually all the human activities and every cultural product that are designed by humans themselves to facilitate the constant cosmic creation of Heaven in the human arena in a specifically humane way. In this respect, *Xici* (系辞, Appended Text, also traditionally known as “Yidazhuan”, 易大传, Great Treatise), one of *Ten Wings* and also the most systematic expression of Confucian metaphysics in its classical period, gives its most refined exposition: “The sages had the means to perceive the activities taking place under Heaven, and observing how things come together and go smoothly, they thus enacted statutes and

¹⁰⁰Zheng Xuan, 礼记正义, 1617; translation adapted from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/hun-yi>, accessed on 08/27/2014.

¹⁰¹ Translation adapted from Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book*, 100.

¹⁰² An example about economy and technology in *Yijing* is that Chapter Two of Part II of *Great Treatise* describes how the sage kings advanced the economical development of ancient society through the invention of new technologies, see Wang Bi, 周易正义, 298-300.

rituals (典礼) accordingly.”¹⁰³ In this broadest view, Confucian ritualism is a humanism, while Confucian humanism is an anthropo-cosmism¹⁰⁴. It affirms the irreplaceability of human agency to realize the ideal of cosmic creation of Heaven in the human arena, and meanwhile sublimates the human efforts to create such a humane society with holy dignity.

Understood as such, it is no surprise that ritual, together with the principle of realities that underlies it, could be the core subject of Confucian education. To learn ritual is to learn to be human, and to learn to be human is to learn how to be a sacred being in the most mundane dimensions of human life. This process is both conservative and transformative. It is conservative because there is such a rich heritage of human culture which stores the memory about how human beings have succeeded to facilitate cosmic creation in a humane way, which is definitely necessary for education. As we commented before¹⁰⁵, to divine in Confucianism is in this sense a pure ritual through which the virtuous person could have an opportunity to learn the principle of things-in-change as revealed by the highly patterned wisdom of *Yijing* and thus facilitate his or her moral conduct to try to be fully human. But however rich the heritage of human ritual is, cosmic and human realities are constantly in flux. The most important thing in the learning of ritual is thus not to learn its crust of art and technique as is circumspectly thought over in 4.12-4.15, but its kernel of the most generic principle of reality so as to inspire and nurture human creativity to produce an ever-updating harmonious status of changing realities in every occasion of human life, as is shown by the heuristic pedagogy hailed in 4.2-4.3. Therefore only in this perspective of the ritualistic anthropology which is grounded in Confucian metaphysics, the Confucian philosophy of education as implied in Hexagram Meng could be understood integrally.

Since the learning of ritual is so important to either the self-cultivation of a person or the construction of a humane society, Confucianism always prioritizes “government by ritual and education”(礼治教化) over “government by law” (法治) as the more desirable form of public administration. Confucius once compared the two: “Guide the people with laws and adjust their behaviors with punishments, they will try to evade the punishments, flee the government and have no sense of shame. Guide the people with virtue and adjust their behaviors with ritual, and they will have a sense of shame, rectify their behaviors by their own will, and support the

¹⁰³ Translation adapted from Lynn 57.

¹⁰⁴ “Anthropo-cosmism” is a category used by Tu Wei-ming to characterize the religiosity of Confucian view, see Tu Wei-ming, Centrality and Commonality -- An Essay on Confucian Religiousness (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 9.

¹⁰⁵ See Part I, Introduction A .

government.”¹⁰⁶ But this doesn’t mean that the education of ritual could be applied in any case, let alone downplay the importance of government by law. Confucius once depicted the person who runs into trouble in life, doesn’t know how to deal with it but meanwhile refuses to learn about it as the worst person for learning; this kind of person can’t change himself or herself. He or she is just uneducable ¹⁰⁷. In the same way, Mencius thinks the person who refuses to learn and approve what is right and to do what has been learned can’t be taught and talked of anything; he or she just does violence to his or her own human nature¹⁰⁸. These two extreme cases are the same as the one depicted in Six Third, where the individual is ignorant about right marriage, and proximate to a good teacher, but still refuses to learn. For these uneducated and uneducable people, there is only one way left for a society to treat them: as long as they violate the law and commit a crime, they should be “hit” and punished violently by justice, as is well depicted by Top Nine. It implies that the government by law acts as the bottom line of a moral and humane society which according to Confucian view can only be fully constructed by the government with ritual and education. In relation to the categorization of elementary learning and great learning which is indicated by the statements of Initial Six and Nine Second, we can say the government by law plays the same role as what elementary learning plays in the Confucian curriculum of self-cultivation: to set up the right norms and to have people know and abide by them through reward and punishment. In this sense, whether the great learning--the education of ritual which aims to inspire and nurture people’s moral consciousness and creativity--could be well carried out in any given society heavily depends upon whether it has a good government. In Hexagram Meng, all the spectacular stories about the great learning and good education are staged in the yaos which are clamped by the initial and top ones, in which a violent way to punish ignorant people has to be used. This can be seen as a symbol for the relationship between elementary learning and great learning, as well as the one between government by law and government by ritual and education.

3, Reflection about Contemporary Chinese and American Education

There are rich instructions about education implied in Hexagram Meng. Before we briefly reflect upon the contemporary Chinese and American education, a summary of the main points of Confucian philosophy of education as implied here will be helpful:

¹⁰⁶ Analects 2.3, translation adapted from Eno 5.

¹⁰⁷ Analects 16.9, and 17.13.

¹⁰⁸ Mencius 4A:10, as translated in Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book*, 74.

- (1) Education is divine. It doesn't add anything to the educated, but helps to rediscover and nurture people's innate good human nature, which is bestowed by Heaven and enables human beings to have appropriate reactions to the constantly changing cosmic realities.
- (2) The best pedagogy is heuristic, which requires both the initiative research of the student and the wise response of the teacher. It targets the special talent and character of different students, and meanwhile allows teachers and their students to be correlative and cooperate with each other to constitute the most opportune moment when good education could happen.
- (3) Learning by rote memorization and imitation, while simultaneously being motivated by rewards and punishments, is the pedagogy for elementary learning. This method can make known the right norms, but can't foster creativity, so can only be used in the first stage of education.
- (4) Learning creatively, while motivated by the ultimate goal of self-cultivation as grounded in the depth of the human heart--to be in a trinity with heaven and earth and to co-create and nurture a myriad of things under heaven--this is the trajectory for great learning. Since elementary and great learning are different levels of education, any person at any age needs to upgrade his or her learning from the elementary to the great one. Since the greatest learning always aims for creation and is thus without end, education is a life-long project. A human being cannot stop learning.
- (5) Education is a universal human right. Educators, together with the whole of human society, have specific responsibility to make sure even the remotest student receives a good education.
- (6) Ritual, as the cultural product of human beings that can facilitate individuals' co-creation to love and nurture cosmic fellow beings, is the most important subject for education. To learn ritual is to learn to be human, and to learn to be human is to learn to be sacred in one's secular life.
- (7) The order of education challenges the one's in power. As long as the situation is demanding and the right ritual is obeyed, a subject has the obligation to educate the monarch, a son ought to educate his parents, and a student has the great potential to inspire the teacher. The independence of personality of every human being is built up from a divine foundation and is a guarantee for the right human relationship in education, as well as for the health of any other kind of human relationship.
- (8) Education has its extreme case; peaceful education can't be applied everywhere. There must be a good government that makes sure any uneducated and uneducable evil person be

brought into justice. This is the bottom, most basic and crude function of education. It is necessary, however, for any normal project of education to be carried out.

Based upon these points of Confucian philosophy of education, we can have a very brief discussion about contemporary Chinese and American education.

On the first page of the website for this International Conference on Confucianism and Education, it declares that the conference's interest in Confucian thought of education is partially motivated by "Chinese students' outstanding academic performances, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)" as they contrast with the education reforms which are becoming intensified in Western countries, especially in U.S. The logic implicit in this assertion seems to be: through absorbing some idea from Confucian educational philosophy, Western countries could figure out why Chinese students have such an outstanding performance in these subjects and how western students could catch up with their Chinese competitors after a series of timely and efficient educational reforms. But I think this logic makes a mistake similar to "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness" as expounded in Whitehead: it mistakes an abstract theory for concrete reality. I think Confucianism, as the most prominent influence on Chinese intellectual history, could indeed help explain why contemporary Chinese students have such academic performances in these areas. But it doesn't mean Confucianism values these performances as much as what people have usually thought it to do. Neither does it mean that Western reformers should imitate what Chinese education has done in order to improve their student's academic performances—nor think then that it is due to Confucianism.

As shown above, the main subject of Confucian curriculum is ritual, and ritual refers to all the cultural products that facilitate human beings' creative reaction to cosmic beings-in-change, which definitely include both the knowledge of STEM, of humanities, and of social sciences. If Confucian educational philosophy does indeed play a dominate role in Chinese students' academic performances, the students should excel in both STEM and all the other subjects, and the "excellency" mentioned here must be defined together with "creativity". But the fact is, although Chinese students have historically achieved high scores in tests related to STEM, they are not equally creative. In 2005, when the former premier minister Wen Jiabao visited one of the most famous scientists in China, Qian Xuesen, the latter asked why none of the students raised in the contemporary Chinese educational system were on a par with the so many great masters of science who got their education in the period of the Republic of China (1911-1949) -- and even won the Nobel Prize in some cases. This is named the "Question of Qian Xuesen." It has been a hot issue in Chinese public media in recent years. It indicates that Chinese people are very aware of the defects which are hidden behind the remarkable test scores of Chinese students. As for

most of the humanities and social sciences, they are not as easy as STEM to be standardized and tested. Good performance in these areas relies heavily upon the diversity and creativity of students' intelligence and personality. I believe a college student from China will immediately understand how Chinese education is lacking these areas once he or she steps onto the campus of an American university and has a chance to study there for a while.

Why does contemporary Chinese education have such one-sided excellence in STEM? In Confucian terms, it's because the essentially test-oriented educational system in contemporary China is stuck in the stage of "elementary learning". This is far away from the "great learning" that aims to cultivate the person and nurture the creativity so as to construct a vibrantly harmonious humane society. As shown above, the elementary learning is to learn by rote and imitation, to motivate by rewards and punishments; its aim is to set up the right norms without students' real understanding of them at the very early stage of education. Correspondingly, STEM are all subjects that are highly standardizable. If the same textbook, the same test, and the same group of people are taken to teach, the resulting boredom of the process of learning can only be offset by a ranking system that gives such an incentive to say: the competitors with higher scores can go to better universities and find better jobs. The most efficient way to get a high score in this system will be imitation, repetition, and endless practice, without any hope of releasing the creativity innate in every individual. This is exactly what happened in most of Chinese public schools in regard to the teaching and learning of STEM. Actually these schools also use the same pedagogy to train students in other subjects, but unfortunately, humanities and social sciences can't succumb to standardization as much as a high score in these subjects could mean anything in any international competition. In a word, I think the general political, economic and social structures of contemporary China are not yet able to create a platform to allow the level of education in its public educational system to be upgraded from elementary learning to great learning. I believe if any Confucian educationist takes charge of the ministry of education and carries out any real educational reform in China, the most urgent item on his or her agenda will still be to address this point.

In contrast, American education seems to be in line with the great learning from the very first beginning. American students rarely experience what Chinese students have suffered under the strict ranking system. Individuality, diversity and creativity seem to always stand in the first rank of values that American education cherishes and pursues. But according to some recent observations, under the pressure of the intensifying political and economic global competition, America now tends more and more to follow the examples of China and some other East Asian countries to reform and standardize its public education and thus gives its students more tests.

One educational scholar, Yong Zhao, has well commented: “American education is at a crossroad. Two paths lie in front of us: one in which we destroy our strengths in order to catch up with others on test scores and one in which we build on our strengths so we can keep the lead in innovation and creativity.”¹⁰⁹ In a Confucian view, I think American educational reformers need to do a special acrobatics to find the right way in this crossroad.

On the one hand, the standardization of education in the genre of Confucian elementary learning is not totally valueless. The practice in China has proved that the human resources which get trained in this genre of education are favorable to the implementation of some grand national programs which value the power of collective execution more than the strength of innovation from individuals. In this sense, they are also quite adaptable to the quick import and absorption of the most up-to-date techniques to enhance the competitive power of national economy. But the cost is also very high. As 4.14 has formulated, this pedagogy can be barely applicable in the long run. In the long run, it doesn’t only damage the cornerstone of a nation’s power--the thriving and creativity of individuals--but also goes against the ultimate goal in Confucian philosophy of education: the construction of a vigorous, harmonious and humane society on the basis of full moral self-consciousness and unfettered self-development of each individual. Taking these points into consideration, it would not be totally helpless to give some testable discipline to American students in their initial stages of education, especially in the area of STEM, since that will help to refine their still fragile mentality and prepare them for deeper and further study. It is not useless for the execution of national strategy either. The consciousness of norm and authority that is fostered in the genre of Confucian elementary learning could enhance the solidarity of human community, upon which the well-functioning of any political system undoubtably relies. This is especially applicable to the United States, as it is such a multicultural nation that is made up of such a diverse demography. Some discipline given to the young students and newly enfranchised citizens about a basic set of values that are necessary for the maintenance and improvement of a good democratic polity will be more than helpful. However, if American education really needs such an adjustment towards the genre of Confucian elementary learning, the concerned educational reformers must take a special precaution that this can’t be counted as the ultimate direction of education. As the Confucian great learning quite clearly endorses, the real power of a nation consists in the creativity of its citizens as individuals and the vibrant harmony of its society based upon that.

¹⁰⁹ Yong Zhao, *Catching Up of Leading the Way: American Education in the Age of Globalization* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2009), 178.

Therefore, a special balance needs to be achieved between the traditional advantage of American education in fostering the creativity of individuals and its growing need to enhance its society's solidarity on the basis of some sense of authority that must be inculcated into individual's moral consciousness through education. We will be more than happy to see how this balance can be achieved under the inspiration of Confucian philosophy of education, especially its idea of the structural differentiation between the elementary and the great learning.

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